

Warren County Board of Supervisors

RESOLUTION NO. 188 OF 2012

Resolution introduced by Supervisors Monroe, Bentley, Thomas, Girard, Sokol, Wood and Frasier

CONFIRMING AND RESTATING RESOLUTION NO. 146 OF 2011 OPPOSING THE FEE PURCHASE OF THE FORMER FINCH AND FOLLENSBY POND LANDS BY THE STATE OF NEW YORK

WHEREAS, by Resolution No. 146 of 2011, the Warren County Board of Supervisors expressed opposition to the proposed fee purchase by New York State of the former Finch and Follensby Pond Timberlands, and

WHEREAS, the Warren County Board of Supervisors desires to confirm and restate Resolution No. 146 of 2011, and

WHEREAS, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) purchased 161,000 acres known as the Finch Pruyn (Finch) Timberlands several years ago with the intent of selling 89,000 acres in conservation easements and 65,000 acres (to be added to the state forest preserve) of said land in fee to the State of New York (State), and

WHEREAS, the State and TNC have recently completed a deal on the 89,000 acre conservation easements that maintain productive forestry practices and enjoy the support of local governments that were directly impacted by providing said communities with several thousand acres in recreational enhancements, and

WHEREAS, the State of New York has indicated its desire to now purchase more than 60,000 acres of the former Finch timberlands and an additional 15,000 acres of the Follensby Pond timberlands in fee from TNC, and

WHEREAS, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) is charged with the responsibility of determining state agency compliance with the Adirondack State Land Master Plan (SLMP) and to engage in a continuing planning process which recognizes matters of local concern, and

WHEREAS, the SLMP provides that: “due to the importance of the forest products industry to the economy of the Adirondack region, bulk acreage purchases in fee should not normally be made where highly productive forest land is involved, unless such land is threatened with development that would curtail its use for forestry purposes or its value for the preservation of open space or wildlife habitat”; and

WHEREAS, the former Finch lands and the Follensby Pond lands are both highly productive forest lands, and neither are threatened with imminent development that would curtail its value of open space, and

WHEREAS, the proposed purchase of the Follensby lands will be partially funded by federal Forest Legacy program funds designed to purchase and protect working forests, and is not designed to fund fee acquisition lands where forestry would be prohibited, and

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WHEREAS, the State is currently facing unprecedented financial challenges, and with the loss of thousands of state jobs the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is unable to properly maintain and manage existing, no less any newly acquired, lands due to staff reductions, and

WHEREAS, fee purchase and Forest Preserve designation of the Finch and Follensby lands by the state will result in the inability of any entity to participate in the carbon sequestration credit market that would provide millions of dollars in desperately needed revenues at a time when people are facing job losses and local governments are cutting vital services, and

WHEREAS, the education of our children and taking care of the less fortunate should be priority one - not more land purchases - particularly when the State already owns millions of acres of Forest Preserve and the role of private conservation groups like TNC should not be as a taxpayer subsidized real estate broker for the state, but rather their well-funded private conservation organization, with billions in assets, should be about land stewardship as advertised, and

WHEREAS, the purchase in fee of the Finch timberlands and Follensby timberlands by the State of New York is expected to have a devastating economic impact as it will result in significant loss of employment and economic opportunities that are vital to the region and its economy, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Warren County Board of Supervisors confirms and restates its strong opposition to the fee purchase of the Finch timberlands and the Follensby Pond timberlands by the State of New York, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Warren County Board of Supervisors requests Governor Cuomo to order a study of the economic and social impacts of state land acquisitions in the Adirondacks before any additional purchases of state lands are authorized, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors be, and hereby is, authorized and directed to forward copies of this resolution to the Twelve Counties of the Adirondacks; Governor Andrew M. Cuomo; Senator Charles E. Schumer; Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand; Congressman Christopher Gibson; Senator Elizabeth O'C. Little; Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward; the Adirondack Park Agency and DEC Commissioner Joe Martens; DEC Region 5 Director Betsy Lowe, and DEC Region 6 Director Judy Drabicki.