

Warren County Board of Supervisors

RESOLUTION NO. 559 OF 2014

Resolution introduced by Supervisors Monroe, Geraghty and Simpson

**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
ADIRONDACK ASSOCIATION OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES AND
THE ADIRONDACK PARK LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW BOARD
TO AMEND THE ADIRONDACK STATE LAND MASTER PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages (“AATV”) and the Adirondack Park Local Government Review Board (“Review Board”) have long advocated for a comprehensive review of the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (“SLMP”) - the document that governs the use of all 2,614,000 acres of state-owned land in the Adirondacks, and

WHEREAS, the Adirondack Park Agency (“APA”) is currently initiating a process to review and amend the SLMP which has not had a major review in a quarter century and is in need of significant revisions to reflect the realities of today’s Adirondacks and the needs of the people who seek to make their homes and earn their livings here, and

WHEREAS, upon passage of the Adirondack Park Agency Act (“APA Act”) by the New York State legislature, the Act required the APA to draft the Adirondack State Land Master Plan for approval by the Governor, and

WHEREAS, Governor Rockefeller’s Memorandum in Support of the Act, and the Press Release he issued when he signed the SLMP in 1972 make it very clear that both he and the state legislature intended that the state interest in the protection and preservation of the natural resources of the Adirondacks be balanced with the needs of the residents for a strong economy and healthy communities, and

WHEREAS, the Statement of Legislative Findings and Purposes of the APA Act (Section 801) state:

“The basic purpose of this article is to insure optimum overall conservation, protection, preservation, development and use of the unique scenic, aesthetic, wildlife, recreational, open space, historic, ecological and natural resources of the Adirondack park.

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A further purpose of this article is to focus the responsibility for developing long-range park policy in a forum reflecting statewide concern. This policy shall recognize the major state interest in the conservation, use and development of the park's resources and the preservation of its open space character, and at the same time, provide a continuing role for local government.”

and

WHEREAS, for the past four decades, state land purchasing and management policy in the Adirondacks have been tipped decidedly against economic sustainability. During that time, many traditional uses have been severely restricted or prohibited, and 320,000 acres of productive private forest lands have been purchased and converted to “forever wild” state forest preserve lands, and

WHEREAS, today, as documented in the 2014 *Adirondack Park Regional Assessment*, Adirondack populations continue to dwindle, schools continue to lose students, and emergency services continue to struggle financially and lose volunteers, and

WHEREAS, in recognition of the Agency's current willingness to review and amend the SLMP, it is incumbent on local government to take this unique opportunity to support amendments to the SLMP that reflect the need for economic development sensibly balanced with the character of the Adirondacks, and

WHEREAS, the Review Board and the AATV have prepared the attached list (Schedule “A”) of their recommendations for changes in the SLMP, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Warren County Board of Supervisors hereby states its support for the recommended amendments to the State Land Master Plan attached hereto as Schedule “A”, and encourages the AATV and the Review Board to pursue said recommendations with all due haste, and be it further

RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Deputy Director of Planning, Kathy Regan, Adirondack Park Agency, PO Box 99, Ray Brook, New York 12977 and via email to SLP Comments @apa.ny.gov, and be it further

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RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Governor Andrew Cuomo, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Senator Charles Schumer, Congresswoman-Elect Elise Stefanik, Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos, Senator Elizabeth Little, Senator Hugh Farley, Senator James E. Seward, Senator Joseph A. Griffo, Senator Patty Ritchie, Senator Kathy Marchione, Senator David Valesky, Senator Liz Krueger, Assemblyman Dan Stec, Assemblywoman Janet L. Duprey, Assemblyman Al Graf, Assemblyman Mark Butler, Assemblyman Ken Blankenbush, Assemblyman Robert Sweeney, DEC Commissioner Joe Martens, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, DEC Region 5 Director Bob Stegemann, DEC Region 6 Director, Judy Drabicki, the Twelve Counties of the Adirondacks, the Adirondack Park Agency, and the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages and the Adirondack Park Local Government Review Board.

