

Environmental Conservation

Since the creation of the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) in 1993, the Assembly has worked to mold the fund into an important environmental protection tool. Starting with an appropriation of \$31.5 million in SFY 1994-95, the EPF grew to \$250 million in SFY 2007-08. Last year, the Governor signed into law an Assembly proposal which will expand the EPF to \$300 million by SFY 2009-10 and require new reporting on the Fund's activities. The Governor's proposal of \$250 million for the EPF this year will continue to protect and enhance New York's vital natural resources.

Recognizing the significance of State parks in the quality of life of New York's citizens and as an important part of the State's economy, an ambitious effort to address the capital needs of the parks system is needed. With an initial \$100 million investment, the Governor begins to address the challenge of restoring New York's parks to a level of international prominence.

Environmental justice initiatives are a priority of the Assembly and are included in the Executive's budget proposal. The Governor maintains funding of \$500,000 for community impact research grants to community-based organizations for projects aimed at researching exposure to multiple environmental harms and risks. The Assembly also looks forward to studying the Governor's proposal to create a new account in the EPF for Environmental Justice. These efforts must focus on improving the environment, specifically in minority and low-income

communities, and addressing disproportionate adverse environmental and health impacts that may exist in those areas.