The Adirondack Council
NEWSLETTER
Vol. 11 November 1987 No. 40

MAJOR LAND ACQUISITION URGED

Members of the Adirondack Council have been urging the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation to purchase a conservation easement (development rights) on 72,000 acres of Yorkshire Timber Company land in St. Lawrence County in the northwest Adirondacks. This important tract contains miles of canoeable waterways, including remote sections of the Grasse River (all three branches) and Blue Mountain and Lake Pleasant streams. Fishing, hiking and camping opportunities abound.

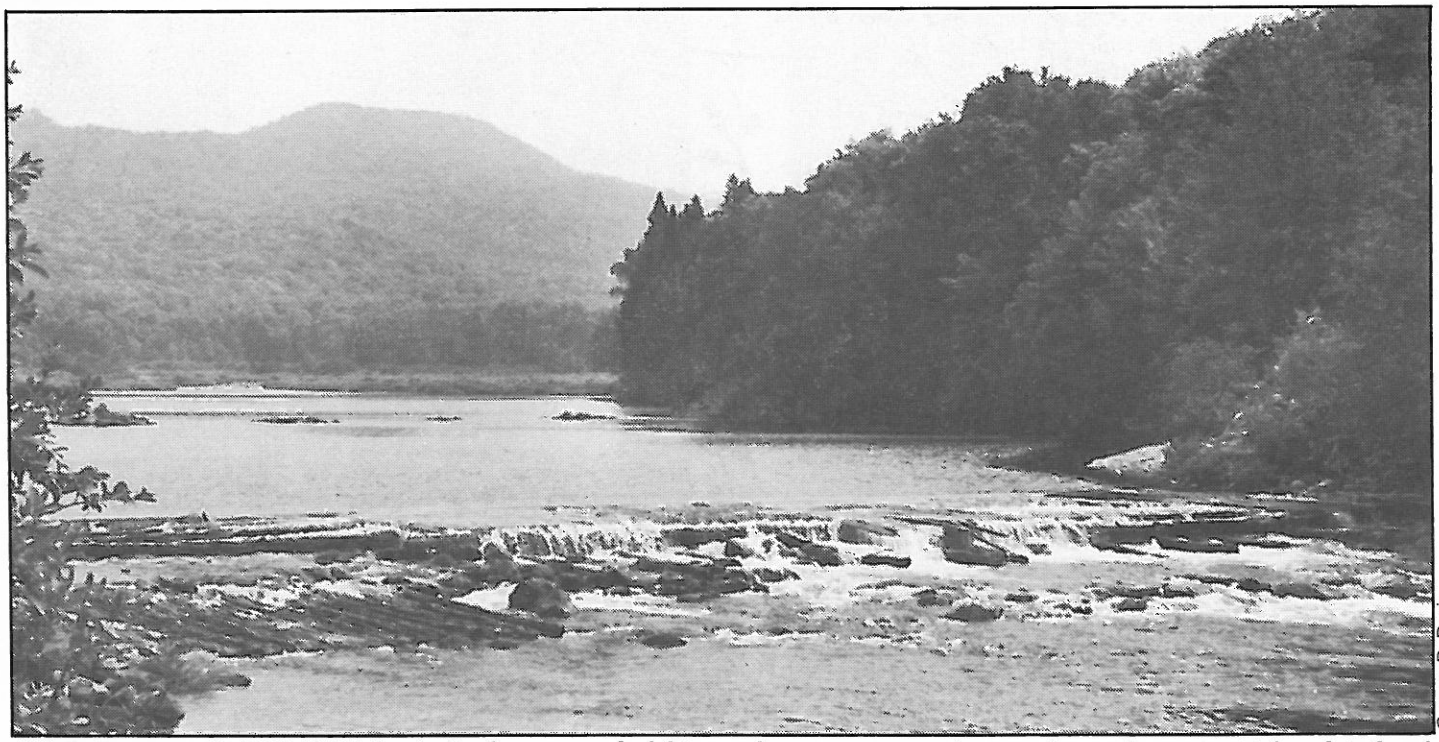
At this writing, Commissioner Thomas C. Jorling has not yet acted on the purchase. If you haven't yet done so, please let the Commissioner hear from you.

"The conservation easement is a wonderful preservation tool," explains Chuck Clusen, the Council's executive director. "By acquiring easements on critical lands, the State can preserve much of the Park's open-space at half the price of direct purchase. An easement can secure the wild character of the land in perpetuity, and it leaves the option to purchase the land outright if the need arises. An easement can also include public access when desirable—as with the Yorkshire tract."

"What counts," says Clusen, "is that the State get to the choice open-space lands before the developers and subdividers do. The future of the Adirondacks will be largely determined in the next few years. The wildlife habitat, the undisturbed natural beauty, the ecological integrity that we save now is saved forever. What we lose is gone for good."

Write: Commissioner Thomas C. Jorling, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, 50 Wolf Rd., Albany, NY 12233.

