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and Counsel**

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December 23, 2025

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

RE: Adirondack Park FY27 Funding Priorities

Dear Governor Hochul,

Protect the Adirondacks urges the continued funding of a comprehensive suite of Adirondack Park programs and initiatives that support the stewardship and long-term vitality of both public and private lands throughout the Park. In addition to the budget allocations outlined below, we recommend passage of an important Article VII climate change bill that would provide economic stability to local municipalities and strengthen environmental protection for privately owned forest lands. This legislation would incentivize landowners to keep forests intact to store and sequester carbon rather than converting them to non-forestry uses.

Budget Requests Supported by Protect the Adirondacks

Protect the Adirondacks supports the following budget requests for the coming fiscal year (2026-27) to help protect and sustain healthy, resilient human and natural communities throughout the Adirondack Park:

- **At least \$425 million for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) including:**
 - **\$50 million for open space protection and land conservation, including:**
 - at least \$3 million for the Land Trust Alliance Conservation Partnership Program
 - at least \$1.5 million for the Land Trust Alliance Conservation Easement Program

Protect the Adirondacks

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- **\$50 million for state land stewardship**, including:
 - \$10 million for Adirondack Visitor Safety and Wilderness Protection
 - \$2.5 million for Parks and Trails Grants Program
 - \$1 million reallocated to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to conduct the carrying capacity study of the Saranac Chain of Lakes
 - \$2 million for the Survey of Climate and Adirondack Lakes Ecosystems (SCALE)
- **\$250,000 each** for Paul Smith’s Visitor Interpretative Center (VIC), the SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) Adirondack Interpretative Center (AIC), and the ADK High Peaks Information Center
- **\$20 million** for Invasives Species prevention, control and eradication
- **\$200,000** for the Adirondack Watershed Institute (AWI) at Paul Smith’s College and the Atmospheric Science and Research Center (ASRC) Whiteface Mountain Field Station
- **At least \$500 million** for the Clean Water Infrastructure Fund
- **Funding to improve Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Climate Justice in the Adirondacks**, including:
 - \$2.1 million for the Timbuctoo Institute
 - \$420,000 for the Adirondack Diversity Initiative (ADI)
 - Funding for the Adirondack Experience’s new exhibition celebrating the history of African Americans in the region
- **At least \$90 million** in capital funds for DEC
- **At least \$3.8 million** for the Smart Growth program
- **Funding to continue expanding road salt reduction and control efforts** throughout the Adirondacks, and
- **Increased staffing** for DEC Forest Rangers and the Adirondack Park Agency.

Climate Protection-Based Private Land Forest Management Program

We urge you to include in your Executive Budget an amendment to the Real Property Tax Law that would create a tax incentive for private landowners to keep mature forests intact. Protecting standing forests reduces carbon in the atmosphere and benefits community safety, carbon storage and sequestration, climate resiliency, and New Yorkers’ wallets. A climate protection-based program for private forest lands would be especially beneficial in the Adirondack Park, where millions of acres of privately owned forests are at risk of conversion to non-forestry uses. A straightforward state program, available to willing private landowners across New York, would provide annual property tax benefits in exchange for maintaining intact forests. In addition, localities meeting specified criteria can seek state reimbursement of lost property taxes revenues from the real estate transfer tax funds. This approach will help New York achieve the goals of

the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act and the 30 by 30 Act, while also improving habitat connectivity for wildlife and reducing forest fragmentation.

Legislation to establish this program already exists (S5603/A7550), and we urge you to advance this proposal as an Article VII bill in your Executive Budget.

Conclusion

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Protect the Adirondacks, we thank you for your consideration of these requests, which are intended to bolster the regional economy while advancing the preservation of the natural environment in the Adirondack Park. We stand ready to answer any questions that your staff may have regarding the proposals outlined above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claudia K. Braymer". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Claudia" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Braymer".

Claudia Braymer
Executive Director

cc:

Kathryn Garcia, Director of State Operations, Executive Chamber

Ashley Dougherty, Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Executive Chamber

Blake Washington, Budget Director, Division of the Budget

Amanda Lefton, Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation

Barbara Rice, Executive Director, Adirondack Park Agency

Kathy Moser, Acting Commissioner, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Marie Therese Dominguez, Department of Transportation