



**Testimony of
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**New York State Legislature
Senate Standing Committee on Finance
Assembly Standing Committee on Ways and Means
Hearing:**

**The 2009-10 Executive Budget Recommendations for the
Department of Environmental Conservation**

January 13, 2009

Chairman Kruger, Vice Chair Krueger, Chairman Farrell, Senator Thompson, Assemblyman Sweeney and members of the legislative fiscal and environmental conservation committees, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the budget recommendations of Governor David A. Paterson for the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for the 2009-10 State fiscal year.

I have been Commissioner of DEC for a year and a half and I still marvel at the opportunity to be on the front lines of environmental policy at this critical time in history. It is my great honor and privilege to lead an agency with such remarkable breadth and impact in this state and to work with such skilled, dedicated professionals. While our responsibilities are vast, our goal is simple: to create a healthier, safer environment and a stronger New York.

To provide a context for my remarks today, I want to share with you a brief power point presentation to highlight the extraordinary range of the Department's responsibilities.

This daunting list of responsibilities was not created overnight – in fact, the remarkable scope of what we do is evidence of, and a testament to, New York State's longstanding commitment to preserve and protect its environment, a commitment continued and strengthened by Governor Paterson. Our work, however, is far from done. Even as we continue to implement dozens of programs addressing the traditional environmental quality and natural resource management issues, we are confronted with new problems. Global warming, invasive species, and smart growth are all challenges that we are just beginning to confront and will continue to require myriad responses from swift, decisive action to creative, thoughtful planning.

Over the years, New York State has made enormous investments in environmental protection, which have paid off many times over in better quality of life, the conservation of open space, our valuable water and other natural resources, and incredible recreational and eco-tourism opportunities. Even as the Department "shares the pain" with other state agencies, the

Governor's proposed budget recognizes the importance of environmental programs, and ensures that we will not backslide on what we have worked so hard to achieve.

Today New York State stands as a beacon for responsible and forward-looking environmental policy in this nation. What DEC does matters to every New Yorker, and every employee of DEC takes enormous pride in that. Despite the difficult but necessary choices in the proposed Executive Budget, DEC in 2009 is strong and more than up to the tasks ahead.

The Fiscal Challenges Ahead

The state and nation are facing unprecedented fiscal challenges. Governor Paterson has taken the lead and been forthright in communicating the reality of the state deficit and need for fiscal prudence to not just get through these trying times but to emerge from this crisis stronger than we were when it was thrust upon us. Despite our dire current circumstances, Governor Paterson and I remain committed to advancing a comprehensive and progressive environmental agenda.

As the Governor has made clear, the fiscal crisis presents both challenges and opportunities. For DEC, the challenge is that even as our resources shrink, our wide range of mandated responsibilities continues to grow. A few of our new programmatic responsibilities include GIS mapping of environmental facilities, outreach on environmentally safe drug disposal, and implementing the new plastic bag recycling law. We're also facing a few "big ticket" items, including ensuring that gas exploration in the Marcellus shale formation, which may be a multi-billion dollar industry for New York, is environmentally responsible. In addition, the significant oversight and permitting responsibilities the Department expects to face in dealing with the wide variety of projects to be funded under the federal infrastructure stimulus package now being crafted will be time and staff intensive, and will add a layer of time-sensitive responsibilities to our already heavy workload. The Department is committed to partnering with other State and local agencies on these projects to make sure they move ahead swiftly without compromising environmental standards.

Those are some of the challenges. The opportunity, however, is that this is the right time to find creative ways to accomplish our multi-faceted mission. To that end, we are rethinking every one of our business processes, focusing on priority issues, eliminating redundancies, implementing efficiencies, looking to time-saving technology, and investing resources in those initiatives most likely to succeed and where we will get the most “bang for the buck.” We are also looking to take advantage of the public interest in environmental policy to maximize outside resources and find creative means of funding priority projects.

As we take these steps, I want you, everybody in this room and people across the state to know that no matter how severe the challenge, we will not shortchange the environment in the process.

