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## Thousands of Acres of Timberland for Sale in the Park

Historic opportunity to expand the Forest Preserve faces obstacles

Lassiter Industries and Clerical Medical Forestry, Inc. have placed approximately 100,000 acres up for sealed-bid sale. These lands are located principally in the western and northwestern sectors of the Park (north of Tupper Lake and between Cranberry Lake and Star Lake). They include ecologically significant parcels in both the proposed Bob Marshall Great Wilderness and Boreal Forest Heritage Reserve.

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is aware of the importance of these lands, but may not be able to meet the bidding deadlines. Complicating matters, the private land-saving organizations that normally act on DEC's behalf are currently committed to other large land projects and they may not have the financial resources to acquire additional key parcels. Timber investment companies are likely to bid on these lands. We will urge any private buyer to commit to sustainable forestry practices and ask that they be willing to remove development rights from these lands through state-funded conservation easements.

The Lassiter and Clerical Medical lands, plus the former Finch, Pruyn & Co. lands that Adirondack Nature Conservancy is working to protect, add up to more than a quarter of a million acres of regionally-important wildlands available in the Park right now. The Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) is the principal source of money for conservation easements and land acquisition projects.

Unfortunately, the Spitzer Administration has proposed siphoning \$125 million from the \$250-million EPF into the catch-all General Fund, where those funds could be spent on non-environmental projects. If that sum were instead applied to open space protection, it could save all or most of the available lands. The Adirondack Council is urging Governor Spitzer and the state Legislature to restore full funding to the EPF during the budget process. We will be calling on you for letters and calls this spring if the issue is not resolved soon.

## Adirondack Club and Resort Project Creeps Along

Mediation will aim to address issues prior to hearing

After months of delays (per requests by the developer), the developer and interested parties in the 700-unit Adirondack Club and Resort project in Tupper Lake agreed on January 25<sup>th</sup> to proceed with mediation for the project. This mediation process is an effort to settle some concerns of environmental organizations and local citizens, and expedite the formal hearing process that will follow. The Council has agreed to confidentiality amongst the parties for the duration of the mediation, scheduled to begin in March. If you don't hear any news, you can assume positive progress. Otherwise, expect to hear from us loud and clear.



*The Adirondack Club and Resort proposes development of Mt. Morris (pictured in the distance) and the surrounding forest lands.*

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Newsletter photos by Adirondack Council staff unless otherwise noted.



## No More Property Taxes?

Municipalities throughout the Adirondack Park receive approximately \$70 million each year in property taxes from the State of New York for state-owned lands within their communities. They have come to depend on these revenues, but a recent court decision places the payments in danger.

In 1886, the Legislature agreed to pay full taxes on all Forest Preserve lands. The payments were the state's means of compensating local governments for the fact that "forever wild" Forest Preserve lands cannot be logged or developed. The state pays taxes, and tax-like payments, on forest it owns all over the state. Local governments assess the value of state lands and bill the state as they would a private owner.

Nearly 100 years later, in 1983, the Legislature agreed to pay its share of taxes on lands where the state acquired a conservation easement. The Council led the effort to pass this legislation on behalf of the taxpayers of the Adirondack and Catskill parks. In the meantime, the Legislature granted additional tax payments to communities that contained state forests outside the two wilderness parks. Not every patch of state forest comes with a tax payment. The Legislature must pass a law agreeing to allow the state to be taxed by a local government.

The November 2007 New York State Supreme Court decision in *Dillenburg v. State of New York, et al.* found that state property tax payments, and payments-in-lieu-of-taxes, were being granted – and denied – without justification. In his decision in the Chautauqua Supreme Court, Acting Supreme Court Justice Timothy J. Walker ruled that the state violated the constitutional rights of some taxpayers by granting state tax payments to some localities, while denying payments to other localities in similar situations.

The Dillenburg dispute involved State Reforestation Lands, all of which are located outside the Adirondack and Catskill parks. Ironically, Walker went out of his way to state that tax payments on the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserves were legal. Yet, he ordered them halted along with all other state tax payments for forest lands. Enforcement of this ruling has been stayed pending an appeal.

