



October 27, 2014

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Thank you for your continued support for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) in the state's budget for FY2014-15 by working with the Legislature to enact a \$9 million increase in the annual appropriation over the prior fiscal year. As organizations that partner with the state, local governments, private industry and community stakeholders to conserve and restore valuable natural resources and protect public health, we applaud your support for the EPF as a critical component of New York's economic recovery and more resilient future. This year's appropriation of \$162 million for the EPF was another productive step as we work together to achieve the shared vision of state leaders and the environmental community to continue to enhance and rebuild the EPF in future years.

We write to respectfully request that you include an appropriation of \$200 million for the EPF in your Executive Budget proposal for SFY2015-16, so that we can continue to build on this year's success. By further enhancing and restoring the EPF, we will generate economic activity and revenue, build green infrastructure, protect the environment and clean water, and create jobs in many sectors throughout New York State. Achieving this goal in the coming state budget will put us on a path to restore the EPF fully to a sustainable level of \$300 million annually in the future, which will allow us to meet current demand and implement critical programs across our State.

The EPF: A Sound Investment for a Resilient New York

A 2012 analysis by The Trust for Public Land found that for every \$1 of EPF funds invested in land and water protection, \$7 in economic benefits through natural goods and services is returned to the state of New York. Many EPF programs provide communities the ability to use natural solutions to help reduce risk and plan growth in a way that improves sustainability and resilience in the face of more frequent extreme weather events. As you heard at the recent NY Rising event in Albany, strategies such as land conservation, wetlands protection, urban forestry, sustainable waterfront planning, municipal parklands, and estuary restoration can reduce storm impacts in communities by mitigating flooding and buffering areas from storm surges. The EPF is enabling many communities to engage with not-for-profits, educational institutions and private companies to implement these types of projects, which will complement the NY Rising and other programs focused on effectively deploying federal storm recovery funding to impacted communities around the state. As you have rightly pointed out, we must ensure that we are

“building back better,” and the EPF is an effective program that can help New York communities achieve that goal, while building on public-private partnerships and creating jobs.

“The EPF supports thousands of jobs in our state through its various programs across a broad spectrum of industries, from outdoor tourism, agriculture and forest products to drinking water protection for millions of New Yorkers. EPF-supported industries generate approximately \$40 billion in revenue every year. In many instances, EPF-funded programs support and align with strategic goals of the Regional Economic Development Councils as well as the emerging regional sustainability plans.”

Through the EPF New York is conserving and enhancing farms, forests, rivers, beaches, and lakes. The EPF is supporting community parks, recycling programs, and zoos and botanical gardens. EPF programs improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers, attracting businesses, creating jobs and protecting our water, air, and natural heritage.

As Our Economy Recovers, So Too Must the EPF

Unfortunately, current demand for these programs far outpaces appropriations and spending. Delays and long waiting lists for EPF dollars continue to threaten opportunities to leverage millions of dollars from local, federal and private sources. Additional funding is needed to help meet the demand on existing EPF programs, and to enhance programs to address needs in regions around the state, including our urban centers.

While restoration of the Fund has begun, we have much work to do. Annual appropriations for many programs, including those that have been “cornerstones” of the EPF since its creation – land conservation, farmland protection, municipal parks, municipal recycling, secondary materials markets, and waterfront revitalization – are still well below historic levels, and restorations have not occurred sufficiently to meet program demand. Some of these programs have now “spent down” their appropriations authority from prior years, and are running out of cash. Several of these programs also have very long “waiting lines” where public and private organizations and municipalities are required to wait years for the possibility of funding. Restorations for these programs and others within the EPF must be prioritized so that we can address these issues and implement programs that are critically important to our economy, environment and public health.

We believe that appropriating \$200 million for the EPF in your next budget proposal is the proper level of funding that will put the state on the path to achieve our goal of \$300 million in the future. In addition to the recovery of our economy, which will increase revenue to the traditional source of funding for the EPF, the State’s existing Real Estate Transfer Tax, there are funds flowing into New York from various settlements and other sources. Overall, as you and others pointed out during the FY2014-15 budget process, the State’s financial condition is improving. We understand that you, your staff, the heads of state agencies and the Legislature are working to ensure all sources of state revenue are wisely invested during the budget process. We urge you to continue your commitment to the EPF by accelerating its restoration. The EPF has a clear track record of achieving significant returns on investments and its community-driven programs that leverage private and other public monies.

Sustainable Funding for Environmental Agencies

In addition to the need to enhance the EPF in the coming budget, we request that you work to ensure that state agencies responsible for administering the EPF and implementing important programs that protect our shared environment and public health have resources adequate to meet existing needs. Staffing levels at the Department of Environmental Conservation, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Department of Agriculture and Markets and Department of State remain deeply reduced. Reductions to staff levels at these agencies by prior administrations were disproportionately large and must be addressed. Staff restorations at each agency would increase efficiency and effective administration of important programs.

