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More Than 125 Organizations Call on New York Legislators to Preserve Funding for Critical Environmental Programs

Following strong bipartisan support for environmental investment across the U.S., advocates from across the state urge state legislators to preserve environmental funding critical to New York's economic and health recovery

Environmental programs provide what New Yorkers need now more than ever before: clean air and water, good-paying jobs, economic resiliency, and access to outdoor recreation and parks

Albany, NY (November 10, 2020) – Today, a broad coalition of more than 125 organizations from across the state will convene for a virtual day of action to call on lawmakers to protect funding for critical environmental programs that create jobs, fortify local economies, advance environmental justice in frontline communities, and address the intensifying climate crisis. The programs include the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), the Clean Water Infrastructure Act, Parks 2020, and DEC Capital Programs. Advocates will also urge that funds from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) be spent on intended projects to tackle climate change.

The virtual Lobby Day comes just one week after a strong show of bipartisan support across the nation for the preservation and expansion of environmental funding:

- In Michigan, voters overwhelmingly passed (**84% margin**) an expansion of natural resource and state park funding known as Proposal 1, which enjoyed bipartisan support from state lawmakers.
- Texans in Hays County, one of the fastest growing areas in the state, voted to invest in parks and open spaces and protect clean drinking water through Proposition A, which passed by a **69.5% margin**.
- And in New York, voters in New Paltz passed their own environmental preservation measure known as Local Law One (**72% margin**) to safeguard clean drinking water and protect outdoor recreation, family farms and wildlife habitats.

Environmental programs have historically driven state economic recovery, serving as a proven investment that makes New York communities stronger and healthier. Today, New York's environmental programs support hundreds of thousands of jobs and diverse industries – including agriculture, outdoor recreation, construction, tourism and

commercial fishing – that add \$40 billion to the state economy each year. As New York faces the unprecedented COVID pandemic, these programs are also essential to protecting public health, including clean air, safe drinking water and outdoor recreation across the state.

“Through these programs, we can put people back to work in good-paying jobs and ensure New Yorkers have clean air to breathe, safe water to drink, and local parks to enjoy. By putting the \$3 billion Environmental Bond Act on the 2021 ballot, we can tackle climate change and make our communities safer from threats like deadly heat, flooding, and lead poisoning. And we can conserve the natural resources our children and grandchildren depend on. That is why we are calling on state leaders to support environmental funding as a clear pathway to our economic and public health recovery,” said **Bill Ulfelder, New York executive director of The Nature Conservancy.**

Julie Tighe, President of the New York League of Conservation Voters, said, “The environment is not a luxury and our budget for environmental programs must reflect that. Everyone deserves access to clean water, open space, and good air quality. We need New York to continue to invest in our communities, help create green jobs, and combat climate change. That's why NYLCV is proud to join with our partners for this important lobby day calling for the preservation of these critical funds.”

Ned Sullivan, President of Scenic Hudson, stated, “The confluence of coronavirus and heightened calls for environmental justice make it imperative to sustain robust funding for New York’s environmental programs. These investments are essential for ensuring the health of all New Yorkers – providing us with clean drinking water, access to healthy local food, and places to engage in recreation – while combating the impacts of climate change whose effects are felt most severely in communities of color and low income. In addition, the state’s environmental funding is a proven job-creator, so important as we work to restore the state’s economy. For all of these reasons, Scenic Hudson joins our colleagues in calling on the Governor and Legislature to maintain the Environmental Protection Fund at \$300 million – a small part of the state’s overall budget but a big contributor to New York’s prosperity.”

“New York faces significant environmental challenges, including a solid waste crisis, failing sewage and drinking water infrastructure, harmful algal blooms, and climate change. We have made meaningful progress over the last several years to combat these challenges, we cannot lose ground now. The landmark funding for both the Environmental Protection Fund and Clean Water Infrastructure Act provide the foundation to protect our environment and public health. Clean air and water is not a luxury item that can be dispensed with during hard economic times, it is a necessity for all times. We need to ensure that our most successful environmental programs are not put in jeopardy,” said **Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment.**

"Environmental infrastructure is critical to ensuring that New York’s economy and communities are strong and resilient. By investing in the state's environmental programs, we can create sustainable jobs that clean our air and water and ensure that all New Yorkers

have access to public lands for recreation and health. Our future well-being requires that we make these investments now," said **Carter Strickland, New York State Director for The Trust for Public Land**.

