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September 18, 2013

# As Adirondack Reserve Grows, Asking How Wild It Should Stay

By [LISA W. FODERARO](#)

MINERVA, N.Y. — A 250-foot waterfall, one of the tallest in the Northeast, tumbles over giant slabs of marble. A chain of 13 crystalline lakes and ponds teems with bass and lake trout. A 10-mile stretch of the Hudson River gorge winds through dense stands of hemlock, white pine and red maple.

These natural features make up the more than 21,000 acres of the Adirondacks that were recently purchased by New York State from the [Nature Conservancy](#), a nonprofit organization. By October, the land will be entirely opened to the public for the first time in more than a century. It is now part of the forest preserve, allowing visitors to experience a resplendent landscape in the heart of the six-million-acre state park.

But while environmentalists, town officials, paddlers, boaters, hikers and snowmobilers have embraced the pristine wilderness, they now find themselves in a tug of war over how the land should be enjoyed. Should it be reserved for quiet recreation like canoeing, rafting and hiking? Or should it also be open to cars, motorboats and Jet Skis? It is a debate that has long torn at the Adirondacks, and it revolves around an invisible entity: noise.

“It is a spectacular resource,” said Joseph Martens, commissioner of the state’s [Department of Environmental Conservation](#), of the new forest preserve lands. “The challenge is to find a way to make that resource accessible to a wide variety of people — meaning the elderly, disabled and families — but that doesn’t damage the resource itself. It’s a balancing act. You have to respect both objectives.”

The question comes down to whether the [Adirondack Park Agency](#), which governs land use in the park, should designate the land as “wilderness,” which prohibits the use of motorized vehicles, or “wild forest,” which allows them.

The Nature Conservancy has remained neutral, but several other environmental groups, including [Protect the Adirondacks](#), the [Adirondack Council](#) and the [Adirondack Mountain Club](#), are pressing for a wilderness designation. The land was part of a much larger acquisition in 2007 by the Nature Conservancy, which purchased 161,000 acres from a local timber company. The \$110 million deal, which included 90 mountain peaks and 300 lakes and ponds, was hailed as a milestone in the history of Adirondack Park, a remote patchwork of private and public lands in upstate New York.

After meeting with local officials and residents, the Nature Conservancy [decided to preserve 92,000 acres as active timberland](#) through sustainable logging, a move that used the state purchase of development rights to save both jobs and the land’s open character.

The group also won a commitment from the state to buy 65,000 acres in installments over five years and add them to the forest preserve, which is off-limits to development and logging.

This first section to be bought by the state is broken up into a few parcels. The debate centers mainly on the largest of them, a 17,320-acre area known as the Essex chain of lakes tract, a network of lakes and ponds in Essex County, as well as a 925-acre stretch of land along the Indian River.

There are several different proposals for those two parcels, allowing varying levels of motorized access. (Another 2,780 acres that includes the waterfall, called OK Slip Falls, would be classified as wilderness under each alternative.)

In a study of the 200 largest lakes in the Adirondacks, Protect the Adirondacks determined that only a dozen were off-limits to motorboats and float planes. Half of those were difficult to access, requiring long hikes through woods. The group is lobbying for Alternative 1a., which it calls “wilderness with access,” allowing visitors of all abilities to park their cars within a short hike of the Essex lakes chain.

“We have great mountains that are wilderness, and incredible stretches of forest that are wild,” said Peter Bauer, executive director of Protect the Adirondacks. “But we don’t have that many big lakes where people can get a wilderness experience that is timeless.”

But for other residents and elected officials whose towns encompass the recently acquired land, motorized access is seen as critical to revitalizing the Adirondacks’ beleaguered economy. “Making those connections is essential to building economic opportunity,” said Sue Montgomery Corey, supervisor of the town of Minerva, which includes part of both the Essex chain of lakes tract and Indian River tract.

“We would like to be able to snowmobile, ride or hike to the other communities,” Ms. Corey said at a public hearing held by the Adirondack Park Agency. “Hiking in three miles carrying a canoe from an access point will not work for most seniors or most young families.”

The agency received nearly 4,000 written comments that leaned four to one in favor of “wilderness” protection, while spoken testimony tilted slightly in favor of “wild forest.” Later this year, the agency will submit a recommendation to Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo. In the meantime, the state’s Department of Environmental Conservation has weighed in with its own preference: Alternative 4b., “wild forest” but with a “special management area” that would provide flexibility to limit motor use.

In a phone interview, Mr. Martens said that the special management area could, for instance, give the state leeway to restrict motorboats to those with quiet electric engines and allow more motorized access during the less busy “shoulder seasons” of spring and fall.

For the Nature Conservancy, however, the significance of adding tens of thousands of acres to the forest preserve transcends the battle over noise versus silence, paddles versus propellers.

“It’s a point that gets forgotten in the classification debate,” said Michelle Brown, a conservation scientist for the group’s Adirondack chapter. “This land will never be developed or harvested for timber. It’s forever wild.”



**ALBANY** September 24, 2012, 3:00 pm

## The Reporter Had a Life Jacket, but the Governor Knew How to Ply a Paddle

By [THOMAS KAPLAN](#)



Nathaniel Brooks for The New York Times Thomas Kaplan, a Times reporter, at the front of a canoe on Sunday as Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo assessed his paddling skills.

NORTH HUDSON, N.Y. — Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo positioned himself in the stern of a canoe on Sunday while I clung to dry land a few feet away, befuddled by the straps on my life jacket. “We’re going to make an outdoorsman out of him,” Mr. Cuomo declared.

I had been headed back to the lodge that served as Cuomo base camp when the governor approached. It was Hour 3 of Mr. Cuomo’s field trip with members of his cabinet and the news media to the Boreas Ponds. I had already been on a walk — calling it a hike would be an exaggeration — with Joseph J. Lhota, the chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and the governor had been fishing, on an expedition where reporters’ access was limited. (“Don’t call it the ship of state,” he exhorted about his vessel.) But now the governor was eager to get back to the water.

“Do you canoe?” he asked me.

I do not. But, taking a lesson from the 21 months I have spent observing Mr. Cuomo field questions, I answered a slightly different question. “I’ve kayaked,” I said. (It quickly became apparent that, if I did not accept the governor’s invitation, [a reporter from The Wall Street Journal](#) was ready to jump into the gubernatorial canoe.)

“Come on, Kaplan,” Mr. Cuomo instructed.

I got in the boat.

