



New Beginnings  
Annual Report  
2023-2024

**PROTECT**   
**THE ADIRONDACKS!**

# New Beginnings

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PO Box 48  
North Creek, NY 12853  
518.251.2700  
[info@protectadks.org](mailto:info@protectadks.org)  
[www.protectadks.org](http://www.protectadks.org)

*Cover picture:*  
*Rock Lake Outlet*



*Claudia Braymer and Chuck Clusen*

Dear Protect the Adirondacks Members,

Claudia Braymer starts as our new Executive Director on January 1, 2025. She brings a great deal of environmental law and local government experience to this position. Claudia has been working as our Deputy Director for the past two years and has been involved in all aspects of managing the organization. Staff succession planning has been a priority of the Board of Directors over the last three years. With long-time Executive Director Peter Bauer stepping down, we're very pleased that this big change will go off without a hitch.

As you can read in our Conservation and Advocacy report, the important work of Protect the Adirondacks has continued with as much vigor as ever throughout the staff transition. We are excited for the opportunities ahead and we appreciate you standing with us as we start a new beginning. As always, we are grateful for our members who continue to support, inform and inspire our efforts to defend the forever wild Forest Preserve, find solutions to the challenges within the Adirondack Park, and to keep the state agencies accountable for upholding the environmental laws that they are obligated to enforce and implement. Thank you!

— Chuck Clusen, Chair, Board of Directors,  
and Claudia Braymer, Deputy Director

## Remembering Dale Jeffers, a founding Board Member

Founding Board member, Dale F. Jeffers (1944-2024), passed away on October 18, 2024, at his home in Elizabethtown, N.Y., one day shy of his 80th birthday. Dale was a long-time Adirondack Park environmental activist, who loved canoeing and camping, especially on Low's Lake, and who worked to create and build Protect the Adirondacks since its founding in 2009. Ten years ago, Dale moved to a cabin in the woods outside Elizabethtown, where he enjoyed living in the woods with his dogs and cats.

For many years, Dale served as a Board member of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks, when the organization was based in Niskayuna. He served for many years on the Conservation Committee of the Adirondack Mountain Club. He was a vocal member of just about every environmental group in New York. Dale was especially fond of weekend canoe trips, usually accompanied by one of his beloved dogs, Churchill, Seamus, and Banagan.

Dale was one of a handful of key players in 2009 who worked to merge the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks with the Residents' Committee to Protect the Adirondacks to form Protect the Adirondacks! Dale drafted many of the organizational materials, including the first Bylaws. Dale envisioned that the new organization would be a premier activist organization and pushed for the ! at the end of Protect the Adirondacks! to emphasize that point. After the merger Dale served as a Board member, and a proud member of the Conservation Advocacy Committee.

Dale's passion for the Adirondacks led him to be outspoken and active on fighting floatplanes on Low's Lake, pushing to protect the Forest Preserve by upholding Article 14, the famed Forever Wild clause in the New York Constitution, pushing to expand Wilderness areas, intervening in the planning around military overflights, and watchdogging major proposed subdivisions on private lands in the Park. He provided legal research that helped to prohibit ATVs on the Forest Preserve.



Dale was born and raised in Watertown, New York, son of Francis Byron Jeffers and Veronica L'Huillier Jeffers. After graduating from Watertown High School, he went on to receive an accounting degree from the University of Buffalo and a law degree from Albany Law School.

Dale spent most of his life in the Albany area, where he worked as a CPA at Cluett Peabody and Company and at Roth, Lurie. He then became a practicing tax attorney with Lombardi, Reinhardt, Walsh and Harrison. In his free time, Dale was an avid craftsman, building wood furniture and carefully crafting cedar strip canoes. He also loved gardening and later in life was a voracious reader.

Besides his parents, Dale was predeceased by his beloved wife of 26 years, Barbara "Bobbi" Banagan Jeffers, and he cherished his time with Bobbi and the entire Banagan clan. He is survived by his brother, Darrell Jeffers of Albany and Palm Springs, Calif.; sister, Sue Miller of Watertown and Wildwood, Fla.; two daughters, Amanda Townsley (Mike) of Houston, Texas and Elissa Smith (Justin) of Menands; three granddaughters; and nephews and nieces.

# Challenges and Opportunities

The work of protecting the Adirondack Park and Forest Preserve never stops.



During the last year, Protect the Adirondacks has been at the forefront of advocating for the State to significantly ramp up spending and land protection efforts, including the addition of new lands to the Adirondack Forest Preserve. Our research in 2023 on lands protected throughout the State served as a basis for our calls for more land protection in the Adirondacks. As we do every year, Protect the Adirondacks implements an agenda through advocacy, public education, independent public oversight, research, grassroots organizing, and legal action that enhances protections for the natural resources of the Adirondack Park and helps to build viable communities. Our careful planning changes with unforeseen events that require immediate action. We remain vigilant and ready to tackle the challenges,

*Big Salmon Lake, in the north end of the 36,000-acre Whitney Park, is one of 22 undeveloped lakes. Whitney Park has been a top land protection priority for the last 50 years for the State of New York. Right: Slim Pond on Whitney Park. These lands are on the market again and up for sale. Pictures by Nancie Battaglia.*

those known and those not yet known, that lie ahead.

**Setting the Stage for More Land Protection:** After the State passed the 30 by 30 law in 2022, setting a goal of conserving 30% of the State's lands and waters by 2030, PROTECT produced a report *20% in 2023: An Assessment of the New York State 30 by 30 Act* demonstrating that the State needed to protect approximately 3 mil-



lion acres of land to reach its goal. This report set the stage for the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) report released July 1, 2024 that calculated that 2.83 million acres of land need to be protected to meet the 30 by 30 goal. PROTECT's report held State officials accountable. We are now working to make sure that the 30 by 30 goal is incorporated into DEC's new Open Space Conservation Plan. PROTECT has also pushed the State to use Bond Act funding for open space land protection projects. Open space conservation is necessary to reach the 30 by 30 goal and is a critical piece of New York's Climate Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**Save Whitney Park:** Earlier this year, the owner of the 36,000-acre Whitney Park, John Hendrickson, the widower of Mary Lou Whitney, suddenly passed away. His heirs are now marketing Whitney Park, which has been at the top of New York State's land protection target list for decades. In many ways the future of Whitney Park will shape the future of the Adirondack Park.

**Forest Preserve Management Reform:** It has been more than three years since New York's highest court struck down DEC's plans to build a network of hundreds of miles of "Class II Community Connector Snowmobile Trails" in the Forest Preserve that violated Article 14 of the New York Constitution, the famed "Forever Wild" clause. PROTECT's win catalyzed reform efforts in DEC's management of the Forest Preserve. DEC formed the Forest Preserve Trails Stewardship Working Group, which is comprised of stakeholders in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks from local government, trail building groups, and conservation organizations including PROTECT, and has been slowly making progress.

Throughout 2023 DEC worked with the Working Group to develop a new Commissioner's Policy on "Forest Preserve Work Plans," which governs the planning and implementation of management activities such as trail work, bridge construction, campsite and parking lot construction, among other things. Significantly, the new Work Plans are supposed to focus on ensuring compliance with the Forever Wild clause. However, as DEC used the new Work Plan format in 2024 we have seen varying levels of Article 14 analysis included in the Work Plans prepared by DEC staff. Unfortunately, some of the Work Plans have little to no discussion explaining how certain proposals, such as for tree cutting, comply with the Forever Wild clause. We have commented on many of these draft Work Plans, urging DEC to improve the analysis of Article 14 issues.

In 2024, the Working Group focused on revising DEC's trail standards. DEC drafted new design standards for all trails — hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding and snowmobiling. These standards create a series of trail classes with varying limits on trail tread widths, trail corridor widths, heights of cleared area, and the types of bridges and drainage technologies to be used, among other things. Development of new trail standards has been a major challenge for the Working Group and for DEC. We expect to see a formal draft of these new trail standards released for public comment at some point in the first half of 2025.



One major downside to this work is that DEC and the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) are stubbornly insisting that they can still build and manage extra-wide snowmobile trails despite the 2021 court decision that found these trails violate Article 14. With a one-foot alteration in trail design standards, changing the unlawful 9-12 foot trail width to 8-12 feet, DEC is claiming with a straight face that the ever-so-slightly narrower snowmobile trail will pass constitutional muster. We will continue to press for DEC-APA to abide by the New York State Constitution.

DEC continues to work with OTAK, an environmental consulting firm, to develop the first Visitor Use Management (VUM) plan in the Adirondacks for the central High Peaks Wilderness Area. PROTECT participated on a Stakeholders group to provide feedback on the development of this plan. While this effort had promise as a way for DEC to improve its management of visitor use to protect these popular lands, the process has yet to produce a viable plan. VUM is widely used by the National Park Service and the Forest Preserve would benefit from its use in the Adirondacks.

*Above: The dilapidated Debar Lodge. PROTECT pushed for these buildings to be removed and the lands at the north end of Debar Pond restored to wild forest. Legislation to privatize these buildings was withdrawn in 2024. Right: Adirondack activists meeting with Assemblymember Billy Jones (top left) as they advocated for Adirondack Park-specific funding during Adirondack Park Environmental Lobby Day 2024.*

**Sustainable Trails:** The State is now in the fourth year of work on the new Cascade Mountain Hiking Trail that will run four miles from Mount Van Hoevenberg Winter Sports Complex Visitor's Center to the summits of Cascade and Porter mountains. This trail is sustainably designed to withstand heavy public use. While it will follow a longer route to reach the summit of Cascade Mountain, it will be easier for hikers to walk on a trail with an even trail tread, gradual elevation gain, and intact corridor. This trail is expected to open in 2025. This follows the very successful sustainable trail constructed on Mount Van Hoevenberg that opened in 2023.

**Adirondack Park Environmental Lobby Day 2024:**



In partnership with 15 other Adirondack organizations, PROTECT hosted Adirondack Park Environmental Lobby Day to advocate in the State Legislature for Adirondack Park-specific needs such as funding for Adirondack Park stewardship projects and visitor centers, the Survey of Climate Change and Adirondack Lake Ecosystems, the Adirondack Watershed Institute at Paul Smith's College, the Timbuctoo Climate Science and Careers Institute at SUNY's Environmental Science and Forestry Newcomb campus, Cornell's New York State Hemlock Initiative, and the Adirondack North Country Association's Adirondack Diversity Initiative. Through these combined efforts over 65 different legislative offices were contacted.

#### **Environmental Protection Fund Lobby Day 2024:**

PROTECT joined dozens of other environmental organizations from across New York for EPF Lobby Day to advocate for funding in the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to remain at \$400 million. Funding in the EPF is the main source of funding for stewardship of public lands within the Adirondack Park and for the environmentally sound economic development of communities in the Park. The EPF included \$39.5 million for open space land protection, \$4 million for land acquisition, \$4.5 for land trusts, and \$10 million for Adirondack and Catskill Park visitor safety and wilderness protection projects.

**Debar Lodge Article 14 Constitutional Amendment:** PROTECT helped to block a proposed amendment to privatize six acres of Forest Preserve on the shore of Debar Pond that includes a dozen buildings in disrepair. These public lands have significant open space, natural resource, and public recreational value as they provide unfettered public access to one of the most remote and scenic water bodies in the Adirondack Park. We are advocating for Debar Lodge and the other buildings to be removed so that the site can be restored to a wild forest setting.

