



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Adirondack Wild to Oppose a Constitutional Convention**

### **Will urge a “No” vote on the question of whether or not to hold a convention**

At its spring board meeting, the nonprofit organization *Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve* resolved to urge voters to vote “no” on the question of whether or not to hold a constitutional convention. That question will appear on the November 7 ballot.

“We’ve concluded that New Yorkers should not entrust our unique, 125 year-old “forever wild” constitutional protection of the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve to 204 politically well-connected delegates meeting for a brief period of time in Albany,” said Adirondack Wild’s David Gibson.

“While we very much entrust Article XIV to the people, the rules governing election of delegates to a convention favor the well-connected and the well-funded who may not appreciate or be inclined to enthusiastically support the vital watershed and other non-commercial values of the Forest Preserve in both the Adirondacks and the Catskills,” he said.

"In reviewing such an important public policy as Article XIV, haste should be avoided," said Adirondack Wild's Dan Plumley. "Sufficient public deliberation and debate over several years is essential to analyze any amendment or exception to our 'forever wild' Forest Preserve. A convention does not allow nearly enough time for that to take place."

"New Yorkers who honor and safeguard Forever Wild should vote 'no' on a convention and continue to work the legislative process whenever amendments may prove absolutely necessary," he added.

"New York already has a process for amending Article XIV when deemed necessary and in the public interest," said Adirondack Wild's Vice Chair Chris Amato. "In stark contrast to a constitutional convention, the current amendment process requires passage by two successive legislatures followed by a public referendum. This type of transparent and considered process is far superior to the one-shot political wheeling and dealing that would characterize a constitutional convention."

There are also concerns about the cost of a convention. Adirondack Wild estimates that the cost could be very high, in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

"That cost cannot be justified given that constitutional questions and amendments can be considered through the annual legislative process," Amato added.

Roughly 150 amendments have been proposed since 1895, but due to the public's strong support for Article XIV most have been rejected in the State Legislature or at the polls. There have been just 19 amendments to Article XIV, Section 1's directive that the lands constituting the forest preserve "shall be forever kept as wild forest lands," and "not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed."

For example, amendments have authorized the construction of the Adirondack Northway and of Gore, Whiteface and Belleayre ski centers. These and the many land exchanges have all been approved through the multi-year legislative amendments, not through a convention. There are approximately three million

acres of Forest Preserve inside the Adirondack and Catskill Parks, and a much smaller amount outside the Parks but within defined Forest Preserve counties. All Forest Preserve is fully taxable. Annual tax payments support small towns, villages and school districts in the Adirondacks and Catskills.

Adirondack Wild's policy is that amendments or exceptions to "forever wild," including land exchanges should be narrowly defined, specific in purpose, limited in scope and serve a documented need for public facilities or public services that cannot be provided in ways other than through an amendment. Amendments should never be for the purpose of benefiting a private or public corporation and should never take public land for corporate or commercial purposes.

Further, Adirondack Wild expects that scientific surveys be done on Forest Preserve affected by a proposed amendment to determine if the lands harbor valuable natural resources or wildlife habitats. Those scientific surveys require time to complete and the results considered, considerably more time than a constitutional convention would allow.

"On balance, the legislative process is much preferred to a convention because of the time two legislatures allow to consider, deliberate, study and decide if exceptions to our irreplaceable Forest Preserve are in the public's interest," Adirondack Wild's Gibson concluded.

*Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve* is a not for profit, membership organization which advances New York's "Forever Wild" legacy and Forest Preserve policies in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks, and promotes public and private land stewardship consistent with wild land values through education, advocacy and research. More on the web: [www.adirondackwild.org](http://www.adirondackwild.org).