

Spring
2018



Defending the East's Greatest Wilderness

NEWS IN AND ABOUT THE SIX-MILLION-ACRE ADIRONDACK PARK

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Is Overuse Threatening the Adirondacks?

Challenge of managing record visitation acknowledged

Efforts to promote and encourage more people to visit the Adirondacks have been extremely successful. More people are enjoying and understanding the Park, which is good. But now, experts are worried about the overuse of lands and waters in some areas of the Park.

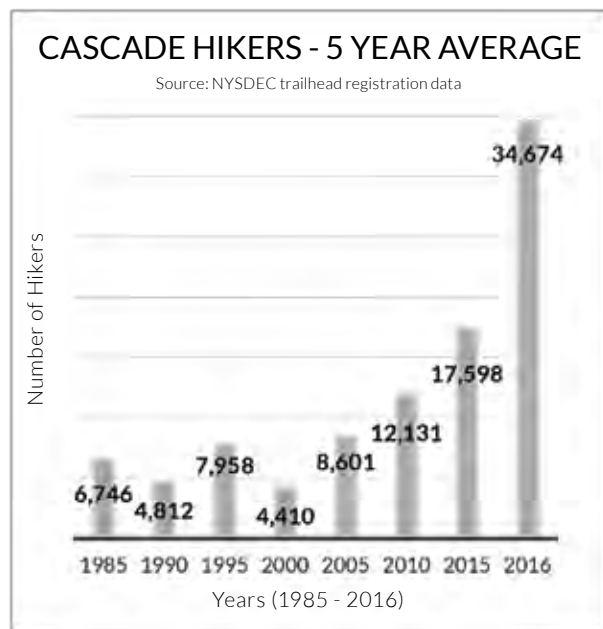
Overuse is fast becoming one of the most urgent concerns for the Adirondacks today. On popular weekends, almost 80 percent of the 35 trailheads across the High Peaks region are over capacity. Record daily visitation now tops 5,000 people during these times - more than 200 percent over state limits designed to protect interior resources. Overcrowding near Old Forge, in Lake George and on popular canoe routes has also been reported.

Specific problems in the High Peaks recognized by the state include: visitor safety, natural resource damage and impact to users' wilderness experience. Meanwhile, beautiful alternative outdoor recreation destinations are underused. Gateway towns including North Hudson and Newcomb want and need more visitors.

The Adirondack Council applauds the dedicated state professionals responsible for preserving the Adirondacks. The new state budget includes funds that could be directed towards overuse. State officials hope to announce proposed actions this spring.



Large crowd of hikers on the summit of Cascade Mountain
Photo: Nancie Battaglia



"The state (tourism promotion) and local businesses have done an excellent job of attracting hikers and climbers to the High Peaks, and local residents benefit from the tourism dollars spent here. But now it's our responsibility to manage this success and provide for these visitors when they get here. This is a responsibility we owe to the visitors, to the residents, and to the spirit of protecting the wilderness."

**- JOE PETE WILSON
SUPERVISOR, TOWN OF KEENE**

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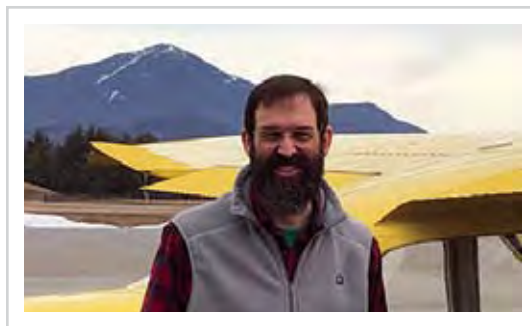
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Preserving the Adirondack Legacy

New science-based strategies needed

A peregrine falcon soared past as I enjoyed the summit of an Adirondack mountain in April. These birds, like our beloved and iconic loons, were almost all gone only a generation ago. Both acid rain and pesticides caused their numbers to plummet. Now, they are thriving again. It's thrilling. But it's not by chance.

