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DEC Region 5 gets new chief

Robert Stegemann has forestry, nonprofit background and is broadly praised

By MIKE LYNCH - Outdoors Writer (mlynch@adirondackdailyenterprise.com) ,

RAY BROOK - The state Department of Environmental Conservation has a new director in Region 5, the agency announced Friday.

It will be Robert Stegemann, who worked for International Paper for 18 years. He starts his new job Monday. He replaces Betsy Lowe, who resigned last month.

"Bob's impressive record in working to create a sustainable society and to preserve New York's resources make him a natural fit for DEC," DEC Commissioner Joe Martens said in a press release. "In both professional and volunteer capacities, Bob has proven to be an exceptional environmental steward. Bob will be a valuable asset to DEC and the eastern Adirondacks community."

For the past two years, Stegemann acted as a natural resource and public affairs adviser for nonprofit organizations. He formerly held a variety of roles at International Paper, most recently as the company's manager of sustainability.

In his new role, Stegemann will manage and oversee the day-to-day functions of DEC's Region 5 office based in Ray Brook. Region 5 includes Clinton, Franklin, Essex, Hamilton, Fulton, Saratoga, Warren and Washington counties.

Stegemann earned a master's degree from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry and a bachelor's degree from Union College.

Stegemann's previous experience also includes serving as the executive vice president of the Empire State Forests Products Association and as senior policy analyst for the Tug Hill Commission. In a volunteer capacity, Stegemann held positions with the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, the Adirondack Research Consortium, the Adirondack Nature Conservancy & Land Trust, the SUNY ESF College Foundation and the Northern Forest Lands Council.

Shortly after the appointment became public, Stegemann drew praise.

State Sen. Betty Little said she knows him from when he held a position with International Paper as a governmental relations specialist.

"He has an environmental degree, he has a great knowledge of forest products and forestland, so I'm really pleased," Little said. "I think the commissioner made a great choice. ... He's hard working, and he's certainly someone who is going to work with everyone."

Adirondack Council spokesman John Sheehan said his organization is very pleased with Stegemann.

"Bob was an outspoken environmentalist working for International Paper in the Adirondacks," Sheehan said. "I think he has a good sense of the importance of the Forest Preserve, and I believe he has some experience as a board member on the Adirondack Nature Conservancy. We think he's a solid choice, and we're glad to see Bob back in the area."

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