



STATE OF THE PARK 2018 - 2019



A NATIONAL TREASURE

THE ADIRONDACK PARK

The Adirondack Park is the world's largest intact temperate deciduous forest. It is also the largest park in the contiguous United States. It contains six million acres (9,300 square-miles), covers one-fifth of New York State and is equal in size to neighboring Vermont. The Adirondack Park is nearly three times the size of Yellowstone National Park.

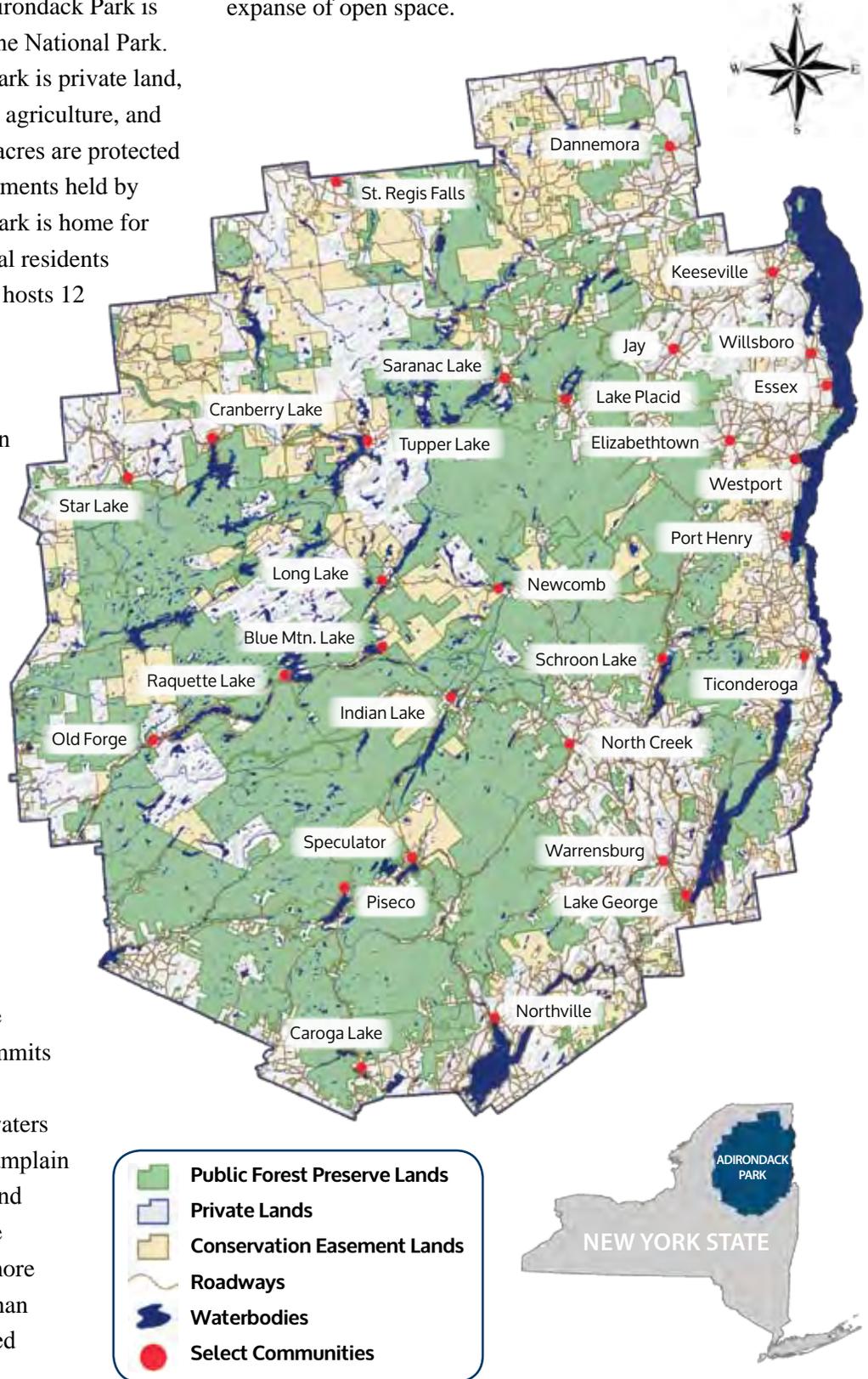
More than half of the Adirondack Park is private land, devoted principally to hamlets, forestry, agriculture, and open-space recreation. Nearly 775,000 acres are protected from development by conservation easements held by the state or private organizations. The Park is home for 130,000 permanent and 200,000 seasonal residents in 120 hamlets and 9 villages. The Park hosts 12 million visitors yearly.

Nearly half of the Park is publicly owned Forest Preserve, protected as "Forever Wild" by the NYS Constitution since 1894. About 1.1 million acres of these public lands are protected as Wilderness, where non-mechanized recreation may be enjoyed. Most of the public land (more than 1.4 million acres) is Wild Forest, where motorized uses are permitted on designated waters, roads and trails.

Plants and wildlife abound in the Park. Old growth forests cover more than 100,000 acres of public land. The western and southern Adirondacks are gentle landscapes of hills, lakes, wetlands, ponds, and streams. In the northeast are the forty-six High Peaks. Forty-three of them rise above 4,000 feet and 11 have alpine summits that rise above the timberline.

The Adirondacks include the headwaters of five major drainage basins. Lake Champlain and the Hudson, Black, St. Lawrence, and Mohawk Rivers all draw water from the Adirondack Park. Within the Park are more than 2,800 lakes and ponds, and more than 1,500 miles of rivers, fed by an estimated 30,000 miles of brooks and streams.

Through public education and advocacy for the protection of the Park's ecological integrity and wild character, the Adirondack Council advises public and private policymakers on ways to safeguard this great expanse of open space.



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A REVIEW OF ELECTED AND APPOINTED GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS' ACTIONS AFFECTING THE ADIRONDACK PARK

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Written and Edited by Adirondack Council Staff

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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 forests and farms and vibrant local communities.

Using science, we **educate** the public and policymakers; **advocate** for regulations, policies and funding to benefit the Park's environment and communities; **monitor** proposals, legislation and policies impacting the Park; when necessary **take legal action** to uphold constitutional protections and agency policies established to protect the Adirondack Park; and, **secure public and private actions** that preserve this unique national treasure for future generations.

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Dear Friends of the Adirondack Park,

This year, as we welcome a record 12.4 million visitors to the Adirondacks, we celebrate the Park as a world-class resource and national treasure. We honor and thank all those who have contributed over the last year, big or small, to the preservation of this globally unique natural landscape.

Almost 90 percent of Adirondack Park visitors come to hike in a quiet spot, hoping to find a clear view of the stunningly beautiful landscape around them and soak in the sights and sounds of nature. Others come to paddle a canoe (55 percent), go fishing (36 percent) or ride a snowmobile (8 percent). Every single visitor is important, regardless of his or her preferred form of outdoor recreation.

All of those visitors will take away fond memories of the Park, and we hope they will make a permanent connection between the beauty of this place and the laws and regulations that protect it. The Adirondack Park is facing serious threats to its wild character, ecological health and communities. We will need the assistance of both state and federal officials to eliminate these threats.

Here at home, overuse of the High Peaks and surrounding Wilderness areas has gathered attention from the state, which has recognized the surge in use as a threat to visitor safety, natural resources and the wild character of the Park. The state has announced some initial actions. These are positive steps in the right direction. Additional measures will also be needed to ensure that recreation doesn't degrade the pristine forests and waters people come here to see.

Farther from home, the Trump administration's reversal of past bi-partisan federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) actions combined with an embrace of coal-fired power plants threatens the Park's residents, wildlife, forests, and waters with a halt or reversal of recent declines in acid rain damage.

The Adirondack Council is working with leaders of both major parties in Albany and Washington to limit all of these threats and protect the Park's future. We thank you for your assistance in eliminating the oil tanker junkyard from the railroad tracks north of North Creek. We also thank you for your successful letters to Gov. Andrew Cuomo, urging him to classify the Boreas Ponds and a buffer around them as motor-free Wilderness. And we thank those who made financial contributions, because funding is also critical to these victories, our successful lawsuit against the EPA over acid rain, and much more.

