



**NEW YORK STATE
ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.**
For the Birders and Birds of the Empire State since 1948

Mr. Charles Gilchrist
Division of Mineral Resources
NY State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway, 3rd Floor
Albany, NY 12233-6500

July 17, 2005

Dear Mr. Gilchrist,

I am writing to express the concerns of the NY State Ornithological Assoc. regarding the proposal to lease state forest lands for oil and gas exploration in central New York and specifically in Bear Swamp State Forest.

While oil and gas exploration and extraction may be an appropriate use of state land under well-controlled and regulated circumstances, those areas of particular ecological value should be excluded from this activity. Bear Swamp provides habitat for a wide array of wildlife, including several bird species that are on various lists of conservation concern. In addition, it contains valuable and rare wetland habitat types and unique and rare flora.

Bear Swamp helps protect the waters of adjacent Skaneateles Lake, a public water supply for the Syracuse area that does not currently require filtration due to its purity.

The area is also a popular recreation area for a number of uses, including birding and other nature study. It has been given Important Bird Area status by the National Audubon Society due to its assemblage of at risk species.

It would be difficult if not impossible to avoid negatively impacting these critical values of the area during energy exploration and extraction. We urge the Department of Environmental Conservation to recognize the importance of Bear Swamp and remove it from the list of areas under consideration for these activities.

Sincerely,

Andrew Mason, Conservation Co-chair