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## APA delays clear-cut rules vote

BY STEPHEN WILLIAMS Gazette Reporter

Controversial plans for the Adirondack Park Agency to loosen review rules for “clear-cut” logging have been pulled from the agenda for the agency’s Jan. 10 meeting, when they could have been approved.

“APA is reviewing extensive public comments and plans to meet with stakeholders on the proposal,” agency spokesman Keith McKeever said Friday. “We will bring the matter to a vote when that process is complete.”

The agency’s decision to pull the proposed rules from its next agenda was immediately praised by environmental organizations that had spoken against them during a public comment period that ended Dec. 28.

Environmental organizations said the proposal could allow clearcut logging on 2 million acres of private forest land within the 6-million-acre park. The state holds public access easements on some of that land, though the easements allow logging to continue.

The proposed change would eliminate the requirement for a formal environmental review before the APA grants permission for clear-cutting on more than 25 acres at once.

Those criticizing the proposal have included the Adirondack Council, Adirondack Wild, Protect the Adirondacks, the Citizens Campaign for the Environment and the Sierra Club.

“The damage done to the forests and waters of the Adirondack Park by widespread clear-cutting was the reason why the public voted to protect the park’s public forests via the [state] Constitution, declaring them to be ‘forever wild’ in 1894,” the Adirondack Council said.

“The people of New York have spent well over \$150 million to protect forestlands in the Adirondacks. The public does not support clearcutting on conservation easement land,” Protect the Adirondacks said in a separate statement Friday.

Some professional foresters, however, contend that the removal of large trees from a wood lot — while considered “clear-cutting” under APA definitions — creates a healthy forest by allowing young trees to grow.

Adirondack Wild has called for a more comprehensive study, while noting it supports forestry if done with environmental safeguards.

“We are calling for a deliberative, inclusive and transparent study of today’s forest management and related regulatory issues facing the park’s private forest lands. Any permit policy or regulatory changes should be based in part upon the facts and conclusions emerging from that study,” said David Gibson, an Adirondack Wild partner.