



HISTORY OF DEC

Highlights & Environmental Milestones

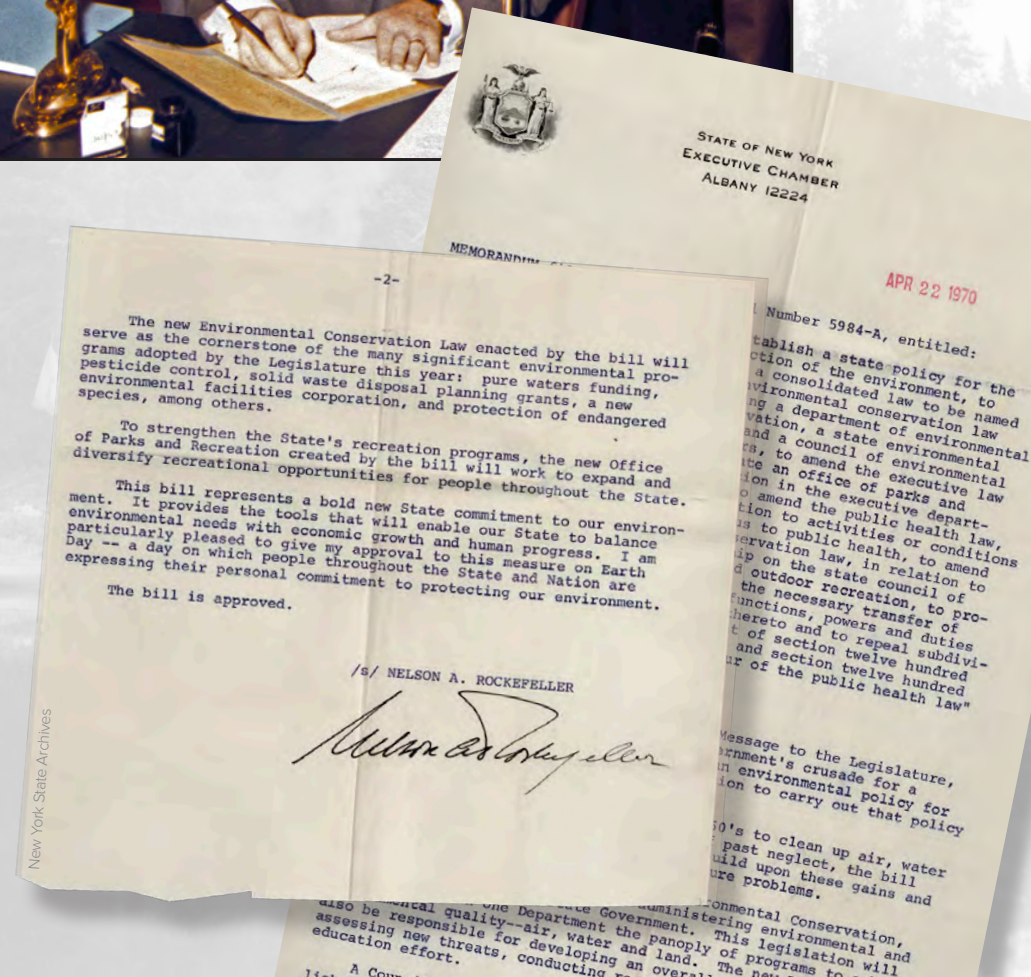
1970

- ▶ On April 22, the first Earth Day, Governor Nelson Rockefeller signs legislation merging the duties of the existing Conservation Department with select programs of the State departments of Health, and Agriculture and Markets, and certain state commissions under the newly created New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). DEC immediately begins to work to address challenges like pesticides, mercury pollution, solid waste management and recycling, flood protection, and access to wilderness. The newly created agency also begins to develop air quality plans to comply with national health-based standards for air pollutants and auto emissions under the federal Clean Air Act.
- ▶ New York State bans the use of lead paint in schools and the interiors of homes. The measure provides important protections against exposure to toxic lead dust, which can pose serious human health risks, especially for children under the age of 7. A federal ban is not enacted until 1978.



1971

- ▶ New York State bans DDT, a widely used pesticide that was found to cause cancer, and also harm wildlife and the environment. DEC's pesticide controls are the most comprehensive in the country. The U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) follows New York's lead one year later with a national ban on DDT.



