INTRODUCTION
This is the second annual review of the state of the Adirondack Park. These reviews are intended to measure how effectively the state government is protecting the Park and its resources. In addition, they identify the need for new programs and directions. It is our hope that these reports will act as a barometer, measuring the quality of the Park and warning of changing conditions in time to act.

This review covers six critical aspects of the Park: The Forest Preserve; The Private Lands; State and Federal Stewardship; Air and Water Quality; Forests, Waters and Wildlife; and Overall Park Quality. Taken together, these indicators reflect the open space and natural resource base that is the essence of the Adirondack Park.

For each of these six indicators of the state of the Park, the report cites specific state actions - or lack of action - in the past year that have significance to the Adirondack Park and that are to the credit or discredit of the state agency involved.

The agencies primarily responsible for the Park are the:
(1) Adirondack Park Agency, which regulates the use of the 3,600,000 acres of private land in the Park, develops general policy for the forest preserve and serves as a forum for developing state policy concerning the Adirondack Park;
(2) Department of Environmental Conservation, which is charged by law with the care, custody and control of the 2,400,000 acres of Adirondack Forest Preserve; and
(3) Department of Transportation, which has responsibility for over 11,100 miles of state highways within the Park.

Other agencies that occasionally undertake actions significantly affecting the Park will also be cited, as will the state legislature and the Governor.

THE FOREST PRESERVE
Condition: Good Trend: Stable
Constitutionally protected as “forever wild”, New York’s Adirondack Forest Preserve is not only a symbol of faith in the future but a tangible proof that society is capable of controlling its appetite for the consumptive use of all our natural resources. The forever wild provision of the state constitution prohibits the sale of forest preserve and the cutting of timber on it. The quantity of forest preserve that this generation passes on to future generations, and the condition of that preserve, depend on the following kind of decisions, all of them made within the past year.

The state took fewer protective actions in 1983 than in 1982 and more actions that indicated less certainty regarding the role of the forest preserve in the Park. Thus, the trend, although rated as “stable”, bears watching.

To its credit:
- The Department of Environmental Conservation, after years of little progress, is now committed to assigning resources to the preparation of unit management plans. Individual plans will be prepared for each major tract of forest preserve. These plans will detail the management techniques to be used to protect the wilderness or wild forest values of the unit.

To its discredit:
- The Department of Environmental Conservation has conspicuously failed to develop and pursue an aggres-
sive, innovative forest preserve acquisition policy. The present policy appears to be a wholly reactive one based on reviewing parcels for their desirability as they come on the market. Even then the review focuses heavily on administrative ease rather than the needs of future generations. The Department has failed to develop a long range acquisition policy based on the public need for: 1) open space preservation, 2) canoe route access, 3) rounding out the designated wilderness areas, 4) highway corridor protection, 5) natural shoreline preservation, and 6) scenic vista preservation. After identifying its needs, the state should then use more innovative approaches that include discussions with land owners about various real estate transactions that might meet the needs of both the state and the owner. Such techniques include not only outright purchase but also life estates, the purchase of development rights and individually crafted conservation easements.

-The Department of Environmental Conservation in acquiring a vitally important 6000 acre forest preserve parcel that consolidates the existing Five Ponds and Peppercorn Wildernesses, entered into a contract allowing the seller to cut the timber on the property over the next 8 years and requiring the construction of 12 miles of gravel roads through this tract which should be designated wilderness. The reasoning for this bizarre transaction stems from archaic state acquisition requirements that, for appraisal purposes, result in giving a positive value to roads. Requiring roads, therefore, brought the parcel’s appraised value up to a level acceptable to the seller. The irony, of course, is that the roads will actually make the land less valuable for the purpose for which it was acquired -- wilderness preservation. The Department believes that the roads will never be built and, as a result, the state may receive a refund. The end result is a gamble, a gamble that may save some money but may also lose a wilderness.

-The Department of Environmental Conservation, in a needless but perhaps symbolic attack on the wilderness concept, proposed amending the wilderness requirements of the State Land Master Plan to allow motorized vehicular use within wilderness areas in order to limit just 3 acidified lakes -- and thus to replace one artificial aquatic environment with another -- while hundreds of lakes and ponds outside designated wilderness exhibit similar acidic conditions and could just as easily have been chosen for such treatment.

THE PRIVATE LANDS

Condition: Fair  Trend: Declining

Most Adirondack Park landowners have been, and continue to be, good stewards of their land. This is evident in the beauty of the Park today. At the same time, the exceptions -- garish commercial developments -- detract from the natural character of the Park. The Adirondack Park Agency was created to insure that private development would not adversely affect the natural environment and open space character of the Park.