With your continued help, we will tackle the threats of over-use and acid rain too. And the Adirondacks will be as healthy and beautiful for our children as it has been for us.

Sincerely,

William C. Janeway
Executive Director

2018 REPORT CARD

Elected and appointed government leaders made decisions late in 2017 and in 2018 that affected the legacy of the Adirondacks. Here are the 2018 priorities (from September 2017), and a report on how they did.

2018 Priorities/Analysis

Results

Boreas Ponds Wilderness: Governor Cuomo approved a Wilderness classification to protect the Boreas Ponds and sensitive new and unclassified lands and waters from motorized or mechanized recreation. State Forest Preserve planning improved and the outline of a strategy to address overuse was developed. *But, an all-terrain vehicles ban was NOT approved.*



More Vibrant & Diverse Communities: The state continues to invest in smart growth, downtown redevelopment, tourism promotion and community infrastructure. The focus for hut-to-hut and glamping has pivoted to hamlets and private land. *But, Legislative approval and state implementation of the community health and safety land bank has lagged.*



State Clean Air & Water: Junk oil trains were removed from the Forest Preserve. Clean Water Act compliance improved with millions in grants for Park communities. State and regional emissions cap reductions continue, efforts to further reduce use of road salt expand and new funding was approved for aquatic invasive species control.



Federal Clean Air & Water: The Federal government is failing to ensure compliance with clean water and clean air laws critical to protecting the environment and public health. The Trump Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has moved backwards on air pollution, acid rain, smog, and climate change. *But, Congress overruled the President's proposed cuts to the EPA.*



Healthy Forests & Farms: The Governor proposed but the Assembly didn't approve timberland tax-abatement (RPTL 480a) reforms to improve incentives for private land stewardship. Questions about the sustainability of cutting continue. Easement monitoring and enforcement did not improve. *But, support for farming did improve.*



Forever Wild: Legislation to weaken Forever Wild was defeated. Voters rejected a proposed constitutional convention that unnecessarily risked weakening Article XIV. A Health and Safety Land Bank Amendment was approved. *But, state enforcement is lacking. No plans released for addressing invasive species infestations without material tree-cutting.*



Adirondack Park Agency (APA) Reforms: Proposed state legislation to address needed reforms failed to pass. No appointments or reappointments to the APA were proposed by the Governor, leaving empty seats on the 11-member board. *But, the Agency has proposed internal changes designed to improve the review process for larger developments.*



Conservation Funding: The state's Environmental Protection Fund includes \$300 million for environmental projects, but didn't increase. Supplemental clean water infrastructure funds from a \$2.5 billion appropriation continues to benefit the Adirondacks. The Senate provided an additional \$250,000 for Adirondack ecological research and monitoring. *But, the Department of Environmental Conservation and APA environmental staffing and non-personnel funding was not restored.*





THE GOVERNOR



Boreas Ponds Is Wilderness

In March, Gov. Andrew Cuomo included the Boreas Ponds in an historic, once-in-a-lifetime 25,000+ acre expansion of the High Peaks Wilderness Area and consolidated it with the Dix Mountain Wilderness Area, expanding the Park's most popular hiking and camping destination to 275,000 acres. The action protects high-



elevation wetlands, pristine waters and rare wildlife habitat, creates an iconic Wilderness larger than Rocky Mountain National Park, and benefits the economies of host communities. The Governor's compromise includes the potential for motorized uses close to the Boreas Ponds and efforts continue to ensure that management effectively preserves the rare ecology and wild character of the Boreas Ponds for everyone.



Junk Oil Trains Removed

In 2017, the Governor, with others, persuaded Berkshire-Hathaway and Iowa Pacific to stop storing obsolete oil tanker rail cars on the Adirondack Forest Preserve. The Governor's agencies and NYS Attorney General Eric Schneiderman ordered Iowa Pacific Holdings LLC of Chicago to stop turning the rail line into a junkyard. The Governor and NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli called on Berkshire-Hathaway CEO Warren Buffett to remove cars that belonged to a Berkshire-Hathaway subsidiary, which accounted for most of

the cars. The state is also petitioning the federal Surface Transportation Board to remove Iowa Pacific as an operator. As soon as melting snows allowed, Berkshire-Hathaway amicably removed its cars from the 22-mile track between North Creek and Tahawus. Iowa Pacific began removing the remainder of its cars and equipment from the railroad in May, after Warren County ended its agreement with the company.



Junk oil train cars along the Hudson River in North Creek, Warren County - Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.



High Peaks, Low Staffing

The Governor has not replaced staff positions at the Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Adirondack Park Agency (APA) that were lost due to budget cuts during the Great Recession. The DEC lost close to 25 percent of its overall staff, while the much smaller APA lost 30 percent. Both agencies have assumed additional responsibilities since then, as the Forest Preserve has grown and as oversight of private development and commercial forestry have become more complex.



\$300M EPF Capital Funding

The Governor again budgeted \$300 million for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), which serves as the state's revenue source for environmental projects such as open space protection, park facilities, etc. This year's EPF included a \$4.1-million increase in the State Land Stewardship category and \$300,000 in new money for the colleges that operate the Adirondack Visitor Interpretive Centers at Paul Smiths and Newcomb.



Clean Water Grants Awarded

As of 2018, the Governor had awarded \$41.2 million in clean water grants to Adirondack communities, with \$9.2 million going to towns and organizations to curb sewage pollution and limit road salt contamination in the Park's lakes and rivers. Adirondack towns also received \$32 million in grants for clean water and wastewater infrastructure as part of a \$2.5-billion statewide clean water program.



Fighting Algae Blooms in Lakes

In this year's budget, the Governor devoted \$65 million to fighting algae blooms in major waters such as Lake George and Lake Champlain. Algae are aquatic organisms that can grow uncontrollably when there are too many nutrients in the water from storm-water runoff, etc. This causes algae blooms, like blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) which are toxic to people, pets and wildlife. Septic waste and consequent algae blooms closed beaches on both lakes in July. This program is a good beginning.

75 Million Reasons To Resist Tax Change

The Governor's budget proposal included a provision that would have eliminated the state's obligation to pay local property taxes on three-million acres of Forest Preserve it owns in 92 Adirondack towns and 12 counties. This plan would have abandoned the state's century-old obligation to pay full taxes to towns, counties and school districts on all "Forever Wild" state Forest Preserve. Instead, the state would impose a formula to determine how much it pays each year. Local governments would lose their right to assess the value of state property, as well as the protection of state rules governing property tax payments. The plan was rejected in the final budget negotiations. The state currently pays more than \$75 million in property taxes on the Adirondack portion of the Forest Preserve.



Throttling Up on Recreation

Forest Preserve management plans drafted by the Governor's agencies continue to emphasize intensive recreation over protection of public natural resources. This approach often wins praise from user groups, especially those supporting motorized recreation. But the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan states the protection of the Park's forests and waters takes priority.

A Better Future for All Forests

In his budget, the Governor included a proposal to incentivize the sustainable management of private forest lands in a bid to overhaul the state's outdated timberland tax abatement programs. The Empire Forest for the Future Initiative would expand the scope and reach of the state's efforts to include incentives

for wildlife management, open space protection and carbon sequestration. The package was not part of the final budget.

Two Out, Four Uncertain

During the 2018 Legislative Session, the Governor didn't nominate anyone for the Adirondack Park Agency Board. Barbara Rice of Saranac Lake resigned to take a position with the state. Chairman Sherman Craig of St. Lawrence County also resigned. Arthur Lussi of Essex County, Karen Feldman of Columbia County, Bill Thomas from Warren County and John Ernst of New York City continue to serve on terms that have expired. The Governor selected Feldman as "acting chair." The Governor should nominate strong environmental decision-makers to fill the vacancies and seek Senate confirmations as soon as the Legislature returns in 2019.

Spotlight on Outdoor Sports

The Governor's tourism promotion efforts have borne fruit in the Adirondacks, with an estimated 20-percent increase in overall visitors and a big jump in the popularity of hiking in the eastern High Peaks Wilderness Area. In addition, his budget included \$62 million for Olympic sports facilities upgrades that helped secure Lake Placid as host for the 2023 World University Games. With planning and management, the games can be a boon to the Adirondacks' economy and help remind the world that the Park serves as a model of conservation for inhabited landscapes around the world.

Adirondack Diversity Needs Support

State funding has not reached the Adirondack Diversity Initiative. The state also ignored calls to provide anti-bias training to its own staff and to Adirondack Park tourism businesses in wake of several racial conflicts that gained notoriety inside the Park and across the nation. Currently, the Park attracts an array of visitors, but sometimes not everyone feels welcome. Anti-bias efforts could help with this. Long term, the Park's economy and political support depend on it.

Critic of Trump Attacks

The Governor has been a sharp and vocal critic of the Trump administration's attacks on the Environmental Protection Agency and federal programs that protect clean water, clean air, public health, and wild places.

Broadband Coverage Gaps

Declarations of successful broadband coverage in the Adirondacks turned out to be premature. Solutions are needed, not just a campaign blaming and attacking the provider (Charter) and weak satellite links for those left behind. The Governor's goal of 100 percent universal broadband is laudable and important, especially for rural Adirondack communities.

Big Vision Announced

In July, the Governor pledged to spend \$10 billion on new environmental, clean water, clean energy and park projects as part of \$150-billion statewide infrastructure plan. Details were few at press time.



Photo: NYS Governor's Office, flickr

Saranac Lake Wins Big

In August, Governor Cuomo announced the Village of Saranac Lake will receive \$10 million from the state's Downtown Redevelopment Initiative (DRI). The DRI is a competitive grant program that provides funds to local communities for economic development.

Above Left: Boreas Ponds and the High Peaks, spring 2018 - Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.



STATE LEGISLATURE

BOTH HOUSES



Nix' Dacks Tax 'Fix'

Both houses of the NYS Legislature rejected Gov. Andrew Cuomo's budget proposal to repeal a century-old law requiring New York to pay full property taxes on all Forest Preserve lands in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. Adirondack towns, counties and schools receive about \$75 million in property tax payments on the "Forever Wild" Forest Preserve. The Adirondack Council joined with local officials and other organizations to create the Forever Taxable Coalition to successfully resist the proposal.



Lake Placid Wastewater Treatment Facility - Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.



Steady Flow of Money For Water, EPF List

Both houses agreed with the Governor's plan to maintain steady funding for water quality improvement projects in communities around the state, devoting a total of \$2.5 billion to the effort. Both houses also continued funding the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) at \$300 million. The EPF is the state's main funding source for parkland, open space, recycling facilities, invasive species controls, water pollution prevention, and other priorities.



Iffy on EFFI

A final agreement couldn't be reached on Governor Cuomo's plans to update the state's private timberland tax abatement program by expanding it to include owners of smaller tracts and allow for alternative forest management that benefits wildlife and sequesters carbon. The Empire Forest for the Future Initiative (EFFI) would create property tax incentives for landowners who keep their forests undeveloped. Current programs were created to only prevent the loss of productive timberland to development. Climate change and habitat loss underscore the need to reward anyone who keeps forests intact.



Financial Cloud Obscures Rainbow

The Legislature failed to dedicate any funding for an Adirondack Diversity Initiative to help the Adirondack Park become a more welcoming place for all New Yorkers and visitors from around the world. Its state offices and tourism businesses need training and assistance so the Park becomes a place where every visitor feels at ease and where our rural communities benefit from New York's incredible diversity of people and talent.



Gridlock on Conservation Design

Following the approval of the budget, partisan disagreements stalled action on nearly every initiative aimed at protecting the Adirondack Park's ecological health and wild character. One priority left to languish was a Conservation Design bill aimed at updating the Adirondack

Park Agency's 46-year-old rules for development. Currently, developers are allowed to spread homes and roads across large landscapes in remote, unbroken forests. This forces wildlife out of their habitat, diminishing the Park's vitality and pushing some species closer to extirpation or extinction. With engagement of the non-partisan Adirondack Common Ground Alliance, a modified bill was developed that had broad support, but the Legislature ran out of time before it could be advanced.



ATV Ban Stalled Again

The Legislature again failed to approve a general ban on the use of all-terrain vehicles (ATV) on the Park's Forest Preserve. ATV trespass is damaging trails and bringing noise, erosion and invasive species deeper into forests and wetlands. While state policy currently prohibits ATVs on Forest Preserve trails, proposals have been made to change that. A law would make the ban permanent, and authorize alternative locations, while allowing officials to spell out penalties for trespass and specify reasonable exceptions.

Above: Falls Brook, Indian Lake - Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.

Setback on Land Bank

Legislation failed to reach the Governor's desk that would have authorized the 250-acre land bank needed to carry out the Constitutional Amendment known as the Health and Safety Land Account (Ballot Proposal 3, 2017). Legislation adding a minimum of 250 acres is needed to compensate the use of an equal amount of Forest Preserve lands by local governments. Until that is approved, the land account cannot be utilized. Last year, voters authorized a plan allowing local officials to swap out tiny pieces of Forest Preserve along town and county roadsides, where utility poles, waterlines, broadband cables, or bike lanes are needed. Once the 250 acres is used up, the bank would expire.

THE SENATE

Lake Survey Survives

Sen. Elizabeth Little, R-Queensbury, secured \$250,000 in new funding in the state budget for acid rain related research and monitoring in the Adirondack Park. The money will help keep the Adirondack Lakes Survey Corp working at a higher level following a loss of other funds.



Heavier Damage Invited

The Senate's budget bill included a provision that would have increased by 50 percent the weight limit for all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) that may be registered for use in New York. The bill would have introduced a new class of multi-passenger Utility Task Vehicles, inviting a much higher volume of use. The Senate bill didn't ban ATVs from the Forest Preserve or establish strong penalties for trespass. Allowing larger ATVs in higher numbers would increase damage to trails. The Assembly opposed the change.

Idle Prison Could Be Put Back to Use

The Senate passed a resolution seeking a Constitutional Amendment authorizing the transfer of the former state prison Camp Gabriels near Saranac Lake to a private party. The forests around the prison campus were added to the NYS Forest Preserve long ago. The remaining campus consists of buildings and roads, but is state owned, so its legal status as "Forever Wild" Forest Preserve is presumed. The Assembly didn't act on the resolution.

Great Camp, Not Campground

The Senate passed a bill by Senator Little (S.2647/A.2910) that would transfer management of Great Camp Santanoni in Newcomb from the Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (which operates historic sites and campgrounds). The DEC is already under pressure to allow more intensive use of this Forest Preserve site. It should be treated as an integral part of the Forest Preserve, not a separate historic site, demonstration farm or campground. The bill was also sponsored by Assemblyman Stec. The Assembly didn't act on the bill.

Missing Title

The Senate passed a bill sponsored by Senator Little (S.7939) to clean up the last loose ends of the enormous and complicated deed dispute involving landowners around Raquette Lake, in Hamilton County, which voters authorized in a 2016 Constitutional Amendment (Proposal 4, 2016). The Assembly did not act.

State Would Lift Tax Burden

The Senate passed a bill sponsored by Senator Little (S.138A) that would establish a forestry stewardship and habitat conservation credit for personal income and business franchise taxes. The bill was also sponsored by Adirondack Assemblymembers Carrie Woerner, D-Round Lake, Dan Stec, R-Queensbury, and Billy Jones, D-Chateaugay. The Assembly didn't act on the bill.



We Can All Get Along



Sen. Brian A. Benjamin, D-Manhattan, introduced legislation (S.8415) that would require the state to provide anti-bias and inclusion training to all state employees.

THE ASSEMBLY

Climate Policy Should be Law

The Assembly passed the Climate and Community Protection Act (A.8270B) sponsored by Assembly Environmental



Conservation Chairman Steven Englebright, D-Setauket, for the third consecutive session. The bill commits the state to producing half of its energy from renewable sources by 2030 and reaching 100 percent renewable energy production by 2050. This would make mandatory a policy goal of the Cuomo administration. The bill also requires fair labor standards and directs investments to disadvantaged communities. The Senate didn't act on this bill.

