

The Adirondack Council A SUMMARY REPORT



JANUARY 1990

SUMMARY REPORT: VOLUME 2 of 2020 VISION

Completing the Adirondack Wilderness System

The people of New York State now have an extraordinary opportunity to secure for all time the finest wilderness legacy east of the Mississippi River. This can be accomplished if the State moves decisively to establish in the Adirondack Park three new public Wilderness Areas and to round out 13 other tracts already designated as Wilderness.

In the second of its 2020 Vision studies (summarized in these pages) the Adirondack Council recommends that the Adirondack Wilderness System be enlarged from 1,038,874 to 1,650,478 acres. One-third of the additions can be made by classifying existing public Forest Preserve as Wilderness; the rest can be accomplished by state acquisition of key private holdings.



2020 VISION

Fulfilling The Park's Wild Promise

In the first of its 2020 Vision reports, the Adirondack Council identified 218,420 acres of private parkland of great biological value in need of permanent protection; in our next report we will set forth recommendations for expanding, filling in, and improving recreational opportunities on the state-owned Forest Preserve classified as Wild Forest.

This report is intended to serve as a policymaker's guide for completing one of this nation's great public assets — the lands and waters of the Adirondack Forest Preserve designated as Wilderness.

Public purchase of some important private tracts identified in this study may not be feasible until well into the next century. In such cases, the acquisition of conservation easements, which preclude future development, will suffice until the owner, or the owner's successors, agree to sell. ***Of overriding importance is that these critical private lands and waters be preserved in their natural, undeveloped condition so that the option for eventual public ownership remains open.***

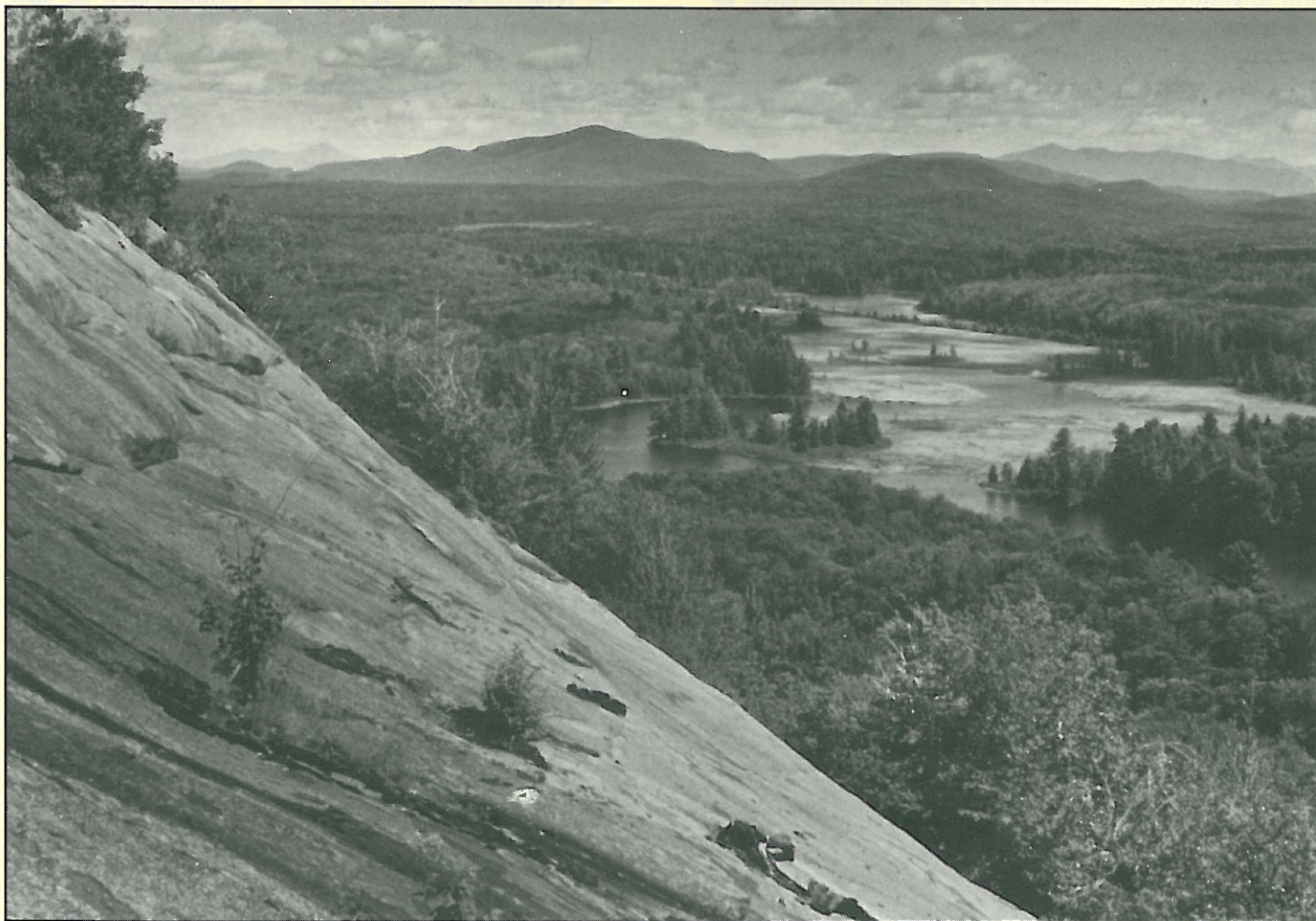
As it undertakes to negotiate with landowners for these essential additions to the Wilderness System, the State

must show respect for and sensitivity toward established uses of private land. Such uses include commercial forestry, hunting camps on timber company lands, snowmobile trails, and private estates. Where a snowmobile trail must be closed, another trail of comparable length and quality should be opened. Where hunting camps might be displaced and motorized access prevented, the State should provide comparable hunting opportunities by means of an aggressive conservation-easement program.

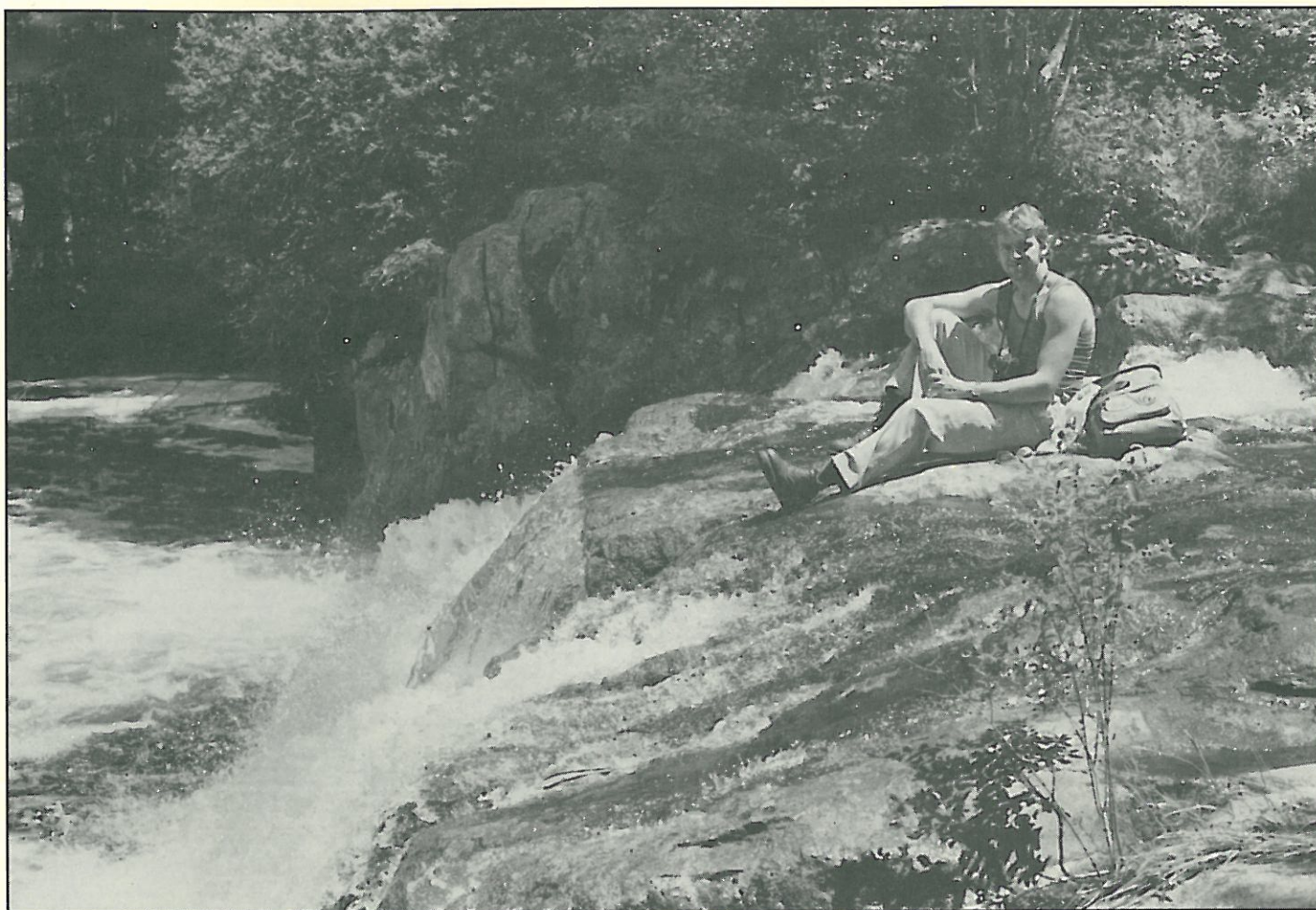
The state's power of eminent domain should be used only as a last resort when a critical private tract is threatened with irreversible change and degradation.

Today the people of New York State own title to the finest vestiges of wilderness in the northeastern United States. This splendid natural legacy is testimony to the foresight of our forebears. How fully and quickly we seize the opportunities to complete the Adirondack Wilderness System will be a test of this generations's foresight.

One thing is certain: time is of the essence. Once wilderness is subdivided and developed, it is wilderness no more.



Dave Dayger



George Brenning

Adirondack Wilderness System

The primary purpose for designating public land as Wilderness is to preserve natural biological systems. The preservation of natural beauty and the opportunity for outdoor recreation in a superb natural setting are other important benefits.

In contrast to those areas where man and his works dominate, Wilderness is defined as “an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”

Wilderness is further defined as:

- having been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable;
- offering outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation;
- constituting at least 10,000 acres of land and water, or being of sufficient size and character to be preserved and used in an unimpaired condition.

Wilderness areas are those increasingly rare and precious places where a hiker, canoer, fisherman, camper, cross-country skier, hunter or picnicker can hear the cry of a loon instead of the roar of a motorboat, where he or she can breathe spruce-scented air instead of exhaust fumes. No motors of any kind are allowed in Wilderness: no jeeps, jet skis or speedboats, no floatplanes, all-terrain

vehicles, dirt bikes or snowmobiles. In contrast to almost every place else on our human-dominated planet, natural tranquility prevails.

DEFINITIONS

Adirondack Park: Created in 1892 by the New York State Legislature, this largest of all parks in the contiguous United States contains six million acres of intermixed public and private land. About 58% of the park is privately owned and devoted mainly to forestry, open-space recreation, and agriculture.

Adirondack Forest Preserve: The state-owned land in the Adirondack Park is “Forest Preserve” and protected by the State Constitution as “forever wild.” The hundreds of parcels of Adirondack Forest Preserve add up to about 2,600,000 acres.

Adirondack Wilderness System: This special category of Adirondack Forest Preserve totals 1,038,874 acres — about 45% of the state-owned land and one-sixth of the entire park. For the purpose of this report, the St. Regis Canoe Area is also included in the Wilderness System.



Gary Randorf

Recommendations

To secure and complete the Adirondack Wilderness System, the State of New York should expand the System from 1,038,874 to 1,659,694 acres by rounding out existing wilderness boundaries, reclassifying 194,308 acres of other Forest Preserve, and acquiring 407,906 acres now in private ownership. When established motorized access is precluded by the reclassification of Forest Preserve to Wilderness, the State should provide comparable access elsewhere.

Bob Marshall Great Wilderness 408,777 acres

This proposed wilderness area can be established by combining three existing wilderness areas and five primitive areas with 178,310 acres of private land acquisitions. This will be the largest block of undisturbed open space east of the Mississippi and north of the Everglades.

Boreal Wilderness: 73,300 acres

The best of the park's boreal ecosystem (northern spruce/fir forests and sphagnum bogs) can be preserved in this proposed wilderness area through the consolidation of public lands and the acquisition of private lands.

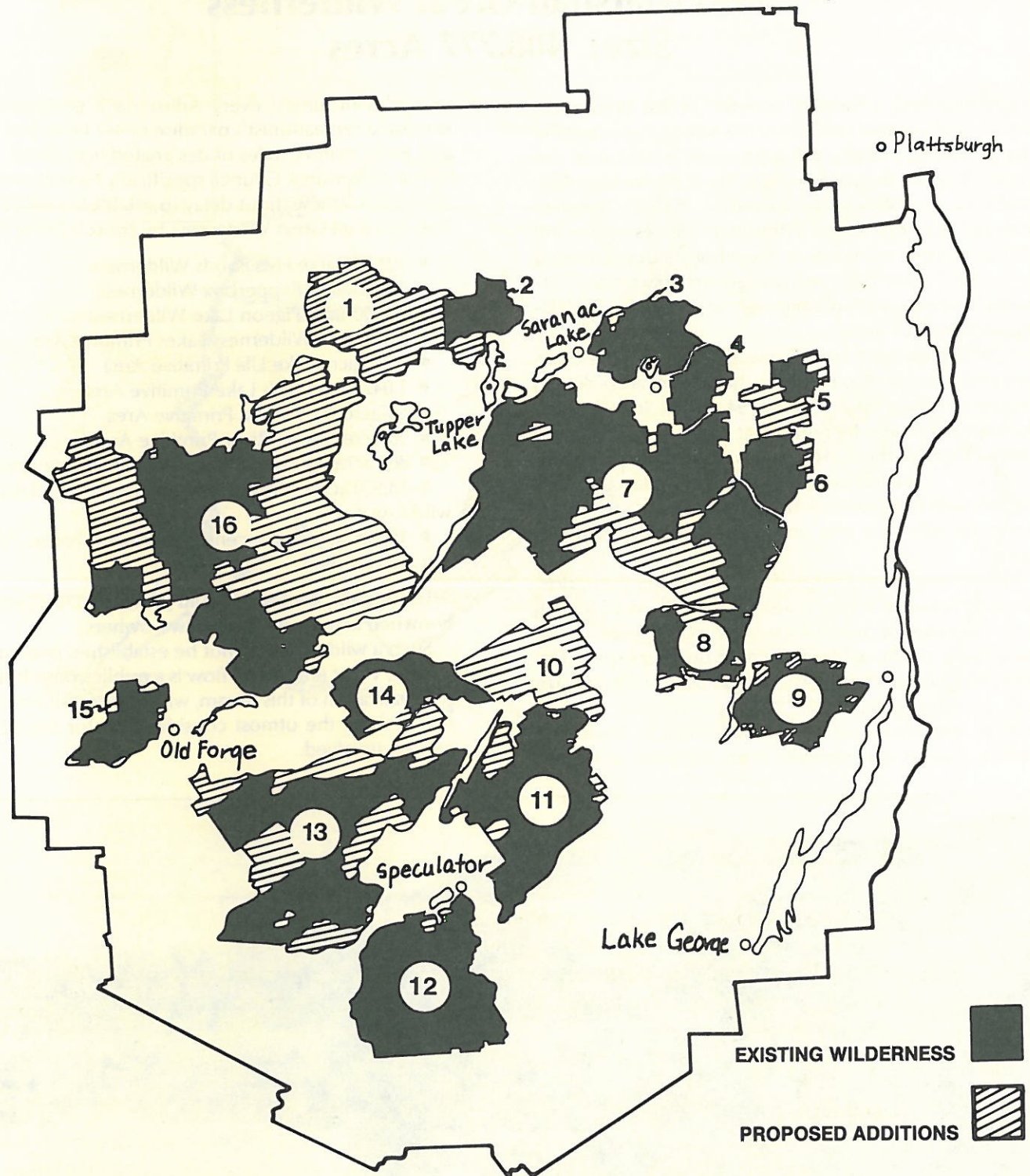
Wild Rivers Wilderness: 72,480 acres

The greatest concentration of wild and scenic rivers in the eastern United States can be preserved in this proposed wilderness area through the consolidation of public lands and the acquisition of private lands.

Complete Existing Wilderness

By consolidating various public tracts and acquiring 142,696 acres of private land, the State can expand present wilderness areas to more rational ecological and administrative boundaries. In so doing, the public will be able to safeguard these rare and fragile wilderness remnants for all time.

The Adirondack Wilderness System



- 1 — Proposed Boreal Wilderness
- 2 — St. Regis Canoe Area
- 3 — McKenzie Mt. Wilderness
- 4 — Sentinel Range Wilderness
- 5 — Jay/Hurricane Wilderness
- 6 — Giant Mountain Wilderness
- 7 — High Peaks (& Dix Mt.) Wilderness
- 8 — Hoffman Notch Wilderness

- 9 — Pharaoh Lake Wilderness
- 10 — Proposed Wild Rivers Wilderness
- 11 — Siamese Ponds Wilderness
- 12 — Silver Lake Wilderness
- 13 — West Canada Lake Wilderness
- 14 — Blue Ridge Wilderness
- 15 — Ha-de-ron-dah Wilderness
- 16 — Proposed Bob Marshall Great Wilderness

NEW WILDERNESS PROPOSALS

Bob Marshall Great Wilderness

Size: 408,777 Acres

Bob Marshall, a forester, founder of the Wilderness Society, and summer resident of the Adirondacks, was the first person to identify the wilderness potential of the Cranberry Lake-Beaver River country in the western Adirondacks. In a survey conducted in 1935-36, Marshall analyzed all forested areas in the United States embracing 300,000 acres or more which "have not yet been invaded by [public] routes of mechanized transportation." Included on his list of 48 roadless remnants was the 380,000-acre Adirondack tract.

