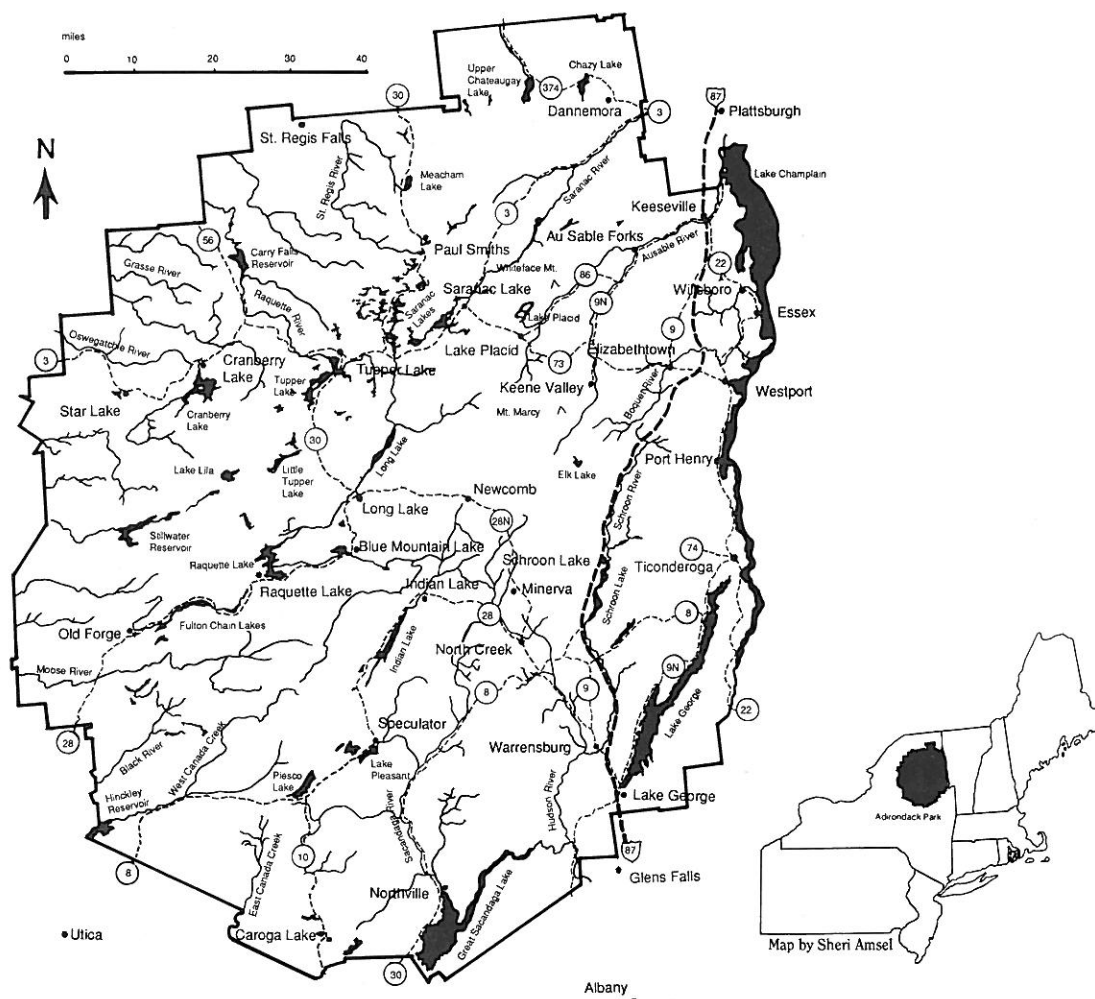




The Adirondack Council
STATE OF THE PARK

Adirondack Park Centennial Edition
1892-1992



ADIRONDACK PARK

The Adirondack Park is the largest public park in the contiguous United States. It contains six million acres, covers one-fifth of New York State, and is equal in size to neighboring Vermont. Few people realize that the Adirondack Park is nearly three times the size of Yellowstone National Park.

Some 58 percent of the Adirondack Park is private land, devoted principally to forestry, agriculture and open-space recreation. The Park is home for 130,000 permanent and 210,000 seasonal residents, and hosts an estimated nine million visitors annually.

The remaining 42 percent of the Adirondack Park is publicly-owned Forest Preserve, protected as "forever wild" by the State constitution since 1895. One million acres of these public lands, representing one-sixth of the entire Park, are designated as Wilderness, where a wide range of non-motorized recreation may be enjoyed in an incomparable, natural setting. The majority of public land—more than 1.3 million acres—is classified as Wild Forest, where motorized uses are permitted on designated waters, roads and trails.

Plants and wildlife abound in the Adirondack Park, many of them found nowhere else in New York State. Uncut ancient forests cover tens of thousands of acres of public land. Ironically, much of the Park is more wild and natural today than a century ago, when irresponsible logging practices and forest fires ravaged much of the yet-unprotected Adirondack region. Someday, all native wildlife, including those extirpated in the last century, such as the wolf,

cougar, lynx and moose, may live and breed here.

The western and southern Adirondacks are a gentle landscape of hills, lakes, ponds and streams. In the northeast are the High Peaks, 46 of them above 4,000 feet, 11 with alpine summits that rise above timberline.

The Adirondacks include the headwaters of five major drainage basins: Lake Champlain and the Hudson, Black, St. Lawrence and Mohawk rivers. Within the Park are 2,800 lakes and ponds and more than 1,500 miles of rivers fed by an estimated 30,000 miles of brooks and streams.

Embodied in this and other Adirondack Council studies is a vision of an Adirondack Park that will serve as a global model for integrated land use and conservation. In the next century and beyond, the Adirondack Park must continue to offer vast areas of undisturbed open space, a sanctuary for native plant and animal species, and a natural haven for human beings in need of spiritual and physical refreshment. It must also provide for sustainable, resource-based local economies and for the protection of community character and countryside values.

This publication is but one step in the Park protection process. Through continuing public education and advocacy for the protection of the Adirondack Park's natural character, the Adirondack Council hopes to advise public and private policy-makers on ways to safeguard this last remaining great expanse of open space in the eastern United States.

Into the Next Century

As we celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the creation of the Adirondack Park, it is important to reflect upon the forces that have influenced the Adirondacks over the past century and to bring that perspective to bear on the Park's future in its second century.

The State of the Park Centennial Edition examines issues that are critical to the future of the Park and contains our recommendations for preserving the natural and open-space character of the largest park in the continental United States, while maintaining a healthy economy for the 130,000 year-round residents who call the Park home.

Looking Back

By the late 1800s, decades of irresponsible logging had decimated the Adirondacks. Nearly all of the large white pine had been cut. Most of the spruce had been cleared away for pulp production and tanneries had consumed the vast majority of hemlock. Nearly two-thirds of the softwood in Northern New York was gone.

