



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

Land and Water Conservation with NYS DEC: Exploring a New Grant Opportunity

Upper Susquehanna Watershed Forum
10/2/2025



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

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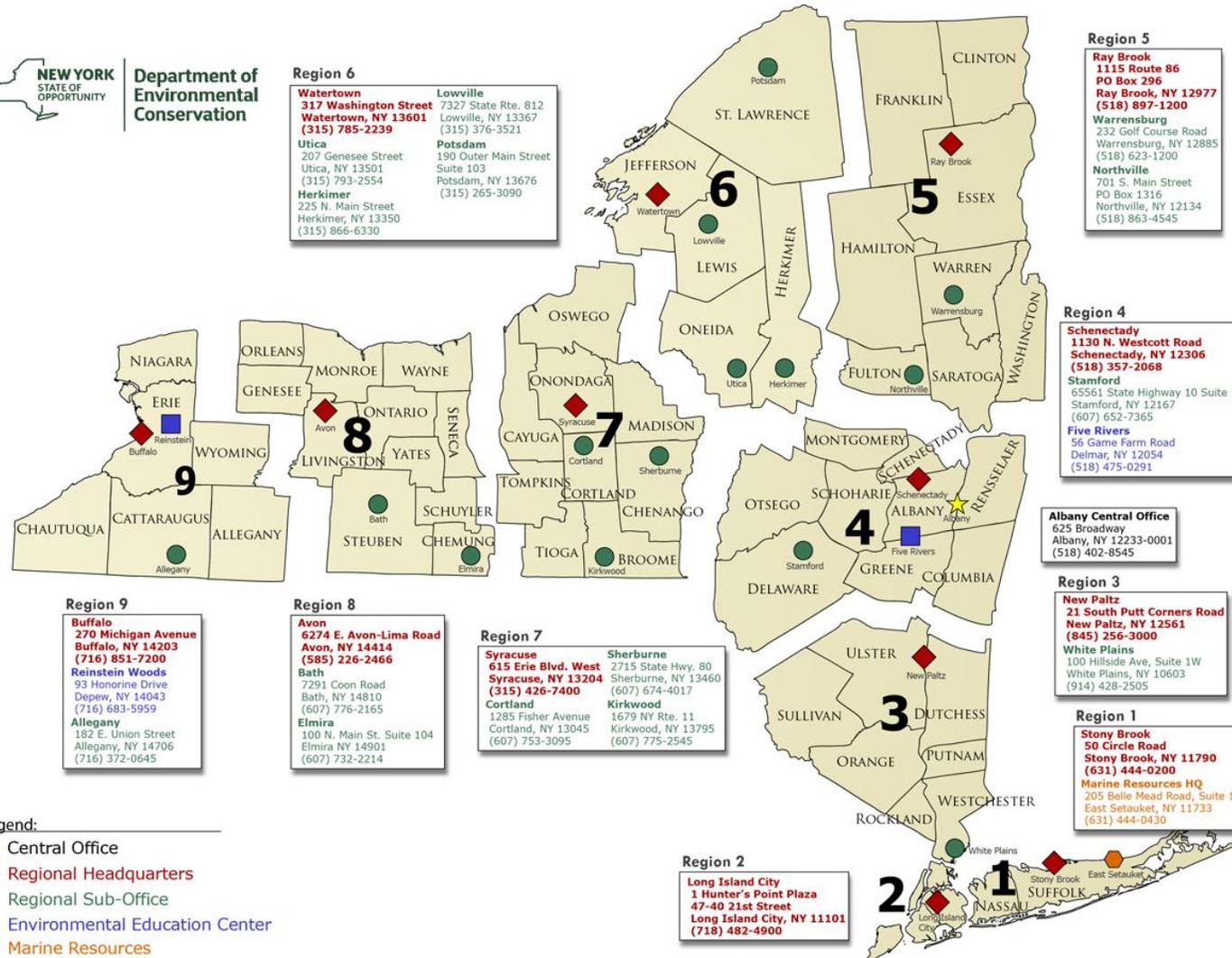
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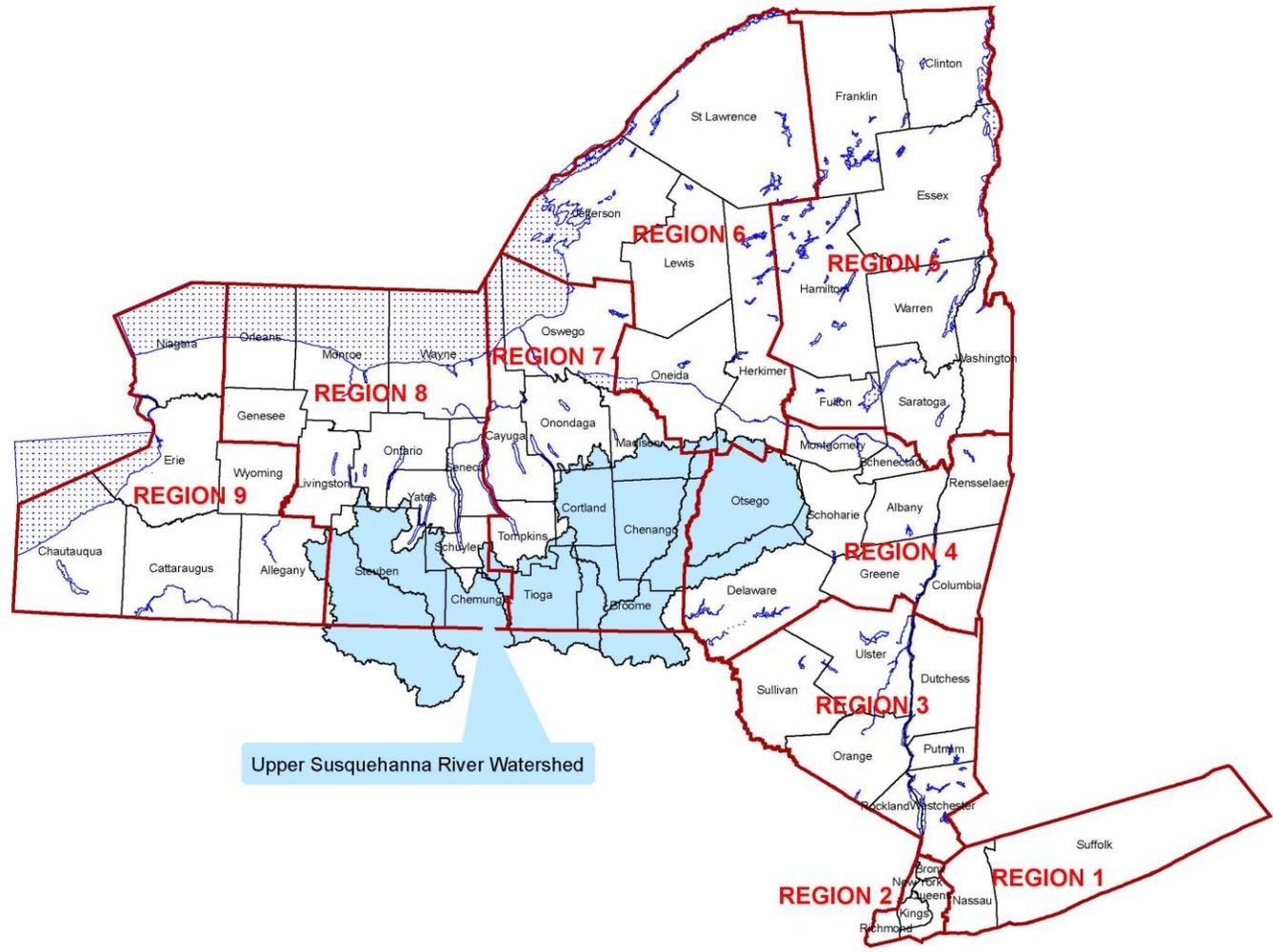
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New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Regions