A decade earlier, Marshall had hiked most of the Cranberry Lake region. Along the way he ranked, according to degree of scenic beauty, some 94 ponds. In his travels through the region he noted that "only a subdued light filtered through the dense crowns of the dark spruce and hemlock . . . The old trail underfoot was the last connecting link with the pioneers of a century ago . . . when the North Woods were one unbroken stretch of luxuriant forest."

Remarkably, more than half-a-century later the opportunity to preserve such a roadless area still exists. In fact, with the abandonment of the Adirondack railroad, an even larger public wilderness could be established. The area proposed by the Council would be of sufficient size and remoteness to sustain viable populations of most wildlife species native to the Adirondacks (including wolves, moose and possibly even cougars), safeguard

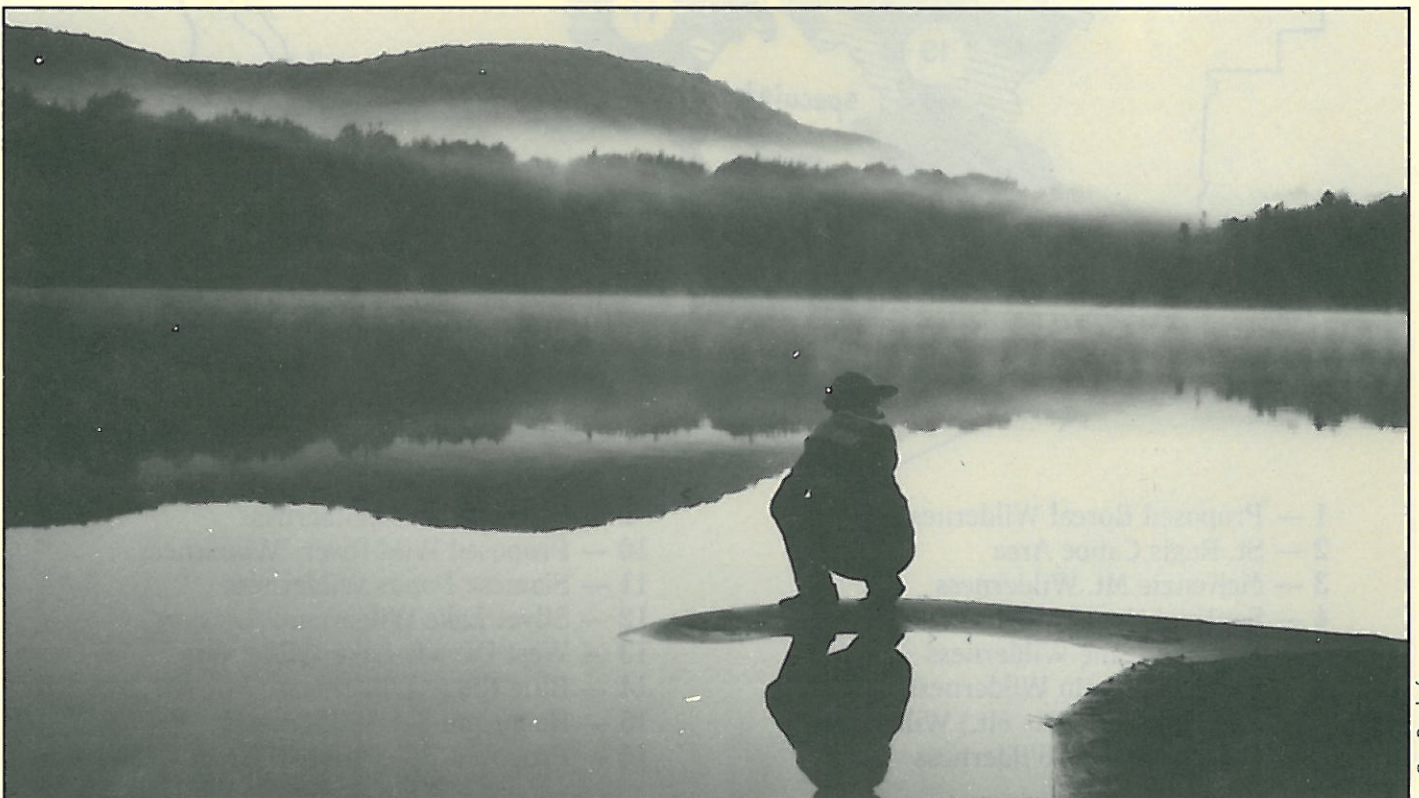
examples of almost every Adirondack ecosystem, and serve as a recreationist's paradise of 441 lakes and ponds and more than 70 miles of designated wild rivers.

The Adirondack Council specifically recommends that the State move without delay to establish a 408,777-acre Bob Marshall Great Wilderness by consolidating the:

- 101,171-acre Five Ponds Wilderness
- 14,625-acre Pepperbox Wilderness
- 50,100-acre Pigeon Lake Wilderness
- 6,676-acre Wilderness Lakes Primitive Area
- 7,215-acre Lake Lila Primitive Area
- 1,042-acre Low's Lake Primitive Area
- 50-acre Buck Pond Primitive Area
- 10-acre Beaver River Primitive Area,
- 800 acres of the Hitchens Pond Primitive Area
- 38,970 acres of Forest Preserve presently classified as wild forest
- 16,228 acres of recently-purchased Forest Preserve not yet classified.

In addition, the State should purchase 178,310 privately-owned acres from twenty-two owners.

Such a wilderness cannot be established overnight, of course. What is essential now is a public commitment to the realization of this dream, with an acquisition process that reflects the utmost consideration for the 22 landowners involved.

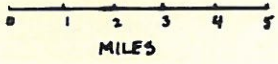
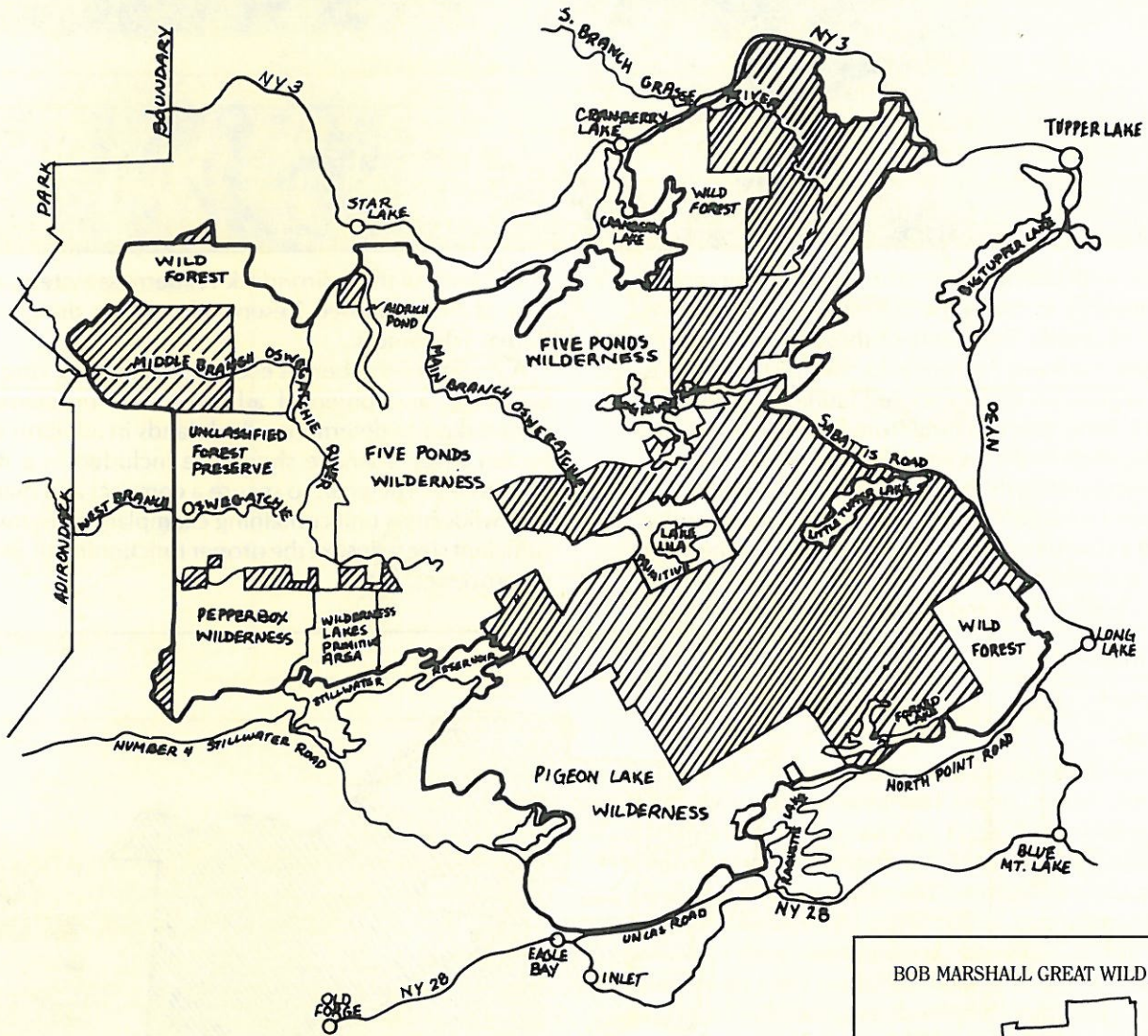



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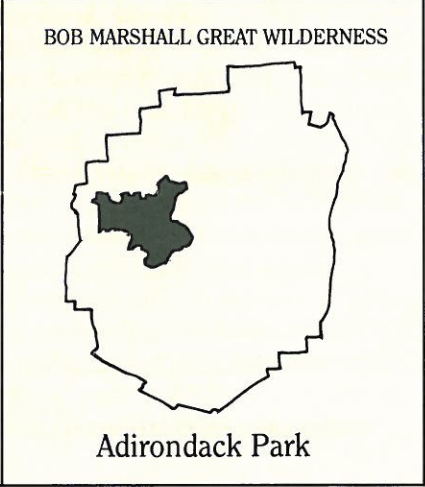
"Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed; if we permit the last virgin forests to be turned into comic books and plastic cigarette cases; if we pollute the last clean air and dirty the last clean streams and push our paved roads through the last of the silence."

