

NEWS IN AND ABOUT THE SIX-MILLION-ACRE ADIRONDACK PARK

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New Wilderness Includes the Boreas Ponds

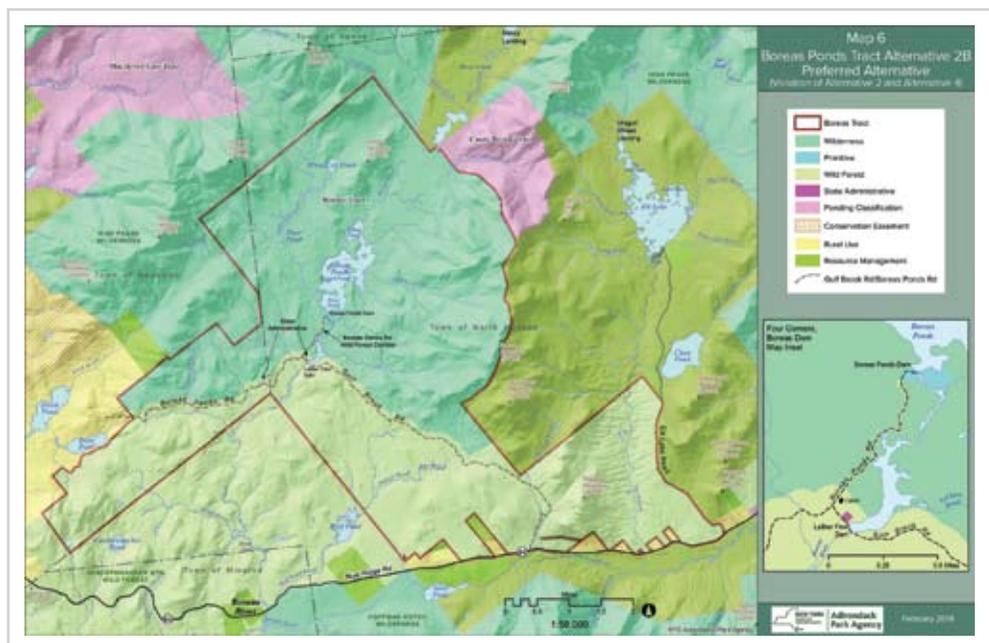
Classification nets 25,000 acres of new Wilderness

The Adirondack Council led a coalition of regional and national conservation organizations and citizen advocates that successfully urged Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Adirondack Park Agency to classify a large portion of the recently acquired Boreas Ponds tract as motor-free Wilderness. Combined with other new state land classifications this creates 25,000 acres of new Wilderness in the Adirondacks and expands the High Peaks Wilderness Area to nearly 275,000 acres. New York State can be proud to stand in welcome contrast to the federal government's roll-back of natural resource protections.

The Boreas Ponds classification is a compromise in which the state tried to balance the desires expressed by Wilderness advocates with those of local officials who wanted greater motorized access to new Forest Preserve lands. The BeWildNY coalition and other Wilderness advocates wanted 30,000 acres of new Wilderness and a larger buffer between the ponds and the last parking lot. The Council is disappointed with the smaller buffer in the state's compromise.

At a time when overcrowding is harming the ecology of the Park's most fragile lands, the Council will work to make sure the state follows through on its commitment to manage the buffer area (see map inset below) to protect the Boreas Ponds and other sensitive natural resources and wetlands. Motorized vehicles should not reach the ponds or be close enough to disturb wildlife, harm water quality, or spread invasive species.

We thank the Governor's team for including the Boreas Ponds in an expanded High Peaks Wilderness. We thank the coalition and supporters who wrote letters and turned out by the thousands to comment on these classification proposals, as well as the editors of the 12 upstate daily newspapers who endorsed the BeWildNY coalition Wilderness proposal. Assuming this is approved by the Governor, (still pending as of print) there is a lot for everyone to celebrate.