Your Adirondack Council and our colleagues conducted extensive research and education campaigns. Together with our partners, we urged government officials into action. They purchased and protected new lands and waters. Government curbed air pollution and banned DDT. Peregrines, native brook trout, eagles, loons, moose, and high-elevation forests came back. We all benefit from this ecological recovery, enjoying cleaner water and air and protected open spaces, knowing the Adirondacks are Forever Wild.

More recently, we led a campaign in which we and our partners persuaded government officials to create and celebrate an expanded High Peaks Wilderness Area that includes Boreas Ponds. We are fostering more vibrant communities, spurring the removal of obsolete railroad oil tank cars, and securing funding for clean water. You can be proud of your impact.

However, the work we have still to do is daunting. Experts in large-landscape preservation and policy recognize that simply trying to save the Adirondacks with the strategies and techniques of 50 or even 25 years ago will not be enough. The resources, staffing levels, partnerships, and protections of the past are not adequate for the future. In addition, political decision-making is often dangerously unpredictable.

New actions are necessary to sustain Adirondack successes in the face of new threats. Federal environmental policy rollbacks, climate change, invasive species, warming waters, and new forms of motorized recreation not imagined 25 years ago exist today. Furthermore, overuse must be addressed before we love popular places to death.

A new commitment to science-based stewardship of public and private lands is needed to sustain the Adirondacks in the 21st century, for us and for future generations. The Adirondack Council has made this a priority. Thank you for being engaged and willing to help provide for the preservation and stewardship of the Adirondacks.

Thank you,



William C. Janeway
Executive Director

The mission of the Adirondack Council is to ensure the ecological integrity and wild character of the Adirondack Park for current and future generations.

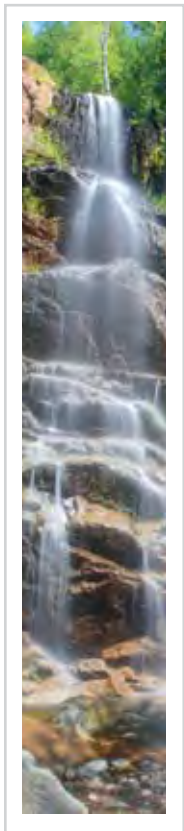
We envision an Adirondack Park with clean water and air and large wilderness areas, surrounded by working farms and forests and vibrant local communities.

CAPITAL MATTERS: ALBANY

Environmental Funding Upheld in Lean Year

Funding for clean water and communities

Ahead of the April 1 deadline, Governor Cuomo and the Legislature approved a state budget for next year that upholds core environmental funding and supports new initiatives that will benefit clean water and communities in the Adirondacks, in spite of the lean budget outlook.



Adirondack budget highlights:

\$2.5B clean water fund for local communities continues to be distributed

\$250,000 for Adirondack lakes research and monitoring

\$300M Environmental Protection Fund, including:

- **\$32.64M** state land stewardship (+ \$2.64M);
- **\$13.3M** invasive species controls (+ \$300,000);
- **\$700,000** Lake George Park Commission Visitor Center;
- **\$180,000** Visitor Interpretive Center at Paul Smith's; and,
- **\$120,000** Visitor Interpretive Center at SUNY ESF.

Adirondack budget priorities not approved:

The **Empire Forests for the Future Initiative**, which would have overhauled the timberland tax abatement program to increase efficiency, enroll smaller parcels, and provide greater protection for the Park's private forests and watersheds.

The **replacement of select priority staff at the Adirondack Park Agency and Dept. of Environmental Conservation** to help the state conserve water, forests and wildlife.

A request for **\$100,000 to support an expanded Adirondack Diversity Initiative**, although the initiative may qualify for an Environmental Protection Fund grant.

Beaver Meadow Falls Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions Inc.

