

State Environmental Officials Gather to Celebrate Land Conservation Agreement that Protects Thousands of Acres

Pact is latest step in redevelopment of A.D. Makepeace lands

PLYMOUTH - Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles and Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Mary Griffin joined state legislators, land conservation advocates and representatives of the A.D. Makepeace Company to celebrate the preservation of thousands of acres of critical habitat and open space in southeastern Massachusetts that clears the way for an innovative eco-friendly smart growth development project.

DFG and A.D. Makepeace Company, the world's largest cranberry grower and the largest private landowner in eastern Massachusetts, reached an agreement on the land conservation project in April.

The three-phase land deal, which involves a purchase by the state of 160 acres in Plymouth and Wareham and two long-term options to purchase thousands of other acres that will be protected under conservation restrictions, and will support smart growth development projects that Makepeace is pursuing elsewhere on its properties. Makepeace is also considering plans to install wind turbines to support its own operations, and evaluating the possibility of a sizeable wind farm in a remote location.

"This agreement protects important habitat forever at the same time that it enables development to move forward, creating jobs and growth," said Secretary Bowles. "A.D. Makepeace is demonstrating a new model for creative, environmentally sensitive development."

"The Pine Barrens habitat supports a variety of rare species, including the Northern Red-bellied cooter (a rare turtle), declining shrub land birds such as Brown Thrasher, Prairie Warbler and Whip-poor will, and a variety of rare insects and freshwater mussels," said DFG Commissioner Mary Griffin. "The Department and the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife look forward to pursuing a more extensive conservation plan with Makepeace, local communities, and the land conservation community over the next 30 years."

"The Makepeace family and our Board of Directors determined early on that this land was important and warranted a creative approach to development, and working together, we all achieved that," said Michael P. Hogan, president and CEO of the A.D. Makepeace Company.

Hogan credits the Plymouth Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, and the town's professional staff who worked so diligently to craft a bylaw which made this plan possible, as well as organizations like The Nature Conservancy, Mass Audubon and Wildlands Trust.

"The commitment made by A.D. Makepeace and the Commonwealth strikes the right balance and is an example of how protecting our environment and promoting smart growth are not mutually exclusive," said Senate President Therese Murray (D-Plymouth). "The ability to balance environmental conservation and preservation with development is critical to the future of our area and the Commonwealth."

Funds for the Commonwealth's land conservation program come from the \$1.7 billion Energy and Environment Bond Bill passed in 2008. Governor Deval Patrick has made a historic commitment of resources for land conservation, with the Patrick Administration devoting more than \$50 million per year for open space in fiscal years 2008 and 2009. Overall EEA and its agencies protected more than 20,000 acres - up from about 14,000 in FY 08 - with the \$50 million dedicated to land conservation and parks by the Governor.

Included in the first-phase purchase is land near Halfway Pond in Plymouth and the Maple Springs property in Wareham. The second phase of the project involves a 20-year option to acquire Makepeace property along the Agawam River corridor. Makepeace is currently in the process of developing its mixed-use River Run project on a portion of this property, but other portions will be protected and managed under permit from the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program and conservation restrictions. Covering more than 1,000 acres, this is the largest area ever protected by a conservation management permit of the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Other rare species supported in the area include New England Blazing Star, a plant with purple flowers, and the Barren's Buckmoth.

The third stage of the conservation effort involves a 30-year option to purchase several thousand acres of environmentally sensitive land west of Myles Standish State Forest in an area known as "Frogfoot," as well as a block of land south of the forest called Maple Springs North, should Makepeace decide to pursue development opportunities on any of its property in that area.

A.D. Makepeace has also committed to implement and provide funding for long-term management of the protected Pine Barrens, maintaining habitat for rare species while reducing the risk of uncontrollable large-scale wildfires. In addition, Makepeace has agreed to support a Pine Barrens monitoring and research project in southeastern Massachusetts.

These conservation plans, in combination with Makepeace's River Run and Tihonet mixed-use and commercial developments, are made possible by Plymouth's Transfer of Development Rights Bylaw, under which permanent protection of environmentally significant open space allows for denser development elsewhere. This innovative "smart growth" approach both preserves important natural habitats and concentrates development where it is most appropriate.

DFG and MassWildlife's land conservation program targets the most ecologically valuable habitats in Massachusetts, and utilizes state open space bond funds and revenue from the Wildlands stamp for land purchases. The Wildlands stamp is funded by a \$5 charge on the sale of fishing, hunting, and sporting licenses sold in Massachusetts, providing more than \$1 million a year for the protection of open space. By the end of this fiscal year, DFG expects to have protected approximately 10,000 acres at a cost of about \$13.2 million. In fiscal year 2008, DFG protected 6,225 acres at a total cost of \$11.2 million. MassWildlife now manages approximately 180,000 acres of conservation land.

For more information on the Commonwealth's land conservation efforts, click [here](#) and [here](#).

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is responsible for promoting the enjoyment and conservation of the Commonwealth's natural resources. DFG carries out this mission through land preservation and wildlife habitat management, management of inland and marine fish and game species, and enforcement of the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. DFG promotes enjoyment of the Massachusetts environment through outdoor skills workshops, fishing festivals and other educational programs, and by enhancing access to the Commonwealth's lakes and ponds.