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DEC Announces Winners of 15th Annual Environmental Excellence Awards

State Recognizes Six New York Businesses and Organizations as Leaders in Innovation and Sustainability

Six organizations were recognized today at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) 15th Annual New York State Environmental Excellence Awards Celebration. DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos presented the awards at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York.

DEC Commissioner Seggos said, "I am proud to present this year's Environmental Excellence Awards to municipalities and organizations demonstrating green leadership by adopting innovative solutions to protect our environment and strengthen our economy. Our 15th slate of honorees sets a high bar for other New Yorkers to follow, as we work together to fight climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and using energy more efficiently, and safeguard our natural resources for future generations. Congratulations to all of our outstanding award winners."

The Environmental Excellence Awards are presented in recognition of each organization's innovative programs and outstanding commitment to environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and economic viability. A statewide review committee of 20 representatives from the public and private sectors assisted in selecting the award winners from an array of competitive applications received in May 2018. This year's winners were chosen for pioneering projects to expand renewable energy, improve sustainability, reduce water use, and cultivate new partnerships to enhance stewardship of our parks and open spaces.

The 2018 winners are:

Gore Mountain's Commitment to Solar and Sustainability, Warren County

Gore Mountain is home to a 25-year solar energy project, the largest solar array dedicated to a ski area in the United States. In addition, Gore is actively decreasing energy use and continuing a long-term investment in high-efficiency snowmaking. The solar array saved nearly \$124,000 in one year and the new, efficient snow guns saved 860,000 kWh of energy translating to a reduction of 946,000 pounds of carbon dioxide. These projects make Gore an industry model for its reduction of kilowatt hours used and offsets of CO₂. The ski area is also expanding recycling, creatively repurposing buildings and materials, offering locally produced foods, and offsetting energy use through strategic trail modifications. More than 250,000 visitors come to Gore Mountain each year.

Great Neck Water Pollution Control District, Nassau County

The Great Neck Water Pollution Control District is the first New York municipality to successfully complete a municipal consolidation. By combining two aging wastewater treatment plants, the district's state-of-the-art facility is saving taxpayers more than \$2 million annually. The district is going above and beyond regulatory water regulations and implementing projects that demonstrate its commitment to reduce carbon emissions, save water, reduce the use of hazardous chemicals, and reduce nutrient loadings.

I Love My Park Day: Parks and Trails NY in partnership with NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Albany County

I Love My Park Day is an impressive demonstration of environmental stewardship. This annual event has gathered momentum because of the unique partnership between Parks and Trails NY and the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. This statewide event engages thousands of volunteers in cleanup, improvement, and beautification projects at New York State Parks, historic sites, and public lands. Since its inception

in 2012, this one-day event has resulted in 930 park improvement projects completed by 34,000 volunteers, contributing 77,350 hours of community service. These extraordinary efforts preserve and protect New York's treasured outdoor recreational areas and enhance the experiences of the more than 71 million visitors, generating an estimated \$5 billion in spending and supporting nearly 54,000 jobs.

Stony Brook University Hospital Sustainability Program, Suffolk County

Stony Brook University Hospital serves as the region's only tertiary care and regional trauma center. The hospital is leading by example and implementing a progressive and comprehensive sustainability program that reaches beyond facilities to all patient care units, departments, and areas throughout the hospital setting. The hospital now uses full digital image processing and decommissioned its last wet x-ray processor in 2017. During the harvest season, the hospital's rooftop garden supplies approximately 1,500 pounds of produce for patient meal trays and local charities. And, in just one year, the hospital diverted and donated 11.5 tons of food.

