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Court rejects snowmobile lawsuit

A legal fight over a five-year-old state plan to locate new snowmobile trails in Adirondack Park may be carried out on a trail-by-trail basis.

Last week, the state's second-highest court rejected a lawsuit by the Adirondack Council, which challenged the snowmobile plan adopted in 2006 by the state Department of Environmental Conservation and in 2009 by the Adirondack Park Agency.

That plan allows for so-called community connector trails, and the creation of new nine-foot-wide trails as far as two miles from road corridors.

Both a state Supreme Court judge, and now the Appellate Division of State Supreme Court, have tossed the lawsuit, saying it was premature because no new snowmobile trails had yet been approved by DEC through unit management plans that establish state policy in the Forest Preserve.

In other words, because trails could be built in a way that the Council said is illegal under the state Land Use Master plan for the Adirondacks does not mean any such trail will be built.

Said Adirondack Council Executive Director Brian L. Houseal, "This decision appears to put us in the position of having to wait until trail construction begins in unlawful places before we can sue to stop it."

Last year, the Council sued the state over a specific set of snowmobile trails that the state plans to build in the Jessup River Wild Forest. That lawsuit was rejected, with the State Supreme Court judge saying the plan complied with the new snowmobile plan.

The state plan "allows for the siting of new trails as far as two miles from road corridors and from the edge of the Forest Preserve, rather than the 500-foot standard the state uses everywhere else. Sadly

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