

January 20, 2016

Kathy Regan
NYS Adirondack Park Agency
P.O. Box 99
1133 NYS Route 86
Ray Brook, NY 12977

Re: Proposed SLMP Amendments

Dear Kathy:

The Adirondack Park Local Government Review Board offers the following comments on the proposed amendments to the State Land Master Plan

Biking:

The Review Board supports Alternative 3B to allow the use of bicycles in the Essex Chain Lakes Primitive Area, the Pine Lake Primitive Area, and the many primitive areas of the Adirondacks, which have the road infrastructure to support biking. The logging roads in the Essex Chain and Pine Lakes area have supported log trucks for decades and are well suited to family biking. The same is true of other primitive areas, because most were commercial forests when they were in private hands.

The economies of the five town most affected by the purchase of the former Finch lands have, so far, been negatively impacted by the purchase. They have lost jobs in the forest products industry formerly available for loggers, log truck drivers and mill workers dependent on the forests on that land. Income from visitor activity in the Essex Chain and Pine Lakes has, to date, not replaced the forest products jobs. The towns will also soon lose the economic activity of the recreational leaseholders and their guests.

The Review Board supports Governor Cuomo's vision for the former Finch lands as venues for new outdoor recreational activities, increasing visitors to the region and bringing in tourism dollars. It can happen - but only if the SLMP is amended to allow it to happen.

The infrastructure that exists in the Essex Chain and Pine Lakes Areas provides one of the best opportunities for new outdoor recreational activity, bringing new visitors to the area, and providing memorable experiences for families.

The potential market is huge. The International Mountain Biking Association reports that there are 43 million mountain bikers in the US. Many of the roads in the Essex Chain and Pine Lakes areas are suitable for mountain biking, and family biking. The National Bicycle Dealers Association reports that 18 million bicycles were sold in the US in 2014 and 88 million were sold in the previous 5 years.

The National Sporting Goods Association reports that in 2007 "... the number of Americans who rode bicycles was greater than all those who ski, golf, and play tennis combined."

A research group called the Outdoor Industry Foundation publishes an annual Outdoor Recreation Participation Study. Its 2013 report states that bicycling is the most popular outdoor activity among youth in America, and it is also the outdoor activity they do with the second-highest frequency. Among adults, it is the third most popular and the second most frequent.

Biking should be allowed in Primitive areas throughout the Forest Preserve, where the existing infrastructure will easily support it, without damage to the environment. Hard surfaced roads designed and built for log trucks will easily support biking.

Biking has a very substantial potential for improving the economies of the five towns, and towns throughout the Adirondacks, if the SLMP is amended to allow it.

Non-Native materials:

The Review Board supports Alternative 3.

Non-Native materials for bridge construction should be permitted Park wide, regardless of classification. Non-native materials will allow for the construction of long-span bridges with lower profiles. They could be aesthetically attractive, especially if covered with wood veneers.

Administrative roads:

The Review Board recommends the addition of a clause to clarify that an "administrative road" is not a "highway" as defined in the Highway Law, to make it clear that the Highway Law does not apply to those roads. We suggest the following: "This type of road has been called a State Truck Trail in older editions of this Plan, and is not a highway as defined in V&T Law Sections 118 and 134."

Mixture of public and private land:

The draft currently states that:

“This mixture of public and private lands is a distinguishing feature of the Adirondack Park. At the present time, state ownerships account for some forty four percent of the 6,000,000 acres of land and water within the Park, the balance, or about 3,600,000 acres, being private land.”

We do not believe that statement is correct with respect to private lands. The “May 2014 Park Private Land Acreage and Percent of all Private Land” table on the APA website lists 2,935,138 acres of private land (50.42%) and 2,551,699 acres of state land (43.83%). It appears that the balance of 334,584 acres is state waters not encompassed with the boundaries of forest preserve land.

If that is the case, we suggest revising the balance clause as follows:

“This mixture of public and private lands is a distinguishing feature of the Adirondack Park. At the present time, state ownerships account for some forty four percent of the 5,821,421 acres of land (and water surrounded by forest preserve land); 334,584 acres (5.7 %) are state waters not surrounded by state forest preserve land, and the balance of 2,935,138 acres (50.42%) is private land. Approximately 775,000 acres (26%) of this private land, or 13% of the total of all Park land is protected by state conservation easements.”

Invasive species:

The Review Board supports the addition of references to invasive species and recommends additional amendments to the SLMP to specifically authorize invasive species prevention activities in all state land classifications.

Administrative personnel:

The Review Board supports the proposed definition of administrative personnel to clarify that it includes “... individuals and organizations authorized by the Department of Environmental Conservation to provide stewardship services under a Temporary Revocable Permit, an Adopt-A-Natural Resource Agreement, a Voluntary Stewardship Agreement or a Contract.”

Sincerely,

Frederick H. Monroe
Executive Director