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Adirondack Council recognized for acid rain data collection efforts

By PAUL POST, The Saratogian

SARATOGA SPRINGS — A prominent environmental group has been awarded for its ongoing efforts in maintaining funding for acid rain data collection programs.

The Adirondack Council has led the fight for reductions of sulfur and nitrogen emissions, largely from Midwestern power plants, which are responsible for killing wildlife in countless northern New York lakes and streams.

The council relies on statistics from the National Atmospheric Deposition Program, a network of 223 air quality test stations, to provide the basis for clean air programs.

“We saw what was happening,” council spokesman John Sheehan said. “We had no data, no proof. We needed to know how much pollution to cut and we needed information to be reliable.”

At numerous times, however, the \$7-million federally funded test program has been targeted for budget cuts, quite often for political reasons. The council, through lobbying efforts, has waged a battle on that front, too, to make sure funding stays in place.

More than 100 NADP members from throughout the country are meeting at the Holiday Inn this week. On Wednesday, the group recognized the Adirondack Council for its work on behalf of atmospheric scientific and research programs.

“Now, with the new Obama Administration, we’ll press for enhanced funding,” Sheehan said.

There are 10 air quality test stations in New York, including one atop Whiteface Mountain run by SUNY Albany. Most stations are run by colleges and universities. Cornell University operates stations in the Catskills, where an acid rain problem has also been identified.

Data collected by the NADP, a nonprofit network, is sent to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which supplies money for research.

In 1990, NADP data provided the basis for amendments to the Clean Air Act, resulting in a 50 percent reduction in sulfur emissions. Next year, even tougher standards might be forthcoming under a new Clear Air Interstate Rule initiative.

“Congress now understands how important this issue is,” Sheehan said.