In addition to 11,412 acres of Wilderness surrounding the Boreas Ponds, the parcels shown in pink (MacIntyre East and Casey Brook) are recommended for Wilderness as part of the expanded 275,000-acre High Peaks Wilderness Area.

MAIN OFFICE
PO Box D-2
103 Hand Ave., Suite 3
Elizabethtown, NY 12932
518.873.2240

ALBANY OFFICE
342 Hamilton Street
Albany, NY 12210
518.432.1770

AdirondackCouncil.org
info@adirondackcouncil.org

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Lisa M. Genier	

*Grant Conservation Associate

Ongoing Project Consultants

Legal Counsel:

Doug Ward, Young/Sommer
Phil Gitlen, Whiteman Osterman & Hanna

Clean Water Initiative:

David J. Miller, Program Coordinator

Adirondack Diversity Initiative:

Melanie Reding, Communications Assistant

Oil Train Legal Counsel:

Allison Fultz, Kaplan Kirsch Rockwell LLP
Bernard Melewski, Esq.



Your Adirondack Victories

Securing a better Park

On new snow in February, I made ski tracks across the Boreas Ponds in the heart of the Adirondacks. The silence was beautiful. In just a few months, the snow and ice will be gone. We will then be able to paddle and fish on new motor-free Wilderness waters with great views of New York's highest peaks. Whether you visit the Park or are one of millions who enjoy just knowing it's protected and wild, this is yours.

We thank you. You helped make sure this magnificent landscape is now protected as part of an historic 25,000-acre addition to the High Peaks Wilderness.

We thank you for other recent victories we celebrate as well, including \$39 million in grants for Adirondack community clean water infrastructure; \$13 million proposed in the Governor's budget to fight invasive species; and Warren Buffett, eager to help protect the Adirondacks, pledging that Berkshire Hathaway companies will forever remove their used oil car trains from the Park.

When the loons return to the Boreas Ponds this summer, they will catch fish, raise their young and make their calls. They will be oblivious to the victories we've had and others that lie ahead. But let's use the call of the loons as a reminder that our work is never done.

While the state's historic compromise on the Boreas plan was a victory, it does not include all of which we advocated. A compromise is just that. However, we will be forever vigilant in ensuring that management of this area is appropriately protective of its resources.

This is a pivotal time in the history of the Adirondacks and the world. Wilderness and parks across the country are under siege. You help secure a better future for the Adirondack Park, in a world that needs this national treasure more than ever.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Janeway'.

William C. Janeway
Executive Director

The mission of the Adirondack Council is to ensure the ecological integrity and wild character of the Adirondack Park for current and future generations.

We envision an Adirondack Park with clean water and air and large wilderness areas, surrounded by working farms and forests and vibrant local communities.

CAPITAL MATTERS: ALBANY



David Miller, Clean Water Initiative Program Coordinator, and Conservation Director Rocci Aguirre discuss water quality and clean water infrastructure grants that will benefit Adirondack communities.

Governor's Budget: Communities & Forestry Benefit

What's in and what's out of the budget?

Governor Cuomo introduced his executive budget proposal in the middle of January, demonstrating an intent to preserve core environmental funding at 2017 levels while advancing long anticipated forest tax law amendments and new tourism proposals at the state's Olympic Regional Development Authority facilities.

What is in the Governor's proposed budget.

- **\$300 million** Environmental Protection Fund with funds for land protection, state land stewardship, invasive species, and facilities.
- **\$2.5 billion** in clean water funding for upgrades to wastewater infrastructure.
- **\$62.5 million** for upgrades, including energy efficiency improvements, at Whiteface and Gore Ski Centers.
- **Empire Forests for the Future Initiative:** The Governor proposes updating the state's property tax incentive program for large forest owners to achieve many objectives long supported by the Council. In addition, the Council continues to advocate for regulatory reforms at the Adirondack Park Agency to modernize the review of forest management practices in the Park.

What is NOT in the Governor's proposed budget.

