

GREEN SHEET | New York



A Publication of Environmental Advocates of New York • NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2009 Vol. 14, No. 6



**ENVIRONMENTAL
ADVOCATES OF NEW YORK**

YOUR GOVERNMENT WATCHDOG

.....

BUDGET BY THE NUMBERS

\$2.7 BILLION—New York's
Deficit Reduction Plan for 2009-10

\$90 MILLION—Governor's
raid on state energy funds

\$10 MILLION—Deficit
Reduction Plan's EPF cut

\$500 MILLION—Taken
from the EPF since it was
established

500—Projected staff loss at
Dept. of Environmental Conservation
due to budget cuts, hiring freeze

.....

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Staff News
- Director's Chair
- 2010 Legislative Priorities
- 40th Anniversary

Budget Woes Result in Green Raids

Over the last few months, state lawmakers have looked for ways to address New York's growing state budget deficit. With a multi-billion dollar deficit looming, lawmakers recently came to the Capitol to address our fiscal crisis during "special" legislative sessions.

On December 2nd, lawmakers reached agreement on Governor Paterson's proposed Deficit Reduction Plan. The total reductions to the State's budget are \$2.7 billion, and include swiping the state's energy efficiency funds and cutting the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF).

Budget cuts to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) mean that the agency has less resources now than it did nearly five years ago. With the Governor's \$12 million in deficit reduction cuts, the DEC's State Operating Budget has decreased one percent (when accounting for inflation) since 2005.

RAIDING CLEAN ENERGY MONIES

As part of his Deficit Reduction Plan, the Governor took \$90 million from the pool of auction proceeds generated by New York's role in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Raiding revenue generated by the nation's first-ever plan to reduce global warming pollution to plug New York's budget hole hurts consumers and the environment.

This one-time raid undercuts the RGGI's long-term job creation and investment benefits, not to mention the reductions in climate-altering greenhouse gas emissions the monies would have achieved if put to their intended use.

Research shows that the regional climate program's success hinges on the wise use of revenue generated by allowance auctions. The Deficit Reduction Plan jeopardizes the success of this critical program and serves as a bad example to other states.

To use RGGI auction proceeds for budget relief is also a reversal of the Governor's policy to use the proceeds to reduce the impact of climate change in the future.

ENVIRONMENTAL CUTS

The Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) has been the target of almost \$500 million in sweeps since it was established, as well as an unprecedented \$50 million cut last year. As a result, during 2009 budget negotiations the State Legislature fought to include \$222 million for EPF programs. However, the Deficit Reduction Plan includes taking another \$10 million from our environmental trust fund.

Protecting the EPF is critical to New York's public health and safety and cutting support for environmental projects will only worsen the State's financial situation. The Fund invests primarily in capital projects that protect the environment and enhance our communities. It has created jobs, prevented pollution, and connected countless communities and children with the outdoors.

DEC BUDGET CUTS

The health and safety of all New Yorkers depends on the DEC's ability to successfully implement our environmental laws. Ongoing analysis of the DEC's budget reveals that the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

STAFF NEWS

Jackson Morris left Environmental Advocates of New York in November to become a senior policy advisor with the Pace Law School Energy and Climate Center.

Jackson joined us in 2006 as a public policy intern. As such he helped gather information critical to the production of *Muddying the Waters*, our report on New York's failed water pollution permit system.

In 2007, Jackson joined our staff as government affairs program associate. He recorded lawmakers' votes on significant environmental measures and worked closely on our sister organization's annual *Voters' Guide*, the only scorecard that grades New York State lawmakers according to their votes on bills that could benefit or harm our air, land and water.

Jackson went on to head up our Air & Energy Program, where he led efforts to reduce global warming pollution by cutting carbon dioxide emissions and promoting energy efficiency and clean energy.

Jackson will be missed by everyone at Environmental Advocates. We wish him the best of luck in his new endeavor.



