

Adirondack EXPLORER

State Land Master Plan updates spark push for other 'wish list' items

By Gwendolyn Craig

State and federal lawmakers, including U.S. Rep. Elise Stefanik, joined more than 70 people requesting the Adirondack Park Agency to rezone most of the Lake George Battlefield Park to a more protective land classification.

The switch, they argued, would better preserve the French and Indian War and Revolutionary War site and “limit construction ... that could be considered a threat to the critical historic resource.” Earlier this year, the agency authorized plans for interment of unearthened Revolutionary War-era soldiers at the park.

Alliance members hope the APA, which oversees public and private development in the 6-million-acre Adirondack Park, will consider changing the battlefield’s day use area, campground and park from intensive use to historic. The Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance led the call.

The agency received the letters, petitions and plans during its public comment period for revisions to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan, a policy document governing the public forest preserve. The APA is supposed to update it every five years. It last revised the master plan in 2019.

The APA’s proposed edits did not include a reclassification of the battlefield, or other wish list items from the public, such as backcountry ski trails throughout the Adirondacks and a mountain bike corridor connecting the Wilcox Lake Wild Forest to Speculator. Written comments, racking up more than 2,000 pages, also weighed in on the agency’s proposals around accessibility, climate change, wildlife and visitor management.

An APA spokesman said the agency received more than 1,200 comments, which “may be used to develop revisions to the final proposed amendments package.”

The earliest such final edits may be brought to the APA board is late winter, the spokesman said. The board could vote on the package then. Once the board passes the amendments, the APA will deliver them to Gov. Kathy Hochul for her signature.

In addition to Stefanik, state Assemblyman Matthew Simpson, Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner and state Sen. Dan Stec asked for the Lake George Battlefield Park to be classified as historic.

Lawmakers and battlefield alliance members do not believe the classification change would impact the existing campground or day use areas, but rather protect it from further development and enhance state stewardship. The Adirondack Park contains five historic areas: Crown Point,

John Brown Farm, Camp Santonini, the Hurricane Mountain Fire Tower and the St. Regis Mountain Fire Tower.

But not all are convinced the change is necessary.

Lynda Karig Hohmann, former president of the alliance and a current member, questioned why such a classification was necessary. The battlefield already has state and national historic designations, which Hohmann said provides “a high level of protection.”

Hohmann also questioned if a new classification would impact the campground’s function and maintenance, an area that “provides a strong tourist benefit for the Village and Town of Lake George.” The campground at Crown Point, she noted, is under an intensive use classification.

John DiNuzzo, president of the Lake George Battlefield Park Alliance, said he believes the historic designation will provide “a higher level of care for the artifacts” and would bring the battlefield in line with other historically designated areas.

“We’ve got to have a vision, not just for now, but for the future,” DiNuzzo said. “The more that we can protect and preserve the site, the better.”