- **Adirondack Diversity Initiative: \$100,000 toward a \$250,000 program** that would offer diversity training to ensure the longevity and sustainability of the Park, and make the Adirondacks a more welcoming and inclusive community.
- **Adirondack Lakes Research and Monitoring: \$700,000** to continue 30 years of monitoring and data collection that has proven critical to nearly every effort by the state to defend and improve upon current Clean Air Act requirements and allow recovery from the effects of acid rain.

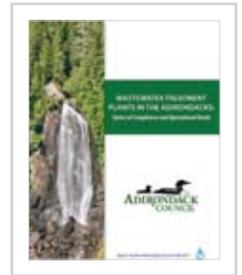
'Forever Taxable' Coalition Opposes State Land Tax Cap

The Adirondack Council, local government and partners have expressed concerns over the Governor's budget proposal to change the state's property tax payments to local governments that host state Forest Preserve lands. Instead of paying full local property taxes to Adirondack Park towns, counties and schools, the state would make payments-in-lieu-of-taxes subject to a maximum annual increase of two percent. This could create potential fiscal constraints for communities in future years. The Forest Preserve benefits not only Park residents, but residents across the state as well. It's unfair that the Adirondack communities that host Forest Preserve lands bear the brunt of the financial burden.

Clean Water Grants

Progress made on state funding, local action

Last fall, the Adirondack Council released *Wastewater Treatment Plants in the Adirondacks: Status of Compliance and Operational Needs*, its second report on clean water infrastructure needs in the Adirondack



Park. This report celebrates more than \$39 million in clean water grants to Adirondack communities since 2015. It also lists 22 Adirondack communities that still need \$85 million in wastewater treatment plant and sewer system upgrades to protect local streams, lakes and ponds. The historic \$2.5 billion in clean water funding approved in last year's budget presents an opportunity to fund these projects. Water quality challenges including road salt and septic system pollution are also mentioned in the report. The Council will continue its Clean Water Initiative in 2018 by reaching out to communities regarding their needs and advocating for more grant funds in the Park.

Legislature Pursues APA Reforms

Bill addresses backcountry development

Legislative measures have been introduced to require "conservation design" of future development on sensitive private backcountry lands to protect their open space character. For example, bill A. 5451 (Englebright) would require clustering of lots in residential subdivisions in remote, rural and forested parts of the Park.

IN AND ABOUT THE PARK

Spruce Grouse Victory

Boreal Primitive Area management plan withdrawn

In the fall of 2017, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) released a draft amendment to the Raquette-Jordan Boreal Primitive Area (■) Unit Management Plan proposing the construction of a connector road between two isolated conservation easement areas (■) in a remote northwest area of the Park. The road would have opened up thousands of acres of sensitive spruce grouse habitat to motorized recreation for the first time. After receiving several hundred public comments, the DEC withdrew the draft. A new proposal will be released, and a new public hearing and comment period will be hosted.



Male Spruce Grouse. Photo courtesy Larry Master, masterimages.org.

Sentinel Range Wilderness Plan

Highlights need for complex planning

In November 2017, the DEC released its draft plan for the 23,000+ acre Sentinel Range Wilderness Area (■) that adjoins the High Peaks Wilderness Area (■). The Council supported the plan, including the creation of a 10,500-acre trail-less area in the core of the unit. However, concerns exist with the lack of complex planning that could address the severe access and parking issues along Route 73 that plague both Wilderness Areas. The Council recommended the DEC manage this entire area holistically and incorporate complex planning across both units.



Whiteface from Copperas Pond in the Sentinel Range Wilderness.
Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions Inc.

