

# *The Friends of New York's Environment*

## *Protecting our land, air and water*

December 15, 2009

Governor David A. Paterson  
Executive Chamber  
State Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

*The Friends of New York's Environment*, a broad partnership of more than 100 environmental, public health, agricultural, recreational and urban stakeholder groups, is writing to call on you to ensure the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) has the resources necessary to support New York's most critical environmental needs in State Fiscal Year 2010-2011, as well as honor the State's previous commitments to protecting our air, land and water.

EPF investments are not only protecting our natural resources and public health, they are also playing an important role in New York's economic recovery.

### **Environmental protection is an economic engine.**

EPF investments create jobs, eliminate solid waste, prevent pollution, protect ecosystems and community character for generations to come, and connect communities and children with the outdoors. A few specific examples of these economic benefits and the New Yorkers who rely on EPF monies are listed below.

Municipal recycling initiatives, funded by the EPF, have helped hundreds of local governments improve their communities without relying on local property tax increases. The Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency's initiatives have prevented more than 40,000 tons of waste from entering the waste stream and the agency estimates that more than 700 jobs are connected to the community's recycling efforts.

Hundreds of New York businesses have relied on EPF monies to help create new markets for waste products, streamline their processes, and create jobs. In Richfield Springs, Andela Products has created new products from discarded glass thanks to a \$300,000 EPF investment that allowed them to leverage matching funds and create at least six new jobs in central New York.

Hundreds of farmers around the state rely on the EPF to maintain their way of life, preserve family farms, and grow the food that feeds millions of New Yorkers. In Washington County, EPF support has allowed Tiashoke Farms to preserve more than 500 acres as farmland and leverage hundreds of thousands in federal investments.

Dozens of zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums throughout New York State rely on EPF funding to maintain their living collections. These living museums attract millions of visitors and tourists every

year, which bolster local economies by providing good paying jobs and supporting local businesses. Critical to the goals of the EPF, living museums educate the next generation of conservation stewards and create the constituency that values clean water, clean air, and land preservation.

And the collaboration of state agencies, land trusts and other not-for-profit organizations ensures that New Yorkers and others have access to some of the most beautiful and majestic areas in the United States, while also providing for the long-term and cost-effective protection of our public drinking water supplies. Throughout the state, support from the EPF has protected thousands of acres of important habitat and investments in natural resource protection have leveraged millions more in local, federal and private funds.

These are just a handful of the hundreds of EPF funded programs and projects. Every county of New York state benefits from EPF funded programs and projects.

***The Friends of New York's Environment* respectfully requests new appropriations of \$300 million in State Fiscal Year 2010-2011.**

Considering the wide ranging benefits provided by the EPF and its benefits to every county in the State, the Friends of New York's Environment respectfully requests that you include \$300 million in new appropriations in your 2010-2011 Executive Budget proposal. The need to sufficiently protect our health and environment, better manage our natural resources, and make our urban centers more sustainable grows stronger with each passing day. The immediate and long-range challenges we face include clean air, clean water, sprawl, sustainability, climate change, habitat loss, and maintenance of parks and zoos. In addition, an investment of this magnitude will spur continued economic recovery and protect New York's air, land and water.

***The Friends of New York's Environment* also requests that you advance a multi-year repayment plan to help ensure that projects supported by the Fund are paid in a timely manner and that new resources are dedicated to projects that protect our natural resources and bolster the economy.**

During the last seven years, more than \$500 million of dedicated environmental funding has been transferred from the EPF and spent on other non-environmental programs. We are asking that your proposal include a multi-year year repayment plan with an annual increase in the amount of Real Estate Transfer Tax funding dedicated to the EPF to ensure that the State can fulfill its current commitments and utilize new appropriations to fund new projects and provide ongoing support to current programs.

While new capital appropriations primarily look ahead to meeting future environmental challenges, today New York State is struggling to honor its *existing* obligations based on the nearly half billion dollars that has been transferred from the EPF for general budget relief. Without properly addressing repayment of previously diverted EPF funds, the State runs the risk of exhausting future appropriations on previous commitments, risking progress on new projects. The Executive has recognized the importance of repayment of EPF funds and has provided legislatively approved language authorizing repayment in prior budgets. We believe it is time to create a plan to begin the authorized repayments.

As you know, New York has been forced to triage state payments based on the current fiscal crisis. As a result, state payments to EPF-supported projects have been delayed. Hundreds of local governments and not-for-profits are currently relying on New York to fulfill its obligations. Over time, New York has entered into thousands of commitments and now does not have the cash to back them up. Simply put, the EPF is overdrawn and a new cash infusion is needed to make good on state promises.

Existing law requires that nearly \$200 million in Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT) revenue flow to the Fund. However, as of September 2009, more than \$230 million was contractually committed to projects, and much more has been committed to organizations still awaiting finalization of contracts or other paperwork.

