



STATE OF NEW YORK
EXECUTIVE CHAMBER
ALBANY 12224

ANDREW M. CUOMO
GOVERNOR

December 2016

Dear Fellow New Yorker:

I am pleased to approve New York's 2016 Open Space Conservation Plan, which provides an important blueprint for moving the State's Open Space Conservation Program forward. The plan offers guidance for open space planning and protection at the State, regional and community levels.

When I proposed nearly doubling New York's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) budget to a record level of \$300 million, I did so with the knowledge that many of the EPF programs help support open space conservation: the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) land acquisition programs, the farmland protection program of the Department of Agriculture and Markets, the Conservation Partnership Program, and the Municipal Park Program.

This visionary plan contains a list of outstanding priority projects across the State that were identified by citizen-based regional advisory committees. It also contains comprehensive policy and program recommendations to expand the number and scope of conservation tools and their use by our partners in all levels of government, landowners and by nonprofit conservation organizations, including land trusts.

As we face the challenges of climate change, there is a sense of urgency to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change and to adapt to the changes already occurring. There is a clear link between climate change adaptation and open space conservation. To this end, the plan includes solid recommendations on how State and local governments can protect and enhance riparian, coastal and flood plain areas and forests as part of adapting to a changing climate, while improving wildlife habitat and creating new outdoor recreational activities. The Open Space Conservation Plan complements the extraordinary efforts my administration is undertaking to combat climate change, including the 2100 Commission Report, the Community Risk and Resiliency Act and the work of the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery.

The great progress of our open space conservation program is documented in this plan. I was proud to complete the acquisition of the former Finch lands, the largest addition to the Adirondack Forest Preserve in more than a century, and our unprecedented investment of

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resources into the rehabilitation of our State Park system. We are also focused on improving access to our public lands and highlighting our tremendous outdoor legacy. The miracles of the natural world surround us, from the depths of wilderness in the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserves to the community gardens and pocket parks of New York City. It is our duty to develop the next generation of environmental stewards.

New York's natural and cultural heritage links all of us to the past and directs us into the future. Continued stewardship of our parks, forests, farms, lakes and rivers will ensure that those resources are available for generations of New Yorkers in the years to come.

I want to thank Commissioners Seggos, Harvey and Ball and Secretary of State Rossana Rosado and their staffs, and the volunteer regional advisory committees who devoted time and expertise to develop this excellent and far-reaching plan.

Sincerely,



ANDREW M. CUOMO