



Board of Directors

May 10, 2024

Charles Clusen
Chair

Hon. Brad Hoylman-Sigal
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
LOB Room 310
Albany NY 12247

James McMartin Long
Michael Wilson
Vice-Chairs

Barbara Rottier
Secretary

Re: Constitutional Amendment needed to re-purpose the 3 closed correctional facilities in the Forest Preserve

David Quinn
Treasurer

Dear Senator Hoylman-Sigal:

Nancy Bernstein
John Caffry
Andy Coney
Dean Cook
James C. Dawson
Lorraine Duvall
Robert Glennon
Roger Gray
Evelyn Greene
Sidney Harring
Sheila Hutt
Dale Jeffers
Patricia Morrison
John Nemjo
Peter O'Shea
Philip Terrie
Chris Walsh

Senate Bill S27 is on the agenda for the Senate Judiciary Committee's upcoming meeting on May 14, 2024. This bill proposes an amendment to Article 14, Section 1 of the New York State Constitution to authorize the sale of the former state correctional facility (Camp Gabriels) that is located in the Adirondack Forest Preserve in the Town of Brighton, Franklin County. While we are not opposed to this bill, we note that there are now three decommissioned state correctional facilities on Forest Preserve lands. In addition to Camp Gabriels, there are also two others on the Forest Preserve: Moriah Shock Incarceration Correctional Facility in the towns of Moriah and Elizabethtown, Essex County, and Mount McGregor Correctional Facility in the towns of Corinth, Moreau and Wilton, Saratoga County.

Staff

One constitutional amendment could address all three of the closed correctional facilities. Camp Gabriels has been closed since 2009, Mount McGregor since 2014, and Moriah Shock since 2022. The State Police are temporarily using the Mount McGregor facility for training exercises, but this is short-term.

Peter Bauer
Executive Director

Each of the three correctional facilities is sprawling and contains a considerable amount of acreage and an assortment of buildings (see maps enclosed). Camp Gabriels includes roughly 92 acres and 48 buildings. Moriah Shock covers 60 acres and has around 20 buildings. Mount McGregor covers 53 acres and has around 100 buildings and structures. Camp Gabriels and Mount McGregor are linked historically to other state lands. Camp Gabriels was originally part of a much larger purchase, but the prison complex was separated from other Forest Preserve lands, which will remain as Forest Preserve, including a portion of the shoreline of Church Pond. The Mount McGregor prison complex is located adjacent to a historic site and other state

Claudia K. Braymer, Esq.
Deputy Director

Christopher Amato, Esq.
**Conservation Director
and Counsel**

Protect the Adirondacks

PO Box 48, North Creek, NY 12853 518.251.2700

www.protectadks.org info@protectadks.org

Like Us on Facebook and on Instagram/Threads @ProtectAdkPark

lands, such as the historic Grant Cottage, where President U.S. Grant wrote his famous memoir as he was dying of throat cancer, and Lake Bonita in Moreau Lake State Park. The Town of Brighton is interested in gaining access to the Camp Gabriels' water system to create a new water district for local residences in the area around Route 86 where residential wells have been contaminated by road salt pollution.

Protect the Adirondacks supports a Constitutional Amendment to Article 14, Section 1, the famous "Forever Wild" clause, to address all three correctional facilities. Historically, Article 14 constitutional amendments are only pursued when they are needed to solve some kind of problem facing Adirondack communities or administration of the Forest Preserve. We believe that an amendment for these facilities passes both tests for helping communities to provide municipal services and to improve Forest Preserve management.

For local communities, these fully developed sites hold the possibility that they could be repurposed, either by one entity that purchases the facility, or by many entities, public and private, working together. The State could either sell or transfer them to local governments. While closed prisons do not have a strong track record of successful adaptive re-use in New York, the location of Mount McGregor in Saratoga County, long the fastest growing county in the state, and the good condition of all of the buildings at Moriah Shock, which was not organized as a standard prison, but functioned more like an educational campus, hold real possibilities. The location of Camp Gabriels in the Tri-Lakes area of the Adirondacks, arguably the most dynamic neighborhood in the Adirondack Park, also holds promise. In addition to meeting any number of public needs from housing to small business space to non-profit space, repurposing could bring these facilities back onto the tax rolls, which would benefit local governments and schools. The reality, though, is that nothing can happen without a constitutional amendment to free up these facilities for future public or private use.

