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December 13, 2018

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

Dear Governor Cuomo:

In your first two terms, you worked with the Legislature to restore the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and deliver historic \$300 million appropriations for the last three years. This important funding is now supporting projects across New York that conserve critical resources for future generations while, combating climate change, creating jobs and making our communities more resilient. **As you develop the first budget proposal of your third term, we write to respectfully request that you once again include an appropriation of at least \$300 million for the EPF.** Funding at this level meets the commitment of the State's 5-year Capital Plan and maintains your role as a national environmental leader.

Your commitment to this funding affirms the job creation, tourism opportunities, clean water, public health protections, climate mitigation and resilience, recreational access, and quality of life the EPF provides communities in every county of our State. The EPF generates economic activity and revenue, builds green infrastructure, protects the environment and clean water, and creates jobs in many sectors throughout New York. Providing at least \$300 million for the EPF is prudent and essential to ensuring that all New Yorkers have what they deserve - a healthy environment, thriving communities, and clean water. An EPF of at least \$300 million helps make New York a national leader in smart environmental investments, supporting the partnerships and local initiatives that conserve critical natural resources for future generations while creating jobs and making our communities more resilient.

Our organizations appreciate partnering with New York State, local governments and other stakeholders to implement critical EPF programs to conserve open space and farmland, protect and improve water quality, promote responsible forest stewardship, mitigate climate change and build community resilience, sustainably revitalize waterfronts, create local parks and trails, promote recycling, reduce waste, prevent pollution, provide environmental justice, community and environmental health programs, support our zoos and botanical gardens and much more. Capital investments made through the EPF support thousands of jobs in our state across a broad spectrum of industries, from tourism, recreation, agriculture and forest products to drinking water protection for millions of New Yorkers, and generate approximately \$40 billion in revenue every year. 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 are generated for New York State. We are eager to see these many benefits continue to touch down locally throughout New York in the coming years.

Ensuring Funds are Deployed Efficiently and Fully

What's just as important as the appropriation of funds to the EPF is ensuring that the state's financial plan includes revenue to fully back the appropriation and a target to disburse the full appropriation in the course of the fiscal year.

When the EPF was first increased to \$300 million from \$177 million in 2015, it was clear time was needed to “ramp up” spending, including in new programs that were established that year. This year, in the third year at this funding level, spending from the EPF is expected to reach \$240 million, an all-time high. This good progress shows that with the revenue to fully back the \$300 million appropriation, and a projected disbursement to match, the state can and should achieve full spending of the EPF annually, starting in the 2019-20 fiscal year. This will accelerate the positive impact on communities in every county of New York State, from the five boroughs of New York City to the shores of the Great Lakes.

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 now be addressed.** These agencies can no longer deliver programs of the caliber your administration rightly expects and demands without additional resources. In fact, spending on programs within the EPF could be more efficient and at levels equal to the appropriation if the agencies had additional staff to focus on deploying these critical funds. And, at a time when our federal government is rolling back funding and environmental regulations, we need to ensure our state agencies are properly resourced to ensure the protection of our clean air, clean water and wildlife. We urge you to find room in the overall budget to make targeted increases to staffing levels in key program areas to ensure efficient and effective program implementation, and to prevent missed opportunities to leverage federal, local and private dollars. This will not only ensure environmental and public health protection, but also provide regulated entities with more timely responses.

Thank you for your leadership on environmental funding, and your understanding of the important economic and public health benefits of environmental investments. We look forward to continuing our work with your administration to an EPF with at least \$300 million, and to promote the important programs it is funding in communities throughout New York State.

Sincerely,

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

Cc: Melissa DeRosa, Secretary to the Governor
Robert Mujica, State Budget Director
Cathy Calhoun, Director of State Operations
Evan Preminger, Assistant Secretary for the Environment
Pat Hooker, Deputy Secretary for Agriculture
Basil Seggos, Commissioner, NYSDEC
Rose Harvey, Commissioner, NYSOPRHP
Rossana Rosado, Secretary of State
Richard Ball, Commissioner, NYSDAM



