



# ADIRONDACK COUNCIL

PRESERVING WATER,  
AIR AND WILDLANDS

## Board of Directors

Michael A. Bettmann, M.D.  
Chair

Sarah C. Hatfield  
Vice-Chair

Laurel Skarbinski  
Vice-Chair

Daniel J. Ryterband  
Treasurer

Liza Cowan  
Secretary

Kurt Abrahamson

Emily M. Bateson

Mary Bijur

David E. Bronston

Charles D. Canham, Ph.D.

Ann E. Carmel

Georgina Cullman, Ph.D.

Thomas Curley

Philip R. Forlenza

Ethan Friedman

Rush Holt

Robert J. Kafin

Lee Keet

Eric W. Lawson

Jerome Page

Justin Potter

John Reschovsky

Brian Ruder

Kate Russell

Douglas Schultz

Noah Shaw

Douglas Stewart

Curtis R. Welling

Ethan Winter

## Executive Director

William C. Janeway

December 21, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Re: **Adirondack Park Budget & Policy Priorities**

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The Adirondack Park is a national treasure, a landscape of hope for all, and we urge you to keep it open, funded and preserved. This 20% of the state contains economically challenged communities and large expanses of environmentally fragile public and private land, water and wildlife such as the loon, bobcat, heritage brook trout, moose, and the majestic bald eagle. The Park's wildlands and communities are experiencing negative impacts from overuse and the pandemic. Actions you take can address these challenges and ensure nature and people flourish together.

Thanks to your leadership and your team, New York leads the nation addressing the public health crisis while combatting climate change and offering world-class wilderness opportunities. You have been a champion of science and Adirondack water, wilderness and communities. In the coming year you have the opportunity to build on your Adirondack legacy. We respectfully submit these recommendations, for your FY'22 executive budget and State of the State proposals.

### **Address Overuse: Keep the Adirondack Park Open**

We applaud you for your success attracting millions of New Yorkers to the Adirondack Park and for acknowledging that, without improved management and protections, the resulting overuse degrades the resource and the quality of the experience that attracts visitors. We applaud the establishment of the High Peaks Wilderness Overuse Strategic Planning Advisory Group, and efforts to ramp up visitor education efforts. Unfortunately, still growing overuse of portions of the Adirondack Park in a pandemic is threatening visitor safety, causing record levels of ranger rescues, and degrading the health of our natural resources and the wilderness character that so many seek. **Communities faced with overuse need visitor education, new trails, enhanced wilderness protections and more rangers, to ensure the Park can meet the surge in demand.**



**To secure your successful Adirondack legacy, and preserve tourism that generates jobs and benefits Adirondack communities, we call upon you to provide \$500 million from the Environmental Protection Fund, a Clean Water and Jobs Bond Act, and other sources for the Adirondack Park over the next five years.** This funding should be dedicated to improving visitor services, community infrastructure, trails, and park access while improving protections for the Park's waters, wilderness and communities. Please provide funding for new Rangers and other environmental park staff, who are on the frontlines managing overuse and protecting public health on a daily basis. In order to expediate the implementation of visitor management recommendations, preserve wilderness and community benefits that depend on positive visitor experiences, we support convening stakeholders for a dialog about potential new dedicated revenue options.

### **Funding the Environmental Protection Fund and State Land Stewardship**

We applaud your work with the legislature in making a \$300 million Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) a staple of recent budgets. Your EPF investments will have impacts lasting long into the future, by preparing the Park to remain resilient with a changing climate, growing numbers of Adirondack visitors and growing water quality challenges. We stand with the *Friends of New York's Environment* coalition in thanking you and we request that you once again appropriate at least \$300 million in your executive budget for the EPF this year. **In addition, we strongly encourage you to propose an increase in State Land Stewardship funds with a focus on natural resource protection and a dedicated subcategory for Wilderness management and overuse on the forest preserve. We support important education/resource protection programs and partnerships that support rebuilding trails, as well as the High Peaks Alpine Summit Steward program.**

### **Protecting Clean Water with Infrastructure Funding**

Your leadership investing in clean water infrastructure to keep sewage and other pollutants out of drinking water and Adirondack Lakes including Lake George keeps residents, visitors and businesses healthy and safe. Aging treatment systems, climate change impacts and a limited tax base leave Adirondack waters threatened, and more than \$100m in projects currently need funding.

**We respectfully urge you to continue to make annual investments of at least 1 billion dollars per year state-wide for New York State's Clean Water Fund.** We also urge you to dedicate \$25 million to small rural Adirondack Park communities who face extra hardships. Please ensure that grants meet your original intent of closing the gap between the cost of projects and the amount that communities can actually afford, up to \$5 million per project as provided in the statute. Please invite Environmental Facilities Corporation grant applications to close the gap.