**Three Prisons Article 14 Constitutional Amendment:** In 2024, PROTECT supported a "Three Prisons" constitutional amendment for Article 14 that would authorize the State to remove from the Forest Preserve three closed state prisons that were built on Forest Preserve lands. This amendment focused on Camp Gabriels in Franklin County, Mount McGregor Correctional Facility in Saratoga County, and the Moriah Shock Correctional Facility in Essex County. In the summer of 2024, Governor Kathy Hochul announced more closures of State correctional facilities, including two more in Forest Preserve counties: Great Meadow prison in Washington County and Sullivan prison in Sullivan County. Under state law, the only way that these closed prisons located on the Forest Preserve can be repurposed is through an Article 14 amendment. These facilities include hundreds of buildings and are highly developed. There is no appetite in State government to clear and restore these sites. We will continue to work on these amendments during the 2025 legislative session.

**Stop Wildlife Killing Contests:** In 2023, Protect the Adirondacks worked to help pass a bill, sponsored by Senator Timothy Kennedy and Assembly Conservation Committee Chair Deborah Glick, that makes it unlawful for any person to organize, sponsor, conduct, promote or participate in wildlife killing contests in New York State. Wildlife killing contests, often involving indiscriminate killing of coyotes, foxes, squirrels or other fur bearers, for prizes for the largest animal killed or the most animals killed in a certain period of time. In the last days of 2023, Governor Hochul signed the bill into law.



**Going to Bat for Wildlife Crossings:** PROTECT advocated for the passage of the Wildlife Crossings Act, which was sponsored by Senator Leroy Comrie and Assembly Member Robert Carroll. The bill directs the NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) and the NYS Thruway Authority to identify sites along highways, thruways and parkways where wildlife crossings are most needed to increase public safety and improve habitat connectivity. The bill also directs DOT and the Thruway Authority to create a priority list of wildlife crossing projects where federal funds could be used. There are millions of dollars of federal funds available through the Biden Administration for wildlife crossing infrastructure such as overpass bridges, underpass tunnels, culverts and directional fencing, that enable wildlife to safely cross roads and other barriers. The bill passed the Legislature in the spring of 2024 and we're now pressing for Governor Hochul to sign this bill into law.

**Protecting New York's Wolves:** PROTECT worked alongside other wildlife organizations to advocate for

*Above: Wolves, which are endangered and illegal to kill in New York State, have physical characteristics that are similar to coyotes, which are legal to hunt and trap. Right: DEC lacks credible data on the bobcat population in New York and the DEC needs to collect reliable data before finalizing its new bobcat management plan.*

a new wolf protection bill in the State Legislature. The bill, sponsored by Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal and Assemblymember Robert Carroll requires all coyotes taken by hunters or trappers to be tagged (as is currently done with other fur/game species) and directs DEC to collect DNA samples of any coyote weighing more than 50 pounds (an indicator that the animal may actually be a wolf). The bill would also require DEC to report to the Governor and Legislature on the status of wolves in the State; require DEC to establish a website portal for the public to report suspected wolf sightings; and modify its hunting and trapping training curriculum to include educational information concerning the presence of wolves and legal protections in New York.





**New York State Wildlife Action Plan:** DEC is currently in the process of updating the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), which must be updated and submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2025 to secure continued federal funding for wildlife conservation. The first step in the SWAP update is DEC’s preparation of a Species Status Assessment (“SSA”) for each species that is or may be imperiled in the State. PROTECT submitted comments on the draft SSAs prepared by DEC. PROTECT’s comments focused on four mammal species (Canada lynx, cougar, moose and wolf) and four bird species (American three-toed woodpecker, bay-breasted warbler, Bicknell’s thrush, and red-headed woodpecker) that are either present in low or declining numbers in the Adirondack Park or that formerly had breeding populations in the Adirondacks but are now rare. PROTECT urged DEC to provide increased protections for these at-risk species.

**Endangered Species:** PROTECT provided comments on DEC’s proposed regulations implementing the State’s Endangered Species Act. PROTECT commended DEC’s proposed regulations for providing crucial protections for imperiled species and their habitat, and offered suggestions for clarifying and improving several regulatory provisions.

**Bobcat Management Plan:** PROTECT submitted comments on DEC’s draft Bobcat Management Plan, which would govern management of the State’s bobcat population for the next 10 years. PROTECT criticized the draft Bobcat Plan as lacking any basis in reliable bobcat population data and attempting to establish hunting and trapping seasons in the absence of harvest-independent data concerning the status, distribution, and population trends of bobcats in New York. PROTECT urged DEC to withdraw the draft plan and to collect scientifically reliable population data before preparing a revised management plan.

**Protecting Wetlands:** PROTECT submitted comments on DEC’s proposed regulations for implementing the new 2022 Freshwater Wetlands Act (FWA) amendments. PROTECT’s comments strongly supported DEC’s proposed regulations, but noted that some provisions in the regulations should be modified. PROTECT suggested changes to provisions in the draft regulations governing their applicability, as well as changes to provide greater protection to vernal pools. PROTECT also prepared and submitted a letter to APA on behalf of several environmental groups urging APA to prepare updates to its wetland regulations to implement the new FWA provisions. APA administers and enforces the FWA in the Adirondack Park.

**27 Years of Water Quality Monitoring:** 2024 was the 27th year of the Adirondack Lake Assessment Program (ALAP), which is a partnership between Protect the Adirondacks and the Adirondack Watershed Institute (AWI) at Paul Smith’s College. ALAP has three primary objectives to: 1) collect long-term water quality data on individual lakes and ponds in the Adirondack Park; 2) provide long-term trend data on individual lakes and ponds for local residents, lake associations, property owners and local governments to help organize water quality protection efforts; and 3) assemble a profile of water quality conditions across the Adirondacks. ALAP has relied upon trained volunteers who collect water samples and information that is analyzed by the scientists at AWI. ALAP data is pivotal to making the public case for reducing road salt pollution in the Adirondacks.



**Fighting Road Salt Pollution:** The Adirondack Road Salt Reduction Task Force final report was finally released in September 2023. The report was strong in documenting the pollution of lakes and residential wells along heavily salted road corridors. The report identified options for experimental road salt applications and pilot-studies to use less salt, employ substitutes, and to use new types of equipment or techniques for winter road management and de-icing. The State Department of Transportation undertook a few pilot studies in the winters of 2023 and 2024, but was largely unsuccessful in reducing road salt pollution. PROTECT is advocating for new salt reduction legislation and is considering legal action to force the State to regulate road salt as a pollutant.

**Reducing Septic System Pollution:** Across New York and the Adirondacks, failing and improperly sited, designed, or installed onsite septic systems are a leading cause of water pollution that harms the environment and public health. New York needs to update the laws and regulations governing septic systems. In the spring of 2024, PROTECT advocated for a new bill sponsored

*Above: Barton’s waste tailings pile grows higher and more problematic each year. Right: Black mold known as Whiskey Fungus grows on the side of a house in Moriah from the WhistlePig Whiskey distillery facility. Far right: APA and DEC approved a marina project at this location on Lower Fish Creek Pond to consist of 92 motorboat slips, using large piers extending 160 feet, 172 feet, 188 feet and 196 feet from the shoreline. No carrying capacity study was completed for the connected Saranac Chain of Lakes.*

by Senator Pete Harckham, Chair of the Environmental Conservation Committee, and Assemblymember Chris Burdick that would require sellers of properties served by a septic system to provide buyers with information on how to obtain a NYS Department of Health pamphlet that educates owners about septic system maintenance. That bill was passed by the Legislature, was signed into law by Governor Hochul in September, and goes into effect on July 1, 2025.

In the 2024 Legislative session, PROTECT also advocated for a septic inspection bill that would require an inspection of existing septic systems at the time that



property is transferred from one owner to another. This type of inspection is often conducted during a property transaction, but not always and it is not mandatory. An inspection bill should also require failing systems to be fixed prior to the property transfer. Other states already require these inspections at the time of transfer of title. For example, Massachusetts has had this requirement in place since 1995. We will continue pushing for this bill in 2025.

**Independent Public Oversight:** PROTECT manages the best Independent Public Oversight Program in the Adirondacks. In 2024, PROTECT reviewed materials and has filed over 50 comment letters after filing 36 in 2023. These comments cover a range of issues regarding proposed private land development.

PROTECT submitted extensive comments to APA on the application by Barton Mines, LLC (Barton), which is seeking to significantly expand its mountaintop open pit mine in the Town of Johnsbury, Warren County. The mine is located on Ruby Mountain directly adjacent to the Siamese Ponds Wilderness Area. Specifically, the proposed expansion will destroy an additional 26 acres of the Critical Environmental Area that provides a critical buffer between the Barton Mine

and the Siamese Ponds Wilderness Area; significantly expand the existing massive waste dump that is already 73 acres in size and over 2,200 feet in height and which will be visible from numerous public hiking trails in the Forest Preserve; and will exacerbate the noise and dust impacts already being experienced from current mine operations. PROTECT also pointed out that APA has failed to comply with the State’s Climate Act because the Agency has not considered the project’s climate impacts.

In the Town of Moriah, PROTECT has been urging DEC and APA to take action to compel a whiskey maker to control emissions from its storage facilities that are coating nearby homes, cars, signs, and fencing with a black mold known as “whiskey fungus.” The company, WhistlePig Whiskey, owns and operates 13 warehouses in the small community of Mineville. PROTECT asked the APA and DEC to enforce their permits to stop WhiskeyPig from contaminating nearby properties. Neither agency has taken such action.

PROTECT also fought, along with other environmental groups, against the excessive number of boat slips proposed for the marina project on Lower Fish Creek Pond. The new landowner (the same owner of the



marina on Lower Saranac Lake) sought approval to construct 92 motorboat slips using large piers extending 160 feet, 172 feet, 188 feet and 196 feet from the shoreline. Unfortunately, that project was approved by both APA and DEC.

On Chazy Lake, PROTECT submitted comments to APA on an application for development of a 257-site campground with associated amenities on an undeveloped 146-acre parcel bordering Chazy Lake. PROTECT pointed out numerous significant deficiencies in the application. This project seeks to bring thousands of people to a relatively small and sparsely developed lake, doubling the number of people that currently live on and recreate on Chazy Lake, and does not include a phasing plan even though the application states that the project will be developed in phases.

PROTECT is also scrutinizing several other proposed development projects, including the major subdivision proposal in the Town of Jay, a new subdivision proposal in the Town of Lake Luzerne, and a large resort proposal in the Town of Cairo adjacent to the Wind-

*Above: PROTECT's Conservation and Director and Counsel Christopher Amato (2nd from right) representing PROTECT in Court earlier this year in Rochester with members of the Adirondack White Lake Association. Right: Franklin County is seeking to open miles of local roads for ATV use.*

ham-Blackhead Range Wilderness area of the Forest Preserve in the Catskill Park.

**Franklin County's Multiuse Trail System:** Over the summer, Franklin County proposed a 500-mile "multi-use" recreational trail system. During the County's public comment period on its proposal, we submitted a letter pointing out numerous concerns with the proposed system that would create extensive new routes for off-road vehicles ("ORVs") to use roads and trails throughout the County, including potentially on Forest Preserve lands. Franklin County has since said that it would remove ORV use on trails that lead into the Adirondack Park. However, that still leaves open the possibility for ORV use on public roads, which is problematic for several reasons, not the least of which is that the use of larger ORVs, such as "side-by-sides" or



“utility task vehicles,” are not allowed on public roads according to Vehicle and Traffic Law. We will continue to urge Franklin County to scale back its proposal and ensure that it complies with applicable laws.

**ProcellaCOR:** As of the fall of 2024, at least eight waterbodies, including Lake George, have used the aquatic herbicide ProcellaCOR EC to control invasive Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM). Despite our repeated calls for an adjudicatory hearing on the use of this relatively new herbicide, APA never held one. PROTECT continues to be concerned about the use of ProcellaCOR in the Adirondack Park and its potential long-term impacts on the ecosystem, especially where it is applied in the same waterbody year after year. EWM must be controlled with sustained, active management and we do not believe that ongoing chemical herbicide treatments is the answer. The scientific follow-up studies by the Lake George Association after chemical treatment in Lake George are yielding important information. We urge lake associations and managers to develop robust lake management plans that include a variety of non-chemical tools to address the multitude of threats facing Adirondack lakes.