Despite this devastation, it took 50 years of persuasion to convince the public of the importance of reversing this loss. Among the influential writers and speakers on behalf of Adirondack protection were state surveyor Verplanck Colvin and Franklin B. Hough, both members of the Commission of State Parks, the writers of *Forest and Stream* magazine and the editorial writers of the *New York Times*.

After years of debate, the NYS Assembly passed a bill creating the Adirondack Park by a margin of 91-0 on March 31, 1892. The Senate passed the bill on April 20. Governor Roswell P. Flower signed it on May 20.

The original Adirondack Park was 2.8 million acres, encompassing parts of Essex, Hamilton, Franklin, Herkimer and Warren counties. Private ownership of forests, estates, and clubs made state purchase of the entire Park economically unfeasible. So the state embarked on an experiment of building what is now known as a "countryside park" — a blend of public and private ownerships that would

preserve the natural character of the region.

But the Fisheries, Forest and Game Commission noted that the largest private parcels in the Park changed ownership frequently and were vulnerable to changes in land use. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the commission called for the creation of a dedicated environmental fund so the state could buy the lands it considered important.

Throughout the twentieth century, the state has developed criteria for deciding which lands should be added to the publicly owned Forest Preserve, but has never published an inventory of lands needed to complete this task while maintaining the biological health of the region. In response, the Adirondack Council created 2020 VISION, a three-volume blueprint for preserving biological diversity, completing the Wilderness system and realizing the recreational potential of the Park's Wild Forests.

In January 1992, hearings were held throughout the New York on the state's Draft Open Space Protection Plan. People in every region of the state expressed concern for the Adirondack Park and many submitted 2020 VISION as part of their testimony. Those testifying also called for a dedicated environmental fund to pay for land acquisition and the purchase of development rights from willing sellers.

A Park in Transition

Economic forces in the last decade of the twentieth century have brought about a turning point for many corporate, institutional and family ownerships. These large ownerships total 1.5 to 2 million acres of Park lands. We are seeing some of these ownerships subdivided and put up for sale. The open spaces of the Adirondack Park are being fragmented and its character is being changed.

This year, the Legislature will consider several measures to protect the Park, including those proposed by Governor Mario Cuomo. The Adirondack Park's future depends upon the wisdom of policymakers at all levels of government and the actions they take today.

“Forever Wild”

Delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1894 decided that Forest Preserve lands in the Adirondacks and Catskills needed special protection in the State Constitution. Although these lands were in state ownership, timber cutting, road building and leasing of vacation camps continued.

In order to halt all cutting, removal or destruction of trees on the Forest Preserve lands of the Park, the “Forever Wild” clause was adopted. Unlike the 1885 legislation creating the Forest Preserve, this clause specifically prohibits the sale or lease of lands and the cutting or removal of any trees, dead or alive, from the Forest Preserve. These provisions made it the strongest environmental protection law in the nation.

This protective measure meant that no person or group could ever again allow the destruction or degradation of the Forest Preserve without first convincing the voters to alter the Constitution.

“Forever Wild” Since 1894

More than a dozen amendments have been approved by New York State voters that allow exceptions to the “Forever Wild” clause for very specific and important reasons, such as highway construction, recreational facilities and land exchanges with municipalities.

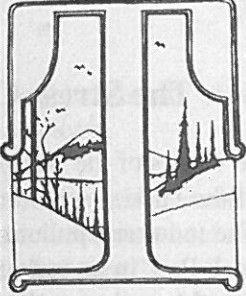

Many other attempts to change the nature of the “Forever Wild” clause have been made over the years since its adoption, but none have succeeded. In 1902, Governor Benjamin B. Odell Jr. called for allowing the cutting of trees in the Forest Preserve. While the Senate passed the constitutional amendment, the Assembly did not act.

Further attempts to weaken the clause occurred in 1903, 1915, 1916, 1918 and 1928. At the 1938 Constitutional Convention, the “Forever Wild” clause



Courtesy of Adirondack Museum

Log jam on the Hudson River. Such scenes were typical before the creation of the Park.

he lands of the state, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed. 

was renumbered (from Article VII, Section 7) to Article XIV. During the convention, 14 proposals were introduced by delegates to weaken Article XIV. All were defeated.

Again in the 1950s and in 1962, 1963, and in 1974, proposals to modify Article XIV were defeated.

In January 1991, Assemblyman John G.A. O'Neil introduced a bill to allow commercial cutting of the Forest Preserve with the proceeds going into state coffers. While still alive until the end of December 1992, the bill has yet to be voted out of committee.

In January 1992, Senator Ronald Stafford again introduced a bill to allow removal of dead trees from the Forest Preserve. The bill passed the Senate. It appeared unlikely, as of the printing of this document, that the Assembly would pass the bill. Senator

Stafford has proposed this bill every year for the past 15 years.

The Forest Preserve lands of the Adirondack Park, many uncut for nearly 100 years, are characterized by rare and fragile ecosystems, abundant wildlife, majestic trees and pristine waters. The region stands as a tribute to those who protected these lands so long ago and as a rebuke to those who would exploit them for short-term gain.

The "Forever Wild" clause of the State Constitution has protected the Forest Preserve lands since 1894. The Adirondack Council is firmly committed to protecting the letter and spirit of Article XIV.

Shorelines and Pure Water

When the first Europeans entered the Adirondacks in the 1600s, they found 2,800 lakes and ponds, dozens of rivers and countless streams of pure, clean water, untouched by the hand of Western civilization.

In 1837, Ebenezer Emmons, chief of the first natural history survey for the State of New York, made the first ascent of Mount Marcy. He also warned of the potentially devastating effects of wholesale timber cutting on water supplies.

Throughout the 1800s, widespread logging, forest fires and tanning operations caused log jams, runoff, siltation and pollutants that degraded the surface waters of the Adirondacks.

Communities near lakes and streams piped raw sewage into pristine waters. (In some places, this practice continues today.)

During the 1940s, '50s and '60s, proposals to create huge reservoirs by damming Adirondack rivers were advanced. These proposals were all defeated.

The call for creation of an Adirondack Park in the 1880s was motivated in large part by the concern over damage to lakes and streams.

