

Forest Legacy Information

Rensselaer County has significant forest and natural resources that benefit all residents. For that reason, the Rensselaer Plateau was given priority status in the NYS Open Space Conservation Plan for many years. The Forest Legacy Area designation will make the Plateau region eligible for federal funding to purchase conservation easements from willing sellers to protect the resources valued by local residents. This proposal is voluntary and it compensates landowners for protecting the public benefits their land provides. See the link to the DEC fact sheet below. ¹

The Forest Legacy Program gives landowners the flexibility to continue traditional uses, such as timber production, outdoor recreation, habitat protection, and watershed protection. It has worked very well in other places, including in the Towns of Berlin, Petersburg and Stephentown, where conservation agreements were purchased with Forest Legacy Funding to protect the Taconic Crest Trail.

The Forest Legacy Area designation simply makes the area eligible to receive federal funding for voluntary land conservation.

The Forest Legacy Program:

- Is 100% voluntary. Only landowners that choose to participate will participate;
- Places no restrictions on non-participants or towns;
- Encourages participating landowners to retain ownership of their land unless they choose to sell outright;
- Supports a local forest economy that is sustainable into the future;
- Protects important forests and resources from conversion to non-forest uses; and
- Encourages traditional forest uses, including timber harvest and public access for hiking, hunting, snowmobiling.

This program is entirely voluntary. Landowners who sell conservation easements retain ownership of their land and continue to pay property taxes. If the state purchased land they would continue to pay taxes as well. The state pays town, school, fire district, water district taxes on the Pittstown and Tibbits State Forests and the Capital District Wildlife Management Area. NYS law requires that the State pay ALL taxes on its lands in the Towns of Berlin and Stephentown.

Land conservation has been shown to, “be financially beneficial to local governments by reducing the costs for public infrastructure and programs”. ³

¹ View a copy of the DEC fact sheet at http://rensselaerplateau.org/RensselaerPlateau/Public%20Files/DEC_RenssPlat_FactSheet.pdf

² Links to more information can be found at: <http://rensselaerplateau.org/RensselaerPlateau/ForestLegacy.aspx>

³The complete NYS Comptroller’s Open Space Preservation report can be found at <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/environmental/openspacepreserv10.pdf>

This document compiled by the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Inc. For more information visit <http://www.rensselaerplateau.org> or contact us at info@rensselaerplateau.org or (518) 794-9160.