

**Adirondack Mountain Club**  
**Adirondack Council**  
**Adirondack Wild: *Friends of the Forest Preserve***  
**Audubon New York**  
**Catskill Center for Conservation and Development**  
**Catskill Heritage Alliance**  
**Catskill Mountainkeeper**  
**Citizen's Campaign for the Environment**  
**Natural Resources Defense Council**  
**Protect the Adirondacks!**  
**Environmental Advocates of New York**  
**New York League of Conservation Voters**  
**Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter**

December 1, 2014

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor, Executive Chamber  
NYS State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Dean Skelos  
Majority Co-Leader, NYS Senate  
NYS Capitol, Room 330C  
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Sheldon Silver  
Speaker, NYS Assembly  
NYS Capitol, Room  
Albany, NY 12248

Re: **Opposition to 2014 "Forever Wild" Article XIV Constitutional Amendments**

Dear Legislative Leaders and Governor Cuomo;

The concept of Land Bank and Community Use Amendments to Article XIV of the NYS Constitution was proposed earlier this year in a white paper issued by the Common Ground Alliance. While some of the ideas and proposals in that paper intended to benefit Adirondack communities have merit and deserve continued discussion, we write to firmly oppose the immediate drafting of anything for passage this year attempting to implement the virtually unlimited purposes and projects expressed in the white paper. We support New York's Adirondack and Catskill Parks and the continued protection of the State's Forest Preserve.

No amendment to the Forever Wild clause of the State Constitution should be attempted during these final weeks of 2014. Drafting of bills and/or concurrent resolutions now would be highly premature because the proposed uses of the Land Bank are too numerous and too broadly defined. There is insufficient information on problems, issues and available alternative solutions. Numerous questions have yet to be answered and available data does not yet provide an adequate foundation for legislative action. Without such data and justification, voters across the state will not ultimately support amending Article XIV. To gain broad statewide support, any future Land Bank should be tightly defined and limited as to mission and purpose, similar to the existing State Highway Bank (1957 amendment to Article XIV). Such discussions should take place during 2015.

The "Forever Wild" Article of the State Constitution has been in place for over one hundred years. Given the sensitive and complex nature of any constitutional revision, there needs to be adequate time for full and proper deliberations before the Legislature is asked to vote on any amendment. Article XIV was enacted in order to constrain governmental activity on the Forest Preserve, not facilitate it. Amendments to the constitutional protection of these lands and waters should be rare, limited, specific, and narrow in scope, and only considered when there is a demonstrated public need and a clear net benefit to the Forest Preserve. Other principles and considerations should also be satisfied. For example, any amendment proposal or proposals should be accompanied by enabling legislation that details the full scope and process for implementation upon passage. Given all these considerations, we cannot support a rushed legislative first passage of any proposed amendments in the final weeks of 2014.

Theodore Roosevelt, after serving as Governor of New York, and while President, said "There is [no question] which compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us." We have a responsibility to preserve and enhance the more than one hundred year old legacy of constitutionally protected public Forest Preserve in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks for future generations. Thank you for past efforts to support these parks. We look forward to working with you and other stakeholders in 2015.

Sincerely,

Neil Woodworth, Executive Director and Counsel  
The Adirondack Mountain Club

William C. Janeway, Executive Director  
The Adirondack Council

Dave Gibson, Partner  
Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve

Erin Crotty, Executive Director  
Audubon New York

Alan White, Executive Director  
Catskill Center for Conservation and Development

Kathy Nolan, Chair  
Catskill Heritage Alliance

Ramsay Adams, Executive Director  
Catskill Mountainkeeper

William Cooke, Director of Government Relations  
Citizen's Campaign for the Environment

Richard Schrader, Political and Legislative Director  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Peter Bauer, Executive Director  
Protect the Adirondacks!

Peter Iwanowicz, Executive Director  
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Marcia Bystryn, President  
New York League of Conservation Voters

Roger Downs, Conservation Director  
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

CC:

Basil Seggos

Senator Elizabeth O'C. Little

Assemblyman Robert Sweeney

Paul Midey

Julia Mallalieu