

Adirondack Park Agency 2023 Annual Report



Governor Kathy Hochul

Executive Director Barbara Rice





From Left: APA Executive Director Barbara Rice, Paul Smiths Professor Curt Stager, APA Board Member Benita Law-Diao and Martha Swan, Founder and Executive Director of John Brown Lives!

Message from Executive Director Barbara Rice

It is a great honor to serve as the Adirondack Park Agency Executive Director especially during such a milestone year as 2023 when the agency commemorated the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan Map. This innovative regional land use plan went into effect on August 1st, 1973, and is considered by many as New York State's original Smart Growth Plan.

A distinguished group of guest speakers helped memorialize this special event. Richard Booth and John Banta provided a historical perspective. An inspiring group of young people from the Wild Center's Youth Climate Initiative summoned our optimism as they proudly spoke of their appreciation for this special place and hopes for its future. We also were enlightened by individuals who brought to light the significant but often unheralded contributions of women and African Americans.

As always, our staff and board focused intently on successfully completing the critical work we perform on behalf of all New Yorkers. Nearly three hundred permits were issued, major state land actions were undertaken, best management practices were updated, and we continue to broaden our outreach efforts in support of local government.

I appreciate the hard work and dedication of all agency staff and the support of the board. Together we continue to uphold New York State's great legacy of land preservation and community sustainability inside the Adirondack Park.

Adirondack Park Agency Board

The Adirondack Park Agency is a New York State government agency with an eleven-member Board - five of whom must be residents of the Adirondack Park. The Governor appoints eight members, subject to confirmation by the Senate, and three ex-officio members: The Commissioner of the Department of Economic Development, the Secretary of State, and the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation. The Board represents a careful balance of local, regional and statewide interests in the Adirondack Park. The Agency Board acts on park policy issues and permit applications during meetings, which are held monthly and open to the public.

Board Member	Seat	County	Term
Chair John Ernst	Out of Park	New York	6/30/25
Arthur Lussi	In Park	Essex	6/30/25
Daniel Wilt	In Park	Hamilton	6/30/23
Zoë Smith	In Park	Franklin	6/30/24
Mark Hall	In Park	St. Lawrence	6/30/22
Kenneth Lynch	Out of Park	Onondaga	6/30/22
Benita Law-Diao	Out of Park	Albany	6/30/24

Department of State Designee: Matt Tebo

Department of Environmental Conservation Designee: Joe Zalewski

Department of Economic Development Designee: Bradley Austin

The APA Board commemorated the 50th Anniversary of Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan in 2023. Future environmental leaders from The Wild Center's Youth Climate Initiative provided their perspective and hopes for what the next 50 years will bring to the Adirondack Park.



2023 Adirondack Park Agency Board Highlights

State Land Committee:

- Adirondack Park State Land Master Interpretation – No Material Increase of Road Milage on Wild Forest Lands
- Sharp Bridge Campground and Day Use Area Unit Management Plan Approval
- Broadalbin Boat Launch Unit Management Plan Approval
- Rollins Pond Campground and Day Use Unit Management Plan Approval
- Golden Beach Campground and Day Use Unit Management Plan Approval
- 2023 State Land Classification Package Public Comment and Hearings Authorization

Regulatory Programs Committee:

- P2022-0266 - 5W Solar Power Generating Facility/Town of Moriah, Essex County
- P2022-0194 – Denial of Variance to Expand a Non-Conforming Boathouse
- P2023-0045 – Approval for Use of ProcellaCOR EC in Lake Luzerne
- P2016-0029A – Variance Approval for LS Marina, LLC
- P2022-0037 – Carver Sand and Gravel, LLC
- New General Permit Application for Telecommunications Facility Updates

Public Awareness and Communication Committee:

- Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories – Sandra Weber
- Historical Perspective on Implementation of Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan – Richard Booth and John Banta
- Rediscovering Our History – Professor Curt Stager, Paul Smith’s College and Martha Swan, Founder and Executive Director of John Brown Lives!
- A Look Ahead Perspective – Jen Kretser, Director of Wild Center’s Youth Climate Initiative, and local students
- The Black Woods: Pursing Racial Justice on the Adirondack Frontier – Amy Godine

Local Government Services Committee:

- Amendments to Town of Lake George’s Approved Local Land Use Program Approval

Park Ecology Committee:

- Ecology and Environmental Impacts of Roads

Administration Committee:

- Policy on Policies and Public Comment Policy Revisions

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

The Administrative Division manages many core business operations to assist employees in carrying out the mission of the Adirondack Park Agency. The core business operations include fiscal management, information technology, facilities management, human resources and communications.

Priority Accomplishments:

- Increased Full-Time Equivalent staff to assist with day-to-day operations.
- Facilitated publication of 50th anniversary map to commemorate the Adirondack Park Private Land Use and Development Plan Map.

Fiscal Management

The Administrative Division provides fiscal support to the agency while implementing Governor Hochul's FY2023-24 budget as enacted. The agency met all directives issued by the NYS Division of Budget and managed funding to maintain the agency headquarters and staffing. The agency continued to work with the Business Service Center (BSC) and the Statewide Financial System for many of its fiscal transactions. The agency provides contract administration, payment processing, and budgeting.

Information Technology

In 2023, the Administrative Division provided operational continuity, oversight of telecommunications and related technology services provided by NYS ITS, while providing ongoing technology support to the agency and its employees. The agency interacts with the NYS Information Technology Services Center (ITS) daily regarding its information technology needs and resources. They also provide asset and inventory management.

Facilities Management

Throughout 2023, facilities staff professionally performed all required building and ground maintenance tasks for the Ray Brook Headquarters for the health and safety of the staff and the public. In addition, the facilities staff maintained the agency fleet vehicles in accordance with state standards to provide support to agency staff while completing site visits and agency related business.

Human Resources

During FY 22-23, the Administrative Division continued to work with the NYS Division of Civil Service on increasing staffing levels, civil service testing, and priorities for human resource needs. The human resources staff continues to assist with statewide training mandates, conference and travel processes, maintenance of personnel files, facilitates the recruitment and employment process, while working directly with the NYS Business

Services Center, NYS Department of Civil Service and NYS Division of Budget, as well as the Governor's Office of Recruitment and Public Service.

The Administrative Division oversees the agency records management retention and systems and provides support staff to the agency as a whole. The Administrative Division works with many other state agencies such as: NYS Office of Diversity and Inclusion; NYS Division of Budget, NYS Department of Civil Service, NYS Office of State Comptroller, NYS Employees Benefits Program and NYS Office of General Services. Division staff provide the NYS required reporting for Minority Women Business Enterprises (MWBE), Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Business (SDVOB); Green NY; and the Language Access Plan (LAC).

Communications

Priority Accomplishments:

- Organized guest speaker series to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Adirondack Park Private Land Use and Development Plan Map.
- Conducted public comment periods/public hearings for Adirondack Park State Land Classification Package, Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan Interpretations/UMPs, Telecommunications and Wetlands General Permits, and other private land actions.

Communication staff organized five guest speaker presentations to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Adirondack Park Private Land Use and Development Plan. Former Staff Attorney and Board Member Richard Booth along with former Director of Planning and General Counsel John Banta provided a historical perspective. The Wild Center's Director of Climate Initiatives Jen Kretser and an inspiring group of local students offered a "Look Ahead." Jenna Audlin, Ellen Lansing, Bella Wissler, Cedar Young and Anthony Zurlo passionately spoke about growing up in the park and what they envisioned the next 50 years will bring to the Adirondacks. Sandra Weber, Professor Curt Stager, Martha Swan and Amy Godine highlighted the lesser known but outstanding contributions of women and African Americans.