To its credit:

-The Adirondack Park Agency demonstrated sensitivity and professional competence in its review of the large Top O’World residential development in Warren County. The Agency provided support to local officials regarding access to Lake George and required the developer to preserve vegetation necessary to screen the development from the lake.

To their discredit:

-The Adirondack Park Agency has undercut its own planning process and the legislated process for amend-
continues to exert pressure on DOE to exclude major designated parks from use as repositories.

- The Department of Transportation, working closely with the Adirondack Park Agency, has located alternative sites, screened from public view, for their Hoffmanister and Cranberry Lake maintenance and sand and salt storage areas as part of a sincere effort to improve the Park's highway corridors.

- The Public Service Commission upheld its decision to require a transmission line crossing the Boquet River to be placed underground despite intense pressure to change. The beneficial results of the underground crossing and the negligible effects on the fishery resource have proven the PSC decision correct.

AIR AND WATER QUALITY

Condition: Good  Trend: Declining

The fresh, pure air and the sparkling, clear waters of the Adirondacks, long a lure to urban dwellers, are basic to the Park's economy and its residents' quality of life.

These two resources are threatened not only by activities within the Park but by activities many miles distant. Outside the Park, sulfur emissions from industry and nitrogen oxides from automobiles react in moist air to pose the most ominous threat of all to the Park--acid rain. It is because of the lack of positive action to control acid rain that the air and water quality in the Park must be considered declining.

To their credit:

- The Adirondack Park Agency has taken a leadership role in the fight against acid rain. Specifically, the Agency has: 1) sought strong acid rain control amendments to the federal Clean Air Act; 2) supported (along with the Attorney General) the proposed state Coal Conversion and Acid Precipitation Act that prohibits any net increase in sulfur dioxide emissions for coal conversions and would also require utilities to reduce by 50% their current allowable annual maximums by the year 2000; 3) sought court permission to enter a lawsuit against the Department of Environmental Conservation for allowing the Eastman Kodak Company to increase its sulfur dioxide emissions in Rochester; 4) brought the extent of sulfur dioxide emissions from sources within New York State (almost 1,000,000 tons per year) to public attention; 5) challenged a Department of Environmental Conservation finding that a 20,000 ton per year increase in sulfur dioxide in 20 New York counties would not have a significant effect on the environment; 6) requested the Department of Environmental Conservation to impose a moratorium on granting permission for the use of high sulfur coal; and 7) formally requested the Department of Environmental Conservation to seek federal designation of the Adirondack Park as a class I air quality area, a designation that would result in strict emission standards on any major new air pollution sources that might affect the Park.

- Governor Cuomo has strongly supported acid rain control amendments to the federal Clean Air Act. The Governor testified in support of H.R.3400 but requested a strengthening amendment to increase the required annual sulfur dioxide reduction to 12 million tons.

To their discredit:

- The Department of Environmental Conservation and the Department of Public Service have opposed the proposed state Coal Conversion and Acid Precipitation Act.

- The Department of Environmental Conservation, despite its charter, has taken a curiously timid role in acid rain matters (with the Consolidated Edison coal conversion decision being a notable exception) while the Governor, Attorney General and Adirondack Park Agency have provided the state's leadership instead. Specifically, the Department has: 1) allowed the Eastman Kodak Company to increase its sulfur dioxide emissions and build two new tall stacks that will increase long range transport of these emissions; 2) granted permission to use high sulfur coal in 20 counties in and near the Adirondacks resulting in a 20,000 ton per year increase in sulfur dioxide emissions; and 3) proposed Clean Air Act amendment policies insufficient to control the effects of acid deposition on the Adirondacks.

FORESTS, WATERS & WILDLIFE

Condition: Good  Trend: Improving

The diverse forests, waters and wildlife are the very essence of the Adirondacks. The mere word Adirondack instantly evokes images of a vast forest rich in wildlife, laced with rushing rivers and studded with glistening lakes and ponds. Government laws, regulations, policies and actions can either protect or degrade these qualities.

To their credit:

- The Department of Environmental Conservation has continued its emphasis on restoring populations of extirpated wildlife species such as the peregrine falcon, bald eagle and moose.

- The Adirondack Park Agency, after detailed consultations with the forest products industry and environmentalists, issued wetland regulations solidly based on sound biological values such as water purification, water storage and wildlife habitat. The regulations protect the resources while at the same time not unnecessarily hampering legitimate uses. The Agency also completed the mapping of almost all Adirondack Park wetlands to enable landowners to determine accurately if they are affected by the new regulations.

