

PRESS RELEASE
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Paddlers at Paddle for Wilderness call for adding the 36,000-acre Whitney Park to the Forest Preserve

Protect the Adirondacks and Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter call on Governor Kathy Hochul and Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Amanda Lefton to add the 36,000-acre tract in the heart of the Adirondack Park to the “forever wild” Forest Preserve

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Several dozen paddlers from Protect the Adirondacks and Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter attended a water-based protest earlier in September. The Paddle for Wilderness at Forked Lake in the central Adirondacks, on waters bordering Whitney Park, was a floating protest calling for the protection of the 36,000-acre Whitney Park that is up for sale and threatened with development. This tract has been at the top of the State’s land protection list for 50 years. Whitney Park includes 22 lakes and ponds, and over 100 miles of undeveloped shorelines. The tract has important natural habitat and is the missing link for re-establishing historic canoe routes that traversed the property.

Protect the Adirondacks and Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter are calling on Governor Kathy Hochul and Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Amanda Lefton to add the 36,000-acre Whitney Park property to the Adirondack Forest Preserve.

“We deeply appreciate DEC Commissioner Lefton’s commitment to the protection of New York’s open space resources. Whitney Park presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to preserve a vast and ecologically vital landscape in the heart of the Adirondacks. We urge Governor Hochul to lead the way through this complicated land transaction to a solution that brings Whitney Park into the Adirondack Forest Preserve. With decisive action, Governor Hochul can secure a landmark conservation success that will benefit generations of New Yorkers,” said Roger Downs, Conservation Director, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter.

Whitney Park is currently owned by a Trust set up by the Estate of John Hendrickson. Mr. Hendrickson, the husband of Mary Lou Whitney, died unexpectedly in 2024. Although Mr. Hendrickson had expressed concern about potential State management of the lands, we believe

that the late owner's concerns can be satisfactorily addressed through careful stewardship of the lands by DEC pursuant to the forever wild protections set forth in the Constitution.

"John Hendrickson and the entire Whitney family were good stewards of the Whitney lands. The Trustee for Mr. Hendrickson's estate stated earlier in 2025 that he would be open to talk to the State of New York to find out if the State can pay the asking price for the property. We urge Governor Hochul and her administration to pursue purchasing Whitney Park to add it to the Forest Preserve," said Claudia Braymer, Executive Director, Protect the Adirondacks.

The Trust is currently negotiating to sell these lands to a resort developer from Texas, Todd Industries. Todd Industries Chairman Shawn Todd has also had discussions with State officials about protecting more than 32,000 acres of Whitney Park. If the State steps in as a purchaser of Whitney Park, that 32,000 acres of land could be added to the State-owned Forest Preserve.

The protection of Whitney Park's natural resources and the opportunities for public recreation it affords are critical for the future of the Adirondack Park. In the late 1990s, then Governor George Pataki purchased 15,000 acres around Little Tupper Lake from Mary Lou Whitney. Adding Whitney Park to the Forest Preserve offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to expand the existing William C. Whitney Wilderness Area and would be a lasting legacy of Governor Hochul's administration.

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