Staff continued to coordinate the implementation of the agency's transparency plan. The Citizen's Guide was revised and uploaded to the website. Newly issued permits are now uploaded. Staff are working on a process to add permits issued before 2022. A new informational email was created to provide the public with a process to submit general questions. Staff monitored the incoming email and responded to 56 inquiries from the public.

Staff responded to 115 media inquiries related to agency actions and policies, 205 general information inquiries from the public and issued 21 press releases. In addition, staff conducted six public outreach presentations including annual presentation to Syracuse and Cornell Humphrey Fellowship Program.

The Director of Communications assists the Executive Director in the organization of the monthly board meetings and assists Information Technology staff in managing the operation of the monthly meetings and webcasts.

The Director of Communications represents the APA in the weekly North Country Regional Calls, participated in the monthly NYS Interagency Solar Eclipse planning meetings and the biweekly Bond Act Public Engagement meetings.

The Director of Communications served as hearing officer for the 2023 State Land Classification Action and for the variance hearing for the LS Marina, LLC project.

Staff participated in the organizational meetings for the 2nd Annual Adirondack Park Planning Forum.

The Director of Communications participated in the hiring teams for the Executive Assistant and the Assistant Public Information Officer.

In 2024, staff will prioritize the use of social media to increase public awareness of the APA's mission and work.

Economic Services

The Economic Services Unit provides expertise in market and financial feasibility analysis, economic and fiscal impact analysis, and economic development planning to the agency, State and local economic development organizations, and the region's business community. Staff assists project sponsors and economic developers in evaluating business locations and identifying other sources of assistance for business development. Staff also works with local governments and economic development entities in the development and implementation of sustainable economic growth strategies.

Priority Accomplishments:

- Staff provided support to local, regional development initiatives by attending over 74 public outreach, local and regional workgroup, and community development meetings.
- Staff served on the North Country Regional Economic Development Council's (NCREDC) Writing Team and was the Writing Captain of the Council's Innovation Workgroup in support of the 2023 strategic plan update and report.

Community Outreach

Staff provided support to local, regional development initiatives by attending over 74 public outreach, local and regional workgroup, and community development meetings. Among significant initiatives, staff attended meetings regarding the Common Ground Alliance, the North Country Regional Economic Development Council, workforce and market rate housing, and municipal comprehensive planning.

Project Permitting

During project review, Economic Services staff provides expertise in market and financial feasibility analysis as well as economic and fiscal impact analysis pursuant to the agency's Section 809 mandate to consider the potential benefits of a proposed project. Staff assisted in the review of permits that were approved in 2023 including several solar energy projects, commercial uses, and housing projects.

Staff also provided technical expertise related to the Agency's project review process to a range of large-scale and entrepreneurial ventures during the pre-application process including solar projects, retail projects, hospitality projects, and housing projects.

Regional Council Support

The Regional Economic Development Councils were tasked with updating their strategic plans. Staff served on the North Country Regional Economic Development Council's (NCREDC) Writing Team and was the Writing Captain of the Council's Innovation Workgroup in support of the 2023 strategic plan update and report. Staff led the enhancement of the NCREDC's Innovation Workplan and served on the Council's workforce housing committee.

Community Planning Support

Staff assisted communities on economic development and community planning initiatives. Staff assisted the Town of North Elba and Village of Lake Placid in the development of the communities' joint comprehensive plan. Staff also served on the comprehensive planning committees for the Towns of Schroon and Johnsbury as well as provided guidance on the Warren County Comprehensive Plan update. Staff also worked with the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST) to evaluate ways to implement the Destination Management Plan for the Town of North Elba.

REGULATORY PROGRAMS DIVISION

The Regulatory Programs Division implements the statutory and regulatory provisions of the Adirondack Park Agency Act, the Freshwaters Wetlands Act, and the Wild Scenic and Recreational Rivers System Act. Staff review permit applications for proposed new land use and development projects throughout the Adirondack Park, including conducting site visits and coordinating with local governments and other regulating authorities, as well as providing guidance and pre-application assistance to applicants.

This year the Regulatory Programs Division received 351 new applications and issued 297 permits. In addition, 124 new pre-application files were opened.

Priority Accomplishments:

- David Plante, AICP CEP was appointed to serve as the Deputy Director for Regulatory Programs.
- Adoption of the Telecommunications Eligible Facilities Request General Permit. This new general permit establishes a unified and streamlined application and approval process for federally defined Eligible Facilities Requests on existing cell towers and base stations. The new general permit will help expedite project review and result in improved cellular reception while still protecting the unique aesthetic resources of the park.
- Updated “Development in the Adirondack Park” to include guidance for solar generating facility projects. Solar project alternatives analysis, site selection and design guidance were added to strengthen environmental protections and provide clarity for developers for what is expected inside the park.
- Created new Battery Energy Storage System and Utility Structures over 40 feet applications for these types of emerging projects. Reviewed and updated other application forms to ensure all information requested remains comprehensive, is timely with current professional standards, and where applicable is consistent across the various applicant forms.
- Improved permit condition compliance documentation and tracking to help Environmental Program Specialists enforce agency permit conditions.
- Worked with partner agencies, including the New York State Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, the National Park Service, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and several tribal nations on the adoption of a Programmatic Agreement between the agencies under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act regarding de minimis impacts from federally funded highway projects to the Adirondack Park Forest Preserve as a National Historic Landmark.

PERMITS ISSUED	2022	2023
Minor Projects	90	76
Major Projects	81	87
Variances	4	9
State Agency Order	7	0
Amendments/Renewals	57	35
General Permits	84	81
Emergency Authorizations	1	9
Totals	324	297

MAJOR PROJECT CATEGORIES	2022	2023
Subdivision	18	20
Single Family Dwelling	0	3
Wetlands	14	18
Commercial Use	16	17
Towers / Telecommunications	45	41
Timber Harvest	3	0
Solar	5	3

RESOURCE ANALYSIS AND SCIENTIFIC SERVICES DIVISION

The Resource Analysis and Scientific Services (RASS) Division of the Adirondack Park Agency is responsible for providing scientific and engineering assistance to agency staff. All agency transactions that involve wetlands, soils, wastewater treatment, invasive species, stormwater, surface water and forests are analyzed by RASS in the protection of natural resources.

RASS staff act as an interface between agency divisions as well as a point-of-contact with project sponsors. During site visits, RASS staff provide technical direction and guidance to applicants on a wide range of issues to avoid adverse environmental impacts. Staff also provide wetland determinations and field delineations to landowners, an integral step for the planning and design of projects.

RASS staff provide technical evaluations on enforcement cases, jurisdictional determinations, variances, and policies. Using the appropriate statutory and regulatory criteria, among other resources, staff's review includes analysis of soils, slopes, groundwater and surface water quality, fish and wildlife, wetlands, drainage and runoff patterns, topography, hydrology, adjoining and nearby land uses, adequacy of site facilities, forest resources, and open space resources.

