



December 20, 2013

Huntington Conservation Board
Huntington Town Hall
100 Main Street
Huntington, NY 11743

Dear Board Members:

On behalf of the American Lung Association in New York, we write in support of enacting a leaf blower ordinance for the Town of Huntington.

We have supported similar local restrictions on the use of leaf blowers because there will be some very real health benefits that will accrue if leaf blower restrictions are enacted into law. Equipment that has zero-emissions (rakes and brooms and electrically powered tools) is the healthier way to go. There are many reasons why no-emissions technologies are best.

First, air quality in our region is rather unhealthy. Our annual report, *State of the Air 2013*,¹ finds that ozone air pollution in Suffolk County fails our clean air test. In fact, Suffolk County had the most unhealthy levels of ozone pollution in all of the state. Additionally, the United States Environmental Protection has declared that Westchester County is "out of attainment" for the federal ozone² and fine particle³ health standards.

Second, small sources of emissions can add up to be big polluters. As you may know, one of the arguments against controlling small engines is that they are just that, small. However, studies have shown that a lawnmower running for an hour could emit the same amount of smog forming emission as that you would emit by driving a car for 8 hours. Multiply this statistic with the number of engines in your area and you have a better idea of the contribution these small engines can make to our region's poor air quality. These small sources continue to become a bigger percentage of the pollution pie as stringent emission limits are applied to other tailpipes and to smokestacks.

Third, small engines do not have the sophisticated pollution control devices as a passenger vehicle has. Thus, the level of pollution they belch out can be quite high.

¹ See <http://www.stateoftheair.org>

² <http://www.epa.gov/ozonedesignations/regions/region2desig.htm>

³ <http://www.epa.gov/pmdesignations/regions/region2desig.htm>

For gasoline powered-equipment, the emissions can cause or worsen ozone levels and also increase the amount of airborne cancer agents. Gasoline has many cancer agents in it and these engines have no real emissions controls on them. In addition, small engines that use two-stroke technology, where the gasoline and oil are mixed are particularly big polluters. About thirty-percent of the fuel poured into these engines is directly emitted in the exhaust.

Finally, states are limited by federal law as to what they can do to address the emissions from small engines. Up until 2003, federal clean air laws provided states with the right to copy the California emission standards for small engines, which traditionally have been better than the ones that the US EPA has set. The law was changed by Congress to bar states from replicating the California emission standards for lawn and garden equipment. So we are at the mercy of the US EPA standard setting process when it comes to establishing emissions limits. The options for states or local governments in New York are these:

- ✓ Restrict the use of small engines; and,
- ✓ Ban the use of equipment that runs on small engines.

We wish there were more choices at our disposal to deal with this very important public health issue. Given limited options, the American Lung Association in New York is pleased to support local ordinances which limit the use of leaf blowers.

Sincerely,



Michael Seilback,
Vice President, Public Policy & Communications

For more information contact: Michael Seilback, Vice President, Public Policy & Communications for the American Lung Association of the Northeast, 631.415.0946 or mseilback@lungne.org.