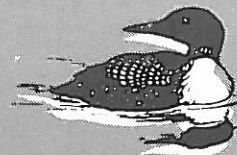




The Adirondack Council NEWSLETTER



to keep supporters informed of our activities

Vol. 7

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No. 24

PERKINS CLEARING: WILDERNESS LOST?

New Yorkers may be about to lose a rare opportunity to protect the critical central portion of the West Canada Lake Wilderness in the vicinity of Cedar Lakes—the very opportunity that for a full decade they were assured would occur if a forest preserve land exchange with International Paper Company was approved at the polls. The potential classification of the Perkins Clearing area has touched off a battle with the integrity of the entire West Canada Lake Wilderness at stake.

History

A nearly impossible management situation existed for years in the Perkins Clearing area because of an intermingling of state and Paper Company lands. Beginning in 1969 a land exchange that would finally consolidate these ownerships was investigated by the Governor's Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks. In both its report to the Governor and in the Technical Reports that accompanied the final report, the Commission made clear its intention that the "proposal allows for state ownership of all the bodies of water in the area and would add lands to the proposed West Canada Lake Wilderness." All alternative land exchange proposals that would not block out this wilderness were rejected. This criterion was used as the major purpose of the exchange, emphasizing the need for greater wilderness width in the adjacent narrow neck of the West Canada Lake Wilderness.

In 1972 the Adirondack Park Agency prepared and the Governor approved the State Land Master Plan (SLMP) that officially established the West Canada Lake Wilderness and classified the state lands in the Perkins Clearing area as Primitive "to insure that uses made of the area will permit wilderness classification once the land ownership problem is overcome." The description of this area concluded with the phrase "until the whole area becomes wilderness." Seven years later, however, the Agency revised the SLMP to provide that consideration be given not only to wilderness but also to wild forest—a classification permitting motorized access in an area that people had been assured would be wilderness.

This reversal by the Agency has started a heated controversy and pitted various users of the forest preserve, who should have much common ground, against each other. Those who favor motorized use feel the Agency change assured them they would have their way; those opposed to motorized use in this critical area—including The Adirondack Council—feel that the Agency has reneged on a commitment to the voters of the state that underpinned the entire constitutional amendment process.

The actual exchange, approved by the voters in 1979, was consummated this summer and has resulted in a 10,344 acre tract of forest preserve adjacent to the West Canada Lake Wilderness. No classification decision has been made by the Agency as of this writing, but certainly the state's commitment to the voters that held from 1969 through 1979 appears to be eroding. In a premature and unfortunate statement DEC Commissioner Henry Williams recently said he favored opening the road into

the heart of the Perkins Clearing area and allowing float plane use to continue on Whitney Lake.

