



PRESS RELEASE

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Budgets Released by the Legislature Show Strong Support for Adirondack Park Initiatives

The Senate and Assembly have each proposed one-house budgets that provide funding for critical programs in the Adirondack Park.

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Protect the Adirondacks, Inc. (PROTECT) thanks the leadership in the Legislature, including Senate Majority Leader Andrew Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie, Senate Finance Chair Liz Krueger, Assembly Ways and Means Committee Chair Pretlow, and the Senate and Assembly Environmental Conservation Chairs Senator Harckham and Assembly Member Deborah Glick, for the funding in the FY2026 one-house budgets proposed by the Senate and Assembly. The proposed budgets from each house increase the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) by \$100 million, restore and/or increase funding for Adirondack programs that were reduced or eliminated from the Governor Kathy Hochul's proposed budget and include funding for several new initiatives that are crucial for the Adirondack Park.

“We applaud the Legislature for the historic proposal to increase the EPF to \$500 million. This proposed increase allows for much-needed enhancements to the Open Space and Land Acquisition and State Land Stewardship lines of the EPF of approximately \$60 million for each. These funds are critical for the addition of new lands to the Forest Preserve and for the management and stewardship of existing Forest Preserve lands in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks,” said Claudia Braymer, Executive Director of PROTECT.

Both houses propose to increase the EPF to a new historic high of \$500 million for FY2026. This is a landmark increase that will serve to fund environmental initiatives across the State and are critical to maintaining and enhancing the State's environmental quality in the face of reduced federal funding for the environment.

Both the Senate and the Assembly proposals (\$58.7 million and \$60 million, respectively) increase the amount of funding for Open Space and Land Acquisition above what was

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proposed by the Governor (\$37.5 million). This increase is needed to put the State on track to achieve its goal of protecting 30% of the State's lands and inland waters by 2030. Both the Senate and Assembly proposals (\$61.3 million and \$59 million) also increase the amount of funding for State Land Stewardship above what was proposed by the Governor (\$49 million). Additionally, both the Senate and Assembly proposals include \$12 million for the management and stewardship of State lands in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks.

“We welcome the Assembly's inclusion of \$1 million for the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to conduct a carrying capacity study of the Saranac Chain of Lakes. The Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan requires DEC to conduct this study, which is absolutely necessary before further adverse impacts occur to these precious water bodies from increased visitor usage and new private development projects that have been approved by the Adirondack Park Agency in recent years,” said Christopher Amato, Conservation Director and Counsel for PROTECT. “We hope that in the coming weeks the Senate will recognize the importance of this funding as it negotiates the final budget with the Governor and the Assembly.”

The Assembly also included \$250,000 in the EPF for nongame wildlife research. “We thank the Assembly for recognizing the need to fund research on nongame species in New York State, which are critical to the health of New York's wild ecosystems. We call on the Senate to support including this funding in the enacted budget to ensure that DEC has the best scientific research available for updating the State Wildlife Action Plan, including a status assessment for wolves in the State,” said Christopher Amato, Conservation Director and Counsel for PROTECT.

Both the Senate and Assembly included \$200,000 for the Adirondack Watershed Institute at Paul Smith's College that conducts water quality monitoring and invasive species management throughout the Adirondack Park; \$200,000 for the Atmospheric Sciences Research Center at Whiteface Mountain Field Station; \$3 million for Survey of Climate Change and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems (SCALE) study; \$1 million for the four visitor centers in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks; and \$2.1 million for the Timbuctoo Summer Climate and Careers Institute.

The Assembly also included \$2 million for the “African American Experience in the Adirondacks” exhibit at the Adirondack Experience in Blue Mountain Lake.

Protect the Adirondacks

Protect the Adirondacks is an IRS-approved non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and stewardship of the 6-million-acre Adirondack Park. Our mission is to protect the Adirondack Park's wild character for current and future generations. PROTECT pursues this mission through a combination of advocacy, grassroots organizing, independent public oversight, research, water quality monitoring, education, and legal action. Protect the Adirondacks was formed in 2009 as the result of a merger between two long-standing environmental conservation groups in the Adirondack Park, the Resident's Committee to Protect the Adirondacks (est. 1991) and the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks (est. 1901).

Protect the Adirondacks is managed by a 20-member Board of Directors of Adirondack leaders with expertise in environmental law, local government, Adirondack environmental and cultural history, state agency management, and small business. Protect the Adirondacks maintains an office in a 100% energy efficient, solar-and wind-powered office in Johnsbury in the central Adirondacks. For more information see www.protectadks.org and @ProtectAdkPark.

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