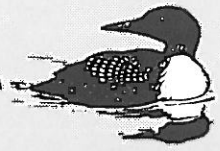




The Adirondack Council
A SPECIAL REPORT



March 1987

STATE OF THE PARK

1987

**A Review of Actions and Trends
Affecting the Adirondack Park**



THE ADIRONDACK PARK

In size, diversity and ownership pattern, the Adirondack Park is unique in the United States.

The Park contains six million acres and covers one-fifth of New York State. It is equal in size to neighboring Vermont and occupies nearly three times the acreage of Yellowstone National Park, our largest national park outside Alaska.

Some 40 percent of the Adirondack Park is publicly-owned Adirondack Forest Preserve, protected as "forever wild" by the state constitution since 1895. One million acres of these public lands, representing one-sixth of the entire Park, is further designated as Wilderness, where motorized use of any kind is prohibited.

The remaining 60 percent of the Adirondack Park is private land devoted principally to forestry, agriculture and open-space recreation. The Park is home for 120,000 permanent and 210,000 seasonal residents, and hosts an estimated nine million visitors annually.

The western and southern Adirondacks are a gentle landscape of hills, lakes, ponds and streams. In the

northeast are the "high peaks," 42 of them above 4,000 feet, nine of them with alpine summits.

The Adirondacks form the headwaters for most or part of five major drainage basins: Lake Champlain and the Hudson, Black, St. Lawrence and Mohawk Rivers. Within the Park are 2,759 lakes and ponds and more than 1,000 miles of rivers fed by an estimated 30,000 miles of brooks and streams.

What truly distinguishes the Adirondack Park is its diversity. Within this 9,365-square-mile natural sanctuary is a combination of wildlife, forests, wetlands, waterways and mountains found nowhere else in the world.

The Park offers superb opportunities for boating of all kinds, camping, hiking, mountaineering, hunting, fishing, swimming, bicycling, nature photography, downhill and cross-country skiing, ice skating, ice boating, horseback riding, and scenic motoring on some of the nation's loveliest highways and backroads.

STATE OF THE PARK REPORT

This is the Adirondack Council's fifth annual report on trends and events affecting the Adirondack Park. The report includes an evaluation of specific state actions, or lack of action, that reflect favorably or poorly on the state entity or public official involved.

The agencies most frequently cited are the:

Adirondack Park Agency, an 11-member commission appointed by the Governor, with a staff of about 50. The Agency regulates the use of the Park's private lands, totalling 3.5 million acres, and develops policy for the Park's public lands, consisting of nearly 2.5 million acres of state-owned Adirondack Forest Preserve.

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, charged with the custody and control of the publicly-owned Adirondack Forest Preserve and the acquisition of additional Forest Preserve lands, along with the purchase of conservation easements on key private holdings, as these become available.

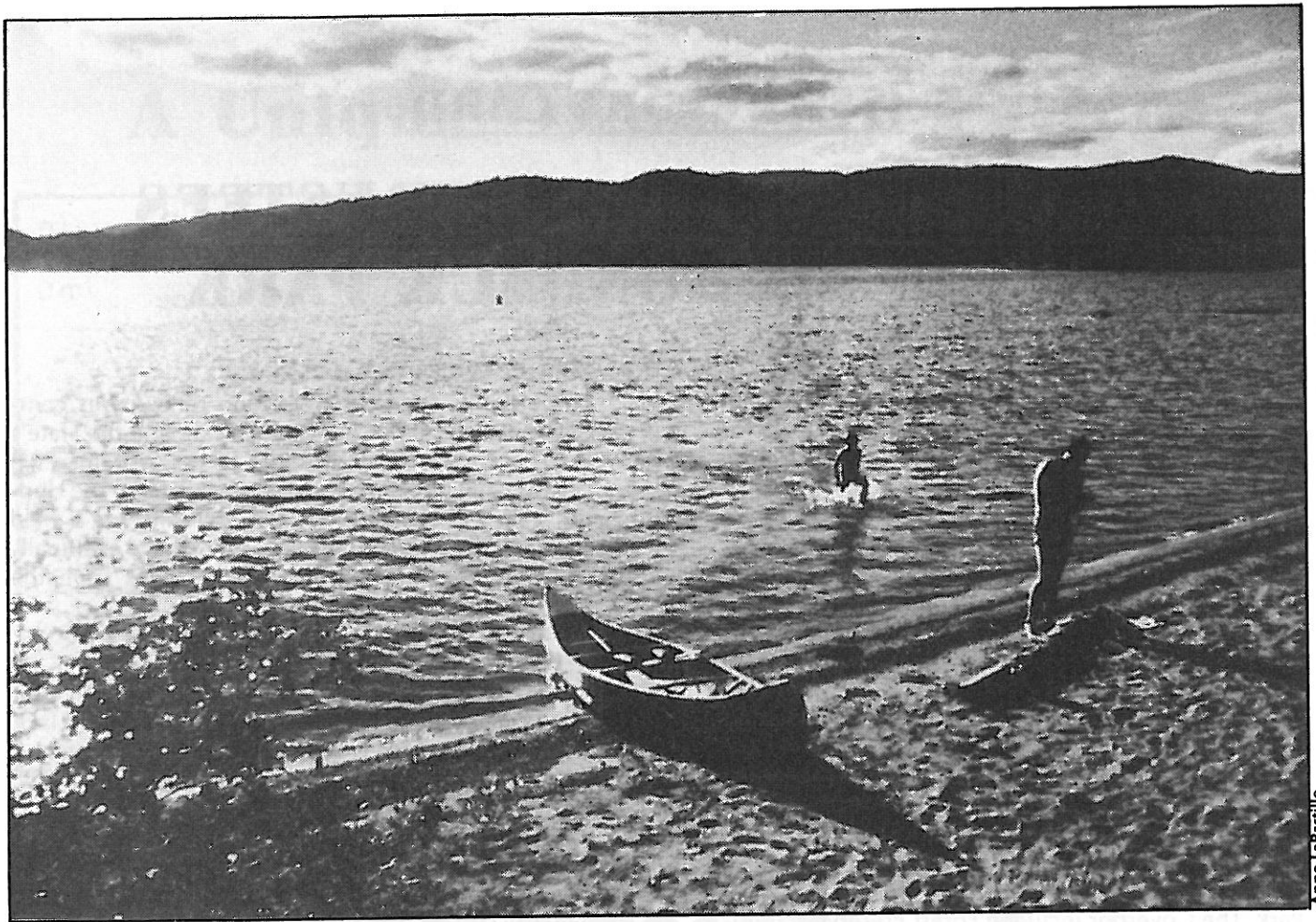


This report was prepared for the Adirondack Council by George D. Davis and Richard Beamish.

Davis was staff ecologist for the Governor's Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks from 1968-71 and director of planning for the Adirondack Park Agency from 1971-76. He later served as executive director of the Wilderness Society and as national coordinator for the RARE II study of roadless areas conducted by the U.S. Forest Service. He is currently program director of the Adirondack Council and executive director of the Adirondack Land Trust.

Beamish is the Council's communications director. He has served in a similar capacity for the National Audubon Society and, before that, the Adirondack Park Agency.

The Adirondack Council is a citizen watchdog organization headquartered in Elizabethtown, NY. (See inside back cover for more information.)



Anne LaBastille

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1987 REPORT CARD

RATING THE PUBLIC TRUSTEES OF THE ADIRONDACK PARK

ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY—9

The Adirondack Park Agency continued to exhibit the professionalism that has now been its hallmark for three consecutive years. Under the influence of the Cuomo administration, the APA has reverted to its proper (and original) role as an environmental protection agency for the Park. Reasonable decisions based on exacting staff evaluations marked Agency actions in reviewing project proposals and zoning-map amendments, revising the State Land Master Plan, and scrutinizing a proposal to apply pesticides to Lake George. The Agency's only conspicuous lapse in 1986, as in 1985, was its failure to designate appropriate county highways as "critical environmental areas" and thus provide better protection for scenic travel corridors.

GOVERNOR MARIO M. CUOMO—9

Once again our Governor from Queens proved himself a champion of the public values of the Adirondack Park. The Governor included Forest Preserve acquisition funds in his proposal for a 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act, and he continued his leadership in developing park-interpretation facilities for Adirondack visitors and residents. He missed a perfect score for failing to pursue more diligently his Adirondack legislative agenda, particularly his proposal to subject state-agency development activities in the Park—such as road building, prison construction, and expansion of recreational facilities—to the same aesthetic and environmental standards that private developers must meet.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION—8

The Department continued its exceptional Adirondack Forest Preserve acquisition program begun in 1985, undertook to manage state-designated Wilderness in a professional and sensitive manner, exercised caution and restraint in considering proposals from Warren County and the Lake George Park Commission to use what might prove to be a dangerous chemical pesticide in Lake George, and provided leadership in promoting the Environmental Quality Bond Act. To its discredit, however, the Department adopted policies that (1) would allow timber cutting on new Forest Preserve acquisitions for up to 25 years and (2) fail to recognize the multiple benefits of conservation easements to the Park.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION—8

The Public Service Commission renewed its commitment to both the Adirondack Park and the State's Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System by (1) requiring new powerlines to be placed **under** the Hudson and Schroon Rivers and (2) by initiating a field survey and evaluation process that may eventually eliminate intrusive overhead utility lines from the Park's scenic highway corridors.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION—5

The DOT improved its 1986 rating by taking special care to protect wetlands and prevent stream and lake siltation, and by reviving its program to redesign and relocate unsightly maintenance sites away from scenic roadways. To its discredit, DOT failed to include the Public Service Commission on its newly-created North Country Highway Group, thereby hindering cooperative efforts to improve the appearance of Adirondack highway corridors. The Department also continued to ignore the need for automobile pull-offs at the Park's scenic vistas and worked against the Governor's legislative proposal to subject state agencies to the same standards that apply to private developers in the Park.

