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APA approves Lyon Mountain classification as wild forest

By MIKE LYNCH, Enterprise Outdoors Writer

The state Adirondack Park Agency approved a 31,000-acre classification package Friday that includes the 17,190-acre Lyon Mountain tract and the 6,800-acre Tahawus tract in the southern High Peaks.

The package includes the classification of 91 parcels in 10 counties and reclassification of four parcels consisting of 258 acres.

For the most part, this classification package received little opposition during the public hearing process.

The main request from the public was to allow the Lyon Mountain tract to remain open to snowmobiles and to keep the fire tower on the summit. Both will occur because of the wild forest designation.

The Adirondack Council had also requested that the land be classified as wilderness, but that request never gained traction.

The Lyon Mountain parcel itself has come under scrutiny because the state attorney general's office and comptroller's office both launched an investigation into state land purchases this spring after a New York Post report that said the state overpaid for about 20,000 acres that included the Lyon Mountain tract.

That sale for \$9.8 million in October 2008 came about four years after the Nature Conservancy bought the property for \$6.3 million. The Nature Conservancy says it got the land for a discount because it was part of a larger 104,000-acre purchase with Lyme Timber.

The Nature Conservancy's website points to a \$9.1 million appraisal it had done on the property for its 2004 purchase as evidence of that. The state had two independent appraisals done on the property prior to arriving at the 2008 purchase price. The appraisals were for \$8.8 million and \$11 million.

This classification package will now be sent to Gov. David Paterson for final approval.