



July 20, 2015

Nina Schoch
Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation
P.O. Box 195
Ray Brook, NY 12977

Dear Nina:

On behalf of *Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve*, I write to heartily endorse your proposal for an Adirondack Loon Center to be submitted to the North Country Regional Economic Development Council.

There is no more iconic wildlife symbol for our Adirondack Park than the loon. The bird is an ambassador for wild, lovely, unpolluted lakes. The human study of this remarkable and ancient bird began in the 19th century, but the protective love for this creature as a symbol of what sets the Adirondacks apart from other regions is a late 20th and now a 21st century phenomenon. And phenomenon it is because thousands of New Yorkers and visitors to the Adirondack region identify strongly with the bird for its wild vocalizations, for its mastery of migration each spring and fall, its parenting of young chicks, its fishing skills and both its fragility and its endurance in the lake region of the Adirondacks and in every part of its life cycle on the earth.

Many organizations, authors, and photographers have long taken advantage of the public's fascination and concern for this creature. But no human community in the Adirondack Park has, to my knowledge, yet taken this fascination to a new level by opening a "main street" center devoted to the loon, where the public's fascination and curiosity can be harnessed to actually benefit main street, a village, the Saranac Lake region, and the bird and its habitat, also. Your proposal seeks to do exactly this.

There are models elsewhere of loon conservation centers in the American northeast, but also of other main street centers devoted to various forms of wildlife. A team from the Adirondacks, including me, returned from Italy in 1998 very taken with how wildlife centers in their Abruzzo National Park attracted tourists, tourist spending, and student volunteers from throughout Europe. Your proposal for a Loon Center in the Village of Saranac Lake has the same potential of increasing visits, length and quality of each visit, local spending, and in-migration of those curious or committed to loons and their scientific research and conservation.

"Build it and they will come." Your proposal just makes a great deal of sense for your community. If the funds and staffing can be secured, then it will one more shining example of how Saranac Lake can lead the Park in terms of organizing, educating and inspiring residents and visitors to live sustainably and in conscious harmony with the Park's wildlife - without which many would not choose to live in the

Adirondack Region. I am very hopeful that the Regional Economic Development Council will also see the many benefits and advantages of your proposal.

Sincerely,

David Gibson

David Gibson

Staff Partner with

Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve

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Cc: Dan Plumley, Staff Partner, Keene