



PRESS RELEASE

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Protect the Adirondacks calls for new 12,850-acre Wilderness Area in the southern Adirondacks

New Wilderness area could be classified from newly purchased and existing “roadless” Wild Forest lands

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Lake George, NY – Protect the Adirondacks is calling for the creation of a new 12,850-acre West Stony Creek Wilderness area, consisting of 3,925 acres of lands purchased by the State of New York earlier in 2014 from The Nature Conservancy and over 8,925 acres of existing Forest Preserve lands in the towns of Benson (Hamilton County) and Mayfield, Northampton and Bleecker (Fulton County).

The newly purchased land enables the creation of a new 12,850-acre Wilderness area in the southern Adirondack Park. This is a historic opportunity to create a new Wilderness Area. Some 8,925 acres of land outlined by PROTECT are currently classified as Wild Forest (see map attached) in five different tracts in the Shaker Mountain Wild Forest. The newly purchased lands, part of the former Finch Paper holdings, will allow these Wild Forest tracts to be consolidated into a new, cohesive 12,850-acre Wilderness area that will protect a large intact landscape.

“The West Stony Creek area is rugged terrain dominated by low ridges and mountains and the meandering West Stony Creek and associated wetlands. The Forest Preserve sections have old growth forest communities. Combined with part of the newly purchased lands we see a great opportunity to create a new Wilderness area in the southern Adirondack Park,” said Chuck Clusen, Chairman of Protect the Adirondacks.

In recognition of the wild character of this area, the Northville-Placid trail (NPT) has been rerouted through the West Stony Creek tract as part of the Shaker Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan. This will provide a stunning new beginning for this landmark trail that takes hikers off a road trail and puts them in a wild setting for nine miles before they enter the Silver Lake Wilderness area.

“The Forest Preserve lands contain mature forests with many trees over 150 years old.

Over six miles of West Stony Creek meanders through this tract, connected to various wetland systems. West Stony Creek, which runs into the Sacandaga Reservoir and then into the Hudson River, is classified and protected under the NYS Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers Act. The best protection for this stunning river system is a Wilderness classification,” said Peter Bauer, Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks.

The West Stony Creek Wilderness is a balanced proposal. Of the 160,000 acres of former Finch Paper lands that were purchased by The Nature Conservancy, 95,000 acres were sold as conservation easements, where logging will continue in perpetuity. Of the 65,000 acres being sold to New York State for Forest Preserve, more than half will be classified as Wild Forest and opened to a variety of motorized uses. The existing C8 Snowmobile Trail marks runs along its southwestern boundary and is unaffected by this proposal.

“The areas of newly purchased Forest Preserve lands need time to recover and regenerate. A Wilderness classification provides the best opportunity to protect against invasive species and to allow a large, intact forest system to develop,” said Peter Bauer.

After the classification hearings of 2013, there now stands over 1,160,000 acres of Wilderness compared with over 1,275,000 acres of Wild Forest. There remains across the Forest Preserve well over 100,000 acres more Wild Forest lands, which permits various types of motor vehicle use, than non-motorized Wilderness lands.

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 to protect the Adirondack Park and defend the public “forever wild” Forest Preserve through citizen advocacy, grassroots organizing, education, research, and legal action. PROTECT is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. PROTECT maintains an office in Lake George. For more information see www.protectadks.org.

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Proposed West Stony Creek Wilderness Area