NYS Attorney General Andrew Cuomo is expected to appeal the decision during the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court's May term. The Adirondack Council is consulting with the Attorney General and its own legal team to determine how we can assist in the appeal. The Council is also working to secure support for new legislation reinstating the Adirondack and Catskill payments, should the appeal fail.

The loss of state payments would have a devastating effect on rural communities in the Park that rely on the state to pay a share of property taxes to support schools and other expensive services. This uncertainty has already moved one Adirondack town to veto the use of the state Environmental Protection Funds for a new parcel of Forest Preserve.

More information on the case including news editorials, the Adirondack Council's press release, and DEC Commissioner's promise to continue with land protection agreements are on our website [www.adirondackcouncil.org](http://www.adirondackcouncil.org).

Brian L. Houseal, Executive Director

**ACTION UPDATE**

**Thank You for Your Comments to Help Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Plan moving forward in Northeastern States

Thank you to our members who wrote comment letters or attended public hearings regarding New York’s proposed regulation to reduce greenhouse emissions. Your comments make a difference.

You can read our public written comments and hearing testimony online at [www.adirondackcouncil.org](http://www.adirondackcouncil.org). We expect the New York regulation to be adopted by mid-2008 followed by the auction of carbon credits for utilities operating in the Northeastern states that are part of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

**Constitutional Amendment Passes**

Clean drinking water and new Forest Preserve

Thanks to you and voters across New York State, a Constitutional Amendment was passed in November 2007 that provides drilled wells and clean drinking water for the hamlet of Raquette Lake and adds 12 acres of land to the Adirondack Forest Preserve. Your support for upholding the Constitutional protections of the Park bolsters our efforts. Thank you.

**Step It Up 2007 ~ A call for action on climate change**



*The Adirondack Council teamed up with staff from the Blue Mountain Center to host a Step It Up event at the Uiblein Foundation’s Heaven Hill Farm in Lake Placid calling on Congress to take action on climate change and cut carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. Students from North Country Community College, Adirondack Council members, and area residents showed their support for climate action. John Davis, Adirondack Council Director of Conservation, shared his perspectives on the potential impacts that climate change will have on the Adirondack Park.*



**Eyes and Ears**

Let us know when you’re concerned about the Park

Thank you for being the Adirondack Council’s eyes and ears in the Adirondack Park. We get around the Park a lot, but we can’t possibly be everywhere. Your calls and e-mails to share questions and concerns help us be informed of actions that could harm the Park. Don’t hesitate to contact us about things you see or hear that spark your concern, whether they’re in your backyard or deep in the wilderness of the Forest Preserve. [info@adirondackcouncil.org](mailto:info@adirondackcouncil.org) or 877-873-2240 (toll-free)



Illustration by Sheri Amsel

**Have you Seen a Moose in the Adirondacks?**

Report your sightings to DOT

Last year, twelve moose were killed on Adirondack roadways. The Adirondack Council is working with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to help reduce wildlife collisions and the death of moose as their numbers increase in the Adirondack Park. To help the DOT predict moose travel patterns, please report any moose sightings in the Adirondacks on their website by following these steps:

1. Go to [www.nysdot.gov](http://www.nysdot.gov)
2. Select “Divisions” tab
3. Select Environmental Analysis
4. Select Adirondack Park and Forest Preserve (and follow instructions).



## DEC Commissioner Speaks at Council Event

Encouraging children to explore places like the Adirondacks

Speaking to Adirondack Council members in New York City in January, Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Alexander “Pete” Grannis, shared the Department’s goals for the Adirondack Park and a new “no child left inside” initiative to encourage children to explore the outdoors. DEC has launched a version of its successful Conservationist Magazine for children. Aimed at the fourth grade level, the magazine will be distributed to schools throughout New York or you can find it online at <http://www.cforkids.org>. The Department is also expanding summer camp opportunities in the Adirondacks and throughout the state.