Right on Rights

The Assembly passed a resolution (A.6279/S.5287) seeking voter permission to add Article 1, Section 19 to the NYS Constitution granting citizens the right to clean air, clean water and a healthful environment. The Environmental Bill of Rights was sponsored by Assembly EnCon



Chairman Englebright and Sen. David Carlucci, D-Rockland/Westchester. The Senate didn't act on the resolution.

THE COURTS



Fighting Acid Rain Trumps Inaction

The U.S. District Courts in Baltimore and Manhattan delivered twin victories to the Adirondack Park in June when they ordered the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to act on two separate petitions to curb the air pollution that causes acid rain and smog in the Northeast. Both courts set fall deadlines for the EPA to make a final decision. In 2017, the Adirondack Council, Environmental Defense and Chesapeake Bay Foundation joined the State of Maryland and others to seek relief from pollution created by the 36 dirtiest coal-fueled power plants in the nation. All are in the Midwest. The “good neighbor” provision of the Clean Air Act requires the EPA to prevent air pollution created in one state from causing harm to another state. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt ignored the petitions until the courts’ orders. Pruitt resigned under pressure in July.



Putting the Brakes on ATVs

NYS Supreme Court Justice Peter A. Schwermann ordered the Lewis County Village of Constableville to close several street segments to all-terrain vehicle (ATV) traffic. The judge agreed that the village had violated state laws that prohibit use of public roads as ATV trails. The Adirondack Council has won several similar lawsuits and was supportive of the plaintiff’s effort. Municipalities that violate state law are inviting further ATV lawlessness, including trespass on to nearby Forest Preserve lands.



Yes & No Begs Appeal

In May, a split 3-2 Appellate Division ruling said that public snowmobiling could potentially be authorized by the Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) on a bridge, such as the Polaris Bridge over the Hudson River in Newcomb, even if it’s within a river corridor protected from new or changed uses by a Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act (WSRRA) designation. The Polaris Bridge was built two decades ago by timberland owners Finch, Pruyn & Co. to carry logging trucks across the river, and was used by recreational leaseholders and their guests. The bridge was never open to public snowmobiling before the state bought it and should not be now. This bridge was posted against trespass by both Finch and The Nature Conservancy, which owned it for roughly a decade following Finch’s sale. The plaintiffs, Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve and Earth Justice, will lead an appeal to the state’s top court.



Polaris Bridge over the scenic Hudson River - Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.



DEC Can Go Back and Say No

In February, the Appellate Division of the NYS Supreme Court helped protect the Adirondack Park when it refused to hear an appeal of the state’s decision to withdraw its 2013 approval for a tar sands oil-handling facility in the Port of Albany. Currently, oil companies in North Dakota are transporting millions of gallons of Bakken crude per year through the Adirondack Park to the Port of Albany via the Canadian Pacific Railway. Adding tar sands from Alberta, Canada could have doubled the traffic, which runs for 100 miles along the Park’s eastern border, perilously close to the shore of Lake Champlain.



DEC Can’t Go Back and Say No

In March, the Appellate Division of the state Supreme Court reversed the Dept. of Environmental Conservation’s (DEC) ruling that the Old Mountain Road (between Keene and North Elba) had been legally converted to a ski trail when the state created the Sentinel Mountain Wilderness Area. The court focused on the DEC’s failure to employ the state Highway Law in closing the road. It is unclear how many other roads in the other 20 Adirondack Wilderness areas might be affected by the court’s ruling.

Above: Algonquin, Colden and Marcy from Goodnow Mountain - Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.

ATTORNEY GENERAL



Putting Heat Back on EPA Over Ozone

The Attorney General's Environmental Protection Bureau (EPB) won a lawsuit in June compelling the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to stop delaying action on a joint New York-Connecticut petition calling on the EPA to curb Midwest smokestack pollution during the summer smog season. The same coal-fired smokestack pollution that causes smog in New York's and New England's urban areas also causes acid rain in the Adirondack, Green and White mountains. The petition calls on the EPA to order the 36 worst Midwest polluters to turn on already-installed pollution devices when the weather is hot enough to convert nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and volatile organic compounds into ground-level ozone pollution that harms public health and wildlife.



Out of Town on a Rail ...

The EPB worked with Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, the Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and the Adirondack Park Agency to persuade Iowa Pacific Holdings (IPH), LLC of Chicago to stop storing old oil tankers in the Adirondack Park. The state brought a complaint to the federal Surface Transportation Board and successfully petitioned for waivers that will facilitate the state's case. The state is moving forward with a proceeding against Iowa Pacific.



Old Mountain Road, Sentinel Range Wilderness



It Should Have Been Enough

The Environmental Protection Bureau (EPB) vigorously supported the DEC's ruling to close Old Mountain Road to motor vehicles under its powers to manage the underlying land as Wilderness under the State Land Master Plan. The Adirondack Council joined the EPB and the DEC in defending this ruling in court. Unfortunately, the judges overturned the DEC ruling. But, the court did say that the DEC had the power to close the road in a different way if it wanted to.



L-R: Board Chair Robert Kafin, Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, Environmental Protection Bureau Chief Lemuel Srolovic and Attorney Allison Fultz - Photo Jonathan Grandchamp



Lighting a Fire Under Coal Coddler

In October 2017, Attorney General Schneiderman led a coalition of 15 state attorneys general in filing a notice of intent to sue the EPA for not meeting the Clean Air Act's statutory deadline for identifying which states are affected by unhealthy levels of ground level ozone (smog). There are still hundreds of coal-fired power plants in the U.S. contributing to smog, acid rain and poor visibility. Following Schneiderman's October notice, the EPA finally began issuing the designations. According to the EPA, the updated smog standards will improve public health for all, but especially for children, the elderly, people with lung diseases, and people who are active outdoors.

Schneiderman Resigns Underwood Takes Over

In May, Atty. Gen. Eric Schneiderman resigned his office. Inspector General Barbara Underwood was appointed



Underwood

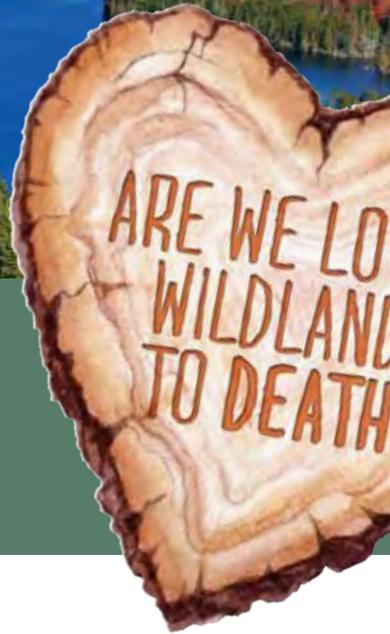
by the Legislature to replace him, making Underwood the first woman to serve as Attorney General for the State of New York. She will hold the post until January, when she

will yield to the candidate elected in November. Underwood is not running for election.

Above: Sunrise from the Hurricane Mountain - Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.



Boreas Ponds and the High Peaks
Photo © Carl Heilman II



PRESERVING ADIRONDACK WATERS AND WILDLANDS AS FOREVER WILD

The Adirondacks are more of a national treasure than ever because the Boreas Ponds were included in an 80,000-acre expansion of the now 275,000-acre High Peaks Wilderness Area.

Thank you to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, New York State, tens of thousands of Adirondack Council citizen advocates, the BeWildNY coalition, and our partners.

With the Governor's classification compromise done, attention now turns to addressing overuse. The good news is that more people are coming to the Adirondacks to experience the

stunning grandeur of the state's tallest mountains, clean waters, wildlife, and communities. The bad news is that too many visitors in too few places are placing people at risk, harming the environment, and spoiling the wilderness experience.



Overuse is degrading natural resources, threatening visitor safety, and harming the wild character of "Forever Wild" state-owned lands and waters.



Overuse in the High Peaks
Photo: Nancie Battaglia

The Trump administration is rolling back environmental protections. People need New York to showcase a better way. The world-class natural resources of the Adirondacks, and the dedicated professionals who work for the state's

environmental agencies deserve increased investments in stewardship and better protections to preserve and sustain the success of the Park for future generations.

