



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

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT
Proposed 2015 – 2016 State Budget
January 28th, 2015
State Senate – Assembly**

Joint ENCON Budget Hearing

The state budget of 2014 - 2015 proposed by the Governor and passed by the Legislature with its support for the environment and sportsmen was a sharp turnaround from previous budgets. From the sportsmen's perspective it seemed to recognize the importance of conservation and the sportsmen and our value to the environment. The budget of 2014 – 2015 made for a strong base for the proposed budget for 2015 – 2016 to build upon.

The proposed new budget continues to create a base of support and protection of sound environmental and wise use conservation practices. To the financially concerned it supports an entity that contributes \$8.1 billion to the New York economy.

The State Comptroller's December 2014 report on Environmental Funding in New York State reported:

"The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has experienced staff cuts and constrained funding since 2003 while its responsibilities have grown, according to a report released today by New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli.

"DEC's staff has declined while funding has barely kept pace with inflation and now is projected to decline," DiNapoli said. "Our natural resources are major assets for the state's economy and New Yorkers' health and quality of life. We must continue to safeguard these assets."

Elements within this new proposed budget address the needs as reflected in the Comptroller's December report. This budget will move the state in the right direction.

While the cuts in the past were seen as necessary for economic reasons, it would be disastrous for these cuts to continue long term.

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Key elements of the budget of interest to sportsmen:

- Allocation of \$8M from NY Works for Access Projects
- Allocation of \$4M for hatchery improvements. This money and more was needed at least 10 years ago. It will not complete all the needed hatchery improvements but is a step in the right direction.
- Offloading \$1.2 million of e-licensing expenses and other future anticipated costs from the Conservation Fund to another account. It just makes sense that the statewide mandated e-licensing system be further supported by something other than the Conservation Fund.
- A new Habitat Conservation and Access Account under the Miscellaneous Capitol Account. While still having the present protection of the current Habitat Access Account, it will offer a more workable and manageable fund designed to be protected and only used for its designated purpose.
- The addition of 18 staff positions to DEC. While this will not return staffing to a more desired level, it will offer better use of DEC's personnel needed for proper management of our resources and the ability to go after and use financial resources both within and outside the state that was not possible with present staffing.

From the perspective of the New York State Conservation Council's membership this budget, coupled with the accomplishment of last year's budget as it pertains to conservation, is a strong move forward and worthy of this Legislature's support.



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