



October 21, 2021

Governor Kathy Hochul
Executive Chamber
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

On behalf of the undersigned members of New Yorkers for Clean Water and Jobs, a coalition of more than 100 environmental, labor, business, local government, environmental justice, outdoor recreation, and public health organizations, thank you for the many exciting environmental announcements you made during Climate Week, in particular those regarding environmental funding. Our communities need state funding to leverage federal funds and deliver clean water, clean air, access to nature, and local jobs to New Yorkers. We applaud your proposals to increase environmental funding and grant out current funding efficiently so that communities can begin important work across the State. We applaud your prioritization of granting out \$600 million from the Clean Water Infrastructure Improvement Act, Water Quality Improvement Program, and Green Infrastructure Grant Program.

Your proposal to increase the 2022 Environmental Bond Act by \$1 billion to a total of \$4 billion, and to update the name of the measure to “Clean Water, Clean Air, Green Jobs” will help tackle some of the greatest challenges facing New York State and ensure we can reduce pollution that causes climate change and threatens our drinking water, produce healthy food locally, provide outdoor recreation, conserve nature and wildlife habitat, and reduce risks from extreme weather like flooding and deadly heat. We look forward to working with your team and the State Legislature to further shape this historic measure, and then advocating in support of the measure when it goes on the 2022 New York State ballot.

As you witnessed with Hurricane Ida in your first week of office, climate change is already here. It is not a far-off threat that we face someday in the future. New York State must do more to eliminate the greenhouse gases causing global warming and reduce risk to communities that face devastating effects from more frequent and extreme weather events. Simultaneously, we must address serious challenges facing our state – water contamination threatening our health and making our beaches unsafe for swimming, poor air quality causing asthma, heart disease, and other illness, a lack of access to nature or fresh food, and a biodiversity crisis. We need to take strong action now.

Our organizations look forward to partnering with your administration to address these issues, starting with ensuring adequate and necessary resources from the state. These solutions will create jobs, protect our health, and -- as the federal government contemplates trillions in funding for infrastructure -- put New York in a strong position to leverage federal funding to act on climate change, protect clean water, modernize our infrastructure, and build a sustainable future.

With your leadership, we can build a sustainable future for New York State. In your 2022-23 Executive Budget Proposal we urge you to include:

1. Your proposal to rename the 2022 Environmental Bond Act and increase the measure to \$4 billion.

Our organizations worked closely with the Executive and Legislature in 2019, 2020, and 2021 to craft a Bond Act that was appealing to many and had important economic benefits, including creating or supporting more than 65,000 jobs. As you work to determine how to allocate the additional \$1 billion you are proposing, we urge you to keep the programs in the previously passed legislation in place and make strategic additions for programs that complement the existing measure. In addition, we support the requirement that at least 35 percent of the funding be dedicated to projects that improve public health in environmental justice communities, to ensure substantial and meaningful improvements in communities that have historically been hardest hit by pollution, and the accountability provisions that will increase confidence in voters as they decide if they will support the spending.

2. \$500 Million for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)

As part of your Executive Budget Proposal, we urge you to increase the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) appropriation from \$300 million to \$500 million. As you know, over the last three decades, the EPF has become essential to New York. This program supports 350,000 jobs across the state, and EPF-supported industries generate approximately \$40 billion in economic activity every year. EPF programs improve water quality, support our zoos, aquaria, and botanical gardens, provide resources to environmental justice organizations, conserve land and water including local farms and forests, create new parks and trails, support the transition of municipal fleets to zero emissions, support climate adaptation and mitigation projects, pay for community recycling programs, and prevent pollution in every county in the state. Many of these programs have years-long waiting lists or backlogs for funding. An increase now would address those backlogs and allow for strategic program expansions to address needs throughout the state.

3. \$1 Billion for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act

We respectfully urge you to provide at least \$1 billion in new appropriations for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act (CWIA).

New York's drinking water and wastewater infrastructure is old, failing and can't keep up with the extreme weather climate change is delivering. The total need for upgrades across the state is estimated to be \$80 billion over the next 20 years. Since 2017 the State has committed over \$4 billion for water infrastructure programs, including the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act. This money will modernize infrastructure, protect clean drinking water, and prevent pollution from reaching our lakes, rivers, and streams while supporting good, local jobs. In fact, for every \$1 million in state investment in this program, 17 local jobs are created or supported.