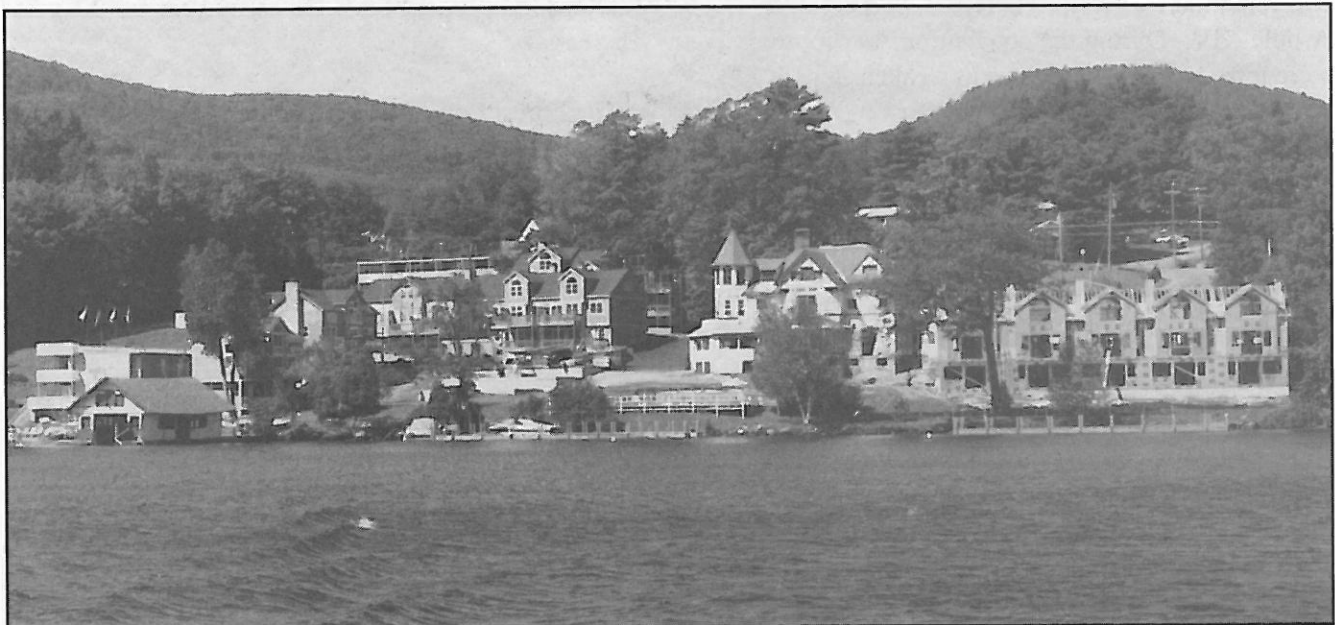
The Stress Continues

The waters of the Adirondacks are clearly one of the Park's most notable and prized assets. The industrial pollution that plagued the Adirondack Park in its early years has diminished. But new problems have arisen that pose just as great a threat to the waters of the Park and those who depend on them to live.

Acid Rain

When industries in the Midwest and southern Ontario began to solve local air pollution problems by building taller smokestacks, a new threat to the Park's waters emerged in the form of acid precipitation. Acid rain and snow have critically acidified more than 300 lakes and ponds in the Adirondack Park, killing fish and many other life forms. Acid levels in rain and snow at Whiteface Mountain have been recorded with the same pH as lemon juice (200 times as acidic as untainted rainfall).

In 1987, after years of pressing for better air pollution controls, the Adirondack Council published "Beside the Stilled Waters," a full-color booklet illustrating the damage done to Adirondack Park lands and waters by acidic precipitation. The booklet drew upon the extensive body of scientific research



Western shore of Lake George amid construction boom.

Alan Cederstrom

that has documented the destructive path of acid precipitation across the Northeast.

In 1990, Congress enacted the reauthorization of the Clean Air Act which included new acid rain provisions. The Adirondack Council was asked to participate on the federal Environmental Protection Agency's Acid Rain Advisory Committee, which was created to advise the EPA on how to regulate industries to meet the emission reductions mandated by the 1990 amendments to the Clean Air Act.

However, the committee's recommendations for regulations to implement the Act have been altered by the President's Council on Competitiveness, and it is now unclear whether the EPA's new regulations will be effective in stopping, or even slowing, the acid precipitation problem.

In March 1992, the Adirondack Council asked state and local government officials within the Park, as well as the New York Congressional delegation, to petition EPA Administrator William Reilly to curb the causes of acid precipitation.

Loving the Park to Death

The lakes and streams of the Adirondacks remain the principal draw for the nine million people who visit the Park each year. Some of those visitors decide to make the Park their year-round home.

The Park's population (about 130,000 year-round; about 210,000 seasonal) is growing at twice the rate of New York State. Camps are purchased and converted to year-round homes, often tripling the amount of wastewater generated without any improvements to the septic system and discharge.

Older septic systems run the gamut from safe and adequate to a couple of punctured 55-gallon drums planted outside or even a pipe running directly into the water. Runoff from farm fields, parking lots, lawns, construction sites and other sources carry nutrients into lakes and streams. Algae blooms and other water quality problems resulting from these nutrients damage aquatic ecosystems and diminish the recreational potential of these waters.

Those who build new homes seek shorefront lots as prime construction sites. Despite the Park's so-called "restrictive zoning laws," houses can be built shoulder-to-shoulder along most Adirondack shorelines without the approval of the Adirondack Park Agency.

Habitat Lost

As large landowners in the Park subdivide and sell all or part of their lands, undeveloped shorelines are built upon and critical plant and animal habitat is destroyed. The plants and animals that depend on that habitat are crowded out.

Recommendations

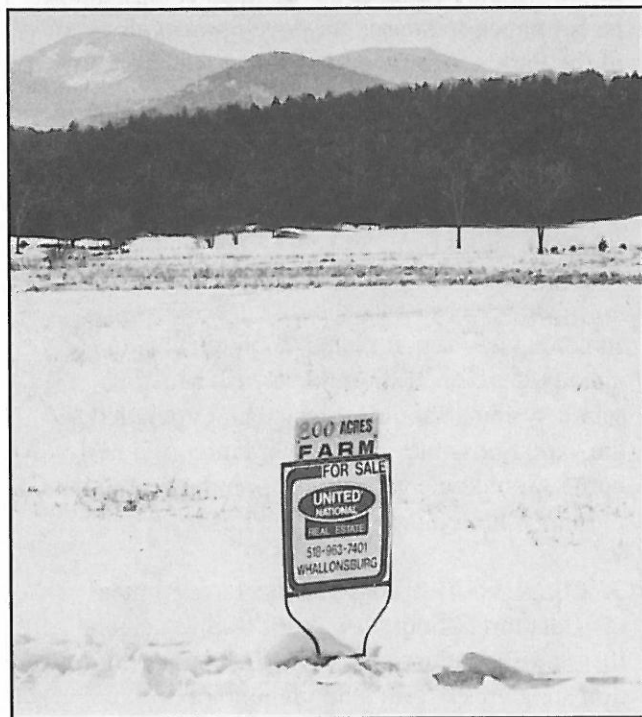
1. New, parkwide land-use laws are needed to protect undeveloped shorelines outside of hamlet areas.
2. Both state and local government should adopt performance standards for development along all of the Park's waterways to protect water quality and habitat.
3. Local governments should protect undeveloped shorelines in their own hamlets, where the Adirondack Park Agency lacks jurisdiction.
4. Local governments should enact vegetative screening and septic system requirements in already-developed shoreline areas. Existing septic systems should be tested and upgraded to the extent possible. The construction of a new home should be conditioned upon the protection of both water quality and shore habitat.
5. Congressional, state and local government officials throughout New York should demand that the EPA adopt tough new federal air pollution standards to halt acid precipitation.

Preserving Open Space

New York State sold off much of the Adirondack region long before the creation of the Park. In 1892, only 681,000 acres of state land remained in the Adirondacks. By then, most of the private forest land had been cut over. Of the seven million acres of forest in Northern New York, very little of the original old growth forest remained standing.

Although timber companies owned many large tracts of Adirondack land, they were not the only owners of large parcels in the Park. Wealthy sportsmen from New York and Boston were eager to find a place where they could hunt all day in a wilderness setting and spend the night in the relative comfort of a hunting lodge. They acquired thousands of acres each.

A few well-known businessmen used their fortunes to create huge estates, where friends and family could vacation and elude the pressures of city life. Among them were William Seward Webb, William Whitney, Alfred Vanderbilt, and J.P. Morgan. By 1892, more than 25 percent of the Adirondack region was held in private reserves by individuals and clubs.



An all-too-familiar sight.

Picking Up The Pieces

In 1895, the state acquired the 74,600-acre William Seward Webb property along the Beaver River after Webb sued the state for damages resulting from the damming of the Beaver River to create the Stillwater Reservoir. In 1897, armed with a \$1 million appropriation from the Legislature, the Forest Preserve Board used the first dedicated environmental fund to buy the estate of Great Camp designer William West Durant, on the south shore of Raquette Lake. This remains the state's single largest purchase of land for the Forest Preserve.

Bond Acts

In 1916, the voters approved the first bond act for land acquisition. This was to set a precedent for the use of borrowed money to acquire Forest Preserve lands which continued until 1990. As time has passed, many of the large private holdings have been put up for sale. Bond Acts in 1916, 1924, 1960, 1962, 1966, 1972 and 1986 were used to secure many of these large holdings. Public Forest Preserve lands have increased to about 2.4 million acres.

Working Lands

Of the (roughly) 3.6 million acres of private land in the Park, more than 30 percent forms the resource base for 12 timber companies. More than 80 percent of the Adirondack land protected with funds from the 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act were protected through the sale of development rights through contracts with landowners called conservation easements. These agreements keep the land in private hands, and may allow continued logging, farming and other uses of the land, while prohibiting inappropriate development. Consequently, the environment is protected, the cost of protection is less than outright purchase and the state helps pay the property taxes. In some cases, public access is also allowed.

Lassiter Debacle

In 1988, Atlanta-based land speculator Henry Lassiter short-circuited state negotiations with the new owner of the defunct Diamond International match company by buying Diamond's entire Adirondack holdings

Gary Randorf

(96,000 acres). The state bought 15,000 acres back from Lassiter and purchased development rights on 40,000 acres more. However, tens of thousands of acres containing significant resources and habitat remained in Lassiter's hands. Mr. Lassiter assured the public that his remaining lands would continue to be used for timber production.

However, in November 1991, Lassiter declared bankruptcy and placed all of his remaining Adirondack forest land back on the market. At the same time, Lassiter began subdividing larger parcels and selling building lots.

Park at Risk

Another large tract of Adirondack land is owned by a descendant of the Vanderbilt and Whitney families. This 51,000 acres is managed both as timberland and a private park. However, last February, the Whitney family began talks with the Adirondack Park Agency to issue a subdivision permit for the sale of some of this land.

Funds Fall Short

The \$1.9 billion Environmental Quality Bond Act (which contained \$800 million for land acquisitions statewide) failed in November 1990 by less than one percent of the vote. For the first time since the summer of 1960, the state was left without a cent for land protection and acquisition.

In the spring of 1991, Governor Cuomo proposed the creation of a dedicated environmental fund, which would eventually include money for land protection. An environmental fund bill passed the Assembly. The Senate failed to act.

A New Wilderness

In January 1992, The Adirondack Council called for the state to follow through with plans to create a 408,000-acre wilderness in the western portion of the Park -- the Bob Marshall Great Wilderness. This wilderness would provide enough space and untouched habitat to facilitate the return of the moose, cougar and timber wolf to the Adirondack Park. All were once native to the region. It would be the largest true Wilderness east of the Mississippi River.

Both the Whitney Estate and the Lassiter holdings contain significant portions of the proposed Bob Marshall Great Wilderness.

Looking Ahead

To a great extent, the fate of the Adirondack Park in the next century will depend upon what happens to the large tracts of land now held by timber companies, private clubs, and individuals. The first century of the Adirondack Park has seen a partnership of public and private land stewardship that has preserved the character of the Park.

With over 200,000 acres of Adirondack lands on the market, the need for land acquisition funds is evident. But incentives are also needed to promote continued good stewardship by private landowners. Productive forest lands are essential to preserving the character of the Park as well as to sustaining the local economy. But with timber companies paying four dollars per acre per year in property taxes in New York State as compared to one dollar in northern New England, these forest lands may not stay in production.

Recommendations

1. The state must create a dedicated environmental fund that can be used to purchase from willing sellers development rights and those lands best suited for public ownership.
2. The state must act to assist the owners of large private parcels in keeping their lands open and productive. The state should adopt a tax abatement program that relieves property tax burdens on owners who commit to long term stewardship of their lands, but the state should also reimburse local governments for reduced revenues received from these lands.
3. The state should consider the use of existing-use zoning on the largest parcels of the Park to preserve the open-space and natural character of the working timberlands and forests and prevent their conversion to other uses.

Wildlife

Civilization had already reduced the number of animal species and biological diversity of the Adirondack region by the time the Park was created in 1892.

Beaver were hunted and trapped out of existence. Moose, lynx, timber wolves and cougars disappeared due to overhunting and loss of their natural habitat. Trophy trout streams grew warm and muddy as watersheds were destroyed by deforestation. Countless numbers of fish and wildlife perished.

The Struggle for Survival

Fortunately, reforestation of the Adirondack Park and continued purchase of lands for the Forest Preserve have helped restore habitats needed to sustain healthy populations of plants and wildlife. But other factors have prevented the complete return of Adirondack wildlife that is the hallmark of the region's biodiversity.



Peter Nye

Symbol of our national pride, the bald eagle is back.

Since Forest Preserve holdings are separated by private lands, the roadless range needed for the moose, cougar and wolf is not yet available. Occasional sightings of these mammals throughout the Park have been reported, but their numbers are limited. Efforts have begun to restore populations of the once native moose and lynx.

Other species, although less well known, also need protection, for development and subdivision in some areas has the potential to wipe them out. Last summer, for example, Atlanta-based land speculator Henry Lassiter sold the core of a rare pine barren in Clinton County, near the northwestern corner of the Park.

According to state experts, an entire species of rare winter moth may disappear from the United States if this land is developed, and another uncommon winter moth and a scarce prairie plant will disappear from New York State.

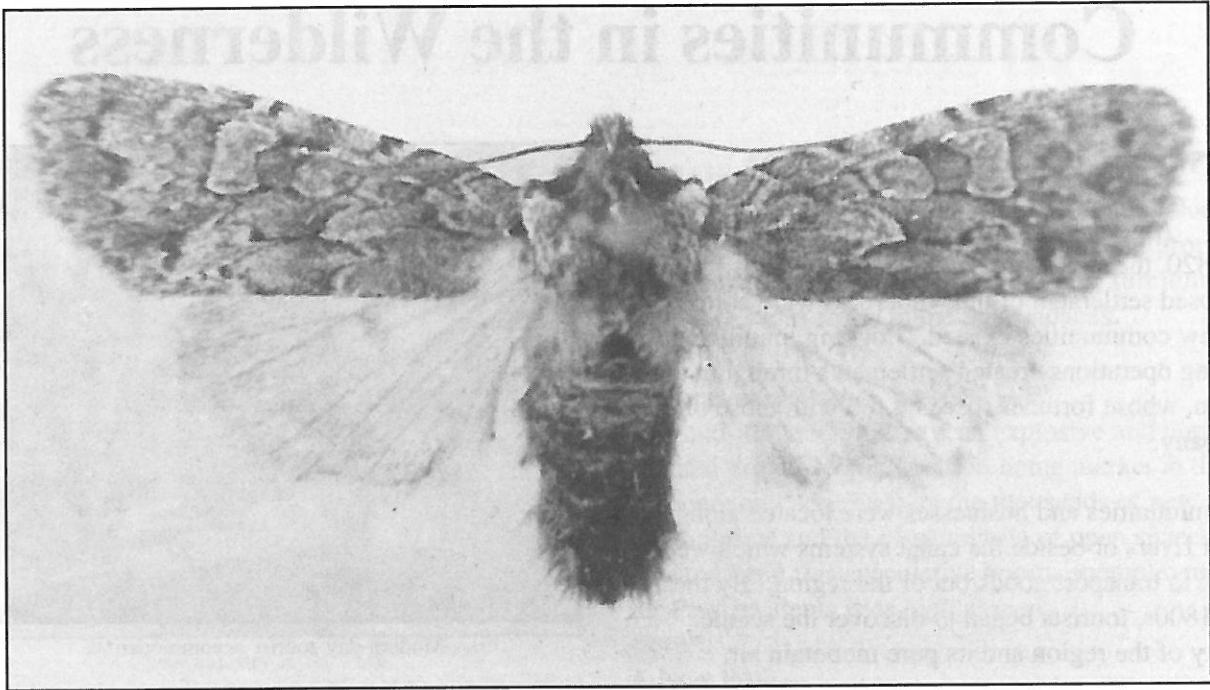
With New York State lacking funds for critical habitat protection, the Adirondack Nature Conservancy is working to preserve the biodiversity of the Adirondacks by protecting these areas through the donations of private individuals.

Critical Research Program

The State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry's Adirondack Wildlife Program has been researching the reintroduction of native Adirondack animal populations, including the spruce grouse, moose and lynx. It is also studying ways to alleviate the effect of acid rain on water birds, and ways to maintain the health of other animal species.

Through state-sponsored protection efforts, beaver have returned to healthy populations throughout the Park. In an effort to control the damage their dams can inflict upon highways and private property, the Adirondack Wildlife Program is developing a method to divert beaver from problem areas without harming them.

Unfortunately, efforts to eliminate program funding from the state budget have occurred in each of the



NYS Museum

Say goodbye to *Lithophane lepida lepida*, victim of a pine barren subdivision.

past two legislative sessions. Like many of the animals it studies, the Wildlife Program is in danger of being lost forever.

Toxic Chemicals

During the mid-part of this century, the widespread use of toxic chemical pesticides wiped out the bald eagle and the peregrine falcon, and severely reduced populations of other species in the Park. As a result of the ban on the use of DDT and several other chemicals, the Adirondack reintroduction efforts for some of these species have been successful.

Grassroots efforts by environmental groups including the Adirondack Council have convinced the majority of Park communities of the health risks of aerial spraying of toxic chemicals to eliminate black flies and mosquitoes. Many local governments are using natural biological alternatives such as Bti, or allowing populations of birds, bats and other natural predators to control the insects.

Whitetail Deer

The deer herd within the Adirondack Park is healthy, though some sportsmen claim that the continued acquisition of Forest Preserve is "choking off" the deer herd. Though they state that the ban on motorized vehicles in Wilderness areas has made it more difficult to bag a buck in the Adirondack Park, the 14 deer management units in the State's Northern Zone

reported another increased deer harvest in 1991. (In fact, despite the state's decision to limit hunters to one deer each in the Northern Zone, the deer harvest last year set a new state record.)

Recommendations

1. The Legislature should make the Adirondack Wildlife Program a permanent part of the state budget and appropriate enough money for its research and education programs to continue and expand. This is the only program of its kind in the state.
2. The state should launch a public education program to explain the benefits of the Forest Preserve to game (and non-game) species.
3. The state should protect (and eventually purchase from willing sellers) the additional lands needed to create the Bob Marshall Great Wilderness as well as those lands listed in the Adirondack Council's 2020 VISION research series Volume I, to ensure the biological health of the Park for centuries to come.
4. The APA should develop plans to preserve the Park's biodiversity and ecosystems.

Communities in the Wilderness

The first permanent settlements in the Adirondacks were not created by Native Americans, but by the English and French. By 1820, the state's sale of Adirondack lands for the proposed settlement of the wilderness were complete, but few communities existed. Logging, mining and tanning operations created settlements throughout the region, whose fortunes rose and fell with those of the company.

Communities and businesses were located along major rivers or beside the canal systems which were set up to transport goods out of the region. By the mid-1800s, tourists began to discover the scenic beauty of the region and its pure mountain air.

Economy

Today, many communities in the Park reflect a history of industry and activity that is no more. Many mines, factories and hotels are closed, empty or gone. Unemployment is high.



Gary Randorf

Modern-day tourist accommodation.

Timber and tourism are still the mainstays of the Adirondack economy. In addition, state and local government are major employers.

Timber

A recent study performed for the Adirondack North Country Association showed that the Adirondack



Courtesy of the Essex County Planning Department

Portrait of an earlier day in an Adirondack settlement.



Gary Randorf

Clean industry in the Park.

