



Memorandum of Support

A.2816 (Jones), S.3030 (Stec)

This proposed amendment of Article 14, Section 1 of the New York State Constitution would authorize a land exchange between the Debar Pond Institute, a non-profit organization, and the State of New York within Franklin County in the Adirondack Park. The exchange would provide the Debar Pond Institute six acres of Forest Preserve, on which sits the Debar Pond Lodge, in exchange for 400 acres of wild forest land adjacent to nearby Meacham Lake.

As an advocate for the Forest Preserve, Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve must be persuaded that any exception to the “forever kept as wild forest” mandate of Article 14 results in a significant net benefit to the Forest Preserve. The organization weighs whether an amendment to Article 14 is narrowly defined, specific, limited in scope and provides public services or serves a public need, as opposed to serving a mostly private interest, which cannot be provided in ways other than through an amendment.

While Debar Institute is a private organization, the goal and purpose of this amendment is to preserve Debar Pond Lodge, maintain it, and open it to environmental and cultural educational programming compatible with adjacent Forest Preserve. Taken together, these serve a legitimate public purpose. The Lodge has significant architectural and historic value and is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Adirondack educational opportunities and venues are rare in northern Franklin County. The Lodge’s maintenance and use can provide environmental and cultural, educational programming in a remote, underserved location in the Adirondack Park and attract visitation from population centers in Saranac Lake and Malone. In the accompanying implementation bill, a legally binding easement ensures the Lodge’s rehabilitation, appropriate maintenance, visitation, and educational use.

The preservation of the Lodge cannot happen without this amendment because the Lodge’s presence on the Forest Preserve is unconstitutional. The six acres proposed for the Lodge’s preservation under private ownership will also ensure public foot access to Debar Pond and its wild forest trails around the lake and to Debar Mountain without exceeding the capacity of the area to withstand human use. Wild forest character and Debar Pond is better protected under this land exchange than it would be under the state’s proposed Intensive Use reclassification. The 400 acres proposed to come into the Forest Preserve by exchange is legally available to be conveyed to the State of New York. This additional acreage would enlarge protection of Meacham Lake.

Adirondack Wild is persuaded that this land exchange and Article 14 amendment meets its criteria as worthy of public support. We are pleased to endorse and support this legislation and encourage first passage of the amendment resolution in both Senate and Assembly. We ask that detailed implementation language be introduced promptly. Approval of the implementation bill should accompany second passage of the amendment.

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For more information, contact:

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