We support your goals and are hopeful that you can continue that work and make the remainder of the approximately \$2 billion of Clean Water Infrastructure Act funding available to state agencies to award to communities across the state.

4. Capital Funding for New York State Parks and Department of Environmental Conservation

Since 2010, more than \$1 billion in capital funding has been dedicated for upgrades to New York's world-class state parks system. During the COVID crisis, state residents have relied on these parks to recreate, exercise, and find solace during extremely difficult times. Every dollar invested in state parks generates \$5 of economic activity. 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. Last year's budget included a four-year, \$440 million commitment to state parks, with the first \$110 million programmed for the current fiscal year. We urge you to build on this commitment and appropriate all of

the remaining \$330 million in State Parks Capital funding in State Fiscal Year 2022-23, and announce a new goal to sustain this level of investment annually for the next decade.

Furthermore, we urge you to continue to invest at least \$100 million in capital funds for NYSDEC in your next budget proposal. 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 enjoyment, 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.

5. Reinvest in key New York State agencies to advance environmental funding programs

Key New York State agencies are working to implement ever-larger mandates – including the state’s nation-leading climate law – the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act – while continuing to provide critical permitting, public safety, and conservation services that allow businesses, farms, and cultural institutions to operate and the public to safely enjoy all New York’s lands and waters have to offer. During the last decade, these agencies were never restored to the staffing capacity that existed prior to the economic downturn in 2008.

We cannot continue to “do more with less.” We need to ensure our state agencies have the staff and resources to do more. Additional lawyers and experts are needed to review permit applications to keep our air and water clean. Forest Rangers and Parks Police are needed to keep our communities safe. Technicians and engineers are needed to design and approve needed infrastructure. Construction workers are needed to build and restore parks and trails. Technical experts are needed to support the state’s implementation of policies to tackle climate change and guide communities in building a safer future. More employees at environmental agencies are needed to facilitate grants and technical services to businesses, not-for-profit organizations, cities, towns, and villages.

We urge you to reinvest in our state environmental agencies by increasing staffing levels putting them on the path to restoration to their 2008 levels, including:

Authorize a total of 3,300 FTEs at the Department of Environmental Conservation
Authorize a total of 2,300 FTEs at Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Authorize the addition of 10 FTEs at the Department of Agriculture and Markets

With your strong leadership, we can advance policies and programs in New York State that will ensure a healthy, sustainable, and prosperous future for our children and grandchildren. Thank you for your consideration of this environmental funding agenda.

Sincerely,

+ POOL, Kara Meyer, Managing Director
Adirondack Council, Kevin Chlad, Director of Government Relations
Adirondack Mountain Club, Michael Barrett, Executive Director
Agricultural Stewardship Association, Renee Bouplon, Executive Director
Alley Pond Environmental Center, Inc., Irene V. Scheid, Executive Director
American Farmland Trust, Erica Goodman, New York Regional Director
Associated General Contractors NYS, Walter Pacholczak, Vice President of Government Affairs
Atlantic States Legal Foundation, Lhakpa Tsering, Executive Director
Audubon New York, Erin McGrath, Policy Manager
Audubon New York, Michael Burger, Executive Director

