



Fall Foliage

Cannonsville Reservoir - New York City Water Supply System



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEP Acquires Conservation Easement on 463-Acre Parcel in Shandaken

Follows Announcement Last Month That City Has Acquired Over 53,000 Acres Under Its Land Acquisition Program

Commissioner Christopher O. Ward of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced today that as part of its continuing watershed protection program the DEP has acquired a conservation easement on a 463-acre parcel in the Town of Shandaken, Ulster County.

The announcement comes less than one month after New York Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and U. S. EPA Administrator Michael Leavitt announced that the City was committing an additional \$25 million for land acquisition in the Croton watershed. The City has secured over 53,000 acres in its watersheds since 1997.

"Land acquisition allows the City to forever protect valuable watershed property from development and pollution," said Commissioner Ward. "The response from landowners to the Program has been remarkable. To date, over 680 willing sellers have agreed to accept the City's fair-market-value purchase offers, either selling land outright or granting conservation easements. We will continue to identify strategic properties through this successful program through at least 2007."

Lands under conservation easement remain in private ownership and will not be opened to the public, while the easements are monitored by the City to prevent adverse impacts to water quality and to assist landowners wherever possible in protecting their natural resource base. The conservation easement in Shandaken will help to protect the Catskill/Delaware water systems, which together provide the City and one million upstate residents with over 90 percent of their daily water supply from the Catskill Mountains west of the Hudson River in conjunction with the West Branch Reservoir in Putnam County and the Kensico Reservoir in Westchester.

Over 52,000 acres of land and easements in Catskill/Delaware have been secured since 1997, including over 6,500 acres placed under farm easements by the Watershed Agricultural Council using City funds. The City now owns 7.9% of the 1.05-million-acre (1,640-square-

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	<p>mile) Catskill/Delaware watershed, up from 3.7% in 1997.</p> <p>The 53,000 acres of land and easements acquired or under contract throughout the watershed (in Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, and five counties west of the Hudson River) involve over 680 parcels. The City's acquisitions in the Croton system (primarily in Yorktown, in the New Croton Reservoir Basin), along with several purchases by New York State, total about 1,200 acres.</p> <p>The DEP has also recently acquired a 339-acre conservation easement in the Town of Kent, Putnam County, and has purchased a 12-acre parcel in the Town of North Castle, Westchester County. The two transactions will help to protect the drainage areas of the West Branch Reservoir and the Kensico Reservoir, respectively.</p> <p>The Land Acquisition Program acquires land or conservation easements at fair market value from willing sellers only, and pays property taxes in proportion to the property rights acquired. Landowners are therefore paid upfront for development rights and are relieved of significant property tax burdens in perpetuity. Landowners can generally continue to harvest timber and bluestone from the land under good management plans approved by the DEP. Under this arrangement, the DEP is effectively paying good land stewards to continue to care for their land, protect their views from development and enjoy passive recreational opportunities. For more information, landowners can contact the DEP's Land Acquisition Program at (800) 575-LAND.</p> <p>The City has opened over 43,000 acres of its watershed land to public recreation, including over 27,000 acres of the land acquired under the Land Acquisition Program. The DEP has issued over 67,000 public access permits and over 6,300 hunting tags to people wanting to use City watershed property for recreation. There were also almost 10,000 boat tags issued in 2003 for people to use boats on City reservoirs.</p>
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