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**ADIRONDACK COUNCIL \* ADIRONDACK MOUNTAIN CLUB  
ADIRONDACK WILD: FRIENDS OF THE FOREST PRESERVE \* PROTECT THE ADIRONDACKS!**

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## **ADIRONDACK CONSERVATION ORGS SEEK TO PROTECT WATER, WILDLIFE AS STATE BUDGET TALKS BEGIN**

ALBANY, N.Y. – Four Adirondack conservation organizations today called on Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Legislative Leaders to protect Adirondack forest and lakes from invasive species and poorly sited development, while preventing motorized trespass and strengthening the agency that oversees park planning and development.

“The Adirondack Park is a national treasure and the birthplace of the wilderness movement in the United States,” the groups said in a letter to state officials. “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 letter was signed by the Adirondack Council, Adirondack Mountain Club, Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve, and Protect the Adirondacks. It recommended a handful of targeted conservation priorities in the NYS Budget for fiscal year 2019/20. The current fiscal year ends March 31.

**The groups recommended specific actions that would:**

- Require (free) state boat inspections prior to launch, to prevent the spread of invasive species from one water body to another;
- Protect forests, wildlife and water quality on the park’s most remote and sensitive private lands;
- Safeguard the park’s public Forest Preserve from all-terrain vehicle trespass;
- Add state personnel to match a 24-percent influx of visitors over the past decade; and,
- Appoint people with strong planning, legal and scientific expertise to vacancies on the Adirondack Park Agency’s decision-making board.

“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,”

the letter noted. The groups thanked lawmakers for their “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 ...”

**Excerpts from the letter:**

**Invasive Species:** 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.

**Conservation Design:** 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.

**ATV Trespass:** 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.

**Staffing for Crowds:** 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.

**Environmental Capital Funding:** 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.

**Wilderness Funding:** 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.

**Dedicated Clean Water Fund for Park:** 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.

**Dedicate Green Future Funds to Park:** 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.

**APA Board Appointments Overdue:** 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. The Governor's office should negotiate these nominations with the Senate.

"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," the letter concluded, "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."

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