



PRESS RELEASE

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Lake George Land Conservancy and Open Space Conservancy to Protect 1,423 Acres in Lake George Basin

Bolton Landing, NY – The Lake George Land Conservancy (LGLC) announced at a press conference today the anticipated acquisition and protection of 1,423 acres of land in the southern Adirondacks in upstate New York. The purchase will be made possible in part through a \$2.64 million loan from the Open Space Conservancy (OSC) and funding provided by the Helen V. Froehlich Foundation.

The 1,423-acre Berry Pond Tract includes the headwaters of West Brook, a tributary that has a significant impact on the water quality of Lake George, and lies within the towns of Lake George, Lake Luzerne and Warrensburg. The land abuts the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Prospect Mountain to the north as well as protected land to the west which was recently acquired by The Nature Conservancy from Finch, Pruyn & Co., Inc. The purchase closing is expected to take place on January 16.

“We are celebrating the protection of Berry Pond Tract, a beautiful wilderness with views stretching to the Adirondacks and the Narrows of Lake George,” said Nancy Williams, Executive Director of the Lake George Land Conservancy. “This single project links thousands of acres of land together, securing the habitat of countless creatures and will provide recreational opportunities for the residents and visitors to Lake George for future generations. We look forward to the closing on the Berry Pond Tract and working with the Department of Environmental Conservation to add this land to the Adirondack Forest Preserve.”

“The Directors of the Lake George Land Conservancy extend their appreciation to our many partners, without whom we could not have signed the purchase contract,” added Williams. “The Open Space Conservancy is providing the financing needed by our small land trust to protect Berry Pond, the Froehlich Foundation provided the deposit money to secure the land and The Fund for Lake George is serving as guarantors. And because this purchase is part of another partnership, the West Brook Watershed Initiative, we are fortunate to have even more partners: the Lake George Association, the Town and Village of Lake George, Warren County, and the collective support of the other watershed communities and State agencies through the Lake George Watershed Conference.”

“Protection of the Berry Pond Tract is a huge step forward in protecting Lake George's water quality and watershed,” said OSC President Joe Martens, “While OSC is proud to have played a part in its protection, the Lake George Land Conservancy deserves the thanks and praise of all New Yorkers for taking on this hugely important project.”

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The Open Space Conservancy (OSC) is the land acquisition affiliate of the Open Space Institute (OSI), a nonprofit land conservation organization based in New York that has protected 100,000 acres in New York State through direct land acquisition, 20,000 acres of that in the Adirondacks, including the nearly 10,000-acre Tahawus parcel. The loan to LGLC is part of OSI's Conservation Finance Program, which provides critical bridge funding to land trusts in select areas across the East Coast. Including Berry Pond, OSI has made six loans totaling \$30 million in New York State with a special focus on the Adirondacks where it helped to finance the epic Finch, Pruyn & Co. conservation deal last year. The Open Space Conservancy is funded by the Lila Acheson and DeWitt Wallace Endowment.

The Berry Pond Tract includes Berry Pond, a pristine wilderness nearly centered within the 1,423 acres. The highpoints of the land provide expansive views of Lake George to "the Narrows" and southern views to Butler Pond and the lower Adirondacks. The tract is one of only two tracts specifically targeted in DEC's Lake George Open Space Conservation Plan for purchase. Situated adjacent to the existing Lake George Recreation Center, the Berry Pond Tract will provide significantly expanded outdoor recreational resources for residents and area guests.

The acquisition and protection of the Berry Pond Tract, and indeed, the West Brook Watershed Initiative itself, as integral parts of the "*Lake George Plan for the Future*" water quality management plan, were both identified as a priority actions in 2001, as a result of the collaborative efforts of the 25 members of the Lake George Watershed Conference. The recent leadership efforts of the Lake George Land Conservancy, Lake George Association, the Fund for Lake George, the Warren County Board of Supervisors, the Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District, Lake George Village and the Town of Lake George have seen this critical project coming to fruition.

The partnership is working to purchase "Gaslight Village", located near Fort William Henry. The project's goal is to dramatically reduce the sediments and pollutants that currently run freely into West Brook and subsequently into Lake George near "Million Dollar" beach. This will be accomplished by the protection of the Berry Pond Tract, West Brook's watershed and by restoring "Gaslight Village" to its original state as a natural water-filtering wetland and to create a complex series of stormwater management devices to capture sand and sediment before they reach the lake. The remaining land will be comprised of walking trails, interpretive signage and open public fields which may be used for extra parking and special events.

West Brook contributes approximately 50% of the total annual tributary run-off entering the south end of Lake George. One obvious sign of the pollution flowing into the lake from West Brook is the build-up of a large sand delta at the Brook's mouth. The sediment load has been estimated to be 270 tons annually. This sediment carries phosphates that result in algae growth and subsequent oxygen depletion in the lake.

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LGLC is a non-profit organization working to preserve the world-renowned water quality of Lake George and the rare plants and animals within the lake's 150,000-acre watershed by permanently protecting natural lands. www.lglc.org

The Open Space Institute (OSI) protects scenic, recreational, historical and working landscapes to ensure public enjoyment, conserve habitats, and sustain community character. www.osiny.org