STATE LEGISLATURE—5

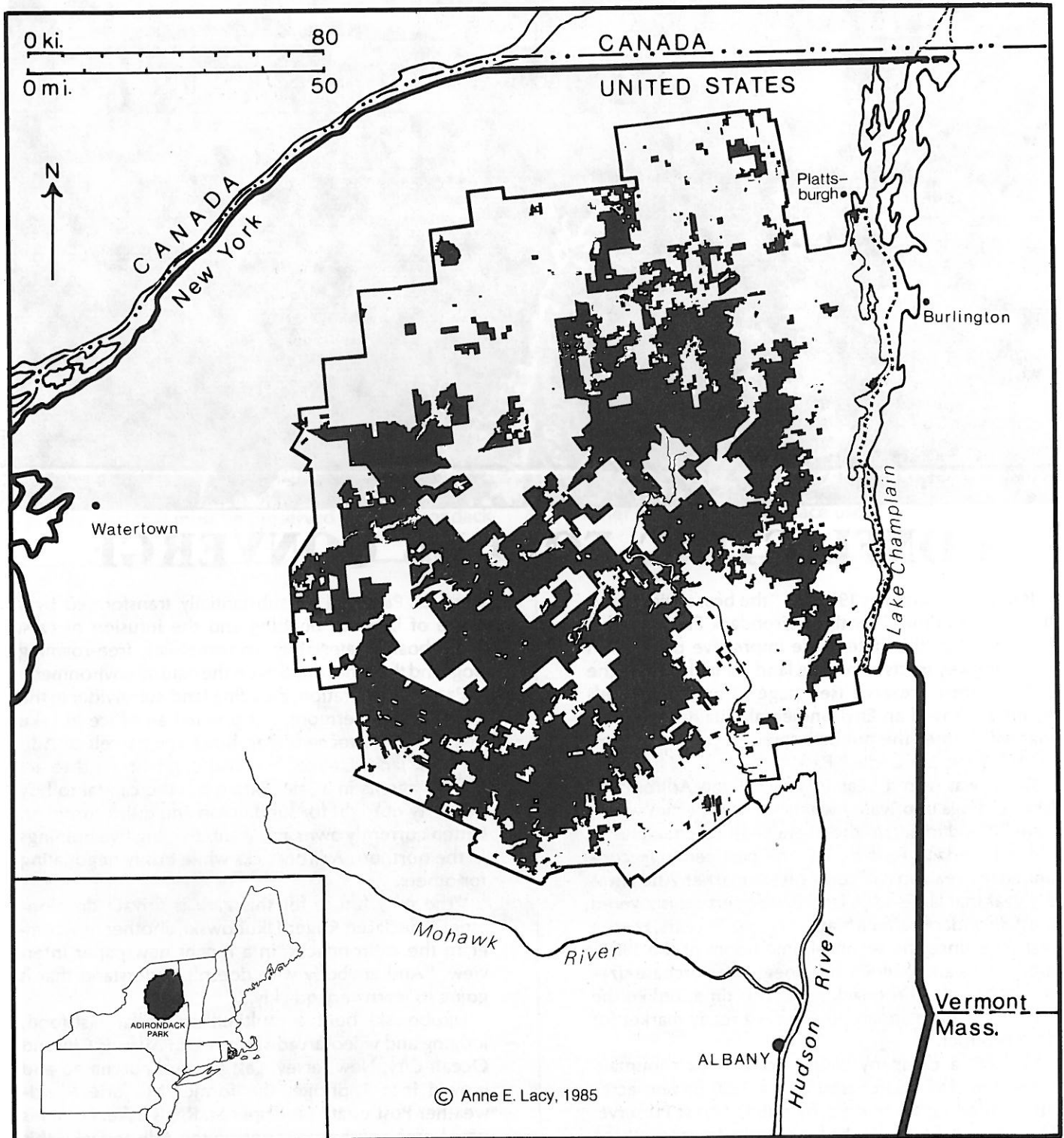
To its credit, the Legislature passed the Governor's proposed Environmental Quality Bond Act and also added 32 miles of Adirondack rivers to the State's Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System. To its discredit, the Legislature failed (1) to assume statewide responsibility for making up local property-tax losses caused by state acquisition of conservation easements (development rights) on private land in the Park, (2) to subject state agencies to the development standards of the Adirondack Park Agency Act and (3) to provide better protection for wild Adirondack lakeshores through stricter land-use controls.

STATE POLICE—0

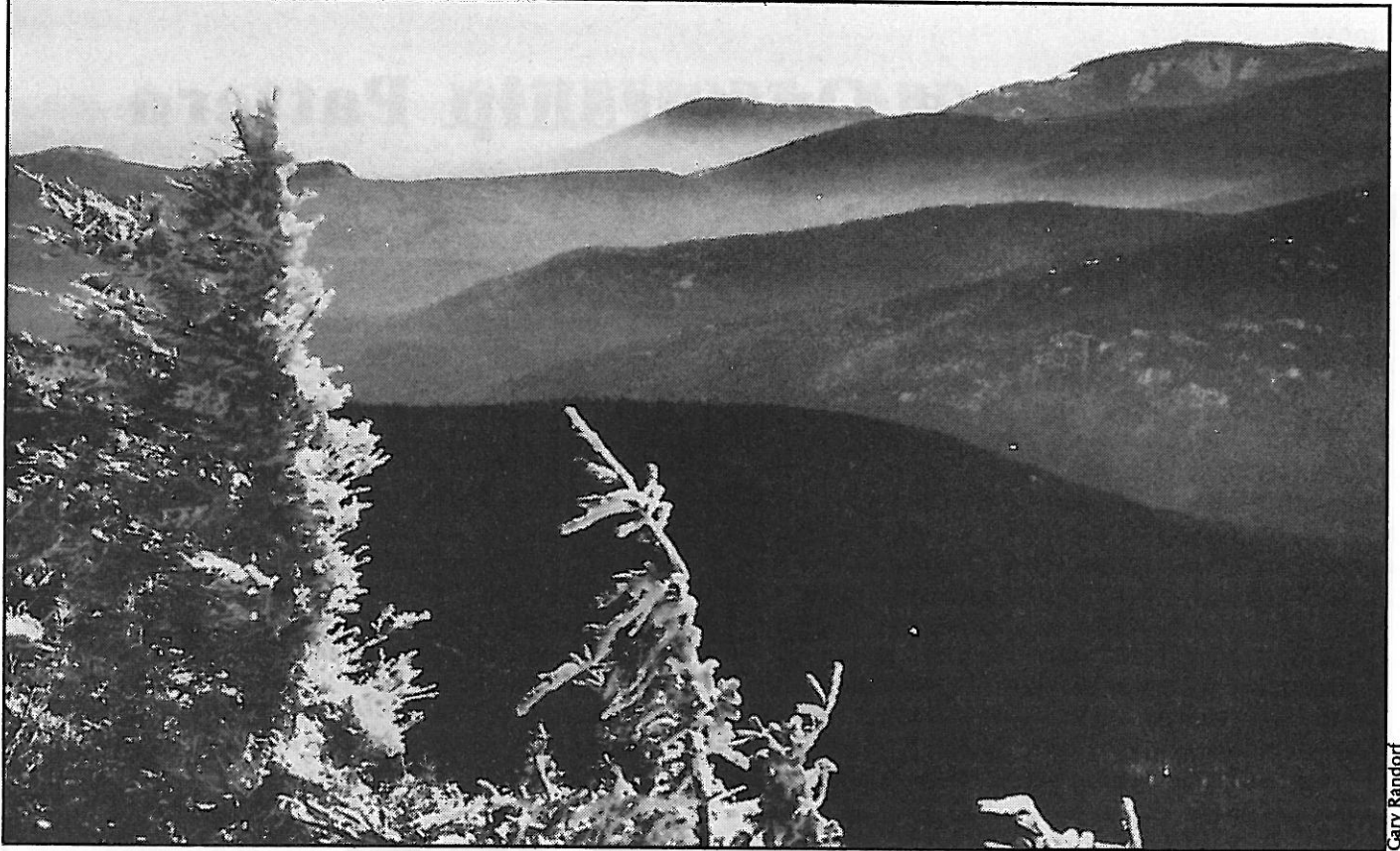
The Division of State Police earns this year's booby prize for refusing to submit its development plans for a system of high-rise telephones along the Adirondack Northway to the Adirondack Park Agency for review and comment.



A Unique Ownership Pattern



The Adirondack Park is a patchwork of public (black) and private lands. As large private holdings break up and land developers move in, the natural character of the Park is increasingly jeopardized—and a vigorous program of public acquisition becomes increasingly important.



Cary Randorf

CONFLICTING FORCES CONVERGE

It might be said that 1986 was "the best of times and the worst of times" for the Adirondack Park. It was a year in which the State made impressive progress in acquiring key tracts of private land for inclusion in the public Forest Preserve (see page 6) and the State's voters approved an Environmental Quality Bond Act that will further the public interest in protecting and enjoying the Adirondack Park.

But it was also a year in which large Adirondack landholdings in private ownership—properties which have helped maintain the overall natural character of the Adirondack Park during the past century—continued to break up and come on the market. And it was the year that large-scale land developers rediscovered the Adirondacks after a hiatus of some 15 years. For the first time since the second-home boom of the 1960s, subdividers and builders have begun to purchase sizeable tracts of Adirondack land. This time, unlike the 1960s, they have apparently found a ready market for their product.

In 1986, a company called Adirondack Mountain Properties, Ltd., purchased about 1300 private acres surrounded on three sides by public Forest Preserve. The fourth side of this choice acreage fronts on three miles of mostly-undeveloped shoreline at the south end of Tupper Lake. Even under the Adirondack Park Agency zoning plan, the developer will be able to subdivide his shoreline into nearly 100 lots. Thus one of the most beautiful, undisturbed large lakes in the Adi-

ronck Park will be substantially transformed by a surge of lakeside building and the infusion of cars, motorboats, waterskiers, snowmobiles, free-roaming dogs and the other impacts on the natural environment.

Patten Corporation, a leading land-subdivider in the Catskills and Vermont, has opened an office in Lake Placid and is proceeding to buy large parcels of Adirondack land. Unlike local realtors, who tend to act only as agents in a sale, Patten has the capital to buy property outright for subdivision and quick turnover. Patten currently owns and is subdividing five holdings in the northern Adirondacks while busily negotiating for others.