As debt service payments on the 1996 Clean Water Clean Air Bond Act begin to decrease, more RETT revenue should be dedicated to the Fund to pay off this backlog and ensure that future appropriations are used for new projects and the continuation of program objectives and operations.

***The Friends of New York's Environment* also requests that Governor's office streamline certain agency grant-making practices.**

There are a number of ways to streamline existing grants programs to pump more resources into New York State's economy. Certain EPF programs need to be reviewed to ensure that taxpayer funds are being administered as efficiently as possible.

For instance, decreasing grant program cost shares for local government and not-for-profits, eliminating lag times for issuing agency solicitations for awards, and cutting certain bureaucratic reviews would be simple steps to ensure resources are efficiently flowing to not-for-profits and municipalities and investing in New York State's economy.

Thank you for your work to protect New York's land, air and water. We look forward to working with you and your staff to ensure New York's historic and long-term environmental investments meet the State's current environmental needs and challenges.

Sincerely,

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

cc: Lt. Governor Richard Ravitch,  
Lawrence Schwartz, Secretary to the Governor  
Valerie Grey, Director of State Operations  
Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver  
Senate Democratic Conference Leader John Sampson  
Assemblyman Robert Sweeney  
Senator Antoine Thompson  
Robert Megna, Director Division of the Budget  
Dean Fuleihan, Secretary Assembly Ways and Means Committee  
Joseph Pennisi, Secretary Senate Finance Committee

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The Adirondack Council, Brian Houseal, Executive Director  
Adirondack Land Trust, Michael Carr, Executive Director  
Adirondack Mountain Club, Neil Woodworth, Executive Director  
Agricultural Stewardship Association, Teri Ptacek, Executive Director  
Allegany County Soil & Water Conservation District, Gretchen T. Gary, Executive Director  
Alley Pond Environmental Center, Inc., Irene V. Scheid, Executive Director  
Alliance for Clean Energy New York, Inc., Carol E. Murphy, Executive Director  
American Farmland Trust, David Haight, New York State Director  
Appalachian Mountain Club, Kristen Sykes, Mid-Atlantic Project Manager  
The Aquarium of Niagara  
Audubon New York, Albert E. Caccese, Executive Director  
Audubon Society of the Capital Region, Craig Thompson, President  
Bronx and Manhattan Land Trusts, Erica Packard, Executive Director  
Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Lois Carswell, Chairman Emeritus  
Brooklyn Greenway Initiative, Milton Puryear, Director of Planning  
Brooklyn Queens Land Trust, Dan Durett, Executive Director  
The Buffalo Zoo, Donna M. Fernandes, PhD, President/CEO  
Burroughs Audubon Nature Club, Carol Hinkelman, Conservation Chairman  
The Catskill Center for Conservation and Development, Daniel Palm, Interim Executive Director  
Cazenovia Preservation Foundation, Pringle Symonds, Vice President  
Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director  
Citizens' Environmental Coalition, Barbara Warren, Executive Director  
Clean New York, Kathleen A. Curtis, LPN, Policy Director  
Coalition of Living Museums, including over 100 individual organizations  
Columbia Land Conservancy, Inc., Peter R. Paden, Executive Director  
Cragmoor Conservancy, Inc., Jeffrey C. Slade, President  
Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Sue Currier, Executive Director  
Ducks Unlimited, Bernie Marczyk, Governmental Affairs Representative  
Dyken Pond Environmental Education Center, Lisa Hoyt, Director  
Empire State Future, Peter Fleischer, Executive Director  
Environmental Advocates of New York, Robert Moore, Executive Director  
Environmental Defense Fund, Jim Tripp, General Counsel  
Esopus Creek Conservancy, Inc., Susan Bolitzer  
Farm Catskills, Amy Kenyon, Board President  
Federated Conservationists of Westchester County, Jan Blaire  
Finger Lakes–Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, Kristy LaManche, Program Coordinator  
Finger Lakes Land Trust, Andy Zepp, Executive Director  
Fire Island Land Trust, Jansen A. Hahn, Esq., Executive Director  
Four Harbors Audubon Society, Susan Krause, President  
Friends of Brook Park, Harry Bubbins, Director  
Friends of Hudson River Park, A. J. Pietrantone, Executive Director  
The Fund for Lake George, Peter Bauer, Executive Director  
Genesee Valley Audubon Society, June Summers, President  
Genesee Valley Conservancy, Eric W. Grace, Executive Director  
Greene Land Trust, Bob Knighton, President