Department of Environmental Conservation





Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act of 2022 (Bond Act)

- On November 8, 2022, New Yorkers overwhelmingly approved a ballot proposition to make \$4.2 billion available for environmental and community projects. State agencies, local governments, and partners can access funding to protect water quality, help communities adapt to climate change, improve resiliency and create green jobs.
- Bond Act Funding will support new and expanded projects across the State to safeguard drinking water sources, reduce pollution, and protect communities and natural resources from climate change.



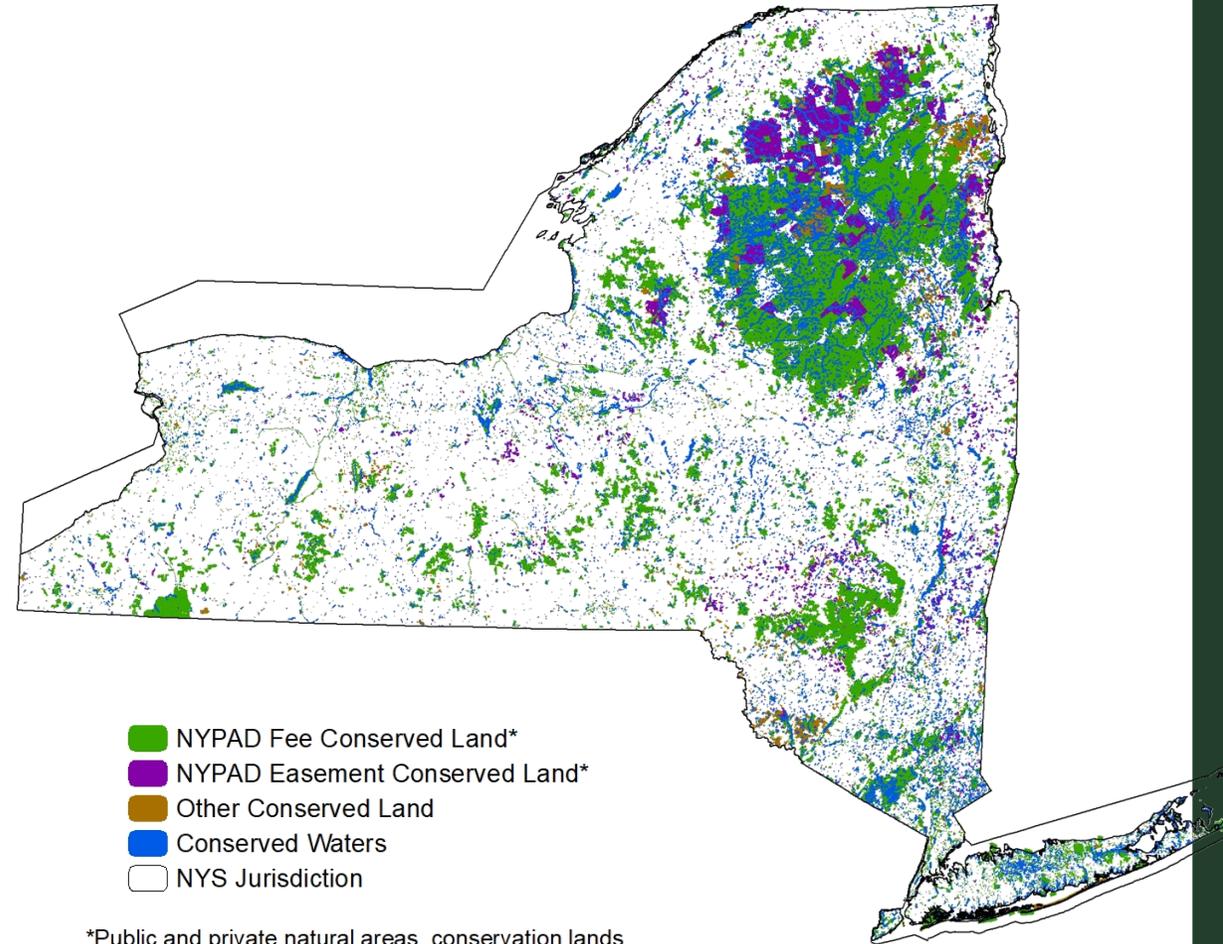
Bond Act Eligibility (ECL 58-0101)

- 1) Possess ecological, habitat, recreation or scenic values
- 2) Protect the quality of drinking water supply
- 3) Provide flood control or flood mitigation values
- 4) Constitute a floodplain
- 5) Provide habitat connectivity
- 6) Provide open space for the use and enjoyment of the public
- 7) Provide community gardens in urban areas

NYS 30 x 30

*“It shall be the goal of the state to support and contribute to national efforts to **conserve at least thirty percent of United States lands and inland waters and at least thirty percent of United States ocean areas by the year 2030.**” - NYS Senate*

- Align with the state land acquisition plan
- Increase **climate resilience**
- Protect **wetlands**
- Preserve and restore **biodiversity** through **habitat protection** and **connectivity**
- Consider **diverse landscapes**
- Expand **equitable outdoor access**
- Consider **economic sustainability** and **food security**
- Collaborate with research institutions to utilize **innovative scientific observation**
- Collaborate with **tribal partners**
- Ensure **public input** and involvement



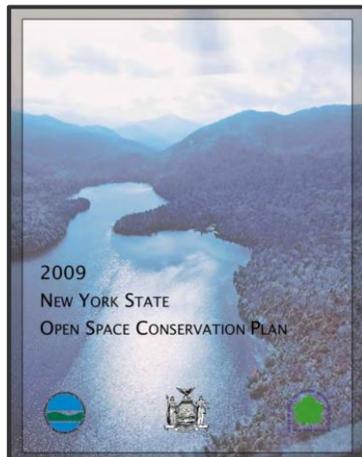
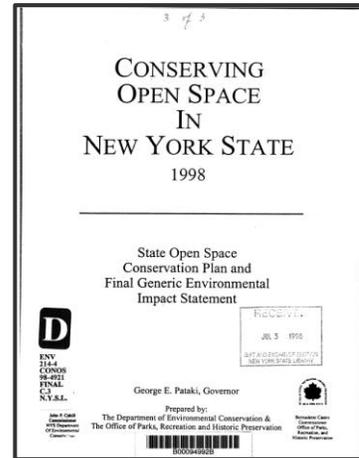
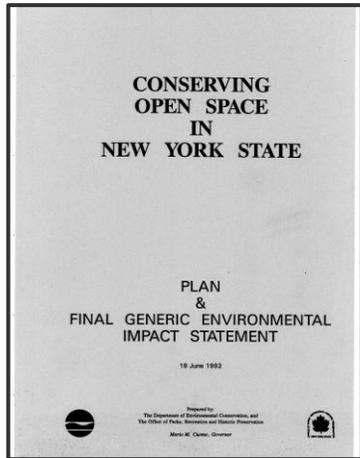
*Public and private natural areas, conservation lands, open space, or recreational areas.
Source: New York Protected Areas Database

NYS Open Space Plan (OSP) – Foundation for Land and Water Conservation in NYS

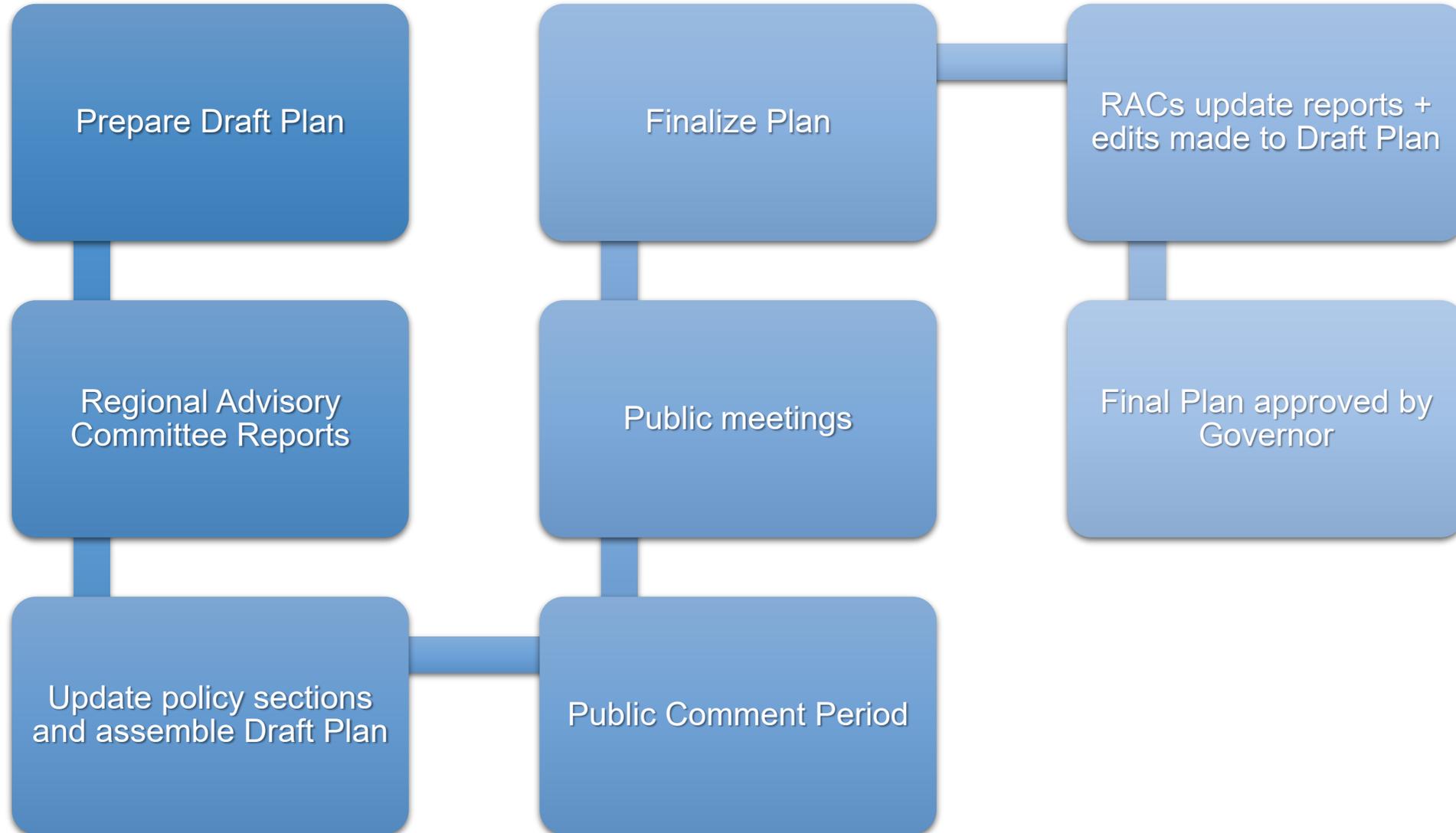
- Blueprint for NY land conservation
- 1990: Legislation for Land Acquisition Plan – ECL Article 49, Title 2, State Land Acquisition
- 1992: First Open Space Plan
- 1993: Environmental Protection Fund created – land acquisition required to be part of a listed priority conservation project
- Established the goals & principles (ECL Article 49 Title 2)
 - Projects must align with a priority project or conservation goal noted in the plan



Previous Open Space Plans 1992 to 2016



Open Space Plan Process Summary



Open Space Conservation Grant Vision and Basic Requirements

- **Vision** – High impact, geographically diverse land acquisitions that increase climate resilience and adaptation, enhance community health and access to nature, and preserve, improve and connect terrestrial and aquatic habitats throughout New York State.
- **\$100 million allocated**
- **Projects must:**
 - Align with Bond Act project funding eligibility requirements.
 - Possess ecological, habitat, recreation or scenic values
 - Protect the quality of drinking water supply
 - Provide flood control or flood mitigation values
 - Constitute a floodplain
 - Provide habitat connectivity
 - Provide open space for the use and enjoyment of the public
 - Provide community gardens in urban areas
 - Align with Open Space Plan project funding eligibility requirements.



Open Space Conservation Grant Program Process

Timeline to date

- Draft Eligibility Guidelines – June 2024
- 50 public comments
- Staff person hired to manage program 9/4/2025
- Request for Application (RFA) currently being drafted.



Eligibility

- **Eligible applicants**

- Not-for-profit corporations, as defined in 49-0303(8)2, include any not-for-profit corporation organized inter alia for the conservation or preservation of real property and which has the power to acquire interests in real property. Such organization must have qualified as exempt for federal tax purposes pursuant to Section 501 (c)(3) of the internal revenue code or any similar successor statutory provision.
- Municipality defined in subdivision 58-0101(8)
 - Local public authority or public benefit corporation
 - County, city town, village, school district
 - Improvement district within a county, city town or village, including Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- Indian Nation or Tribe recognized by New York or the United States (within NY)

Next Steps

- RFA finalization
- Announcement of grant program
- Webinar
- Additional advertisement

NYSDEC Open Space Conservation Grants (other opportunities)

- Community Forest Conservation
 - Fee and CE acquisition by municipality
 - \$500,000 per year
 - <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/open-space/community-forest-conservation-grant-program>
- Forest Conservation Easements for Land Trusts (FCELT)
 - 1.35 million per year
 - <https://landtrustalliance.org/resources/connect/field-services/new-york/forest-conservation-easements-for-land-trusts-program>
- NYS Conservation Partnership Program
 - Capacity, catalyst, professional development, stewardship, transactions
 - 3.1 million per year
 - <https://landtrustalliance.org/resources/connect/field-services/new-york/new-york-state-conservation-partnership-program>
- Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP)
 - Several types of eligible projects including land acquisition that protects drinking water
 - At least \$75 million per year for all project types
 - <https://dec.ny.gov/get-involved/grant-applications/wqip-program/land-acquisition-projects-source-water-protection-toolkit>





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