Sportsmen Opposition

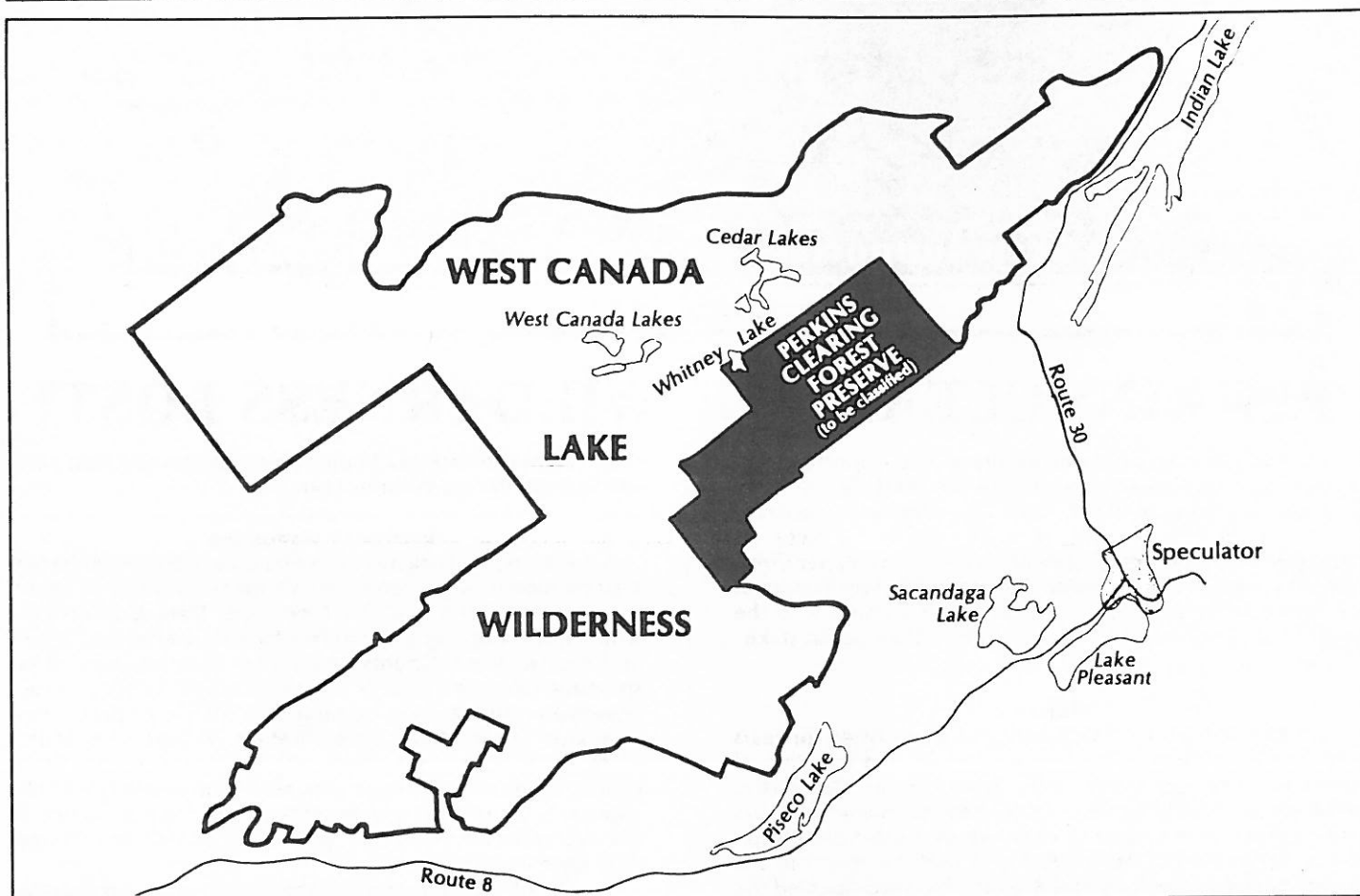
A vigorous, well organized campaign to oppose wilderness classification is being conducted by many hunters and fishermen primarily through the New York State Conservation Council at the urging of the Adirondack Conservation Council and the Hamilton County Federation of Sportsmen. These sportsmen sincerely believe that a wilderness classification will negatively impact their hunting and fishing opportunities. They also claim that such a classification will hurt the economy of the Speculator-Lake Pleasant area. Unfortunately many sportsmen around the state unfamiliar with the details of this case are accepting this argument and using their influence on the Adirondack Park Agency both as individuals and through their state legislators.

Specifically, the sportsmen want a Wild Forest classification for Perkins Clearing that would allow several miles of road to be opened into what should be the geographic center of the West Canada Lake Wilderness near Cedar Lakes as well as the continuation of float plane landings on Whitney Lake.

When looked at objectively and in more detail, the sportsmen's arguments falter. First, *motor vehicle access will be improved regardless of the classification*. The exchange provided for road access to the new state land boundary thereby allowing all users to drive two miles closer to the area than they were able to prior to the exchange. The economy of the area, insofar as it is tied to sportsmen visitation, certainly should not suffer. The tourist economy of the area could, in fact, be enhanced by a concerted effort to promote the wilderness resources of the area that are far more unique for all of their users, including hunters and fishermen, than are lands crisscrossed with roads and snowmobile trails.