**Legal Action:** Protect the Adirondacks takes legal action when necessary, when we believe the law has been broken and all other efforts and remedies have been exhausted. Going to court is always the last move on the board. In the past year, we’ve been involved in four lawsuits.

With other petitioners, PROTECT is challenging the approval of a major marina expansion on Lower Saranac Lake, specifically over APA’s decision that installation of a series of new docks in regulated wetlands did not require a wetlands permit. APA had required a wetlands permit for years and then reversed course. The Court dismissed part of the case, but we requested that the Judge reconsider the dismissal and we are awaiting a decision from the Court.

In 2023, PROTECT sued the DEC and APA over their decision to refurbish nearly one mile of a motor vehicle road in the southern High Peaks Wilderness Area. In September 2024, the Supreme Court, Albany County, granted a motion by APA to dismiss PROTECT’s complaint as time-barred. We have filed a notice of appeal of Supreme Court’s decision with the Appellate Division, Third Department. We have until April to perfect this appeal.

Under the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan and the Saranac Lakes Wild Forest Unit Management Plan a carrying capacity study has been long required on the Saranac Chain of Lakes. In 2024, PROTECT filed a lawsuit against DEC asking the Court to require DEC to conduct the mandated carrying capacity study for the waterbodies in the Saranac Chain of Lakes. The study is necessary to evaluate the environmental and social impacts of visitor overuse of these waterbodies, which is all the more important as APA has recently approved major expansions of marinas on Lower Saranac Lake and Lower Fish Creek Pond. We are awaiting a decision from the Court.

PROTECT worked with the Adirondack White Lake Association and PACE Environmental Law Clinic on a case challenging APA’s issuance of a permit for the White Lake Granite Quarry, despite significant community concerns, without first holding an adjudicatory



public hearing. We lost at State Supreme Court and in an appeal to the Appellate Division, Fourth Department. Scores of nearby property owners sought to have the impacts of this new mine independently evaluated through an adjudicatory hearing.

**Priorities for 2025:** This fall, APA released proposed amendments to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (SLMP). Many of the proposed changes have the potential to weaken the SLMP's protections of the Forest Preserve, especially in Wilderness Areas. We are particularly concerned about the discretion being given to DEC to allow motor vehicles on the Forest Preserve without abiding by the limitations in the current SLMP. APA's proposed SLMP amendments are another indicator that APA has lost focus on its mission to protect the Park's natural resources.

PROTECT's 2024 analysis of APA's operations showed a noticeable decline in the overall functioning of the APA Board. This has been manifested in the lack of Board meetings for multiple months during the year, the reduction in the time that Board meetings last,

*Above: PROTECT's Deputy Director Claudia Braymer speaking with David Lombardo, host of WCNY's The Capitol Pressroom, advocating for state legislation to protect wolves in New York State. Right: Hikers on Mount Marcy.*

the lack of APA Board committee meetings, and the increasing delegation to APA staff of project review functions. We found that in every category that we analyzed the numbers have declined over the last 20 years, with the most marked declines occurring from 2009 to the present.

In addition, by June 2025, every single appointed APA Board Member's term will be expired, so there is an incredible opportunity to appoint a group of strong, diverse and environmentally minded candidates to the Board. Having qualified and dedicated Members is essential to APA's ability to carry out its mission of protecting the natural resources of the Adirondack Park. In 2025 we will continue to advocate for APA to regain its status as a leader in environmental protection and regional land use regulation and planning for the Adirondacks, New York State, and the United States.



In 2025, Chris Amato will take on more advocacy in the State Legislature now that it has been more than two years since his time as counsel in the State Senate and he is no longer subject to a ban on lobbying. On January 1, 2025, Claudia Braymer takes over as the Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks.

Throughout the annual state budget process, PROTECT will advocate for funding in the Environmental Protection Fund for vital programs including land protection, invasives species control, Forest Preserve Stewardship, new carrying capacity studies for Adirondack lakes, support for important Adirondack institutions and initiatives, such as the Adirondack Diversity Initiative and Visitor Interpretive Centers, among others.

We'll push for new state legislation to protect wolves, reduce water pollution, and ensure that new Article 14 amendments are only undertaken where absolutely necessary and where they provide a clear public benefit. To that end, we will support second passage for the Mt Van Hoevenberg constitutional amendment, and amendments that remove the closed correctional facilities from the Forest Preserve, but will oppose any

attempt to remove the Debar Pond lands from the Forest Preserve.

We will continue pushing for the State to ramp up an ambitious land protection program to fulfill the 30 by 30 goal. We will also work to get the State to implement the recommendations in the Adirondack Road Salt Reduction Task Force to significantly reduce the road salt polluting Adirondack waterways and wells. We will advocate for the State to move forward with full implementation of New York's Climate Action Plan, and we will advocate for programs and funding that protect standing forests on private lands in the Adirondack Park for carbon sequestration and storage purposes.

PROTECT will continue our independent public oversight work to hold State and local entities responsible for implementing Adirondack Park environmental laws, and we will bring legal challenges when necessary. We will defend public participation and organizational transparency of state agencies during their review of private land development projects, and we will actively participate in bringing needed reforms to the management of the Forest Preserve. We will work with partners in the Adirondack community to build vibrant hamlets by advocating for municipal infrastructure funding, community planning funding, and funding for affordable housing programs.

PROTECT believes in transparency of State and local governments, and it believes in transparency with the public about our own positions. Our comment letters, articles and positions on public policy matters are all available on our website for anyone to read. We encourage you to go to our website or our social media channels to get real-time updates on our ongoing efforts.

We are so grateful for the members of Protect the Adirondacks for your financial support, membership, letters, public comments at hearings, and volunteerism. Your contributions to PROTECT are what drives our work and helps us succeed at keeping the Adirondack Park wild and beautiful for our generation and for generations to come. Thank you!

## Welcome New Board Members



*Sheila Hutt*



*John Nemjo*



*Patty Morrison*

Sheila Hutt was born in Tupper Lake and for all but five years she has lived and worked in the Adirondacks. She is a steward and caretaker of the Adirondack wilderness and sees PROTECT as an advocacy organization that shares her vision. She helped found the Adirondack Lakes Center for the Arts in Blue Mountain Lake. With goals attained and having established the Arts Center as a permanent asset in the Adirondacks, she knew that she wanted to remain in Blue Mountain Lake and continue to be active in the Adirondack community. She and her husband Jim worked on numerous projects through their firm, Hutt Enterprises/The Ideas Company, Inc., including an exhibit for the 1980 Winter Olympic Games in Lake Placid. Always concerned with quality of life in the Adirondacks, she has dedicated her time and talents as a volunteer for many organizations, including as a Trustee for Paul Smith's College for 22 years.

John Nemjo founded Mountainman Outdoor Supply Company in 1993 in an abandoned pizza shop in Inlet. Eventually it became one of the pre-eminent outdoor specialty retailers in not only Upstate New York, but in the entire northeast. With stores in Old Forge and Saratoga Springs, he sold over 43,000 canoes and kayaks and outfitted thousands of hikers and backpackers on their adventures in the Adirondacks and around the world. In 2023, he sold his Old Forge location and

now concentrates his time and energy on Saratoga Outdoors, his store on Broadway in Saratoga Springs, giving him more time for his own outdoor explorations. Previously he was a mosquito biologist and a teacher at the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. He has undergraduate degrees in both math and biology from Florida Southern College and a master's degree in Ecology from Rutgers University.

Patricia Morrison brings professional and community leadership experience to PROTECT. With 25 years in business, she has driven market introduction and sales across industries such as healthcare, government, and higher education. She has launched products in SaaS and hardware for major companies, including Talkdesk, Canon, and Panasonic. A lifelong advocate for community development, Patty is active in numerous organizations. Her roles include serving on the Minerva Historical Society, Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation boards, and as a member of the Saratoga Springs Planning Board. She was also a trustee for the Saratoga Springs City School District and a volunteer with Sustainable Saratoga's Urban Forestry Project. Patty has family roots in the Adirondacks, with connections on both sides of her family. Her background equips her to help PROTECT fulfill its mission of safeguarding the park's lands and communities for future generations.



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## Peter Bauer steps down after 35 years of Adirondack Park conservation and environmental protection work

By the end of 2024 I will have worked in Adirondack Park environmental conservation for 35 years. A long tradition of Adirondack conservation and advocacy by many others preceded my time and I hope that this work continues for many others in the years to come.

This past summer I was transfixed by the Summer Olympic Games in Paris and it occurred to me that Adirondack Park conservation is like a relay race where the baton is passed from person to person, organization to organization, generation to generation, decade after decade. For a period of time, I was lucky enough to carry the baton of conservation. Adirondack conservation includes dozens of leaders and groups all working for the Park and Forest Preserve, sometimes together, sometimes independently, sometimes successful, sometimes spinning their wheels, but always aiming forward. In the various positions that I have held, for the various organizations that I worked for, I tried to shape and effect good deeds and environmental gains for the Adirondack Park.

As I look back at the wins and losses that I contributed to since 1989, I know that I worked hard and honestly to protect the wild places, forests, waters and rural communities of the Adirondack Park. This work was important, valuable, and thoroughly enjoyable. I was lucky to be given the chance to do good work and I tried my best to honor that opportunity.

The end of this year tops just over 12 years that I have worked as the Executive Director of Protect the Adirondacks, the organization that formed through a merger of the Residents' Committee to Protect the Adirondacks, where I was the Executive Director for 14 years, and the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks. In between these positions I worked for five years as the Executive Director at the FUND for Lake George, which has since merged with the Lake George Association. These were three wonderful organizations, with great Boards and members, who were



*Above: a canoe-in protest for a motorless Weller Pond, part of the Saranac Chain of Lakes, in 2018. Right: Meeting with Senator Schumer in 1999 soon after his election to the U.S. Senate. Far right: Scenes from the North Forest Canoe Trek in 1996 with Peter Sterling, a major educational effort about the Adirondack Park and Northern Forest.*

highly successful. During my time working for these groups, I was often a “professional meeting-goer” as I drove all around the Adirondacks and beyond to various meetings, and in the last three decades I went from the youngest person in the room to one of the oldest.

I moved to the Adirondacks in the mid-1980s after having visited the area, mainly the High Peaks, when I was in college. I moved to Saranac Lake initially, but also lived in Lake Placid and Keene. It was thrilling in those years to hike and paddle and camp and cross-country ski in new places around the Adirondacks. Driving on roads in far flung areas of the Adirondacks



that I had never driven over before was exhilarating. In the mid-1990s, I moved to Blue Mountain Lake, where my wife Cathleen Collins grew up, and this is where we live today, though for a period we lived in Lake George.

In a stint at *Adirondack Life* magazine in the late 1980s, where I was fortunate to work under the writer Christopher Shaw, and work with other writers like Bill Mckibben, I wrote a piece on the future of the Adirondacks, interviewing George Davis in the process. George and his wife Anita helped me make a map for the article of the top lands in private ownership that were targeted by the environmental community for protection in the Forest Preserve or by conservation easement. My position at *Adirondack Life* was the start of a great education about the history, geography, character, and culture of the Adirondacks.

In 1989, Governor Mario Cuomo formed the Commission on the Adirondacks in the Twenty-First Century, headed by one-time Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner and former state legislator Peter A. A. Berle as its Chair. Berle led the legislative floor fight to pass the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) Act in the early 1970s, and he named George Davis as the Commission's Executive Director.

