



October 13, 2021

For Immediate Release

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## Adirondack Park Agency Should Allow Verbal Public Comments

Ray Brook, NY – The nonprofit advocate *Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve* has written to the NYS Adirondack Park Agency asking the agency to comply with its own public comment policy by inviting verbal public comment at the Agency’s remote October meeting. The webcast meeting takes place on Thursday Oct. 14.

The agency’s response to Adirondack Wild’s request, so far, has been that they would “take it into consideration.”

“Governor Hochul has announced a Government Transparency Initiative which requires all New York State agencies to submit plans this month on how they will improve transparency,” said Adirondack Wild’s managing partner David Gibson. “That order obviously includes the Adirondack Park Agency. Given that order, APA should be allowing the public to sign up and speak directly to the Adirondack Park Agency’s decision-makers during their regularly scheduled webcast meetings.”

During the pandemic emergency the APA, like many agencies, has webcast its regularly scheduled monthly meetings. Throughout this period APA’s public comment opportunity has been limited to emails delivered to a general comment inbox. The public has not been allowed to verbally comment to the eleven members and executive staff who are the state’s planners and decision-makers affecting the six-million-acre Adirondack Park.

“We are in the 19<sup>th</sup> month of the pandemic emergency. The opportunity for direct public comment during the webcast should be routine by now at the APA, as it is for many local town boards,” said Adirondack Wild’s Gibson.

APA public comment policy, posted on the agency website, has been in existence since 2001. It states, in part:

*“The Agency will provide approximately 10 minutes for public comment at or near the beginning of each open meeting of the Agency” for all items except those to be acted upon during the meeting, and “the Agency will provide a reasonable amount of time at the end of each open meeting of the Agency for public comment” for any item of concern to the APA, whether it was an action item or not.*

“APA should be welcoming and encouraging public comment about the Adirondack Park, not shying away from it. APA has skilled information technology staff to make it happen during a webcast. We are requesting that starting this month of October and in compliance with Governor Hochul’s transparency initiative the APA adhere to its own public comment policy. Invite those who wish to verbally comment the chance to sign up in advance, be unmuted and permitted to speak directly to APA’s decision-makers.”

*Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve* is a not-for-profit, membership advocate acting to safeguard wilderness and to promote wild land values and stewardship. More on the web at [www.adirondackwild.org](http://www.adirondackwild.org).