Partnering With Stakeholders

Before I get to the specifics of the budget, let me highlight one way we’ve found to achieve efficiencies and better results which has played a key role in many of our successes and which will be especially important as we face the looming fiscal challenges. Over the past year and a half, we have found that by developing and strengthening our relationships with our stakeholders, particularly the regulated community and local governments impacted by our activities, we can streamline processes, more effectively deploy staff time, and simultaneously achieve DEC’s mission while smoothing the way for both public and private sector economic growth.

This strategy, which is a change in approach that has no cost, has proven to be a successful means of getting to the finish line faster, often with substantial savings in project costs. We’ve found that the most difficult environmental issues arise when DEC gets involved late in the planning process, when it is more difficult and often more costly to make changes necessary to comply with state law and regulations. To solve this, at both the regional level and in central office, we have been making a concerted effort to encourage a dialogue prior to commencing project planning or a permit application. This type of proactive cooperation enables faster

permitting, heads off potential problems, and in many cases results in a smarter, more cost-effective, more environmentally sensitive project. Here are a few examples:

- DEC worked closely with Beech-Nut when it began the process to relocate from its historic location in Canajoharie to the town of Florida in Montgomery County to ensure that all environmental issues were addressed. DEC and Beech-Nut collaboratively developed a habitat management strategy to address a threatened species on the new site, and developed a plan that permits the company to develop an innovative performance-based standard for stormwater runoff rather than impose a prescriptive requirement. By working together, Beech-Nut was able to stay on an aggressive construction schedule, while DEC was able to meet its environmental protection obligations. The end result of this cooperative effort was not only that the environmental and business goals were achieved, but costs, both in time and resources, were reduced for DEC and an important New York-based company..
- In another instance, DEC is working closely with ALCOA on plans that would facilitate a \$600 million investment by Alcoa to modernize its Massena East facility. This project would result in a one-third reduction of harmful emissions, including greenhouse gas emission reductions of more than 70 percent and hazardous air pollutant reductions of 45 percent. The negotiated plans for this plant would also reduce wastewater and stormwater discharges by over 60 percent. While this project remains a work-in-process, through early dialogue, issues related to air emissions, wastewater discharges, wetlands and the SEQR process are being addressed on the front end, which has enabled the planning process to move forward expeditiously.
- DEC is also applying a more proactive approach when working with local governments. New York City, one of our largest regulated entities, is a good example. We have worked closely with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to craft a landmark agreement to bring the city's sprawling sewage treatment plants into

compliance with state discharge standards, and to avoid future compliance problems, fix broken processes, and use an innovative self-audit mechanism. As part of our negotiated settlement, we arranged for the City to invest in a significant environmental benefit project for the affected communities. This is a strategy DEC has and will continue to use to ensure our enforcement brings maximum benefit to neighborhoods and citizens affected by parties failing to comply with environmental regulations.

- We have worked closely with local agencies in resolving SEQR “lead agency” disputes by agreeing up front on protocols which will help project sponsors know what to expect during the environmental review process, provide guidance to the local lead agency in successfully meeting its responsibilities, and in so doing eliminate what would otherwise be a significant drain on limited Department and local agency resources.
- Another example of working with local governments toward a mutual goal is the former Spaulding Fibre site in the City of Tonawanda, Erie County. This heavily contaminated 46-acre former manufacturing site is currently the only large developable parcel in the city. Through a combination of programs, including the use of State Superfund monies, the Environmental Restoration Program, Restore New York, a grant from Erie County, and federal assistance through the leadership of Senator Schumer, the cleanup of this site is proceeding at a rapid pace, and we expect the remediation to be completed by the end of this year. Work on this site, which is critical to both the environmental and economic health of Tonawanda and Erie County, is a great example of multiple layers of government proactively working together, and in the process maximizing the use of available resources and creating efficiencies.
- We’ve also applied this principle of early communication and forging productive relationships in our dealings with sister state agencies. For example, recognizing that early discussions regarding economic development projects can bring better outcomes, we held workshops around the state with DEC and ESD staff to familiarize them with our

programs and requirements, and to review prospective and ongoing economic development initiatives. DEC deputies and senior staff meet regularly with executive and regional level staff of other agencies regarding the environmental aspects of projects to ensure that problems are identified early and solutions developed. This process has laid the foundation for more permanent, ongoing partnerships, relationships which will be critical in implementing a federal stimulus package.

- We are also intent upon recognizing and taking advantage of the overlapping expertise of sister agencies on initiatives where there are interrelated policy goals. A great example of this is the collaboration between DEC and NYSERDA on climate change initiatives and energy efficiency projects. Environmental concerns and energy policy are intertwined; by jointly approaching problem solving we can use scarce resources efficiently, avoid duplication of effort, and draw upon appropriate agency expertise. Similarly, we are engaged in collaborative efforts with Ag & Markets on addressing CAFO issues, the Department of State on employing ecosystem-based management, and the Department of Transportation and the PSC on power line issues in the Adirondack Park.

Summary of DEC Priorities

Even as New York State copes with extraordinary fiscal turbulence, with your support, we have and will continue to accomplish a great deal. When I came to DEC, I established six general agency priorities. Support for each of these continues in the proposed Executive Budget.

Combating Climate Change

- Deployed DEC's fully staffed Climate Change Office to take steps to reduce and mitigate the impacts of greenhouse gases and climate change.

- Signed on as a founding member, and New York's representative, of the 39 state Climate Registry.
- Successfully launched the first auction of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), yielding \$42 million for new energy technology and efficiency programs and projects.
- Chaired two interagency workgroups created by the Governor's Renewable Energy Task Force: one to develop strategies to reduce vehicle miles traveled; the second, to assess the environmental, health and social impacts of biofuels and to develop a policy road map.
- Chair of the newly established Sea Level Rise Task Force, which has been working to assess the anticipated impacts of sea level rise, and prepare recommendations on actions to protect areas at risk. As no resources were provided for this task force, we are leveraging work being performed by the Army Corps of Engineers, New York City, and groups and professionals engaged on this topic.

Foster Green and Healthy Communities

- DEC continues to oversee implementation of the Adirondack Community Smart Growth Grant program, and its counterpart in the Catskills.
- Issued 15 certificates of completion for remediated brownfield sites, and continue to process applications and oversee cleanups around the state.
- Nearing completion of a new State Solid Waste Management Plan to provide guidance to communities regarding their waste management activities.
- Co-sponsored roundtable discussion with the New York State Association of Solid Waste Managers on product stewardship, focusing on innovative approaches to reduce local collection and processing costs and provide incentives to limit the waste stream.
- Held two widely attended stakeholder conferences on chemicals policy.
- Undertook a broad initiative on Bottle Bill enforcement that included Environmental Conservation Officers visiting 650 stores across the state in a sweep to ensure compliance with bottle bill requirements, issuing over 100 notices of violation.

Build a Toxic Free Future

- Issued and held the first round of hearings on a draft Hazardous Waste Siting Plan – a document that was supposed to be completed in 1987.
- Developed a “Don’t Flush Your Drugs” campaign to address a new and growing concern over the presence of pharmaceuticals in water and wastewater streams.
- Leading effort along with OGS co-chair in implementing Governor Paterson’s “Green Procurement” Executive Order 4, which charges over 80 state agencies and authorities with developing sustainability programs that include reducing or eliminating toxics use; reducing, reusing and recycling solid waste; increasing the use of renewable energy; and reducing consumption of energy and natural resources to save agencies money, reduce their environmental footprint, and spur green economic development within the state.

Connecting New Yorkers to Nature

- Because of a bill signed by Governor Paterson in 2008, there was an increase in the number of young people who took advantage of New York’s hunting and trapping opportunities, bringing the total number to 15,000.
- Through better promotion, attendance at DEC’s summer education camps increased by 20% from 2007, which included a significant increase in young campers from inner cities and other low-income communities throughout the state.
- Over 19,000 acres of land owned by the New York City DEP in the city’s Catskill watershed were opened for recreational uses such as hiking, hunting, trapping and fishing under a landmark agreement negotiated by DEC, addressing longstanding concerns about inconsistent rules for adjoining city and state lands.

