

NEWS RELEASE



For more information:

John F. Sheehan

518-432-1770 office

518-551-1340 cell

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, Thursday, June 28, 2012

**ADIRONDACK COUNCIL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRIAN HOUSEAL TO STEP DOWN
AFTER DECADE AT HELM OF PARK'S MOST INFLUENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP**
*Helped Defend 'Forever Wild' Forest Preserve, Pressed for More Wilderness, Wildlife Protection
While also Finding Common Ground with Local Officials, Encouraging Sustainable Development*

ELIZABETHTOWN, N.Y. – The board of trustees of the Adirondack Council announced the departure of Brian L. Houseal after a decade as executive director of the Adirondack Park's largest and most influential environmental organization.

Houseal will remain at his post until the end of October. Chairwoman Ann Carmel said the board will then turn to Deputy Director Diane Fish of Lake Placid to serve as Acting Executive Director, while the board conducts a national search for a new Executive Director.

Carmel said "the Council has been privileged to have Brian Houseal as our Executive Director for the last 10 years. He has exhibited leadership and innovation on so many issues affecting the environment and the communities of the Adirondack Park. He is leaving the Council in a strong position as it continues to face issues affecting this magical park."

"Brian's leadership gave the Council an ever larger voice in all matters related to the Park. He understands how the pieces fit together for both wilderness and communities and has nurtured the essential interdependence between them. This benefits all stakeholders in the Park, keeping it a special and unique place while enriching our lives inside its boundaries," said Brian Ruder, chairman from 2007-10.

"When we hired Brian 10 years ago, I had very high expectations for his leadership potential. His performance far exceeded my expectations. Combining a passion for the environment, a warm feeling for people and exceptional communication skills, Brian was the perfect leader for the Council," said David Skovron, chair, 1999-2003.

Reflecting on his tenure at the Council, Houseal said, "I have had the honor of moving forward with a legacy endowed to us by some of the greatest conservationists in our country. Louis and Bob Marshall, Clarence Petty, the Council's founders, and many other directors, staff and members over the years have all fought to uphold Article XIV – the Forever Wild Clause – of New York State's

Constitution, unique in the world as a people's commitment to wilderness preservation. That vision and constellation of stars provides the compass bearing that guides our team every day.

"What makes the Adirondack Park unique as well is the character and vitality of our communities. I am proud to be a co-founder of the Common Ground Alliance, because it helped forge a role for the Council as a 'solutions department,' searching for ways to protect the environment while also benefiting local communities and their economies.

"In the time-honored Adirondack tradition of borrowing someone else's cabin during a winter blizzard, I believe I'm leaving the Adirondack Council in better condition than I found it, with dry tinder and a big pile of wood for the next steward. It's a dynamic organization with a passionate Board and staff, dedicated members and supporters and will continue its strong tradition of successful advocacy.

"Our organization is well-equipped for the transition. Diane Fish has been a great partner as Deputy Director and has the Board's full support and commitment. John Sheehan, Communications Director, Scott Lorey, Government Relations Director, Allison Buckley, Conservation Director, and Elaine Burke, Operations Director, are an experienced team who will continue to guide our staff to the next level of growth," he said.

Leadership on Issues Vital to the Unique Adirondack Park

One of the Council's first accomplishments under Houseal's leadership was its support and the subsequent enactment of the Clean Air Interstate Rule, now known as the Cross State Pollution rule. It requires deep pollution cuts from power plants in 23 states whose emissions cause acid rain and mercury pollution in Adirondack lakes. This landmark achievement has led to significant reduction in lake acidification and more rapid than anticipated restoration of many lakes in the Park.

In addition, one of the organization's proudest accomplishments was among the least glamorous: repeatedly saving the federal grants that have paid for long-term acid rain research in lakes and rivers across the Adirondack Park since 1985. The annual funding vigil doesn't bring the organization much attention or financial support, but it provides the proof needed to show whether federal policies are protecting the park's waters from harm.

Curbing acid rain is crucial to the future of the park's vast, unspoiled wilderness, as well as the 130 communities within the Park. The integration of communities within the Adirondack Park sets this Park apart from other state and national parks and makes it a global model for preserving wild lands amid rural communities.

The Council encouraged New York and nine other Northeast states to create the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in 2008. The Council then supported RGGI by becoming an active participant, competing against power plants to purchase carbon allowances at RGGI auctions.

Thus, the Council became the first environmental organization to participate in a government-mandated carbon auction. The Council and its supporters have retired more than 12,000 tons to date.

