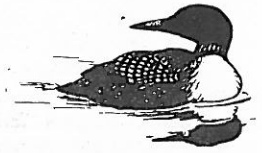




The Adirondack Council NEWSLETTER



to keep supporters informed of our activities

Vol. 3

June 1979

No. 8

LEGISLATIVE PICTURE

At this late date, June 1, the good news is that no major bills damaging the Adirondack Park have passed both houses of the Legislature. The concurrent resolution providing for the Perkins Clearing land exchange (the good version that does not guarantee continued motor vehicle and aircraft access to Pillsbury and Whitney Lakes) recently passed the Assembly and the Senate for the second time. Voters will have the opportunity to vote on this matter in November.

The Council's top priority is A.7683/S. , a measure that would add nine stretches of notable Adirondack rivers to the State System of Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers. The measure has moved along well in the Assembly, thanks to Assemblyman Hinchey and many others. On the Senate side the bill has not fared so well. Senator Eckert didn't request the bill for consideration by his Conservation Committee as many of us hoped because he sensed opposition from some Adirondack area legislators. Senator Goodman finally agreed to sponsor the Senate version and there is still a good chance the bill can come out of the Rules Committee for full Senate consideration if enough people favoring the measure communicate their support to Senators Anderson, Donovan, Stafford and Eckert.

CURRENT USE TAXATION

The Adirondack Council is very interested in real property tax reform for the Adirondack Park and believes this might best be achieved by current use taxation. Current Use is in effect in New Hampshire and their legislation might serve as a model. The introduction to New Hampshire's law states:

It is hereby declared to be in the public interest to encourage the preservation of open space in the state by providing a healthful and attractive outdoor environment for work and recreation of the state's citizens, by maintaining the character of the state's landscape, and by conserving the land, water, forest, and wildlife resources. It is further declared to be in the public interest to prevent the conversion of open space to more intensive use by the pressure of property taxation at values incompatible with open space usage, with a minimum disturbance of the concept of ad valorem (according to the value) taxation. The means for encouraging preservation of open space authorized by this chapter are the assessment of land value for property taxation on the basis of current use and the acquisition of discretionary easements of development rights by town and city governments.

Any landowner who wishes to keep land in a use consistent with the purposes of this law applies to the town planning board or selectmen of his town for a permit to convey a discretionary easement to the town or city not to subdivide, develop, or otherwise change the use of such land to a more intensive use inconsistent with the purposes of the statute. If the town determines that the planned use of such land is consistent with open space objectives, it approves the application and takes steps to acquire a discretionary easement. The easement is a burden upon the land and binds all transferees and assignees of the land. The selectmen of a town, or the mayor and council of a city acquiring a discretionary easement, include the current use assessment category as a term of agreement in such easement and the assessment cannot exceed the highest per acre valuation of any category of open

space land established by the current use advisory board.

The Adirondack Council shared this information with some of the Adirondack Park area state legislators. Senator Ron Stafford has taken an interest in this matter. He has asked his legal counsel to study over the summer New Hampshire's law and the laws of other states which have adopted such legislation. It may follow that Senator Stafford will introduce a bill in the next session to facilitate current use taxation in the Adirondack Park. This would be a very positive incentive to encourage more landowners to preserve their land in open space and could serve to relieve the burden of those landowners whose land has been placed in the more restrictive classifications of the Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan.

ANNUAL MEETING

This year's annual meeting of the membership of The Adirondack Council will be an after-lunch affair held at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, July 9 at the Hand House, Water Street, Elizabethtown, New York. After the membership meeting, there will be a regular meeting of The Board of Directors of the Council. Members of the Council are invited to attend both meetings and bring along interested friends. If the weather is pleasant, Gary Randorf will lead a nature walk on the nature trail behind the Adirondack Center Museum in Elizabethtown. It will be a short walk focusing on woodland ecology. Those interested should show up at noon at the Hand House and bring a brown bag lunch.

