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Pataki picks former college president for top APA slot

By JOEL STASHENKO Associated Press Writer

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ALBANY, N.Y. -- Gov. George Pataki nominated a former forestry school president Thursday as chairman of the agency that makes land use and zoning decisions in the Adirondacks.

Ross Whaley's nomination to the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) board now goes to the state Senate, which is expected to approve it during a short session next month.

Whaley was president of the State University of New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse from 1984-2000. Previously, he directed forest resource economic research at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service.

Pataki said Whaley, a Franklin County resident, has "dedicated his life to sustainable development" and will be a plus at the head of the 11-member APA board.

Whaley said in a statement released by Pataki's office that he will "serve Governor Pataki in his continuing effort to build a strong economy while preserving our natural heritage."

If confirmed, Whaley will succeed acting APA Chairman James Townsend. Pataki's office said Townsend will remain on the board after Whaley's confirmation.

The Adirondack Council's John Sheehan said Whaley, who has degrees in forestry and natural resource economics, will bring a unique background to the APA's top job.

"You couldn't find anyone with a better knowledge of the park's ecosystem and forestry," Sheehan said.

Peter Bauer of the Residents' Committee to Protect the Adirondacks called Whaley "probably one of the few people in the state that will be applauded from all sides."

"He has a long history for the timber industry," Bauer said. "He has a long history working collaboratively with local governments. He has strong credentials. He's a reasonable and well-liked guy."

Bauer said Whaley will deal well with the various constituencies and the often-emotional issues in the 6 million-acre Adirondack Park because he "radiates calm and patience."

The chairman of the APA receives \$30,000 a year.

Pataki also announced that he has renominated Deanne Rehm, former supervisor of the town of Bolton in Warren County, for another term. She has been an APA board member since 2001.

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