"The only future for this Park is private development," declared Roger Jakubowski, another newcomer to the Adirondacks, in a recent newspaper interview. "And anybody who doesn't understand that is going to learn very quickly."

Jakubowski built a multimillion dollar fast-food, lodging and video-arcade business in Atlantic City and Ocean City, New Jersey. Last year he purchased and moved into Topridge, the former Marjorie Merriweather Post estate on Upper St. Regis Lake. From his new home and headquarters in the Adirondacks, this aggressive and colorful entrepreneur has set out, in his own words, "to buy it all."

In addition to Topridge he has purchased a mile of Lake Champlain frontage, an island, most of Lake Ozonia, and the Big Tupper Ski Area. Adirondack real-

estate, Jakubowski has asserted, is "scandously under-priced." And though his comments may sometimes seem intentionally outrageous, he and other new Adirondack developers must be taken seriously.

Well-financed development interests can move quickly on land purchases, and they can outbid the State on any parcel that strikes their fancy. If the State offers \$500 an acre for property that should be in the public domain, Jakubowski, or Patten, or Adirondack Mountain Properties, can offer \$550. And so on.

This kind of competition can work against the public interest when a particular parcel is needed to consolidate the Forest Preserve, protect scenic vistas along public roadways, provide better public access to the Forest Preserve, expand or buffer Wilderness tracts within the Preserve, or simply preserve the natural beauty and undisturbed character of the Adirondack Park.

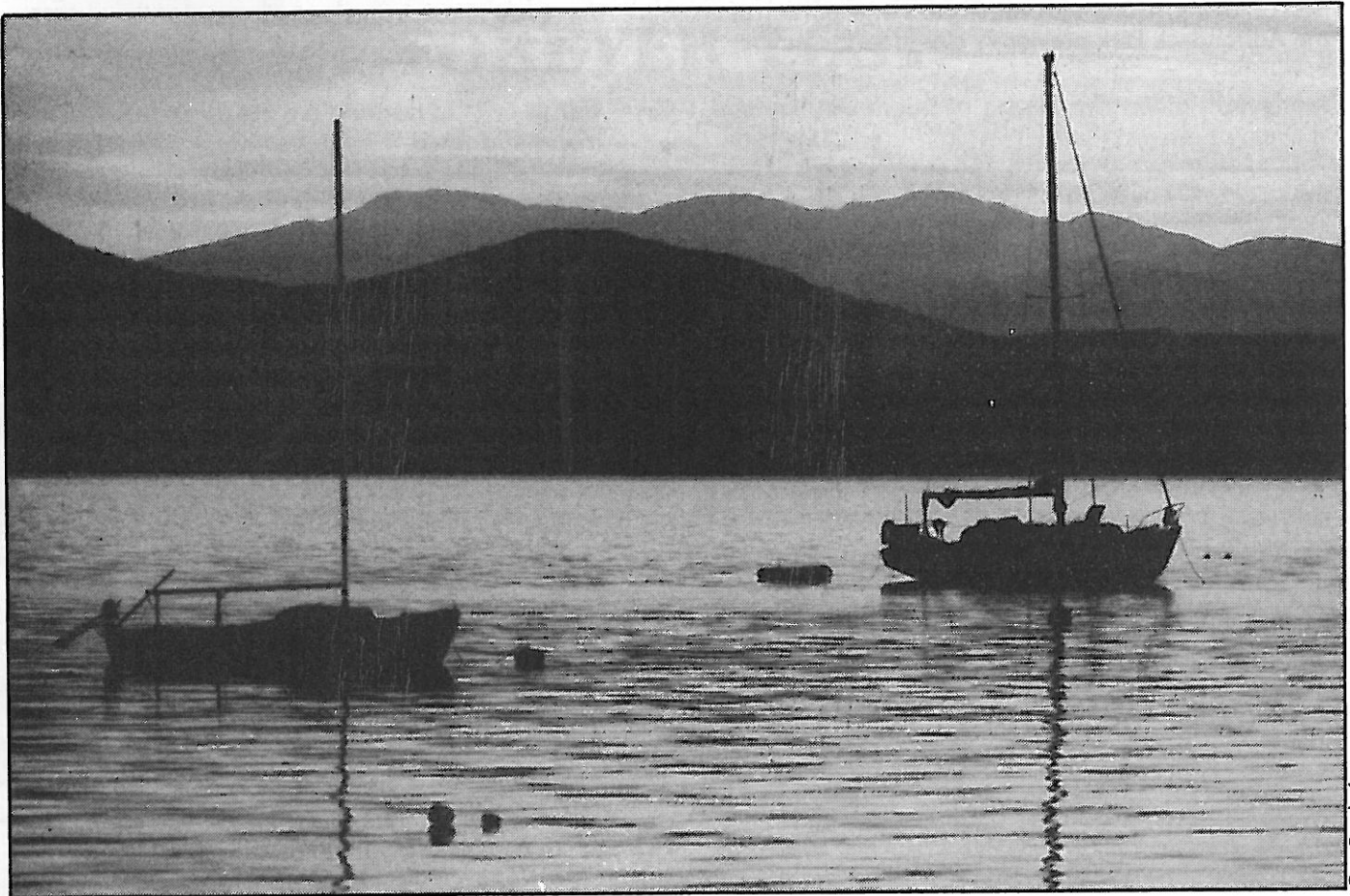
The resurgence of land developers highlights a problem long recognized by the Adirondack Council and others interested in preserving **permanently** the Park's natural character. As comprehensive as it may be, the Adirondack Park Agency zoning plan fails to provide enough protection for the Park.

A great deal of compatible development—residential, commercial and recreational—is possible and may even be desirable on some privately-owned portions of the Park. But there are also many critical tracts of private land that must be preserved if the Adirondack

Park is to remain in its present natural state.

The State clearly needs to streamline its acquisition procedures (see page 8). And over the next few decades, as the fate of most large private tracts is decided, the State must be prepared to spend \$300 million to insure lasting protection for the Park. Of this total, the Adirondack Council estimates that \$100 million will be needed to acquire approximately 500,000 additional acres of private lands to be added to the Adirondack Forest Preserve, balancing the Park's ownership at about 50/50—half private, half public. These fee-title purchases will round out publicly-owned Wilderness areas, provide a new Wilderness tract in the low-elevation boreal life zone (the rare northern-forest ecosystem which is the only zone not adequately represented in the Adirondack Wilderness System), open new backcountry canoe routes and create another Adirondack Canoe Area, protect critical corridors of Adirondack rivers now in private ownership, and consolidate fragmented tracts of Forest Preserve.

The additional \$200 million will be needed to acquire conservation easements on many privately-owned tracts, thus protecting the Park's scenic, open-space character for future generations while providing for more public use and enjoyment of the entire region. At the same time, conservation easements can help to perpetuate forestry, farming, hunting, fishing and other important open-space uses.



Gary Randorf

ACQUISITIONS: ANOTHER FINE YEAR

1986 marked the biggest public-acquisition year in the Adirondacks since 1964. The Department of Environmental Conservation purchased 49 parcels of new Forest Preserve land totalling 33,266 acres, at a cost of \$6,181,956 (or an average of \$186 an acre). Even more important than quantity, however, was the *quality* of the purchases. Most met one or more of the following criteria used by the Adirondack Council to identify desirable acquisitions:

- Rounds out Wilderness and Primitive areas;
- Preserves Wild, Scenic and Recreational River corridors;
- Provides public access to otherwise inaccessible areas;
- Provides outstanding recreational opportunities;
- Preserves ecologically-significant areas;
- Consolidates the Forest Preserve;
- Preserves scenic highway views and roadsides;
- Preserves private land whose wild character is essential to the undisturbed beauty and natural integrity of the Park.

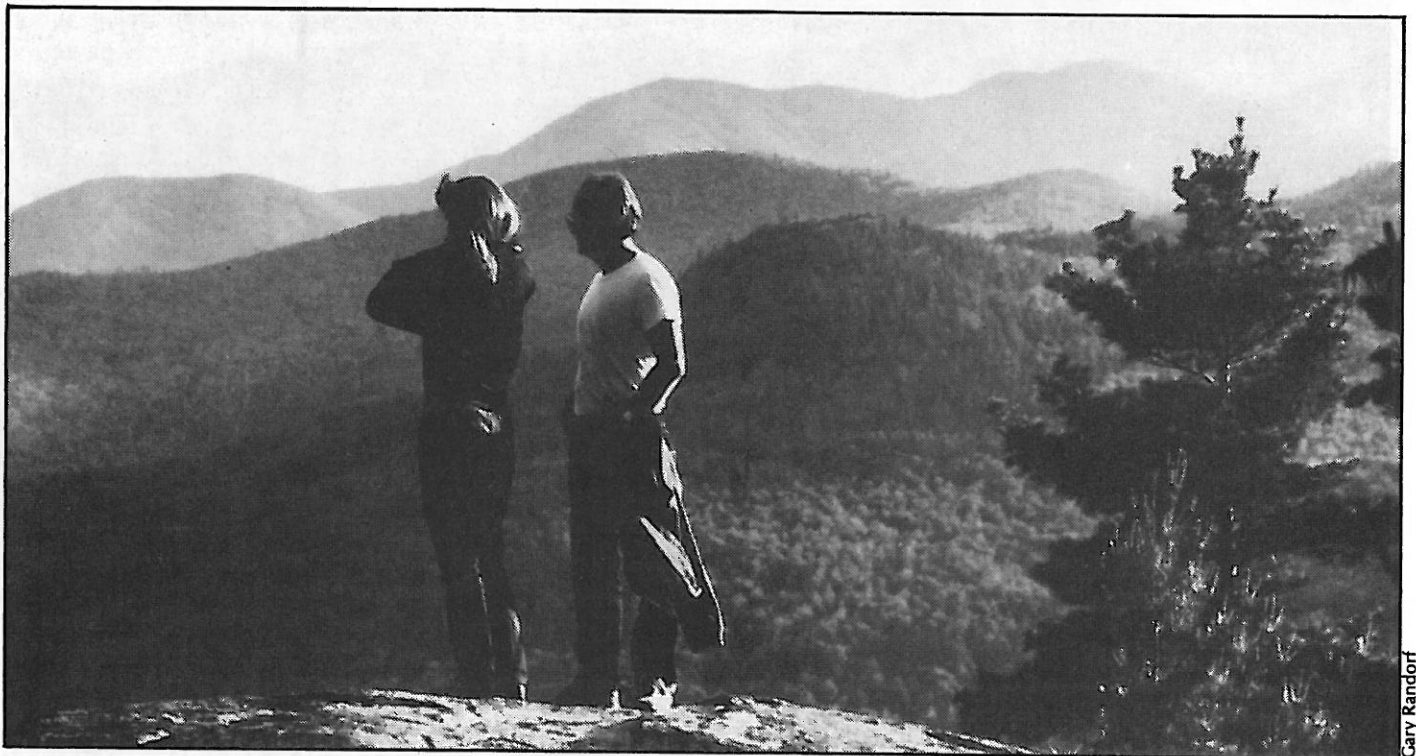
Of major importance was the completion of the 9,248-acre Bog River Flow acquisition, opening wilderness canoeing, hiking and camping to a large portion of the Adirondack Park previously closed to the public;