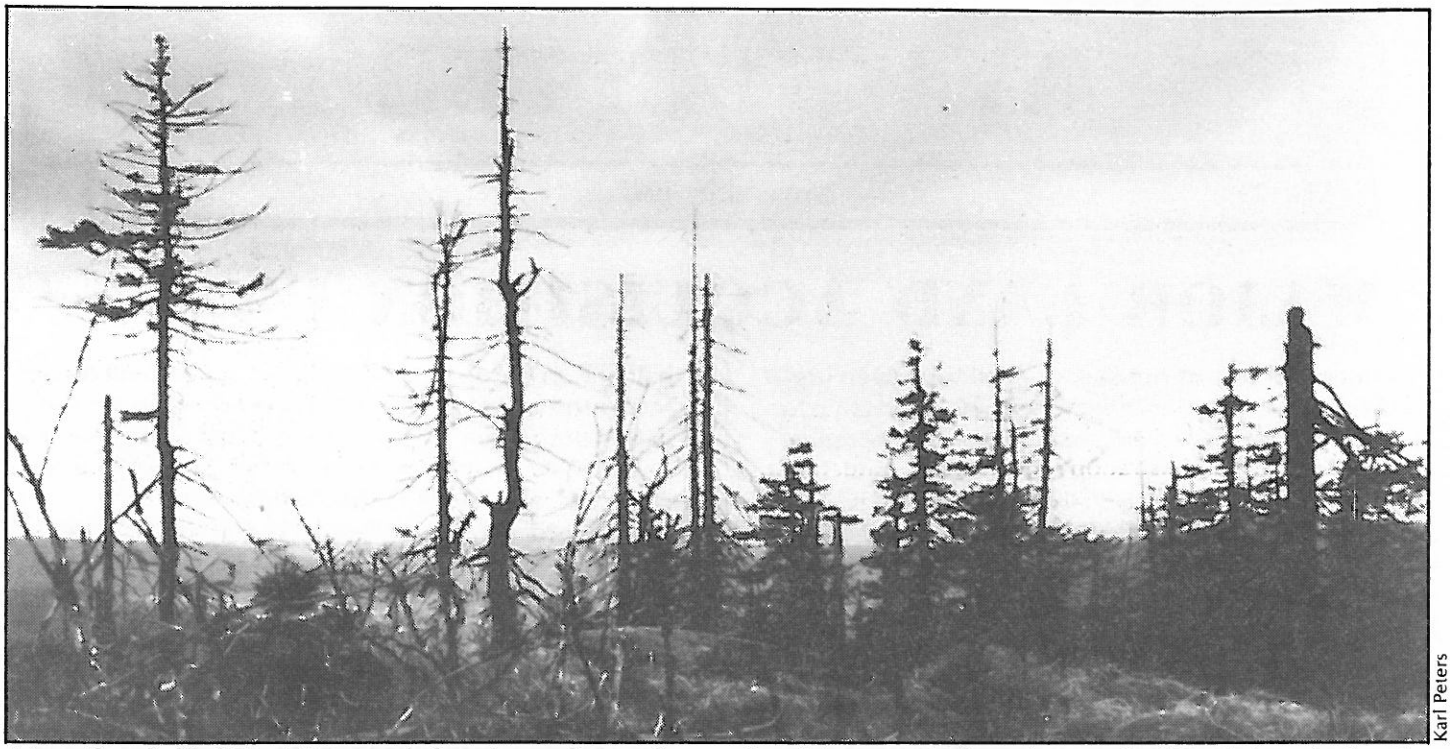
SCENIC VISTA SAVED



George D. Davis

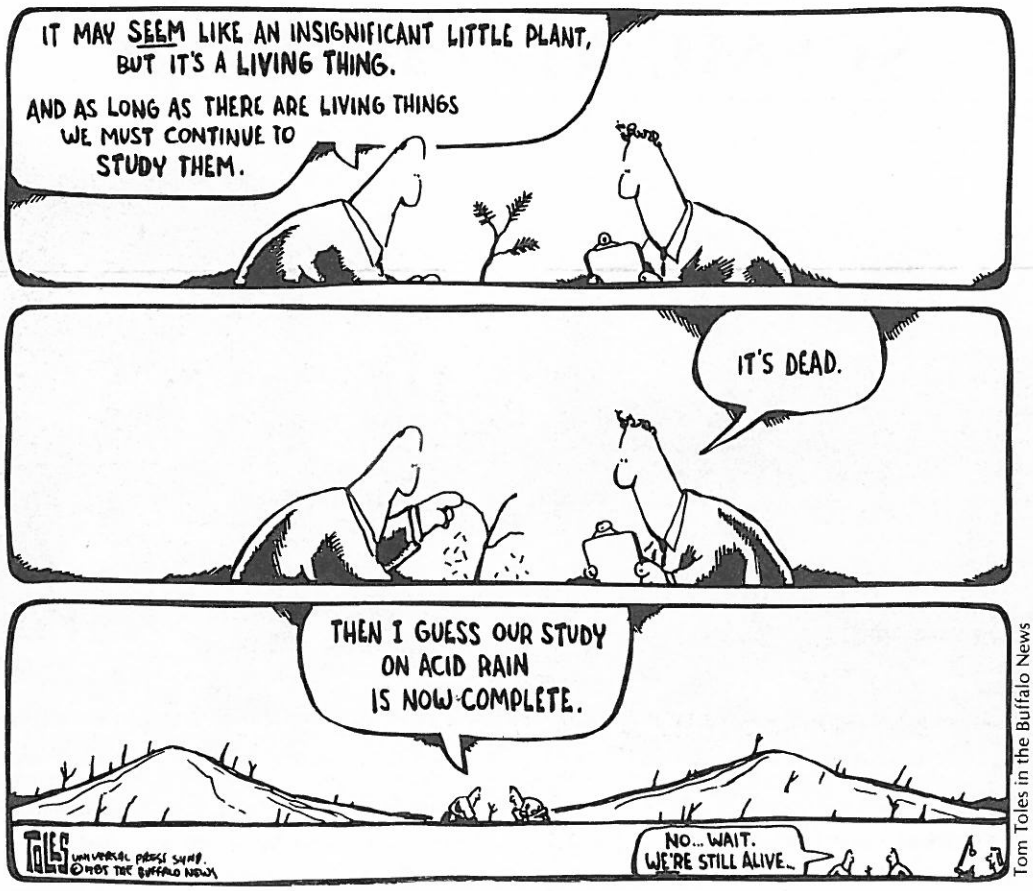
When he spotted a FOR SALE sign in the foreground of this scenic roadside vista, George Davis, the Council's program director, swung into action. ***See page 7 for details of acquisition success story.***

