

Don't cut Adirondack Park Agency funds

This is in response to William Hammond's April 2 "Environmentalists relieved budget cuts were less than expected."

Maybe some were relieved, but I can tell you that others -- including the National Audubon Society -- are appalled. How the governor and Legislature can agree to cut the budget of the tiny Adirondack Park Agency by 9 percent -- by some \$250,000 -- is almost unbelievable in this year of celebration and mutual congratulation over the 100th anniversary of the Adirondack Park.

The Adirondack Park Agency is the thin green line that protects the Adirondacks from rampant, destructive development. It consists of about 50 staff whose job is to regulate development projects in an area the size of Massachusetts. That's one-fifth of New York state -- embodying

the largest American park outside Alaska.

The Adirondack Park Agency has not yet been given the staff and budget commensurate with its responsibilities. It cannot currently administer and enforce its complex law with its existing minuscule staff -- though it tries valiantly to do so. And now the governor and Legislature are snatching away its very bones!

There is nothing to be relieved about in the tragically shortsighted budget cuts in one of the nation's most important environmental-protection programs. The APA needs to be strengthened, not weakened, if we are to have a park worth the name 100 years from now.

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