



Q2 newsletter 2010

Member Appreciation Reception at Wenonah

AdkAction.org will host a thank-you reception (for members only¹) at historic great camp Wenonah, the home of members Jim and Ann Schoff, 320 County Road 45, on Friday, July 7 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. This is not a fundraiser. [Please-Please RSVP via email \(info@AdkAction.org\) and then](mailto:info@AdkAction.org) come to enjoy food and hors d'oeuvres with friends who share the same concerns for the future of the Adirondacks. Upper Saranac Lake members are urged to boat-pool, with tie-ups at the Schoff's dock, at Marsha Stanley's nearby dock, or by anchoring in the cove if dock spaces run out and being ferried in. There will be valet parking available at the Wenonah circle.

Milfoil Appropriation Moving through House

AdkAction.org joined with the Adirondack Council in sending a delegation to Washington last December to lobby our congressman and senators for funds to first map and plan the attack, and then bring the 54 Adirondack lakes with Eurasian Water Milfoil under control. The funds would go to the Adirondack Watershed Institute at Paul Smith's College who have extensive experience in controlling milfoil using hand harvesting (divers) and benthic matting (i.e., without chemicals). This spring our Water Quality Co-chair, Lee Keet, met with Congressman Owens to press the case further. Congressman Owens then sponsored a \$1 million appropriation to do the first phase of the project. On July 1 the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee approved Congressman Bill Owens' funding request. [You can access Congressman Owens announcement here.](#) The appropriation will move forward in the Congressional approval process.

Meet our Intern, Peter Erwin

AdkAction.org has hired Peter Erwin as an intern for June through August. Peter's main responsibilities include expanding the organization's membership through local and regional contacts, organizing mailings and distributions such as the newsletter and updating the website. We expect to benefit in organization, efficacy and additional member contributions by his efforts this summer.

Peter is a mathematics major and history minor at Hamilton College, where he will enter his senior year in the fall. He is a captain of the varsity tennis team and a student

¹ If you are not a member and want to join, go to www.adkaction.org/Contribute/Contribute.htm and sign up!

advisory board member of the college's community outreach program. In the fall semester of 2009, Peter cultivated an academic interest in the Adirondacks to complement his recreational one. He took a course called "Cultural and Natural History of the Adirondack Park," in which he found himself on a field trip to Camp Wenonah – a place with which he is now much more familiar – on Upper Saranac Lake. Peter has enjoyed many a weekend at his family's Adirondack house in Pottersville and lives in his hometown of Cornwall, New York.

This summer, Peter has the opportunity to extend the organization's reach to all areas of the Adirondacks by finding prospective members. After productive meetings with several members already, he is on track to complete a very successful mailing of AdkAction.org literature to residents of the Park. If you haven't had the chance to meet Peter, we hope you will at our July 9th reception at Wenonah, or another time this summer.

2010 North County Assessors' Conference Draws Praise

On Thursday, June 24th, AdkAction.org hosted the North Country Assessors' Conference in Saranac Lake. Though we organized the logistics of the conference, the material was presented by and for the assessors in attendance. The goal was to provide a forum for the assessors to discuss the challenges of ensuring the equitable valuation of all property in the North Country, both public and private. Those challenges include issues such as immense tracts of state land, few comparable sales, and waterfront valuation methodologies which vary from town to town. At the end of the day, the participants agreed that the conference met or exceeded their expectations and they supported the formation of a North Country Association of Assessors to continue future collaboration.

The conference featured five speakers in the morning, followed by breakout sessions in the afternoon to address each of the five issues presented in the morning:

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Comparable Sales	Paul Maniacek, Assessor for the Towns of Horicon and Chester
Valuation Models	Dave Briggs, Assessor for the Towns of Cortlandville, Homer, Taylor, Virgil, and Willett
Waterfront Valuation	Doug Tichenor, Assessor for the Towns of Brighton, Franklin, Harrietstown, and Santa Clara
Equalization Rates	Curt Schoeberl, Assessor for the Town of Shawangunk
Property Owner Understanding	Sue Otis, Assessor for the Town of Malta

By mid-afternoon, the leaders from each breakout group had related the consensus of their respective groups to the rest of the room. Dave Briggs closed the conference by encouraging the audience to think regionally and to continue to share ideas: "Think about, on a larger level, some reforms that would ultimately make our job easier."

