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EDITORIAL

## Just build the shed

Everybody agrees that the village of Saranac Lake's sand and salt pile needs a roof over it. When it rains, the salt (which is about 5 percent of the pile) dissolves and washes into a nearby brook, which passes through a marsh and eventually into Lake Colby. That's bad for village taxpayers because salt is expensive, and it's bad for the lake because salt can cloud the waters and kill off plants and bacteria that animals like fish feed on.

After years of bugging the village about this, the Lake Colby Association, a shoreowners' group, has gotten a bigger environmental advocacy group to wade into this local spitting match. The Adirondack Council has threatened to sue the village if the pile isn't covered in 60 days. Unfortunately, as Council spokesman John Sheehan admitted to us, no one from his group called any village official before issuing a press release announcing the threat. He said they had monitored the situation for years through the Lake Colby Association and finally decided that the lawsuit threat would "get people's attention."

It did that. To sue the taxpayers of a small Adirondack village without offering a hand to help them or even extending a courtesy phone call would be awful, and we sincerely hope the threat is empty. The Council needs to learn the old lesson about getting further with honey than with vinegar. If it donated the thousands of dollars it would spend on a lawyer toward the construction of a salt shed, that might grease the wheels enough for action.

But Mr. Sheehan is right that the threat may break the frustrating political deadlock. Everyone on the village board wants a shed, but they can't agree on whether to put it beside the village garage or beside the town of Harrietstown's highway garage, across the train tracks. Trustees John McEneany and Jeff Branch are the only ones on either the village or town board who want the shed on village property. It's long past time for them to give up the fight and end the obstructionist tactics that prevented this shed from being built a long time ago.

In 2003, the Lake Colby Association had the Adirondack Watershed Institute of Paul Smith's College test the water. That survey deserves follow-up since questions remain, especially about how much of the lake's saltiness is the village's fault and how much is due to the state Department of Transportation dumping salt on Route 86 alongside the lake. Nevertheless, the study made two points pretty strongly:

-There is more salt in Lake Colby than there should be.

-The salt concentration is extremely high in the creek next to the village sand-salt pile.

The village and the state Department of Environmental Conservation have had this study for years and done nothing. Now, however, the DEC is ordering the village to cover the pile.

A lawsuit threat is an ugly way of getting something done, but it looks like it's working. We're sad to say this, but we hope it does.