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Community rallies in support of urging Governor Cuomo to transfer former McGregor Prison lands to Moreau Lake State Park

Saratoga Springs, NY – Saratoga PLAN began a petition on December 4, 2014 to raise public support in the transfer of management of the western portion of the State-owned lands surrounding the former McGregor Prison, including Grant's Cottage Historic site, to the Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, as an addition to Moreau Lake State Park. The petition received 1,093 signatures; 244 of which occurred in just one day. A link to the petition and 263 public comments can be found [here](#). In addition the National Audubon Society re-posted the petition and added another 145 signers in 3 weeks.

Already attracting over 400,000 visitors each year, Moreau Lake State Park is a popular destination for hiking, swimming, kayaking, athletic events, camping, hunting, wildlife viewing, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, geo-caching, fishing and horseback riding. Adding Lake Bonita and the surrounding woodlands to the park will offer additional heritage and adventure tourism with greater opportunities to expand trails and camping accommodations, serving even more adventurers each year. Maintaining these former McGregor lands as natural un-fragmented forests will directly increase Saratoga County's economic development and tourism by enhancing its attractiveness as a great place to live, visit, or work.

On Friday, January 30, 2015 Saratoga PLAN Executive Director Maria Trabka met with the Governor's Office to deliver the petition, advocating for the publically favorable transfer of the former McGregor Prison lands to Moreau Lake State Park. Trabka was joined by Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner, Senator Kathy Marchione, State Counsel of Parks Saratoga-Capital District Commissioner Barbara Glaser, Town of Moreau Supervisor Preston Jenkins, Town of Wilton Supervisor Art Johnson, Senator Hugh Farley, Assemblyman Dan Stec, and representatives from offices of the Open Space Institute and Audubon NY. PLAN staff left the meeting feeling optimistic that the land transfer will likely happen. General comments made during the meeting indicated that the

details of the issue are being worked on and that the public will be happy with the outcome of the situation. PLAN feels strongly that the input made by such a diverse group of public and private entities working together to protect the Palmertown Conservation Area will aid in a positive outcome for this issue.

“There is tremendous public support for this land transfer to happen, as demonstrated by the results of the petition,” said Saratoga PLAN Executive Director Maria Trabka. “The 763-acre section of former McGregor Prison lands has the potential to greatly contribute to the health and economy of the region, providing the public with access to an expanse of vitally important, untamed natural resources, significant cultural heritage, and an extended trail network.”

"When we first learned of plans to close Mt. McGregor Correctional Facility, my Senate colleagues and I did everything possible to try and keep the facility open to help protect local public safety jobs. Despite our best efforts, the facility closed. Going forward, I want to ensure the best possible use of the facility, and its surrounding acreage, which is why my office has been working closely with the local community to achieve a positive outcome. I support transferring a portion of the facility's lands to Moreau State Park. Such a transfer would promote conservation, protect wildlife habitat, preserve water quality and support sustainable local economic development and scenic tourism. All around, this proposal would be a win-win for the community," New York State Senator Kathy Marchione (R,C,I-Halfmoon) said.

“We strongly believe that the former McGregor Prison lands adjoining the Moreau Lake State Park are better used for public birding, hiking, camping, and other outdoor activities than to be sold for development,” said Pat Fitzgerald, President of Southern Adirondack Audubon Society. “The importance of conserving these undisturbed habitats for wildlife is demonstrated with the support of 145 local Audubon members that signed the petition.”

Trabka added that the former McGregor Prison lands are located within the Palmertown Range and the Kayaderosseras Creek and Snookkill watersheds, an area listed as a conservation priority in the latest (2009) NYS Open Space Plan and the 2006 Saratoga County Green Infrastructure Plan.

In addition, the expanded trail system that would result from expanding the state park would serve park visitors and provide a critical link for the trail network being planned in Saratoga County as part of the Palmertown Trail (our “Alternative Northway”), linking Moreau Lake State Park with Lincoln State Forest and the Saratoga Spa State Park, and providing opportunities for recreation as well as off-road transportation. The National Realtors Association reports that access to nearby trail systems is a community amenity

highly desired by home buyers, second only to good schools. These lands are among NY's greatest assets, offering beautiful woodlands to visit, hike, camp, and snowmobile, amongst other outdoor activities, for health-conscious tourists, local residents, and companies looking for a location for their employees.

About Saratoga PLAN

Saratoga PLAN, which stands for preserving land and nature, is a nonprofit land trust that works to preserve the rural character, natural habitats and scenic beauty of Saratoga County so that these irreplaceable assets are accessible to all and survive for future generations. For more information, visit www.saratogaplan.org or call 518-587-5554.

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