

The Adirondack Council*Audubon New York*The General Contractors Association of New York*New York League of Conservation Voters*New York Water Environment Association
Open Space Institute*Regional Plan Association*Riverkeeper
The Nature Conservancy in New York*The Trust for Public Land

June 10, 2015

Hon. Andrew Cuomo
Governor
Executive Chamber
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Thank you for your support of including much needed capital funding for natural resources in this year's state budget, including \$200 million for wastewater infrastructure, \$177 million for the Environmental Protection Fund, \$110 million for Parks capital improvements and \$50 million for capital improvements on lands and facilities managed by the Department of Environmental Conservation.

As discussions about extending or making permanent the state's Real Property Tax Cap continue, we write to urge you to make modest modifications to the Cap to ensure that communities can protect clean water, build resilience to extreme weather and meet other pressing environmental and public health needs.

Currently, communities across the state are in dire need of funding for water and wastewater infrastructure. Although low interest loan programs exist at the Environmental Facilities Corporation and through other public funds, due to the constraints communities face under the state's Tax Cap, many are not able to take on even low interest loans to make needed repairs and upgrades to wastewater and drinking water infrastructure because repaying loans or paying interest on bonds would cause them to exceed the tax cap. This issue is in no one's best interest. As many of your regional economic development counsels recognize, without clean water, our communities cannot attract jobs and tourists, protect public health and safety or provide quality of life to residents. We are specifically asking for an exemption of both water and wastewater levies from the Tax Cap calculations.

Likewise, many communities across the state experienced severe impacts of strong storms including Hurricanes Irene, Lee and Sandy, and more recent locally significant heavy snow and rainfall events. These strong storms demonstrated for community leaders the need to focus on investments in green infrastructure, land conservation and other resilience strategies to reduce risk from future extreme weather. Much like the issue with repaying loans for wastewater and drinking water infrastructure, communities are not able to take on projects to create green infrastructure and other resilience measures locally because the cost-share or repayment of debt service on local bonds would cause them to exceed the tax cap.

As discussions continue about the extension or permanence of the state's Tax Cap this legislative session, we urge you to ensure that should this policy be continued in some form, limited but important exemptions for drinking water & wastewater levies and land conservation and green infrastructure

projects that enhance community resilience be built in so that we can ensure our communities are able to remain healthy and strong for future generations.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

The Adirondack Council, William Janeway, Executive Director

Audubon New York, Erin Crotty, Executive Director

The General Contractors Association of New York, Denise Richardson, Executive Director

New York League of Conservation Voters, Marcia Bystryn, Executive Director

New York Water Environment Association, Patricia Cerro-Reehil, Executive Director

Open Space Institute, Christopher J. Elliman, President & Chief Executive Officer

Regional Plan Association, Robert Freudenberg, Director, Energy and Environment

Riverkeeper, Paul Gallay, Executive Director

The Nature Conservancy in New York, Stuart Gruskin, Chief Conservation & External Affairs Officer

The Trust for Public Land, Marc Matsil, New York State Director

Geoffrey G. Miller, P.E., BCEE, Chair, Water Utility Council of the New York Section American Water Works Association

cc: James Malatras, Director of State Operations
Matthew J. Millea, Deputy Director of State Operations for Administration
Basil Seggos, Deputy Secretary for the Environment