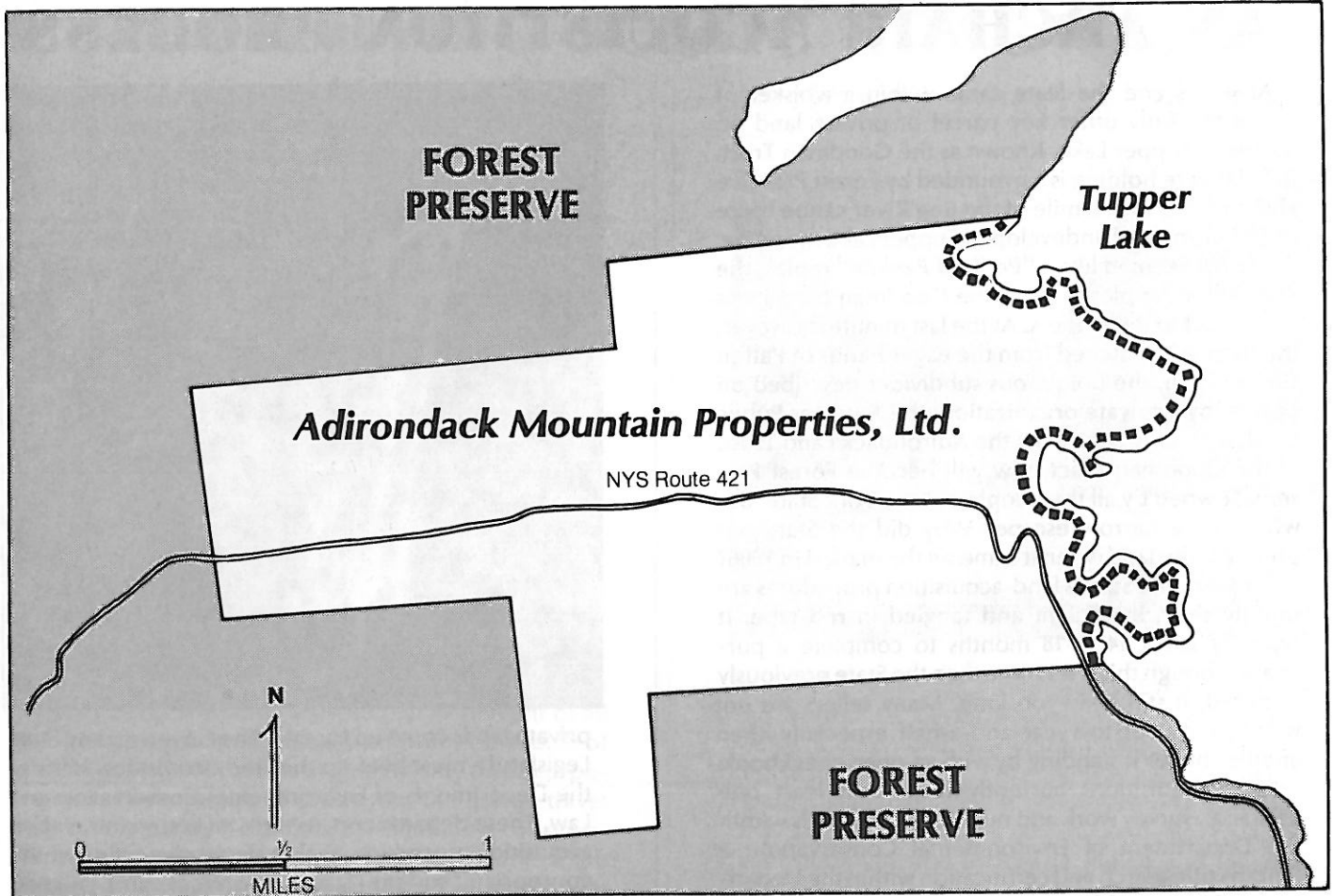
purchase of the 1,920-acre Squaw Brook tract, critically located between the West Canada Lake Wilderness and the Buell Brook Primitive Area; purchase of the 1496-acre Crotched Pond parcel adjacent to the Siamese Ponds Wilderness; and the purchase of over three miles of pristine shoreline on Osgood Pond and the beginning of the Osgood River—land that was on the verge of being subdivided and privately developed.

Capping the year's acquisition achievements was the purchase of Watson's East Triangle, a 16,228-acre holding in the western Adirondacks.

Public ownership of this crucial tract sets the stage for a consolidation of the Five Ponds and Pepperbox Wilderness areas into the second largest, government-protected wilderness tract (second only to the Adirondack High Peaks Wilderness) in the northeastern United States. It also brings into public ownership 10 miles of the Oswegatchie River.

Though much of Watson's East Triangle has been recently cut over, and much of it currently appears to be in a scruffy, sapling state, the Department did what government agencies seldom do: it looked several generations ahead. What it saw were the magnificent, mature forests that will eventually return to awe future visitors, thanks to the "forever wild" protection given the Forest Preserve by the state constitution in 1895.





FOREVER LOST

By ordinary standards, the prospect of 45 to 80 new houses along the southwest shore of a large lake would not seem like much to worry about. Most smaller lakes in this country are surrounded by hundreds of houses.

But on a forested, largely-undisturbed lake in the Adirondack Park, with publicly-owned Forest Preserve bordering both sides of the development site, even 45 houses—each conspicuously visible from the water—can have a tremendous impact.

For years the American Legion operated Veterans Mountain Camp as a tuberculosis and health resort on Tupper Lake. The property included more than 1300 acres with over three miles of shoreline, bounded by Forest Preserve. This private "inholding" had been on the market for several years. In 1986, the owners received five purchase offers (all from developers) and sold to the highest bidder—Adirondack Mountain Properties, Ltd.

The first, 45-lot stage of the new subdivision will begin this spring. Under the Adirondack Park Agency zoning plan, another 35 lots are permissible.

Why did the Department of Environmental Conservation, newly alert to opportunities elsewhere, fail to pursue acquisition of a tract so essential for preserving the natural qualities of Tupper Lake? Why does the Adirondack Park Agency zoning plan allow such intensive shoreline development on this and many other

natural lakeshores in private ownership throughout the Park?

For the answer to both questions, one must go back to 1972-73, when the APA's Land Use and Development Plan was being prepared for submission to the State Legislature. In the face of strong opposition from Adirondack legislators, town officials, and development interests, the APA revised its preliminary zoning plan to allow much more development on many Adirondack lakeshores. This compromise (or "giveaway," as many conservationists saw it) is now coming back to haunt the State and all who would preserve the natural attributes of the region.

In its acquisition policy, the Department of Environmental Conservation has also been guided by this original compromise. It has shied away from acquiring shoreline zoned for extensive development, and concentrated instead on the more restrictively-zoned areas. Correcting the APA zoning plan to better protect Adirondack lakeshores may now be politically impossible. The best hope for saving wild shoreline appears to be state acquisition in fee (direct purchase), or the acquisition of conservation easements (development rights), from willing sellers.

One thing is certain. If the Adirondack Park is to be preserved, many of the natural lakeshores in private ownership need permanent protection **now**.

AN ARCHAIC ACQUISITION PROCESS

At year's end the State came within a whisker of losing the only other key parcel of private land on southern Tupper Lake. Known as the Goodman Tract, this 600-acre holding is surrounded by Forest Preserve and includes over a mile of the Bog River canoe route and a half-mile of undeveloped Tupper Lake shoreline.

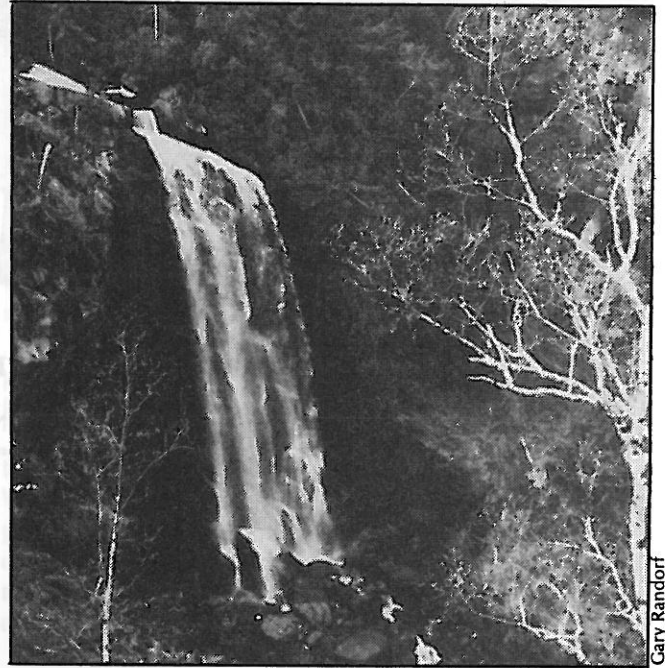
In what seemed like a "Perils of Pauline" replay, the State stood helplessly by as the Goodman parcel was almost lost to developers. At the last minute, however, the tract was snatched from the eager hands of Patten Corporation, the ubiquitous subdivider described on page 4, by a private organization, the Trust for Public Land, with assistance from the Adirondack Land Trust.

