

Adirondack Daily Enterprise

Letters to the Editor

May 19, 2021

Good editorial about state tree cutting

To the Editor

The recent editorial from the Adirondack Daily Enterprise ("*State tree cutting reined in,*" May 15 issue) concluded that "*eventually, a court was bound to decide that the Constitution's language is as strong as it sounds.*" As a friend of the court (*amicus curiae*) in the snowmobile community connector case, Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve wholeheartedly concurs with the editorial.

Despite many warnings over many years, the state pushed the overengineering and mechanization of the park's snowmobile trails beyond constitutional limits. Instead of forcing the issue over a constitutional precipice, the Department of Environmental Conservation could have sat down and discussed with stakeholders, including user groups, how to prioritize and manage needed trail maintenance without triggering further litigation.

For example, the ADE editorial also mentions the Route 3 (Saranac Lake to Tupper Lake) tree cutting incident that occurred in 2005, where over 4,000 trees were cut by the Department of Transportation as an overreaction to one hazardous tree having fallen across Route 3. My organization issued our clear intention to sue the state on grounds of violating the state constitution's Article XIV. Instead of fighting us all the way in court, as DEC fought Protect the Adirondacks in the snowmobile case, in 2006 the state and my organization negotiated reforms to its highway hazardous tree and

other maintenance practices through a consent decree signed by DOT, DEC and the Adirondack Park Agency. That agreement led to the interagency Travel Corridor Unit Management Plan for State Highway Travel Corridors in the Adirondack Park, a tremendous planning advancement in the way the state manages park travel corridors. While imperfect, it was a constructive and beneficial alternative to fighting it out in court.

Sincerely,
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