



Adirondack Wild and Adirondack Wilderness Advocates: Missed Opportunity to Realize Wilderness Potential at Boreas Ponds

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Keene, NY – While Governor Cuomo has directed the NYS Adirondack Park Agency (APA) to classify Boreas Ponds to allow mechanized traffic all the way to the dam (8 miles in), *Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve* and *Adirondack Wilderness Advocates* continue to advocate for a Wilderness alternative across the entire 21,000-acre Boreas Ponds tract that would be responsive to overwhelming public sentiment for Wilderness and allow the Gulf Brook and Boreas Roads to revert to accessible, low impact foot trails.

“When the APA meets on Feb. 1-2 to consider the Boreas Ponds classification, we urge the agency to keep in mind APA member Chad Dawson’s admonition to his fellow members in October, 2016, that the APA ‘should focus on the whole landscape and consider not just what’s on the land now, but on what the landscape could look like in the future,’ said Adirondack Wild’s Dave Gibson.

“Some 84 percent of the statewide public commentary on the APA’s Draft classification proposals and 2016 environmental impact statement called for Wilderness and not for a split of Wilderness and motorized Wild Forest, stated Adirondack Wild’s Dan Plumley, adding, “we’re deeply disappointed that Governor Cuomo has ignored thousands of citizen comments seeking a full Wilderness alternative which truly reflects the best ecological protection and connectivity between Boreas Ponds and the High Peaks Wilderness beyond.”

“The APA has apparently determined that the area south of Gulf Brook Road did not meet Wilderness criteria because it lacked high elevations and steep slopes. But if this were the case, the Five Ponds Wilderness should never have been classified, because that area has no high elevations and few steep slopes, said Bill Ingersoll, co-founder of Adirondack Wilderness Advocates (AWA). “By the APA’s argument about half of the tract falls within 3 miles of Gulf Brook/Boreas Road, therefore claims of the area’s remoteness are overstated. Of course, with the proposed classification the entire tract will be within 3 miles of Gulf Brook Road, so the APA is poised to extinguish one of the intangible wilderness characteristics it is legally obligated to protect.”

“The State and environmental groups have been very clear about the significance of adding Boreas Ponds to the High Peaks Wilderness, and we agree wholeheartedly,” said AWA co-founder Pete Nelson. “That makes it hard to understand why allowing motorized access into the heart of the tract, which is antithetical to the very idea of Wilderness, is an acceptable idea. People like to talk about balance. AWA supports foot, ski, equestrian and disabled access to the Boreas Ponds, all of which we can do without compromising a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to expand Adirondack Wilderness with a magnificent tract that is free of motors.”

“The APA alone has the legal authority and responsibility to evaluate all options and select the one that best fits the future Wilderness potential of these lands in

the context of the adjoining High Peaks and Dix Mountain Wilderness areas, and the entire Park,” Plumley added.

“A diversity of scientific studies and analyses, including the APA’s own, suggest that an all Wilderness alternative is both a viable and very desirable option which should be vigorously debated on Feb. 1 and 2 in Ray Brook,” concluded Dave Gibson.

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.

Adirondack Wilderness Advocates is a grass roots citizens’ advocacy group, with no dues-paying members, lawyers or lobbyists. The mission of Adirondack Wilderness Advocates is to promote the knowledge, enjoyment, expansion, and protection of the Adirondack Park’s wildest places. More on the web at www.adirondackwilderness.org.