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## **Groups Applaud Water Infrastructure Investments**

### *Additional \$200 Million Helps Communities Upgrade Drinking and Wastewater Systems*

Albany – Governor Andrew Cuomo and state legislators have enacted a SFY2016-17 Budget that invests \$350 million over the next two years to help communities upgrade and maintain drinking and wastewater infrastructure, which is critical to public health, environmental quality, and quality of life.

First established in 2015, the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act is a three-year grant program started with an original investment of \$200 million. The additional investment this year will increase the allocation for both 2016-17 and 2017-18 to \$175 million annually—an increase of \$100 million per year over previously budgeted totals, an effective doubling of the commitment. Additional grant funding translates to more communities having the resources they need to leverage additional monies that allow them to launch priority projects.

According to federal Clean Watersheds and Drinking Water Infrastructure needs surveys, New York State has more than \$53 billion in documented need for investment over 20 years. Based on the state Environmental Facility Corp.'s 2016 Intended Use Plan, need exceeds \$14 billion for shovel-ready projects. New York's drinking and wastewater infrastructure needs are higher than almost all other U.S. states due to a lack of investment over many decades, which is changing under the leadership of Governor Cuomo and state legislators.

Additional funding has been advocated by a broad coalition of nearly 40 organizations representing environmental, water utility, municipal, labor, recreational, engineering, planning and business interests.

William C. Janeway, Executive Director of the **Adirondack Council**, said: "Clean water is essential to the future of the Adirondack Park. But Adirondack communities need the state's help to repair and improve the equipment that keeps sewage out of our lakes and rivers. The park boosts the state's economy by hosting 10 million annual visitors. But most of the park's 130 rural communities have fewer than 1,000 residents to foot the bill. All of them are willing to

pay their fair share, but grants like these can bridge the gap between what they need and what they can afford.”

“We applaud this year’s investment in the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act, the foundation for healthy communities and ecosystems across the state,” said Erin Crotty, **Audubon New York** executive director. “Recent events have demonstrated what Audubon has always known, that access to clean water is not only a human right, it’s imperative to a maintaining a strong regional and state economy and ensuring a high-quality of life for all New Yorkers, birds and other wildlife. These additional funds will ensure the advancement of critical water infrastructure projects needed to help sustain healthy water quality.”

Adrienne Esposito, executive director for **Citizens Campaign for the Environment** said, “We commend the Governor and legislature for stepping up to help communities fix aging and failing sewage and drinking water infrastructure. Greater investment in clean water infrastructure is great news for any New Yorker that swims, fishes, boats, or drinks water in New York. These investments will translate into cleaner water, healthier communities, and increased economic development across New York State.”

Elizabeth Moran, water and natural resources associate at **Environmental Advocates of New York** said, “More money means more communities are able to start more long overdue projects. Drinking and wastewater infrastructure are the linchpin to public health and community growth in New York State. We applaud Governor Cuomo and state legislators for their leadership on this issue because clean water cannot be taken for granted. We look forward to working with them in the years ahead to continue to build on the progress they have started.”

Richard Schrader, the Political Director of the **Natural Resources Defense Council NorthEast**, said: “The strong investment in water infrastructure by Gov. Cuomo and the NYS legislature will not only make our water system safer and more efficient but will prepare it for the harsher storms and potential flooding endemic to climate change.”

Rob Buchanan, a member of the **New York City Water Trail Association** Steering Committee, said: “It’s great to see the governor and the legislature step up and acknowledge the critical importance of clean water. This is a public investment that benefits everyone and will pay for itself many times over.”

Marcia Bystryn, President of the **New York League of Conservation Voters** said: “With water quality crises reaching a tipping point, we are pleased to see the State coming together on additional multi-year dedicated funds in the budget that will help address this critical issue. Governor Cuomo’s and the Legislature’s allocation for each of the next two years brings us closer to leveraging the estimated \$800 million of water infrastructure needed annually statewide.”

Joseph Fiegl, P.E., President of **NYWEA** stated “New York has the greatest documented need of all states in the nation to advance its clean water infrastructure. While communities are attempting to address these needs, additional assistance from the state helps close this large investment gap and provides assistance to local ratepayers shouldering the remaining costs. On behalf of clean water utilities across New York that work to protect local waterways and public

health on a 24/7 basis, NYWEA thanks the Governor and the Legislature for their commitment to these critical infrastructure assets.”

“We applaud these investments in our communities to improve public health and the environment,” said Debbie Mans, Executive Director, **NY/NJ Baykeeper**. “Our future needs to include drinkable and swimmable water for all, all the time.”

Dan Shapley, Water Quality Program Manager for **Riverkeeper**, said: “We’re happy to see the Governor and Legislature, and such a diverse group of interests represented by this coalition, agree that these investments are critical. The water quality data collected by dozens of community scientists partnered with Riverkeeper show as much. Bottom line: these grants will improve water quality where we boat, swim and fish.”

Tracy Brown, Director of Western Sound Programs for **Save the Sound**, said: “Save the Sound applauds our elected officials and the many groups who came together to call for this increased investment in New York’s water infrastructure. Clean water is a priority everyone shares but it takes consistent investments every year to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to safe, reliable water.”

Ned Sullivan, President of **Scenic Hudson**, said: "Governor Cuomo and the state Legislature have once again delivered a budget that manages the state's drinking water supplies while creating jobs. The Water Infrastructure Improvement Act will help Hudson Valley communities with failing systems invest in their future and become the best collection of cities, villages and town centers in the country. There are tremendous opportunities to make advances in environmental health and smart economic revitalization in future years, and we look forward to exploring these in the months ahead."

Jessica Ottney Mahar, policy director for **The Nature Conservancy in New York** said, “The Nature Conservancy in New York commends Governor Cuomo and the Legislature for increasing funding for water infrastructure in this year’s state budget. Water pollution is a significant threat to the quality of life and our environment throughout the State. These funds will be deployed to projects across New York; leverage significant private, local and federal funding; and will improve water quality, community prosperity and public health.”