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PRESS STATEMENT

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GROUPS CONGRATULATE GOV-ELECT CUOMO, SEND 1ST GREEN ASSIGNMENT: REBUILD NY'S ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCIES & RESTORE FUNDING

(ALBANY, NY)—Environmental, conservation, and public health organizations today congratulated Governor-elect Andrew Cuomo on his recent victory in the race to become New York's next top executive. The groups look forward to a productive relationship with Governor Cuomo over the next four years.

The groups now call on the governor-elect to put at the top of his to-do list rebuilding New York's devastated environmental agencies and restoring environmental funding. The recent discovery of an internal Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) memo highlights the dire state of the agency and serves as a powerful public reminder of longstanding problems now endemic to New York's efforts to protect public health, provide stewardship of state lands, and prevent air and water pollution. According to the memo, the DEC is "hanging by a thread" and "the public would be shocked to learn how thin we are in many areas..."

The groups are concerned about the impacts of staff reductions at state agencies charged with protecting New York's environment. For example:

- Since April 2008 the DEC has lost 849 of its scientists, engineers, and enforcement officials—one-quarter of its total workforce.
- The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has lost more than 20 percent of its permanent staff, as well as 1,000 seasonal staff.
- Taken together, resources for the DEC and Office of Parks have been cut by 15 percent in the past year, a disproportionate reduction compared to cuts at other agencies.

- Cuts to the DEC's Minerals Division will mean fewer staff available to oversee activities related to natural gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale formation.

In addition, support for the state's Environmental Protection Fund was slashed almost 40 percent in 2010, on top of \$500 million in raids by past administrations, leaving municipalities and nonprofit groups waiting for payments to support ongoing efforts to protect drinking water, reduce solid waste, and improve the quality of life in New York's communities. The fund helps ensure healthier communities across the state by investing in everything from parks and zoos to wastewater infrastructure, pesticide research, and open space and farmland preservation.

Last week, Governor David Paterson released his proposal to lay off an additional 150 staff at the DEC and 90 staff at the Office of Parks. DEC staff reductions will cut the state's oversight of federal Superfund cleanups.

"The Adirondack Council was pleased with Governor-Elect Cuomo's official policy statements on the environment during the campaign, which showed he intends to protect the state's natural resources, improve its public land holdings, safeguard clean water and clean air and improve outdoor recreational opportunities in the Adirondack Park and beyond," said Brian Houseal, Executive Director of the Adirondack Council. "We urge him to stick to his plan and avoid the mistakes of the current administration. Recent cuts to environmental programs are a real threat to public health and to the safety of our children."

"The success or failure of Governor-elect Cuomo's environmental agenda hinges upon his commitment to rebuild the state's environmental agencies and restore critical environmental funding," said Robert Moore, Executive Director, Environmental Advocates of New York.

"It is urgent for the Governor-Elect to restore DEC's staff and their invaluable involvement in key environmental issues. This is an historic opportunity to build a sustainable future where our environment and economy must grow together. A strong, enlightened DEC is needed to monitor, protect and guide a future where ecology and economy are united," said Jeff Rumpf, Executive Director of Hudson River Sloop Clearwater. "Without a robust DEC, New York's environment will deteriorate rapidly and opportunities to create a smart sustainable future will be lost. The DEC puts the ECO in our Economy."

"We congratulate Governor-elect Cuomo on yesterday's electoral success. Now, the hard work begins on what is the unofficial first day of the Cuomo administration," said Marcia Bystryn, president of the New York League of Conservation Voters. "We look forward to working with the governor-elect and his transition team to tackling New York's pressing environmental challenges and setting policies that will optimize limited state dollars to create a more sustainable future."

"We are eager to work closely with Governor-elect Cuomo in cleaning up air pollution from dirty diesel engines, dirty home heating oil, outdoor wood boilers and power

plants,' said Scott T. Santarella, President and CEO of the American Lung Association in New York. "All of these pollution sources continue to negatively impact our air quality and hinder New Yorkers' ability to breathe."

"Governor-Elect Cuomo has already made it clear that economic and environmental interests go hand-in-hand," said Open Space Institute President Joe Martens. "The environmental community looks forward to working with the governor-elect and his team to help find new ways to protect and enhance the State's green infrastructure, its parks, forests and farms, in the face of daunting fiscal challenges."

"The next Governor faces a difficult challenge of ensuring that New York's environment and public health are protected despite the state's fiscal woes," said Laura Haight, senior environmental associate with NYPIRG. "From closing state parks to suspending the state's role in Superfund cleanups, the proposals put forth by the Paterson administration have been nothing short of disastrous. We look forward to working with Governor-elect Cuomo to help meet the state's challenges carefully and wisely."

"New York's diverse and growing land conservation community looks forward to working with governor-elect Andrew Cuomo and his administration to re-position New York as a national leader in addressing our critical environmental challenges. We urge the Governor-elect to make good on his pledge to invest in a cleaner, greener New York, and we stand ready to help local communities do their share," said Ethan Winter, New York Conservation Manager for the Land Trust Alliance.

"Governor-elect Cuomo has laid out a comprehensive Environmental Agenda and has a strong history of cracking down on polluters. We look forward to partnering with him to rebuild our depleted agencies and restore our environment," stated Paul Gallay, Executive Director and Hudson Riverkeeper. "Indeed, there's never been a more important time for environmentalists in and out of government to band together to address the problems created by these crippling cuts to our environmental agencies, which threaten our quality of life, natural resources and even our economic recovery."

"We welcome Gov.-elect Cuomo's pledge to keep parks open, improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and support natural resource stewardship," said Robin Dropkin, executive director of Parks & Trails New York. "These indicate that he understands the importance of the environment to New York's economy, health, and quality of life. To fulfill his pledge the Gov.-elect must reinvest in New York's park and environmental agencies and restore environmental funding. If he does this, New Yorkers will truly be able to say that they have the environmental leadership they want and deserve."

The groups are asking Cuomo to protect our natural resources, restore the capacity of the state's environmental agencies, and renew New York's investment in programs so important to safeguarding public health and maintaining quality of life.

The organizations congratulating the Governor-elect include The Adirondack Council, American Lung Association in New York, Catskill Mountainkeeper, Citizens Campaign

for the Environment, Clean New York, Environmental Advocates of New York, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Land Trust Alliance Northeast Program, New York League of Conservation Voters, New York Public Interest Research Group, Open Space Institute, Pace Energy and Climate Center, Parks & Trails New York, Riverkeeper, Sierra Club – Atlantic Chapter, and Theodore Gordon Flyfishers, Inc.

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