Park exports its timber resources without adding value to them. Most of the trees cut in the Adirondack Park for reasons other than paper production are sent elsewhere in the form of logs. Milling operations in the South and in Canada then reap the benefits of turning those logs into furniture, dimension lumber, log home kits, toys or other finished materials.

The study estimated that \$18 million per year could be added to the Adirondack economy by providing incentives to businesses that turn raw wood into products.

Tourism

The Adirondack Park is truly a park for the people. Its lakes, streams, mountains and forests bring over nine million visitors to the Park each year. As long as tourism development does not adversely impact the natural resources of the Park or the infrastructure of its communities, then tourism will remain a significant boon to the region's economy.

Other regions have seen resort development of such a scale and impact as to create a sad dichotomy between magnificent natural resources and an overbuilt, honky tonk atmosphere in communities, ultimately eroding the local economy. Planning for tourism in the Park's second century should recognize that the unique resources of the Adirondacks are the key to a thriving tourist economy.

Made in the Adirondacks

The state has never recognized the potential value in a "Made in the Adirondack Park" marketing program for the cheese, maple syrup, hand-crafts, furniture and other items made in the Adirondacks.

Unsuccessful Path

The mid- to late-1980s saw an explosive and unprecedented growth in the vacation home market in the Adirondack Park. Despite the thousands of new building lots and the consumption of open spaces that resulted from this speculative boom, unemployment for Park residents is as high as ever.

A New Path

With the population of the Park growing each year, it is clear that the state and local governments will need to work together to build an economy in which the natural resources and compatible industries are nurtured at the same time.

The state must also face its responsibility to provide for the infrastructure needs of the Park. These needs should not be the sole burden of year-round residents.

Recommendations

1. The state must help protect the working landscapes of the Park (farms, timberlands, etc.) through the purchase of development rights and other incentives.
2. The state should provide investment capital and incentives to those interested in adding value to timber before it leaves the Park.
3. The state should assist local governments in dealing with the wear and tear placed on community infrastructures, as they host nine million visitors each year.
4. The state should help develop a marketing strategy for goods made within the Adirondack Park .

Roadsides and Scenic Areas



Alan Cederstrom

The Boreas Road -- a scenic Adirondack highway.

Good roads were rare in the Adirondack Park in 1892, so waterways and railroads served as the main sources of commercial and recreational transportation. As mills, mines, logging camps and trading posts gave way to residential hamlets, people found it convenient to live near harbors and rail stations.

Railroads connecting the central Adirondacks with the St. Lawrence, Hudson and Mohawk Valleys brought thousands of visitors. Grand hotels were built to accommodate these tourists, who came to experience the rugged wilderness by day and the comfort of the hearth by night. Between 1875 and 1889, the number of such hotels swelled from 50 to more than 200.

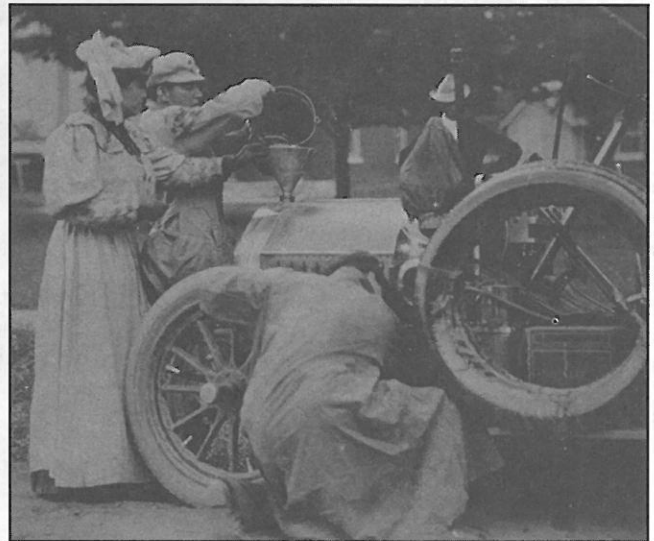
Emergence of the Automobile

The advent of the automobile changed forever the nature of development within the Adirondack Park. Roads and vehicles improved, travel within the Adirondacks grew easier, and travel to the Park became more popular.

As a result, the hamlets began to change shape. Residents no longer needed to live and work within walking distance of the center of town, and developments sprang up along the new turnpikes.

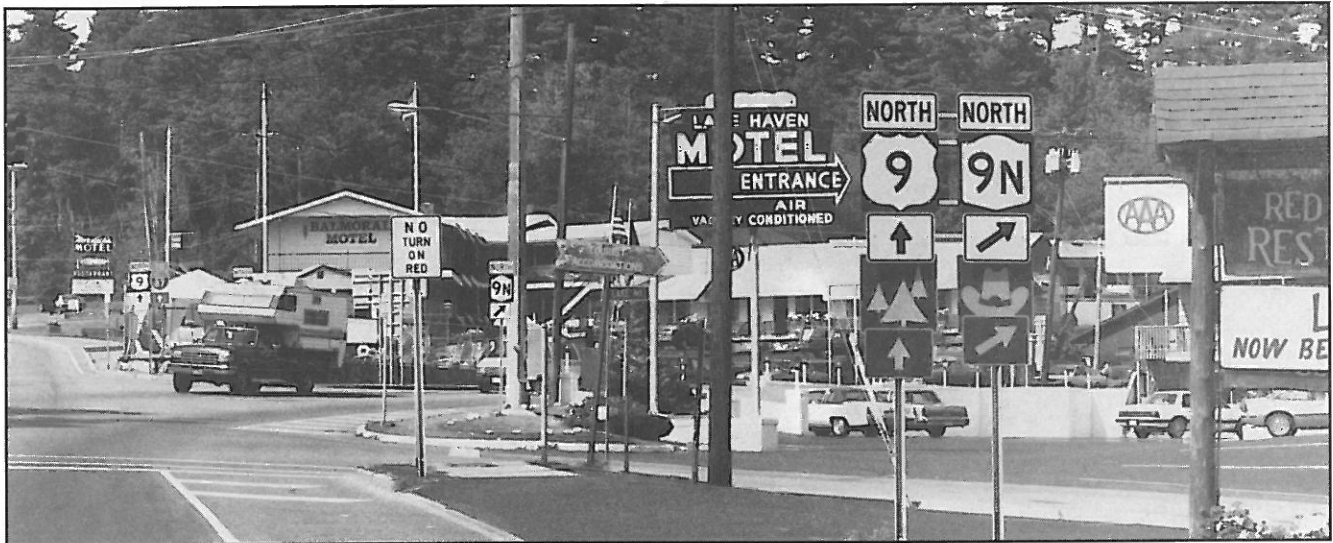
In 1967, construction of the Northway (I-87) made vast areas of the Park accessible to downstate travelers. Roadside inns, diners, service stations, amusement parks and other attractions aimed at the motor traveler appeared throughout the Park.

