Explanation:
This bill provides protections to 41,000 miles of class C streams in New York. Certain developments that might affect class C streams will have to apply for a permit and take the proper steps to ensure these critical waterways are not harmed or degraded.

The health of our streams is directly linked to the safety of our drinking water. Class C streams protect against flooding, filter harmful pollutants, and feed into waterways that can recharge drinking water sources. The vitality of these freshwater resources is also essential to maintaining a recreation economy that supports thousands of jobs across the state; class C streams are specifically defined as those that support fisheries and non-contact recreation.

As climate change triggers an increased frequency of catastrophic storms, protecting class C streams is more important than ever. These streams reduce the velocity of water during flooding, protecting the lives and property of thousands of New Yorkers. In the wake of the 115 lives lost in Hurricane Ida and after billions of dollars in flood-related damages across the country, we cannot afford to lose more of this critical natural infrastructure.

New Yorkers across the state have demonstrated their strong support for increased stream protections. The $4.2 billion Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Bond Act included significant funding for stream restoration and passed with overwhelming voter approval in November 2022.

This bill is a critical complement to the Bond Act. New York should act to protect our streams before pollution and destruction occur in addition to taking action to restore those already degraded. Proactively protecting streams is a far cheaper environmental investment. Recent pollution by the toxic chemicals PFOA, PFOS, and 1,4-dioxane, and the costs associated with removing them from our drinking water, shows the urgent need for source water protections that prevent contamination from occurring in the first place.

Summary:
This bill amends the environmental conservation law to include class C streams in the list of protected streams within the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation regulatory system.