Wallace Stegner

Bob Marshall Great Wilderness



NECESSARY ACQUISITIONS 



Proposed Boreal Wilderness

Size: 73,300 Acres



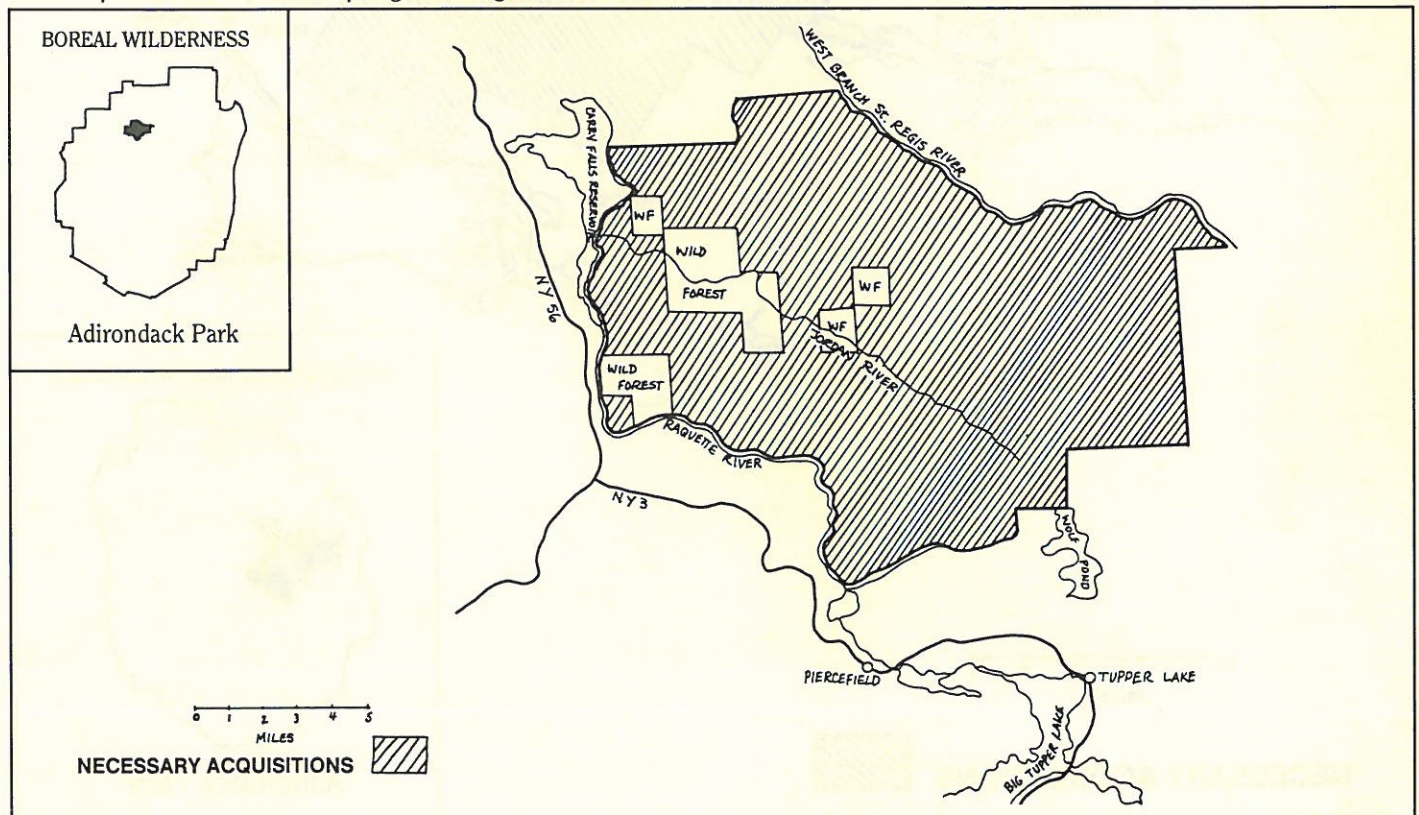
Gary Randorf

Canadian and Siberian taiga (the subarctic evergreen forest) symbolize to many the largest and most remote wilderness on earth. Remnants of these boreal systems persist in the northern Adirondacks. Two distinct islands of boreal vegetation and associated fauna lie within the Adirondack Park: one resulting from high elevation and winds in the High Peaks region, the other shaped by soils and microtopography in the northwest Adirondacks.

In Volume I of 2020 Vision, the Council called for the creation of a Low Elevation Boreal Reserve in southern St. Lawrence and west Franklin counties. Since this extensive area of spruce/fir forests and sphagnum bogs is not found

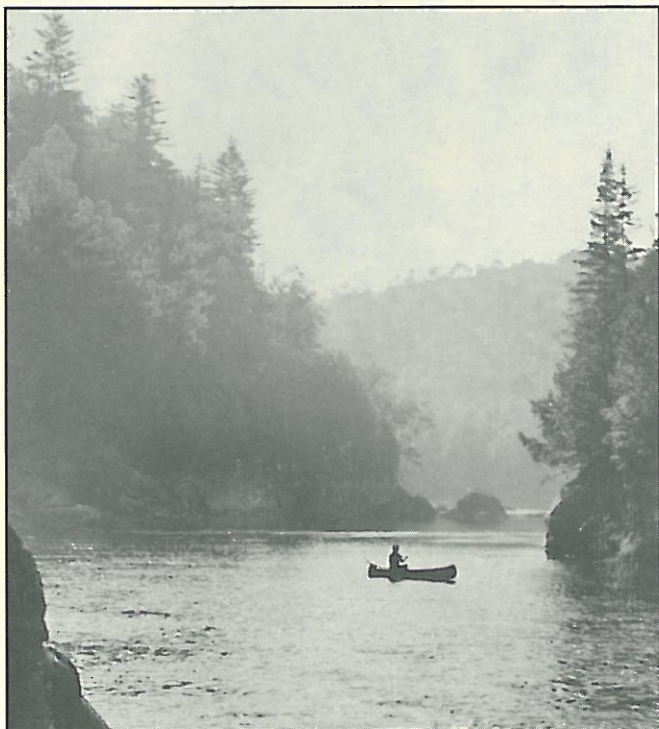
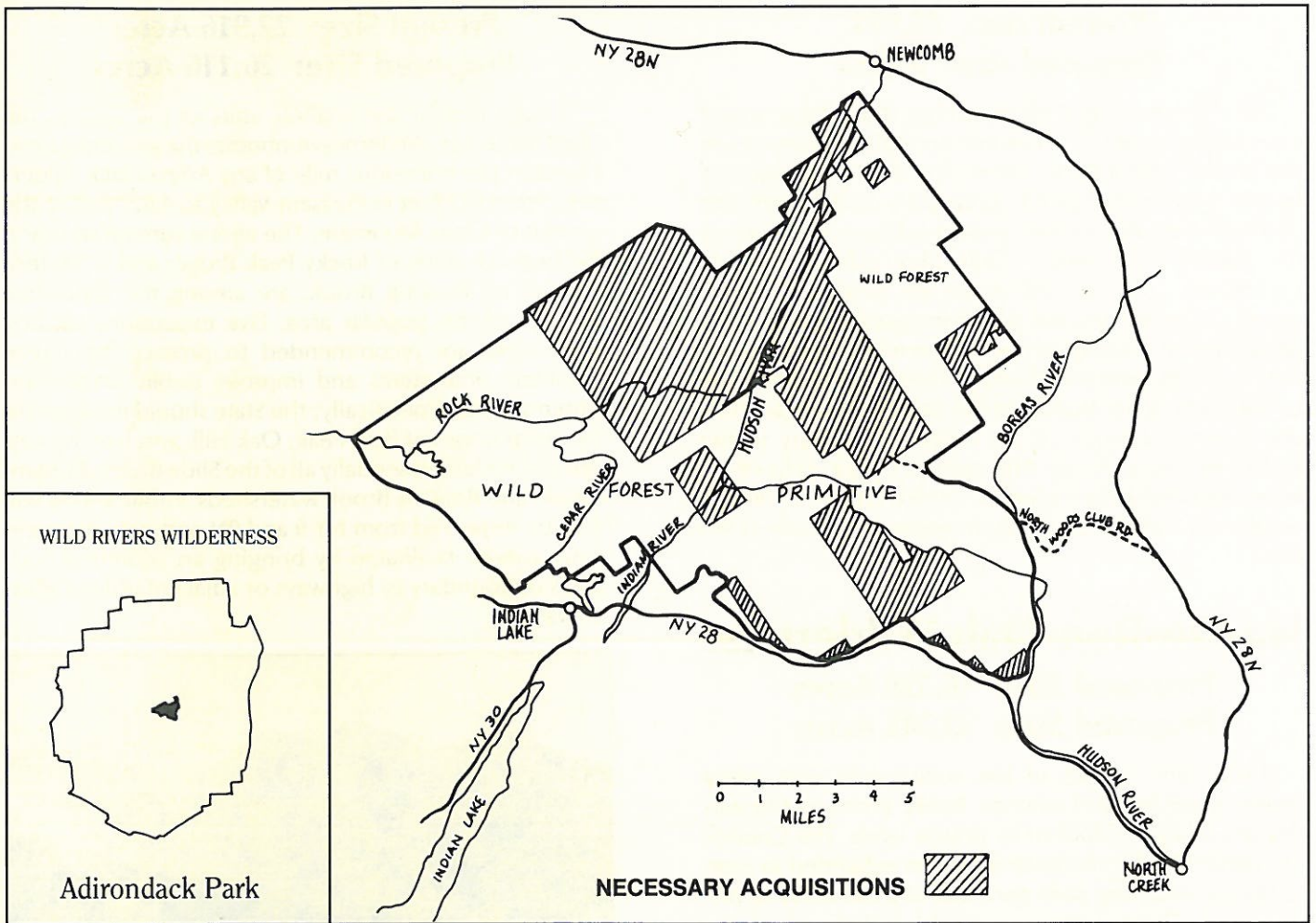
in any units of the Adirondack Wilderness System, a portion of the proposed Reserve should be designated a Boreal Wilderness.

