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THE NATURE CONSERVANCY – NEW YORK • THE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

PRESS RELEASE

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Groups Praise Governor for Signing Critical Environmental Legislation

Environmental Protection Fund Increased to \$300 million by 2009

Albany, New York – On Wednesday, July 18, 2007, Governor Eliot Spitzer signed legislation that will increase the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to an all-time high of \$300 million by 2009. The EPF was created in 1993 as a dedicated annual funding source for capital projects that directly benefit New York's land, air and water.

The projects funded by the EPF include clean water, open space, working farms, municipal and urban parks, land stewardship, urban and community forestry programs, local recycling programs, historic preservation, Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquaria (ZBGA), smart growth, and public health initiatives like breast cancer research.

The legislation was sponsored by Assemblyman Robert Sweeney (D-Lindenhurst) and Senator Carl Marcellino (R-Syosset), both of whom serve as Chairman of the Environmental Conservation Committee in their respective Houses.

“The Nature Conservancy applauds Governor Spitzer for continuing his leadership on environmental conservation issues and signing this legislation, which will expand critical environmental funding in New York State,” stated Jessica Ottney, Director of State Government Relations for The Nature Conservancy in New York. “This funding will help protect biodiversity, open space, clean water and clear air throughout New York,” Ottney continued.

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“ADK and the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference applaud the Governor for signing this important legislation,” said Neil Woodworth, Executive Director of ADK and of-counsel to the Trail Conference. “Enactment of this legislation will provide greatly needed additional funds for open space protection in the Hudson Valley, Catskills and Adirondacks and for stewardship of publicly owned lands.”

“Environmental Advocates of New York applauds Governor Spitzer for signing the Environmental Protection Fund Enhancement Act into law and committing New York State to better funding the critical programs that manage our state’s precious and public natural resources,” said Robert Moore, executive director of Environmental Advocates of New York. “The Fund not only protects the health of New York’s irreplaceable Adirondacks, it supports key programs in the New York City metro area, including urban forestry, waterfront revitalization and municipal parks.”

"The expansion of the Environmental Protection Fund is one of the most important environmental victories in New York State this year," said Marcia Bystry, executive director of the New York League of Conservation Voters. "Thanks to Governor Spitzer's leadership, vitally important environmental programs that had been under-funded for years can now operate at an acceptable level and even grow."

"Scenic Hudson applauds Governor Spitzer's vision and leadership in signing this crucial legislation at this pivotal moment in the history of New York State and the Hudson Valley. The additional funding will boost the region's economy and environment -- saving working farms and supporting 'smart' development that creates new parkland while revitalizing downtowns and waterfronts. As we approach the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's sail up the river, funding from the EPF will help the Hudson Valley showcase a 21st century sustainable economy in the Hudson Valley and beyond for all the world to see." Ned Sullivan, President of Scenic Hudson.

"We are greatly appreciative of Governor Spitzer for signing this bill into law. Farmers continue to have a superior record of stepping up to protect lakes, rivers and streams as well as conserving farmland, but we can't do it without the help of a healthy and well-funded EPF," said Julie Suarez, Director of Public Policy for New York Farm Bureau. "The increased EPF funding provided by the Governor and the Legislature through this new law will allow critical farm projects to protect open space and water quality for future generations of farmers and consumers."

“Audubon New York applauds Governor Eliot Spitzer, Senator Carl Marcellino and Assemblyman Robert Sweeney for taking this critical step to provide increased funding for the EPF at a time when demand for projects continues to outpace funding,” said Albert E. Caccese, Executive Director of Audubon New York. “As habitat loss remains a leading threat to birds and other wildlife, the important programs in the EPF are critical for providing the necessary resources to protect New York’s great natural heritage.”

"This is a wonderful day for the environment in this state," said Theresa Cassiack, Legislative Associate for the Sierra Club. "We can now count on more programs and resources that will benefit the health and well being of New York's environment and it's citizens. On behalf of my membership, our sincere thanks goes to Governor Spitzer for making this legislation a reality."

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“The EPF has protected more than 700,000 acres of Adirondack forest from development over the past decade. And yet, it has never been more important to the future of the Adirondack Park than it is today,” said Brian Houseal, Executive Director of the Adirondack Council, a privately funded environmental advocacy organization. “Some portion of the 161,000 acres of former Finch, Pruyn & Co. lands should be purchased by the state and added to the Forever Wild Forest Preserve, while dozens of smaller projects also await state action. There has never been enough money in the EPF to go around the entire state. This addition will help a great deal.”

"NYPIRG commends the Governor and the Legislature for enacting this measure to expand New York's Environmental Protection Fund and increase agency accountability," said Laura Haight, senior environmental associate of the New York Public Interest Research Group. "This is an important step towards our collective goal of increasing funding for the EPF to \$500 million over the next three years."

“We commend Governor Spitzer for supporting these essential programs to improve our environment, protect public health and benefit the economy across New York State,” said Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director for Citizens Campaign for the Environment. “The EPF is a giant success story. New Yorkers resoundingly support this reliable and steady stream of funding for parks, clean water, recycling and other environmental protection programs,” Esposito continued.

"The expanded EPF will mark New York as a national leader in open space protection, ocean conservation and clean energy," said Richard Schrader, the NY Legislative Director for the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)."

“The Coalition of Living Museums applauds Governor Eliot Spitzer, Senator Carl Marcellino and Assemblyman Robert Sweeney for their leadership to expand the Environmental Protection Fund and support its critical programs,” said Lois Carswell, Chairman of the Coalition of Living Museums. “New York's living museums are the conservators, protectors and interpreters of our natural world. With thousands of fish and wildlife and millions of plants, these institutions collectively provide the richest zoological and botanical resources of any state in the union.”

“As New York’s primary source of funding for historic preservation projects, increased funding for the Environmental Protection Fund will aid municipalities and organizations across the state in efforts to rehabilitate and revitalize New York State’s extraordinary legacy of historic buildings and landscapes,” said Jay DiLorenzo, President of the Preservation League of New York State. “Environmental and community quality are key components of economic competitiveness and success, and the Environmental Protection Fund has a core role to play in New York State’s economic redevelopment.”

“We join our colleague organizations in thanking Governor Spitzer for his efforts in securing New York’s Environmental Protection Fund. Not only is the EPF critical to maintaining the quality of New York’s environment, but through its’ Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquaria (ZBGA) program, this fund helps support the facilities that connect all New Yorkers to their environment, and those that inspire New York’s next generation of environmental stewards”, stated John Calvelli , Senior Vice President of the Wildlife Conservation Society.

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Lynn Schumann, Northeast Director of the Land Trust Alliance, a national coalition of land protection groups that includes 75 active land trusts working in New York, also applauded Governor Spitzer's action. She said, "This expansion of the Environmental Protection Fund is very good news for land conservation, New York farmers, and for communities across the state that are working to protect public health and quality of life."

"Parks and Trails New York lauds Governor Eliot Spitzer, Senator Carl Marcellino and Assemblyman Robert Sweeney for their leadership in expanding critical funding for the environment in New York," said Robin Dropkin, Executive Director of Parks and Trails New York. "The expanded EPF is a great step forward in providing vital funding for state and local parks, trails, and stewardship of state lands among many other crucial environmental programs."

The annual allocation of EPF funds among programs is subject to Executive and Legislative agreement. The EPF was funded in its first year (State Fiscal Year 1994-95) at \$31.5 million. This year (State Fiscal Year 2007-08) the EPF was funded at \$250 million during the State budget process. The funding for the increase provided by this legislation will come from revenue generated by the State's Real Estate Transfer Tax, which is the traditional source of EPF funds.

