



PRESS RELEASE  
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## **New Analysis Shows that Whitney Park is Unsuitable for Development**

### **The 36,000-acre tract in the heart of the Adirondack Park should be added to the “forever wild” Forest Preserve**

For more information, call:  
Claudia Braymer, Executive Director, Protect the Adirondacks: Cell 703.937.7163

Protect the Adirondacks recently commissioned a desktop analysis of the 36,000-acre Whitney Park’s natural resources data. The analysis shows that this remote tract faces severe constraints for largescale residential and golf course development. The data indicates that Whitney Park is dominated by sensitive natural features, including wetlands, streams, steep slopes, and poor soils. These features would make any intensive residential development exceedingly difficult and highly detrimental to the property’s ecological integrity. This analysis confirms that the Whitney Park tract presents numerous natural resources constraints to development. Future on-site investigations, such as wetlands assessments, habitat evaluations, and wildlife surveys, would further document the exceptional natural values of this land.

“We have known that this special, undeveloped tract of land in the heart of the Adirondacks deserves protection because of its connected forest canopy and its numerous lakes, ponds, streams and wetlands. Now we know more about the natural resources limitations that make this remote property unsuitable for development,” said Claudia Brayer, executive director of Protect the Adirondacks. “Nearly 95% of Whitney Park is either limited by wetlands, open water and steep slopes, or poor soils that cannot support development. This natural resources analysis makes clear that Whitney Park should not be developed and must be protected.”

Protect the Adirondack’s analysis shows that Whitney Park contains 6,339 acres of lakes and ponds, 4,772 acres of wetlands, 748 acres of streams (including 100-foot setback area), and that 22,079 acres have greater than 7% slopes, which constrain development projects. Those natural characteristics are significant impediments to development of Whitney Park.

In addition, soils characteristic across the entire property are unsuitable for building site development:

- 22,821 acres are classified by New York State as soils that are “Very Limited,” which indicates that the soil is unfavorable for development and cannot be overcome without significant modifications, special designs, and expensive installation and maintenance.
- 10,610 acres are classified as soils that are “Somewhat Limited,” which indicates soils that are moderately favorable for development but still require special planning, design or installation and maintenance can be problematic.

As a result of these natural resources considerations and limitations, the highest and best use of this property in the heart of the Adirondacks is as Forest Preserve where these fragile and sensitive lands will be protected in perpetuity. The fragility of Whitney Park’s natural resources is underscored by its classification as Resource Management – the most protective private land classification within the Adirondack Park. This land classification is due to the fragility and importance of protecting these sensitive lands. Any proposal to develop these lands would warrant rigorous review and would clearly merit an adjudicatory hearing before the Adirondack Park Agency.

Protect the Adirondacks continues to urge 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. Earlier this year, [we applauded Governor Hochul](#) for expressing interest in the State purchasing a vast majority of Whitney Park.

Whitney Park is currently owned and being sold by a Trust set up by the Estate of John Hendrickson. Mr. Hendrickson, the husband of Marylou Whitney, died unexpectedly in 2024. Although Mr. Hendrickson had expressed concern about potential State management of the lands, Protect the Adirondacks believes 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 New York State Constitution. Whitney Park has been eyed by generations of Adirondack conservationists and State officials because it is 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. For Whitney Park, the long-standing conservation priorities and goals of the State must outweigh the private interests of one individual.

### **Protect the Adirondacks**

Protect the Adirondacks is an IRS-approved non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and stewardship of the 6-million-acre Adirondack Park. Our mission is to protect the Adirondack Park’s wild character for current and future generations. PROTECT pursues this mission through a combination of advocacy, grassroots organizing, independent public oversight, research, water quality monitoring, education, and legal action. Protect the Adirondacks was formed in 2009 as the result of a merger between two long-standing environmental conservation

groups in the Adirondack Park, the Resident's Committee to Protect the Adirondacks (est. 1991) and the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks (est. 1901). Protect the Adirondacks is managed by a 21-member Board of Directors of Adirondack leaders with expertise in environmental law, local government, Adirondack environmental and cultural history, state agency management, and small business. Protect the Adirondacks maintains an office in a 100% energy efficient, solar-and wind-powered office in Johnsburg in the central Adirondacks. For more information see [www.protectadks.org](http://www.protectadks.org).

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