



To the Editor of the Post-Star (Glens Falls, NY)

Thanks to your editorial writers for raising attention to our report, Adirondack Park at a Crossroad (July 15 edition). Where you label the report and our organization as intransigent, others may view it as vigilant and protective. Regardless, it is citizen action and pressure which, through our legislative process, created the Park in 1892 and fashioned the Adirondack Park Agency laws from 1971-73. Now, in 2015, citizen pressure will again determine whether or not the APA legislation receives its first significant changes since 1973 by requiring every major residential subdivision in key resource sectors of the Park to be designed and built according to conservation subdivision design principles. The point is that development per se is rarely the issue. The key issues are where and how that development is located, planned, designed and constructed. The need for conservation subdivision design and eleven other areas of needed changes for the Park are prioritized in our report. We felt it was high time for an organization to issue a critical audit of State environmental performance here. Our report is hardly a comprehensive "state of the Park." Nor is it "balanced," as the APA law contains no balancing provision. We make no apologies for our understanding that the Constitution and statutes mandate that the Park's environmental agencies give the Park's wilderness character and health of its woods, waters and wildlife primacy over other , albeit important, considerations. Right now, that is not happening as it should. The health of humans and environment in the Park are inseparable and interdependent, not "balanced" against each other.

Sincerely,

David Gibson, Adirondack Wild

(the writer is co-author of The Adirondack Park at a Crossroad: A Road Map for Action found at www.adirondackwild.org).

EDITORIAL: As Adirondack debate moves forward, intransigents are left behind

Glens Falls Post-Star
July 15, 2015



Wild West Ranch & Western Town owner Ralph Macchio Sr. points June 10 to where the Eagle Flyer zip line cables will run on French Mountain. In a recent report, new environmental group Adirondack Wild says the zip line project is cause for alarm, but that and other perspectives it presents in the report are too narrow.

By demonstrating how intransigent they still are and how narrow their perspective is, the leaders of Adirondack Wild have shown, in their recent report, how much more constructive the debate over Adirondack land use has grown in the past few years.

The report, "The Adirondack Park at a Crossroad: A Road Map for Action," is a combination of scolding and crying wolf, as its authors lash out at state workers for doing their jobs and warn about environmental damage that is not taking place.

Adirondack Wild is a new environmental group, formed in 2010 by the hardest core of the Adirondack environmentalists who were interested in ideological purity and not in working together for the good of the region with people who disagreed with them.

In tone and content, their report is reminiscent of periods from the past when the divisions in the Adirondack land use debate were so deep the two sides would barely consent to being in the same room.

The report cites the state approval a few years ago of Adirondack Club and Resort in Tupper Lake as an example of what shouldn't be happening. But the resort's plans, which leave huge swaths of land as open space, follow the law and deserve the approval they got from the Adirondack Park Agency.

Adirondack Wild warns of the "fragmentation" of the wilderness through developments such as Adirondack Club and Resort, but over the past couple of decades, we have witnessed just the opposite: an expansion and consolidation of the Adirondack wilderness through state purchases of tens of thousands of acres of land.

Added to the outright acquisition of enormous tracts of land has been the state purchase of conservation easements, which preserve wilderness through the sale by private owners of development rights.

Meanwhile, at the Adirondack Club and Resort, nothing has happened yet. Perhaps some houses will be built there, eventually, but in any case, the ecosystem will remain wild and unpolluted.

Adirondack Wild also cited the zip line project on French Mountain in Lake George and Queensbury as a cause for alarm. But the zip line will do nothing more than clear a narrow path down the mountain. It will involve cutting down far fewer trees than logging operations that Adirondack Wild supports. It is a clean business that will have no lasting impact on the natural environment.

But, according to the Adirondack Wild report, the zip line "will be highly visible from many vantage points along state Route 9 and the Northway I-87."

Just think — people driving up to the Adirondacks (in their pollution-spewing cars) might glance up and glimpse a kid having a blast on a zip line.

A thread runs through this report, a thread that rejects the concept of balance in the debate over Adirondack land use and insists on the primacy of environmental preservation.

The report cites the APA Act, which says the agency's mission is "to ensure 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."

We agree that conservation and preservation should be the top concerns when discussing land use in the Adirondacks. But "development and use," also mentioned in the mission statement, must also be part of the conversation.

Recent years have seen a move toward positivity in this debate and a greater willingness on both sides to compromise. Projects like Adirondack Club and Resort

have demonstrated development is possible in an environmentally responsible context.

People have started working together to preserve the region's ecology and improve its economy. Meanwhile, the few who refuse to move forward, like the leaders of Adirondack Wild, are left muttering to themselves, repeating refrains from the past.

Local editorials represent the opinion of The Post-Star's editorial board, which consists of Publisher Terry Coomes, Editor Ken Tingley, Projects Editor Will Doolittle, Controller/Operations Director Brian Corcoran and citizen representative Jerri Lynn Cook.