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## **Gov. Cuomo visits to formally finish Boreas Ponds purchase**

<http://www.lakeplacidnews.com/page/content.detail/id/525207/Gov--Cuomo-visits-to-formally-finish-Boreas-Ponds-purchase.html>

NORTH HUDSON - The sun shone brightly and the black flies were out on the shores of Elk Lake Tuesday, May 10 as Gov. Andrew Cuomo ceremonially sealed the state's purchase of the 20,000-acre Boreas Ponds tract.

"We're completing the largest acquisition to the Park in 100 years," Cuomo said. "The Boreas Ponds are one of the really magnificent parts of the Adirondacks. It is truly spectacular."

Like nearby Elk Lake, where Cuomo made his announcement, Boreas Ponds offer breathtaking views of Adirondack High Peaks like Marcy, Gothics, Skylight and Sawteeth. The Boreas Ponds tract also features 50 miles of rivers and streams, a variety of forests, and habitat for all kinds of animals.

The state paid \$14.5 million to The Nature Conservancy for the tract, according to a deed filed April 5 in the Essex County clerk's office.

With Boreas Ponds, The Nature Conservancy settles the final piece of the 161,000 acres it purchased in 2007 from the Finch, Pruyn paper company for \$110 million. TNC sold 90,000 acres to a pension fund, which is logging the land, and set aside 69,000 acres to sell to the state.

In 2012, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced the state would spend \$49 million to buy those 69,000 acres of former Finch property in phases over five years and add the lands to the "forever wild" Adirondack Forest Preserve. Since then, the state has acquired the Essex Chain Lakes, OK Slip Falls, MacIntyre East and West, and other tracts.

"The way we did it, I believe, preserves the balance between preservation and economic development, and I understand the passion on both sides," Cuomo said. "Passion is what makes the Park special. The answer, obviously, is balance."

"You need to preserve the Park because it's the right thing to do, morally, as a citizen. And you need to preserve the Park because it is the asset that is attracting people."

Cuomo also noted the importance of Adirondack towns and villages needing to generate revenue and provide jobs. The Boreas Ponds land will remain on the tax rolls; as with all of the Forest Preserve that makes up nearly half of the Adirondack Park, the state will still pay property taxes to local governments and schools.

"Once in a rare while, you get a chance to do something that makes a difference forever, that literally leaves our children a place that is better than the place that we inherited," Cuomo said. "Today we know we are leaving our children a better North Country, a better park than we inherited.

"It's not just an intellectual accomplishment; it's not just an economic accomplishment. It is a moral accomplishment. And today I can tell you, because I can hear it, the soul of the state of New York is singing because of what we did today."

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Next up: Classify it

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The next step is for the Boreas tract to be classified, which will determine the extent of public and recreational access allowed on the property. Cuomo sent a letter to the state Adirondack Park Agency, asking it to begin the process of classifying Boreas Ponds - and not indicating if he has a preference as to what kind of Forest Preserve it becomes.

Environmental groups are pushing for Boreas Ponds to be wilderness, the most restrictive type which bans most man-made structures as well as motorized uses like snowmobiles and bicycles. A coalition of these groups is pushing for Boreas Ponds to be added to the adjacent High Peaks Wilderness, which would grow from 204,000 to 280,000 acres and become roughly the same size as Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado.

Some local officials want a combination of wilderness and the less-restrictive wild forest, which allows some structures and motorized uses.

DEC has suggested opening the 7 1/2-mile dirt road leading into the tract as far as LaBiere Flow, a dammed segment of the Boreas River about a mile before the ponds. Some wilderness advocates have argued for closing the whole road to let the tract return to a natural wild state.

Another question surrounds a massive lodge overlooking the ponds that was built by Finch to serve as a corporate retreat. Environmental groups have called for it to be removed, but local leaders have said it could be used as a ranger outpost or as part of a hut-to-hut lodging and trail system.

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Other stops

After his speech at the Elk Lake Lodge, Cuomo toured the Whiteface Mountain Veterans Memorial Highway, which was recently upgraded with state funds, in the town of Wilmington. He also took time to visit a fish-stocking operation in Indian Lake.