Priority Accomplishments:

- Dr. Elizabeth Schuyler was hired to the position of Natural Resources Supervisor. Dr. Schuyler's extensive ecological and project management experience was immediately impactful. In addition, Casey Young joined RASS as an Ecologist 1. She helped to address the immense number of wetland site visits the agency conducts.
- Staff worked with both Regulatory Programs and the Planning Division to update best management practices documents, jurisdictional flyers, and application forms. This included the update for solar generating facilities in the "Development in the Adirondack Park" guidance document.
- RASS wetlands staff collaborated with NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) staff through an inter-agency work group to develop a draft memorandum of agreement for the establishment of a wetland mitigation bank for DOT projects within the Adirondack Park. This work included a site visit to field test the drafted workbook.
- Staff has embraced technological advancements and explored innovative methods to identify wetland communities using remotely sensed data.

Engineering

Evaluating existing and proposed development within the park requires professional engineering services and technical analysis. This analysis is based upon sound science and engineering judgment in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, standards, policies, and guidance documents.

RASS engineering staff routinely conduct site visits, evaluate professionally prepared plans and designs, and provide technical comments and design recommendations. Engineering evaluations include, but are not limited to, on-site wastewater treatment systems, design of dams, bridges and roads, stormwater management, erosion and sediment control, mineral extraction, traffic and noise studies, and adequacy of municipal infrastructure services.

To provide an overview of how engineering services are utilized at the agency and the amount of staff time spent on some of the more common review areas, RASS staff track the number of engineering reviews by category and by division. Engineering staff completed 83 site visits in 2023 compared to 66 site visits in 2022, 95 site visits in 2021 and 78 site visits in 2020.

The number of engineering reviews performed across all divisions was 2,692, slightly lower than the 2,816 reviews performed in 2022. Engineering staff reviewed several technically complex project proposals in 2023. This included quarry expansions and a munitions testing proposal.

The number of jurisdictional inquiry forms (JIF) reviews increased from 178 in 2022 to 220 in 2023. The number of regulatory project reviews from 793 in 2022 was comparable to 744 in 2023. The number of engineering evaluations of stormwater management decreased from 605 in 2022 to 491 in 2023.

RASS Engineering staff provided written technical recommendations by division as follows (Figure 1):

- Regulatory Permit Applications: 744
- Regulatory Enforcement: 92
- Legal (Jurisdictional Office, legal reviews): 220
- Planning (Local Government/Map Amendments/State Land): 14

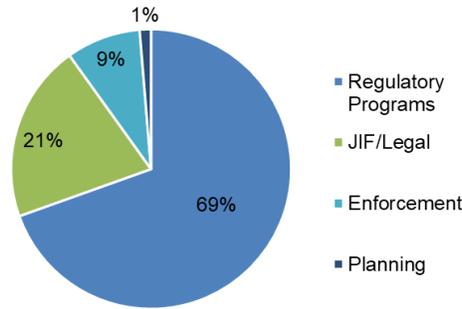


Figure 1: Total engineering reviews by Agency Division from 2023. Engineering staff also organized reviews by development or treatment category. (Table 1; Figure 2). The following are descriptions of each category reviewed:

On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems (OSWTS) - Evaluation of OSWTS design prepared by a New York State Licensed Professional Engineer utilizing site, soils, and slopes information for compliance with applicable laws, regulations, standards and guidelines for protection of human health, water quality, and natural resources.

Stormwater Management - Evaluation of stormwater plans prepared by a qualified professional for compliance with applicable laws, regulations, standards, and policies to prevent impacts to water quality and natural resources from stormwater runoff associated with development proposals.

Shoreline Development – Technical reviews include a broad spectrum of programs including projects, variances, jurisdictional determinations, State land, and enforcement cases. Typical engineering evaluations include both in-office plan reviews and site visits for structures such as new and expanded single-family dwelling construction, retaining walls, boathouses, docks, boardwalks, decks, and other accessory structures.

Shoreline Variance Proposals - Reviews include proposals submitted that require variances, enforcement, or jurisdictional determinations.

Height- Review of proposed new structures that exceed 40 feet in height and evaluation of existing structures that are proposed to be increased in height.

Table 1: Engineering reviews by treatment of development category for 2023.

On-Site Wastewater Treatment System (OSWTS) Reviews	485
Stormwater Management	491
Shoreline Development	150
Shoreline Variance Proposals	350
Height	63

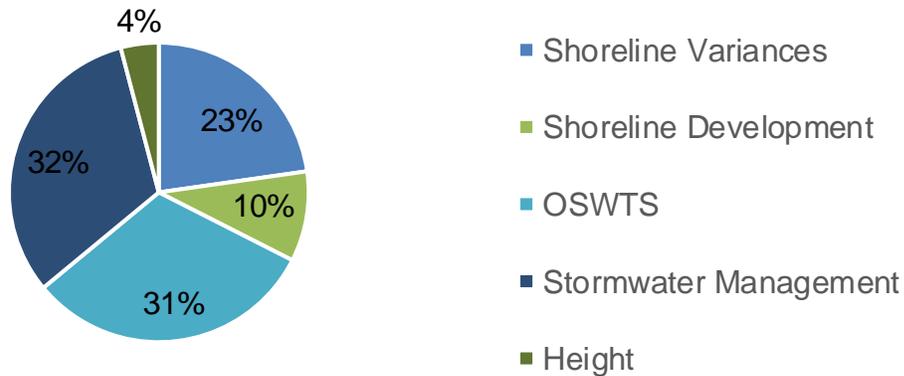


Figure 2: Total engineering reviews by treatment or development category in 2023
Soil Analyses

Staff that specialize in soil analyses provide an essential service to the public and Agency engineers with soil test pit analysis for On-Site Wastewater Treatment System (OSWTS) design. This work is vital for the efficient review of submitted OSWTS designs and is one of the key factors for identifying areas suitable for development.

225 projects involving deep-hole test pits (DHTPs) were reviewed by staff (Table 2). The number of DHTPs decreased in 2023 as compared to 2022 (Figure 3).

Of the 147 projects directly related to DHTPs, 72 were described by staff and 75 were described by outside consultants. All data submitted by consultants is checked by staff to ensure soil profile accuracy, separation requirements, and appropriate setback distances.

In 2023, 41% of the test pits were accepted in support of conventional standard absorption OSWTS; 43% were accepted for conventional shallow absorption, and 16% did not meet Agency guidelines (Figure 4).

Of the test pits indicating the need for conventional shallow absorption systems, 81% were due to the presence of shallow seasonal high groundwater and 19% were due to the presence of shallow bedrock.

Table 2: Deep-hole test pit statistics (DHTP) totals by month for 2023. DHTP that were not approved did not meet agency guidelines.

Deep Hole Test Pit Statistics	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Projects Involving DHTPs	5	7	4	1	9	7	4	8	8	12	9	4	78
DHTPs Described by APA	5	4	0	0	10	10	3	2	2	12	18	6	72
DHTPs Described by Consultants	3	19	9	3	4	2	2	11	6	8	7	1	75
<i>Total DHTPs</i>	8	23	9	3	14	12	5	13	8	20	25	7	147
Approved Conventional Systems	0	11	0	3	6	4	4	6	5	13	7	1	60
Approved Shallow Systems	7	11	5	0	7	4	1	5	3	7	10	3	63
Unapproved	1	1	4	0	1	4	0	2	0	0	8	3	24

<i>Approved Conventional (%)</i>	0	4	0	100	43	33	80	46	63	65	28	14	41
<i>Approved Shallow (%)</i>	88	48	56	0	50	33	20	38	38	35	40	43	43
<i>Unapproved (%)</i>	13	4	44	0	7	33	0	15	0	0	32	43	16
Shallow Systems (SHGWT)	6	11	1	0	5	4	1	4	2	5	9	3	51
Shallow Systems (Bedrock)	1	0	4	0	2	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	12
<i>Shallow Systems (SHGWT) (%)</i>	86	100	20	0	71	100	100	80	67	71	90	100	81
<i>Shallow Systems (Bedrock) (%)</i>	14	0	80	0	29	0	0	20	33	29	10	0	19

