



CALL OF THE LOON

Adirondack Council Newsletter | Fall 2024



Addressing Threats to Water Quality

With changing climate conditions, increased development, and complex political pressures, the Council is committed to ensuring that the water quality criteria that protect the pristine lakes, rivers, and groundwater resources of the Adirondacks are upheld to the highest standards. Towards that goal, in early November, the Adirondack Council submitted comments for the 2024 Advanced Notice for Proposed Rulemaking for the Triennial Review of Water Quality Standards to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

The Council focused its comments on road salt (sodium chloride) and PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl) - also known as forever chemicals - to help proactively protect Adirondack waters. PFAS can be found in water, air, soil, and clouds; raising concerns regarding their impact on ecological and human health. In the Adirondacks, PFAS levels are collected in clouds and rain water at the Whiteface Mountain science station. In a recent study,

the water samples collected at the station found that more than half of the water samples tested contained PFAS, which have been explicitly targeted for regulation due to their known negative health effects.

Road salt and its seasonal application and storage also pose significant hazards to public infrastructure and health. On average, state roads in the Adirondacks have 37 tons of road salt applied per lane-mile per year, which has been shown to leach into Adirondack waters, including drinking water sources. These heightened levels of negatively charged chloride ions in drinking water can weaken heart health and cause skin damage.

The Adirondack Council will continue to monitor and participate in the creation of protective standards for PFAS and road salt being set by the DEC to achieve these goals.

ABOVE: HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN, OCTOBER 2024

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**ADIRONDACK
COUNCIL** PRESERVING WATER,
AIR AND WILDLANDS

Protecting the Adirondack Legacy



Raul J. Aguirre
Executive Director

Dear Supporters and Friends,

As 2025 and the Adirondack Council's 50th Anniversary approach, I am grateful for our work and the transformative power of the Adirondack landscape. To work closely with so many committed members, partners, stakeholders, and advocates who are deeply connected to the Adirondacks is truly a gift. When I reflect on all that has been accomplished over the past five decades—and all that lies ahead—I think about the life and legacy of Clarence Petty, an iconic Adirondack conservationist and wilderness advocate.

Clarence was truly of the Adirondacks—a person who lived and worked here for 104 years, remaining an advocate for unspoiled wilderness throughout his life, including as a founding board member of the Council. Throughout his life, he maintained optimism for the future and continually found peace in wild places. Clarence believed in having a voice and being heard, staying optimistic, and championing the things he thought were important. These are lessons we carry forward that remain as relevant today.



It's hard to predict what will come with a new year. Political changes in New York and Washington, D.C., will certainly impact the Park and its future. The Adirondack Council's role in safeguarding the Park's ecological integrity and wild character has never been more important.

As an organization based in the Adirondacks, and well-versed in the inner workings of state and federal government, the Council has excelled at advocating on behalf of the Adirondack Park for half a century. Our non-partisan approach will be critical in the years ahead as we strive to educate and persuade those in power to protect this iconic legacy.

It is important, especially in this milestone year, to draw inspiration from those whose hope fueled their diligent work to protect this place. Our friend Clarence said, as he looked to the future: "I would like to think that 300 years from now, people would come up here and find at least as much wild land as we've got now." Indeed. Together, we will continue the fight to protect wilderness for current and future generations.

Sincerely,

Raul J. Aguirre
Executive Director

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CAPITAL MATTERS

2025 Legislative Priorities

The Survey of Climate Change and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems - \$2.5m

As part of a multi-year project, a consortium of non-profit partners and academic institutions continue to gather critical data as part of the water quality Survey of Climate Change and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems (SCALE) project. Implemented as a pilot program in 2023, this project will examine the growing impacts of climate change against historic baseline conditions of Adirondack waterbodies, explore the relationships between climate change and asthma-causing pollutants while working to reduce emissions and achieve climate justice. Advocates expect this data will inform future policymaking and strategic investments for climate resiliency and emissions reductions.



The Timbuctoo Climate and Careers Summer Institute - \$2.1m

In collaboration with the SUNY and CUNY systems, the Timbuctoo Climate Science and Careers Summer Institute (Climate Institute) introduces high school students living in urban environments to careers combatting climate change, environmental conservation, and green infrastructure jobs. As a global conservation success story, the Adirondack Park plays a critical role in New York's effort in protecting biodiversity and mitigating the impacts of climate change. The fight for climate and social justice prioritizes better connecting the Adirondacks with communities disproportionately impacted by climate change. The Adirondacks played an important role in the early abolition and Black suffrage movements, and the Climate Institute continues to uphold and foster the spirit of opportunity created by that movement.



Forever Adirondacks Campaign Ends

This December marks the end of the Adirondack Council's Forever Adirondacks Campaign, led by national wilderness and environmental justice advocate Aaron Mair. The three-year campaign focused on protecting clean water, creating jobs, coalition building, and linking those key issues to the preservation and importance of the wilderness of the Adirondack Park.

