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Testimony of Ricardo Gotla Legislative Director New York League of Conservation Voters

2013 Joint Environmental Conservation Committee Budget Hearing February 4, 2013

Good afternoon, Chairman Grisanti, Chairman Sweeney and members of the Assembly and Senate Environmental Conservation Committees. I am Ricardo Gotla, Legislative Director for the New York League of Conservation Voters, a statewide environmental advocacy organization.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Chairmen and members of each committee for providing the opportunity to comment on the Governor's 2013-2014 Executive Budget.

Overall, the New York League of Conservation Voters supports the Governor's Executive Budget. In his State of the State Address, Governor Cuomo discussed the need for New York State to adapt to a changing climate and advance climate change mitigation strategies, policy objectives emphasized in the New York League of Conservation Voters' 2013 State Policy Agenda. The Governor's stated commitment to advancing climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies are reaffirmed with budget allocations in New York's 2013-2014 Executive Budget.

In response to Superstorm Sandy, the Governor has appropriated \$21 billion for disaster-related recovery, rebuilding and mitigation programs, aimed at ensuring New York rebuilds smarter and stronger, adopts modern building standards and where it is too dangerous to rebuild, supports rebuilding on safer ground by providing a voluntary homeowner buyout option. The New York League of Conservation Voters is particularly supportive of the Governor's commitment to rebuild and harden critical infrastructure, specifically wastewater treatment plants. We hope mass transit is also included in this area. An additional \$30 billion in federal money is expected to help New York recover from Superstorm Sandy and prepare for future extreme weather events.

The New York League of Conservation Voters welcomes language in the Executive Budget that discusses building natural infrastructure, including wetlands, reefs and dunes as climate adaptation strategies. Our 2013 State Policy Agenda emphasizes the need for New York to give equal consideration to both ecosystem-based and hard infrastructure solutions when preparing



New York for a changing climate.

An additional highlight in the 2013-2014 Executive Budget is a \$153 million Environmental Protection Fund allocation – a \$19 million increase from the previous two budgets to this critically important environmental program. We believe passage of last year's Environmental Protection Fund Enhancement Act was influential in achieving this year's EPF increase. Thank you Chairmen Grisanti and Sweeney for your strong support for the Act.

The 2013-2014 Executive Budget also includes additional funding and programs to achieve a clean-energy future and advance climate change mitigation strategies. One billion dollars has been appropriated to fund a Green Bank that is expected to use existing, scarce public funds to leverage private capital in order to achieve greater investments in clean-energy projects. Further, the Governor has proposed to increase New York's photovoltaic solar capacity by committing \$150 million annually for ten years to the New York Sun Program. Twenty-five million dollars for Cleaner, Greener Communities Program grants will be used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Up to \$10 million will pay for new projects.

While the New York League of Conservation Voters supports these 2013-2014 Executive Budget allocations, many of the details for how these appropriations will be spent remain to be seen. With that said, the New York League of Conservation Voters looks forward to continue working with our sustainability partners and the legislature throughout the budget process to ensure New York adopts a final budget that reflects the environmental community's 2013 priorities.

Thank you.