Davis would go on to win a MacArthur Foundation "Genius" award for his Adirondack Park planning and advocacy work. I was a late addition to the Commission's staff in the summer of 1989, and in the end, I was its last employee in late 1990.

The Commission brought together everything about the Adirondacks – the history, major issues and challenges, politics, controversies, successes and failures, strengths and weaknesses, and the passions and irrationality of this place. We grappled with competing ideas, policies, and visions for the future, probing the data and its importance for the Forest Preserve and ways to strengthen regional landscape planning. Under George Davis, the most fearless of fearless leaders, the scope of the Commission's work was broad and ambitious and in those two years I learned the power of myths and the importance of reality in public policy for the Adirondack Park.

In my work I've often encountered the notion that the Adirondacks is somehow a land apart from the rest of the country, a place that's unique with its own social, cultural, and economic rhythms, a place somehow behind the times. The great open spaces of the Adirondacks can seem dramatically different and overwhelming to visitors, especially when encountering roads



lined with seemingly endless walls of forests after a long drive from a city or suburban landscape.

But in many ways, I found the Adirondacks to be ahead of the rest of the country. The disinformation and misinformation around the Berle Commission report in 1990 and after, the statements at public hearings, usually to great applause, about a United Nations takeover of the Park and black helicopters ferrying-in blue helmeted soldiers from an international army to drive out local people from their homes, was omnipresent in wake of the Commission report in the early 1990s. This was a rebirth from the fertile seedbank of the anti-APA advocacy in the late 1970s-1980s. In this fact-free zone of passions, where there was little public accountability and no gatekeeper for the truth in local media, the Adirondack Park was actually ahead of its time, presaging a new truth-free and fact-free era of American public life that we're all currently living through. In this unfortunate respect, the rest of the county had to catch up to the Adirondacks.

My experiences with the Berle Commission brought

*Peter Bauer and Cathleen Collins, 2000.*

me into meetings with environmental staffers at the Cuomo Administration. I watched them say one thing to Commission leaders in private and another thing to the media. I watched them play different Commissioners against one another. At the same time, local government leaders came through the office, and they too said different things in private than in public. I watched some Commission members disavow hard data as simply somebody's random opinion. The staff or spouses of State Assembly members or Senators came through the office to deliver messages. But the biggest thing I saw was how hard it was to turn the wheels of government to create the opportune conditions for serious public policy to happen.

At the Commission, I had a front row seat to the debates that I would hear echoed though Adirondack conservation for years to come. I was awed by environmental stalwart Harold Jerry, who had led the Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks under Governor Nelson Rockefeller,

which recommended the formation of the APA and a regional land use plan for the Adirondacks. Harold Jerry often squared off with Bob Flacke, another former Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and local government official from Lake George. They argued about land acquisition, strengthening or weakening the APA Act, and community development. At the Commission I marveled at the leadership of Berle, the graceful diplomacy and wisdom of Ross Whaley, then President of SUNY-ESF, and the canny work of Craig Gilborn, the Director of the Adirondack Museum. Flacke would go on to write a minority report to undermine the Commission's final report and then he campaigned against the APA for a decade with various timber-industry-backed groups. Though adversaries in the years after the Commission report, when I later lived in Lake George in the early 2000s, Flacke and I teamed up on various efforts and became allies and friends.

The Commission's work spotlighted the need for open space protection and made sweeping recommendations to improve the management of the Adirondack Park and community development. The Commission's final report included over 250 recommendations and though this plan failed to be implemented in its full form, over half of the recommendations were eventually adopted in part or in full over the years. The Commission's boldest act was the publication of a map of high priority lands that merited long-term protection to maintain the great open space landscape of the Adirondack Park in perpetuity. In my role, I helped design and get that map printed. For me, that map, that vision, always set out the highest goal for Adirondack policymakers and communities.

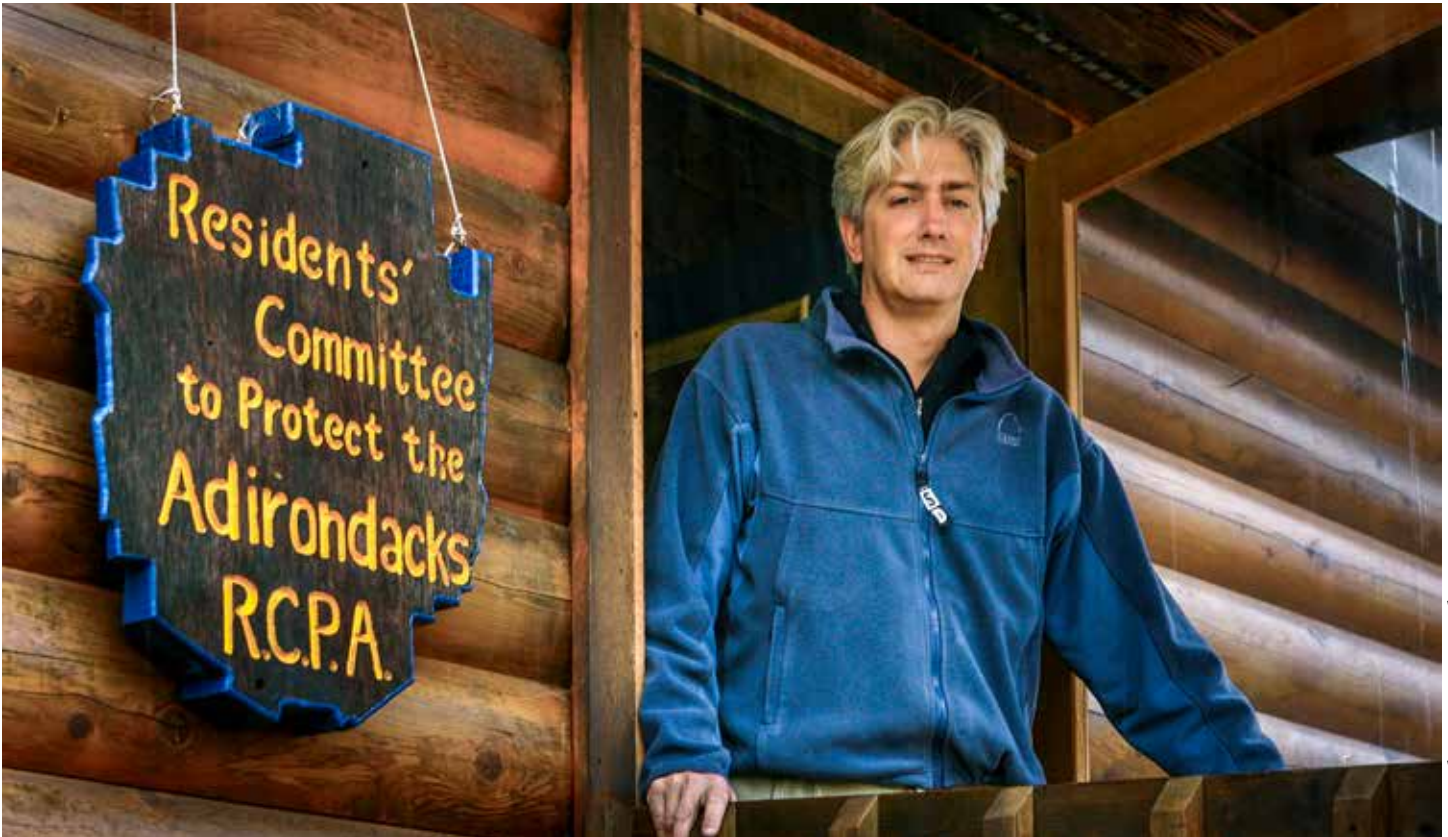
In the few short years I had lived in the Adirondacks before working on the Berle Commission, I had sensed a deep love for the wildness of the area among many Park residents. The opposition to the Commission report in the early 1990s seemed to be using local voices for the benefit of the large timber companies and landowners who were opposed to further land use restrictions. A Commission meeting in North Creek in the spring of 1990 led to local residents in the area banding together to organize a group that wanted stronger

protections in order to protect the Adirondacks. In the wake of that meeting, the Residents' Committee to Protect the Adirondacks (RCPA) formed in 1990.

In my first years living in Saranac Lake and Keene, I hiked, paddled and cross-country skied all the time on the Forest Preserve. At *Adirondack Life*, I had various Adirondack Park maps on the wall of my office and at the Berle Commission we pored over all sorts of maps. But it wasn't until I was at the RCPA and living in Blue Mountain Lake, that I grew to understand the incredible good fortune of the public Forest Preserve in the Adirondack Park, its immenseness and grandeur, and I saw up close what public wild spaces mean for a society, and for the last three decades the Forest Preserve has been the principal focus of my work.

The RCPA was as grassroots an effort as there ever was. The organizers were David Moro, Joe Mahay, Evelyn Greene, Art Perryman, Richard Stewart, Peter O'Shea, and Erwin Miller, among many others. Another one of the key organizers was the incomparable John Collins, who was not only steadfast in his environmental views, but always seemed to know the right position to take and was quietly persuasive. Johnny, a schoolteacher in Long Lake, served for a long time as an APA Board member from Hamilton County, then APA Chairman, and he later became my father-in-law, and was someone I grew to deeply admire and love.

I started attending RCPA meetings in the summer of 1990 with Wendy O'Neil, where we helped raise money and did some grant-writing to get the group going. 1990 saw large protests against the Commission report and various acts of civil disobedience. Many of the opponents claimed to speak for all Adirondack Park residents. The RCPA went gangbusters in its first years, garnering attention as a credible local voice for conservation, while working with a constellation of other groups pushing for various legislative versions of the Commission report. Dan Ling and then John Parker were hired as the first staff. RCPA published a periodic pro-conservation newspaper *Adirondack Voices*, which I initially put together, and later John and Constance Quenell helped to publish it, and it was widely distributed around the Park.



Picture by Nancie Battaglia

By the time I was hired in the summer of 1994, much of the early enthusiasm had waned, and our goal was to build a viable organization. For the next 14 years, the RCPA played a key role in Adirondack Park advocacy. Our initial work focused on complementing the larger Adirondack Park advocacy organizations with a sustained undeniable local voice calling for stronger environmental protections. In these years, the role of the RCPA grew and we took the lead on some issues and set the agenda for Adirondack conservation.

The Board was bolstered with new leaders like Peter Hornbeck, Phil Hamel, Dean Cook, and Nancy Bernstein. Hornbeck, Hamel, and Joe Mahay all chaired the group at different times. The RCPA focused on major private land development issues before the APA as well as Park-related budgetary and legislative matters in Albany. In a series of meetings, I paraded local residents who spoke out earnestly for Park protection through the office of State Senator Ron Stafford from Plattsburgh, the legendary and all powerful Senator, who controlled all things legislative for the Adirondacks, and with whom I established a working relationship.

*At the RCPA Office in North Creek in 2006.*

A few months into my work at the RCPA in 1994, George Pataki was elected Governor. He would go on to serve for 12 years. I had no idea at the time how much Pataki would change the Adirondack Park landscape for better and worse. After Nelson Rockefeller, who set up the APA, passed the APA's Land Use and Development Plan, and signed the first Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan, Pataki has had the greatest influence over the shape and management of the Adirondack Park of any New York Governor.

In his first years, Pataki struggled to set his agenda. He was the first Republican Governor in twenty years in New York and expectations were high for him to make major changes. Among the various groups beating up on the APA at that time, like the Blue Line Council and Fairness Coalition, hopes were high that Pataki would abolish the APA. Pataki did not kill off the APA, but he gutted the APA Board in 1995 by getting rid of long-time Adirondack Park environmental titans Peter Paine, Elizabeth Thorndike, Anne LaBastille, and

John Collins. Pataki also fired Bob Glennon, the APA's Executive Director. New Board members were largely local government officials and North Country political leaders or ideological pro-development allies. The APA has never recovered.