The Goodman Tract now will become Forest Preserve, owned by all the people of New York State. But why such a narrow escape? Why did the State not purchase the land when it came on the market in 1986?

Answer: The State's land-acquisition procedures are unduly slow, inefficient and tangled in red tape. It typically takes 14-to-18 months to complete a purchase. Though this is less time than the State previously required, it still takes too long. Many sellers are not willing to wait up to a year-and-a-half, especially when another buyer is standing by with an open checkbook.

State acquisitions currently require at least one appraisal, survey work and numerous approvals within the Department of Environmental Conservation; a lengthy title search and certification within the Department of Law; and funding approval by the Division of the Budget. The process is further hampered by a lack of staff resources. There are simply not enough foresters, appraisers, surveyors, lawyers and office personnel to do what must be done.

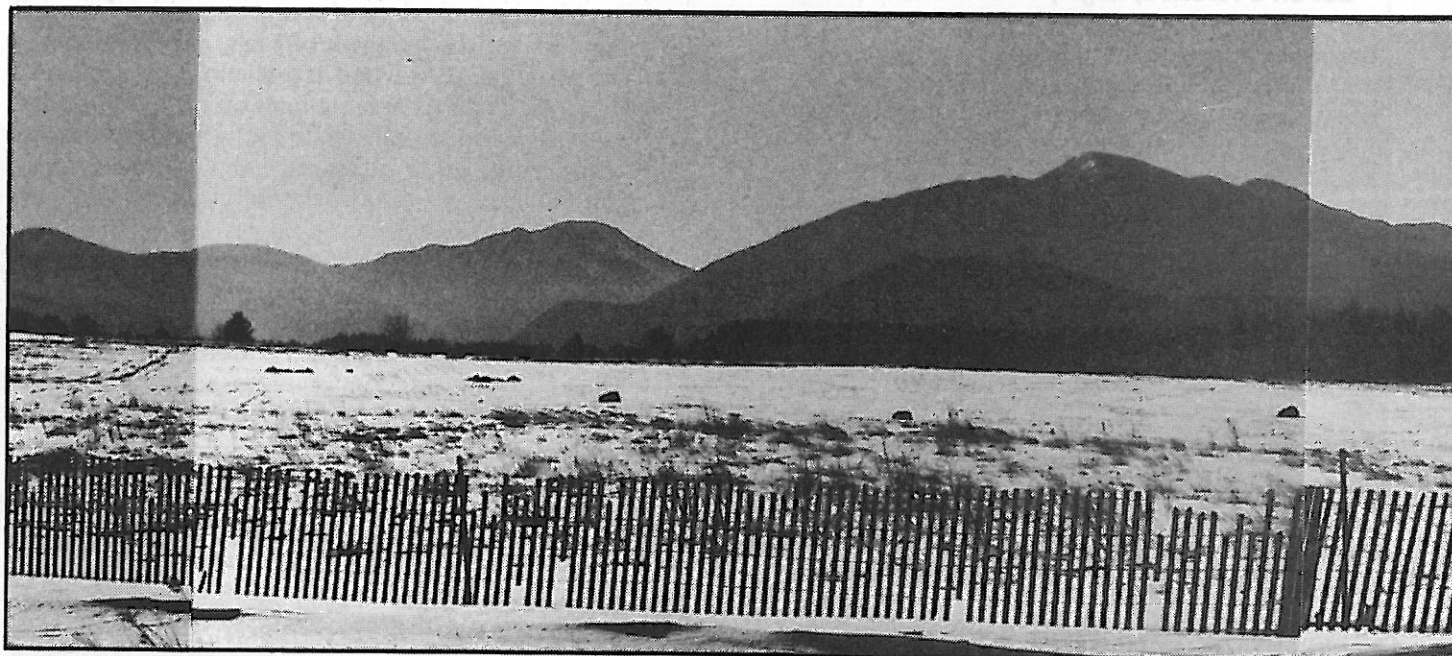
The State cannot always count on the timely intervention of public-interest organizations when choice



Gary Randorf

private lands come up for sale. The Governor and State Legislature must beef up the land-acquisition staffs of the Departments of Environmental Conservation and Law. These departments, in turn, must streamline their acquisition procedures, seeking legislative action where appropriate, so that (1) a sale contract can be signed **immediately** when necessary and (2) purchases will take no more than four-to-six months to consummate. Only then can the State make the best use of the newly-approved Adirondack acquisition funds and begin to compete with fast-moving land developers for possession of some of the finest natural tracts remaining in the United States.

Scenic roadside



PRESERVING SCENIC ROADWAYS

Visitors' impressions of the Adirondack Park are largely determined from the Park's roadways. Yet only 11 percent of the land along state roads in the Adirondack Park is publicly-owned Forest Preserve. That most of the private roadsides still remain in their natural state is more a matter of luck than design.

Anyone who regularly drives through the Adirondacks, however, has seen this natural picture inexorably changing as houses, motels, ski jumps and other man-made structures pop up along roads and in the foreground of lovely roadside vistas.

If we are to preserve the natural beauty of the Park's roadways, the Department of Environmental Conservation must use a portion of its Adirondack acquisition funds from the 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act to purchase conservation easements (development rights) along undeveloped roadsides and within scenic roadside vistas.

The Adirondack Land Trust, a private organization affiliated with the Adirondack Council, recently studied a 55-mile segment of Route 30 from Speculator to Tupper Lake. The study showed that 77 percent of all private lands along this largely undisturbed stretch of the "Adirondack Trail" is owned by only three corporations. Thus the job of preserving this scenic travel corridor is greatly simplified. By negotiating conservation easements now with only three landowners, the State could insure that the Adirondack Trail will remain an unspoiled highway corridor through some of the finest natural landscape in the United States.

Far-ranging roadside vistas are relatively rare in the densely wooded Adirondacks—making those that do occur doubly dramatic. Who can forget the panoramic roadside views that encompass in one unbelievable



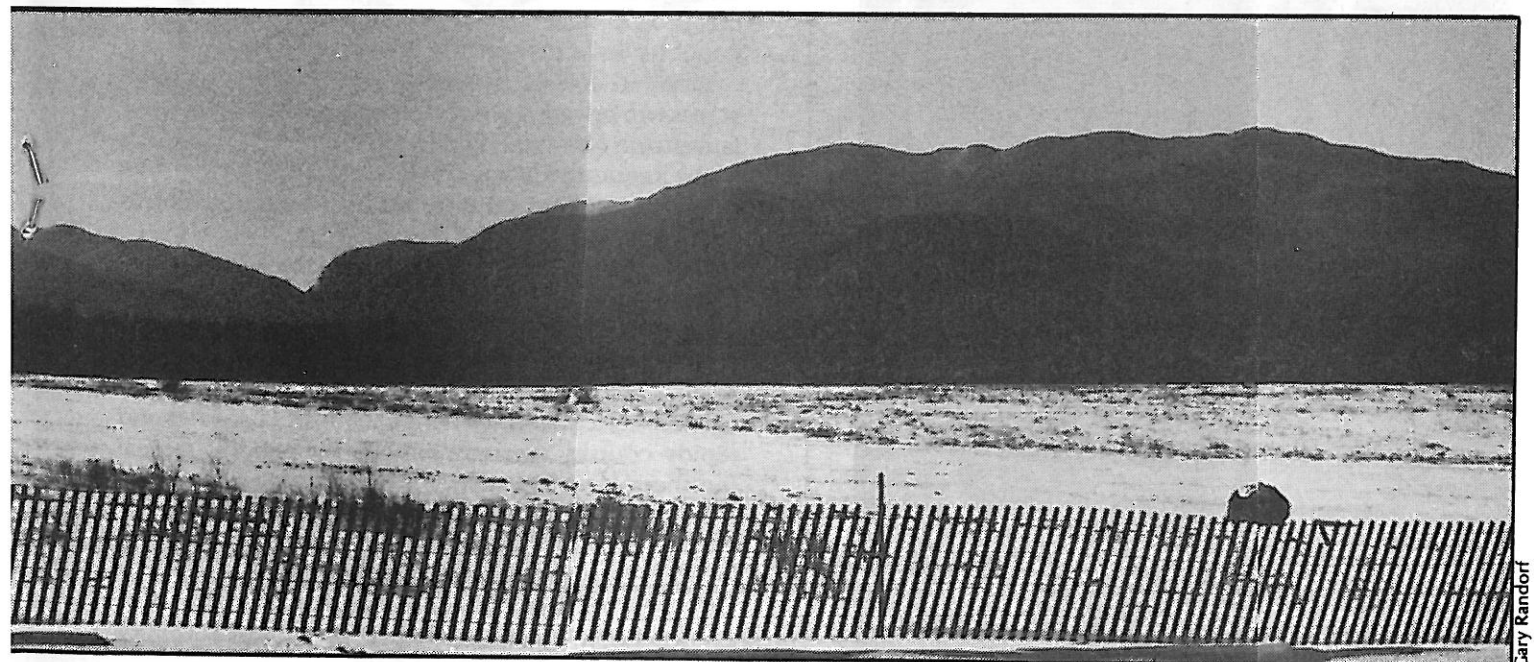
Cary Randorf

sweep the Adirondack High Peaks, Lake Champlain and Vermont's Green Mountains? Or the view of Marcy, Colden and Algonquin peaks, and the great cleft of Indian Pass, from the highway just south of Lake Placid (see below)? Or the 180-degree vista from Donnelly's Corners across the Bloomingdale Bog to Whiteface Mountain, the McKenzie Range and the High Peaks?

Conservation easements can often preserve such views while allowing for every kind of economic and recreational use of the "viewshed" except intrusive structural development.