A review of the boreal ecosystems, existing land uses, buffering, and potential administrative problems was undertaken to determine which lands in addition to the Jordan River drainage should be included in a Boreal Wilderness. The goal: to secure a compact and manageable wilderness unit containing exemplary ecosystems of sufficient size to insure the proper functioning of all natural processes.



Proposed Wild Rivers Wilderness

Size: 72,480 Acres



Paul Schaefer

Through the geographic heart of the park run some of the nation's finest wild and scenic rivers: the Boreas, Cedar, Hudson, Indian and Rock. Forty-eight miles of these spectacular waterways, including the magnificent Hudson River Gorge, should form the core of a new Wild Rivers Wilderness. Whether fishing, canoeing, rafting the rivers or hiking the shoreline, the visitor cannot help but feel like an early explorer. Adding to the sense of grandeur and wildness are three dozen pristine lakes and ponds and the dramatic OK Slip Falls, the greatest vertical-drop cataract (over 250 feet) in the park.

To establish a Wild Rivers Wilderness will require the acquisition of 27,310 acres of private land, the reclassification of 28,000 acres of wild forest, and the reclassification of the 17,170-acre Hudson Gorge Primitive Area.

Here, then, is the opportunity to secure a river-dominated wilderness containing the finest in riparian ecosystems and offering the best of wild-river recreation. The opportunity to create such a wilderness exists nowhere else in the nation east of the Rocky Mountains.

SECURING EXISTING WILDERNESS

Blue Ridge Wilderness

Present size: 45,951

Proposed size: 51,851

The six-mile-long, 3,500-foot-high Blue Ridge massif forms the core of this accessible but little-known area in the central Adirondacks. Dense forests are interspersed by nearly two dozen ponds, principally on the north side of the mountain, and spectacular rock faces occur along the southern perimeter. Only nine relatively minor expansions, totaling 5,900 acres, are proposed. Public access and administration will be improved by extending an additional 1.4 miles of the northern wilderness boundary to NY 28, extending much of the southern boundary to the Cedar River Road and the Wakely Mountain trail, and extending much of the western boundary to the Kamp Kill Kare Road. The entire Upper Lake Kora watershed should be included, along with the Lost Brook watershed and the Lake Durant watershed south of the lake.

Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness

Proposed Size: 16,528 Acres

Proposed Size: 33,248 Acres

The terrain consists of low rolling hills with many beaver meadows and swamps. Public access to this wilderness is largely blocked by private lands. The Council recommends that the boundaries be expanded in nine locations, requiring state purchase of 5,880 acres of private land. These extensions would include all of the upper Big Otter Lake watershed (exclusive of the lake itself), 4.2 miles of the Independence River, and the Pine Creek watershed east of the main stem. Much of the southern boundary would extend to NY 28, thus improving public access and administration.

Hoffman Notch Wilderness

Present Size: 36,305 Acres

Proposed Size: 45,266 Acres

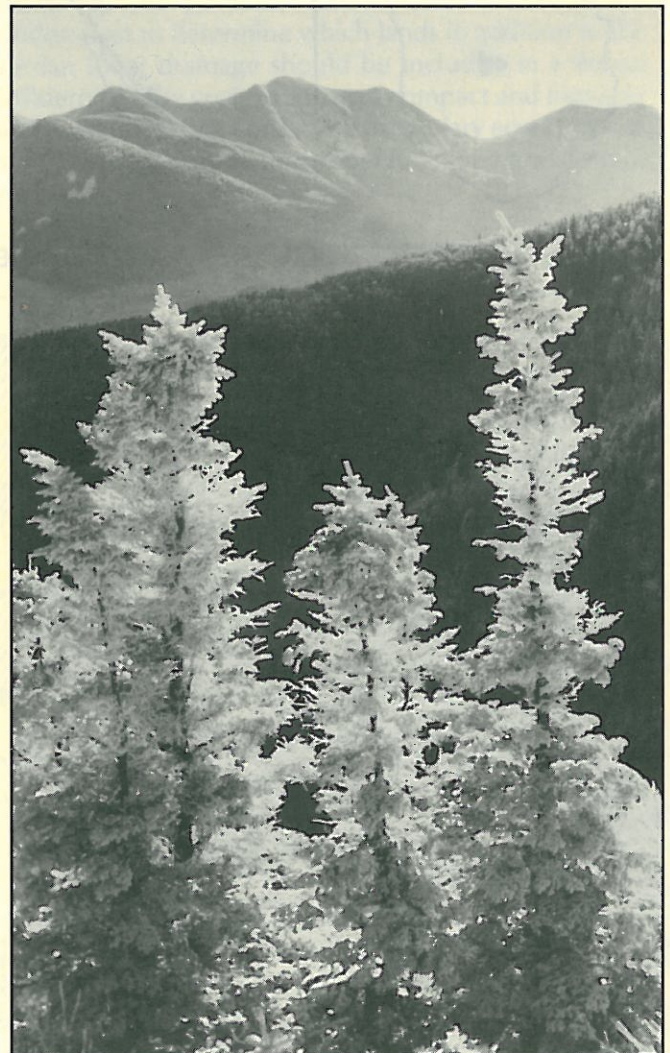
This wilderness is characterized by magnificent northern hardwoods and red spruce. Steep slopes and dense forests make travel difficult except on the Hoffman Notch trail. A total of nine private-land acquisitions, totaling 5,160 acres, and four Forest Preserve reclassifications totaling 3,875 acres, would extend the wilderness boundaries to more favorable locations, including a total of 4.6 miles east to the Adirondack Northway and 4.4 miles north to the Boreas/Blue Ridge Road. Also included would be the eastern half of the Minerva Stream drainage basin and the watersheds of Hoffman Notch Brook, Platt Brook, and the east and west branches of Trout Brook.

