

# Friends of the Forest Preserve Applauds Dedicated Forest Ranger Academy

By Community News Reports  
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Leaders of the nonprofit advocate *Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve* are hailing the recent announcement of **an independent Training Academy for the NYS DEC Forest Rangers** to be held next year. The welcome announcement was made by Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos and Acting Forest Ranger Director John Solan.

"We are pleased that this training academy will be 100% dedicated to Forest Ranger recruits," said Adirondack Wild's David Gibson. "It's something we have long sought."

For decades, Forest Ranger recruits have had to share a training academy with Environmental Conservation Office recruits, where law enforcement and

policing became the training emphasis. The two positions are very related, but also very distinct.

"Forest Rangers are active participants in managing the public's responsible use of public lands like the Forest Preserve. In addition to ensuring public safety and handling of emergencies like search and rescue, they must be effective public communicators and educators on our trails, mountains, lakes, and rivers," Gibson said. "To gain this combination of skills Forest Ranger recruits require and deserve their own training academy."

"We are also delighted that the next Forest Ranger Training Academy will be in the Adirondack Park, hosted by the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry's Ranger School in Wanakena." For the past two decades, the joint Training Academy was located far from the Adirondack or Catskill Forest Preserve.

"Forest Rangers are our front-line guardians of wild public lands like the Forest Preserve. They are also DEC ambassadors. They play an essential role as educators. We rely on them being approachable, communicative, educational, and prepared. They are also highly respected around the country as wildfire fighters. All of this background requires and will now have a focused, independent training academy."

Adirondack Wild is also asking DEC next year to recruit more women and persons of color to serve as Forest Rangers and Environmental Conservation Officers. "Our front-line Rangers and Officers should look like the rest of New York. This is a recruitment challenge for the 2022 Ranger and ECO Academies, for all of DEC, and for all environmental organizations as well," Gibson said.

With the number of field Forest Rangers stuck at 1971 levels each ranger is responsible for an additional 20,000 acres on top of their areas of responsibility 50 years ago. Meanwhile, search and rescue emergencies led by the Forest Rangers on our public lands and waters have increased by one-third just over the past decade. "The immediate need is 30 more Forest Rangers simply to fill vacant positions and to account for retirements. "But that would only be treading water," Gibson added. "The entire force of 134 Forest Rangers should, in fact, be doubled. Our Forest Rangers are all stretched to the breaking point."

*Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve* is a not-for-profit, membership organization which acts on behalf of wilderness and wild land values and stewardship. More on the web at [www.adirondackwild.org](http://www.adirondackwild.org).