Mair brought new ideas and solutions to wilderness protection and community development, while strengthening connections between the Council and the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Caucus of the NYS Legislature. Mair was an essential force in the creation in 2022 of the Timbuctoo Climate Science and Careers Summer Institute, which pairs urban students entering the City University system in NYC with the SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry's campus in the Adirondack High Peaks region. The program is bringing fresh attention to Adirondack climate issues and fresh talent to solving the Park's problems. His work was also instrumental in gaining statewide support for the Survey of Climate and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems, which will use state funding and scientific expertise to better understand the impacts of air pollution and a warming climate on Adirondack lakes.



L-R: Aaron Mair with Adirondack Park Agency Board Member Benita Law-Diao

Mair's career spans five decades, beginning with his pioneering work in the field of environmental justice for communities of color. In 2015, he was elected the 57th President of Sierra Club. He was the first African-American to hold that title. In 2024, the Library of Congress collected his personal and professional papers for its soon-to-be established Environmental Justice Collection.

IN & ABOUT THE PARK

1. State Land Master Plan Amendments

The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) has proposed significant amendments to the Adirondack State Land Master Plan (SLMP) that outlines the permissible uses on Forest Preserve lands within the Blue Line. Among the proposed changes, the APA is seeking to add new language for accessibility, climate change and expand the interpretation of carrying capacity. The Council is weighing in on the proposed amendments, advocating for state-wide accessibility policies, retention of the APA's authority, and upholding its directive to protect the natural resources of the Park. The Council will continue to advocate for stronger climate language and the protection of motor-free Wilderness, Primitive Area, and Canoe Area classifications.



2. 500-mile Franklin County Multi-Use Trail Raises Concerns

Earlier this year, Franklin County released a plan for a 500-mile multi-use trail system primarily for use of off-road vehicles including ATVs. The off-road trail system largely used existing roads and appeared to crisscross publicly-owned Forest Preserve and private lands, including Akwesasne lands, without consulting the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. The lack of detail within the maps and narrative included in the draft generic environmental impact statement raised legal and environmental concerns from the Council, local municipalities, state agencies, and the public. Due to pressure from advocacy groups and local elected officials, the county dropped its plans for expanded trails within the Adirondack Park.



3. Endangered Species Protection Being Reviewed

The New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is reviewing and revising the state's list of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species. While the Council supports the DEC's broad efforts to protect endangered species, there is also much work to do. The Council has urged the DEC to be more regular in its reviews of endangered species; to be more robust in its proactive efforts for the protection of key species, such as wolves and cougars; and to add rare and critical plants to the Endangered species list. The DEC is currently accepting comments on its proposed plan. Freshwater fish were reviewed this fall, and other groups of animals will be released in phases to allow for robust public review and input. The Council will continue to push for critical wildlife conservation measures in future rounds of public comment.



CAPTIVE WOLF | LARRY MASTER, MASTERIMAGES.ORG



4. 30x30 Land Protection Goals

The New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) plays a major role in implementing the recently passed 30x30 legislation. The DEC has issued a report outlining reasons for protecting at least 30% of the state's lands and waters by 2030. The DEC must incorporate 30x30 goals into its upcoming Open Space Conservation Plan revision. These goals should explain how lands will be protected as Forever Wild as parts of a state-wide ecological reserve system that would include areas connected by wildlife corridors. The Council will keep you informed as to how and when you can comment on the draft Open Space Conservation Plan when it comes out next year and urge state officials to provide more money for land conservation.

5. Video Series Highlights Headwaters and Lake Associations

After a busy summer season, the Headwaters Campaign - a joint effort of the Adirondack Council and Northern Forest Canoe Trail - is on solid footing heading into the new year. Over the summer, the Council helped release four videos highlighting the lake associations on Long Lake, Raquette Lake, and Blue Mountain Lake. The video series was well received around the region, and that project, along with other Headwaters work, has helped form strong working relationships across the central Adirondacks. The campaign will continue to build off this growth going forward.



6. Large-scale Solar Development proposed for Mayfield

For the first time ever, the Adirondack Park Agency does not have jurisdiction over a utility-scale solar project, the largest to date proposed within the Adirondack Park. With the passage of the Renewable Action Through Project Interconnection and Deployment Act, environmental and jurisdictional review is streamlined for certain major renewable energy facilities and major electric transmission facilities as New York strives to achieve its climate goals. Unfortunately, the 40 MW solar facility in the Town of Mayfield proposes up to 99 acres of tree cutting - with a little over 40 acres actually being cleared for the project itself, and the rest for private landowner timber management. If the Adirondack Council's concerns are addressed, the project may be a demonstration of how agrivoltaics, solar, and active agricultural uses may go hand-in-hand to allow prime agricultural land to remain in production while the state decarbonizes.

MAYFIELD AND THE GREAT SACANDAGA LAKE | PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.



CONSERVATION MATTERS

Adirondack Food System Network Growth

The Adirondack Food System Network (AFSN) is the region's largest collaboration of food system stakeholders and organizational leaders in the 12 counties fully or partially located within the Adirondack Park. The AFSN was formed during the COVID-19 pandemic when food access and distribution was limited.

Since then, partner AdkAction has secured funding to house AFSN and continue its important work. The Council has also provided a critical role in helping to create strength and capacity through our expertise on policy, market, production, processing, distribution, and food access issues unique to the Adirondacks. After more than a year of strategic planning and grant-writing, AFSN now has a full-time staff member responsible for its initiatives, including the annual Food Justice Summit.

