

STATE OF THE PARK

Strongest Together | 2023-2024



ADIRONDACK
COUNCIL PRESERVING WATER,
AIR AND WILDLANDS

Strongest Together

Dear Friends,

The release of the Adirondack Council's VISION 2050 report in 2021 marked a turning point for the organization and the way we see our work moving forward. Or more importantly, how we envision that work being done to achieve an ambitious set of outcomes that will profoundly influence the future of the Adirondack Park and North Country. As is captured in the VISION report, success will only be possible if both the human and natural communities flourish. And this will only be achieved if we find new ways to tackle old problems, rethink what is possible, and build on new opportunities.

In the articles ahead, you will see how the Adirondack Council is working on behalf of the Adirondack Park and its communities, both natural and human, by expanding the scope of its outreach and finding new allies across the state. From the headwaters of the Hudson River in the High Peaks to New York City, the Adirondacks play a vital role in the lives of countless wildlife species and well-being of millions of people. While our landscapes may be different, our issues and needs are largely the same.

By working more closely with advocates and community leaders across the state, we continue to redefine how essential the Adirondacks are to everyone and the power they have to influence our collective lives in a positive way. Our mission to protect the ecological integrity and wild character of the Park hasn't changed -- if anything our recent outreach and engagement has only reinforced how essential this mission is. But there is real value in listening to new voices and finding new truths in the lessons shared. We will be stronger for this work and fulfilling the promise of the Park isn't possible without it.

As we prepare to celebrate the Adirondack Council's 50th Anniversary in 2025, we know the Park can be a more welcoming, accessible, and relevant place to a much wider audience. This support will be essential to tackle the daunting challenges that lie ahead regarding climate change, economic uncertainty, development pressure, road salt pollution, and other issues. When we say we are strongest together, that "we" needs to continue to grow, upstate and down. Our collective success is dependent on it.

With your support, the Adirondack Council will continue to build connections with organizations and individuals across the state. So that together we can bring our priorities to Albany and Washington D.C. and speak collectively on behalf of the Adirondacks to ensure our needs are met and we have the resources to protect our wilderness, our communities, our Park -- now and for future generations to come.

Warmest regards,



Raul J. Aguirre
Executive Director



Raul J. Aguirre
Executive Director

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CONTENTS

- 2** Letter from the Executive Director
- 4** About the Park
- 5** 2023 Report Card
- 6** The Governor
- 8** State Legislature
- 12** The Courts & Attorney General
- 14** **Milestones**
- 16** Local Government
- 18** Dept. of Environmental Conservation
- 20** Adirondack Park Agency
- 22** Federal Government
- 24** Other Agencies
- 25** Awards
- 26** In the Spotlight
- 27** 2023-24 Priorities

Below: East Copperas Pond, one of more than 300 lakes that will be the subject of the Survey of Climate and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems (SCALE) in years ahead. The survey will provide the scientific evidence needed to protect the Adirondacks and urban communities from harmful levels of air pollution and to understand and cope with the impacts of a rapidly changing climate.



Our Mission

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

On the Cover: AuSable River, AuSable Forks, Sentinel Range Wilderness and Whiteface Mountain PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.
 Written and Edited by Adirondack Council Staff
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ABOUT THE PARK

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

The Adirondack Park is one of the largest intact temperate forest ecosystems left in the world. It is also the largest park in the contiguous United States. It contains six million acres (9,300 square miles) of interspersed public and private lands, 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.

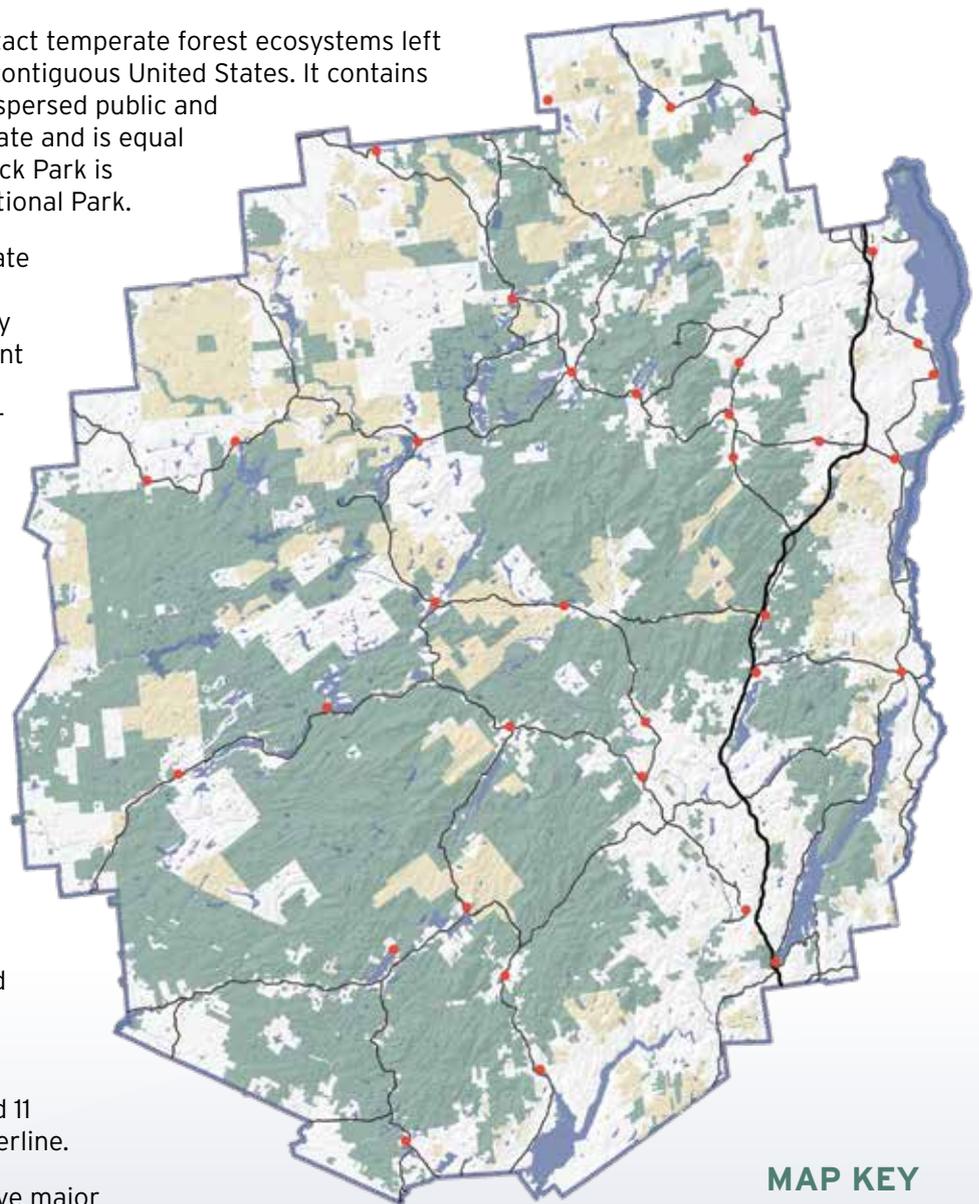
More than half of the Adirondack Park is private land, devoted principally to hamlets, forestry, agriculture, and open-space recreation. Nearly 775,000 acres are protected from development by conservation easements held by the state or private organizations. The Park is home for 130,000 permanent and 200,000 seasonal residents in 120 hamlets and 9 villages. The Park hosts 12.4 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 large 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.



MAP KEY

- Public Forest Preserve
- Private Land
- State Conservation Easement
- Waterbodies
- Select Communities

2023 REPORT CARD

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

Elected and appointed government leaders made decisions late in 2022 and in 2023 that affected the legacy of the Adirondacks. Here is a report on the 2023 State of the Park priorities (issued Sept. 2022).

Passed the Bond Act

New York voters approved the \$4.2-billion Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Bond Act. Over the next 20 years, this package of investor-funded capital projects will supplement the existing Environmental Protection Fund in protecting open space, wildlife habitat, clean water, and a livable climate.

Combated Climate Change

New York showed national leadership in adopting a Statewide Climate Plan that included major protections for the forests and communities of the Adirondacks and advanced local, state, and federal climate actions. Progress on the federal level was unprecedented.

Secured Federal Support

Congress and the Biden administration secured federal science funds and policies to protect clean water and air, wildlife, wildlands, and communities in the Adirondacks and beyond. The Inflation Reduction Act provided new funding while the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency made improvements to ambient air quality rules, using a “critical loads” standard developed in the Adirondacks to protect our lakes and streams. This success was tempered when the administration slowed, but didn’t halt, progress on smog and ozone.

Invested in Science

New York increased and spent new funding for ecosystem research and monitoring inside the Adirondack Park, providing new data that can help to curb air pollution and protect public health. Programs funded include the Survey of Climate and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems (SCALE), and a comprehensive Visitor Use Management to better protect the Adirondack Forest Preserve.

Preserved Wildlife & Wildlands

New York increased the size of the Adirondack Forest Preserve and took steps to limit the number of road miles allowed on it, while land trusts worked to help connect habitat areas inside and outside the Park. Staff was added at the Dept. of Environmental Conservation, including new Forest Rangers, marking modest progress toward doubling and diversifying the Park’s Ranger cohort.

