



# E-Newsletter

Your Voice in the Future of the Adirondacks

Q1, 2011

AdkAction.org elected an expanded board of directors and new officers in January after our reorganization as a non-profit at the end of 2010. New officers are David Wolff, chair; Marsha Stanley, vice chair; Jim Crane, secretary; Linda Tauber, treasurer. The other board members are Airlie C. Lennon, Joan Grabe, Ernest E. (Lee) Keet; Richard F. Kibben; Dick Maid; Barbara Plumadore, James A. Schoff; Fred Schwarz; and Phyllis Thompson. Read more about their [backgrounds](#) on our website.

We have filed for recognition from New York State as a non-profit and an application is being prepared for submission to the IRS to secure our status as a 501(c)(3). Any contributions made since Jan.1, 2011, will be eligible for tax deduction as soon as our status is approved and receipts will be mailed at that time. Thank you again for your support. You may pay annual dues, become a member or contribute to our work at <http://adkaction.org/Contribute/Contribute.htm>

### **AdkAction.org Summer Meeting and Social**

*Please mark your calendars for the third annual\**

*AdkAction.org festive summer gathering at*

*Bottle Bay*

*The Upper Saranac Camp of Joan and Bill Grabe*

*Saturday, July 23, 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.*

*\*AdkAction.org members and guests only, by invitation*

**Once again, we are pleased to report that AdkAction.org is active on these projects important to the Adirondacks:**

### **Second Conference on Damaging Road Salt June 13**

AdkAction.org and the Adirondack Council will co-sponsor a second inter-organizational conference on June 13 at Paul Smith's College to address the growing problem of winter road salt damage in the Adirondack Park. The conference is open to individuals responsible for winter road maintenance policy and execution, including county, town and village executives, elected officials, state agency personnel and environmental groups by invitation or request.

Attendees at last year's conference reached general consensus on several key proposals to reduce the use of road salt and the damage it causes to Adirondack lakes and roadside

environments as well as its heavy costs in application and in damage to vehicles and infrastructure. However, attempts to take those proposals to Albany for action were hindered by the inertia last winter at the state level where a lame-duck governor was packing to leave and candidates were vying to take over.

“We believe the evidence suggests that salt damage in the Adirondack Park could be reduced by 50% or more with changed practices, at no increase in long-term cost or reduction in safety,” said Lee Keet, chairman of the AdkAction.org water quality committee.

The June conference will consider some specific recommendations for improved sharing of services, common purchasing of equipment and chemicals, standardized approaches to snow and ice management, improved training and reduction of overlap in responsibilities. The conference also will examine the "clear road" policy adopted in the Adirondacks to accommodate traffic at the 1980 Olympic event with consideration of whether it could be modified in certain instances without compromising public safety.

Daniel Kelting, executive director of the Paul Smith's Adirondack Watershed Institute (AWI), will report at the meeting on results of his new research on chloride loading along road networks by watersheds in the Adirondack Park.

Kelting and the AWI last year released an important publication commissioned by AdkAction.org titled [Review of Effects and Costs of Road De-icing with Recommendations for Winter Road Management in the Adirondack Park](#).

For more information, contact Lee Keet at [Lee@adkaction.org](mailto:Lee@adkaction.org).

### **AdkAction.org Sponsoring Third Annual Meeting of Adirondack Assessors**

Adkaction.org is hosting a one-day seminar on property data collection conformity for the Adirondack Counties Assessors Association (ACAA). The seminar is a follow-up to the very successful conference held last June in Saranac Lake.

This year's meeting is to take place on June 23 at the Wild Center in Tupper Lake <<http://www.wildcenter.org/>> and is intended for all assessors within the Park as well as those within the counties that border the Park on the north. There is no charge and lunch will be provided by AdkAction.org.

This is the third meeting of North Country assessors that AdkAction.org has sponsored, successfully reviving an earlier assessors' organization which had ceased to function. Three years ago we invited them to a daylong session to discuss how to make assessments in Adirondack towns more equitable. AdkAction.org members have established as one of their top goals fair and equitable property assessments. Last year the assessors discussed best practices with respect to comparable sales, valuation models, waterfront valuation, equalization rates and the fostering of good relations with property owners.

At the third conference this summer, the assessors will review existing data collection methodologies to determine if a standardized data collection methodology can be implemented throughout the Adirondack region. Vacant land, residential, commercial, and industrial data collection techniques will be discussed. David Briggs, IAO, whom many of the assessors know professionally, will be moderator.

Assessors in the Adirondacks face unique challenges especially in today's economic environment when there are few sales in a town each year. If a standardized data collection methodology can be implemented, then the assessors may be able to look in adjoining or similar towns for comparable sales. For instance, discussion at the AdkAction.org-sponsored meetings revealed that assessors may not measure lakefront footage consistently from town to town, even on the same body of water.

