



Press release
For immediate release
July 3, 2007

Contact: Connie Prickett
(518) 576 - 2082 x162
cprickett@tnc.org

The Nature Conservancy's 161,000-acre purchase in the Adirondacks:
Status of Public Access

KEENE VALLEY, NY - On June 18, 2007, The Nature Conservancy announced that it purchased, with assistance from the Open Space Institute (OSI), 161,000 acres in the Adirondack Mountains of Northern New York. The property was once owned by Finch, Pruyn & Company, which also owned the paper mill in Glens Falls. After The Nature Conservancy purchased the property, many people have called the Conservancy's Keene Valley office about access to the lands, which lie primarily in the central lake and tourist area of the Adirondack Park.

At this time, the Conservancy is not opening any new lands for public access.

The bulk of the property, some 131,000 acres, is under lease for recreational purposes by hunting and fishing clubs, individuals, families and others. The Conservancy is honoring these leases as its staff, in conjunction with OSI, over the coming 12-18 months, conducts a thorough review of the forest resources acquired to evaluate their ecological, economic and recreational merits. During the planning process, there will be no new leases granted or additional public access.

"While we are not immediately opening any of the property to the public, we know many people are curious about the lands. We've pulled together a list of ways the public can see some of these spectacular lands, including places that provide legal access to some beautiful sections of Forest Preserve," said Michael Carr, Executive Director of the Conservancy's Adirondack Chapter.

"We hope the viewing opportunities will give the public a flavor for the Conservancy's monumental land purchase. There may be new opportunities in the future for public recreation, but we ask that the public respect the rights of the many leaseholders on the property," Carr said.

With no significant changes to the way the property has been managed in the past, the Finch woodlands staff has been retained by The Nature Conservancy to continue to manage the forests for sustainable timber harvest and oversee the recreational leases. There is a no-tolerance policy for trespass.

A scenic drive

Blue Ridge Road: One of the easiest ways get a feel for the property is by driving or bicycling west along the Blue Ridge Road off Exit 29 of I-87. For miles, the road is bordered, sometimes on both sides, by the Conservancy's newly acquired lands. "Many consider the Blue Ridge Road

one of the most scenic roads in the park," said Mercedith Prime, Chair of the Conservancy's Adirondack Chapter. "West of the exit, you can see from the road a beautiful stretch of the Branch River rushing toward the Schroon River."

Public access rights-of-way

Hoffman Notch Wilderness: The access trail to the 36,000-acre Hoffman Notch Wilderness, the first mile of which crosses a section of the former Finch lands, is about five miles west from Exit 29. That initial section of the trail is described in the *Discover the Central Adirondacks* guidebook as follows: "[It] leads into one of the loveliest mountain passes, through mature forests, besides streams and wetlands..."

High Peaks Wilderness: Other trails across the Conservancy's land, as well as OSI's land (which is open to the public), provide southern access to the High Peaks Wilderness, New York's largest wilderness area. From the Upper Works, an abandoned mining operation off the Blue Ridge Road near Newcomb, the trails to Duck Hole and the Flowed Lands traverse Conservancy and OSI lands. The Flowed Lands serve as a popular base camp for hikers ascending Mt. Marcy and other high peaks.

Blue Mountain: Nearly 4 miles of the Finch property border both sides the scenic travel corridor between Long Lake and Blue Mountain Lake on Routes 28N and 30. There is a public access point at Blue Mountain, a popular hiking destination with a fire tower offering panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. The trail snakes its way up the western side of the mountain, crossing a 16,000-acre block of the newly acquired lands. The summit of Blue Mountain, now part of the Blue Mountain Wild Forest, was an important hub for surveyor Verplanck Colvin, famous for his zeal for the Adirondacks, as he mapped and measured the terrain in the 1870s. (Please note that the northern access road to the summit, a remnant of Colvin's survey days, is not open to the public.)

Northville-Placid Trail: A segment of the Adirondacks' longest hiking trail, the Northville-Placid Trail, passes through the same Blue Mountain Tract as the summit trail, but is accessed from Routes 28 and 30 across from Lake Durant. This public right-of-way connects two pieces of state wild forest land and leads to Tirell Pond, where there are a number of public campsites.

Adjacent state lands

Snowy Mountain: The trailhead for Snowy Mountain, the highest peak in Hamilton County, is off Route 30 south of the Village of Indian Lake. The northern view from the newly refurbished fire tower opens to a ridge line and vast expanse of forests that fall within the 14,500-acre parcel purchased from Finch, Pruyn.

Blue Ledges: A marked, 2.3-mile trail to the base of the Blue Ledges descends from the North Woods Club Road, west of 28N in Minerva. This steep wall is well known to paddlers and rafters traveling through the Hudson River Gorge.

Hudson River Gorge: The best way to see the entire Hudson River Gorge, a significant portion of which is flanked by some of the land purchased by the Conservancy, is to go on a day-long

tour with a whitewater rafting company. (A list of local outfitters can be found online at <http://adirondacks.com/rafting.html>.)

Mount Adams: The Open Space Institute acquired Mount Adams in 2003. OSI is in the process of conveying nearly 7,000 acres surrounding Mt. Adams to the state for addition to the Forest Preserve but will retain a small parcel at the top of Mt. Adams so that the fire tower on the summit can be restored and opened for public use. This land is currently open to the public and accessed via the Upper Works. Views to the southeast look out onto a 22,800-acre block of the Conservancy's property and to the southwest, a 20,000-acre tract.

Information on current trail conditions and other details can be found in a number of hiking guidebooks or obtained from local outfitters. All trails open to the public are properly marked with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation trail markers. Trails and roads not so marked are not open to the public.

###

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a leading international, non-profit organization working to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. With today's announcement, the Conservancy has protected 556,572 acres in the Adirondacks since 1971. More than 300,000 of those acres are privately owned and managed sustainably as working forests. For more information about the 161,000-acre purchase in the Adirondacks, visit www.nature.org/adirondacks/finch.