

Environmental Conservation

The Governor includes some key environmental initiatives in his State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2007-08 budget. Two major initiatives, an expanded "Bottle Bill" and an enhanced Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) have long been advocated by the Assembly. The Governor provides for 166 additional staff positions related to the environment, 109 at the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), 52 at the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), and five at the Adirondack Park Agency (APA).

The "Bottle Bill" expansion proposed by the Governor is substantially similar to legislation passed by the Assembly in each of the past two years. Under the proposal, the definition of returnable beverage containers would be expanded to include certain non-carbonated beverages. Unredeemed deposits from all returnable beverage containers would be deposited into the EPF and used for programs supported by the Fund. Financial incentives would be provided to municipalities, not-for-profit organizations and businesses to enhance container recycling capabilities.

Over the past several years, the Assembly has also been a leader in supporting additional funding for the EPF. As a result of this leadership, the annual allocation of funds has grown from \$31.5 million in SFY 1994-95, its first year, to \$225 million in SFY 2006-07. Last year, the Assembly passed legislation to support an EPF of \$300 million by SFY 2009-10. With the Governor's proposal of a \$250 million EPF this year,

we are well on our way to achieving that goal.

In addition to these key environmental issues, the Governor also provides for 166 additional staff positions related to the environment. These positions are distributed between DEC, OPRHP and APA to provide support for a wide range of environmental issues. One initiative included in the Governor's proposal is the establishment of a new Climate Change office within DEC. This office will focus on global warming and the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Together, these environmental improvements put forth by the Governor will serve to continue to move New York in the direction the Assembly has fought hard for over the past several years.

Finally, the Governor continues environmental justice initiatives which the Assembly Majority has effectively fought for and succeeded in funding the past several years. These efforts focus on improving the environment in communities, specifically minority and low-income communities, and addressing disproportionate adverse environmental impacts in those communities. The Governor maintains funding of \$500,000 for environmental justice grants to community-based organizations for projects aimed at researching a community's exposure to multiple environmental harms and risks.