



The rescued man clung to a mooring buoy after his kayak capsized near Captree State Park yesterday.

USCG / PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS STEVEN STROHMAIER

COAST GUARD RESCUES KAYAKER

A 58-year-old man spent more than an hour clinging to a mooring buoy in the water near Captree State Park after his kayak overturned yesterday morning, the Coast Guard said.

Another man, who was fishing, heard cries for help and called 911 about 5 a.m., the

Coast Guard said.

An arriving Coast Guard boat from Station Fire Island was directed toward the man in the water by West Islip firefighters, who could see him from land, the Coast Guard said.

"Thankfully, this man was wearing his lifejacket. It saved

his life," Capt. Andrew Tucci, commanding officer of Coast Guard Sector Long Island Sound, said in a statement.

The man was suffering from mild hypothermia and was to be treated by emergency medical service personnel, the Coast Guard said.

— WILLIAM MURPHY

Smoke delays MacArthur flight

A smoke condition in the cockpit that prompted an American Eagle crew to return its flight to Long Island MacArthur Airport yesterday morning turned out to be caused by a burned-out lightbulb, according to the airline.

Flight 4868, a twin-engine turboprop de Havilland DH8 operated by Piedmont Airlines, landed safely at MacArthur at 6:50 a.m., the Fed-

eral Aviation Administration said. The flight had departed MacArthur about 6:10 a.m.

The flight, carrying three crew members and 40 passengers, returned out of "an abundance of caution," American Airlines said in a statement.

As a formality, the FAA said it would investigate the incident.

American issued a state-

ment that read, in part, "it was a burned out light bulb, which caused the smoke in the cockpit. Out of an abundance of caution, the crew decided to return to Islip to have the issue checked by our maintenance team."

The airline said the issue was fixed — and said the flight had "redeparted" for Philadelphia — by about 9:15 a.m.

— JOHN VALENTI

\$10M OKd for septic program

- Suffolk pols approve funds for high-tech systems
- Homeowners can apply for up to \$11G to upgrade

BY RICK BRAND

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The Suffolk Legislature yesterday unanimously approved a \$10-million grant program to help homeowners pay for high-tech septic systems that can cost as much as \$17,500, in the first major step in a county program to combat nitrogen levels in local waters.

Lawmakers also approved the hiring of four new employees so the county can begin processing grant applications July 1. Officials hope installations can begin four to six weeks later.

"Today Suffolk County has made history . . . to help solve our water quality crisis on Long Island," said County Executive Steve Bellone, who proposed the grant effort. "After decades of managing the decline of our water bodies, we are finally turning the tide."

The grants funded under the county watershed protection program will allow about 200 homeowners annually over the next five years to convert aging cesspools, especially in low-lying areas near surface waters. However, its impact will be limited, given that 360,000 homes in Suffolk have cesspools that do little to remove nitrogen.

Backers of the new program also say it will help the county compete for \$75 million in state money available for infrastructure improvement across New York.

"We can't wait any longer since there are millions of dollars on the table," said Adrienne Esposito, executive director of the nonprofit Citizens Campaign for the Environment.

Under the program, homeowners can apply for grants of up to \$11,000 for the installation of new systems if they make

less than \$300,000 a year in income; grants of \$5,000 are available for those making between \$300,000 and \$500,000.

Homeowners can qualify to finance the remaining cost over 15 years at 3 percent interest, officials said. The loan program will be administered by Community Development Corp. of Long Island Funding Corp., with financial support from Bridgehampton National Bank.

County officials said the new program will give preference to homes in low-lying priority areas, although there is no advantage based on low income.

Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory (D-Copague) also got agreement from Bellone aides that residents should be warned about additional costs, such as permit fees and maintenance costs.

Health officials said they expect system owners to incur \$300 in annual maintenance fees, and from \$20 to \$266 annually in electricity costs, depending on which of four approved systems they use.

Some criticized the grant program yesterday.

"My suggestion is to rename this program a 'corporate workfare' program for real estate developers . . . and attorneys," said Peter Akras, a plan opponent from Wading River. The program will "open the floodgates to these unproven systems which will saddle the taxpayers with operating expenses for years, increase development, and do very little to reduce nitrogen in our waters," Akras said.

But Elinore Restivo, who lives near the water in Hampton Bays, said she has seen water quality deteriorate over the past 50 years.

"It may not be a solution, but it is a beginning," said Restivo, who hopes to get a grant.