Beginning in December, the Council will cycle out of its co-chair role at the Network and re-take a seat as one of the 16 at-large organizational representatives.



Outgoing Co-chair of the Adirondack Food System Network and current Adirondack Council Farm Advocate Dillon Klepetar attends the 2024 Food Justice Summit at the Wild Center in Tupper Lake

Wildlife Crossing Act Vetoed by Governor Hochul

After Adirondack Council members sent nearly 700 letters of support for the Wildlife Crossing Act (A4243B / S4198B) in late November, NYS Gov. Kathy Hochul vetoed the bill, which was designed to make highways safer for motorists and wildlife through purpose-built crossings across New York.

The vetoed bill, sponsored by Senator Leroy Comrie, D-Queens, and Assemblymember Robert Carroll, D-Brooklyn, would have required the NYS Dept. of Transportation and the NYS Thruway Authority to conduct studies to determine the most hazardous areas of highways for vehicle-animal collisions and develop a plan to reduce those hazards. This would have allowed New York to qualify for and access a pool of more than \$350 million in federal funding, available to municipalities, states, and tribes for the construction of bridges, tunnels, and other infrastructure to provide safe passage for wildlife. The New York Wildlife Crossing Act would have helped the state become more competitive in accessing this federal funding.



Whitetail deer killed by automobile collision on NYS Route 30 near Tupper Lake

It is essential that innovative actions are implemented to protect the ability of wildlife to migrate for their survival in the face of climate change. Studies have shown that wildlife crossings are an excellent investment, often paying for themselves quickly by preventing property damage and the need for medical assistance to accident victims. They also reduce the labor and financial burden on highway departments by decreasing the number of accidents, collisions, and dead animals that need to be cleaned off public roads.

SUPPORTING THE COUNCIL



Your Impact Starts Here

Your support strengthens the Adirondack Council's conservation, advocacy and education efforts for the Adirondack Park. Every dollar and every donor plays a vital role in what we can achieve together. This giving season, please consider the following ways your financial contribution helps preserve the water, air and wildlands for generations to come:

- **YEAR END MATCH** | Help us meet our year-end matching gift challenge! Donate via check, credit/debit card, or electronic funds transfer and your gift will be matched 1:1. Any new or increased gifts will be matched 2:1 up to \$250,000 until December 31! Make a gift and double your impact at donate.adirondackcouncil.org/yearend24
- **IRAs** | Owners of an individual retirement account (IRA) aged 70 1/2 or older can make a qualified charitable distribution up to \$105,000 each year. Those aged 72+ years may use gifts to satisfy their required minimum distribution.
- **GIFT OF STOCK/MUTUAL FUNDS** | Make a charitable contribution by giving appreciated stock or bonds and help minimize your capital gains tax liability.
- **DONOR ADVISED FUNDS** | Recommend how much and how often your money is granted to the Adirondack Council from your fund. As a fund holder you can elect recurring gifts and plan for charitable giving into the future.
- **MONTHLY GIFTS** | Set up automatic monthly giving with credit card or your bank account - to automatically give \$25, \$50, or \$100 a month - or any amount that works for you. Your ongoing support helps protect Adirondack water, air and wildlands year-round.
- **MATCHING GIFTS** | Double your donation and impact with an employer match! Check to see if your workplace offers matching gift programs - many employers also match gifts for retirees.



We extend our heartfelt gratitude to those who have already given and welcome all to make a meaningful difference!



Adirondack Council Staff, December 2024

Plan on Forever

Help preserve the Adirondacks for generations to come by joining the Adirondack Legacy Society. By naming the Adirondack Council in your will or as a beneficiary of your insurance or retirement plan, you ensure that your generosity continues to make a difference. Your gift will support the Forever Wild Fund, creating a lasting legacy and a powerful voice for the protection of Adirondack Park.

For more information on planned gifts, please contact Director of Development Janine Scherline at 518.873.2240 x106 or jscherline@adirondackcouncil.org.



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ADIRONDACK COUNCIL
PRESERVING WATER, AIR AND WILDLANDS

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“Our community and town depend on the health of Raquette Lake. It doesn’t matter how cute your town is in the Adirondacks if tourists can’t go in or fish in the lake.”



– Gail Morehouse, of the Raquette Lake Preservation Foundation

Save the Dates!

Adirondack Park Lobby Day
Monday, February 24, 2025
NYS Capitol, Albany, NY

Join fellow advocates and organizations for an opportunity to tell elected officials and staffers what is most important for the Adirondack Park in this year’s state budget and legislative session.

50th Anniversary Celebration
Saturday, July 19, 2025 - Silver Bay YMCA,
87 Silver Bay Rd, Silver Bay, NY

Over the past half-century, the Adirondack Council has achieved significant milestones in advocacy and conservation, making a lasting impact on the wild character of the Adirondack Park. A late afternoon gathering will feature delicious local food, a gorgeous view, and good company as we honor the legacy of the Council and those who have helped shape the Adirondack Park we see today.

