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Land Conservation Agreement Will Protect Thousands of Acres, Support 'Smart Growth' and Wind Energy Projects *Pact is latest step in redevelopment of A.D. Makepeace lands*

BOSTON – An initial agreement to preserve thousands of acres of critical habitat and open space – and clear the way for an innovative eco-friendly smart growth development project – in southeastern Massachusetts has been reached between the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game and A.D. Makepeace Company, the world's largest cranberry grower and the largest private landowner in eastern Massachusetts, Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles announced today.

The three-phase land deal, which involves purchase by the state agency 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 in the meantime, 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 is the full package – with land conservation where it matters most, development concentrated where it makes the most sense, and renewable energy where the resource is available, A.D. Makepeace is demonstrating a new model for creative, environmentally sensitive development,” said Secretary Bowles. “Today, we cap more than a decade of collaboration and negotiation between the Commonwealth and one of our largest landowners. The agreement will protect important habitat forever at the same time that it enables development to move forward, creating jobs and growth.”

“The company, and the Makepeace family, are fully committed to preserving this property, despite its appeal for development,” said Michael P. Hogan, president and CEO of the A.D. Makepeace Company. “We believe that the proximity of conservation land to our River Run village will enhance the value of the village, while the transaction helps the Commonwealth to achieve its land conservation goals.”

Hogan credited the Plymouth Planning Board and conservation advocacy groups, including The Nature Conservancy, Six Ponds Association, Wildlands Trust, Mass Audubon, and the Wareham Land Trust for their support of the TDR bylaw which made the innovative River Run plan possible.

Under a three-part agreement finalized today, the Department of Fish and Game will purchase 160 acres from Makepeace for \$3.4 million, and also obtain options to purchase land that will be held under conservation restrictions required by endangered species permits. Included in the purchase is land near Halfway Pond in Plymouth and the Maple Springs property in Wareham. The funds derive from the \$1.7 billion Energy and Environment Bond Bill enacted last year, and are part of the Patrick Administration's five-year capital plan.

"These are ecologically important properties in Pine Barrens habitat that supports a variety of rare species, including the Northern Red-bellied cooter, Eastern Box Turtle, and a variety of rare insects and freshwater mussels," said Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Commissioner Mary Griffin. "This acquisition sets the stage for a much more extensive conservation plan we will pursue in cooperation with Makepeace, local communities, and the land conservation community over the next 30 years."

The second phase 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 DFG's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program and conservation restrictions. Covering more than 1,000 acres, the endangered species permit is the largest area ever protected by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Rare species supported in the area include New England Blazing Star and the Barren's Buckmoth, as well as declining shrub land birds such as the Brown Thrasher, Prairie Warbler, and Whip-poor-will.

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.

Hogan credited the Plymouth Planning Board and conservation advocacy groups, including The Nature Conservancy, Six Ponds Association, Wildlands Trust, Mass Audubon, and the Wareham Land Trust, for their support of the Transfer of Development Rights Bylaw, which made the River Run plan possible.

Makepeace is also considering plans to install several wind turbines on its properties, to power its agricultural operations, support its 1,175-unit mixed-use River Run development in Plymouth, and also a potential larger installation in an interior portion of its properties.

"Finding a balance between development and conservation is critical to the future of our communities. This is the kind of agreement that is going to meet the future needs of our community while, at the same time, protect wilderness and species that make our area unique," said Senate President Therese Murray. "I am pleased that the Commonwealth and Makepeace have been able to make the commitment to our environment, conservation and smart growth."

“This is one of the best land deals the Commonwealth has ever made,” said Bernie McHugh, coordinator of the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition. “This is fabulous. It is a great expression of Governor Patrick’s commitment to biological diversity and natural heritage protection.”

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