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## **DEC Recognizes Eight Innovative Programs Working to Sustain NY's Resources and Strengthen the Economy**

### **Winners Announced at the 10th Annual Environmental Excellence Awards Celebration**

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) recognized eight organizations today at the 10th Annual New York State Environmental Excellence Awards celebration. The event was co-hosted by Price Chopper/The Golub Corporation at its LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) Gold Certified headquarters in Schenectady.

DEC Commissioner Joe Martens presented the awards in recognition of each organization's innovative programs and outstanding commitment to environmental sustainability, social responsibility and economic viability.

"Not only are we recognizing eight outstanding organizations during this milestone event, but we are honoring the collective accomplishments of 52 winners that have been awarded since 2004," said Commissioner Martens. "These inspiring success stories have created a greater awareness of environmental sustainability and have contributed to a stronger economy through cost-effective innovations. I want to thank this year's event co-host, Price Chopper, which has accomplished best-in-class building strategies with its LEED building. Through strong partnerships, we will continue to execute Governor Andrew Cuomo's green initiatives for New York."

The winners included a village enacting an ordinance banning plastic shopping bags; the first commercial-scale urban, roof-top greenhouse; a small and unique environmental education center empowering students to be future environmental leaders; a high-tech, sustainable data center; a county implementing an innovative and comprehensive green infrastructure program; a statewide post-flood emergency stream intervention program; a small business that is leading the nation in biomass heating systems and a unique and dynamic environmental education center and water reclamation facility.

Now in its 10th year, DEC established the awards program in 2004 to recognize those who improve and protect New York's environment and contribute to a more healthy economy by advancing sustainable practices involving creative partnerships. To date, DEC has recognized 52 award winners. A statewide review committee, made up of 20 representatives from the public and private sectors, provided DEC advice in selecting the award winners from an array of competitive applications received in May. For additional information about the program and past winners, and to learn about applying for the 2014 [Environmental Excellence Awards](#), visit DEC's website.

The 2013 winners include:

**Advanced Climate Technologies (ACT) Bioenergy, LLC (Schenectady County):** ACT Bioenergy

LLC is setting industry standards by being the first manufacturer in the United States to produce high-efficiency, gasification-type boiler systems that are 10-20 percent more efficient and produce one-third of the emissions of conventional wood boiler systems. The ACT Bioenergy Boiler is suitable for burning wood chips, wood pellets and selected agricultural residuals. At least 24 biomass boilers have been installed in New York to date, achieving significant environmental and economic benefits. These boilers save at least 300,000 gallons of heating oil annually, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 4,000 tons each year and cuts particulate air emissions by 300 percent as compared to conventional biomass boiler systems. Because local biomass products are being used, these systems support local economies. ACT is an industry leader that is promoting a greater understanding about efficient biomass energy and generating interest in using it as a cost-effective method to achieve renewable energy goals.

**Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District (Delaware County):** Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District's Post-Flood Emergency Stream Intervention Program is a critically-needed, innovative, and sustainable flood response protocol and pre-flood training program. This "stream triage" sets standards and practices for the period immediately following a flood. Moreover, these same principles and methods can be applied to other municipal work in and around streams, such as bridge and culvert work. Municipalities using this new protocol learn how to work with the stream's natural tendencies, and post-flood responders obtain knowledge and guidance that serves as a basis for an environmentally and economically sound post-flood response. The Post-Flood Emergency Stream Intervention protocol has gained broad acceptance by both municipalities and regulatory agencies. Using the protocol and training program, local stream responders can scientifically assess the need for intervention and use their knowledge to perform work that protects aquatic resources consistent with the streams natural tendencies.

**Gotham Greens Farms, LLC (Kings County):** Gotham Greens has successfully brought a technologically sophisticated, energy-efficient, "green" agri-business to an industrial neighborhood in Brooklyn. This sustainable urban agriculture project is the United States' first commercial-scale, urban rooftop facility in the U.S. growing pesticide-free produce that does not contain genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Gotham Greens has emerged as a leader in the growing urban agriculture movement across the country and has demonstrated excellent innovation and leadership in creating green collar jobs and promoting clean technology and urban agriculture. This sustainable project is achieving impressive environmental, economic and social benefits, including saving approximately 5 million gallons of water annually and eliminating all agricultural runoff. The company uses an on-site solar PV system, which saves 76,000 kWh of electricity a year, and has also eliminated the need for long-distance, refrigerated food transportation, saving nearly 400,000 gallons of fuel annually.

