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Legislative Edition

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2018 Legislative Session Poised for Frustration

The 2017 legislative session was about as disappointing as any we've seen in recent history. There is little hope that the 2018 will be any more successful than the last.

New York State Conservation Council, the state Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the state Conservation Fund Advisory Board are already developing a Legislative Agenda with common goals based on issues that were not addressed this year and new issues for 2018.

Prop 3 helps Forest Preserve communities

Communities located with the state's Blue Lines — the Catskill and Adirondack Parks — have long been frustrated by the Forever Wild provisions of the State Constitution. Efforts to complete infrastructure repairs and improvements, as developing project to help with economic development, can be frustrated by of the state government and the Adirondack Park Agency.

The November ballot will have an initiative called Proposition 3, that will authorize the creation of a land bank that would provide the communities with the means to complete projects that require passage thru state-owned land located within the Blue Lines.

A land bank of 255 acres will be created to offset parkland that would have to be used to complete such projects. *****

Projects that would be eligible for land include:

- (a) addressing bridge hazards;
- (b) eliminating dangerous curves and grades on roads;
- (c) relocating, maintaining, or reconstructing local highways and associ-

ated culverts provided that no relocated portion is over one mile long;

(d) water wells located within 530 feet of state or local highways; and

(e) stabilization devices for existing utility poles next to highways.

In sum, an additional 255 acres of land will be added to the state's Forest Preserve. Those acres will offset the eventual loss the 255 acres that will be set aside for the land bank.

The proposal requires a Constitutional Amendment because of limitations on land use within the "Blue Line" that bounds the combined preserves. The six million-acre Adirondack Preserve includes 2.6 million acres of state owned land, 287,514 acres of the 700,000 acre Catskill Preserve are state owned.

Governments would need to demonstrate that no viable alternatives exist to using state Forest Preserve land for the projects. They would also be required to restore pre-project environmental conditions as much as is practicable.

The proposal will also help reduce project costs without jeopardizing or threatening the environmental concerns of the people of the state.

Municipalities would request to use acres in the land bank to complete their projects which could also include bike paths, sewer lines, and electric, telephone, and broadband lines within the width of highways (49.5 feet or the width of the easement in existence on July 1, 2015) cutting through the Forest Preserve.

The New York State Conservation Council, the state Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the state Conservation Fund Advisory Board, are universally supporting the initiative. So is a loosely knit organization called Access the Adirondacks that came together to push for reasonable and sensible access to the lands purchased by the state from the Finch Pruyn Paper Company. lines,

and electric, telephone, and broadband lines within the width of highways (49.5 feet or the width of the easement in existence on July 1, 2015) cutting through the Forest Preserve.

CWD Risk Minimization

NYS CC, FWMB and CFAB, have all endorsed the CWD Risk Minimization Plan that is currently being considered. If the plan is adopted, it could lead to a ban on the use of natural deer urine. However, that would require adoption of new regulations.

There are some people expressing opposition to such a ban, but CWD has caused severe problems in states that have been an aggressive with their approach have had additional cases. Pennsylvania has a growing problem and that is at least partly responsible for our aggressive approach.

Trout Stream Management

The DEC Bureau of Fisheries has been holding meetings across the state on the status of our trout management program and what anglers are looking for in the future.

The current plan has not been updated in many years and angler's expectations have no doubt changed.

This initiative is taking place at the same time that our hatchery system is getting some much needed attention as a result of funding from New York Works Program that Governor Cuomo has included in his Budget Bills the last several years.

Fisheries staff are handling the public sessions as a "listening tour," the issues and concerns expressed by the state's anglers will help update our trout stream management program. The first Region 3 meeting was held in New Paltz. Another one will be held on October 26, in Cortlandt Manor. Contact Bill Connors for details if you would like to attend.