

Adirondack Council
Adirondack Mountain Club
Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve
Adirondack Wilderness Advocates
Citizens Campaign for the Environment
New York League of Conservation Voters
Protect the Adirondacks!
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

October 29, 2024

Hon. Kathy Hochul, Governor
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

RE: Whitney Park

Dear Governor Hochul:

As you are well aware, the 36,000-acre Whitney Park in Long Lake is up for sale. Following the untimely death of John Hendrickson this past summer, this historic tract in the heart of the Adirondack Park will be sold by his heirs and a Trust seeking to sell these lands in the months ahead. We ask that you and your Department of Environmental Conservation take a leading role in negotiating the conservation of Whitney Park through purchase as Forest Preserve, as conservation easement, or a combination of the two.

Since 1992, Whitney Park has been a high priority in the Statewide Open Space Conservation Plan, described in that Plan as “a 36,000 acre property in Hamilton County that has been devoted to forest and wildlife management for over 100 years and contains enormous outdoor recreational potential.” Whitney Park’s interconnected waterways are not only part of a historic 19th century canoe route, but provide great ecological connectivity throughout the central Adirondack Park. Furthermore, its forests, recovering now after years of heavy cutting, would offer carbon sequestration and carbon storage benefits, thereby contributing substantially to your and the state’s GHG mitigation and removal goals.

In addition, the protection of Whitney Park, which includes 22 lakes and ponds, and over 100 miles of undeveloped shoreline, will contribute substantially to your administration’s commitment to protect 30% of New York State by 2030.

The 3-million-acre Forest Preserve in the Adirondacks and Catskills is one of the great success stories in New York State. It has been built through a multi-generational, bipartisan conservation tradition from 1885 through today. Whitney Park has been eyed by generations of Adirondack conservationists and State officials as a cornerstone of a protected Adirondack Park, a missing link for historic public canoe routes that ran north-south and east-west through the property, and as a vital missing piece for the public Forest Preserve.

In 1998, Governor George Pataki purchased the northern portion of Whitney Park, 15,000 acres around Little Tupper Lake, from Mary Lou Whitney. These lands were combined with Forest Preserve lands around Lake Lila to form the William C. Whitney Wilderness Area, which has grown to be one of the most popular Wilderness areas in the Adirondacks that provides timeless and wild outdoor experiences. It's impossible today to imagine an Adirondack Park without public lands and waterways like Lake Lila and Little Tupper Lake.

Your success in conserving and protecting the balance of Whitney Park will surpass the efforts of four previous governors. The groups listed above urge you and your administration to do everything you can to accomplish this goal. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and challenge that the State of New York must meet head-on. Protection of Whitney Park would be a great accomplishment for your administration and, like critical lands purchases made by previous Governors, would stand the test of time for its immense public benefits, including your goals for the Adirondack and North Country economy, quality of life, public recreation, clean air and water, GHG mitigation, and climate action.

The organizations listed above stand ready to help in every way possible so that you can conserve and protect the balance of Whitney Park for this and coming generations. Thank you for your commitment to the Adirondack Park and the Forever Wild Forest Preserve.

Sincerely,

Rocci Aguirre, Executive Director, Adirondack Council

Peter Bauer, Executive Director, Protect the Adirondacks!

Roger Downs, Policy Director, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director, Citizens Campaign for the Environment

David Gibson, Managing Partner, Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve

Julia Goren, Acting Executive Director, Adirondack Mountain Club

Patrick McClellan, Policy Director, New York League of Conservation Voters

Pete Nelson, Chair, Adirondack Wilderness Advocates