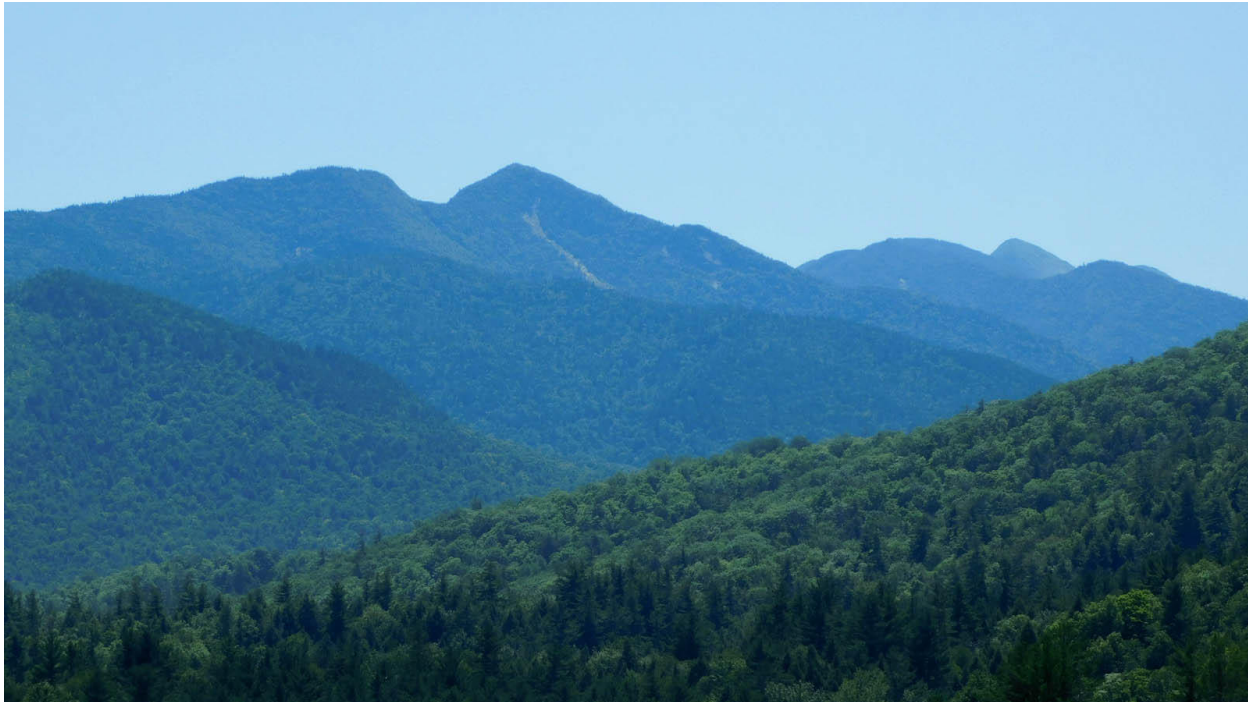


Advisory Committee Issues Preliminary Recommendations For High Peaks Overuse

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View of the Adirondacks from the Keene Valley area.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has released an [interim report](#) with recommendations to deal with overuse of the High Peaks region of the Adirondacks.

The report from the High Peaks Strategic Planning Advisory Group offers steps to manage recreational use of the Adirondack wilderness. There are some new recommendations while others enhance ongoing efforts. Among the immediate actions the report recommends are strictly enforcing parking especially along the popular Route 73 corridor; use of shuttles and E-shuttles; implementation of Leave No Trace measures in the High Peaks region and establishing a pilot program to limit use.

The town of Keene is often described as an entry to the High Peaks. Supervisor

Joe Pete Wilson, a member of the Advisory Group, says the DEC has been responsive in implementing some of the recommended actions even as they were under discussion. "The interim report has really promoted a discussion about details. What are the issues here? You know more detail of how will we use education? How will we assess different areas and what their needs are for different designs of facilities? So the interim report is reinforcing the general concept but it's really refining and pointing the direction that we need to go to come up with really appropriate effective solutions and uses of the tools we're talking about."

Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve Managing Partner David Gibson says the report reinforces much of what the DEC is already doing but not much more. "It sort of moves the chairs around the deck, in our opinion, and doesn't really address the overarching problem of overuse which really has to marry both the front-country and the backcountry of the High Peaks wilderness. In the interim report there's practically no mention of the Unit management Plan which took over 30 years to produce and which really addresses a lot of the front-country and backcountry issues that we're taking a swing at again now. And I think the task force should be advised to take a fresh look at the Unit Management Plan and always keep that plan uppermost in mind."

Protect the Adirondacks Executive Director Peter Bauer says the report is a short-term plan to deal with the summer and the extraordinary COVID outbreak. "We were pleased that they put out an interim report. Things have changed dramatically in New York since the time this group was formed to the time it put out its interim report. The state's financial position has changed dramatically and the public use of the Forest Preserve and all of the protocols around COVID-19 public safety have changed the way in which the public will use the High Peaks."

Bauer adds that Protect submitted a 25-page letter to the advisory group with numerous recommendations that he hopes the group includes in a longer term plan. "Long term solutions that we're looking for include a High Peaks visitors' center, a national park style visitors' center, somewhere in the Keene Valley

area. And we have to get serious about public education like how is it that we can get information to people about how to use the High Peaks, about how to plan their trip to the High Peaks, about how to protect the resource in the High Peaks before they even show up. And then we also need to build the necessary infrastructure so that we can accommodate safely public use in the High Peaks and we need to have science and good data driving those decisions.”