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Founded in 1975, **the Adirondack Council** is a privately funded not-for-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the ecological integrity and wild character of the Adirondack Park. With members in all 50 United States, the Council carries out its mission through research, advocacy, public education and legal action.

United in partnership, **the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK)** and the **New York – New Jersey Trail Conference** are dedicated to conservation, education, outdoor recreation and protection of New York's Forest Preserve, state parks, wild lands and waters. Together, the two organizations represent over 100,000 hikers, paddlers, skiers and backpackers.

Audubon New York, the 50,000-member State program of the National Audubon Society, is dedicated to protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitats that support them. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in positive conservation experiences.

Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE) is an 80,000-member, non-profit, non-partisan, advocacy organization working to protect public health and the natural environment throughout New York State and Connecticut. For more information please visit www.citizenscampaign.org.

The Coalition of Living Museums, founded in 1980, is a nonprofit organization representing New York State's zoos, botanical gardens, aquariums, arboreta and nature centers. Through our rich zoological and botanical resources and award-winning educational programs, each year more than 12 million New Yorkers experience the wonders of the natural world at our living museums. Our animals and plants make natural science come alive to teachers and schoolchildren, and are helping to grow a new generation of conservation stewards.

Environmental Advocates of New York is the state's government watchdog, holding lawmakers and agencies accountable for implementing policy that protects natural resources and safeguards public health. For more information call 518.462.5526 or visit www.eany.org.

New York Farm Bureau is the statewide lobbying/trade organization that represents thousands of member families. Its members and the public know the organization as "The Voice of New York Agriculture." New York Farm Bureau is dedicated to solving the economic and public policy issues challenging the agricultural community.

New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV) was founded in 1989 as a non-partisan, policy making and political action organization that works to make environmental protection a top priority with elected officials, decision makers, and voters by evaluating incumbent performance and endorsing and electing environmental leaders to office in New York State.

The New York Public Interest Research Group is the largest environmental, consumer, and government reform advocacy group in New York, with 25 offices across the state and more than 100,000 supporters.

Parks and Trails New York, established in 1985, works to improve the quality of life of New Yorkers through the expansion, protection, and promotion of a network of parks, trails and open spaces throughout the state for the use and enjoyment of all. www.ptny.org.

The **Preservation League of New York State** is dedicated to the protection of New York's diverse and rich heritage of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes. It actively encourages historic preservation by public and private organizations, agencies, and individuals in local communities throughout New York State and provides the united voice for historic preservation advocacy. www.preservenys.org

Scenic Hudson works to protect and restore the Hudson River and its majestic landscape as an irreplaceable national treasure and a vital resource for residents and visitors. A crusader for the valley since 1963, we are credited with saving fabled Storm King Mountain from a destructive industrial project and launching the modern grass-roots environmental movement. Today with more than 20,000 ardent supporters, we are the largest environmental group focused on the Hudson River Valley. Our team of experts combines land acquisition, support for agriculture, citizen-based advocacy and sophisticated planning tools to create environmentally healthy communities, champion smart economic growth, open up riverfronts to the public and preserve the valley's inspiring beauty and natural resources. www.scenichudson.org

The Sierra Club is a non-profit, member-supported, public interest organization that promotes conservation of the natural environment through public education and lobbying. Grassroots advocacy has made The Sierra Club America's most influential environmental organization. Founded in 1892, the Club is now more than 700,000 members strong. The Atlantic Chapter applies the principles of the national Sierra Club to the environmental issues facing New York State.

The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 15 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Visit us on the Web at www.nature.org.

The Wildlife Conservation Society saves wildlife and wild lands. We do so through careful science, international conservation, education, and the management of the world's largest system of urban wildlife parks, led by the flagship Bronx Zoo. Together, these activities change individual attitudes toward nature and help people imagine wildlife and humans living in sustainable interaction on both a local and a global scale. WCS is committed to this work because we believe it essential to the integrity of life on Earth