Forest Preserve PILOT Proposal Rejected

Council partnered with local governments

The Adirondack Council worked with local governments to stop a plan that would have put at risk more than \$75 million in state property tax payments to localities in the Adirondacks. The Executive Budget proposed to change state tax payments from an "ad valorem" model, where communities assess property as if it was privately owned, to a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) where the state determines the taxes it pays. For more than a century, the state has paid full taxes on Forest Preserve lands to reflect its benefits afforded to all New Yorkers. This should continue.



Above: Kevin Chlad, Director of Government Relations, provides budget testimony before state legislators.

Bad ATV Plan Blocked

Work still needs to be done

The Adirondack Council is proud to have led the way in halting a plan in the state budget that would have allowed the registration of larger all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). This measure could have led to significantly more illegal ATV use on public lands, exacerbating damages to natural resources and adding to the challenges already facing our Forest Rangers and Environmental Conservation Officers. The Council commends all sides for rejecting this proposal and will still push for a general ban on ATV use on the Forest Preserve and other state lands.



APA Updates Large-Scale Subdivision Permit

Complements proposed legislative reforms

The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) recently amended its permit application process for large-scale subdivisions to incorporate conservation development principles for the Park's most sensitive private lands. The goal of conservation development is to protect wildlife habitat by clustering new buildings into a more compact footprint. The APA's effort was borne out of an ongoing stakeholder process that included environmental groups, private landowners and local government interests, aimed at securing legislative reforms to the APA Act. This permit application update is currently voluntary for the applicant, underscoring the need for legislative reforms.

IN AND ABOUT THE PARK

Wilderness Victory for Boreas Ponds

Governor approves APA recommendation

In March, Governor Cuomo approved the Adirondack Park Agency's recommendation to classify a large portion of the Boreas Ponds tract and other state lands as motor-free Wilderness. The approval expands the High Peaks Wilderness Area (■) to nearly 275,000 acres. Now, the Department of Environmental Conservation is developing unit management plans for this area to determine specific recreation uses and other management actions that will be allowed on these lands.

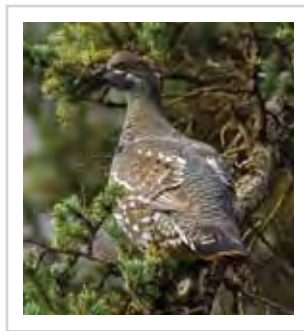


Boreas Ponds and the High Peaks
Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions Inc.

Protecting Boreal Birds

Managing habitat and recreation

The Department of Environmental Conservation is updating the Cranberry Lake Wild Forest (■) Management Plan and the Conifer-Emporium (■) Recreation Management Plan, which include nearly 45,000 acres of land in the northwest portion of the Park. In its comments, the Council stressed the ecological importance of these Boreal habitats, particularly in regard to protecting the NYS Endangered Spruce Grouse that inhabit both areas.



Male Spruce Grouse
Larry Master, masterimages.org

Making a Rail-Trail Possible

State Land Master Plan "Travel Corridor" Amendments

As a result of complications arising from a plan to turn a portion of the Remsen to Lake Placid Travel Corridor into a rail-trail, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) is seeking to clarify and update the travel corridor classification within the State Land Master Plan. This is an attempt to remove any ambiguity within the Master Plan on how railroad corridors will be used and managed. Proposed draft language allows for the Travel Corridor, and future rail lines, to maintain its travel corridor status whether the line operates as a railroad, with rail cars, or as a recreational trail with the rails removed.