1972

- ▶ New York begins to allocate billions of dollars through DEC's Construction Grants Program to build an advanced network of sewage treatment facilities to reduce raw sewage from flowing into rivers, lakes, and streams. New York voters approve the Environmental Quality Bond Act to fund the construction of new sewage treatment plants, as well as land acquisitions/preservation, solid waste projects, air pollution controls, and resource recovery.



1973

- ▶ New York State bans phosphorous in all cleaning products (except dishwashing detergents) to reduce water pollution. Prior to the ban, high levels of phosphorous led to green water – caused by excessive aquatic growth – especially in Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. A subsequent law passed in 2010 made it illegal for stores in New York to stock household dishwasher detergents that contain phosphorus, and also restricts the use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorous.

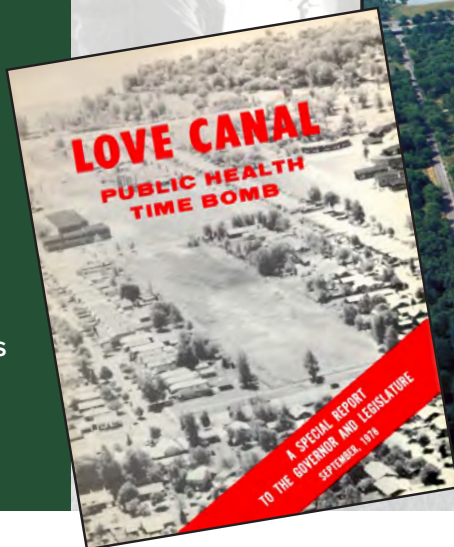
1976

- ▶ New York launches bald eagle restoration efforts; a year later, the agency begins restoration for osprey on Long Island.
- ▶ New York places controls on aerosol cans containing chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). CFCs destroy the Earth's ozone layer, which protects life from the harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun.



1978

- ▶ New York declares a public health emergency when toxic pollutants seep into homes in the Love Canal development in Niagara Falls. DEC and partners install a permanent leachate collection system, a 22-acre clay cap on the site (subsequently expanded to 40 acres), and a carbon treatment facility to contain and cleanup the contamination. To this date, DEC and other agencies maintain the barrier drain system and pumping station, and treat and monitor groundwater at the site.



OTHER 1970s MILESTONES

- ▶ The State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) is established under law to help control wastewater discharges into New York's rivers, streams, lakes and marine waters.
- ▶ DEC works with Vermont and Quebec under a cooperative strategic partnership to evaluate environmental impacts and develop a comprehensive management plan to restore trout and salmon fisheries in Lake Champlain. DEC also begins a new era of Great Lakes fisheries management with the enactment of major clean waters legislation, long-term research and monitoring of fish communities, broader international cooperation, and intensive trout and salmon stocking efforts.
- ▶ The State protects or purchases approximately 134,000 acres of land, including the 12,500-acre Santanoni Preserve; 7,100 acres of land in the Long Island Pine Barrens; and an additional 9,182 acres in the Adirondacks, including 12 mountain peaks, with an additional 7,000 acres preserved under an easement. In addition, the statewide Urban and Community Forestry program is established, promoting tree planting and education in urban areas. Through this program, DEC supports and assists communities with comprehensive planning and management to create healthy urban and community forests that enhance the quality of life for residents.
- ▶ New York enacts the State "Superfund Program" to clean up contaminated sites by enabling the state to order responsible parties to clean up sites that pose the most serious threat to public health and the environment.



1982

- ▶ New York's "Bottle Bill" is passed, requiring a deposit on certain beverage containers to encourage greater recycling and reduce litter.

1984

- ▶ New York passes the nation's first law to reduce "acid rain" from in-state air pollution sources; in addition, DEC initiates the State Acid Deposition Control Act, a policy to control acid rain in areas susceptible to the impacts of acid rain, including the Adirondacks, Catskills, and the Hudson Highlands. In 2019, DEC confirmed that brook trout were found in Lake Colden in the Adirondacks, a lake that had been devoid of fish for more than four decades due to acid rain.
- ▶ DEC assumes responsibility for the oil and hazardous substance spill program and establishes a statewide toll-free hotline to report spills.