Giant Mountain Wilderness

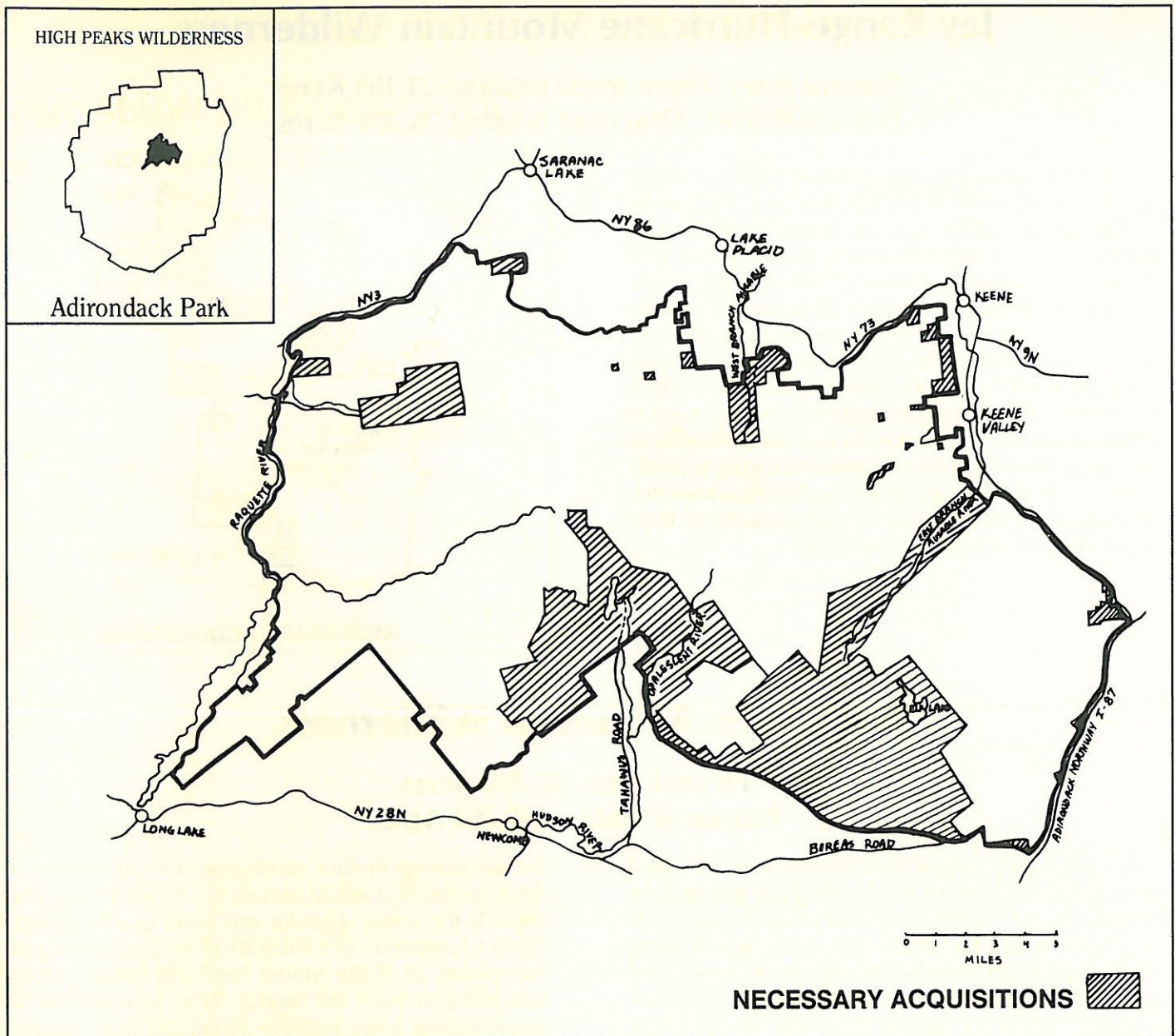
Present Size: 22,916 Acres

Proposed Size: 26,116 Acres

Though one of the smallest units of the system, the Giant Mountain Wilderness embodies the greatest gain in elevation per horizontal mile of any Adirondack wilderness: from 613 feet in Pleasant Valley to 4,627 feet at the summit of Giant Mountain. The alpine summit of Giant, the bedrock spine of Rocky Peak Ridge, and a 200-foot cataract on Roaring Brook, are among the distinctive features of this popular area. Five expansions totaling 3,200 acres are recommended to protect the fragile mountain ecosystems and improve public access and administration. Specifically: the State should incorporate the steep slopes of Bald Peak, Oak Hill, and Iron Mountain and include essentially all of the Slide Brook, Putnam Brook, and Roaring Brook watersheds. Public access will thus be improved from NY 9 and 9N and state management will be facilitated by bringing an additional four miles of boundary to highways or adjacent utility rights-of-way.



Gary Randorf



High Peaks (including Dix Mountain) Wilderness

Present Size: 238,008 Acres
Proposed Size: 314,694 Acres

The High Peaks Wilderness already contains most of the State's highest mountains. If expanded as proposed to include the Dix Mountain Wilderness, this area would encompass 42 of the Adirondack "high peaks" over 4,000 feet.

The range trail from St. Huberts to Mount Marcy traverses New York's most rugged landscape. The Cold River country, once home for the sociable hermit, Noah Rondeau, is one of the wildest watersheds in the East. Yet the High Peaks Wilderness is losing its special sense of remoteness due to heavy and concentrated use. Much of this problem is caused by present boundary locations, private "inholdings," resource limitations, and management difficulties.

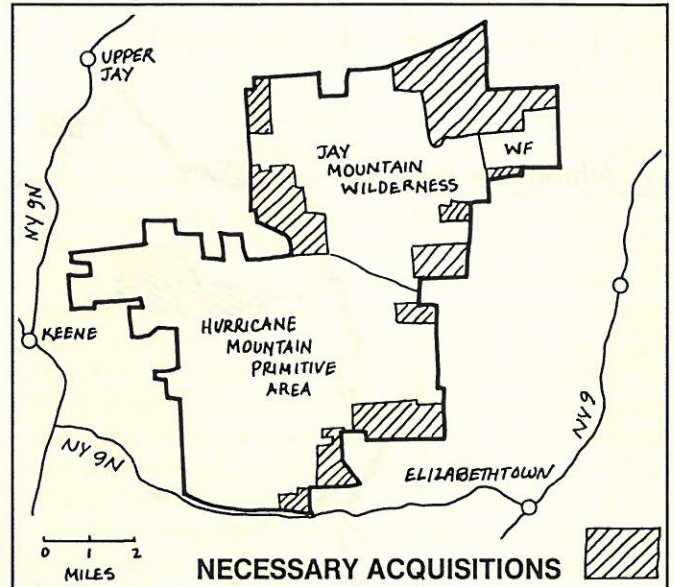
New boundaries should be established to better protect this wilderness, insure its ecological stability, and facilitate enlightened management. Excluding existing communities, the Council proposes that the boundaries be extended to the Adirondack Northway and NY 73 on the east, the Boreas/Blue Ridge Road on the south, and NY 3 and 73 on the north. Specifically: the State should consolidate the High Peaks and Dix Mountain Wilderness; incorporate the Ampersand and Johns Brook Primitive Area; include most of the Opalescent River watershed and all the watersheds of southern Ossetah Lake, Ampersand Brook, Henderson Lake and Calamity Brook, the Boreas Ponds, and the upper East Branch of the Ausable River.

Jay Range-Hurricane Mountain Wilderness

Present Size: Three tracts totaling 21,109 Acres

Proposed Size: One tract totaling 26,309 Acres

Rugged terrain and spectacular views from open, rocky summits characterize the wilderness area that can be established by merging the Jay Mountain Wilderness, Hurricane Mountain Primitive Area, and Mount Fay Wild Forest. Ten private parcels totaling 5,200 acres are recommended for acquisition. Such additions will establish watersheds as the natural ecological components of this wilderness, including "The Glen" and upper Styles Brook, the upper, roadless portion of the Hale Brook watershed, and the watershed of upper Jackson Brook and most of upper Falls Brook. The proposed expansions will bring an additional two miles of the wilderness boundary to public roads, thus improving access and facilitating administration, and encompass the mountain ecosystems of Bluff, Big Lawler and Little Lawler mountains.



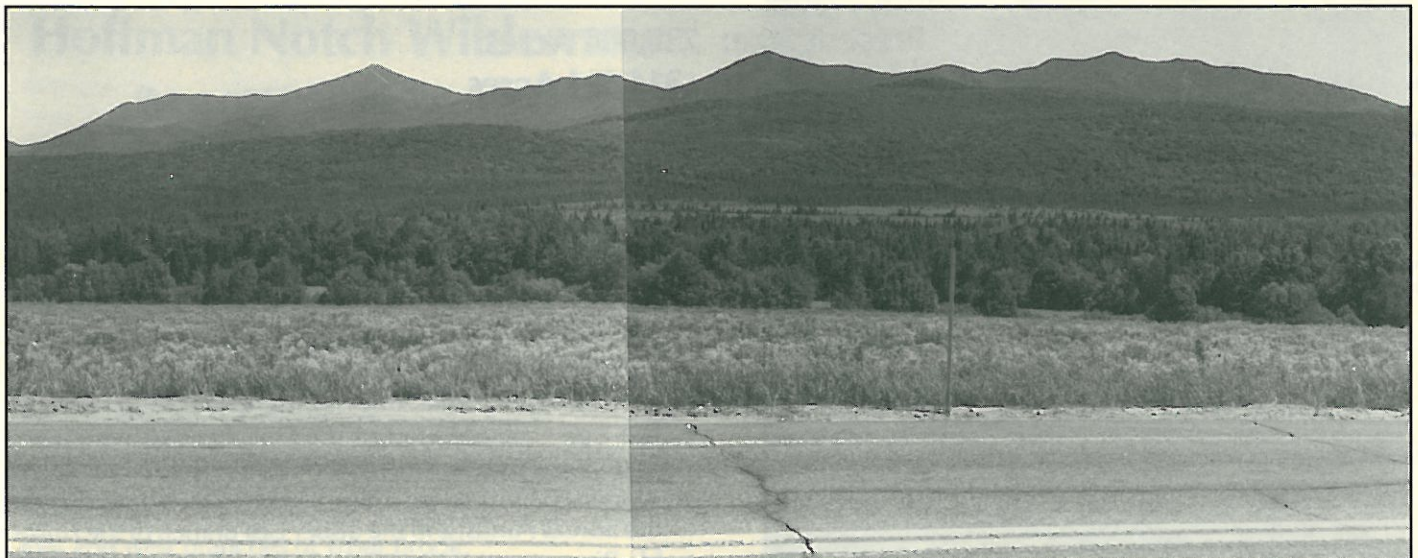
McKenzie Mountain Wilderness

Present Size: 37,798 Acres

Proposed Size: 40,368 Acres

This wilderness centers on a densely-forested massif rising 2,000 feet above the nearby villages of Saranac Lake and Lake Placid — a little-known sanctuary near some of the park's best known natural and manmade attractions. The McKenzie Mountain Wilderness can be perpetuated as a wild refuge with some relatively-small boundary expansions along the Saranac River and the Whiteface Inn road, and immediately behind the developed northwest shoreline of Lake Placid. (The latter boundary expansion

will prevent the kind of mountainside condominium development that would intrude on the wilderness and degrade the scenic splendor and water quality of Lake Placid.) Acquisition of 1,690 acres of private land would incorporate all of the Moose Pond and Moose Creek watershed, increase the Saranac River boundary to 12 uninterrupted miles, improve access to Lincoln Brook, and include High Falls Gorge on the Ausable River.