The point of why hunting and fishing in the Adirondacks is so special seems to be missed by those bent on homogenizing the experience to be like that elsewhere in the state. Perhaps Dr. Rainer Brocke, a noted SUNY Adirondack wildlife biologist, describes the lure of the Adirondacks to the sportsman best:

"Where else but in the Adirondacks can one see white-tails feeding on the water's edge of a wilderness lake in summer? Where else is it possible to bag whitetail bucks with consistently large racks? Where else can one rifle-hunt and not see another hunter for weeks on end? Where else is there a better chance of bagging a black bear while deer hunting? Where else can one select and hunt an individual buck without being disturbed by hordes of hunters? Only in the Adirondacks! I submit that there is no other area in North America or in the world which combines scenic beauty, solitude and whitetail hunting in the superb combination we enjoy in the Adirondacks."



Ancillary Issues

There are two issues dealing with Pillsbury Mountain, located in the southern portion of the Perkins Clearing acquisition, that must be addressed in addition to the issue of road and float plane access. First, wilderness designation of Perkins Clearing would require removal of the Pillsbury Mountain fire tower; and, second, it would preclude future use of Pillsbury Mountain for a communications relay facility. Such a facility, if constructed, would improve radio communication into the West Canada Lake Wilderness and accelerate the removal of existing nonconforming telephone lines.

Although these issues do not, in the Council's opinion, outweigh the importance of a wilderness designation, some Council members may well disagree. An easy and manageable alternative exists - designate approximately 250 acres on the south slopes and peak of Pillsbury Mountain as Wild Forest and the remainder of the area as Wilderness.

The Case for Wilderness

More than 2 million acres of the 2.4 million acres of Adirondack Forest Preserve are within 2 miles of a public road or a water body accessible to the public by motor boat! To argue that too much of the Forest Preserve is "locked up" does not do justice to the intelligence of New Yorkers. To insist that motor vehicles be allowed in the Perkins Clearing area because so much of the forest preserve is remote is spurious at best.

Wilderness is the scarcest of the natural resources in the Eastern United States. Only Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area and Florida's Everglades National Park come close to equaling the size of the Adirondack wilderness resource.

Wilderness recreation provides an opportunity for the 55 million individuals within a day's drive of the Adirondacks, as well as others, to escape the hectic pace and noise of their daily environment - an environment largely associated with motor-

ized equipment and vehicles. Wilderness recreation can be both actual in the sense of hiking, birding, hunting and fishing or passive in the sense of vicarious appreciation.

Wilderness is also, however, much more than recreation. It is a public policy statement that we as a society do not have to reign supreme on every acre. That we respect the inherent values of naturalness. That we believe that it is ethically desirable to leave options for future generations. That we can preserve gene pools and practice restraint.

Wilderness is a resource that by its very nature can easily shrink but seldom expand. The fact that we have wilderness in the Adirondacks that is every bit as wild as wilderness anywhere in this country is a tribute to the foresight of our ancestors. It will be a tribute to our generation if we preserve what wilderness we have and enlarge it in those few cases where this is possible, such as Perkins Clearing.

At its September Board meeting, The Adirondack Council unanimously passed a resolution calling for wilderness designation for the entire Perkins Clearing area.

What You Can Do

Only those who believe in the integrity of the Adirondack wilderness can insure that this great wilderness area will remain. Each of you, and as many friends and organizations as you can rally should:

1. Write to Ted Ruzow, Chairman, Adirondack Park Agency, P.O. Box 99, Ray Brook, NY 12977 requesting that all or essentially all of the lands acquired by exchange in the Perkins Clearing area be added to the West Canada Lake Wilderness.
2. Send copies of your letter to: DEC Commissioner Williams, 50 Wolf Road, Albany, NY 12233; your State Assemblyman, NYS Assembly, Albany, NY 12248; your State Senator, NYS Senate, Albany, NY 12247; and, The Adirondack Council.

