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**ARBOR DAY CELEBRATED IN NEW YORK STATE WITH ANNOUNCEMENT OF
\$750K IN URBAN FORESTRY GRANTS AVAILABLE**

New Yorkers Encouraged to Recognize Numerous Contributions Provided by Trees

Grants Will Add and Enhance Green Spaces in Cities throughout the State

At least \$750,000 in Urban Forestry Grants is now available for urban communities to apply for, New York State Department of Environment Conservation Commissioner Joe Martens announced today at the New York State Arbor Day Celebration.

Applications are now being accepted by DEC to support urban forestry projects across the state. These grants, funded by the Environmental Protection Fund, will be of particular interest to those communities faced with the infestation and eradication of the Emerald Ash Borer. Proposals for tree inventories, tree planting, maintenance, management plans and invasive pest detection studies will be accepted. The grants will be awarded to large cities and small communities across the state. Applications must be postmarked by June 21.

The State Arbor Day Committee, made up of several state agencies and industry associations, joined state and local officials to celebrate Arbor Day in Albany's West Capitol Park. This annual celebration encourages New Yorkers of all ages to recognize the importance of trees and the impact they make in our everyday lives.

"Arbor Day is a national observance that celebrates the essential role trees play in our environment," said Commissioner Martens. "Trees help improve air quality, reduce energy consumption and beautify the landscape in New York's urban centers. The urban forestry grants will play an important role in helping protect trees in cities across the state."

Urban Forestry Grants

Grants will be available to municipalities, public benefit corporations, public authorities, school districts and not-for-profit organizations that have a public ownership interest in the property or are acting on behalf of a public property owner. Grants will range from \$2,500 to \$50,000, depending on municipal population, with a 50/50 match requirement.

Eligible projects include tree inventories and management plans, tree and shrub planting and maintenance, and invasive pest detection studies. Additionally, \$1,000 Quick Start Arbor Day grants - with no match requirement - will be available to help communities generate support for a new municipal tree program with an Arbor Day celebration. Funds are made available from the state's EPF and will be managed and allocated by DEC. Proposals will be evaluated on their cost effectiveness, projected benefits, use of recommended standards in implementation, community outreach, education and support, and regional economic impact.

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Applications will be accepted at the DEC Central Office by hand delivery at the address below until 4:00 p.m. on June 21 or mailed and postmarked by June 21 to: NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Lands and Forests, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4253.

Arbor Day Celebration

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Commissioner Darrel Aubertine said, “Arbor Day was first recognized in 1872 in Nebraska as a way to encourage farmers and homesteaders to plant trees on what were then primarily treeless plains. Today, we celebrate Arbor Day in New York where we are blessed with a bounty of forested land, and recognize all the contributions that trees make to our communities – both rural and urban alike.”

West Capitol Park, located in the center of Downtown Albany, served as the backdrop for this celebration as it is filled with Greenspire Linden trees and serves as a popular lunchtime destination for state employees and visitors to Albany. The tree was donated by Northern Nurseries in Schenectady to the New York State Arbor Day Committee. Tree “price tags” adorned the trees to demonstrate the benefits of trees represented in dollar amounts. Each tree in Capitol Park gives back \$480 in benefits over a 15-year period.

The Arbor Day celebration also recognized Hershini Paray, a fifth grader from Our Lady of Perpetual Help in South Ozone Park Queens, who won DEC’s 2012 Arbor Day Poster Contest depicting the theme “Trees are Terrific.” Her winning artwork was reproduced into posters and bookmarks to be distributed across the state.

“By participating in the annual Arbor Day poster contest, students learn about trees and how they promote a healthy, balanced ecosystem. I encourage everyone to take a moment today and to consider how each of us can help preserve our precious natural resources,” said DEC Commissioner Martens.

The New York Nursery and Landscape Association presented its Environmental Beautification Awards, which highlight excellence and quality in landscape design and construction, as well as foster goodwill through friendly competition.

James Presutti, President of the New York State Nursery and Landscape Association, said, “Arbor Day is a day to appreciate one of nature’s greatest gifts – the tree. Trees not only provide beauty and diversity to our landscape, they are vital to our natural balance. Trees are essential windbreakers, they keep soil intact and provide natural fuel and building materials as well as being nature’s shade from the sun. From the small sapling to the mighty oak – we are thankful to the tree.”

The Arbor Day celebration concluded with the presentation of the 2011 Arbor Day poster. This year’s poster is a photograph taken by Tonya Whitford Condon, from Ticonderoga, Essex County and produced on paper donated from International Paper’s Ticonderoga mill from trees harvested in working Adirondack forests managed in accordance with the principles of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

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Arbor Day is a nationally celebrated observance that encourages tree planting and tree care and highlights the importance of trees to our environment, our economy and our quality of life. Founded by J. Sterling Morton in Nebraska in 1872, National Arbor Day is celebrated each year on the last Friday in April.

Arbor Day in New York State is coordinated by the Arbor Day Committee, made up of representatives from the New York State Departments of Agriculture and Markets and Environmental Conservation, New York State Nursery Landscape Association, New York State Arborists and the Empire State Forest Products Association.

For more information about celebrating Arbor Day contact your local DEC office or visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5274.html> on the DEC website. Information on the Urban Forestry grants can be found at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5285.html> or by calling DEC at 518-402-9425.

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