



NYS DEC

Sterling Lake is one of the focal points in the expanding public acquisition of Sterling Forest, with 1,968 acres added in the latest state/federal/private-funded purchase to add to the 17,000 already protected for wildlife and hiking.

State buys 1,968 acres to add to Sterling Forest Park

By Graham Cox

Public acquisition is heading towards 20,000 acres in the Sterling Forest lands of the New York-New Jersey Highlands. In February, Governor Pataki announced an agreement to buy an additional 1,968 acres, adding to the 17,000 already purchased, for a price tag of \$8 million.

The latest acquisition includes three large parcels, the largest of 1,100 acres being from the Sterling Forest Development Corp., which will continue to hold another 1,100 acres for potential future development. When this latest deal is completed, the public will own some 95 percent of the Sterling Forest lands, protecting what is a major source of drinking water for residents of

northern New Jersey.

Governor Pataki has committed \$4 million from New York state, New Jersey Governor Whitman has promised \$1 million and the federal government will contribute \$2 million from the Forest Legacy program. The additional million dollars will be raised from grants and private donations.

The conservation community is still concerned about the potential development impacts of the privately held lands inside the park boundary. The Sterling Forest Corp. retains some water rights to two lakes. There is also a proposal to build 110 homes and a 250-acre golf course on the lands remaining in private ownership.

DEC opens discussion on new trail proposals for the Adirondack Park

By Graham Cox

The DEC's Region 5 open space committee held its first meeting April 7 to start the revision process for the state open space plan. Presentations about the needs for additional or upgraded trails in the Adirondacks for hiking, biking, horses, snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) were the first order of business.

The Adirondack Mountain Club, which also represents the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference, described the national hiking trails systems that are converging on the Adirondack Park to join up with existing trails such as the Northville-Lake Placid Trail. The North Country National Scenic Trail is linking with New York's Finger Lakes Trail and heading into the southern Adirondacks. The Long Path is approaching from the south with a proposed end point at Whiteface Mountain, providing an alternative north-south path to the Appalachian Trail.

The snowmobile representative said they simply want a good documentation from DEC about just how many miles of snowmobile trails there are for their use on state lands in the park. They are not pushing for more, just a good inventory and possibly widening them. They were told by DEC regional director Stuart Buchanan that widening state trails beyond 8 feet is out of the question, no matter how wide they are on private lands.

The ATV representatives, the Rough Riders from Franklin County, said they want to enjoy the wilderness but in a different way. They love nature but just want to have access for their ATVs to public lands. They pay state registration fees of \$10 per

vehicle and believe that they are being shortchanged. They asked why they could not use the snowmobile trails in summer and want their registration fee money to go to a state program to build and maintain trails for them. There are similar ATV groups formed in the other Adirondack counties. Club riders prefer to travel together in groups (248 joined together in one meet in the North Country in early spring).

DEC's position is that the agency is neither a proponent or opponent of ATVs and ATV trails. They are recreational users like hikers and bikers, snowmobilers and horseback riders, and like all interest groups, DEC will listen to them and accommodate them where and when it is feasible and practical. For example, in Regions 4 and 7, which covers much of the Catskills and Southern Tier, DEC is now also proposing up to 100 miles of ATV trails in the Treaty Line State Forest (see accompanying article.)

State Open Space plan

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- By September 2000, the regional advisory committees will submit recommendations to the central DEC and Parks offices;
- In January and February 2001, the draft plan will be published and hearings conducted statewide;
- In March 2001 DEC and OPRHP will review public comments and develop the final plan;
- In September 2001, the final revised open space plan will be sent to the governor for approval.

ATV trails proposed for Treaty Line State Forest

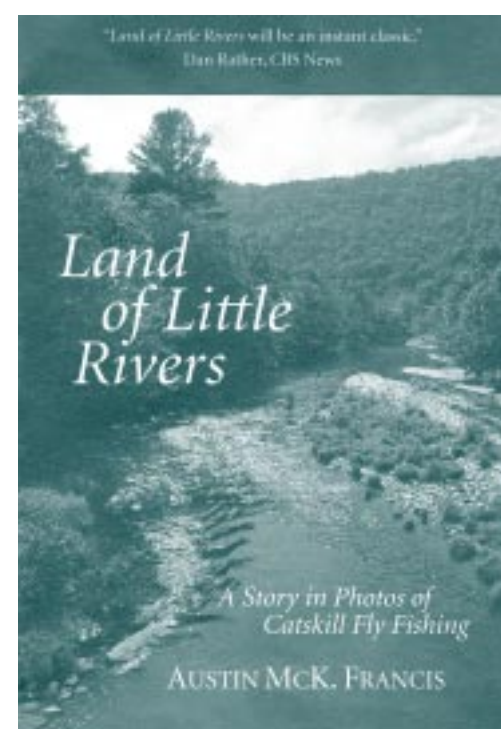
By Graham Cox

The state DEC held a public meeting May 2 in Deposit, near Binghamton, to get reaction to a draft unit management plan for the Treaty Line State Forest, covering 17,626 acres in Broome, Chenango and Delaware counties.

Up to 600 pro and con all-terrain vehicle (ATV) activists were expected by DEC. Controversial in the plan is the creation of a trail for ATVs from 40 to 100 miles long on state lands.

ATV groups are hoping that this will be the first of many state-funded trail systems on state lands. Conservation and hiking groups raise issues about the precedent, the noise, the likely trail erosion and conflicts with other uses.

DEC will accept written comments on the proposal until June 2. Send them to the Sherburne office, 2715 State Route 80, Sherburne, NY 13460. The draft plan is on the web at www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dlf/publands/ump/treatyline/treatyump.html.



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