



For Immediate Release
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Adirondack Park Agency Approves Fragmenting, Conventional Lake Subdivision.

Need for New Adirondack Legislation Grows More Urgent.

Northhampton, NY – Today’s vote to approve the 34-lot residential subdivision encircling undeveloped Woodward Lake, zoned as Rural Use, makes it urgent to pass new legislation mandating the use of conservation subdivision design for large projects in the Adirondack Park.

That is the conclusion reached by *Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve*, one of several non-profit organizations that have tried for two years to persuade APA to do more than suggest changes to the spatial design of this subdivision, but to apply the agency’s broad legislative authority to minimize areas of new disturbance, concentrate development where impacts are least, and preserve large blocks of unbroken forest and lakeshore for wildlife, forestry and open space recreation.

Instead, upon meeting resistance based on the applicant’s marketing and sales projections APA gave up on their own goals established in 2018. At Woodward Lake, they largely accepted the developer’s preferred layout while adjusting individual lot lines to stay out of the most environmentally sensitive areas.

“APA staff expertly demonstrated how to adjust the development footprints to stay out of wetlands, streams, and steep slopes,” said Adirondack Wild’s managing partner David Gibson. “They placed buffers along the shoreline and along the streams and wetlands. These are basic best management practices that any good local planning board should take to mitigate against environmental damage to water quality and wetlands.”

“The problem is that this is not a planning board. This is the Adirondack Park Agency charged by the State Legislature with broad powers to protect the Park’s natural resources across six-million acres. The Adirondack Park Agency has a higher threshold to meet than a checklist of technical issues. However, today’s APA has unfortunately become a rubber stamp for applicants. APA is allowing applicants to set the parameters of what is approvable, making only polite requests for alternatives. By their own actions today APA demonstrated how their

voluntary system is toothless and why new legal mandates for conservation design are required.”

“In the case of Woodward Lake, APA just allowed the entire shoreline of this mostly undeveloped lake to be parcelized into housing lots to meet the developer’s economic objectives. All the lots will be on individual septic and well water. APA authorized a new 2000 ft. subdivision road that is terribly damaging to the ecology of this forest. And APA authorized an unbroken forest in the most protected private land use class to be parcelized into multiple separate ownerships.”

Several APA members voiced these concerns at the meeting. Several asked for more rigorous analysis of alternative designs. At least one questioned why the developer was allowed so many home lots under the APA’s overall intensity guidelines. APA has wide discretion about how many lots should be allowed given their environmental and Park context. Unlike town and village zoning, the APA Act does not give developers absolute rights to develop up to some maximum number.

“By eliminating additional lots, APA could have advanced a far more innovative conservation design that would keep more than half the lakeshore undeveloped, eliminate the new road, keep the forest and wildlife habitats unsubdivided, and comfortably fit about 20 new home lots on good soils in one location of the project area,” Gibson continued.

“Such an alternative would be consistent with the APA Act. Instead, the APA allowed the applicant to maximize his return to build a conventional subdivision at the expense of Woodward Lake and adjacent forest.”

The needed conservation subdivision design legislation in relation to preserving ecological integrity, wildlife and open space in the Adirondack Park is sponsored by NYS Assemblyman Steven Englebright and State Senator Todd Kaminsky. The legislation is highlighted on Adirondack Wild’s website.

Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve is a not-for-profit, membership organization which acts on behalf of wilderness and wild land values and stewardship throughout the state. More on the web at www.adirondackwild.org.