SCHEDULE "A"

Return Balance to the Plan: The introduction to the Plan contends that "the protection and preservation of the natural resources of the state lands within the Adirondacks must be paramount." However, when the APA was created, and the SLMP was developed, the guiding documents from the state legislature and governor made it clear that the **complementary needs of the environment and the economy *should be balanced*** on state lands. For the past four decades, state land purchasing and management policy in the Adirondacks have been tipped decidedly against economic sustainability. During that time, many traditional uses have been severely restricted or prohibited, and 320,000 acres of productive private forest lands have been purchased and converted to state forest preserve lands. Today, as documented in the 2014 Adirondack Park Regional Assessment, Adirondack populations continue to dwindle, schools continue to lose students, and emergency services continue to struggle financially and lose volunteers. The time is here to amend the SLMP to reflect the need for economic development that is complementary with the character of the Adirondacks.

Maintain Scenic Vistas: The writers of the SLMP were visionary in creating roadside pull-offs where visitors and local residents alike could enjoy a multitude of scenic vistas. Currently, however, there is no provision in the Plan to allow the trimming or removal of vegetative growth that blocks these views. We propose a provision be added to restore and maintain these vistas through trimming or cutting.

Expand Mountain Bike Uses: Modern visitors bring bikes to explore the Adirondacks, but cannot see some of our most majestic areas. Currently, mountain bikes are not allowed in areas designated as Wilderness, Primitive or Canoe. The Plan should be updated to allow bicycles to use existing roads and state truck trails in those areas -- corridors that would be designated for such uses if the road infrastructure exists to support it. Bikers, like hikers, hunters and those who fish, bring money into our communities and return regularly to use state land.

Address Invasive Species: As is all too apparent from the challenge now confronting Lake George, in the southeastern Adirondacks, we need to protect our lakes from the threat posed by invasive species - something that was not envisioned when the Plan was created. We propose adding a provision in the Plan that calls on the state DEC to create boat inspection and washing stations in Intensive Use areas on major water bodies and/or major Adirondack entry points to help block invasive species.

Improve Snowmobile Trails: The current Plan calls for snowmobile trails in the Adirondacks to be "essentially the same character as a foot trail." While that might have made sense with the snowmobiles being ridden in 1972 - due to the use of approved mechanical groomers and rider safety - it does not make sense in 2014. Snowmobile trails can certainly exist and be maintained over some existing hiking trails, as the Plan suggests, but in order to be safe today's modern snowmobiles need wider paths, deeper snow pack and wider turns than what would be expected of a foot trail.

Allow for More Grooming of Cross Country Ski Trails: The current Plan allows cross-country ski trails to be groomed only on Intensive Use areas. We propose that grooming also be allowed in Wild Forest areas to open up more state land to be used by the passive recreational skier. Grooming is currently not permitted in Wild Forest areas, though the current guidelines call on the state to "provide the types of outdoor recreation that will afford public enjoyment without impairing the Wild Forest atmosphere."

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Powder Skiing: We support the call by the Adirondack Powder Skier Association to create a provision in the Plan that would allow low-impact ski touring trails to be created in certain Wilderness and Wild Forest areas. Once again, it would bring a low-impact wintertime activity to certain areas of the Adirondacks that would help local and regional economies.

Improve Float Plan Access: When Lows Lake in St. Lawrence County was closed to float planes, the DEC promised to designate areas in the Adirondacks where float planes would be allowed to land, leave visitors and take off again. That designation has not yet happened and we call on the APA to study alternative lakes for landings and to make good on that DEC promise!

Natural Materials/Bridges: New and existing bridges are currently required to be constructed of natural materials. Suspension bridges, such as the existing bridge at Whitehouse on the Northville-Placid Trail, are scheduled for removal because steel cables were used in the original construction. Likewise, a new bridge proposed over the Cedar River in the Essex Chain Lakes, would have a lower profile, if permitted to be constructed of “man-made” materials, such as steel. The plan needs to take a common sense approach to new bridge construction and maintaining existing infrastructure.

Amend the Signage Policies: Many small businesses are located off the main highways on side roads where the traveling public is not aware of their existence due to current sign restrictions. Small business is the largest segment of our economy and promoting such with appropriate signage may make the difference for their survival. Additionally, there are few signs alerting tourists to our major attractions, such as the Adirondack Museum and the Wild Center. Exit 29 on the Northway is a prime example where tourists could exit for these attractions, yet there are no signs on the Northway or at the exits when they get off. We propose amending the SLMP to allow standardized signs on the Northway, other main highways and state rights of way directing visitors to lodging, gas, food, local businesses, and tourist destinations.