A WARNING FROM WEST GERMANY



Karl Peters

More than half of West Germany's forests are diseased or dying because of acid precipitation. Some American scientists, including Dr. Herbert Vogelman of the University of Vermont, believe that much of North America is only a few years away from the present ecological plight of West Germany and Scandanavia.



Tom Toles in the Buffalo News

COUNCIL REVEALS ACID-RAIN DAMAGE

The Adirondack Council released its photographic documentation of acid-rain damage to Congress and the national news media about a week after the Reagan Administration issued a report downplaying the effects of acid rain.

The Council's publication, "Beside the Stilled Waters," pictures environmental damage from acidic rain, snow and fog in the Adirondacks, Vermont, North Carolina and West Germany. Photographs of Camel's Hump in the Green Mountains show a dramatic increase in dead and dying trees between 1963 and 1983. Other pictures show the widespread dieback of red spruce on Mount Marcy and the spread of algae over a lake bottom when the pH (alkalinity) level of the water falls below 5.6.

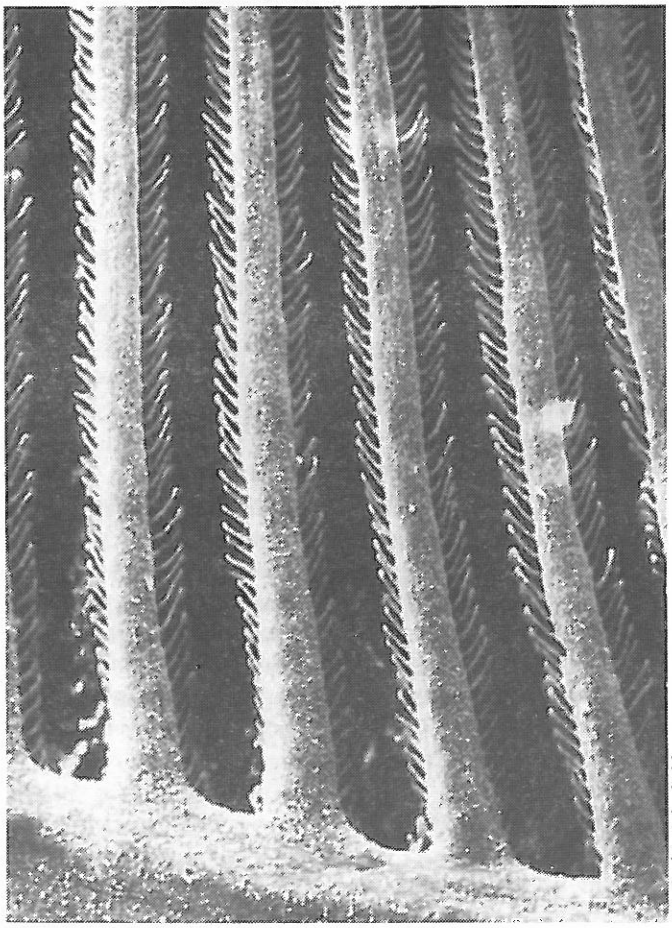
The Reagan Administration report, on the other hand, carries the same message delivered by its principal author, J. Laurence Kulp, when he addressed a meeting of the Adirondack Park Agency last year. Kulp told his astonished audience that we don't need federal controls for sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions—the pollutants that cause acid rain. The problem is insignificant, he insisted, and it will correct itself anyway as new technologies come on line. Kulp concluded his two-hour presentation by calling for more studies.

"I'd hate to be the patient and have you for my doctor," said Gary Randorf, the Council's spokesman at the time. "You're saying we will know more in 1990. Then you'll be able to tell me why I died and what you could have done to save me."

