

Letter to the Editor

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APA not living up to role to protect park

I appreciate Kyle Adams' Jan. 16 coverage of the latest Adirondack Park Agency-approved subdivision known as New York Land and Lakes LLC in Bleecker. Your newspaper lends the Adirondacks special coverage because of the historical importance of the Adirondack Park to The Gazette's readers.

Now to the problem facing the Adirondacks that Adams' article raises. The APA has become a mediocre planning board for 6 million acres, as reflected in this latest permit: 24 building lots spread all over 1,100 acres, land formerly owned by the Boy Scouts, in what is supposedly the park's most protected private land classification, Resource Management.

The APA meets the bare minimum standards of its law (stay out of wetlands, use existing roadways as much as possible), but has no stomach anymore to reach for higher standards demanded by its law, which are "to preserve the open spaces that are essential and basic to the unique character of the park."

One of the APA's charges is to plan so as to preserve this open space in harmony with the adjacent public Forest Preserve. The law says residential development in Resource Management must be "well designed." That is not happening. In the case of the Bleecker subdivision, the APA proposed an alternative design that would avoid impacts caused by human activity outside of the actual footprint of new housing and driveways.

However, upon learning that the redesign conflicted with the applicant's market objectives, the agency backed down. Is it the purpose of the APA to accept the assertions and short-term economic objectives of land subdividers? Of course not. The APA should be striving to educate developers about conservation design of new subdivisions and providing both sticks and carrots to actually use these design tools in order to "preserve the open spaces that are essential and basic to the unique character of the park."

The APA has a highly professional staff. They know all about conservation design. All it would take is for Gov. Andrew Cuomo to tell his APA to start using these tools and to place them in regulation so that they are

consistently applied. End needless fragmentation of Adirondack open space and wildlife habitats, governor!

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The writer is a staff partner with the nonprofit organization Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve.