

# NEWS RELEASE

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**ADVOCATES PROMOTE ADIRONDACK HIGH PEAKS WILDERNESS EXPANSION**  
*With 35,000 New Motor-Free Acres, Area Would Rival National Parks Out West*

NEWCOMB, N.Y. – Regional, statewide and national conservation organizations and supporters sent a letter Monday to Gov. Andrew Cuomo urging him to protect the Adirondack Park’s wilderness legacy, while opening spectacular new landscapes to public recreation and boosting the economies of the surrounding communities.

The groups applauded the Governor’s commitment to purchase the stunningly beautiful Boreas Ponds tract in the southern High Peaks area of the Adirondack Park, as part of a series of state land purchases in the area.

After Boreas is purchased, the groups are urging him to add it to the High Peaks Wilderness Area, along with several other recent state purchases. The expanded wilderness would then be connected to the nearby Dix Mountain Wilderness Area, creating a contiguous, motor-free area of more than 280,000 acres.

The new wilderness would rival Rocky Mountain National Park, in Colorado, and would be larger than Mount Rainier National Park in Washington. It would be almost twice the size of Zion National Park in Utah.

The letter was signed by the Adirondack Council, Adirondack Mountain Club, Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve, Audubon New York, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Environmental Advocates of New York, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the New York League of Conservation Voters.

“You have an extraordinary opportunity to create a true national legacy, an Adirondack wilderness area here in New York whose scale and positive impacts will rival some of the most famous conservation landmarks in the world,” the letter stated.

The letter noted that “An expanded Wilderness will provide new economic opportunity for communities in the heart of New York’s Adirondack Park while protecting for future generations this priceless gift of nature among the state’s tallest mountains, one of the world’s best known rivers, and the Park’s most spectacular scenery.”

The process of determining classification decisions is led by the Adirondack Park Agency, as prescribed in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan and other regulations and laws. The process should be “respectful of divergent opinions,” says the letter, and “classifications must be science-based, protect functional natural ecosystem integrity and habitat connectivity, integrate sound science and above all, as required by the master plan, keep ecological protection paramount. The process should include opportunity for analysis and consideration of feasible alternatives, ample transparency, input from the public, and hearings across the state.”

The letter also noted the project will be “opening in perpetuity lands and waters that have been closed to the public for more than 150 years. This region will provide a very special experience in hiking, camping, paddling, birdwatching, hunting, fishing, cross country skiing, snowshoeing and horseback riding. Activities will be possible for people of all abilities, while preserving water quality, and wildlife habitat.”

“The exceptional value of Boreas Ponds lies in the opportunity it offers to experience nature’s grandeur without the influence of motors. There simply is no other publicly accessible waterbody in the Park that offers the combination of views and solitude these ponds offer. Motorized access would not only diminish the experience but would deter visitation and weaken the property’s economic draw,” the letter continues.

The Governor has announced he would purchase the last remaining parcel needed to complete the expansion – the 20,494-acre Boreas Ponds tract – by April 1, 2016 or sooner. The groups urged him to add most of the Boreas Ponds tract to the adjoining motor-free area, leaving some of the parcel’s southern end to accommodate a community-connector snowmobile trail outside of the wilderness area.

They also urged that he incorporate most of the recently purchased MacIntyre East and MacIntyre West parcels; the entire Casey Brook tract, between Elk Lake and Boreas Ponds; and, a few others that have been purchased but not yet classified.

All of the lands touch the boundary of the High Peaks Wilderness Area.

Together, the new parcels would expand the existing 200,000 acre plus High Peaks Wilderness Area by 35,000 acres and connect it to the Dix Mountain Wilderness, which is more than 45,000 acres. Some parcels currently classified as Wild Forest would become Wilderness as well.

All Adirondack Forest Preserve is public land, protected from logging, lease, sale or development by article 14, Section 1 of the NYS Constitution, known as the “Forever Wild clause.” Less than half of the Adirondack Park is Forest Preserve, while the other half is private land.

Less than half of the Forest Preserve is classified as wilderness. A wilderness classification provides an added layer of protection from noise, pollution, traffic accidents and the introduction of invasive species. Wilderness areas are motor-free. Parking is available next to wilderness areas, but not in the interior. Exceptions are made in designated areas for people with handicapped-access permits.

“You have been to the Boreas Ponds,” the letter reminded the Governor. “You know how special they and the Adirondacks are. We write to urge you to create an expanded Adirondack High Peaks Wilderness, a more than 280,000-acre national landmark jewel connecting the existing High Peaks and Dix Wilderness areas and including new wilderness protection for 35,000 acres including the Boreas Ponds and McIntyre Tracts, and the headwaters of the Hudson River. Your administration’s decision on this, and your leadership, will determine your Adirondack legacy.”

The new wilderness would be “ecologically healthy and biologically rich. It provides some of the state’s most intact and diverse wildlife habitat—from low elevation wetlands to high elevation spruce-fir forests. It also offers some of the most spectacular views of the High Peaks, including Mt. Marcy, Haystack Mountain, Gothics Peak, and Saddleback Mountain. More than 50 miles of rivers and streams, primarily within the Upper Hudson Watershed, run through the tract, including Boreas River, LeClaire, Casey, Slide, and White Lily brooks.”

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