

June 1, 2026

Commissioner Amanda Lefton  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
625 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12233

**RE: High Peaks Visitor Use Management Pilot Project Report and Recommendations**

Dear Commissioner Lefton,

We, the undersigned organizations and partners, write to express our appreciation for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) releasing the High Peaks Pilot Visitor Use Management (VUM) Report and Recommendations. The report represents an important and constructive first step toward addressing the growing challenges facing the High Peaks and reflects a meaningful investment in collaborative, data-informed visitor management.

We believe the pilot report should serve as the beginning of a broader and more comprehensive Visitor Use Management process, not an endpoint. A full VUM process is necessary to understand not only how visitor use affects natural resources, but also how it impacts infrastructure, public safety, and the visitor experience.

**We encourage DEC to advance a comprehensive Visitor Use Management process rooted in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan's biological, physical, and social carrying capacity framework, with ecological conditions serving as an overarching consideration across all three capacity elements. The process should also account for economic impacts, public safety, infrastructure needs, and both resident and visitor experiences to support balanced and durable management decisions.**

Given the Adirondack Park's unique mix of public and private lands, recreation, tourism, and local communities, long-term solutions will require continued collaboration among stakeholders, municipalities, organizations, and partners.

We are encouraged by the opportunities identified in the report and believe that, in coordination with the full VUM process, there is strong potential for collaborative action in several key areas, including:

- Improved parking administration and management strategies with DEC leadership and funding;
- Expanded visitor education and stewardship programs;
- Increased trail maintenance and infrastructure investments; and
- Additional staffing, including enhanced ranger capacity.

The report's permit recommendations require careful, stakeholder-specific consideration. Not all undersigning organizations support permit- or limits-based management approaches; please see individual letters for additional detail.

We appreciate DEC's leadership and look forward to continued collaboration in advancing thoughtful, science-based, and community-informed visitor use management solutions for the Adirondack Park.

Sincerely,

Rocci Aguirre, Adirondack Council  
Pete Nelson, Adirondack Wilderness Advocates  
David Gibson, Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve  
Dave Pawlick, Adirondack 46ers  
Dan Kelleher, Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism  
Will Roth, Adirondack Climbers' Coalition  
Joe Pete Wilson, Town of Keene  
Mary Lamphear, Town of Newcomb  
Claudia Braymer, Protect the Adirondacks!  
Rick Preston, Town of North Elba

CC:

Josh Clague, DEC, Bureau Chief of Forest Preserve & Conservation  
Katie Petronis, DEC, Deputy Commissioner, Natural Resources  
Fiona Watt, DEC, Director, Division of Lands & Forests  
Joe Zalewski, DEC Region 5 Director  
Ashley Walden, ORDA President & CEO  
Barb Rice, APA Executive Director