



PRESS RELEASE

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## **PROTECT Calls for New 39,000-Acre Upper Hudson River Wilderness Area**

*New Wilderness Area to be created from former Finch lands  
and existing Wild Forest and Primitive Area lands*

*New Wilderness Area would permanently protect 22 miles of the Hudson River*

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LAKE GEORGE - Protect the Adirondacks released a proposal calling for the creation of a new 39,000-acre Upper Hudson River Wilderness Area. This new Wilderness Area is centered on 22 miles of the Upper Hudson River that stretches from the Town of Newcomb to North River; see map attached. It would include over five miles of the Cedar River and four miles of the Indian River as well as dozens of other lakes and ponds. The new Wilderness Area would be created from roughly 19,000 acres of former Finch Paper lands to be purchased by the State of New York from The Nature Conservancy and 20,000 acres of existing Forest Preserve lands in the Hudson Gorge Primitive Area (17,000 acres) and in the Blue Mountain and Vanderwhacker Wild Forest Areas (3,000 acres).

After the announcement by Governor Cuomo in August 2012 that the state would purchase 69,000 of former Finch Paper lands from The Nature Conservancy for addition to the Forest Preserve, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Adirondack Park Agency (APA) began planning for the classification of these new Forest Preserve lands. The DEC has stated that the 69,000 acres will be purchased over the next five years. It is expected that the 22,000-acre Essex Chain Lakes tract will be the first tract purchased. The purchase is expected to close in early 2013. The DEC has stated that it will move ahead with classification as each tract is purchased. The Essex Chain Lakes tract is vital for a new Upper Hudson River Wilderness Area.

“The creation of a new Wilderness Area that centers on 22 miles of the Hudson River would be a tremendous accomplishment for the State of New York” said Chuck Clusen, co-chair of PROTECT. “Wild country and wild rivers grow fewer each year and a new Wilderness area for the Upper Hudson would provide permanent protection for 22 miles of one of the greatest rivers in America.”

The new Upper Hudson Wilderness Area would also include much of the new Essex Chain Lakes lands to be acquired by the state within the next few months. “PROTECT envisions a new Wilderness Area that protects the Essex Chain Lakes and Hudson River. Wilderness classification is the best protection to create a motorless lakes system for the Essex Chain Lakes and protect the Hudson River as a wild river” said Peter Bauer, Executive Director of PROTECT.

“The proposed Wilderness Area will protect the core of the Essex Chain Lakes, Cedar River and Hudson River, while allowing broad public access” said Chuck Clusen.

DEC has indicated that it plans to continue floatplane access to 1<sup>st</sup> and Pine Lakes, on the edge of the proposed new Wilderness Area. PROTECT recognizes the established floatplane use on these lakes and has drawn the Wilderness Area boundary to classify those lakes as Wild Forest. PROTECT also recognizes public interest in access to the Essex Chain Lake for canoe camping and has drawn its Wilderness boundary for road access to this area through conservation easement and Wild Forest lands. The northern Wilderness boundary along the Essex Chain Lakes also provides good opportunities for disabled access camp sites and recreational experiences. Wild Forest corridors are also proposed to provide access to the Hudson for launching/take-outs as well as emergency services at the north and south ends. (See map.) These road corridors will also provide access to lands, especially during hunting season.

PROTECT believes this new Wilderness Area will enhance the highly successful Hudson River-Indian River whitewater rafting industry by managing, for the first time, the Hudson River as an integrated resource and by providing much improved day use and camping opportunities through the entire length of the Hudson River Gorge. “An Upper Hudson River Wilderness will protect the whitewater rafting industry over the long-term. This industry has proven to be highly successful as well as sustainable and provides terrific opportunities and wild river experiences for visitors to the Adirondack Park” said Peter Bauer.

While the new Upper Hudson Wilderness Area would not be one of the largest Wilderness Areas in the Adirondack Park, such as the five Wilderness Areas over 100,000 acres (High Peaks, West Canada Lake, Five Ponds, West Canada Lake, Silver Lake), it would be larger than nine other Wilderness Areas in the Adirondack Park.

## **Protect the Adirondacks**

Protect the Adirondacks is a privately funded, IRS-approved not-for-profit organization dedicated to the protection of the 6-million-acre Adirondack Park in northern New York. PROTECT was formed through the merger of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks and the Residents’ Committee to Protect the Adirondacks in 2009. PROTECT pursues its mission through citizen advocacy, grassroots organizing, education, research, and legal action. PROTECT is guided by a volunteer Board of Directors. PROTECT maintains an office in Lake George. For more information see [www.protectadks.org](http://www.protectadks.org).