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## **Environmental Groups and Local Governments Cheer Proposed Classification of Boreas Ponds Tract in Adirondack Park**

*Boreas Ponds designation achieves environmental and community goals envisioned in historic transfer of lands from The Nature Conservancy to New York State*

Albany, NY – Environmental groups and local government leaders working in the Adirondack Park today announced their support for a proposal to classify the 20,530-acre Boreas Ponds tract as a mix of Wilderness and Wild Forest, preserving the interests of local communities and adding key lands to the High Peaks Wilderness and Vanderwhacker Wild Forest areas. The classification will support local economies while preserving the Adirondack Park, and marks the completion of a historic, once-in-a-generation effort to conserve 161,000 acres of Adirondack forest lands.

In this proposal the state seeks to classify 9,118 acres as Wild Forest, including Ragged Mountain and a beautiful stretch of the Boreas River, create new opportunities for roadside camping along Gulf Brook Road, reasonable access for people to walk to Boreas Ponds, easy access for hunting and potential for new mountain bike trails. The 11,412 acres proposed for Wilderness, including Boreas Ponds, Moose Mountain and White Lily Pond, represent the remotest parts of the property and will be added to the adjacent High Peaks Wilderness Area.

The proposal, which reflects a respectful compromise, will be on the agenda for a vote of the Adirondack Park Agency board during their February meeting, taking place February 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in Ray Brook, New York. The decision on the Boreas Ponds is part of a larger 54,000-acre classification package that the APA will consider.

Boreas Ponds is the largest of 25 parcels The Nature Conservancy conveyed to New York State between 2012 and 2016 as additions to the Adirondack Forest Preserve as part of a much larger project. The full 161,000-acre conservation project, undertaken with extensive consultation with local communities and stakeholders, protects more than 415 miles of rivers and streams, 300 lakes and ponds, 90 mountains, and 15,000 acres of wetlands, as follows:

- 95,000 acres of working forests protected through conservation easements that allow sustainable timber harvest, private hunt club leasing and limited public recreation, including dozens of miles of snowmobile trails;
- 65,000 acres added to the Adirondack Forest Preserve (protected as Forever Wild under the state constitution), including gems like OK Slip Falls, Blue Ledges, Essex Chain of Lakes, and, the crown jewel, Boreas Ponds;
- 1,000 acres dedicated for community enhancement projects in local communities.

“This thoughtfully proposed classification for the Boreas Ponds tract is consistent with the balanced approach that The Nature Conservancy has strived to achieve over the last decade,

as it has worked with New York State and local communities to conserve the former Finch, Pruyn lands in the Adirondacks,” said Stuart Gruskin, Chief Conservation and External Affairs Officer for The Nature Conservancy in New York. “We fully support this well-conceived proposal, urge the Adirondack Park Agency Board to adopt it at their February board meeting, and look forward to seeing the economic and environmental benefits it will unleash.”

“The 5 Towns Upper Hudson Recreation Hub are pleased that we have been able to reach a fair and equitable classification of the Boreas Ponds Tract. We hope that this will provide access to these lands for all, young and old, the physically fit and the disabled and provide for a vast array of new recreational opportunities to bring visitors to our towns and sustain those businesses we have and to create new opportunities for business growth and the creation of new jobs,” said Ronald Moore, Supervisor of the Town of North Hudson.

“It is extraordinarily heartening to see another balanced proposal related to the former Finch lands. While it is great news, it is not surprising. Governor Cuomo and his Agencies have been consistently balanced in their State land proposals. Contrary to some of the rhetoric during the Hearing process, it has always been clear that there was room here for a balanced decision. This balance of Wild Forest and Wilderness, provides access and protection.” Said William Farber, Chairman of the Hamilton County Board of Supervisors

“This is a solution that takes a long view in protecting this world class treasure. The opportunities for true solitude will inspire countless visitors to this spectacular part of the Adirondack Park. Governor Cuomo is honoring the critical input of Adirondack communities in this process and making a lasting contribution to New York State’s conservation legacy,” said Mike Carr, Executive Director of the Adirondack Land Trust.

“The Open Space Institute applauds the proposed classification,” said OSI President and CEO Kim Elliman, noting that OSI financed and played an active role in the original TNC acquisition from Finch, Pruyn & Co. “The addition of the Boreas Ponds, White Lily Pond and Moose Mountain to the High Peaks Wilderness Area would complete the mosaic of remote and wild lands in this region and the proposed Wild Forest area would provide sensible access to people of all ages and abilities. Importantly, it protects sensitive natural resources, expands recreational opportunities, provides a new destination for Park visitors and should be approved without delay.”

“Hats off to Governor Cuomo for his decision to strike a compromise that protects the Boreas Ponds as Wilderness, the highest protection for public lands in New York, while working to meet the needs of local communities and making room for many different recreational uses on adjoining Forest Preserve lands classified as Wild Forest. In making this decision, the Governor dared to compromise, something elusive in American life right now,” said Peter Bauer, Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks.

“In an era where public wilderness is greatly threatened nationally, we applaud the proposed classification of the Boreas Pond as Wilderness and Wild forest. The proposed classification of much of the Boreas Ponds Tract as Wilderness as well as Wilderness classification for the MacIntyre East and West parcels facilitates consolidation of the Dix Mountain Wilderness into the High Peaks Wilderness creating a contiguous motor-free area of more than a quarter million acres. The classification of substantial acreage as wild forest will expand opportunities for snowmobiling and mountain biking while enhancing access for roadside family camping, hunting

and fishing. The 25,000 acres of new Wilderness will provide new places to explore for hikers, campers and kayakers in a breathtaking setting of the finest mountain scenery in the Adirondacks. We are truly grateful for Governor Cuomo's vision and leadership for this historic addition to the Adirondack Forest Preserve," said Neil F. Woodworth, Executive Director of the Adirondack Mountain Club.

"National, statewide and local advocates for the Adirondacks support adding the Boreas Ponds and 25,000 additional acres to the High Peaks Wilderness Area to realize a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create 275,000 acres of contiguous public forest that will remain unharmed and unencumbered by motorized recreation," said Adirondack Council Executive Director William C. Janeway, one of the leaders of the BeWildNY Adirondack Wilderness Campaign. "We join with towns and other advocates in support of this compromise that if combined with careful management of a one mile approach corridor to keep out invasive species, will protect as Forever Wild Adirondack Wilderness the Boreas Ponds and source waters of the Hudson River in the heart of the Adirondacks. The Wilderness will provide economic benefits to gateway communities, and complements state investments in community main streets."

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