A series of events happened in the Adirondacks that shaped Pataki's approach to Adirondack politics. Straight off in 1995, with a new APA Board freshly installed, the Essex County Board of Supervisors moved to sell their county landfill. The APA reversed a long-standing policy against the importation of solid waste from outside the Park and then stated it had no role in reviewing the project. The would-be private landfill owners planned to import 150,000 tons of garbage a year and slowly fill up the 150-acre landfill site. They were calling it a "Fresh Kills Landfill North" in a nod to the infamous New York City mountainous landfill in Staten Island. RCPA worked with other groups and local residents to oppose this effort. The big break came with a weekend of *New York Times* stories featuring the RCPA that reported on the APA's sudden policy reversal, which spurred Pataki to reign in the agency. His administration soon negotiated a settlement with the county that blocked privatization.

The summer of 1995 also saw the great Blowdown where a *derecho* blasted across the Adirondacks and microbursts levelled trees by the millions. Sacred places like Canada Island on Lake Lila or long stretches of the Oswegatchie River saw towering white pines and hemlocks flattened. Pataki's DEC convened a working group as there was a big push to go into the Forest Preserve for salvage logging, something that had been done after the 1950 Blowdown. In the end, Team Pataki wisely resisted these calls.

Then at the beginning of 1997, Mary Lou Whitney threatened a major development of exclusive "Great Camps" spread across 15,000 acres around Little Tupper Lake, the northern part of what was then the 51,000-acre Whitney Park private estate in the central Adirondacks. Pataki's top staff intervened and the Governor worked out a state purchase. Team Pataki was generally surprised at the glowing media coverage about its Little Tupper Lake deal.

When I worked at *Adirondack Life*, I first paddled on Low's Lake, which had recently been purchased by the State. Much of the lake was still private land, but the Forest Preserve had a foothold that was expanded over the years. It's hard for me to think of the Adirondack Park without Low's Lake being protected in the Forest Preserve and timeless. My two kids grew up camping and they have always known favorite spots like Little Tupper Lake and Round Lake as public lands.

In the wake of the Little Tupper Lake purchase, I went to New York City with a group of Adirondack environmental leaders and other statewide groups to meet with Pataki. We laid out the enormous opportunities for land protection in the Adirondacks at that time as major timber companies and papermill owners that had owned hundreds of thousands of acres were all changing their industrial practices. One by one they sold off their lands, much of it to conservation, but some to developers, and sold or closed mills from Minnesota to Maine. Most of the papermills that ringed the Adirondack Park closed. To say that Pataki "got it" at this historic moment is an understatement. He seized the challenge.

Pataki embarked on an aggressive land protection campaign for the rest of his time in office. After buying Little Tupper Lake, Pataki went on to finalize the 129,000-acre "Champion" land deal that protected five rivers, including a long stretch of the South Branch of the Grass River, and a 100,000-acre easement. Then he completed the 100,000-acre DomTar deal followed by the 300,000-acre deal with International Paper Company. RCPA spent a great deal of time in this period researching and promoting the benefits of land protection for Adirondack communities and swatting back deliberate misinformation. Pataki went on to purchase Round Lake, Clear Pond, Henderson Lake, Masawepie Mire, Madawaska Pond, and Lyon Mountain, among other natural jewels, and over 700,000 acres of easements on forestlands. The last major timber company to sell its lands was Finch, Pruyn and Company, which sold its 145,000-acre holding to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in 2006, that would later be protected by the State under Governors David Paterson and Andrew Cuomo.



Picture by Nancie Battaglia

Buying land helped Pataki set up a political dynamic that enlivened supporters and minimized opposition in the Adirondacks. While local government leaders were uncomfortable with his land protection deals, and periodically griped, they were thrilled by how he had gutted the APA. While environmental groups were displeased with how useless and pro-development the APA had become, and we publicly griped, we supported the many Pataki land deals to expand the Forest Preserve and buy conservation easements. Pataki was at once pro-development and pro-land protection. Natural jewels were protected, but Pataki opened the gates of the Park wide for vacation homes anywhere and everywhere.

The Pataki land deals changed the face of the Adirondack Park. These historic land purchases were facilitated and assisted by land protection groups like The Nature Conservancy Adirondack Chapter and Land Trust and the Open Space Institute. Mike Carr ran the TNC's Adirondack Chapter for two decades and more than anybody else in these years literally moved mountains from private ownership to public protec-

*The Canoe in for Wilderness at Little Tupper Lake in 1998. Picture by Nancie Battaglia.*

tion to help preserve the great open spaces of the Adirondack Park for the long run.

The RCPA Board was chock full of Wilderness enthusiasts. We organized the Canoe-In For Wilderness at Little Tupper Lake in the summer of 1998, an event with paddlers in over 250 canoes and kayaks of activists calling for a Wilderness classification for the newly acquired lake. The day was festive, and the event helped seal the deal. We worked with local businesses like Blue Mountain Outfitters and with John Nemjo at Mountainman Outdoor Supply Company. Six months later, as the APA acted to classify this area as Wilderness, DEC Commissioner John Cahill and Jim Frenette, a Board member from Tupper Lake, led the charge. Frenette said the Whitney Wilderness classification was a gift to his grandchildren and everybody else's grandchildren too. These years saw the biggest expansion of Wilderness in the history of the Forest Preserve with the creation of the William C. Whitney



Wilderness, Round Lake Wilderness, and Madawaska Primitive Area. It also saw massive expansions of the Five Ponds Wilderness and Pepperbox Wilderness Areas. The RCPA had a hand in all of those actions.

The RCPA also developed a Forest Preserve Watch program. In the late 1990s, we dealt with local governments building wide snowmobile trails with DEC approval, where the APA was forced to undertake enforcement actions, and DEC's massive tree cutting and road widening along the Bear Pond Road in the Watson's East Triangle, where the APA again was forced to undertake an enforcement action. The RCPA sued over the APA's lax enforcement over the Bear Pond Road, and we negotiated a settlement that codified new policies to improve Forest Preserve management.

The most frequent calls we received was about damage to the Forest Preserve from All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs). In the late 1990s, ATV use was out of control in many parts of the Forest Preserve. The RCPA set out to investigate it, and we were stunned by what we found. Todd Thomas, John Davis, and Bill Kitchen all helped immensely with field work and picture taking to document ATV damage to Forest Preserve areas where they were allowed and to areas where they trespassed. The DEC had illegally opened scores of roads in the Forest Preserve to ATVs. Riders were not only tearing up these roads, but widely trespassing onto hiking trails, riding around barrier gates, or tearing the gates out. Miles of roads and trails had been turned into long wide rutted muddy troughs.

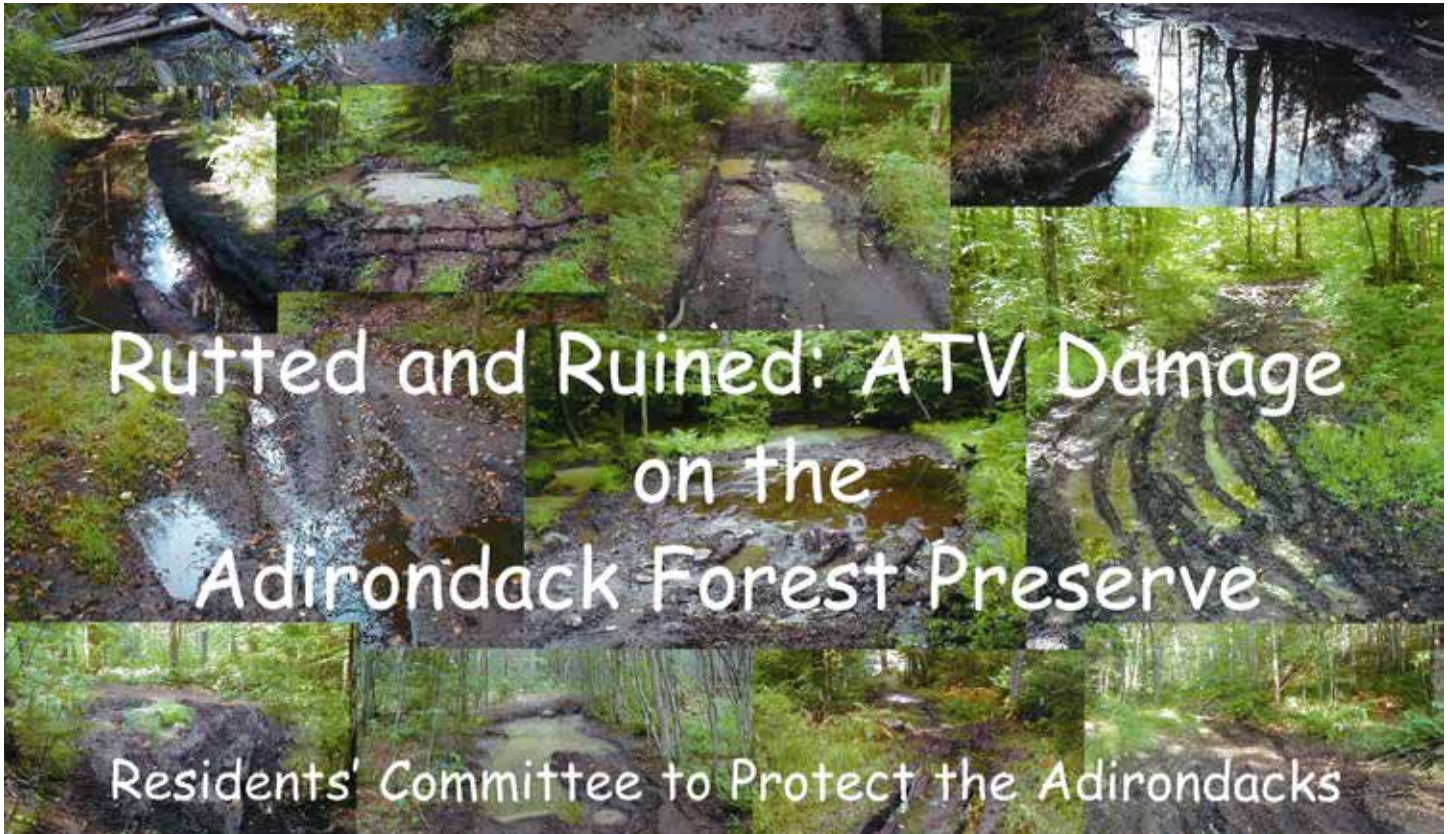
In 2003, RCPA published *Rutted and Ruined: ATV Damage on the Adirondack Forest Preserve*. The report used the power of pictures, long a core part of Adirondack Park advocacy. The report catalogued four years of field work that documented widespread natural resource damage caused by ATVs and provided a legal analysis that showed that the DEC had failed to follow the law and illegally opened scores of Forest Preserve roads. *Rutted and Ruined* reached Pataki's desk.

The report was followed by legal action against the DEC and APA, which was settled as these agencies agreed to close all of the roads in the Forest Preserve

that had been illegally opened. Tom Ulasewicz, Bob Glennon, and Dale Jeffers all helped with the legal analysis. The road closures were followed by a DEC statement that ATV use would not be allowed on the Forest Preserve except for use by disabled individuals through a permit program. The DEC drafted a new Commissioners Policy to ban ATVs on the Forest Preserve and held public hearings that were roiled by angry men, and some women, facing limits on the use of their machines, but DEC never finalized this policy. In these years I learned about the powerful emotional connections between men and women and their machines. While DEC stated that ATVs would no longer be allowed on the Forest Preserve, an official ban proved to be a bridge too far. The RCPA's work effectively banned ATVs from the Forest Preserve, a fact that still continues today.

