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Boreas Ponds tract added to Forest Preserve

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NORTH HUDSON — Gov. Andy Cuomo travelled to Elk Lake Lodge in North Hudson Tuesday to sign purchase papers for the 20,758-acre Boreas Ponds tract.

The deal is part of the state's acquisition of 69,000 acres of former Finch Paper lands in Essex and Hamilton counties that had been held by the Nature Conservancy.

Sale price for Boreas Ponds tract is \$14.5 million. The conservancy will also provide \$750,000 for grants to towns so they can improve access to the addition to the Forest Preserve.

'TRULY SPECTACULAR'

The governor chose the meadow in front of Elk Lake for his signing of the sale agreement, which also directed the Adirondack Park Agency to begin classification of the new state lands.

He stood at a podium before a crowd of state and local officials, journalists and environmental leaders, including Nature Conservancy Executive Director Michael Carr and Adirondack Council Executive Director Willie Janeway.

“Once in awhile you get to do something that makes a difference forever,” the governor said to applause from the group seated in front of him. “The soul of the state of New York is singing because of what we did today.”

The governor said the entire acquisition is the largest state land purchase for the Adirondack Park in 100 years.

“This is one of the really magnificent parts of the Adirondacks,” he said. “It is truly spectacular. This 20,000 acres solidifies the High Peaks. It links the High Peaks with the Dix Mountain Wilderness (Area).”

ECONOMIC ENGINE

His administration is committed to taking care of the Adirondack Park, the governor said, and park visitation is already up 15 percent this year.

“Tourism is a phenomenal economic engine for the park.”

North Hudson Town Supervisor Ronald Moore agreed that, under Cuomo, the Adirondacks have done well.

“We’ve seen the state adopt a remarkable focus on the Adirondack Park,” Moore said at the podium. “The governor has brought funding for the (State) Environmental Protection Fund to a record \$300 million, to protect the beauty of the Adirondacks for all New Yorkers.”

The Environmental Protection Fund was used to buy the Boreas Ponds tract and the other Finch Paper lands from the Nature Conservancy. Most of the Boreas Ponds tract is in North Hudson.

CLASSIFICATION TO COME

Under the Nature Conservancy agreement with the state, a few hunting camp leaseholders will continue to have driving access to their camps on the Boreas Ponds through Sept. 30, 2018. The conservancy will also have administrative access to the property for the removal of the camps, including the former corporate Boreas Lodge, which is slated to take place this spring.

Carr said the natural beauty of the Boreas Ponds tract will bring joy to people who visit.

“The park is large forests and small towns like North Hudson,” he told the crowd. “The conservancy is putting in (\$750,000) in seed money (for the towns).”

Environmental groups have been campaigning for the Boreas Ponds tract to be added to the High Peaks Wilderness Area, which would require the roads to be closed and motorized access barred.

Local officials want a less restrictive classification, and the Adirondack Park Agency will make the decision when it classifies the property under the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan.

The Boreas Ponds tract will be available for limited public access until classified.