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August 19, 2025

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

Re: Whitney Park

Dear Governor Hochul:

We respectfully urge your administration to take a more proactive, inclusive, and transparent role in the State's efforts to conserve Whitney Park – a privately owned, 36,000-acre tract of largely undeveloped lands and waters within the Adirondack Park.

The property is now under contract to a private Texas-based real estate developer who has publicly announced plans to transform the site into a luxury golf resort. We understand that the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has had some contact with the developer. However, despite the clear, compelling and widespread public support for conserving Whitney Park, DEC has yet to engage with environmental stakeholders in any meaningful way.

At a June meeting with DEC Commissioner Amanda Lefton, we were told only that "conversations" had taken place between DEC and the developer, with no details provided. Later, a press statement from DEC Commissioner Lefton was similarly vague, merely noting that DEC "is engaged in productive conversations" with the Texas developer. Our subsequent requests for updates and information have gone unanswered, and a recent request for a follow-up meeting with Commissioner Lefton was denied.

DEC's lack of transparency is deeply concerning, and its justification for declining further engagement – that it does not comment on ongoing or potential negotiations – stands in stark contrast to prior practices.

DEC has regularly partnered with the Adirondack conservation community to advance their shared long-term commitment to open space and habitat preservation in the Adirondack Park. Despite occasional policy differences over the years, the State and stakeholder groups have consistently worked together in a constructive and collaborative manner to protect critical lands.

Protect the Adirondacks

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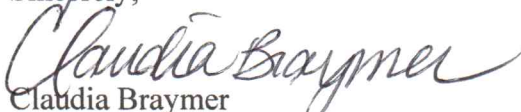
Notable examples of the past close collaboration between conservation organizations and the State on major land acquisitions in the Adirondack Park include the following:

- In the late 1980s, Adirondack conservation groups worked closely with the administration of Governor Mario Cuomo to secure key additions to the Forest Preserve, including the Bog River Flow/Low's Lake region, the Watson's East Triangle and lands formerly owned by the Diamond Matchstick Company.
- In the early 1990s, conservation groups partnered with DEC, federal agencies, and the Town of Indian Lake to establish New York's first Forest Legacy project—protecting public access to the Indian River for commercial whitewater rafting on the Indian and Hudson Rivers.
- In the late 1990s, Governor George Pataki's, environmental staff, and DEC leadership collaborated with the Adirondack conservation community to build widespread support—locally, statewide, and in the Legislature—for landmark land protection initiatives. This resulted in the State's acquisition of 15,000 acres around Little Tupper Lake (now the William C. Whitney Wilderness Area) along with the purchases of Henderson Lake, Massawepie Mire, Round Lake, Clear Pond, Bartlett's Carry, and other significant tracts. This partnership ultimately led to the protection of more than one million acres across New York, Governor Pataki's signature environmental achievement.
- In the 2000s, Governor Eliot Spitzer's regular coordination with Adirondack conservation groups helped plan the purchase of 160,000 acres of the former Finch Pruyn lands. This collaboration continued through the administrations of Governors David Patterson and Andrew Cuomo, culminating in the addition of thousands of acres to the Forest Preserve, including the Boreas Ponds and Essex Chain of Lakes tracts.

We urge your office to honor the long tradition of collaboration by taking immediate steps to ensure that any opportunity to conserve Whitney Park is not lost. This includes directing DEC to engage transparently with all stakeholders and to act decisively in the public's interest. We also reiterate our June 23, 2025 request, made jointly by a number of environmental organizations, for a meeting with you to discuss protection of Whitney Park.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Protect the Adirondacks, thank you for your leadership and your ongoing commitment to protecting New York's natural heritage.

Sincerely,



Claudia Braymer
Executive Director

cc: Amanda Lefton, DEC Commissioner
Katie Petronis, Deputy Commissioner of Natural Resources