



Save the Sound®

## MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

### *Save the Sound Priorities for New York State Fiscal Year 2020-2021*

*For more than 40 years Save the Sound has been protecting clean water and restoring Long Island Sound ecosystems through hands-on science and community collaboration, legislative advocacy, and legal action.*

#### **PASS THE “RESTORE MOTHER NATURE” BOND ACT**

Save the Sound strongly supports the proposed Restore Mother Nature Bond Act. In our work we see the widespread need to design and build more projects that address the stresses our communities are facing due to the changing climate. The proposed bond would fund projects that reduce local flooding, increase habitat for wildlife, conserve our critical natural resources, and reduce climate change. If passed, Save the Sound will work to support the passage of the bond in November.

#### **SUPPORT \$1 BILLION IN NEW FUNDING FOR CLEAN WATER INFRASTRUCTURE**

Current investments for clean water infrastructure are yielding significant results, however, we still have much work to do to address all of NY’s clean water needs – estimated at \$80 billion over 20 years, not including emerging contaminant treatment, drinking water source protection, or harmful algal bloom response and prevention. In order to meet our wastewater infrastructure needs and keep drinking water safe and affordable, New York State should invest \$1 billion in new clean water infrastructure funding in the 2020-21 budget.

#### **FULLY FUND THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUND (EPF) AT \$300+ MILLION**

The historic sustained funding level of the EPF should be maintained in the SFY 2020-2021 to a funding level of \$300 million or greater. The Environmental Protection Fund supports projects that protect and improve water and air quality, conserve critical open space, and sustain valuable environmental research and education. The fund enables NY state to leverage federal, local, and private dollars, investing in a healthy environment which in turn makes New York an attractive home for businesses and families. We support an increase in the EPF to support the following:

#### **INCREASE INTERSTATE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION (IEC) FUNDING (EPF)**

Increase the appropriation allocated to the Interstate Environmental Commission (IEC) from \$41,600 to \$96,323. This modest increase is critical in order for IEC to maintain eligibility to apply for and receive federal funding in excess of \$1,000,000 annually, yielding New York State a significant return on its investment. This increase will help ensure the IEC can continue and expand ambient water quality monitoring of Long Island Sound as well as involvement in DEC’s Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan and South Shore Estuary Program activities.



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### **INCREASE STAFF AT DEC AND DOH**

Staff levels need to be increased at the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Department of Health (DOH) to keep pace with critically needed water protection programs and to enforce existing laws and regulations designed to protect public health. Program needs within both agencies have increased significantly in recent years. Experienced staffers have retired, resulting in decreased staff levels. New York State needs to immediately increase staffing levels in key program areas to ensure efficient and effective implementation of clean water programs, design and construction approvals for projects receiving infrastructure funding, and to prevent missed opportunities to leverage federal, local and private dollars.

### **PROTECT NEW YORK'S STREAMS**

Protecting New York's small streams is integral to protecting our sources of drinking water throughout the state. Under DEC's Protection of Waters Program, class AA, A, B streams, and class C streams that support trout populations or may support trout spawning, are protected from certain activities and require a permit for other impacting activities such as stream bank or bed disturbance. New York should adopt A.8349/S.5612-A, which would add New York's class C streams into DEC's program, providing additional protections for thousands of stream miles across the state.

### **PROTECT NEW YORK'S FRESHWATER WETLANDS**

Independent of size, wetlands play an integral role in protecting water quality, absorbing floodwaters, and supporting wildlife. For example, one acre of freshwater wetland can hold over a million gallons of water. Acting like filters, wetlands protect water supplies by absorbing pollutants, pesticides, nitrogen, phosphorus and other contaminants. Current law limits the DEC to protect and map wetlands 12.4 acres or larger, or wetlands of "unusual local importance." Independent of scientific and ecological value, the 12.4 acre size limitation was included in the Freshwater Wetlands Act of 1975. New York State can protect water quality and make our state more resilient to climate change by enacting A.3658/S.5576, which will protect all wetlands one acre or larger.

### **BAN EXPANDED POLYSTYRENE FOAM**

Polystyrene plastic is produced from petrochemicals and causes health and environmental hazards. Polystyrene is derived from styrene and benzene, both of which are neurotoxins and probable carcinogens posing a human health hazard. Polystyrene is the only plastic used in food packaging that is based on a carcinogen. Styrene leaching from polystyrene products increases with temperature and particular foods such as alcohol, oils and fats. Therefore, polystyrene products raise a human health and environmental risk necessitating their removal from use as a food packaging material.