

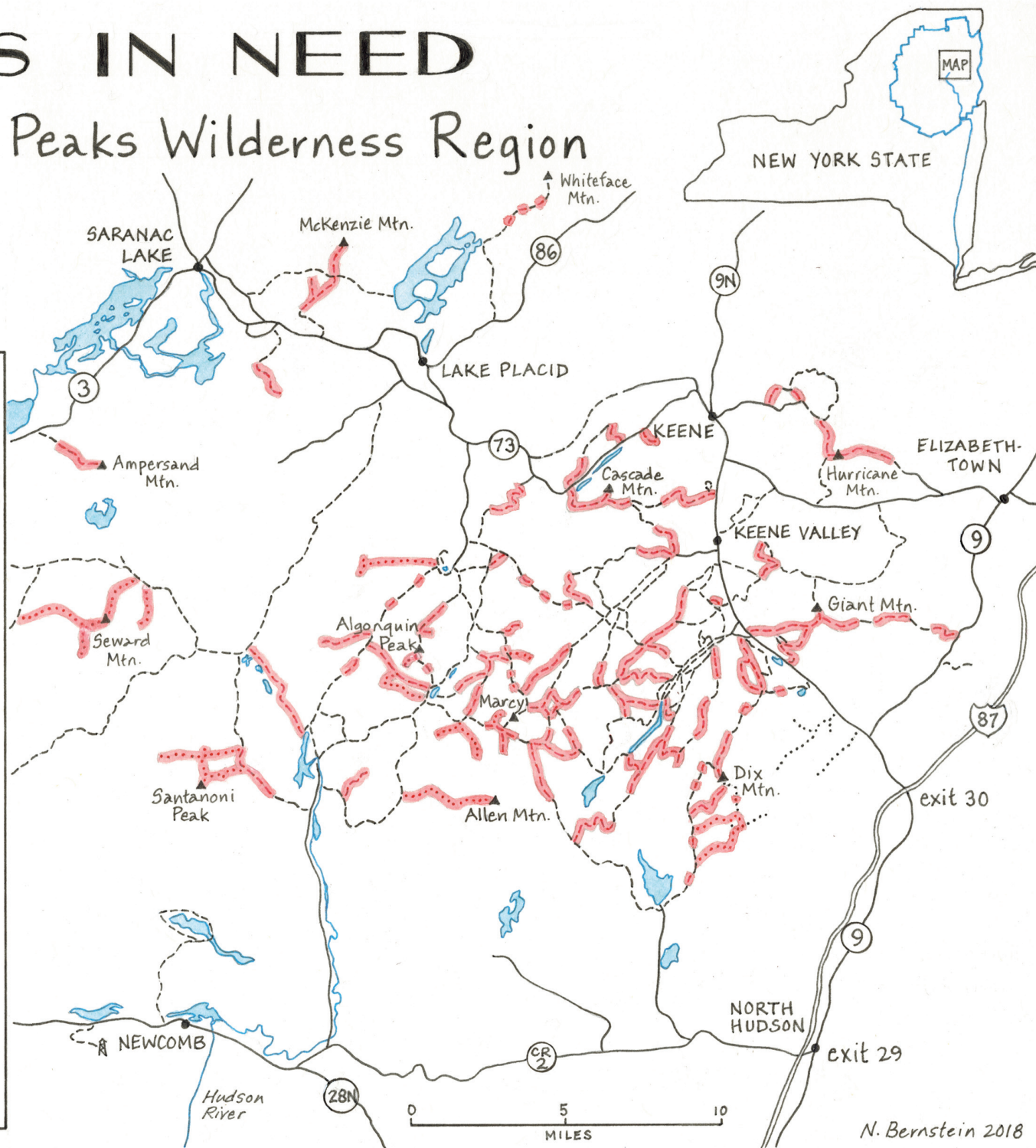
# TRAILS IN NEED

## Adirondack High Peaks Wilderness Region

- hiking trail
- ..... other hiking trail
- trail with major need

This is an Adirondack Council 2018 preliminary assessment of the condition of official and unofficial hiking trails in the Adirondack Park's High Peaks Region. An estimated 130 miles of trails were identified in need of significant redesign, reconstruction and/or repair of old drainage and stabilization work. All trails need annual maintenance. These trails need much more, not for user convenience, but to correct and prevent further damage to natural resources.

Many factors contribute to trail conditions, including design, maintenance, slope, soil types, water, education and overuse. This inventory is the responsibility of the Adirondack Council, not those from ADK, ATIS, the ADK 4Gers, Adirondack Hamlets to Huts and others who provided much appreciated input.





A Preliminary Assessment of Trails in Need  
Adirondack High Peaks Wilderness Region  
September 2018

In its 2018 preliminary assessment of the condition of official and unofficial hiking trails in the Adirondack Park's High Peaks Region, the Adirondack Council identified roughly 130 miles of trails in need of significant redesign, reconstruction and/or repair. In addition, all trails need annual maintenance. These trails need much more than maintenance -- not for user convenience -- but to correct and prevent further damage to the park's forests, pure waters, wildlife and wild character.

The Adirondack Council drew upon the expertise of trails professionals and others, who provided input for this assessment. This includes individuals from the Adirondack Mountain Club, Adirondack 46ers, Adirondack Hamlets to Huts, Adirondack Trail Improvement Society and Split Rock Stonework and Trails. The Adirondack Council made all decisions regarding which trails, or trail sections, were highlighted. This report is a preliminary snapshot, designed as a prelude to the comprehensive study needed to assess the cost and timeframe of all repairs, reconstructions and annual maintenance.

Many factors contribute to the erosion, wildlife habitat degradation and other natural resource impacts on overused and under-maintained trails. Many were created without the benefit of sustainable trail design standards. Trail design and maintenance should account for slope, soil types, water, vegetation and other physical features. So each trail presents a unique set of challenges. The state can play a significant role in controlling the impact of trails by following sustainable standards, while dedicating funding to user education and new staff who are dedicated to trails and wildland management.

Much of the success of the Adirondack Park is due to the extraordinary men and women who work for the Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC). What they accomplish is extraordinary, since their staffing levels have been reduced by close to 25 percent from 10 years ago. Over that same span, we have seen the Forest Preserve and the DEC's responsibilities grow, along with the number of visitors.

"Sustainable Trails" is a term used by trail professionals such as Jeremy Burns of Split Rock Stonework and Trails. Burns also leads the Student Conservation Association (SCA) Americorps trail crews in the Adirondacks. He says the three components of "sustainable trails" are: 1) Physical – they must adhere to certain design standards; 2) Social – they should provide a positive user experience appropriate for the planned user group, and; 3) Environmental – they must protect the resource.

A sustainable Adirondack Trail system would meet these criteria. Much of the current system does not. These and other principles of trail design, construction and maintenance are presented in greater detail in a series of books including:

- The Appalachian Mountain Club's "Complete Guide to Trail Building & Maintenance"
- The Appalachian Trail Conference William Birchard, Jr. and Robert Proudman "Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance"
- The Student Conservation Association Robert C. Birkby "Lightly on The Land; The SCA Trail Building and Maintenance Manual"
- Natural Surface Trails by Design; Physical and Human Design Essentials of Sustainable, Enjoyable Trails. Troy Scott Parker

The Adirondack Park is a world-class outdoor resource that needs a world-class trail system that is well-designed and well-maintained. A new investment in clean water and wildlands, wildlife and user safety would preserve the Adirondacks as Forever Wild.