

Adirondack Wild: Plan for Remsen to Lake Placid Travel Corridor Fails to Assess Impacts

**By Editorial Staff,
Adirondack Explorer**

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A DEC plan for the 119-mile Travel Corridor that runs through the heart of the Adirondack Park does not adequately assess actual and projected impacts on the Park's public wilderness and natural resources according to the group *Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve*. At issue is whether the plan complies with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. Adirondack Wild does not believe it does comply. The group filed comments on the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor Unit Management Plan amendment with the Adirondack Park Agency this week.

The Travel Corridor inside the Park is planned to be divided into two segments: 45 miles of rehabilitated Rail from Big Moose to Tupper Lake and 34 miles of all Trail without rail in the Tupper Lake to Lake Placid segment. The linear route of the former New York Central Railroad runs past eleven units of public Forest Preserve, including areas classified Wilderness, Primitive, Wild Forest and Canoe.

Details about public recreational uses on the corridor, including seasonal tourist trains, snowmobiling, bicycling and strolling on the Tupper Lake-Lake Placid segment dominate the planning document. "Unfortunately, the DEC has not devoted enough attention to planning for ongoing climate change and altered precipitation in the Adirondacks, nor does the plan assess the impacts of more intensive train and recreational uses on adjacent 'Forever Wild' Forest Preserve," said Adirondack Wild's David Gibson.

"The plan does a good job in explaining why two segments are needed, why a trail adjacent to the rail is not feasible, and what must be done to create and connect two segments" Gibson added. "It does a very poor job assessing how climate change may alter uses of the corridor now and in the future."

"The plan treats air quality and climate change as trivial and insignificant factors in the planning process. That clearly isn't true. Precipitation patterns and temperatures are already changing. Furthermore, DEC is charged by the state legislature to plan for climate change across the state, but that fact certainly doesn't come across in this planning document," Gibson concluded.

"The plan acknowledges that snowpack does not last on the rails because the corridor warms up faster than its surrounding forest, yet fails to discuss the

consequences of that fact: that off-corridor snowmobile riding – whether legal or not – will be favored and that other mechanized uses of the corridor will come to dominate the corridor. Actual and projected uses and the capacity of the resources and character of adjacent Forest Preserve to withstand those uses must be better evaluated before this plan complies with the State Land Master Plan,” he said.

“The plan also does a poor job in assessing how building recreational train platforms and flag stops along lengthy, remote sections of track may impact the wilderness immediately adjacent to the tracks as well as public health and safety. Running a seasonal tourist train through this wilderness impacts the wilderness itself. Creating all sorts of stops to leave people along the train route adjacent to the wilderness has impacts on resources, on wild character and on public health and safety.”

“It will be the understaffed, overworked Forest Rangers who must patrol this long corridor and respond to emergency incidents all along the way. The plan does a poor job at reconciling DEC’s desire to promote more intensive recreational opportunities with DEC’s more fundamental and legislated mission to protect the Forest Preserve and to appropriately manage the public’s use of it.”

Adirondack Wild is asking the Adirondack Park Agency to send this plan back to DEC for revisions in order to comply with the guidelines of the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. The public has until April 20 to submit comments to:

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