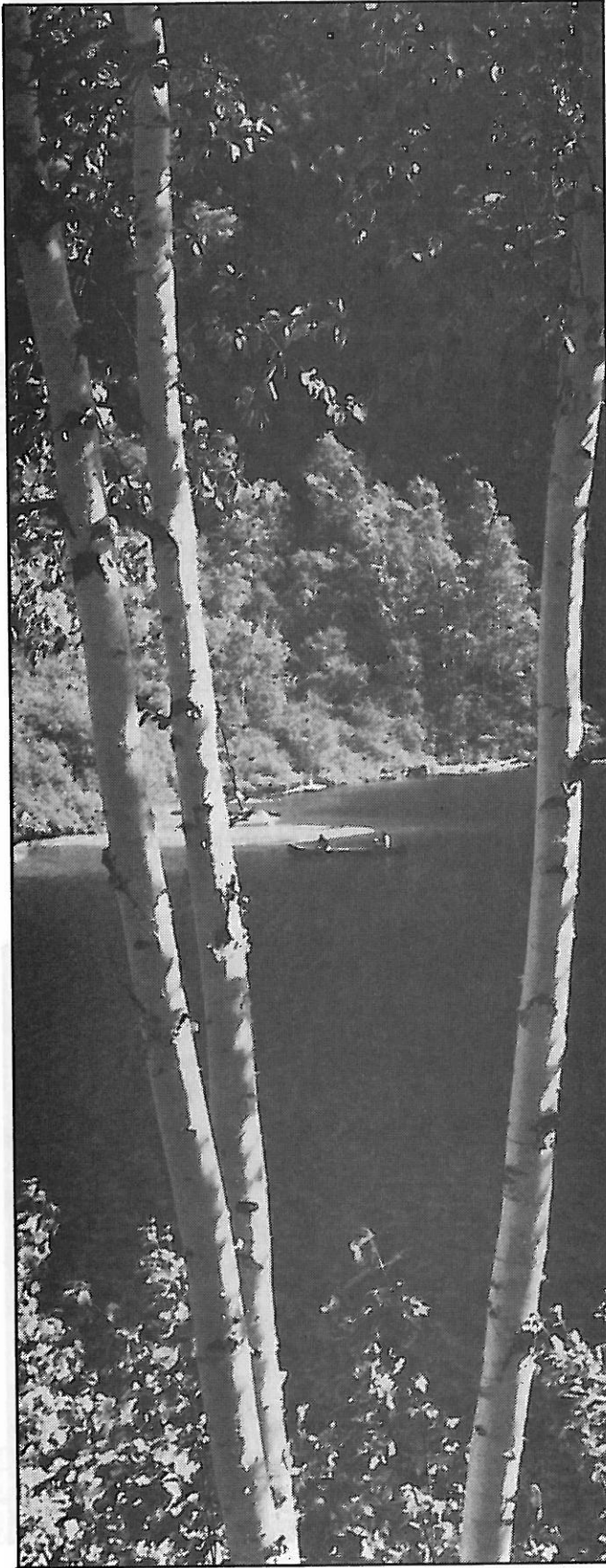
(See page 15 for location of other Adirondack scenic vistas.)

ista near Lake Placid.



Cary Randorf

OPENING WILDERNESS WATERWAYS



Alan Cederstrom

The Adirondack Park's extraordinary system of connecting rivers and lakes, much of it currently closed to public use, is one of the great untapped recreational resources of the Northeast.

"It is ironic that, in a park set aside in 1892 for the 'free use of all the people for their health and pleasure', the finest cruising rivers are largely closed to navigation," writes Paul Jamieson in *Adirondack Waters: North Flow*. This sorry state of affairs can now be rectified. For example, the Adirondack Council has identified five "missing links" that would triple existing mileage of continuous canoe routes in the Adirondack Park. Many if not all of these routes can be opened by the State through direct purchase or by acquisition of access and right-of-passage easements.

MISSING LINK #1: Beaver River—A right-of-passage over three miles of the Beaver River between Stillwater Reservoir and Lake Lila would open Nehasane Lake and waterways beyond. This is the first of three links necessary to open a canoe route connecting Stillwater to Saranac Lake (83 miles), to Union Falls (105 miles), or to the Park boundary (127 miles) near Plattsburgh. This link, plus the next two below, would also open a 43-mile route from Stillwater to Inlet on the Oswegatchie River.

MISSING LINK #2: Robinwood—Two short rights-of-passage to connect Harrington Creek with Clear Pond and Clear Pond to Bog Lake are the second link of the expansion noted above.

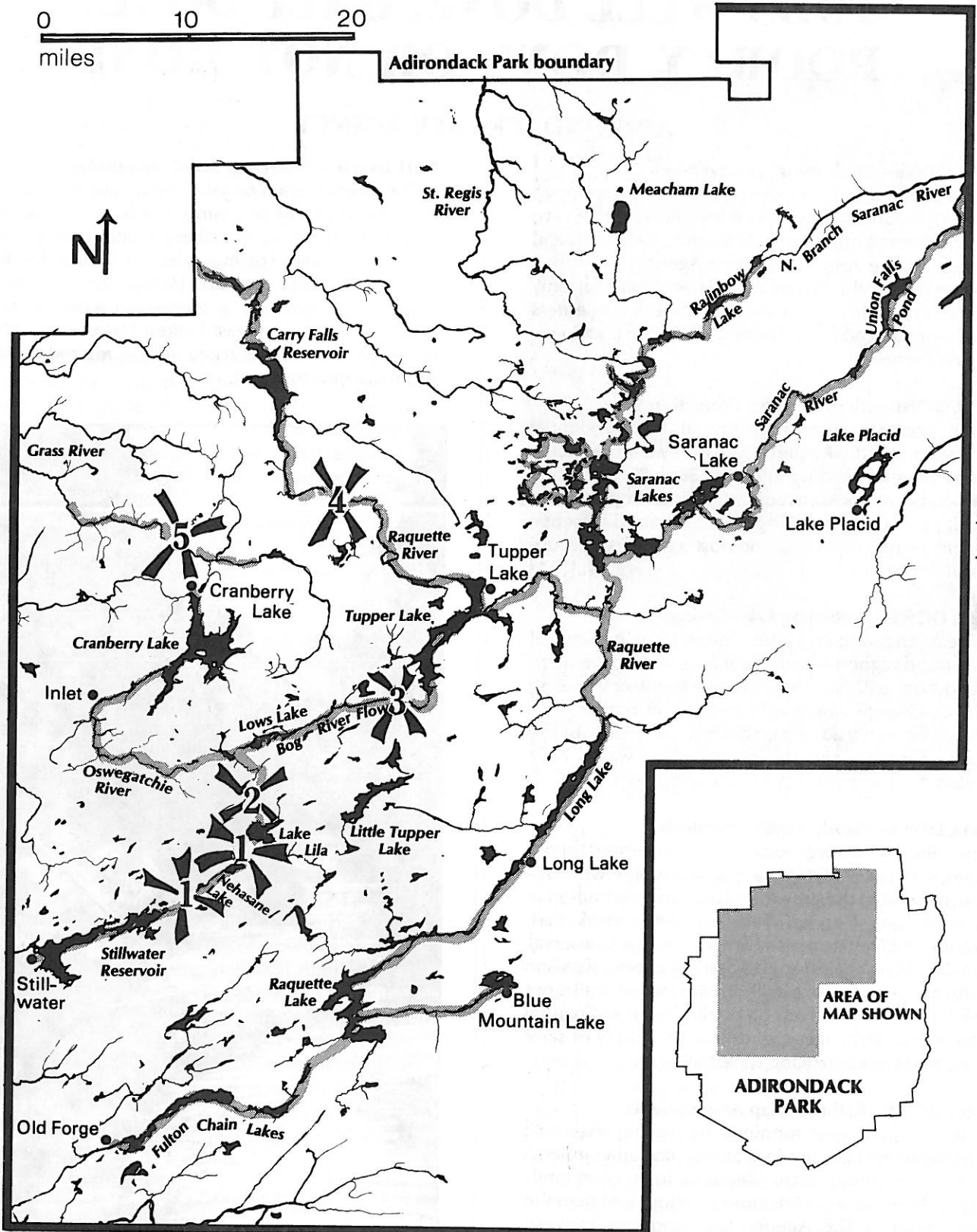
MISSING LINK #3: Bog River—A right-of-passage around Split Rock Falls and rapids would, by itself, open a 69-mile canoe route between Inlet on the Oswegatchie River and Saranac Lake. It would also create a 123-mile route from Old Forge to Inlet via the Raquette and Oswegatchie Rivers.

MISSING LINK #4: Raquette River—A right-of-passage across two private ownerships between Piercefield and Jamestown Falls would open the entire 112-mile reach of the Raquette River inside the Park, from headwaters at Blue Mountain Lake to the Park boundary above South Colton.

MISSING LINK #5: South Branch of the Grass River—The South Branch of the Grass from the bridge on Route 3 to Rainbow Falls stands out as the most worthy of all Adirondack canoe routes to be opened to the public, according to Paul Jamieson. The Adirondack Council concurs. This 17.5 mile section of flatwater and rapids courses through one of the wildest boreal (northern-forest) portions of the Park. Three landowners now have this remote river closed to public use.

To summarize: State acquisition of only five "missing links" in the chain of navigable Adirondack waterways will vastly increase the opportunities for wilderness canoeing in what is already one of the nation's premier canoe areas.

Five Missing Links



State acquisition of five missing links (shown above) in the chain of Adirondack waterways would triple the mileage of continuous canoeing now open to the public.

PUBLIC STEWARDSHIP

JOBS WELL DONE, HALF DONE, POORLY DONE OR NOT DONE

ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY

WELL DONE—Wilderness Preservation

Under pressure to minimize Wilderness and open more state land to jeeps, snowmobiles, motorboats, float planes and other forms of mechanized access and recreation, the Adirondack Park Agency, in its five-year review of the State Land Master Plan, not only resisted efforts to weaken the Adirondack Wilderness System but also added a fine new unit—the Jay Mountain Wilderness.

WELL DONE—River Corridor Protection

The Agency approved a proposal for a residential subdivision on the Raquette River only after reducing the number of building lots from 36 to 28, restricting the number of docks to reduce the visual impact of the development, and requiring the use of raised-fill septic systems or non-polluting composting toilets because of soil limitations.

WELL DONE—Protecting Lake George

The Agency denied a joint request from the Town of Bolton and Lagoon Manor, a condominium developer, to allow up to 72 housing units on a sensitive shoreline of Lake George where APA density restrictions currently allow only 13 units. (The natural beauty of the lake's shoreline, and the quality of its water, have already been impaired by overdevelopment.)

WELL DONE—Caution with Chemicals

In 1986, Lake George local officials clamored for the emergency use of SONAR, a relatively-unknown pesticide, to combat the growth of Eurasian watermilfoil in parts of Lake George. Both the Adirondack Park Agency and Department of Environmental Conservation stood firm against application of a chemical poison in this major source of public drinking water until more is known about its effects on public health and natural ecosystems. Both agencies called for a study of safer alternatives to controlling watermilfoil.

WELL DONE—Rational Map Amendments

For the third year running, the Agency exercised commendable restraint in granting map amendments to the APA zoning plan. (Requests for such amendments almost always seek more development than the plan permits.) The Agency approved one request, approved three with modifications, and denied three others where increased building densities would damage the natural resources or natural beauty of the area.

NOT DONE—Protecting Scenic Roadsides

The Agency again failed to designate the most outstanding stretches of county roads as "critical environmental areas" so that these scenic routes can be better preserved. For example, the Blue Ridge Road that runs 20 miles from North Hudson to Newcomb is as close to an automotive "wilderness experience" as one can find in the northeast United States—yet without better protection this route will be marred by inappropriate development.



Edward Hixon

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

WELL DONE—Defending the Wilderness Resource

The Department in 1986 began to recognize and manage Wilderness as a special resource. For the first time in recent years, the Department consistently took a strong wilderness-protection position at Adirondack Park Agency meetings. Its purchase of the Bog River Flow, Watson's East Triangle, Squaw Brook, and Crotched Pond enhanced the Adirondack Wilderness System. And it sponsored a "Wilderness Round Table" conference, with national experts present, to help educate key personnel in modern wilderness management.

WELL DONE—Working Overtime

The Department's understaffed land-acquisition team worked at a high level of professionalism, and at a fevered pitch, to accomplish far more in 1986 than they can reasonably be expected to continue to accomplish unless more personnel and resources are provided.

WELL DONE—Protecting Water Quality

The Department, along with the APA, deserves credit for subjecting the chemical herbicide SONAR to careful scrutiny before permitting its use in the still-drinkable waters of Lake George.

WELL DONE—Unit Management Plans

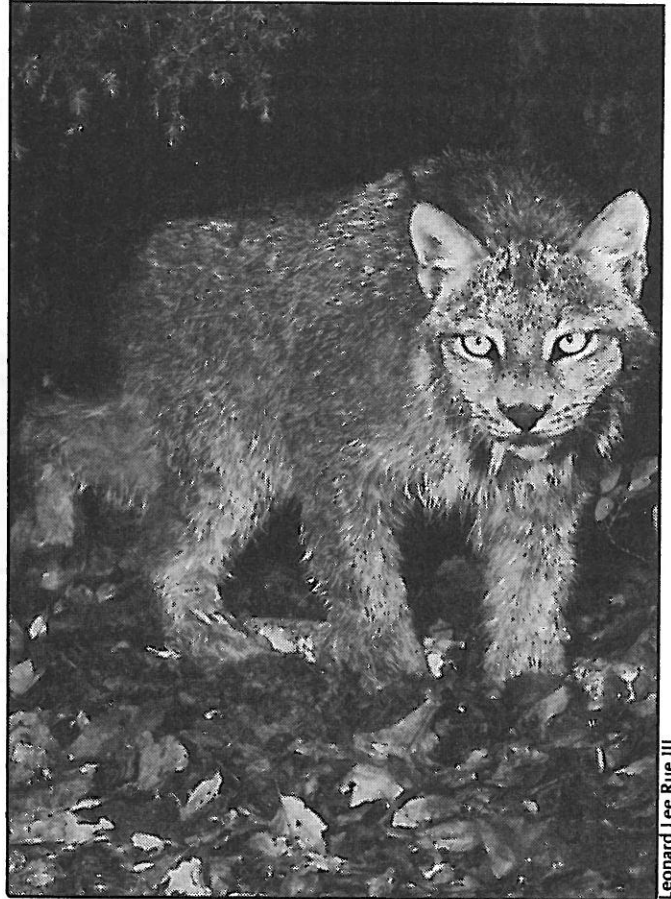
Final unit management plans for the Ha-de-ron-dah Wilderness and Independence Wild Forest Area were approved by the commissioner in 1986. These exemplary plans, which provide for appropriate public use while respecting and perpetuating the natural values of these areas, should serve as prototypes for Forest Preserve management.

POORLY DONE—Unit Management Plans

The final draft of the Five Ponds Wilderness plan (still subject to revision) failed to address the problem of overuse—for example, the kind of crowding and trampling of trails and camping sites that diminishes the opportunities for wilderness solitude and unconfined recreation. The final plan for the Mt. VanHoevenberg Intensive Use Area, approved in 1986 and now in effect, failed to acknowledge the excessive "light pollution" from an over-constructed lighting system that makes Mt. VanHoevenberg look more like Las Vegas than the Adirondack Park when seen from Route 73 and the adjacent High Peaks Wilderness.

POORLY DONE—Long-Term Timber Rights

The Department endorsed a policy that will encourage the reservation of timber-harvesting rights on lands purchased for the Forest Preserve. The retaining of timber rights by the landowner may sometimes be a



Leonard Lee Rue III

Keeping the Park wild means keeping the door open for the restoration of the Canadian lynx.

necessary last resort in negotiating for key private lands, but such rights should never exceed three-to-five years after the land becomes Forest Preserve. As now written, the Department's policy provides for continued cutting on Forest Preserve purchases for up to 25 years, making a mockery of the "forever wild" protection afforded to all Forest Preserve by the state constitution. (Staff work was underway late in 1986 to revise this misguided policy.)

POORLY DONE—Conservation Easement Policy

Conservation easements are a valuable tool for preserving the open-space character of the Park. Unfortunately, the Department of Environmental Conservation adopted a muddled easement policy in 1986 that (1) fails to acknowledge the public values of protecting scenery, plants and animals through easement acquisition, and (2) places unrealistic, inflexible limits on the amount it will pay for easements compared to direct, fee-title purchases. (As with the timber policy, staff work was underway late in 1986 to revise this policy.)

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

WELL DONE—Cleaning Up the Mess

Highway maintenance sites are among the worst eyesores along Adirondack roads. To help remedy this problem, the Department is improving its site at Wells and has earmarked funds to improve its Chestertown site and relocate its Cranberry Lake site.

WELL DONE—Route 74 Reconstruction

In recognition of Park values and fragile resources, the Department undertook extraordinary wetland protection and silt containment measures in the reconstruction of Route 74 at Paradox Lake.

PARTLY DONE—North Country Highway group

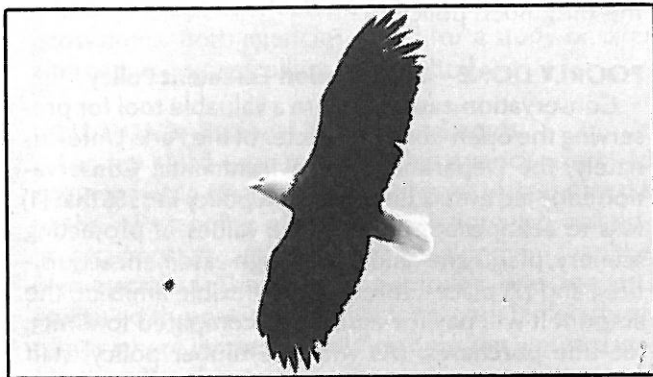
The Department has wisely resurrected a North Country Highway Group that includes state agencies whose operations could, without proper care and planning, mar the natural beauty of Adirondack roadsides. But the Department failed to include the NYS Public Service Commission, whose regulatory authority over utility lines affects the visual quality of the Adirondack Park as seen by the passing motorist.

POORLY DONE—Enhancing Highway Corridors

The Department appears to be backsliding from the great strides it made during the past decade in beautifying Adirondack roadsides. Taken together, recent Department actions are not encouraging—for example, it plans to channelize a lovely Adirondack stream in a roadbuilding project, has replaced Adirondack Northway signs with those in violation of Park design standards, and has placed illegal commercial signs on the Northway while pretending they are historic site-information markers.

NOT DONE—Scenic Vista Pulloffs

The Department has continued to ignore the need for automobile pulloffs at some of the 40 scenic roadside vistas identified by the State almost 20 years ago. Such pulloffs would allow motorists to enjoy the Park's scenery while reducing the traffic hazard caused by rubbernecking drivers.



The bald eagle soars again over the Adirondacks.

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

WELL DONE—Improving the Natural Scene (Rivers)

In a unanimous decision, the Public Service Commission ordered Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation to place proposed electric-line crossings of the Schroon and Hudson Rivers **under** these waterways, which are both units of the State's Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System.

PARTLY DONE—Improving the Natural Scene (Roads)

After years of turning a blind eye to the blight of overhead utility lines along Adirondack highways, PSC contracted with the Adirondack Council to evaluate the visual impact of the lines along 1,106 miles of state roads in the Park—with the intention of relocating or undergrounding the worst offenders.

STATE LEGISLATURE

PARTLY DONE—Protecting the Local Tax Base

In 1986 the Senate passed legislation requiring the State to pay its share of local taxes wherever it owns a conservation easement. But because the Assembly failed to pass similar legislation, present inequities continue.

PARTLY DONE—Protecting Adirondack Rivers

The Senate finally voted to add more rivers to the Wild, Scenic and Recreational River System. Together with the State Assembly, which has consistently supported such protection, the Senate added 32 miles of the North and Middle Branches of the Moose River, thereby protecting these waterways from damming and incompatible development along their corridors. That makes a total of 1,238 miles of Adirondack rivers now in the System.

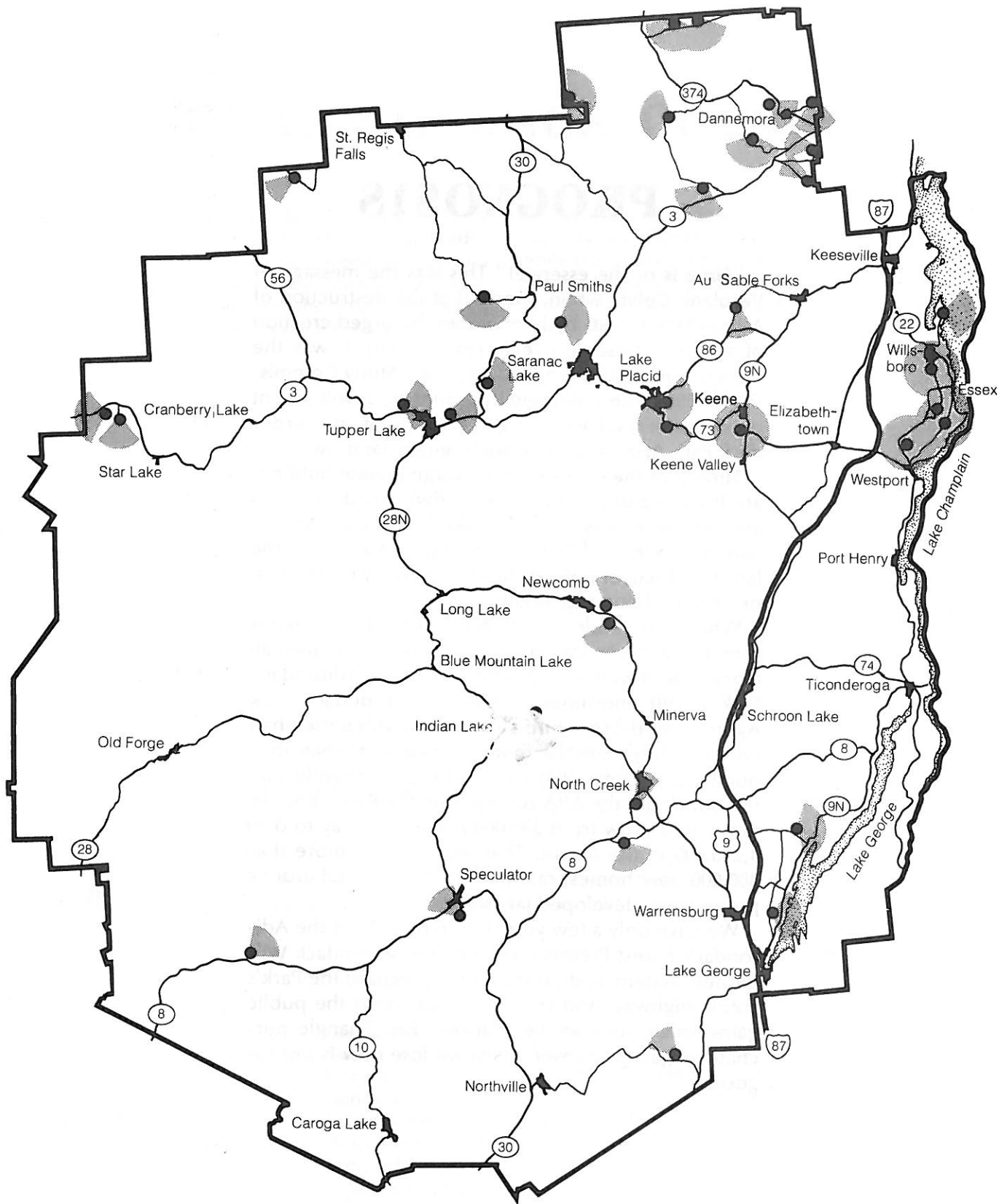
STATE POLICE

POORLY DONE—Ignoring Land-Use Regulations

The Division of State Police plans to install an emergency telephone system along the Adirondack Northway. So far so good. But the Division ignored the special character of the Adirondack Park in designing the project. Plans call for structures up to 18-feet high with enormous photovoltaic cells. When informed by the APA that such a project was subject to its review jurisdiction, the State Police refused to comply. This attitude once again illustrates the double standard for review of public and private development in the Park.



Scenic Vistas Need Protection



Being relatively rare in the densely-wooded Adirondack Park, scenic roadside vistas, as enjoyed by the passing motorist, are especially dramatic. Those that cry out for permanent protection are indicated above.

PROGNOSIS

“Time is of the essence!” This was the message of Verplank Colvin when, shocked at the destruction of Adirondack forests by lumbermen, he urged creation of a Forest Preserve over a century ago. It was the message of the Governor’s Temporary Study Commission in 1970 when, alarmed by mounting development pressures in the Park, it urged creation of an Adirondack Park Agency to zone and regulate land use.

Time is of the essence again. Large private holdings are breaking up, and the subdividers and developers are moving in. Roger Jakubowski, Adirondack Mountain Properties and Patten Corporation are among the latest to discover gold in these hills. Many more prospectors are bound to follow.

What these modern Forty-Niners have discovered is something that many conservationists have known all along: the development potential in the Adirondack Park is still enormous. While the Adirondack Park Agency’s land-use controls are indisputably better than nothing, they allow far more development than they ought to in areas that should be permanently preserved. Under the APA zoning plan, the Park’s population could grow from 330,000 residents today to over 1,250,000 in the future. That would mean more than 300,000 new homes, many of them clustered around presently-undeveloped lakeshores.

We have only a few years left to round out the Adirondack Forest Preserve, perfect the Adirondack Wilderness System, and permanently safeguard the Park’s scenic highways and river corridors. What the public gains today, such as the Watson’s East Triangle purchase, is gained forever. What we lose now is lost for good.

THE ADIRONDACK COUNCIL

Founded in 1975, the Adirondack Council is dedicated to protecting the Adirondack Park through public education, monitoring and advising government agencies and the State Legislature, and legal action when necessary.

The Council is a coalition of the National Audubon Society, Wilderness Society, Natural Resources Defense

Council, National Parks and Conservation Association, and Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks. While the Council receives moral support from these member organizations, its financial support comes mainly from its 3,400 individual members and from private foundations.

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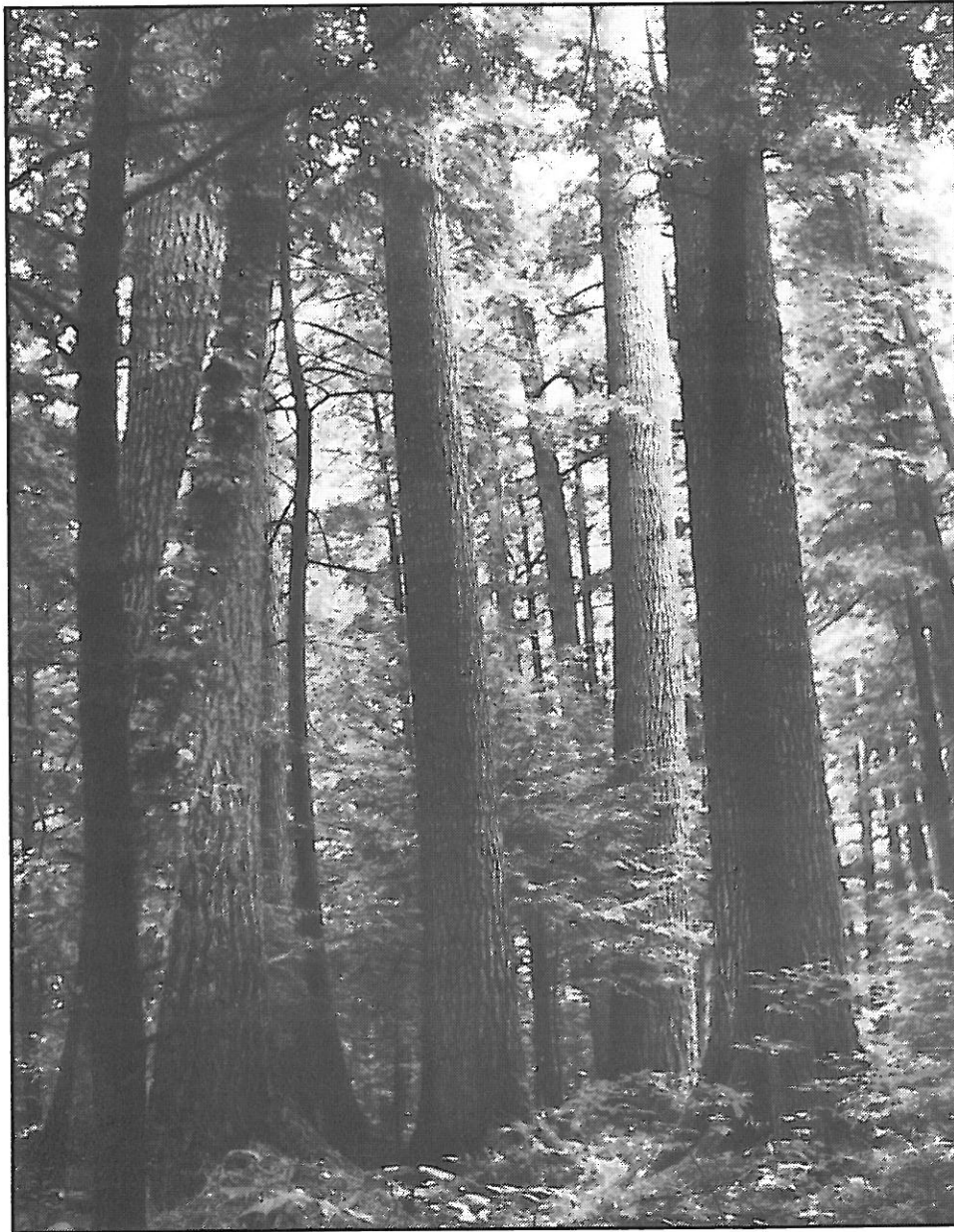
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