

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACTS:

Carrie Stickan, Communications and Outreach Coordinator
Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy
(518) 436-6346 / carrie@mohawkhudson.org

Wendy Craney, Communications Director
Albany Pine Bush Preserve
(518) 456-0655 / wcraney@AlbanyPineBush.org

Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy adds more land to the Albany Pine Bush Preserve in alliance with local municipal and non-profit partners.

COLONIE, NY (April 11, 2023) The globally-rare Albany Pine Bush Preserve is expanding with a recent acquisition of 8.3 acres in the Town of Colonie by the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy (MHLC). The property was acquired by MHLC through a collaboration with Albany County that helps to identify and preserve tax-foreclosed parcels with ecological significance.

MHLC began adding lands to the Albany Pine Bush Preserve in 2016 and, to date, has protected more than 74 acres of this nationally recognized location. A management agreement between MHLC and the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission (APBPC) helps assure the long-term stewardship of lands within the preserve. In a joint effort to restore this important habitat, MHLC works with the Commission, Albany County, other area partners, and willing landowners to acquire and protect these lands.

This is the first direct connection between the Albany Pine Bush Preserve and the Schenectady County Pine Barrens, also known as the Woodlawn Preserve. The property will be managed by the APBPC with access provided by a cooperative agreement with the City of Schenectady who owns the 135-acre Woodlawn Preserve. Additionally, the Friends of the Pine Bush Community provided financial support to offset the closing and legal costs associated with the acquisition. For the last several years, the APBPC has been working with the City of Schenectady and Friends of the Woodlawn Preserve to help manage recreation and improve habitat of this remnant pine barrens in Schenectady County.

Since 1988, with the creation of the APBPC, over 3,400 acres, spanning three municipalities, have been permanently protected as part of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve. However, more remains to be done. The APBPC still needs to protect an additional 2,000 acres in order to assure the viability of the ecosystem. Protecting the land is just the start of making a healthy pine barrens. The specialized plants and animals there are fire-dependent, so the APBPC uses prescribed fire as well a variety of other tools to conserve this distinct local treasure.

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve is not complete; neighbors can connect with the APBPC to learn more on how to help protect additional land as well as support the restoration of this outstanding National Natural Landmark. The Albany Pine Bush Preserve is the largest open space area in the immediate Capital

District, with a future goal of 5,380 acres. The APBPC works with willing sellers with additional properties that can be protected and added to the preserve.

“I’m excited to say that our 3,400-acre preserve just got bigger thanks to an important partnership between Albany County, the Pine Bush Preserve Commission, and the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy. Environmental protection and conservation continue to be top priorities of mine, and this preserve allows us to safeguard countless rare or even endangered wildlife species, including the Karner blue butterfly,” **said Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy**. “While there is still much work to do to continue expanding this National Natural Landmark, today is another important step forward.”

“We’re pleased to be a part of this effort to conserve the rare inland pine barrens shared by our two adjacent counties.” **said City of Schenectady Mayor McCarthy**. “The Woodlawn Preserve is an ecological gem in our city, and we look forward to continuing to work with our colleagues to connect to this important area.”

Mark King, Executive Director of the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy said, “The Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy is thrilled to work with our many partners to establish this connection between the Albany Pine Bush Preserve and the Woodland Preserve. We often focus on political boundaries between communities such as towns and counties, yet ecological systems operate under very different circumstances. Maintaining open space and connections within ecological systems is critical to their health and long-term survival.”

Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission Executive Director Christopher Hawver said, “This is a great story of six partners coming together for a common goal, including Albany County, the City of Schenectady, the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy, our Friends group and Friends of Woodlawn Preserve. We’re incredibly thankful for the cooperative effort and enthusiasm that everyone put into this project and it’s an excellent example of the importance of environmental protection here in our region.”

“The Friends of the Pine Bush Community are thrilled to be able to support the ongoing protection of the unique habitat in the Albany Pine Bush. We manage a Land Protection Fund in a special reserve account so that we are always ready to help acquire land. Neighbors to the preserve are invited to join the Friends and donate to this fund to assure the survival of this ecosystem into the future”, **said Don Allard, President of Friends of the Pine Bush Community**.

“Friends of the Woodlawn Preserve are celebrating the first direct connection of our pine barrens preserves. We’re looking forward to continuing our strong relationship with the City of Schenectady and the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission to manage and protect some of the best remaining examples of an inland pitch pine-scrub oak barrens ecosystem in the world”, **said Janet Chen, President of Friends of the Woodlawn Preserve**.

The Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy (MHLC) is a nonprofit conservation organization conserving and stewarding the lands and waters of the Mohawk and Hudson River Valleys for people and the environment in Albany, Schenectady, and Montgomery counties. Since its founding in 1992, the Conservancy has protected more than 14,000 acres of land, including over 2,500 acres open to the public for hiking, cross-country skiing, and other educational and recreational opportunities. To learn more, visit www.mohawkhudson.org.

The 3,400+ - acre Albany Pine Bush Preserve (APBP), located in New York’s Capital District, protects one of the best remaining inland pitch pine-scrub oak barrens in the world. This extraordinary fire-dependent ecosystem provides habitat for many plants and animals, including more than 20 percent of New York State’s wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need, such as the endangered Karner blue butterfly. The APBP is a National Natural Landmark, Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area,

National Recreation Trail Site, a New York State Unique Area, Birding Trail Site, Bird Conservation Area, and a National Audubon Society Important Bird Area. Characterized by rolling sand dunes and over 20 miles of trails, the APBP offers visitors many recreational opportunities including hiking, bird watching, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, mountain biking, hunting, fishing and canoeing. The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission is a public-private partnership created by the NYS Legislature in 1988 to protect and manage the APBP and provide the public with educational and recreational opportunities. The Management Plan for the APBP guides all aspects of expanding and managing the preserve. The Commission's goal is a preserve of 5,380 acres.

As the gateway to the Pine Bush, the Discovery Center at 195 New Karner Road, Albany, is a "green" certified interpretive center where visitors come to understand why the Pine Bush is rare and special. A visit to this unique destination is an exciting exploration where learning comes naturally through interactive exhibits, an outdoor Discovery Trail, and numerous programs on the ecology, natural history, cultural history and management of the Pine Bush. Admission to the Discovery Center is free (there is a fee for some programs). The center is open daily weekdays 9am-4pm and weekends 10am-4pm. For more information, visit www.AlbanyPineBush.org or call 518-456-0655.

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In addition to the press release, please find the attached images:

8.3-acre parcel with ecological significance has been added to the Albany Pine Bush Preserve

Spring Peeper at the Albany Pine Bush, photo credit Jake Humm

Barred Owl looking down, Albany Pine Bush Preserve, photo credit MAKosek

Rue anemone photo credit Albany Pine Bush Preserve



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