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## **ISLAND-WIDE APPEAL FOR RESTORED ENVIRONMENTAL FUNDING**

### **Hundreds Entreat State Legislature to Renew Support for Water, Land & Parks**

**For Immediate Release:**

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More than 250 environmental and civic leaders representing over 80 groups from Great Neck to Montauk appealed to representatives of Long Island's delegation to the New York State Legislature to restore funds to the state Environmental Protection Fund. Both of the Island's County Executives as well as Town Supervisors and other Long Island public officials joined the call for the restoration of funds to protect drinking water and preserve open space and parks. It was the largest meeting in support of the Environmental Protection Fund in memory and was held March 5 at the Old Bethpage Village Restoration, late Friday.

The proposed budget of Governor David A. Paterson for fiscal 2010-2011 called for slashing \$79 million from the EPF, and eliminating funding for open space altogether for the first time in 18 years and closing popular local parks. The EPF has already been raided of a total of \$500 million over the past eight years. Environmentalists had accepted a cut from the requested \$300 million to \$222 million. The total EPF represents less than one percent of the total state budget, so the cuts would not significantly impact the state's budget deficit.

Local officials and community leaders called on state legislators to restore EPF funding and keep parks open. In spirited but respectful protests, local environmental and recreationalists called the cuts "intolerable" and said they would hold Albany lawmakers accountable for restoring the needed funding. Kevin McDonald, Vice President for Conservation of The Nature Conservancy said, "The proposed budget is unacceptable, but our state legislators understand that Long Islanders expect them to correct this egregiously deficient budget." And Lisa Ott, President of the North Shore Land Alliance added, "The outpouring of concern about these cuts from our community is very strong. We hope it will provide the encouragement state lawmakers need to restore critical funding to the EPF."

State legislators attending the event agreed that the proposed cuts were unfair and promised to work to address the problem. They recognized that cuts to open space preservation would hurt Long Island in particular -- specifically, preservation of the Pine Barrens -- the source of the Island's purest drinking water supply. Assemblyman Fred Thiele said, "The Legislative Exchange at Bethpage strongly demonstrates the continued strong public commitment to land preservation that has never wavered regardless of economic conditions. The public knows that protecting the environment is not a luxury

but a critical state responsibility. Now it is time for Albany to know it too. I will not vote for any State budget that does not eliminate the Governor's proposed moratorium on land preservation. The program must continue."

Both County Executives Ed Mangano of Nassau and Steve Levy of Suffolk said they strongly opposed the cuts and Town Supervisors such as John Venditto of Oyster Bay and Anna Throne-Holst of Southampton pointed out the adverse environmental and economic impacts of the proposed cuts and pledged to continue to advocate for the restoration of the EPF and for keeping state parks open.

The scene now shifts to Albany, where state environmentalists announced today, the largest ever paid advertising and media campaign aimed at restoring funds for environmental programs.