Fostered Sustainable Farms, Forests, & Communities

The Adirondack Council’s support for sustainable local farms topped \$200,000 this year with the awarding of an additional \$26,000 in micro-grants for climate-smart improvements. New York supported farm conservation easements through increases in the Environmental Protection Fund to protect prime agricultural land. More funding is needed to make real progress on solutions to housing, childcare, and communications challenges.

Advanced Protection of Clean Water

New York improved its methods for protecting essential water bodies when it released the findings of its task force on Adirondack road salt reduction. Courts forced local and regional officials to be more deliberate in their reviews of lakeshore development and herbicide applications to control aquatic invasive species. Several municipalities improved their local regulations for inspecting and fixing private septic systems. Council staff helped ensure that more state grant and low-cost loan money is available for municipal water and sewer improvements.

Expanded Support for Justice, Equity, & Inclusion

New York improved funding for the Adirondack Diversity Initiative. The Adirondack Council chose a highly qualified wilderness conservationist as its new executive director, the first person of color to lead the 48-year-old organization. The Library of Congress collected the personal and professional papers of our Forever Adirondacks Campaign Director Aaron Mair so they can be preserved for posterity as the first installment of the library’s new Environmental Justice collection. ■

THE GOVERNOR

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

👍 Stepping Up, Standing Out

In November, Kathy Hochul became the first woman elected Governor in New York history. Her example will most likely inspire other talented public servants to seek higher office, and improve state government.



HOCHUL

👍 Before We Get Started, What Do You Think?

The Governor's staff hosted listening sessions to seek public input on how they should use the \$4.2-billion Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Bond Act, approved by voters in 2022. The Adirondack session in August brought excellent public participation, highlighting the desire among Adirondack stakeholders for investments in conservation, sustainable communities, infrastructure to cope with a changing climate, and new jobs in conservation and science.



L-R: Communications Associate Justin Levine, DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos and Conservation Director Jackie Bowen attend a Bond Act listening session in Saranac Lake

👎 Agencies Needed Experts, Didn't Get Them

The Governor made no appointments during the Legislative session to fill vacancies on the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) board in 2023. As of August, six of the eight citizen members were serving on expired terms or had vacated their seats. The Governor has recently gained the advantage of a Senate majority that is willing to approve a strong slate of environmental board members to the APA. In addition, she made no appointments to the Lake George Park Commission (LGPC) either. The LGPC is another land-use review safeguard inside the Lake George watershed. At this time, nine of the 10 LGPC board seats are vacant or expired.

👎 Agency Needs Big Influx, Barely Gets Refills

The Adirondack Park Agency remains so thinly staffed that it is challenged to carry out the mission of protecting the Adirondack Park from undue environmental impacts. More staff with specific expertise in wilderness management and climate science are needed. There is limited enforcement staff for a park the size of Vermont. By comparison, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection employs over 100 staff to oversee compliance in the Catskill watershed alone. The Catskill Park (1,120 sq. mi.) is less than one-eighth the size of the Adirondack Park. The APA had 84 staff in the 1980s. It needs far more than the 54 staff members currently in the Agency to function effectively across the entire Adirondack Park.

👍 Getting Spiffed Up in Ti Town

The Governor's Downtown Revitalization Initiative awarded \$10 million to the Town of Ticonderoga to restore and rehabilitate the historic hamlet's downtown. This award will augment tourism favorites such as Fort Ticonderoga, a centuries-old Revolutionary War fort, and a modern tourist attraction tied to the former TV show Star Trek. The state's investment will make the community more attractive to visitors, potential residents, and business owners.



Adirondack Experience, The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake

👎 Missed Opportunity

The Governor didn't provide the funding requested by the Adirondack Experience (ADXX, formerly the Adirondack Museum) in Blue Mountain Lake for a new exhibit on Black History in the Adirondacks. As a leading tourist attraction and repository of Adirondack cultural history, the ADXX has uncovered new research and supported new scholarship to tell the more complex history of the Park's diverse communities. State funding would help tell the largely forgotten stories of Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color living and working in the Adirondacks. This information could be used to improve the collections at the State Museum and State Archive in Albany.

Adirondack Park Environment and Communities Fare Well in Funding Plan

The Governor negotiated a FY 23-24 budget with the Legislature that provided much-needed funds for various Adirondack conservation and community-sustainability projects. Those include:

\$2 MILLION for a Survey of Climate and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems, which will study how Adirondack lakes sequester carbon and adapt to climate change

\$400 million for capital projects via the Environmental Protection Fund, including \$8 million for formal Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve stewardship programs



\$500 million for clean water infrastructure

\$90 million for the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation's capital needs, including improved public lands access, dam safety and durability, campground rehabilitation, and upgrades at popular recreational facilities



\$120,000 more for the Adirondack Diversity Initiative, increasing its budget to \$420,000



A cap-and-invest carbon-trading program to curb greenhouse gas emissions across the economy



Permission for the NY Power Authority to develop, finance, construct, own, operate, and maintain renewable energy projects



\$2.1 MILLION for the Timbuctoo Summer Climate Careers Institute, linking high school students to environmental career opportunities through a partnership between City University of NY Medgar Evers College and the State University of New York Environmental Science and Forestry Newcomb Campus

Policies that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in newly constructed buildings



A Menu for a Low-Sodium Diet

The Adirondack Road Salt Reduction Task Force Report has been released, offering solutions the state and Park communities can implement to reduce road salt pollution leeching into Adirondack waters while keeping roads safe for the traveling public. For decades, salt-tainted runoff has contaminated lakes, rivers, and underground water supplies near highways around the Adirondack Park. While an implementation plan and oversight committee are still needed, the release of the report is an encouraging development.



Excessive road salt usage impacts water quality across the Adirondacks

Come Back to the Drawing Board, Please

After withdrawing an unpopular proposal to override local zoning rules, the Governor did not advance any significant proposals to address the affordable housing crisis. In the most popular Adirondack communities, housing costs are rising faster than incomes can keep up with. This induces high transportation costs as people need to move farther away from population centers to find affordable workforce housing options. ■

STATE LEGISLATURE

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ALL HOUSES

Upping the Ante

Before the final state budget negotiations, both houses of the Legislature passed one-house budgets that exceeded the Governor's plans for some of the Adirondack Council's top priorities, including dedicated funding for forest preserve stewardship and a Survey of Climate and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems. Legislative leaders signaled their strong support for Adirondack projects by pressing for millions of additional dollars to address the overuse of public lands, make capital investments, promote diversity/inclusion, and train future environmental leaders.

Playing a Strong Hand

Legislative leaders and members of the Legislature's Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Caucus negotiated a final budget that benefitted the Adirondacks with \$2 million for a Survey of Climate and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems; \$2.1 million for the Timbuctoo Summer Climate and Careers Institute; an additional \$120,000 for the Adirondack Diversity Initiative (for a total of \$420,000); \$8 million for Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve Stewardship; and \$100,000 for a High Peaks Information Center operated by the Adirondack Mountain Club.

Protecting Birds & Bees, So All May Flourish

Both houses approved a bill protecting birds, bees, and people from the ill effects of neurotoxic pesticides used to pre-treat seeds for widely planted crops. If approved by Governor Hochul, the bill would ban the use of specific insecticides on any corn, soybean, or wheat seeds for planting, application, or treatment of outdoor ornamental plants and turf. The loss of pollinator species poses risks of ecosystem-wide damage, as fish, amphibians, and birds rely on pollinators for food. Cornell University reports that pollinators perform \$439 million in ecosystem services for farms and other food crops annually. The Cornell Report also noted connections between neonic exposure, human birth defects, and neurological and reproductive impairment. Sponsors of the bill were Sen. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, D-Manhattan, and Assembly Environmental Conservation Chair Deborah Glick, D-Manhattan.



HOYLMAN-SIGAL



GLICK



Ruby-throated hummingbird
LARRY MASTER, MASTERIMAGES.ORG

Bill Would Stop Killing Wildlife for Cash & Prizes

Both houses approved a bill banning wildlife killing contests statewide. If signed by the Governor it will be unlawful to hold contests to take non-game species for cash prizes, awards, or entertainment. This bill excludes managed game species such as deer, bear, turkey, and fish. The bill would improve the feasibility of natural repopulation by wolves from the Great Lakes and Canada to find a home in the Adirondack Park. Without genetic testing, it is hard to distinguish some larger Eastern coyotes from a gray wolf, such as the wolf killed in central New York in 2021. Gray wolves are protected by the state and federal governments as an endangered species. Sen. Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, and Assemb. EnCon Chair Deborah Glick, D-Manhattan, sponsored this legislation.



KENNEDY

We Don't Pass the Hat ...

The Adirondack Council advocates for the appropriation of public funding for Adirondack conservation and community-sustainability purposes. However, the Adirondack Council is a privately funded independent voice for conservation. The Council doesn't solicit or accept government grants for itself.



Cooperative Cleanup at Olympic Sport Venues

Both houses passed a resolution granting initial approval to an amendment to New York's Constitution designed to bring the winter sports complex at Mt. Van Hoevenberg into compliance with the "Forever Wild" clause (Art. 14, Sect. 1) of the NYS Constitution that protects the Adirondack Forest Preserve. Some of the complex's new facilities constructed for the FISU World University Games are located on the Forest Preserve, making this Constitutional Amendment necessary. The resolution must be passed again by the next Legislature, seated following the 2024 elections, before it may be presented to the voters for final approval in November 2025. If approved by voters, no less than 2,500 acres would be added to the Forest Preserve. Sponsors were Senate EnCon Chair Pete Harckham and Assemb. Billy Jones, D-Chateaugay.



