

Green group moves to reopen hearing on Tupper resort

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TUPPER LAKE - Adirondack Wild is asking for the state Adirondack Park Agency's hearing on the proposed Adirondack Club and Resort project to be reopened.

Group co-founders Dan Plumley and David Gibson say the hearing should be reopened "to secure additional evidence," arguing that there isn't enough information for APA commissioners to make an informed decision on the project.

APA staff, the project's engineers and about 30 other parties of interested groups and neighboring landowners participated in an adjudicatory hearing on the project that spanned 19 days over three months this spring. Commissioners are supposed to make a final decision on the project based exclusively on the hearing's record.

But Plumley and Gibson, along with attorney and former APA Executive Director Bob Glennon - who is being called the group's advisor on the motion - say there isn't enough information in the record.

Project developers never performed a full study of the project's potential impact on local wildlife, except for noting a few observations while working at the site, and that was a major topic of contention during the hearing. The APA issued developers three incomplete notices asking for more information about wildlife impacts, before the application was deemed complete.

During the hearing, biologist Michael Klemens testified on behalf of Adirondack Wild. He had done a day-long study of the lands around the project site in the spring and found about 11 species of amphibians, though the developers didn't list a single amphibian species in their findings of wildlife on the project site.

Adirondack Wild also wants to see more study done of potential

alternative project designs.

"The Agency has a final opportunity now to ensure that the record is supplemented so that you can reach an informed, reasoned and lawful determination," the group wrote in a letter to the board.

Gibson said in a press release that the only other option is to deny the project.

He also said the project still needs additional permits from the state departments of Environmental Conservation and Health, as well as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, so he doesn't believe the APA taking more time to study the project would hold up construction.

"Collecting this evidence will not require years of study," Gibson noted. "While two full field seasons would be preferable, one full field season of work by qualified experts would gather a considerable amount of information about the presence of wildlife and sensitive ecosystems that is presently not available to Agency Members as they seek to render an informed determination whether this is an approvable project or not."

According to the state law laying out the hearing format, the APA board can approve the project, approve it with modifications and/or conditions, or disapprove it. But before a final decision is made, any party or the agency board can move to reopen the hearing. The board would need to vote on such a motion.