

To the Editor,

Thank you for the article printed on May 8, 2010, titled **DEC budget cut is especially severe**. Chris Knight did an excellent good job portraying some of the hardships and difficult choices employees in DEC Region 5 face as staffing levels and funding have been, and continue to be, severely reduced.

Despite the opinions of some of your readers, and the editors of your newspaper, DEC employees are knowledgeable, dedicated professionals who are strongly committed to public service. DEC is tasked by New York State law "to conserve, improve, and protect the natural resources and environment of the State and to control water, land and air pollution in order to enhance the health, safety, and welfare of the people of the state and their overall economic and social well being."

This is a charge that employees DEC Region 5, which administers DEC programs in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton and four other counties, take very seriously and work hard to achieve.

- DEC wildlife and fisheries biologists work hard to provide healthy, diverse fish and wildlife populations for people to hunt, fish, trap, watch and photograph.
- DEC environmental engineers work hard to ensure facilities are operated properly and to provide clean air, water and lands, so people can breathe, drink, eat and recreate.
- DEC foresters work hard to manage more than 2.4 million acres of Forest Preserve, conservation easement and state forest lands protecting habitats for plants and animals, providing recreational opportunities for people and managing sustainable timber harvests.
- DEC operations staff work hard to maintain recreational facilities so people can hike, camp, paddle, boat, bike, horseback ride, and drive on the forest preserve.
- DEC staff in a variety of other positions work hard to issue permits in a timely manner and that ensure protection of natural resources; provide information, education and outreach so people better understand and appreciate nature and the environment and how to protect it; and provide clerical and support services to ensure that the agency functions smoothly and is responsive to the public.

Overall, staff levels in Region 5 have been reduced by 27% over the past 15 years. Certain programs have experienced greater reductions: Fisheries, 50% reduction over the past 15 years; Operations, 35% over 15 years; Lands & Forests, 35% over 10 years; Permits, 33% over 15 years; and Wildlife, 27% over 15 years.

In the past two years there has been a 70% reduction in non-personnel service funding, which pays for supplies, equipment, services, fuel, etc. Compounding the matter, we will now be furloughed one day a week, further reducing the ability to maintain programs and facilities by 20%. DEC employees cannot provide the same breadth and depth of services with these deep reductions in staff and funds.

DEC employees want to provide the programs and facilities that they public expects, but we can't if we aren't provided the resources and support need to properly do our job.

On Behalf of Region 5 DEC Staff

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