UNIT MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan provides general guidelines for the management and use of state lands in the Park classified as wilderness, primitive, canoe, wild forest, and intensive use. Section 816 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act directs the Department of Environmental Conservation to develop, in consultation with the Park Agency, individual unit management plans for each land unit under its jurisdiction classified in the Master Plan. The unit plans are tailored to the character, use and needs of each specific area. Resources and facilities are identified and inventoried and current use and management of the area is reviewed. Management objectives are stated and then management assumptions and decisions are completed after consideration of various alternatives for future management and use. Finally, an implementation plan is developed. The first draft plan for the High Peaks Wilderness was reviewed by The Adirondack Council in January and the Council provided the Department of Environmental Conservation with extensive comments and reactions to the plan. A portion of the Council's comments follow:

"Perhaps our greatest concern has to do with the philosophical direction underlying this entire draft. There appears to be a reluctance on the part of its writers to recognize that the area being treated is wilderness. Wilderness is special and the High Peaks Wilderness is the most special of all. This area should be treated and managed substantially different from wild forest areas, as should wilderness in general. The overriding concern that needs to be reflected in all of the stated goals and objectives for the High Peaks Wilderness is the need to preserve an enduring wilderness resource characterized by naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude. With these goals in mind as an overriding constraint, the secondary need is to provide for primitive types of recreation and other permitted uses. Implicit in these goals

should be the requirement that recreation use be curtailed if it interferes with preserving established standards of naturalness and opportunities for solitude. It is our strong feeling that wilderness management that emphasizes the natural integrity of wilderness ecosystems is essential to achieve the goals of the wilderness of the Adirondack Park and the National Wilderness Preservation System, after which the Park's wilderness is patterned.

"Much more emphasis in the High Peaks Wilderness Unit Management Plan should be placed on such things as monitoring the naturalness of conditions and the control of visitor use and behavior to preserve them. Again, recreational use should be secondary to the maintenance of natural order. Management actions to increase and facilitate use, particularly in the eastern portion of the HPW are inappropriate. Rather than instituting methods to absorb greater impact, management should curtail or disperse use. Management programs should promote opportunities with narrower appeal emphasizing the primitive environment, challenge, and solitude—activities contrasting with the more widely practiced recreational activities available on non-wilderness lands (wild forest).

"We advocate the biocentric approach because it seems to us that a philosophy that facilitates man's use of wilderness gradually diminishes the naturalness and solitude of wilderness, altering wilderness ecosystems in subtle but drastic ways, resulting in the loss of opportunity for human experiences dependent on wild and unaltered settings. The result is a shrinking of the environmental modification spectrum—and a loss of diversity of wild land settings.

"There appears to be too much emphasis in this draft on facilitating man's use of the HPW, particularly with respect to the consumptive uses of hunting, trapping, and fishing. A primary goal appears to be to foster a greater harvest of fish and wildlife resources, partially aided by a put and take approach with regard to fisheries. Artificial manipulations that are desirable for fish and wildlife management on nonwilderness lands and waters are not consistent with the wilderness guidelines of the State Land Master Plan or the wilderness ethic that should guide their implementation.

"By way of contrast, the Unit Management Plan for the National Forest Great Gulf Wilderness states that wildlife management and fisheries management will play a passive role. With respect to wildlife they state, 'by cataloging the various wildlife populations and monitoring their cyclic nature, we can predict management problems that might arise and prepare for, if needed, a solution.'

"We also strongly urge the Department to carefully evaluate each wilderness area as it develops unit plans, with an eye to establishing some no-hunting zones for the non-hunting public. For many of these people the forest preserve is closed to them during hunting season. Particularly with the advent of the early bear season, this means that the preserve is off limits during one of the finest times of the year.

"The policy guidelines for the management of wilderness within the National Forests speak directly to this matter,

There may be wilderness locations so popular with nonhunters during the hunting season that hunting closures by the state agency should be negotiated for limited areas less popular with hunters in order to provide autumn wilderness experiences for both hunters and nonhunters.

A fundamental concept is that classified wilderness is a place where nature rolls the dice, and resulting naturalness, whatever its characteristics, is

wilderness. Wilderness managers should be guardians, not gardeners, and their task is to assure the conditions that permit natural processes to operate freely."

As the Council's Board of Directors were taking a final look at the draft plan they became convinced that the High Peaks Wilderness, because of its extreme fragility and complexity, was probably not a good unit of state land with which to begin the unit planning process. This resulted in the Board asking Harold Jerry to express this concern to DEC Commissioner Bob Flacke. Two letters to the Commissioner resulted:

February 1, 1979

Hon. Robert F. Flacke
Commissioner
Department of Environmental Conservation
50 Wolf Road
Albany, New York 12233

Dear Bob:

I have tried to reach you on the telephone for two days and will continue trying. For the record, I want to put my thoughts in writing.