SAGAMORE AMENDMENT BEFORE VOTERS

Now that both houses of the New York State Legislature have passed the Sagamore Land Exchange Amendment, the referendum will appear on November's statewide ballot as **Ballot Proposal 6**. The Adirondack Council, although extremely cautious of any amendment to Article XIV of the State Constitution, has endorsed this site specific amendment that would authorize an exchange between the state and Sagamore Institute. At stake are 11 state owned buildings located on 10 acres of forest preserve land that were part of Camp Sagamore, a historic Adirondack retreat built in 1897.

The Sagamore Institute will donate a 245 acre parcel that is surrounded by, and would be added to, the Adirondack Forest Preserve should the referendum be approved by the voters. Taxpayers would bear no cost for the exchange since the Institute will purchase the parcel for exchange.

Ballot Proposal 6 deserves your support - please vote yes.



PARK AGENCY FLOUNDERS

A dozen years ago when the Adirondack Park Agency was created, those New Yorkers with a vision of the Adirondacks' potential to become the world's most diverse and enchanting park thought their vision was on the threshold of occurring. Now their hopes are turning into fears and frustrations. All isn't negative, of course, but consider what quite predictably results when an agency with a lack of leadership and a staff with little or no background in park management or the various natural resource disciplines has the responsibility to determine the fate of the largest park in the conterminous United States. Recent examples include:

- Map amendments approved at the whim of developers or local officials with provincial interest and little regard for the requirements of the APA Act or the open space character of the Park (e.g., Sagamore Island in Lake George to hamlet thereby allowing unlimited development; Town of Black Brook classifications allowing greatly increased roadside strip development; Ticonderoga lands adjacent to a vital Lake Champlain wetland to a classification allowing high intensity development).
- The first phase of a 376 lot subdivision approved by staff in a remote and undeveloped portion of the Park without public hearing and scrutiny and without even full Agency consideration.

It was this latter action that has led The Adirondack Council to recently initiate legal action challenging the staff's authority to, among other things, approve a major project by segments.

Governor's Attention Needed

Understandably the Governor is faced with many pressing problems that preclude him from dealing at length with Adirondack issues. The Council staff has been in touch with the Governor's office frequently, as have a number of other special interest organizations, pointing out our concerns.

Now it is imperative, however, that Governor Cuomo hear from individuals as well as organizations. He needs to hear from the grass roots throughout the state that there is a widespread constituency deeply concerned with the future of the Park.

Please take a moment to write a letter stressing that all appointments to the APA must possess a vision of what the Park can and should be and reflect the statewide interest in the Park that has been clearly demonstrated for nearly 100 years. Furthermore it is important to mention that the Governor and his staff need to recognize the national significance of the Adirondack land use plan and support its basic purposes. Address your letters to Governor Mario Cuomo, Executive Chamber, Albany, New York 12224.



RANDORF TAKES LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Gary Randorf, as of October 1, 1983 and until October 1, 1984, will be on leave from his duties as executive director. Gary has served as executive director since 1977 when the Council saw the necessity of hiring a full time professional to handle the ever increasing challenges presented them in all areas of Adirondack issues. His expertise, diligent service and congenial leadership will most definitely be missed, and the Council wishes him happiness and success during his much deserved leave of absence. In the interim, George Davis will fill in as executive director. Having been on the staff as program consultant for over a year, the transition should be a smooth one. Anita Davis will be assisting with staff work on a part time basis.



EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS AVAILABLE

The Council firmly believes education is its most important single function. As part of our education program we have available, at nominal rental fees, the following materials for teachers, schools, organizations, or any other groups interested in the Adirondack Park:

-From Lakes to Lichen. A 20 minute slide-tape program detailing the ecological life zones of the Adirondack Park. A teacher's study guide is also available. Rental fee: \$10.

-Acid Rain: The Choice is Ours. Produced by the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness Inc., this fine slide-tape program shows the effects of acid rain and discusses its causes. Rental fee: \$10.

-The Adirondack-The Land Nobody Knows. An award winning 16mm, 30 minute, sound and color documentary that portrays the fragile ecology and uniqueness of the Adirondack Park. Rental fee: \$15.

-Legacy for a Loon. A beautifully photographed 16mm, 20 minute, sound and color film on the ecological and environmental needs of the magnificent loon. Rental fee: \$15.

