



PRESS RELEASE

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## Protect the Adirondacks calls upon APA to release Forest Preserve classification materials

*APA State Lands Committee Chair Richard Booth distributed a legal and policy analysis on options for classification of Essex Chain Lakes and Hudson River lands that APA leaders won't release*

*This document should be released and included in the public record*

### **For more information:**

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Ray Brook NY – Protect the Adirondacks calls upon the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) to release an extensive legal analysis written by the chairman of the APA State Lands Committee that details the legal and policy options for the APA's decision regarding the classification of Forest Preserve lands around the Essex Chain Lakes and Hudson River. It is PROTECT's understanding that this analysis has been distributed to all APA Commissioners and staff and to top leaders at the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). PROTECT believes that this is a public document and should be released as part of the public record. "The classification of the Essex Chain Lakes and Hudson River lands by the APA is one of the biggest decisions of the APA in a decade. It's unfortunate that the APA has chosen to withhold important public information that helps to frame the APA's decision," said Chuck Clusen, Chairman of Protect the Adirondacks.

The Booth legal analysis is an important document in light of the fact that the APA Counsel has failed to produce a legal and policy analysis that was requested of the APA senior staff more than 60 days ago at the APA's September meeting.

The APA has not responded to numerous calls and emails from PROTECT on this matter.

### **Information Blackout at the APA**

"The decision by the APA to withhold the analysis by Commissioner Booth is consistent with a pattern of withholding critical legal and policy analysis regarding the

classification of the Essex Chain Lakes and Hudson River lands,” said Peter Bauer, Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks.

The APA conducted a public hearing in June-July of 2013 on seven alternatives for the classification of the Essex Chain Lakes and Hudson River lands. Over 3,600 public comments were submitted, which ran 4-1 in support of a Wilderness classification. The APA devoted almost its entire August monthly meeting to a discussion of the classification of the Essex Chain Lakes and Hudson River lands. At the conclusion of the APA’s August meeting, the APA Counsel detailed a list of more than three dozen items for which the APA Commissioners sought additional information. The APA staff has reported back on only about a dozen of these items, though it has had over 90 days to round up this information.

At the APA’s August meeting, the APA also reported on the development of an official “Response” document to the most substantial public hearing comments as required under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). To date, this document has not been released. This document is a critical informational piece for the APA’s classification decision. The public hearing closed nearly 120 days ago.

At the APA’s September meeting, the APA Commissioners requested a full legal and policy analysis on the issues involved with the four principal Forest Preserve classification options – Wilderness, Primitive, Canoe and Wild Forest. To date, this document has not been released.

“The APA has not been responsive or particularly effective in providing important and required legal and policy analysis to the APA Commissioners and the public. We call upon the APA to complete these documents and release them for public review,” 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](http://www.protectadks.org).

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