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## **Organizations Applaud Clean Water, Conservation Investments in New York State Budget**

### ***Funding for Environmental Programs Will Create Jobs, Improve Quality of Life***

(Albany, NY) – New Yorkers for Clean Water and Jobs, a large coalition of conservation, environmental justice, labor, business, local government, outdoor recreation, and public health organizations praised Governor Kathy Hochul and members of the New York State Senate and Assembly for continuing investments that protect clean water, conserve natural resources, provide the public access to nature, safeguard public health and create jobs in communities throughout New York in the State Budget enacted this week.

Environmental investments in the state spending plan for Fiscal Year 2023-24 include:

- **\$400 million for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)**

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the EPF, a landmark program which has consistently earned bi-partisan support from state leaders and has funded beneficial projects in every county of the State, including each borough in New York City. EPF programs protect clean water; support our zoos, aquaria, and botanical gardens; invest in environmental justice organizations; conserve land and water including local farms and forests; create new parks and trails; support climate adaptation and mitigation projects; fund community recycling programs; and prevent pollution in every county in the state. EPF programs also support hundreds of thousands of jobs across New York, and EPF-supported industries generate approximately \$40 billion in economic activity every year.

Appropriations for the EPF were maintained at \$400 million in this budget, continuing a historic annual funding level first achieved last year. The EPF was also protected from a proposal to offload agency staffing costs into the fund that would have reduced funding for projects. Since 2017, New York has invested more than \$2.5 billion through the EPF in communities across the state. A chart with detailed program appropriations is available online [here](#).

- **\$500 million for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act**

This year's continuation of half a billion dollars of funding for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act brings the state's total investment in clean water infrastructure through this fund to \$5 billion since 2017.

New York's clean water is at risk. In 2008, New York state agencies estimated there were \$80 billion in upgrades needed for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure across the state. The need for funding to support community water system upgrades has only grown with new sources of pollution being documented and infrastructure continuing to deteriorate. This funding will be used to upgrade or replace water

infrastructure, which will prevent pollution in our lakes, rivers, beaches and bays, and provide clean water to New Yorkers.

- **\$292.5 million for environmental capital projects** at State Parks and lands owned by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). \$202.5 million of this funding is directed to New York State Parks and \$90 million is for DEC. These projects will ensure New Yorkers can safely access and enjoy recreation at our world-class parks system, Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserves, state forests and other public lands throughout New York.
- **Increased staff levels at state environmental agencies, including 265 positions across multiple agencies for implementation of the \$4.2 billion Clean Water, Clean Air & Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act.** Implementation of this historic measure has begun and the State recently created a [Bond Act website](#) and announced a statewide listening tour to share information with stakeholders about the Bond Act and hear input on how funding programs can meet needs in different communities. The tour begins on May 30<sup>th</sup> at the University of Buffalo; additional dates and locations will be announced soon.

Organizations celebrated these environmental funding victories in the New York State Budget following passage of legislation in Albany.

Jessica Ottney Mahar, New York policy and strategy director for The Nature Conservancy said, "Thank you Governor Hochul, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Heastie, Environmental Conservation Committee Chairs Senator Harckham and Assemblymember Glick, and members of the New York State Legislature for prioritizing funding that delivers conservation and clean water to communities in every corner of New York. The continuation of record funding for the Environmental Protection Fund, , along with new capacity at state environmental agencies, will ensure critical programs are deployed to protect public health, create jobs, and conserve the lands and waters that future generations of New Yorkers will depend on."

Rob Hayes, Director of Clean Water with Environmental Advocates NY said, "With \$500 million for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act in this year's budget, New York's total clean water investment has been an unprecedented \$5 billion since 2017. This is a clear demonstration of Governor Hochul, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie's continuing commitment to protecting public health and creating good-paying jobs. We are hopeful that this commitment will continue to grow to match the enormous need seen around the state."

