

December 2, 2024

Megan Phillips, Deputy Director of Planning
Adirondack Park Agency
PO Box 99
Ray Brook, NY 12977

RE: Proposed Amendments to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan

Dear Megan,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Adirondack Park Agency's proposed amendments to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan.

We, the undersigned groups, strongly support the right of people with disabilities to have access to the Forest Preserve, including access to motor-free Wilderness, Primitive, and Canoe areas.

We strongly oppose APA's proposal to exclude OPDMDs from the definition of motor vehicles in the Master Plan. OPDMDs are defined in the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) as "any mobility device powered by batteries, fuel, or other engines— whether or not designed primarily for use by individuals with mobility disabilities—that is used by individuals with mobility disabilities for the purpose of locomotion, or any mobility device designed to operate in areas without defined pedestrian routes, but that is not a wheelchair." This broad definition includes, among other things, cars, trucks, all-terrain vehicles, golf carts, and Segways—devices that are clearly motor vehicles.

Excluding OPDMDs from the definition of motor vehicles renders these devices conforming in all Forest Preserve land management classes. Currently, as APA staff have noted, individuals apply to the DEC for a permit to use OPDMDs on Forest Preserve lands. While we acknowledge that there is currently a system in place to provide access on a case-by-case basis, a statewide policy is needed to provide clear guidance for land managers and people with disabilities. Therefore, there is no need for, nor do ADA rules require, the Agency to so drastically alter the definition of motor vehicle in the Master Plan—a change that will threaten the very nature of the lands the Master Plan was created to protect.

We urge you to remove the exclusion of OPDMDs from the definition of motor vehicles and to remove the proposed definition of OPDMDs from the Master Plan.

Respectfully,

Raul J. Aguirre, Executive Director, Adirondack Council

Peter Bauer, Executive Director, Protect the Adirondacks!

David Gibson, Managing Partner, Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve

Julia Goren, Acting Executive Director, Adirondack Mountain Club

Pete Nelson, Chair, Adirondack Wilderness Advocates