Safeguard New York's Unique Natural Assets

- Established a new Office of Invasive Species, and promulgated regulations limiting the movement of untreated firewood to combat the spread of destructive non-native insects.
- Moved to strengthen the federal EPA's ballast water permit to raise the level of protection against introduction of invasive species into New York waters.
- Released draft of updated State Open Space Conservation Plan, reflecting participation of citizen committees in every region, in redesigned format to better serve communities.
- Completed the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan.
- Released draft scope and held series of public meetings needed for the preparation of a supplemental generic environmental impact statement for activities associated with horizontal hydraulic fracturing in the Marcellus shale formation.

Work for Environmental Justice

- Awarded all \$1.6 million in grant funding available for State FY 2008-09, including all uncommitted funds from previous appropriations, to 50 local organizations.
- Heading up the Environmental Justice Interagency Task Force established by Governor Paterson to work with participating state agencies to incorporate environmental justice concerns when administering their programs, and assist them in building their awareness of EJ issues.
- Rolled out a newly developed "Stop Smoking Diesel Trucks" enforcement initiative to combat health problems in communities adversely impacted by severe air pollution.

The 2009-10 Executive Budget

I am pleased to provide you with an overview of the impact of the proposed FY 2009-10 budget on DEC's operations, discuss the legislative initiatives included in the Executive budget, talk

about the Environmental Protection Fund, and finally address the efforts to obtain additional federal funding, including the infrastructure stimulus package.

Staffing and Expense Reductions

During the 1990s and the first few years of this century, DEC experienced significant staffing losses that hindered its ability to fulfill the Department's mission. To begin reversing that trend, the 2007-08 and 2008-09 State Budgets added 113 critically needed new positions for DEC programs. We currently have 3,679 filled positions.

Like all state agencies, DEC was asked to significantly reduce its operating expenses during the 2008-09 fiscal year. In May, we were asked to reduce expenditures by 3.35% and again in July to reduce spending by an additional 7%. These reductions resulted in an overall reduction in spending of more than \$32 million from our operating budget.

To meet these targets, we reduced certain contractual expenditures, such as advancing by a month the winter suspension of waste tire cleanups at the Mohawk and Fortino sites. We also found ways to save money in the operation of our Belleayre Mountain ski area, while continuing to recognize its importance to the economic vitality of the southern Catskills. The changes will not impact skier safety or any essential operations or maintenance of the area.

We have taken steps at the Department to reduce non-personal services expenses, including significantly reducing vehicle miles and other travel expenses by utilizing video and conference calling, cutting back on in-house statewide divisional meetings, and carefully considering the attendance of DEC personnel at outside conferences. We've also taken advantage of every opportunity to achieve energy savings, advance cost-effective sustainability goals, and find other NPS efficiencies.

This has involved some tough choices, including the decision to close the Reynolds Game Farm. Despite this action, let there be no doubt about DEC's commitment to ensure that quality game bird hunting opportunities continue to be provided to hunters in New York. We're making similar choices with other operations. For example, we are carefully reviewing attendance at all of our campgrounds, looking to identify underutilized facilities that historically have operated at 20% or less of their capacity to save on both operational and capital costs. With other facilities nearby, efficiencies may be possible in these campgrounds without significantly impacting camping opportunities for the public in those areas.

A number of questions have been asked about our fish hatchery program. The proposed Executive Budget includes \$1 million for the renovation, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of DEC's fish hatcheries. We operate twelve hatcheries that raise high quality fish for recreation and restoration purposes. The men and women that work at these facilities annually produce approximately 900,000 pounds of fish that are stocked in the state's waters. Many of these facilities are aged and outdated, and although we have made progress in modernizing several of them, much work remains to be done. Coupled with funding provided in previous fiscal years, we are looking to make substantial improvements to the hatchery system over the next few years.

