

Audubon New York Hosts Motivational Fall Council Meeting

By Kimberley L. Ray

SEVENTY-FIVE Audubon New York chapter representatives attended the three-day Fall Council meeting in Pawling, New York. The weekend began with a field trip to Constitution Marsh and an evening program

featuring National Audubon's senior

National senior vice president for centers and education Tamar Chotzen addresses the Audubon New York Council at their fall meeting.



vice president for centers and education Tamar Chotzen. Council members vigorously participated in the question and answer period that followed.

Later during the weekend council representatives shared chapter triumphs and defeats during a roundtable discussion and listened as National's vice president for public policy Lois Schiffer expounded on national policy issues of Audubon.

Highlights of the weekend included an inspiring presentation by Mamie Parker, regional director of the northeast United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Parker's compelling message traced her roots in conserva-

tion beginning with childhood memories of fishing with her mother to her adult years as a fishery biologist. Her travels taught her many lessons, but none as indelible as the importance of partnerships. Parker reviewed the many successful joint ventures Audubon New York maintains with her agency including activities at Montezuma Refuge and the flourishing Partners in Flight program. She challenged Audubon New York to cultivate new partnerships and continue its exemplary conservation work.

The next council meeting will be held at the Gideon Putnam in beautiful Saratoga Springs, New York. A discus-

sion of Audubon policy resolutions, special appearance by Ross Dunn a marine fisheries expert of National Audubon, and the presentation of the 2002 William Hoyt Environment Award, are among "must-see" events planned for the weekend. For more information call (518) 869-9731.

U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE



Mamie Parker

Governor Pataki Fully Funds EPF In Budget: Calls For A Million Acres To Be Protected In The State of The State Message *Staff Report*

IN JANUARY, the legislative season began with the traditional governor's State of the State message and the governor's release of his proposed 2002/2003 fiscal year (FY) budget. During difficult economic times and the backdrop of September 11, the governor's proposals maintain a high level of commitment to the environment.

Governor George E. Pataki's State of the State message highlighted the importance of several environmental programs and pledged to protect one million acres of open space over the next decade. New York State has protected 325,000 acres of open space land during the past five years under the Pataki administration.

To pay for these and other environmental needs, the governor released his state budget allocating \$1.4 billion to

environmental programs under a cloud of a \$6.8 billion dollar state deficit. The governor's budget maintains overall staffing levels at the Department of Environmental Conservation, Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation and other agencies such as the Adirondack Park Agency. Pataki's proposal not only called for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to be fully funded at \$125 million in fiscal year 2002/2003, but also urged the legislature to pass a deficiency budget by March 31 to ensure that \$125 million is appropriated to the EPF in this fiscal year (2001/2002). When New York State passed the "bare-bones" budget last August, the dedicated EPF was never allocated.

Audubon hopes that by the time this issue of the *Audubon Advocate* reaches its audience, the Assembly and State

Senate will have passed a deficiency budget with an Environmental Protection Fund, keeping the program intact. The EPF proposals (both for FY 01/02 and FY 02/03) would provide land acquisition funds, farmland preservation funds, Hudson River Estuary program funds, Park and Environmental Conservation Stewardships and Capital projects funds as well as dollars to zoos, botanical gardens and nature education centers. Furthermore, the governor's proposal has no state agency employees on the EPF, a major concern in the past and in turn a victory for the environmental community.

In fiscal year 2002/2003, interest and dollars that have accumulated in the fund, but that were not appropriated, are being utilized for budget relief. "In good times and under normal circumstances we would want

all the interest built up in the fund to be used in future years for environmental programs," said William Cooke, director of government relations for Audubon New York. "However, recognizing the difficult issues before the state, we find it hard to demand all the gray."

Audubon New York will work with both houses of legislature and the governor's office to make sure use of funds built up in the Environmental Protect Fund beyond the \$250 million allocated (for both fiscal years) is used in a reasonable fashion and that the categories of the fund reflect the fund's purpose and maintain its long-term integrity. "The governor's proposal provides us basically what we asked for while maintaining the integrity of the Fund. Now we have to make it happen," concluded Cooke.



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