

Railroad is an obstacle in Tupper Lake

February 2, 2015

Adirondack Daily Enterprise

To the editor:

Here it is, Jan. 26, and still not enough snow to travel the C-7 rail corridor! The small business owners who rely on tourism in the winter have not seen any here in Tupper Lake, at least from the snowmobile-traveling tourist, because of the rails and ties that make the corridor UN-passable most of the winter, especially when the motels, diners, restaurants and gas stations, etc., need the tourist dollars to offset the higher costs of operation (fuel oil, higher electric rates).

I have been very active in this rail-and-trail debate, and I am willing to settle with the options the state was proposing for the corridor, which included removal of the rails and ties from Tupper Lake to Lake Placid for now! I do not think a train coming into Tupper Lake will bring any economic relief, only strife, as it has done the last 50 years or so.

The state and even some of the rail supporters say they will make alternative connector trails on and off the corridor where possible to keep the rail line intact the entire length, but this will not work as the connector trails will not be wide enough to groom with the larger trail groomers, only the slow, pull-behind snowmobile groomers. These trails will not be Americans with Disabilities Act accessible like the rail corridor would be. Some of these trails will traverse leased hunting club land, and they will not want the general public on these lands during the summer and fall months, when they are at camp to enjoy the privacy of camp life. There will be several interruptions while traversing this type of trail every time you have to cross the rails, and people will always want the straight, uninterrupted route, as they do when traveling our roadways. How many people will take the slow, winding county roads through small towns and villages instead of taking the interstate to get to the destination? Not many, and this same analogy will be used for the snowmobile tourists as well.

This is the 21st century, and we need to embrace 21st-century ways of drawing tourism up here in the Adirondack Park and not the former 19th-century train. I was at the original stakeholders meeting in Blue Mountain Lake two years ago, and one thing that bothered me was some of the comments from Department of Environmental Conservation officials. They were worried that if the rails were removed from Tupper south, the sensitive state land would be overrun by the general walking public, especially in the Lake Lila area, and I think that is why they want the rails and ties intact south of Tupper Lake, not because they think a train will be good for the economy.

I personally spoke with 90 percent of the Tupper Lake business owners, and they do not want a train here. Another point to ponder is the fact that all communities along the corridor wanted the unit management plan opened, and most wanted the rails and ties removed to make way for a world-class trail that can be enjoyed by all (year round).

Peter Edwards

Tupper Lake