

Contact:

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176 Groups Urge State to Maintain Environmental Funding to Create Jobs and Restart the Economy

***Broad coalition sends letter to Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins,
and Speaker Heastie, calling environmental programs critical to New York's
recovery and prosperity***

***As climate crisis intensifies, state funding is essential to save lives and protect
millions of vulnerable New Yorkers***

Albany, NY (October 16, 2020) – Diverse organizations from across the state are urging Governor Andrew Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie to maintain funding for environmental programs to create jobs, fortify local economies, and address the climate crisis. In a letter sent to the leaders on Wednesday, 176 groups called environmental funding critical to the health, safety, and prosperity of all New Yorkers.

“As the COVID pandemic has once again demonstrated, clear air, clean water and outdoor recreation are critical in protecting public health. When making difficult funding decisions, these resources and services must be recognized as essential.”

The full text of the letter is below:

Dear Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie:

Public funding to protect clean air and water, create and maintain local parks and enhance recreation, tackle climate change and its impacts, and conserve natural resources is critical to the health, safety and prosperity of all New Yorkers. With the \$3 billion Environmental Bond Act removed from the November 2020 ballot, it is imperative that New York State maintain environmental funding. State environmental funding furthers the goals of the Bond Act while creating good-paying jobs, strengthening local economies, and advancing environmental justice in frontline communities.

In the past, the environment has been treated like a luxury and all too often taken disproportionate funding cuts when the state faced financial crises. But environmental funding programs create jobs and economic opportunity, and, as the COVID pandemic has once again demonstrated, clear air, clean water and outdoor recreation are critical in protecting public health. When making difficult funding decisions, these resources and services must be recognized as essential. This funding also demonstrates a commitment by the state that can be used to leverage federal funds, specifically for future job-creating stimulus funding that could expand our ability to build resilience. Furthermore, the current impacts and dire threats we face from climate change remain during hard economic times and addressing them now will save money and lives, both now and in the long run. Hard economic times like these demand that we protect and enhance the environment we share, and in doing so, we can create solutions that will ensure we build a more prosperous future.

Our organizations join with New York State, local governments, and many other stakeholders to call on Congress to ensure federal assistance to state and local governments to help cover public health costs and economic impacts through COVID relief legislation. Federal support for critical government services will continue to be a top priority.

Additionally, as New York State leaders continue work to address the pandemic and state budget deficit, our organizations urge that the following state programs are at least maintained at currently appropriated levels, deployed effectively throughout the state, and that no further cuts to or sweeps from environmental programs be contemplated. These programs provide essential services with unique, cross-cutting benefits for New Yorkers in every county of the state, and this work must continue.

Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)

The \$300 million EPF supports 350,000 jobs across the state, and EPF-supported industries generate approximately \$40 billion in economic activity every year. EPF projects and programs directly address issues facing New York as we manage the pandemic and fiscal crisis. From improving water quality and community infrastructure, to providing resources for environmental justice organizations and conserving natural resources that reduce pollution and protect communities from storms, the EPF delivers programs New Yorkers need now, more than ever.

Parks 2020 and DEC New York Works Programs

Since its creation in 2010, Parks 2020 has funded \$1 billion in upgrades to New York's world-class state parks system. Every dollar invested in state parks generates \$5 of economic activity. During the COVID crisis, state residents have relied on these parks to recreate, get exercise, and find solace during extremely difficult times. Local construction jobs associated with park development have been an economic lifeline for many communities. Opportunities to expand these benefits by creating new parks and improving existing parks in underserved areas exist throughout the state.

Furthermore, for the last several fiscal years, NYSDEC has received approximately \$40 million in New York Works funding annually for critical environmental capital projects, including approximately \$55 million to support the "Adventure New York" Program, aimed at creating new recreational opportunities and infrastructure to support the record visitation our state lands are now experiencing. These projects protect natural resources, enhance visitor safety and experience, and create new access to the outdoors in all regions of the state. In addition to Adventure New York, capital funding for NYSDEC supports critical health and safety projects that protect the environment and the people of New York State.