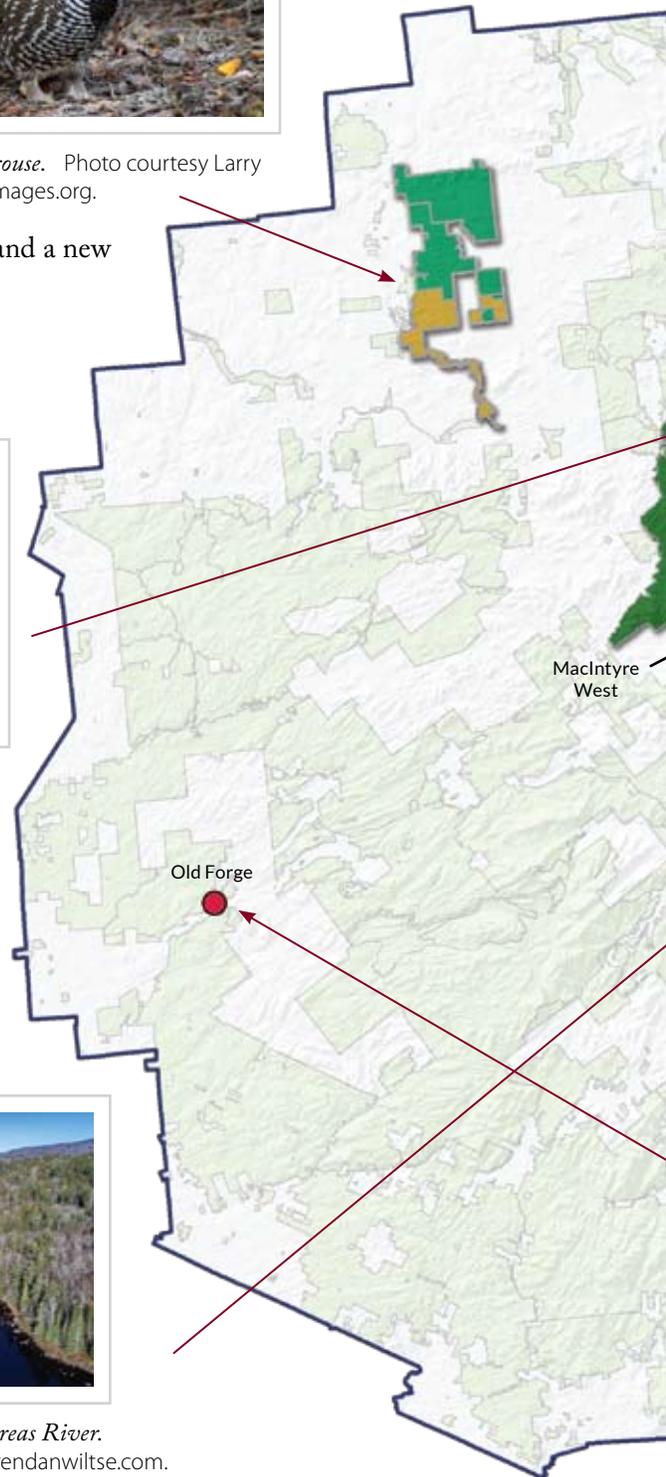
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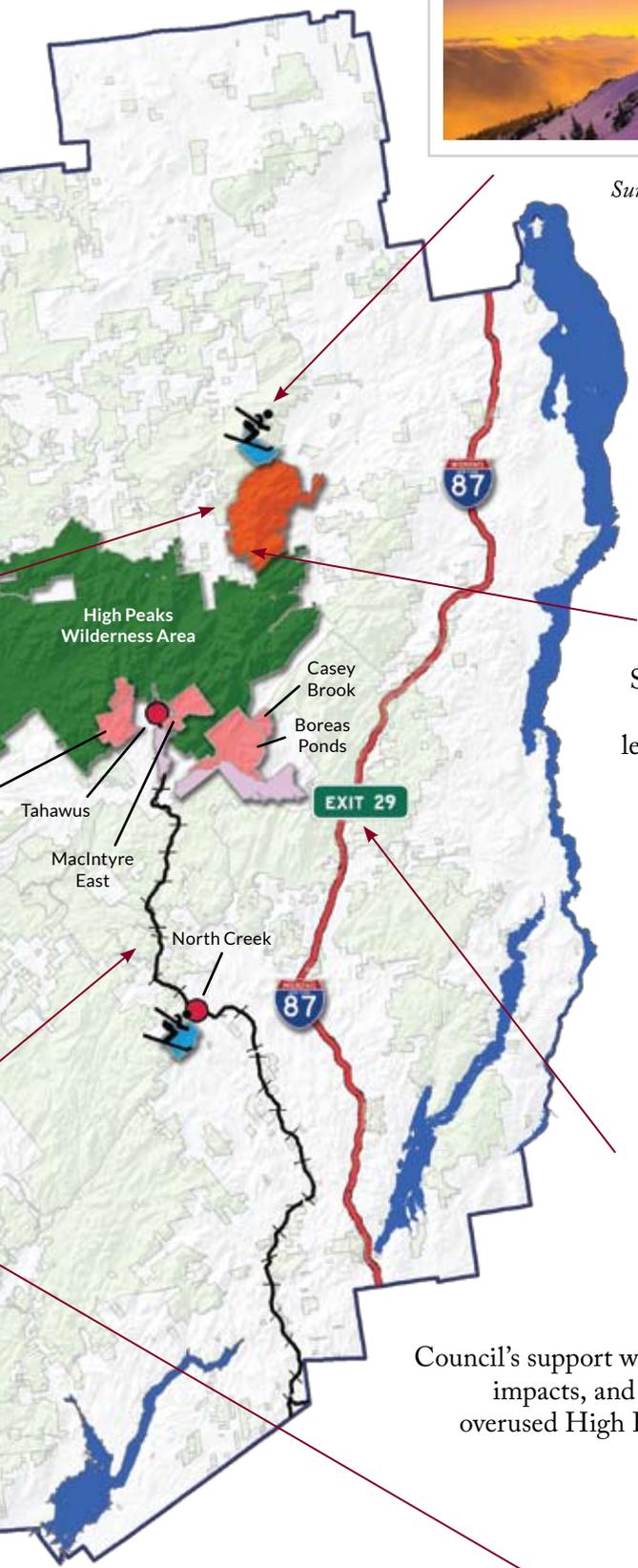
Legal action seeks permanent solution