The conference established AdkAction.org's credibility with the North Country Assessors as an organization who could plan and conduct an unbiased meeting intended solely for the benefit of the assessors. Most importantly, the participants agreed to help us set up the North Country Assessor Association. We are planning to work with the appropriate County Real Property Service Directors and County Assessor Association Presidents to plan the kick-off of the North Country Assessors Association in the fall. We believe that by having the North Country Assessors work together and share best practices in assessing the properties in our sparsely populated and unique area, the public stands the best chance of receiving fair and equitable assessments. In his closing remarks, Dave Briggs said that the Adirondack Region was lucky to have such an organization as AdkAction.org to promote this type of vital collaboration.

Reducing Damage from Road Salting

In May we co-sponsored (with the Adirondack Council) a conference at Paul Smith's on road salt. The conference was a follow-on to the study that AdkAction.org commissioned on the impacts of road salt on our infrastructure, health, and environment that was completed and published in February. Entitled *Recommendations for Road Deicing in the Adirondack Park*, this work was authored by Daniel L. Kelting, Executive Director and Corey L. Laxson, Research Associate, at the Adirondack Watershed Institute of Paul Smith's College. This was the first comprehensive review and summary of the peer-reviewed scientific literature on salt damage, and it got a lot of press and other attention.

The May conference brought together representatives of towns, environmental and advocacy groups, and the state (NYSDOT, DEC, and APA). Conclusions reached were that

- road salt is a serious problem that needs much more cooperative attention across jurisdictions,
- there are new and better techniques that need more study and implementation, and
- the only way to get to a general agreement across all constituencies is to have a special task force appointed by the Governor to make very detailed recommendations on materials, procedures, equipment, shared services, management structures, funding, etc.

A petition to the Governor has been drafted and is being signed by participants at the May meeting. It will be presented by the Adirondack Council to its membership at its Forever Wild Day annual meeting in Lake Clear on July 10th and then again to the Common Ground Alliance meeting in Long Lake on July 14th. Members can access the draft letter and signature page on the News tab on our website or [by following this link](#). We must have real signatures, so if road salt is as concerning to you as it is to us, please print the signature page and mail it signed and filled out to AdkAction.org, PO Box 655 Saranac Lake, New York 12983. We believe we are making real progress on this serious issue. You may also sign the petition in person at the Schoffs' party July 9.

Trails or Rails?

For more than two decades the rail corridor between Saranac Lake and Tupper Lake has laid fallow. Plans for restoration of scenic rail services have always been just around the corner, with funding never quite available and the road bed continuing to deteriorate. In April AdkAction.org lent its offices and talents to drafting a request for proposal (RFP) that would result in a completely unbiased study of the proper uses of this stretch, including the current active tourist rail stretch from Lake Placid to Saranac Lake. The RFP asked for a detailed cost/benefit study of the impact of rail restoration versus conversion of the rail bed to a multi-purpose bike/hike/skate and winter ski/snowmobile trail. Both scenarios will be studied with hard estimates of tourist impact, business opportunities, and costs.

The winning bidder was selected in June. Contract negotiations are under way between the Town of North Elba (who has funding for rail studies left over from the aborted 2002 rails-plus-trails study) and the winner. An announcement of the contract should be made soon and the study should be complete by year-end. At that point the arguments pro/anti train and pro/anti bike should be reduced to factual arguments of the benefits and costs of each. The study will serve as the basis for grant requests that will fund the work to put this incredible stretch of real estate back in the hands of the public.

AdkAction.org is proud of the role it played in getting this topic, to coin a phrase, back on track.

Google the Adirondacks

We hosted a party on June 6 for AdkAction.org members and local opinion leaders who worked together on the [Google the Adirondacks](#) project last February and March. Those invited had worked feverishly last winter to pull together an application to submit to Google in its contest to choose one or more communities for which it will provide broadband services at 100 times current fastest speeds. Almost all the work on the application, whose fate will not be known until early next year, had never met personally. The party was a great chance to get to know one another better. The group continues to meet on regular phone conferences to discuss ways to further broadband access in the Adirondacks, one of AdkAction.org's important goals.

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