

North Country: NOW
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Environmental groups upset over proposal to ease clearcutting rules in Adirondacks

A large coalition of advocacy groups wants Gov. Andrew Cuomo and other key decision makers to deny or postpone action on a proposal to ease forest clear-cutting permits in the Adirondack Park.

The coalition opposes a proposal by the Adirondack Park Agency change the review process for all clear-cut logging projects over 25 acres in favor of a one-size-fits-all General Permit.

The group says the change would effectively gut standard practice by the APA and potentially affects as many as 1 million acres of backcountry and industrial timberland holdings.

The APA is set to vote on the proposal for approval as early as Feb.14.

“This General Permit is a most unwelcome Valentine for the wild Adirondack Park,” said Dan Plumley, Partner with Adirondack Wild. “We urge Governor Cuomo and his agencies to deny or postpone for needed study ‘General Permit 2012 G-1’ that would enable significant clear-cut logging without sufficient board review, public comment or impact assessment.”

According to the coalition, the APA would remove clear-cutting projects from board and public review if the applicants held lands that were under certain third party forest certification programs.

The coalition contends, however, that certification alone can’t justify changing the APA’s oversight authority and process.

“This is simply bad public policy based simply on anecdotes from corporate landowners who want the ability to cut harder and faster. The APA brought no data, no research, no science to discussion of the issue,” stated Peter Bauer, Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks. “What is truly worrisome is that the first lands likely to be clearcut are lands where the state owns a conservation easement, which are supposed to foster sustainable forestry. This new policy undermines the state’s conservation easement program.”

Less than a dozen or so major forest landowning corporations and timber investment management organizations (TIMO’s) own nearly a million acres or 1/5th of the Adirondack Park which might be opened up to General Permit clear-cutting practice.

“Limited clear-cutting can play a role in sound forest management,” Diane Fish, the Adirondack Council’s Acting Executive Director, said. “However, it makes no sense to weaken the environmental review, especially inside the Adirondack Park. The public demands and deserves

a higher standard here – one that protects both the environment and scenic beauty. This proposal does neither.”

The groups have also reached out to many citizens and a host of leading activists across the state.

Members of the coalition include the Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Wildlife Federation, the Sierra Club – Atlantic Chapter, Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve, Protect the Adirondacks, the Adirondack Mountain Club, Adirondack Council, Environmental Advocates, the Adirondack Wildlife Refuge and Rehabilitation Center, the Northeast Ecological Restoration Society, the Champlain Area Trails (CAT), and Citizens Campaign for the Environment.