Fieldwork was decisive on the ATV issue. We clearly proved a negative impact and widespread problem. Getting out into the field, especially to places in the Forest Preserve, became one of the focuses of my work as there was nothing like seeing the issues up close to understand their complexities. No other environmental advocate got out into the Forest Preserve as widely and consistently as I did. This extensive field work helped immensely in how we approached Forest Preserve management issues. The other benefit from this extensive time in the field is that the concept of preserving lands for future generations became very real as I visited wild and beautiful areas that had been protected 30 or 40 or 100 years ago, where I saw how gifts from the past benefitted all of us here today.

In the late 1990s, the RCPA intervened in a civil rights lawsuit under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) against the DEC-APA for their failure to provide adequate access for disabled individuals to the Forest Preserve. The plaintiffs were seeking widespread use of ATVs, which they called "wheelchairs in the woods." A coalition of environmental groups intervened to protect Wilderness Areas from new motorized uses and to help plan for meaningful expanded universal access on all State lands. A 2001 settlement created a workable program for special ATV access in certain Wild Forest areas for disabled individuals



through a permit program and for new planning to provide accessible recreational facilities across New York. In the last 25 years, the DEC has constructed hundreds of facilities to improve disabled access.

Though perhaps the RCPA's greatest impact was on the Forest Preserve, our initial focus was on private land development. In the mid-1990s, private land development was a major focus, with vacation homes fueled by a growing economy and in reaction to the Commission report. RCPA published *Growth in the Adirondacks: Development Trends in the Adirondack Park 1990-1999*, which for the first time charted annual building trends in the Adirondack Park, seeing an average of 850 new houses annually, and that the APA only reviewed about 33% of new development, with 66% handled by local governments. That report ended constant chatter from local officials that nothing could happen in the Adirondacks without an APA permit.

Work on private land development is always an emotionally charged issue because of everything that is involved in owning land or a house. In our advocacy to

*Rutted and Ruined: ATV Damage on the Adirondack Forest Preserve was published in 2003 and led to the DEC prohibiting public recreational use of ATVs on the Forest Preserve.*

limit development we were faced with angry responses from people that we were killing their dreams, whether it was their year-round home or their vacation home. American life creates a tremendous emotional connection between people and their homes. One's home is their castle, where they're kings or queens, where their family is safe, and nobody should tell anybody what they can or can't do there. The vacation home is where the kids and grandkids come to visit. The raw emotion around land and housing development rivalled that around men and women and their machines, and always made these issues fraught and tense.

2024 marked the 27<sup>th</sup> sampling season for Adirondack Lake Assessment Program (ALAP), a water quality monitoring program that was started in 1999 in a collaboration between the RCPA and the Adirondack Aquatic Institute (AAI) at Paul Smith's College. I started this program with Michael Martin, who ran AAI

that time. ALAP started with a dozen lakes initially. AAI evolved into the Adirondack Watershed Institute at Paul Smith's College, which is one of the premier scientific research organizations in the Adirondacks. In 2024, 80 lakes and ponds participated, involving hundreds of volunteers and dozens of lake associations. The long-term data from ALAP has provided vital information on water quality for scores of lakes and documented extensive road salt pollution and impacts from climate change. The road salt pollution data underwrote the final report findings of the Adirondack Road Salt Reduction Task Force. Nancy Bernstein helped manage ALAP for PROTECT for a time and Sean Conin, Mike DeAngelo, Dan Kelting, Corey Laxson, Elizabeth Yerger, and Brendan Wiltse, among others, all worked on the program for PSC-AWI.

The RCPA also had success in Albany as we helped to pass legislation on jet ski control, acid rain mitigation, and bolstering the Environmental Protection Fund in its first years. We worked for years on the Northern Forest Alliance, a massive 40-group, 4-state coalition that focused on land protection and rural community development. We reviewed and field checked dozens of Unit Management Plans for Forest Preserve management, worked on Article 14 amendments, and helped to write the first invasive species management plan for the Adirondack Park. For a decade RCPA also managed an FSC Sustainable Forestry Certification program that at its height had over 12,000 acres enrolled. Ross Morgan and Dan Gilmore were terrific foresters. Kate Gardner, Deb Zack, and Robin Robertson all helped immensely to make the RCPA an effective and viable organization in these years.

Pataki's commitment to protect open space in the Adirondacks irked a number of local government officials. Senator Ron Stafford, a Pataki ally, arranged a meeting with local officials where they pushed for more snowmobile trails and tourist trains to take away the sting of Pataki's land buys. At that point, local officials could have asked the Governor for the moon, but their ask was for more snowmobile trails and tourist trains. This also followed some early missteps at the DEC in Pataki's first years where they gave local governments the authority to widen snowmobile trails

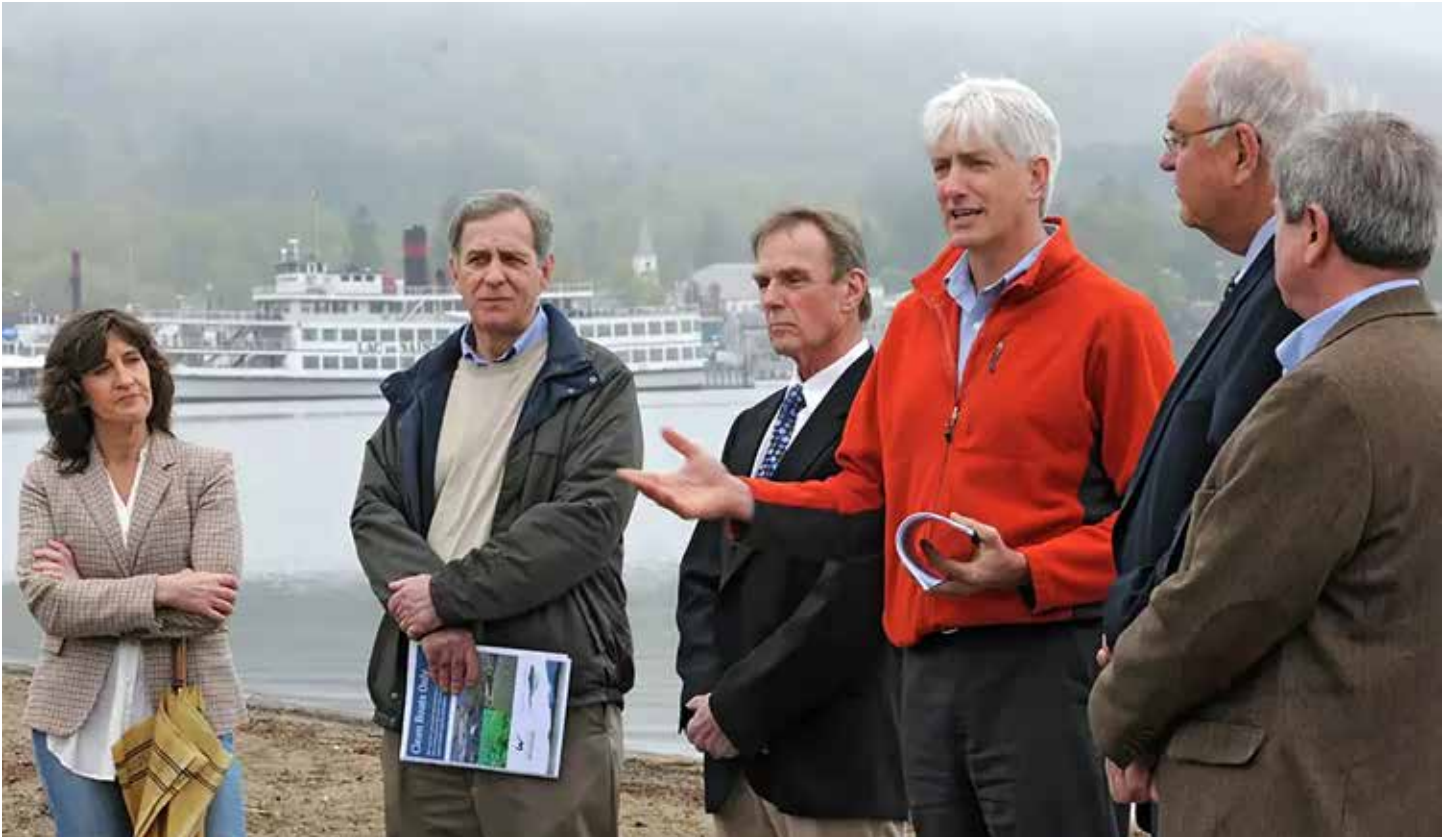
and town highway crews butchered a half dozen trails, which after an outcry saw those trails closed.

After working through the 1995 Blowdown, some initial land protection successes, and disabled access, Pataki's staff then formed the "Snowmobile Focus Group" in 2001, which would bring together state agency officials, green groups, and local government leaders to try and draft a comprehensive snowmobile trail system for the state. For years at these meetings, I expressed concerns that these extra-wide trails could not be built and comply with the Forever Wild clause. DEC officials felt otherwise. At every iteration of the early plan, and at the public hearings on the official draft plan, we protested in an effort to uphold Forever Wild.

In the end, the Pataki Administration released its statewide snowmobile trail plan, heavily focused on the Adirondacks, in its last months in office in 2006 without much fanfare. Pataki's staff acknowledged that the plan had problems, but threw up their hands as career staff at DEC, local government officials, and snowmobile groups demanded the final plan. After 12 years running the state, Team Pataki was on its way out, but as they checked out some key staff acknowledged that their plan would likely create a constitutional showdown at some point in the future.

As the RCPA notched a series of successes, my personal visibility grew, especially as the issues on which we worked involved men and women and their machines or some developer's dream. The RCPA's success in getting ATVs banned from the Forest Preserve and the failure of the state to adopt a fullblown snowmobile plan for years, for which we were blamed, made me a target. That I was the only Adirondack Park advocate selected for Governor-elect Eliot Spitzer's environmental transition team in the fall of 2006, shined the spotlight brighter, and also amplified RCPA's platform.

In these years, I was very visible driving all around the Park and I made sure to attend every public meeting and hearing. If I stopped for gas or coffee or to get a gallon of milk, that could take half an hour as somebody had a bone to pick about something and I was always talked through somebody's complaint, mak-



ing the legal or conservation case. Because I lived in a small community in Hamilton County, I was more accessible than most of the other Adirondack advocates, who mostly lived in Albany or outside the Park. Unlike most of these advocates my kids went to local schools and I dealt with the realities of Park life. This textured experience in all facets of Adirondack living gave me a deep understanding of Adirondack life that the other advocates in Albany never fully gained.

But the spotlight had its downsides. One time I attended the “Forever Wild” community theatre performance in the Adirondack Lake Center for the Arts in Blue Mountain Lake. Forever Wild spoofed all things Adirondack and beyond through a few dozen comedy skits. At one performance, my youngest, then around a year old, was squirmy and I went and stood in the back of the theater to hold him. The Forever Wild players then performed a skit mocking me. Mark Frost, the publisher of *The Chronicle* in Glens Falls, was at Forever Wild and later wrote a gleeful piece in his newspaper about how pleasurable it was to watch me with my squirmy baby as I watched myself get

*With local government officials in 2012 from around Lake George jointly calling for a mandatory boat control program for Lake George to stop the spread of aquatic invasive species.*

mocked. Later on, in Frost’s April Fools satiric edition of *The Chronicle*, he wrote an alarmist front page piece that I had conspired with NASA to spy on all Adirondack residents. There was lots of stuff like that.

