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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NJDEP awards \$500,000 in grant money to help prevent future algal blooms

Lake Hopatcong Commission partners with the Lake Hopatcong Foundation and local and county governments to carry out projects on New Jersey's largest lake

LAKE HOPATCONG, N.J. (March 10, 2020)—The N.J. Department of Environmental Protection announced that the Lake Hopatcong Commission would receive \$500,000 in harmful algal bloom (HAB) grant funding, using money allocated by the state after a 2019 outbreak resulted in a swimming and water sports advisory across New Jersey's largest lake during much of the summer.

"We look forward to the implementation of several HAB management strategies on Lake Hopatcong this spring," said LHC Chairman Ron Smith. "The summer of 2019 was difficult for the lake's residents and businesses and this grant award is a testimony to what we can accomplish when our community joins together in support of our lake."

The grant, which was submitted in partnership with the Lake Hopatcong Foundation, will fund projects that reflect a spectrum of innovative management measures to prevent, mitigate and/or control HABs, particularly in local, nearshore areas where people have the highest degree of direct contact with the water. These measures include new types of materials for existing stormwater basins that remove phosphorus, three types of aeration systems, application of a nutrient inactivating product, a treatment of a non-copper-based algaecide, the use of a compostable Biochar filter media, and the implementation of a rain garden program by Rutgers University. All these projects are intended to be implemented for the 2020 summer season, and will be objectively and critically evaluated through water quality monitoring.

The grant application was prepared with the technical assistance of Princeton Hydro LLC and requested funds from the state with a local match of more than \$330,000, including contributions of \$75,000 from the Lake Hopatcong Commission, \$30,000 from the Lake Hopatcong Foundation, and \$25,000 each from Morris and Sussex counties, plus in-kind contributions from all four municipalities around the lake (the Borough of Hopatcong, Jefferson Township, the Borough of Mt. Arlington, and Roxbury Township) as well as from the Lake Hopatcong Commission and Lake Hopatcong Foundation. In all, this will allow for \$833,000 worth of

projects of be undertaken on behalf of the lake. This is one of several grants being sought by the Lake Hopatcong Commission and Lake Hopatcong Foundation from state and federal sources to address the prevention and ability to address any future HAB outbreaks on Lake Hopatcong.

“The Lake Hopatcong Foundation is so encouraged by this investment in the health of our lake, by the state and by county and municipal officials in this community,” said LHF President and Executive Director Jessica K. Murphy. “We know there is no magic bullet to prevent another algae bloom, but with these tools we are hopeful that we will be in a position to ensure that what happened in 2019 does not happen on Lake Hopatcong again.”

At Lake Hopatcong Foundation’s Environmental & Cultural Center in November, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, announced to local legislators and leaders a package of some \$13 million statewide to fund implementation of methods to mitigate or control freshwater algal blooms. Eligible projects include efforts to prevent, mitigate, or control HABs, focusing on root causes of blooms, short-term bloom reduction techniques, or water quality monitoring.

Cyanobacteria, also known as blue-green algae, are naturally present in lakes and streams in low numbers that can form dense blooms under suitable environmental conditions, such as optimal sunlight, elevated nutrients from stormwater and other runoff, warm temperatures and calm water. These blooms can discolor water and produce floating mats or “scums” on the surface. Under the right conditions, these HABs also can produce cyanotoxins, which can be dangerous to the health of humans, pets and wildlife. Although Lake Hopatcong never reached the threshold for the cyanotoxins in 2019, some or all of the state’s monitoring stations on the lake showed cyanobacteria numbers above the threshold for a swimming and water contact advisory during the summer, which resulted in a devastating season for local residents and businesses.

“Although we will always look back on 2019 with some level of heartbreak because of what we all went through, we also hope that we will remember it as a turning point, when a series of short- and long-term changes were implemented to improve the health of Lake Hopatcong,” Murphy said. “This grant money will go a long way toward changing the narrative for the better on our beloved lake.”

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The Lake Hopatcong Commission is an independent state agency created in, but not of, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. The LHC is recognized as a steward of the lake and watershed. The 11-member Board of State and local appointees include representatives of the four municipalities and two counties surrounding Lake Hopatcong. The LHC is responsible for fulfilling the obligations of the Lake Hopatcong Protection Act, to safeguard Lake Hopatcong as a natural, scenic, and recreational resource. To learn more, visit lakehopatcongcommission.org.

The Lake Hopatcong Foundation (LHF), acting as a partner in this project, is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, established in 2012 that has worked to improve the Lake Hopatcong region through programs and initiatives centered on the environment, education, community and historical preservation, recreation, arts, and culture. Their mission is dedicated to protecting the lake environment and enhancing the lake experience, bringing together public and private resources to encourage a culture of sustainability and stewardship on and around New Jersey’s largest lake, for this and future generations. To learn more, visit lakehopatcongfoundation.org.