Army Training Conducted in Adirondacks

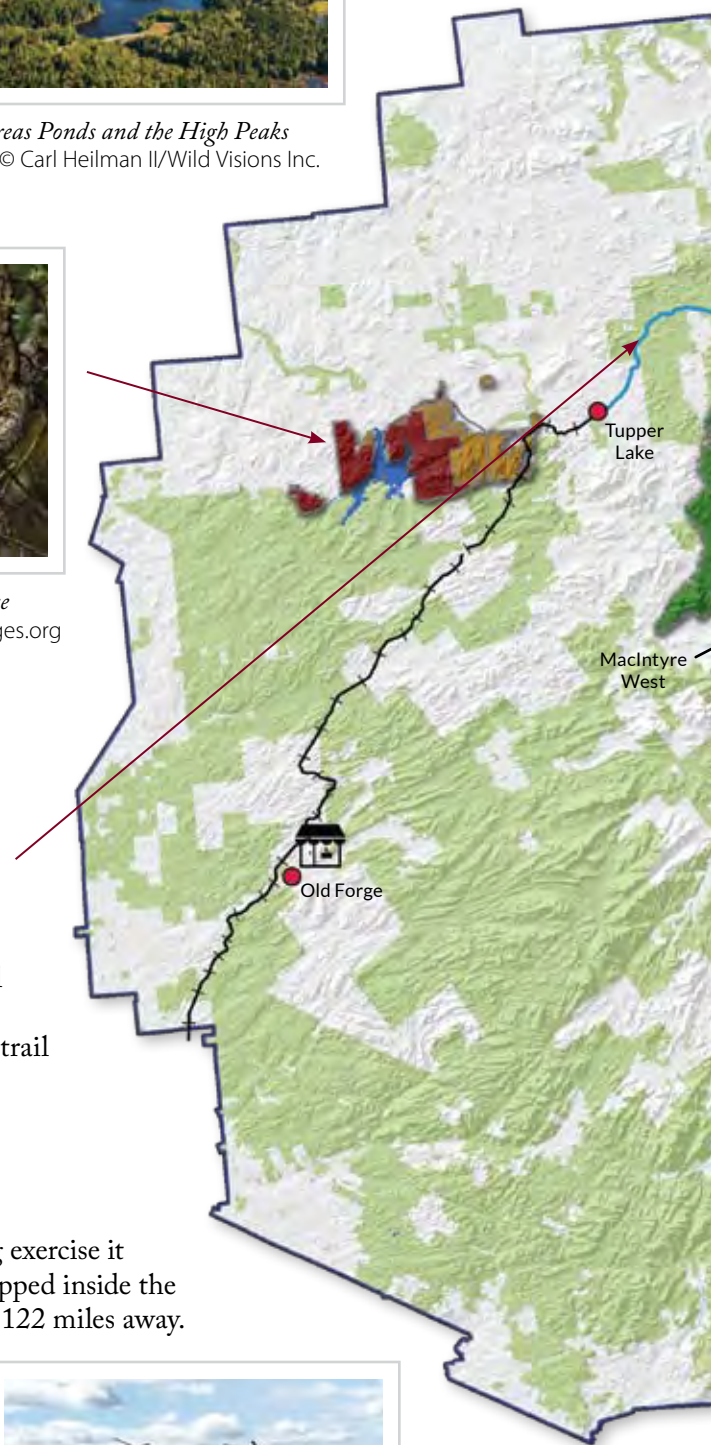
Respected wilderness and wildlife

From April 10 through 18, the U.S. Army conducted the largest training exercise it has ever held inside the Adirondack Park. Hundreds of soldiers were dropped inside the Park and had to make their way back to Fort Drum in Jefferson County, 122 miles away. Also, military helicopter pilots were training to use terrain to mask their location.

