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EDITORIALS

The APA needs bodies

Wanted: One legal director
One project reviewer
One enforcement officer
One wetlands specialist

The Adirondack Park Agency would love to announce these and at least a half-dozen other job openings, but can't because it hasn't the money to pay the salaries. In his new budget, Gov. Mario Cuomo must make sure the agency gets the resources it needs to perform its basic mission.

After 20 years of existence, the APA is still controversial. Although most Adirondackers now grudgingly accept it, there are some who would abolish it. Fortunately, the Legislature recognizes the need for the agency, especially now, when the park is again under development pressure. Without the APA, there would be even more development — and more of the kind that threatens the park's natural beauty and integrity.

However, because of its budget crisis, the APA is not doing as good a job as it could. While its workload has increased 100 percent since 1982, its regulatory staff has increased only 12 percent, to 48 positions. There are just three enforcement officers to cover a vast park the size of Vermont. The result is that many projects are not being

monitored, and some developers are simply ignoring the agency.

At the same time, the lack of project-review personnel means that developers must now wait months for decisions that once took weeks. For this reason, even many developers support an increased budget for the APA.

The lack of personnel has also prevented the agency from communicating better with park residents and local governments, which could reduce misunderstanding, if not resentment. And it has hampered the agency's efforts to help local governments develop their own land-use plans, as the town of Newcomb has done. If all the local governments had such plans, and enforced them, the APA might not be necessary, or at least wouldn't have to be as intrusive.

The cost of hiring the necessary personnel and buying the necessary equipment and services would be \$750,000 — the equivalent of one luxury condo or camp on an Adirondack lake, as agency supporters have pointed out. The money needn't necessarily come from general revenues; it could be raised through increased fees and improved fine collection.

A more efficient and responsive APA could do a lot to bring Adirondackers together, and preserve a magnificent park.