



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

## **Agreement Reached to Preserve Bell Station in Lansing, Tompkins County**

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New York State Electric & Gas Corp. (NYSEG) has agreed to cancel an October 11 auction of 470 acres of undeveloped land on the east side of Cayuga Lake in

Lansing, Tompkins County. Known as Bell Station, the property includes 3,400 feet of pristine shoreline and is the largest privately owned shoreline in the Finger Lakes. Efforts will now advance to preserve the property for the benefit of all those who love the Finger Lakes.

Senator Helming was among those who advocated for the property's preservation. See her letter to Governor Hochul above.

**Senator Pam Helming said,** "This is welcome news for the thousands of residents across our region who will be able to enjoy this pristine area of Cayuga Lake's shoreline for generations to come. I was proud to join with so many dedicated people and organizations to achieve this outcome. Thank you to Supervisor Ed LaVigne and the Town of Lansing, Tompkins County, Finger Lakes Land Trust and Executive Director Andy Zepp, Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization, and my many Lansing constituents for their advocacy. Thank you to the Public Service Commission, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and NYSEG. And thank you especially to Governor Hochul for listening to our concerns and recommendations, and taking action on a solution that benefits the community and preserves this remarkably diverse natural resource we are so fortunate to have."

**Governor Kathy Hochul said,** "Bell Station Landing is the largest privately-owned shoreline in the Finger Lakes region, and as we contend with the consequences of humans' impact on our environment, we must consider ways to protect and preserve this unique property for future generations. I thank NYSEG for stepping up and being a good corporate citizen by willingly agreeing to cancel the land auction. Private development could have irreparably damaged this environmentally sensitive property, and if the auction proceeded, the opportunity to preserve the land for conservation and public access could have been lost forever."

Over the past few weeks, dozens of local property owners, environmental groups, and elected officials have reached out to Governor Hochul's office asking her to intervene to prevent the auction and to explore avenues to protect the property. With the agreement to cancel the auction secured, Governor Hochul is now directing the Department of Public Service (DPS), the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to facilitate permanent protection of this parcel and maximize public access.

**Carl A. Taylor, President and CEO of NYSEG and RG&E said,** "NYSEG has long preferred that this parcel of land be conserved, and I thank Governor Hochul, Chair Howard, Commissioner Seggos, and Commissioner Kulleseid for their collaboration and support in resolving this matter. As a resident of the Finger Lakes region for more than 30 years, I understand the importance of caring for our natural resources and being a good corporate citizen. Building sustainable communities in the areas we serve continues to be a priority for our company and this decision will benefit the conservation efforts in the Finger Lakes region for years to come."

Cayuga Lake is a critical resource for drinking water, tourism, and recreation in the region. Preserving Bell Station Landing will help protect critical habitat for plants and wildlife, and greatly enhance public recreation opportunities by providing direct shoreline access to the east side of Cayuga Lake, which is 90 percent privately owned. The lake supports incredible sport fisheries, including largemouth bass, chain pickerel, northern pike, crappie, yellow perch, sunfish, gar, and bowfin. Cayuga Lake is also designated as an Important Bird Area by New York Audubon and supports a large and diverse population of waterfowl and other birds, particularly during migration and winter. Increased access to unique areas like this provide important economic opportunities to local communities to capitalize on the growing popularity of outdoor recreation, while also protecting the natural buffers that protect water quality. In particular, protecting the lake from lakeshore development and erosion will protect water quality in a public drinking water supply and help reduce the threat of harmful algal blooms.

**John B. Howard, CEO of the Department of Public Service, said,** "As a native of the Finger Lakes region, I am very much aware of the need to preserve open spaces in the Finger Lakes and preserve unique areas from private development. Given the important environmental value of this property, we appreciate NYSEG's willingness to cancel the auction and look for a way to ensure the property is protected."

**Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos said,** "Working together, private and public partners can protect our natural resources and increase sustainable public access to these special places. I'm grateful for Governor Hochul's efforts to preserve the Bell Station parcel and DEC looks forward to working with the Finger Lakes Land Trust to conserve Bell Station for future generations of visitors to experience and enjoy."

**State Parks Commissioner Erik Kulleseid said,** "Conservation of Bell Station Landing is a rare opportunity to preserve water quality in Cayuga Lake, expand access for public recreation, and protect Taughannock State Park's viewshed. We look forward to working with DPS and DEC on this important conservation effort."

**Assemblymember Anna Kelles said,** "I want to thank Governor Hochul, the DPS, DEC, OPRHP and NYSEG for their commitment to preserve Bell Station, a truly beautiful stretch of undeveloped land with 3,400 feet of pristine shoreline on the east side of Cayuga Lake with wooded hillsides, cascading waterfalls, critical bird habitat, and rare threatened plant species. Cayuga Lake is one of the last remaining fresh water reserves in the world. Preserving the forestlands will not only protect the lake from land erosion runoff and negative impacts of shoreline septic systems but will preserve the land for tourism and ecological education. I want to thank our community for their powerful advocacy and ongoing stewardship of our natural resources and environment."

**Finger Lakes Land Trust Executive Director Andrew Zepp said,** "This is terrific news for the Finger Lakes. We are grateful to the leadership of Governor Kathy Hochul, DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos, Public Service Commission Chair John Howard, and State Parks Commissioner Erik Kulleseid for helping to ensure the future of this lakeside gem. All residents of the region and the state will benefit from the conservation of this special place."

**Tompkins County Legislature Chairwoman Leslyn McBean-Clairborne said,** "We deeply appreciate Governor Hochul's efforts to ensure this beautiful property is preserved for public use and are grateful to NYSEG for their commitment to working with the local community on appropriate and beneficial use for this property. Future generations of New York State and Finger Lakes residents will hopefully be able to enjoy this land and its natural resources for many years to come."

DEC and the Finger Lakes Land Trust have proposed acquiring the land and creating a public wildlife management area on the lakeshore portion of the property. Bell Station is recognized as a priority project in New York State's Open Space Plan and designated as "future public access conservation land" in the Town of Lansing Comprehensive Plan.