Alan Cederstrom

St. Regis Canoe Area

Present Size: 23,252 Acres

Proposed Size: 24, 252 Acres

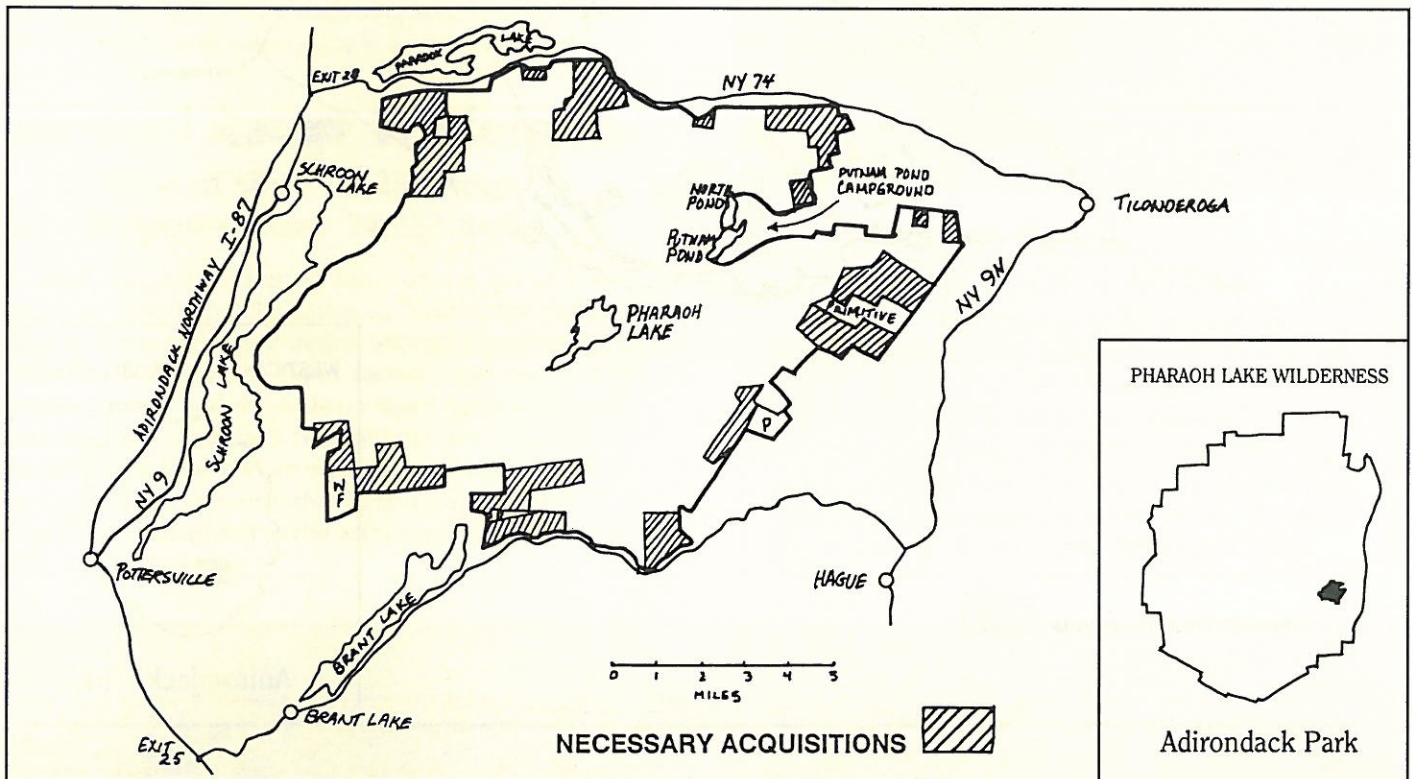
Unsurpassed canoeing and camping is found in the St. Regis Canoe Area, as its steadily-increasing use in the past decade attests. This mostly low, gentle terrain, dominated by St. Regis Mountain to the north and Long Pond Mountain to the west, is also ideal for cross-country skiing. With the recent state acquisition of the bordering Penn Central Railroad right-of-way, the potential exists to expand the Canoe Area to the south and increase its land-and-pond inventory from 58 to 84 bodies of water. Eventual acquisition of only 50 acres of private lands, containing 15 camps, would allow for the closing of the Floodwood Road and the inclusion of more than 7,000 acres of Forest Preserve south of the abandoned railroad and Floodwood Road. To fulfill the promise of the St. Regis Canoe Area, the Council recommends that a total of 860 acres be purchased and 9,020 acres of Forest Preserve be reclassified.

Siamese Ponds Wilderness

Present Size: 113,674 Acres

Proposed Size: 125,574 Acres

Auger Falls, Siamese Ponds, and Puffer Pond . . . the cascades, rock faces and mountain swamps of Eleventh Mountain . . . the East Branch of the Sacandaga and Kunjamuk rivers . . . Burnt Shanty Clearing, Square Falls Mountain, and Bullhead Mountain — such features help to explain the allure of the Siamese Ponds Wilderness. More than 60 lakes and extensive wetlands also add richness and beauty to this land where serenity reigns. The acquisition of 8,800 acres in a dozen locations, and the reclassification of 3,100 acres of Forest Preserve, will bring this wilderness to logical boundaries and fulfill its great promise. The Council recommends extending the southern boundary to the Sacandaga River, Route NY 8 or NY 30, as appropriate, including the eastern shoreline and watershed of Indian Lake and the watershed of Cisco Brook and Owl Pond, Round Pond Brook, Halfway Brook and Bothereation Pond.



