

Spring, 2016



E-Newsletter



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AdkAction.org Celebrates 5th Anniversary

AdkAction.org, established in 2011 by a small group of local residents, is celebrating its 5th anniversary. Its core mission remains getting things done for the Adirondacks by taking on non-partisan projects with widespread support that will benefit both permanent and seasonal residents.

Originally formed to look at fair and consistent property assessments, the group has contributed to the Adirondacks via projects as diverse as Monarch butterfly preservation through sponsorship of "Flight of the Monarch" at the Wild Center and promoting reduced roadside mowing to promote milkweed growth; a first-ever Park-wide symposium bringing together 83 arts organizations which

resulted in a shared arts calendar; and sponsorship of regional road salt conferences as well as stream monitoring equipment, which contributed to a reduction of 30% salt use per mile.

“What differentiates our organization is that we identify projects that need action, and quickly through concentrated effort make change happen. We also collaborate with other organizations here to increase our joint impact,” according to Dave Wolff, a founding Board member and current Board Chair, Members of the Board include local and seasonal residents with diverse professional backgrounds in cardiology, biological science, philanthropy, engineering, law, construction, marketing and sales, management consulting, and photography and art.

Current projects include:

- Bringing universal access to **high-speed broadband** to the Park
- Sponsoring a multi-stage research study to document and quantify **hidden costs of the use of road salt**, hoping to bring to light the economic impact of the overuse of road salt
- **Promoting Adirondack art**, including the placement of banners in various local communities
- **Protecting water quality** and controlling invasive species in the regions lakes
- Developing **local village revitalization** initiatives
- Sponsoring school teacher education in the use of **technology in the classroom**.

Our successful work on these projects has been recognized by local leaders:

"Dave Wolff and AdkAction.org have been instrumental in raising the awareness of how important affordable, high speed broadband is for economic development and education in the Adirondack Park. As the Village of Saranac Lake explored options for bringing fiber optic broadband into Downtown, Dave's insights helped us find a solution that will benefit residents and businesses in the Village for years to come."

-Jeremy Evans, AICP, Community Development Director of Saranac Lake.

With so many recent successes, and recognizing that its ability to grow membership and take on new projects was limited by scarce resources and a lack of full-time senior staff, the organization has just hired a new full-time Executive Director (see article below). “While we have accomplished

much in these past five years, the Board felt that adding an experienced full time Executive Director would allow us to significantly grow membership, which is the key to increased funds that will allow us to take on more projects, to provide a more focused approach to fundraising and grant writing, and to improve marketing and publicity campaigns,” explained Board Chair Wolff.

New Full-Time Executive Director Hired



After a careful search, AdkAction.org hired Brittany Christenson. Mrs. Christenson will be well known to many local residents. For the past several years, she has served as the Administrator to one of the best known local farms in our area, Fledging Crow Vegetables, in Keeseville, NY. While with Fledging Crow, she managed packing and logistics while overseeing a staff of up to 20 seasonal employees. She was at the Saranac Lake and Adirondack Medical Center farmers’ markets weekly throughout the summer, and she helped grow Fledging Crow’s CSA membership by 65% in two years. She also secured state grants to support innovative sustainable growing techniques on the farm.

Mrs. Christenson also worked at the North Country Healthy Heart Network as their Community Nutrition Coordinator where she learned how to build community buy-in and develop innovative program evaluation metrics. Her experience there prepared her to work well with a board of directors and collaborate with other non-profits in the Adirondacks. Mrs. Christenson, who some may still know by her maiden name Harris, received her BA in mathematics from Carroll College in Helena, Montana and also has extensive experience in marketing, social media development, publicity, and website development.

For Ms. Christenson, the opportunity to join AdkAction.org was exactly the sort of challenging career step she was looking for in the Adirondacks.

“I am passionate about this land and this place, and when I saw the accomplishments of AdkAction.org, and was presented with the needs and the ambitious new goals of the organization, I knew this was the perfect fit for me. I am really delighted to be joining such a dedicated group of local residents who are working on projects to directly improve the lives of my neighbors, friends, and everyone in this remarkable Park.”

Among Ms. Christenson’s new goals will be to significantly expand its membership by extending the reach of AdkAction.org beyond its current strengths in the Saranac Lake/Lake Placid/Tupper Lake region into other areas of the Park, especially the southern tier and the Old Forge/western regions.

Project Updates



Monarch Butterflies

AdkAction.org is sponsoring a lecture by Lincoln Brower, emeritus professor at Sweet Briar College, to be held at The Wild Center, August 3, 2016 at 6 pm. There will be a short reception with refreshments following the lecture.

Professor Brower will discuss the current status of the monarch population, which dropped drastically due to the use of herbicides such as Roundup and subsequent scarcity of milkweed plants—the plants the butterflies depend on for food and for their propagation. Last winter the numbers of monarchs appeared to rise a bit only to be decimated once again by a late winter storm this past spring just as their migration from Mexico began.

AdkAction.org has continued its efforts to prevent further decrease in the numbers of this fascinating insect. Once again a letter was sent in April, 2016, to all highway superintendents in the Adirondacks requesting they not mow the road sides between late June and mid-September so as to give the migrating monarch crucial access to the milkweed. AdkAction.org continues to distribute milkweed seed to those wishing to plant it in the Adirondacks.



