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Fall Foliage

Ashokan Reservoir - New York City Water Supply System



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NYC to Acquire More Than 4,100 Acres of Land for Watershed Protection

More than 115,000 Acres of Upstate Land Purchased Since 1997

Helps Preserve New York's High Drinking Water Quality

Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway today announced the purchase of more than 4,125 acres of upstate land and easements for more than \$16 million. This acquisition is the latest in New York City's ongoing efforts to protect the upstate watershed and maintain the outstanding quality of the drinking water that nine million New Yorkers need every day. A total of 40 parcels of land were acquired, ranging in size from 0.8 to 381 acres. The properties are located in Delaware, Putnam, Greene, Ulster, Schoharie and Westchester counties. Since the inception of the Land Acquisition Program, New York City has protected over 115,000 acres of watershed land — including more than 78,000 since 2002 — in the Catskill/Delaware and Croton reservoir systems. Most of these properties will be opened for public access, including hunting, hiking and fishing, as well as hay cropping that helps local community businesses.

"New York City continues to build upon the outstanding success of our Land Acquisition Program," said Commissioner Holloway. "Every acre we protect contributes to preserving the outstanding quality of NYC Water, which serves 9 million New Yorkers every day. Working with local watershed communities, we will open many of these acres to recreation and other economic development programs that strike the right balance between protecting water quality and helping our partners in the watershed to thrive."

The 40 parcels acquired today are scattered throughout priority areas which were established in 1997 based on certain watershed and water quality features that help guide the City's solicitation of land in order to best protect upstate reservoirs from overdevelopment. The acquisition of 40 parcels include 16 in Delaware County totaling 2,658 acres, 17 in Greene County totaling approximately 1,237 acres, four in Putnam County totaling nearly 32 acres, one parcel in Ulster County totaling 22 acres, one parcel in Schoharie County totaling 172 acres and one two-acre

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parcel in Westchester County.

Watershed protection is widely considered the best way of maintaining the quality of drinking water in the long term. New York City's program, one of the most comprehensive in the world, has been so successful at protecting the integrity of New York City's water supply that the United States Environmental Protection Agency awarded the City a 10-year Filtration Avoidance Determination (FAD) in 2007. The success of New York City's Watershed Protection Program is one of the main reasons why New York City remains one of only five large cities in the United States that is not required to filter its drinking water. The other cities are Boston, Portland, San Francisco and Seattle. Since the beginning of the FAD, New York City has committed \$541 million to purchase land to protect our unfiltered drinking water which supplies roughly half the population of New York State. DEP has made unprecedented efforts to balance water quality preservation with the interests and economic vitality of watershed communities, and has agreed to avoid acquisitions in and around existing hamlets where towns have designated such properties.

The 2007 FAD requires the City to continue an active land acquisition program, focusing on properties selected for their water quality protection benefits. The City only acquires lands from willing sellers and pays fair market value based on independent appraisals. The City can acquire land outright, in which case the properties are usually opened for public access and recreational use. The City also protects land by purchasing conservation easements, and through initiatives like the Watershed Agricultural Council, which works with farmers to implement farming practices that are compatible with the City's watershed protection goals.

DEP manages the city's water supply, providing more than 1 billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8 million in New York City, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties. Approximately 1,000 DEP employees live and work in the watershed communities. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/dep or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater.

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