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## Adirondack Council praises feds' cross-state air pollution rule

Adirondack Council releases its annual report card on park

By MARTHA ELLEN

The Obama administration's approval of a cross-state air pollution rule — which is expected to reduce acid rain in the Northeast by 2014 — will have the most positive long-lasting impact on the 9,300-square-mile Adirondack Park among actions taken this year, according to the Adirondack Council.

"The pollution cuts required by the rule are sufficient to allow the park's soils and waters to return to their natural chemical balance," Director Brian L. Houseal said in a statement. "Over time, many of our lost trees, fish, plants and wildlife will return to their native homes."

In its annual report card on actions by public officials, the council said the park's greatest environmental threat comes from the loss of employees at state regulatory agencies and the expired terms of most of the citizen members of the Adirondack Park Agency's board.

The council gave a thumbs-up to the state Senate for approving a bill that would allow towns to declare certain roads as minimum maintenance so they could be passable but not perfect after a snowstorm. Former state Sen. Darrel J. Aubertine, now the commissioner of agriculture and markets, was a co-sponsor.

The council disliked a bill sponsored by state Sen. Joseph A. Griffo, R-Rome, that would have increased the size of all-terrain vehicles allowed in the park because of the damage the heavier weights would do to trails.

It approved the continuation of a court challenge against a 2009 Lewis County law that opened some sections of road in the town of Greig to traffic. The council also gave the Lewis County Legislature a bad mark for allowing an expansion of the county's annual mud season ATV ride, the Snirt Run, into the Brantingham Lake area on the park's western edge.

"The county appears to have illegally authorized the opening of at least one state highway for ATV use on the day of the event," the report states. "Several websites contain videos of participants drinking alcohol while riding, driving recklessly, tearing up wetlands, driving through rivers, ignoring traffic signs, overturning their machines in water and crossing private property."

The council also criticized the town of Bangor for ignoring the wishes of other towns in Franklin County by opting not to seek a state grant that could have established a county planning department.

The council was pleased by a court decision that determined the APA and state Department of Environmental Conservation were obliged to bar floatplanes from the waters of Lows Lake, which is partially in St. Lawrence County, by the end of the year.

The council applauded DEC for finding a way to keep open the acid rain and air pollution monitoring station in Wanakena after it was threatened by state budget cuts. The station is vital to gauge air quality, especially to confirm the results of the federal air pollution rules, according to the council.