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**ADK Applauds New York State Government Leaders
in Passing Legislation that Protects
and Adds Acreage to the New York State Forest Preserve**

ALBANY, NY. – The New York State Assembly and Senate adjourned early on Saturday, June 18, after many days of negotiations that resulted in sound legislation for the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve.

“I am proud of the professional and collegial manner in which all parties worked together for the best outcome for both the Forest Preserve and the communities that call the Adirondack Park or Catskill Park their home. The Adirondack Mountain Club played an active role in securing legislative approval of these bills,” said ADK Executive Director Neil Woodworth.

During this legislative session there were several bills proposing to amend Article 14 of the New York State Constitution, which includes the “Forever Wild” clause that defines and protects the Forest Preserve.

Bill S.7966-A.10737, which passed both the Assembly and the Senate and will now proceed to the desk of Governor Cuomo, provides implementing legislation for the 2013 “Township 40” constitutional amendment. The constitutional amendment and implementing legislation resolves a long-standing dispute over property ownership along the shoreline of Raquette Lake in the Adirondack Park. The ownership issues had been the subject of court battles for decades until the state settled with land owners in an equitable solution for all parties by means of a constitutional amendment.

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The settlement involved the state relinquishing any remaining claim on the land titles, but added the 300 acre Marion River Carry to the Forest Preserve, which will create unique paddling opportunities between Blue Mountain Lake, the Eckford Chain of Lakes, and Raquette Lake. Phil Brown describes the beauty of the Marion River in his book *Adirondack Paddling: 60 Great Flatwater Adventures*, "Many paddlers will think the Marion the best part of the journey. The river winds through one of the largest wetlands in the Adirondacks, a refuge for waterfowl, songbirds and deer." As part of the final legislative agreement, some 2000 additional acres will also be added to the Adirondack Forest Preserve.

Another important bill, which was proposed as a Concurrent Resolution of the Senate and the Assembly A10721-A and S8026-A, a constitutional amendment, will create a 250 acre *Forest Preserve Health and Safety Land Account*. The *Land Account* will be used to allow the use of Forest Preserve from the Land Account to eliminate bridge hazards, dangerous curves, and dangerous grades on county or town highways. The Land Account will also permit new water wells when necessary to meet drinking water quality standards. The legislation also dictates the acquisition of 250 acres for addition to the Forest Preserve. Bill A10721-A also will permit public utility lines (limited to electric, telephone, broadband, and water or sewer lines) to be buried or co-located in the widths of state, county, or town highways in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. The legislation will also permit bicycle paths to be constructed and maintained within the widths of highways. If this bill is passed again in the 2017 legislative session, it goes to the voters on Election Day in 2017.

ADK is also very pleased that earlier this week the state Senate confirmed Basil Seggos as the 15th Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Seggos previously served as Deputy Secretary for the Environment and Assistant Secretary for the Environment for Governor Andrew Cuomo.

In the last hours of the legislative session the legislature also confirmed three new Adirondack Park Agency (APA) commissioners, including John Ernst owner of the Elk Lake Lodge, Chad Dawson professor emeritus of the SUNY College of

Environmental Science and Forestry, and Barbara Rice, a business owner and Franklin County Legislator. Sherman Craig, who has served on the commission, has been appointed as the new chair of the APA Board. We look forward to working with Chairman Craig and his fellow commissioners.

Several pieces of bad legislation which would have a significant impact on New York State public lands were fortunately blocked from passage. These included ATV bills which would have increased the weight and size of ATVs without critical public safety enhancements and increased enforcement support for illegal use and trespass. One of these bills would have opened state lands to ATV use where the damaging use of these vehicles is currently banned.

ADK is pleased that the important implementing legislation for the “Township 40” constitutional amendment, and the *Forest Preserve Health and Safety Land Account* legislation have passed the Assembly and the Senate this session. We look forward to championing other important issues in the legislative year ahead.

The Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) is dedicated to the conservation, preservation, and responsible recreational use of the New York State Forest Preserve and other parks, wild lands, and waters vital to our 30,000 members and 27 chapters.

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