

Editorial – Times Union
October 31, 2016

An Adirondack balance

By [TU Editorial Board](#)

Imagine the most pristine of spots in the heart of the Adirondacks, with a panorama of peaks so beautiful it's been called the million-dollar view. The state just bought it, along with an old logging road that leads right up to the shore of three interconnected ponds.

Some people, including officials in the towns bordering this 20,758-acre area known as the Boreas Ponds tract, want that road open to motor vehicles, allowing people to drive their car or truck to the picture-perfect scenery, put in their motorboat, or, in the winter, barrel over the ice in a snowmobile.

Such broad access, proponents say, would give taxpayers the greatest return on the \$14.5 million the state paid in April to purchase the former Finch Pruyn property from The Nature Conservancy. It would give many more people the opportunity to get into the High Peaks without stepping out of a car. And to get there, they'll pass through local towns and spend money on gas, food and maybe even lodging. That's a big potential boost for a region whose economy depends so much on tourism.

But the Boreas Ponds Tract raises once again the question of how best to protect New York's rich wilderness and honor the "Forever Wild" amendment adopted in 1894 to the state constitution, preserving Adirondack forests. Some environmentalists argue the only way to protect the area is to let vehicular traffic go no farther than Blue Ridge Road, the highway that passes by the property, requiring anyone who wants to view or use the spectacular pond area to either hike or bike nearly 8 miles.

This has state officials trying to find a way to please both sides. In May, when Gov. Andrew Cuomo visited this newly acquired state property, he charged the Adirondack Park Agency with determining what uses will be allowed, promising it would be based on "careful consideration of the natural resources' capacity to withstand use."

The good news is at least one reasonable compromise has emerged. As with most compromises, it gives neither side all it wants, but finds a workable middle ground. This smart plan would allow motor vehicle access to most of the logging road, known as the Gulf Brook Road. A mile before the ponds, users would then park and hike or bike in, carrying their canoes, kayaks or other non-motorized watercraft.

This works for two key reasons. It would keep motorized vehicles away from the ponds, preserving their natural state. It would also vastly reduce the chance for introduction of invasive species, commonly carried in boats on trailers. A version of this plan would allow snowmobiling

along the existing logging road, which satisfies a long-stated desire in the community to support such winter activities.

During his May visit, Governor Cuomo declared, “We are leaving our children a better North Country, a better park than we inherited.”

Adopting the reasonable compromise plan for the Boreas Ponds Tract would help make that happen.