The Adirondack Council has issued its annual State of the Park report. It finds progress in land acquisition and state policies. But it also determined that more needs to be accomplished in order to protect the lands and communities of the region.

The council’s annual report gives thumbs up or down to politicians, federal, state and local government entities, agencies and the courts on actions taken pertaining to the Adirondack Park over the past year.

The report tenders thumbs up for items such as expansion of wilderness and motor-free areas in the Essex Chain lakes; air pollution regulations to further curb acid rain; carbon emission restrictions; invasive species prevention bills and tourism promotion. Adirondack Council Executive Director Willie Janeway. “We found that there’s broad agreement among environmentalists such as the Adirondack Council and other stakeholders, local government, economic interests, tourism promotion, forestry on investing in clean water and infrastructure and invasive species as a way to secure the future of its hamlets. And also to secure the future of the wilderness and the wildlands. We found broad agreement on that and broad agreement on the need for policy upgrades for the Adirondack Park Agency’s rules and regulations for private land development and state land management.”

The report is subtitled “Far From Finished” and Janeway notes that progress has been sidelined by funding needs and outdated regulations. “It’s not just the Adirondack Council. There’s many who want to see a capital investment in clean water infrastructure, invasive species, who want to see the policy updates to the Park Agency and management of state land. We are looking to
the state to play a leadership role and we and local government and economic interests are willing and are prepared to carry our share as partners in that effort.”

Adirondack Mountain Club Executive Director Neil Woodworth is familiar with the format of the council’s annual report, although he has not yet analyzed the latest release. He notes that increased funding for the Adirondacks is crucial, and points out a couple examples. “We certainly need an increased EPF. And I think the environmental community will ask for a $200 million EPF for the next fiscal year. DEC as a state agency needs more funding. They just can’t handle all the responsibilities that they have now. They’re losing staff. Many experts, scientists, technicians that protect our water quality and our air quality are retiring now. The agency really does not have a lot of money to replace them.”

Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve Partner David Gibson says he’s always interested in looking at the State of the Park report, although he characterizes it as useful but limited. “There are certainly some important issues that get raised in it every year. But it’s not a collaborative effort. It’s the Adirondack Council’s point of view and it should be seen as that. There’s certainly gaps that I see in it as well as obviously areas where our interests would overlap and probably would agree with the Adirondack Council.”

Gibson adds that the Adirondack Park is at a crossroads. “We have a tremendous legacy that’s been given to us. What are we going to do with that legacy in the future? The communities in this Park have a critical role to play in both the environmental infrastructure of the Park and the human infrastructure of the Park. Which are vulnerable - both of them. And they intersect in so many different in the towns and villages of this park. We’ve got to involve them in the protection of the Adirondacks and get them to see that it’s in their best interest to do so and give them the resources to become a full partner in the protection of the Park and the stewardship of its resources.”