On the personal services side, we will continue to rely upon staff attrition to meet our 2009-10 budget goals. The proposed Executive Budget calls for a reduction of 241 DEC staff by the end of the next fiscal year. Recent retirements have put us nearing 30% of this target already. We will meet the challenges of these staff reductions by employing management strategies to do things better and smarter.

Article VII Proposals

Included with the 2009-10 recommendations are proposals to raise revenue for key environmental quality programs and natural resources management, including expansion of the

state's Bottle Bill, a modest increase to SPDES fees, establishment of a marine fishing license, and establishing a trout and salmon user stamp.

- *Bigger Better Bottle Bill*

Governor Paterson's Executive Budget calls for moving New York's hugely successful Bottle Bill to the next level. The Executive Budget expands the law's coverage to a range of non-carbonated beverage containers, and directs the unclaimed deposits from both the existing and new containers to the EPF. For 2009-10, unclaimed deposits covered by this new provision are expected to provide \$118 million in EPF funding in lieu of real estate transfer tax revenues which are being redirected to other state purposes. As Commissioner Ash, Commissioner Hooker and I said in an Op-Ed published last week in the Buffalo News (attached), adopting the Bigger Better Bottle Bill is a common-sense move that will curb roadside litter, boost recycling and lessen pressure on municipal waste streams – worthy outcomes on many fronts.

In the budget presented by the Governor, enactment of the Bigger Better Bottle Bill proposal is essential to finance programs covered by the EPF, and we ask that you embrace and support this initiative.

- *SPDES permit fees*

A fee increase is proposed for certain State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permits, a necessary action to sustain the Department's statutorily mandated functions under this federally delegated program.

Pursuant to the federal Clean Water Act and New York State's SPDES program, DEC issues permits for all discharges of wastewater and stormwater, including discharges caused by industrial, municipal, commercial and construction activities, to the surface and groundwaters of the state.

The program encompasses a range of responsibilities, from water quality reviews, permit writing and inspection, to information systems management and compliance assurance activities. Currently, approximately 119 DEC staff across the state oversee more than 18,000 SPDES permits.

The SPDES permit fees for Private, Commercial or Institutional (P/C/I) facilities, industrial facilities and stormwater, and for general permits have not been raised in several years. The proposed fees are expected to raise approximately \$5 million in additional revenue to cover our regulatory programs.

- *Recreational Marine Fishing License*

The Executive Budget includes a proposal to create a recreational marine fishing license for sportsmen and women fishing in the marine and coastal district or for anadromous fish (fish species that spend a portion of their life cycle in both fresh and saltwater, migrating from the sea to spawn in freshwater). Anadromous species found in New York include striped bass, American shad and several species of herring. The proposed recreational marine fishing license will cost \$19 for residents and \$40 for non-residents, which is comparable to the amounts other states are expected to charge.

Establishing a state license this year will ensure that saltwater anglers in New York will not be required to register with the National Marine Fisheries Service under the national registry, and will allow the state to keep license revenues, which could amount to as much as \$6 million annually and benefit New York programs exclusively. License revenues would be deposited into the Conservation Fund to support resource management in New York and would also result in additional federal aid for New York programs.

This legislation also proposes to eliminate the requirement that municipal clerks sell sporting licenses through the DEC Automated Licensing System (DECALS), and authorizes the sale of

licenses via the internet, telephone or mail, as well as through retail sale by outdoor and recreational outlets and not-for-profit organizations. These provisions would remove an administrative and fiscal burden on municipal clerks that do not want to sell sporting licenses, allow the shifting of new license issuing agents to areas where there is a demand for additional license outlets, and allow the selling of marine fishing licenses by outlets other than through DECALS to make it easier for anglers to buy licenses.

- *Trout and Salmon Stamp*

This proposed \$10 Trout and Salmon Stamp will raise much needed revenue for the Conservation Fund. Based on the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, approximately 415,000 anglers fish New York waters for trout and salmon. Most of these anglers fish one or more days in waters that are stocked by DEC with trout and/or salmon. A trout and salmon stamp would generate new revenues of approximately \$3 million annually to support the Conservation Fund, which in addition to funding DEC's marine resources program, funds DEC's management of New York's trout and salmon resources, as well as the operation of DEC's hatchery system.