“This is what you do with an uncooperative reporter: a one-way canoe trip,” Mr. Cuomo announced to the journalists on land. (Perhaps his staff members knew something when they asked the reporters going on the trip to sign waivers of liability in case of accidents involving canoes — as well as cars, vans, motorboats, kayaks, rafts and bicycles.)

Mr. Cuomo, clad in a “Team Cuomo” Windbreaker (but not a life jacket — a choice the governor defended at a news conference Monday), sat in the back. He suggested that my primary responsibility was to ensure I did not fall out of the boat. He did not seek to correct my poor paddling form — which, in my own defense, was affected by my attempt to hold on to my tape recorder.

We quickly encountered other canoeists, including Mr. Cuomo’s environmental conservation commissioner, Joseph Martens, who yelled out to the governor: “Who’s the guy at the front of the boat? He looks like he’s undercover.”

“State Police,” Mr. Cuomo joked. “I never go anywhere without them.”

As we paddled — or, more accurately, Mr. Cuomo paddled, and I attempted a movement that approximated paddling — the governor said he was very pleased with [his outing](#) as a means to talk up tourism, to call attention to the state’s purchase of [69,000 acres](#) for conservation in the Adirondacks, and to bond with his aides and commissioners.

A flotilla materialized nearby, some boats piloted by unlikely pairings of Cuomo aides and political reporters. (Mr. Cuomo’s spokesman, Josh Vlasto, [was described as an “unruly” canoe-mate by his canoeing companion, Reid Pillifant, of Capital New York](#), who said Mr. Vlasto “splashed at least one reporter and repeatedly shook our canoe as if to capsize it.”)

During our 15-minute voyage, Mr. Cuomo demonstrated his political chops by canoeing while simultaneously taking questions from reporters. As he paddled, he offered an assessment of the scenery (“magnificent”), rebuffed a request from a pair of reporters to race (“No, we’re just here

observing the beauty”) and joked about his history with boating (“I’m from a big canoeing family in Queens.”)

Soon, it started to rain. “When the sun goes down, and it starts to rain, it gets cold fast,” Mr. Cuomo warned me. It took a few minutes to reach the shore, and the governor continued to talk about the weather. “Gotta love it,” he said. “Nothing like cold rain in the Adirondacks.”

# To Sell Agenda, Cuomo Puts Team on the Road



Nathaniel Brooks for The New York Times

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, left, with staff members and reporters in the Adirondacks on Sunday. The trip was intended in part to promote the area as a tourist destination.

By THOMAS KAPLAN

Published: September 23, 2012

NORTH HUDSON, N.Y. — Gov. [Andrew M. Cuomo](#), dressed in khaki cargo pants and a navy windbreaker that said “Team Cuomo/We Deliver,” paddled expertly from the rear seat of a canoe on Sunday afternoon. He had just gone fishing, catching an eight-inch brook trout, and now it was time for another adventure.

From in the middle of one of the Boreas Ponds, the High Peaks of the Adirondacks offered an impressive backdrop. On shore, some of his aides and state commissioners, who had arrived with him by bus from the capital, were hiking amid the fall foliage; others piloted their own canoes nearby.

Mr. Cuomo, who invited a reporter to canoe with him, shouted to his aides as they passed — complimenting one for his paddling stroke, teasing another about fishing skills — and he marveled at the scenery.

“You couldn’t really paint this picture,” he said. “Mother Nature has a better brush.”

The excursion was the most recent example of a theme that has emerged over the first 21 months of the Cuomo administration: Mr. Cuomo, who was housing secretary under President Bill Clinton, has adapted practices he learned from the White House, periodically dispatching top officials around the state for activities he hopes will capture the attention of the news media and call attention to his administration’s priorities.

The event on Sunday was intended to promote the Adirondacks as a tourist destination and highlight the [69,000 acres the state is acquiring](#) for preservation. Previous activities have included storm cleanup in communities damaged by [Tropical Storm Irene](#) and volunteer work at parks.

Cabinet officials are often little known outside Albany, but Mr. Cuomo, a Democrat, said he had chosen to deploy them for nontraditional activities because he saw that as a way to encourage the state’s sprawling government to work together.

“The best government is a government that works on a horizontal axis, and that approaches a problem as one,” the governor said, adding, “To spend four, five hours together in a bus today — it sounds horrendous. It actually is horrendous. But on another level, you chat with people, you get to see people in a different vein.”

In one indication of how seriously he takes the effort, in Albany, Mr. Cuomo has created a director of cabinet affairs position, which he said he drew from his Clinton days. “That would be the person who would call you up and say, ‘We need you to go to Omaha tonight,’ ” Mr. Cuomo explained at a cabinet meeting earlier this year. To laughter, he said, “I loved that person.”

Many of the cabinet members’ trips around the state involve giving speeches, explaining and promoting elements of the Cuomo agenda — his budget proposal, for example. Mr. Cuomo’s administration includes many onetime elected officials, including former mayors of Rochester, Schenectady and Syracuse, whose geographic expertise make them ideal emissaries. The visits tend to attract positive local news coverage, especially in smaller communities upstate.



“In New York City, you walk around, you’re not a big shot,” Cesar A. Perales, New York’s secretary of state, said. “But you walk around in a place like Waterloo in Seneca County and people are so glad to see you.”

Mr. Perales’s tasks have included serving Thanksgiving dinner at a senior center in Troy and wading through flooded food pantries in Westchester County. “I knew not to wear a good suit,” he said.

For the positive publicity, the biggest cost to the Cuomo administration is time. “I’m not being Pollyannaish — all of this is more work, and it is on top of what we need to do as commissioners for our agencies,” said Rose H. Harvey, the parks commissioner. But she credited Mr. Cuomo’s approach with “setting the example that government is more than process and bureaucracies and forms.”

Ms. Harvey recalled being assigned to pulling up a linoleum floor in a flooded farmhouse in Schoharie County. Robert L. Megna, the budget director, described shoveling mud out of a flooded basement in the Catskills after Tropical Storm Irene and, last spring, sweeping a parking lot at a state park in the capital region.

“I’m a pretty good sweeper, I’ve found,” Mr. Megna said. He noted that his task was unusual: “Usually, I’m sitting in front of a computer, not in a guy’s basement helping carry mud up the steps, or sweeping the street, or collecting garbage.”

For the trip to North Hudson, reporters were asked to sign waivers that covered hazards not present at the Capitol — like snakes, rockslides and the possibility of hypothermia.

Mr. Cuomo’s aides and cabinet members had breakfast at the Executive Mansion before getting on a bus borrowed from the State University at Albany. Then they transferred to vans and were brought to a lodge overlooking the Boreas Ponds, one of the jewels of the new land acquisition.