1986

- ▶ The New York State Environmental Quality Bond Act passes, providing \$1.2 billion to clean up hazardous waste sites and \$250 million to acquire parks and other environmentally sensitive lands.



1987

- ▶ DEC creates an integrated state solid waste management plan and implements Part 360 solid waste regulations, bringing New York State into compliance with the provisions of the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. The plan sets visionary and aggressive, yet achievable, goals and includes periodic updates to ensure continued progress in managing solid waste. Over the years, DEC has revised the regulations to address the reuse, recycling, transport, and disposal of high volume hydraulic fracturing (fracking) waste, construction and demolition debris, and improve oversight of mulch and compost facilities, and support greater recycling.



1988

- ▶ The Solid Waste Management Act is passed. The Act provides grants for municipal solid waste projects and recycling programs, and creates DEC's Bureau of Waste Reduction, Reuse and Recycling. In addition, New York's solid waste regulations are revised and enhanced, becoming one of the nation's most comprehensive set of requirements for solid waste management facilities. The State also passes laws related to infectious medical waste, which are later expanded to include all medical waste.



1989

- ▶ DEC helps form the Niagara River Toxics Management Plan and Lake Ontario Toxics Management Plan with EPA, Environmental Canada, and the Ontario Government to jointly reduce the discharge of contaminants that accumulate in the fish of those waters.
- ▶ State regulations are drafted specifying water quality standards for 95 toxic chemicals, and how sites for petroleum bulk storage facilities should be chosen, as well as how they should be built, monitored, and shut down.
- ▶ DEC's Bald Eagle Restoration Project achieves its goal of 10 nesting pairs.

1990

- ▶ New York City signs an agreement with the state to clean up, improve operations, and submit an application to operate Fresh Kills Landfill, which, at the time, was the largest landfill in the country (2,200 acres). Under a state law, the landfill was required to cease accepting solid waste, and it was closed on March 21, 2001. Note: an exception was made in the aftermath of 9/11, as workers used the former landfill as a site to sort through materials from Ground Zero.

1991

- ▶ The use of lead shot is prohibited for waterfowl hunting in New York. Since ducks and geese that normally ingest small pebbles, sand, and rocky materials as part of their feeding routine (e.g., they lack teeth), they are susceptible to lead poisoning if they ingest lead shot.



1992

- ▶ The first NYS Open Space Plan is signed, creating the blueprint for acquisitions and protection of unique and environmentally sensitive lands. The plan is periodically updated
- ▶ New York State adopts California's stringent vehicle emissions standards. Under federal Clean Air Act amendments, DEC works to improve air quality for the entire state and control urban smog, acid rain, toxic air pollutants, and stack emissions pollution.