**Onondaga County's Save the Rain Program (Onondaga County):** Onondaga County has transformed the "civic strip" in downtown Syracuse into a green infrastructure corridor. Several marquee projects for the county's Save the Rain program are located within the civic strip, including a 66,000-square-foot green roof, a water reuse cistern system, bioretention plantings, underground infiltration systems and porous pavement. Additionally, several innovative green energy technologies have been incorporated, including LED lighting, solar-powered trash compaction and electric car charging stations. Save the Rain features an innovative and comprehensive combined sewer overflow (CSO) abatement program that integrates conventional wastewater/stormwater treatment technologies with advanced green infrastructure practices to improve water quality in the Onondaga Lake watershed. The civic strip projects are capturing approximately 6.2 million gallons of stormwater annually, resulting in an energy savings of approximately 12,450 kilowatt hours each year.

**Schoharie River Center (Schenectady County):** The Schoharie River Center is a small, and unique not-for-profit organization that empowers young people in a comprehensive Environmental Study Team (EST) youth development program. The center has demonstrated an unprecedented commitment to develop environmentally literate, self-directed individuals who are able to identify and work toward positive life goals and achieve constructive change in their lives. While the Environmental Study Team program is open to all interested youth, the program specifically engages at-risk and underserved youth from the urban and rural areas of the flood-impacted Mohawk River/Schoharie Valley area. More than 800 students from four counties and nine school districts have been trained to use federal and state stream monitoring protocols. This small, unique grassroots education center also provides hands-on, professionally-supervised outdoor learning activities, community-based archeology research, folk art demonstrations and workshops that showcase traditional artists, crafts and music. The center is committed to educating people about local history and traditional culture, natural history, environmental issues and the relationship between the natural environment and human activity in the watershed.

**Southampton Advocates for the Village Environment's (SAVE) (Suffolk County):** This small, volunteer committee in the Village of Southampton led an effort to enact the Reusable Shopping Bag Program -- the first municipal program to prohibit single-use, plastic, grocery-sized shopping bags. The Village of Southampton has set an example for municipalities and businesses across New York. Through a successful campaign that enlisted support from retailers and the entire village community, the village's ordinance has achieved a 98 percent compliance rate by retailers, restaurants and stores, which translates into the elimination of at least 110,000 plastic shopping bags annually. The streets and beaches of the Village of Southampton are no longer littered with plastic bags, and the quality of the local marine waters has improved significantly.

**The Omega Center for Sustainable Living (Dutchess County):** The Omega Center for Sustainable Living is an example of sustainable architecture and design, and is the nation's first green building to achieve both LEED® Platinum and Living Building Challenge™ certification. The center houses a natural wastewater reclamation facility that treats water by mimicking the processes in nature. This system treats more than 5 million gallons of wastewater annually and its rainwater collection system captures nearly 5,000 gallons of rainwater, which offsets nearly all of the center's yearly water consumption. In addition, the roof-top solar panels supply 100 percent of the center's electricity needs, and through a comprehensive waste reduction program, approximately 26 tons of non-food waste is recycled and about 113 tons of food waste is composted annually. In addition, the Omega Center for Sustainable Living serves as an educational resource for more than 5,000 visitors each year.

**TurnKey Internet, Inc. (Albany County):** By the year 2020, the data center and cloud hosting industry is expected to surpass the airline industry as the largest greenhouse gas polluter. TurnKey Internet Inc.'s innovative green data center project sets a benchmark for the data center industry to offset the expected trend. TurnKey transformed a vacant, former post office building into a high-tech, sustainable data center. With a roof-top solar array and cutting-edge technologies, the best hardware available to minimize energy consumption, this data center is minimizing its power consumption and has a zero-carbon footprint. TurnKey's green data center is one of only two ENERGY STAR® certified data centers in New York and one of just 39 in the United States. The company is saving more than 1 million kWh of electricity per year, which has reduced its carbon dioxide emissions by more than 765 metric tons annually. TurnKey serves as a model of excellence by setting a high sustainability standard for companies in the technology sector.