



## Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization

*Intermunicipal cooperation for watershed protection*

April 24, 2024

The Honorable Governor Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
NYS Capitol Building  
Albany NY 12224

To the Honorable Governor Hochul,

The Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (CWIO) brings watershed municipalities together to work collectively and collaboratively on monitoring, protecting, and restoring the health of the watershed. CWIO works with municipalities and our non-profit partners to identify water quality threats, recommend actions and strategies to address these threats, and take actions to protect and preserve the watershed. CWIO strongly supports the work of the Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT) and other organizations that purchase lands important to the protection of water quality, such as vegetated land buffers to waterways throughout the watershed, important wetlands which absorb and filter stormwaters, and sloping lands that when left wooded help prevent erosion of soils and nutrients into waterways.

CWIO supports the Finger Lakes Land Trust's request to improve the pace of acquisition of conservation land by the State of New York. More specifically, we support the call to increase staffing in the Real Property Bureau and the Office of General Counsel at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) while continuing to fully fund the Environmental Protection Fund.

The Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT) has a backlog of land acquisition projects with the state of New York. FLLT today owns 19 properties with a market value of more than six million dollars that are awaiting transfer to the State of New York. While some are recent purchases, one of the properties has been awaiting transfer since 2012. The FLLT is not alone in this regard. New York land trusts are currently holding over 100,000 acres of land that was acquired upon the request of the state, with a market value of over \$150 million.

CWIO is also contacting NYS Attorney General Letitia James requesting an improved pace of the acquisition of conservation land not only with the above requests, but to also consider allowing title insurance as a means of achieving marketable titles to these lands as is allowed in other state and federal land acquisition programs.

Thank you for your consideration.

*Roxanna Johnston*

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cc:

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Senator Rachel May  
Senator Tom O'Mara  
Senator Lea Webb  
Assemblyman Jeff Gallahan  
Assemblywoman Anna Kelles  
Assemblyman Philip Palmesano