The Reagan Administration report is the product of what purports to be a "National Acid Precipitation Assessment Program." The report was immediately criticized by many scientists, including some who contributed to it. Among other complaints, they claimed that the report's executive summary is inaccurate and misleading, and appeared to be aimed more at justifying the Administration's opposition to acid-rain controls than providing a scientific assessment of the problem.

What can be done to curb acid rain? Right now, you can urge your U.S. Senators and Representative to persuade their fence-sitting congressional colleagues to enact acid rain controls that will reduce the offending pollutants by 50% in the next decade. You could also send your copy of "Beside the Stilled Waters" to your Representative and ask that he pass it along to a fellow lawmaker who might still be undecided on this issue.

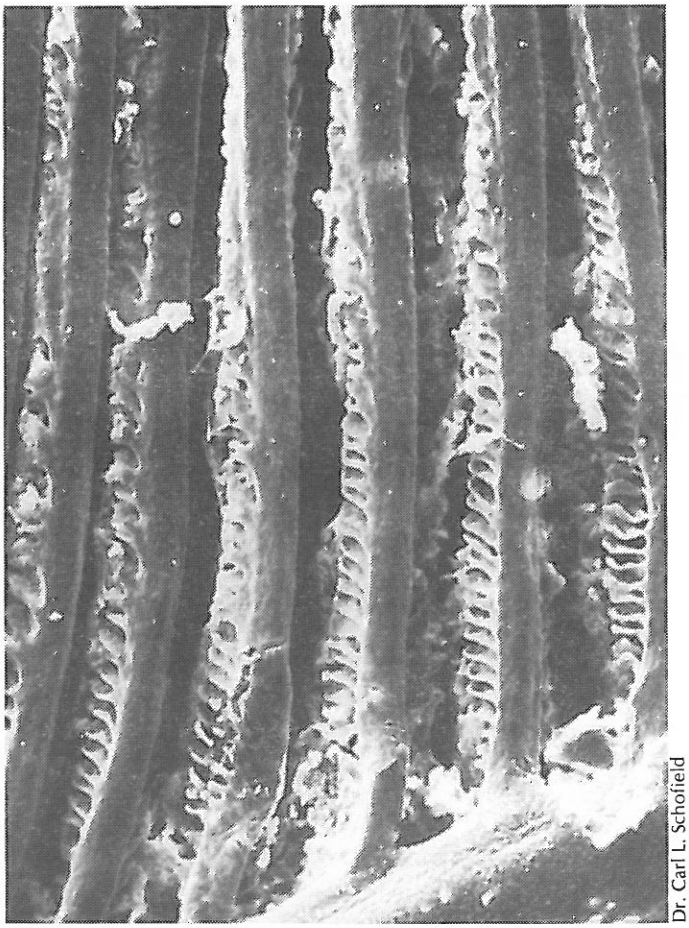
HEALTHY FISH



Dr. Carl L. Schofield

Gill of young brook trout living in neutral Adirondack stream water. (From "Beside the Stilled Waters.")

SICK FISH



Dr. Carl L. Schofield

Gill of young brook trout living in acidic Adirondack stream water. (From "Beside the Stilled Waters.")

NEW LEADER LOOKS AHEAD

Recently settled into his Elizabethtown office, Charles M. Clusen, the Adirondack Council's new executive director, answered some questions about the Adirondack Park and the Council's role in it. Clusen previously served as vice president for conservation of The Wilderness Society in Washington, D.C., and before that as assistant conservation director of the Sierra Club in San Franciso.

Why did you come to the Adirondacks?

Clusen: I like natural areas and this is the finest natural area left in the eastern United States. For most of my adult life I've been working to save wild lands, mostly in the western states and Alaska. Much of the work was successful, but much of it was also rather abstract. I was in Washington or San Francisco, working with congressmen, or the news media, or other conservation groups. I was almost always in the city, while the land I was fighting for was out there somewhere. Here you can work to preserve it and be *in* it at the same time. Just look out this office window. You see a forested mountain. Open the window and you hear a stream running by.

How did you get interested in preservation?

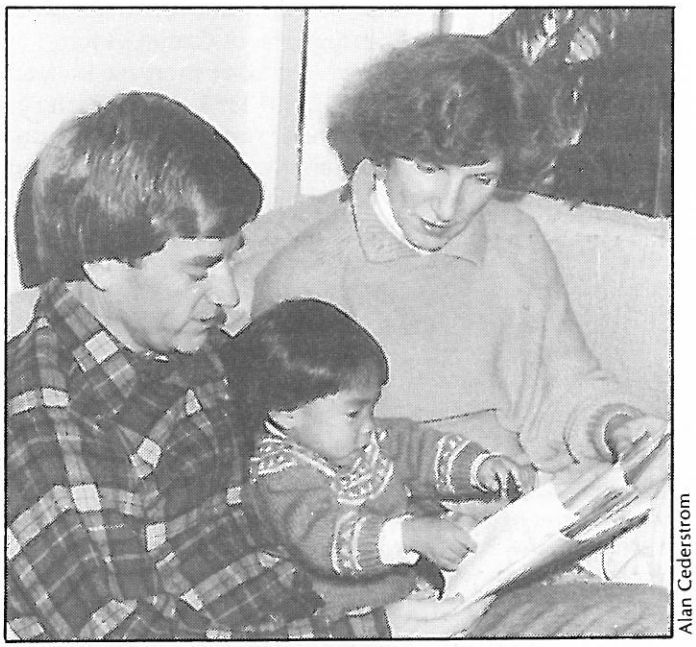
Clusen: My father took a course with Aldo Leopold at the University of Wisconsin. So as a kid I read Leopold's *Sand County Almanac,* which called for a land ethic. Leopold said we had to start treating land like a resource—a living thing we depend on and interact with—rather than just another commodity to exploit and profit from. I was a product of the politically-activist 60s. I completed the conservation program at the University of Michigan in 1969 and stayed on for a year of graduate work in regional planning. I started the Michigan chapter of Zero Population Growth and helped organize the 1970 Earth Day teach-in in Ann Arbor. From there it was a natural transition to the staff of the Sierra Club.