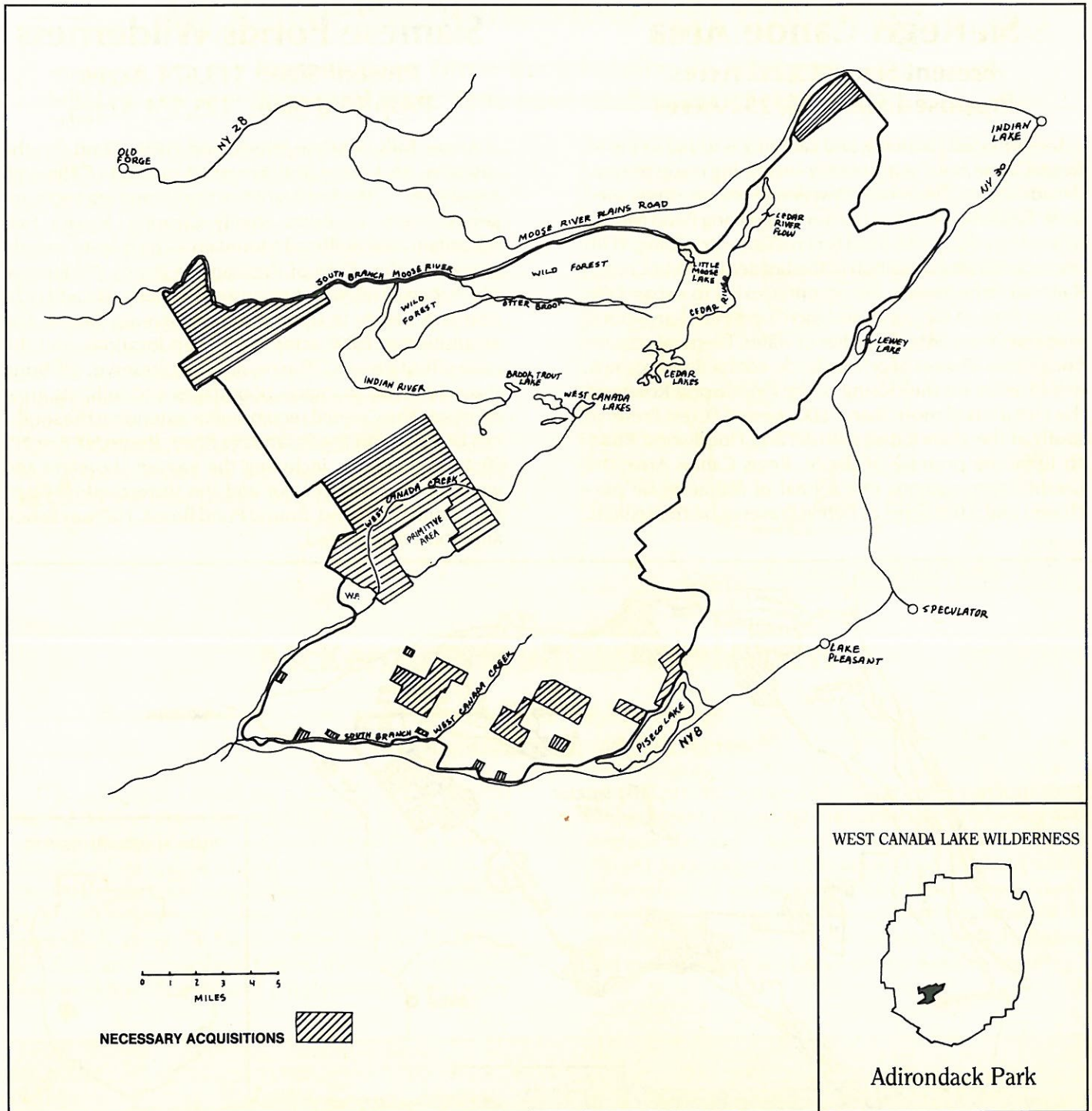
Pharaoh Lake Wilderness

Present Size: 45,884 Acres

Proposed Size: 53,175 Acres

Grizzle Ocean, Desolate Swamp, Devil's Washdish, The Dam Hill, Thunderbolt Mountains and Oxshoe Pond — such are the place names in a wilderness that contains some of the finest landscapes in the Adirondack Park. Pharaoh Lake is one of the largest Adirondack waterbodies entirely surrounded by public land; numerous clear ponds and open vistas from rock outcrops also add

to the appeal. To round out and protect this wilderness, 6,190 acres of private land in 15 locations should be acquired by the State. In addition, the following Forest Preserve tracts should be incorporated: the 500-acre Bald Ledge Primitive Area, 91-acre First Brother Primitive Area, 210-acre Hague Brook Primitive Area, and 300 acres of wild forest.



West Canada Lake Wilderness

Present Size: 169,695 Acres

Proposed Size: 219,150 Acres

Famed as the haunt of French Louis, this is an outstanding wilderness tract in both size and quality. Recent acquisitions in the Perkins Clearing and Little Squaw Brook areas have begun to extend the West Canada Lake Wilderness to ecologically-sound locations. To further enhance and preserve this natural treasure, the Council recommends that all or part of four major watersheds be incorporated, requiring public purchase of 30,180 acres of

private land in 16 locations and the reclassification of 19,275 acres of Forest Preserve. The watershed additions include the southern half of the South Branch of the Moose River, Cedar River upstream from Cedar River Flow, West Canada Creek upstream from the inlet of Honnedaga Brook, and the South Branch of West Canada Creek watershed upstream from the Flow.

Silver Lake Wilderness

Present Size: 105,814 Acres

Proposed Size: 117,010 Acres

Extensive northern hardwood and mixed-wood forests, from the venerable yellow birch and red spruce on the flank of Three Ponds Mountain to the white pines towering over the West Branch cataracts, typify the Silver Lake Wilderness. With more than 100,000 geographically-compact acres, the Silver Lake Wilderness could be one of the most ecologically significant sanctuaries in the United States — when the upper six miles of the West River Road, a gravel motorway that now penetrates the area, is closed. Such action will require acquisition of about 785 acres of private land, involving some 15 hunting camps and the closure of a road long popular with hunters. Such a purchase must be undertaken over a reasonable period of time, with understanding and sensitivity shown to present users and with a sincere effort to provide alternative motorized hunting access by means of an aggressive conservation easement program. The Council proposes an expansion of 11,196 acres, including acquisition of 8,480 acres of private land with multiple ownerships.

Sentinel Range Wilderness

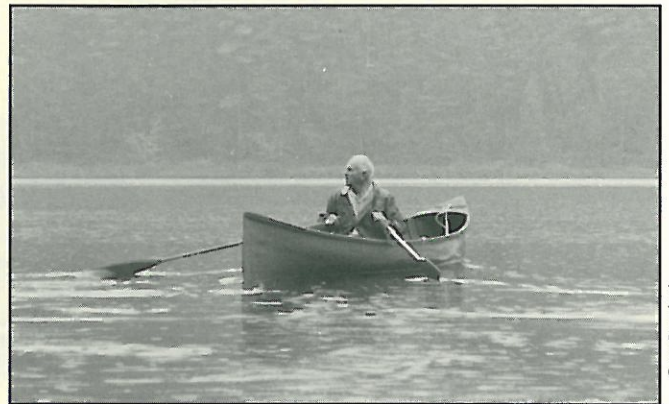
Present Size: 23,252 Acres

Proposed Size: 24,252 Acres

A small, rugged wilderness sandwiched between the hamlet of Keene and Wilmington Notch, the Sentinel Range offers a surprising degree of seclusion. Only the Copperas-Owen-Winch Pond section, just above Wilmington Notch, and the Military Road north of Pitchoff Mountain, get significant recreational use. The interior remains a wild, little-known mountain-ecosystem reserve. The Council recommends that 1,780 acres of private land be acquired and added to the wilderness to preserve the area's natural integrity.

2020 VISION

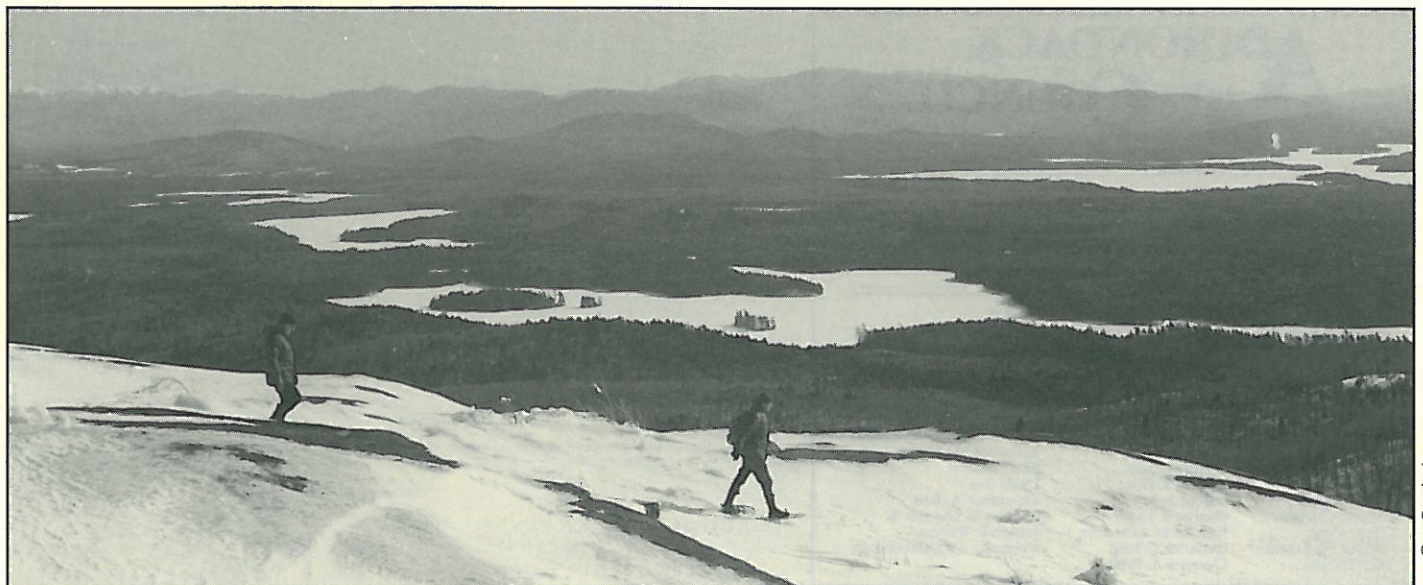
What kind of Adirondack Park do we want in the year 2020 and beyond? The Council's answer to that question is being developed in a series of studies entitled *2020 Vision — Fulfilling the Promise of the Adirondack Park*. The study summarized in these pages was prepared by George D. Davis, an ecologist, land-use planner, and longtime Adirondack conservationist. Copies of the full 48-page report on the Adirondack Wilderness System may be ordered from the Adirondack Council, Box D-2, Elizabethtown, NY 12932. To cover production and mailing costs, a donation of \$10 per copy is requested.



Gary Randorf

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Urge Governor Cuomo to do everything in his power to complete the Adirondack Wilderness System as proposed by the Adirondack Council. Remind the Governor that time is running out. What this generation does (or doesn't do) in the decade ahead will determine the fate of the Adirondack Park for all generations to come. Write: Governor Mario Cuomo, State Capitol, Albany, NY 12244.




Gary Randorf



Robin Brown

ADIRONDACK COUNCIL



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A coalition of the National Audubon Society; The Wilderness Society; Natural Resources Defense Council; Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks; National Parks and Conservation Association; and other concerned organizations and individuals.

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