Our organizations appreciate your leadership and your understanding of the important economic and public health benefits that environmental investments have across the state. We look forward to continuing our discussions with your administration as we work together to enhance funding for the EPF to \$200 million in the upcoming state budget.

Thank you again for your leadership in conserving our land, air and water, making our communities more resilient, and creating jobs throughout New York State.

Sincerely,

The Friends of New York's Environment
(See attached list of organizations)

Cc: Robert Megna, State Budget Director
Lawrence Schwartz, Secretary to the Governor
James Malatras, Director of State Operations
Basil Seggos, Deputy Secretary for the Environment
Pat Hooker, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture
Joe Martens, Commissioner, NYSDEC
Rose Harvey, Commissioner, NYSOPRHP
Cesar A. Perales, Secretary of State
Richard Ball, Commissioner, NYSDAM

We Love New York

The Friends of New York's Environment

Adirondack Council, Kevin Chlad, Legislative Director
Adirondack Mountain Club, Neil Woodworth, Executive Director
Agricultural Stewardship Association, Teri Ptacek, Executive Director
Alley Pond Environmental Center, Inc., Irene V. Scheid, Executive Director
Alliance for New York State Parks, Erik Kulleseid, Executive Director
American Farmland Trust, David Haight, New York State Director
Appalachian Mountain Club, Mark Zakutansky, Mid-Atlantic Policy Manager
Aquarium of Niagara, Gay B. Molnar, Director of Development
Audubon New York, Erin Crotty, Executive Director
Bedford Audubon Society, Janelle Hope Robbins, Executive Director
Brooklyn Greenway Initiative, Milton Puryear, Director
Brooklyn Queens Land Trust, Irene Van Slyke & Amelia Blanquera
Buffalo & Erie County Botanical Gardens, David J. Swarts, President & CEO
Buffalo Audubon Society, Inc., Loren Smith, Executive Director
Buffalo Niagara River Land Trust, Adam Walters, President
Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper, Jill Jedlicka, Executive Director & Riverkeeper
Buffalo Zoo, Donna M. Fernandes, PhD, President & CEO
Catskill Center, Alan White, Executive Director
Catskill Park Coalition, Ramsay Adams & Alan White, Directors
Central Westchester Audubon Society, Lisa Curtis, President
Champlain Area Trails, Chris Maron, Executive Director
Chemung Valley Audubon Society, Mary Anne Perks, President
Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Sarah Eckel, Legislative & Policy Director
Clean and Healthy New York, Kathy Curtis, Executive Director
Coalition of Living Museums
Columbia Land Conservancy, Peter R. Paden, Executive Director
Concerned Citizens of Montauk, Jeremy D. Samuelson, Executive Director
Cragmoor Conservancy, Inc., Jeffrey C. Slade, President
Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Sue Currier, Executive Director
Dutchess Land Conservancy, Rebecca Thornton, President
Dyken Pond Environmental Education Center, Lisa Hoyt, Director
Empire State Forest Products Association, Eric Carlson, President & CEO
Empire State Future, Peter B. Fleischer, Executive Director
Environmental Advocates of New York, Peter M. Iwanowicz, Executive Director
Environmental Defense Fund, James T. B. Tripp, Senior Counsel
Federated Conservationists of Westchester County, Jan Blaire
Federation of Monroe County Environmentalists, Carol Hinkelman
Finger Lakes Land Trust, Andrew Zepp, Executive Director
Four Harbors Audubon, Susan Krause, President
Friends of Brook Park, Harry J. Bubbins, Director
Friends of Dyken Pond Center, Leonard E. Tremblay, President
Friends of Fahnestock and Hudson Highlands State Parks, Katrina Shindledecker, President
Friends of the Shawangunks, The Shawangunk Conservancy, H. Neil Zimmerman, President
Genesee Land Trust, Gay Mills, Executive Director and Jill M. Cicero & Cenie Cafarelli, Board Members
Genesee Valley Conservancy, Benjamin Gajewski, Executive Director

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The Friends of New York's Environment

Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo, Melissa M. Fratello, Executive Director
Great South Bay Audubon Society, Lenora Daniel, Conservation Chair
Greenburgh Nature Center, Margaret Tjimos Goldberg, Executive Director
Greene Land Trust, Bob Knighton, President
Group for the East End, Robert S. DeLuca, President
Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Andrew Chmar, Executive Director
Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc., Manna Jo Greene, Environmental Director
Huyck Preserve and Biological Research Station, Dawn O'Neal, Ph.D., Director of Conservation Education
Indian River Lakes Conservancy, Elliott D. Hillback Jr., President
Kingston Land Trust, Andi Turco-Levin, Chair
Lake George Land Conservancy, Nancy Williams, Executive Director
Lake Placid Land Conservancy, Jeffrey Graff, Executive Director
Land Trust Alliance, Ethan Winter, New York Conservation Manager
Lewisboro Land Trust, Anne-Marie Nordgren Stewart, Bobbe Stultz, and Helen Peeples, Board of Directors
Livingston County, Heather Ferrero, Deputy Planning Director, Livingston County Planning Department
Mianus River Gorge, Roderick G. Christie, Executive Director
Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, Mark King, Executive Director
Mohonk Preserve, Glenn D. Hoagland, Executive Director
Nassau Land Trust, Lloyd P. Zuckerberg
Natural Resources Defense Council, Richard Schrader, New York Legislative Director
New York Association of Conservation Districts, Judy Littrell, Executive Director
The New York Botanical Garden, Aaron Bouska, AVP for Government and Community Relations
New York City Audubon, Kathryn Heintz, Executive Director
New York Farm Bureau, Jeff Williams, Director of Public Policy
New York League of Conservation Voters, Marcia Bystryn, Executive Director
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, Edward Goodell, Executive Director
New York Public Interest Research Group, Laura Haight, Senior Environmental Associate
New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse and Recycling, Inc., David Lupinski, President
New York State Association for Solid Waste Management, Frank Visser, President
New York State Pollution Prevention Institute, Anahita Williamson, Director
New York Trout Unlimited, Ron Urban, Chairman
Niagara Watershed Alliance, Vincent Agnello, Executive Secretary
North Fork Audubon Society, Debbie O'Kane, President
North Salem Open Land Foundation, Gloria Stein, Executive Director
North Shore Land Alliance, Lisa W. Ott, President
Northern Catskills Audubon Society, Inc., Larry Federman, President
Oblong Land Conservancy, Sibyll Gilbert, Vice Chair
Open Space Council, Marilyn England, President
Open Space Council Carmans River Watershed Trust Fund, Karen Blumer, Administrator
Open Space Institute, Christopher J. Elliman, President
Orange County Audubon Society, Lynn Barber, President
Orange County Land Trust, Jim Delaune, Executive Director
Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District, John DeHollander, District Manager
Otsego Land Trust, Virginia Kennedy, Executive Director
Parks & Trails New York, Robin Dropkin, Executive Director

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The Friends of New York's Environment

Peconic Land Trust, John v.H. Halsey, President
Port Washington Parks Conservancy, Myron Blumenfeld, Board Member and Founder
The Pound Ridge Land Conservancy, Inc., Elyse Arnow Brill, President
Preservation League of New York State, Jay A. DiLorenzo, President
Protect the Adirondacks, Peter Bauer, Executive Director
Ramapo River Watershed Intermunicipal Council, Janet Burnet, Executive Director
Rensselaer Land Trust, Inc., Christine Young, Esq., Executive Director
Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Jim Bonesteel, President
Riverkeeper, Paul Gallay, President and Hudson Riverkeeper
Rochester Museum & Science Center, Kate Bennett, President
Rondout-Esopus Land Conservancy, Inc., Zali Win, Secretary/Treasurer
St. Lawrence Land Trust, Tom Langen, Board President
Saratoga PLAN, Maria Trabka, Executive Director
Save the Pine Bush, Lynne Jackson
Save the River, Lee Willbanks, Executive Director and Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper
Save the Sound, Tracy Brown, Director, Western Long Island Sound
Saw Mill River Audubon Society, Anne Swaim, Executive Director
Scenic Hudson, Ned Sullivan, President
Schenectady County Environmental Advisory Council, Joe Berman, Council Chair
Serpentine Art and Nature Commons, Inc., Neil Pisane, President
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, Roger Downs, Conservation Director
Somers Land Trust, Michael Barnhart, President
South Shore Audubon Society, Betty Borowsky, President & Anne Mehlinger, Board Member
Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, Jason Goldsmith, Conservation Chair
Southern Madison Heritage Trust, Harvey L. Kliman, Ph.D., President
Sustainable Hudson Valley, Melissa Everett, Ph.D., Executive Director
The Nature Conservancy in New York, Stuart Gruskin, Chief Conservation and External Affairs Officer
The Trust for Public Land, Marc Mastil, New York State Director
Thousand Islands Land Trust, Jake Tibbles, Executive Director
Three Village Community Trust, Cynthia Barnes, President, Board of Trustees
Torne Valley Preservation Association, Patsy Wooters, Chair
Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Linda M. Garrett, Executive Director
Wallkill Valley Land Trust, Christie DeBoer, Executive Director & Chris Bernabo, President
Warwick Conservancy, Inc., Andrew McLaughlin, President
Wave Hill, Claudia Bonn, President
West Branch Conservation Association, Martus Granirer, Executive Director
West Harlem Environmental Action, Cecil Corbin-Mark, Deputy Director
Westchester Land Trust, Lori J. Ensinger, President
Western New York Land Conservancy, Nancy Smith, Executive Director
Wildlife Conservation Society
Winnakee Land Trust, Lucy Hayden, Executive Director
Woodstock Land Conservancy, Marita Lopez-Mena, Executive Director and Kevin D. Smith, Chairman