In the fall of 2017, dozens of obsolete oil tankers were being stored between North Creek and Tahawus on a railroad track (+++) leased by Iowa Pacific Holdings (IPH). Some of these defunct tankers were owned by a subsidiary of one of Warren Buffett's companies. After more than 1,000 Adirondack Council advocates, Governor Cuomo, Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, and local communities asked, Buffett's companies made a commitment to remove their used oil tankers and never store them in the Adirondacks again. Unfortunately, IPH is threatening to store other railcars in the Park. But, Governor Cuomo has filed a complaint with the federal Surface Transportation Board to eliminate future use of the rail line as a junkyard.



Oil tanker train cars along the Boreas River.
Photo courtesy Brendan Wiltse, brendanwiltse.com.





Sun dog from Whiteface Mtn.
 Photo courtesy John Suhar
 johnsuhar.com | @jtsuhar

Whiteface & Gore Mountain Plans Upgrades at ski centers

The Olympic Regional Development Authority recently announced draft amendments to the Whiteface and Gore Mountain (☞) Unit Management Plans. Several management actions were proposed to improve and modernize the facilities at both mountains that are part of Adirondack Forest Preserve. A proposal that would increase trail mileage raises constitutional concerns regarding compliance with trail mileage caps.

Old Mountain Road Case In court fighting for wilderness



The Adirondack Council recently appeared before the NYS Supreme Court's Appellate Division in Albany to defend the future of Wilderness preservation in the Adirondack Park. The Council has asked the Court to uphold the state's power to keep motor vehicles off of an abandoned town road now used as the Jackrabbit

Ski Trail through the Sentinel Range Wilderness Area (■). The Council is defending DEC's authority to close roads in Wilderness areas. If the town's legal challenge succeeds, it would pose significant challenges for the Park's 21 Wilderness Areas (1.1 million acres). A decision is expected in March.

