



November 21, 2023

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

RE: FY2024-25 New York State Budget

Dear Governor Hochul,

On behalf of the undersigned members of New Yorkers for Clean Water and Jobs, a large coalition of conservation, environmental justice, labor, business, local government, outdoor recreation, and public health groups, thank you for your leadership on environmental conservation. State funding is essential for communities to leverage federal funds and deliver clean water, clean air, access to nature, and local jobs to New Yorkers. We applaud your dedication to growing environmental funding through the state budget, and the work of your agencies to efficiently award grants to projects throughout the state.

Thank you for your leadership on promoting the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act, and educating communities and organizations on the potential for programs through the recently concluded Bond Act listening tour. We were thrilled to see stakeholders come out across the state to learn about how they can work with your administration to implement this historic measure. We also thank you for working with the Senate and Assembly to ensure this year's budget authorized necessary capacity at state environmental agencies to achieve urgently needed work to address pollution and environmental degradation across New York and realize our state's ambitious conservation goals.

We ask that you continue to dedicate environmental funding to enable communities to thrive now and long into the future. In your 2024-25 Executive Budget Proposal, we urge you to include:

Implement the \$4.2 billion Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act

Our organizations were proud to support and work towards the overwhelming passage of the Environmental Bond Act in the 2022 General Election. This measure was needed to ensure environmental funding levels – when combined with other programs including those outlined below – are better able to address the significant needs that exist in communities throughout the state. We commend you for thoughtfully beginning the implementation of this measure, including the authorization of new staff at state agencies in the last budget, the statewide listening tour, and initial program design and solicitations for proposals for some of the first disbursements.

We look forward to seeing additional information from the interagency working group regarding feedback received through the listening tour, and on program designs with processes for funding applications that are both transparent and competitive. It is important that Bond Act programs are designed to ensure distribution of funding to communities throughout the state, including to partners such as local governments and non-governmental organizations. While state agencies may directly undertake Bond Act projects as well, implementation should ensure disbursements of funding reach communities and address needs identified on the ground. This will also increase the state's capacity for implementation by leveraging partners to deliver projects.

As you prepare your Executive Budget Proposal and your administration continues the implementation of the Bond Act, we urge you to maintain other sources of environmental funding – including the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), Clean Water Infrastructure Act, and capital funding for the Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The Bond Act is a necessary long-term investment for New York State to thrive; it is additive funding, not a substitute for existing programs.

While the State's fiscal situation is strained, reducing environmental funding, which is a very small percentage of the state budget, will not bring budget relief and will in fact set communities back as we work to provide clean water, clean air, and access to natural resources.

In order to support passage of the Bond Act, we built a strong and diverse coalition. The coalition continues to welcome opportunities to partner with the State now to ensure the Bond Act is implemented effectively and transparently.

At Least \$400 Million for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)

As part of your Executive Budget Proposal, we urge you to continue the EPF appropriation of at least \$400 million and continue to work towards increasing the appropriation to \$500 million sustained annually over the long term. We appreciate that your administration has provided historic funding to the EPF and has avoided problematic proposals such as offloading agency operating costs into the fund. We urge you to continue to support agencies as they find efficiencies for program administration in order to speed up annual disbursements from the EPF to enable valuable projects across the state.

The EPF has consistently enjoyed bi-partisan support in the Legislature and has funded beneficial projects in every county of the state, including every borough of New York City. The EPF is essential to the resiliency, sustainability and quality of life in New York. 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 that promote equitable access to nature; support climate adaptation and mitigation projects on farms, in forests and in urban areas; fund community recycling programs; and prevent pollution. EPF programs also support hundreds of thousands of jobs across the state, and EPF-supported industries generate approximately \$40 billion in economic activity every year. Many EPF programs have years-long waiting lists for funding and continuing to effectively move these programs forward will complement the work that can now be done through the recently enacted Environmental Bond Act and other environmental programs that protect clean water and create jobs.

\$600 Million for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act as Part of a New Five-Year \$4 Billion Commitment for Clean Water

We respectfully urge you to enable New York communities to leverage significant federal funding for water projects by providing at least \$600 million in new appropriations for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act (CWIA) in your upcoming budget, as a first installment in a new \$4 billion commitment to clean water funding over the next five years. We support the appropriation to direct funding to specific programs so it is clear what types of projects will be funded.

