



ADIRONDACK COMMUNITIES & CONSERVATION PROGRAM

May 27, 2005

Kenneth Kogut
NYSDEC
Route 86, Box 296
Ray Brook, NY 12977

Re: High Peaks Bear Canister Regulation

Dear Ken:

The Wildlife Conservation Society is supportive of the Department's regulation to require the use of bear canisters in the Eastern High Peaks Wilderness area. As you know, WCS has been working in partnership with the DEC in the Adirondacks since 2001 to educate hikers on canisters as the best option for storing food in the backcountry. In addition during this time period, WCS has provided almost 200 canisters to 20 retail stores in the Adirondacks and surrounding regions in an effort to promote canisters and to make them inexpensively accessible to campers. WCS provides the canisters, along with training and educational materials, and the shops rent the canisters to campers for a reasonable rate. These partnership efforts have been very successful in raising public awareness of the bear-human conflict issue, and we feel that the regulation will provide additional assurance that the situation in the High Peaks improves over time.

We believe that mandating the use of canisters in this popular and heavily-used area is an appropriate and responsible action, and that the benefits of this policy will include improved public safety as bears learn to disassociate humans and food, leading ultimately to a healthier and less habituated bear population. We acknowledge that the regulation will be a challenge to enforce, and we applaud the dedicated Forest Rangers and Environmental Conservation Officers of the department for their work in educating the public about proper food storage. We also understand that some members of the public are concerned that there will not be sufficient canisters available for all of the visitors to the High Peaks. We believe that, by providing canisters for rental to stores throughout northern and western New York, as well as Quebec and Vermont, we have helped to alleviate the need for a dispersed, accessible stock of canisters. We look forward to working with the DEC and others to continue this effort.

We have also assembled a list of locations renting and selling bear canisters, and published this on our website. We understand that there will be some backpackers who will not have access to a canister or know about the regulation before they enter the High Peaks. In these instances, we suggest that DEC maintain back-up systems for a limited time such as extra canisters at interior outposts, or other emergency food storage systems. WCS remains committed to working in partnership with the DEC, retail stores, and other regional partners to identify solutions and fill needs as they arise.

Best Regards,
Zoë Smith

7 Brandy Brook Avenue, Suite 204, Saranac Lake, NY 12983 tel 518.891.8872 fax 518.891.8875 web www.wcs.org/adirondacks

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