Clean Water Infrastructure Act

To date, the State has provided \$3.9 billion for water infrastructure programs, including the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act, and Governor Cuomo committed an additional \$1.5 billion over the next three years as part of the SFY2019 budget for a total commitment of \$5.4 billion. New York's drinking water and wastewater systems need tens of billions of dollars in upgrades to ensure our communities have clean, safe water and our bays, harbors, lakes and rivers are not polluted. With county and local budgets stretched beyond their limits, funding for maintaining and upgrading our water infrastructure and addressing emerging contaminants threatening our safe drinking water is essential to protecting public health. In addition, this program is a strong job generator, with every \$1 million in state investment resulting in 17 local jobs.

Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Program

Over the course of the program, \$228 million of RGGI funds (that is 17% of total funding) have been

transferred by NYSEDA to the state General Fund, depriving New Yorkers of funding that could have lowered energy bills and created good jobs. RGGI has received more than its fair share of cuts and it is more critical than ever that these funds be fully dedicated to implementing New York's programs focused on addressing climate change, including the Green Jobs Green NY program, and meeting the state's ambitious goals in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. A diversion of RGGI resources from NYSEDA will be economically and environmentally harmful to the state in the long run.

Each of the above programs creates thousands of jobs, saves communities and taxpayers money, and supports several multi-billion dollar sectors of the economy, including but not limited to agriculture, outdoor recreation, construction, tourism and commercial fishing. These programs also leverage federal, local and private dollars to deliver important services to residents, which New York cannot afford to lose. With these many important benefits in mind, we urge the Legislature and Governor Cuomo to maintain funding for these important and successful programs, and pass legislation to reauthorize a \$3 billion environmental Bond Act on a future ballot.

Sincerely,

+ POOL, Kara Meyer, Managing Director

Adirondack Council, Kevin Chlad, Director of Government Relations

Adirondack Land Trust, Mike Carr, Executive Director

Adirondack Mountain Club, Michael Barrett, Executive Director

Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve, David Gibson, Managing Partner

Agricultural Stewardship Association, Teri Ptacek, Executive Director

Alley Pond Environmental Center, Inc, Irene V. Scheid, Executive Director

Alliance for a Green Economy, Jessica Azulay, Executive Director

Alliance for the Great Lakes, Crystal M.C. Davis, Vice President of Policy & Strategic Engagement

American Farmland Trust, Samantha Levy, New York Policy Manager

Appalachian Mountain Club, Kimberly Witt, Mid Atlantic Policy Manager

Association for a Better New York, Steven Rubenstein, Chairman

Atlantic States Legal Foundation, Lhakpa Tsering, Executive Director

Audubon New York, Erin McGrath, Policy Manager

Audubon Society of the Capital Region, Teresa Murphy, President

Bedford Audubon, Suzanne Cahill, Executive Director

Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, Jill Jedlicka, Executive Director

Capital Roots, Amy Klein, Chief Executive Officer

Catskill Center, Jeff Senterman, Executive Director

Catskill Mountainkeeper, Katherine Nadeau, Deputy Director

Central Westchester Audubon Society, Lisa Curtis, President

Champlain Area Trails, Chris Maron, Executive Director

Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy, John Jablonski III, Executive Director

Chemung Valley Audubon Society

Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director

City Parks Foundation

Clean and Healthy New York, Kathleen A. Curtis, Executive Director

Climate XChange, Michael Green, Executive Director, Coalition of Living Museums

Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor, Carol DiPaolo, Programs Director, Water-Monitoring Coordinator

Columbia Land Conservancy, Peter R. Paden, Executive Director

Concerned Citizens of Montauk, Laura Tooman, President

Defend H2O, Kevin McAllister, President

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society, Susan O'Handley, Co-President

Earthjustice, Courtney Bowie, Managing Attorney, Northeast Office

Eastern Long Island Audubon Society, Byron Young, President

Edmund Niles Huyck Preserve, Inc., Anne Rhoads, Executive Director

Empire State Forest Products Association, John K. Bartow, Jr., Executive Director

Environmental Advocates of NY, Kate Kurera, Deputy Director
Environmental Defense Fund, Mark Rupp, Director, State-Federal Policy & Affairs, Ecosystems
Finger Lakes - Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, Kristy LaManche, Program Coordinator
Finger Lakes Land Trust, Andrew Zepp, Executive Director
Food & Water Action, Eric Weltman, Senior Organizer
Four Harbors Audubon Society, Joyann Cirigliano, President/ Strategic Planning Chair
Friends of Georgica Pond Foundation
Friends of the Bay, Heather Johnson, Executive Director
Friends of the Upper Delaware River, Jeff Skelding, Executive Director
Friends of Tillson Lake, Inc., Morey Gottesman, President
Friends of Times Beach Nature Preserve, Jay Burney, Chair
Genesee Land Trust, Gay Mills, Executive Director
Genesee Valley Audubon Society, June Summers, President
Genesee Valley Conservancy, Inc., Benjamin Gajewski, Executive Director
Grassroots Gardens WNY, Jeanette Koncickowski, Executive Director
Great Neck Breast Cancer Coalition, Laura Weinberg, President
Great South Bay Audubon Society, Annette Brownell, Treasurer
Green Ossining, Suzie Ross, Chairperson
Greene Land Trust, Robert Knighton, President
Groundwork Hudson Valley, Brigitte Griswold, Executive Director
Group for the East End, Robert S. DeLuca, President
HabitatMap, Michael Heimbinder, Executive Director
Hampton Bays Civic Association, Maria N. Hults, President
Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association, Lisa DeLeeuw, Executive Director
HEALTHY SCHOOLS NETWORK, Claire L. Barnett, MBA, Executive Director
Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee, Eric Swenson, Executive Director
Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Michelle Smith, Executive Director
Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester, Frances Greenberg, President
Hudson Valley Fishermen's Association
Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition, Inc., Karen Joy Miller, Founder and President
Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society, Simone DaRos, Board Member
Indian River Lakes Conservancy, Elliott D. Hillback Jr, Board Chairperson
Institute for Ocean Conservation Science at Stony Brook University, Christine Santora, Assistant Director
Keuka Outlet Trail, Tom McGuigan, Board Member - Keuka Outlet Trail
Kingston Land Trust, Julia Farr, Executive Director
Lake Agawam Conservancy, Meghan Nadosy Magyar, Board Member
Lake George Land Conservancy, Jamie Brown, Executive Director
Lake Placid Land Conservancy, Kerry Crowningshield, Executive Director
Land Trust Alliance, Meme Hanley, Senior New York Program Manager
Lewisboro Land Trust, Bobbe Stultz, Co-Chair
Long Island Contractors' Association, Inc., Marc Herbst, Executive Director
Long Island Pine Barrens Society, Richard Amper, Executive Director
Manhasset Bay Protection Committee, Sarah Deonarine, Executive Committee
Mianus River Gorge, Roderick G Christie, Executive Director
Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, Mark King, Executive Director
Mohonk Preserve, Kevin Case, President & CEO
Moms for a Non Toxic New York, Alexandra Zissu, Ulster County Chapter Head
Nassau County Soil and Water Conservation District, David Ganim, District Manager
Nassau Hiking & Outdoor Club, Guy Jacob, Conservation Chair
Natural Areas Conservancy, Sarah Charlop-Powers, Executive Director
Natural Resources Defense Council, Richard Schrader, Policy and Legislative Director
New Rochelle, Noam Bramson, Mayor of New Rochelle
New York Botanical Garden
New York Building Congress, Carlo A. Scissura, Esq., President & CEO
New York City Audubon, Kathryn Heintz, Executive Director
New York League of Conservation Voters, Julie Tighe, President

