



New York State Association of Conservation Commissions

Simon Skolnik, President

(914) 306-0394 • president@nysacc.org • <https://nysacc.org/>
PO Box 356, Katonah, NY 10536

Joy Squires, President Emeritus

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Draft Scoping Plan Comments

NYSERDA

17 Columbia Circle

Albany, NY 12203-6399

The New York State Association of Conservation Commissions represents over 250 municipally appointed conservation advisory councils and sustainability committees and 17 environmental management councils.

We are commenting on the following section from Chapter 19, which specifically calls for funding for Conservation Advisory Commissions and Environmental Management Councils.

LU5. Mapping, Research, Planning, and Assistance

Page 288 **Assist local governments to create land-use policies:**

We support the recommendation that Conservation Advisory Commissions and Environmental Management Councils be funded, because these volunteer groups have an important and primary role in preserving open space, including producing natural resources inventories, habitat mapping, and open space plans and taking steps such as the community preservation plans and providing input on their municipalities' and counties' comprehensive plans and zoning. These groups help protect important natural areas that sequester greenhouse gases and store water to enhance resilience. Members are knowledgeable, dedicated community volunteers and often the municipality provides no funding.

We support these recommendations because CACs and EMCs are the local advocates for good environmental planning and connect the state policies to their communities. Without a strong association of CACs and EMCs, New York State loses its only partners between state government and local municipalities and counties.

Funds would be used for such items as:

- Training
- Resources for the many details of applying for grants and carrying them out
- Geographic Information Systems software or assistance
- Professional memberships in associations
- Staff salaries
- Clerical help

- Printing supplies
- Marketing and public outreach materials
- Guest speakers

It should be noted that the state funded both CACs and EMCs in the past through its LEAP program. Because of the elimination of this funding source, many counties in the state could no longer finance their EMCs and lost a valuable asset both to the county itself and to the CACs within the county, who no longer had a focal point to meet and share information. Restoration of funding for CACs and EMCs should be a top-priority of the state as we now face the tremendous challenges of climate change. The scoping document gets it right. Fund your partners, who will return that support many multiple times over.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Skolnik', with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Simon Skolnik
President NYSACC