What were some highlights of your Sierra Club days?

Clusen: A big one was our campaign to pass Proposition 20, the Coastal Zone Protection Act. Like the Adirondack Park at that time, the California coast was seriously threatened by land development. The new law established regulations, much like the Adirondack Park Agency's, limiting future commercial and residential impingement on the coastline. These two laws, passed about the same time at opposite ends of the country, are probably the most enlightened land-use measures of the late 20th century. They reflect a new approach to the "highest and best" concept of land use.

What do you mean by "highest and best"?

Clusen: In the real-estate business, "highest and best" has always meant the most profitable use to which land can be put, whether you're talking about resorts and condominiums, hot dog stands or video arcades, mining or timbering, oil prospecting, an amusement park, whatever. The new view of "highest and best"—which was Leopold's view—is reflected in New York State's approach to the Adirondack Park. Here "highest and best" recognizes the *full* value of the land—the wildlife, scenery, opportunities for recreation and renewal in a natural setting, opportunities for peace and quiet away from the rat race.



Alan Cederstrom

THE CLUSENS AT HOME—Chuck and Gail with daughter, Cara.

Is the Adirondack Park Agency succeeding?

Clusen: Partially. The problem is that it doesn't go far enough in protecting the resources. There's been a great outcry from developers who claim the APA law is "locking up" the Park and stifling the local economy. But when you look closely at the zoning plan, you see tremendous potential for development of the private lands, especially the lakeshores. Lakes now in a natural state can be surrounded by houses, with only 50 or 75-foot setback requirements.

What's the answer?

Clusen: We need to strengthen the shoreline regulations, to keep development away from the lakes and limit the amount of alteration in these super-sensitive areas. That won't be easy because shorefront development is where the big profits are. But this is a good time

to start the campaign for better lake protection. The Cuomo Administration appears eager to protect the public values of the Adirondacks. This involves an aggressive program of land acquisition, as well. If the Adirondack Park as we know it today is to be preserved, the State has got to move quickly to acquire the choice wild lands before the developers do. The Council will be identifying and promoting such purchases—as we've just done with the Yorkshire tract [see p.1].

Roger Jakubowski—the developer from New Jersey who bought Camp Topridge—has said that the only future for the Adirondack Park is development. What do you think of that?

Clusen: Not much. That might be the "highest and best" use of Atlantic City, but it certainly isn't right for the Adirondacks. If Jakubowski and some other entrepreneurs have their way, the Adirondack Park will simply cease to exist. It will end up as islands of Forest Preserve surrounded by more or less developed areas. Whether they were second-home projects of five units or 5,000 units, the effect would be the same. The natural integrity of the Adirondack Park would be lost.

What future do *you* see for the Adirondack Park?

Clusen: We have an opportunity to have an Adirondack Park 50 years from now that will more closely resemble the Adirondacks of 1850 than of 1950. Remember, a hundred years ago this region was devastated by logging and fires, and that devastation continued well into this century. Now the forests are growing back to their original state. In another 50 years, much of the Park will look like it did when Samuel de Champlain first saw the region. Efforts are now being made to restore the Canada lynx. With help from us, a healthy moose population may be re-established in our lifetimes. The raven and osprey are coming back strong, the bald eagle has been reintroduced. If we can beat the land developers to the critical, private open space now coming on the market, including critical wildlife habitat, we can actually have a wilder park in 50 years.

What about the Park's economic future?

Clusen: In the long run, a lot of land development, even the tasteful kind, will destroy much of the distinctive quality of the Adirondacks. That's not good economics or good anything. Instead, we have the chance to provide for a special kind of tourism. Hikers, campers, canoers, cross-country skiers, birders, bicyclists—that ever-increasing public in search of ever-decreasing natural areas to enjoy self-propelled recreation. There's a growing market here that is compatible with the resources and good for the local economy. The Adirondack Park has only just begun to attract it.

Some enterprising Adirondackers are planning a cross-country ski trail connecting Keene, Wilmington, Lake Placid, Saranac Lake and Tupper Lake. That's the kind of thing that will put the Adirondacks on the map as the East's premiere cross-country ski region. Huts , inns, restaurants and other support services could be established in and around hamlets. The same is true with bicycling. The 116-mile railroad line from Lake Placid to Remsen could, if the railroad isn't resurrected, be transformed into the first wilderness bikeway in the United States. This would establish the Adirondack Park as the premiere cycling region in the East. There are 5,000 miles of paved backroads in the Park that are a cycler's dream come true. This region could become a mecca for bicycle touring—and think of all the support facilities and services that would be needed!