The Environmental Protection Fund

In its first funding in FY 1994-95, the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) had an appropriation of \$31.5 million. Today, the 2009-10 Executive Budget calls for a \$205 million EPF investment. The EPF allows DEC and sister agencies to acquire and protect critical open spaces, undertake capital projects and provide grants to municipalities, non-for-profits and schools for critical environmental projects supporting state goals. The EPF has proven to be a singularly important tool for investing in the environment. The Legislature's support for the EPF has enabled both the funding, and the programs it supports, to grow. Even in these difficult economic times, it is essential to remember the importance of these types of long term investments to our quality of life, and be mindful that a significant portion of EPF funds flow to

our municipal partners, helping them meet their local needs without relying exclusively on property taxes.

I took to heart our discussion regarding the EPF at last year's hearing, and am pleased to report that EPF funds are going out the door faster. We've discussed this with our partners in administering the EPF, and the joint efforts are reflected in the improving rates of disbursements in individual programs and overall. Through the end of December, \$165 million in EPF funds have been disbursed, exceeding the amount that was expended during the entire prior fiscal year. Specifically for DEC, we've been very successful in moving municipal recycling grants, as well as funding stewardship projects such as investments in our campgrounds, access sites, trails, and buildings. This progress is a direct result of our collective focus on the effective and timely expenditure of EPF funds.

Of the EPF categories under DEC's jurisdiction, the largest is land acquisition. Since the inception of the EPF, land acquisition has made up roughly one-quarter of the total appropriations, and continues to make up the largest single line in the EPF. These funds are used to acquire both fee ownership and conservation easements. Both of these types of acquisitions play an important role – fee acquisitions protect the special places that are essential to ecotourism, water quality protection, recreation, or quality of life, while conservation easements help stabilize New York's significant forest products industry, keeping people employed in mills and harvesting timber. As discussed in the recently released draft Open Space Plan, through good times and bad, land acquisition has been an enormously successful program for preserving some of New York's most exquisite and irreplaceable properties for future generations. With the support in the proposed Executive Budget, we are looking forward to continuing to implement this vital program.

Recognizing the fiscal constraints, the 2009-10 Executive Budget refocuses the EPF on its core mission, and in addition to the land acquisition program, authorizes its use for a number of other important purposes, including:

- Assessment and recovery of compensation for natural resource damages to the Hudson River;
- Capital improvements and stewardship of state parks and lands;
- Support for municipal environmental projects such as recycling and water quality improvements;
- The Hudson River Estuary Management Program;
- The Oceans and Great Lakes initiative;
- Invasive Species

I'd like to mention the Pollution Prevention Institute, an EPF initiative that exemplifies not only the importance of the EPF, but also how forward-looking environmental programs can spur economic growth. Following a formal competitive RFP process administered by DEC, a collaborative of public and private universities, led by the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), was chosen to host the Institute. RIT has partnered with the University at Buffalo, Clarkson University, the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the ten NYSTAR-sponsored Research, Technology & Development Centers located throughout the state.

The Institute offers assistance to New York businesses to prevent pollution, delivering services in four key areas: (1) direct assistance to businesses, (2) professional training, (3) community grants, and (4) research, development and diffusion. Since its inception last March, the Institute already has 37 projects under development, and by the close of the first contract year will have commitments for an estimated 50 business assistance projects. In its first round of grant-making, the Institute's Community Grants Program received 41 applications seeking over \$700,000 in funding for a broad range of public initiatives.

The 2009-10 Executive Budget proposes an additional \$1 million in the EPF to continue funding for the Pollution Prevention Institute.

