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Boy Scout Council Explores Marketing of Staten Island Camp Property To Ensure Financial Stability of Youth Development Programs

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Citing financial stress, the Greater New York Councils' Board of Directors has approved the marketing of Camp Pouch for full or partial sale, with ongoing efforts to secure a conservation easement the preferred arrangement for Scouts and the community. The camp is one of only two key assets that can be strategically leveraged to ensure the Council's financial stability, as necessitated by steep declines in corporate and community funding amid rising operational and outreach costs.

William H. Pouch Scout Camp is wholly owned by the Greater New York Councils, Boy Scouts of America without restrictions. The property encompasses 120.7 acres, including the 20-acre Ohrbach Lake. The entire property is located within the Staten Island Greenbelt and is primarily used by island residents.

Ongoing economic and fundraising conditions have presented the Council with an unprecedented financial challenge. The Board of Directors is exploring all assets to increase liquidity while minimizing disruption to its mission of delivering Scouting to young people. The Council serves a diverse population of children throughout the five boroughs, providing substantial financial assistance to low-income families to ensure that no child is turned away from a quality program and camping opportunities.

In discussions with the Staten Island Greenbelt Conservancy and city, state, and federal elected and appointed officials, the Boy Scouts have sought a conservation easement at Pouch Scout Camp, which would preserve the camp land as green space in perpetuity.

The Scouts seek to relinquish their rights to develop the property through the proposed conservation easement, which would permanently preserve the land as open space and prevent the potential of housing or commercial development. An easement would be a mutually beneficial agreement to ensure that the land remains an outdoor activity/camping area for both Scouts and the community.

The Council has made a series of decisions to ensure its future strength and high quality of service to youth as it celebrates its 100th Anniversary in February 2010. The Council has taken prudent cost-saving steps, including reducing office space by 60%, cutting paid staff by 40% and slashing its overall budget from \$15 million to \$10 million while maintaining its core programs for children.

The Boy Scouts' respect for the environment, natural resources and the quality of life in our community are beliefs integrated in Scouting programs. A conservation easement would preserve green space for generations of Scouts and city residents. The Greater New York Councils maintains two additional camps: the widely-used 12,000 acre Ten Mile River Scout Reservation in Narrowsburg, NY, at which other cash-producing options are explored, and Alpine Scout Camp, in Alpine, NJ, which is a deed-restricted asset in that it must be perpetually used as a Scout camp or be returned to the state.

The Greater New York Councils, Boy Scouts of America provides traditional Scouting and unique outreach programs of character education, life skills, citizenship training, and personal fitness available to all New York City youth.

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