

SAVE MIRROR LAKE

Ausable Sustainable Salt Initiative

February 28, 2019

To our elected officials:

As Lake Placid business owners, we know that Mirror Lake is the centerpiece of our village. Its scenic views and clear waters draw visitors and residents back to our community over and over again. For many, Mirror Lake provides a first and lasting connection to the Adirondacks and its myriad waterways.

We know as well that the health of Mirror Lake is essential to its beauty, to its recreational value, and to the abundance of wildlife that rely on it. Indeed, the well-being of our local business economy and the vibrancy of the Lake Placid community is inseparable from the well-being and vibrancy of the lake.

Therefore, we cannot ignore recent scientific evidence that road salt has significantly affected Mirror Lake causing the interruption of key lake processes, threatening its scenic beauty, endangering wildlife, and pushing the lake beyond its ability to sustain itself. These facts have prompted us to organize in support of the Ausable Sustainable Salt Initiative, a program of the Ausable River Association. Our focus is to save Mirror Lake.

For decades, Mirror Lake silently transitioned from a pristine wilderness lake to the Adirondack lake most affected by road salt. Despite efforts to protect it, this transition went unnoticed until detailed scientific monitoring, starting in 2015, began to uncover the evidence of persistent salt loading. Today, due to excess levels of road salt, the lake is experiencing a disruption of its biannual turnover that has been documented in only a handful of lakes across North America. Lake turnover is a physical process vital to a lake's health, akin to our need to breathe. It allows the deep waters of the lake to absorb oxygen which is necessary to support lake trout and other deep cold-water species that rely on the lake. The loss of spring turnover reduces the lake's natural resilience and makes it vulnerable to undesirable events such as algal blooms and winter fish kills.

The business community of Lake Placid takes this threat seriously. We've discussed our concerns. We trust the scientific evidence presented by the Ausable River Association (AsRA) and the Adirondack Watershed Institute. Further, we trust AsRA's conviction that it is not too late to find a solution, but only if we act aggressively and swiftly.

We, the undersigned business owners, urge the Village Board of Trustees to take immediate action to protect the health of Mirror Lake. Specifically, we recommend the following two initial steps:

- First, as the village plans the replacement of sidewalks along Main Street, we have an opportunity to dramatically reduce the amount of salt used around Mirror Lake by installing heated sidewalks. Heating sidewalks would not only eliminate a major source of road salt pollution, it would also protect village and private infrastructure, as well as improve the downtown experience for visitors and residents. As evidenced by the experience of the Mirror Lake Inn and Smoke Signals, we know heated sidewalks work. We believe that an upfront investment in this infrastructure improvement will reap rewards and save costs over time. Therefore, we request that the Lake Placid Village Board and its contractors fully investigate the cost and implementation options for heated sidewalks on Main Street and present their data and findings to all interested members of the public via one or more village meetings prior to

continuation of plans to replace village sidewalks this coming spring. We know alternatives may exist and would be interested to explore these for use on our properties and throughout our community. In Plattsburgh, for example, individual property owners are required by law to maintain their sidewalks. That model could be transferred to the village along with a practical set of best management practices that, in winter, would minimize or eliminate salt use.

- Second, we ask both the Village of Lake Placid and the Town of North Elba to adopt this year the best management practices identified by the Sustainable Winter Management (SWiM) program and pursue SWiM Roads certification by working with AsRA. NYS DOT recently adopted many of the practices outlined in SWiM and is actively working with AsRA and other partners to evaluate its winter maintenance practices. SWiM certification is one part of the Ausable Sustainable Salt Initiative led by AsRA. Working together, research on application rates of professional operators in Lake Placid are combined with measures of private salt use to create application standards that make business sense and address environmental concerns associated with overapplication. Ongoing scientific research to measure changes in Mirror Lake then quantifies the impact of these known use reductions, allowing our community to adjust and refine our salt use based on real world needs and the health of Mirror Lake. AsRA's credentials and experience make them an essential partner in these endeavors.

To be clear, we greatly appreciate existing efforts of the village and town to reduce salt use and begin implementing best management practices. We applaud your partnership with AsRA, integrating their technical knowledge and scientific expertise as you work to understand the nature of the problem and begin to identify solutions. We are also aware that the first phase of the village sidewalk project is moving toward implementation. Nevertheless, integrating the full complement of practices under the SWiM program and thoroughly investigating a salt-free option for our sidewalks is essential. Business owners stand ready to work with you in partnership to identify ways in which we can assist.

As members and business leaders of the Lake Placid community, we cherish this special place. Many of us live, work, and recreate in and around Mirror Lake and Placid Lake, two incredible resources that, like the lands surrounding them, are resources we must protect. Our recommendations identify essential first steps for the village and the town to protect the health of Mirror Lake, as well as ground and surface waters throughout the Ausable River watershed, including the Chubb River watershed. The short-term investment necessary to proceed is minimal when compared with the significant economic and environmental costs associated with the continuing decline of the lake. We urge you to pursue scientifically verifiable, long-term solutions that reduce road salt inputs to Mirror Lake.

Respectfully,

The Holderied Family, Golden Arrow Lakeside Resort
Ed Weibrecht, Mirror Lake Inn
Bill Billerman, Mirror Lake Watershed Association
Marc Galvin, The Bookstore Plus
Tim Robinson, Lake Placid Business Association (Terry Robards Wine & Spirits)
The Lussi Family
The High Peaks Resort