Cabinet members were offered the chance to go on hikes of varying lengths, or to take canoes — an option that was quite popular with administration officials, until a cold drizzle forced Mr. Cuomo and others to paddle quickly to shore.

At one point, four Cuomo aides played horseshoes, while Joseph J. Lhota, whom the governor picked to be chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, helped guide a group of visitors toward a dam in the Boreas River. Mr. Lhota carried a satellite telephone

in case of a transit emergency, and as he walked down a narrow dirt road surrounded by a thicket of trees, he joked, "I'm looking for where to put the subway."



August 7, 2012, 9:43 am [1 Comment](#)

## Swath of the Adirondacks Gains Protection

By [MIREYA NAVARRO](#)



The Nature ConservancyThe Essex Chain of lakes, which is part of the purchase, is expected to attract anglers, boaters and campers once it becomes public land.



As anticipated, the state of New York [has bought](#) a huge chunk of the Adirondacks and plans to open the land to the public for recreational use.

The state has acquired 69,000 acres for \$49.8 million, a sum to be paid out over five years under a contract with the [Nature Conservancy](#). The stage was set for the deal in [2007](#), when the Nature Conservancy bought 161,000 acres from Finch Paper to keep development away from land that state officials say includes important recreational and environmental assets.

The newly purchased property includes 180 miles of rivers and streams; 175 lakes and ponds; 465 miles of undeveloped shoreline along rivers, streams, lakes and ponds; six mountains taller than 2,000 feet, and countless smaller hills.

Most of the land lies within the central lake and tourist region of the [Adirondack Park](#) in the towns of Newcomb, Indian Lake, North Hudson and Minerva.

“Today’s agreement will make the Adirondack Park one of the most sought-after destinations for paddlers, hikers, hunters, sportspeople and snowmobilers,” Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo said in a statement [announcing](#) the sales agreement with the Nature Conservancy. “Opening these lands to public use and enjoyment for the first time in 150 years will provide extraordinary new outdoor recreational opportunities, increase the number of visitors to the North Country and generate additional tourism revenue,” he said.

The state must now classify the lands and develop recreational plans to allow public access while protecting natural resources, officials said. Public hearings on land uses will be held before final approval.

August 6, 2012

# A Governor's Gift to Nature

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has joined the honor role of governors and conservation groups that have stepped forward at critical moments to protect large parts of the Adirondacks from commercial development. On Sunday, [Mr. Cuomo announced that the State of New York had bought 69,000 acres](#) of timberland from the Nature Conservancy, including stretches of the upper Hudson River watershed. The purchase is the [largest single addition in more than a century](#) to the state's "forever wild" forest preserve and will be open to hunting, fishing and recreational use but not to homebuilding and logging.

The \$49.8 million deal caps a series of transactions stretching back to the 1990s that have protected hundreds of thousands of acres made vulnerable to residential development when timber companies decided to sell their land or move their operations elsewhere.

In 2005, for instance, Gov. George Pataki helped broker a deal under which the state purchased conservation easements (development rights it never intended to use) on more than 100,000 acres belonging to a big timber company called Domtar. In 2007, when another timber company, Finch, Pruyn, decided to sell, [the Nature Conservancy bought 161,000 acres outright](#). The state purchased development rights to 90,000 of those acres in 2010. The latest acquisition guarantees protection for the remainder.

Mr. Cuomo deserves credit for this deal. But his job in the Adirondacks is far from over. The rules and regulations of the Adirondacks Parks Agency, which essentially acts as the zoning board for the park, badly need updating, and he needs to find replacements for five of the agency commissioners whose terms are expiring.

The trick in the Adirondacks has always been to balance the economic needs of local communities with the obligation to preserve one of America's great

natural landscapes for present and future generations. As previous governors have learned, this tension never goes away.

The New York Times

## Green

A Blog About Energy and the Environment

DECEMBER 30, 2010, 5:15 PM

### New York State Buys Conservation Rights for 89,000 Acres of Forest

By *JUSTIN GILLIS*



Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times  
In 2007, the Nature Conservancy bought 161,000 acres of forest in the Adirondacks from the Finch, Pruyn paper company for \$110 million.

The state of New York paid \$30 million on Friday to secure extensive conservation rights on 89,000 acres of forest in the Adirondacks, another big step toward protecting lands once owned by the Finch paper company.

In exchange for the payment, the state got a legal document known as a conservation easement from the Nature Conservancy, the environmental group that in the past several years brokered a complex deal to save a huge bloc of Finch lands from development.

The latest transaction will result in improved public access to thousands of acres of forest, the Nature Conservancy said. It includes provisions for a better network of snowmobile trails in the region, important to the winter tourist economies of several small towns. The plan, approved by 27 towns on or near the former Finch lands, relieves some villages of having to make annual lease payments for snowmobile trails.

“It’s a very exciting day for us, and I think a really strategic investment by the state of New York in the Adirondack economy, and really, the tourism

economy of the state,” said Michael T. Carr, executive director of the Adirondack chapter of the Nature Conservancy.

In coordination with the state, the Nature Conservancy paid \$110 million in 2007 to buy 161,000 acres of forest from the paper manufacturer Finch, Pruyn, with the intention of preventing the property from being carved up into lots and sold off for development.

The environmental group sold 92,000 acres to a Danish pension fund, with the understanding that selective logging, under strict environmental standards, would be allowed in some areas. The Nature Conservancy retained a conservation easement on 89,000 of those acres, specifying protection of various sorts, and it is these rights that it has now sold to the state.

“This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the state, the Nature Conservancy and local governments to work together to achieve a remarkable combination of economic and environmental benefits for the region and the state,” Stuart F. Gruskin, executive deputy of New York’s Department of Environmental Conservation, said in a statement. “The conservation easement acquired today is a terrific investment from any perspective — it supports sustainable forestry and economic development in the North Country, protects critically important land, and creates new eco-tourism and recreational opportunities.”

Of the original purchase of 161,000 acres, the Nature Conservancy retains about 65,000 acres of the most environmentally sensitive lands, and New York state is expected to buy that property in stages over the coming years, as funds permit, making it state forest land.

Mr. Carr said the conservation easement contains an innovative provision meant to allow biologists of the future greater flexibility in coping with climate change. With species expected to migrate north and to migrate higher up mountain slopes in a warming world, the conservation easement requires biological monitoring and a re-examination of management plans for the property, allowing for course corrections to be made if plants or animals require greater protection.



