

A Message for our Lessees from The Nature Conservancy January 27, 2010

In 2007, The Nature Conservancy purchased 161,000 acres of land that had been under the longtime ownership of Finch, Pruyn & Co. Since then, the Conservancy has worked with a variety of interests to develop a plan for the future of the property. That plan calls for 92,000 acres to be protected by a working forest conservation easement held by New York State, 65,000 acres to be added to the publicly owned Forest Preserve, and some smaller parcels to be sold to local towns, like Newcomb, for community purposes. Questions have arisen about the status of this project following recent news of Governor Paterson's Executive Budget proposal. Here's an overview:

Proposed moratorium

Governor Paterson's executive budget proposal includes no appropriation for land acquisition in the upcoming fiscal year and calls for an Administrative moratorium on new state land acquisitions. These are proposals; no budget bill has been passed. Intense debate concerning the budget is anticipated in Albany over the next few months.

Conservation easement moving forward

After the Governor's budget proposal was announced, the state on January 20 made public its commitment to completing three major land protection projects across New York. The working forest conservation easement on the former Finch lands is one of them. With money in the current fiscal year budget, the state will acquire the conservation easement protecting 89,000 of the 161,000 acres. In March 2009 The Nature Conservancy sold 92,000 acres with restrictions in place to ATP Timberland Invest. Those are the lands over which the state will be acquiring a conservation easement (the state already holds an easement on 3,000 of those acres). ATP will continue to own the land. Recreational leasing will be permitted. Pulpwood will continue to be sustainably harvested and delivered to the Finch Paper mill in Glens Falls. The state will acquire limited public recreation rights, including an eagerly awaited opportunity to create a 75-mile snowmobile network widely viewed as an economic lifeline for some rural communities.

Staying the course

Projects like this are complex and take many years to complete. Those who are counting on it to succeed and stand to benefit from the outcomes include business owners, anglers, rafting guides, loggers, hunters and others. Success depends as much on the state's ability to meet its obligations as it does on private philanthropy. Our supporters have been responding with enthusiasm and generosity and we are prepared to stay the course.

Recreational leases

The 10-year transition period for recreational leases on lands slated for transfer to state ownership will continue as planned.

Additional information

Maps, videos and previous announcements about this project can be found [here](#). Questions about recreational leasing can be directed to Len Cronin of the Finch Woodlands Division at (518) 793-2541, ext. 5526, or Erin O'Neill at extension 5513. Questions for The Nature Conservancy can be directed to Connie Prickett, 518.576.2082 x162 or cprickett@tnc.org.