

**New York State Senate and Assembly
Joint Budget Proposal Hearing, February 4, 2013
Department of Environmental Conservation Funding**

**Testimony offered by Charles Parker
President, New York State Conservation Council, Inc.**

Speaking on behalf of the nearly 100 Active, Affiliate, and Associate Members representing more than 330,000 sportsmen and sportswomen from every region of the state, the New York State Conservation Council would encourage the members of both the Senate and Assembly Environmental Conservation Committees to support the Executive Budget funding requests for Department of Environmental Conservation for Fiscal Year 2013-2014, as it pertains to fish, wildlife, marine resources, habitat, and the environment.

The economic impact on the New York taxpayer is minimal. In fact, Full funding brings economic resources back to New York that otherwise would be lost. We view the proposed budget as a minimum requirement and we would like to see greater investment in our programs, the infrastructure, as well as increased staffing. However, while we believe the Executive Budget is acceptable we also believe that funding for fish and wildlife programs could be improved simply by using the monies available in the state's Conservation Fund.

On behalf of the Council we would like to state that we generally support the issues and items as presented by Jason Kemper of the state Conservation Fund Advisory Board and Lance Robson of the state Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

The key to sound Conservation is sound Management. The state Department of Environmental Conservation is responsible for managing our fish and wildlife as well as our forests, air and water. One former Governor, Teddy Roosevelt, was a leader in the early conservation movement and the development of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation that is the model for today's principles of conservation. While there are seven principles in the North American model, at least four of these principles relate directly to today's hearing;

Wildlife is Held in the Public Trust

Democratic Rule of Law - Hunting and fishing laws are created through a public process in which everyone has the opportunity and responsibility to contribute to the development of systems of wildlife conservation and use.

Hunting Opportunities for All - Every citizen should be afforded the opportunity to hunt and fish, if they so choose.

And most important today is:

Sound Scientific Management - is essential to managing and sustaining our wildlife and the habitats they need to flourish.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and their biologists under the Division of Fish Wildlife and Marine Resources are the experts with the science for the discharge of sound wildlife management policy.

There are approximately 750,000 sportsmen and women in New York State who buy hunting and fishing licenses and there are many more people who benefit from the investment made in hunting and fishing related activities. The Following is from Responsive Management's: The Sportsmen's Voice Hunting and Fishing in America Copyright 2010

- Annual Economic Impact for NY from Hunting and Fishing \$3,133,449,923
- State Taxes \$251,896,294
- Wages and Salaries \$1,051,025,236

More current data would show an even larger impact to the state's economy. The data from the most recent survey conducted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service show that hunting, fishing and wildlife associated recreation contribute more than \$140 Billion a year to the nation's economy and New York's contribution, to that 140 billion continues to grow.

The contribution to Sound Conservation Practices to our environment and our wildlife by the DEC is priceless.

It is a fact most of the revenue that goes to support the principles of sound management does not even come from the general tax revenues of the New York State Taxpayers. It comes from the license sales and matching funding from such federal programs and Pittman Robertson and Johnson Dingle acts. And these funds come from Taxes that are accessed on the products and the items that the sportsmen use.

Currently there is almost \$54,000,000 in the Conservation Fund. This is user generated revenue. There is projected additional revenue to the fund of much more than the usual annual \$20,000,000 for this year.

We respectfully ask that these funds be allocated toward the mission of the DEC and Conservation Fund approved projects, as requested through the budget process. There also must be assurances that the allocations are actually spent on targeted programs and staff.

We understand the fiscal restraint and the cutbacks during this time of economic of turmoil. However the revenue in the Conservation Fund comes from the investment made by the sporting community to be used for the sporting community to assure that our conservation and fish and wildlife management programs remain viable.

Using the revenues available in the Conservation Fund will not impact General Fund allocations. Not spending from a fund that is there, and offers no relief to the taxpayer if it is not spent, makes no sense to the membership of the New York State Conservation Council.

Again we, the members of the New York State Conservation Council, ask that the Legislative Members of this joint hearing take the responsible position and support full funding of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation proposed Executive Budget funding allocation.

Respectfully submitted,

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