The Importance of Federal Funding

Many of the more than 600 wastewater treatment facilities serving more than 1,600 communities in New York are old and crumbling, jeopardizing the state's dramatic water quality improvements over the past three decades. At the urging of Assemblyman Sweeney, DEC undertook a comprehensive analysis of the outstanding need for funds to address the problems of our aging wastewater treatment infrastructure – our largest municipal asset outside of our transportation infrastructure. In a March 2008 report, DEC documented the need for a \$36.2 billion investment to repair, replace and upgrade this critical component of New York's municipal infrastructure over the next 20 years, a cost that the State and local governments cannot meet on their own. Joined to this problem is the need for an infusion of an estimated \$38 billion for new and upgraded drinking water infrastructure over the next two decades. New York's support for both of these critical components for protecting public health and our precious environment has been hit hard by dramatic decreases in federal investment.

Governor Paterson has taken the lead in highlighting the urgent need to address this issue in his visits to Washington, meetings with fellow governors and in his recent letter to President-elect Obama on the stimulus package, a copy of which is appended to my statement. In these times, it is also important to take particular note of the fact that improving wastewater and drinking water infrastructure also creates jobs – estimated at 35,000 to 47,500 jobs for each \$1 billion spent on infrastructure construction projects. I urge all of you to add your voices to Governor Paterson's call for swift federal action on a stimulus plan that encompasses these priorities.

To bolster his call on Washington, at the Governor's direction, we established a "Clean Water Collaborative" made up of high-level environmental, labor, business and municipal officials who share the state's concern about the need for a new federal and state investment in wastewater and drinking water infrastructure. We are counting on the Collaborative to play a large and vocal role in advocating for the state's wastewater and drinking water needs during 2009.

As critical as this issue is, it is only one component of Governor Paterson's call for economic stimulus funds. Included in the Governor's Economic Recovery Agenda calling for \$300 billion in infrastructure funds is a request for federal support for construction of a state-of-the-art Alternative Fuel Vehicle Research Lab that will focus on the research and development of alternative fuels, propulsion systems, new vehicle engine and other greenhouse gas reduction technologies and funding for energy efficiency, renewable energy and diesel emission reduction projects – all essential components of his vision to make New York the pre-eminent location for innovative energy technology.

The concerted efforts of DEC staff – partnering with the staff of other executive agencies – will be needed to implement virtually all infrastructure stimulus projects undertaken in New York State, including transportation, wastewater, drinking water and energy transmission infrastructure, consistent with our environmental mandate. DEC is committed to ensuring that all necessary permits and project approvals for stimulus projects are processed expeditiously within our staffing limitations. To this end, we have been working closely with DOT and EFC, as well as other agencies likely to be involved in stimulus projects and stand ready for the challenges these will present.

Moving Forward

As I have noted earlier, we've made great progress on New York's environmental agenda, but we know that we have much work ahead of us to protect our gains and build on our successes. Our "to-do" list grows by the day. Despite our current circumstances, we will move forward because as a society we cannot afford to compromise on clean air and water, we cannot afford to relax protections for our spectacular natural assets, and very importantly, we cannot afford to lose the significant progress we've already made in protecting and preserving New York's environment.

Teddy Roosevelt once said, “Of all the questions which can come before this nation, short of the actual preservation of its existence in a great war, there is none which compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us.”

With the support of the Governor and the Legislature, DEC will be on the front lines in the great central task to pass down a strong, safe, healthy environment to our children and grandchildren.

The challenges of climate change have motivated people in all sectors of New York’s public and private being to focus on the environment. There is a commercial imperative to “be green,” kids are instructing their parents on recycling and sustainability, and around the world government policy is being driven in ways large and small by climate change considerations. New York has a well-deserved reputation as a leader on environmental policy, and this will continue and be built upon under Governor Paterson. In addition to what I’ve outlined today, we will actively seek out opportunities to leverage this momentum, to build public-private partnerships, to work with our municipal partners and industry, and to take advantage of resources offered by the highly motivated and extraordinarily talented non-for-profit and academic communities. Working closely with our sister agencies, we will focus on actions that promote the Governor’s overarching themes of sustainability, smart growth and energy conservation, and take on the challenge of helping New York emerge from this fiscal crisis stronger and better equipped to meet our responsibilities.

Governor Paterson and I and the extraordinary staff at DEC look forward to working with you and your colleagues to address issues under our jurisdiction.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you.