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Contact: Roger Downs (518) 944-0992 roger.downs@sierraclub.org

SIERRA CLUB APPLAUDS HISTORIC ENVIRONMENTAL FUNDING IN BUDGET
Urges meaningful climate policy on building electrification, green transportation, and extended producer responsibility to be negotiated by end of session

Albany, NY - On Friday, April 8, 2022 Governor Hochul and the State Legislature came to an agreement on a $220 billion state budget that included historic funding for critical environmental programs, but missed opportunities to enact important climate policies required to advance the goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). The final SFY 2022 budget includes landmark investments in wetlands protection, clean energy, water infrastructure, and climate resilience. Notable environmental agreements between the Governor and the Legislature include:

- **Historic Wetlands Reforms** that will protect over 1,000,000 acres of critically important freshwater wetlands that are currently unmapped and tens of thousands of smaller wetlands that are of ‘unusual importance’ and provide valuable ecological services. These long awaited regulatory reforms will protect drinking water and biodiversity, and make communities more resilient to floods, droughts, and ecological disruption brought on by the climate crisis.

- **A $4.2 billion ‘Clean Water, Clean Air, Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act’** that will go before the voters in November for approval. This historic proposal will finance projects that protect critical habitats, restore wetlands, prevent floods, and safeguard our drinking water.

- **A $400 million Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)**, the highest level of funding in the program's history, will ensure that NY's primary funding source for critical programs such as land acquisition, farmland and open space protection, drinking water infrastructure, and waste reduction will continue to support the health and prosperity of all NY's communities.

- **Increased Funding and Staffing for Environmental Agencies** including 94 new DEC staff to implement the CLCPA and other environmental needs.

- **$500 million for offshore wind** manufacturing and supply chain development

- **Green transportation initiatives** including the adoption of a 2035 zero-emissions school bus fleet mandate, supported by $500 million in the Environmental Bond Act for electric vehicle procurement.

- **$500 Million for Clean Water Infrastructure Projects**, a continuation of the $4 billion Water Infrastructure Improvement Act, to repair failing sewage and
drinking water infrastructure, upgrade septic systems, remediate contaminated drinking water, confront harmful algal blooms, address water pollution caused by agricultural run-off, replace lead drinking water service lines, and more.

- **Geothermal Tax Credits** for geothermal heating and cooling units up to $5000. Additionally at least $400 million in Environmental Bond Act funding was earmarked for “renewable heating and cooling” in public buildings and schools. Phasing out fossil fuels in favor of geothermal and air source heat pumps is an effective step in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Many of these budget items have a direct connection to the implementation of the CLCPA, and they should be carefully considered in tandem with the initiatives in the Climate Action Council Scoping Plan. The Sierra Club encourages the legislature to engage in the scoping process and take urgent action to pass obviously needed and meaningful legislation that aligns with Scoping Plan recommendations, which will have New York operating at full speed towards the Climate Act mandates.

In response, Roger Downs, Conservation Director for the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter said:

“The SFY 2022-23 Executive Budget ensures that many of New York’s critical environmental programs will maintain sustaining funding levels, and we commend Governor Hochul and the legislature for their continued commitment to protecting our environment. But even as the billions of dollars in this year’s budget dedicated to the environment eclipses any previous environmental budget expenditure in history, the appropriations fall short of the funding and policy steps that are essential in order to stave off the worst impacts of the impending climate catastrophe.

The 2019 CLCPA represented a historic commitment to combating climate change, but its goals cannot be actualized without dozens of other legislative initiatives that are needed to help New York become an equitable and zero emissions society. Missed opportunities in the budget include establishing zero emissions building codes, appliance, and equipment efficiency standards, abolishing the natural gas ‘100 ft. Rule’ to help transition the building sector away from fossil fuels, and banning new gas hookups in all new construction and banning new gas power plants. These shortcomings further intensify and reiterate the obligation of the Senate and Assembly to now pass these critically important initiatives outside of the Budget. The Sierra Club urges the legislature to utilize the time between now and the end of the 2022 session to pass meaningful legislation on these key issues that were excluded in the SFY 2022-23 Executive Budget, as they are absolutely vital if New York is to achieve its ambitious CLCPA goals.”

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