



ADIRONDACK ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

1745 MAIN STREET, KEESEVILLE, NY 12944
518.834.9328 | WWW.AARCH.ORG

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Memorandum of Support A.2816 (Jones), S.3030 (Stec)

Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH) enthusiastically supports Assembly Bill 2816 and Senate Bill 3030, which amends Article 14 of the NYS Constitution in order to convey land to Debar Pond Institute in order to save the National Register-listed Debar Pond Lodge. AARCH is the private nonprofit, historic preservation organization for the Adirondack region. For over 15 years we have advocated for the preservation and public use of Debar Pond Lodge and wrote the nomination to list the site on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004.

This legislation responds to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) proposal to demolish the lodge, replacing it a Debar Lodge Day Use Area, following 17 years of ownership during which the buildings were not used. The proposed land exchange will add 400 acres of Debar Mountain Wild Forest land to the forest preserve, in exchange for approximately 6 acres of land including Debar Pond Lodge. The Debar Pond Lodge 6-acre parcel will transfer to the nonprofit Debar Pond Institute, who will provide public programming and educational opportunities at the site.

The constitutional amendment outlined in A.2816/S.3030 will accomplish the following:

- Save the NYS & National Register-listed Debar building complex from destruction
- Allow organizations to use the Debar Pond Lodge for public educational programs, workshops, events, accommodations, and tours
- Enhance the New York State Forest Preserve in the Adirondacks by at least 400 acres
- Disburse use of the Forest Preserve away from the overused High Peaks region
- Provide jobs and economic benefits to the local area
- Save New York State over \$500,000 in demolition and site improvement costs
- Maintain and facilitate public access, including new handicapped access, to Debar Pond and the surrounding Forest Preserve
- Protect the state's interest in preserving the historic buildings and maintaining the character of the forest preserve through a conservation easement held by NYS DEC

A.2816/S.3030 has the support of a broad-based coalition of local and regional government, historic preservation, environmental, and economic development interests, including Adirondack Wild, the Adirondack Diversity Initiative, Adirondack North Country Association, Town of Duane, Franklin County Board of Legislators, Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages, Adirondack Local Government Review Board.

We applaud the introduction of these bills and urge the Assembly and Senate to pass them during the 2023 session. Thank you to Assemblymember Jones and Senator Stec for their leadership in introducing this bill and Assemblymember Simpson for his co-sponsorship.