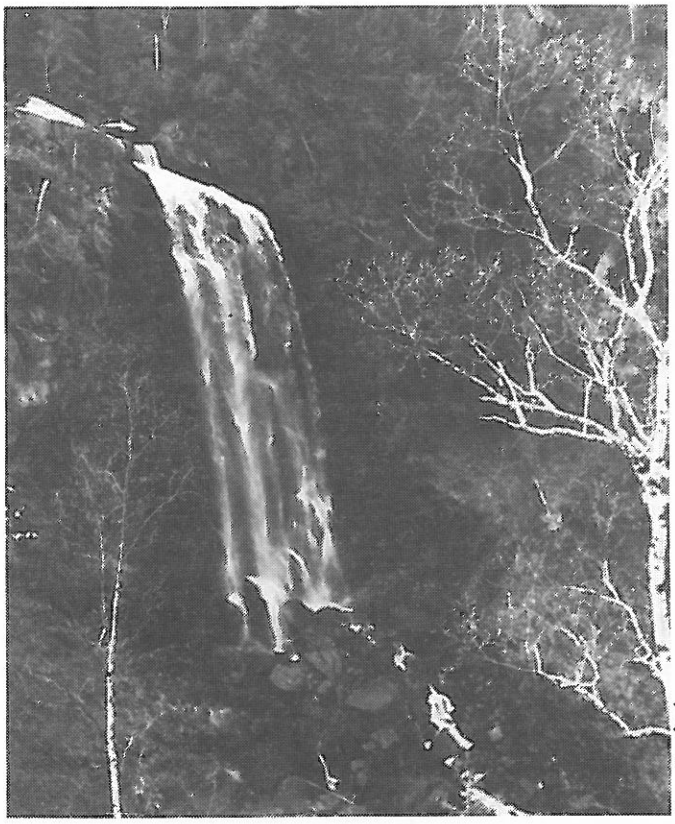
As for boating—especially the quiet, non-polluting kind—there is no place else in the United States with the combination of undisturbed lakes and rivers and streams, bordered by forests and hills and mountains, that you find here. Right now you can paddle over a hundred miles without repeating yourself. The Council has identified five "missing links" in the chain of Adirondack waterways where private owners have denied access to boaters. If the State acquires access rights on these lands, we can triple the amount of continuous canoeing, kayacking and guideboating in the Park.

This is where our recreational and economic future come together. And in an environmentally compatible way!

Where do you see the Council going?

Clusen: I see the Council now moving out of adolescence into maturity. I think our membership can be expanded from 4,000 today to 5,000 next year to 10,000 a few years from now. I see the Council playing a major role in advising the State on Adirondack acquisitions. And if we make the *right* acquisitions quickly enough, this park will survive the latest onslaught from land developers. And it will end up better protected not only for future generations of human beings but for other life forms that have as much right to exist on this planet as we do.

Alan Cederstrom



Gary Randorf

SONAR UPDATE

Environmental sanity may yet prevail on the question of whether to dump a chemical pesticide called Sonar into the renowned waters of Lake George to kill an aquatic weed known as Eurasian watermilfoil.

At hearings conducted by the State earlier this year, the Adirondack Council challenged the proposal by local businessmen and lakeshore homeowners to introduce a questionable chemical into a lake that people drink from as well as swim in. One of the experts brought in by the Council was toxicologist Ellen Silbergeld, who revealed that Sonar contains a breakdown product (monomethylformamide) that induces miscarriages and stillbirths in animals and causes malformation in animal fetuses. The Council stressed that only about 50 acres of Lake George shallows have been found to contain milfoil, with some 6-7 acres being severely affected. The Council also found that mechanical controls, such as placing plastic mats on the weed beds, would probably smother the invader and solve the problem.

Meanwhile, as researchers from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute delve more deeply into the behavior of milfoil in Lake George, an influential town official who previously supported the use of Sonar is reported to be "rethinking" the issue. Richard Bolton, supervisor for the Town of Hague, has said he now believes that more information should be gathered before any chemical is placed in the lake.

Additional hearings will be held as study results come in.