We urgently need to modernize New York's aging and failing drinking water and wastewater infrastructure that can't keep up the state's current needs. We have seen the tragic consequences of our infrastructure failing, from massive flooding and property loss recently in the City of Troy to an entire population of residents going without water in Watertown. These infrastructure failures put public health and safety at risk and we must continue the critically important work of upgrading across the state. At least \$75 billion is needed to address New York's outdated water infrastructure systems. The State has made important investments in water infrastructure programs, including the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act, to upgrade infrastructure, protect clean drinking water, and prevent pollution from reaching our lakes, rivers, and streams.

Your administration's continued work to award grants to projects has been effective, and we appreciate the hundreds of millions of dollars in funding that have been announced for water quality improvement projects throughout the State since you took office. Furthermore, we understand that a significant portion of this funding is reaching disadvantaged communities. We ask you to continue this important work and discuss with stakeholders opportunities to create further efficiencies and program flexibility to expand access to these funding programs even more.

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

This year marks the centennial of our world-class state parks system, an incredible asset to all New Yorkers. Throughout the COVID crisis, state residents relied on these parks to recreate, exercise, and find solace during extremely difficult times. We can expand these benefits by creating new parks and improving existing parks, including in disadvantaged communities throughout the state. While the crisis phase of the pandemic has ended, New Yorker's rediscovery and increased engagement in outdoor recreation and our state parks has not. Visitation remains high, and this demand requires additional investment that will generate important returns for

our state's economy. 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. We urge you to continue to invest at least \$250 million in State Parks Capital funding and announce a new goal as part of the centennial celebration to sustain this level of investment annually for the next decade.

We also ask you to invest at least \$100 million in capital funds for the DEC in your budget proposal. Annual capital appropriations to DEC enable critical projects, including 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 DEC supports critical health and safety projects that protect the environment and the people of New York State.

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.

Sincerely,

Adirondack Council, Kevin Chlad, Director of Government Relations
Adirondack Lakes Alliance, Scott Ireland, Executive Director
Adirondack Land Trust, Mike Carr, Executive Director
Adirondack Mountain Club, Michael Barrett, Executive Director
Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve, David Gibson, Managing Partner
Agricultural Stewardship Association, Renee Bouplon, Executive Director
Allegany County, Office of Planning & Tourism, Michelle M. Denhoff, Deputy Director of Planning
Alley Pond Environmental Center, Inc., Irene V. Scheid, Executive Director
American Farmland Trust, Linda Garrett, NY Regional Director
ANT Alliance, Inc, Gail Serventi, Chair: ANT Alliance, Inc
Appalachian Mountain Club, Mark Zakutansky, Director of Conservation Policy Engagement
Ausable River Association, Kelley Tucker, Executive Director
Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies, Joshua R Ginsberg, PhD, President
Catskill Center for Conservation and Development, Jeff Senterman, Executive Director
Catskill Mountainkeeper, Katherine Nadeau, Deputy Director
Champlain Area Trails, Chris Maron, Executive Director
Chautauqua County Partnership for Economic Growth, Jacob Bodway, Jacob Bodway
Chenango Bird Club, John Knapp, President
Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director
Clean+Healthy, Bobbi Wilding, Executive Director
Climate Reality Project - Westchester Chapter, Suzie Ross, Co-Founder and Co-Chair
Climate Reality Project Long Island Chapter, Francesca Rheannon, chapter co-chair
Climate Reality Project, NYC Chapter, Paul Kiesler, Co-Chair
Coalition of Living Museums, Aaron Bouska, Chair
Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor, Michelle Lapinel McAllister, Programs Director
Cranberry Lake Mountaineers Snowmobile Club, Inc, Heather C. Wilson, President
Dutchess Land Conservancy, Inc., Rebecca E.C. Thornton, President
Earthjustice, Elizabeth Moran, New York Policy Advocate
Environmental Advocates NY, Rob Hayes, Director of Clean Water
Environmental Defense Fund, Kate Boicourt, Director, Climate Resilient Coasts and Watersheds, NY/NJ
Environmental Real Estate Solutions, Jim Daus, President
Ferryland Cottage Rentals, Jan Ferry-Axman,
Finger Lakes Land Trust, Andrew Zepp, Executive Director
Friends of Clark Reservation, Angela Weiler, Chair
Friends of Connetquot, Janet Marie Soley, President
Friends of Georgica Pond Foundation, Inc., Sara Davison, Executive Director
Friends of Higley Flow State Park, Edward Fuh, President
Friends of Letchworth State Park, Carol Rathbun, President and David Mapes, Board member
Friends of Midway State Park, Robert Wooler, President
Friends of Pebbles Island State Park, Inc., David DeMarco, President
Friends of Pickman Remmer Wetlands, Richard Remmer, President
Friends of Rogers Environmental Education Center, David W. Carson, Executive Director

