Explanation:
This bill requires state agencies and academic institutions to convene and develop shared standards for collecting data on New York’s waters and to make such data easily accessible to the public. Comprehensive data is key to crafting effective policy that will protect clean water for all.

New York is one of the most water-rich states in the country, with our bodies of freshwater serving as communal fixtures for tourism, recreation, and industry. However, as climate change increases the frequency and severity of droughts and floods, it is more important than ever to assess whether water abundance, quality, and access is at risk. Current data on New York’s waters is scattered across a number of online platforms, and a significant amount of data is not accessible to the public at all.

The Open Water Data Act directs relevant academic institutions like the Cornell Water Resources Institute and state agencies like the Department of Environmental Conservation and Department of Health to convene and develop shared standards for collecting data on precipitation, water diversions, contaminant levels, and more. The bill requires that any water data collected with state funding adhere to the agreed-upon practices, be updated annually, and be made available to the public through the state’s Open NY data platform.

We can’t fix what we don’t measure. Modeled after policies in Western states facing water scarcity, the Open Water Data Act will make water data in New York more transparent and more accurate. This will help decision-makers ensure the longevity of one of our most valuable resources.

Summary:
This bill directs academic institutions and state agencies to collaborate and create standards for collecting water data and making it available on a public-facing website.