HYDRO UPDATE

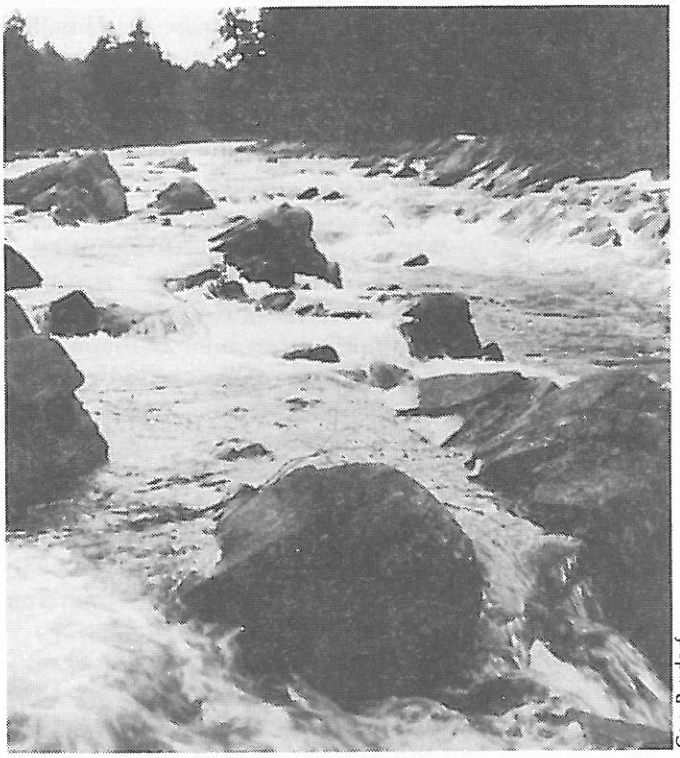
There's a law against building dams on Adirondack streams, right?

Wrong. In the Adirondack Park, 1,238 miles of waterways are indeed protected against damming by the state's Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System—unless, of course, the federal government decides to override such protection. But the remaining 15,000 miles of streams and brooks that flow through the Park's private lands are surprisingly vulnerable to the construction of new hydroelectric dams that would impede their flow and compromise their wildness.

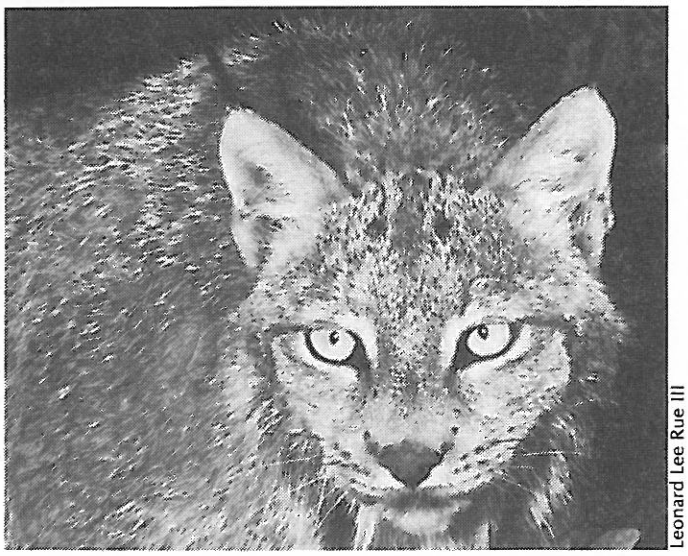
All that's required right now is a state water-quality permit and approval by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), and the dam builders are off and running.

The Adirondack Council recently registered its opposition to a small hydroelectric project on the Oswegatchie River in St. Lawrence County. The proposed dam would flood part of a beautiful gorge and interfere with recreational use of the river. As with other dam projects being considered in and around the Park, the developer claims to be utilizing an "existing" structure, though the original dam disintegrated years ago and the river has long since reverted to its natural state.

In a recent letter to *Adirondack Life* magazine, the Council's chairman and exective director clarified our views on small-dam proposals: "Small hydroelectric development can be an ecologically sound way to produce energy, but the siting of such projects must not interfere with the flow of an otherwise unobstructed river or stream, nor degrade fish and wildlife and other environmental values."



Gary Randorf



Leonard Lee Rue III

CANADA LYNX TO RETURN AFTER LONG ABSENCE

Researchers for the Adirondack Wildlife Program are currently combing the Canadian Yukon in search of a dozen lynx to transplant to remote areas of the High Peaks Wilderness this coming spring. More of these tufted-eared felines will be imported the following year.

Lynx prey on snowshoe hares and thrive in deep snow. Once an integral part of the Adirondack scene, they've been missing from these mountains for more than a century.

The Adirondack Wildlife Program, which the Adirondack Council wholeheartedly supports, is a function of the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse. The Program's field headquarters are in Newcomb, NY.

A $300 MILLION BARGAIN

In its 1987 State of the Park Report, the Council estimated that it would cost the State $300 million to provide permanent protection for the entire Adirondack Park. This could be achieved by direct public purchase of 500,000 acres of private lands and the acquisition of conservation easements (development rights) on about two million additional acres.

That is, $300 million is what it will take, over the next few decades, to round out the public Forest Preserve, consolidate the Wilderness system, preserve key wildlife habitat, keep roadsides and lakeshores in their presently undisturbed condition, and vastly expand public recreational opportunities throughout the Adirondacks.

The largest and most diverse park in the contiguous United States would thereby be preserved for all time, for all future generations to enjoy.

"But $300 million?" said an incredulous newspaper reporter who called us after seeing the report. "You people must be kidding! Where will you ever find that kind of money?"

Soon afterwards, the frigate Stark was severely damaged by an Iraqi jet. In a news report of the attack, the cost of this relatively small American warship was noted.

The amount was $300 million.

SCENIC VISTA SAVED

When the foreground of a scenic roadside vista in the southwest Adirondacks recently came on the real-estate market, the Council realized there was no time to waste. Program Director George Davis immediately brought the opportunity to the attention of the Department of Environmental Conservation.