**ENVIRONMENTAL
ADVOCATES OF NEW YORK**
YOUR GOVERNMENT WATCHDOG

DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

In tight budget years, New York's environmental programs make appealing targets. And right now Governor Paterson and the State Legislature have painted a bull's eye on dollars earmarked for environmental protection. Here are a few examples:

• **Department of Environmental Conservation:** Still reeling from the loss of 800 scientists, engineers and enforcement officials under Governor Pataki, this agency will lose 500 more staff this year thanks to budget cuts. **Result:** Environmental laws are underenforced while companies are unable to get required permits in a timely manner, inhibiting economic activity.

• **Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative:** The Governor's Deficit Reduction Plan has raided \$90 million from the nation's first cap-and-trade program for carbon dioxide. **Result:** We fail to reduce global warming pollution while the State fails to provide incentives for the clean energy industry to move to New York.

• **Environmental Protection Fund:** A target even in good times (more that a quarter of the Fund has been "swept" since 2002), last year Governor Paterson took \$175 million from the Fund. The Deficit Reduction Plan included an additional \$10 million cut. **Result:** Environmental needs go unmet, and ignoring needs now means more costly remediation or restoration later.

Environmental programs too often get treated as if they're luxury items in tough times. Or worse, barriers to economic development.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

BUDGET WOES

agency is in an ever-tightening fiscal vice. Tax revenues are dwindling while responsibilities grow.

The DEC manages water and air quality, gas and oil drilling, hazardous waste, dam safety, and many other programs.

The Governor's hiring freeze and retirement incentives will result in the loss of more than 500 DEC staff by the end of this fiscal year. The latest round of budget cuts will directly impact services and jeopardize programs. Funding agency operations that keep our air and water clean and safe should be a top priority for leaders and lawmakers.

Take the issue of natural gas development in the Southern Tier. Thousands of natural gas wells could soon be drilled in New York and the Governor is slashing staff at the agency responsible for overseeing this potentially dangerous industry. We can look to the Pennsylvania side of our border to see the likely result of such action—contaminated wells, poisoned streams and disrupted communities.

Natural gas drilling may create jobs and generate some additional tax revenue, but at what cost? How much will New York State spend to clean up the mess? How many New Yorkers will flee communities contaminated by fracking fluid spills?

Environmental protection is not a luxury—it's a necessity. Protecting the health of our air, land and water is not an obstacle to economic development—it's a guide to prosperity for all instead of just a few. Green investments spur economic development and support a more sustainable economy. The sooner our Governor and state lawmakers realize this truth, the better off New York will be.



THE ROAD AHEAD

New York, along with the rest of the country, is experiencing difficult fiscal times. But plugging budget holes with one-time sweeps and raids will only exacerbate our problems. The State should focus on annual revenue generators rather than one-time deals likely to reduce new investments in our economy.

There are myriad issues to address in the State budget. But change should not come at the expense of our environment. Our leaders must learn that investing in New York's environment equals investing in our economic future.

2010 Legislative Priorities

Environmental Advocates of New York has identified our legislative priorities for the coming year and Legislative Session. These measures will do much to protect our natural resources and the health our families.

The **Global Warming Pollution Control Act** would direct New York State's leading environmental agency to reduce climate-altering greenhouse gas emissions statewide 80 percent by the year 2050.

Maintaining staff at the Department of Environmental Conservation, especially in light of the Governor's budget cuts and previous agency-wide hiring freeze. We are particularly concerned that staff losses may jeopardize New York's efforts to safely oversee **natural gas drilling, or "fracking,"** in the Southern Tier and Catskills regions.

Ensuring that New York's **Environmental Protection Fund** remains solvent and protected from sweeps to plug the State's budget hole is also high on our list this year. Defending the Fund is critical to the health and safety of all New Yorkers.

Ensuring that **tax credits from the Brownfield Cleanup Program** revitalize properties and guarantee comprehensive and thorough clean-up, rather than provide large subsidies for developers that don't deserve them.

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has limited authority to **regulate ground or surface water withdrawals**, leaving a gaping hole in New York's water quality protections. The agency will likely propose changes during the Legislative Session to clarify authority in this area, and Environmental Advocates will make it a priority to work with the DEC, Governor's office and lawmakers to improve any such legislation.

Great Lakes

In October, President Obama signed a law to nearly double funding to restore the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will help clean up contaminated sediments that threaten public health; prevent the introduction of invasive species that cost the region at least \$200 million per year; prevent run-off and other pollution responsible for beach closures; and restore habitat that is the foundation of the region's outdoor recreational economy.

