



PRESS RELEASE

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PROTECT Calls for 36,500 Acres of New Wilderness Lands in the Adirondack Forest Preserve

State Must Seize Major Opportunity to Expand Wilderness in the Adirondack Forest Preserve, while Accommodating a Range of Recreational Uses and Complying with State Law

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Lake George, NY – Protect the Adirondacks has released a proposal to expand Wilderness areas in the Adirondack Park by over 36,500 acres. This includes Wilderness classification for much of The Nature Conservancy/former Finch, Pruyn and Company lands that border the High Peaks Wilderness, including the soon-to-be-purchased Boreas Ponds, and the creation of a new West Stony Creek Wilderness area in the southern Adirondacks.

In the last two years, the State of New York purchased 13,000 acres of new Forest Preserve lands that border the High Peaks Wilderness area. In the next few months, the State is expected to finalize purchase of 21,000 acres around Boreas Ponds, which also borders the High Peaks Wilderness. These purchases complete the 69,000-acre purchase announced by Governor Cuomo in 2012.

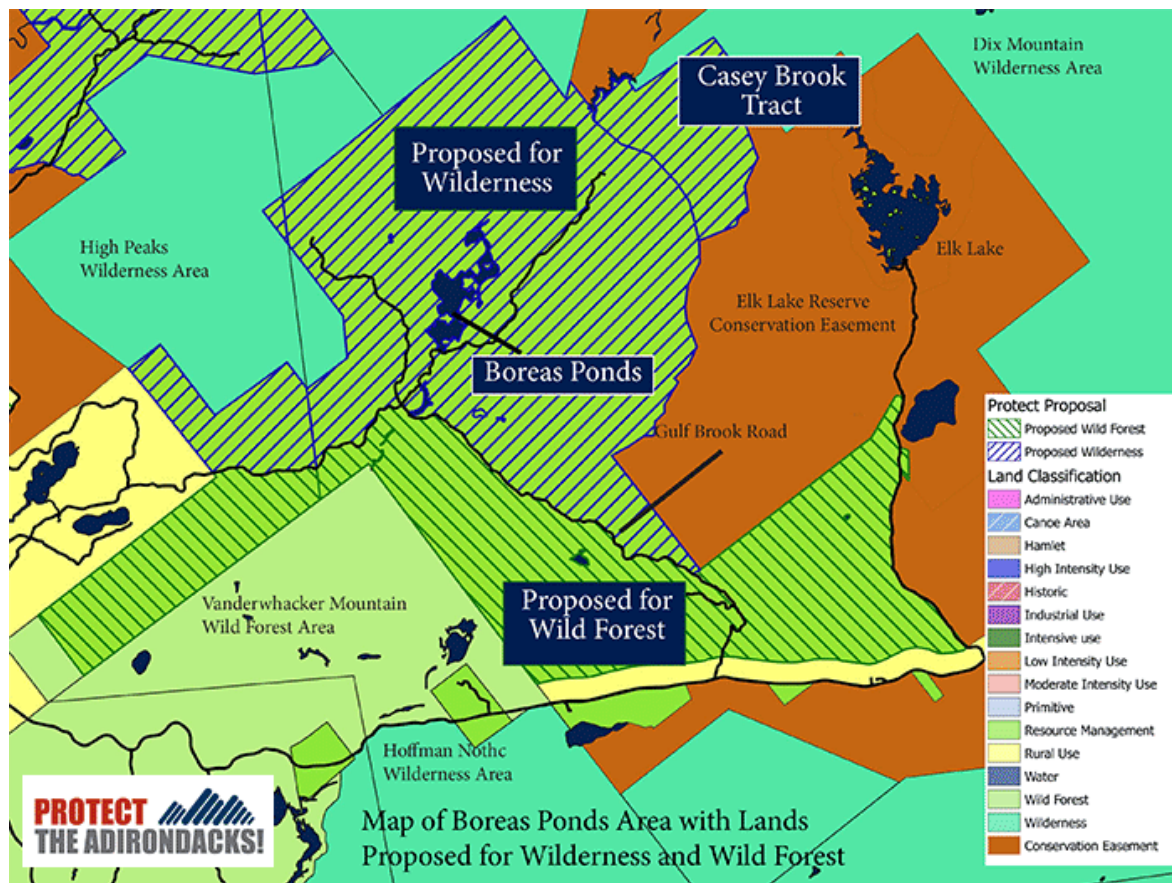
Protect the Adirondacks calls for classification of 24,000 acres of these lands as Wilderness and 10,000 acres as Wild Forest. Under the Adirondack Park Agency Act regional land use plan, Wilderness lands allow only non-motorized recreation, such as hiking, running, cross-country skiing, canoeing or kayaking, among other things, whereas Wild Forest areas allow a variety of motorized recreation including use of automobiles on designated roads, snowmobiles, motorboats, bicycling, among a variety of non-motorized activities.