Volunteers from AdkAction.org membership are needed to staff registration, serve lunch, etc. Please respond to <[info@adkaction.org](mailto:info@adkaction.org)> if you can help.

### **AdkAction.org Released Important Rail/Trail Consulting Study**

In February we published our Rail Corridor Study, a professional consultants' study, to examine the relative construction costs and economic impacts of either extending the Adirondack Scenic Railway from Saranac Lake to Tupper Lake or converting the rail bed to a multi-use trail from Lake Placid to Tupper Lake. Data in the study demonstrate that either extending the scenic railway or converting it to a bike trail would be an improvement over the status quo. The Tri-Lakes community would benefit by a shot to the economy and an increase in jobs under either scenario.

In summary, extension of rail service to Tupper Lake produces \$758,000 in net new regional spending and 13 jobs, plus a one-time employment boost of 171 job years during the construction phase. Similarly, the conversion of the corridor to a recreational trail creates \$1.2 million in net new spending and 20 permanent jobs, with a one-time employment boost equivalent of 300 job years.

We hope it will spur a fact-based discussion of how to put this valuable local resource back to work for the community and for Adirondack visitors. You can find the study on our website at [www.adkaction.org/Rail-Corridor-Study.PDF](http://www.adkaction.org/Rail-Corridor-Study.PDF).

### **Tri-Lakes Loses Google Contest, but AdkAction Broadband Efforts Continue**

Kansas City won the Google contest for installation of super fast broadband. However, AdkAction's initiative helping the Tri Lakes file an application was a big win and work continues to extend and improve broadband in the area. In less than two weeks last winter, AdkAction spearheaded a very credible Google contest application for the Tri-Lakes, while energizing and gaining consensus among six local governmental entities (the towns of Harrietstown, North Elba, and Tupper Lake and the villages of Saranac Lake, Lake Placid, and Tupper Lake), often not known for working together cooperatively in the past.

Since then, the Google the Adirondacks team -- with leadership from AdkAction.org chair Dave Wolff -- has continued to foster community awareness about the importance of high speed broadband access to the future financial viability of the Tri-Lakes. Working with us on the project are the Trudeau Institute, Adworkshop, Adirondack Broadband, the Saranac Lake Chamber of Commerce, the Lake Placid Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism, Clarkson University, the Tupper Lake Chamber of Commerce, CBN Connect, the Development Authority of the North Country and the High Peaks Education Foundation. We are now taking the lead in an effort to make affordable broadband access available to all households in the Tri-Lakes by working with Time Warner to produce a detailed map of the area's broadband coverage. Our goal is to determine the design and costs associated with broadband build-outs, prioritizing routes, and ultimately finding sources to fund construction. Keene's model for extending broadband to almost 100% of that community is being used as a model.

### **We Need Your Help on an AdkAction.org Standing Committee**

In a recent email alert we asked members to consider helping out on one of AdkAction.org's standing committees. We are small organization with an ambitious workload and we would appreciate your help, even if your time commitment is limited. Once again, here are the committees and their agendas. Please email [info@adkaction.org](mailto:info@adkaction.org) if you have time or interest. We also welcome your suggestions for other committees you recommend we form.

#### Water Quality Committee (Lee Keet, chair):

- Continuing our pursuit of a more cost effective and less harmful road salt policy in the Adirondacks.
- Organizing and staffing a June conference jointly sponsored by AdkAction.org and the Adirondack Council.
- Exploring the possibility of hiring professional consultants to define specific actions to improve winter road maintenance and how much such changes would cost and save.
- Discussing options for testing Adirondack lakes for bacterial contamination by fecal coliform and adding this as an option under the existing ALAP and/or CSLAP lake assessment programs.

#### Government Affairs Committee (Barbara Plumadore, chair):

- Studying realistic options for consolidating government services in ways that will cut costs and keep taxes down, with initial concentration on Tri-Lakes schools, since school costs account for the largest share of the tax burden.
- Working on a continuing project to expand broadband service in the Adirondacks. This work began when AdkAction.org initiated the Google the Adirondacks project last February, prompting the Tri-Lakes to enter a Google broadband contest, and has expanded in its mission since. Lots of progress, but more to be done (see above).

#### Property Tax Committee (Dave Wolff, chair):

- Sponsoring a meeting of assessors in June at the Wild center (see above) for which we will need volunteers to for sending invitations, coordinating the agenda and food set up.

Communications Committee (Marsha Stanley, Chair)

(This committee is fully staffed). Its duties include:

- Writing the quarterly newsletter, press releases and communications to members such as this newsletter.
- Advising on public relations strategy.
- Creating updated tri-fold brochures sent to prospective members
- Writing appeals to new members.

### **AdkAction.org to Hire Intern Again this Summer**

Interviewing is underway for selection of our second annual intern. The job description has been posted at three schools with strong Adirondack connections – Hamilton College, St. Lawrence University and Clarkson University. Applicants should send résumés to [Phyllis@adkaction.org](mailto:Phyllis@adkaction.org).