An amendment would also remove scores of non-conforming buildings from the Forest Preserve and remove inconsistent, incongruent uses. Replacement lands to compensate the Forest Preserve should be part of the amendment, and these new lands would be managed as wildlands and provide public recreational and outdoor experiences. The existence of closed prisons on the Forest Preserve undermines very basic Forever Wild values of wilderness, solitude, outdoor recreation, wildlife protection, and universal openness and accessibility.

A single Constitutional Amendment for all 3 correctional facilities is an investment in Adirondack communities and in the integrity of the Forest Preserve. Draft language for a proposed Constitutional Amendment for the 3 facilities is enclosed. The proposed land is relatively simple, allows future repurposing of three closed prisons and the 205 acres on the Forest Preserve, and compensates the Forest Preserve with 2,500 acres to be purchased by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The 2,500 acres of replacement lands are significantly greater than the 205 acres being removed from the Forest Preserve, which we believe will make the amendment attractive to voters, and the 2,500 acres of replacement lands is the same compensation required by the Mt. Van Hoevenberg Amendment, which received First Passage in 2023.

We encourage the Senate and Assembly to work together with the Executive Chamber to secure first passage of a single Constitutional Amendment for all 3 correctional facilities in 2024. The only way for these closed facilities to be repurposed is through an amendment. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter at any time. Thank you for taking into consideration our proposed solution to this problem facing the Forest Preserve and Adirondack communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Bauer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peter" being more prominent than the last name "Bauer".

Peter Bauer
Executive Director

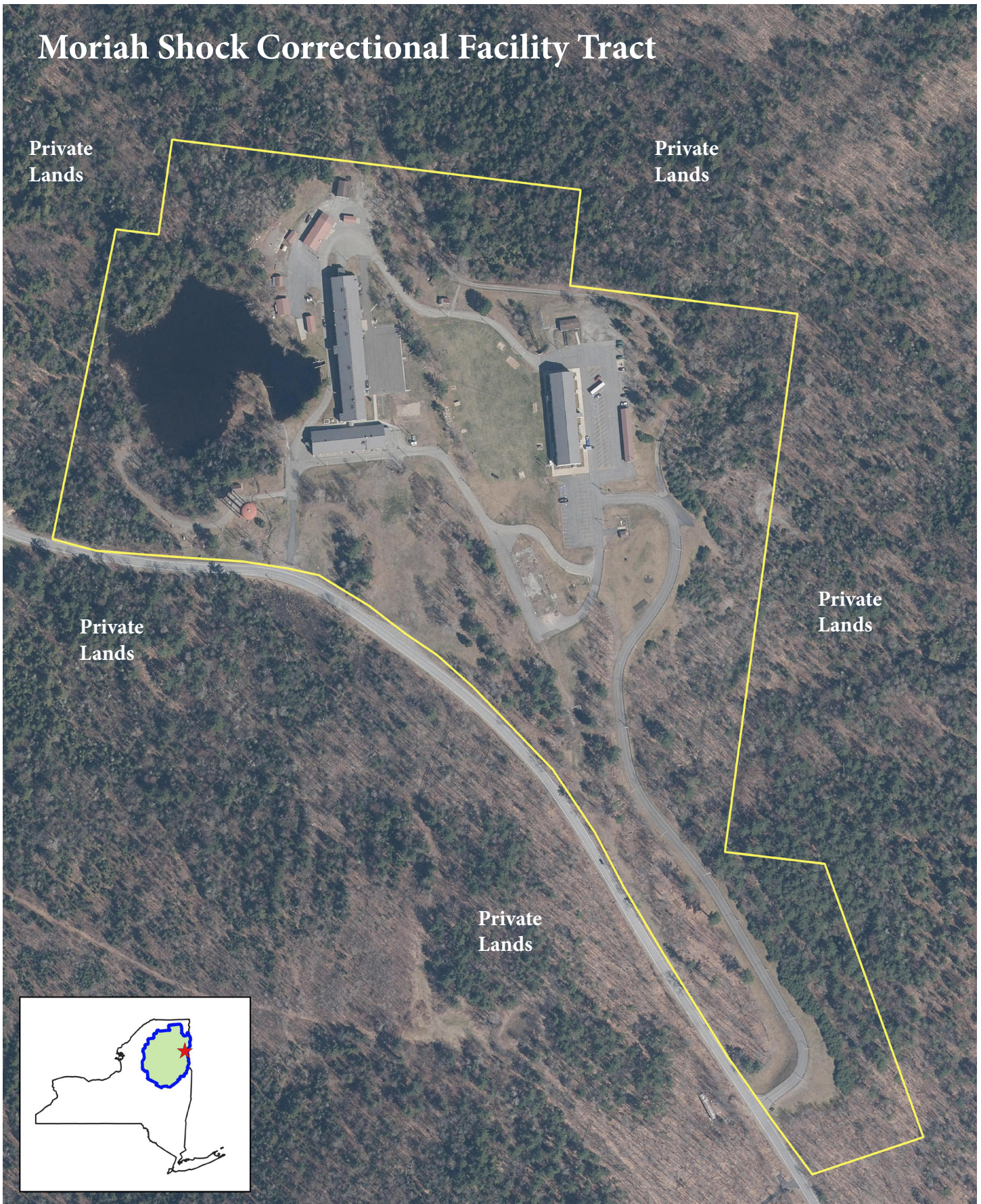
cc: Hon. Pete Harckham, Chair, Senate Committee on Environmental Conservation
Hon. Deborah Glick, Chair, Assembly Committee on Environmental Conservation
Hon. Charles D. Lavine, Chair, Assembly Committee on Judiciary

