

## Patrick-Murray Administration Expands State Conservation Lands by Nearly 850 Acres

New Twining Lake property in Tolland expands a state forest, provides wilderness recreational opportunities, and protects important wildlife habitat

[Link to map.](#) 

BOSTON - The Patrick-Murray Administration today advanced its unprecedented commitment to land conservation, announcing the acquisition of a stunning 843-acre parcel in Tolland that features an 81-acre lake and extensive forest habitat, and abuts a 4,000-acre existing state forest.

In acquiring the Twining Lake property, the Commonwealth seized an rare opportunity to purchase a large, unfragmented interior forest - protecting it from future development. The acquisition, which greatly expands Tolland State Forest, is the largest state land acquisition since 2008 and was completed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) this week. It expands a mosaic of undeveloped and protected land in the area, comprising 5,000 acres of mountains, forest, streams, and wetlands.

"What we protect is just as important as what we build," said Governor Deval Patrick. "In pursuing this opportunity, the Commonwealth turned an economic downturn to its advantage, preserving a beautiful forest at a great price to taxpayers, while increasing the conservation legacy we are leaving for future generations."

DCR purchased 782 of the 843 acres in Tolland from Twining Lake Properties, Inc. for \$3 million in capital funds - significantly less than the land's estimated value of \$5 million. A conservation restriction on an additional 61 acres was conveyed to the agency at no cost, protecting the property from development in perpetuity. Equal the size of 17 Boston Commons, the parcel was scheduled to be sold by auction last fall, and DCR worked closely together with the sellers, town of Tolland officials and other parties to secure the property.

"Protecting the integrity of large forest blocks is critical to protecting the present and future biodiversity of the state, providing recreational opportunities and conserving open space," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Richard K. Sullivan Jr., whose office includes DCR. "Under the leadership of the Patrick-Murray Administration, the state has taken action to permanently protect more than 75,000 acres of land - the equivalent of 54 acres per day - since 2007."

"This acquisition furthers the Patrick-Murray Administration's commitment to expanding public access to parks and conservation land, improving the quality of life for residents and visitors, and making Massachusetts a premiere destination for outdoor pursuits," said DCR Commissioner Edward M. Lambert Jr. "We appreciate the seller and the town of Tolland's commitment to long-term conservation, which is demonstrated by Twining Lakes' decision to make this property a part of the state park system."

"I am so pleased the Patrick-Murray Administration has acquired this property, further expanding the state's conservation lands," said Sen. Marc R. Pacheco, co-chair of the

Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture. "While economic development opportunities that create jobs are crucial to Massachusetts economy, we also need to be vigilant of the state's overall environment and acquiring this property will help ensure Massachusetts continues to protect important wilderness land for our residents to appreciate and for our wildlife to thrive."

"I am pleased the Patrick Administration has demonstrated a commitment to preserving valuable land here in Western Massachusetts," said Sen. Michael Knapik. "Tolland is the quintessential New England small-town and I am pleased that the Commonwealth has invested in maintaining the natural beauty of this special place."

"This is wonderful news. I applaud the DCR and the Governor for their continued commitment to preserving and protecting our natural beauty," said Rep. William "Smitty" Pignatelli. "When we lose these precious lands, they are gone forever."

The Twining Lake property is exemplary of DCR's strategy to pursue parcels of land surrounding and in proximity to existing protected forests and parkland. It offers excellent connections to other DCR properties such as Tolland State Forest, and contains large areas of "prime forest soils" - areas that will grow large, tall and diverse forests that offers excellent wildlife habitat. Large protected blocks also reduce the movement of invasive species which pose a threat to Massachusetts forests and wildlife. In addition, until the DCR's purchase, the property contained one of very few large, unprotected lakes left in the state with an undeveloped shoreline.

"Large, unfragmented tracts like this one support wide-ranging wildlife species such and bear and moose and reduce the stress of habitat fragmentation, a significant threat to endangered and threatened wildlife species," said Department of Fish and Game Commissioner Mary Griffin.

Features of the Twining Lake property include:

- approximately 2,700 feet of frontage on the Farmington River, one of the state's most pristine river, along its westerly boundary, as well as a few unnamed streams and wetland areas;
- a central location in a very large forest block, with most of the property identified as interior forest habitat;
- more than 6,000 feet of frontage on Twining Lake, a fairly shallow water body with one large island and a few small islands, which is fed by several streams and springs flowing from surrounding wetlands and marshy areas;
- existing trails throughout the property provide pond access and wilderness-style recreational opportunities for hiking, fishing and kayaking and canoeing;
- connected by water and adjacent to several large unfragmented parcels, representing landscape-scale conservation greatly expanding Tolland State Forest;
- excellent habitat for a variety of large mammals, and interior forest nesting bird species;
- four hilltops forested with a variety of hardwoods, pine and hemlock, and a stream leading from Twining Lake to the Farmington River - a fast flowing, rocky-bottomed river with excellent water quality;

- designated as a "Critical Natural Landscape" by [DFGs BioMap 2](#) , representing the largest, and least fragmented forests in the state.

The largest recent private land acquisitions by the Commonwealth include the DCR acquisitions of an 883-acre parcel in Fitchburg in 2008 and a 900-acre parcel in Sandisfield in 2007.

As a result of Governor Patrick's unprecedented commitment to land conservation - including investment of \$50 million in capital funds annually -- the amount of protected open space recently passed the 1.2 million acre mark, for the first time exceeding the amount of developed land in Massachusetts.

Over the past four years, Patrick-Murray Administration investments have created or restored over 114 parks, many in underserved neighborhoods within the Commonwealth's 51 cities. These parks provide a new or improved place for outdoor recreation for an anticipated 1 million visits per year, more than half of these to the newly created parks. In addition, more than 14,000 of the acres conserved have been pristine habitat within the ten Habitat Reserves representing among the best large natural landscapes left in the state.