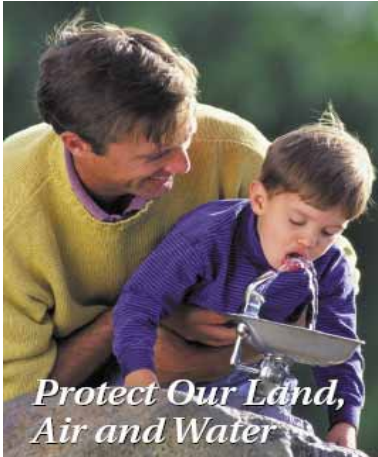


The Friends of New York's Environment

Protecting our land, air and water



A new day for New York's Environment. The environmental challenges that New York and the United States face have taken on an exponentially higher order of urgency and complexity in the past decade. The unassailable truth, the reality, is that meeting these challenges and protecting our health and the environment will require greater creativity, innovation, leadership, unity of government focus and funding.

A new environmental initiative. The problems that face us include the accumulation of greenhouse gases and sprawl's impact on farmland, open space and our quality of life. Our needs include clean air, clean water, energy independence and effective recycling. These challenges, as well as acid rain, mercury, coastal degradation, pollution and invasives cross all geographic and political boundaries. New York needs a new environmental initiative to ensure that these problems are addressed and the State supports responsible stewardship of public lands, waters, parks, historic sites, nature centers, fish and wildlife. Cities, neglected urban areas and underserved communities need their fair share of environmental help.

New York can and should be a national leader addressing these challenges. We can and should continue to lead in wilderness and forest protection, helping to make us carbon neutral. We can and should provide market-based incentives for smart growth, healthy schools, affordable housing and green development where infrastructure already exists, building more energy efficient, sustainable urban, rural, coastal and suburban communities. We can protect our environment, our jobs, our health and our way of life without raising taxes.

A new era, a new opportunity. Policy initiatives to address these challenges depend on increased and smarter use of dedicated funding. An analysis of the gap between current program and investments needed concludes that approximately \$1 billion per year in new funding is needed. We ask that you:

- **Expand the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to \$500m and expand the Bottle Bill**
- **Strengthen state agencies to advance environmental protection; restore 200 positions**
- **Provide incentives for local open space conservation initiatives**
- **Advance consideration of a future environmental bond act**

Friends of New York's Environment is a broad coalition of 200 plus individual environmental, health, agricultural, recreational and urban stakeholder groups and coalitions who work together to advocate for real increases in environmental protection. We hope to partner with the new administration and the legislature to help advance protection of our environment.

New York needs a **fresh, bold approach** to a wide range of environmental and energy issues. Our children need a safe, secure future; to do that the new administration and legislature needs to make environmental investments that will truly protect **New York's land, air and water**. Our organizations stand ready to help New York achieve a cleaner, healthier environment.



Expanding the Bottle Bill will support cleaner communities and an expanded EPF.

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To address the environmental needs of the state, we urge the administration and the legislature to:

Expand the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to \$500 million:

An expanded, reformed EPF can allow for the necessary investment and incentives to implement innovative environmental policies. By 2010 the EPF should be funded at \$500 million. This can be accomplished by adding \$105 million in new Bottle Bill revenue (see below) plus some of the undesignated real estate transfer revenue for an EPF of \$350 million in FY'08, adding the balance of the Bottle Bill revenue and more real estate funds for an EPF of \$450 million in FY'09, and authorizing \$500 million in FY'10.

We support improvements to the EPF to include amending the granting procedures and policies to facilitate more timely release of funds in addition to the awarding of grants to previously excluded non-profits. As key staff positions are filled, previously appropriated and committed but not yet released EPF funds should be released. This will produce real and immediate environmental and local community benefits.

We urge the new Executive to submit, and the Legislature to approve, an itemized EPF with guaranteed new funding to back increases for existing programs and any proposed, appropriate new categories. We oppose "off-loads," the use of the EPF to support agency staff or programs paid for by the General Fund.

Expand the Bottle Bill, Support Cleaner Communities and More Recycling:

The state should support cleaner communities and generate new funding for environmental protection by updating the Bottle Bill. Existing law requires a minimum 5-cent deposit on beer, soda, sparkling water and wine cooler containers sold in the State. We support expanding the bottle bill to include bottled water and other non-carbonated beverages, and transferring the unclaimed deposits to the EPF. Currently, bottlers keep an estimated \$140 million a year in unclaimed deposits from beer and soda sales. The revenue from an expanded bottle bill would generate an estimated \$180 million a year in new funding for the EPF.

Strengthen state agencies to advance environmental protection; restore 200 positions:

Innovative policies and new programs will need motivated state employees to implement them. The central conservation agencies in state government have experienced a near crushing diminishing of resources -- more than 1,000 staff over the last 12 years were cut from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). We ask for \$20 million in FY'08 General Funds to restore two hundred environmental experts, scientists, planners, real estate professionals and stewardship staff positions at DEC, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Department of State, Agriculture & Markets, and the Adirondack Park Agency. This will ensure that they have the capacity and the skilled and committed employees for priority programs, enforcement of new and existing environmental laws and policies, and implementation of EPF reforms.

Provide state authorization and incentives for local open space conservation initiatives:

In many New York communities, especially on Long Island and NYC suburbs, residents are willing to help pay for protection of their local communities. If more local funds were matched by state money, more local funds will be approved and local governments become stronger environmental partners. Many towns also desire the ability to raise funds locally for smart growth and open space initiatives with mechanisms that require state authorization. If the State gives local municipalities authorization for innovative local conservation ballot initiatives, state funding could leverage \$1 billion in new local funds over the next ten years. This might include one or more local and/or regional Community Preservation Acts.

Advance consideration of a future environmental bond act:

New York needs to think big and expansively to address environmental crises. Leadership needs to plan for a full-scale environmental, energy campaign, including new technologies and clean water infrastructure for the Great Lakes, Long Island Sound, Hudson and other water bodies. This will address environmental needs, help build a more sustainable future, and generate jobs. We should, by 2009, let New York voters decide if they want to protect our water and the environment future New Yorkers will inherit by investing now, while it is less expensive, in capital projects that will provide future benefits. Based on the current analysis of needs, a new \$2.5 billion Bond Act or further expanded \$750 million a year EPF could provide needed funding.