



CALL OF THE LOON

Adirondack Council Newsletter | Winter 2020



Governor Proposes 2020 Environmental Bond Act

In January, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that he would seek voter approval for a proposed \$3 billion “Restore Mother Nature Bond Act.” If approved, the bond act will fund 21st Century infrastructure needed to fight climate change, protect clean water and clean air, preserve wilderness, and support communities in the Adirondacks and across the state.

The proposed 2020 environmental bond act is part of New York’s ambitious agenda to address climate change. It will help protect the many lakes and ponds where harmful algal blooms have occurred and are likely to occur in the near future. It will also provide a significant amount of money to invest in storm water runoff prevention, stream and fisheries restoration, wetland protection, and forest preservation.

Additional details on bond act funding priorities will be negotiated between the Governor and Legislature as part of the state budget, which is due by April 1. Then the referendum will go on the ballot in November 2020.

If approved by the voters, the bond act will serve as an important supplement to the Environmental Protection Fund, which provides \$300 million annually for environmental capital and state land stewardship projects.

The Governor also announced the need to address overuse, to preserve and provide access to popular Wilderness areas and other destinations in the Adirondack Park.

Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.

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**ADIRONDACK
COUNCIL** PRESERVING WATER,
AIR AND WILDLANDS

Adirondack Scenic Beauty and Cell Service



William C. Janeway
Executive Director
@WillieJaneway

Dear Members and Friends,

The Adirondack Council defends the East's greatest Wilderness, while supporting more vibrant communities. In response to demand for cell service, we support improved and well-screened communications infrastructure across the Adirondacks, so phone service is more reliable in communities, in homes and along travel corridors. It's important to provide service outside of remote Wilderness areas without having cell towers distract from the Park's scenic beauty.

The use of cell phones in the Park today is an ordinary occurrence. Since 2004, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) has done an excellent job approving proposals that have improved cell service in the Adirondacks while ensuring that new towers fit into the surrounding landscape. APA policy requires all tall structures be "substantially invisible" when viewed from public places. This has preserved the Park's uniquely wild landscape and

provided cell coverage to population centers and along many major travel corridors. This sets the Adirondacks apart from other rural places in the Northeast.

Some are asking the state to modify the tower policy and let companies build more visible and taller towers. Some applicants seek to bypass the policy. We disagree with both approaches because there is a better way.

We agree with the call for improved communications infrastructure that came out of the annual Adirondack Common Ground Alliance 2019 forum. The Adirondack Park's major communities and roadways are currently being outfitted with high-speed fiber-optic communications. New 5G networks employ much smaller, lower-profile equipment. Part of rural Maine is outfitted with state-of-the-art, "substantially invisible" equipment attached to utility poles.

We can and should use 21st Century technology and provide adequate cell service and protect the Park's scenic beauty.

Sincerely,

William C. Janeway
Executive Director

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Bi-Partisan Road Salt Legislation Introduced

The Adirondack Watershed Institute recently studied 500 drinking water wells that receive runoff from state highways. It found that more than half exceeded health guidelines for acceptable sodium levels. This data points to the need to think holistically about how we manage our roadways, to ensure safety and clean water.

The “Randy Preston Road Salt Reduction Act,” a bill (A.8767/S.6824) that would establish an **Adirondack Road Salt Task Force** and pilot program, was introduced by Senator Betty Little (R-Queensbury) and Assemblyman Billy Jones (D-Chateaugay). The Adirondack Council supports this legislation and urges its passage this year.

This legislation is the next step in the Council’s decade long campaign to reduce road salt pollution. Over the last 10 years, the Council has:

- Published a road salt report titled “Low Sodium Diet” (2009) detailing the problem and a series of recommendations.
- Co-sponsored three road salt conferences with partners.
- Co-chaired/served on the Adirondack Road Salt Working Group that secured state salt reduction test trials.
- And taken successful legal action under the Federal Clean Water Act to protect Lake Colby from an improper salt storage site by the Village of Saranac Lake.



Governor’s Budget Proposal Funds Water, Wilderness and Communities

Governor Cuomo proposed new investments to fight climate change, protect clean water, preserve Wilderness by addressing overuse, and help communities. In addition to the “Restore Mother Nature” Bond Act, the Governor’s proposed FY 2020 - 2021 budget includes:

A \$300 million Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), with

- \$36M for state land stewardship, including \$3M for overuse, trail crews and an Essex County hiker shuttle system

- \$30M for open space conservation
- \$13.3M to fight invasive species
- \$4.5M for climate smart farms
- \$2M to “connect kids to nature”
- \$2M for smart growth grants
- \$300,000 for Adirondack Visitor Interpretive Centers

\$1 billion for clean water infrastructure grants, including the \$9.4 million needed for Lake George’s wastewater treatment plant.

