



**For Immediate Release  
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**ADIRONDACK WILD BACKS NYS DEC PLAN TO CLOSE HIKER PARKING ON RT.  
73 AND REDIRECT CASCADE MOUNTAIN HIKERS TO NEW TRAIL CONNECTION  
AT MT VAN HOEVENBERG**

**PUBLIC SAFETY AND  
WILDERNESS IMPACTS & MANAGEMENT CITED AS CRITICAL**

**Keene, NY - Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve**, the non-profit wildland advocacy organization, announces its strong support for the State's decision to close the Cascade Pass (NYS Rt. 73) to off-highway parking for Cascade, Porter and Pitchoff Mountains during the forthcoming Columbus Day weekend. Cascade, Pitchoff and Porter Mountain hikers and climbers will be redirected to Mt. Van Hoevenberg parking facilities, where a new trail connection to the mountains has been built.

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation announced its decision yesterday to close these Rt. 73 access points on this high volume weekend due to increasing highway hazards. Parking numbers off the highway shoulder often exceed 200 vehicles each day, exceeding Wilderness carrying capacity and creating a very serious public safety problem on Route 73 during high use weekends.

"We applaud the interagency coordination to protect public safety and wilderness integrity through this action. This is not only a vitally needed health and safety measure, but redirecting Cascade Mountain hikers to Mt. Van Hoevenberg/ORDA facilities also represents proper care, custody and control of the Forest Preserve," stated Dan Plumley, Staff Partner with Adirondack Wild.

"The 2016 and 2017 summer tourist and hiker traffic has seen exponential growth along the Rte. 73 corridor – and much of it a public safety hazard and untenable for maintaining Wilderness conditions," stated Adirondack Wild's David Gibson. "We've supported reductions in parking along Rte. 73 that was creating both wild land overuse problems and threats to the driving and hiking public, as well as first responders."

Adirondack Wild first requested action in August of 2016, realizing that changing demographics and widespread use of social media brought tens of thousands more hiking visitors annually to the High Peaks Wilderness, increasing human user conflicts on the wilderness resource and public safety.

NYS DEC's plans will take effect on October 5 and run through the Columbus Day weekend, the historically busiest hiking period when hikers and nature lovers come in droves to experience the Adirondack High Peaks in peak fall foliage.

"The next step is to comprehensively assess, revise and fully update the High Peaks Wilderness Unit Management Plan (HPWUMP) with citizen stakeholder inputs," Dan Plumley added. "This decision to close off-highway parking and redirect hikers to Mt. Van Hoevenberg will, if it becomes permanent, require an amended High Peaks Wilderness Unit Management Plan. That adds new urgency for DEC to organize a multiple stakeholder task force to advise DEC about updating the 1999 High Peaks Wilderness Unit Management Plan and ensure that the plan remains consistent with Wilderness guidelines of the State Land Master Plan."

"It's again time for diverse citizen stakeholders to gather and help DEC to manage the High Peaks for the benefit of the Wilderness resource and future generations."

The mission of *Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve* is to advance New York's 'Forever Wild' legacy and Forest Preserve policies in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks, and promote public and private land stewardship that is consistent with wild land values through education, advocacy and research. More is on the web at [www.adirondackwild.org](http://www.adirondackwild.org).