Leadership on Constitutional Issues

In 2007, The Council worked with officials in the Town of Long Lake, Hamilton County, to secure approval for a Constitutional Amendment allowing the hamlet of Raquette Lake to secure a supply of potable water for its residents, following the failure of its water treatment plant. The town took control of a small parcel of Forest Preserve next to the hamlet, which then became town land, in exchange for a much larger parcel to be added to the Forest Preserve, and New York's Forever Wild legacy.

In 2009, The Council also helped the Franklin County Village of Tupper Lake fix its unreliable power supply, which often failed in winter and endangered residents whose furnaces and other heat sources would shut down. Houseal helped to negotiate a Constitutional Amendment that brought a new

power supply line into town from a local hydro-power project, alongside State Route 56 as it passes through Forest Preserve lands. The deal resulted in the swap of six acres of roadside ditch for more than 20 acres of precious Raquette River shoreline, which was added to the Forest Preserve.

In each instance, the Council sent its representatives out to speak with voters and the media in every corner of the state, to ensure the Constitutional Amendments were understood and given the proper consideration by the State Legislature and the voters. Both were approved in landslides of greater than 2-to-1.

New Approach for Adirondack Eco-Tourism

Building on a successful approach taken by the National Parks Service, the Council developed an eco-tourism plan for the less-visited western half of the Adirondack Park that emphasized the 24 hamlets and villages that constitute the Gateway Communities surrounding the 600,000-acre Bob Marshall Wild Lands Complex. By working together to promote the wild lands and waters that lie between them, the Council hopes these communities will embrace a common economic and environmental purpose, rather than continuing to see the Forest Preserve as a barrier that separates their communities from each other.

To promote the idea, the Council created an Adirondack outdoor recreation map that emphasizes the communities around the wilderness, showing how their locations, cultures and histories are essential to the enjoyment of the region's wild lands and waters. Over the past 10 years, the percentage of acres under state protection in "the Bob" has risen from just over half to more than 80 percent, nearly completing the vision for this vast expanse of true wilderness. As a result of the Council's groundbreaking work, the DEC is now using wild lands complexes to undertake large landscape conservation plans across the entire Park in collaboration with local gateway communities.

Personal Legacy: Common Ground with Local Officials

Perhaps the signature action of Houseal's tenure at the Council was his work as co-founder of the Common Ground Alliance. The CGA brought community development and environmental leaders together to discuss how they could build and promote a common agenda for policymakers in Albany and Washington. The alliance grew out of a conversation among Lani Ulrich (then director of CAP-21, now chair of the APA) and J.R. Risley, then supervisor of the Town of Inlet, asking if they could find solutions to benefit the Park's communities, their economies and the environment. Those early meetings have culminated in a scenario planning process that describes a vision for a sustainable park where both people and nature thrive.

The alliance's most significant long-term accomplishments may lie in the mutual understanding and sense of cooperation between local government officials and environmental organizations. By speaking with a single voice to media and the Paterson Administration in Albany, the alliance persuaded the Legislature to abandon Paterson's plan to cut state tax payments on Forest Preserve lands to local communities and find savings in other areas of the state budget. The state pays almost \$70 million per year in local property taxes on 2.4 million acres of Forest Preserve in the park's 92 towns.

Houseal also oversaw the Council's efforts to improve the 700-unit Adirondack Club and Resort planned for the lands around the former Big Tupper Ski Center. After six years of reviewing plans, and participating in mediation sessions and public hearings, which changed many aspects of the development to better ensure the viability of Tupper Lake and to put in place environmental safeguards, the Council supported the Park Agency's decision to approve the project. The Council then commenced an effort to modernize the agency's rules and regulations, which have remained largely unchanged since 1971.

The Adirondack Council Going Forward

The Council's signature accomplishments in the last 10 years under Houseal's leadership include legislative victories on clean air, flexibility in governance, and a new civility in discourse -- legacies that leave the organization well positioned to continue to lead the environmental conversation in the Adirondacks. As Houseal reflected, "The Adirondack Council is now seen as a model of environmental advocacy that has evolved to meet the needs of the 21st century. Here, where both people and nature coexist so intimately, each needs the other to develop and thrive. As people across the globe look to our Adirondack Park as an ongoing experiment in how conservation can adapt, evolve, and be strengthened, I see the Adirondack Council as an organization with a bright future, one whose influence will extend far beyond the Blue Line."

The Adirondack Council is a privately funded, not-for-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the ecological integrity and wild character of New York's 9,300-square-mile Adirondack Park – the largest park in the contiguous United States. The Council carries out its mission through research, education, advocacy and legal action. Adirondack Council members live in all 50 United States and on four continents.

Learn more at www.adirondackcouncil.org.

-end-