



FORESTS

Nature Conservancy, IP agree to latest Adirondack land deal

By Graham Cox

In his state of the state address Governor George E. Pataki announced the latest Adirondack land deal, the purchase by The Nature Conservancy/Adirondack Land Trust of 26,500 acres from International Paper (IP.) TNC will pay \$10.5 million for the three parcels next to the Whitney tract in Long Lake.

When the sale is complete, TNC plans to sell some key waterfront and canoe access parcels to the State DEC, but the bulk of the property will remain in commercial forest production, either managed by TNC or a forest management company.

"This unique agreement will combine state and private ownership, providing public recreational access to four pristine Adirondack lakes, which will become part of the Forest Preserve. At the same time, working forest conservation easements will strengthen the timber industry in the North Country," Gov. Pataki said.

The same day IP and TNC announced the deal, IP officials traveled to their pulp and paper mill in Ticonderoga and announced a new investment program for increasing production and employment at the mill. IP is the single largest private forest land owner in the Adirondack Park, with more than 300,000 acres. IP reassured local government officials that they will remain a major corporate fixture in the region and will soon be announcing investment plans for their mill in Corinth, on the southern edge of the Park.

John Dillon, chairman and CEO of IP and a native of the Adirondacks, said: "IP continues its presence in the Adirondacks and the state of New York. With the recent realignment of our printing papers business our Ticonderoga Mill is taking on an expanded role ... with a major capital investment in one of its paper machines."

Dillon said that it is important to have a balance between economic activity and conservation of natural resources in the region. "We have a 100-year history of forest stewardship in the Park and have shown how these two goals have indeed worked together."

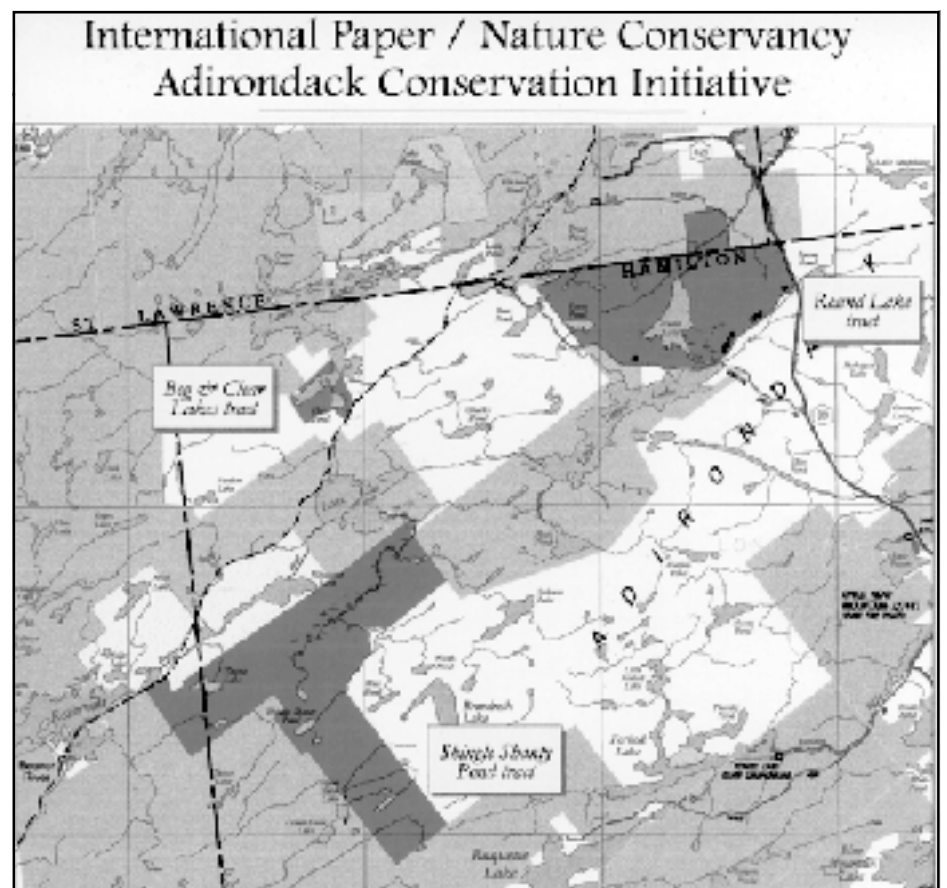
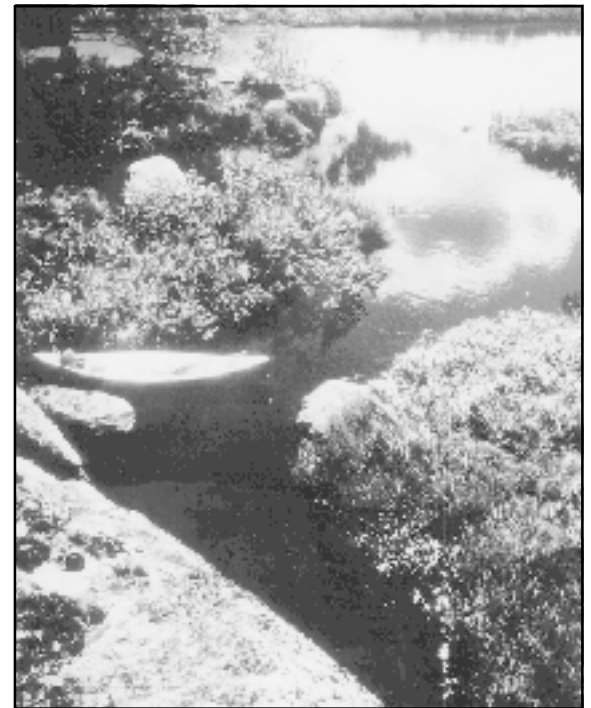
Henry Tepper, state director for The Nature Conservancy in New York, said the agreement will protect four lakes, a dozen smaller ponds, 4,000 acres of wetlands, 85 miles of rivers and streams and intact northern hardwoods and spruce-fir forests. The forests are habitat to black bear, moose and a great diversity of bird life, fish and other wildlife species, he said.

