



Date: June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019

## Memorandum of Opposition to Adirondack Park Agency Board Nominations

The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) board is in need of greater expertise in environmental law, land use planning, and environmental science. The proposed slate of candidates, while including some qualified individuals, does not provide a diversity of professional expertise needed for the board, nor does it bring the board back to full capacity. The quality of the Adirondack Park's wilderness and overall environment is at risk without a professionally diverse board of recognized experts. **Our organizations call on the Senate to reject the candidates as nominated by Governor Cuomo, if the list is not amended and expanded.**

The Adirondack Park encompasses a vast landscape of public and private lands covering one-sixth of New York's land mass, including 2.6 million acres of constitutionally protected public Forest Preserve, over 750,000 acres of state-owned conservation easement lands, and 2.6 million acres of private lands that fully or partially exist within 92 towns and 12 counties. By state law, the APA administers a regional land use program over the public and private lands of the Adirondack Park as well as the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act and New York State Wetlands Act. This complex set of laws requires a detailed understanding of many public and private land use classifications and natural resource systems and how they should, as a whole, be managed for the conservation and development for the benefit of local residents and over 12 million annual visitors.

By law, the APA board includes 11 members at full capacity: three representing state agencies, three from counties across New York outside of the Adirondack Park, and five from the 12 Adirondack counties who must be full-time residents from within the Park boundary. Eight members are nominated by the Governor with the advice and consent of the State Senate. APA Board members serve four-year terms, two of which expire each year. No more than 5 of the eight members can be registered with one political party. Currently, the board has a retired professor from SUNY-ESF who is a public lands management expert, two local government officials, and two business leaders. Currently, three of those members are serving in expired terms and three other seats are vacant. The current composition of Board members, heavily weighted towards business and local government experience, needs to be broadened with experts in environmental law and science. One Board member is a Pataki nominee who has served on the Board for 13 years.

The APA Board was designed in a manner intended to foster independent debate amongst a collection of members with diverse professional experiences and qualifications. **Our respective organizations have consistently stated for more than a year that we would support a slate of candidates if the sum of their backgrounds and credentials met a few minimum threshold requirements:** The APA board needs new board members with professional experience in environmental law and ecological science, and should be advanced as a complete block of candidates. With six seats available to accomplish these requirements, the piecemeal nomination of a partial slate of candidates does not meet our minimum threshold to diversify the APA board. **We call on the State Senate to reject these nominees and to encourage the Governor to nominate new and returning individuals with the needed qualifications.** It's important to do this right.

Willie Janeway, Executive Director, *Adirondack Council*

Neil Woodworth, Executive Director and Counsel, *Adirondack Mountain Club*

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

Peter Bauer, Executive Director, *Protect the Adirondacks!*