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## Historic Signing of Agreement for Sale of Ashokan Field Campus Announced

### Open Space Institute, NYCDEP, Campus Auxiliary Services (SUNY) Come to Terms on Future of Site

NEW YORK, NY - May 13, 2008 - The Open Space Institute (OSI) and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) today announced the acquisition by the Open Space Conservancy (OSC), the land acquisition affiliate of OSI, of the 394-acre Ashokan Field Campus. OSC acquired the property from Campus Auxiliary Services (CAS), an affiliate of the State University of New York, New Paltz, and will subdivide the property and sell a portion to NYCDEP to facilitate water supply operations, and transfer the remaining portion to the Ashokan Foundation, a new non-profit group that will continue to run educational, cultural and arts programs on the property. The Open Space Institute, which has protected 100,000 acres of scenic open space in the Hudson River Valley, played a pivotal role in the transaction by acquiring the site, initiating a subdivision and facilitating partnership between the Ashokan Foundation and NYCDEP for the future use of the property.

The newly renamed Ashokan Center (formerly Ashokan Field Campus) is located in the Ulster County towns of Olive and Marbletown. CAS has operated education programs there for more than 40 years in a secluded, natural setting adjacent to the Ashokan Reservoir and wilderness areas of the Catskill Forest Preserve. Ashokan Center, which is bisected by the Esopus Creek, provides an inspirational backdrop for hands-on educational experiences and group retreats with themes in all disciplines.

"This is an historic day," said Joe Martens, OSI's President. "Thanks to a concerted effort on the part of SUNY, NYCDEP and the Ashokan Foundation, school children and adults will continue to benefit from a one-of-a-kind outdoor learning experience. I want to personally thank Jay Ungar, Molly Mason and Commissioner Emily Lloyd for their unfailing commitment to protect this special property and ensure its

### MORE INFORMATION

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continued educational use. This is truly a win-win-win situation," concluded Martens.

As part of the agreement, NYCDEP and the Ashokan Foundation will work together to make improvements to the site to ensure that NYCDEP's activities will have minimal impacts on educational programs being run at the campus by the Ashokan Foundation. Several buildings, currently located near the Esopus stream channel, will be rebuilt on higher ground to avoid impact from future reservoir releases.

"DEP is very pleased to be able to partner with the Open Space Institute, the Ashokan Foundation and SUNY New Paltz and preserve the use of Ashokan for educational and cultural programs, while enabling the City to use the property for important water protection purposes," said DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd.

The Ashokan Foundation, which was created by internationally acclaimed musicians Jay Ungar and Molly Mason, will take over the operation of the field campus and continue to offer an ever widening variety of year round environmental and cultural programs to people of all ages. Jay and Molly have been associated with Ashokan for nearly 30 years, through their annual Fiddle and Dance Camps at the site, which attract musicians and dancers from around the world.

"Ashokan feels like home to so many people," said Molly Mason, "from kids who spend a few days here with their elementary schools, to adults and families who return each year for retreats, conferences and special events."

"We and the Ashokan Foundation are extremely grateful for the dedicated efforts of OSI, NYCDEP, SUNY New Paltz and the Ashokan Center staff working together to assure that Ashokan can continue to be a place where people can re-connect with nature, history and the arts," added Jay Ungar.

NYCDEP owns and operates the Ashokan Reservoir. Located in Ulster County, the Ashokan Reservoir is about 13 miles west of Kingston and 73 miles north of New York City. It was formed by the damming of the Esopus Creek, which eventually flows northeast and drains into the Hudson River. Consisting of two basins separated by a concrete dividing weir and roadway, the reservoir holds 127.9 billion gallons at full capacity and was placed into service in 1915. The Ashokan is one of two reservoirs in the City's Catskill Water Supply System. The Ashokan supplies about 40% of New York City's daily drinking water needs in non-drought periods. DEP has the ability to release water from the reservoir to the lower Esopus Creek. Releasing water can allow DEP to create a void in the Ashokan Reservoir to capture high-flow runoff events. Capturing such events can have benefits for water quality and enhance the attenuation effect the reservoir already provides in relation to downstream flooding.

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection manages the City's water supply, providing more than 1.1 billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents throughout New York State through a complex network of nineteen reservoirs, three controlled lakes and 6,200 miles of water pipes, tunnels and aqueducts.

The Open Space Institute protects scenic, natural, and historic landscapes to ensure public enjoyment, conserve habitats, and sustain community character. OSI achieves its

goals through land acquisition, conservation easements, regional loan programs, fiscal sponsorship, creative partnerships, and analytical research. OSI has protected nearly 100,000 acres in New York State. Through its Northern Forest Protection Fund and Conservation Finance Program, OSI has assisted in the protection of an additional \$1.6 million acres in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina and Georgia. Please visit [www.osiny.org](http://www.osiny.org) for more information.