The Adirondack Council strongly recommends that the High Peaks Wilderness Unit Management Plan (hereafter HPWUMP) be indefinitely postponed. We recommend strongly, although we realize that it will take more than a year, that DEC prepare a package of one wilderness management plan, one primitive management plan, one wild forest management plan, and one intensive use management plan. The wilderness area selected for the package should not be the High Peaks nor any of the wilderness areas with alpine zones or critical overuse problems. The Silver Lake Wilderness would be a suitable candidate and there are several others. The package of four management plans should be released simultaneously for public discussion.

Please let me explain how we have arrived at this conclusion. We have spent hours, even days, individually and collectively, analyzing the HPWUMP. This analysis was done by Gary Randorf, by a special committee under Clarence Petty, and finally by the Board of Directors. We prepared a 14-page analysis of HPWUMP that we sent to Norm VanValkenburgh. I also called Norm and told him the decision we had reached about delaying HPWUMP and starting over again with a package of four plans. He told me that I could state that he was in agreement with this strategy.

The difficulty in releasing HPWUMP alone now is that it will force all environmentalists to recommend very stringent and very unpopular measures to solve the complex problems of the High Peaks. Since there is no other plan before the public, we will not be able to compare the stringent standards in the High Peaks Wilderness with much more relaxed standards in a wild forest area or in a less complex wilderness area.

The basic difficulty is that the High Peaks Wilderness is one of the largest, the most complex, the most threatened, and the most controversial, of all the areas in the Adirondack Park. Thus it will be necessary to make recommendations for the High Peaks that will be extremely unpopular and will not be required in other areas in the Park. We are afraid that if you proceed with HPWUMP, it will be watered down or literally rejected, thus leaving the whole program of management plans in dire peril.

I will continue to try to reach you by telephone to discuss this in more detail. We will very much appreciate your careful consideration of our recommendation.

Cordially yours,
Harold A. Jerry, Jr.

March 7, 1979

Hon. Robert F. Flacke
Commissioner
Department of Environmental Conservation
50 Wolf Road
Albany, New York 12233

Dear Bob:

Several people have asked me to elaborate on a letter that I wrote to you on February 1st concerning the High Peaks Wilderness Unit Management Plan (hereafter HPWUMP). These

people are afraid that my letter can be interpreted to request an indefinite postponement of HPWUMP for an unknown number of years.

I am writing once again to clarify the request of the Adirondack Council. We do want HPWUMP postponed. We do want a new package of one wilderness management plan, one primitive management plan, one wild forest management plan, and one intensive use management plan. We do suggest that the Silver Lake Wilderness or some other non-critical wilderness area be selected for the wilderness plan.

After the public release on the package that I have described we would hope that attention could be turned once again to the High Peaks. We are not proposing that the High Peaks be abandoned. We are simply suggesting that HPWUMP be held in abeyance while our proposed package is prepared and released.

I would estimate that this proposal would delay HPWUMP about two years.

I am going to send copies of this letter to some of the people who were afraid The Adirondack Council was proposing abandoning the High Peaks.

Cordially yours,
Harold A. Jerry, Jr.

The following letter is a response to the Council's comments on the HPWUMP from the Department's Norman VanValkenburgh and outlines DEC's next steps in the unit management planning process:

Mr. Gary A. Randorf
Executive Director
The Adirondack Council
P.O. Box D-2
Elizabethtown, New York 12932
Dear Gary:

After careful and thorough consideration, Commissioner Flacke has decided not to take immediate action towards finalization of the High Peaks Wilderness Area Unit Management Plan. As you well realize, this area is the most complex of all land units identified in the Adirondack State Land Master Plan, and is beset with problems that require careful study, analysis and planning. We feel that the Department is presently lacking in the experience necessary to develop a comprehensive plan of this magnitude.

Our efforts in the immediate future will be directed toward the preparation of unit management plans for two or three wilderness areas of a less complicated and sensitive nature. Concurrently, we will prepare two or three plans for areas classified as wild forest and, probably, plans for one or two primitive areas. This will enable writers and reviewers to compare these divergent land classifications and establish the differences in management and public use concepts that are appropriate to each classification. The experience and knowledge gained in the preparation of these plans will prepare us for approaching the complexities of the High Peaks Wilderness. Presently, we are looking over the various land units to determine which ones we will select for this planning approach.