New York's Congressional leaders, including senators Schumer and Gillibrand and representatives Slaughter, Higgins, Maffei, Arcuri, Massa and Lee, were essential in getting the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative fully funded at \$475 million.

Green Sheet New York Going Green

Environmental Advocates of New York is making *Green Sheet New York* a quarterly newsletter. Currently, *Green Sheet* is published six times a year. Publishing the newsletter quarterly, or four times a year, will save us thousands of dollars in production costs, as well as tons of paper. This is just one of many ways we hope to go green in the future. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Daniella Nordin at dnordin@eany.org or at 518-462-5526 ext. 239.

40TH ANNIVERSARY

Environmental Advocates of New York celebrated our 40th anniversary last month at our annual Advocate Awards Gala. This year, we honored three extraordinary green heroes. Carter Bales, Andy Darrell and Lieutenant Governor Richard Ravitch were applauded for exemplary service and leadership in protecting New York's environment.

Carter Bales is a nationally recognized expert on the economic impacts of global warming. For more than a decade, he has worked tirelessly to address the threat of climate change by documenting the fiscal consequences of inaction.

Andy Darrell is New York's foremost expert on sustainable cities. Working with Environmental Defense Fund and other groups, he has long been dedicated to revitalizing the city's neighborhoods, parks and public areas.

Lieutenant Governor Richard Ravitch has led the charge to improve public transit for almost 30 years. He has a distinguished history of working to solve the State's most critical challenges, both fiscal and political. Widely known for resuscitating the MTA, Richard Ravitch has served in many critical roles.

Guests included former Environmental Advocates' executive director and recently appointed U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 2 Administrator Judith Enck, Silda Wall Spitzer, and Rainforest Alliance executive director and 2008 Advocate Award honoree Tensie Whelan, among others.

Help us celebrate 40 years of protecting the environment by going to www.eany.org to donate \$40 for 40 years.



ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATES OF NEW YORK

YOUR GOVERNMENT WATCHDOG

353 Hamilton Street, Albany, NY 12210

Forwarding Service Requested



Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper with soy ink.



BE AN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATE TODAY!

Stay up-to-date on statewide environmental issues by becoming a member of Environmental Advocates of New York for just \$35. Membership includes a **subscription to our bi-monthly *Green Sheet New York* newsletter** and **a copy of EPL/Environmental Advocates' annual *Voters' Guide***. Please be sure to include your address with your payment. For more information, contact **Peggy Fandrich at 518.462.5526, ext. 236**.

Join Environmental Advocates today!

- \$1000 Advocates Circle \$750 Steward \$500 Defender \$250 Protector
- \$100 Preserver \$50 Guardian \$35 Watchdog Other \$

Would you like to increase the impact of your gift? Ask your company if they have a Matching Gifts Program!

Sign up as an eAdvocate! Email: _____

Make your tax-deductible check payable to **Environmental Advocates**, or use your credit card, and mail to **353 Hamilton St., Albany, NY 12210**.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ City, State and Zip: _____

- AMEX VISA MASTER CARD DISCOVER

Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____ Amount: _____

Signature: _____

GREEN SHEET NEW YORK is published by Environmental Advocates of New York.

- Irvine Flinn**, President of the Board
- Robert Moore**, Executive Director
- Saima Anjam**, Government Affairs Program Associate
- Peggy Fandrich**, Development Assistant
- David Gahl**, Policy Director
- Alison Jenkins**, Fiscal Policy Program Director
- Katherine Nadeau**, Water & Natural Resources Program Associate
- Daniella Nordin**, Communications Assistant
- Erica Ringewald**, Communications Director
- Deb Sgambelluri**, Membership Director
- Pat Sterling**, Finance Director

Environmental Advocates of New York is a member of EarthShare, a federation of the nation's most respected environmental charities.

To find out more about how and your workplace can support Environmental Advocates through an EarthShare campaign, please call Deb Sgambelluri at 518.462.5526 ext. 230, or visit www.earthshare.org. To donate through EarthShare, designate your donation to Environmental Advocates of New York, CFC #97425.