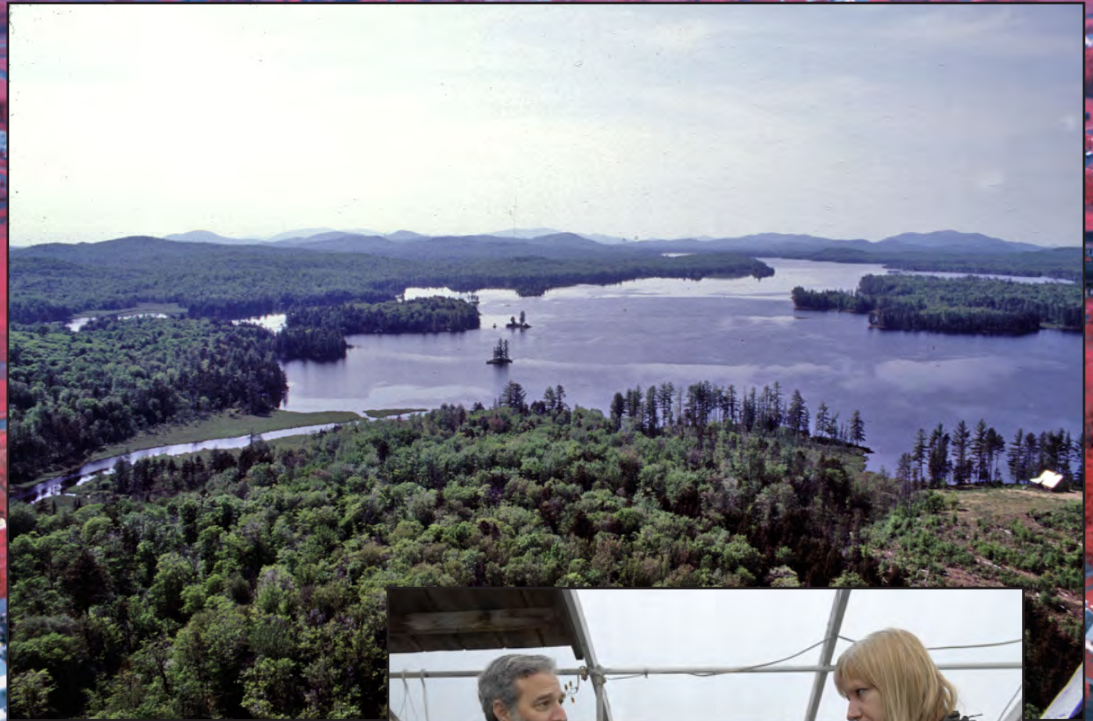
1993

- ▶ New York creates the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), which provides millions of dollars annually to support state add local programs that preserve open space, farmland, coastlines, and municipal parks. EPF funds are also available for closing landfills and improving recycling programs.



1994

- ▶ The number of active landfills in New York State drops from more than 500 in 1984 to 50 a decade later. Today, there are 27 active municipal solid waste landfills in New York.
- ▶ DEC approves a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for the cleanup and restoration of Long Island Sound. The State of Connecticut and EPA adopt the plan shortly afterward. A new CCMP was released in 2015 to continue and expand on these efforts, including addressing challenges such as sustainability, climate change, and ecosystem-based management.
- ▶ New York reaches agreement with Occidental Chemical Corp. to settle Love Canal litigation, including the company paying \$120 million in cleanup costs and restoration of the Lake Ontario fishery. The agreement is one of the largest natural resource damages settlements in the nation at the time.



1996

- ▶ New York State voters approve the \$1.75 billion Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, which will fund various environmental projects, including land acquisitions, clean water and air project, dam safety and flood control projects, historic preservation, and brownfields redevelopment.
- ▶ The State enacts the Pesticide Reporting Law, among the first of its kind in the nation, which requires licensed commercial businesses to report the specific pesticides they are using and post signs at treated sites warning that pesticides have been applied.



1997

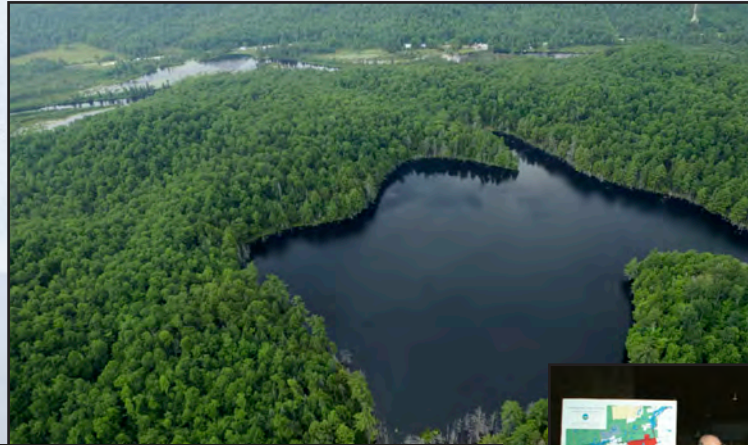
- ▶ DEC signs a landmark agreement with New York City that forms the basis for managing and protecting the New York City Watershed, which supplies approximately 1.2 billion gallons of clean, high quality drinking water to residents and businesses, serving nearly half the population of New York State every day.

1998

- ▶ DEC establishes a Pollution Prevention Unit to plan, monitor, manage, coordinate, and encourage efforts by businesses and industry to prevent pollution at its source.

