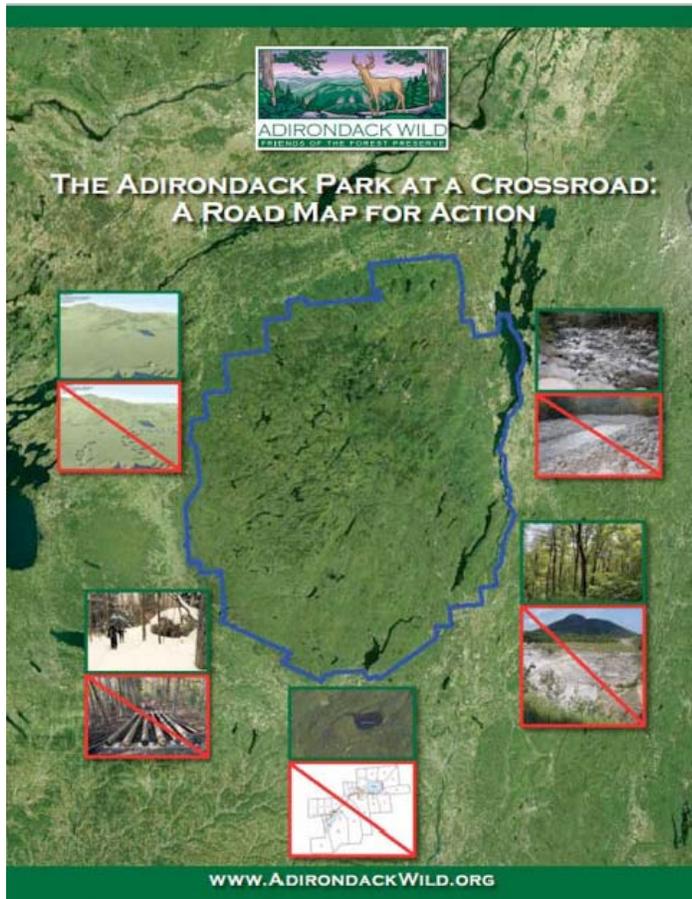


Adirondack Group Issues Report Critical Of Park Management

By Pat Bradley
WAMC Northeast Public Radio

July 15, 2015



An Adirondack advocacy group has issued a new report critical of the Adirondack Park Agency and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's management of the park. As WAMC's North Country Bureau Chief Pat Bradley reports, the DEC is disputing the findings.

[Adirondack Wild](#): Friends of the Forest Preserve's report ["The Adirondack Park at a Crossroad: A Road Map for Action"](#) finds that the 6 million acre park is threatened by state agencies' failure to uphold state regulations mandating the protection of its natural resources and wild forests.

Staff Partner and report co-author David Gibson says a number of seemingly isolated management permitting actions over the past decade by state

agencies violate the fundamental laws protecting the park. "When you add them up there is a cumulative impact and we decided to put them, or many of them, in one report to show that there's a pattern. These aren't isolated. This pattern is troubling to us. And there are some recommendations so that the state can become a leader once again in wilderness protection.

"Dan Plumley, also a Staff Partner and report co-author, says many agency decisions are trending toward the negative. "We've seen agency decisions become more insular. We're seeing guidance and staff or board level decisions at the agency that appear to be at cross purposes with the legal State Land Master Plan. You don't have the environmental side of the equation being stood up for at the agency level as was once the case."

Adirondack Council Executive Director Willie Janeway agrees that the Adirondacks are at a crossroads. He says similar issues appear in the Council's State of the Park report. "There are other things that we also highlighted in our State of the Park report that are missing and these include some of the positive things that have been happening. The Adirondack Council and I share the frustration of some of our environmental preservation friends that wish more was done, and done faster and more effectively. But we see a great opportunity with the state leadership to work together and make the right decisions going forward."

Officials at the Adirondack Park Agency were not providing interviews, but Chair Lani Ulrich emailed that "The APA'sStaff fully understands the magnitude of their work and professionally reviews all land use projects....this Agency in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Conservation, diligently executes its authority and the Adirondack Park is stronger and better protected for it."

Declining to go on tape, the DEC press office also provided only an emailed criticism of the report. It says, in part: "The logic that went into this report's findings is without merit and has no basis in the facts..... The management planning process utilized by DEC in consultation with APA is rigorous, open and transparent..."

Adirondack Wild's Plumley fires back: "Governor Cuomo can pan this report if he likes. But the report provides demonstrated evidence that decisions by the DEC and the Adirondack Park Agency are not in keeping with their original intent of the laws to protect the Park with very specific examples."

The Adirondack Park at a Crossroad is the first of a two-part report. Adirondack Wild plans to issue the second segment later this year.

This is the full response from the NYS DEC provided to WAMC:

"The logic that went into this report's findings is without merit and has no basis

in the facts. For the past 4 years, DEC has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to protecting and managing New York's forest preserve and all public lands in the Adirondack Park. DEC is a national leader in land conservation continually building the public land asset of the Adirondack Park which includes over 900 thousand acres of Conservation Easement and over 2.7 million acres of Forest Preserve lands. The management planning process utilized by DEC in consultation with APA is rigorous, open and transparent, inviting the public to participate throughout the entire planning process, including local government leaders and all the diverse stakeholders who care strongly in how these lands will be managed in the future."

This is the full statement from Chairwoman Lani Ulrich provided by the Adirondack Park Agency to WAMC:

"The APA's commitment to the Adirondack Park remains as strong today as it was at our inception. Staff fully understands the magnitude of their work and professionally reviews all land use projects. We believe vibrant communities are essential for Park sustainability. But make no mistake about it, this Agency in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Conservation, diligently executes its authority and the Adirondack Park is stronger and better protected for it."