*Adirondack Council Executive Director Brian Houseal(L), DEC Commissioner Pete Grannis and Council Board Chair, Brian Ruder.*



## Schumer and McHugh Fight Acid Rain

Acid rain research fully funded

US Senator Charles E. Schumer (D-NY) and Rep. John McHugh (R-Watertown) were successful in rolling back potentially devastating cuts by the Bush Administration to a vital anti-acid rain monitoring program that is used in New York State. The program, the Clean Air Status and Trends Network (CASTNET), is a critical federal program that works to combat acid rain across the state and the country by establishing monitoring stations that provide scientists and legislators with detailed information regarding acid rain deposition.

“We dodged a bullet and now our scientists and environmentalists will have the tools they need to fight acid rain, which has already decimated too many of New York State’s precious parks, lakes and rivers,” said Senator Schumer in a prepared statement.

Rep. McHugh said on the floor of the House in June, “[Restoring the funding] would allow the 80 monitoring stations that are maintained under CASTNET to continue operating at the level they have over the past ten years. These are monitoring stations for a very important issue associated with acid rain.”

Read both the Senator and Congressman’s press releases on our website [www.adirondackcouncil.org](http://www.adirondackcouncil.org)



## Sharing Common Ground with Local Communities

Group presents a broad agenda of shared concerns

The Common Ground Alliance (CGA) is working to identify solutions that benefit the Park’s communities, their economies and the environment. Adirondack Council Executive Director Brian Houseal and JR Risley (President of the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages) presented the ‘Blue Print for the Blue Line’ to the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) Commissioners at their December meeting.

The principal components of common concern for environmental groups, government representatives and economic development organizations range from Climate Change, Invasive Species and Acid Rain to Community Housing, Transportation Infrastructure, Energy, Effective Governance and Policy, Land Use Change, Property Taxes, and Healthcare. These components should be part of a comprehensive plan for the Park, and the CGA requested the assistance of the APA and other state agencies to take action. The report was well-received by the Commissioners. You can read a final draft of the Blue Print for the Blue Line at our website [www.adirondackcouncil.org](http://www.adirondackcouncil.org).

## ADIRONDACK FACTS AND FIGURES



### Say what?

Or what those initials stand for and why they matter.

### SLMP

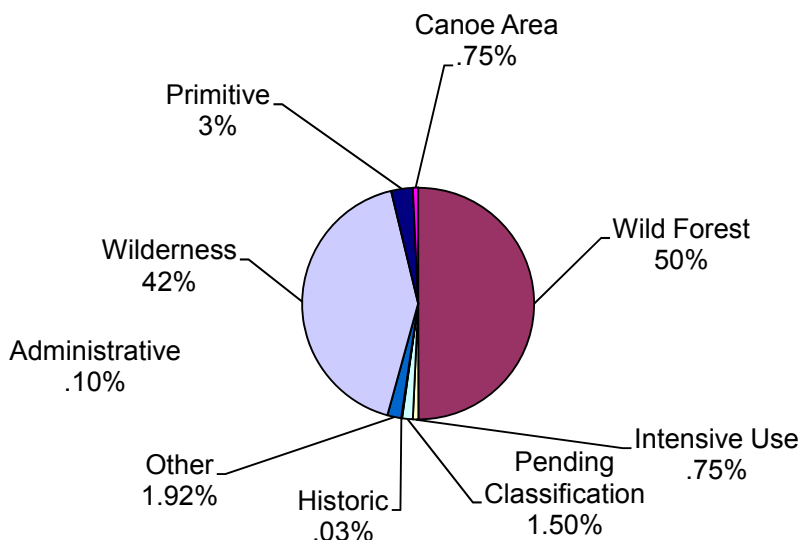
Commonly known as the “Slump,” SLMP is the acronym for the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan.

The Plan’s stated purpose is to “guide the preservation, management and use of these lands by all interested state agencies in the future.” The SLMP distinguishes the various land classifications in the Park and sets guidelines for use. The Adirondack Council uses the Plan’s guiding principle to help focus our efforts on the Park’s behalf:

“If there is a unifying theme to the master plan, it is that the protection and preservation of the natural resources of the state lands within the Park must be paramount. Human use and enjoyment of those lands should be permitted and encouraged, so long as the resources in their physical and biological context as well as their social or psychological aspects are not degraded.”