1999

- ▶ DEC establishes the Office of Environmental Justice to address environmental concerns in underserved areas and ensure community participation equality in the state's environmental permitting process. The office offers competitive grants to support and empower communities in their efforts to develop and implement solutions that significantly address environmental issues, harms, and health hazards; build community consensus; set priorities; and improve public outreach and education.
- ▶ DEC initiates a program that requires utilities to cut their sulfur- and nitrogen oxide emissions by 50 percent. These chemical compounds are major components of acid rain, ozone, and smog.



OTHER 1990s MILESTONES

- ▶ DEC acquires or protects more than 100,000 acres of land, including the addition of 15,000 acres in the heart of Adirondack Park from the Whitney family's estate, which many canoeists have called "the jewel of the Adirondacks."

2000

- ▶ New York State enacts the Pesticide Neighbor Notification, which requires a notice of 24 to 48 hours in advance of a pesticide application on an abutting property. The notice includes visual markers for most residential lawn applications.

2002

- ▶ The urban fishing program, “I Fish NY,” begins, part of an effort to increase participation in fishing and promote outstanding fishing opportunities in New York through programs such as free fishing clinics, fishing rod loaner programs, and more. DEC also hires its first fisheries biologist for New York City.
- ▶ DEC create Clean Sweep NY, a program to provide schools with an economical and environmentally safe process to collect and dispose of unwanted, unused and obsolete pesticides, chemicals, and mercury-containing devices, and recycle pesticide containers.

2003

- ▶ The passage and signing of the State Superfund/ Brownfields Act helps DEC establish a Brownfields Cleanup Program with \$120 million available annually to clean up unused or abandoned industrial properties and return them to productive use. In addition, the State Waste Tire Management and Recycling Act also passed, providing funding to remove water tires from tire dumps across the state. By 2009, 26.5 million waste tires had been removed from tire dumps in the state.



2004

- ▶ The gasoline additive MTBE is banned in New York based on concerns about the chemical polluting groundwater and impacting drinking water and public health.

2005

- ▶ New York and six other northeastern states establish the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), the nation's first market-based, cap-and-trade system to reduce harmful carbon (CO₂) emissions from fossil fuel burning power plants, which create greenhouse gases, a main contributor to climate change.

2006

- ▶ DEC and EPA reach agreement with Honeywell International, Inc., the responsible party for the industrial contamination of Onondaga Lake, to conduct the cleanup operation to remove contaminated sediments from the lake bottom, tributaries, and upland sites.

2007

- ▶ New York State surpasses its goal of preserving more than one million acres of open space throughout the state, including environmentally significant lands and forests.



2008

- ▶ An independent audit finds that State Forests managed by DEC meet the highest standards for protection and sustainability, earning them “green certification” from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Forest Stewardship Council. In addition, regulations restricting the movement of firewood.

2009

- ▶ The ban on open burning of trash and debris is expanded to all areas of the state to improve air quality and prevent wildfires.

2010

- ▶ The Electronic Equipment Recycling and Reuse Act becomes law, establishing the most comprehensive electronic waste (e-waste) produce stewardship program in the country. Since this law was enacted, more than 627 million pounds of consumer electronic waste has been recycled or reused rather than being sent to landfills, waste combustion facilities, or improperly disposed.

2011

- ▶ Due to improved water quality, DEC is able to allow shellfish in more than 3,000 acres of marine waters off Long Island that had been closed to shellfishing for decades.



2012

- ▶ New York acquires 69,000 acres of the former Finch, Pruyn and company lands and other Nature Conservancy lands in the Adirondacks. The State also acquires a 2,146-acre parcel of land within the Adirondack Park to be added to the State Forest Preserve, and a 651-acre parcel outside the Park that will become state forest.

2013

- ▶ To minimize the entry and spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in New York, the state issues a regulation that prohibits the importation of any captive deer, elk, or moose into New York, except under a permit issued by the State Department of Agriculture and Markets. No cases of CWD have been detected in the state since 2005.

2014

- ▶ New state regulations adopted to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species require boaters to clean, drain, and dry their boats prior to launching the vessel from DEC lands/facilities. These regulations are part of a broader state effort, in conjunction with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, to control invasive species that threaten native plants and animals, and destroy habitat, and address the damage they cause.