“PROTECT’s proposal provides Wilderness classification and protection for the most important natural resource areas on 36,500 acres. It also aims to facilitate motorized access desired by area local governments and snowmobiling interests by designating key roads for public motor vehicle and snowmobile use. PROTECT is making a good faith effort to provide a workable and realistic classification and management program that expands Wilderness lands, complies with State law, and meets the objectives of many different and often conflicting interests,” said Peter Bauer, Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks.

Boreas Ponds: 13,000 acres of Wilderness and 8,300 acres of Wild Forest to Create Motorless Canoe Destination, Provide Public Access the Boreas Ponds, and link a Regional Snowmobile Trail

The Boreas Ponds tract has ranked near the top on the State's acquisition lists for decades. This tract includes the two Boreas Ponds, the dammed LeBiere Flow area, a corporate retreat compound, and other smaller ponds. This tract has more than 50 miles of dirt roads with the Gulf Brook Road being the main artery that runs east-west through the southern section of the tract and runs all the way to the Blue Ridge Road. PROTECT's position is that 13,000 acres around the Boreas Ponds should be classified as Wilderness and added to the High Peaks Wilderness. The retreat should be removed and the site reforested.

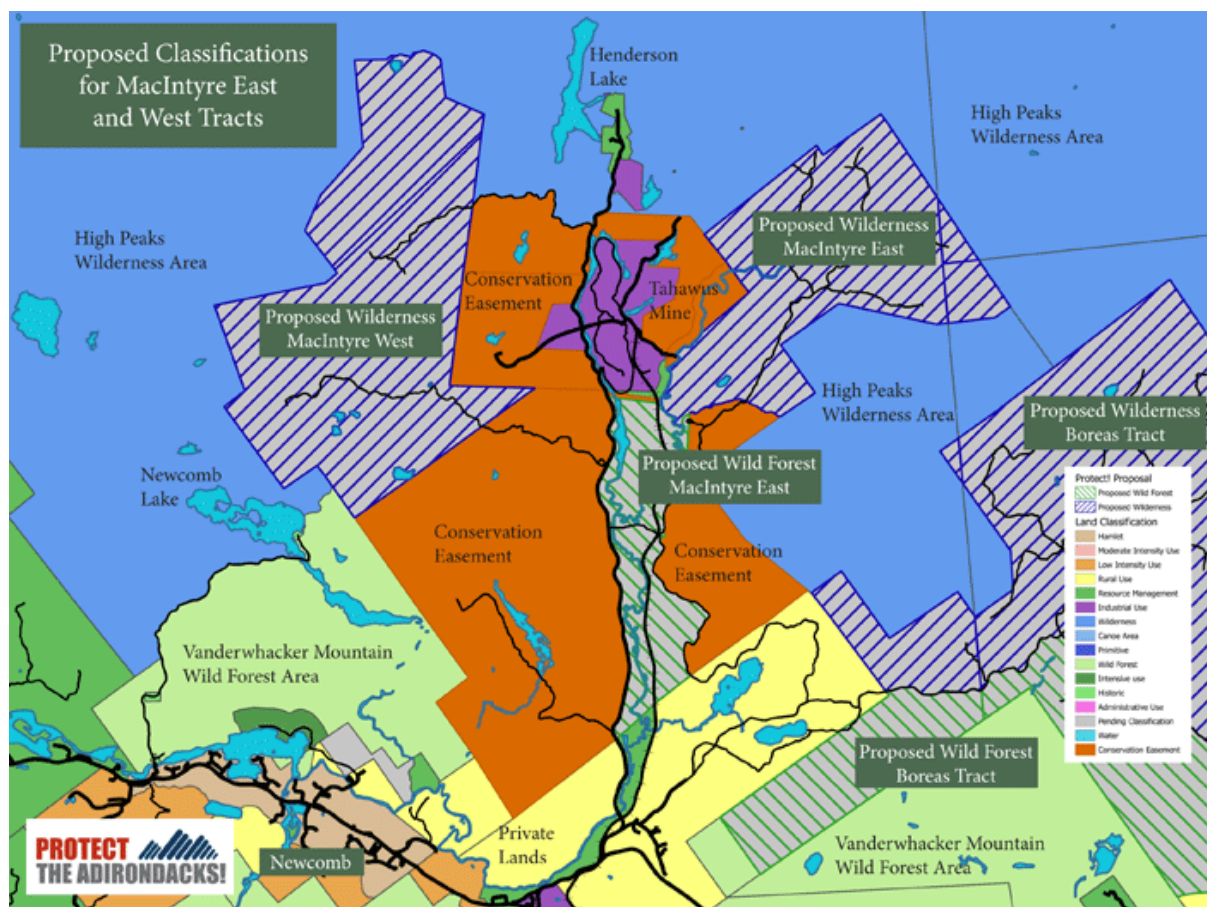
"A Wilderness classification for the Boreas Ponds will create a stunning new motorless canoeing opportunity. There are not many of these opportunities in the Adirondacks where one can escape for days and paddle deep into a wild area. These opportunities are rare today across New York or the Northeast USA. The sad reality in the Adirondacks is that there are relatively few motorless camping opportunities on a big lake or river where a visitor knows for sure they are going to get a wild experience. Classification of the Boreas Ponds as Wilderness will provide New Yorkers a place they can count on for wild times visit after visit, year after year, decade after decade, generation after generation," said Peter Bauer.