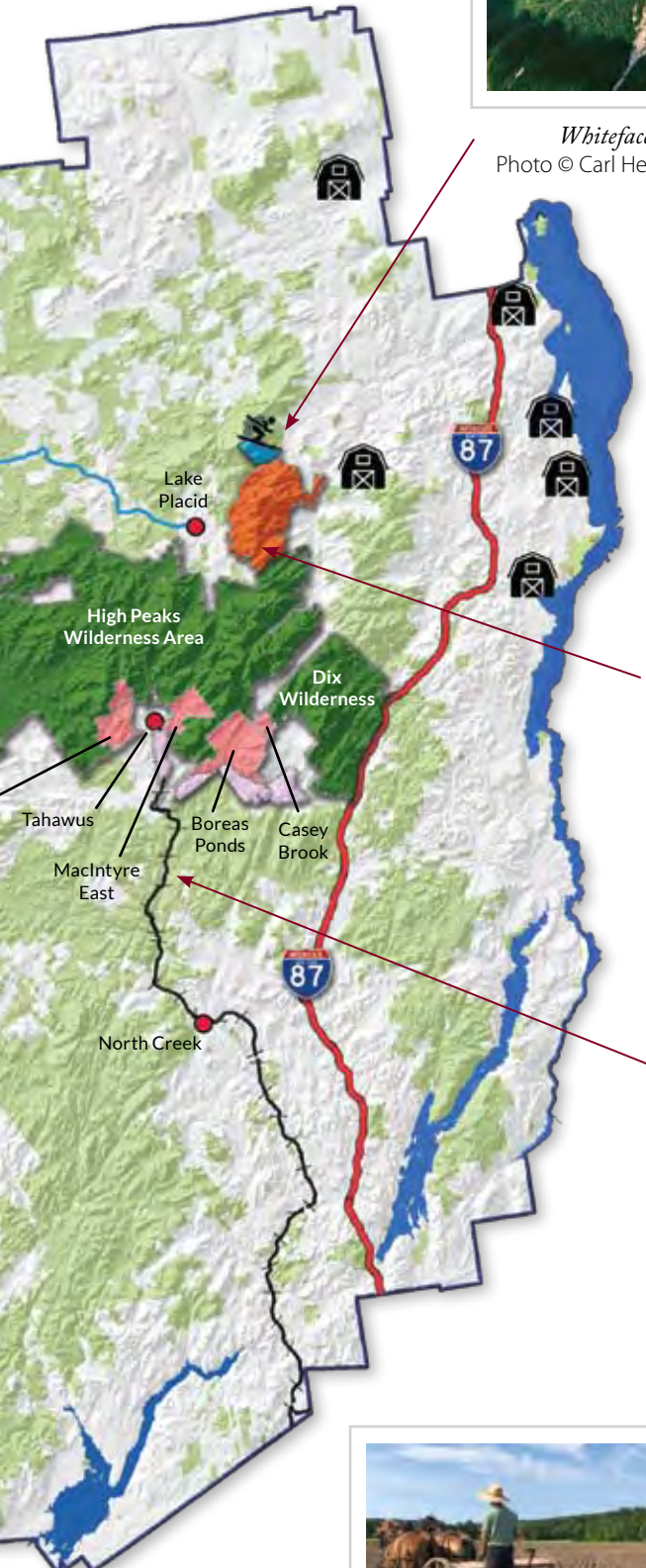
The Army spoke with the Adirondack Council and Department of Environmental Conservation as the mission was beginning and agreed to avoid Wilderness areas and sensitive habitats. The Council has been advising the military since the early 1990s on ways to accomplish vital training exercises while respecting the Park's unique natural resources.



Blackhawk helicopters in training



■ Added to Wilderness
■ Added to Mtn. Wil



Whiteface and Lake Placid
Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions Inc.

Whiteface Mountain Upgrades

Ensuring legal trail mileage

In April, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) approved the Olympic Regional Development Authority's (ORDA) amendments for a new Whiteface Mountain Ski Center unit management plan. The Council's comments recognized ORDA's need to improve and upgrade this recreational facility. As a result of dialogue, ORDA recognized that trails maintained for glade skiing must be included as part of the total trail mileage limited by the state constitution.

Court Makes Final Decision on Road Case

Rules Old Mountain Road not properly abandoned

In March, the Appellate Division of the NYS Supreme Court, Third Department overturned a decision to close Old Mountain Road to vehicle traffic, stating that the road had not been legally abandoned. This road, which is part of the Jackrabbit Ski Trail, traverses the Sentinel Range Wilderness (orange), where motorized use is prohibited.



Old Mountain Road

The Town of North Elba had pressed the lawsuit against the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The Council was a party to the case, arguing on behalf of Wilderness. The court said that the DEC could have formally abandoned the road through the state's Highway Law Section 212. The Adirondack Council urges the state to close the road.