The agreement between TNC and IP covers three parcels of property which will provide key links in canoe routes through the central part of the park. The parcels are:

- The Round Lake tract, 9,926 acres, which includes two large remote lakes, Round Lake and Loon Pond, and extensive wetlands. It is adjacent to the Whitney Canoe Area and will reopen a historic canoe route linking Little Tupper Lake to the Bog River and Tupper Lake.
- The Shingle Shanty Pond tract, 15,536 acres, linking the Whitney Canoe Area to the Pigeon Lake Wilderness and Lake Lila Primitive Area. It includes extensive wetlands and is next to the largest roadless area in the Park and in the eastern USA.
- Bog Lake and Clear Pond, a 1,100-acre parcel, with significant new canoeing opportunities and a canoe carry foot trail linking DEC's existing Lows Lake/Bog River Flow and Lake Lila public canoe areas, opening up a huge recreation resource.

TNC will work with DEC and other conservation groups to develop a detailed planning process for the tracts. They will also plan for a new snowmobile trail on the Round Lake tract. Overall, said TNC, the purchase will protect unique open space and ecological resources and create major new recreation opportunities, including canoeing, hiking, cross-country skiing and snow shoeing.

Conserving these lands has been a top priority of conservation groups for a long time. These parcels were included on the 16-item list, the Adirondack Land Initiative, presented to the governor three years ago. Almost all these pieces, including Whitney property and the Champion working forest lands, have now been either added to the Forest Preserve or protected as working forest using conservation easements. This list has since been updated by the conservation groups and some of these parcels have been included on the revised state open space conservation plan now about to go for public comment. (See story on this page.)



The IP Lakes area is rich in wetlands, lakes, ponds and river habitat (above); the three parcels involved in the land deal are shown in dark shading. The latest Whitney purchase around Little Tupper Lake lies between the Shingle Shanty Pond and Round Pond tracts.

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Public meetings set in spring for open space plan

The state is planning a series of public meetings across the state this spring to get comments and reaction to the latest revisions to the state open space conservation plan.

The first plan was approved by the governor and legislature in 1992 and it has been revised twice since then, in 1995 and 1998. Regional open space committees met through the summer and fall last year with state DEC and state Parks representatives to review the plan and make suggested changes. For information about the meeting locations and times, visit the state web site at www.dec.state.ny.us.

Western Catskills/Beaverkill open space plan underway

Audubon New York staff is working with a community residents group to identify and map

natural resources and open space features along the Beaverkill, Willowemoc and later the Neversink river valleys.

The mapping and planning effort is intended to supplement work already progressing, jointly by state DEC and Trout Unlimited, as well as by county planners in Sullivan County. The DEC and TU recently announced a fishing access plan for these famous fly fishing streams.

The Audubon New York project is looking at a broader corridor along the river valleys to see what additional areas could be considered for open space conservation in future revisions to the state open space conservation plan.

It will also provide a valuable Geographic Information System (GIS) information base for local land trusts. "Audubon New York's dedication to the Western Catskills is really paying off with conservation successes and greater appreciation of bird habitats" stated Audubon's Stewardship Committee member and area resident John Wilkinson.