



PRESS RELEASE

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New DEC Kushaqua Conservation Recreational Management Plan Provides Broad Motorized Recreation

Majority of hiking trails are shared with ATVs, almost all mountain bike trails are shared with ATVs and other motor vehicles

Plan envisions widespread new motor vehicle access to parts of the Debar Mountain Wild Forest area of the Forest Preserve

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Lake George, NY – Protect the Adirondacks has submitted public comments to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) regarding its new draft Recreational Management Plan (RMP) for the 18,000-acre Kushaqua Conservation Easement tract in the Towns of Franklin and Brighton in Franklin County. This tract is surrounded by public “forever wild” Forest Preserve in the Debar Mountain Wild Forest. This is part of a larger 255,000-acre conservation easement the State of New York purchased from International Paper Company in 2004. The forest management rights are owned today by Lyme Timber Company.

“This is the first large-scale recreational management plan that has been released for public comments by the DEC. This RMP is important because it will set the template for future RMPs as far as the data and other information that is included,” said Chuck Clusen, Chairman of Protect the Adirondacks.

The Kushaqua Conservation Easement tract has 31 private leased hunting camps and a network of 130 miles of roads. The land is actively logged. Major community connector snowmobile trails already are routed through parts of the tract. It also provides a hiking trail to Loon Lake Mountain.

“PROTECT is concerned that this RMP is principally a motorized recreational use plan. For all practical purposes, this is a plan for the new Kushaqua Motorsports Park. The dominant recreational activities are All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) riding, snowmobiling, and drive-in camping. The hiking trails are largely shared with ATVs and mountain bike riders share roads with ATVs and motor vehicles,” said Peter Bauer, Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks.

The recent Forest Preserve classification process between the Adirondacks Park Agency (APA), DEC and Cuomo Administration over parts of the former Finch Paper lands made its decision mantra “something for everybody.” PROTECT finds that the scant non-motorized recreational access opportunity in this RMP violates this new ethos.

The DEC is accepting public comments until February 21st.

Here are the issues of greatest concern to PROTECT:

- Almost all hiking trails are shared with ATVs.
- Almost all mountain bike trails are shared with ATVs and other motor vehicles.
- The RMP proposes extensive new motorized use opportunities in the Debar Mountain Wild Forest, though no Unit Management Plan exists for that unit.
- Local municipalities may open public roads to ATVs so they can ride to the Kushaqua tract. This will increase ATV trespasses on private property.
- No environmental impact assessment was provided, despite the requirement under the APA-DEC Memorandum of Understanding to do so.
- The Kushaqua tract is under active forest management and contains a number of clearcuts and strip cuts. No details were provided in the RMP about forest management.
- The RMP provides scant information about DEC enforcement capabilities despite promoting extensive new motor vehicle recreational use opportunities.

“PROTECT is very concerned about DEC’s ability to adequately enforce public recreational use given that ATV riding will be the dominant recreational use on the property. There have been lots of problems with ATV trespasses and natural resource damage on the Forest Preserve. It’s important that the DEC be able to police the recreational uses that they’re promoting,” said Peter Bauer.

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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