In these years, the RCPA emerged as a strong grassroots advocacy non-profit that had a big impact on issues across the Adirondacks. We contributed to a number of successes that helped to shape the Adirondack Park as we know it today.

In 2007, I stepped down from the RCPA and took a job as the Executive Director at the FUND for Lake George, which has since gone on to merge with the Lake George Association. The FUND job let me work every day with Chris Navitsky, the legendary Lake George Waterkeeper, where we put together the *Do-It-Yourself Water Quality* publication and its “Low Impact Development” manual. The big focus was on a massive

stormwater mitigation project along West Brook in Lake George Village where new wetlands and stormwater control devices were built in an area of a dilapidated Wild West themed amusement park called the Gaslight Village. In the end, after nearly \$10 million was raised, the new wetlands and stormwater controls were built along with the new Charles Wood Park.

Since the 1970s, the FUND had built one of the country's best long-term water quality monitoring programs in partnership with the RPI Darrin Fresh Water Institute in Bolton Landing. This data had found largely stable water quality parameters for Lake George with the notable exception of road salt pollution, which increased annually. This partnership has reached a wholly different level with the Jefferson Project. In my years at the FUND, I helped lead the effort to try and eliminate the Asian clam infestation, a massive effort that was ultimately unsuccessful. We worked to improve Eurasian watermilfoil hand harvesting in partnership with the Lake George Park Commission. We pushed for stream buffer and septic regulations, which eventually bore fruit. I helped to catalyze the ultimately successful effort for a mandatory boat control program to defend Lake George against new infestations of aquatic invasive species.

In 2012, I signed on as the Executive Director with Protect the Adirondacks, which had formed through a merger of the RCPA and the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks in 2009. It was a homecoming of sorts as I was back with Evelyn Greene, Peter O'Shea, Nancy Bernstein, and Peter Hornbeck, who had all been involved in the RCPA, and continued their activism, but was also new as I started working with Chuck Clusen, the Board Chair, who had extensive experiences with national environmental organization, and Dave Quinn, our long-time Treasurer, and people like Charlie Morrison, Michael Wilson, Ken Strike, Dale Jeffers, Bob Glennon, John Caffry, Barbara Rottier, Jim Dawson, Roger Gray, Chris Walsh, Lorraine Duvall, Andy Coney, Phil Terrie, and Sid Haring, among others.

I hit the ground running at PROTECT in the fall of 2012. Two weeks in, the Cuomo Administration an-

nounced that it would buy 69,000 acres for the Forest Preserve from TNC, which would complete the Finch, Pruyn and Company land purchase. Governor Pater-son had purchased a 90,000-acre conservation easement over the Finch lands in 2010. The biggest project in the history of the APA – the 5,800-acre Adirondack Club & Resort in Tupper Lake – was being litigated. And, perhaps biggest of all, the looming constitutional showdown about Forever Wild had finally arrived as the DEC-APA started cutting thousands of trees and grading with heavy machinery a new 12-mile-long, extra-wide “Class II Community Connector Snowmobile Trail” through the Moose River Plains Wild Forest.

In early 2013, the Legislature passed the “NYCO Amendment” to amend the Forever Wild clause to allow NYCO Minerals, Inc., a mining company, to acquire 200 acres in the Jay Mountain Wilderness. This amendment split the Adirondack green groups. PROTECT opposed it, but it narrowly passed in a statewide vote in November even as another Article 14 amendment to settle a land dispute on Raquette Lake passed by a large margin. In the years after the vote, I obtained records through Freedom of Information requests that detailed the close working relationship between the Cuomo DEC and NYCO where the DEC staff acted as de facto lobbyists for the mining company throughout the legislative campaign. At NYCO's insistence, DEC even intervened with the New York State Board of Elections to change the official ballot language to favor passage of the amendment. I worked with Sue Craig at *The New York Times*, who has since gone on to win a Pulitzer Prize for her work on Donald Trump's taxes, to publish an expose' at the *Times* about the DEC's collusion. Andrew Cuomo's Administration, of course, did nothing about this matter.

My time at PROTECT largely coincided with Andrew Cuomo's time as Governor. From top to bottom, Team Cuomo was the worst administration for the Adirondacks in modern times. Motorsports was something dear to the Governor, who made expanding snowmobiling in the Forest Preserve a top priority. Cuomo eagerly participated in an annual snowmobile ride with snowmobile lobbying groups where he thrilled in driving a snowmobile at high speed.



Picture by Mike Lynch

In the fall of 2012, I started fieldwork on the new Seventh Lake Mountain Trail, the State’s first “Class II trail,” where I documented and photographed extensive tree cutting and excessive trail grading. I photographed the crew at work and excavators carving out a wide trail. State policy limited Class II trails to widths of 9 feet in straight areas and 12 feet on hills and curves. I measured and photographed scores of locations where the trails were 20 feet in width or greater. I counted thousands of tree stumps, though grading of the trail to flatten and smooth it had destroyed many stumps. We calculated that for each mile of Class II trail constructed an acre of forest was cleared. The Seventh Lake Mountain Trail was the DEC’s showcase Class II Community Connector Snowmobile trail, the first 12 miles of what was planned to be a network of hundreds of miles of new motorized trails in the Forest Preserve. Team Cuomo was planning the largest expansion of motor vehicle use in the history of the Forest Preserve.

I reported my findings to the PROTECT Board and Conservation Advocacy Committee and we submitted

*Fieldwork in 2016 on Class II snowmobile trails for the trial and case on Forever Wild.*

our concerns about State policy and Forever Wild violations to the DEC and APA, who brushed them aside. By 2012, we had been raising these concerns for 15 years, but the DEC was determined to expand motor vehicle use in the Forest Preserve. In early 2013, Glens Falls environmental attorney and PROTECT Board member John Caffry, volunteered to take on an Article 14 challenge pro bono and enlisted Claudia Braymer, an environmental attorney in his office, to join with him. The initial constitutional challenge was filed in early 2013. None of us involved anticipated that this case would take 10 years to complete.

The DEC officially opened the 12-mile-long Seventh Lake Mountain Trail in 2013, but continued to work on the trail in 2014. DEC also started cutting trees to build the 18-mile-long Newcomb to Minerva Trail through the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest Area in 2015 and 2016. DEC planned to build over 36 miles of new Class II trails in its first phase. PROTECT

sought injunctions and restraining orders to stop trail building, but were unsuccessful until 2016 when our field work documented that over 30,000 trees had been cut down or were marked for imminent cutting. Forest Ecologist Steve Signell and I worked out a field protocol for counting standing trees in uncut sections of various trails and for counting and photographing stumps. To document the extent of tree cutting, we had to photograph and take GPS measurements for each stump that was one inch in diameter or greater. In many places we counted tree rings on stumps of trees less than 3 inches in diameter and found them to be 50 years old or older. For this case, I photographed and recorded data on over 10,000 stumps and Signell counted thousands of standing trees marked for cutting. I also provided dozens of pictures showing that Class II trails were regularly constructed to widths of 20 feet or more.

Claudia Braymer used the tree counts to win injunctions to stop tree cutting and trail work in 2016. The Newcomb to Minerva Trail was partially cut out at that time. A trial was held in 2017, which was managed by John Caffry, who led the legal team. Historian Phil Terrie testified about the 19<sup>th</sup> century use of the word “timber” to mean all the trees of the forest, not just large diameter merchantable trees. Signell testified about the extent of tree cutting and the ecological changes to the forest from building wide trails through an intact forest. He and I testified about the tree counts and trail width photographs. Other experts testified about ecological impacts to the forest from cutting Class II trails as well as about the significant differences between Class II trails and hiking trails. The trial judge ruled against PROTECT at the end of 2017, but Caffry organized a successful appeal to the Appellate Division, Third Department, in 2019, and Caffry successfully defended this decision at the Court of Appeals, the state’s highest court, which issued a historic decision in 2021. The case was formally ended in 2023.

This landmark case followed only two other major cases in the last 130 years, which combined set out the case law for Article 14. This case effectively caps snowmobile trail mileage in the Forest Preserve and has spurred important Forest Preserve management

reform efforts, such as revision of the DEC’s Forest Preserve tree cutting policy and creation of a new DEC Commissioner’s Policy (CP-78) for planning and undertaking construction or maintenance work on the Forest Preserve. DEC-APA are also currently working on new Forest Preserve trail design standards. These reforms were hard won and participation in this defense of Forever Wild was a highlight of my time.

The purchase of the TNC-Finch lands, done in stages 2013 to 2018, was something that had been in the works since Pataki, and was the sole major achievement for Andrew Cuomo in the Adirondacks, though he largely botched the classification of these lands and severely weakened Forest Preserve management and policy in the process. Floatplane rights on remote ponds and road management contracts were given to local governments. Under Cuomo, the DEC purchased the Finch lands, and sent them to the APA for classification, in stages.

During the APA’s classification review of these lands, our chief goal was to see DEC-APA manage the major waterbodies at the core of these new Forest Preserve lands as motorless lakes. Despite the abundance of water throughout the Adirondacks, there is not an extensive list of motorless areas for the public to paddle. In the Finch-TNC deal, the Essex Chain of Lakes and Boreas Ponds created great opportunities for new motorless waters. In the end, the classifications for the Essex Chain and Boreas Ponds were compromises, the best we were going to do with Team Cuomo running things at the DEC and APA. We helped to win motorless waters for the Essex Chain and Boreas Ponds, and saw new Wilderness lands created, but these gains were coupled with dozens of miles of newly designated motor vehicle roads, such as the 6-mile-long Gulf Brook Road that leads to Boreas Pond, and a series of “State Administrative” roads lacing through the Essex Chain Lakes tract, as well as a historic weakening of the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan and the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act.

In these years, at various meetings I often heard complaints that in the Adirondacks when lands were purchased for the Forest Preserve we were “manufac-



Picture by Nancie Battaglia

turing” Wilderness out of industrial lands that had been intensively managed for decades. I would push back that manufacturing Wilderness was one of the best things a society could do in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as more and more lands are developed and our collective footprint grows incessantly year after year. Lands purchased for the Forest Preserve are seldom undisturbed primeval wild lands. The Forest Preserve restarts the clock, draws a line in time, where for the future, hopefully for all time, these lands will see only the most minimal of human interference as natural ecologic processes will get to play out unfettered. That’s the promise and the dream of the Forest Preserve.

At this time, PROTECT put together the best Independent Public Oversight Program in the Adirondacks that watched, reviewed, and intervened on all major public and private land management decisions. We reviewed dozens of projects and proposals each year and submitted dozens of comment letters. The major issue where we had an impact was stopping the storage of hundreds of dirty oil tanker rail cars on little used Adirondack rail lines and continued ATV trespass on

*Commenting at a public hearing on changes to Forest Preserve management policy in 2016.*

the Forest Preserve, and we tried to stop clearcutting on conservation easement lands, and opposed new major hotels in Lake George and Saranac Lake and large private land subdivisions and developments.

In Albany, we helped to pass the Invasive Species Transport legislation and pushed for State spending to improve trail construction and maintenance and Forest Preserve management. We pushed for funding and testified at budget hearings to support critical Adirondack Park institutions and programs, like the Visitor Interpretive Centers and the Adirondack Diversity Initiative, among others. We questioned quixotic state spending projects like building the new Frontier Town Campground. We helped to craft legislation to reform the APA Act to utilize conservation design principles for largescale subdivisions and reviewed and worked on proposed constitutional amendments for the Forest Preserve. We advocated for the State to study the reintroduction of extirpated species and wildlife



protection legislation. We stood up against State efforts to change the law that requires State payment of local taxes on the Forest Preserve.

