New York State Conservation Council Inc.
8 East Main Street, Ilion, New York 13357-1899

MEMORANDUM IN OPPOSITION

Bill # **A 1459** Jenne Same as **S 3987** Funke

Title: Requires the addition of one full time equivalent forest ranger position for every thirty thousand acres of land acquired.

This legislation would mandate the number of Forest Rangers required, based on the number of acres within the jurisdiction of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Justification:

While the Council strongly supports the sponsors' intentions, it is unable to support the legislation without a clear commitment to fund the positions and the necessary training academy (or academies) to fill and maintain them.

Based on the parameters that this legislation would establish, the Division of Forest Protection would require in excess of 30 new positions to be at optimum staffing. Their brethren in the Division of Law Enforcement are also over 30 positions short of previously authorized staffing.

The Department of Environmental Conservation as a whole has endured staffing cuts in excess of 10% over the last dozen years. During the same period, the department's responsibilities have significantly increased with the addition of major new programs. To add insult to injury, dedicated environmental funds, such as the Environmental Protection Fund, have been swept to cover General Fund deficits.

The issues of significant staffing in any department should be handled through the budget process. Unless the addition of staff positions is accompanied by the necessary budgeted funding, it merely represents further institutionalization of unfunded mandates.

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