

Adirondack Park Agency Releases Its Classification Proposal For Boreas Ponds Tract

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WAMC Northeast Public Radio

January 30, 2018



Adirondack Park Agency will meet later this week to vote on the classification of the Boreas Ponds land tract purchased by the state from the Nature Conservancy in April 2016 for \$14.5 million. In advance of the final decision, the agency released its classification proposal. Most environmental and community interests say it's a reasonable compromise.

[Five alternatives](#) to classify the 20,543-acre Boreas Ponds Tract had been put forward for consideration. The APA announced that its staff finds Alternative 2B offers the best resource protection. The option would classify 11,412 acres as

wilderness, 11 acres as primitive and 9,118 acres as Wild Forest. It would also set aside two one-acre State Administrative areas.

Adirondack Mountain Club Executive Director Neil Woodworth says the most important areas of the tract would be protected as wilderness with no motorized access. While the Boreas Ponds are the focus of the tract, he notes other parcels will help create one of the largest wilderness areas in the eastern U.S. "There is a smaller tract called the Casey Brook tract. With the Casey Brook Tract also to be classified wilderness that will make a continuous connection between the 45,000 acre Dix Mountain Wilderness and the High Peaks. And then to the west MacIntyre East and MacIntyre West the greatest part of those tracts will be added to the High Peaks Wilderness. So we're going to basically have, when that's done, a 280,000 acre wilderness that's the third largest wilderness east of the Mississippi. That's how big this wilderness is going to be."

Town of North Hudson Supervisor Ron Moore notes that the five towns of the Upper Hudson Recreation Hub had supported Alternative One, which featured more motorized recreation. But he feels the compromise still provides a wide variety of opportunities. "The Boreas Ponds tract will allow us to begin building or finish building the community connector trails that the DEC has proposed. So it's a big opportunity to bring those five towns together and provide people that opportunity to take hiking, biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling and visit each of those five towns. So I think it'll be a big boost to our economy."

Woodworth says Alternative 2B is a reasonable compromise that meets community and environmental concerns. "Using the Gulf Brook Road and the Boreas Road as the boundary, the de facto boundary, between wilderness and wild forest the different uses can be accommodated."

But not all groups agree with the agency's likely designation. Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve Managing Partner David Gibson says the Park Agency should have offered an all-wilderness alternative and should classify the tract as such. "The State Land Master Plan and the classification guidelines really makes it clear that Boreas Ponds, a substantial part of the tract if not all, has

wilderness characteristics and is a very important ecological connection to the High Peaks and Dix Mountain wilderness areas. And of course the ponds themselves and the boreal forest stretching north all have wilderness characteristics. You're creating a wild forest corridor that really bisects the tract, creates a lot of ecological issues for the area and forgets about the wilderness potential for the entire tract and ignores it."

During the APA monthly meeting on Thursday and Friday, board members will review state environmental quality process and state land master plan requirements, review the classification alternatives and vote on the resolution for final classification.