Today, new businesses are often constructed on roadfront lots outside the hamlets, rather than being located in rehabilitated older buildings within the hamlets. Such strip development forces local governments to extend services such as traffic control and fire and police protection outside the hamlets.



Courtesy of the Essex County Planning Department

Early Adirondack motorists.



Alan Cederstrom

Roadside clutter in Lake George.

New Standards Needed

The entrance to a community often signals its character. As a result, the appearance of roadsides influences potential tourists, business people and residents.

Because of the importance of roadside views, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) needs to adopt standards to minimize the visual impact of roadside development through vegetative screening and setback laws, in order to preserve the scenic areas under its jurisdiction.

Often, the overall appearance of many Adirondack hamlets is determined piecemeal by the developers of individual construction projects, not by design of the residents. Since many Adirondack communities rely upon the tourist industry, this development trend must be reversed in order to maintain the beauty that attracts millions of visitors.

An 18th Century Experience

The corridor and rails of the famous Adirondack Railroad from Remsen to Lake Placid are largely intact, and the Adirondack North Country Association has recommended that the railroad be rebuilt and used as a tourist attraction. (The railroad was revived briefly in 1980 to transport spectators to the Winter Olympic Games, but frequent derailments and a lack of capital doomed the project.)

Alternatively, the railroad corridor would make an excellent multiple-purpose recreation path, opening more than 100 miles of scenic countryside and trail to motorized and non-motorized travel.

Recommendations

1. The Legislature should empower the APA to review roadside development plans to ensure protection of natural scenic beauty. Signs, placement of utility lines, and building configurations should all be considered.
2. Local governments should adopt plans to protect the unique character of their hamlets.
3. State and local governments should work together to make available interpretive information about the region's history, culture and natural resources.
4. The state should decide whether to rebuild the Adirondack Railroad, or open it as a multiple-use trail to be managed according to a corridor plan.

Administration



Governor Rockefeller signs APA bill.

Governing the Adirondack Park has been a complex task since its creation, since Park boundaries were established along ecological rather than political lines.

In 1892, the State Forest Commission governed New York's Forest Preserve lands, including those inside the Park. The fate of private lands depended upon dozens of local governments and the pressures of the real-estate market.

No Adirondack Focus

The Fisheries, Game and Forest Commission succeeded the Forest Commission from 1895 until 1911, when Governor John A. Dix created the Conservation Commission. However, there was still no single entity to watch over the Park as a whole.

Spurring Action

In 1967, Laurance S. Rockefeller proposed to make the Adirondacks a national park, centering attention on the Adirondacks as never before. While an unpopular notion within New York State, it moved thousands who became determined to preserve the Adirondacks without federal involvement.

The following year, the Temporary Study Commission on the Adirondacks was appointed by Governor

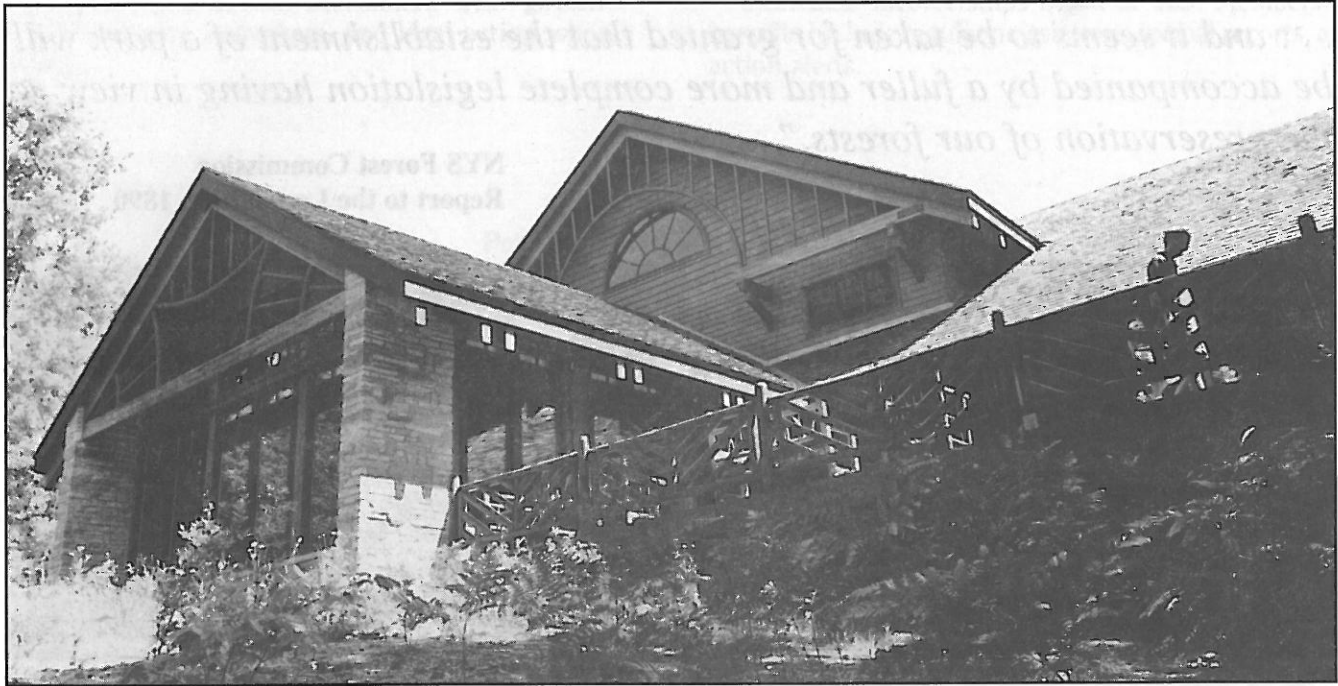
Nelson Rockefeller to review the problems of the area and to develop alternatives for the future of the Adirondacks. Results of that study included the landmark zoning plan for the Park and the State Land Master Plan that created the largest collection of designated Wilderness in the northeastern United States.

In 1970, Governor Rockefeller created the Department of Environmental Conservation to oversee the use of public lands and to enforce game and environmental laws and pollution control permits. The DEC's authority was broken into nine regions state-wide, with two Adirondack Park regions (5 and 6).

Protecting Private Lands

To protect the natural character of the private lands of the Park from overdevelopment and inappropriate uses, Governor Rockefeller led the move to create an Adirondack Park Agency in 1971. Within two years the Private Land Use and Development Plan was adopted, creating the first meaningful private land-use regulations in the Park's history, to be administered by the APA.