Suffolk County Community College Sustainability Program, Suffolk County

With an enrollment of approximately 27,000 students, Suffolk County Community College is the largest in New York State. In 2014, its Office of Sustainability was established to uphold the college's commitment to the environment. The Office of Sustainability is dedicated to the comprehensive integration of sustainability into its operations. As a result, more than 2,000 students are greening their commutes thanks to the college's partnership with 511 NY Ride Share and Suffolk County Transit. The graduating class of 2018 was the first to wear eco-friendly gowns made from 100 percent recycled plastic bottles. An average of 25 plastic bottles was used to make each gown. In addition, free, filtered water is available at 33 bottle filling stations on all three campuses. Collectively, the stations have helped keep more than 600,000 plastic bottles out of area landfills.

The 15th annual Environmental Excellence Awards honors the collective accomplishments of the 86 award winners recognized since 2004. This year's attendees were inspired by award winners that are using innovative approaches and technologies, advancing sustainable practices and generating economic growth, harnessing the power of unique partnerships, and achieving extraordinary outcomes.

DEC established the awards program in 2004 to recognize organizations with outstanding, innovative, and sustainable projects or programs and unique partnerships helping to achieve a more sustainable New York and serving as models of excellence within their industries and communities. For [additional information about the program and past winners, and to learn about applying for the 2019 awards](#), please visit the DEC website.

New York State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey said, "New York State Parks has been extremely proud to partner with Parks & Trails, New York on I Love My Park Day. Each year, thousands of New Yorkers join to improve beloved state parks in their communities through hands-on cleanup and beautification projects. It is a beautiful and inspiring day that reflects the spirit of stewardship that makes the New York State Park system the best in the nation. With over 130 participating parks and historic sites, I Love My Park Day is our largest single-day statewide event and has inspired a new era of volunteerism in our parks. We are grateful to Parks & Trails, New York for their commitment to this effort and we are honored that our partnership has been recognized with the NYS Environmental Excellence Award."

Robin Dropkin, Executive Director of Parks & Trails New York, said, "Parks & Trails New York is honored to receive the NYS Environmental Excellence Award, along with our partner, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, for our coordinated annual I Love My Park Day event. New York's parks and outdoor spaces are in the midst of an unprecedented revitalization, with renewed government investment. But government cannot and should not do it alone; citizen stewards are needed to keep the revitalization going. That's why in 2012 we launched I Love My Park Day - to make it easier for people to give back to the parks and outdoor places they love."

Gore Mountain CEO Mike Pratt said, "Gore Mountain is honored to have been recognized with this award. Our projects are aimed at fighting climate change and protecting the environment our business is so naturally intertwined with. Our solar power purchasing plans, high-efficiency snowmaking investments, creative repurposing of materials, and other energy-saving initiatives are steps that help us to be better stewards, and that help preserve future winters for all generations to come. This season, guests can look for new electric car charging stations. Thank you to DEC for inviting New York State businesses to work together toward a more sustainable future."

Great Neck Water Pollution Control District Commissioner Patty Katz said, "The Great Neck Water Pollution Control District is extremely honored to be one of the organizations to receive this NYSDEC Environmental Excellence Award. These projects will generate sustainability, lower costs, and have a positive impact on the environment. Our micro-turbines, solar panels and grease receiving station collectively demonstrate our commitment to leadership with present and future solutions to the environmental and economic challenges we face. These improvements and innovations show what is possible for treatment facilities and can be utilized as a model for others in NY State regardless of size."

Suffolk County Community College President Dr. Shaun L. McKay said, "Suffolk County Community College is committed to the stewardship of our natural resources through our comprehensive sustainability programs that embrace our students, staff and administration in the effort to contribute to a healthier environment and economy and serving as models of excellence. We thank the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for recognizing our considerable efforts."

Director of Healthcare Safety & Sustainability SUNY Stony Brook Jill Kavoukian said, "Stony Brook University Hospital is honored to receive this prestigious award and it's especially meaningful coming from an organization whose mission is "to conserve, improve and protect New York's natural resources and environment". This recognition acknowledges the innovative work accomplished by our dedicated interdisciplinary team at Stony Brook University Hospital. They continue to seek new and more effective ways to improve our environmental performance through conservation, purchasing, reduction, reuse and recycling. It's a true milestone in our healthcare sustainability journey."