

**Adirondack Council * Adirondack Mountain Club
Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve * Protect the Adirondacks!**

February 8, 2019

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Andrea Stewart Cousins
NYS Senate Temporary President
Room 907, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Carl Heastie
NYS Assembly Speaker
Room 932, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12248

Honorable Todd Kaminsky
NYS Senate Chair of Environmental
Conservation Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 302
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Steven Englebright
NYS Assembly Chair of Environmental
Conservation Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 621
Albany, NY 12247

Re: Adirondack Priorities for 2019

Dear Governor, Legislative Leaders and Environmental Conservation Chairs:

The undersigned organizations have enumerated a list of Adirondack Park priorities for 2019. The Adirondack Park is a national treasure and the birthplace of the wilderness movement in the United States. At six million acres, the Adirondack Park is the largest park in the contiguous United States. It is, also, the largest intact temperate deciduous forest in the world, making it a primary source of our state's clean water, a refuge for wildlife and biodiversity, and a sponge for greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide.

The Adirondack Park belongs to all New Yorkers and is the premier area in the Northeast U.S. for outdoor recreational opportunities and wilderness. The Adirondack Park is home to 130,000 residents spread throughout 102 towns and villages and attracts over 12 million visitors a year.

We applaud your leadership and bold action this year to tackle the threat of **climate change** and to continue building on your successes in fighting for **clean water** for all New Yorkers. We stand ready to support those efforts because they are state-wide priorities that also hold enormous benefits for natural resources and communities off the Adirondack Park.

Here is a list of the 2019 Adirondack Park priorities:

1. **Strengthen invasive species legislation by making boat washing mandatory and permanent in the Adirondacks.** New York State pays for a Park-wide system of boater education, inspection and washing stations. But people are not required to stop. We can leverage this investment in protecting water resources by expanding free mandatory boat washing beyond the existing Lake George program, without restricting boater access. This legislation should also renew New York's transport law that makes it illegal to transport invasive species in the state.
2. **Amend and update the Adirondack Park Agency Act to make Conservation Subdivision Design of development mandatory for the largest subdivision applications.** Speculative, large-scale subdivisions are a threat to the contiguity of our forests and the wildlife habitat they provide. The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) has recently enacted an updated permit for large scale subdivisions, which is a step in the right direction, and voluntary, but fails to make conservation design mandatory for larger projects. Conservation design of development ensures that the largest negative impacts of development are avoided, natural, scenic and aesthetic resources protected, and large tracts of open space unfragmented by use of design tools that cluster roads, utilities and houses. Conservation design is widely used across the U.S. and in New York and needs to become part of the APA Act.
3. **Protect the Forest Preserve and other state lands from All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) trespass and ecological damage.** For three decades, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Forest Rangers have confirmed that illegal ATV use has been the "most problematic activity" on state lands. ATVs cause a great deal of natural resources damage to public and private lands, and are proven high risk to public health and safety. It is time to pass a general ban on recreational use of ATVs on state lands, improve enforcement and offer safe legal riding on non-state lands.
4. **Important Budget Items for the Adirondack Park:** In budget negotiations, we urge you to fight for Adirondack priorities. These are:
 - An immediate increase in the DEC personnel budget to provide for at least twenty new full-time DEC Forest Rangers, as well as more assistant Forest Rangers and backcountry stewards to provide for the stewardship of our public lands and the greatly increased number of emergency incidents, searches and rescues on our state lands;
 - An expanded Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). While we support this year's \$300 million EPF (for environmental capital projects only, not staff salaries) we also call for a schedule of EPF increases over the next few years that build the EPF to \$500 million, a level that is widely

believed necessary to meet pressing environmental needs in the Adirondack Park and across the state.