- The Adirondack Park Agency hosted a pesticide forum attended by users, manufacturers' representatives, environmentalists and a broad array of scientists, to debate the myriad issues concerning potential effects of various pesticides on both the human and natural resources of the Park. In addition the Agency has aggressively asserted its jurisdiction over pesticide spraying in wetlands and has requested utilities to cease using pesticides in their right-of-way management programs.

- The Public Service Commission, with support from the Adirondack Park Agency, Department of Environmental Conservation and the Attorney General, has ordered the preparation of an environmental impact statement evaluating the use of herbicides for electric transmission line maintenance.

- The Department of Environmental Conservation and the Adirondack Park Agency have taken a strong, firm stand with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that public interest has already been defined by New York State and no new dam proposal involving forest preserve or a designated wild, scenic or recreational river can possibly meet the public interest requirement of the Federal Energy Law. Therefore, the Department and the Agency conclude, the Commission cannot license new dams in such cases.

To their discredit:

- The Adirondack Park Agency has already misused the "overriding economic and social needs" safety valve of its wetland regulations by allowing the Village of Tupper
Lake to fill an important wetland for use as a snow storage area.

OVERALL PARK QUALITY

Condition: Good  Trend: Declining

The park ambiance and open space character that annually attracts millions of visitors to the Adirondacks is more than the sum of the specific resource components discussed above. It assumes an overall atmosphere or quality that sets it apart from the rest of the northeast. This park ambiance is inextricably linked to the economy of the region. To foster the quality of the Adirondacks as a park is to foster the economy of the region.

To their credit:

-The Legislature and the Governor enacted a conservation easement law that clarifies the validity of conservation easements in New York State and, in doing so, provides the state and conservation organizations a valuable new tool for preserving open space, agricultural lands, historic sites and productive forest lands. Conservation easements can be tailored to each individual situation and can take into account both the public and the landowner's interest.

-The Adirondack Park Agency has aggressively sought reaffirmation of the prohibition against large new transmission lines being built in the Adirondack Park in this year's update of the State Energy Master Plan.

To their discredit:

-The Adirondack Park Agency, in a move that totally confounded its supporters, opposed the conservation easement legislation passed this year and nearly persuaded the governor to veto what is the decade's most important piece of land use legislation. Despite efforts to pass such legislation by the Agency in past years, a strong recommendation by the Adirondack Study Commission, and a 13 year all out effort by major Adirondack environmental groups, the Agency this year saw fit to oppose the bill on factually discredited grounds relating to tax implications, while timidly supporting "the concept."

-The Governor and Legislature shackled the Adirondack Park Agency with a budget totally inadequate to fulfill its legislated mandates or to protect the quality of the Park. The result was a 14% personnel reduction from the previous year and a 44% reduction from the Agency's 66 staff positions of several years ago when various government employment programs (e.g., CETA) were available to supplement state authorized positions. The Agency itself compounded the situation by not reorganizing in a manner that would retain the natural resource specialist positions so vital to its mission.

-Neither the Adirondack Park Agency, the Department of Environmental Conservation, nor any other state agency has provided information about the Park and its wealth of recreational and educational resources through the use of visitor information centers, visitor interpretive centers, limited range radio transmissions, publications or other methods. In addition, the Department of Transportation (DOT) has not undertaken the much needed and relatively inexpensive program of identifying, with road signs, the Park's natural landmarks as seen by the motorist. While being unobtrusive, such signs would enhance the visitor's appreciation and understanding of the Park.

-Neither the Adirondack Park Agency nor the Department of Environmental Conservation has stressed park management expertise within its organization or developed a park management program.

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR THE PARK

The future of the Adirondack Park is in the hands of the citizens of New York State. A knowledgeable citizenry, as quick to praise sound policies as to denounce unsound ones, can influence state actions. A silent, uninformed citizenry can not. The new administration in Albany is only now turning its attention to Adirondack policies; the policies they set and the actions they take will reflect their perception of the desires of New Yorkers.

There is still time to alter these destructive trends and preserve what remains of the most spectacular open space reserve in the Eastern United States: the Adirondacks. We need only the will to do so. With the support and vigilance of the citizens, the future of the Adirondack Park will be secure; it will provide proof that people and the natural environment can co-exist productively and harmoniously.

This report was prepared by George D. Davis, Executive Director of The Adirondack Council, under contract to Wild Wings Foundation. It has been reviewed and adopted in its entirety by The Adirondack Council. Additional copies are available from The Adirondack Council, Box D-2, Elizabethtown, New York 12932.