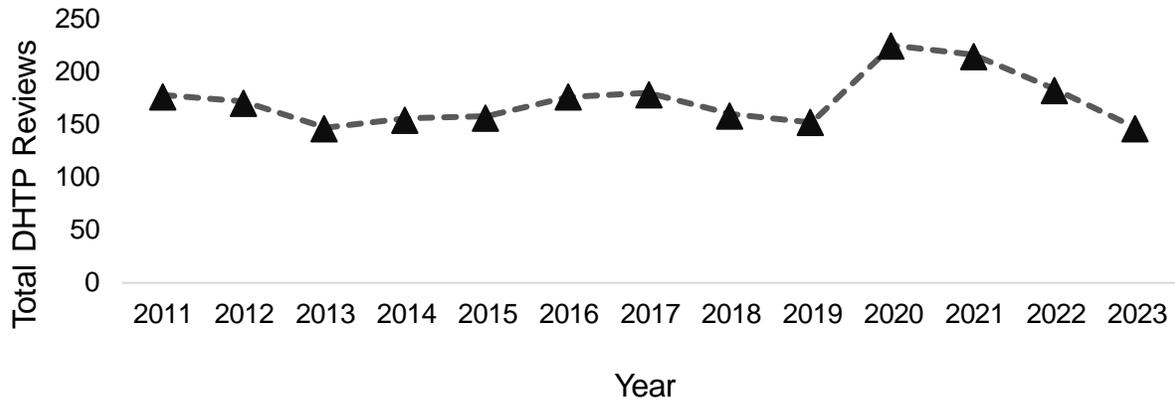


Figure 3: Annual totals of deep-hole test pits (DHTP) reviewed by APA staff from 2011-2023.

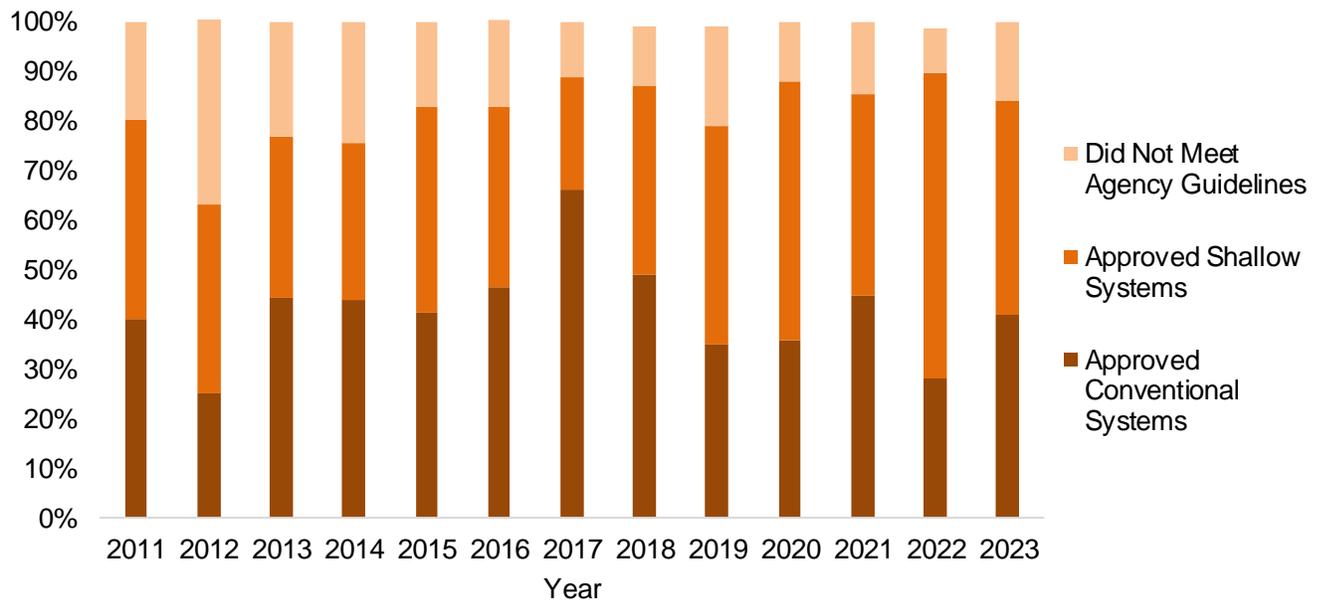


Figure 4: The percent of deep hotel test pits reviewed by Agency staff by system type from 2011- 2023.

Wetlands

Wetland involvement is a common jurisdictional trigger. The NYS Freshwater Wetlands Act and the APA Act have stringent requirements for regulated activities involving wetlands. The agency’s wetlands protection program includes mapping, delineation, evaluation, mitigation, and impact analysis. The agency’s wetlands program is responsive to public needs and utilizes the best available technology.

This year 223 wetland visits were conducted throughout the Park, which represents the third highest number of site visits performed over the past 12 years (Figure 5). Each site visit involved a wetland jurisdictional determination and/or delineation. Staff typically share information with applicants on the significance of wetland ecosystems so that landowners better understand the regulations. Some wetland delineations, due to wetland size, can take several days to complete. The average processing time for site visits, which is the amount of time it takes between receiving a request and conducting a site visit, was 23 days in 2023 (Table 3).

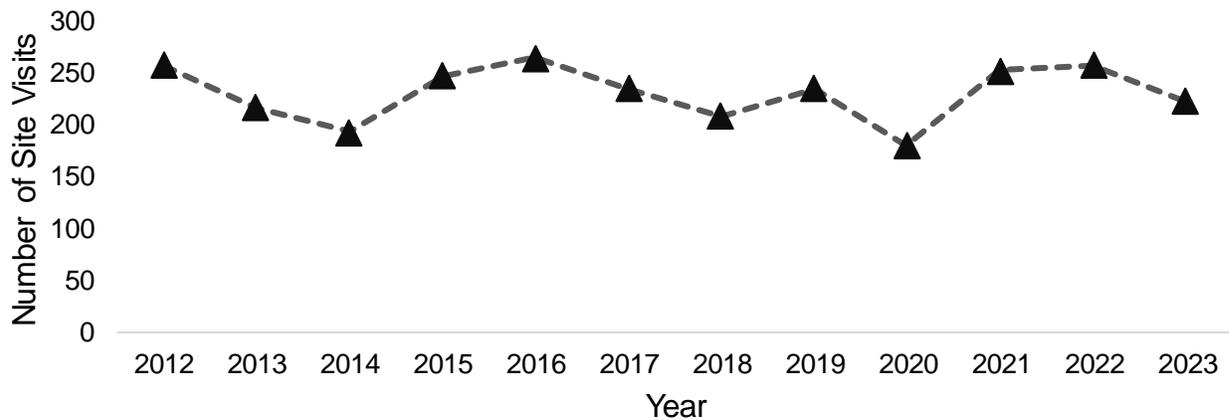


Figure 5: Trend of the number of wetland site visits from 2012 to 2023 by Agency staff.

Table 3: Total wetland site visits by month and average processing time for wetland site visits. The average length of time from date received to date scheduled was 23 days.