# 92,000 Acres Sold in Adirondacks, With Protection Pledge

By MIREYA NAVARRO

The Nature Conservancy has sold 92,000 acres of forest in the Adirondacks to a Danish pension fund as part of a long-term strategy to protect the land from development.

The pension fund, ATP, paid \$32.8 million for the acreage. The fund will benefit from tax credits related to a planned New York State conservation easement on the land that prohibits development but allows recreation and logging under strict sustainable forestry standards. RMK Timberland Group will manage the land for the pension fund.

Officials at the conservancy, an international nonprofit environmental group, said the transaction struck a balance between protection of wild lands and the region's economic interests. Not only will it maintain environmentally responsible logging operations, they said, but it will create the opportunity for moneymaking recreational uses in areas that have been closed to the public.

"This is an extraordinary investment in the Adirondack economy by a world leader pen-



Logging will continue to supply a paper mill in Glens Falls.

sion fund, and an affirmation of the viability of green investment in timber," said Michael T. Carr, executive director of the Adirondack chapter of the Nature Conservancy.

The land is part of 161,000 acres in the Adirondacks, including mountain peaks, lakes, ponds, rivers, streams and a commercial forest, that the Nature Conser-

vancy bought in 2007 from the Finch Paper company for \$110 million to prevent it from being subdivided and developed by builders of houses and resorts.

As part of the 2007 deal, the conservancy agreed to allow logging to continue to supply wood to the Finch Paper mill in Glens Falls, N.Y., a fixture in the region since the 1800s that employs

about 800 people.

The logging operations, which Mr. Carr described as "selective cutting" of trees on less than 10 percent of the land, are considered sustainable — meaning they would minimize harm to water quality and the wildlife habitat, among other requirements.

The state conservation easement will allow leases to fishing and hunting clubs to continue and will afford new access to areas where the public will be able to climb mountains, ski, ride snowmobiles and participate in other recreational activities. Building will be prohibited.

Officials from many of the 27 towns that benefit economically from recreation and forestry operations in the area welcomed the purchase.

"By continuing the working force aspect of this land, there will be an ongoing economic benefit," said George Canon, supervisor of Newcomb, a town of 500.

Of the 69,000 acres that remain in the Nature Conservancy's hands, 65,000 are intended for sale to the state. They would be incorporated into existing forest preserve in the Adirondack Park.

# State to Preserve Heart of Adirondacks

By ANTHONY DePALMA

State environmental officials agreed on Thursday to preserve a vast swath of wild acreage in the northern part of Adirondack Park, using a combination of outright purchase and conservation easements meant to protect both wilderness and jobs.

The deal was praised by environmental groups, which had urged the state to act quickly to gain control of most of the 161,000 acres that the Nature Conservancy acquired from a paper company last year. The land is considered crucial to protecting the heart of the Adirondacks.

Local leaders in the Adirondacks, who have been concerned about land conservation crowding out economic opportunity, will have several months to approve or reject the plan.

As laid out by state officials in meetings with local officials and environmental groups on Thursday, New York State will buy more than 57,000 acres that had been owned by Finch, Pruyn & Company since the Civil War and add it to the existing forest preserve, which is off limits to development or timber cutting but open for public recreation.

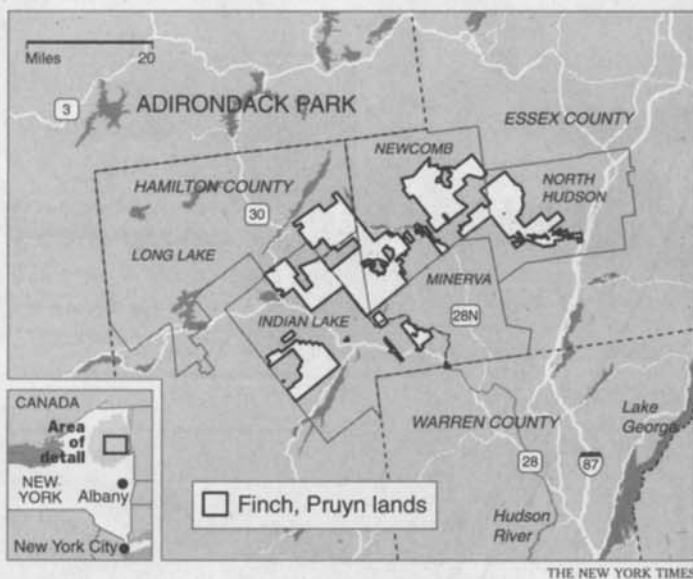
In addition, the state will buy conservation easements on 74,000 more acres of woodlands formerly owned by Finch, Pruyn (pronounced PRINE) and now controlled by the conservancy.

The easements prohibit development but allow recreation and logging under strict sustainable forestry standards. The conservancy expects to sell the land with the easements attached to private timber management companies, which would provide wood pulp to the paper mill in Glens Falls, formerly owned by Finch, Pruyn.

"We were hoping a little more land would go into the forest preserve, but it appears that they have protected the most environmentally sensitive areas, namely Boreas Ponds, the Essex chain of lakes and the Hudson River Gorge," said John Sheehan, a spokesman for the Adirondack Council, a private group.

Pete Grannis, commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, said he felt confident that the agreement would safeguard "all the truly precious pieces of property" that were available in the huge tract.

In all, the state is committing to protect about 130,000 of the 161,000 acres of Finch, Pruyn land



Thousands of acres are being set aside for public recreation.

that was acquired in a complex \$110 million deal last July by the Nature Conservancy with the help of the Open Space Institute.

Mr. Grannis said the state was having the property appraised to determine how much it should pay for it, probably using money from the state's Environmental Protection Fund. The Nature Conservancy has begun a \$35 million fund-raising drive, suggesting that it expects the state to provide \$70 million to \$80 mil-

land is entirely within the proposed forest preserve, would have a 10-year transition period during which they would gradually have to share their land with the public. At the end of 10 years, they would have to give up their leases, and their land would revert to public ownership and use.

Another controversial aspect of the plan would connect existing snowmobile trails to create a network linking North Hudson, Newcomb, Long Lake, Minerva and Indian Lake, the five towns where most of the 134,000 acres of the northern holdings are situated.

Mr. Grannis said that some environmental groups have already expressed opposition to the expanded trail network, but that the project would benefit the five rural towns.

"These trails and the network of support services and businesses that go along with having lots and lots of people visiting us have a huge potential for building and sustaining economic interest in the area," Mr. Grannis said.

