

New York State Conservation Council Inc.
8 East Main Street, Ilion, New York 13357-1899

Budget 2016-2017

Attached you will find the New York State Conservation Council's Memorandum of Support for Governor Cuomo's 2016-2017 proposed budget. Points mentioned in our memorandum have consensus of approval from the estimated 300,000 sportsmen who are associated with the Council through membership in their local sportsmen's club.

The New York State Conservation Council is entering its 83rd year of operation and is a leading advocate for the environment and New York sportsmen and conservationists.

We strongly support:

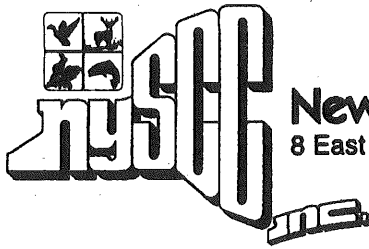
- The Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources portion of the Environmental Conservation Department remaining intact and at the same level as last year.
- Staffing for DEC remaining the same.
- Successional funding for projects originally created under NY Works 3 and NY Works 4 Projects being available under this budget to ensure continued improvements of our hatcheries, infrastructure, Young Forest Initiatives, and general health of the DEC's Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources Division.
- Allocation of financial resources for FWMR, building upon the revisions of miscellaneous Capitol Accounts of last year and continuing the principle of sound financial management

These budget items have long been supported by the organized sportsmen. Seeing them all presented in the Governor's Budget with support by the legislature will be greatly appreciated by all who are served by the NYSCC.

Sincerely,

NYS CONSERVATION COUNCIL, INC.

A. Charles Parker
President



New York State Conservation Council Inc.
8 East Main Street, Ilion, New York 13357-1899

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT
Proposed 2016 – 2017 State Budget
January 28th, 2016
State Senate – Assembly**

Joint EnCon Budget Hearing

This year's budget as presented by Governor Cuomo proposes a welcomed increase of \$69.2 million to the Department of Environmental Conservation. While this budget proposal includes Environmental Protection Fund issues, it also addresses what I wish to comment on -- the resources that will be available to New York State, DEC Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources and to DEC Lands and Forests.

While we would have preferred to see an increase, it is good news that funding for Lands and Forests and Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources appears to be remaining at the same level as last year.

Most funding sources for FWMR are directly related to sportsmen's contributions to conservation. While there is a significant contribution through our license fees, it is matching funds from Pittman-Robertson, Dingell-Johnson and other federal programs that bring in a significant portion of available revenue to FWMR; these funds are based on license sales.

Much of the financial and program support to the DEC has come from prior obligations that require future budgetary commitments. We welcome seeing that continuing projects committed under NY Works 3 and 4 such as hatchery improvements, the Young Forest Initiative and DEC infrastructure and staffing are being funded under this proposed budget.

It is nice to see that the State of New York will continue pursuing the goals of good conservation practices that the Governor recognizes.

As a sportsman I hunt, fish and trap. A release from NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli shows that I am not alone. Some items of note in Comptroller DiNapoli's report:

Fishing and hunting bring a stream of cash to New York, \$5 billion that supports local businesses and jobs across the state,

Nearly two million people fish, hunt or trap in New York, ranking the state third nationwide.

In several New York counties the number of resident licenses sold equaled more than one-third of the county's population.

Fishing is the most popular activity with two-thirds of New York participants fishing exclusively, followed by 28% who fish and hunt, and nine percent who hunt only.

Consumer spending on these sporting activities totaled more than \$5 billion in 2011, the most recent year for which such figures are available. Nearly \$1.9 billion was spent on trip-related purchases including transportation, lodging and food. Nonresidents generated 20% of revenue collected from license fees in the 2012-13 license year.

Erie County ranked first in total license sales in the 2012-13 season, issuing more than 120,000 licenses and permits. Oswego County ranked first in fishing licenses.

In addition to benefiting the economy, fishing and hunting **supports state wildlife programs**. Revenues from the sale of annual licenses to fish, hunt and trap have contributed an average of **\$45.3 million** a year to the New York State Conservation Fund in the last five fiscal years. Spending from that Fund on state wildlife conservation programs has averaged \$44.3 million over the same time period.

The state Division of the Budget estimates \$50.2 million in such expenditures in state fiscal year 2015-16. Federal programs that allocate certain federal hunting, fishing and boating revenues to the states for wildlife programs have provided an average of more than **\$24 million a year for New York since 2011**.

The full report "Fishing, Hunting and Trapping in New York State" can be found at:

http://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/economic/sportpersons_11302015.pdf

As investment practices of DEC's lifetime license fund have recently changed for the good as a result of CFAB working with the Comptroller's Office, sportsmen hope that further investment strategies will yield an even greater return.

Hunting, fishing and trapping is good business as well as sound conservation and environmental practice.

Many different groups in New York State present their cases on what they feel are sound environmental and conservation practices. The New York State Conservation Council agrees with some of these groups on many issues, but we have other matters on which we do not agree or have a different perspective.

In the present budget discussion and upcoming legislative session there are certain topics and perspectives we would like to see addressed:

The management of our natural resources requires balance, taking into consideration our forests and lands, our wildlife, and man's interests. Man has a role in that balance, since nature left to its own accord does not yield the best results. Management is a science. The experts in New York State are within DEC. While nothing is ever absolute and perfect, the DEC -- not legislation -- should be the primary management tool. This is not saying that DEC does not need the support of the Legislative and Executive levels of government.

An issue exists in the Adirondacks in practice now that the sportsmen have great concern over. The state is gaining a considerable amount of formerly privately controlled land, but what we are not gaining is real access to these lands or sound management for the wildlife thereon.

The definition of 'access' differs depending on who you talk to. Access for the physically fit 20-year-old is not access for someone in their 60's. We do not see man's access as detrimental to a healthy ecosystem.

Some lands being purchased can be labeled as new growth. If these new growth lands are not managed for wildlife control the result will be lands being over browsed to the point where only the inferior plants of low environmental value will exist. Mature desired species of trees identified with a healthy mature forest will not grow; there will not be balance.

The State's handling of invasive species is gaining increased attention, as well it should. The continued revenue support of our government along with DEC and public involvement will make for a strong coalition to positively address invasive issues.

Whether through budgetary or legislative process, the New York State Conservation Council would like to see full inclusion of the crossbow in the

established archery season. Crossbows are implements that allow more people, some with lesser physical ability, to go afield hunting.

Deer populations -- too many, too few -- are becoming a concern to sportsmen, land owners and the public. Adequate funding is needed to study this issue.

ATV / UTV weight classification has morphed into an ATV / UTV / Access issue. This topic needs resolution but unfortunately is being stalled as involved parties fail to consider sound alternatives to their point of view.

Snowmobile legislation that would not require snowmobilers to pay added fees for trail systems they do not use continues to go nowhere. We need resolution of this matter.

All the above are just part of the over 300 pieces of legislation and topics the NYSCC is concerned with.

The annual budget may appear to be repetitive to some. The New York State Conservation Council sees this process as an opportunity for like-minded stakeholders within and outside of government to hear each other and work together to achieve responsible and wise use of our environmental resources. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to present the view of New York sportsmen.

Chuck Parker, President
New York State Conservation Council, Inc.