



PRESS RELEASE

July 7, 2015

PROTECT calls on Adirondack Park Agency to reject DEC Snowmobile Trail Connector Plan

*PROTECT finds DEC plan violates the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act
and DEC Rivers Act Regulations. APA set to act at its July 9th meeting in Ray Brook.*

*Plan opposed by many private landowners who do not want big
new community connector snowmobile trails on their private lands.*

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Lake George, NY – Protect the Adirondacks called today for the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) to reject the proposed Community Connector Trail Plan at its July 9, 2015 meeting proposed by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). This plan violates the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act by seeking to build a new motorized snowmobile trail and bridge across the Boreas River, a classified Scenic River under the state Rivers Act. DEC regulations for the Rivers Act require trails in Scenic River areas to be non-motorized and only four feet in width.

The APA is set to take up this new plan that would approve major new snowmobile trails between Newcomb and North Hudson and Newcomb and Minerva. Both trails require vast construction through Forest Preserve areas, some currently trailless and wild, as well as on private lands. Many private landowners have opposed locating trails on their lands, but their pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

The APA is set to take up a series of Unit Management Plan amendments to authorize construction of major new snowmobile trails in the central Adirondacks at its meeting in Ray Brook on July 9, 2015. These trails will connect a series of towns with major new snowmobile trail routes. PROTECT has found that the APA is willfully ignoring requirements under the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act that prohibits motor vehicle use and limit trails in Scenic River corridors to four feet in width. In this case the Rivers Act supersedes the APA Act and State Land Master Plan.

“This is a case of the APA and DEC working closely together to ignore requirements of New York’s Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act that prohibit motorized uses in

classified 'Scenic' River corridors and require that new trails only be four feet in width. In essence, DEC is violating its own laws," said Peter Bauer, executive director of Protect the Adirondacks.

The Adirondack Park Agency Act, passed in 1971, requires that the APA establish rules and regulations for management of the Forest Preserve. The APA officially created the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan in 1972. The Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act, passed in 1972, required that the DEC create rules and regulations to administer the Rivers Act, which the DEC did in 1986. The Rivers Act states that in areas of law where there is conflict between various state agencies that the more restrictive and most protective requirements should apply. In this case, that means that DEC limitations for only 4-foot wide trails should be upheld and supersede the APA Act. "Where there is conflict between state agencies administering the same law, the most protective and restrictive requirements should be upheld. This has long been a staple of law in New York and the U.S. Protect the Adirondacks is at a loss to understand how the APA can approve a new 9-11 foot wide trail and bridge over the protected Boreas River when the more restrictive power under DEC rules limits trails to 4 feet and non-motorized uses," said Peter Bauer. "If the APA and DEC want to build a big new motor vehicle over the Boreas River they need to either change New York's Rivers Act or change DEC regulations."

The major new snowmobile trails in the central Adirondacks require extensive use of private lands to make connections. These trails face severe terrain obstacles from mountains, wetlands, steep slopes and roads. Without consulting many private landowners, DEC has proposed to build a snowmobile trail through their lands. "Many private landowners are opposed to the DEC's plans. If the APA goes ahead with this approval it should require that no work on these trails begin until 100% of the routes between these various communities have been organized and lawfully created" said Peter Bauer.

Class II Community Connector Snowmobile Trails Unlike any Other Forest Preserve Recreational Trails

Class II community connector snowmobile trails are road-like "trails" that are not built for motorized uses. Trails for hiking, mountainbiking, horseback riding, or cross-country skiing look nothing like a Class II community connector snowmobile trails. No other recreational use in the Forest Preserve requires this type of vast terrain alteration and natural resource damage to build and maintain.

Class II community connector snowmobile trails are 9-11 foot wide cleared trails, specifically designed and constructed to allow regular grooming with large multi-ton motor vehicles and high speed snowmobile travel. Unlike other trails built by hand, these trails are excavated with heavy machinery, utilize extensive bench cutting, remove thousands of trees over 3 inches diameter at breast height (DBH), remove tens of thousands of trees under 3 inches DBH, remove the entire native understory, often replace the native understory with a grass mix, open the forest canopy, often fracture

and chip away bedrock, utilize oversized bridges often equipped with reflectors, and are built to handle operation of motor vehicles. No other recreational activity in the Forest Preserve, outside of Intensive Use Areas, requires such profound terrain alteration and destruction of natural resources. Protect the Adirondacks believes that this network of “trails” violates the SLMP and Article XIV, Section 1 of the NYS Constitution.

Protect the Adirondacks

Protect the Adirondacks is a privately funded, IRS-approved not-for-profit organization dedicated to the protection of the 6-million-acre Adirondack Park in northern New York. PROTECT was formed through the merger of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks and the Residents’ Committee to Protect the Adirondacks in 2009. PROTECT pursues its mission to protect the Adirondack Park and defend the public “forever wild” Forest Preserve through citizen advocacy, grassroots organizing, education, research, and legal action. PROTECT is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. PROTECT maintains an office in Lake George. For more information see www.protectadks.org.

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