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Assemblyman 11th District

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February 6, 2009

Honorable Sheldon Silver, Speaker
NYS Assembly
Room #932 - LOB
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Speaker Silver:

A clean and healthy environment provides countless benefits to the State's residents and visitors, as well as serving as an important economic engine. Since 1993, the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) has helped to finance New York's environmental agenda. We write to express our support for the Fund, and to urge the rejection of disproportionate cuts. Instead, we ask that funding remain at fair and equitable levels that will ensure the ability of the State to continue the impressive environmental achievements accomplished previously with Fund monies.

We understand the harsh fiscal realities facing the State currently and urge that careful consideration be given to the economic benefits generated by the fund. For example, the Fund's solid waste programs help support an industry with \$1.3 billion in revenue and 30,000 jobs. Birders, along with 1.2 million other "wildlife watchers" in New York, contributed an estimated \$1.6 billion (and \$250 million in State Sales Tax revenue) to the State economy in 2006, supporting thousands of jobs across the State, with such activities often taking place on land acquired with Open Space monies from the EPF. In addition, according to the Department of Environmental Conservation's Draft Open Space Plan, "Parks, beaches, scenic landscapes, historic sites, lakes, streams and coastal areas are central to New York State tourism and travel industry. State Parks and Historic Sites alone generate almost \$500 million in sales to local area businesses from visitors from out of state. Another \$20 million is generated through tax revenues." Also, protecting land can help decrease water treatment costs - for every 10 percent increase in forest cover in a water source area, treatment costs decreased by approximately 20 percent.

Although there is widespread support for the expansion of the Bottle Bill, we oppose the Governor's proposal to substitute the Bottle Bill expansion revenue for the Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT) monies. The RETT was selected as the original source of funding because of the link between sprawl and

