

Lake George Mirror
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EDITORIAL

Good News for The Adirondacks

The June issue of a scientific journal called Environmental Science and Technology carries an article by the Darrin Fresh Water Institute's Sandra Nierzwicki-Bauer and Chuck Boylen about their long term study of the affects of acid rain on Adirondack Lakes. Researchers have long known that acid rain can severely decrease the diversity of plant and animal communities in fresh water lakes and ponds. However, little was known about how microscopic bacteria, which form the foundation of freshwater ecosystems, respond to acidification. The Bolton Landing-based researchers evaluated acidity in 30 Adirondack lakes in order to determine how air pollution affects the fish, bacteria, phytoplankton and other aquatic life. They found a general link between increased acidity and decreased bacterial diversity. The researchers determined that a drop in one unit of pH corresponds with a loss of approximately four fish and plant species. Surprisingly to some, the researchers also found that lakes can start to recover as industrial emissions are reduced. That's why a recent announcement that the US Environmental Protection Agency has issued a new Clean Air Interstate Rule requiring deep cuts in sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides from electric power plants in 31 midwestern states is such good news. According to the Adirondack Council, "these cuts are deep enough to halt most of the damage acid rain is causing in the Adirondack Park." The lakes studied by the researchers from the Darrin Fresh Water Institute have become less acidic as a result of the emission reductions mandated by the Clean Air Act. In at least one lake, fish have been re0introduced. As the full affects of the new rules are felt, we may see those fish mature and reproduce. That would be a 21st century Adirondack recovery; one as historically important as the reforestation of the park in the 19th and 20th centuries. Anyone who cares about the park should join the Adirondack Council in thanking the Obama Administration for advancing the new rules.