

**Joint Legislative Committee on the FY 2022 State Budget
Environmental Conservation**

**Testimony of
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Scenic Hudson**

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Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to present Scenic Hudson's perspective on Governor Andrew Cuomo's Executive Budget Proposal for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

Scenic Hudson partners with people, businesses and governments to create healthy, prosperous communities -- by protecting the Hudson River and other natural treasures from Manhattan to the foothills of the Adirondacks that are the engines of local economies and developing innovative strategies that make the Hudson Valley a model for responding to climate change. We advance thoughtful environmental policy at the local, state and federal level, and leverage privately raised capital with public funds to deliver tangible benefits for residents and visitors to the Hudson River Valley. These investments create clean drinking water, protect our communities, children and grandchildren against the effects of climate change, and provide recreational opportunities that help fuel the region's economy.

Before I begin with formal testimony, I would like to congratulate the legislature, and the chairs of the Senate Finance, Environmental Conservation and Agriculture Committees, and the Assembly Ways and Means, Environmental Conservation and Agriculture Committees on a job well done last legislative session. Your collective work secured a \$300 million Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), renewed investment in the Clean Water Infrastructure Act, and promoted the Environmental Bond Act.

It goes without saying that 2020 was an extraordinary year, and that the 2021-22 fiscal year presents many challenges. However, in these challenges, there is also a great opportunity. The Governor has proposed to maintain a \$300 million EPF, renew the Clean Water Infrastructure Act, and make other important investments that will help the state recover from the COVID pandemic.

State Parks System

Scenic Hudson supports the Governor's proposal to commit at least \$440 million over the next four years to expand the state parks system.

Despite the bond act being on hold, Scenic Hudson's discussion with the Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation regarding the new 508 acre park in Kingston, Hudson Cliffs State Park, are progressing positively. We look forward to working closely with the agency to secure state ownership of the property and support its design process.

We also support the agency's ongoing work to establish the Hudson Eagles State Recreation Area, and look forward to the first boat launch in this initiative moving toward completion.

We are also encouraged that the agency is has prioritized reopening Lake Sebago in Harriman State Park to swimming, one of several new planned amenities in the park.

The Environmental Protection Fund

Request for \$300 million appropriation, and a plan for future growth

The Legislature and the Governor have recognized the extensive value and benefits of the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) by maintaining a \$300 million appropriation to the fund since 2016. The Fund's impact is well established. It is the state's foundational and baseline strategy to invest in projects that conserve critical resources for future generations while combating climate change, creating jobs and making our communities more resilient.

Scenic Hudson supports the Governor's proposal for the EPF and looks forward to sharing examples of its power at work in the Hudson Valley, and how it is addressing climate change and helping communities recover from the global pandemic.

Requests for individual EPF line items and programs

Scenic Hudson requests that the Legislature prioritize the Governor's proposal for funding for the following programs:

- Open Space Land Acquisition
- Farmland Protection Program
- Hudson Estuary Management
- Land Trust Alliance Conservation Partnership Program and Conservation Easement Program
- State Land Stewardship/Parks and Trails New York NY Grants
- Climate Resilient Agriculture
- Community Impact Grants

Clean Water Infrastructure Act

Scenic Hudson supports the Governor's proposal for continued investment in projects as authorized by the New York State Water Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2017. The benefits of this program in the Hudson Valley and throughout New York State are well established.

Hudson River Valley Greenway

Scenic Hudson supports the Governor's proposal to provide consistent funding for the agency compared to last year's levels.

Article 7 Legislation

The Governor's proposed Article 7 proposal relating to increasing the statutory cap for the Electric Generation Facility Cessation Mitigation Fund is of interest to Scenic Hudson. We are examining how this proposal might impact communities in the Hudson Valley and will brief members of the legislature in more detail soon.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. As always, if you have questions about Scenic Hudson's position or work, please contact me at (914) 489-1568 or abicking@scenichudson.org