Oil Tankers Leave the Park

Remaining cars to be removed

In April, Iowa Pacific Holdings removed all but 24 defunct oil tanker cars they were storing on the railroad track (+++) between North Creek and Tahawus on the edge of the High Peaks Wilderness Area. The Council will continue to work to ensure all of these oil tankers are removed in order to protect this area's sensitive resources.



Junk oil tanker cars

High Peaks
Wilderness Area
Vanderwhacker
Wild Forest



Full & By Farm

Micro-Grants Support Farms and Businesses

Building a climate-friendly Park

The Adirondack Council, Klipper Fund and Lookout Fund celebrated Earth Day 2018 by working with a coalition of partner organizations to award our Cool Farms/Healthy Park micro-grants to 15 Adirondack farmers (👨) and four small businesses (🏠). Micro-grants of between \$500 and \$1,500 were awarded for energy conservation, reductions in carbon emissions, and sustainable and environmentally healthy farming and small business projects.

CONSERVATION MATTERS



Above: Summit of Marcy Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions Inc.

Good Science Needed for Wilderness Protection





Boreas Ponds and High Peaks planning

With the classification of the Boreas Ponds tract and other former Nature Conservancy/ Finch Pruyn lands, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has solicited input on the types of recreation and management the public would like to see in the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest and the High Peaks Wilderness. The Council submitted comments encouraging the DEC to holistically manage the entire High Peaks Wilderness Area, using the best science and up-to-date wildlands management practices.



Early spring at LaBier Flow

As a component of the planning process for Boreas Ponds, the Council provided specific guidance to the DEC on limiting and controlling access along the Gulf Brook Road up to the Boreas Ponds. This guidance included:

-  Establishing **graduated parking controls along Gulf Brook Road** approaching the Four Corners and the Boreas Ponds.
-  **Concentrating parking at the current lot** established under the interim recreational access plan.
-  Allowing **access for persons with disabilities** to LaBier Flow and Boreas Ponds.
-  Having a **gate at the Four Corners with a designated steward** responsible for educating visitors, enforcing rules and regulations, and controlling access up to the Ponds.

Acid Rain Funding Saved

Both state and federal budgets provide monies

This spring, the Adirondack Council lauded New York's federal and state representatives for their efforts to save critical funding for an acid rain monitoring program in the Adirondack Park.

New York's bipartisan Congressional delegation helped to secure approval of a \$1.3-trillion federal appropriations agreement that eliminated significant cuts to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that would have crippled its acid rain and climate research grants in the Adirondacks. That funding agreement will continue through the end of the 2018 fiscal year.

In New York State's annual budget, Gov. Andrew Cuomo and legislative leaders approved \$250,000 for the Adirondack Lakes Survey Corporation. This funding will allow for the continued testing of water chemistry for Adirondack lakes and rivers and monitoring of impacts of upwind pollution from coal-fired power plants. This information will be used to inform policymakers as they develop new policies to protect the Adirondack Park from further damage.

EPA Ignoring Clean Air Laws

Legal action seeks clean air enforcement

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt continues to use procedural maneuvers to delay enforcement of clean air laws that protect public health and the environment. Pruitt is shirking his obligation to require the nation's dirtiest coal-fired power plants to curb emissions that cause smog, soot and acid rain in the Northeast.

The Clean Air Act requires the dirtiest power plants in the nation to use special pollution controls in the summertime, when sunlight and heat combine to create smog from the same smoke that causes acid rain. Any downwind (Northeast) state can notify the EPA when an upwind (Midwest) state's emissions make it impossible for the downwind state to meet health standards. In the past, the EPA immediately ordered the Midwest plants to switch-on existing controls when it received such a request.

In spring 2017, Administrator Pruitt ignored a petition from Maryland. Maryland sued the EPA and was joined by the Adirondack Council, Environmental Defense Fund, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and others. The EPA ignored the suit as long as possible, and now has asked the court for permission to wait until Dec. 31, 2018 to explain why it didn't respond last summer. New York has filed a similar petition.