Julie Tighe, President of the New York League of Conservation Voters said, "The New York League of Conservation Voters is thrilled to see the continued commitment to environmental protection and conservation funding in the state budget. Thanks to the hard work of advocates and lawmakers, the Environmental Protection Fund will receive historic funding once again—without a raid to pay for staff—and significant investments will be made in clean water infrastructure and capital projects that are critical to meeting New York's nation-leading climate goals and preserving our natural resources for future generations."

Daniel Ortega, Community Affairs, Engineers Labor-Employer Cooperative (ELEC 825) said, "It is not every day that a labor organization and environmental groups join in a statement. Today, we want to thank Governor Hochul and the New York Legislature for their leadership and commitment not only to these important environmental issues, but also to the jobs that come

with them. Whether we work on water infrastructure or improvements to our park system, IUOE Local 825 members and their signatory contractors stand ready to work on these projects on day one. This type of infrastructure is significant. It means thousands of jobs across the state. Our members don't just work here. They live here and raise their families here, too. We also know the benefits of safe reliable infrastructure for our communities."

Brian Smith, Associate Executive Director, Citizens Campaign for the Environment said, "CCE commends the Governor, Senate, and Assembly for delivering a final budget that provides robust funding for programs that are critical to protect clean water, safeguard public health, and fight climate change. With an additional \$500 million allocated to the Clean Water Infrastructure Act, New York has now invested \$5 billion in the program since 2017. This is a historic accomplishment and continues New York's national leadership in protecting clean water."

Laura Ladd Bierman, Executive Director, League of Women Voters of New York State said, "The League of Women Voters was pleased to see investments in our environment and in particular clean water infrastructure for New York State included in the budget. This is a step in the right direction towards ensuring We New York State has the funds available to meet the mandates in the CLCPA and to address the needed infrastructure update to our water system."

Erin McGrath, Senior Policy Manager, National Audubon Society said, "Audubon applauds New York State's commitment to protecting our environment and thanks the Governor and Legislature for providing robust funding and critical policies that will support the conservation and restoration of our natural resources. Providing \$400 million for the Environmental Protection Fund, \$500 million for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act, and capital funding for our State Parks and DEC facilities will help make New York State a place where birds and people can thrive."

Mikaela Perry, New York Policy Manager, American Farmland Trust said, "American Farmland Trust applauds Governor Hochul and the legislature for their continued support of the Environmental Protection Fund, which funds the state's Farmland Protection program. Over 100,000 acres of farmland across the state have now been permanently protected thanks to this funding, helping to keep farms viable today and into the future. We look forward to growing this crucial program to save the land that sustains us in New York for generations to come!"

Kathy Moser, OSI's Chief Conservation and Policy Officer said, "Thank you to Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature for supporting a New York State budget that reflects the public's commitment to protecting our natural resources and great love for our outdoor spaces. This spending plan sets the stage for real, long-term advancements to provide clean water, combat climate change, and protect the land and waterways that showcase the beauty of our state. In particular, we applaud the state's continued investments in open space protection, the Environmental Protection Fund, and the much-needed funding for capital projects and agency staff at State Parks and Department of Environmental Conservation."

"We are excited to see the Environmental Protection Fund maintained at historic levels again this year," said Carli Fraccarolli, State Policy Coordinator for Scenic Hudson. "Thanks to these investments, more agricultural land will be protected from development, helping to sustain the operations of family farms critical for supplying the freshest, most nutritious food to homes, restaurants, and food pantries. In communities historically lacking access to nature, funding will help address this gap, ensuring residents will benefit from the mental and physical health benefits provided by spending time outdoors. We thank the legislators who championed

environmental causes in this budget, and Governor Hochul, who reaffirmed her commitment to a healthy, climate-resilient New York.”

“New York cannot undertake the herculean effort of combating the worst ravages of climate change without reinforcements of hundreds of new staff at our environmental agencies and billions of dollars in funding,” said Roger Downs, conservation director, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter. “The Sierra Club applauds the leadership of the legislature and the governor in understanding that if we are to implement nation leading decarbonization policies and avoid the worst impacts of a rapidly warming planet, we need a robust Environmental Protection Fund and a dedicated agency workforce to make our goals operational.”

