



Adirondack Park Environmental Lobby Day 2021

The NYS Environmental Protection Fund: The EPF is proposed at \$300 million. The EPF funds a variety of environmental programs including land acquisition, invasive species management, state lands stewardship, farmland protection, solid waste/recycling programs, and much more. On the EPF, the Adirondack groups have the following positions: 1) the State Lands Stewardship account should include an earmark \$10 million for Adirondack-Catskill Forest Preserve management; 2) the land protection account should be increased above the \$30 million proposed by the Governor; 3) we support the \$300,000 to help fund the Paul Smith's and Newcomb Visitor Interpretive Centers.

State Land Stewardship: The EPF includes a category called "State Lands Stewardship" that funds construction and maintenance of the recreational infrastructure on the Forest Preserve and conservation easement lands, including trails, lean-tos, parking areas, trailheads, etc. This year the Governor increased EPF spending for land stewardship to \$35.665 million, which includes \$800,000 "Essex County Overuse" which means the High Peaks Wilderness. These funds may be used to help implement the recommendations of the High Peaks Advisory Committee (HPAG). The groups support funding the State Lands Stewardship account at \$35.665 million, but advocating for the \$800,000 suballocation to be increased to \$10 million for Adirondack-Catskill Forest Preserve management.

Invasive Species: The EPF invasive species account should be supported at or above the \$13.3 proposed in executive proposal, and education and interdiction programs should be prioritized. Currently, eradication grants are prioritized at \$5.75 million in this account. While eradication projects are helpful, education and intervention are much more effective. We urge that educational and intervention programs aimed at stopping the spread of invasive species are funded at a level equal to eradication grant programs. In the Adirondack Park 3 of every 4 surveyed lakes or ponds remain un-infested. It is imperative that these aquatic habitats be protected. Also, in the Invasive Species account, the Cornell Hemlock Woolly Adelgid project should be supported at \$500,000.

Forest Rangers

Forest Ranger Staffing: The groups believe it is essential to increase the number of Forest Rangers and other personnel, such as assistant Rangers and backcountry stewards, to help meet pressures facing natural resource protection, public safety, and public education from increased use of the High Peaks Wilderness and other areas. Ranger staffing for the entire state is currently around 135 positions. This needs to be expanded to 175 with a special focus on the High Peaks in the Adirondacks. The Forest Rangers have primary responsibility for DEC's care, custody and control of five million acres of State-owned land and conservation easements across New York, the vast majority of which is in the Adirondack Park. Today, Forest Rangers are responsible for patrolling an average of 53,752 acres, whereas in 1970 it was 28,516 acres. There has been a major increase in public use, and the number of search and rescue missions has increased by 45% in the last year.

Reform of the Adirondack Park Agency

Conservation Development Legislation A.4074/S.1145: The greatest threat to Adirondack forests is fragmentation into smaller lots and rural sprawl of widely spaced subdivisions. Legislation sponsored by Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee Chair Steve Englebright (A.4074) and Senate Environmental Conservation Committee Chair Todd Kaminsky (S.1145) requires that for all large-scale subdivisions proposed in the Adirondack Park, the Adirondack Park Agency must organize baseline materials and evaluate the impacts to wildlife, water quality, forest ecosystem health, among other factors. This legislation would require use of

conservation development design to cluster the development of buildings, roads and utilities in order to protect large tracts of intact forests. This is the most significant reform of the APA Act in its history. This legislation has broad environmental and local government support. Urge legislative leaders to co-sponsor this legislation and support Chairmen Englebright and Kaminsky.

APA Board Leadership: The Adirondack Park Agency is in a crisis state. The APA Board consists of 11 individuals; three who represent state agencies and 8 who are nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate to 4-year terms. Of the eight appointed Board members, there is now one vacancy and two other seats expire in June 2021. When APA board member Chad Dawson resigned from his seat in the end of 2020, he cited concern for the DEC elevating recreational amenities over environmental protection without sufficient study of the consequences, and the APA failing to counter those efforts. The groups are advocating for greater professional diversity on the Board to include more members with broad environmental concerns and experiences. Urge Senators to support APA Board members with diverse professional experiences and insist that the Governor appoint a full slate to bring the APA Board up to its full capacity by the end of June.

Mandatory Boat Control for the Adirondack Park

Strengthen the Invasive Species Transport Law: In 2014, the Invasive Species Transport Bill was passed and authorized for five years. This legislation made it illegal to transport invasive species on boats and trailers across the state or to launch a boat that is not clean, drained and dry. In 2020, this legislation was renewed for 1 year and it now expires in June 2021. The Adirondack groups are advocating for this law to be renewed in 2021 and are urging legislators to strengthen the legislation to ensure that the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation is authorized to create mandatory boat control programs in different regions of the state. The legislation should also provide for biannual reports to the Legislature on terrestrial and aquatic invasive species infestations in New York, with the first report due on January 1, 2023.

Environmental Bond Act

Clean Water and Jobs Bond Act: We applaud the Legislature and Governor for creating the \$3B bond act last year, and would like to see it reauthorized and advanced as soon as the state's financial condition allows. A recent AECOM study showed that the environmental bond act will support 65,000 jobs and result in \$6.7B in project spending on projects that tackle climate change, conserve natural resources, protect clean water and deliver benefits to disadvantaged communities. We support the environmental bond act that was approved last year by the Legislature and Governor. As part of our work to build a campaign for the ballot measure, we have secured approximately \$3M in pledges for support for the Bond Act due to excitement about the programs detailed in the legislation, and we want to ensure this widely supported measure makes it on to the ballot.

A Survey of Climate Change and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems

Adirondack Park-wide Water Quality Monitoring: Our groups ask your support for a \$6 million/3-year (\$2 million annual) appropriation for the proposed Survey of Climate Change and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems. (SCALE). This research is necessary to assess new threats to Adirondack waters from climate change, mercury contamination, browning, invasive species, harmful algal blooms and salinization. It has been more than 30 years since the last comprehensive undertaken assessment of all major Adirondack waters was completed by the Adirondack Lake Survey Corporation (ALSC), which studied over 3,000 lakes and ponds. New Park-wide research must now assess the impact of these new stressors even as certain lakes and streams continue to recover from the impacts of acid rain.

The SCALE initiative builds upon the 1987 report that analyzed water quality and the effects of acid rain. Data collected and analyzed by the ALSC has been crucially important for the development of both State and Federal policies on emission control and air transport regulations. Similarly, we anticipate that SCALE research and findings will guide management for decades to come.