The EPA's own research shows that smog controls protect health and curb acid rain in all Northeast states, preventing more than 10,000 premature deaths per year and returning health benefits worth \$20 for every dollar invested in pollution controls.

SUPPORTING THE COUNCIL

Leave a Legacy

Plan a gift that gives back to the Adirondacks...forever

When you arrange for a contribution to the Adirondack Council through your estate, you help provide lasting support to protect the Adirondack Park for generations to come.

All estate gifts to the Adirondack Council grow as part of the Forever Wild Fund (unless otherwise indicated by the donor). This quasi-endowment is insurance that the Adirondack Council will always be ready and able to take action to protect the legacy of the Adirondacks. Under the prudent oversight of the Board of Directors and with future bequest contributions, the Forever Wild Fund will continue to grow long into the future.

Any estate gift amount is greatly appreciated and benefits the Council. Naming the Council in your will or as a beneficiary to a life insurance or retirement account are simple ways to contribute through your estate. It is always best to consult with your attorney for advice regarding an estate gift. Thank you. For more information, please contact Debbie Pastore, Director of Development, at 1.877.873.2240 (Ext. 106).

"I have lived close to the Adirondacks for most of my life and have enjoyed the scenery, the hiking, trails, camping, and canoeing. I think it is very important to continue to treat the Adirondacks as New York State's "jewel." As a result, I have designated the Adirondack Council as a 50% beneficiary on two of my annuities... Keep up the good work!"

- ANONYMOUS

Bring your Adirondack Council Nalgene water bottle with you on your next Park adventure!

The 32 oz. wide-mouth bottle features the Council's loon logo.

Available in 5 colors: pink, red, gray, green, and orange.

Made in the USA and BPA free. Price: \$15.00



Purchase your water bottle at: AdirondackCouncil.org
under "SHOP" or call us at 1.877.873.2240.



*Above: Wetland in the Jessup River Wild Forest
Photo © Carl Heilman II/Wild Visions Inc.*

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Join our growing community of sustainers! Keep your membership active all year and provide a steady stream of support for Adirondack conservation. Consider becoming a sustaining member with a monthly donation of \$5 or more deducted from a credit card or bank account. Managing your monthly giving is easy with our website and member account option (securely save and manage your payment information at anytime). Please contact Tyler Frakes, Membership Director, at 1.877.873.2240 (Ext. 109) to become a sustaining member today.



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Canoe Raffle

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Drawing held December 21



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FOREVER WILD DAY - OLD FORGE - JULY 14, 2018



Fulton Chain from Bald Mtn Photo © Carl Heilman / Wild Visions Inc.

FOREVER WILD DAY

Celebrating Science & Conservation

This year's Forever Wild Day will be held in Old Forge at the Town of Webb school playing field. The day includes a celebration of our collective successes on behalf of our beloved Adirondacks, the Annual Members' Meeting and awards luncheon, and optional outings and time to share your love of the Adirondacks with friends and fellow conservation advocates.

2018 CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

Daniel C. Josephson

Dan Josephson is a research fisheries biologist who has worked for Cornell University in the Adirondack region for nearly four decades. Dan and the Adirondack Fishery Research Program have been on the forefront of acid rain research and have contributed to the recovery of Park waters.



SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD

Gary Lee

Gary Lee is a retired NYS Forest Ranger who worked in the Moose River Plains Wild Forest and West Canada Lakes Wilderness for over 30 years. He is also a noted birdwatcher, photographer, writer, and ecotourism guide. Gary has spent many years working to preserve loons, and since 1999 has worked with the Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program.



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Thank you to our event Patrons for supporting Forever Wild Day and honoring Dan Josephson, our 2018 Conservationist of the Year recipient and Special Recognition Award recipient Gary Lee.

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Additional information on Forever Wild Day is available at AdirondackCouncil.org under "EVENTS".