JONES

Sustaining a Good Idea

Both houses passed a bill granting town boards the authority to establish aquatic-growth control districts to reduce infestations of aquatic plants and aquatic invertebrate species. Taxing districts allow for municipalities to apply a special tax assessment that the town collects and spends on a specific purpose. If approved by Governor Hochul, Adirondack communities would gain an additional tool to combat invasive species infestations. Sponsors were Sen. Dan Stec, R-Queensbury, and Assemb. Carrie Woerner, D-Round Lake.



WOERNER



Mt Van Hoevenberg sports complex in Lake Placid

Squeezing the Brakes on ATV Tragedies

Both houses approved a bill to prevent tragic injuries and deaths by raising the age at which a person may legally operate an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) without supervision from age 10 to 14. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a minimum age of 16 for unsupervised riding and advances recommendations from the Council's 2019 ATV report. Sponsors were Senate EnCon Chair Pete Harckham, D-Mount Kisco, and Assemb. Amy Paulin, D-Scarsdale.



PAULIN

SENATE

Harckham Heralds Good Things

In January, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, D-Yonkers, appointed Sen. Pete Harckham, D-Mount Kisco, as chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee. Senator Harckham is an ardent advocate for the protection of the Adirondack Park.



HARCKHAM

Gabriels on the Block, Almost

Senator Dan Stec, R-Queensbury, sponsored a resolution passed by the Senate in May to allow the sale of the former state prison called Camp Gabriels, near Saranac Lake, for private redevelopment. The facility was once a tuberculosis hospital and part of the Paul Smith's College campus. The Assembly did not pass the bill.



STEC

Crosswalks for Wildlife

Sen. LeRoy Comrie, D-Queens, sponsored a bill to create an inventory of highway locations that most need safe wildlife crossings to increase the state's chance of qualifying for federal funding. Wildlife, from amphibians to moose, need safer ways to cross major thoroughfares around the state, especially in the Adirondacks. The Assembly didn't pass the bill despite having an identical version.



COMRIE



Moose crossing sign in the Adirondack Park



Camp Gabriels, Town of Brighton
PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

ASSEMBLY

Park's Pal Glick is EnCon Pick

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, D-Bronx, appointed Assemb. Deborah Glick, D-Manhattan, to chair the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee. Assemb. Glick is a long-time friend of the Adirondack Park and the Forest Preserve.

Waiting for a Solution

The Assembly did not advance first passage of a constitutional amendment to allow the sale of the former state prison called Camp Gabriels, for private redevelopment that would include additional positive conservation options for portions of the property. The infrastructure on the property falls into disrepair while local communities wait for a win-win solution.

New Occupation Proposed for Noted Adirondack Camp

Assemb. Billy Jones, D-Chateaugay, sponsored a resolution passed by the Assembly to amend the state Constitution allowing the sale of the long-shuttered Debar Lodge estate in Brighton, Franklin

County. The estate was willed to New York State, subject to a 25-year private lease, that expired in 2004. As Forest Preserve lands, the state used it to for the administration of the surrounding state lands. When that use was over, state officials moved to remove the non-conforming structures as required by the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. The Debar Pond Institute has offered to add several hundred acres to the Forest Preserve nearby in exchange for Debar Lodge and six acres surrounding it to provide educational programs to the public. The Senate did not pass the resolution.

Wildlife Wait for Crossings Act

The Assembly failed to advance legislation to create an inventory of highway locations that most need safe wildlife crossings to increase the state's chance of qualifying for federal funding. Wildlife require safe crossings in the Adirondacks to cope with climate change impacts. ■

FOREVER WILD FOR EVERYONE

*Welcoming the inaugural summer program of the
Timbuctoo Climate and Careers Institute*



The Adirondack Council proudly welcomes the first students of the Timbuctoo Climate and Careers Institute. Created in partnership with SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry and CUNY Medgar Evers College, this new program will create inclusive opportunities for the next generation of environmental leaders.

DISCOVER MORE AT [ADIRONDACKCOUNCIL.ORG](https://www.adirondackcouncil.org)

Photo: Members of the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Caucus with the inaugural cohort of the Timbuctoo Climate and Careers Institute



THE COURTS & ATTORNEY GENERAL

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

Two is More Than One

In March, New York State Supreme Court Justice Richard Meyer of Essex County ruled against the Adirondack Park Agency's (APA) for not adhering to the Agencies wetland standards while reviewing a permit for a marina expansion request on Lower Saranac Lake. APA rules state that any wetland meeting more than one of the sensitivity criteria outlined in its regulations deserves the agency's highest levels of protection and most detailed review. Although the wetlands near the marina displayed two such features, the APA arbitrarily increased the standard to three or more and approved the permit. Judge Meyer ruled that the Agency was bound to its original standards and vacated the permit. The APA then stated that no permit was needed for the marina expansion, only a variance. That prompted Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve and Protect the Adirondacks! to pursue legal action in August for failing to protect the wetlands entrusted to its care.

Teens Lead on Climate Language Sounds Familiar

In August, a Montana state court ruled in favor of 16 young climate activists who alleged that the state violated their constitutional right to a "clean and healthful environment" by approving new fossil fuel projects. Advocates declared it a landmark ruling that could serve as a precedent for similar cases nationwide. In 2021, New York voters amended the state's constitution to guarantee its citizens a "clean and healthful environment."

Supreme Court Dries Up EPA's Wetlands Jurisdiction

In May, the United States Supreme Court unreasonably limited the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ability to protect important wetlands from fragmentation, development, and pollution. In a 5-4 decision, the Court reduced the EPA's jurisdiction to only geographical features described in ordinary parlance as streams, oceans, rivers and lakes and to adjacent wetlands indistinguishable from those bodies of water due to a "continuous surface connection." Prior rulings had allowed the EPA to safeguard any wetlands with a "significant nexus" with streams, oceans, rivers, and lakes. Adirondack wetlands are protected by state regulations that safeguard any lands dominated by wetland plants down to one acre, which includes seasonal wetlands.

Five is More Than Enough

In March, Supreme Court Justice Robert Muller of Warren County again ruled against the APA for not holding an adjudicatory public hearing before voting on a permit request to apply a chemical herbicide to the waters of Lake George. In this case, Muller ruled that five of the seven possible legal criteria listed in the APA's rulebook for determining when a public hearing should be held were met. The APA has balked at holding an adjudicatory hearing on any permit request for the past 12 years. With limited information, a vote was approved by the APA board without the benefit of the sworn testimony and legal evidence a hearing could provide. Muller nullified the permit.



Wetlands at the Paul Smith's College Visitor Interpretive Center

Upwind Pollution Solution Protect ADKs

In August, NYS Attorney General Letitia James's Environmental Protection Bureau gained a settlement that halted harmful emissions of toluene and ground-level ozone (smog) from a factory in Delhi, NY. The factory is upwind of the Adirondack Park and several urban neighborhoods with excessive pollution levels. Toluene is a volatile organic compound in paint, paint thinners, and solvents. Minor, short-term exposure irritates the eyes and the upper respiratory



JAMES

tract and causes sore throat, dizziness, and headache. Chronic exposure can be deadly and associated with birth defects, central nervous system dysfunction, attention deficits, and organ failure.

Won't You Be a Good Neighbor?

Attorney General James led a multistate coalition in August that submitted an amicus brief to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in the case of Texas v. EPA to defend the "Good Neighbor Rule." Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana are challenging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's authority under the Clean Air Act to ensure each state does its fair share to reduce the air pollution they send to other states.

