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EDITORIAL

Ballot amendment key for Tupper Lake

— It's not often that environmentalists and power companies agree on anything. Where to place a power line would be a perfect candidate for dispute. In the case of a power line running from near Malone to provide a backup source for outage-racked Tupper Lake, however, National Grid and the Adirondack Council are in brotherly accord.

Everyone seems to agree on the plan, including the State Legislature, which passed measures — unanimously, at that — in two consecutive sessions in 2007 and 2008 to enable construction.

That paves the way for an amendment to the State Constitution allowing the placement of the line. The amendment will be on the ballot Nov. 3. Proponents fear voters won't even be aware there is such a question on the ballot and that it could get defeated by ignorance.

It is important that voters, particularly in this region, pull the lever under "yes," so Tupper Lake residents will be relieved of all those outages they endure by inadequate delivery.

At issue was the placement of the line. The route in question is in the Town of Colton, parallel with the Raquette River. Originally, it was to circle around a heavily forested patch of land, crossing 95 streams and wetlands, including the state's biggest habitat for spruce grouse, which is on the endangered-species list. Practically no one thought that was a good idea.

Parties got together to divine an alternative and came up with one that seems to offend no one. Instead of circumventing the forest, the line will be placed along Route 56, a much more direct path between the source in Stark Falls Reservoir and Piercefield.

In order to accomplish this, the state will swap six acres of Forest Preserve lands for 43 acres of intact forest nearby, which will be added to the Forest Preserve after the vote.

The New York Power Authority and National Grid have already begun installation, since the legislature gave its unanimous consent, and that anticipates voter approval. No opposition to the proposal has emerged.

The people of Tupper Lake badly need the security and convenience of having backup power for the single line entering town from the opposite direction, which has proved so fragile.

The construction of the line will have no effect, positive or negative, on the proposed Michael Foxman development of Big Tupper and surroundings.

Advocates — which include everyone involved — will be touting the project around the state in hopes of heading off any misunderstanding in New York City or elsewhere that this will

somehow not be in their best interests. It is in no one's worst interests and is certainly crucial to the Tupper Lake region.

When you vote Nov. 3, don't forget to look for the amendment on the ballot. The only bad thing that could happen would be that too many people of good conscience would overlook the question.