

INTERSTATE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

A TRI-STATE WATER AND AIR POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY

Brooklyn Army Terminal, 140 58th Street, Building A, Box 202 • Brooklyn, New York 11220

PHONE: (646) 222-9616 WEB SITE: www.iec-nynjct.org

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Testimony of the Interstate Environmental Commission Before the New York State Joint Legislative Hearing on 2024-2025 Executive Budget Proposal

Environmental Conservation

February 7th, 2024

Thank You Senator Krueger, Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator Harckham, Assemblymember Glick, members of the Legislative Fiscal and Environmental Conservation Committees. Thank you for this opportunity to offer written testimony on behalf of the Interstate Environmental Commission in regards to the Governor's proposed budget for State Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

The Interstate Environmental Commission commends Governor Hochul for continuing to demonstrate, through the Executive Budget, her commitment to protecting New York's environment. The funding appropriated through these budget actions, demonstrates New York's understanding of the need to invest resources in order to protect and restore New York's environment.

The Interstate Environmental Commission (or IEC) is a tri-state water and air pollution control agency similarly committed to protecting, conserving, and restoring New York's environment, particularly in the area of water quality.

In brief, the Interstate Environmental Commission's District runs west from a line between Port Jefferson, New York, and New Haven, Connecticut, on Long Island Sound; south from Bear Mountain on the Hudson River to Sandy Hook, New Jersey (including Upper and Lower New York Bays, Newark Bay, Arthur Kill and Kill Van Kull); and embraces a portion of the Atlantic Ocean out to Fire Island Inlet on the southern shore of Long Island and the waters abutting all five boroughs of New York City. Our entire district is either New York water, or water that is shared by New York and its neighboring states of New Jersey and Connecticut. Just as water knows no state borders, the IEC is committed to taking a regional approach to water quality management, yet recognizes that water quality protection needs vary across our member states and in fact across different regions within the state.

The IEC's mission is to protect and enhance environmental quality in

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the Interstate Environmental District through monitoring, cooperation, regulation, coordination and mutual dialogue between government agencies and citizens. The IEC fulfills this mission through a number of strategies developed to meet regional water quality needs. Since 2021, IEC has significantly expanded its water quality projects and leveraged diverse sources of funding to support these projects. Some of the projects which benefit New York State, and their funding sources, are highlighted below. Despite increased federal funding, the need for state, non-federal support remains critical, now more than ever. As additional federal funding is directed toward IEC, the burden to document non-federal match similarly increases.

- *Long Island Sound Long-Term Monitoring:* In response to the increasingly critical need to document summer hypoxic conditions in western Long Island Sound and its embayments, IEC has monitored dissolved oxygen, as well as key water quality parameters relevant to hypoxia, in far western Long Island Sound every summer since 1991. IEC continues to expand this monitoring, with monthly “winter” surveys added, resulting in a year-round monitoring program. In 2022, IEC expanded this monitoring further to include additional parameters to assess coastal acidification. IEC also partners with Save the Sound to perform monitoring in support of the Unified Water Study, a comprehensive project to assess and compare the ecological health in over 30 Long Island sound embayments using consistent methodologies and schedules. IEC has received expanded funding from EPA’s Long Island Sound office to perform pathogen trackdown surveys in areas adjacent to shellfish harvesting waters to mitigate pathogen sources and ultimately reduce the size and duration of these closures. IEC has also received supplemental funding through EPA’s Long Island Sound office to build a regional volunteer pathogen monitoring network in the Long Island Sound watershed. In federal fiscal year 2023, IEC was awarded \$1,695,000 in funding from EPA’s Long Island Sound Office.
- *New York Harbor Monitoring Network:* In 2021, IEC initiated a Harbor Monitoring Network, funded by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). The program incorporates sites in shared waters (Raritan bay, Arthur Kill, Upper New York Bay, Lower New York Bay, Kill Van Kull and the Hudson River). In 2024, with funding passed through to IEC from NYSDEC from federal 604b funds, and in consultation with NYSDEC, IEC will implement a complementary monitoring program, incorporating both shared water sampling locations as well as sites in New York State tributaries to the Harbor. The resulting monitoring network will provide a more robust, balanced, independent assessment of the waters of New York Harbor.
- *Monitoring and Analytical support for public access, including Governor Hochul’s NYSWIMS initiative:* IEC supports initiatives to increase safe public access to New York’s waterways for all New Yorkers. Since 2021, through IEC’s Coordinated Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program, IEC has provided sampling and analytical support to Friends of +Pool in order to inform the siting of water-filtering, floating pools using the natural waters of New York State. IEC’s laboratory is NYSDOH ELAP

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certified to perform a wide scope of parameters including pathogen indicators in surface water. Having an ELAP certified laboratory, IEC is uniquely positioned to generate the high-quality data needed to inform and guide NYSWIMS.

Recent public access projects also include monitoring a public access site adjacent to Roberto Clemente State Park, on the Bronx side of the Harlem River, through a partnership with USGS and the Federal Urban Waters Program.

IEC also supports volunteer monitoring by the Hudson River Park Trust, Gowanus Canal Conservancy, Billion Oyster Project and other community groups to enable the generation of high-quality data to inform public recreation in regional waterways. IEC has partnered with the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program to participate in Citizen Science and education initiatives such as City of Water Day (<https://waterfrontalliance.org/what-we-do/city-of-water-day/about/#in-your-neighborhood>.)

These efforts are all funded through IEC's federal CWA Section 106 grant.

- *Expanding capabilities to address contaminants of emerging concern:* EPA Region 2 has provided IEC funding to begin developing the capacity to analyze PFAS in wastewaters and ambient waters. IEC's laboratory is primarily supported by federal funds provided by USEPA Region 2. Additional funding would allow IEC to procure additional instruments to expand nutrient analytical capabilities and capacity.

In addition, IEC has the capability to perform short-notice inspections—sampling, monitoring, and analyses— in response to regional environmental emergencies, concerns, or natural disasters. In the past, IEC has assisted local environmental agencies to determine environmental impacts after natural or manmade events.

- IEC's ability to mobilize quickly and perform sampling and associated analyses quickly at the request of local, state and federal agencies makes IEC a valuable resource.
- In October 2022, the Commission opened a new laboratory and headquarters at the Brooklyn Army Terminal. The newly constructed facility was made possible through funding provided by BioBAT, Inc, IEC and the EPA. BioBAT, Inc is a partnership created by the Research Foundation for SUNY, on behalf of Downstate Health Sciences University, and the New York City Economic Development Corporation. The 2800 square-foot, state of the art facility has enabled IEC to expand its analytical capabilities and regional monitoring efforts. Since 2000, the laboratory has held accreditation through the National Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (NELAP). The IEC laboratory holds primary NELAP accreditation through the New York State Department of Health's Environmental Laboratory Approval Program (ELAP). The Commission's laboratory is dedicated to producing technically defensible environmental data, through

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sound science and a comprehensive quality control and quality assurance (QA/QC) program.

The IEC performs coordinated, tailored inspections and projects designed to assist, rather than duplicate, compliance efforts of the New York State DEC:

- IEC has a robust, coordinated, and tailored inspection program which includes inspections at SPDES-permitted wastewater treatment plants (water resource recovery facilities), industrial dischargers, pump stations, combined sewer systems as well as municipal separate storm sewer (MS4) systems focusing on state priorities designed to complement efforts of regulatory authorities. IEC's staff conducts inspections with sampling at industrial facilities and municipal wastewater treatment plants year-round. These inspections, which are planned in coordination with regional NYSDEC staff, include effluent sampling and an inspection of processes, equipment, and plant records. Samples collected at these facilities are analyzed in the IEC's certified laboratory to determine compliance with the IEC's Water Quality Regulations and with each facility's specific SPDES permit. In New York State, IEC is frequently the only agency performing effluent compliance monitoring at SPDES permitted discharges. Thus, IEC's compliance monitoring is, in many cases, the only verification of data reported by permittees on discharge monitoring reports.

While the majority of the IEC's funding comes from other sources—primarily federal Clean Water Act Section 106 grants—state funding is critical to enable the Commission to implement the work plan of the grants and to meet the match requirement for federal grants. In federal fiscal year 2023, IEC was awarded over \$2,000,000 in federal funds from CWA Section 106 and Long Island Sound appropriations. IEC is only eligible to apply and receive this annual federal funding if it can demonstrate and document non-federal matching support in the amount of \$214,051.

New York had a long history of supporting the work of the IEC until 2009 when financial stresses caused the state to cut previous appropriations of over \$300,000 to the statutory minimum level of funding—\$15,000—as set forth in the *Tri-State Compact of 1936*. Going forward, IEC is requesting that the annual non-federal match of \$214,051 be provided by our three member states in accordance with the structure set forth in the *Tri-State Compact*—45% support from New York and New Jersey and 10% support from Connecticut. **While IEC recognizes and appreciates the Environmental Protection Fund appropriation of \$41,600 in the Executive Budget released in January, 2024, we respectfully ask the Legislature to increase the appropriation in the New York State FY2024-2025 for the Interstate Environmental Commission (located in *Aid to Localities*) to 45 percent of the required \$214,051 matching funds—\$96,323.** This level of funding is supported by environmental advocacy partners including Riverkeeper and Save the Sound. This nominal increase in appropriation is critical to ensure IEC's continued eligibility to apply for and receive federal

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funding of over \$2,000,000 annually, yielding New York State a significant return on its investment.

On behalf of the IEC, I would like to thank the Legislature and, in particular, the legislative committees on environmental conservation, for their continued leadership and diligent oversight of State environmental policy. The IEC genuinely appreciates this opportunity to present testimony at the budget hearing, is hopeful that the Legislature will consider our request, and looks forward to continuing our important water quality work in support of New York State.

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