

The Sun Community News

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Lodge at Boreas Ponds should stay or be relocated to serve as a visitors center

<http://www.suncommunitynews.com/opinions/editorials/lodge-at-boreas-ponds-should-stay-or-be-relocated-to-serve-a/>

Dignitaries gathered last week in front of a pristine lake in North Hudson to announce what is anticipated to be the final in a series of large-scale acquisitions by the state, the 20,758-acre Boreas Ponds Tract.

Frequently referred to as the “crown jewel” of the former Finch Pruyn land holdings, the Manhattan-sized tract in the High Peaks region contains an astonishing spread of ecological diversity, from alpine-type summits to lowland forest, all teeming with life.

Now that the ink is dry, the land classification process begins.

For the first time, North Hudson will gain an access point to the High Peaks Wilderness.

The discussion is sure to ignite what’s expected to be the latest in a long, grinding clash between advocates of access, who would like to see the lands remain opened up to motorized vehicles, and preservationists, who prefer to see as little human impact as possible.

Both sides have compelling arguments.

But no matter which side of the ideological spectrum you fancy, we strongly believe that the more user groups that have the opportunity to enjoy the land, the more positively it will impact not only the region, but the entire state.

That’s why it’s a shame that the sprawling lodge once used by timber executives will be torn down this spring.

Doing so, we think, is counterproductive.

Located seven miles from the hardtop, the lodge could serve a myriad of purposes.

As the population ages, the building could be used as a respite for sportsmen who are no longer able to climb mountain trails, wade through rivers and access back country ponds.

After all, the state has slammed the door on hundreds of hunting clubs that allowed motorized back country access to a generation who would not have been able to take advantage of it otherwise.

And we are all going to get old someday.

It could also serve as a home base for those who have never had a chance to experience that firsthand.

Other potential uses abound, from a possible education center to a sportsmen's museum.

Last week, the Nature Conservancy announced they'd sweeten the transaction deal with \$750,000 in grant money to promote economic development projects.

The organization should be commended for their largess, which is just the latest in a long string of generous financial contributions to the communities surrounding the vast tract of land holdings.

But we can't help but think that those funds could be better used as seed money for a possible visitor center that will help disabled people who also want to take advantage of the serene natural setting.

After all, the gorgeous facility is already handicap accessible.

This is in line with a number of stakeholders who have said they want to make the Adirondack Park more diverse and accessible to as many user groups as possible.

We concede little will save the lodge from the wrecking ball.

We've been told local officials are hashing out a possible plan for the former Frontier Town site with state brass.

So here's an idea:

Disassemble the building piece-by-piece and reconstruct it elsewhere, say, off Exit 29 of the Adirondack Northway, where it can serve as a link to the past and greet those who visit in the future.

Brand it as a testament to compromise. In a state so decisive, that's something everyone should enjoy.