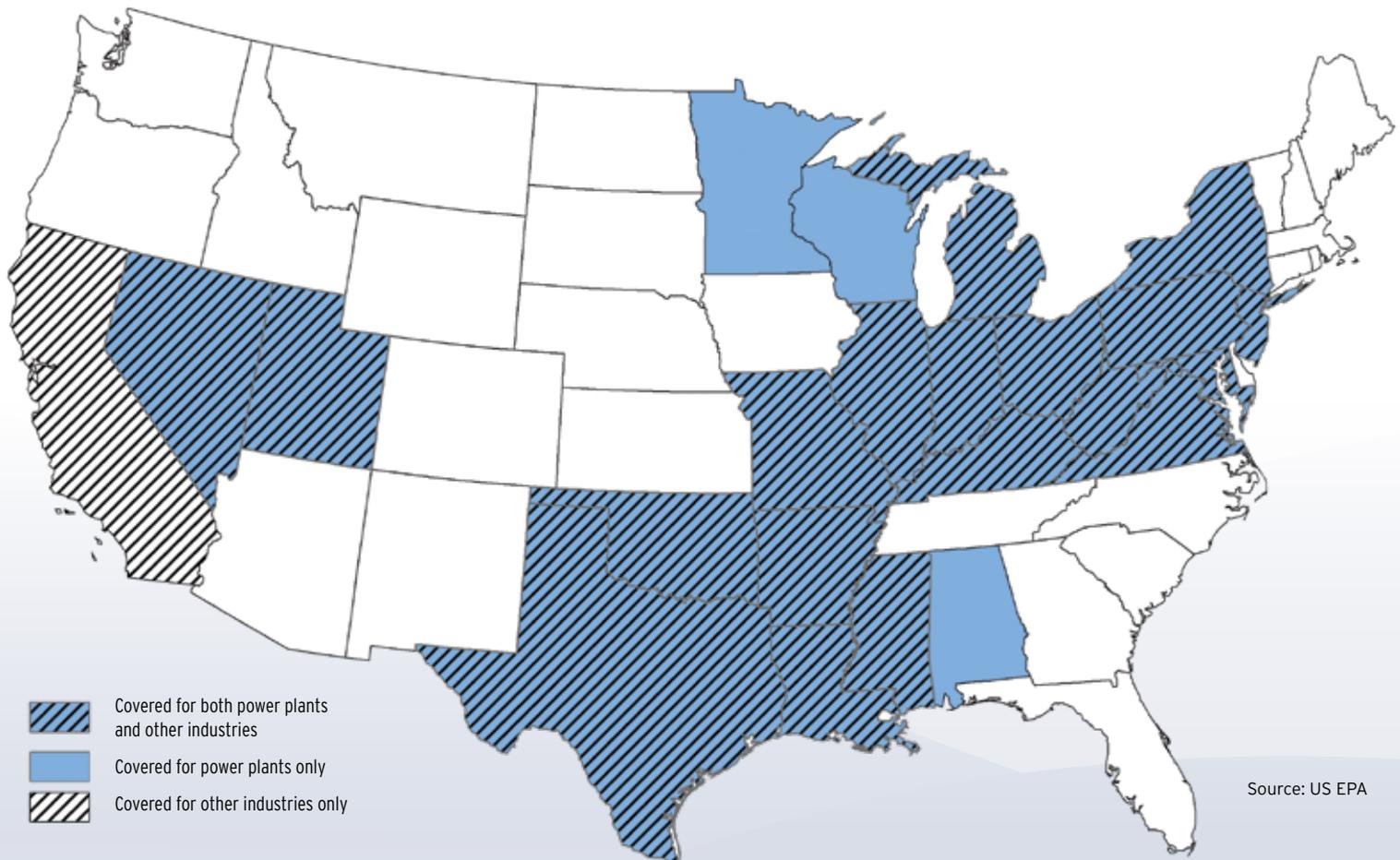
The rule has already gone into effect in states that didn't file the challenge. (See graphic below for more information) ■



Cloud collection system and air quality monitoring on the summit of Whiteface Mountain

States Covered Under the Power Plants & Other Industries Portions of the Final Good Neighbor Plan

The Good Neighbor Plan secures significant reductions in ozone-forming emissions of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) from power plants and other industrial facilities. Under the Clean Air Act's "Good Neighbor" requirements, 23 states must reduce pollution that contributes to problems attaining and maintaining the EPA's health-based air quality standard for ground-level ozone (smog).





INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' FORUM ON CLIMATE CHANGE

MILESTONES



L-R: Aaron Mair meets with a member of the Indigenous Peoples Caucus at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt

In September of 2022, then Deputy Director Raul “Rocci” Aguirre was a featured panelist at the opening plenary of the Land Trust Alliance’s annual conservation conference. This forum focused on the broader issues of increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the larger land conservation movement as part of a national discussion on creating more meaningful conservation outcomes. More than 1,500 attendees from around North America participated in the three-day retreat.

In November of 2022, Adirondack Council Forever Adirondacks Campaign Director Aaron Mair traveled to Egypt to participate in COP27, the most recent World Climate Conference of Parties meeting to discuss and urge progress on curbing global climate change. Mair urged world leaders to preserve wilderness as a means of reducing and storing atmospheric carbon most efficiently.

Adirondack Council Director of Government Relations Kevin Chlad and Deputy Director Aguirre traveled to Puerto Rico in November 2022 for the annual Somos (“All of Us”) gathering of Latino government and community leaders from New York and the Caribbean. This annual conference has opened up new doors of engagement across NY with stakeholders and decision makers about the importance of the Adirondacks to all New Yorkers.

L-R: NYS Attorney General Letitia James, Aguirre and Chlad at the annual Somos conference



In December 2022, Conservation Director Jackie Bowen and Conservation Associate Jess Grant made a trip to Montreal to take part in the United Nations’ Biodiversity Conference (COP15). Bowen and Grant were able to elevate the importance of the Adirondack Park within the global biodiversity context and reiterate the Park’s role in battling climate change.



L-R: Jess and Jackie attend COP15

In February 2023, William C. “Willie” Janeway stepped down as Executive Director of the Adirondack Council after 10 years at the organization’s helm. Under Willie’s leadership, the Council’s political influence grew substantially as did the financial resources of the organization. He left a strong, fully staffed organization prepared to tackle the most pressing issues facing the Park over the coming years.



L-R: Janeway and Aguirre attend the Adirondack Park Lobby Day in Albany

On Earth Day (April 22), the Adirondack Council surpassed \$200,000 in awards given through its grant program designed to promote sustainable Adirondack farms. The grants have been awarded annually since 2015 through the Council’s Essex Farm Institute, with essential funding from the Klipper Fund.

The AuSable River Association's Water Quality Research Manager Phil Snyder gathers data as part of the Survey of Climate and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems (SCALE)



In April 2023, Aguirre and Chlad were named to City & State Magazine's 2023 Energy and Environment Power 100. The list, which is compiled each year, identifies the most influential people in New York in their fields. Chlad and Aguirre, along with other staff, have increased recognition of the Adirondack Council's environmental and policy work with elected and appointed officials from across the state.

In June 2023, Raul (Rocci) Aguirre was promoted from Deputy Director to Executive Director. Rocci has over 28 years in large landscape conservation, natural resource management, open space protection, and environmental advocacy. He started with the organization in 2014 after a career with the National Park Service and later working with a number of regional land trusts across the northeast. Rocci is the first person of color to lead the Adirondack Council and is among a small group of Hispanics to lead an environmental conservation organization with a national membership.



That June, Communications Director and Clean Air Specialist John Sheehan testified on behalf of the modernization of the national Clean Air Status and Trends Network in public hearings held by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Air Science Advisory Committee in Bethesda, Maryland.

In July 2023, a microburst the night before collapsed the enormous tent set up to shade guests at the Council's annual Forever Wild Day luncheon at the Crown Point State Historic Site. Staff arrived to find the tent flattened and waterlogged by hundreds of gallons of water. Within hours, staff rallied to clear the water, raise and secure the tent, dry the tables and chairs, and prepare the space for over 200 of the Council's closest friends. This near catastrophe underscored the resiliency of the Council team to rise to unexpected challenges, overcome significant hurdles, and to remain resilient in the face of overwhelming odds. The experience speaks to the talent, skills, and humor that make the Council team so unique and the organization so strong.



Nicholle Gotham and other staff took turns pounding tent stakes on the morning of Forever Wild Day

In July, the Council bid a fond farewell to Debbie Pastore, Director of Fund Development, who stepped away from the Council after 8 years guiding and leading the development team. Her vision, work ethic, and humor was instrumental in seeing the Council's fundraising efforts and membership levels grow significantly over her time with the organization. A search for her replacement is expected to be completed late in the fall of 2023.

In July, the Library of Congress requested the personal and professional papers for Aaron Mair, the Forever Adirondacks Campaign Director, for its new collection on the American Environmental Justice Movement. Mair's lifelong work protecting vulnerable communities from pollution and discrimination continues at the Council. In his current role, he fosters a dynamic link between wilderness preservation and community economic sustainability. He was also the first person of color to serve as President of the Sierra Club.

In August 2023, the Council and the Northern Forest Canoe Trail announced the hiring of a first-of-its-kind position - a headwaters coordinator- that would work in the western region of the Park. Becky Sutter, a professor at Paul Smith's College, was selected for the part-time position, which is meant to bring together public and private stakeholders to increase cooperation and conservation outcomes within the headwaters of the Raquette River watershed.



In August, Essex Farm Institute's Farm Advocate and Champlain Valley farmer, Dillon Klepetar, spoke compellingly in favor of the Birds and Bees Protection Act. This bill would ban neonicotinoid pesticide coatings on most food crops. Klepetar underscored that the chemicals were not always needed to control pest damage, and were often deadly to birds, bees and other pollinators that are vital to healthy farms. He called on Governor Kathy Hochul to sign the bill.

In September 2023, the Adirondack Road Salt Reduction Task Force released its long-awaited report, which contains recommendations that, if acted upon, would significantly reduce road salt pollution entering Adirondack waters. The Adirondack Council has been tracking road salt pollution and its impacts for decades. This report is a major step forward but will only be useful if meaningful action is taken to implement its very achievable recommendations. ■

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

Kept Cool, Saved Lives, & Spared Rivers

Officials in Newcomb, Essex County, and Long Lake, Hamilton County, acted swiftly and responsibly during severe flooding brought by heavy rains in July. Officials helped prevent loss of life as roads, power lines, dams, and homes were inundated and washed away. It took days to restore highway connections between communities, during which officials informed residents via radio broadcasts and social media when possible. They implemented lessons learned in the aftermath of tropical storms Irene and Lee in 2011, when heavy equipment was used to remove debris and dig new river channels, ruining sensitive aquatic habitat and increasing the possibility of future downstream flooding.



