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July 3, 2024

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Sean Mahar
Interim Commissioner
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway, 14th Floor
Albany, NY. 12233-1010

RE: The New York State 30x30 Act and Updates to the Open Space Conservation Plan

Dear Commissioner Mahar:

Protect the Adirondacks (PROTECT) commends the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for the recent release of the draft New York State 30 by 30 Strategies and Methodologies (strategies report). Release of the draft strategies report marks an important and vital first step in New York's effort to achieve the goal of protecting 30 percent of the state's lands and inland waters by 2030. We look forward to providing input on the draft strategies report during the public comment period.

The draft strategies report estimates that approximately 7,639,505 acres of lands and waters in the state meets the report's definition of protected or conserved and that this translates into an estimate that "approximately 22 percent of New York's lands and waters are considered conserved." Strategies Report at 9-10. This figure agrees with PROTECT's estimate, released in 2023, that approximately 6,220,150 acres of lands and waters in the State—or about 20 percent—is currently protected. *See 20% in 2023: An Assessment of the New York State 30 by 30 Act* (2023). These figures clearly indicate that a substantial land acquisition and protection effort is needed for the State to achieve the 30 by 30 goal.

Concurrent with development of the draft and final strategies report, DEC is now in the process of updating the New York Open Space Conservation Plan (Plan). As you know, the Plan is a comprehensive statewide strategy that guides investment of land acquisition and protection funds from the Environmental Protection Fund. As required by law, the Plan is updated periodically, relying heavily on the work of the nine Regional Advisory

Protect the Adirondacks

PO Box 48, North Creek, NY 12853 518.251.2700

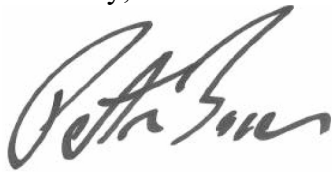
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Committees. These committees are currently meeting to identify categories and specific parcels of lands and waters for acquisition or long-term protection. We believe that the 30 by 30 Act and the Open Space Plan go together in the State's planning for land protection. The 30 by 30 Act should provide the underpinning for updating the Plan by committing the State to an aggressive program of land acquisition and protection necessary to achieve the Act's land protection goals as stated in the recent strategy report for protecting 2.83 million acres across New York.

We therefore respectfully urge DEC to instruct the Regional Advisory Committees to adopt the 30 by 30 goal as the centerpiece of their Plan updates so that the updated Plan can provide the blueprint for how the State will achieve the 30 by 30 Act's goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Bauer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "B".

Peter Bauer
Executive Director

cc: Ashley Dougherty, Assistant Secretary for the Environment
Tom Berkman, DEC Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel
Katie Petronis, Deputy Commissioner for Natural Resources
Fiona Watt, Director, Division of Lands and Forests
DEC Regional Directors
DEC Regional Foresters