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654-Acre Eagle River Property Acquired By Partnership of New York City, Somers, Westchester County and New York State**Largest Single Open Space Purchase Ever In Westchester**

A partnership of New York City, the Town of Somers, Westchester County and New York State yesterday completed the acquisition of the 654-acre Eagle River property, creating a new nature sanctuary that protects drinking water supplies and wildlife habitat, and providing miles of new recreational trails for residents.

The property was acquired from a private corporation for \$20.5 million, the appraised fair market value.

The partnership involves acquisition of 269 acres by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection and acquisition of 385 acres jointly by the Town of Somers and Westchester County. A conservation easement on all but 15 acres is to be conveyed to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

The property has been the target of local conservation interests for years, and is located entirely in the drainage basin of the Muscote Reservoir of New York City's Croton water system. The Westchester Land Trust has worked diligently with the parties to forge the alliance that led to the protection of the 654 acres.

The acquisition is thought to be the largest single open space purchase in Westchester's history – only a few other protected areas such as Ward Pound Ridge are larger, but these were assembled piecemeal over time. Much of the property will become a park called the Angle Fly Preserve, named after the brook that bisects it.

New York City's portion will be managed by the Department of Environmental Protection as protected watershed land, helping to ensure continued high-quality drinking water from the Croton system for millions of New York City and Westchester residents. The City's land comprises the westernmost portion of the property and was acquired for \$9.44 million.

Commissioner Emily Lloyd of the Department of

MORE INFORMATION

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Environmental Protection said, "The City is pleased to play a leadership role in securing this unique property. The funding for this project was dedicated by Mayor Bloomberg, and we could not be more pleased that it was used so quickly to leverage protection of such a large and threatened property. We appreciate the dedication of our partners to this project and look forward to other such efforts to protect vacant land in the Croton system."

Under terms of the 1997 Watershed Memorandum of Agreement, the City will convey a conservation easement to New York State and will pay assessed property taxes on its acquisition. Passive recreational activities may be allowed on the City's 269 acres after a full assessment by the DEP.

The Town and County will jointly own 370 acres, with the Town contributing \$4 million and the County contributing \$4 million toward the purchase.

To ensure that the jointly-owned property will never be developed, New York State will receive a conservation easement on the land for its \$3.2 million contribution.

Ball fields are permissible on a specific small portion of the jointly-held property. Any recreation fields will be owned jointly by the Town of Somers and Westchester County. Somers residents will have first rights to use the recreation fields, with County residents having access at other times. The Town of Somers will have sole right and responsibility to manage the entire jointly-held property. The Town of Somers will also independently own 15 acres upon which active recreation facilities such as a community center may be built.

The purchase ends efforts by the prior owner, ICC Bridgeport LP/Eagle River LP, to build a subdivision of large homes on the land. The acquisition includes all of the land proposed for development plus an additional 30 acres of noncontiguous land on Orchard Hill Road.

The acquisition will protect a key section of the Croton watershed, 140 acres of federal, state and local wetlands, and a vast wildlife habitat of countywide significance. It provides miles of new hiking trails and the potential for trail linkages to the county's Lasdon Park and elsewhere. Because the property represents three percent of the total area of Somers, the acquisition protects a tract of land that is essential to the Town's character.

"This open space preservation acquisition is a huge step toward assuring that Somers remains a beautiful and livable community and can only be described as a dream come true," said Town Supervisor Mary Beth Murphy. "Not only is the size of the property unique but the extraordinary partnership of four levels of government and a not-for-profit banding together to accomplish this incredible win for the environment and our water supply is itself extraordinary."

Negotiations started in 2004 after the Town hired Westchester Land Trust to work on the acquisition. The Land Trust worked with Town residents to come up with a plan for the property, assisted with negotiating the deal with the owners' representatives, and helped build the coalition necessary to complete the transaction.

"The partners aimed extraordinarily high on this, and then worked hard to achieve that goal – we couldn't be more please and proud to be a part of it," said Westchester Land Trust Executive Director Paul Gallay. "This is a great

achievement for residents of Somers and the county, as well as for the State and the City."