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Glen Stratton, Chairman
Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, Jill Jedlicka, Executive Director
Carbon Cycle Institute, Torri J. Estrada, 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
Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director
Clean and Healthy New York, Bobbi Wilding, Executive Director
Columbia Land Conservancy, Troy Weldy, President
Cragmoor Conservancy, Inc., Jeffrey C. Slade, President
Defend H2O, Kevin McAllister, Founder & President
Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society, Susan O'Handley, Co-President
Dutchess Land Conservancy, Rebecca E.C. Thornton, President
Earthjustice, Elizabeth Moran, New York Policy Advocate
Empire State Forest Products Association, John K. Bartow, Jr., Executive Director
Environmental Advocates NY, Kate Kurera, Deputy Director
Environmental Defense Fund Kate Boicourt Director, NY-NJ Coastal Resilience
Finger Lakes - Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, Kristy LaManche, Program Coordinator
Finger Lakes Land Trust, Andrew Zepp, Executive Director
Friends of Georgica Pond Foundation, Sara Davison, Executive Director
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
Genesee Land Trust, Gay Mills, Executive Director
Genesee Valley Conservancy, Inc., Benjamin Gajewski, Executive Director
Grassland Bird Trust, Laurie LaFond, Executive Director
Green Ossining, Suzie Ross, Co-Founder and Chairperson
Groundwork Hudson Vallley, Brigitte Griswold, Executive Director
Group for the East End, Robert S. DeLuca, President
Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association, Lisa DeLeeuw, Executive Director
HEALTHY SCHOOLS NETWORK, Claire L. Barnett, Executive Director
Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee, Eric Swenson, Executive Director
Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Inc., Katrina Shindledecker, Executive Director
Land Trust Alliance, Meme Hanley, New York Senior Program Manager
Long Island Contractors' Association, Inc., Marc Herbst, Executive Director
Long Island Pine Barrens Society, Katie Brown, Deputy Director
Natural Areas Conservancy, Sarah Charlop-Powers, Executive Director
Natural Resources Defense Council, Richard Schrader, New York Policy Director
New York League of Conservation Voters, Julie Tighe, President
New York Restoration Project, Tara Das, Government Affairs Manager
New York State Laborers Tri-Funds, Patrick Purcell, Executive Director
Newtown Creek Alliance, Willis Elkins, Executive Director
NY Public Interest Research Group, Blair Horner, Executive Director
Onondaga Audubon, Maryanne Adams, Conservation Chair
Open Space Institute, Christopher (Kim) J. Elliman, President and CEO
Otsego Land Trust, David Diaz, Interim Executive Director
Palisades Parks Conservancy, Heather Loebner, Executive Director
Parks & Trails New York, Robin Dropkin, Executive Director
Peconic Baykeeper, Peter Topping, Executive Director & Baykeeper
Peconic Land Trust, John v.H. Halsey, President
Protect the Adirondacks!, Peter Bauer, Executive Director
Ready About Sailing, Inc., Greg Swan, President
Rebuild by Design, Amy Chester, Managing Director

Renewable Energy Long Island, Gordian Raacke, Executive Director
Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Jim Bonesteel, Executive Director
Riverkeeper, Jeremy Cherson, Senior Manager of Government Affairs
Riverside Park Conservancy, Anastasia Galkowski, North Park Outreach Coordinator
Rochester Museum & Science Center, Todd R Stevenson, Grants & Government Relations Manager
Saratoga PLAN, Maria Trabka, Executive Director
Save the Sound, Peter H. Linderoth
Scenic Hudson, Andy Bicking, Director of Government Relations & Public Policy
Schoharie Land Trust, Andrew Mason, President
Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District, Erin Peruzzini, District Manager
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, Roger Downs, Conservation Director
South Shore Audubon Society, Brien Weiner, President
Sustainable Westchester, Nina Orville, Executive Director
The Conservation Fund, Thomas R. Duffus, Vice President & Northeast Rep.
The Nature Conservancy, Jessica Ottney Mahar, New York Policy and Strategy Director
The Trust for Public Land, Carter Strickland VP, Mid-Atlantic Region & New York State Director
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Christy Plumer, Chief Conservation Officer
Thousand Islands Land Trust, Jake Tibbles, Executive Director
Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Linda M Garrett, Executive Director
Vision Long Island, Eric Alexander, Director
Waterfront Alliance, Karen Imas, Vice President of Programs
WE ACT for Environmental Justice, Sonal Jessel, Director of Policy
West Branch Conservation Association, Terri Thal
Westchester Land Trust, Lori Ensinger, President
Western New York Land Conservancy, Nancy Smith, Executive Director
Wildlife Conservation Society, John F. Calvelli, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs
Woodstock Land Conservancy, Maxanne Resnick, Executive Director

Cc: Karen Persichilli Keogh, Secretary to the Governor
Kathryn Garcia, Director of State Operations
Robert Mujica, Director, Division of Budget
Basil Seggos, Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation
Erik Kulleseid, Commissioner, Office of State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Richard Ball, Commissioner, Department of Agriculture and Markets
Katie O'Leary, Senior Policy Advisor for Energy and Environment
Kevin King, Deputy Secretary for Agriculture