

Press Republican  
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## State of the Park

By KIM SMITH DEDAM, Staff Writer

ELIZABETHTOWN — The Adirondack Council's annual State of the Park report weighs in on some 90 Adirondack preservation issues.

Some of the sharpest criticism in the report went to State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis for ruling that Old Mountain Road belongs to the towns of North Elba and Keene.

Adirondack Council's report says he "relied upon bad advice and incorrect information. His own regional staff has filed a formal request for a 'clarification,' hoping to avoid opening this road to motorized traffic."

The council gives DEC staff kudos for challenging the commissioner's judgment.

### 19-YEAR EFFORT

The recently released is the expressly non-partisan stance of the Adirondack Council staff and Board of Directors, spokesman John Sheehan said.

"For the last 19 years, it has worked thusly: I draft a list of items I think we should cover in the report and circulate to all staff for additions and deletions. I then draft the text, and we put together a staff team to review each of the articles and the overall tone.

"The chairman of our board of trustees then gets to look over the final draft and make recommendations."

Most of the "thumbs-up" or "thumbs-down" snapshots rate policy actions from local, state and national leaders.

### ESSEX SEWER

Kudos went to Town of Essex Supervisor Ronald Jackson for his success in obtaining federal funds to build a wastewater treatment plant.

Essex is the last town left on Lake Champlain without a sewer plant.

"I do appreciate the support the council provided in writing letters in support for funding of our sewer system," Jackson said.

### OUTDOOR BOILERS

The council also nodded to town officials in Wilmington, Jay, Elizabethtown and Moriah for taking action to ban or limit outdoor wood-burning furnaces.

"I'm glad they've acknowledged us for that," said Wilmington Supervisor Randy Preston. "I've felt all along if we worked together more we would find common ground.

"Because of the state's inaction on wood boilers, our board felt we had to do something.

"I am deeply saddened, however, by the state's lack of logic in their new outdoor-burning (of trash) regulations. What they have done by stopping towns from obtaining permits to burn at town sites is create a fire hazard."

"We appreciate the acknowledgment of all the hard work and recognition for trying to do the right thing," Elizabethtown Supervisor Noel Merrihew said about his community's outdoor-boiler restrictions.

#### RIVERSIDE CONDOS

Another thumbs-up went to the Town of Wilmington Planning Board for review and denying a variance to developers who proposed condominiums along the Ausable River, a site Wilmington planners felt was too close to the Town Beach.

#### WATERFRONT HOMES

Rebuff was given broadly by the council to nine park counties and 11 towns that sued the Adirondack Park Agency over new shoreline-setback regulation of waterfront homes built before 1973.

County and town leaders have claimed the regulation will hurt waterfront property-tax income throughout the Adirondack Park.

APA earned a separate thumbs-up on the issue for withstanding "withering criticism from developers and real-estate interests" on the issue, according to the report.

#### CELL TOWER

Many of the single-paragraph commentaries are directed toward the APA, Department of Environmental Conservation and other state agencies.

As a lobbyist's benchmark, the State of the Park briefly touches on a broad spectrum of issues.

The environmental watchdog group gave APA a thumbs-down for approving a cellular-phone tower designed like a fake pine tree at Paul Smith's College.

"The result is an object that looks neither like a tree nor a cell tower and calls attention to itself rather than concealing the equipment behind it," the report states.

"In already developed areas, a neutral background color would do more to minimize the visibility of the tower than does covering it in plastic needles."

The council also decried APA's move to establish a general permit — with fast-track review protocol — for cell towers that APA staff deem fit its Tall Towers Policy.

"Luckily, this is only a one-year experiment to be revisited soon," the council noted.

"We received constructive criticism from all the stakeholders," APA spokesman Keith McKeever said in response to the rebuke.

"The general permit was put out to public comment before it was adopted, and we received comments both for and against."

On the following page of the report, the council calls the APA's general permit for residential wind turbines "a gust of progress."

#### APPOINTMENTS

The State of the Park considers Gov. David Paterson's appointment of Terry D. Martino as APA executive director a "good choice" and nods also to his appointment of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) to replace now Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

View report

The report can be viewed online at [www.adirondackcouncil.org/stateofparks3.html](http://www.adirondackcouncil.org/stateofparks3.html)