

**GOVERNOR PATERSON'S BUDGET AN ATTACK ON ENVIRONMENT, CLEAN WATER,
FARMLAND, PARK AGENCY, ADIRONDACK ECONOMY
- ALL SAVAGED BY DRACONIAN BUDGET PLAN -
*Plan Would Destroy Integrity of Environmental Protection Fund, Hack Park Staff,
Cut Special Funds for Pollution Prevention, Cancer Research & Recycling***

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ALBANY, N.Y. -- The Adirondack Council today called Gov. David Paterson's budget plan a declaration of war on New York's environment that guts programs designed to prevent pollution, protect clean water, prevent cancer, save dwindling local farmland and working forests, and create parks.

"These cuts are massive and way out of proportion with cuts being made to other areas of the state budget," said Brian L. Houseal, Executive Director of the Adirondack Council, an environmental research, education and advocacy organization. "This budget plan will cause instant and irreversible harm to the environment in general, and to the Adirondacks in particular.

"The Governor is fond of complaining about 'special interests' who disagree with his spending reduction priorities," Houseal said. "Clean water, clean air, healthy food and a decent place for kids to play are not special interests. They are essential to public health and welfare.

"New York has a long and proud tradition of providing for environmental and public health needs, in good times and in bad. This governor is intentionally abandoning that tradition. Both the environment and the economy of the Adirondack Park would suffer disproportionately if this plan is approved. We call on the Legislature to amend this plan before the April 1 deadline."

Paterson's budget plan calls for:

- Zero dollars for land acquisition in the Environmental Protection Fund (a \$59-million cut from 2009-10).
- A massive cut of \$69 million to the Environmental Protection Fund (although the Real Estate Transfer Tax established to fund it in 1993 collected more than enough revenue to avoid any cuts);
- A \$6.9-million cut in the Water Quality Improvement Program;
- Elimination of 10 staff at the Adirondack Park Agency (from 69 positions down to 59 to manage land use in a park larger than Massachusetts);
- Elimination of 54 staff at the Department of Environmental Conservation (down to 3,314 and requiring, for example, each state forester to cover 300,000 acres of land alone; this is 385 fewer staff than DEC says it needs);
- Closure of the Adirondack Park Agency's Visitor Interpretive Centers in Paul Smiths and Newcomb – two of the linchpins of the Park's winter tourism economy;

- A \$12-million cut in Farmland Protection Program statewide (there are 620 family farms in the Adirondack Park, employing thousands of residents);
- A \$12-million cut in Waterfront Revitalization grants (badly needed for economic development throughout the Park);
- Zero dollars for breast cancer research (down from \$450,000 in 09-10); and,
- A \$2.8 million cut in municipal recycling grants.

“On top of all that, Governor Paterson proposed removing an additional \$5 million from the Environmental Protection Fund – a capital-projects-only account -- diverting the money to pay taxes to local governments on state-owned lands,” Houseal said. “The state has paid those taxes from its general fund since 1886.”

“The Environmental Protection Fund has already lost \$500 million to raids by governors and the Legislature since 2002,” said Houseal. “Now the governor is proposing to pay the state’s day-to-day expenses out of this dedicated, capital projects fund. If that happens, the fund will be sucked dry with these off-loads. New York taxpayers will have to go back to relying upon massive borrowing, via bond acts, to handle major environmental priorities. Adding debt won’t help the economy or the environment long term.”

Houseal explained that the Adirondack Council doesn’t accept public or taxpayer-supported funding of any kind, and supports itself solely through private donations.

The EPF is supposed to contain a statutorily set amount of money each year so that environmental agencies and other groups have a sense of how much funding to expect, explained Houseal. It was required by law to be \$300 million last year, but the Governor proposed only \$205 million. The Legislature added back about \$17 million before the budget was passed and the final amount for 2009-10 was \$222 million.

This year, the Governor is proposing \$143 million, or less than half of the \$300 million that state law says should be appropriated for the fund.

Founded in 1975, the Adirondack Council is a privately funded, not-for-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the ecological integrity and wild character of the Adirondack Park. With members in all 50 United States, the Council carries out its mission through research, advocacy, public education and legal action.