Month	Total requests received	Total completed	Interval for processing	Number pending
January	1	1	N/A	0
February	0	0	N/A	0
March	5	0	N/A	5
April	50	9	40	46
May	38	32	37	52
June	35	35	29	52
July	16	46	21	22
August	22	33	16	11
September	35	29	18	17
October	19	29	15	7

November	2	9	10	0
December	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Total	223	223		

Remote Sensing

RASS wetlands staff conducted 353 wetland spatial imagery interpretations in 2023, mostly to support other divisions (Table 4; Figure 6). Spatial imagery interpretations are conducted with high-resolution digital stereo pairs of aerial photographs viewed with advanced hardware and software. This equipment allows staff to respond to requests for wetland determinations promptly and reduces the need for field visits. The number of air photo interpretations was equivalent to the 356 interpretations conducted in 2022 (Figure 7).

Table 4: Total number of spatial imagery determinations of wetlands by request in 2023.

Month	JIF	Referrals	Project Review	Enforcement	Public	State Land	Consultants	Total
January	20	3	4	0	0	0	0	27
February	22	0	3	0	0	0	0	25
March	28	5	11	0	0	2	0	46
April	16	5	5	1	0	0	0	27
May	22	5	8	1	0	1	0	37
June	18	2	4	0	0	0	0	24
July	30	2	2	2	0	0	0	36
August	15	3	1	1	0	0	0	20
September	21	3	4	0	0	2	0	30
October	11	0	12	3	0	0	0	26
November	26	3	6	0	0	0	0	35
December	9	2	4	4	0	1	0	20
Total	238	33	64	12	0	6	0	353

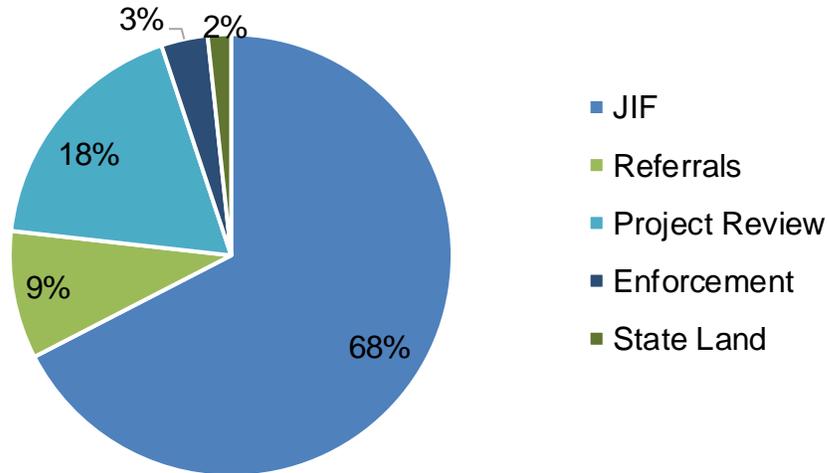


Figure 6: Percent of spatial imagery determinations of wetlands by category by request from 2023.

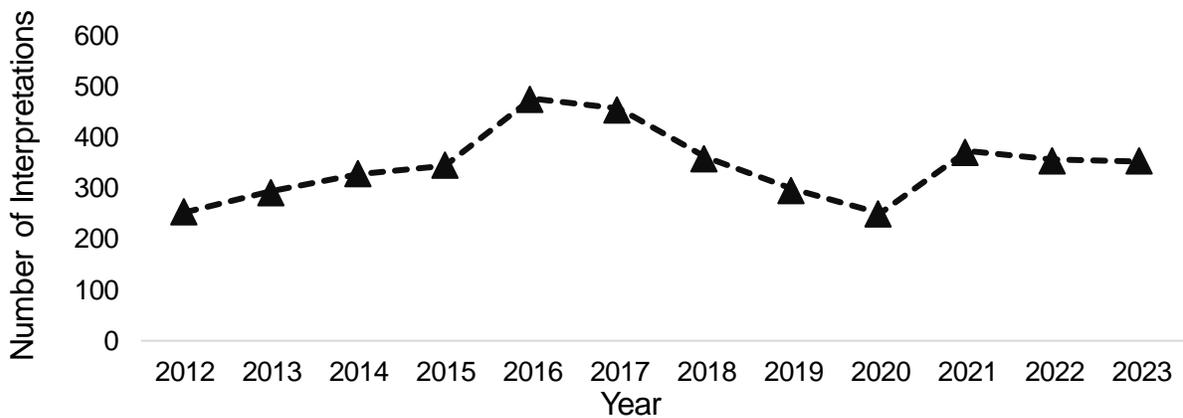


Figure 7: Trend of the number of spatial imagery determinations of wetland from 2012 to 2023.

Biological, Freshwater, And Forestry Resources

RASS ecologists and forestry specialists track the number of wetland, aquatic, terrestrial, and forestry related reviews by category. This tracking provides an overview of staff time spent in each category and provides an overview of how wetland biologist, freshwater ecologist, and forestry specialist services are utilized. There were 353 wetland-related project reviews (61%), followed by 188 forestry-related reviews (32%) (Figure 8).

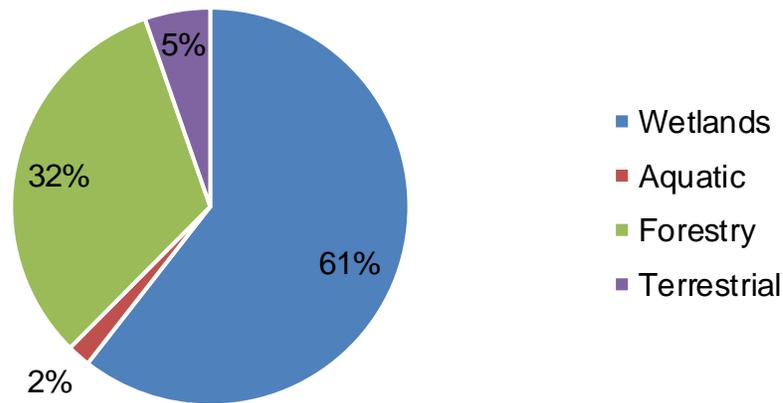


Figure 8: Percent of reviews by agency staff by ecological category in 2023.

Freshwater Resources

The abundance of freshwater waterbodies is a defining characteristic of the Adirondack Park. The park contains approximately 3,745 lakes and ponds, including 50 of New York lakes greater than 100 acres in size. Aquatic invasive species (AIS) can cause both environmental and economic harm to these waterbodies, impairing recreational use and degrading the native habitat of fish and other wildlife.

In the Adirondacks, lake and watershed organizations coordinate to prevent the spread of AIS and invest significant resources to address existing infestations. In 2023, RASS staff conducted 11 lake site visits to review proposals associated with non-native and invasive species management activities. This included review of proposed hand harvesting methodologies, stocking of sterile triploid grass carp, and the use of aquatic herbicides.

Staff partnered with the Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force organized by the Lake Champlain Basin Program, and the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program to provide public outreach and guidance to local lake associations and watershed organizations.

Staff also assisted other divisions with jurisdictional determinations and participated in review of projects which were jurisdictional to the agency.

Forest Resources

The forests of the Adirondacks are integral to the character of the park. Forests create a living landscape that provides wildlife habitat, biodiversity, purification of water resources, economic benefits, and recreational opportunities. Forests on State lands, in many cases preserved from logging for more than a century, are characterized by steadily maturing stands. Many of the privately-owned forests are managed for timber which results in younger, early succession forests. This age diversity comprises a mosaic of habitats supporting a diverse variety of flora and fauna. Ongoing human

disturbance, including invasive pests and pathogens, climate disruption, acidic deposition, and poor forest management, pose a threat of significant impairment to our forests.