Road damage after severe flooding in Long Lake
PHOTO: DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Sun Shines on Landfill Site

After rejecting a solar installation proposed for local parklands, the Town of Warrensburg, Warren County, is working with a developer to use the former town landfill site instead. The new location will not require the removal of a forest or the conversion of parkland into industrial space.

Protecting Precious Ecological Resources

In July, the Village of Speculator, Hamilton County, enacted a new local law that requires the owners of any property sold within 250 feet of a stream, lake, or wetland to have the septic system inspected at the time of sale. The law notes that on-site wastewater treatment systems are “likely to be a threat to public health with particularly acute impacts upon the general public through impairing and contaminating precious ecological resources of the Village and, in some limited cases, even rendering drinking water unsafe.” The law applies to all properties adjacent to Lake Pleasant, Lewey Lake, and Whitaker Lake, plus “all lands within 250 feet from the edge of any stream, lake, pond, marsh, river, or other body of water within the boundaries of the Village of Speculator.”

Not Smarter Growth

Local opposition to the Conservation Design bill proposed by the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee Chair Deborah Glick, D-Manhattan continues to keep this essential legislation from moving forward. The bill would amend the Adirondack Park Agency’s rules for development in the park’s most at risk resource management lands and focus new construction in locations best able to handle it while conserving open spaces to protect wildlands and wildlife. Given spiking housing costs and growing development pressure, finding a mechanism to balance growth with smart conservation will be critical in the coming years.



Speculator, Hamilton County

Good Start at Frontier Town

Essex County and the Town of North Hudson joined forces to seek and win \$2 million in state grants to rehabilitate historic buildings on the grounds of the former Frontier Town amusement park near Northway (I-87) exit 29. Additional funding is needed to connect the new state campground to the nearby restored A-frame visitor’s center at the entrance to the former amusement park. Additional grants to help create food and recreation hubs at locations such as the restored A-frame are necessary if these critical gateway businesses are going to provide essential services for the eastern High Peaks Wilderness Complex, Sentinel Range, and Blue Ridge wilderness areas.



Frontier Town Gateway

Meier Warns Lowville about Rally, Town Listens

In March, Lowville Town Attorney and former state senator Ray Meier told the town board that Lewis County's annual SNIRT Run was "a liability nightmare waiting to happen." The annual mud season off-road vehicle rally connects rural taverns via all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails and county roads. Participants visit each establishment to collect a playing card and compare poker hands for prizes at the end. Meier said the snowmobile club sponsoring the event lacked the proper liability insurance; local media reported that it covered spectators but not participants. The town board voted 5-0 not to offer the use of Lowville roads for the one-day event, based on his advice.

Responsible Path Forward or No Go

Lewis County continues to advertise its "trail" network for all-terrain vehicles as a place where riders can use Utility Task Vehicles up to 2,000 pounds. State law currently prohibits registering vehicles heavier than 1,000 for use on public trails. Events that continue to promote inappropriate or illegal use continued to take a toll on the health and wellbeing of participants with injuries and tragically, a death over the past year. Time for responsible users and forward-thinking municipal leaders to build a new path forward or these events will continue to be a black eye and only make new or expanded opportunities for ATV use a non-starter across the Park.

Short-Term Rentals Face Long Odds

Towns in the Park's most popular tourist destinations are increasingly moving to regulate short-term home rentals to curb inflation in local housing costs. In most of the Adirondack Park's 92 towns, real estate prices are low compared to the rest of the state, as are average year-round incomes for local residents. But the prices Adirondack homes fetch for short-term vacation rentals - especially in Lake George, Lake Placid, and Old Forge -- are on par with expensive resorts in other parts of the nation. This has led to speculative purchases



Currently there are no locations where recreational ATV use is officially permitted on the Forest Preserve

to convert residential buildings to full-time, short-term rentals. That pressure is driving home prices higher across the Park, leaving many residents and potential residents scrambling to find affordable homes.

New Solution for Tupper's Water

The Village of Tupper Lake has secured a grant for half of the \$9 million dollar cost of its new microfiltration drinking water project. The town's underground water supply was safe but plagued by heavy iron content that left unwanted deposits on ceramic plumbing fixtures and clothing washed in it. The town will filter and use the softer waters of the Raquette River, the same source it used before switching to underground wells. Without microfiltration, river water's natural organic elements became volatile and potentially hazardous after being chlorinated to kill any harmful bacteria.



Raquette River Oxbox, Tupper Lake

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC

Help for a Worthy Cause

Warren County's new Septic Replacement Fund provides up to 50% of the costs of repairing or replacing a faulty septic system for properties near Lake George's shoreline. Essex County has provided similar funding through a block grant made available by the NYS Environmental Facilities Corp (EFC). That fund is also available to homeowners and businesses in Willsboro Bay, on Lake Champlain. Lake Eaton is the focus of EFC funding for eligible shoreline properties. Septic system cleanup is vital to maintaining water quality and curbing excess weed growth in Adirondack waters. Cleanup must remain affordable for homeowners.

Tapping Local Talent for Tough Job

Recognizing the expertise already available at a local not-for-profit organization, Essex County officials hired community development organization PRIDE of Ticonderoga to administer the County's new land bank and to boost affordable housing stocks. Since it was founded in 1984, PRIDE has been awarded more than \$15 million in grants for housing, economic development, and historic preservation programs. ■

DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION



On Track with Otak

Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos selected consulting firm Otak to develop its Visitor Use Management Framework for a subarea of the High Peaks Wilderness Complex. Otak is a national consulting firm recognized as a leader in the outdoor recreation research sector. With offices across the U.S., Otak has worked on some of the most relevant resource management challenges facing our National Parks and has local expertise in the Adirondacks. The Adirondack Council has been urging state officials to assess and reduce overuse in sensitive areas across the High Peaks and other high-use areas of the Forest Preserve.

Cleaner Boats at Campgrounds

The DEC completed a management plan to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species at the 52 campgrounds it operates in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. The plan establishes boat decontamination siting and construction procedures for campgrounds and day use areas.



Free boat cleaning area and educational information for boaters and anglers on Upper Saranac Lake

Playing Fast & Loose, Again

In June, the DEC began implementing a draft work plan for trail construction on the “Forever Wild” Forest Preserve before the Adirondack Park Agency formally adopted the plan. By initiating a draft work plan like this DEC undoes the checks and balances and environmental safeguards established by the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. Following the necessary regulatory framework isn’t just good process but an essential management tool that reduces the potential of litigation and alleviates ongoing tensions among stakeholders who have very different expectations of outcomes related to DEC and APA approved projects.

Hunter, DEC Discover Wolf

In September of 2022, the DEC confirmed that an animal shot by a hunter in Cherry Valley, Otsego County, during the 2021 coyote hunting season, was a wolf according to multiple DNA tests. The hunter volunteered a DNA sample because the animal weighed 85 pounds, about twice the average adult size for an Eastern coyote. The DEC admitted it had been incorrect when it first identified the animal as a coyote and agreed to help educate hunters on how to tell the difference between coyotes and wolves. Wolves are a protected species in New York. It is legal for licensed big game hunters to kill coyotes from October through March.



Commissioner Seggos and a graduate of the NY Ranger Academy

PHOTO: DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Academy Graduates Record Number of Women

In December of 2022, the NY Ranger Academy graduated 38 new Forest Rangers. This class saw the highest number of women in academy history, with 10 women graduates. Commissioner Seggos vowed to devote more Rangers to the Adirondacks in budget discussions with state legislators. A dramatic increase in Adirondack search and rescue missions over the past decade has left the Ranger force significantly challenged to attend to other duties. Any addition to the Ranger force will be welcome. The Adirondack Council supports doubling and diversifying the Ranger force and encourages the DEC to seek all forms of diversity in its recruitment efforts.

Wolves Victims of Mistaken ID?

The DEC continues to allow an open season on coyotes from October through March, with no limits on the number of coyotes killed. Upstate New York's large Eastern coyotes are very difficult to distinguish from endangered gray wolves. This is mainly due to a high percentage of wolf genes in Adirondack coyotes. Coyote hunting regulations need to be updated to include limitations on the means and conditions that hunting of coyotes is permitted to reduce accidental wolf mortality. Healthy coyote and wolf populations would help to check or reverse the growth of the region's deer herd. Deer overpopulation is harming forest regeneration across the state as deer consume saplings before they can grow into trees.



Eastern coyote

PHOTO: LARRY MASTER, MASTERIMAGES.ORG

Watt is New Forest Chief

In May, DEC leaders appointed Fiona Watt as the new Director of Lands and Forests following the retirement of Rob Davies. Watt spent the past 25 years working for the NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation, where she was an expert in urban forestry and invasive species controls and a committed advocate for adaptive management through data-driven decision making.



WATT

More Trails at Three Lakes

In September of 2022, the DEC released a final recreation management plan for the Three Lakes Tract Conservation Easement in the Town of Webb, Herkimer County. The 3,350-acre Three Lakes Tract is comprised of commercially managed forestland and is named for Hitchcock, Grass, and Moose ponds. The plan includes new hiking trails connecting McCarty Road in the Independence River Wild Forest to Blue, Hitchcock, Grass, and Moose ponds. An Accessible Campsite for People with Disabilities (ACPWD) will be established near Blue Pond.

Dangerous Beach Closed

This spring, the DEC made an unpopular but correct choice when it drafted a management plan for the state's Broadalbin Boat Launch that prohibits public bathing. The site was never intended to be a public beach. It has been used because it has a sandy shoreline and is adjacent to public parking and bathrooms. Power boat traffic at the launch is fairly heavy and dangerous to swimmers. Neither the state nor the Town of Broadalbin provides a lifeguard. The DEC also improved the launch and made it easier to remove invasive species from infested watercraft prior to launch.

Community Self-Defense

Since January, the DEC has been working with 10 urban communities to create and operate a network of air pollution sensors designed to help identify airborne chemicals that harm public health. With the DEC's guidance, community teams are handling the research for projects in Bronx, Brooklyn, Buffalo/Niagara Falls/Tonawanda, Downtown Albany, Nassau County, Manhattan, Mount Vernon/Yonkers/New Rochelle, Queens, Rochester, and Syracuse. State law requires the DEC to prevent additional pollution in locations where the burden on public health is already too high.

Let Good Idea Go Viral

The parking reservation system established two years ago for the High Peaks Wilderness trailhead at the Ausable Club on Route 73 has been successful. While initial challenges have largely been addressed, current users reported it is easy to reserve a spot and had no trouble once they arrived. The landowners say there is a noticeable improvement in trails and a greater sense of solitude while on the trail. The DEC should expand the system to other overcrowded and highly impacted trailheads.

Time to Stop the Flow

As the agency entrusted with water quality in New York, the DEC needs to establish rules for statewide inspection and maintenance of septic systems. Inadequate wastewater treatment allows raw sewage to run into Adirondack lakes and rivers. Local officials in Herkimer, Warren, and Hamilton counties have taken matters into their own hands by enacting local ordinances mandating inspections when homes are sold. Local officials are also working to provide low-cost financing for construction and repairs. It's time for the DEC to make a stand and lead a statewide effort that protects our most ecologically sensitive and important waterways. ■

ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY

PHOTO © CARL HELLMAN II / WILD VISIONS INC.

We Heard You Loud & Clear

In May, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) considered a proposed policy change that would have unduly tightened the rules and deadlines for public participation in agency actions. The APA received nearly 600 public comments and a joint letter from four past APA leaders asking it to rethink the policy changes. Chair John Ernst decided to reconsider the staff's recommendations to remove the public comment opportunity at the start of its full-day meetings and shorten the deadline for when the agency could consider written comments, among other changes. As a result, the public retained the right to speak at the beginning and end of APA meetings. Also, the APA will post its agenda two weeks ahead of a meeting rather than just one. Written comments directed to the board are now due the Monday before each meeting.



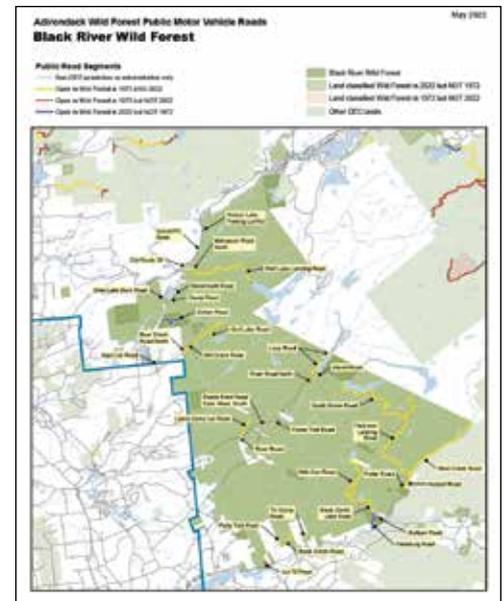
Forever Adirondacks Campaign Director Aaron Mair provides public comment before an APA monthly meeting

Took Time, Remains Unsettled

Fifty years after the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan was adopted, the APA engaged on an effort to interpret and determine the total mileage of roads on the Adirondack Forest Preserve. While this effort was needed, the APA ultimately inserted a loophole that puts at risk the board's careful deliberations in the future. While the board proposed a rationale for accepting a roughly 12% increase over 1972 mileage totals, it also approved an escape clause noting that future APA boards could make a "contrary interpretation." This loophole permits this issue to be raised again and should have been written to be conclusive and final.

APA Rejects Big Boathouse Expansion

In May, the APA board rejected a second request from camp owners to expand an already non-conforming boathouse on Spitfire Lake in Brighton, Franklin County. The existing two-slip boathouse was built before the agency had formal boathouse regulations. Seasonal residents sought space for a third antique wooden boat and sent a representative to tell the board that they would build a second boathouse if not allowed to expand the first. The APA board made a rare no-vote with 5 board members voting against the variance. After the vote, board member Benita Law-Diao said she was astonished the APA doesn't limit the number of boathouses that may be built on a shoreline and urged the board to do so to protect water quality and wildlife habitat. We commend board member Law-Diao for clearly stating the issue and one of the core responsibilities of the APA.



Map of public motor vehicle roads in the Black River Wild Forest developed by the Dept. of Environmental Conservation and the Adirondack Park Agency

Proposed No Solution

The APA has made no progress on its promise to improve how it handles applications for permits to build large subdivisions in remote, undeveloped locations. Following the introduction of bills in the state Legislature seeking to curb impacts on sensitive wildlife, the agency announced it would make improvements. It has not. In each of its last three opportunities to judge large subdivisions, it chose the least fuel-efficient option, spreading development across the entire parcel rather than clustering homes and consolidating access road mileage.

Not Living Up to Carrying Capacity

Despite having the legal mandate to do so, the APA has made no progress measuring the recreational carrying capacity of Adirondacks lakes. It most recently declined to address the issue for the Broadalbin Boat Launch Management Plan on Great Sacandaga Lake. The agency has a legal obligation to measure and, if necessary, adjust human uses on Adirondack lakes. Just as it is obligated to measure the carrying capacity and adjust public use to non-harmful levels across Forest Preserve lands. Carrying capacity must be understood to set rules for recreational uses that won't degrade the Park's water quality, wetlands, amphibians, and aquatic life, which the APA is mandated to protect.

Smith Stands for Science

In May, APA board member and scientist Zoë Smith voted against the approval of an herbicide to kill Eurasian watermilfoil in Lake Luzerne without a broad analysis of the impact on the lake's ecosystem. The proposed permit had been based only on its impact on other plants, acknowledging that it would kill at least one species of plant on the state "threatened" list. Smith noted that the herbicide had been in use only since 2018. Its mid-term and long-term impacts are unknown. Smith wanted a detailed assessment of the lake's biology beyond just plants and a multi-year follow-up survey.



L-R: APA Board Members Zoë Smith and Benita Law-Diao with former board member Andrea Hogan



Measuring the recreational carrying capacity of Adirondack waters will help protect water quality and wildlife

Climate - the Ignored Elephant in the Room

The APA, despite multiple requests from the public, still fails to assess how its actions as an Agency (including permitting authority) help or hinder the state's climate goals outlined in the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). Wetlands, for example, play an important role in providing habitat for a diverse array of species while also acting as important carbon sinks. The Agency still does not assess how projects subject to jurisdictional review and approval impact the overall climate mitigating role of the region and the state. This needs to be a top priority for the APA and is an essential need for a state agency after the passage of the CLCPA.

FAQ on Invasive Species

This spring, the APA worked with partners to develop response guidelines and anticipate questions concerning changes to the inter-agency directives on invasive species management on public lands (and waters) in the Park. We commend the Agency for the willingness to engage in this way on such a critical issue for the long-term health of our rivers, lakes, and forests. ■



Milfoil spotted during an survey of Raquette Lake

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

Good Rules Make Good Neighbors

In March, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a final Good Neighbor Rule, an overdue portion of the implementation plan for the Clean Air Act. The rule bans the kinds of interstate air pollution that have damaged the Adirondack Park's forests, soils, and waters with acid rain and smog for decades. This final rule requires each state to submit a State Implementation Plan that ensures that sources of pollution within the state do not interfere with the maintenance of National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) in other states. New York has cleaned its emissions significantly, halting the use of coal to make electricity. Most of the acid rain currently harming the Adirondacks is generated in upwind states now governed by the new rule.

Tonko Focuses on Clean Energy's Future

Rep. Paul Tonko, D-Amsterdam, held public discussions in August to discuss how the federal government should spend \$370 billion over the next decade to deploy clean energy and tackle the climate crisis. His meetings brought local focus to the Inflation Reduction Act and gave individuals and organizations a chance to advise him on projects that deserve his support. The Adirondacks are expected to host additional solar and large-scale battery installations to help New York create a more stable grid while reaching its clean energy production goals.



TONKO

Military Justice, Eventually

In January, the Dept. of Defense began removing the names of Confederate officers from U.S. military bases and replacing them with more appropriate role models. One such renaming changed Fort Polk in Louisiana -- named for a largely unsuccessful Confederate General and enslaver of as many as 1,000 people. In June, it was rededicated as Fort Henry Johnson, named for one of Upstate New York's most famous soldiers. Leaving his job as a redcap porter at Albany's Union Station, Sergeant Johnson was among the first American soldiers to fight and be wounded in WWI. Serving as a sentry in the Argonne Forest of France in May of 1918, he fought off a German raid in hand-to-hand combat, saved a fellow soldier, and killed numerous German soldiers while suffering 21 wounds. Johnson was awarded the Croix de Guerre (Cross of War) by the French government that same year. At first, a national celebrity back home, Johnson was later punished for being an outspoken critic of the unequal treatment of Black and White American soldiers. He was denied his rightful Purple Heart medal until 1996. In 2002, Pres. George W. Bush awarded him the Distinguished Service Cross. In 2015, he was awarded the nation's top military decoration, the Medal of Honor, when Pres. Barack Obama presented it posthumously. Johnson died in 1929.



