

Enviros oppose subdivision plans, say it should be in ADK Park Forest Preserve

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A group of environmental organizations has come out against a proposed 1,119-acre subdivision near the southern end of the Adirondack Park border. They believe the land, which includes undeveloped lakes, woods and wildlife habitat, should be added to the ADK Park's forest preserve which would protect it from future development.

This comes as another development in the ADK Park, which would be the park's largest, appears ready to move ahead now that court battles against it have been dismissed. That's the Adirondack Club and Resort **slated** for a 6,400 acre tract near Tupper Lake which would include revitalizing the ski resort there.

Here is the release followed by the letter regarding the Woodworth Lake proposal, which would be on a former Boy Scout camp south of the park in Bleeker.

Five conservation organizations today sent a joint letter urging the Adirondack Park Agency's board of commissioners to hold a special public hearing to decide the fate of a permit request to subdivide and develop a former Boy Scouts camp in northern Fulton County.

The former Woodworth Lake scout camp is a 1,119-acre parcel located in Bleeker and Johnstown, near the Adirondack Park's southern border. The parcel's intact forests, wildlife habitat and undeveloped lakes make it an excellent candidate for addition to the park's public lands, the conservationists said.

However, the scouts sold the camp to New York Land and Lakes LLC, which has applied to subdivide Woodworth Lake and adjacent Hines Pond into 31 lots. Each of 26 building lots would come with permission to construct a residence, additional structures and roads to reach them.

The land is zoned as Resource Management under the state's Private Land Use and Development Plan, meaning its recommended uses are conservation,

commercial forestry and farming, not residential housing developments. The organizations are urging the Adirondack Park Agency to hold an adjudicatory hearing because that is the only way the agency can require a significant change in a proposed permit.

"Everyone involved wants a healthy forest, clean water, abundant wildlife and recreational opportunities," said Adirondack Council Executive Director William C. Janeway. "It is possible to protect all of those things when we limit development to a small area and conserve the remaining forests around us."

Instead, the current plan calls for a development that spreads roads, houses and driveways over the entire tract. It is similar to the design conservationists opposed in the Adirondack Club and Resort project approved by the APA in Tupper Lake.

"It is relatively easy to accommodate a similar number of homes, clustered but with plenty of privacy, on a much smaller footprint," said Neil Woodworth, Executive Director of the Adirondack Mountain Club. "The APA has the authority to seek such improvements before approving this plan and should exercise that authority. We showed in our letter how it met all of the APA's criteria for holding the hearing."

"We have been to the site, and it appears quite sensitive to development," said Adirondack Wild's David Gibson. "There are steep slopes down to Woodworth Lake, steep slopes off the lake with significant stream systems and wetlands intervening between the lake and the upland slopes. Great care should be taken to identify and map these sensitive resources. Then and only then should house-lots be reconfigured through a conservation design that avoids serious impacts."

"This project fails to uphold APA laws and standards for subdivision of backcountry lands classified as Resource Management. The APA has had many briefings by scientists about the benefits of Conservation Subdivision Design to mitigate negative impacts to wildlife and forest health, yet the APA is set to approve a project that promotes sprawl and forest fragmentation. It's unfortunate that in 2015 we're still stuck with poorly planned subdivisions as the state of the art in the Adirondack Park," said Peter Bauer Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks.

The letter listed eight specific reasons why the conservation organizations were seeking a hearing on this project, including its sprawling design, potential impacts to the shoreline of two water bodies, inadequate site surveys, impact on nearby state lands, and insufficient exploration of alternatives as required by the agency's rules.

The letter also quoted a letter sent to the APA in December 2014 by the Wildlife Conservation Society, noting the dangers to wildlife resulting from

residential development in the Adirondack Park's most remote and sensitive private lands.

"Our five organizations are united in urging the Adirondack Park Agency to hold an adjudicatory hearing to require full consideration of conservation design alternatives," said Dan Plumley, Partner with Adirondack Wild. "That is the only way the Park Agency can alter the present project's fragmenting and ill-fated design flaws."

The Adirondack Park is the largest park in the contiguous United States, and its public lands are protected as "forever wild" by the NYS Constitution. A little over half of the park is privately owned, subject to a state development plan, with 130 rural villages and hamlets.

In 1990, the Adirondack Council urged the state to place special development restrictions on Woodworth Lake, and to acquire the scout camp if it ever came up for sale. If purchased, the Council recommended adding it to the adjacent Shaker Mountain Wild Forest — one of the most important and heavily used public recreation areas in the southern Adirondacks.

In addition, a broad spectrum of Adirondack Park advocates is calling on state government to consider science-based reforms to the APA's development rules that include clustering, transfer of development rights and smart-growth incentives for landowners and communities.

Groups signing on to the letter included the Adirondack Council, Adirondack Mountain Club, Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve, Protect the Adirondacks! and Sierra Club/Atlantic Chapter.