PROTECT supports classification of 8,300 acres along the Gulf Brook Road and the Blue Ridge Highway as Wild Forest. This road will set the Wilderness-Wild Forest boundary so that the public can drive to within a short carry to a canoe launch to the Boreas Ponds, utilize the road as a major part of a Newcomb-North Hudson snowmobile trail, and by using the existing road there will be significantly less tree cutting than if this snowmobile was cut through the Forest Preserve. Major snowmobile trails are 9-12 feet wide and when newly constructed require extensive tree cutting, grading and leveling with heavy machinery and extensive bridge construction. It makes far more sense to utilize an existing road rather than built a new road-like snowmobile trail.

“PROTECT has always taken the position that on the Forest Preserve motor vehicle uses should be kept in Wild Forest areas. When state agencies start allowing motorized uses in Primitive areas this twists and contorts state law and creates bad long-term precedents that will undermine coherent Forest Preserve management,” said Peter Bauer.

“PROTECT’s proposal is a pragmatic approach that balances a range of competing interests, accommodates a number of recreational uses with the minimum amount of terrain alteration and negative impacts, and protects the most important natural resource areas on the Forest Preserve,” said Peter Bauer.



New 12,000 Acre West Stony Creek Wilderness

The State also purchased another 8,500 acres of former Finch, Pruyn and Company lands from The Nature Conservancy two years ago. These are scattered mostly in small tracts across the lower half of the Adirondack Park. PROTECT has called for classification of 3,000 acres of newly purchased lands in the mountains above Northville as Wilderness and for reclassification of a trailless 9,000-acre tract in the Shaker Mountain Wild Forest area as Wilderness to create a new 12,000-acre West Stony Creek Wilderness area.

The Shaker Mountain Unit Management Plan describes the Wilderness atmosphere and characteristics of the trailless tract that surrounds the West Stony Creek river valley. The dominant recreational use is the new re-route of the Northville-Placid Trail (NPT). It will be a significant boost to the allure of the NPT to pass in its early stage through a new Wilderness area.

Governor Cuomo has a terrific opportunity to put his stamp on the Forest Preserve. This would be the biggest expansion of Wilderness in the Adirondacks since 2000 when Governor Pataki acted to classify over 41,000 acres of new Wilderness by creating the 20,000-acre William C. Whitney Wilderness area, which included upgrading the 7,500-acre Lake Lila Primitive Area to Wilderness, and expansion of both the Five Ponds Wilderness and Pepperbox Wilderness areas by over 21,000 acres.

See map attached.

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

