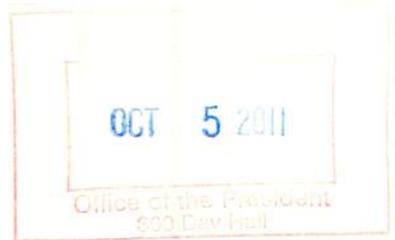




# Finger Lakes Land Trust

202 East Court Street  
Ithaca, New York 14850  
Tel: (607) 275-9487 / Fax: (607) 275-0037



. . . working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes Region.

September 29, 2011

David Skorton, President  
Cornell University  
Day Hall, Room 300  
Ithaca, NY 14853

Tom Tranter, CEO and President  
Corning Incorporated  
One Riverfront Plaza  
Corning, NY 14831

Dear President Skorton and Mr. Tranter:

The Finger Lakes and the Southern Tier together support tourism and agricultural sectors that generate more than \$3 billion in revenue each year. These industries are vital to the region's economy and both rely on rural landscapes that provide the lands needed to sustain agriculture and forestry while at the same time providing the scenic vistas, clean water, and recreational trails that attract increasing numbers of tourists.

As you participate in the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council's creation of a strategic plan for our region's economy, we ask that you include reference to the value these rural lands have in supporting our agricultural and tourism sectors and consider endorsing strategic investments in two areas:

Maintaining a Land Base For Our Diversified Agricultural Economy: Agriculture continues to be a mainstay of region's economy. The State's successful farmland protection program ensures that our most productive agricultural soils continue to be farmed while also providing farmers with capital to invest in their operations. Farmers and local communities compete for state funding on a competitive basis to secure prime farmland through the purchase of perpetual conservation easements. Continued funding of this program is needed so that local governments and the State can work together to secure larger blocks of farmland, and not just individual farms. This will provide the stability needed for long-term investments in processing facilities and other agribusiness enterprises.

Creation of A Network of Parks, Greenways, and Blueways: The Southern Tier is already blessed with thousands of acres of public conservation land and yet most of it remains unknown to most visitors. Modest investments in basic infrastructure such as parking areas, entry signs, and interpretive kiosks and select acquisition of key land parcels will greatly enhance public accessibility to existing state lands – particularly those managed by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Long-distance hiking routes such as the Finger Lakes Trail are increasingly threatened by fragmentation and acquisition of access easements can be used to sustain this popular recreational resource.

Targeted investments will be needed if we are to retain and enhance these assets so that they can serve increasing number of tourists who are interested in active, outdoor recreation. The creation of "blueway" trails – networks of boat accessible shoreline parks and business that cater to the boating public, also have sparked recent public interest within the Region and have yielded increased tourism elsewhere. Efforts to create and promote these recreational resources should be encouraged.

Our region is blessed with remarkable natural resources that serve as the basis of significant portions of our local economy. Modest investments and supportive policies can yield even greater returns in the areas outlined above. Elsewhere in the United States, communities have made similar commitments that have yielded significant economic returns.

Thanks very much for your consideration. Please don't hesitate to contact either of us if you have any questions about this proposal or if we can be of assistance in any way. We would be happy to meet with you, or other members of the commission, at your convenience in order to discuss these issues in greater detail.

Sincerely,



W. Stuart Schweizer  
President  
Pine City, NY



Andrew E. Zepp  
Executive Director  
Ithaca, NY

cc: Martha Robertson  
Carolyn Peterson  
Tom Santulli  
Michael Stamm  
A. Scott Welliver