Friends of Sampson State Park, Francis Caraccilo, President
Friends of the Bay, Heather Johnson, Executive Director
Friends of the Chemung River Watershed, Elizabeth Zilinski, Executive Director
Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway, Inc., Carl L Schoenthal, President
Friends of the Upper Delaware River, Jeff Skelding, Executive Director
Genesee Land Trust, Lorna Wright, Executive Director
Grassroots Gardens of Western New York, Timothy Chen, Executive Director
Green Ossining, Suzie Ross, Chairperson
Groundwork Hudson Valley, Oded Holzinger, Executive Director
Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association, Lisa DeLeeuw, Executive Director
Healthy Schools Network, Claire L Barnett, Executive Director
Hudson Highlands Land trust, Inc., Katrina Shindledecker, Executive Director
Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Jen Benson, Environmental Action Director
Hyde Hall, Inc., Jonathan P. Maney, C.E.O. & Executive Director
IMPACT: Friends Improving Allegany County Trails, Inc., Glenn Gebhard, President
Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance, John DiNuzzo, President
Land Trust Alliance - NY Program, Jamie Brown, Program Manager
Marvin Stepherson, Genesee Regional Commissioner, New York State Council of Parks
Mohonk Preserve, Kevin Case, President/CEO
Moms for a Nontoxic New York (MNNY), Kathleen A Curtis, Founding Director
Montezuma Historical Society, Cheryl Longyear, Secretary
Mothers Out Front - Tompkins, Sheila Out, Organizing Member
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Rich Schrader, Policy and Legislative Director
New York League of Conservation Voters, Julie Tighe, President
New York Outdoor Recreation Coalition, Melissa Abramson, Co-Chair
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, Joshua Howard, Executive Director
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY), Katie Baidon, Policy Manager
Open Space Institute, Kathy Moser, Chief Conservation and Policy Officer
Orange County Land Trust, Jim Delaune, Executive Director
Parks & Trails New York, Paul Steely White, Executive Director
Paul Smith's College, Daniel Kelting, President
Paul Smith's College VIC, Scott van Laer, Director
Peconic Baykeeper, Peter Topping, Baykeeper & Executive Director
Peconic Land Trust, John v.H. Halsey, President
Planting Fields Foundation, Gina Wouters, President and CEO
Preservation League of New York State, Jay DiLorenzo, President
Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Jim Bonesteel, Executive Director
Riverkeeper, Jeremy Cherson, Senior Manager of Government Affairs
Rivers & Mountains, Michael Richardson, Convener
Riverside Park Conservancy, Merritt Birnbaum, President & CEO
Save the Sound, David Ansel, Vice President of Water Protection
Scenic Hudson, Carli Fraccarolli, State Policy Manager
Schroon Lake Association, Scott Ireland, President
Seneca Lake Guardian, Yvonne Taylor, Vice President
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, Roger Downs, Conservation Director
South Shore Audubon Society, Russell Comeau, President
Sustainable Westchester, Jim Kuster, Interim Executive Director
The Conservation Fund, Thomas R. Duffus, Vice President & NE Representative
The Friends of Fillmore Glen State Park, Lorrie Tily, Board of Directors
The Nature Conservancy, Jessica Ottney Mahar, New York Policy & Strategy Director
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, Christy Plumer, Chief Conservation Officer
Third Act Upstate NY, Scott Ireland, Co-Facilitator
Thousand Islands Land Trust, Jake R. Tibbles, Executive Director
Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative, Peter Bardaglio, Coordinator
Trust for Public Land, Mary Alice Lee, Interim New York State Director
Upper Saranac Foundation, Tom Swayne, President
Village of Scottsville NY, Maggie Ridge, Mayor
Walt Whitman Birthplace Association, Cynthia Shor, Executive Director
WE ACT for Environmental Justice, Sonal Jessel, Director of Policy

Westchester Land Trust, Kara H. Whelan, President
Western New York Land Conservancy, Marisa Riggi, Executive Director
Wildlife Conservation Society, John F. Calvelli, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs
Woodstock Land Conservancy, Andy Mossey, Executive Director

cc:

(VIA EMAIL)

Karen Persichilli Keogh, Secretary to the Governor

Kathryn Garcia, Director of State Operations

Micah Lasher, Director of Policy

John O'Leary, Deputy Secretary for Energy and Environment

Ashley Dougherty, Assistant Secretary for Environment

Blake Washington, Director, Division of Budget

Basil Seggos, Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation

Erik Kulleseid, Commissioner, Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation