



PRESS RELEASE

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Governor Cuomo Approves new 23,000-acre Hudson Gorge Wilderness Area and 9,940-Acre Motorless Primitive Area for Essex Chain Lakes

Governor also approves troubling motorized Wild Forest corridor through the heart of the new Forest Preserve lands and green lights state agencies to plan for construction and maintenance of permanent bridges over protected scenic rivers

For more information:

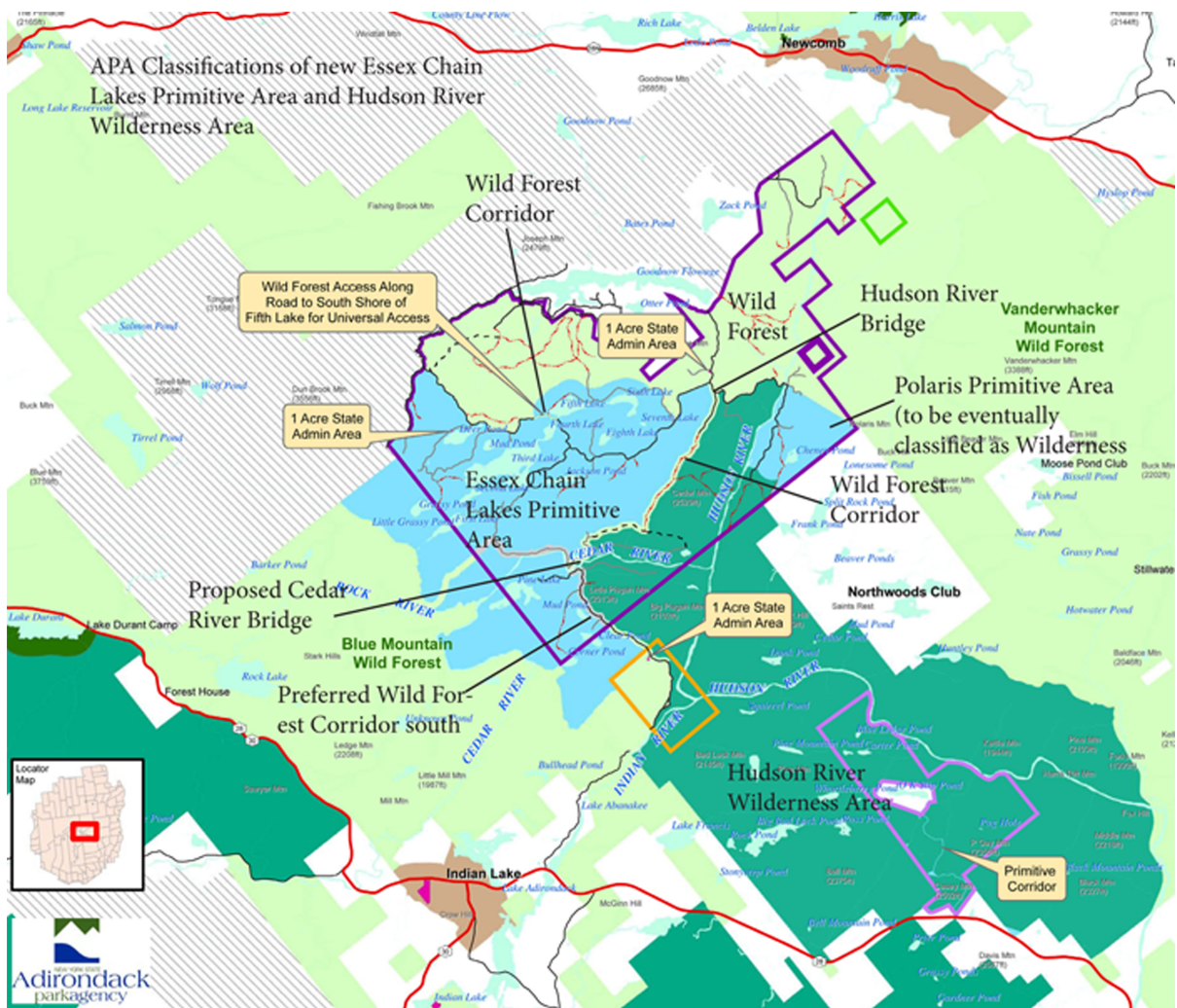
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Albany, NY – Governor Andrew Cuomo today signed the official Forest Preserve classification recommendations from the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) and Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for over 42,000 acres. These lands include new and existing Forest Preserve lands that will be classified Wilderness, Primitive and Wild Forest areas. This action involved classification of over 22,000 acres of newly purchased Forest Preserve lands and reclassification of over 20,000 acres of existing Forest Preserve lands.

“We applaud the creation of a new Hudson Gorge Wilderness Area. The Governor has successfully protected over 15 miles of the Hudson River as Wilderness. This is a great tribute to New York’s grandest river,” said Peter Bauer, Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks.

The Governor’s approval created a new 23,572-acre Hudson Gorge Wilderness Area and a 9,940-acre Essex Chain Lakes Primitive area and classified 7,377 acres as Wild Forest. Another 963-acre Polaris Primitive Area was also created, but is scheduled to be classified as Wilderness once all reserved leaseholder rights expire in 2019.

In 2012, Governor Cuomo announced that the state would purchase 69,000 acres of new Forest Preserve lands from The Nature Conservancy. The first three tracts, purchased in 2012 and 2013, were included in the APA’s action today. These total 21,000 acres: the 18,230-acre Essex Chain Tract, 2,823-acre OK Slip Falls Tract, and 923-acre Indian River Tract. The APA also reclassified roughly 20,000 acres of existing Forest Preserve lands, including the 17,000-acre Hudson Gorge Primitive area.



“The new 9,940-acre Essex Chain Lakes Primitive Area will provide a great motorless destination that will be enjoyed by families for generations. New Yorkers will be able to watch these lands grow wilder each year as the forest reclaims roads and the beavers retake wetlands and swamps,” said Peter Bauer.

The classification package also included the creation of a motorized Wild Forest corridor through the heart of this area.

This Classification Creates Long-Term Challenges

The Governor’s approval also authorizes further review and planning by Adirondack Park Agency and Department of Environmental Conservation to revise existing state laws or regulations on a variety of issues. These include:

1. The APA emphasized a preference for the Wild Forest corridor to extend across the Cedar River. This action will necessitate a revision to DEC regulations for management of Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers for bridge construction and

motor vehicle use in a Scenic River corridor.

2. The APA emphasized a preference for the Wild Forest corridor to extend across the Cedar River. This action will necessitates a revision in the State Land Master Plan for elimination of the current requirement for natural materials in bridge construction.
3. The APA also pledges to review State Land Master Plan revisions to allow mountain biking in Primitive Areas.
4. The APA also pledged to work with the DEC to revise the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act to allow motor vehicle use within a Wild Forest corridor.

“Now that the Governor has made it all official, Protect the Adirondacks will continue to monitor the APA’s and DEC’s plans around bridge retention and construction. These are controversial issues and need extensive public scrutiny and intervention,” 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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