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Campground owner sues Ad'k Council

By CHRIS KNIGHT, Enterprise Senior Staff Writer

The owner of a resort and campground on Silver Lake is planning to file a lawsuit today against an Adirondack environmental group and the chairman of its board of directors.

Leroy Douglas and the Douglas Corporation of Silver Lake will be filing an action in state Supreme Court of Essex County seeking \$2.1 million from the Adirondack Council and Brian Ruder for interfering in Douglas' business affairs.

Douglas has accused the Adirondack Council and Ruder, who owns property next to Douglas in the town of Black Brook, of working in collusion with the state Adirondack Park Agency in an enforcement case against Douglas. The APA recently agreed to discontinue the enforcement action, which involved a wetlands violation, as long as Douglas submits a sworn affidavit confirming that he's completed remediation to the property.

Douglas said the enforcement case prevented him from selling eight lots on the property and cost him hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees.

"The reason I was tied up with the APA was because of the Adirondack Council," Douglas said this morning. "The agency was taking directives from the Council, and the e-mails will prove that. They were interfering with a contract that was already in place, and it cost me a ton of money."

Matthew Norfolk of Lake Placid, Douglas' lawyer, had argued that the Adirondack Council was working "to strategize and plot against Mr. Douglas for no legitimate purpose, to stop his clients' lawful development plans."

Norfolk cited a series of e-mails sent to APA staff offering legal advice against Douglas and urging the agency to "exercise maximum vigilance in keeping a close eye on developments on Silver Lake." The name of the person who sent the e-mails was blacked out by the Park Agency, but Douglas and Norfolk allege they came from Ruder.

Scott Lorey, the Adirondack Council's legislative director, also sent a letter to APA Commissioner Cecil Wray, chair of the agency's Enforcement Committee and a former member of the Council's board of directors, calling for the agency to issue a substantial fine against Douglas. The letter notes that Douglas' shoreline lands were recognized by the state as a conservation priority in the 2005 Open Space Plan.

Adirondack Council spokesman John Sheehan said he was not aware of the lawsuit and had no immediate comment.

"There have been so many shenanigans with (Norfolk) accusing us of bizarre things so far that I have no interest in commenting on anything until we see what he's produced for court," Sheehan said this morning.

Douglas said his case against the Adirondack Council is just the first step. He said he may pursue legal action against the APA and others.

"This is going to federal court, too," Douglas said. "What the APA did to me, they did to hundreds and hundreds of residents in the Park, and it's got to stop."

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