2015

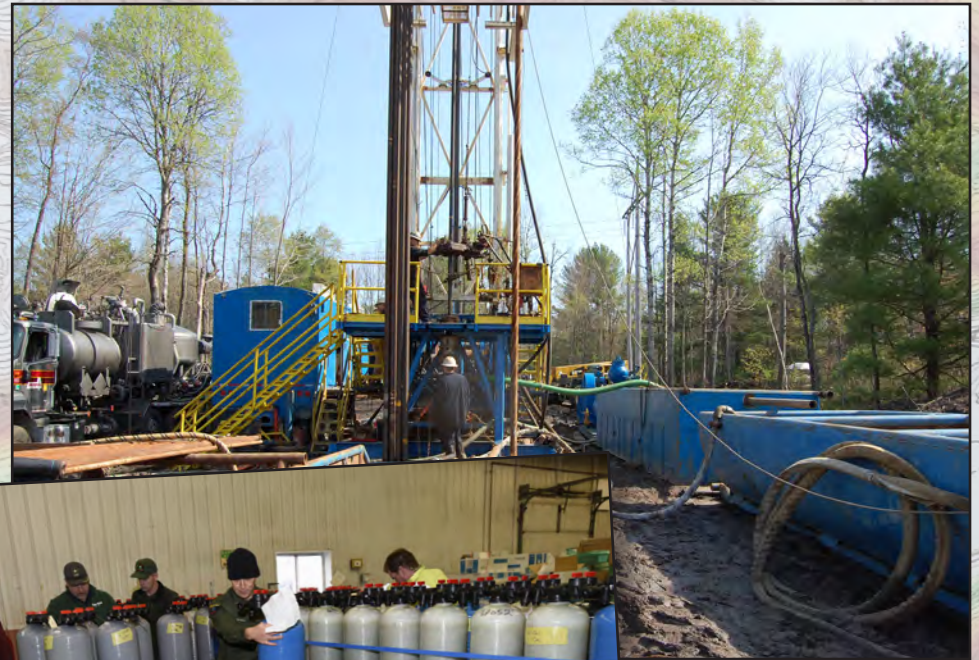
- ▶ Following an extensive, seven-year review, which including an assessment of potential risks to public health and the environment, New York State officially prohibits high-volume hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) in the state.

2016

- ▶ DEC and the State Health Department (DOH) address PFOA-contamination of water in Hoosick Falls. As part of this effort, New York established a State Water Quality Rapid Response Team, led by the two state agencies, to swiftly identify and evaluate threats to drinking water supplies statewide, and groundwater and surface water contamination.

2017

- ▶ New York passes the \$2.5 billion Clean Water Infrastructure Act, which will support key drinking water and clean water infrastructure projects, and improve water quality protection across the state. Projects will address emergent contaminants and alleviate pollution problems associated with aging water treatment plants, and older, sub-standard septic and stormwater systems.
- ▶ DEC begins an engineering investigation of an underground contamination plume from the U.S. Navy/Northrup Grumman property in Nassau County, Long Island. Note: in December 2019, DEC announced the selection of a remedy (Record of Decision) to halt the flow of the contamination plume and expedite the cleanup of the site.



