

NEWS RELEASE

ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY PROPOSED FOREST CLEAR-CUTTING RULES OPPOSED BY ADIRONDACK, STATE AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

GROUPS CALL ON GOVERNOR TO DENY OR POSTPONE ACTION THAT WOULD EASE CLEAR-CUTTING; UNITED CALL FOR RESEARCH STUDY, STAKE HOLDER-BASED SCIENTIFIC PROCESS AND FULL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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RAY BROOK -- An unprecedented local, regional, statewide and national coalition of conservation, wilderness and environmental organizations today called upon Governor Andrew Cuomo, Adirondack Park Agency (APA) Chairwoman Leilani Ulrich, and Department of Environmental Commissioner Joe Martens to deny or postpone action on a controversial proposal to ease forest clear-cutting permits in the East's last great wilderness area, the Adirondack Park.

The groups, including the Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Wildlife Federation, the Sierra Club – Atlantic Chapter, Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve, Protect the Adirondacks, the Adirondack Mountain Club, Adirondack Council, Environmental Advocates, the Adirondack Wildlife Refuge and Rehabilitation Center, the Northeast Ecological Restoration Society, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, and the Champlain Area Trails (CAT) combined comprise well over 1 million members nationwide and over 100,000 New York citizen members.

The coalition opposes a proposal by the Adirondack Park Agency to eliminate project review over all clear-cut logging projects over 25 acres in favor of a one-size-fits-all General Permit. This action would effectively gut standard practice by the APA and potentially affects as many as 1 million acres of backcountry and industrial timber land holdings. The APA is set to vote on the proposal for approval as early as this Thursday, February 14.

“This General Permit is a most unwelcome Valentine for the wild Adirondack Park,” stated Dan Plumley, Partner with Adirondack Wild. “We urge Governor Cuomo and his agencies to deny or postpone for needed study ‘General Permit 2012 G-1’ that would enable significant clear-cut logging without sufficient board review, public comment or impact assessment.”

The APA would remove clear-cutting projects from board and public review if the applicants held lands that were under certain 3rd party forest certification programs. The coalition contends, however, that certification alone can't justify changing the APA's oversight authority and process.

“This is simply bad public policy based simply on anecdotes from corporate landowners who want the ability to cut harder and faster. The APA brought no data, no research, no science to discussion of the issue,” stated Peter Bauer,

Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks. “What is truly worrisome is that the first lands likely to be clearcut are lands where the state owns a conservation easement, which are supposed to foster sustainable forestry. This new policy undermines the state’s conservation easement program.”

Less than a dozen or so major forest landowning corporations and timber investment management organizations (TIMO’s) own nearly a million acres or 1/5th of the Adirondack Park which might be opened up to General Permit clear-cutting practice.

“Limited clear-cutting can play a role in sound forest management,” Diane Fish, the Adirondack Council’s Acting Executive Director, noted. “However, it makes no sense to weaken the environmental review, especially inside the Adirondack Park. The public demands and deserves a higher standard here – one that protects both the environment and scenic beauty. This proposal does neither.”

Clear-cut logging can be a silvicultural “prescription” to encourage new, higher quality forest tree species regeneration such as northern hardwoods, but in many portions of the nation it is highly controversial because of environmental, habitat, watershed and scenic impacts.

“The coalition is rightly justified in calling upon the Governor, DEC and the Park Agency principally to research and study this issue with the benefit of an involved stakeholder committee,” stated Rob Moore, Executive Director of the Environmental Advocates of New York, adding, “this was exactly the process that included an 18-month study back in 1980 to 1982 that led to current regulations and practice. The Agency would be foolhardy to rush this through.”

The research study on “Intensive Timber Harvest in Private Adirondack Forests” and stakeholder committee process that began in 1980 was fostered by the Adirondack Park Agency’s Chairman Ted Ruzow, who stated at the time:

“When a [forest] stand is cut, it is an irreversible act – if it is an error in judgment, the harm can not be overcome in a man’s lifetime.”

“All of us support 3rd party certification, but in the Adirondack Park that serves as a global model of integrated wild land conservation internationally, we feel

Agency review based on scientific process, public awareness and partnership is the only way to go. This 'General Permit' proposal by the Park Agency clearly walks away from those key principles that will only harm wildlife and wildlife habitat," stated George Gay, Senior Manager for Wildlife Conservation Programs at the National Wildlife Federation.

"APA should focus on its regulations, and drop the General Permit," said David Gibson of Adirondack Wild. "APA's regulations pertaining to clear-cutting are now three decades out of date. We all stand ready to assist the APA and forest landowners with regulatory revisions that actually enhance today's forest management, improves forest health and ends years of confusion about how to apply APA's rules in the field. Regulatory review also has the distinct advantage of making the public-at-large a fully informed and involved participant in the process."

The groups have also reached out to many citizens and a host of leading activists across the state. All of the organizations have informed the Adirondack Park Agency and forest landowners and industry of their willingness and capacity to work towards maintaining current review and environmental impact and transparency standards while gaining permit efficiency and predictability that would benefit applicants.