In the Adirondacks we can and should show the world how people and nature can thrive together.



The Forest Preserve is a priceless resource. It deserves the world-class protection New York can afford to give it.

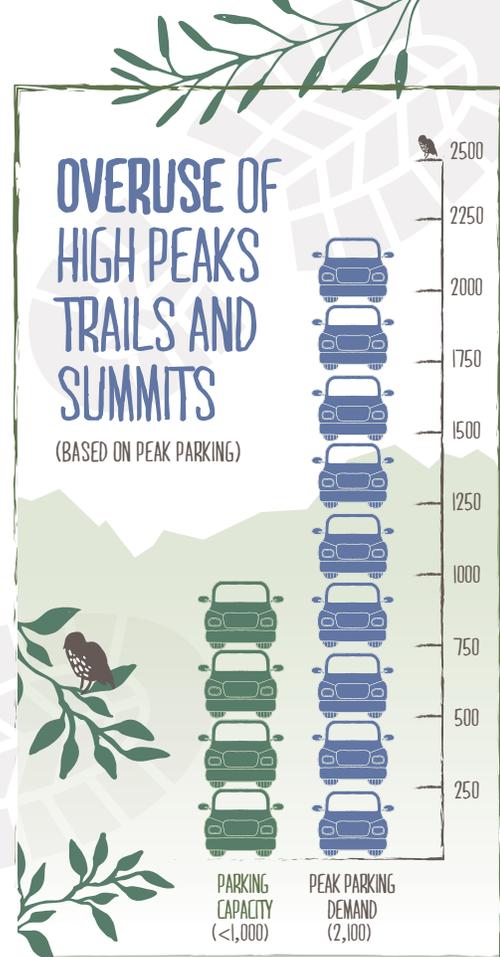


To better preserve pure water, pristine forests, rare wildlife, solitude, and public safety, a series of proven, reliable methods for managing the popularity of natural areas should be implemented. These actions will help secure the future of the Adirondacks as a continuing success, as a globally unique ecological reserve, and a national treasure.

- ▶ 1. Commit to comprehensive "regional" planning.
- ▶ 2. Expand education and promotion of alternative destinations.
- ▶ 3. Improve but don't expand parking and front-country infrastructure.
- ▶ 4. Redesign and rebuild trails and backcountry infrastructure.
- ▶ 5. Limit use, at some locations during times of peak use, when overuse threatens visitor safety, the natural resource, and the wild character of the user's experience.
- ▶ 6. Hire more rangers and other staff, and increase funding.

The NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation employed some of these methods recently. These were good first steps.

We can and should do more to protect this legacy for generations to come.



Overuse killing trees on Ampersand Mountain
Photo: Nancie Battaglia



OTHER AGENCIES



Fighting Carbon Helps Economy

In April, an independent study of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) showed that the decade-old program has injected \$4 billion into economies of the Northeast states since 2009. The three-year study by the Analysis Group says those benefits continued even as the program grew more ambitious.



Comptroller and Buffett Agree

In December of 2017, Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli leveraged the state's investments when he requested that Berkshire-Hathaway CEO Warren Buffett remove his company's derelict oil tank cars from storage on a rail line north of North Creek. Buffett agreed and removed the cars.



Broadband Dispute vs Service

The Governor has pledged 100 percent high-speed broadband coverage in isolated parts of the state, including across the Adirondack Park. The state provided millions to Charter Communications to make this happen. Everyone seemed to be declaring, "mission accomplished," but then it became clear that there would be real gaps in coverage. Since then the Governor and Charter have been critical of each other. The residents, communities and businesses in the Adirondacks need high-speed broadband, not a fight over who to blame for failures.

Above: Gore Mountain State Ski Center and the Siamese Ponds Wilderness - Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.



Acknowledging a Salty Problem

In May, the NYS Dept. of Transportation (DOT) announced two pilot programs to reduce the troubling build-up of road salt in Mirror Lake in the Village of Lake Placid and in Lake George. A recent study completed by the Adirondack Watershed Institute shows that there is also widespread salt contamination in drinking water where wells and other subsurface water supplies are close to highways maintained by the DOT.



NYS DOT plow and salt truck



Planned Response to Road Salt Problems

The NYS Department of Health (DOH) has been slow to react to evidence of widespread contamination of drinking water supplies in the Adirondack Park due to road salt applied to state-maintained highways. The DOT's reaction has been less than needed.



Transportation Planning for the Park

The DOT completed a Generic Travel Corridor Unit Management Plan for State Highway Travel Corridors in the Adirondack Park. This provides guidance for management of state road corridors throughout the Park.



Olympic Upgrades

The Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) responded positively this spring to concerns expressed by the Adirondack Council over potential environmental and legal hurdles in the its plans to upgrade Olympic facilities at Whiteface, Gore Mountain and Mt. Van Hoevenberg. The Authority addressed the Council's concerns of accounting for all ski trail mileage allowed at Whiteface under the NYS Constitution. It also agreed to the Council's request to add more acres of Wilderness to the Forest Preserve to off-set a smaller transfer of land to the less protective Intensive Use classification, as was done at Gore Mountain.



Unfortunate Sign of Times

The DOT's decision to post "Cultural Attraction" signs on selected exits of the Northway (I-87) contravenes long-standing state policy against "service" signs on the Adirondack portion of the highway and violates the spirit if not the law regarding Adirondack signs.



Authority Funds Acid Rain Monitoring

The New York State Energy and Research Authority approved a five-year, up to \$500,000 contract with the Adirondack Lake Survey Corporation to support long-term monitoring of select waters in the Adirondack Park impacted by acid rain.



LOCAL GOVERNMENTS



Redirecting Traffic in High Peaks

Keene Town Supervisor Joe Pete Wilson led a group of local officials who joined with conservation organizations to help the state to better manage large crowds of hikers flowing to the eastern High Peaks Wilderness Area and surrounding peaks. Wilson pointed out that the addition of Boreas Ponds and other tracts to the High Peaks Wilderness Area creates an opportunity to redirect some of the traffic that overwhelms his small town on summer and fall weekends into communities that need the economic boost it would provide.



Car traffic at an Adirondack trailhead



Trying to Save Gooley Camp

The state and local officials and The Nature Conservancy all agreed that the former Gooley Club buildings in the Essex Chain Lakes Primitive Area were to be removed or razed by October 1, so the lands and waters can become part of the “Forever Wild” Forest Preserve. The club’s limited, retained access to the buildings expires this fall. The club can move to a 3,000-acre tract of timberland nearby. Local politicians should not be trying to save these buildings.



North Elba Wants Road Rights

The Town of North Elba kept alive a lawsuit that nullified state action closing a Wilderness trail to motorized traffic. A state court ruled that the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) made mistakes when it closed the trail to vehicles in the Sentinel Range Wilderness Area. The Adirondack Council joined the state to defend the state’s right to close roads in Forest Preserve Wilderness areas. The court said the DEC could still act to formally close the right-of-way.



Warren, Essex Send Chicago Company Home

This spring, Warren County officials voided their contract with Iowa Pacific Holdings (IPH) LLC after the company failed to meet its obligations to the county. Essex County officials also urged the company to leave. IPH of Chicago had promised to operate a cargo service but instead stored nearly 100 tankers on the rail line between North Creek, Warren County, and Newcomb, Essex County. The Adirondack Council hired legal experts in railroad law to help, and several state officials also assisted in urging IPH to remove itself from the line. IPH’s equipment had been removed by August.



Keene, Queensbury Solarize

The towns of Keene, Essex County, and Queensbury, Warren County, have won designations as Clean Energy Communities by the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority

through its Solarize project. Both were rewarded for their development of major green energy projects. The program eases community investments in renewable energy in an effort to fight climate change and decrease energy needs across the state.



Saying ‘No Thanks’ to State Salt

Local officials in the Village of Lake Placid, the towns of North Elba and Wilmington in Essex County, and the towns of Lake George, Queensbury and Bolton in Warren County, have led the effort to reduce the impact of road salt on local lakes, rivers and underground aquifers. All are working with local not-for-profit organizations and NYS Dept. of Transportation to reduce annual tonnage and find alternative de-icing options.



