



For Immediate Release
February 8, 2013

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Adirondack Park Agency General Permit Damages Public Relations for Forest Landowners, Reduces Public Comment Without Improving Forest Practices:

Adirondack Wild Calls for Regulation Change

Keene, NY – After a meeting where environmentalists, scientists and forest managers all told the Adirondack Park Agency that changes in its thirty-year old forest regulations were badly needed, the APA has chosen to ignore this advice and proceed with a General Permit for clear-cut logging in the Adirondack Park. APA is putting the General Permit to a vote of its commissioners at its regularly scheduled meeting on February 14.

“We have been calling for more study and dialogue on these complex forest issues in the Adirondack Park, while the APA staff insists on rushing a General Permit through with minimal public scrutiny, no environmental impact assessment, and just brief discussion of the underlying issues,” said Adirondack Wild’s Dan Plumley .

“The GP’s lack of public transparency and accountability for a host of forest stewardship issues potentially affecting hundreds of thousands of private forest lands in the Park also badly violates Governor Cuomo’s standards of openness and good governance within his state agencies,” added Adirondack Wild’s David Gibson.

The General Permit would eliminate the APA’s normal regional review and public notice of permits seeking to clear-cut forests on 25 or more acres in the Park, and substitute a General Permit which could be issued after thirty days of review to qualifying forest land managers who are certified under the Forest Sustainability Council (FSC) or Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).

“Agency staff’s comments that the General Permit merely alters the ‘rules of engagement’ with these landowners, and in no way lowers permit standards ignores the fact that these special rules apply to just a few landowners, and cut out the normal public notification and comment process,” Plumley continued.

“The GP will naturally engender public cynicism of the Agency’s performance, but also tarnish the reputation of landowners attempting to achieve their economic objectives under strong global competition while living up to rigorous forest certification standards. None of these landowners deserve to be labeled as “clear-cutters” of Adirondack private forests, but that is exactly where the Agency’s General Permit is leading them.”

“Landowners are telling us that the APA’s regulations on clear-cutting are way out of date, not helping the cause of sustainable forestry in the Adirondack Park, and we agree,” Gibson said. “APA should be leading us all in changing their regulations to provide flexibility for good silvicultural treatments, conserve important bird and wildlife habitats, and meet all the applied standards in the field required under FSC and SFI certification.”

“In contrast with this General Permit, regulatory change must be done in broad daylight, and involves the public at every step, and in this way the public becomes a partner in improving forest standards and practices, not a bystander.”

“Governor Cuomo should ask APA Chairwoman Ulrich to drop the General Permit, expedite review for applicants who may seek permits for harvesting which exceeds current clear-cutting thresholds, and immediately undertake a study to reform its forest regulations,” Plumley concluded. “This would serve as an example of productive forest dialogue and good governance worthy of our globally significant Adirondack Park.”