



Dutchess County
Environmental Management Council

Farm and Home Center

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Millbrook, NY 12545

November 19, 2009

Dear Dutchess County Legislators:

As members of the Dutchess County Environmental Management Council (EMC) appointed by your legislative body, we are writing to voice our deep concern with the Dutchess County Executive's proposed 2010 budget, which calls for a 100% funding cut for Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County's (CCEDC) Environment Program. To avert what will likely be a net increase in cost of services to the taxpayers, we urge the Dutchess County Legislature vote to restore full funding for the CCEDC Environment Program in the 2010 budget.

As you know, the EMC became a volunteer board in 2006 when the Dutchess County Planning Department requested that CCEDC create and staff a professional Environment Program. The Environment Program's contract with the Dutchess County Planning Department specifies that it provide support, research-based information, education, and resources to the EMC and other groups, and it is the only active Ex-Officio agency participating with the EMC. CCEDC and the EMC have collaborated on numerous projects since 2006 that have provided information for the Legislature on protecting Dutchess County's valuable natural resources.

While we recognize that Dutchess County is facing difficult economic challenges, we also know that if this funding is not restored to CCEDC, these budget cuts will severely impact the EMC and its ability to accomplish its mission for the Legislature and residents of Dutchess County, including

- o Elimination of the Environment Program and its four professional staff members who provide research-based, non-biased information, tools and resources about natural resources and the environment for the EMC, Conservation Advisory Councils (CACs), municipal officials, and the general public;
- o Loss of coordination for the EMC, including volunteer support, meeting preparation, notification, facilitation, and follow-up with project implementation;
- o Loss of CCEDC's role in helping create, and helping volunteers to maintain, the new EMC website, www.dutchessemc.org. The new website was developed entirely in-house by CCEDC staff, at no cost to the EMC or county, saving thousands of dollars. The new website is the latest step in making the EMC more effective and productive for the Legislature and County.
- o Loss of coordinating organization for the ongoing update of the county's Natural Resource Inventory with the EMC (which CCEDC took on at the request of the County without additional funding and utilizing volunteers to write various chapters) for a cost savings of thousands of dollars in consulting fees that the county would otherwise incur – see: www.co.dutchess.ny.us/CountyGov/Departments/Planning/16138.htm.

While the 100% funding cut to the Environment Program would provide only a minimal savings to the overall 2010 County budget, these cuts will likely result in *increased* costs for many of the above initiatives and projects on the County's "Green" agenda, for which CCEDC's staff expertise, tools, services, and research-based education play a leadership role at very low cost to taxpayers. As we know, any dollar invested in CCEDC is multiplied by the organization by 8 times.

As appointed members of the Dutchess County EMC, we ask with all due respect that you restore full funding to CCEDC's Environment Program budget for 2010.

Sincerely, on behalf of the EMC membership,

Lalita Malik
EMC Chair

Robert Cohen
EMC Vice Chair

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