

AUDUBON ADVOCATE

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FALL 2000

Governor proclaims state program a 'conservation leader'

Staff Report

Governor George E. Pataki addressed the board of directors of the National Audubon Society at their June meeting, which was held in Bear Mountain.

State designates new BCAs, see page 4

The national board, which travels across the country to hold its meetings, selected the New York state site to hear reports on and celebrate the success of the New York state program.

The governor called Audubon's state program a conservation leader and partner for New York state. Pataki noted the long-standing history of Audubon's leadership and conservation, and encouraged the national board to be ever vigilant in pursuing Audubon's environmental agenda.

The governor took this opportunity to designate two new Bird Conservation Areas, the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area and the Mongaup Wildlife Management Area. (More about these Bird Conservation Areas on page 4 of this issue.) Pataki noted

that the leadership of David Miller, his staff and board have helped enact the state Bird Conservation Area law, the first of its kind in the country. He challenged National Audubon's board to use New York as an example in urging other governors to sign into law a Bird Conservation Area program for their state.

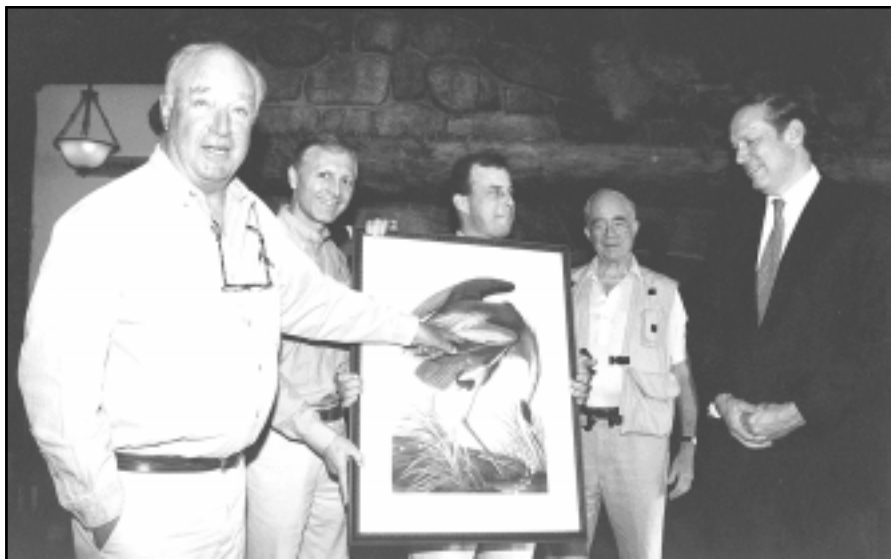
National board chair Donal O'Brien and National Audubon president John Flicker, with National Audubon Society of New York State (NASNY) board chair Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff and executive director David Miller by their sides, presented Governor Pataki with a framed Audubon print of the Great Blue Heron signifying the governor's outstanding commitment to conservation. O'Brien noted that Pataki is a conservation leader in New York state, out of the same cloth of the great governor and president, Theodore Roosevelt. O'Brien further noted how appreciative National Audubon is to the governor's leadership and partnerships from environmental education to conservation policies.

As a further demonstration of this unique partnership in New York state, NASNY board chair Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff and executive director David Miller unveiled NASNY's strategic action plan for the 21st century. Their presentation to the board emphasized Audubon's work in

New York state, which focuses on Audubon centers, Audubon education, bird conservation programs, conservation science and advocacy programs, and efforts to increase chapter leadership development and programs.

Following the presentation of the strategic action plan, New York State Parks Commissioner Bernadette Castro and Environmental Conservation Commissioner John Cahill spoke to the national board on the multitude of partnerships in conservation programs between the National Audubon Society of New York State and their agencies. A few examples cited by the commissioners were: the construction of an educational boardwalk at Constitution Marsh Audubon Center, creation of the Bird Conservation Area program, joint lobbying for federal conservation funds to the state such as the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), and educational programs at state facilities.

Glenn Olson, senior vice-president for field operations for the National Audubon Society said of the meeting, "New York state has set a pretty high bar for Audubon state programs." Olson added, "It's not every day we have the governor and his two highest ranking environmental commissioners address the board of the National Audubon Society."



Executive Office

From left to right, National Board Chairman Donal O'Brien, National Audubon President John Flicker, NASNY Executive Director David Miller and NASNY Board Chairman Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff present Governor George E. Pataki with an Audubon print of the Great Blue Heron (*Ardea Herodias*) to award his dedication to conservation.

Farmland Protection Program helps local land conservation

By Commissioner Nathan Rudgers

New York has a proud tradition of environmental stewardship dating back at least to the establishment of the Adirondack Park in the last century. The Pataki administration has reclaimed this tradition by providing significant resources for the purchase of large areas of open space, forest and recreation land as a legacy for our children.

Among these resources is the Farmland Protection Program, which provides financial assistance to local municipalities and county agricultural and farmland protection boards to purchase the development rights on viable farmland that is under significant development pressure and buffers a significant natural public resource or ecosystem. Over the past four years, the state has awarded more than \$27.5 million to 21 municipalities to purchase the development rights on farmland on over 50 farms. The \$12 million allocated by Governor Pataki for farmland protection in 2000 represented the largest amount ever and a 56

percent increase from the previous year.

As a group, the burden of maintaining New York's open environment falls principally on farmers, who manage about one quarter of the state's land base, if you include farm woodlots. Purchasing development rights helps working landscapes on the urban fringe, which is important when you consider that recent statistics suggest that we are losing about 100,000 acres to development and another 25,000 acres to forest every year.

Historically, the single greatest reason for the loss of farmland is farmers going out of business. We have tried to address this issue by lowering the cost of doing business through property and sales tax reductions and implementing programs such as technology and marketing grants to keep farms economically viable. We believe that our efforts have been effective, since the total number of farms in the state has stabilized or increased slightly in recent years.

RUDGERS continued on page 3

Inside this issue

NYC gains land in the Catskills

New York City has increased its land holdings for water protection by more than 50 percent since the historic Watershed Agreement in January 1997. See page 7 for story.

Biodiversity projects at West Point



Learn about the rich biological diversity inhabiting the 16,000-plus acres of West Point, N.Y. See page 9 for story.

LI Sound Restoration Act passes

The bill authorizes \$40 million a year to be allocated for the cleanup of Long Island Sound. See page 14 for story.

Fall Audubon Council Meeting

The fall 2000 council meeting featured speakers Commissioner Castro and Commissioner Rudgers. See page 16 for story.

