

Adirondack Council
Adirondack Mountain Club
Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve
Environmental Advocates of New York
Protect the Adirondacks!
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

June 2, 2021

Hon. Carl Heastie, Speaker
Hon. Steven Englebright, Environmental Conservation Chair
NYS Assembly
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Majority Leader
Hon. Todd Kaminsky, Environmental Conservation Chair
NYS Senate
Albany, NY 12247

Re. Threat to the Adirondacks and Need for A. 4074/S. 1145

Dear Speaker Heastie, Leader Stewart-Cousins, Chairman Englebright and Chairman Kaminsky,

Our organizations urge you to pass extensively vetted legislation that will preserve the ecological integrity, wildlife, water quality and open space in the Adirondack Park. **Assembly 4074/Senate 1145** will strengthen the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) by incorporating modern conservation development principles and practices to curtail widely scattered exurban development, or “rural sprawl” in the Adirondack Park.

The bill’s passage has just become urgent after last week’s announcement by the owner of private *Whitney Park*, *36,000 undeveloped acres in the heart of the Adirondacks*, that he will apply to the APA to fragment the large tract into eleven, sprawling estate lots. *This is a direct threat to the ecological integrity of the entire Adirondack Park.*

Whitney Park in Long Lake has been a top priority of the State's Open Space Conservation Plan since 1992. Whitney lands have 22 lakes and hundreds of streams and wetlands which connect the lakes. Converting this wild landscape into numerous private estates, would introduce new sprawl - roads, construction, vehicles, utilities, lights, and pets – into the very heart of the Adirondack Park and its most protected, green Resource Management zone.

Subdivision, development, and fragmentation of a landscape like Whitney Park is precisely the kind of threat to the Park that this legislation is intended to prevent. Your legislation would also be the first science-based conservation advancement to the APA's legislation in 50 years.

It would mitigate this threat by requiring that the APA design large subdivisions like this one to concentrate the new homes near existing roads and other infrastructure while maintaining intact the lakeshores, wetlands, and blocks of forest for wildlife, forestry, water quality and open space recreation. The bill also helps achieve the state's goals under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

Your bill is directed squarely at the largest, commercial, speculative developments in the Adirondack Park and will not affect small landowners or family operations. The bill includes a variance provision and incentives for developers through a density bonus if they configure a development to maximize open space protection. There is also a transfer of development rights provision.

As you know, the legislation was subject to extensive stakeholder meetings over a two-year period. Those meetings resulted in significant changes to achieve consensus among environmental, local governmental and forest product representatives. Such consensus is extremely rare in the Adirondack Park.

Please address this new threat to our state's treasured Adirondack Park by passing S. 1145/A. 4074 before end of this session. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Willie Janeway, Executive Director
Adirondack Council

Michael Barrett, Executive Director
Adirondack Mountain Club

David Gibson, Managing Partner
Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve

Peter Iwanowicz, Executive Director
Environmental Advocates of New York

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Protect the Adirondacks!

Roger Downs, Conservation Director
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