47 new staff at the Department of Environmental Conservation to

implement the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, but **no additional Forest Rangers.**

The Adirondack Council will ask the legislature to fund more staff including Forest Rangers, reject the Governor’s proposal to use the EPF for agency staffing, and reject a raid of Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative funds. The Council applauds the Governor’s proposals to fund wilderness protection.

IN & ABOUT THE PARK

1. Senator Betty Little Announces Retirement

After nearly 25 years in the state legislature representing most of the Adirondack Park, Sen. Betty Little (R-Queensbury) is retiring at the end of 2020. Little started her political career as a Queensbury at-large county supervisor before being voted in through a special election to the Assembly in 1995 to replace James King, who resigned to become a judge. In 2002, she was elected to the Senate replacing Ron Stafford who retired. While in office, Little didn't always agree with but still worked with the Adirondack Council to achieve some important success protecting clean water and the natural environment while fostering more vibrant communities.

(L-R) Sen. Betty Little with the Council's Deputy Director Diane Fish | Photo: Jasen Lawrence, ROOST



2. Council Wins Another ATV Lawsuit

The Adirondack Council has won its legal challenge against an unlawful all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trail in the Town of Clare in St. Lawrence County, which the town established on a road through and adjacent to the Adirondack Forest Preserve. The town didn't contest the Council's complaint, which sought to overturn the local law and protect the Forest Preserve. Under state Vehicle and Traffic Law, ATVs are generally not allowed on roadways. Experience has shown that when ATVs are allowed on roads that run through or are adjacent to the Forest Preserve, they easily enter and damage the protected lands. The Adirondack Council has won similar suits recently vs. Lewis County and the Town of Forestport.



3. Council Sues to Fight Acid Rain...Again

The Adirondack Council joined with the Environmental Defense Fund and Sierra Club in December as intervenors in a lawsuit in which New York is suing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over its refusal to protect residents from the pollution of Midwest coal-fired power plants. Under the Clean Air Act's "Good Neighbor" provision, no state is allowed to create air pollution that causes a health hazard in another. Northeast states have the right to petition the EPA for protection from smog and acid rain caused by upwind states. The EPA is obligated to order those power plants to turn on already-installed pollution control equipment. Since 2017, the Trump administration's EPA has refused.

Photo: Larry Master, masterimages.com





4. Supporting Adirondack Farms and Farmers

The vision of the Adirondack Council's Essex Farm Institute (EFI) is for farms in the Adirondacks to provide prosperous livelihoods for farmers and their workers, mitigate climate change through healthy agricultural soils and leadership in renewable energy, and directly improve human health through local food. Between 2012 and 2017, the number of farms in Essex County increased 9.2%, as compared to a 3.2% loss of farms nationally. However, average net cash income for these farms was down 10.5% from 2012 to 2017. EFI advocates and educates to build diversified, resilient farms in the Park that are financially viable, socially responsible and environmentally beneficial. Agricultural land shown in red on map.

Photo: Ben Stechschulte

5. Governor Supports Adirondack Diversity Initiative

In December, the Adirondack Diversity Initiative welcomed Nicole Hylton-Patterson as its first director with \$250,000 provided from the Environmental Protection Fund by the legislature and Gov. Andrew Cuomo. This funding was allocated to the Adirondack North Country Association to supervise and manage the program. This transformed the Diversity Initiative into a professionally directed entity. Within days of being hired, Hylton-Patterson gave a presentation to the Adirondack Park Agency, visited with legislators in Albany, and began a regional listening tour. Hylton-Patterson is working with partners to ensure that the Adirondack region is welcoming and inclusive to everyone, and that the Park is relevant to and supported by an increasingly diverse state and national population.



Photo (L-R): Diversity Initiative Director Nicole Hylton-Patterson and DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos

6. Lake George Wins Water Funding

Lake George waters are used by many for drinking, and are threatened by pollution. In January, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that he will provide an additional \$9.4 million in grants to the Village of Lake George to repair and upgrade its wastewater infrastructure and protect the water quality of Lake George. The grant is in addition to a \$3 million Water Infrastructure Improvement Act grant and a Department of Environmental Conservation-funded \$2.5 million Water Quality Improvement Project grant. This money fills a budget gap in the project and brings the total state investment to \$14.9 million. The remaining cost of the project will be covered by a zero-interest loan from the Environmental Facilities Corporation, which will be repaid by Lake George residents and businesses.





Efforts to Protect Wilderness from Overuse

Data from 2019 show that the state's initial actions to address overuse had an impact. These efforts include educating visitors, controlling overuse on peak weekends, promoting alternative hikes, establishing new parking rules, and rerouting/rebuilding the Cascade Mountain trail. Data show that the total annual number of hikers is still rising.

The data collected by the Adirondack Council show that actions by the state and others were successful in redistributing use in 2019. Peak weekend visitor traffic across the top three High Peaks' destinations, in

sum, decreased by 3.5%. And at 10 less well-known places, use expanded by 65%. Across the High Peaks Wilderness Complex, from 2017 to 2019, peak-weekend use increased from 222% to 238% of the state's estimate of capacity.