- The EPF Open Space/ Land Acquisition account should be increased to \$40 million this year.
- The State Lands Stewardship account should be changed to include a line for \$5 million earmarked for Adirondack and Catskill Wilderness Areas. This will help to make Wilderness management a priority at state agencies and start to effectively address overcrowding and substandard trails in the Adirondack High Peaks Wilderness area.
- The new \$2.5 billion for clean water should include specific funds of \$100 million for the Adirondacks. Many small communities are struggling to maintain over-used and out-of-date sewage treatment plants and public water systems. These small communities provide key access to many Adirondack lakes and the Forest Preserve but need help to update critical infrastructure.
- We invite you to join us in calling for \$500 million of the Governor's proposed \$2 billion from the Green Future Fund for *Parks, Public Land, and Resiliency* to be dedicated to the Adirondack and Catskill Parks over the next five years. Visitation has increased by more than 2.1 million visitors to 12.4 million since 2001. In that time, the staffing and resources have decreased. Environmental groups and local government leaders of the Adirondacks stand together in calling upon the state to address natural resource impacts, visitor safety, and the decline of the wild character of our Park. A dedicated funding source can accomplish those aims. Preservation requires paying for management infrastructure stewardship.
- **The Governor and Senate have a rare opportunity to strengthen and diversify the Adirondack Park Agency board.** The APA is charged by state law with regulatory oversight and long-range planning for the Adirondack Park. The board should include independent expertise in land use planning, conservation science pertaining to the Adirondacks and the laws protective of the Park. The 11-person APA board will need seven appointments by June 2019 to fill two vacancies and five expired terms. Two members are Pataki appointments and have served for more than 12 years. It is time for new representation. A majority of these appointments should have strong environmental skills and environmental community backing. A list of suggestions containing well-qualified individuals ready to serve on the APA is attached. The Senate should negotiate these nominations with the Governor's office.

The organizations signed onto to this letter stand ready to support you in achieving these

aims, and will similarly stand guard against any policies or funding proposals that threaten the Adirondack Park's future. We look forward to discussing these proposals with you and your staff in greater detail, and we thank you for making the Adirondack Park a part of your environmental conservation priorities this year.

Sincerely,

Willie Janeway, Executive Director
Adirondack Council

Neil Woodworth, Executive Director and Counsel
Adirondack Mountain Club

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

Peter Bauer, Executive Director
Protect the Adirondacks!

CC:

Dale Bryk, Deputy Secretary for the Environment
Amanda Lefton, First Assistant Secretary for Energy and the Environment
Evan Preminger, Assistant Secretary for the Environment
Senator Liz Krueger, Chair, Finance Committee
Assemblymember Helene Weinstein, Chair, Ways and Means Committee

Adirondack Park Agency Board Terms

In-Park Board Members

<u>Board Member</u>	<u>Status/Term Expiration</u>	<u>Year Appointed</u>
Art Lussi (D Essex)	Expired (2017)	2006
Bill Thomas (R Warren)	Expired (2018)	2006
Daniel Wilt (R Hamilton)	Current (2019)	2013
Vacancy (None)	Open (2020)	None
Vacancy (None)	Open (2019)	None

Out-of-Park Board Members

<u>Board Member</u>	<u>Status/Term Expiration</u>	<u>Year Appointed</u>
Chad Dawson (D Tompkins)	Current (2020)	2016
Karen Feldman (D Columbia)	Expired (2018)	2013
John Ernst (D New York)	Expired (2017)	2016

Note: APA Act states that only one Board member can serve from a county at a time. No more than five Board members can serve from one political party. Five Board members must be residents of the Adirondack Park. Three Board members must be residents of counties outside the Adirondack Park. APA terms are set though Board members can continue to serve expired terms without penalty. APA terms are set on 4-year cycles with two terms expiring each year.

Viable Candidates from Inside the Adirondack Park

Essex County

Dean Cook

Ray Curran

Heidi Kretser

Henrietta Jordan

Franklin County

John Delehanty

Celia Evans

Robert Glennon

Leslie Karasin

Barbara Rottier

Keith Silliman

Zoe Smith

John Quinn

Warren County

Steve Ovitt

Fulton County

James Long

Sidney Harring

St. Lawrence County

Neil Woodworth