



Riverkeeper's SFY 2020-2021 Budget Priorities

RESTORE MOTHER NATURE BOND ACT - \$3 BILLION

Riverkeeper strongly supports the proposal for a \$3 billion Restore Mother Nature Bond Act. While the Hudson River Estuary has undoubtedly become cleaner in the past several decades, at the same time the Hudson's most iconic fish species have experienced dramatic declines. Of nineteen species examined, one species has left the Hudson completely, two are on the verge of extirpation, one shows a slight uptick, and the rest show significant to severe declines. The bond act presents an opportunity to make investments that will benefit New York's environment for generations to come. **We strongly request that greater clarity and transparency on the funding categories are included in the final budget agreement.**

CLEAN WATER INFRASTRUCTURE ACT - \$1 BILLION

New York State has over an \$80 billion need for water infrastructure investments over the next 20 years, the largest in the nation. The infrastructure investments made through the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act (WIIA) via the Clean Water Infrastructure Act (CWIA) are the biggest New York State investment in this critical priority in a generation. In his 2019 State of the State, the Governor's proposed doubling of the commitment to CWIA to \$5 billion marks a historic commitment to protect New York's waters. **We encourage an increase in commitment to a \$1 billion investment in the FY 2020-21 budget to meet the scale of the clean water challenges facing the state.**

Protecting New York's Freshwater Wetlands (Part TT TED Article vii Legislation)

Riverkeeper strongly supports the proposal included in the executive budget to reform New York's regulatory program for freshwater wetlands in Article 24 of the Environmental Conservation Law. We encourage the legislature to support this proposal and encourage . New York must take action to ensure our state's natural resources aren't compromised by the Trump administration's attacks on the Clean Water Act. New York now must act to address these new gaps and protect these valuable clean water resources and wildlife habitats.

BAN ON 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.¹ 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.**

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION STAFFING

DEC staff and budget must be increased after decades of attrition, in order to meet the increasingly numerous and complex water challenges the agency faces. For example, the DEC Division of Water has experienced the steepest decline over a 10-year period, with a loss of 59 positions, or 21%. The Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources has seen a decline of 58 staff positions since 2008, a 13% drop in

¹ Sierra Club, "Regulating the Use of Polystyrene Food Service Items" available at, https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce-authors/u1997/polystyrene_fact_sheet_MA-SC-2015%281%29.pdf

Contact Jeremy Cherson, Legislative Advocacy Manager, jcherson@riverkeeper.org, 770-630-6790



Riverkeeper's SFY 2020-2021 Budget Priorities

staff resources. Environmental Conservation Police Officers have experienced a loss of 44 positions as of October 2018 from a 2008 high of 333, also a 13% drop in staff resources. The DEC is increasingly asked to fill in the vacuum but they are underfunded and staffing needs are greater than ever.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUND - \$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. Below are specific line items.

HUDSON RIVER ESTUARY PROGRAM - \$7 Million (EPF)

For 30 years, the Hudson River Estuary Program has provided indispensable technical assistance and community grants to support a model, stakeholder-driven collaborative management program for the region. Both the Hudson River Estuary Program and the Mohawk Basin Program will begin implementing new Action Agendas in this fiscal year. Riverkeeper supports increase to \$7 million for the Hudson River Estuary Program, including \$1 million for the Mohawk Basin Program.

- Hudson River monitoring project, a landmark proposal to finally establish baseline water quality conditions for the river - \$1 million
- Harmful Algal Blooms response, including Walkkill River clean water plan, will need approximately \$500,000
- Support of the Governor's Restore Mother Nature Bond Act, particularly dam removal to restore historic migratory fish habitat - \$500,000

WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM - \$15 MILLION (EPF)

The Waterfront Revitalization Program is an important source of community-led watershed management funding for communities statewide and received \$14.5 million in the FY 2019-20 budget. Riverkeeper urges the restoration of funding to FY 2018-19 level of \$15 million, but notes that the popular program warrants further growth. The Program funds community grants to plan for and implement both waterfront revitalization and watershed management projects.

WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM - \$18.25 MILLION (EPF)

The Water Quality Improvement Program received a \$500,000 cut in the FY 2019-20 budget to \$17.75 million. We urge the restoration of this funding. The program is, along with the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act, a key source of needed grants to support community investments in wastewater infrastructure. Significant Clean Water Infrastructure Act funds are spent via the Water Quality Improvement Program, but the terms of Water Quality Improvement Program grants are more favorable to communities, typically allowing for less local match and greater state investment per project. We support the following specific allocations within WQIP:

- Source Water Assessments at \$5 million into the next fiscal year.
- Newburgh source water mapping: \$250,000

Contact Jeremy Cherson, Legislative Advocacy Manager, jcherson@riverkeeper.org, 770-630-6790