The plan would also make available 1,000 acres for ball fields and other public recreational use, along with affordable housing.

In the southern part of the park, 27,000 acres of undeveloped land are scattered through 22 towns. The land was previously owned by Finch, Pruyn, but it is not included in the present proposal. Mr. Carr said he intended to continue negotiating with the towns to determine the best way to handle the additional tracts of land.

## Environmentalists praise a plan to save wilderness and jobs.

lion for its purchases and easements.

The conservancy would pay taxes on the land until the deal with the state was complete. The state would then pay the taxes.

One sticky issue in the transaction is what to do with hundreds of private hunting and fishing clubs that have leased their land — sometimes covering thousands of rural acres — from Finch, Pruyn for generations.

Eleven clubs that lease nearly 40,000 acres where the state intends to buy conservation easements would be permitted to continue leasing their properties, said Michael T. Carr, executive director of the Adirondack chapter of the Nature Conservancy.

Twenty other clubs, whose

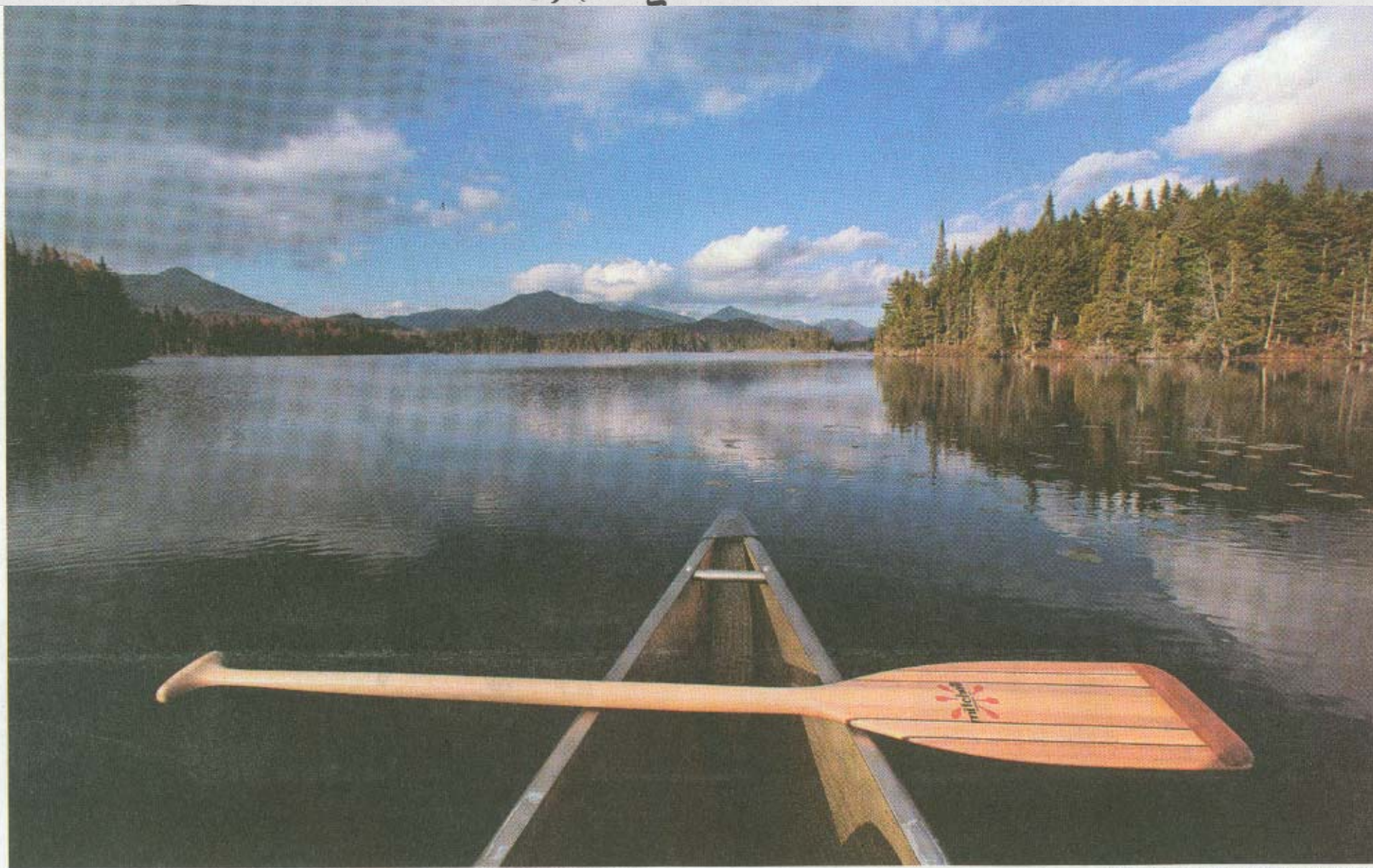
# The Metro Section

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B1

MONDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2007

The New York Times



PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRED R. CONRAD/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Boreas Pond is on land that the Nature Conservancy bought in the Adirondacks. The conservancy has agreed to supply wood for 20 years to a mill operated by Finch Paper.

## IRONY IN THE ADIRONDACKS

### Logging Is Part of a Plan to Preserve 161,000 Acres Purchased by a Major Conservation Group

By ANTHONY DePALMA

ADIRONDACK FOREST PRESERVE — Late in the year, when the campers are gone but the hunters have not yet arrived, timber trucks rule Boreas Road in the heart of the Adirondacks, barging through the morning mists with 70,000 pounds of fresh-cut fir and spruce strapped to their backs.

"That's one of ours," said Michael T. Carr, a 44-year-old bear of a man driving a green S.U.V. headed west on Boreas Road as one of the timber trucks barreled eastward.

That is a jarring statement coming from Mr. Carr, who is not a lumber man, or paper company executive, but executive director of the Adirondack chapter of the Nature Conservancy, one of the world's biggest environmental groups and, since June, the owner of 161,000 acres of highly prized Adirondack wild lands.

The conservancy entered the timber business when it purchased the land from Finch, Pruyn &



Company, which had held it since the Civil War. As part of that \$110 million deal, the conservancy agreed to continue logging to supply wood to the Finch Paper mill in Glens Falls, N.Y., for the next 20 years.

The Finch, Pruyn (pronounced Prine) lands, considered the last remaining large privately owned parcels in Adirondack Park, are an ecological marvel, containing 144 miles of river, 70 lakes and ponds, more than 80 mountains and a vast unbroken wilderness that only loggers and a few hunters have ever seen. The property also contains unmatched natural features like the blue ledges of the Hudson River Gorge, OK Slip Falls and Boreas Pond, with its stunning views of the Adirondack high peaks, which naturalists have dreamed of protecting for decades.

The Adirondack Explorer, a local newspaper, called the transaction "the deal of the young century." Peter Bauer, executive director of the Residents' Committee to Protect the Adirondacks, said the conservancy's handling of the land "will have a huge impact on what kind of park we have in the future."

Environmentalists cheered when the conser-

Continued on Page B8

# Logging Is Part of a Plan To Preserve 161,000 Acres In the Adirondacks

From Page B1

vancy swooped in to buy the Finch holdings, but a stark reality is now setting in. Not all 161,000 acres will be preserved as public wilderness. The terms of the pulp supply agreement are confidential, but foresters with knowledge of the deal said the conservancy could cut at least 65,000 tons of pulpwood trees a year for the mill — which is about 15 percent less than Finch cut in the Adirondacks last year. In addition, maples and other hardwoods could be cut under strict certified forest management guidelines.

The conservancy expects eventually to sell much of the land to the state. But to pay the enormous debt it incurred and the \$1 million in annual property taxes, the group will, in the near term, have to sell some portion of the property to private owners. While those buyers will not be allowed to build on the land, they will be able to keep out the public. Some small parcels near existing hamlets might even be sold for housing or commercial development, Mr. Carr said.

Mr. Carr expects his decisions about which parcels to sell and to whom will anger as many people as they excite.

"This is not a throw-the-gates-open-to-the-public kind of acquisition," Mr. Carr said. A team of scientists is now conducting a rapid ecological assessment of the land. Final decisions will not be announced until next fall, Mr. Carr said, and they will be driven not by concerns about recreational opportunities, or economic development, but "by science."

"We have no intention of making everyone happy," he said.

He also said that he realizes that people might be confused by a conservation



The land was purchased from Finch, Pruyn & Company for \$110 million.

Northeast. Dealing with close public scrutiny is another. The conservancy came under criticism after The Washington Post published a series of articles in 2003 that focused on the group's transactions, particularly a deal in Texas, where it drilled for natural gas on sensitive lands it had purchased.

But the most intense pressure is coming from local communities, environmental organizations and special interest groups, all clamoring to stake their interest in the property. Mr. Carr's list of petitioners is long: raft guides, float plane pilots, hunting clubs, loggers, hikers, school superintendents, buffalo ranchers and municipal golf course operators looking to expand. "Mike Carr has created a five-year nightmare for himself in trying to decide how to unload this property," said John Sheehan, spokesman for the Adirondack Council, a nonprofit environmental organization. The impact of those decisions on the Adirondacks and the people who live, work and play there, he said, will be immeasurable.

But overlapping regulations and competing interests abound within the Adirondack Park, the six million-acre Vermont-size slab of New York State that is a century-old experiment in conservation.

Created by the State Legislature in the late 19th century, the park is an unusual mix of public and private lands designed to preserve exquisite mountain wilderness and a rugged way of life. As state purchases added up, the conflict between conservation and economic development intensified, with some local officials arguing that enough property had already been protected.

Over the last decade, many American paper companies in the Northeast changed the way they operated. They sold off their forestlands, creating historic opportunities for governments or conservation groups to acquire vast tracts of woodlands. During the administration of Gov. George E. Pataki, more than 660,000 acres in the Adirondacks were protected.

The Finch, Pruyn lands, while not the largest parcels to change hands, are in some ways among the most important, said Michelle L. Brown, conservation scientist for the conservancy, because they filled in many missing pieces of one of the largest northern forests left in the world.

"What's most impressive to me is the connectivity," Ms. Brown said. "Everything's intact — the rivers, bogs, wetlands and forest all come together."

Seen from Tom Helms's 30-year-old Cessna 206 seaplane, the Finch, Pruyn lands are a mountain-size screen saver,



The Adirondack Park property includes 144 miles of rivers, 70 ponds and lakes and more than 80 mountains.



"People are not sure if we're going to cut trees or hug them," said Michael T. Carr of the Nature Conservancy.



Besides loggers and a few hunters, virtually no one has seen the land.

organization being in the timber business.

"Right now, people are not sure if we're going to cut trees or hug them," Mr. Carr said. He pointed out that in recent years wood supply deals have become accepted aspects of land preservation efforts, and the economics of this deal make logging — according to high standards of forest sustainability — absolutely essential.

Overcoming the perception that the conservancy has no business cutting trees is just one challenge Mr. Carr faces in managing one of the most complicated land deals ever attempted in the

## ONLINE: ACRES OF ADIRONDACKS

More photographs of a rarely seen area of the Adirondacks, and voices of people involved in the land sale: [nytimes.com/nyregion](http://nytimes.com/nyregion)

with lines of softwood green surrounding rainbow pixels of autumn-colored hardwoods. Although Finch has cut trees here for 150 years, almost no signs of commercial timber operations are visible from 1,500 feet in the air.

"It's the nicest piece of land in the Adirondacks that the state doesn't own," Mr. Helms said.

Leonard J. Cronin, Adirondack forest manager for Finch, said the company cut 3,533 acres of woodlands in the Adirondacks last year. Of that, 66 acres were clear-cut.

In other Adirondack land deals, the

state has purchased easements restricting new construction on timberland. State officials said they are studying the Finch lands now for possible purchases, although some of the Adirondack towns are expected to resist because state-owned land is removed from property tax rolls and they feel the state already owns too much of the Adirondacks. Finch holdings are spread across 31 towns, and money from the state's Environmental Protection Fund can be used for land acquisitions if local communities do not object.

Existing leases with private hunting clubs that cover 130,000 acres of the 161,000 in the tract are another big issue. One recent morning, Mr. Carr was out surveying the lands when he ran into David Hubert of Queensbury, a member of the Gooley Club, one of the oldest sportsmen's groups in the Adirondacks. Mr. Hubert, 67, said he was worried about the future of the 16,000 acres the

club has leased for the last 50 years.

"Obviously, we'd like to see it put to use in the same fashion as it is now," Mr. Hubert said. He had just come back from hunting woodcock with his Brittany spaniel. "I'd hate to see it become non-game-producing state land."

Mr. Carr has spent months listening to leaseholders and community leaders. Both the Adirondack Council and the Adirondack Mountain Club have already made their desires known: They want the state to buy about half of the 161,000 acres for forest preserve, with most of the rest sold with conservation easements to private buyers.

