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Andrew M. Cuomo - *Governor*

Governor Cuomo Announces Climate Smart Communities Certification Program

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Six Municipalities Recognized for their Efforts to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Improve Energy Efficiency and Promote Recycling and Waste Reduction

Albany, NY (April 22, 2014)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today applauded the first six municipalities to achieve certification as part of the state Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Program, which is designed to support municipal efforts to meet economic, social and environmental challenges posed by climate change. The new certification effort, which awards certification, bronze, silver and gold levels under the CSC Program, will provide a means to recognize those communities that achieve success under their CSC pledge, a means to track and reward local actions, and a better defined framework for local climate action. The governor heralded the state and local partnership effort as part of the weeklong celebration of Earth Day, to support a more resilient and sustainable New York and promote a cleaner and healthier environment.

The six certified Climate Smart Communities that were honored by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Joe Martens and Department of Transportation Commissioner Joan McDonald at an event today at a solar-powered boat pavilion, included the City of Watervliet, Albany County; the City of Albany, Albany County; the Town of Cortlandt, Westchester County; Orange County; the Village of Dobbs Ferry, Westchester County; and the City of Kingston, Ulster County.

“Building and achieving a more sustainable New York can only be successful if we all, on the local, state and federal levels, work together to support goals that mitigate and protect against the impact of climate change,” Governor Cuomo said. “On this Earth Day, we are proud to be partnering with municipalities to do just that and I congratulate these six communities for demonstrating bold leadership by aggressively pursuing policies and actions to reduce their carbon footprint and address climate change at a very local level.”

“Many communities across New York State have experienced the dramatic effects of climate change over the past few years, including severe weather and devastating floods,” Commissioner Martens said. “Governor Cuomo has directed DEC and other state agencies to develop and implement strategies to address the cause and effects of climate change, including strengthening our resiliency against storms and flooding. DEC encourages and supports community climate action plans that help to prepare for and mitigate potential impacts. We congratulate these six communities for their leadership in tackling this environmental challenge and encourage others to take an active role on this important issue.”

New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) Commissioner Joan McDonald said, “Congratulations to these six communities for adopting the pledge to combat climate change and join the ranks of Climate Smart Communities. Under Governor Cuomo’s leadership, NYSDOT is collaborating with its State partners to provide local communities with the assistance they need to improve energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the consequences of climate change. NYSDOT is committed to this effort.”

John B. Rhodes, president and CEO, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), said, “Congratulations to these six communities for their demonstrated commitment and effective progress in combating climate change. These municipalities can serve as models for others to follow. Governor Cuomo has set out an aggressive energy agenda to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and Climate Smart Communities support this goal by reducing fossil fuel use and stimulating clean energy to create a cleaner environment for all New Yorkers.”

PSC Chair Audrey Zibelman said, “Under Governor Cuomo’s leadership, New York is addressing the real threat of climate change through programs designed to curb greenhouse gas emissions, increase energy efficiency and develop renewable energy. In addition, we are launching brand-new initiatives to modernize the State’s energy infrastructure and energy business model. Partnering with local governments and communities in the Climate Smart Communities program will help ensure our success to address climate change impacts.”

State Health Commissioner, Nirav R. Shah M.D., M.P.H., said, “By creating sustainable methods to help meet the challenges posed by climate change, these communities are leading the way in the effort to collect and analyze data to better understand, improve, and protect our health.”

Assemblymember John T. McDonald III said, “It is a pleasure to join Commissioner Martens and Mayor Manning as we celebrate Earth Week. Innovative and determined leaders like Mayor Manning have not only embraced the Climate Smart Program but have also taken the program to new areas in his zest to improve our climate and the community of Watervliet with the critical outcome of saving taxpayers’ funds. It is through the Climate Smart Program, under the oversight of New York State Department of

Environmental Conservation, that has made a difference in regard to our environment and also in educating our residents in New York State on how we need to protect, preserve and position our environment for the generations to follow."

Assemblyman Phil Steck said, "'We cannot ignore the impact of climate change. I am pleased local communities I represent have taken a leading role to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and become more energy-efficient. I look forward to working with them and my colleagues at the state level to develop strategies that will better protect our environment."

Through New York's Climate Smart Communities Program, municipalities receive analytical tools, information on available training and financial assistance, an informational webinar series and direct technical support from coordinators. The coordinators are funded by proceeds from the sale of Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) carbon dioxide emissions allowances.

Counties, cities, towns, and villages can join the voluntary program by adopting the Climate Smart Communities Pledge. The pledge requires local governments to set goals; inventory emissions and develop a climate action plan; decrease energy demands and encourage renewable energy in their operations; support recycling and other climate smart solid waste management practices; promote climate protection through land use tools; develop an adaptation and resiliency plan for climate change; support a green innovation economy; inform and inspire the public; and commit to an evolving process.

To date, 130 local governments have taken the pledge to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, prepare for the effects of climate change and encourage development of a green innovation economy.

Building upon the success of the Climate Smart Communities program and with funding from the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), Climate Smart Community sponsoring agencies developed criteria for communities to achieve official designation as Certified Climate Smart Communities. The state sought input from an advisory group consisting of local officials and experts from a variety of organizations in developing the certification manual, which identifies more than 130 specific actions Climate Smart Communities can take to receive points toward certification and higher award levels.