JOHNSON

Restoring a Long-Interrupted Ecosystem

In August, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) collaborated with Trout Unlimited and the NYS DEC to remove the wrecked spillway and powerhouse from a former power dam at Indian Rapids on the Saranac River. The project is part of a USFWS plan to reopen fish passage to the river's highest-quality salmon spawning habitat. The USFWS also worked with partners this summer to remove debris surrounding a former dam at Fredenburgh Falls. Once complete, salmon should reach areas of the river that have been out of reach since the 1790s. Additional funding and support came from the Lower Saranac Hydro Partners LLC and the Lake Champlain Basin Program.

Off-Target on Gun Tax Repeal

In September of 2022, Rep. Stefanik co-sponsored a bill that would halt a federal excise tax on guns and ammunition that comprises most of the funding for the Pittman-Robertson Act's wildlife conservation program. Stefanik said she "will not allow the government to tax the constitutional right of hardworking Americans by marking up the price to exercise one's Second Amendment rights." The taxes in question were imposed in 1937 and have had strong support from hunting and target shooting organizations.

👍 New Net Means Better Protection

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, D-NY, provided additional funding in the EPA's Science & Technology budget to save and modernize the Clean Air Status and Trends Network (CASTNET). U.S. Rep. Paul Tonko also voiced strong support. CASTNET is a collection of air quality monitors measuring the chemistry of rain, snow, and sleet and sites that measure dust and other dry particles falling from the sky. CASTNET data have provided New York with the evidence to compel federal action to control air pollution in upwind states. New York advocates have used this proof in court to win emissions settlements with major polluters in Congress, to amend the Clean Air Act, and in testimony before regulators deciding how to enforce the Clean Air Act and its Good Neighbor Rule.



SCHUMER

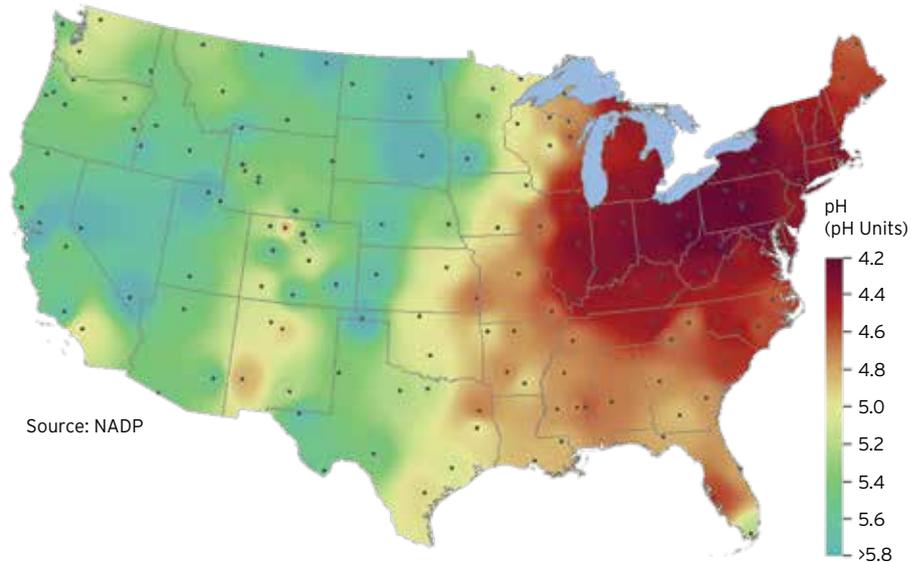
👍 New Standard is a Critical Improvement

EPA Administrator Michael Regan's team has been working with research scientists from the Northeast to craft new National Ambient Air Quality Standards for sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and fine particles of soot. The EPA is expected to set primary standards that protect public health and secondary standards that protect forests and wildlife. The new approach for secondary standards would set "critical loads" for Adirondack watersheds based on the soil's ability to neutralize the acid rain falling on it from the smokestacks of the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley coal states. Watersheds with the least acid-neutralizing capacity would get the most significant protection.



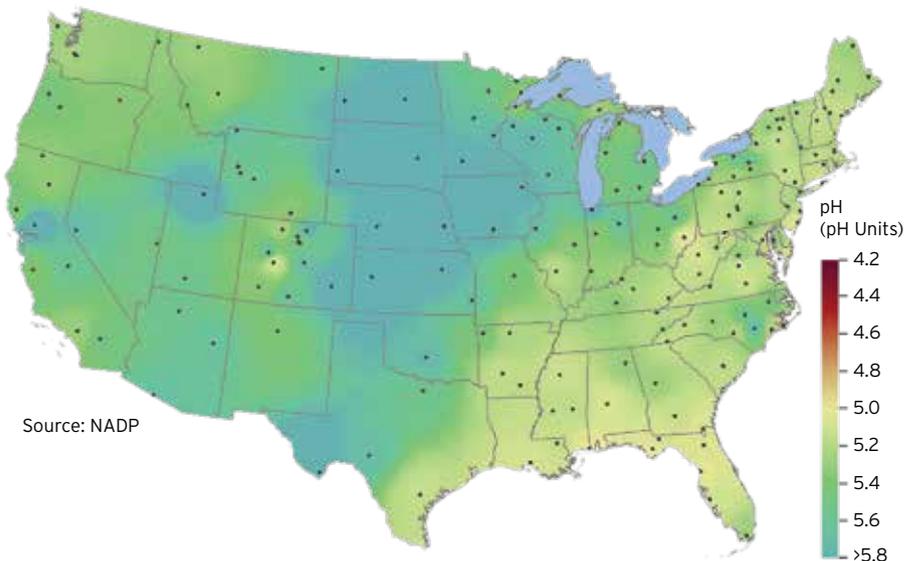
REGAN

1989 Precipitation Chemistry - Acidity (pH)



Source: NADP

2019 Precipitation Chemistry - Acidity (pH)



Source: NADP

👎 Lost in Translation?

U.S. Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-Salem, leveraged her position as House Majority Conference Leader to gain \$28 million in earmarks for local projects in December 2022. Projects included flood resilience on the Ausable River, water system funding in the Town of Ticonderoga, and money for broadband expansion. Yet, after securing these critical earmarks in the federal budget Rep. Stefanik voted against the bill along stark partisan lines that undermined the necessary and important funding she had secured.

👎 Taking the Slow Boat

In August, the EPA announced that it had dropped its reconsideration of the inadequate National Ambient Air Quality Standard for ground-level ozone (smog) set in 2020 by the Trump administration. The agency's decision comes despite mounting evidence of the adverse health impacts and environmental damage caused by ozone pollution. At its current pace, the EPA would not complete an entire rulemaking process for a new smog standard until the late 2020s. ■

OTHER AGENCIES



PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

👍 Hope Still Alive in Mineville

The NYS Division of Corrections Services has opted to keep the lights and heat on at the idled Moriah Shock Incarceration facility in Mineville, hoping that the state will find an alternate use for the campus before it begins to deteriorate from disuse. The campus has no security fence and would be suitable for state workforce housing, job training, and other uses related to the care and management of the Forest Preserve. Mineville lost over 100 good-paying jobs when the minimum-security, boot camp-style facility was shuttered and consolidated with a similar camp near Buffalo.



(L-R): Town of Moriah Supervisor Thomas R. Scozzafava, NYS Senator Dan Stec (R-Queensbury), Forever Adirondacks Campaign Director Aaron Mair, Executive Director Raul J. Aguirre, and NYS Assemblymember Billy Jones (D-Chateaugay Lake) gather in front of the former Moriah Shock Incarceration Correctional Facility
PHOTO: NANCIE BATTAGLIA

👍 Fine Choice for Science Funding Manager

In September, the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) appointed Jeremy Magliaro as its Environmental Research Programs Manager. He replaces Greg Lampman,

who became Director of Offshore Wind Programs. Magliaro spent the past 14 years as an Environmental Policy Advisor to the NYS Attorney General's Environmental Protection Bureau. Before that, he served as a Watershed Program Manager for Cornell Cooperative Extension. NYSERDA funds and conducts tens of millions of dollars worth of research on pollution, clean energy, and energy conservation each year, including acid rain and climate research in the Adirondacks.

👍 New Scoop on Poop

The Vermont Dept. of Agriculture has instituted a phosphorous pollution reduction program aimed at reducing the chemicals in the waters of Lake Champlain. Most of the phosphorous reaching the lake is from manure-tainted stormwater runoff from dairy farms. Such farms make up a large portion of Vermont's economy. Working with the Lake Champlain Basin Program, the department is measuring runoff from farms and paying farmers for reductions they make in that pollution load. Lake Champlain makes up more than 100 miles of the Adirondack Park's eastern border.



Vermont's Otter Creek flows into Lake Champlain
PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.