New York State Assc. of Reduction, Reuse and Recycling (NYSAR3), Kelli Timbrook, President
New York State Laborers' Union
New York State Pollution Prevention Institute, Charles J. Ruffing, Director
New York State Urban Forestry Council, Karen H. Emmerich, President
New Yorkers for Parks, Adam Ganser, Executive Director
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, Joshua Howard, Executive Director
Newtown Creek Alliance, Lisa Bloodgood, Director of Advocacy and Education
North Fork Audubon Society, Debra O'Kane, President
North Fork Environmental Council, Susan MacKenzie, President
North Salem Open Land Foundation, Jocko McKean, Executive Director
North Shore Audubon Society, Peggy Maslow, President
Northern Catskills Audubon Society, Inc., Larry Federman, President
Northern New York Audubon, Joan Collins, Conservation Chair
NY Climate Reality Chapters Coalition, Tim Guinee, Legislative Action Coordinator
NY Product Stewardship Council, Andrew Radin, Board Chair
NY Water Environment Association, William J. Nylic, III, President
NYC Audubon, Kathryn Heintz, Executive Director
NYPIRG, Elizabeth Moran, Environmental Policy Director
Onondaga Audubon, Maryanne Adams, Conservation Chair
Ontario Bays Initiative, Inc. (OBI Land Trust), Jim LaPlante, Board Chairperson
Open Space Institute, Christopher "Kim" J. Elliman, President & CEO
Orange County Audubon Society, Melissa Peterson, Administrator
Orange County Land Trust, James Delaune, Executive Director
Otsego Land Trust, Patricia Szarpa, Executive Director
Our Outer Harbor Coalition, Buffalo, Margaret Wooster
Parks & Trails New York, Robin Dropkin, Executive Director
Peconic Baykeeper, Peter Topping, Baykeeper
Peconic Estuary Protection Committee
Peconic Land Trust, John v.H. Halsey, President
Pollinator Conservation Association, Inc, Jay Burney, Special Projects Director
Preservation League of New York State, Jay DiLorenzo, President
Protect the Adirondacks!, Peter Bauer, Executive Director
Putnam County Land Trust, Judith Terlizzi, Board President
Rebuild by Design, Amy Chester, Managing Director
Renewable Energy Long Island (reLI), Gordian Raacke, Executive Director
Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Jim Bonesteel, Executive Director
RETI Center, Gita Nandan, Chair of the Board
RETI Center, Tim Gilman-Sevcik, Executive Director
RETI Center, Isil Akgul, Director of Operations
Riverkeeper, Jeremy Cherson, Legislative Advocacy Manager
Riverside Park Conservancy
Rochester Museum and Science Center, Hillary Olson, President & CEO
Sag Harbor Village Harbor Committee
Saratoga PLAN, Maria Ttabka, Executive Director
Save The Great South Bay, Robyn Silvestri, Executive Director
Save the Sound, Tracy Brown, Regional Director, Water Protection
Saw Mill River Audubon, Anne Swaim, Executive Director
Scenic Hudson, Ned Sullivan, President
Seatuck Environmental Association, Enrico Nardone, Executive Director
Serpentine Art and Nature Center, Inc., George Y. Bramwell, Esq., Past President
Setauket Harbor Task Force, George Hoffman, Trustee
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, Roger Downs, Conservation Director
Somers Land Trust, Michael Barnhart, President
South Shore Audubon Society, Brien Weiner, President
Southampton Town Civic Coalition, Andrea Spilka, President
Southern Madison Heritage Trust, Harvey L Kliman, Ph.D., President
St. Lawrence Land Trust, Jessica Rogers, President of the Board

Surfrider Foundation, Matt Gove, Mid-Atlantic Policy Manager
Sustainable Westchester, Steven Rosenthal, Interim Executive Director
SWANA New York Chapter, Luann Meyer, President
Syracuse Cultural Workers, Andy Mager, Sales Manager and Social Movements Liaison
Teatown Lake Reservation, Kevin Carter, Executive Director
The Conservation Fund, Thomas R. Duffus, Vice President, Northeast
The Nature Conservancy, Jessica Ottney Mahar, NY Policy & Strategy Director
The North Shore Land Alliance, Inc., Lisa W. ott, President
The Town of New Castle, Supervisor Ivy A. Pool, Deputy Supervisor Jeremy Saland, Council Member
Lisa Katz, Council Member Lauren Levin, Council Member Jason Lichtenthal, New Castle Town Board
The Trust for Public Land, Carter Strickland, New York State Director
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Christy Plumer, Chief Conservation Officer
Town of Ossining, Dana Levenberg, Town Supervisor
Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Linda M. Garrett, Executive Director
Urban Green Council, Danielle Manley, Associate Manager, Policy
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance, Stephanie Ehrlich, Executive Director
Vision Long Island, Eric Alexander, Director
Wallkill Valley Land Trust, Christie DeBoer, Executive Director
Waterfront Alliance, Cortney Worrall, President and CEO
WE ACT for Environmental Justice, Cecil Corbin-Mark, Deputy Director & Director of Policy Initiatives
Westchester Land Trust, Lori Ensinger, President
Western New York Environmental Alliance, Lynda Schneekloth, Chair
Western New York Land Conservancy, Nancy Smith, Executive Director
Wildlife Conservation Society, John F. Calvelli, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs
Winnakee Land Trust, Robert S. Davis, Executive Director
Woodstock Land Conservancy, Maxanne Resnick, Executive Director