Advocates are urging the state to put the \$3 billion Environmental Bond Act on the 2021 ballot and maintain funding for the following programs and deploy them effectively throughout the state:

- ***Environmental Protection Fund:*** 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. The EPF delivers programs New Yorkers need now, more than ever:
The EPF
 - Improves water quality, reduces air pollution, and funds environmental justice projects in frontline communities
 - Creates parks, gardens, and green spaces, conserves family farms, and revitalizes waterfronts
 - Conserves natural areas that protect people, roads, and infrastructure from storms
- ***Clean Water Infrastructure Act:*** New York's drinking water and wastewater systems need tens of billions of dollars in upgrades to ensure our communities have safe drinking 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 drinking water is essential to protecting public health. 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. This funding is critical and must be continued. This program is also a job generator, with every \$1 million in state investment resulting in 17 local jobs.
- ***NY Parks 2020 and DEC Capital Funding:*** Over the last 10 years, 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. In addition, DEC's \$40 million annually in capital funding creates 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. 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.
- ***Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative:*** Over the course of the program, \$228 million of RGGI funds (that is 17% of total funding) have been transferred by NYSERDA to the state General Fund, depriving New Yorkers of funding that could have created good-paying jobs, reduced pollution, and lowered energy bills. 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 NYSERDA will be economically and environmentally harmful to the state in the long run.

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New Yorkers for Clean Water & Jobs

New Yorkers for Clean Water & Jobs is a broad coalition formed to demonstrate the vast support for New York environmental funding and programs that protect clean water and air, create jobs, and address the climate crisis.

Members include:

- ACEC New York
- Adirondack Council
- Adirondack Mountain Club
- Adirondack North Country Association
- Alliance for the Great Lakes
- American Farmland Trust
- American Solar Grazing Association
- Associated General Contractors NYS
- Association for a Better New York
- Audubon New York
- Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
- Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy
- Broadway Mall Association
- Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper
- Carbon Cycle Institute
- Catskill Center
- Central Westchester Audubon Society
- Champlain Area Trails
- Citizens Campaign for the Environment
- City Parks Foundation
- Clean and Healthy New York
- Columbia Land Conservancy
- Construction Industry Council
- Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society
- Delta Waterfowl
- Ducks Unlimited
- Environmental Advocates NY
- Environmental Defense Fund
- Finger Lakes Land Trust
- Freshkills Park Alliance
- Friends of + POOL
- Friends of Georgica Pond Foundation
- Friends of the Bay
- General Contractors Association of New York, Inc.
- Grassland Bird Trust
- Grassroots Gardens of Western New York
- Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce
- Green Ossining
- Groundwork Hudson Valley
- Hudson Highlands Land Trust
- Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester
- Hudson Valley Economic Development Corporation

- Hudson Valley Fishermen's Association
- Lake George Land Conservancy
- Land Trust Alliance
- Lewisboro Land Trust
- Local Progress NY
- Mohonk Preserve
- MWest Holdings & Hutton Brickyards
- Nassau Hiking & Outdoor Club
- National Young Farmers Coalition
- Natural Areas Conservancy
- NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council)
- New York Building Congress
- New York City Audubon
- New York League of Conservation Voters
- New York Public Interest Research Group
- New York Restoration Project
- New York State Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association
- New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
- New Yorkers for Parks
- Newtown Creek Alliance
- Northeast Organic Farming Association -- New York (NOFA-NY)
- NYS American Academy of Pediatrics, A Coalition of Chapters 1, 2 & 3
- NYS Association of Counties (NYSAC)
- Onondaga Audubon
- Open Space Institute
- Otsego Land Trust
- Palisades Parks Conservancy
- Parks & Trails New York
- Peconic Baykeeper
- Peconic Land Trust
- Pollinator Conservation Association
- Protect the Adirondacks!
- Real Estate Board of New York
- Rebuild by Design
- Rensselaer Plateau Alliance
- Riverkeeper
- Riverside Park Conservancy
- Scenic Hudson
- Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter
- South Shore Audubon Society
- Sustainable Westchester
- The Chazen Companies
- The Nature Conservancy
- Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
- Thousand Islands Land Trust
- Trout Unlimited
- Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust
- Uncharted Power
- Union Theological Seminary
- Van Cortlandt Park Alliance

- Vision Long Island
- WE ACT for Environmental Justice
- West Branch Conservation Association
- Western New York Environmental Alliance
- Western New York Land Conservancy
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- Winnakee Land Trust, Inc.
- WNY Native Plants Collaborative