Western shore of Lake George looking north
PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

👍 Frequent Inspections, Cleaner Lake

Lake George Park Commission Septic Inspection regulations enacted in February are the tightest standards on the books anywhere in the Adirondack Park. They deserve to be repeated across the Park. The program requires nearly 2,700 near-shore properties in the Lake George basin to be inspected every five years to ensure a functioning septic system. Park Commission staff would inspect more than 500 homes each year. Low-cost financing and grants are available for those needing repairs and replacements. Lake George has experienced several algal blooms in recent years, likely caused by excess nutrients carried to the lake on stormwater polluted by poorly treated sewage. ■

AWARDS

2023 Conservationist of the Year - New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, & Asian (BPHA) Legislative Caucus

On July 15, during its annual Forever Wild Day Celebration at the Crown Point State Historic Site on the shore of Lake Champlain, the Adirondack Council presented its Conservationist of the Year Award to the New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus. The Caucus was recognized for its efforts that have led to better recognition of the Park's multicultural history, securing funding for a new careers institute to educate young people about environmental jobs, and for championing a comprehensive, new scientific study of the impacts of climate change and pollution on Adirondack water quality.



L-R: Executive Director Raul Aguirre, Assemblyman Billy Jones (D-Chateaugay), Assemblywoman Michaelle Solages (D-Elmont), Board Chair Sarah Hatfield, Senator Zellnor Myrie (D-Brooklyn), Assemblymember Khaleel Anderson (D-Queens) and BPHA Caucus Executive Director Joshua Joseph

Special Recognition Award - Chris Maron, Champlain Area Trails

The Council presented a Special Recognition Award at Forever Wild Day to Chris Maron and the organization he leads, Champlain Area Trails (CATS). CATS has connected thousands of people to nature through its 77 miles of foot trails, 983 acres of protected land, and hundreds of hikes, outdoor education events, and volunteer workdays since 2009. Their land conservation work has been especially important in New York's Champlain Valley because as the last part added to the Adirondack Park, there is little public land and until CATS began, few hiking trails. These actions, along with its organized hikes, events, and outdoor education activities, have provided economic and community benefits for Champlain Valley residents and visitors.



L-R: Executive Director Raul Aguirre, CATS Executive Director Chris Maron, Board Chair Sarah Hatfield and Conservation Director Jackie Bowen

Fighting Smog and Bomb Trains - Lemuel Srolovic

NY Attorney General Environmental Protection Bureau Chief Lemuel Srolovic accepted an award from the Adirondack Council on behalf of the bureau during a reception in New York City in February 2023. Lem's team of litigators helped reverse a prior Environmental Protection Agency decision not to enforce mandatory summer smog controls at coal-fired power plants. The team also helped remove dozens of derelict oil train cars off the Adirondack Forest Preserve in North Creek, Warren County. ■



L-R: Director of Communications John Sheehan welcomes Lem Srolovic

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

ORGANIZATIONS & PEOPLE

It takes more than government to make this amazing Park work so well. Here are some of the organizations and people who made a positive difference in the Adirondacks this year:

The **Adirondack Foundation** used its Special and Urgent Needs Fund to coordinate and distribute emergency aid and flood support to Long Lake, Blue Mountain Lake, and Indian Lake during extreme rainstorms this summer that caused locally heavy flooding, washing out of roads, and power outages.

In August, **Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve** and **Protect the Adirondacks!** filed separate Article 78 lawsuits against the Adirondack Park Agency in the State Supreme Court, Warren County, for failing to protect top-priority wetlands when it granted a marina-expansion permit in June on Lower Saranac Lake.

The **Adirondack Land Trust**, assisted the Six Nations Iroquois Cultural Center in purchasing 333 acres near its current location in Onchiota for a new museum and center. The land trust also protected the iconic views along Loj Road outside of Lake Placid.

In August, British clean water advocate **Lewis Pugh** began a 315-mile swim of the entire Hudson River, from Lake Tear of the Clouds on Mount Marcy to New York Harbor, using social media to promote clean rivers as he progressed.

Prof. Curt Stager of Paul Smith's College revealed another forgotten chapter of local history when he recreated tax maps showing that black farmers were majority landowners in many Adirondack communities in and around Lake Placid, North Elba and Saranac Lake during the mid-1800s.

Over the past year, the **Northeast Wilderness Trust** created the new 1,400-acre Grasse River Wilderness Preserve on the western edge of the Park that will protect water quality and further conserve the critical Algonquin-to-Adirondack (A2A) wildlife corridor. In addition, they secured 1,775-acres that connects wildlife habitat in the Champlain Valley to the Adirondack High Peaks.

In July, the **Canada Lakes Conservation Association** and the **Adirondack Watershed Institute (AWI)** sponsored an educational program to teach youth how to spot invasive plants and aquatic life in Caroga Lake. AWI continues to provide watershed level leadership on monitoring and data collection efforts of our region's signature waterbodies.

In December, a coalition including: the **Adirondack Council; Adirondack Experience; Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve; Adirondack Wilderness Advocates; Citizens Campaign for the Environment; Environmental Advocates of NY; New York League of Conservation Voters; Protect the Adirondacks!; Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter; and WE ACT for Environmental Justice** joined in presenting a united request for conservation funding from the Governor and Legislature, securing budget and policy priorities such as Timbuctoo Summer Climate Careers Institute, the Survey of Climate and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems and grants for municipal clean water projects.

The **Adirondack Mountain Club** hosted an all-taxa bio-blitz at its Cascade Visitor Center near Lake Placid, involving hikers in citizen science studies. Cascade continues to grow in importance and relevance as a front country source of Leave-No-Trace education, gear, and general recreation information.

The **Northern Forest Canoe Trail (NFCT)**, the **Long Lake Association**, the **Blue Mountain Lake Association**, and the **Raquette Lake Preservation Foundation** joined the Adirondack Council to create the Raquette Watershed Coalition. The Council and NFCT hired coordinator Becky Sutter.

The **Adirondack Diversity Initiative (ADI)**, a program of the **Adirondack North Country Association** hired **Tiffany Rea-Fisher** as the second director of ADI replacing Nicole Hylton-Patterson. This essential hire is critical to ongoing efforts to make the 6-million-acre Park more inclusive, safe, and diverse.

The **Adirondack Coast** tourism promotion website focused on the Champlain Valley has been helping stargazers prepare for a visible total solar eclipse in April 2024, reminding potential visitors that most of the Park's seasonal businesses will be closed.

In December of 2022, the **Open Space Institute** worked with **Revolution Rail Co.** to purchase the Saratoga and North Creek Railway between North Creek, and Tahawus allowing continued recreational use by rail bikes and preventing storage of derelict oil train cars on the tracks.

Ausable River Association, Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and partners began the pilot study for a Survey of Climate and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems this summer, using the first \$250,000 appropriated in the FY 2022-23 state budget.

Protect the Adirondacks! hired environmental attorney **Claudia Braymer** to serve as their Deputy Director. Claudia has a strong background as a member of the Warren County Board of Supervisors and as an attorney with experience in Adirondack environmental litigation. ■

2023-24 PRIORITIES

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.

To preserve the legacy of the Adirondacks for current and future generations, 2024 priorities, guided by the VISION 2050 report, include:

VISION 2050

Incorporate VISION recommendations throughout the organization to advance new conservation funding, Park governance, and sustainable communities priorities across the Adirondack Park and in Albany.

Forever Adirondacks Campaign

Secure additional funds/more action on Clean Water, Wilderness, Green Jobs.

Park Governance & Funding Upgrades

Adirondack Park Agency (APA) Act upgrade/legislation, fresh appointments to the APA board, new funding structures or models.

Clean Water

Action on road salt, aquatic invasives, wastewater infrastructure, aging septic systems, and gathering new data from the Survey of Climate and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems.

Wilderness Preservation & State Land Stewardship

Encourage conservation plan for the Whitney Estate conservation, new information from Otak as it works to create the state's first Visitor Use Management Framework and Plan.

Rewilding

Encourage better habitat and wildlife connections inside the Park and between protected areas outside the Blue Line.

Federal Funds & Policy

Secure funds for Adirondack clean air and water monitoring/science support.

Defending Forever Wild

Nurture favorable Constitutional Amendments, discourage bad ones, and monitor state and public compliance.

Sustainable Working Forests & Farms

Promote local food security, green economy, and improve conditions for farm laborers. Engage more fully on private land management focused on sustainable forestry.

Adirondack Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Increase state funding and broader regional justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts. ■

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 environmental 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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Support Adirondack Conservation

Whether you are in the Adirondacks or elsewhere, you too can show your support for preserving the water, air, and wildlands of this national treasure. Visit our online shop at **donate.AdirondackCouncil.org** or call us at 518.873.2240 to purchase a variety of branded merchandise. All proceeds support our daily advocacy for the Adirondack Park.



NEW! 2024 Forever Wild Calendar | \$15 + tax & s/h

12-month calendar featuring Adirondack landscapes from award-winning photographer Carl Heilman II

Trucker Hats | \$25 + tax & s/h

Two-tone (blue/green), Richardson trucker hats with loon logo in faux-leather, cloth patch or white embroidery



Loon Mugs | \$25 + tax & s/h

Handcrafted in the USA, 12oz capacity, microwave & dishwasher safe. Available in heritage blue, forest green, cinnamon, or burgundy (not shown).



Neck Gaiters | \$20 + tax & s/h

Available in three colors (blue, green, or orange) two designs (loon logo or mountains) and two styles (lightweight or insulated) Measures (9.5" x 15.5")