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Greenwich Citizens Committee, Inc., Tracy Frisch  
Group for the East End, Robert DeLuca, President  
Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Andrew T. Chmar, Executive Director  
Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Jeff Rumpf, Executive Director  
Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society, Stella Miller, President  
Huyck Preserve and Biological Research Station, Chad Jemison, Executive Director  
Indian River Lakes Conservancy, Mark A. Scarlett, President  
Kathleen Matthews, Three Village Community Trust Board  
Lake George Land Conservancy, Nancy Williams, Executive Director  
Lake George Waterkeeper, Chris Navitsky  
Land Trust Alliance, Ethan Winter, New York Conservation Manager  
Long Island Drinking Water Coalition, Mathew Meng, President  
Long Island Environmental Voters Forum, Anthony Coates, Director  
Long Island Pine Barrens Society, Richard Amper, Executive Director  
Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, Jill Knapp, Executive Director  
Mohonk Preserve, Glenn D. Hoagland, Executive Director  
Natural Resources Defense Council, Richard Schrader, Legislative Director  
New York Agricultural Land Trust, Maureen Knapp, Interim Executive Director  
New York Association of Conservation Districts  
The New York Botanical Garden, Gregory Long, President  
New York City Audubon, Glenn Phillips, Executive Director  
New York Farm Bureau, Dean Norton, President  
New York League of Conservation Voters, Marcia Bystry, Executive Director  
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, Edward K. Goodell, Executive Director  
New York Public Interest Research Group, Laura Haight, Senior Environmental Associate  
New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse and Recycling (NYSAR3), Dianne Woske, President  
New York State Urban & Community Forestry Council, Christian Mercurio  
New York Trout Unlimited, Ron Urban, Chairman  
North Fork Audubon Society, Diana Van Buren, President  
North Shore Audubon Society, Peggy Maslow, President  
North Shore Land Alliance, Lisa W. Ott, President  
Northern Catskills Audubon Society, Larry Federman, President  
Northeast Wilderness Trust, Jim Northup, Executive Director  
The Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc., Robert P. Addis, President  
Oblong Land Conservancy, Sibyll Gilbert, Vice Chair  
Open Space Institute, Joe Martens, President  
Onondaga Audubon Society, Gerry Smith, President  
Orange County Land Trust, Jim Delaune, Executive Director  
Otsego Land Trust, Peter Hujik, Executive Director  
Parks and Trails New York, Robin Dropkin, Executive Director  
Peconic Baykeeper, Kevin McAllister  
Peconic Land Trust, John v.H. Halsey, President  
Port Washington Parks Conservancy, Myron Blumenfeld, Treasurer  
Protect the Adirondacks! David Gibson, Executive Director  
Putnam Highlands Audubon Society, Rich Anderson, President

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Putnam County Land Trust, Judy Terlizzi, President  
Queens Botanical Garden, Susan Lacerte, Executive Director  
Regional Plan Association, Robert Pirani, Director Environmental Programs  
Rensselaer Land Trust, Christine Young, Esq., Executive Director  
Riverkeeper, Inc. Alex Matthiessen, President & Hudson Riverkeeper  
Saratoga County Interfaith Environmental Coalition (SCIEC), Lew Morrison, President  
Saratoga PLAN, Julia S. Stokes, Chair  
Save The River, Jennifer J. Caddick, Executive Director, Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper  
Scenic Hudson, Ned Sullivan, President  
Schoharie Land Trust, Inc., Andrew Mason, President  
Selkirk, Coeymans, Ravena Against Pollution (SCRAP), Jim Travers  
Serpentine Art and Nature Commons, Inc., George Y. Bramwell, Esq., President  
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, Susan Lawrence, Chapter Chair  
Somers Land Trust, Michael Barnhart, President  
Southampton Baymen's Association, Sam Rispoli, President  
Staten Island Museum, Elizabeth Egbert, President & CEO  
Staten Island Zoo, John J. Caltabiano, Executive Director  
Teatown Lake Reservation, Fred W. Koontz, Ph.D., Executive Director  
The Nature Conservancy in New York, William H. Ulfelder, State Director  
Torne Valley Preservation Association, Patsy Wooters, Chair  
The Three Village Community Trust, Cynthia R. Barnes, President, Board of Trustees  
The Trust for Public Land, Leslie Wright, New York State Director  
Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Linda M. Garrett, Executive Director  
Wallkill Valley Land Trust, Robert E. Taylor, President  
The Warwick Conservancy, Inc. Andrew McLaughlin, President  
Wave Hill, Claudia Bonn, President and Executive Director  
Wayne County Soil and Water Conservation District, Henry Kelsey, District Manager  
West Branch Conservation Association, Martus Granirer, Executive Director  
Westchester Land Trust, Ben Spinelli, Executive Director  
Wildlife Conservation Society, John F. Calvelli, Executive Vice President, Public Affairs  
Winnakee Land Trust, Lucy Hayden, Executive Director  
The Woodstock Land Conservancy, Kevin Smith, President and John Winter, Executive Director