And those groups agree that woodland crews should continue cutting trees for the conservancy. Mr. Carr said he hopes that shows there no longer needs to be a choice between cutting and conservation.

"At this scale, and with this much land," he said, "there's room for both."

## Corrections: For the Record

An article yesterday about the future of the 161,000 acres of woodlands in the Adirondack Park of New York that were recently bought by the Nature Conservancy misstated the property tax status of parkland that the state buys from private parties for preservation. It remains subject to local property taxes; it is not removed from the rolls.

# The New York Times

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## A Deal Worth Cheering

The steady march of major timber companies to new locations in the southern United States and overseas has exposed millions of acres to development, ratcheting up the already fierce pressures on the nation's dwindling supply of open space. With most federal open-space programs cut to the bone, the task of preserving these lands for future generations has fallen increasingly to private groups.

Given their relatively limited resources, any victory they achieve is cause for cheers. And cheer we do this week for the Nature Conservancy's purchase — with financing from the Open Space Institute and other groups — from a paper company of 161,000 acres of hardwood forests, mountain peaks, lakes and streams in New York's Adirondacks.

The deal secures for posterity the last big piece of privately owned timberland in the Adirondacks. It caps a series of transactions stretching back to the early 1990s that altogether have protected hundreds of thousands of Adirondack backcountry acres that might otherwise have been lost to second homes. The transaction is also significant because it

will allow selective logging to continue for 20 years, helping to preserve jobs at a local paper mill.

To cover the \$110 million price, the Nature Conservancy is going to need more than just cheering. Some of the money could come from private fundraising, and some by selling part of the timberland back to a company that would harvest the land sustainably but keep out residential development.

We also urge Gov. Eliot Spitzer to step forward, as his predecessor George Pataki did on similar occasions in the past. The state could buy some of the land outright, adding it to the New York State Forest Preserve. It could also buy the development rights from the Nature Conservancy through a conservation easement — rights, of course, it would never use.

From Maine to California, groups like the Nature Conservancy, the Conservation Fund and the Trust for Public Land are engaged in a continuing, and financially creative, battle to keep the developers at bay and keep large ecosystems intact. This week's deal gives them, and all of us, heart.

"All the News  
That's Fit to Print"

# The New York Times

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## INSIDE

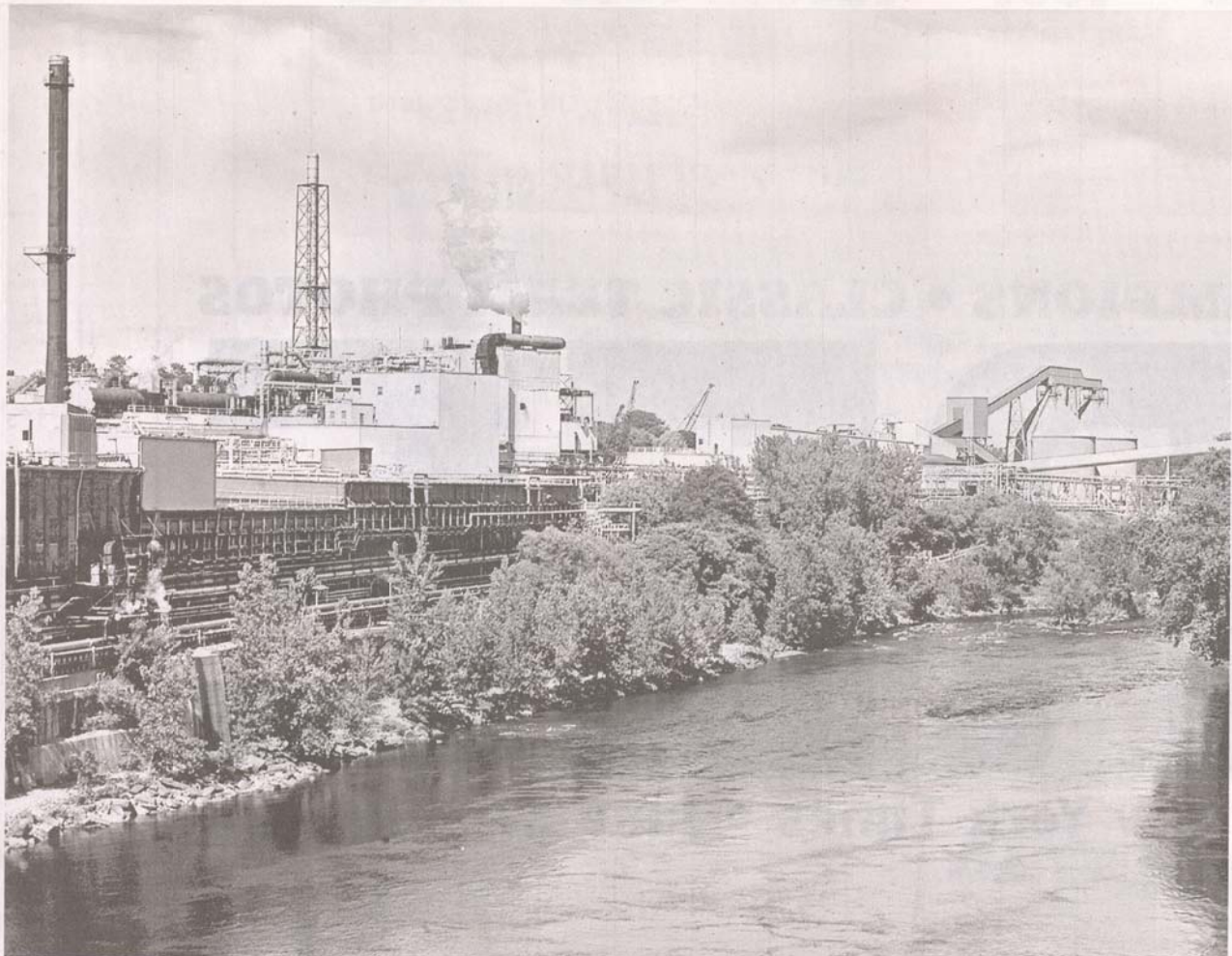


Finch, Pryn & Company

### Protecting 161,000 Acres

The Nature Conservancy has bought the last big piece of privately owned timberland in the Adirondacks. Page B5.

THE NEW YORK TIMES **METRO** TUESDAY, JUNE 19, 2007



Stewart Cairns for The New York Times

Selective cutting of timber will be allowed to continue for 20 years to provide trees and preserve jobs at the Finch Paper mill in Glens Falls, N.Y.