The 2018 election changed things in Albany, as it ended over 100 years of Republican control of the State Senate, ended divided government, and catalyzed a series of far-reaching pieces of legislation including the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). The CLCPA ushered in New York's Climate Action Plan under which state agencies are supposed to bring climate change and greenhouse gas emission limits into their regulatory work. So far, neither DEC nor APA have stepped up on complying with the CLCPA, but this far-reaching law provides a major yardstick to measure the State's progress.

Protect the Adirondacks was struggling when I started in 2012. The growing pains of the merger and Great Recession had stalled its progress. I worked to rebuild the core of the group, stabilize and grow its financial support, and expand its programmatic scope. In these years, I am indebted to Ellen Collins for all of her help with office work (and for being the best mother-in-law imaginable). Since 2012, PROTECT has run up a bunch of successes and helped to reform and improve the overall management of the Adirondack Park and Forest Preserve. PROTECT grew in these years, and as I step back, Protect the Adirondacks is now a group led by two highly skilled environmental attorneys.

Whereas Governor Pataki had been pro-development and pro-land protection, Cuomo and Hochul were just pro-development. Andrew Cuomo lined up his agencies and budgets around the slogan that "The Adirondack Park is Open for Business" and that pretty much said it all. Governor Cuomo welcomed any and all development with scant land protection successes. Governor Cuomo protected the least land in New York State and the Adirondacks of all Governors who completed at least one full term since the Great Depression of the 1930s. For her part, Governor Kathy Hochul has yet to articulate an agenda for the Adirondack Park, for the Forest Preserve or our rural communities, beyond massive financial support for the Olympic Regional Development Authority.

A big part of my work at PROTECT was trying to set the public record straight by bringing sound factual information to the pressing issues of the day or the ongoing debate over the future of the Adirondacks. We did our homework and brought factual and accurate legal and policy analysis to the public. We organized a report *The Adirondack Park and Rural America: Economic and Population Trends, 1970 to 2010*. This report brought hard data and a national rural context to questions around economic and population trends in the Adirondacks, where the APA's regional zoning and the Forest Preserve had long been blamed for all the Park's problems. When we looked at the data, we found that Adirondack communities were stronger than many other rural areas, and that there was nothing unique in the Adirondacks because everything that is happening here is the same thing happening all across Rural America.

During my PROTECT years I wrote regularly for *The Adirondack Almanack*, first with its punchy and visionary founder John Warren, and then with Melissa Hart, who edited the site after it was purchased by the *Adirondack Explorer*. I wrote over 200 articles for the *Almanack* that addressed all the major issues confronting the Adirondack Park over the last dozen years.

Through it all, I'm incredibly grateful to the members of the RCPA, FUND for Lake George, and Protect the Adirondacks, the terrific Boards and co-workers at these groups, the many generous donors and foundations, volunteers, and partners in the Legislature, state agencies, and allied non-profits. I was always asked why there are so many different groups in the Adirondacks, and folks complained that they could not keep them all straight or tell them apart in the alphabet soup of acronyms. My response was that there were never enough groups, that we always need more, because there is so much work to do to protect the Forest Preserve and Adirondack Park. The job of protecting the Adirondacks involves many people, wearing many hats, bringing to bear a wide spectrum of voices and talents and ideas. Sometimes this chaotic orchestra hits all the right notes, at other times the music is a discordant static buzz, yet it comes together more than not, and the Park wins from these collective efforts.



Conservation work is also heartbreaking work. We often deal with loss. Lands that would have been great additions to the Forest Preserve are developed. State agencies that should be public servants and honest brokers violate their own statutes and the State constitution. Invasive species inexorably infest new lands and lakes in the Adirondacks. Climate change has made it so it's just as likely to rain as it is to snow in the winter and is driving ecological change everywhere. Random political decisions in Albany drive bad policies for private land development and Forest Preserve management. That we could sometimes stop bad things from happening didn't always mean that we could always make good things happen.

Over the next two decades the final shape of the Adirondack Park will concretize as land will either be protected or developed. The Adirondack Park has been in flux for decades, but its final shape is coming into view. The list of problems and challenges facing the Adirondack Park would quadruple the length of this article, but as much as there have been conservation successes in the Adirondack Park, there have been losses and missed opportunities.

*In the field looking at oil trains in 2019. Picture by Nathaniel Brooks, courtesy of The New York Times.*

As I wind things down in my work at Protect the Adirondacks, my home continues to be in Blue Mountain Lake, smack in the middle of the Adirondacks in northern Hamilton County, where I live with my wife, where my kids come home to visit, and where I'm involved with my community. My future role in Adirondack Park conservation remains a work in progress, but I plan to stay active as a proud citizen activist, and plan to revisit many of the special places in the Forest Preserve, and to hopefully finally get to some other places that I have yet to get to while I still can. I will always believe that I was incredibly lucky to have done this work for as long as I have and I know I that worked like hell to honor this opportunity and the platform it accorded me. All of my work has been accomplished as part of the Adirondack Park's conservation tradition, while standing on the shoulders, and honoring their work, of all who gave their time, talents, and passion for the last 175 years to create and build and manage and care for and protect the forever wild Forest Preserve and the Adirondack Park.



**Peter Bauer and Michael Martin founded the Adirondack Lake Assessment Program in 1997, with the first sampling season held in 1998.**

### Adirondack Lake Assessment Program Completed its 27th Year in 2024

The Adirondack Park Lake Assessment Program (ALAP) is a partnership between Paul Smith’s College Adirondack Watershed Institute and Protect the Adirondacks. 2024 marked the 27th season of water quality monitoring. ALAP has grown into one of the best long-term citizen science programs of its kind in New York and the eastern United States.

The annual report for all ALAP lakes is available on the ALAP website: [www.adklakes.org](http://www.adklakes.org). Here’s a list of 77 lakes studied in 2024:

Amber Lake  
Arbutus Pond

Augur Lake  
Austin Pond  
Big Moose Lake  
Blue Mountain Lake  
Brandreth Lake  
Butternut Pond  
Canada Lake  
Caroga Lake (East)  
Caroga Lake (West)  
Catlin Lake  
Chateaugay Lake (Lower)  
Chateaugay Lake (Upper)  
Chazy Lake  
Clear Pond  
Cranberry Lake  
Deer Lake  
Eagle Lake  
Eli Pond  
Elk Lake  
Everest Lake  
Fern Lake  
Frank Pond  
Friends Lake  
Garnet Lake  
Green Lake

Gull Pond  
Hidden Lake  
Highlands Lake  
Hoel Pond  
Indian Lake (Franklin Cty)  
Irving Pond  
Jordan Lake  
Kiwassa Lake  
Lake Adirondack  
Lake Clear  
Lake Colby  
Lake of the Pines  
Lake Titus  
Lens Lake  
Little Long Lake  
Little Simon Pond  
Long Lake  
Long Pond  
Loon Lake (Franklin Cty)  
Loon Lake (Warren Cty)  
Lower Saranac Lake  
Middle Saranac Lake  
Mink Pond  
Moody Pond  
Moss Lake

Mountain View Lake  
Osgood Pond  
Oseetah Lake  
Otter Pond  
Paradox Lake  
Pine Lake  
Pleasant Lake  
Ragged Lake  
Raquette Lake  
Rich Lake  
Rondaxe Lake  
Silver Lake  
Simon Pond  
Star Lake  
Stony Creek Ponds  
Thirteenth Lake  
Tripp Lake  
Trout Lake  
Tupper Lake  
Twitchell Lake  
West Lake  
White Lake  
Windover Lake  
Wolf Lake  
Zack Pond

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\* Deceased at time of publication.

## Tributes

### In memory of Michael Casey

Joe and Kerry Bartlett  
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### In memory of Patrick Small

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Big Moose Property Owners Association  
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Tupper Lake)  
Town of Dannemora  
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Windover Lake Association

# 2023-2024 Financial Summary

Assets	2023-24	2022-23
Cash	\$6,247	\$67,781
Cash (Board Designated)	54,307	60,000
Cash (Temporarily Restricted)	48,323	50,192
Cash (Permanently Restricted)	42,660	42,660
Investments - Board Designated	39,113	35,348
Investments - Unrestricted	322,439	300,831
Investments - Permanently Restricted	515,055	494,611
Property (Adirondack Research Library)	450,000	450,000
Property (Headquarters/Furnishings)	207,596	207,211
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$1,685,740</b>	<b>\$1,708,634</b>

Revenues	2023-24	2022-23
Contributions & Grants	\$300,377	\$248,161
Dues & Fees	53,100	59,365
Investment Income	19,430	14,902
Realized Gain (Loss) on Investments	0	0
Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Investments	58,272	18,859
Event Income	4,935	0
In-Kind Donations	0	0
Program Services	49,998	30,500
Miscellaneous	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>486,112</b>	<b>\$371,787</b>

Program, Administrative & Fundraising Expenses	2023-24	2022-23
Program Expenses	(88%) \$456,623	(88%) \$389,683
Administrative Expenses	(4%) \$22,346	(5%) \$22,605
Fundraising Expenses	(8%) \$40,221	(7%) \$30,140
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$519,190</b>	<b>\$442,428</b>

Expenses	2023-24	2022-23
Salaries	\$310,632	\$239,951
Payroll Expenses & Benefits	40,958	25,434
Contracted Services	0	1,543
Insurance	2,771	2,073
Occupancy Costs (Headquarters main.)	3,618	13,825
Supplies	22,099	5,136
Printing	18,116	31,348
Postage	6,102	5,522
Conferences & Events	4,197	3,883
Bank Charges	2,201	2,526
Advertising	2,425	1,750
Dues & Subscriptions	1,226	990
Legal Defense	11,499	16,426
Professional Fees & Services	10,563	9,775
Travel	8,304	7,990
Website, Software, Technology Services	10,476	21,742
Investment Fees	0	0
Program Expense	56,592	45,374
Miscellaneous	0	0
Depreciation and Amortization	7,411	7,140
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$519,190</b>	<b>\$442,428</b>

## 2023-24 Total Resource Allocation



Administration 4%  
Fundraising 8%  
Programs 88%

Protect the Adirondacks is the recipient of the "Gold" level Guidestar seal for organizational transparency.



## Notes

Protect the Adirondacks' fiscal year runs from July 1 - June 30th.

An independent audit was prepared by Cusack & Company in Latham, New York. All information reported in this summary is also available in PROTECT's NYS CHAR 500 and Federal 990 filed with the NYS Attorney General.

The Adirondack Research Library (\$450,000) is on permanent loan to the Kelly Adirondack Center of Union College in Niskayuna, NY, and PROTECT's headquarters (\$207,211) is located in Johnsbury, NY.

In 2024, Protect the Adirondacks received the "Gold" certification for non-profit organizational transparency by Guidestar/Candid.



## Help secure the future of Protect the Adirondacks

### Join the Forever Wild Legacy Group

The Forever Wild Endowment Fund ensures that the grassroots organizing, advocacy, research, independent public oversight, legal defense, and other vital work of Protect the Adirondacks is sustained for decades to come.

The Forever Wild Endowment Fund is managed in two funds. One is administered by the Board of Directors of Protect the Adirondacks, in partnership with professional financial advisors. A second Endowment Fund is held with the Adirondack Foundation. Both funds are managed for long-term growth, and the income supports PROTECT's programs based on an annual allocation. No matter how one chooses to make a gift, you can direct your gift to support the Forever Wild Endowment Fund. The Forever Wild Legacy Group are people who have notified us that they have included Protect the Adirondacks as a beneficiary in their wills or estates.

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Barbara Rottier  
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For more information on the Forever Wild Legacy Group call (518) 251-2700 or email us at [info@protectadks.org](mailto:info@protectadks.org). Thank you very much!



Protect the Adirondacks  
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