

**Adirondack Council
Adirondack Mountain Club
Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve
Catskill Center for Conservation and Development
Catskill Mountainkeeper
Protect the Adirondacks!**

March 22, 2021

Hon. Andrea Stewart Cousins
Majority Leader
NYS Senate
Room 907, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Carl Heastie
Speaker of the House
NYS Assembly
Room 932, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Majority Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins and Speaker Carl Heastie:

RE: NYS FY 2021-22 Budget for the forever wild Forest Preserve and Adirondack and Catskill Parks

The groups listed above are very grateful for the bold actions taken by the State Senate and State Assembly in your respective budgets passed last week. We commend you, and the environmental leaders in your chambers, for taking tough, but necessary stands, to make greater investments in environmental protections in New York through a historic increase in the Environmental Protection Fund and through the Clean Water, Green Jobs, Green New York Bond Act. We also applaud your actions to protect our public Forest Preserve in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. As the state finalizes its new state budget in the days ahead, we urge you combine these historic environmental funding priorities.

Environmental Protection Fund: The State Assembly's budget included a \$400 million Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), raising the fund from \$300 million proposed by the Executive. The Assembly EPF calls for investments in a number of environmental priorities, including land protection funded at \$44 million, invasive species control funded at \$19.3 million, State Lands Stewardship at \$40.465 million, and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation at

\$19.8 million. The State Lands Stewardship category provides vital funding for the Adirondack Park and Catskill Park with \$9 million for “Adirondack and Catskill Visitor Safety and Wilderness Protection” and \$400,000 for the Adirondack Research Consortium to work on helping to organize and develop a Visitor Use Management monitoring program for the Adirondack Forest Preserve. The Senate budget includes \$800,000 in the State Lands Stewardship Account for “Essex County Over-Use.” We support the Assembly’s bold plan for the Environmental Protection Fund and urge the State Senate to match this funding.

The Senate and Assembly are aligned on funding in the EPF for the Catskill Visitor Interpretive Center at \$150,000, the Adirondack Diversity Initiative at \$250,000, the Paul Smith’s Visitor Interpretive Center at \$180,000, the Newcomb Visitor Interpretive Center at \$120,000, Adirondack landfill closure for Essex and Hamilton counties at \$450,000, and Lake George invasive species control at \$450,000. We applaud your support for these important programs.

\$400,000 for Visitor Use Management in the Adirondack Forest Preserve: The State Senate included \$400,000 for the Adirondack Research Consortium to work on helping to organize and develop a Visitor Use Management monitoring program for the Adirondack Forest Preserve in its budget for Aid to Localities. The Assembly funded this effort in the EPF. We applaud the two houses for your recognition about the need to take action to improve the management of the High Peaks Wilderness and the Forest Preserve. We urge both houses to include this vital funding in the final state budget, and prefer that this funding be approved in the EPF budget.

\$200,000 for managing high use in the Catskill Forest Preserve: The State Senate included \$100,000 for the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies to gather data and conduct research on high-use in the Catskill Forest Preserve, \$50,000 for the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development to expand the Catskill Stewards Program, and \$50,000 for Catskill Mountainkeeper to establish a steward program. We urge both houses to include this vital funding in the final state budget.

Clean Water, Green Jobs, Green New York Bond Act: The State Senate included a new \$3 billion Clean Water, Green Jobs, Green New York Bond Act. If approved by the legislature, this measure would be placed on the state ballot for a vote in November 2021. Unlike in last year’s state budget, there is no budget language authorizing its removal from the ballot once it is passed. The \$3 billion Clean Water, Green Jobs, Green New York Bond Act includes \$1 billion for climate change restoration and flood risk reduction, \$550,000 million for open space land conservation and recreation, \$700 million for climate change mitigation, and \$550 million for water quality improvement and resilient infrastructure, among other project and programs. We applaud the State Senate for proposing this bond act and we urge the State Governor and Legislature to work together to send it to the ballot this year.

Clean Water Infrastructure: Both the Senate and Assembly continued important clean water funding, including \$500 million in new funding for clean water infrastructure and commitments to capital improvements at our state parks and environmental conservation facilities. This is consistent with the Executive budget. We applaud your continued commitment to rebuilding New York's clean water infrastructure.

Thank you very much for consideration of our views and concerns.

Sincerely,

Keven Chlad, Director of Government Relations
The Adirondack Council

Cathy Pedler, Director of Advocacy
The Adirondack Mountain Club

David Gibson, Managing Partner
Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve

Jeff Senterman, Executive Director
The Catskill Center for Conservation and Development

Katherine Nadeau, Deputy Director
Catskill Mountainkeeper

Peter Bauer, Executive Director
Protect the Adirondacks!