Dacks Axe Tax Hacks

The Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages, Adirondack Park Local Government Review Board, Warren County Board of Supervisors, and Hamilton County Board of Supervisors joined with the Adirondack Council, Catskill Center for Conservation and Development and other organizations to create the Forever Taxable Coalition. The coalition opposed Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s budget plan to halt the state’s property tax payments on all Forest Preserve, and replace them with a complex payment formula. The state has been obligated to pay property taxes on all Forest Preserve since 1886.

Above: Saranac Lake - Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.

DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.



Whistle Blows for Junkyard

In December 2017, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos filed a successful petition for waivers and exemptions with the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) as part of an effort to remove Iowa Pacific Holdings LLC as the operator of a railroad between North Creek and Newcomb. The DEC



Seggos

argued that the company has stopped operating a railroad and had turned the line into an industrial junkyard. The STB granted most of the state's requests. Soon after, the company announced it would be removing the junked oil tanker cars and leaving the Adirondack Park. Parts of the railroad sit on "Forever Wild" Forest Preserve, while others are adjacent to rivers protected by the state's Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers program.



Demands Answer on Clean Air

The DEC filed a petition under the Clean Air Act's Good Neighbor provision calling on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to curb pollution from the 36 dirtiest coal-fired power plants in the Midwest. The DEC was trying to protect New York from smog and acid rain. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, who resigned in July, ignored New York's petition and refused to turn on the plants' already-installed pollution controls. The DEC referred the petition to the NYS Attorney General. In June, New York won an order from a U.S. District Court judge compelling the EPA to make a ruling.



Coal Plants Choked Out

In July, Commissioner Seggos held hearings on proposed emissions regulations that will benefit the Adirondack Park. By tightening carbon emissions caps at all power plants, the DEC will compel the two sources of coal-fired smokestack emissions nearest to the Adirondack Park to shut down by 2020. This will reduce the acid rain, smog and fine particle pollution currently harming the Park's forests and waters. It will also help curb climate change.



Photo: Nancie Battaglia



On the Right Trail

In June, the DEC announced that by Columbus Day weekend the state would take action to promote sustainable tourism and better protect the Park's visitors, natural resources and wild character by limiting overflowing trailhead parking in the High Peaks, especially at lots on busy State Route 73. The DEC worked with the Dept. of Transportation to better delineate the parking lots. Other measures include a social media campaign and leave-no-trace principles; electronic message boards on Rt. 73; information kiosks; additional portable restrooms; and, promotion of underutilized hiking options.



Forest Preserve Crowd Control

In June, Commissioner Seggos introduced the state's first hiking reservation system, establishing a program at the Peekamoose Blue Hole, a popular destination in the Sundown Wild Forest of the Catskill Park. The new system is designed to balance the goals of ensuring public access to the Forest Preserve, while reducing environmental damage and enhancing public safety.



Thinking Bigger... Better Planning

The DEC is moving closer to adopting internationally recognized landscape-scale conservation techniques that are needed to adequately manage the natural resources and recreational demands of the Adirondack Park. Rather than consider each of the 100-plus Forest Preserve units in isolation, the DEC has begun combining adjacent units and planning for them together. This is an excellent first step towards stewardship essential for preservation.



Lack of Personnel Endangers 'Dacks

The state's decision to keep DEC staffing close to 25 percent below where it was just ten years ago, and quietly eliminate the Endangered Species Unit, has led to the Department having trouble completing work. A recent report from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service indicated that the DEC no longer had sufficient trained personnel to complete peregrine falcon surveys. In his budget testimony before the Legislature, the Commissioner did not agree with the representatives of the Department's Forest Rangers and Environmental Conservation Officers who said they needed more staff. The dedicated, hard-working staff needs more support.



Need New Drawing Board

In June, the DEC submitted to the Adirondack Park Agency flawed management plans for the High Peaks Wilderness Area and Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest. Both plans contained elements that were out-of-compliance. For example, they added 12.4 miles of roads, when an increase in motorized roads is prohibited. The DEC also short-circuited the public review process when it declared that the plans would have no significant environmental impact. Together, the two plans cover more than 300,000 acres of nearly contiguous Forest Preserve. While the approved plans include some very positive actions, and are a step in the right direction, they are flawed and could and should be better.



Jamestown Falls and the Raquette-Boreal Primitive Area - Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.



Dozing a New Path

In September 2017, the DEC announced it would construct 1.25 miles of new road on private lands between the Carry Falls Reservoir and the West Branch of the St. Regis River. The new road would have opened a vast area to public motorized recreation, threatening the Raquette-Boreal Primitive Area and lands recommended by the Adirondack Council to become the 73,000-acre Raquette-Boreal Wilderness Area. This road would invite public vehicles into a rare and sensitive, low-elevation spruce/fir forest, normally found only in Canada and Siberia. The proposal was withdrawn after objections were raised, but the state has indicated that they will try again.



Well, if it's Already Ruined ...

As managers of the Forest Preserve, the DEC has overemphasized recreation at the expense of careful protection of priceless natural resources. There has been a flurry of unit management plans proposed in recent years that routinely contain additional road and snowmobile trail mileage, more parking and additional motorized access. All of these can significantly increase impacts on the Forest Preserve. Protection of natural resources appears to be a secondary consideration, although the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (SLMP) requires the opposite. Preservation of the natural resources and wild character of the Forest Preserve should be the priority.



Clear-Cut Destruction

In order to more easily transport materials to repair the Big Otter Lake Trail, the DEC clear-cut 40' x 40' drop zones for helicopter delivery of bridge building materials in the Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness Area. In recent years, the DEC has also gained permission to use non-natural materials for bridges on the Forest Preserve to ease in maintenance. The DEC needs to preserve the wild, not cut it down.



No, We Already Settled That

In August, the DEC told local officials that the buildings comprising the Gooley Club on lands formerly owned by Finch, Pruyn & Co., would be razed or removed by October 1, in accordance with the approved management plan. Local officials pressed the state to retain the buildings after the publicly vetted plans were already complete. Some local officials identified the former hunting club lodges as a location for public "hut-to-hut" camping, despite a constitutional prohibition on non-administrative buildings on the Forest Preserve.



Time to Shut it Down

The State Supreme Court ruled in March that the state could use NYS Highway Law Section 212 to prohibit motorized traffic on the Jackrabbit Ski Trail in the Sentinel Range Wilderness. They wrote that the law "vests DEC with the authority to order the abandonment or discontinuance of a road passing over or through lands within the

Forest Preserve whenever a state purpose is endangered by such road." Instead, DEC has left the trail open to motorized uses inside of the Wilderness area.



Schuyler Island and Trembleau Point - Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.



Growing the Forest Preserve

In April, the state acquired the 618-acre Trembleau Mountain tract on Lake Champlain, including more than one mile of undeveloped shoreline, which will be added to the Adirondack Forest Preserve. Located in Chesterfield, Essex County, the parcel was purchased with \$676,000 from the Environmental Protection Fund. Unbroken shoreline is rare on Lake Champlain.



Lake George Beaches Deserve Clean Water

The DEC is working with other agencies and local officials to try and halt all contamination coming from untreated sewage, faulty septic systems, and developed areas of Lake George's southern basin. For a third consecutive summer, the swim season was marred at Million Dollar Beach in Lake George due to *E.coli* bacteria. Beach closures reflect poor stewardship of our most essential natural resources and drive away visitors who have a right to expect clean water in the Adirondack Park.



Bucks to Fight Aquatic Invasives

In June, the Paul Smith's College Adirondack Watershed Institute received a five-year, \$9.3 million contract from New York State to implement the Adirondack Park Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program. The agreement funds a region-wide voluntary watercraft inspection and decontamination program to try and stop the introduction, spread, and transport of aquatic invasive species such as Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussels and spiny waterflea. Fifty-eight stewards will be funded at locations across the Park.



ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY



Wilderness for Boreas Ponds

In March, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) board voted to classify a large portion of the recently acquired Boreas Ponds tract as motor-free Wilderness. It also classified other new state lands to facilitate an expansion of the High Peaks Wilderness Area to 275,000 acres. The new Wilderness will be slightly larger than Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado and almost twice the size of Zion National Park in Utah. The classification package preserves enormous new areas of high-elevation wetlands, rare wildlife habitat and sensitive forest that enhance the ecological integrity and wild character of the High Peaks Wilderness Area.



Delay Relieves Pressure

In November 2017, the APA Board delayed action on a final recommendation to the Governor on the classification package for the Boreas Ponds tract and other new parts of the High Peaks Wilderness Area. This was wise given the pressure on the Agency at that time to approve commercial hut-to-hut overnight accommodations on the Forest Preserve near Boreas Ponds as part of that package. By waiting until spring to make a decision, the Agency allowed that tempest to pass before acting.

Above: Upper Hudson River - Photo © Carl Heitman ll/Wild Visions, Inc.



Gothics from Boreas Ponds



Rush to Judgement Anyway

In July, the APA rushed approval of management plans for the High Peaks Wilderness Area and Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest. The Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) worked with the Park Agency to prepare both plans, which cover more than 10 percent of all of the public land in the Park, and said the proposals had no potential for significant negative environmental impact. Public comments to the DEC and APA on these plans identified material errors and elements that were out-of-compliance with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. But the APA certified the modified plans as compliant without allowing for a public comment period on what they accepted. This was defended even as material deficiencies were acknowledged. New “concurrent comment periods” that limit opportunities for public review and comment frustrate efforts for open and transparent decision-making.



Recreation Prioritized Over Preservation

When the APA approved the High Peaks and Vanderwhacker Unit Management Plans, it prioritized recreational infrastructure over natural resource protection. This was in direct contradiction to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (SLMP), which requires that the protection of the natural resource be the priority, not the accommodation of a variety of recreational and motorized uses. The SLMP has the force of law, and is the guiding document for the APA’s oversight of the DEC with regard to state management of the Forest Preserve.



More Roads Bad Process

This spring, the APA approved the DEC’s management plans for the more than 375,000-acres in the High Peaks and Vanderwhacker Units despite their flaws, including: no analysis of the addition of 12.4 miles of new Forest Preserve roads, although the SLMP prohibits any material increase in roads; no assessment of the carrying capacity for new public water bodies; and, the addition of an entire section on rock/ice climbing without public input. The state pledged to address the issues of roads and carrying capacity after approval.

Day Use Areas in Wilderness

The APA approved the designation of “day use areas” at the Boreas Ponds Dam, Chapel Pond and Henderson Lake Dam although these sites should be managed as Wilderness. This description could lead to confusion by the general public about the types of infrastructure and uses that will be allowed in these areas. Other “day use areas” have intensive recreational amenities, and are often managed as part of state campgrounds.



Photo: Jamie West-McGiver

Guiding Mountain Bike Trails

The APA approved a new mountain bike trail guidance document that will help create well-designed, ecologically sensitive, and low-impact single-track trails within the Forest Preserve. As mountain biking use continues to grow regionally, the prudent use of these guidelines will help managers protect natural resources and landscapes while encouraging single-track mountain biking opportunities on appropriate Wild Forest areas of the Adirondacks.

Better Application Better Subdivisions

The APA took a necessary first step in addressing deficiencies in the design and construction of large development projects on sensitive Adirondack lands when it revised its application for large-scale subdivisions. While major reform is needed to create true conservation designed subdivisions, this new application should improve efficiency, help clarify project requirements, and help ensure that proposed projects include protection of open space, wildlife and habitat resources.

Preserving Park Towers Policy

The APA took substantial steps in protecting the “substantially invisible” doctrine of its Telecommunication Towers and Tall Structures Policy when it approved the McCauley Mountain emergency tower in Herkimer County. While the emergency tower would exceed the height standard, the APA noted the exception was necessary to protect “public health, safety and welfare.” The Agency’s policy on telecommunications towers has been a model for the entire nation, and has allowed the expansion of cell phone and broadband service, while preserving the natural character and beauty of the Adirondacks.

Amusement Park or Adirondack Park

The APA’s approval of the Olympic Regional Development Authority efforts to modernize trail and lift facilities and improve infrastructure at their facilities was generally legal and environmentally responsible. However, it also approved a number of amusement style attractions (such as a zip line and mountain coaster) that threaten to undermine the unique nature of these Olympic landmarks.

All Quiet!

The Park Agency has taken no action advancing or approving a permit for large noisy commercial parties at a camp on Raquette Lake. This non-action could help local stakeholders and businesses restore and preserve the peace and quiet on and around Raquette Lake.

Too Quiet!

As concerns grow and are voiced about increased cutting and potentially unsustainable rates of harvesting of trees on commercial forest lands in the Park, the Park Agency has been strangely quiet. The APA should be a leader in a dialog about new and improved incentives and updated regulations to support modern sustainable forest management and carbon sequestration.

Feldman Takes Helm at Park Agency

In June, Gov. Andrew Cuomo appointed Adirondack Park Agency (APA) Board Member Karen



Feldman



Craig

Feldman as the board’s Acting Chair. Feldman, of Hudson, Columbia County, takes the place of Sherman Craig of Wanakena, St. Lawrence County, who retired from the board in July. Feldman is an attorney who has served on the APA board since June of 2013. Also, Barbara Rice resigned from the APA to

accept a state economic development position, so this leaves two of the 11 seats vacant, while four members (Feldman, Ernst, Lussi, and Thomas) continue to serve even while their terms have expired. Members serve until replaced or until they resign.



Commercial forest lands east of Carry Falls Reservoir, St. Lawrence County



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

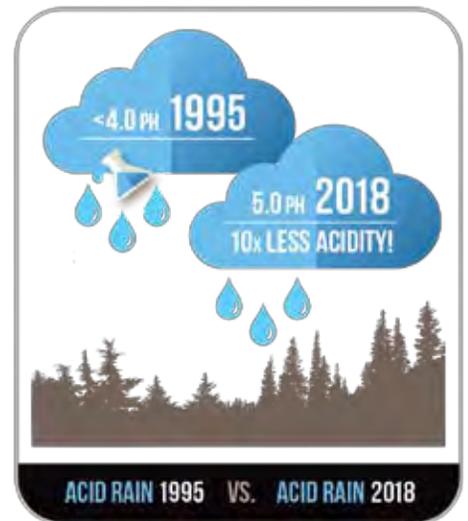


Milestone Measured in the Air

Richard Brandt of the University at Albany's Atmospheric Sciences Research Center measures cloud water chemistry in the weather station atop Whiteface Mountain for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Air Division. He helps New York determine whether the Midwest air pollution reductions ordered by the EPA have cleaned up air quality in the Northeast. The acidity of clouds dictates the acidity of the rain and snow that falls out of them. Prior to the start of the federal Acid Rain Program in

1995, the average pH of clouds passing over Whiteface Mountain was 4.0. Since then, the average has steadily risen to 5.0. In the 1970s, cloud pH at Whiteface hovered as low as 2.6, nearly the same as vinegar or lemon juice. Unpolluted rain has a pH of 5.5. There is still more work to do to halt acid rain's impact entirely and allow the Park to recover, but real progress has been made.

Whiteface Mountain, Essex County - Photo © Carl Heitman II/Wild Visions, Inc.



Silent Spring II



Cartoon © Mark Wilson www.EmpireWire.com



Henhouse Foxes Bite EPA, Clean Air

The Trump administration continued its war on the EPA and clean air in 2018, when it proposed a 31-percent cut in the EPA's budget (rejected by Congress) and refused to enforce the Clean Air Act. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt ignored New York's and Connecticut's petitions asking for relief from smog generated by coal-fired Midwest power plants. The Clean Air Act's Good Neighbor provision prohibits one state from causing smog in another state. Pruitt resigned in July under the cloud of 13 federal investigations into his conduct. President Trump appointed Pruitt colleague and fossil fuel lobbyist Andrew Wheeler as acting EPA administrator.