In addition, we will apply specific management concepts to certain problem areas within the High Peaks Wilderness over the coming summer season. We will also, through our interior personnel, study certain problem areas in this Wilderness in order to better develop the management approach that would best solve these specific problems.

Finally, it is our intention to thoroughly review the responses you and others provided to the first draft of the High Peaks Wilderness Area Unit Management Plan. This process and the other two approaches mentioned above should lead us in a year or two to the finalization of the High Peaks Plan. Therefore, our first draft effort and your response are not wasted.

I certainly appreciate the time and effort you expended in this review process. I look forward to a continuing dialogue with you in the High Peaks planning process and in the development of the plans we will be developing for other Adirondack State land areas.

Sincerely,
Norman J. VanValkenburgh,
Director Division of Land Resources
and Forest Management

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

In late March the Council's Executive Director, Gary Randorf, helped lead an early spring outdoor field biology workshop for teachers from the Warren County area. Gary used the publication **MAN AND THE ADIRONDACK ENVIRONMENT** by George Davis (a 1977 publication of the Adirondack Museum, Blue Mountain Lake, New York 12812) extensively as a guide for the 4-hour workshop and felt it worked exceptionally well. Approximately one hour was spent indoors discussing life zones, communities, succession, natural resource considerations employed in the Adirondack Park private land plan, and other concepts. The remaining three hours were spent in the field relating species identification and meadow and forest observation to the concepts. There was some very positive feedback from the teachers.

Gary is once again on the planning committee for the 4th Annual BOCES sponsored Conference on the Adirondacks for Adirondack area educators and other interested parties. The Conference will be held on September 28 and 29 at Camp Poko-McCready in Willsboro. There will be workshops on the principal Park industries, and on wetland ecology, wildlife, geology, acid precipitation, Park history, arts and literature, and typical programs of outdoor education resident centers. Gary will give a workshop on "Perspectives on the 1980 Winter Olympic Games." These very successful conferences grew out of discussions Gary had in 1976 with Ted Huntington, District Superintendent of the Washington-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES. Ted has spearheaded the conferences with the help of some very able conference chairpersons and he is still very much involved this year. For further information on this year's conference contact:

Phil Corell
P.O. Box 36
Cadyville, New York 12918

Another conference that may be of interest will be held at the Sagamore Conference Center, located near Raquette Lake, on September 29 and 30. **THE ADIRONDACKS: THE LAND NOBODY KNOWS** is the conference title. The program reads, "a diverse staff including Ann LaBastille, historian Bob Venables, architect Paul Malo, Adirondack Council Director Gary Randorf and others will provide participants with a fascinating study of one of the truly unique areas of our country." For more information write or call:

Cindy Batterson
National Humanistic Education Center
110 Spring Street
Saratoga Springs, New York 12866

The National Wildlife Federation will again hold their Conservation Summit on the shore of Lake George from July 29 - August 4. Subjects include Adirondack history, environmental ethics, cooking with natural foods, animal wood carving, bog studies, and a special class on transportation problems with an emphasis on the northeastern states. For more information write:

Conservation Summits
Dept. CS-35
National Wildlife Federation
1412 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Finally, there will be a national conference on outdoor education at the Lake Placid Club Resort, located in Lake Placid on October 4-8. Workshop subjects include wilderness education, geology of the Adirondacks, natural history interpretation, environmental legislation, public lands and outdoor education, orienteering, outdoor cooking, and research in outdoor education. Council Executive Director Gary Randorf will give a workshop on "Preserving New York's Quiet Place" - a discussion of the movement to preserve the Adirondack Park and the lessons to be learned. For more information regarding the conference contact:

Bill Connolly
Star Lake Campus
S.U.N.Y.
Potsdam, New York 13676

*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.

The Adirondack Council is funded solely through private contributions and grants.

If you are not yet a contributor, please consider lending us your financial support. Send contributions to the address at right. Please make checks payable to: The Adirondack Council.

*Contributions are tax deductible

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The Adirondack Council

Box D-2, Elizabethtown, NY 12932

A coalition of the National Audubon Society; The Sierra Club, Atlantic Chapter; 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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