Frontier Town Campground Approved Town of North Hudson



The site for the "Gateway to the Adirondacks" recreation hub at Exit 29 (Interstate 87) in North Hudson.
 Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions Inc.

In December 2017, the state released its plan for a campground, equestrian facilities and day use area at the former Frontier Town, located in North Hudson. The Council conceptually supports this recreational hub for its potential to support local economies, complement an expanded High Peaks Wilderness, and disperse visitor use impacts. However, given the scope of information involved and limited time for review, the

Council's support was conditioned on the avoidance of site-specific impacts, off-site cumulative impacts, and segmenting the development of a Forest Preserve management plan for the overused High Peaks complex. The Adirondack Park Agency approved the plan in January.

Forever Wild Day 2018

Save the Date - July 14, Old Forge, NY

Join the Adirondack Council Board, staff and fellow supporters for our annual members' meeting and awards luncheon on Saturday, July 14 in Old Forge, NY. Celebrate your love of the Adirondacks with friends and fellow conservation advocates.

- Added to High Peaks Wilderness Area
- Added to Vanderwhacker Mtn. Wild Forest

CONSERVATION MATTERS



We Live in a Biosphere

Re-defining the ADK-VT designation

The Council is participating with other regional stakeholders in efforts to maintain and preserve the designation for the Champlain-Adirondack Biosphere Reserve (CABR). Spanning both sides of Lake Champlain, including large portions of the Adirondacks and Vermont, the CABR is recognized by the United Nations as an area of internationally significant terrestrial or coastal ecosystems. Efforts include establishing an organizational structure that would be responsible for meeting reporting requirements of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and engaging municipal leaders and local stakeholders in how to best promote and better utilize this important designation.

On the Road to Renewables

Clean Energy Community: Keene

The Council is now a member of the Keene Clean Energy Team, a committee assembled to help the Town of Keene become a Clean Energy Community (CEC). The state program encourages municipalities to complete four out of ten clean energy projects in order to compete for grants ranging from \$50,000-\$100,000. The town was recently certified as a CEC and is now eligible to apply for a \$50,000 grant to implement an energy efficient project. The Committee has recommended to the town board that the grant be used for three priority projects: solar panels, LED lights and an energy audit.

Beyond Boreas

Other new land classifications

During its February meeting, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) not only reviewed the classification of the Boreas Ponds tract, it also voted in total on the proposed classification or reclassification of over 50,000 acres of state lands in the Park. The APA approved 99 of 101 proposed actions that recommended the classification or reclassification of Forest Preserve lands and made map corrections. The APA's recommendations have been sent to the Governor for approval. Prior to the APA's decisions, the Council identified 15 classifications to watch carefully, including:

- **MacIntyre West:** The Council strongly supported adding the 7,365-acre tract (with a small Primitive Area exception) to the High Peaks Wilderness. The APA recommended this classification.
- **MacIntyre East:** The Council strongly supported applying a Wilderness classification to approximately 4,445 acres of the northern section of the tract, to be included in an expanded High Peaks Wilderness Area. The 1,600 acres southern portion of this tract warranted a Wild Forest classification. The APA recommended these classifications.
- **Casey Brook:** The Council strongly supported a Wilderness classification. The APA recommended this classification as an addition to the High Peaks Wilderness Area.
- **Hudson Gorge & Raquette Brook:** The Council advocated for a Wilderness/Primitive combination for both. The APA recommended a classification that is a combination of both Wilderness/Wild Forest.

Above: Winter at Boreas Ponds.

Below: Hikers gather on the summit of Cascade. Making sure surging visitation and increased popularity of the Adirondacks doesn't put people, natural resources or the wild character of the Park at risk is an emerging priority for the Adirondack Council.

Photo courtesy Nancie Battaglia.