# Conservancy Buys Large Area of Adirondack Wilderness

By ANTHONY DePALMA

The last big piece of privately owned timberland in the Adirondacks — a craggy 161,000-acre wilderness of hardwood forests, 80 mountain peaks, 70 crystal-clear lakes and ponds, undammed rivers, white water gorges and secluded bogs — has been sold for \$110 million to the Nature Conservancy, in a move intended to protect the land from future development.

The transaction — one of the largest ever in the Adirondack Park — is also significant because it includes a working forest agreement to allow selective cutting of timber to continue for 20 years, providing trees to the Finch Paper mill in Glens Falls and helping preserve 850 jobs at the mill, which has been a fixture in the region for more than a century.

The land sale was part of a complicated business transaction in which an investment group led by Atlas Holdings and Blue Wolf Capital Management, and operating under the name Finch Paper Holdings, acquired the privately held company Finch, Pruyn & Company, a local business that traced its roots back to 1865.

Following the model set by other paper companies in recent years that have sold off their vast holdings of timberland, the new owners decided to sell Finch, Pruyn's 161,000 acres, offering the land to the Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit conservation group.

Henry Tepper, the New York State director of the conservancy, said that because of the extraordinary nature of the land that is being protected, the organization had to act quickly to make sure the property was not broken up or sold piecemeal to a developer.

Finch Paper Holding first raised the option of selling the land to the conservancy just six weeks ago. Deals of this size and importance often take an entire year.

"Our major accomplishment here, in moving as quickly as we have moved, is that we have kept this extraordinary holding intact," Mr. Tepper said. "There was a very real chance that the mill and forest could have been broken up and sold in separate sales, which would have meant that we would lose a 100-year tradition of sustainable forestry on this land."

The Adirondack Park, created in

1892, is the largest publicly protected area in the contiguous United States, greater in size than Yellowstone, Everglades, Glacier and Grand Canyon National Parks combined.

The park encompasses approximately six million acres, nearly half of which are publicly owned, and half composed of private farms, timberlands, businesses, homes and camps.

The 161,000 acres purchased by the conservancy is situated between Long Lake and Keene Valley in the heart of the Adirondacks. Besides preserving it as a working forest, the Nature Conservancy said it intended to renew about 140 annual recreational leases with hunting clubs and other organizations that have a long tradition of using the land.

The conservancy will also continue to pay \$1.1 million in local property taxes to the 31 towns in 6 counties

## A move to protect 161,000 acres from development.

where the land is situated.

The final disposition of the land has not yet been determined, Mr. Tepper said. One option is to hold the land until the state can purchase it. The conservancy could also sell some of the property to a timber investment management organization that would oversee the sustainable harvest of the trees but keep out residential development.

Eventually some parts of the property being sold — which has been closed to the public since Ulysses S.

Grant was president — could be opened for limited public recreational use, though that has not yet been decided.

For now, access is generally limited to scenic views along Blue Ridge Road and other thoroughfares that border Finch lands.

In the recent past, some paper companies in New York have sold only the development rights to their Adirondack lands while retaining ownership.

Adam Blumenthal, managing general partner of Blue Wolf Capital Management, one of the partners in the new holding company, said that selling the property outright was considered the better option because doing so brought an infusion of capital that "provided a strong financial basis for the mill to go forward while also assuring fiber supply for the long term."

John F. Sheehan, of the Adirondack Council, an environmental group, said the 161,000 acres — which includes what he called some of the wildest country in the Adirondack Park — is "crucial to the park's biological diversity and completeness in terms of ecological protection."

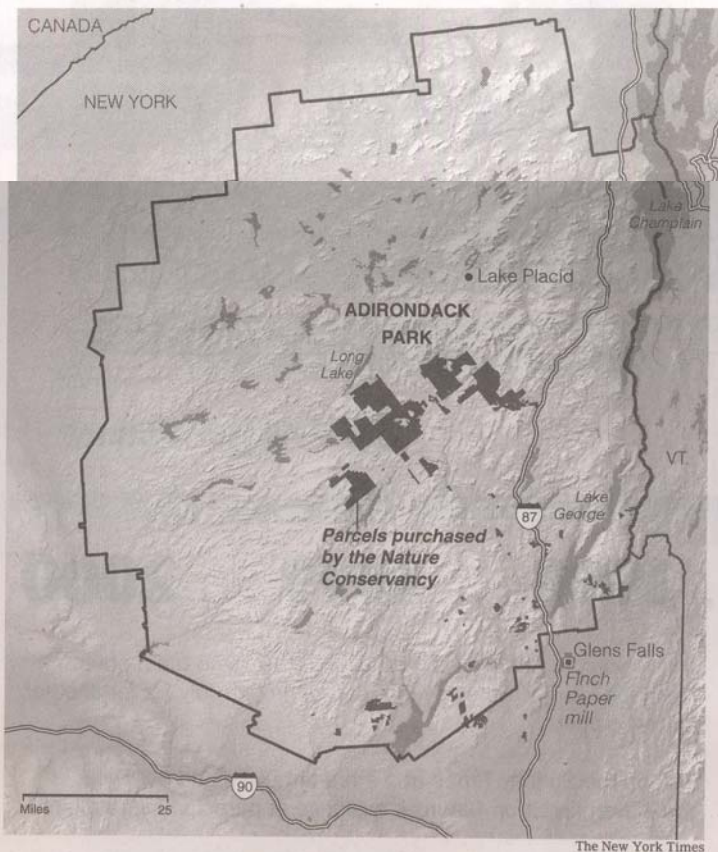
Mr. Sheehan said that continuing timber operations that provide jobs and have been sustainably managed is considered compatible with the Adirondack Park's preservation goals.

According to biological inventories prepared by the conservancy, the Finch property is home to 95 different animal species, including 37 that are considered rare in New York. The land also supports 91 species of birds. The Hudson River Gorge, which is sometimes called New York's Grand Canyon, flows through the property.

With this acquisition, the Nature Conservancy has protected 556,572 acres in the Adirondacks since 1971.

The group financed the \$110 million Finch purchase with loans from the Open Space Conservancy, the land acquisition arm of the Open Space Institute. The John Hancock Life Insurance Company is continuing an existing mortgage.

Mr. Tepper said the conservancy would undertake a major fund-raising project to cover the purchase price. And over the next year to 18 months, the conservancy will meet with community leaders, lease holders and the state to determine how best to manage the land.



The Adirondack Park, which covers approximately six million acres, is the largest publicly protected area in the contiguous United States.