## **Promoting Vibrant and Diverse Communities in the Adirondacks**

We applaud your leadership funding the Adirondack Diversity Initiative (ADI) with \$250,000 a year in the EPF for the last two years. ADI has made its mark as an invaluable resource for the Adirondack Park. Now more than ever, ADI is need to ensure the Adirondack Park remains a welcoming, inclusive and safe place for all to live and visit.

In the coming year, the Adirondack North Country Association Adirondack Diversity initiative should to expand its outreach and influence throughout the Park and needs expanded staff capacity and resources. **We ask that you fund ADI at \$500,000 for FY 2021-2022.** The demand for resources that ADI provides to the Park's communities has never been higher.

## **Funding Science and a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Adirondack Lakes Survey**

Science is essential for addressing the pandemic and for protecting Adirondack waters from cross-state (upwind) pollution, climate change, invasive species, excess road salt and other pollutants. The more than 2,800 lakes and ponds, and over 30,000 miles of rivers and streams in the Adirondack Park are the environmental and economic backbone of the north country. The original Adirondack Lakes Survey of 1,469 lakes, conducted from 1984 – 1987, was the foundation for the solution to acid rain. An updated assessment or survey will be the basis for protecting the Adirondack Park's treasures and economy from climate change and other crises.

**We request a two million dollar investment for the first year of a three year, six million dollar 21<sup>st</sup> Century Adirondack Lakes Survey. This will produce the second-ever comprehensive assessment of Adirondack waters (an estimated 1,400+ lakes).** This study will measure the impacts of climate change and other threats including invasive species infestations and road salt, as well as the extent and magnitude of the recovery from Acid Rain. These efforts will bolster and integrate various ongoing water quality research and monitoring efforts throughout the Adirondacks, and guide actions needed to protect water, public health and natural communities in the Adirondacks, around New York, and across the country.

## **Supporting the Bond Act**

We applaud your leadership on initiating the Restore Mother Nature Bond Act. Protecting clean air and water and tackling the impacts of climate change is crucial to the health and safety of all New Yorkers. In order to double down on your commitment to lead the nation in the fight against climate change, **we respectfully encourage you to champion a new \$3 billion Environmental Bond Act to ensure that current and future generations have protected clean air and water and access to world-class open spaces. In addition, we ask that you dedicate at least \$25 million of the Bond Act to support the development of Visitor Use Infrastructure in the Adirondack Park.** This will support the establishment of visitor information centers, restrooms, parking lots, roadside safety infrastructure, boat inspection and decontamination stations and launches, intensive use sites like picnic areas and scenic viewing areas. By

providing these facilities, we will better protect sensitive forests and waters, enhance visitor safety, and preserve the reputation of the Adirondack Park as a world-class wilderness destination.

## **Non-Budget Policy Priorities**

We applaud you for signing the Road Salt Task Force legislation in 2020. There are more opportunities to address other threats and strengthen protections for Adirondack Waters and Communities through non-budget policy and legislative actions, and appointments.

1. **Strengthen Aquatic Invasive Species Legislation:** We applaud you for all you have done to support the fight against aquatic invasive species. Thanks to your smart investments the Adirondack Park now has a world-class network of infrastructure and stewards dedicated to inspecting and decontaminating watercrafts that spread aquatic invasive species.

The infrastructure and staff supported by the EPF Invasive Species budget designed to protect our Adirondack waters and local communities continues to go underutilized year in and year out. The program is positive and generally successful, but not without major problems. In the last five years alone, Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program has documented 25 new aquatic invasive species infestations. Without your investments and commitment, the situation would be far worse. But the Adirondack Park has too much to lose not to capitalize on your investments, close loopholes and protect Adirondack waters. **In order to ensure boaters utilize the world-class network of free inspection stations, we call on you to work with legislature to strengthen the *Aquatic Invasive Species Act of 2014* to ensure trailered motorboats don't bypass staffed inspection stations before launching into a public Adirondack waterbody.**

2. **Adirondack Park Agency Leadership:** The Adirondack Park Agency needs leadership. Please appoint a capable qualified chair from the non-state agency board members. And please work with the Senate to complete three board appointments by the end of June.

In conclusion, the Adirondack Council thanks you for the opportunity to speak with your staff last week and applauds your success in the Adirondacks. We encourage you to defend and build on your success with funding for overuse stewardship, staffing, research and monitoring. The waters, wildlife and communities of the Adirondacks are depending on you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William C. Janeway". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and a distinct "C" before the last name.

William C. Janeway  
Executive Director  
Adirondack Council

CC: Melissa DeRosa, Secretary to the Governor  
Robert Mujica, State Budget Director  
Kelly Cummings, Director of State Operations  
Amanda Lefton, First Assistant Secretary for the Environment  
Basil Seggos, Commissioner, NYS DEC