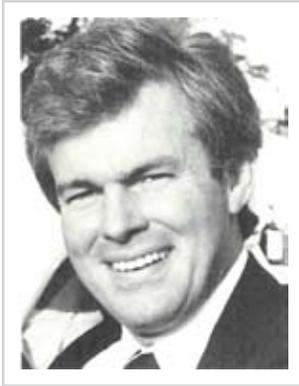


SUPPORTING THE COUNCIL

In-Memoriam

Thomas D. Thacher II (1946-2017)

On October 30, 2017, the Adirondack Council lost a dear friend. Thomas D. Thacher II, "Toby" died in Bedford, NY at the age of 71. Toby joined the Board of the Adirondack Council in 1986 and generously lent his keen political instincts, programmatic advice and wise counsel (whether on or off the Board) for over 30 years. Through his long-standing personal and family roots in the Adirondacks, he encompassed an unshakeable commitment to preservation of the Adirondack Park - its mountains, waters, open spaces and especially its fish! Many friends and family came to enjoy his special place in the Adirondacks and each went away with cherished Adirondack memories.



In his professional life, Toby was a public prosecutor, independent monitor and private investigator - instrumental in curbing corruption, fraud and waste in the construction industry. In all three roles, he created enduring strategies to uncover and contain corruption.

Toby's infectious good humor, his passion and his dogged determination to "get things done" will be sorely missed by the Council. His legacy lives on in the mission of the Adirondack Council ensuring the protection of the Adirondacks for generations to come. Thank you, Toby.

THE WORK THE COUNCIL IS DOING TO ENSURE THE ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF THE ADIRONDACK PARK IS BEYOND PRAISEWORTHY.

~ Thomas P. DiNapoli, NYS Comptroller



(L-R): Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, Executive Director Willie Janerway and John Stouffer Environmental Policy Expert, Comptroller's office.

Photo courtesy Jonathan Grandchamp.



SIGN THE PETITION!

Protect Adirondack Lands & Waters from Overuse!

The Adirondacks are a world-class outdoor recreation destination experiencing a record surge in hikers and visitors. The success of attracting more people to the most popular areas threatens the Park's future. Negative impacts on waters and mountain summits at over-popular trailheads and along trails puts visitor safety at risk, causes trail erosion, harms rare plants and wildlife, and threatens the wild character of the Park.

I support efforts to improve the preservation and stewardship of the wilderness character, clean water and wildlife of the Adirondack Park. I support additional education, roadside visitor facilities, alternative recreational destinations, natural resource protections, law enforcement, more rangers and other staff, and a robust public process for regional wild lands planning.

Signature _____

Email _____

Please detach and return in the enclosed envelope for delivery to policymakers.

Thank You!



ADIRONDACK COUNCIL
Defending the East's Greatest Wilderness
 103 Hand Avenue, Suite 3
 PO Box D-2
 Elizabethtown, NY 12932

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Discussing Diversity

A vision for the Adirondacks

In December, the Adirondack Diversity Initiative (ADI) held its 2017 Forum: *Envisioning Our Future* with keynote speaker environmental justice leader, Samara Swanston. Many local organizations, non-profits, state agencies, and concerned citizens attended with discussions centering on ADI's direction, strategic plan and future initiatives.

The symposium kicked off with a panel of ADI Core Team members who spoke about strategic and organizational areas that ADI was looking to advance in the coming year.

This included how to build stronger business engagement to create a more welcoming Adirondack community.

The keynote speaker, Samara Swanston, spoke about her role in the environmental justice movement. The afternoon included a hands-on workshop by the Adirondack Center for Writing, and sessions led by poets Adam Falkner and Sofia Snow focusing on looking critically at diversity, communicating differences and understanding belonging within our community. The Adirondack Council is one of the founders of the Adirondack Diversity Initiative.

Photo courtesy Chris Morris, Adirondack Foundation.

#WildAboutThePark

Tag us in your Adirondack photos on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter to be featured on social media, or in our next newsletter!