Staff reviewed six proposals for jurisdictional timber harvesting projects on private lands this year. These projects were designed to meet specific silvicultural goals, based upon existing forest conditions, with the intent to create favorable conditions for long-term forest health and timber value.

In reviewing proposed development, staff seek to minimize and mitigate environmental impacts associated with the removal of vegetation. Staff conducted 61 reviews of proposed cutting and planting plans, 27 reviews of cutting involving shoreline areas, and five reviews of cutting involving designated river areas (Figure 9).

Staff continue to engage with State agencies, forest health researchers, and APIPP to monitor invasive pest disturbances within the lands and waters of the Adirondack Park. Vigilance and public education regarding these threats are vital as the spread of pests and our response to them impact the health of Adirondack forests.

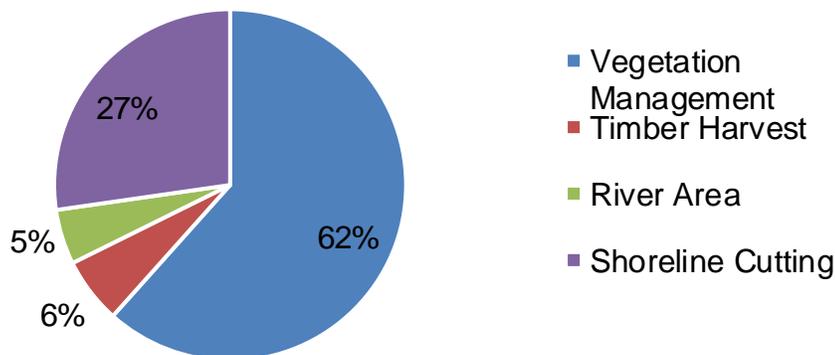


Figure 9: Forestry profile of project reviews and site visits for 2023

Committee And Organizational Affiliations

During 2023, staff actively represented the agency at numerous committees and working groups and provided education and outreach to a wide variety of participants. Staff continue their professional development by attending conferences or workshops.

Committee and working groups included:

- Adirondack Aquatic Invasive (AIS) Species Taskforce
- Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP)
- DOT Wetland Mitigation Guidance Working Group
- Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) Streamwise Committee
- LCBP AIS Rapid Response Task Force
- LCBP AIS Grant Review Committee
- NYS Invasive Species Council

Education and Outreach

- Forestry BMPs workshop
- Soil and Water Conservation District presentation on wetland general permits
- Impacts of Roads presentation to Agency Board

Conferences and Training for Staff

- NYS PRISM Conference Calls
- Northern Forest Center Webinar: *Ensuring long-term forest health and resiliency*
- Submersed and Emergent Aquatic Plants Training
- NYSDEC Stormwater Manual Updates
- Invasives Species Expo
- New York Cooperative Soil Survey Meeting
- North County Stormwater Tradeshow and Conference
- ADK Research Consortium Fall Forestry Roundtable
- Empire State Forest Products Association Meeting

PLANNING DIVISION

The Planning Division is responsible for regional planning, local government services, Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan Map amendments, State Land planning, Park policy, Geographic Information System (GIS), services and web site management.

State Land

State Land staff administer the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP). Unit Management Plans (UMP's) prepared by Department of Environmental

Conservation (DEC) staff for units of state land throughout the park are reviewed for conformance to the APSLMP's management guidelines and criteria. Staff also provide conformance review for individual state-land project proposals submitted by DEC. Staff provide general APSLMP guidance and interpretation to DEC staff and the agency's board concerning long-range planning efforts for state land in consultation with DEC. In addition, staff develop proposals for substantive revisions to the APSLMP – including the classification and reclassification of state lands in the park in consultation with DEC.

Priority Accomplishments:

- At the May 2023 board meeting, the board adopted a resolution to interpret the “No Material Increase” of roads on wild forest lands provision of the APSLMP, resolving a longstanding policy issue. The board determined that a mileage increase of up to 11.6% does not constitute a material increase, and the total allowable mileage of roads on wild forest lands will be 236.1 miles. This interpretation allows for 13.0 miles of future public roads and/or CP-3 routes that may be proposed in future UMPs and/or future acquisitions classified as wild forest. They also determined that non-Galusha CP-3 mileage meets the definition of a road per the APSLMP, and CP-3 mileage included in the Galusha consent decree does not meet this definition.
- Staff conducted field work, mapping, and engaged in inter-agency consultations to develop the 2023-24 state land classification package and associated draft supplemental environmental impact statement for public input. The creation and publication of an [online interactive story map](#) facilitated deeper public engagement with the proposed package. The agency hosted three public hearings and accepted comments for a period of 45 days.

Unit Management Plan Review

The following unit management plans and amendments were reviewed for conformance with the APSLMP:

- Sharp Bridge Campground & Day Use Area – the new plan included management actions to replace existing facilities; rehabilitate existing roads and water system; replace overhead electric lines with an underground system; and native plantings and campsite restoration. The board adopted a resolution finding the plan in conformance with the APSLMP at the February 2023 meeting.
- Broadalbin Boat Launch – the new plan included management actions such as repurposing the existing bathing beach to provide additional hand launch opportunities; construction of an accessible pathway from the parking area to the lake and another pathway between the trailered boat ramp and the car-top launch; redesign of the parking area associated with the car-top boat launch; and shoreline restoration activities to prevent erosion on a lake where water levels fluctuate regularly. The board adopted a resolution finding the plan in conformance with the APSLMP at the August 2023 meeting.

State land and DEC staff presented initial draft unit management plans for the following units:

- Rollins Pond Campground – the draft plan included proposed management actions to replace existing structures; rehabilitate roads; construct new staff housing; replace the trailer dump station; construct an accessible trail; restore campsites; improve the boat launch; allow extended stay camping permits; and reclassify lands.
- Golden Beach Campground & Day Use Area – the draft plan included management proposed management actions to replace existing structures; replace the trailer dump station; rehabilitate roads and the water and sewer systems; restore campsites; and reclassify lands.

Policy and Planning Initiatives

Staff continued to work on various Forest Preserve policy and planning initiatives in 2023, including the following:

- Participation on the state core team for the visitor use management framework project for the High Peaks region. The project is led by Otak and is focused on the experiential, social and public safety elements of visitor use.
- Development of draft desired conditions for trail networks and design parameters for various trail types to advance the efforts of the Trail Stewardship Working Group.
- Representation on the DEC/APA Accessibility Advisory Group.

- Representation on the Adirondack Road Salt Reduction Task Force and finalization of the final report containing recommendations and pilot projects.

State Land Project Planning

Staff completed review of 35 project proposals submitted to the agency for projects across the state lands of the park. These consultations determine APSLMP conformance and whether a wetland permit was required. Projects ranged in nature from trail re-routes in the Fulton Chain Wild Forest, Siamese Ponds Wilderness and Sentinel Range Wilderness; installation of culvert enclosures along the rail trail; gravel pit reclamation; new bridge construction and bridge replacement along the Northville Placid Trail and the Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness; pumpable privies in the Black River Wild Forest; invasive species management; and various culvert replacements (multiple units), among other topics.