Claire Barnett Executive Director Healthy Schools Network said, “Healthy Schools Network strongly supports the EPF and funds to improve drinking water quality. We especially applaud adding state staff to implement the landmark Bond Act.”

Sarah Charlop-Powers, Executive Director, Natural Areas Conservancy said, “We are deeply thankful to Governor Hochul and the Legislature for continuing to fund key environmental initiatives. Bond Act funding will have a transformative impact on urban forestry and wetlands programs, both of which are crucial to making our cities more healthy and resilient. We look forward to our ongoing partnership with State officials to ensure that New York continues to address climate justice and equity, while improving our vital urban natural areas.”

Jeff Senterman, Executive Director, Catskill Center said, “We are grateful that the Governor and the Legislature continue to recognize the importance of New York’s environment, and more specifically the importance of the Catskill Park in the budget. Dedicated funding for the Catskill Forest Preserve, the Catskills Visitor Center, the Catskill Science Collaborative and more will go a long way to protecting our amazing natural resources, welcoming visitors to the Park, and conducting proper park stewardship, all with good research and data.”

Paul B. Hai, Associate Director, SUNY-ESF's Adirondack Ecological Center said, “As we look at the challenges facing the Adirondack region, and rural regions across the State and beyond, these investments in education, research, natural resource management, conservation and human diversity are a model for how to build toward sustainable natural and human communities. These investments, which will be transformative in small and big ways across our State, demonstrate New York continues to be a national leader investing in both our environment and our economy.”

Cathy Pedler, Director of Advocacy, Adirondack Mountain Club said, “This funding represents a continuing acknowledgment by legislators that protecting clean water and stewarding our wild and recreational lands in the Adirondacks and Catskills are goals shared by all of us.”

Jim Delaune, Executive Director, Orange County Land Trust said, “We are delighted to see \$400M in EPF funding in this year’s budget. NYS has again demonstrated its unwavering commitment to the protection of our natural resources and communities. Thank you Governor Hochul and members of the NYS Senate and Assembly.”

“We are truly grateful to the New York State Legislature and Governor Hochul for funding the Environmental Protection Fund at a record level,” said Jonathan Kaledin, Executive Director of the Western New York Land Conservancy. “Given the climate-related challenges we’ll all face in the coming decades, the urgency to protect the state’s large, carbon-reducing forests could not be greater. With the EPF playing a crucial role, land trusts like ours will continue doing this

critical work on behalf of New Yorkers across the state. We applaud the Legislature and the Governor for their outstanding leadership."

Suzie Ross, Co-Founder and Chairperson, Green Ossining said, "As a municipal-based environmental advocacy organization with a focus on resilience in the face of climate change, we applaud the Governor and NYS Legislature for supporting communities' growing needs for infrastructure funding at such a critical time. As an organization who has always put protection and conservation of natural resources front-and-center, the programs supported address public health concerns on a more equitable basis: including clean water and air, protection and restoration of open space and farmland. We also applaud the efficiencies we will all benefit from with the State agency staff additions needed to execute on the Bond Act benefits."

Patty Buchanan, Board Member, CURE100 (Communities United to Reduce Emissions 100%) said, "We are grateful for the Governor's and the Legislature's commitment to environmental protection in this budget. These funding streams demonstrate New York's leadership in climate action."

David Ansel, vice president of water protection, Save the Sound said, "We are pleased to see the state of New York continue its commitment to clean water infrastructure, providing communities the funding necessary to address the escalating challenges of wastewater and stormwater pollution and enhancing climate change resiliency across the region. This funding, combined with the Environmental Bond Act, puts us in a stronger position than ever to protect and restore the waters of Long Island Sound and its rivers and tributaries. Now that the budget has passed, we ask our legislators to turn their attention to other bills that will help prepare our communities for the future, including through use of living shorelines and other resiliency measures."

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