

## Thousand Islands Land Trust asks court to stop work on Carleton Island campground

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An excavator works on Carleton Island Tuesday morning clearing trees on a property that is undergoing a site plan review with the Cape Vincent Zoning Board of Appeals. The owner is proposing building a campground. Provided photo

CAPE VINCENT — After sending a cease-and-desist letter to the owner of the Carleton Villa over a conservation easement, the Thousand Islands Land Trust has requested in court that development of the property be brought to a halt.

During Wednesday's Cape Vincent Town Planning Board Meeting, TILT Executive Director Jake Tibbles said the organization has filed a motion for a preliminary injunction in Jefferson County Supreme Court over the Carleton Villa restoration and campground/glampground project proposed by owner Ronald Clapp.

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STATE OF NEW YORK  
SUPREME COURT : COUNTY OF JEFFERSON

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THOUSAND ISLANDS LAND TRUST, INC.,

Plaintiff,

-against-

Index No.:

RON CLAPP and CARLETON VILLA, LLC,

Defendants.

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**VERIFIED COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff, THOUSAND ISLANDS LAND TRUST, INC. ("TILT"), by and through its attorneys, Rupp Pfalzgraf LLC, as and for its Complaint against Defendants, RON CLAPP and CARLETON VILLA, LLC ("Defendants"), alleges as follows:

**PARTIES**

1. At all times relevant to this action, TILT is and has been a not-for-profit corporation with a principal place of business in Jefferson County in the Town of Clayton, New York. TILT is a not-for-profit conservation organization as that term is defined under section 49-0303 of the N.Y. Environmental Conservation Law (the "ECL") because it is organized to conserve and preserve real property and has the power to acquire interests in real property.

2. At all times relevant to this action, Defendant Carleton Villa, LLC ("Carleton Villa") is and has been a domestic limited liability company duly authorized to do business in the State of New York.

3. At all times relevant to this action, Defendant Ron Clapp is and has been a resident of the State of Florida.

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The Thousand Island Land Trust has filed suit against Ronald Clapp, who has proposed building a campground on Carleton Island

TILT holds the conservation easement on Carleton Island, and "part of the original patent cooperation subdivision. TILT was entrusted to uphold the terms and conditions of the easement for betterment and the natural environment," Tibbles said. "This is TILT's obligation."

He said that after a review of the project's special-use permit, TILT's legal team found that the campground would violate "several provisions of the conservation easement."

After telling Clapp about their findings, TILT officials issued a cease-and-desist letter, requesting Clapp pull his special-use permit applications within the next 30 days, expiring April 1, according to Tibbles.

When Clapp brought heavy machinery on the island on Tuesday, which Tibbles said is not allowed as there is supposed to be a 30-day notice, TILT filed the motion for a preliminary injunction.

He said the motion of preliminary injunction is "to prevent irreparable damage" to the land between the north and south bays. If granted, the injunction could halt any work while a case proceeds.

Tibbles also requested a minimum 90-day adjournment for the site plan review in order to resolve the legal issues, as well as ensure people impacted by the proposal would be able to share their opinions on the project.

Clapp declined to comment Wednesday.

Residents on Wednesday continued to share their concerns about the project, including fire and emergency access and property values potentially decreasing.

Clapp, West Palm Beach, Florida, purchased the property in July 2022 and is hoping to turn some of the area around the historic villa into campgrounds/glampgrounds. He says he would use money from the campgrounds/glampgrounds to pay for the renovations.

The plans call for 13 guest rooms in the main villa and 12 cabins for camping/glamping.

The planning board did not take any action on Carleton Villa as it is awaiting feedback from other agencies.

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**Jonathon Wheeler**

Staff Writer