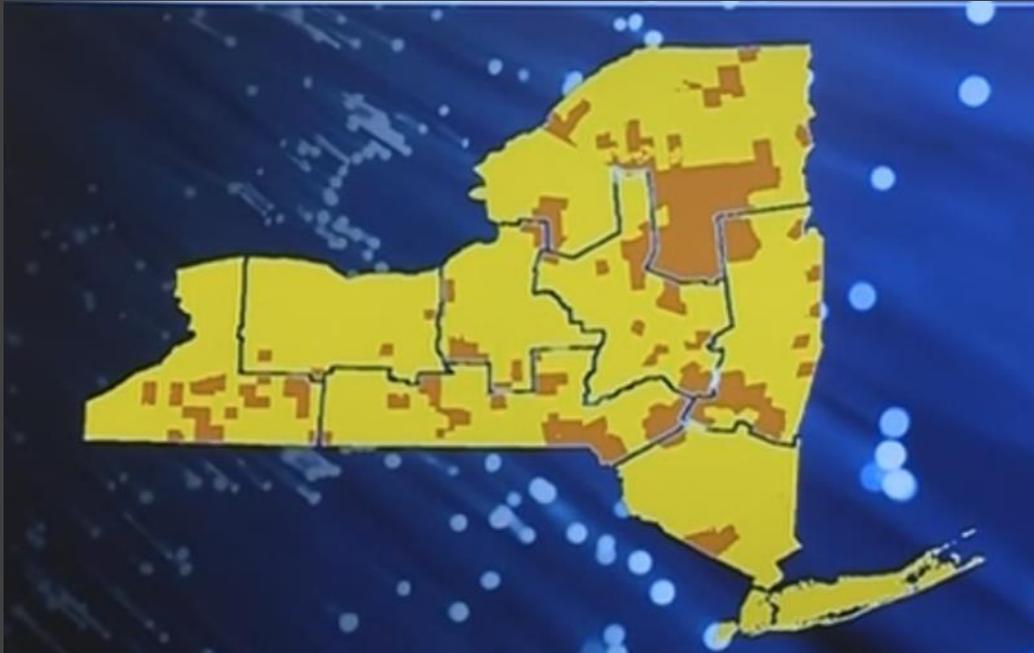
Road Salt Project Update

ADKAction.org has sponsored three road salt seminars in partnership with Paul Smith's College. The "Road Salt Management Conference" focused on educating responsible state and local officials on the many harmful impacts of road salt, and actively worked on developing and implementing new winter road maintenance methods by the NYSDOT. The result: a 30% reduction in the use of environmentally harmful road salt! But there is much more to be done.

Our current efforts are focused on economic motivations for reducing road salt use. We recently funded a study showing that the data indeed exists to demonstrate costs associated with road salt damage to personal vehicles, DOT Vehicles, and bridges/NYS infrastructure. We are working with Adirondack Research to produce a study on the "Hidden Costs of Road Salt"; The full study will need to be grant funded, but in order to justify a grant, we need to sponsor a smaller preliminary research effort as an example of the type and quality of work we intend to produce.

The preliminary phase of research is focused on calculating the cost of rehabilitation or replacement of bridge decks over a five-year period for each region and county in

New York. AdkAction.org will match new dollars raised in an ADK Gives campaign to reach our goal of raising \$9000 to pay for the research necessary to show that road salt is not only an environmental concern, but an economic concern as well. Please email us at info@adkaction.org and let us know if you are willing to donate towards this very important project.



Broadband Update

At the state and regional levels, much is happening in the world of broadband, and AdkAction.org continues to play a strong role in the effort to bring greater internet access to the residents of the Adirondacks. As you may remember from our last e-newsletter, the NY Public Service Commission approved the merger of Time Warner Cable and Charter Communications earlier this year, and the New NY Broadband Program was officially launched. In early May, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) gave final approval of the merger. As a condition of the merger approval, by mid-summer Time Warner Cable will be required to identify an additional 145,000 households in its current franchise areas that it will add to its network.

Funding through the New NY Broadband Program was announced to connect all unserved and under-served households in the state at speeds of at least 100 Mbps. The funding is to be released in phases. The application deadline for Phase 1, focused on

the areas in brown on the map above, was April 15th, and winning providers will be announced in the coming months. Requests for Proposals for Phase 2 funding will be let during the summer.

Of great importance at the federal level is the status of the \$170 million in federal aid that was offered to Verizon to expand broadband in rural areas of New York through Connect America Funds. Verizon declined to accept the funding, and now the \$170 million may be auctioned off to another state. Board Chair Dave Wolff recently co-signed a letter authored by the Adirondack Council supporting Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand, and Governor Cuomo's request to the FCC to reconsider diverting the funds and to instead offer them to other service providers in New York State.

AdkAction.org continues to host a widely-attended monthly Broadband Conference Call to encourage communication between community members, state and local government officials, and service providers.



Annual Meeting and Party Reminder

AdkAction.org will celebrate its 5th Anniversary at its annual membership meeting/party at:

Heaven Hill Farm
Thursday, July 21, 5:00-7:30 PM

Join us for drinks, great food and conversation, and the Silent Auction. **If you're not a member yet, please use one of the buttons below to join** so that we can enjoy your company at our annual meeting.

[Individual Membership \\$75](#)

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AdkAction.org

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