Conservation Easements

Staff worked with Regulatory Programs staff to review recreation management plans for conservation easements for Speculator Tree Farm/Perkins Clearing/Burnham Mountain Tracts and Big Moose Tract. Recreation management plans are reviewed by the agency pursuant to the April 13, 2010 *“Memorandum of Understanding between the Adirondack Park Agency and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Concerning State-Owned Conservation Easements on Private Lands within the Adirondack Park.”* The purpose of such review is to identify projects within the plan that may be subject to agency review under Section 814 of the APA Act, and/or a permit from the agency.

GIS/Website Services

Staff administers Section 805 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act to maintain the official Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan (APLUDP) map and State Land Master Plan (SLMP) map, manages the APLUDP map amendment process, and provides map boundary advice to other staff, state agencies, local governments, and landowners. Staff also work with state land staff to map and classify newly acquired state lands or reclassify existing lands as needed.

The Geographic Information Systems (GIS) program provides essential support to other divisions through mapping applications such as the APA Look Up System and EditAPA. In addition, staff support the wetland mapping program, and provide advice and technical assistance to other divisions, local governments, and the public with mapping and GIS-related questions and problems.

Priority Accomplishments:

- Published a 2023 edition of the Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan facsimile map to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Agency. This was the first printing of the map since 2018. Three thousand copies were printed available to the public upon request.
- Website staff worked with NYS ITS staff and the agency's website host to undertake major upgrades to the web server. Upgrades improved website security and increased capacity to accommodate future needs. Staff also identified and addressed security vulnerabilities.

Mapping

Staff updated the land use classification areas for the Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan map and designed a commemorative 50th Anniversary map. Three thousand copies of the map were printed and distributed to local government officials, state agencies, not-for-profits, academic institutions, and the public. The 50th Anniversary map is available for download at www.apa.ny.gov.

GIS support and mapping was provided to assist with the 2023 State Land Classification Package. The package included approximately 6,000 acres of newly acquired state land or existing parcels that were proposed for reclassification or required technical map amendments. The classification recommendations were scheduled to be considered by the agency's board at the January 2024 meeting.

Mapping and GIS-related advice and technical assistance on all agency map applications was provided throughout the year to other divisions, state agencies, local governments, and the public.

Lookup System

Research on new development platforms and directions for the next version of the agency's in-house web applications (Lookup System and EditAPA) was undertaken. The GIS software provider will retire all versions of its current development platform by the end of 2025. This platform will no longer be supported. Based on research, staff determined the best option was to test and develop web applications in ESRI's Experience Builder. Staff will develop and implement new map applications before the retirement of the previous development platform to ensure mission critical applications are preserved.

Major Data Improvements

The agency relies on high quality GIS data both produced internally and from external sources. Major GIS data updates this year included the 2022 Real Property tax parcel dataset, NYS large forest blocks dataset, NYS streets, agricultural districts, as well as regular updates to agency field photo points and project transactions. Staff received 2022 aerial imagery from NYS ITS for use with our 3D stereo machine. Annual updates were made to the agency's telecommunication towers dataset both internally and online. Staff also updated the APA land classification data layer that was published internally and on the APA website for download.

Hardware and Software Improvements

Major hardware and software updates to the new 3D Stereo Analyst workstation, which included new downloads of all the latest software versions were completed. This machine was put into production in August and technical improvements were conducted throughout 2023. Assistance was provided to the RASS division with downloading and installing software to assist with field data collection and digitizing wetlands processes. Updates to GIS software applications on the agency's GIS server were completed.

Website Development

Routine webpage maintenance and content management was performed throughout the year. This work included improvements to the language services provided through NYS and a significant server migration to an upgraded website host server. Staff worked with the website host and NYS ITS to ensure a smooth transition to the new server in the beginning of the year. Upgrades resolved many website vulnerabilities and improved website security.

2023 GIS/Web Tasks Summary:

Task	Total
GIS Agency Program Administration	137
GIS Map Production	37
LUA Boundary/Blue Line Inquiry	33
Map Amendments Review	13
State Land Classification/Reclassification Review	24
Web Administration/Content Management	185
Administrative Tasks	21

Local Government Services Program

The Local Government Services (LGS) Program administers Sections 807 and 808 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act and its implementing regulations. Program staff provide oversight of the eighteen Agency-approved Local Land Use Programs (ALLUPs) and review variance referrals and zoning amendments annually from the participating program municipalities. Additionally, staff respond to numerous informational requests from local officials within the park. The workload is driven by strict statutory deadlines for responses to variance referrals and the need to provide timely responses to inquiries from elected and appointed officials.

Priority Accomplishments:

- In 2023 the Agency introduced the Adirondack Planning Forum. The forum brings together local government officials, citizens, consultants, and non-profit organizations to discuss Adirondack issues and provides training hours for local planning and zoning board members. The forum successfully attracted 250 people in its inaugural year. The agenda included topics such as housing, clean water infrastructure, and navigating various state funding sources. Planning is underway for 2024.

A summary of Local Government Services accomplishments and reportable items in 2023 is provided in the table 1 below. The information is compiled from LGS Committee monthly reports. The data highlights the number of Adirondack communities and officials that staff consulted with and assisted during the course of 2023.

Table 1 Local Government Services Summary of Program Accomplishments and Reportable Items	2023 Totals
ALLUP amendments approved by Board/by Del Res	1/5
ALLUP variances referred/reversed	96/3
<i>“ALLUP” denotes “APA-approved local land use program”</i>	

The reportable items in table one includes the following activities in the following categories:

ALLUP Amendments

In 2017, the Agency amended the Delegation Resolution (Del Res) to allow for approval of certain ALLUP amendments under the authority of the Executive Director. This change allowed certain amendments to local land use controls to be approved by Agency staff without Board approval. Staff work collaboratively with the ALLUPs on proposed amendments and often review multiple drafts before reaching the approval

stage. The Agency approved 6 amendments to ALLUPs in 2023. Five were approved pursuant to the Del Res and one required Agency Board approval.

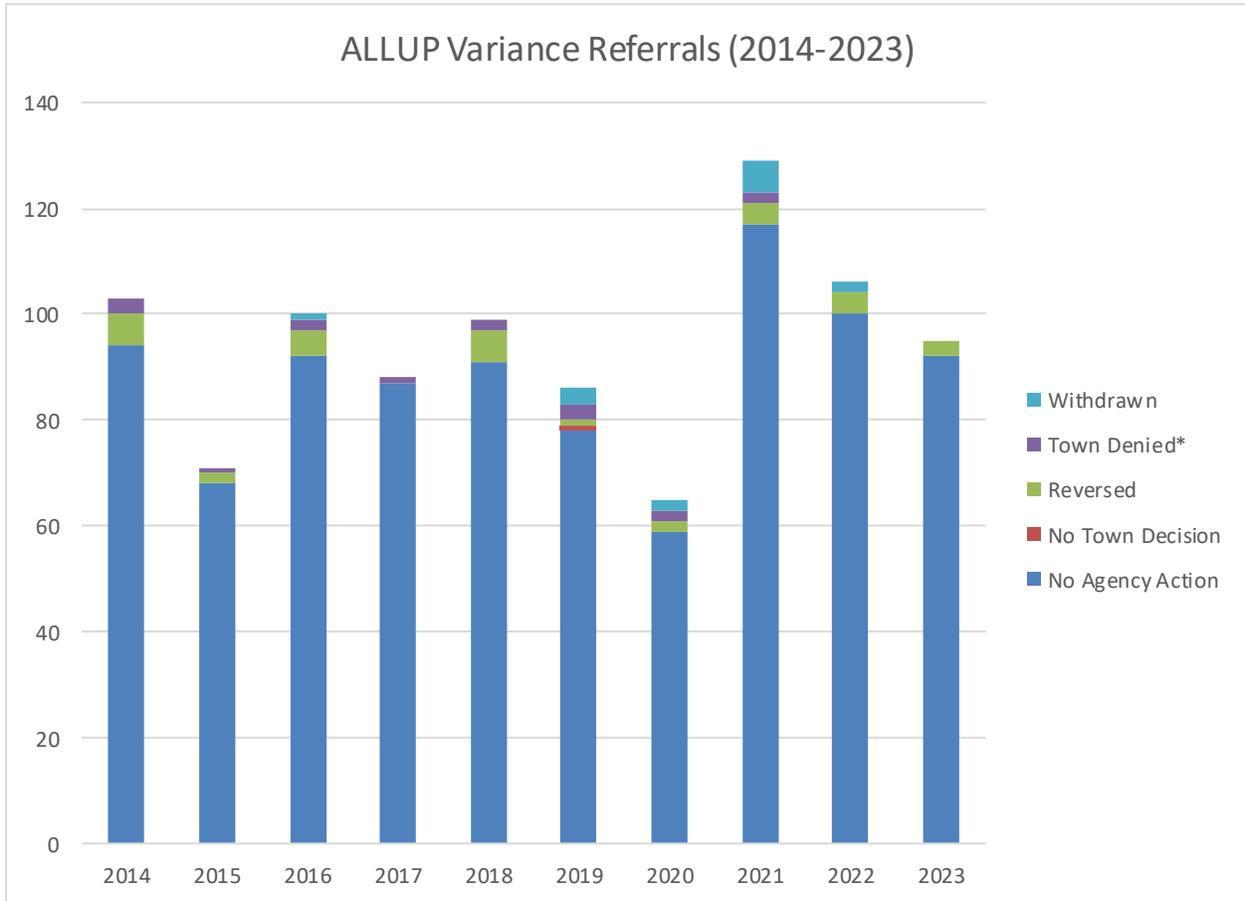
- The Town of Arietta, which received original approval in 1983, proposed an amendment to its zoning code and map. The amendment split District 34 into two Districts, 34 & 34A, in order to recognize existing non-conforming development in the district. This amendment was approved by the Executive Director in February.
- The Town of Horicon, which received original approval in 1978, proposed two changes to its zoning code. The first proposed to replace Section 8.33 'Storage and Dumping' with an expanded section 'Property Maintenance'. The other amendment was to Section 8.37 'Travel Trailers', the defined terms related thereto and addition of the use Travel Trailer to certain zoning districts. This amendment was approved by the Executive Director in August; however, it was tabled by the Town following its public hearing in September.
- The Town of Lake George, which received original approval in 1978, proposed changes to its Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map. The Town proposed updates to its defined terms, as well as changes to sections related to PUDs, Yards, Detached Accessory Uses/Structures, Multiple-family dwellings, Tourist Accommodations and Penalties or Offenses in addition to re-zoning seven areas of its zoning map. This amendment was approved by the Agency Board in February.
- The Town of Queensbury, which received original approval in 1982, proposed two amendments to its program. The first was to Chapter 147 "Stormwater Management." The second was to several sections of Chapter 179 "Zoning", and Chapter A183 "Subdivision of Land" to incorporate the updated regulations of the Lake George Park Commission. The amendment included changes to Sections: 179-2-010 "Definitions", 179-6-050 "Shoreline Regulations", and Section A183-27 "Layout of streets and roads." Both amendments were approved by the Executive Director in May.
- The Village of Lake George, which received original approval in 1985, proposed to amend Section 220-101 of its code to add the definition "Condominium Dwelling" and to add that use to the CMU/CR Zone pursuant to a special permit in specific designated areas. This amendment was approved by the Executive Director in May.

There were several other amendments to Approved Programs that were proposed in 2023 which were not reviewable by the Agency and included regulations on Short Term Rentals and zoning changes affecting only Hamlet land use areas. In addition, there are amendments proposed in Hague and Westport that are currently still under review.

ALLUP Variances

Towns with an ALLUP are required to refer certain locally approved variances (outside of Hamlet land use areas) to the Agency. The Agency has 30-days for review in which time it may reverse the local determination if it was not based upon the appropriate statutory basis. The Agency received 96 variance referrals during the year.

The Agency reversed three of these variances, which all involved shoreline setbacks.



LEGAL DIVISION

The Legal Division consists of three major components: the Office of Counsel, the Legal Services Unit, and the Jurisdictional Inquiry Unit. The Counsel and Associate Counsel advise all agency divisions and the agency board. Legal Division attorneys review significant permitting, planning, enforcement, and other documents, assist the Attorney General with litigation, manage adjudicatory hearings, and provide other legal services as necessary. The Jurisdictional Inquiry Unit provides advice to landowners and potential project sponsors regarding agency jurisdiction, including informal phone advice and written jurisdictional determinations. The Jurisdictional Inquiry Unit also houses the Records Access Officer who responds to all Freedom of Information Law requests to the agency.

Priority Accomplishments:

- Provided legal advice and support for all litigation matters, including enforcement, in cooperation with the Office of the Attorney General.
- Provided legal advice and support for the 2023 State Land Classification Action and multiple Unit Management Plan conformance determinations.

In 2023, the Legal Division operated with reduced staff for part of the year and provided support to agency staff and the public consistent with past years despite increased workloads noted below.

Office Of Counsel and Legal Services

The Office of Counsel and Legal Services Unit continued to provide daily legal advice and services to all agency programs. Attorneys provided staff across all divisions with review, assistance, and legal advice relating to the full spectrum of agency work, including:

- Project pre-applications, applications, permits (including general permits and emergency projects), variances, and reconsideration or appeals from such actions.
- Staff inquiries regarding agency jurisdiction.
- Enforcement and compliance.
- Support to local government services, including variances from Approved Local Land Use Plans and proposed zoning changes in towns and villages.
- Key public-facing documents, such as the Citizen's Guide and jurisdictional flyers.
- Training new staff and agency board members.

Jurisdictional Inquiry Unit

The Jurisdictional Inquiry Unit provide advice to landowners and others regarding agency jurisdiction to determine if an agency permit or variance is required. This unit also includes the agency's Records Access Officer who is responsible for processing all Freedom of Information Law requests. In 2023, the number of jurisdictional inquiries was consistent with 2022 levels, suggesting a persistent increase in the number of inquiries observed since 2020. Average response times remain stable, reflecting the agency's goal to promptly respond to inquiries within a two-week period on average, though individual response times may be different depending on the circumstances of the inquiry.

The number of FOIL requests in 2023 rose considerably to 421 compared to 359 in 2022, an increase of 17%. This increase is in line with a broader trend of increased FOIL requests over the past four years. In addition, the agency's Record Access Officer completed a successful transition to a new, statewide platform for tracking and processing FOIL requests; this work was performed without any material change to the average response times for FOIL requests. Staff continued to handle the increased workload while maintaining the customary level of customer service.

Activity	2022	2023
JIFs Received	1,178	1,158
JIFs Responded To	1,130	1,062
Non-Jurisdictional	827	782
Jurisdictional	227	202
Variance	31	29
General Information	37	35
Potential Violation	8	14
Average Response Time (in days)	12	7
Telephone Calls	3,399	3,328
Walk-Ins	45	72
Write-Ins/Site Visits	0	7
Other Agency Referrals	351	386
FOIL Requests Received	359	421

JIFs – Jurisdictional Inquiry Forms **FOIL** – Freedom of Information Requests