



# NEWS

## REGION 4

Albany, Columbia, Delaware, Greene,  
Montgomery, Otsego, Rensselaer,  
Schenectady and Schoharie counties



*Peter M. Iwanowicz, Acting Commissioner*  
*Gene Kelly, Regional Director*

[www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)

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### **RENSELAER PLATEAU ADDED TO FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service has designated the Rensselaer Plateau as a Forest Legacy Area, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced today.

DEC proposed to create a Rensselaer Plateau Forest Legacy Area under the USDA's federal Forest Legacy Program (FLP), a grant program designed to protect forest lands from conversion to non-forest uses. It is administered by DEC in New York State. New York can apply for project specific funding to supplement the State's normal Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) monies typically used for land protection.

"This designation will provide DEC with the ability to assist landowners within the Plateau through financial incentives designed to ensure that property remains dedicated to traditional forest uses, including logging, hunting, trapping, snowmobiling and open space," said Regional Director Gene Kelly.

Authorized in 1990, the federal Forest Legacy Program recognizes that most forested lands in the United States are held in private ownership. Many forest landowners are facing growing financial pressure to convert their lands to uses that would remove them from the forested land base, such as residential and commercial development.

The Rensselaer Plateau is a forested, 196,000-acre plateau in eastern Rensselaer and Columbia counties. It meets the goals of the FLP, including maintaining and enhancing water quality, preventing lands from being converted to non-forest uses and protecting important wildlife habitat.

The plateau is adjacent to the Taconic Ridge Forest Legacy area, where DEC has used FLP funding to protect more than 1,500 acres of land since its inclusion in the program in 1994.

The program is entirely voluntary.

Landowners who choose to participate may either sell their property outright or sell only a portion of their property rights, such as development rights through conservation easements, and still retain ownership of the land. Conservation easements allow the land to remain in private ownership while ensuring that important public values such as wildlife habitat, watershed protection and outdoor recreation opportunities would be protected.

The Rensselaer Plateau was given priority project status in New York State's 1998 and all subsequent Open Space Conservation Plans and includes the fifth largest unfragmented forest in New York. The plateau also includes a portion of the Tomhannock Reservoir Watershed, which provides drinking water to more than 100,000 residents.

The forests of the plateau also generate jobs for the local forest products industry - in the woods and in the region's many mills and wood processing facilities. The plateau also includes several unique wetland communities and impressive mammal diversity not typical of the greater Capital Region, including black bear, fisher, otter,

bobcat, and moose.

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