Camp Gabriels Correctional Facility Tract



The decommissioned Camp Gabriels Correctional Facility in the Town of Brighton, Franklin County, includes 92 acres and more than three dozen buildings.

Moriah Shock Correctional Facility Tract



The decommissioned Moriah Shock Correctional Facility in the Towns of Moriah and Elizabethtown, Essex County, includes 60 acres and more than two dozen buildings.

Mt. McGregor Correctional Facility Tract

Moreau Lake State Park

Moreau Lake State Park

Grant Cottage Facilities

Moreau Lake State Park



The decommissioned Mt. McGregor Correctional Facility in the Towns of Moreau, Wilton, and Corinth in Saratoga County, includes 53 acres and nearly 100 buildings.

DRAFT Article 14 Amendment

Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions and subject to legislative approval prior to transfer of title, three decommissioned state correctional facilities on forest preserve lands totaling approximately two hundred five acres and including various buildings may be conveyed by the state in a public or private sale provided that the state acquires at least two thousand five hundred acres of lands in the Adirondack park for inclusion in the forest preserve that the legislature determines are of equal or greater value. The aforementioned three decommissioned state correctional facilities are Camp Gabriels Correctional Facility in the town of Brighton, Franklin County; Mount McGregor Correctional Facility in the towns of Corinth, Moreau and Wilton, Saratoga County; and Moriah Shock Incarceration Correctional Facility in the towns of Moriah and Elizabethtown, Essex County. Camp Gabriels Correction Facility includes land developed as a private tuberculosis hospital, private college annex and state correctional facility, comprising forty-eight structures on approximately ninety-two acres of land along state route 86, part of lot 78, township 18, Great Tract 1, Macomb's purchase in the town of Brighton, Franklin county. Sufficient water rights on the above-described Camp Gabriels premises shall be held in reserve for the town of Brighton, Franklin county, for the purpose of creating a water district to supply potable water to residents in the area of Easy Street in the hamlet of Gabriels in the town of Brighton whose drinking water wells have been contaminated by road salt. Mount McGregor Correctional Facility includes the land developed as a tuberculosis sanitorium, home for veterans, facility for persons with developmental disabilities and state correctional facility, comprising up to one hundred structures on approximately fifty-three acres of land on Mount McGregor adjacent to Moreau Lake State Park, part of the Kayaderosseras Patent, 18th and 23rd Allotments in the towns of Corinth, Moreau and Wilton, Saratoga county. Moriah Shock Incarceration Correction Facility includes the land developed as a state correctional facility and up to twenty structures on approximately sixty acres of land that is part of the Iron Ore Tracts in the towns of Moriah and Elizabethtown, Essex county. Each of the aforementioned sales shall be subject to the condition that the properties be used for a public purpose after sale and that the revenue derived from each such conveyance be paid into an account of the state to be used solely for acquisition of lands within the Adirondack park to be added to the forest preserve as specified herein.