The State was willing to buy—but the owner wasn't willing to wait up to 18 months for the State to arrange the purchase. So Davis put the Department in touch with the Adirondack Land Trust, a public-interest affiliate of the Adirondack Council, to expedite the acquisition.

Moving quickly, Tom Duffus of the Trust bought the 6.2 acre property on Route 8 in Herkimer County with the understanding that it would be resold later to the State. The purchase price was $8,000. As a result of this action, the view from the Nobleboro Bridge (see page 1), overlooking West Canada Creek and Fort Noble Mountain, will remain permanently unaltered by residential or commercial development.

In all, there are 38 scenic roadside vistas throughout the Park that require special protective measures if these views are to remain in their natural state. Securing such protection is a high priority for both the Adirondack Council and the Adirondack Land Trust.

"Looks as if the clean-air crowd turned out in force."

Drawing by Richter; © 1987 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

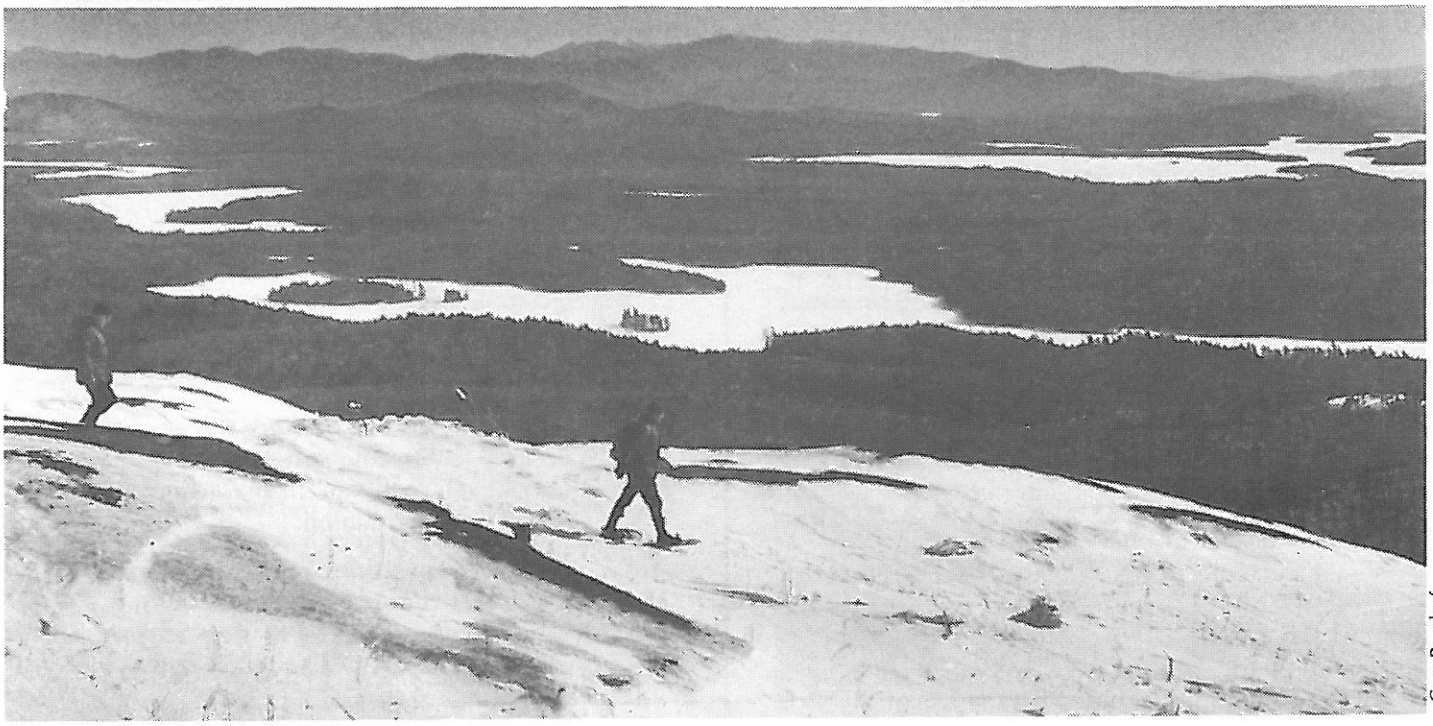
FORESIGHT AND RESOLVE

"Some areas of the country have managed to escape the destructive hand of man but even these sanctuaries are now subject to the unrelenting pressures of an increasingly urbanized society. The Adirondack Park has long been such a sanctuary. Whether it will continue to be one depends on the foresight and resolve of all New Yorkers."

Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks, 1970.

A LASTING LEGACY

Bequests are the best way to insure the long-term stability and effectiveness of the Adirondack Council, now the most influential citizen advocacy organization working to preserve the wildness and natural beauty of the Adirondack Park. For confidential information about bequests and other planned giving opportunities, please contact Lynne Poteau, Adirondack Council, Box D-2, Elizabethtown, NY 12932, 518-873-2240.



Gary Randorf

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November 1987

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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