A High Peaks Wilderness task force, which includes the Council's Conservation Director Rocci Aguirre as a member, started a strategic planning process that will recommend more measures to address overuse. The task force will work to minimize critical impacts to Wilderness areas, while assisting communities with public safety

and safeguarding the wilderness character that is so critical to the local economy. The Governor proposed funding to protect and provide for stewardship of wilderness.



Cars parked near the Ampersand trailhead

Photo: Nancie Battaglia

Advocating for the Adirondack Park Agency

The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) has a critical role preserving the Park's natural resources and defending wildlife, and is tasked with developing long-term plans for public and private land use. However, by June of 2020, all eight appointments for the APA board will be vacant or expired.

The Adirondack Council is calling on the Governor and the Senate to appoint and confirm a full slate of new and returning candidates who can bring diverse backgrounds and expertise in environmental law, land-use planning, science, development, and local government.

In addition to needing a full, diverse board, the APA needs new tools to address large-scale speculative subdivision developments that can fragment the contiguity of the Park's wildlands and threaten wildlife.

The Council is working with diverse stakeholders to update land development practices. Modern conservation design avoids negative impacts of land development and ensures the preservation of sensitive habitat.

The Council supports legislation (S.6484 (Kaminsky)/A.8123a (Englebright) that would require clustering of development for the largest subdivisions on the most sensitive private lands in the Adirondacks.

INSTEAD OF THIS



STRIVE FOR THIS



Clustering homes reduces fragmentation and preserves wildlife habitat

Photos: Wildlife Conservation Society, *Make Room for Wildlife: A Resource for Local Planners and Communities in the Adirondacks*

SUPPORTING THE COUNCIL



Your Support: By the Numbers

Thank you to all Adirondack Council supporters, new members and advocates. Your dedication and generosity to Adirondack conservation is inspiring and makes a positive difference for the Adirondacks!

5 Gifts started the \$70,000 year-end matching challenge

692 Supporters made year-end donations



\$131,000+ Raised and goal exceeded

YEAR END MATCH



GROWING MEMBERSHIP



1268 New members/donors have joined since July 1, 2019

20,000+ Members in over 7500 households

94,000 Constituents



12 Action Alerts in 2019

4 Different petitions addressing water quality, acid rain, overuse and wildlife habitat

12,000+ Letters to policymakers

ADVOCACY IN ACTION



Hornbeck Canoe Raffle!

Support Adirondack conservation and enter our raffle for your chance to win a Hornbeck Boats New Tricks Twelve canoe!



The 12' long kevlar and carbon fiber boat weighs just 18 lbs., perfect for portaging through the remote Adirondack wilderness.

The drawing will take place on June 30, in time to plan your 2020 summer paddling adventures. You do not need to be present to win.

Tickets are 1 for \$10 or 3 for \$25

Purchase raffle tickets at donate.adirondackcouncil.org/canoeraffle20 or call us toll-free at 1.877.873.2240.

Special thanks to Peter and Ann Hornbeck for their donation of the New Tricks Twelve canoe.

Begin a Sustaining Membership!

Simplify your support for Adirondack conservation by becoming a sustaining member. Instead of making a single gift once a year consider an automatic monthly contribution deducted from a credit card or checking account. Your monthly donation will remain active until you choose to make a change. Every January, we will mail your tax receipt and an opportunity to select a special thank you gift.

Three easy ways to start your sustaining support today:

- Use the enclosed envelope with your credit card # or voided check.
- Visit us online at donate.adirondackcouncil.org/sustaining.
- Call Tyler Frakes Membership Director at 1.877.873.2240 Ext. 109.



Photo: Larry Master, masterimages.com

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Welcome New Clarence Petty Interns

The Adirondack Council has two new Clarence Petty Interns in its Albany office for the 2020 legislative session.

Caroline Dodd grew up in Saranac Lake, NY, and graduated from Cornell University in May 2019 where she studied Environmental and Sustainability Sciences with a concentration in Environmental Policy and Governance. Caroline worked with The Wild Center's Youth Climate Program and is a member of the Lake Placid Climate Smart Communities Task Force.



Charlotte Staats grew up in Westport, NY, and graduated from Clarkson University in 2017 with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and Policy. For the past five years, she worked on the Adirondack Mountain Club's professional trail crew, building and maintaining hiking, skiing, mountain biking, and snowshoe trails throughout the Park.



SAVE THE DATE!

Forever Wild Day 2020

Saturday, July 11 | 11am - 2pm
Heaven Hill Farm | Lake Placid, NY



Photo: Erika Bailey

WILD ~ABOUT THE~ PARK

We love seeing your photos from around the Park. Use the hashtag **#WildAboutThePark** and tag us on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter and we may feature them here in our newsletter, or on social media!