The actions described in the certification manual are organized according to the ten points of the Climate Smart Communities Pledge. The certification program requires that communities complete a small number of specific actions fundamental to an effective local climate action program, including:

- Formation of a Climate Smart Community task force to coordinate community efforts and of a

municipal "green team" to help the municipality identify opportunities to reduce greenhouse emissions and save energy costs in municipal operations;

- Set greenhouse gas emissions targets and develop plans to achieve them over time;
- Undertake an energy audit of at least one municipal building and to conduct a review of existing local plans to identify opportunities to improve resiliency to climate hazards.

Although the certification program requires a small number of specific actions, communities may select from the large number of voluntary actions to develop a local program that fits local circumstances, objectives and capacities. Many of the communities recognized today focused on reducing municipal energy demand by installing more efficient lighting or converting streetlights to LEDs. Other communities have made commitments to increase the number of alternatively-fueled vehicles in their fleets, or to reduce the generation of solid waste and amount of organic material sent to landfills. Some of the communities, especially those with vulnerable waterfronts, have conducted community-based processes to assess their vulnerabilities and develop adaptation plans.

The six Climate Smart Communities achieving certification in honor of their accomplishments included:

City of Watervliet – Certified: The city took aggressive action to reduce energy consumption in its municipal buildings and installed solar photovoltaics, which not only reduce emissions but also lower city utility costs. In addition, the city adopted policies to require green infrastructure, shade structures and other natural energy-saving devices on public land.

City of Watervliet Mayor Mike Manning said, “We have worked aggressively to improve our renewable and green programs over the past several years, we are proud to be known as a green city and recognized by the DEC state as a climate Climate Smart community. Several energy efficiency upgrades have been implemented in our municipal buildings, parklands and our 1.25 megawatt hydroelectric facility, including solar array installations, which established considerable cost savings for our tax-payers. Between 2011 and 2012 alone, the city saved more than \$145,000 in energy costs. Looking to the future as Watervliet’s residential organic waste program further grows we will continue to save space in our city landfill and provide the opportunity to recycle through anaerobic digestion in addition to composting.”

City of Albany - Certified: The city incorporated climate action planning into its first comprehensive plan, encouraged recycling by adopting a single-stream recycling program, implemented a number of policies to improve neighborhood walkability and completed a climate change vulnerability assessment and adaptation plan.

Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan said, "I am proud to be the Mayor of one of the six founding certified

Climate Smart Communities in New York State. As one of the oldest cities in the United States, the City of Albany is no stranger to change or the need to adapt to new circumstances. Under my leadership, the City of Albany will continue to adapt to a changing world by addressing climate change; as a City we will plan to use less energy, produce less waste, and become more resilient.”

Town of Cortland – Certified: The town’s approach to climate change incorporates the principles of sustainability and resiliency into government operations and includes sharing services with surrounding communities to achieve regional goals. These strategies have helped the town achieve an 18-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from its facilities and a 23-percent reduction from town vehicles.

Cortland Supervisor Linda Puglisi said, “The Town of Cortland has a long -standing record of environmental stewardship exemplified by leadership in protecting open space, natural resources, and smart growth practices.”

Orange County – Certified: The county uses an energy management system to track the results of upgraded lighting, and heating and cooling equipment, more efficient water fixtures, a large photovoltaic installation and alternative fuel vehicles. In addition, the county led the development of the Mid-Hudson regional sustainability plan.

Orange County Executive Steve Neuhaus said, “The example of Orange County proves that you can grow your local economy while growing smart and environmentally safe. Our Planning Department has set the standard for sustainable growth in the Hudson Valley.”

Village of Dobbs Ferry – Bronze: The village reduced greenhouse gas emissions from municipal facilities by 45 percent from 2007 to 2013, significantly exceeding its goal to reduce emissions from municipal operations by 20 percent by 2015. The village accomplished its reductions through initiatives that include installation of LED streetlights and solar arrays, energy-efficiency retrofits and energy-efficient new construction.

Village of Dobbs Ferry Mayor Hartley Connett said, “Dobbs Ferry is proud to be recognized as an environmental leader in New York State. Our reduced energy purchases, and corresponding 45 percent drop in greenhouse gas emissions for municipal facilities, demonstrate that environmental responsibility is good business. We're very pleased with what we've achieved through close collaboration between municipal officials, staff and the mayor-appointed Energy Task Force and with support from New York State, and we look forward to continued progress improving the sustainability of our village operations and encouraging the Dobbs Ferry community to take similar actions in their homes and businesses.”

City of Kingston – Bronze: The city is a regional leader in adaptation planning through its Waterfront Flooding Task Force, which piloted a number of tools and processes that are now available to other communities. Kingston also took many steps to improve the energy-efficiency of buildings, increase its recycling and composting rates, convert traffic signals to LEDs and preserve open space along its vulnerable waterfront.

Kingston Mayor Shayne R. Gallo said, “Creating a more resilient, sustainable community not only reduces our environmental footprint but improves quality of life for those who reside in and visit Kingston. I am proud that Kingston is one of the two bronze-level Climate Smart Communities and that we are committed to forwarding our climate action plan through the implementation of model environmental initiatives and programs.”

Climate Smart Communities can begin working toward certification and submitting required documentation of selected completed actions to DEC’s Office of Climate Change. Under a Cleaner, Greener Communities project previously announced by Governor Cuomo, a team led by the Pace Law School Land Use Law Center is developing a Climate Smart Communities Certification web portal to facilitate the submittal of full documentation, as well as administration and tracking. Details about the Climate Smart Communities program are available at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/50845.html>.

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