



## **Restoring ZBGA back to \$15M means Innovative and Inspiring Environmental Education, Quality Jobs, and Economic Development to every corner of New York State**

From the Rochester Museum and Science Center to the Sweet Briar Nature Center in Smithtown and everywhere in between, the Zoos, Botanical Gardens, and Aquaria (ZBGA) line of the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) directly supports and protects the fragile living collections of 88 zoos, botanical gardens, nature centers and aquaria in every corner of New York State.

The EPF, the dedicated source of funding for programs like ZBGA and other critical programs that protect our clean water and natural resources was maintained at \$300M in the SFY 18 / 19 Executive Budget proposal, a historic high water mark that our Coalition supported and supports to this day.

For reasons that are not clear, the ZBGA appropriation was cut in the Executive Budget by 17%, bringing it from its current level of \$15M down to \$12.5M. A \$2.5M cut to the appropriation may result in a similar cut to each grant recipient – a reduction too severe for any non-profit organization. **We are extremely grateful to the Assembly and Senate for protecting and growing this program over the last 10 years, and are again asking for your help to make this restoration a priority with your leadership and in your one-house budgets.**

### **Restoring ZBGA to \$15M maintains quality environmental literacy programs statewide:**

While living museums work hard at their mission by helping to breed and protect endangered species, addressing the impacts of global climate change, and fighting the spread of invasive species, we are most proud of is educating and inspiring thousands of public school teachers and millions of school children, literally growing the next generation of conservation stewards. It is not a stretch to say that living museums are the state's heartbeat of ecological literacy. Critical to the goals of the EPF, living museums educate the next generation of conservation stewards and create an informed electorate that values clean water, clean air, and land preservation.

Perhaps Assemblyman Steven Englebright said it best in The New York Times, "It is through these institutions - the excitement of a trip to the zoo, or the ability to touch an exotic plant at the botanical gardens - that stirs the imagination and leads to a lifetime commitment to caring about the natural world."

### **Restoring ZBGA to \$15M maintains employment and fuels local economic development:**

Now celebrating 40 years of investment, ZBGA has also proven its economic benefits to the entire state. Living museums generate millions of dollars each year for the state in tourism and economic development. 12 million visitors sought refuge in our environmental sanctuaries, and these numbers are growing as people stay closer to home. Institutions like the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences,

the Utica Zoo, and the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center on Long Island are core to stabilizing local economies by providing good paying jobs and supporting local businesses.

**The Wild Center (TWC), and other upstate living museums, are major catalysts and economic engines for the North Country.** Visitors to TWC generated more than \$14 million in total regional revenue and led to the creation of 277 jobs in a single year. Salaries earned by TWC employees had a \$2.4 million impact in the North Country, meaning that money stayed local and was spent on groceries, clothing, mortgages, taxes, rent, and fuel among other things. In addition to the 38 full time jobs at The Wild Center, 19 new jobs were supported through these expenditures. 6 out of 7 visitors made Tupper Lake their destination of choice because of The Wild Center. On average, they stayed in the region for more than four days and spent \$893.

### **Staten Island Zoo**

For the last 75 years, the Staten Island Zoo has been a proud provider of cultural activity, conservation advocacy, and wildlife education. As the first Zoo to include an educational mandate in its mission statement, the Staten Island Zoo has remained dedicated to educational opportunities for local youth. Each year, the Staten Island Zoo serves over 170,000 visitors. Furthermore, the Zoo provides educational opportunities for nearly 25,000 school children annually. The Zoo contributes more than \$3 million into the economy, creating jobs for New Yorkers, supporting local businesses and generating tax revenue for NYC.

### **Mohonk Preserve**

A recent survey of Mohonk Preserve, New York State's largest non-profit nature preserve and ZBGA recipient, indicated that its 150,000 annual visitors generate a conservative \$3 million in direct food, lodging, and other retail expenditures (bike rentals, rock climbing equipment, gas, etc.) per year, while generating 13,500 lodging nights per year. The Mohonk Preserve generates over \$200,000 in sales tax revenues for Ulster County. Furthermore, this activity sustains 75 tourism-related jobs. Using a multiplier of **x2** for how the dollar cycles through the regional economy, the total economic impact of this publicly accessible, non-governmental natural area is well over **\$6 million** per year to the Hudson Valley

**Wildlife Conservation Society** and **The New York Botanical Garden** both have a major economic impact upon the Bronx and New York City – generating significant amounts of employment, purchasing goods and services, and drawing visitors and visitor spending to the city. This impact benefits not just the private sector, but also generates substantial tax revenues through sales and income tax receipts from employees. A recent survey of The New York Botanical Garden's economic activity found that the Garden's direct and indirect contribution to New York State was nearly \$154 million. Overall, the total economic activity generated by Wildlife Conservation Society during fiscal year 2010 was \$315.6 million, with an associated \$113.3 million in total earnings and over 2,500 total full-time jobs.

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