"The Adirondacks are preserved forever," said Governor Rockefeller as he signed legislation creating the Adirondack Park Agency on May 22, 1973. The APA was designed to protect the private lands of the Park in much the same way as Article XIV of the New York State Constitution was designed to stave



Courtesy of Paul Smiths VIC

Adirondack Park Agency Visitor Interpretive Center at Paul Smiths.

off threats to the public lands. However, because legal protections are only as strong as those who fight to uphold them, the Adirondack Council was organized in 1975 as a coalition of environmental groups to monitor the implementation of the Park Agency Act and to uphold Article XIV.

The APA, controversial since its beginnings, has also always been understaffed. It has never had more than three enforcement officers to cover a Park the size of Vermont and its efforts to assist communities in local planning have been woefully underfunded.

In 1990, Governor Cuomo's Commission on the Adirondacks in the 21st Century recommended important improvements to the administration of laws and regulations in the Park. These proposed changes were overshadowed by the more controversial land use proposals contained in the Commission's report.

Incredibly, in the Centennial year of the Park, Senator Ronald Stafford has introduced a bill to abolish the Adirondack Park Agency. The Council is fighting the attempt. The Senate passed a similar bill to kill the APA in 1977. The Assembly refused to act.

Governor Cuomo recognized the need for state government to treat the Park as a single entity when he issued an Executive Order last fall requiring state agencies to submit all state projects undertaken in the Park for APA review.

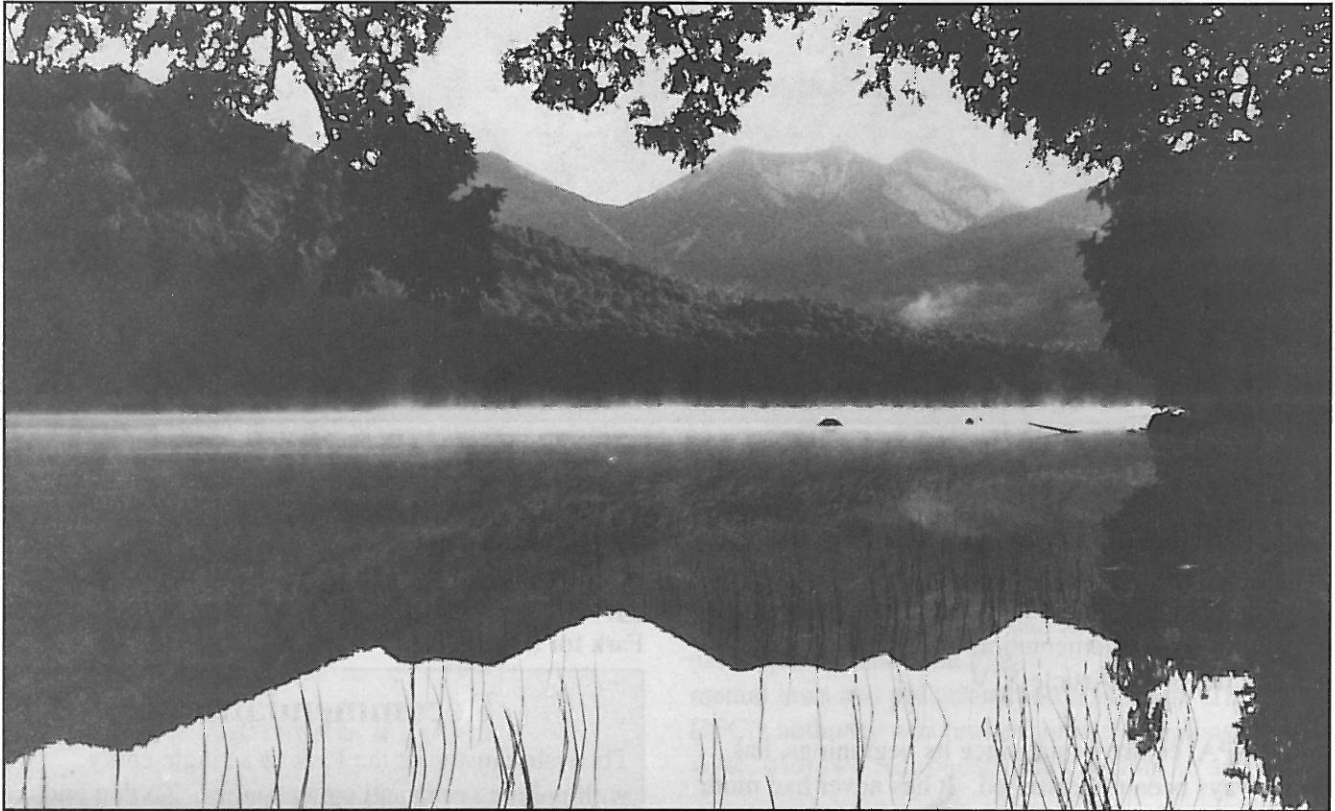
Recommendations

The state must treat the Park as a single entity, with unique needs and opportunities. To that end, it should:

1. Codify Governor Cuomo's Executive Order which mandates that all major state actions in the Park be subject to the same APA review as the private sector.
2. Require that state agencies create plans for all actions that affect Park land use. These plans should be submitted for APA comment and incorporation into the State Land Master Plan.
3. Merge the two DEC Regions serving the Park and centralize state land use controls on private land in the Park under the APA, as recommended by Governor Cuomo's Commission.

“We deem it immaterial whether the popular demand calls for (an Adirondack) park or preserve, provided the consequent legislation enables the state to acquire and hold the territory in one grand, unbroken domain . . . and it seems to be taken for granted that the establishment of a park will be accompanied by a fuller and more complete legislation having in view the preservation of our forests.”

**NYS Forest Commission
Report to the Legislature, 1890**



Gary Randorf

More than a century ago, the people of New York realized they must create an Adirondack Park but knew that its creation would not be enough to protect the forests and waters for all time. They expected that lawmakers would continue to be vigilant in protecting the natural character of the Adirondack Park long after they themselves perished. Those New Yorkers, our great, great grandparents, expected the same of us. We cannot ignore their sacrifice, nor expect our great, great grandchildren to settle for less.

Acknowledgements

The Adirondack Council offers its thanks for the assistance and research provided by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the NYS Legislative Library, the NYS Legislature, the NYS Museum, the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks, the Adirondack Museum, the Adirondack Center Museum, the Adirondack Mountain Club, the Adirondack Daily Enterprise, the Lake Placid News, the Daily Gazette, the New York Times and Sports Illustrated. The Council also offers its thanks to its 18,000 members and the many contributors who made this project possible. (Cover photo: Gary Randorf. Text and layout: John F. Sheehan and Joseph Moore.)

The Adirondack Council

Founded in 1975, the Adirondack Council is an active not-for-profit organization dedicated to protecting the natural and open-space character of the Adirondack Park through public education, interaction with government agencies and lawmakers, and legal action when necessary.

The Council receives moral and financial sustenance from its 18,000 individual members and from private foundations.

Individual memberships begin at \$25. Membership benefits include regular newsletters, special reports, and action alerts.

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