



Article XIV “ForeverWild” Constitutional Amendment Position Statement

The Adirondack Council is committed to upholding Article XIV. Since 1894, the “Forever Wild” clause of the State constitution has been a critical protection for the ecological integrity, clean water, clean air and wild character of an Adirondack Park that sustains a world class Wilderness. The promise to all New Yorkers that these lands shall be “forever protected as wild forest lands” is not trivial. “Forever” is a strong word. Exceptions or amendments should be rare, specific, narrow in scope and only considered when there is a demonstrated and documented public benefit, and no reasonable alternative exists.

Multiple proposed constitutional amendments are up for consideration at this time. The Council’s position on each is consistent with our principles for assessing Article XIV Forest Preserve Land Swaps/Permissive Use Amendments in the Park. Below you will find a summary of our positions on constitutional amendments:

S.3030 (Stec) / A. 2816 (Jones): Preserving Debar Lodge- Conceptual Support

This resolution will protect the integrity of the Forest Preserve and preserve a historic building by conveying 6 acres to the Debar Pond Institute for the purposes of historic preservation and interpretation. In exchange, not less than 400 acres would be added to the Forest Preserve. Public recreational access to Debar Pond will be preserved, and opportunities for educational and interpretive programming hold the promise of providing an exciting new tourism attraction for the Town of Duane. Currently, the structures on this parcel represent a nonconforming use. Without an amendment, the buildings would ultimately need to be removed.

The Adirondack Council supports the concept of this amendment. This resolution should not be approved without accompanying implementing legislation that adds details necessary to ensure the advertised objectives of this amendment are fulfilled, including maximizing the conservation benefit and increasing/enhancing public access.

S.27 (Stec) / A. 2486 (Jones): Transferring Camp Gabriels – Support

This resolution authorizes the sale or transfer of Camp Gabriels, a former prison camp in the Adirondacks. As state-owned property within the boundary of the Adirondack Park, it is considered Forest Preserve. This means its sale, lease or exchange is constitutionally prohibited without an amendment. The facility has been vacant and deteriorating since its closure in 2009, and that is not in the best interests of the State, Franklin County, nor the Town of Brighton. This amendment reserves the right to clean water derived from the property for the Town, which will help its residents who are struggling with road salt contamination in their drinking water wells.

The Adirondack Council supports this amendment. This resolution should not be approved without accompanying implementing legislation that adds details necessary to ensure the advertised objectives of this amendment are fulfilled. Additional clarity should be provided on the compensating acreage that will be added to the Forest Preserve, to ensure a net benefit.