



**For more information:**

Neil Woodworth, Adirondack Mountain Club, 315-848-2953

John F. Sheehan, Adirondack Council, 518-441-1340 (cell)

[www.BeWildNY.org](http://www.BeWildNY.org)

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**WILDERNESS ADVOCATES PRAISE GOVERNOR’S PURCHASE  
OF BOREAS PONDS TRACT, MOST VALUABLE FINCH PARCEL**  
*New 20,494-Acre Tract will be Excellent Addition to Adjoining High Peaks Wilderness;  
Is Last, Most Sensitive of Former Finch Paper Holdings Needing Protection*

NORTH HUDSON, N.Y. – An alliance of wilderness advocates today praised Gov. Andrew Cuomo for purchasing the 20,494-acre Boreas Ponds property in the High Peaks region of the Adirondack Park and adding it to the “forever wild” Adirondack Forest Preserve.

“This purchase marks two significant milestones in the protection of the Adirondack Park’s most special places,” said **Neil Woodworth, Executive Director of the Adirondack Mountain Club**. “First, this purchase protects the most fragile and sensitive of all 161,000 acres formerly owned by Finch, Pruyn & Co. Adding it to the Forest Preserve will protect it forever from logging, development and commercial exploitation.

“Second, it is the final Finch parcel needing protection, so it marks the culmination of a large and complicated conservation victory,” Woodworth explained. “The struggle could have turned out very differently.”

“Protecting Boreas Ponds will ensure that countless generations of New Yorkers will have an opportunity to hike, paddle, climb, hunt and fish in one of the most dramatically beautiful landscapes on earth,” said **William C. Janeway, Executive Director of the Adirondack Council**. “Anyone who experiences it will want to come back again and again.”

The six-million-acre (9,300-square-mile) Adirondack Park is the largest park in the contiguous United States. Half is public forest, while half is composed of private land and communities.

All Adirondack Forest Preserve is protected by Article 14, Section 1 of the NYS Constitution, known as the Forever Wild Clause. Preserve lands may not be logged, leased, sold or exchanged, nor may the timber be sold, removed or destroyed.

The most rare and sensitive Adirondack Forest Preserve lands are further protected by being classified as a wilderness area, where motorized and mechanized recreation is prohibited. There are 21 Adirondack wilderness areas covering about 20 percent of the park.

The groups said the governor's balanced approach is working and will pay off for everyone.

"The protection of Boreas Ponds will also bring a convenient entrance to the High Peaks Wilderness to the doorsteps of Newcomb and North Hudson for the first time," said **William C. Cooke, Director of Government Relations for Citizens Campaign for the Environment**. "They will be the new gateways to New York's tallest mountains and largest wilderness area."

"New business opportunities will abound," said **Richard Schrader, Political and Legislative Director for the Natural Resource Defense Council**. "This is further proof that wilderness protection and community development go hand-in-hand in the Adirondacks. This is good for the ecology and the economy of the Adirondacks."

"By acquiring the majestic Boreas Ponds and adding them to the High Peaks Wilderness, Governor Cuomo and the Adirondack Park Agency will enable this largest of Wilderness areas in the northeast to finally round out its natural boundaries, and achieve a size, level of protection, landscape resilience, enlightened management, and recreational potential unsurpassed in the eastern United States," said **David H. Gibson, managing partner of Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve**.

"By protecting Boreas Ponds, Governor Cuomo continues to demonstrate his environmental leadership. These lands provide critical breeding habitat for some of our state's most beloved and iconic bird species including the Common Loon and Black-throated Blue Warbler. Adding this parcel to 'forever wild' Adirondack Forest Preserve is a significant investment in advancing the quality of life for the birds, wildlife and people of New York," said **Erin Crotty, Executive Director of Audubon New York**.

"The Boreas Ponds purchase brings the final parcel of Finch lands into the Forest Preserve, where it belongs. It is the missing puzzle piece of the existing High Peaks Wilderness Area," said **Marcia Bystryn, President of the New York League of Conservation Voters**. "We thank Governor Cuomo for classifying Boreas Ponds as wilderness and adding it to the High Peaks Wilderness."

### **Long Path to Success**

Adirondack conservationists were troubled in 2007 when Finch put up for sale all 161,000 acres it owned in the Adirondack Park. Its holdings were known to be among the most biologically rich and ecologically fragile in the Adirondacks. Nearly every acre was listed as a high priority for public ownership in the NYS Open Space Conservation Plan. The lands contained some of the park's most stunning mountain and lake vistas, so they were very attractive to second-home developers too.

The state's Environmental Protection Fund lacked the revenue to purchase all of the lands it sought for the Forest Preserve, as well as the timberlands it sought to protect through conservation easements. The state turned to The Nature Conservancy for assistance.

The Conservancy's first step was to acquire the complete property. Then the Conservancy, after an extensive assessment of the property and discussions with state and local gov't stakeholders, moved to ensure that 90,000 acres of the most productive timberland remained in commercial operation – generating jobs, wood products and opportunities for private camp leases—but also included a state-held conservation easement that prevents all future owners from subdividing or developing it. The conservancy also arranged a multi-year pulp-supply agreement from these lands to Finch's mill in Glens Falls.

To assist the affected communities, the conservancy set aside some of the Finch lands for community development and affordable housing projects in the five towns where the largest holdings were located, in Essex and Hamilton counties.

In 2012, Gov. Cuomo agreed to purchase the remaining 69,000 acres. These lands, which were most in need for protection from development, were added to the “forever wild” Adirondack Forest Preserve. Those purchases included the Essex Chain Lakes, OK Slip Falls, MacIntyre East, MacIntyre West, Thousand Acre Swamp, the Benson tract and others.

### **BeWildNY Campaign**

The eight organizations urged the Governor to classify Boreas Ponds and MacIntyre East and West as wilderness to protect them from motorized traffic, noise, pollution and invasive species. They urged the same treatment for other recent additions to the Forest Preserve that have not yet been classified, including the OSI Tract and the Casey Brook parcel. Together, they would fill most of the major remaining gaps in the High Peaks Wilderness Area and allow it to be connected to the Dix Mountain Wilderness Area.

The expanded High Peaks Wilderness Area would grow from 204,000 acres to more than 280,000 acres. That would make it roughly the same size as Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado or Mt. Rainier National Park in Washington, or about twice the size of Zion National Park in Utah.

The organizations created the [BeWildNY.org](http://BeWildNY.org) campaign to be sure citizens were aware of the historic wilderness opportunity and to encourage the state to take advantage of it.

### **Next Step is Classification**

The Governor’s Adirondack Park Agency leads the next step in the process of determining how the state will further protect and manage the Boreas Ponds tract, plus other adjoining state lands, and other new Forest Preserve. Most of the parcels are adjacent to the High Peaks Wilderness Area. Securing a classification of Wilderness is essential to protect the area from motorized and mechanized uses, the organizations said.

The State Land Master Plan sets state policy for this decision-making and prioritizes natural resource protection. The Park Agency is expected to take the lead developing alternative classification scenarios, accepting state-wide comments on those proposals, and making a final recommendation to the Governor.

The BeWildNY alliance is composed of individuals and organizations who love nature and are willing to stand up for the protection of clean water, wildlife and wilderness. We are proud of New York’s century-long heritage of “forever wild” public land protection in the Adirondack Park. We support wild lands that are open to all people. We also recognize that motor-vehicle access into and across wild places can bring noise, pollution and destructive invasive species.

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