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## **THE FRIENDS OF NEW YORK'S ENVIRONMENT APPLAUD INCREASED FUNDING FOR THE EPF**

*2013-14 Budget Includes \$153 Million for the EPF*

*First Step in Rebuilding Program that Creates Jobs By Conserving New York's Land, Air and Water*

The Friends of New York's Environment, a broad coalition of more than 100 environmental, public health, agricultural conservation, recreational and urban stakeholder groups, today applauded the three-way budget agreement that will increase the state's investment in the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) by \$19 million, providing \$153 million for EPF programs across the state in the next fiscal year. This funding increase represents a critical first step toward rebuilding the EPF. The Friends of New York's Environment thank Governor Andrew Cuomo, Senate Leaders Dean Skelos and Jeff Klein, Senate Environmental Conservation Committee Chairman Mark Grisanti, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, and Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee Chairman Robert Sweeney for their commitment to both conserving New York's air, water and land, and their focus on creating jobs through sound investment in worthwhile policies that benefit the entire state.

Jessica Ottney Mahar, Director of Government Relations for The Nature Conservancy in New York said: "We applaud and thank Governor Cuomo and Legislature for their agreement to enhance the EPF as part of the state budget. By investing in the EPF, we are protecting what we love most about New York – our parks, forests, farms, beaches and bays, zoos, while funding programs that provide assistance to communities and businesses for storm resilience, recycling programs, water quality protection and pollution prevention. This agreement benefits every region of New York State and is the first step towards achieving a more sustainable level of investment in these critical programs."

Andy Bicking, Director of Public Policy for Scenic Hudson said: "After years of reduced and flat funding for the EPF, this commitment from Governor Cuomo and the state legislature gives all New Yorkers a reason to cheer. The Environmental Protection Fund has been making our communities healthier and more sustainable for 20 years, and this increased funding is a step in the right direction toward keeping the EPF working for years to come."

Robin Dropkin, Executive Director of Parks & Trails New York said: “Hurricane Sandy reminded all New Yorkers of the importance of preparedness, and the EPF has a key role to play in mitigating the impact of future storms. This increased funding will make it possible to strengthen our natural infrastructure, which creates jobs and bolsters outdoor tourism. This is exactly the kind of investment that will rebuild New York and better position us for the future.”

Richard Schrader, New York Legislative Director for the Natural Resources Defense Council said: “Thanks to Governor Cuomo and the state legislature, the Environmental Protection Fund will be strengthened for the first time since the deep cuts of the Great Recession. Study after study has shown that the EPF is a smart investment for New York – and this funding represents a much-needed down payment on our state’s environment, as well as its economic future.”

Albert E. Caccese, Executive Director of Audubon New York said: “Thanks to the leadership of Governor Cuomo and the state legislature, the Environmental Protection Fund will be better able to help reinforce New York’s natural infrastructure, which is a cost-effective first line of defense against extreme weather events like Hurricane Sandy and Tropical Storm Irene. Natural systems like floodplains, marshes, coastal dunes and wetlands are sound investments in the future of our communities, and enhance economically important bird habitat as well.”

Marcia Bystryn, President of the New York League of Conservation Voters said: “With this budget agreement, state leaders are demonstrating a clear understanding of the important role EPF programs play in both environmental protection and economic prosperity. EPF programs deliver a \$7 return for every \$1 invested, which boosts our state’s economy. We thank Governor Cuomo and legislative leaders for this important commitment to the EPF.”

Neil Woodworth, Executive Director for the Adirondack Mountain Club said: “The EPF is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2013, and with this increased funding, the Governor and the Legislature have made a fitting commitment to many more years of its important programs that create jobs and protect our natural resources. This investment is a first step toward 20 more years of support for our parks, zoos and recycling programs; farmland, forest and clean water conservation; and revitalized waterfronts.”

Ethan Winter, New York Conservation Manager for the Land Trust Alliance said: “Communities, landowners, and local land trust partners around the state applaud the state Legislature and Governor Cuomo for taking this important step toward rebuilding New York’s Environmental Protection Fund. The EPF leverages significant additional private investments that are helping to make our communities healthier, cleaner and more economically competitive. This increased funding puts New York in its rightful place as a national leader in environmental protection and public-private partnerships.”

Kim Elliman, President of the Open Space Institute, said: “In taking this step to rebuild the Environmental Protection Fund, Governor Cuomo and the Legislature clearly and laudably perceive that environmental investments matter: to New York’s economy, to its public health, to its clean water, to its storm resilience, to its foodsheds, to its parks, and, indeed, to so many of the shared values that we in the Empire State hold dear.”

David Haight, New York State Director for American Farmland Trust said: “Farmland forms the foundation of New York’s \$31 billion farm and food economy, yet over the last 25 years the state has lost half a million acres of farmland to real estate development such as residential subdivisions and shopping malls. The EPF is currently the sole source of funding for the state’s Farmland Protection Program, which provides funding to protect farms from poorly planned development. Farmland conservation also contributes to agricultural economic

development as farmers reinvest the funds they receive in exchange for placing a conservation easement on their farm, diversifying and expanding their farm businesses by building new infrastructure, introducing new crops, purchasing equipment or livestock, and most importantly, transferring family farms to the next generation of farmers.”

Dean Norton, President of New York Farm Bureau said: “New York Farm Bureau commends Governor Cuomo and the state legislature for their wise investment in the Environmental Protection Fund, which has had a long history of supporting agricultural stewardship of land and water. With the help of EPF, many farms in this state, including dairy farms, will be able to take advantage of critical cost-share funding for water quality projects that will allow them to reinvest and grow responsibly. In addition, EPF helps keep farms in business by protecting the land from commercial development while also fighting invasive species from ravaging our crops and natural resources.”

William C. Janeway, who starts in May as Executive Director of the Adirondack Council, said: "We applaud the \$19 million increase in the state's Environmental Protection Fund. This is critical funding for clean water, wildlife, new park lands and community smart growth planning in the Adirondack Park. The increase -- from \$134 million to \$153 million -- is a welcome step toward the long-term goal of restoring the EPF to \$250 million, as well as increasing invasive species prevention and control funding from the current \$4.6 million to \$10 million. It will cost at least that much to provide invasive species management and public health protection measures. Both are needed to protect economically valuable and ecologically sensitive wild lands and waters in the six-million-acre Adirondack Park, and beyond."

Marc Matsil, New York State Director with The Trust for Public Land said: "Bravo Governor Cuomo and legislative leaders for supporting the EPF. Over the past year critical projects that contribute to the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers have been funded by the EPF, or expected to be funded, including support for feasibility of the QueensWay that would provide access to greenspace for 250,000 community residents--as well as protection of Pouch Camp in Staten Island--a threatened Boy Scout Camp in the midst of a 3,000 acre protected greenbelt. The Trust for Public Land's Economic Study on the EPF's return on investment clearly shows that EPF programs deliver a \$7 return for every \$1 invested. NY's business community agree that this is money well spent."

Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director for Citizens Campaign for the Environment said: “After being cut and remaining stagnant for years, we applaud the Governor and the Legislature for taking an important step to revive the EPF. New life for the EPF will mean that every New Yorker from Buffalo to Montauk will benefit from this investment in clean air, clean water, open space protection, and sustainable economic development.”

For more information about New York’s Environmental Protection Fund and the Friends of New York’s Environment, please visit [www.keepprotectingny.com](http://www.keepprotectingny.com).

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