Clean Water, Clean Air Trumps Trump

In February, Congress put aside partisan differences and rejected the Trump administration's attack on the EPA's



Tonko



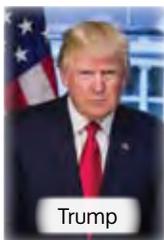
Faso

budget when it approved a \$1.3-trillion spending plan that will continue through the Federal 2018 Fiscal Year. Under the plan, the EPA received a \$763-million increase, providing funds for important environmental and public health priorities. Funding for acid rain and climate research remained at current levels. The Council thanked U.S. Rep. Paul Tonko, D-Amsterdam, who led a coalition press

conference in Albany in February calling for the EPA's budget to be saved, as well as Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-Willsboro, who asked fellow majority members to support the EPA's acid rain program, as did the late Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-Rochester, and John Faso, R-Kinderhook. Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer, D-NY, and Kirsten Gillibrand, D-NY, won support for the EPA in the Senate.

Emissions Switch

In July, the Trump administration drafted a new proposal to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from coal-fired power plants.



Trump

It is far less stringent than the Obama administration's 2015 Clean Power Plan (CPP), which President Trump repealed. The CPP called for a 32-percent cut in power plant greenhouse gases by

2030. Experts said the replacement rule would allow the Trump administration to avoid lawsuits over repeal of the CPP, but said the new plan would do little to curb climate change.

Left: The Lake Champlain Bridge overlooking Port Henry - Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions, Inc.

Opposing Junk Oil Trains

In January, Senators Schumer and Gillibrand called upon the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) urging



Schumer



Gillibrand

regulators to stop Iowa Pacific Holdings (IPH) LLC, of Chicago from storing derelict oil tank cars on the Adirondack Forest Preserve. "Legitimate freight rail operations are an important part of our economy, but using an old rail line in the middle of a state park to store outdated tanker cars is an unacceptable outcome and must be prohibited," said Senator

Schumer's letter. IPH won the Senator's support in 2011 when it proposed using the Saratoga and North Creek Railway to haul mine tailings from former iron mines in Newcomb.

Lake Champlain Funding Increased

Congresswoman Stefanik and Rep. Peter Welch, D-VT, secured approval of \$8.4



Stefanik

million for funding for the Lake Champlain Basin Program for fiscal year 2019. This was an increase of \$4 million in funding for the program which is critical to protecting the water, fish and economy

in and around the lake in Vermont and New York. The Trump administration and House appropriations proposed a cut.



Stefanik Votes to Protect Wildlife

In 2017, Rep. Elise Stefanik voted against a House budget bill that contained a provision opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil drilling. The bill still passed. The Adirondack Council is part of a national coalition supporting wilderness preservation in Alaska and the Adirondacks.

Stefanik Votes Against Refuge

In 2017, Congresswoman Stefanik voted to support a bill (H.R. 218) sponsored by Rep. Don Young, R-AK that allows road construction through Alaska's Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and Izembek Wilderness, without environmental review. The Senate did not act on the bill.

Clearing a Path for Water, Wildlife

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has been working with the AuSable River Association and the Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy to improve stream and river passages beneath roads to allow safer fish and wildlife passage and prevent washouts during storms. In mountainous areas such as the Adirondack Park, a rapidly changing climate can trigger surprise storms and deepen major events such as blizzards and hurricanes. In 2011, Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee caused extensive flooding, washouts and property damage in the Park.



Thank You, Adirondack Park Advocates!

This year, thousands of Adirondack Council advocates took action to expand wildlands, preserve clean water and clean air, protect wildlife, address overuse, and more. Your personal letters, phone calls and emails to policymakers helped secure positive results for the Park. Your continued involvement is essential to protecting the Adirondack legacy for generations to come. Thank you!



Photo: Kurt Gardner Photography

TIP OF THE HAT & AWARDS

Partner Contributions

Each year the Adirondack Council recognizes individuals and not-for-profit organizations whose work has advanced environmental protection and shown how nature and people can thrive together in the Adirondack Park.

The **Adirondack Watershed Institute** released findings of a study funded by **ADKAction** and the **Fund for Lake George** detailing heavy use of salt on state highways is responsible for most of the contamination of nearby drinking water wells. Road salt has been showing up at unhealthy levels in wells and springs near state roads, indicating contamination of underground aquifers that hold vast reserves of fresh water.

Lake Champlain Chapter of Trout Unlimited in partnership with the **AuSable River Association** and others made the West Branch of the Ausable River a little wilder by removing the Quarry Dam. The dam is located downstream of the intersection of NYS Route 86 and River Road near Lake Placid and serves no practical purpose. Its removal will allow natural fish passage and spawning to reach higher into the Ausable River watershed. The larger Rome Dam further downstream is also being removed.



Barnett Legacy Cheered

The Adirondack Council in August honored the conservation legacy of Timothy Barnett, founding Executive Director of the Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and past winner of the Council's Conservationist of the Year award. Barnett was celebrated during a gathering of Council members at a Westport lighthouse overlooking Lake Champlain. Barnett trained and led a team that purchased and protected hundreds of thousands of acres of new "Forever Wild" Forest Preserve, as well as private sanctuaries. Tim retired in 2018, after 46 years with the Conservancy.

Right: Former Council Board Members and Tim Barnett (center) at Forever Wild Day, July 2017

Conservationist of the Year

On July 14 at the Adirondack Council's Forever Wild Day celebration in Old Forge, nearly 250 members and friends gathered to present the 2018 Conservationist of the Year award to Cornell University acid rain and fisheries research scientist Dan Josephson.

Working from the Little Moose Field Station for over three decades, Josephson and his colleagues documented the need for pollution cuts, then proved that the cuts had resulted in cleaner air, less water pollution and a recovery of fisheries.

For his lifetime of work as a steward and educator, the Council also honored the work of retired forest ranger and wildlife scientist Gary Lee of Inlet. Lee's most recent work centers on monitoring bird health, especially common loons.



L-R: Dan Josephson, Board Member Sarah Collum Hatfield and Board Chair Robert Kafin



L-R: Board Member Kate Russell and Gary Lee - Photos by Brian Styk



2019 PRIORITIES

Federal and state elected and appointed government leaders will be making critical decisions in the year ahead that will affect the legacy of the Adirondacks for all time. **Priorities for 2019 include:**

- **Overuse:** Address pressures on Wilderness preservation with better planning, expanded education, front-country (parking) and backcountry (trails) infrastructure funding, peak use management, a general ban on ATVs on the Forest Preserve, and restored staffing.
- **Clean Water, Clean Air & Clean Energy:** Renew and correct problems with community Clean Water loan & grant programs, dedicate funds for the Adirondacks, and take aggressive actions to address road salt. Combat acid rain and climate change by reducing emissions and promoting clean energy. Fund research & monitoring.
- **Forever Wild:** Defend the NYS Constitution’s “Forever Wild” clause (Article XIV). Improve state enforcement of, and compliance with, Forever Wild and other environmental, Park and wild, scenic and recreational river legal requirements.
- **Forests and Farms:** Secure new incentives, regulations and policies to promote healthy ecologically, aesthetically appealing and sustainable, climate smart private forestlands and working farms.
- **Adirondack Park Agency:** Make appointments, approve legislative and policy reforms, including new conservation design for subdivisions and science-based decision making.
- **Invasive Species:** Approve updated legislation, stronger protections, more dedicated funding and plans to address both aquatic and forest threats.
- **Conservation Funding:** Expand funding dedicated for clean water, clean air, preservation of wildlife and wildlands, Parks and agency budgets, broadband, and more vibrant diverse communities. Restore part of the more than 25-percent reduction in environmental agency staffing.

The Adirondack Council is committed to our mission, our values and these priorities. We will use the best available science and respect diverse views in order to achieve these results. We will employ our knowledge of the political process to be the leading advocate for the Adirondacks. We work with partners, promote diversity, and find common ground when possible. We carry on the legacy of early conservation visionaries and ensure the Park is known and protected as a national treasure.

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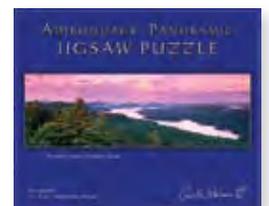


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