



**ENVIRONMENTAL  
ADVOCATES OF NEW YORK**

## **2018 Action Agenda**

In the past year, it became abundantly clear that progress on environmental matters must come from the states. The Trump Administration and Congressional Leadership are determined to pull the country back to the dirty and dangerous conditions of the past. New York State has pioneered protections to improve the quality of all of our lives before and must do so again.

The Nation desperately needs a powerful New York, now more than ever before. Environmental Advocates of New York is determined to pursue a bold Action Agenda that rises to meet these challenges.

### **Climate Leadership**

Local and state leaders must find common ground to turn our bold climate goals into enforceable law. The stability of legislative action is needed to unleash the entrepreneurial spirit and innovation that is embedded in New York's culture and history. Further, these new laws must ensure equity for communities on the front lines of climate change impacts: low-income households, seniors, communities of color, immigrants, and vulnerable people who are often the last to get relief and help rebuilding their lives and communities when catastrophes strike.

New York must take action in 2018 to legally require that the state's economy will be completely powered by renewable energy by the year 2050. EA's Climate Plan of Action to accomplish this includes:

- Enacting the Climate and Community Protection Act to set legally binding clean energy and climate goals (requiring that half of New York's electricity come from renewable sources by 2030 and eliminating all human-induced greenhouse gases by 2050) and requiring all state agencies and local governments to screen every decision against climate goals, social equity principles and workforce development;
- Ensuring that New York strengthens the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) regulations and expands climate pollution pricing across the entire economy. The state must tighten the rules governing the use of RGGI auction revenues, with at least 40% of the revenues going to frontline, environmental justice, and disadvantaged communities. New RGGI standards are expected to create more than 30,000 jobs in New York and save consumers more than \$3 billion on energy;
- Adopting innovative forest and agricultural land-use management strategies to sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and,

- Developing new – and expanding existing – policies at the local and state levels to promote energy efficiency, large scale and community-owned renewables, energy storage, electric grid modernization, and geothermal and offshore wind.

## Clean Transportation

Transportation in New York is the biggest source of greenhouse gases: 34% of the total. We spend a staggering \$30 billion (most of which flows to out-of-state interests) on fossil fuels to move people and goods. Strong local and state policies can move the 11.2 million vehicles on our roads rapidly away from dependence on the dirty internal combustion engine of the last century and cut climate pollution, keep billions in our economy, and stimulate innovation. It is imperative that leaders seize the opportunity and begin to transform our transportation sector in the following ways:

- Substantially increase funding for the Metropolitan Transit Authority and other local transportation systems;
- Enact policies like congestion pricing that will address the health and environmental costs of our tailpipes and provide funds to modernize the transportation infrastructure that is so vital to our citizens and our economy; and,
- Lead by example by converting state and local fleets to electric vehicles, ramping up investments in charging infrastructure, and increasing incentives for electric vehicles.

## Healthy Water

It's easy to take clean water for granted until crises occur. From pollution caused by sewage overflows, to chemical contamination, the quality of our water is seriously threatened.

Water infrastructure investment provides good local jobs and a boost to the economy. The United States Conference of Mayors determined that each public dollar invested in water infrastructure increases private long-term Gross Domestic Product output by \$6.35. The United States Department of Commerce has estimated that each job created in the local water and wastewater industry creates 3.68 jobs in the national economy and each public dollar spent yields \$2.62 in economic output in other industries. These benefits are unlocked by New York's water infrastructure grant program (WIIA), which has effectively leveraged other sources of funding to put shovels in the ground.

Our Clean Water Plan of Action includes:

- Increasing funding for WIIA to help fund more communities with clean water infrastructure grants;
- Ensuring the newly created Drinking Water Quality Council reviews priority chemicals that science has linked to significant human health impacts, develops a model to respond to water contamination, and promulgates recommendations for the Department of Health to adopt;
- Ensuring the Department of Health (DOH) creates a State "emerging contaminant" list and requires **all** communities to test their water for listed chemicals;
- Adopting a pesticide use reduction plan, including a ban on the use of chlorpyrifos, which the Trump Administration has abdicated its responsibility to do;

- Building on New York’s fracking ban to prohibit the disposal of oil and gas waste in New York landfills and the use of such waste as dust and ice control on roads; and,
- Funding land protection and setting regulatory standards that protect water-bodies and entire watersheds to create healthier ecosystems for wildlife.

## **Investments to Protect Us**

Governor Cuomo and legislators have few responsibilities that impact our lives more than the New York State Budget. The SFY 2018-19 Enacted Budget should:

- Fully fund and implement the life-saving Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (which legislators have delayed since 2010);
- Finance the state superfund program (\$100M) and the Environmental Protection Fund (at least \$300M) and protect the funds from being diverted to non-environmental projects;
- Eliminate exposure to toxins such as lead in drinking water by funding service line replacement;
- Provide more funds to increase staff of environmental and health agencies (e.g. the Department of Environmental Conservation, Office of Parks, Department of Public Service and Health Department) and more funds so they have the resources to do their jobs.

## **Environmental Rights**

The New York Constitution should include the civil right to clean water, to clean air, and to live in a healthful environment. New York should once and for all enable its citizens to seek judicial relief from environmental threats and health hazards.

## **Stopping Rollbacks**

Special interests and their allies in the Legislature work each year to weaken, block, or delay environmental protections. Environmental Advocates will continue to act as a “watchdog” and identify these assaults, sound the alarm with the media, the public, and decision-makers, and work overtime to ensure bad proposals are dead on arrival.