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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New York City Acquires Two Properties in Kent, New York Watershed Land Acquisitions Now Tops 44,000 Acres

Commissioner Christopher O. Ward of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced today that the DEP Land Acquisition and Stewardship Program (LASP) has recently acquired two parcels in the Town of Kent, totaling 155 Acres. This acquisition brings the total number of acres of sensitive lands now protected from development throughout the nine-county watershed to over 44,000 acres. Both properties are located west of Route 52 in northern Putnam County and within the Boyds Corner/West Branch Reservoir watershed. The area is considered a high priority for the City's watershed protection programs, a comprehensive effort to safeguard the water supply for over 8 million New York City residents and approximately one million consumers in Westchester, Putnam, Ulster and Orange counties.

One parcel, a 64-acre tract on Route 52, had been earmarked by prior owners for construction of a 90,000 square foot assembly hall. The expected negative water quality impacts associated with the development of this facility and other impervious surfaces, such as a planned 700-vehicle parking lot, will now be avoided as a result of the City's acquisition. The second parcel, a 91-acre tract, abuts Big Buck Mountain State multiple use area, and surrounds a subdivision known as South Lake. The property had been considered by the prior owner for development.

Commissioner Ward said "The response from landowners to the Land Acquisition and Stewardship Program has been tremendous. To date, almost 600 willing sellers have agreed to accept the Acquisition Program's fair market value purchase offers and purchase-contract terms. This has allowed the City to protect sensitive watershed lands from development, to provide passive recreational opportunities for the public, and to do so without loss of property taxes to local communities." Commissioner Ward said that "the city also plans to open the properties, which adjoin other protected areas, including 894 acres purchased by the City in July of 1999 for public access and passive recreational uses at some point in the future."

With these purchases, City acquisitions now total over 6,300 acres in Putnam and Dutchess counties, bringing the total

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of lands protected throughout the Catskill/Delaware basins (both sides of the Hudson River) to 41,000 acres. An additional 3,700 acres in agricultural easements in the Catskills have been secured by the Watershed Agricultural Council, one of the City's partners in watershed protection.

The Land Acquisition and Stewardship 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. All such properties are purchased under conditions established by the 1997 Watershed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), which was signed by local watershed communities, several environmental organizations, the State of New York, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. To date the Land Acquisition and Stewardship Program has met or exceeded all requirements established by the MOA.

For more information about the Land Acquisition and Stewardship Program, landowners can contact (800) 575-LAND. For more information about the City's watershed protection programs, visit the DEP web site at nyc.gov/dep.