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*Executive Director*

October 23, 2019

Basil Seggos, Commissioner  
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
625 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12233

**RE: Protect the Adirondacks supports state purchase of the 51,300 acre Three Rivers Tracts in Franklin and St. Lawrence Counties**

Dear Commissioner Seggos:

Protect the Adirondacks urges the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to purchase the 51,300-acre conservation easement and new Forest Preserve lands in Franklin and St. Lawrence Counties protected by the Conservation Fund in June 2019. This purchase will help to protect the working forest landscape in the northwest Adirondacks and the beautiful South Branch of the Grasse River. Conservation easements are an investment by the State of New York in the economy and environment of the Adirondack Park. The state's conservation easement program has been highly successful over the last 30 years, a rare bipartisan effort that has grown from one administration to the next.

**The Working Forest Landscape:** Conservation easement lands dominate the northwest Adirondack Park north of NYS Route 3 and on both sides of County Route 56. Based on the outline of the purchase from the Conservation Fund, the great majority of this purchase would be in the form of conservation easements. The protected working forest landscape through the state's conservation easement program has helped to stabilize commercial forest management, and is an important

**Protect the Adirondacks**

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part of the economy in the Adirondacks and North Country. The Conservation Fund lands dovetail with existing large tracts of actively managed conservation easement lands in the northwest Adirondacks.

**Enhanced Public Recreation on Conservation Easement Lands:** Protect the Adirondacks has long believed that conservation easement lands are suitable places for intensive motorized outdoor public recreation using snowmobiles or all terrain vehicles (ATVs). Conservation easements possess an intensive infrastructure of roads that are suitable for motorized recreational uses. The highly developed road system throughout conservation easement lands can withstand intensive motorized recreation in a way that the roads and trails on the Forest Preserve cannot. By providing abundant opportunities for intensive motorized outdoor recreation, conservation easement lands have long served as a safety valve for the Forest Preserve, lands protected as forever wild under the NYS Constitution, which places practical barriers for tree cutting that limits motorized recreation opportunities.

**The South Branch of the Grasse River:** The Conservation Fund lands also create the opportunity to provide enhanced protections for the South Branch of the Grasse River by fully protecting the river corridor. The Conservation Fund purchase includes land on both sides of the South Branch of the Grasse River that link together Forest Preserve parcels. Addition of these lands into the Forest Preserve will enable placing a new canoe launch for the South Branch of the Grasse River on Route 3, which will facilitate one of the great downriver paddling trips in the Adirondacks and protect a wild river corridor for miles.

**Tooley Pond Mountain Tract:** Another section of Forest Preserve that could be expanded through this purchase is along the south side of Tooley Pond Mountain. Currently, Forest Preserve lands extend around Tooley Pond and parts of Tooley Pond Mountain. Protection in the Forest Preserve of the entire mountain would enhance public recreational opportunities.

Protect the Adirondacks urges the DEC to move ahead boldly with protection of these lands to help protect the great forested open space landscape of the Adirondack Park. As a mix of potential conservation easement and new Forest Preserve lands, this land protection effort will enjoy strong local support and mark a major milestone in the history of the Adirondack Park.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Protect the Adirondacks, please accept my gratitude for the opportunity to urge the DEC to make this important purchase of

conservation easement and Forest Preserve lands in Franklin and St. Lawrence Counties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Bauer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peter" being more prominent than the last name "Bauer".

Peter Bauer,  
Executive Director

- CC     D. Bryk, Executive Chamber  
       A. Lefton, Executive Chamber  
       M. Phillips, Executive Chamber  
       E. Preminger, Executive Chamber  
       S. Mahar, NYSDEC  
       J. Drabicki, NYSDEC  
       R. Davies, NYSDEC  
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