The Adirondack Park Unit Management Plans (UMPs) apply the SLMP principles to each unit of Forest Preserve. Public comments are part of the planning process as each unit’s management plan is reviewed every five years. Your comments make a difference and the Council relies on them in the UMP process. We expect new plan reviews later this spring. We’ll let you know when your comments are needed.

The SLMP classifies state owned lands into the following categories:



### Adirondack Park Flora and Fauna

#### Black-capped Chickadee

One of the most familiar and beloved birds in northern North America, the Black-capped Chickadee (pictured above) is a frequent visitor to bird feeders and common throughout the Adirondack Park. Black-capped Chickadees have benefited from human-provided food and nest boxes, as well as increased forest edges caused by deforestation. However, overzealous forest management can reduce or eliminate natural nest sites.

Did you know?

- The Black-capped Chickadee hides seeds and other food items for later recovery. Each item is placed in a different spot and a bird can remember thousands of hiding places.
- The Chickadee’s simple-sounding calls have been found to be extremely complex and language-like. They code information on identity and recognition of other flocks as well as predator alarms and contact calls.
- Breeding pairs and non-breeders join up into flocks outside of the breeding season. Non-breeders may be members of several flocks, with a different position in the dominance hierarchy of each flock.

Source: Cornell Lab of Ornithology, *All About Birds*, [www.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.birds.cornell.edu).



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## SEEN AND HEARD



*Congressman John McHugh (L) and Adirondack Council Executive Director Brian Houseal pose for a photo after McHugh's clean air legislation announcement.*



*Adirondack Council staff from Albany made the trip north for McHugh's press conference: L to R: Alanah Keddell, Legislative Associate; Scott Lorey, Legislative Director; and Katie Buckley, Office Manager.*

**“The Legislature makes tax policy just about every year. Nobody’s making any more boreal forest.”**

*The Buffalo News in an editorial urging the state to move ahead on land acquisition opportunities in spite of a legal debate over state property tax payments.*



## New Clean Air Legislation Proposed

A new bill would fight acid rain, smog, mercury and climate change

The Adirondack Council joined North Country Congressman John McHugh (R-NY) for a press conference at Whiteface Mountain Ski Center this fall to announce a comprehensive new bill to control smokestack emissions from the nation’s power plants. It would be more effective than the current Clean Air Act at fighting acid rain, smog, mercury contamination and global warming.

Whiteface Mountain is home to two of the nation’s most important air pollution monitoring facilities, with one at the summit and another near the beginning of the Whiteface Mountain Veterans’ Memorial Highway.

The Adirondack Park is the worst-hit region of the United States when it comes to acid rain and it has suffered widespread mercury contamination from the same coal-fired power plants that cause acid rain. The Park is likely to endure vast changes in its ecosystems as a result of climate changes.

**“Mr. Spitzer and Mr. (Bob) Marshall would seem to be a good spiritual match. Speed, raw intelligence, nervous intensity - the new governor should be the perfect one to establish a wilderness in Bob Marshall’s name and in his home state.”**

*A New York Times editorial calling on newly elected Eliot Spitzer to formally establish the Adirondack Council’s proposed Bob Marshall Great Wilderness.*

## DEC Directors Address Adirondack Council Board

Promise strong policies to protect the Park

Judy Drabicki, Director of Region 6 for the Department of Environmental Conservation and her colleague Betsy Lowe Director of Region 5, spoke to the Adirondack Council Board of Directors at their annual retreat in October. They assured the Adirondack Council that they would be a strong advocate for the Adirondack Park’s wild lands. *(Pictured: Judy Drabicki with Brian Houseal, Adirondack Council Executive Director.)*