Limited numbers of the following brochures are available free of charge although a donation to defray expenses would be appreciated.

-Let's Stop Acid Rain. A full color picture brochure covering problems, effects, sources and solutions and what you can do about acid rain.

-Forever Wild: New York's Forest Preserve. A full color picture brochure explaining the forest preserve "forever wild" provisions.

Profits of catalog sales from the enclosed *The Loon's Feather* will go directly to the Adirondack Loon Preservation Project.

APA GOALS MEETINGS

The dates and locations of the outside the Park public workshops for the Adirondack Park Agency Goals Program (see April and July NEWSLETTERS) were announced as we went to press. They are:

- November 1 **Rochester**
Monroe Community College, Bldg. 3
1000 East Henrietta Road
- November 2 **Buffalo**
Mahoney State Office Building
65 Court Street
- November 3 **Syracuse**
Illick Hall Auditorium
SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry
- November 9 **Utica**
State Office Building, Conference Room A-B
207 Genesee Street
- November 10 **Albany**
Federal Building (SUNY Central)
Corner of State and Broadway

All meetings start at 7 p.m. It is imperative that as many Council members as possible attend these meetings to help chart goals for the Park's future.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

July - September 1983

Council Convenes at Camp Uncas

Over 140 members of The Adirondack Council met at Camp Uncas near Raquette Lake on July 9 for the Council's ninth annual meeting. Excellent slide and film presentations, a tour of Camp Uncas by hosts Barbara Glaser and Howard Kirschenbaum and a fine presentation by APA Commissioner Elizabeth Thorndike were highlights of the meeting.

The year's activities were reviewed, including legislative approval of the conservation easement bill and the legal action against indiscriminate use of pesticides.

Three new directors were elected:

—Peter A.A. Berle, former Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation and senior partner in the New York City law firm of Berle, Butzel, Kass & Case, has had a long and active interest in Adirondack concerns.

—Edward "Ted" Earl, secretary of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks, a partner in the Utica law firm of Evans, Severn, Bankert & Peet, has been particularly active in Adirondack League Club affairs serving on the Forestry Committee and as assistant secretary of the club.

—Lynne T. Edgerton, is senior project attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council where she handles environmental litigation. Her love of the Adirondacks stems from 15 years of hiking, canoeing and skiing in the Lake Placid area where she is a seasonal resident.

At their meeting, which was open to all Council members, the Board elected Barbara Glaser to serve as secretary and reelected the remaining officers for another term.

Secretary Hord Steps Down

Bill Hord, a catalyst in the formation of the Council and one of its founding Directors, has stepped down as secretary. Bill has been a guiding light of the Council since its inception, serving as secretary for a period encompassing 61 meetings of the Board of Directors and 9 annual membership meetings. The Council expresses its deepest gratitude and appreciation for Bill's extraordinary service to both The Adirondack Council and all who care for the future of the Adirondack Park. Bill will remain on the Council's Board of Directors so that we will continue to have the benefit of his sage advice and experience.

Black Brook and Day Map Amendments

The Adirondack Council undertook field investigations and submitted written statements regarding proposed amendments to the Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan Map in the Towns of Black Brook (Clinton County) and Day (Saratoga County) during this period. Based on natural resource capabilities, potential economic impacts, the character of the area and the availability of public services, the Council recommended that the Adirondack Park Agency approve portions of the requests and deny other portions. The Agency approved far more than the Council recommended in the Town of Black Brook and thereby encouraged intensive strip development. At their September meeting, the Agency approved a portion of the Town of Day's request while denying the majority of it based on the land's capabilities. This partial approval followed very closely the recommendation of The Adirondack Council. It is interesting and encouraging to note that the Town of Day expressed agreement with the Agency's action and appreciation to the staff for the professional advice and data made available to them.



The Adirondack Council

Box D-2, Elizabethtown, NY 12932
(518) 873-2240

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

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A copy of the last financial report filed with the New York Department of State may be obtained by writing: New York Department of State, Office of Charities Registration, Albany, NY 12231 or The Adirondack Council.