

PARTNERS CONSERVE MORE THAN 900 ACRES ON THE RENSSELAER PLATEAU

Land Deal Protects Drinking Water Supply, Working Forest, and Critical Wildlife Habitats while Creating New Recreation Opportunities

GRAFTON, NY. --- The Rensselaer Plateau Alliance (RPA) acquired 927 acres of working forest with support from The Conservation Fund and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

The Gundrum family, owners of Gundrum Logging and Lumber Inc., is delighted that this land that they have loved for years will be permanently conserved. Siblings Rynard Jr. and Ingrid Gundrum, said: *"We look back at the foresight of our parents, Lois and Rynard Sr., and appreciate how the Gundrum business plan over the last thirty years included purchasing all the smaller parcels that together constitute the 900 acres, and how that really laid the foundation to be able to offer this tract as a protected working forest. Our commitment to sustainable harvesting and responsible forestry kept these individual parcels from being subjected to use that may not have been in the best interest of the forest ecology as a whole. One of the most gratifying aspects of being able to preserve this particular tract of our woodlands is the overwhelming support we've received from many of the landowners from whom we originally purchased some of the parcels, and from neighboring landowners who are as pleased as we are that not only will the land be preserved in its natural state forever, it will remain on Rensselaer County's tax rolls."*

Located next to the Pittstown State Forest, the land purchased from the Gundrum family protects the county's largest drinking water supply as well as wildlife habitat and scenic views. This project implements Rensselaer Plateau Regional Conservation Plan goals to conserve important ecological resources and support economic development through forestry, recreation, and tourism. The plan was developed by the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance in 2013 with significant stakeholder input.

Jim Bonesteel, Executive Director for the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance reported: *"We are very excited to play a role in conserving this land. We are so thankful to the Gundrum family for their vision of conserving this land for future generations and for donating \$50,000 of the land as part of a bargain sale to help make it happen. We appreciate our strong partnerships with NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and The Conservation Fund, without whom we would not have been able to do this."*

Outstanding natural resources and scenic vistas

The Gundrum's land includes significant natural areas identified in the Rensselaer Plateau Regional Conservation Plan, including the unique Slide Mountain and several important wetland ecosystems. It is within the largest intact forest on the plateau and has hundreds of acres of high quality forest ecosystems that are home to a wide variety of wildlife such as moose, bobcat, black bear and many species of amphibians, reptiles and birds. Streams fed from this land provide clean water to the Tomhannock Reservoir, the drinking water supply for 135,000 people in Troy, East Greenbush, North Greenbush, Poestenskill, and Brunswick. Numerous rocky outcroppings provide stunning views of the northern Hudson Valley, Adirondacks and Green Mountains.

Land will continue supporting local economy

RPA purchased the Gundrum family land using bridge financing from The Conservation Fund, a national nonprofit land trust and lender, and will continue to pay property taxes on the land. The land will continue to be managed as working forest, which will support the local forestry economy that generates at least \$9 million annually and sustains 96 jobs, six saw mills, and a heat treated firewood processor. Looking ahead, RPA intends to hold the property until potential future acquisition by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. If the state does acquire the property, it would add this land to the Pittstown State Forest, and it would pay school, town and fire district taxes on the parcel, and sustainable timber harvesting would be allowed.

Conserving this land benefits everyone in Rensselaer County. County Executive Kathy Jimino stated: *"This is a big win for Rensselaer County as the conservation of this important land will benefit future generations of residents and visitors, protect the quality of our water, expand recreational opportunities, and support our local economy as timber harvesting will continue to benefit our local sawmills. I thank all the parties involved for considering all of the impacts including the economic impact of this conservation."*

New recreation opportunities

The land will be open to the public, which will provide new recreation opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Many miles of logging roads will form the basis of a trail network on the land. All forms of recreation that are currently allowed in the Pittstown State Forest—hiking, mountain biking, snowmobiling, hunting, etc.—will be extended to this land. Outdoor recreation draws 300,000 visitors to the Plateau annually to hike, bike, fish, hunt, snowmobile, and ski, adding \$2.8 million to the local economy and supporting 84 local jobs.

DEC Region 4 Director Keith Goertz said: *“The Rensselaer Plateau has been a priority in the state’s open space plan since 1998 because of its large, working forests, unique wetlands, forest bird diversity, and its potential to connect with other protected lands. If this tract were to become part of the Pittstown state forest as envisioned, it would nearly double the size of the forest and provide expanded public recreational opportunities such as hiking, skiing, wildlife watching, hunting, and fishing.”*

About the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance

The Rensselaer Plateau Alliance works with the community to promote and facilitate the conservation of the Plateau’s forests and important wildlife areas. An alliance of diverse organizations and individuals, we share a common vision that 100 years from now the Plateau remains a large forest that still provides enough clean water for thousands of people, habitat for wildlife, support for the local economy, and many other benefits.

For more information visit <http://www.rensselaerplateau.org/> or contact Jim Bonesteel at (518) 712-9211

About the Conservation Fund

The Conservation Fund is a national environmental organization that makes conservation work for America. By creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense, the Fund is redefining conservation to demonstrate its essential role in our future prosperity. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states since 1985 to protect more than 7.8 million acres of land. For more information, visit www.conservationfund.org.