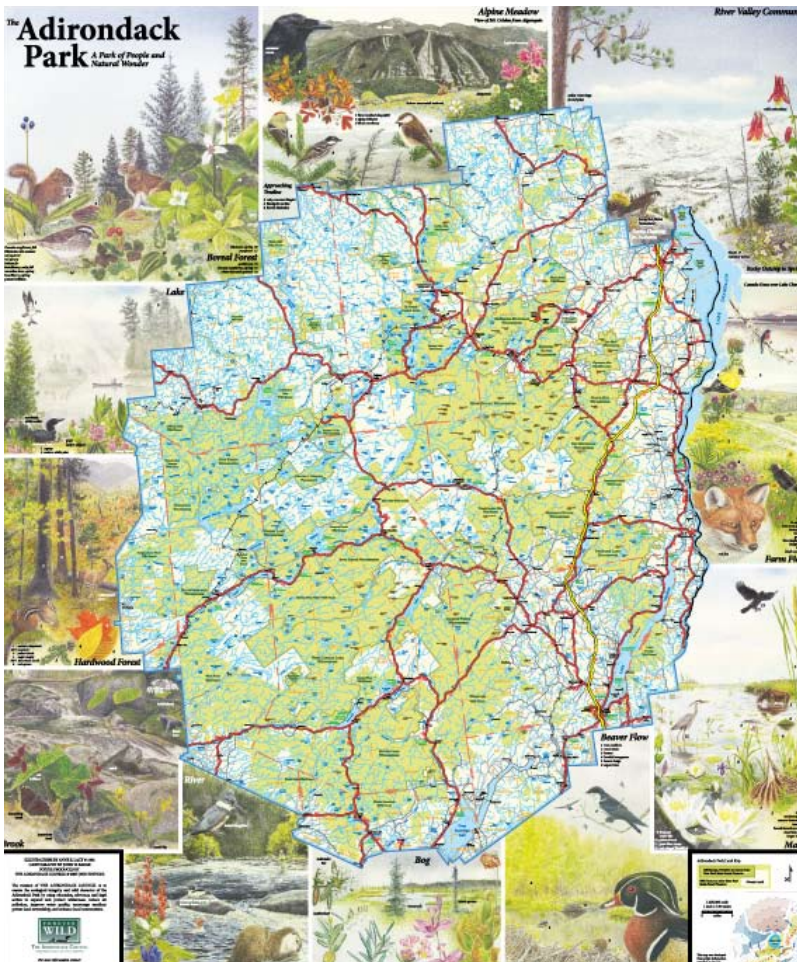
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## Thank You for Supporting the Water Initiative

Successful advocacy for  
Adirondack waters

The Adirondack Council Water Initiative, launched in 2005, has raised awareness of the need to protect the water resources of the Adirondack Park. Thanks to your support the initiative has advocated successfully for new policies and increased funding, thus strengthening the ability of communities and citizens to safeguard the future of Adirondack water.

You can take personal pride in the Council's recent advocacy accomplishments:

- A regulation to reduce mercury pollution from New York power plants by 90%.
- A new state Invasive Species Office within DEC to educate, mitigate and prevent the spread of invasives.
- \$10 million for waterfront revitalization projects.
- Inclusion of water quality considerations in the latest Open Space Conservation Plan.
- Uninterrupted funding for acid rain research.

But there's more to be done. Visit the website for current water advocacy efforts [www.adirondackcouncil.org](http://www.adirondackcouncil.org).

Please consider including the  
Adirondack Council in your will.

Gifts through bequests are added to our Forever Wild Fund, critical resources set aside in an operating endowment for legal action and special projects to bolster our Adirondack Park conservation and advocacy. Thank you.



Join us at  
Silver Bay  
Saturday, July 19<sup>th</sup>  
**Annual Members' Day**  
on the shores of Lake George



Come join us at Silver Bay for the day or make a weekend of it.  
Enjoy guided walks and nature talks, our annual Members Meeting, and the presentation of our Conservationist of the Year Award to environmental journalist and activist Bill McKibben.  
Check our website this spring for details about activities and lodging.

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The Adirondack Council is launching this new member newsletter as a way to keep you informed and connected to Park issues more effectively. In addition to two newsletters in this new format, we will continue to publish our more detailed newsletter in the spring and our annual report of government actions, *State of the Park* in the fall. We're always happy to have your feedback on the programs and projects of the Adirondack Council. Let us know what you think at [info@adirondackcouncil.org](mailto:info@adirondackcouncil.org) or P.O. Box D-2, Elizabethtown, NY 12932.

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