

## A note to Friends of the Upper Hudson Rail Trail

July 19, 2011

We're at a **critical point** in our project, and we need your help. Let me provide some background, and bring you up to date. But if you have only a few moments, the issue is that a railroad company from Chicago is trying to purchase our corridor. If you think we'd be better off with a bike trail, let them know, and perhaps they'll reconsider: [info@sncrr.com](mailto:info@sncrr.com).

For the past year or so, we've been trying to persuade the owner of the Tahawus railroad corridor to turn it over to our trail group. The deal would involve no money from us, but NL Industries would be able to recoup the salvage value of the rails, about \$1M. They've been somewhat reluctant only because of permit issues from the APA. In fact, those issues have prevented them from conducting salvage on their own. I'll spare you the details. But if we acquire the corridor, well-established precedents in federal courts will allow quick resolution of any state regulatory complications.

A more serious complication emerged last December, when Warren County's new tourist train operator, Iowa-Pacific, said they might buy the Tahawus corridor. NL Industries has had to wait to see what might come of this before accepting our offer. They'll prefer to sell it to Iowa-Pacific if it means an immediate \$1M in cash.

It appears at this time that Iowa-Pacific wants to make a deal with NL. To most observers, this makes no sense, since their stated intention is to run freight from Tahawus, which is a place that doesn't even have electricity. But this deal is like buying a decrepit warehouse that has a million dollars worth of stuff inside - I'm referring to the value of the rails. Money in the bank, sort of. Iowa-Pacific does not yet realize that this bank is run by the APA, who will not take kindly to a withdrawal without restoring the corridor to its natural state. That's the only reason the rails are still there.

An Iowa-Pacific official assured me recently that they would take community wishes into account before they purchase the Tahawus corridor - that we should not think of them as enemies. Later, I learned that their concern for the community would actually be limited to cooperating on "rail with trail" - this is an approach that builds a separate trail in the corridor alongside active tracks. Let's consider that option in more familiar surroundings:

Imagine establishing a bike trail alongside Route 28 from Warrensburg to Indian Lake. No, you can't use the shoulder. No, you can't put the trail in the drainage ditches. Don't forget about the Hudson River bridge at The Glen, and all the other bridges along the way that you'd have to widen or double. Well, it's no different along a single track rail corridor - not impossible, but absurdly expensive. Worse, the nature of the Tahawus right-of-way makes it legally impossible. This gesture of community-mindedness is empty, cynical and disingenuous.

**Call to action!** We need to persuade Iowa-Pacific of a few things.

First, **it is certainly not community-minded to interfere with a local, grass-roots campaign to establish a wonderful, world-class bike trail** that will benefit the entire area, both our economy and our quality of life, including our health. Indeed, cyclists and other users of this corridor, including snowmobilers, are entitled to think of this as a rather hostile act.

Second, when you hear Iowa-Pacific say "rail with trail", you gotta call them out - this is utter **nonsense**, and they know it.

Third, and perhaps most important, let them know you think **two attractions in North Creek are better than one**, for all concerned. This simple truth has eluded Iowa-Pacific so far - that their fortunes are tied to the fortunes of North Creek. Anything they can do to make North Creek a better destination in the summer is good for them. We're talking about a bike trail that will win awards, one of the best in the east. As trail lovers, we know what this will mean to a community like North Creek - we've seen it

elsewhere. If you live in Warren County, you know the Bikeway is a great success, while the county's railroad venture has struggled. **We all must try to educate Iowa-Pacific on the huge impact of bike trails.** North Creek needs a bigger boost than it will get from tourist trains.

Since these things are fairly obvious to level-headed people, we stand a decent chance of persuading Iowa-Pacific to forego this expansion into the most sparsely populated area in the East.

Here is the vision we offer: Just imagine rolling along, in dappled sunlight, on a quiet trail alongside cool, rushing waters, across the Opalescent River, in the heart of the Adirondack wilderness. Oh, boy, doesn't that seem wonderful? But it may not happen unless you act. Please take a moment and ...

**Send Iowa-Pacific a message:**

General Email address: [info@sncrr.com](mailto:info@sncrr.com)

Phone: 877 726 7245

Learn more and become a member at <http://upperhudson.org>. Keep current by following our Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Upper-Hudson-Rail-Trail/102812963094737>

Thanks!

Curt Austin

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(a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation)