

# Catskill Land Purchase Completed by DEC

## Forestry

By Graham Cox

The state will buy 1,693 acres along the Neversink River, popular for trout fishing, in the southern Catskill region, adding this to the designated unique natural area and expanding outdoor recreation along this scenic waterway.

The latest acquisition, known as the Leonard property, has been on the state's open space conservation priority list for many years. The purchase will increase the size of the Neversink River Unique Natural Area to 7,100 acres,

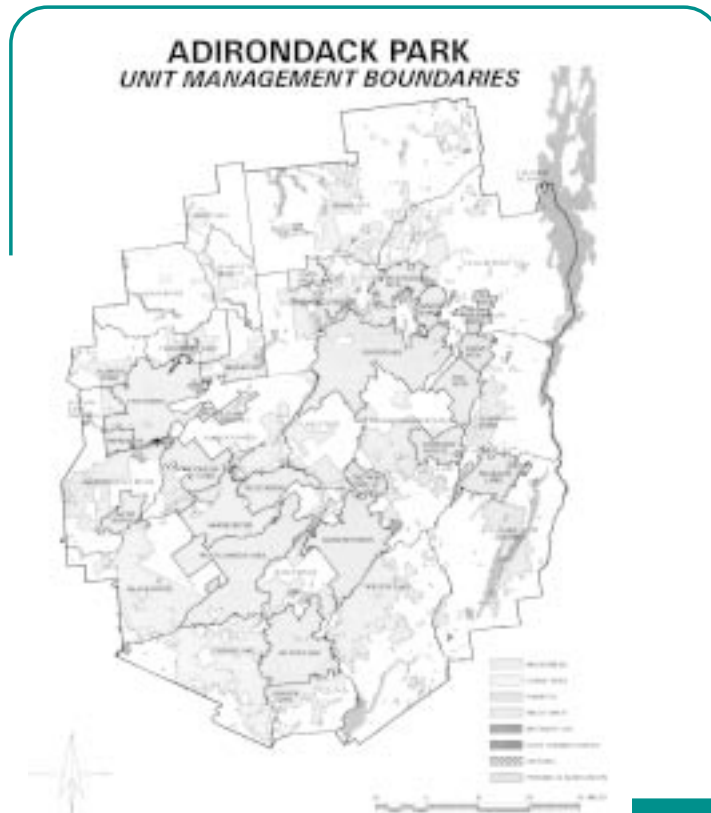
including an additional two miles of riverfront. The area is south of Route 17 in the town of Forestburgh and close to the Bashakill State Wildlife Management Area, identified by Audubon New York as an Important Bird Area.

The parcel cost just over \$2 million and was purchased with funds from the 1996 Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act funds. The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) plans to allow passive and low impact recreation, such as trout fishing and hiking,

while also promoting wildlife, forestry and research projects. Efforts will be made to re-introduce disease-resistant strains of the American chestnut trees, a native to the Neversink area but destroyed by blight.

The state's purchase of this property was welcomed by Joe Martens, president of the Open Space Institute (OSI). OSI was instrumental in the negotiations and purchase in this as well as in many other Hudson Valley, Catskill and Shawangunk Ridge land conservation purchases. In other Catskill activities, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which manages the metropolitan water supply region reprinted research findings that show benefits to water quality from protecting certain types of forest cover in the region. According to the DEP, research by the Institute for Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook suggests that watersheds with lots of oak and beech trees release less nitrogen into streams than areas with maple and birch. DEP foresters are working with the Institute to prepare a detailed inventory of forest cover types for the Catskill region. They are combining satellite images with field surveys of city-owned property to better understand ecological processes on a landscape scale.

In the central Catskills town of Shandaken, the DEP has received a \$250,000 matching grant from the state to begin the restoration of the Esopus Creek channel. The catastrophic flood of January 1996 forced the Esopus to abandon its channel and cut into a new one, threatening adjacent homes. The area, known as Railroad Rapids, is famous as a world class whitewater canoe and kayaking racing destination and a popular fishing area. The DEP has also committed \$250,000; landowners and others have also raised funds toward its restoration.



## Public Comments Given on Bog River Unit Management Plan in Adirondacks Park

By Graham Cox

One of the first of the new crop of unit management plans (UMPs) for the Adirondack Park was released in August for public comment and scheduled for a public hearing in September. The UMP covers 36,100 acres in the Bog River area straddling the county lines of St. Lawrence, Hamilton and Franklin. The Bog River UMP will guide the management of state lands in Horseshoe Lake Wild Forest, Lows Lake Primitive Area, Hitchins Pond Primitive Area and Conifer Easement Lands. This area begins the access to a wilderness canoe route leading from the

Bog River at Low's lower dam into Low's Lake above Low's upper dam and across Low's Lake to the western shore in the Five Ponds Wilderness. The route is connected by a carry to the upper reaches of the Oswegatchie River. The area attracts many for recreation and the UMP recommends adding 12 new campsites, six miles of new hiking trails, three new lean-tos and seven parking lots for a total of 78 vehicles. Audubon New York supports the recommendation in the UMP which phases out the public, commercial use of float planes and motor boats on Lows Lake because it is partly in a wilderness

area, but Audubon New York is concerned about the proposal to create a new snowmobile trail in the Horseshoe Lake Wild Forest Area. A copy of the plan may be obtained through the DEC web site: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us>.

Several new draft UMPs are close to completion as part of the state's concerted effort to complete all UMPs for the Adirondack Park within a five year period, an effort that began in 1999 (see map above showing UMPs.) Some 20 of the 40 major plans are now being prepared, while seven, including the High Peaks plan, have been

completed. The UMPs are required as part of the State Land Master Plan for the Adirondack Park. Meanwhile foresters are also working with less commotion in the Catskill Park to revise five of the 15 already completed plans in this smaller state Forest Preserve. They are also finalizing a revision to the State Land Master Plan for the Catskill Park which will change one wild forest area to a wilderness unit, thereby enhancing its pristine character and simplifying the administration of the High Peaks areas.