Adirondack Council, William C. Janeway, Executive Director
Adirondack Mountain Club, Neil Woodworth, Executive Director and Counsel
Agricultural Stewardship Association, Teri Ptacek, Executive Director
Alley Pond Environmental Center, Inc., Irene V. Scheid, Executive Director
American Farmland Trust, Samantha Levy, New York Policy Manager
Appalachian Mountain Club, Margaret Wilson, Mid-Atlantic Conservation Policy Manager
Audubon Community Nature Center, Leigh Rovegno, President
Audubon New York, Erin McGrath, Policy Manager
Audubon Society of the Capital Region
Buffalo Audubon Society, Melissa M. Fratello, Executive Director
Buffalo Zoo, Norah B. Fletchall, President & CEO
The Business Council of New York State, Darren Suarez, Director of Government Affairs
Catskill Center, Jeff Senterman, Executive Director
Catskill Park Coalition
Catskill Mountainkeeper, Katherine Nadeau, Deputy Director
Chemung Valley Audubon Society, Brian Dugan, Director
Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director
Coalition of Living Museums
Columbia Land Conservancy, Peter R. Paden, Executive Director
Concerned Citizens of Montauk, Laura Tooman, President
The Conservation Fund, Tom Duffus, Vice President & Northeast Representative
Cornell Botanic Gardens, Dr. Christopher Dunn, Executive Director
Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Julie Suarez, Associate Dean for Governmental & Community Relations
Eastern Long Island Audubon Society, Byron Young, President
Empire State Forest Products Association, John Bartow, Executive Director
Environmental Advocates of New York, Peter Iwanowicz, Executive Director
Esopus Creek Conservancy, LeeAnne Thornton, President
Federated Conservationists of Westchester County, Jan Blaire, Board Member
Finger Lakes Land Trust, Andy Zepp, Executive Director
Finger Lakes - Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, Kristy LaManche, Program Coordinator
Four Harbors Audubon, Joyann Cirigliano, President
Friends of the Shawangunks, H. Neil Zimmerman, President
Friends of the Upper Delaware River, Jeff Skelding, Executive Director
Genesee Land Trust, Gay Mills, Executive Director
Genesee Valley Audubon Society, June Summers, President
Great South Bay Audubon Society, Annette Brownell, Treasurer
Green Guerillas, Steve Frillmann, Executive Director
Greenburgh Nature Center, Margaret Tjimos Goldberg, Executive Director
Greene Land Trust, Robert Knighton, President
Groundwork Hudson Valley, Brigitte Griswold, Executive Director
Housatonic Valley Association, Lynn Werner, Executive Director and Michael S. Jastremski, Watershed Conservation Director
Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Michelle Smith, Executive Director
Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society, Simone DaRos, Vice-President
Indian River Lakes Conservancy, Elliott D. Hillback Jr., Board Chair
Land Trust Alliance, Meme Hanley, New York Program Manager
Lake George Land Conservancy, Jamie Brown, Executive Director
Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, Mark King, Executive Director
Mohonk Preserve, Glenn D. Hoagland, President & CEO



Nassau Hiking & Outdoor Club, Inc., Guy Jacob, Conservation Chair
Natural Resources Defense Council, Richard Schrader, New York Legislative Director
The New York Botanical Garden, Aaron Bouska, Vice President
New York City Audubon, Kathryn Heintz, Executive Director
New York Farm Bureau, Jeff Williams, Director, Division of Public Policy
New York League of Conservation Voters
New York Product Stewardship Council, Andrew Radin
New York Public Interest Research Group, Liz Moran, Environmental Policy Director
New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse and Recycling (NYSAR3), Kelli Timbrook, President
New York State Pollution Prevention Institute, Charles J. Ruffing, Director
North Shore Audubon Society, Peggy Maslow, President and Jennifer Wilson-Pines, Conservation Chair
North Shore Land Alliance, Lisa W. Ott, President & CEO
Northern Catskills Audubon Society, Inc., Larry Federman, President
Northern New York Audubon, Joan Collins, Conservation Committee Chair
Onondaga Audubon, Alison Kocek, President
Open Space Council, Karen Blumer, President
Open Space Institute, Christopher J. Elliman, President & CEO
Orange County Audubon Society Inc., Lynn Barber Vice-President
Orange County Land Trust, Jim Delaune, Executive Director
Parks & Trails New York, Robin Dropkin, Executive Director
Peconic Land Trust, John v.H. Halsey, President
Pound Ridge Land Conservancy, Mike Kagan, President
Preservation League of New York State, Jay DiLorenzo, President
Putnam Highlands Audubon Society, Connie Mayer-Bakall, President
Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Jim Bonesteel, Executive Director
Rockland Audubon Society, Karen D'Alessandri, President
Riverkeeper, Paul Gallay, President & Hudson Riverkeeper
Save the River, John Peach, Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper & Executive Director
Saw Mill River Audubon, Anne Swaim, Executive Director
Scenic Hudson, Andy Bicking, Director of Public Policy
Schenectady County Environmental Advisory Council (SCEAC), James Levy, Acting Chair
Seatuck Environmental Association, Enrico G. Nardone, Esq., Executive Director
Serpentine Art and Nature Commons, Inc., George Bramwell, Member of Board of Directors
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, Roger Downs, Conservation Director
South Shore Audubon Society, Michael Sperling, President
Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, Pat Fitzgerald, Conservation Chair
St. Lawrence Land Trust - Tom Langen, Board President
The Nature Conservancy, Jessica Ottney Mahar, New York Policy Director
The Trust for Public Land, Carter Strickland, New York State Director
Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Linda M. Garrett, Executive Director
Walkkill Valley Land Trust, Christie DeBoer, Executive Director
WE ACT for Environmental Justice
Westchester Land Trust, Lori Ensinger, Executive Director
Western New York Land Conservancy, Jajeane Rose, Executive Director
Wildlife Conservation Society, John F. Calvelli, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs
Winnakee Land Trust, Gregg H Swanzey, Executive Director
Woodstock Land Conservancy, Maxanne Resnick, Executive Director

