

For Release: IMMEDIATE
Tuesday, November 10, 2009

Contact: Maureen Wren
(518) 402-8000

**DEC ANNOUNCES PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO EASEMENT ON
FORMER CHAMPION LANDS TO ADDRESS HUNTING CAMPS**

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) today announced a proposed amendment to the state-owned easement that will allow the continued leasing of hunting camps on the former Champion International Corp. lands in Franklin, Herkimer, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties in exchange for the transfer of 2,661 acres of valuable wildlife habitat along the Deer River to the State Forest Preserve and State Forest holdings. The proposed amendment is subject to the current landowner, Heartland Forestland Fund, III, LLC, obtaining a subdivision permit amendment from the Adirondack Park Agency.

In 1999, Champion paper sold 29,000 acres in the North Country to New York State as Forest Preserve and 114,000 acres to Heartland Forestland Fund III, LLC. The state in turn acquired a working forest easement on 110,000 of the Heartland acres that required the removal of traditional hunting camps on the easement lands by 2014. Since then, the state and Heartland have worked together – along with other stakeholders – to explore options to maintain the hunting camps, an important part of the rich outdoor culture in this lightly settled and remote portion of the northwest Adirondacks.

Under the proposed easement amendment, Heartland will retain the right to continue leasing no more than the existing 220 hunting camp sites on the working forest easement lands; the camps will occupy one-acre plots. In exchange, the company will convey title to 2,661 acres to the state. A 2,146-acre parcel within the Adirondack Park will be added to the State Forest Preserve in the vicinity of the Deer River Primitive Area (Franklin County). Also, a 515-acre parcel outside the Park in Franklin County will become a new State Forest. Together, these parcels will facilitate access to a previously inaccessible segment of Forest Preserve property, which will be open to the public for outdoor recreation, including hunting, fishing, camping and hiking.

The easement modification, which must also be reviewed and approved by both the Attorney General's and Comptroller's offices, also requires:

- The landowner to have either a DEC-approved forest management plan (as Heartland does currently) or to be enrolled in an approved forestry certification program. Certification requires landowners to have their forestry practices certified as sustainable.

(MORE)

- Camp leasees' access to the parcels will include the continued right to use motorized vehicles to reach their one-acre lease areas on routes designated by the landowner and approved by DEC. Within one year following the completion of the APA permit amendment process, the entire 110,000-acre property will be open to public hunting, except for the one-acre camp areas.

Notice of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the conservation easement modifications was published in today's Environmental Notice Bulletin, launching a 30-day public comment period. The DEIS can be found at: www.dec.ny.gov/lands/59344.html. Or, copies can be obtained by contacting Heather Carl, NYS DEC, Division of Lands and Forests, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233 or by calling (518) 408-5511. Send written comments by Dec. 11, 2009, to: HFF3DEIS@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

###