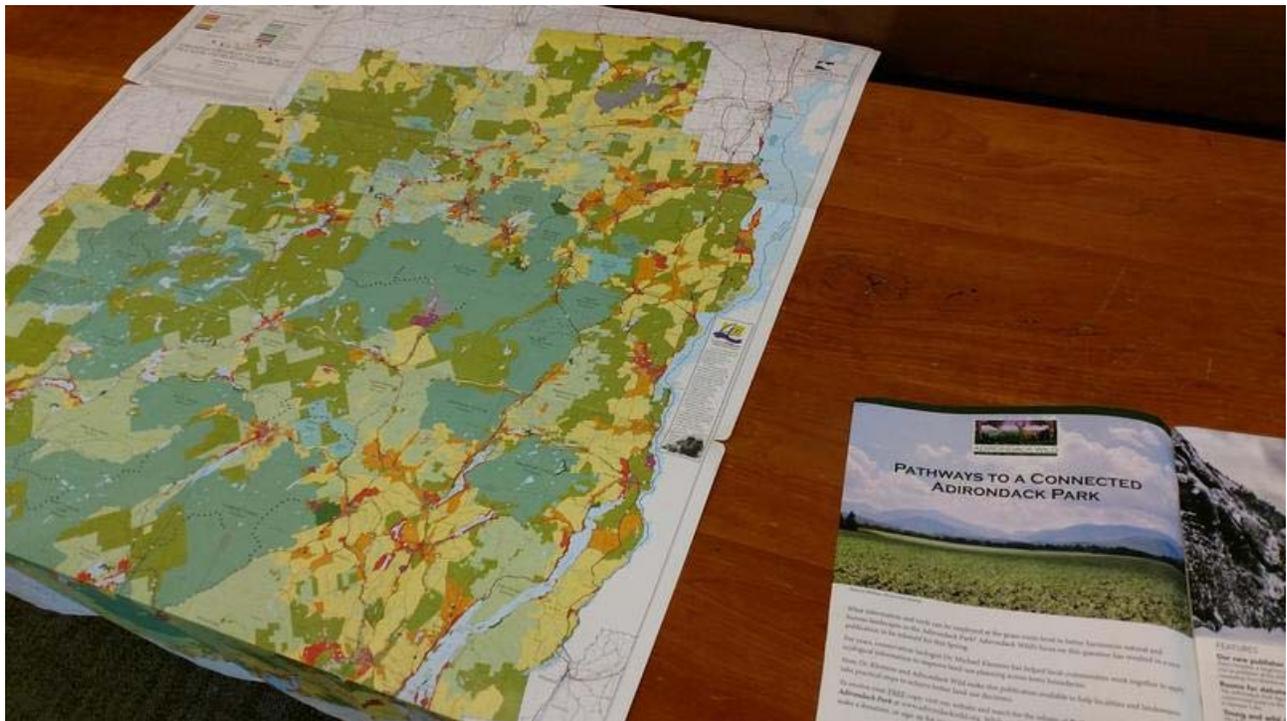


Adirondack Group Continues Conversation Around 2015 Report

By Lucas Willard,
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An audience in Saratoga Springs on Thursday heard from a conservation group about a plan that places pressure on public officials to protect the Adirondack Park. WAMC's Southern Adirondack Bureau Chief Lucas Willard reports.

Adirondack Wild managing partner David Gibson spoke at the Saratoga Springs library Thursday about his group's report titled *Adirondack Park at a Crossroad: A Road Map for Action*.

The report, originally published in 2015, makes the argument that the 6 million-acre Adirondack Park is not as well protected as originally intended.

Gibson gave an example of a land swap approved by the state in 2013. The group criticized state oversight of the project in the report and Gibson said state lawmakers took notice.

"Since 2015, when we issued this, the Assembly has gotten a lot more active because they looked at the NYCO land exchange in Willsboro and they felt like we did: that the state hadn't done its due diligence. They hadn't examined the benefits of that exchange," said Gibson.

Gibson said the Assembly is seeking stronger standards for the New York Constitution's Article XIV, which protects forest preserve lands.

Gibson says his group also worked to introduce a bill in the Assembly that would amend the Adirondack Park Agency Act so subdivisions on resource management lands would fall under new review standards.

"So that we know what's existing on the lands in advance, as a scientific study, and we're going to group that subdivision in ways that avoid impacts to that land, that landscape."

Since the release of the report, the state also acquired the more than 20,000 acre Boreas Ponds Tract, in the high peaks region, from the Finch Pruyn paper company.

Those lands in the Adirondack Forest Preserve have yet to be classified by the Adirondack Park Agency. Public hearings on the future use of the property last fall drew great interest from the public.

Gibson said he wants the Boreas Ponds land to remain a wilderness area. "And that road, the Gulf Brook road, should be closed in our view and a larger wilderness area created that allows people to get in all sorts of different ways but does not allow motorized access to the ponds," said Gibson.

The group had pushed for the dismantling of a former lodge on the property. Adirondack Wild board member Tom Cobb said he'd like to see all agencies that oversee the park brought under one umbrella.

"The state administration of that park is fragmented, or divided, among different state agencies including the Department of Transportation, which has three separate divisions; the Department of Environmental Conservation itself has two; and there are others as well. And one of the concerns or visions we have for the Adirondack Park is something analogous to an Adirondack Park Service."

At the time of the report's release, the Adirondack Park Agency and State Department of Environmental Conservation responded to criticisms leveled in the report.

Former APA chair Lani Ulrich previously told WAMC in an email, "The APA'sStaff fully understands the magnitude of their work and professionally reviews all land use projects....this Agency in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Conservation, diligently executes its authority and the Adirondack Park is stronger and better protected for it."

At the time, the DEC press office also sent an email saying in part: "The logic that went into this report's findings is without merit and has no basis in the facts..... The management planning process utilized by DEC in consultation with APA is rigorous, open and transparent..."

Meanwhile, Adirondack Wild continues to hold public meetings and distributes the report [on its website](http://www.adirondackwild.org): www.adirondackwild.org.