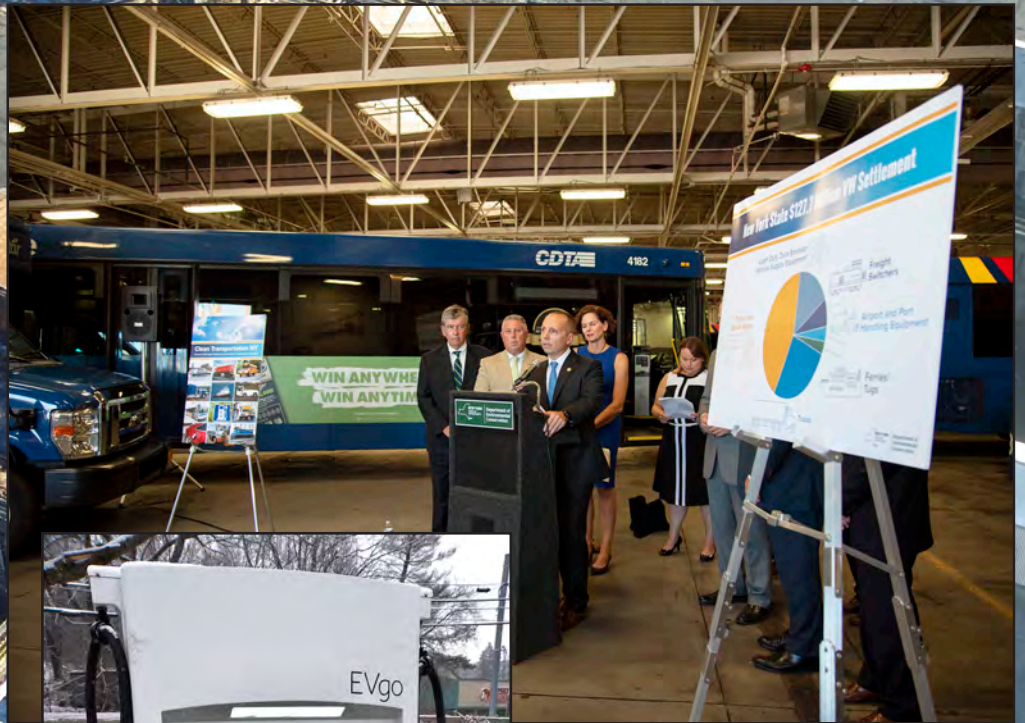
2017

- ▶ DEC confirms a record-breaking number of nesting pairs of bald eagles in the state – 323 pairs. Note: In 1976, there was only one pair of nesting bald eagles in New York.
- ▶ The State completes the capping of the Onondaga Lake bottom, a project that included hydraulic dredging of 2.2 million cubic yards of sediment from the bottom of the lake and adjacent shoreline areas, and the placement of approximately 3.1 million cubic yards of cap material. This effort is a major milestone in the restoration and revitalization of this Syracuse lake, once known as the “most polluted lake in America.”
- ▶ New York releases the Methane Reduction Plan, which features 25 actions to reduce methane emissions from landfills and the oil, gas, and agriculture sectors, the three sectors responsible for the majority of methane emissions. Methane accounts for 9 percent of the state’s greenhouse gas emissions, second only to carbon dioxide as a contributor to climate change.
- ▶ New York launches the Adventure NY initiative, a multi-year outdoor recreation campaign to connect New Yorkers with the state’s diverse and abundant outdoor destinations.



2018

- ▶ New York State releases the Clean Transportation NY plan, a strategy to invest \$127.7 million received through the 2016 Volkswagen settlement to expand the use of clean and electric vehicles. These funds build on the state's aggressive efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector, which accounts for approximately 35 percent of New York greenhouse gas emissions – a percentage that continues to grow..
- ▶ DEC oversees the safe shutdown of the Tonawanda Coke facility in western New York, an industrial plant that had been cited numerous times for releasing harmful emissions, including benzene, into the neighboring community, affecting air quality, the environment, and public health.
- ▶ New York files a lawsuit against six companies that manufactured aqueous foam containing perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). The lawsuit seeks to hold these companies accountable for contaminating local drinking water supplies, and recover state costs and natural resource damages related to the effect these hazardous substances chemicals on public health and environmental resources.



2019

- ▶ New York announces a ban on the sale of single-use plastic bags, starting in March 2020, a significant step to reduce pollution and protect fish and wildlife.
- ▶ DEC adopts regulations that will require all power plants in New York to meet new, stricter emissions limits for carbon dioxide. This first-in-the-nation approach to regulating carbon emissions will end the use of coal in New York power plants by the end of 2020.
- ▶ New York enacts legislation to ban offshore drilling in New York waters, prohibiting the state from granting permits for drilling or oil or gas exploration in offshore areas controlled by the state.
- ▶ New York enacts the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, codifying the State's Green New Deal, which includes a nation-leading clean energy target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 85 percent from 1990 levels by the year 2050.
- ▶ In response to historic flooding of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, New York undertakes the Resilience and Economic Development Initiative (REDI), committing more than \$300 million to flood and erosion mitigation, economic recovery efforts, and the resilience of shoreline properties.
- ▶ DEC launches DECnfo Locator, an interactive map that provides easy public access to DEC documents and data about New York's environment and outdoor recreation.

