

The Park's Watchdog Annual Report 2024-2025

PROTECT 
THE ADIRONDACKS!

Thank you for being part of the work of protecting the Park!

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Dear Protect the Adirondacks Members,

As part of our staff succession planning, Claudia Braymer started as our new Executive Director on January 1, 2025 and Peter Bauer transitioned into a new role focusing on fundraising and special projects, among other things. This change went off without a hitch and the important work of Protect the Adirondacks continued uninterrupted.

The Conservation and Advocacy report summarizes the major issues that Protect the Adirondacks engaged on through the year. We have been pushing Governor Kathy Hochul to add the 36,000-acre Whitney Park property to the Forest Preserve to protect these critical lands in the heart of the Park and to help the State reach its goal of protecting 30% of the State by 2030.

Our advocacy in collaboration with many other Adirondack groups led to the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) dropping its proposal to amend the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan to open new areas of the Forest Preserve to motor vehicles. We are part of the State's new efforts to establish a statewide policy for people with disabilities to use motor vehicles on State lands while keeping intact the protections that apply to the Forest Preserve.

We helped boost environmental spending by the State on Adirondack Park priorities, including seeing the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) increased to a historic high of \$425 million and having \$1 million added for a carrying capacity study of the Saranac Chain of Lakes. Our efforts helped to obtain "Second Passage" of the new Article 14 constitutional amendment for Mount Van Hoevenberg that will address violations at the Winter Sports complex located outside of Lake Placid and add 2,500 acres of new lands to the Forest Preserve.

Updating the APA Act is long overdue and is something that our staff have been diligently working to address. The APA Act needs to incorporate modern science and planning including climate change and conservation subdivision design.

These are challenging times for defending existing environmental protections and we are grateful that you are standing with us as we work tirelessly to protect the Adirondacks. Thank you for supporting us financially and informing the direction of our work. We will continue to bring accountability to the state agencies responsible for upholding environmental protections for the Park, and to search for real solutions to the challenges facing the Park. Thank you very much!

— Chuck Clusen, Chair, Board of Directors



Chuck Clusen, Chair

Welcome New Board Members



Michala Hendrick

Charlie Olsen

Juliet Cook

Michala Hendrick is the Director of Youth Programming at Hudson Taconic Lands, where she leads programs that connect young people to nature through stewardship, outdoor education, and community partnerships. She directs the Forest Conservation Corps teen program and is spearheading the new Learning Landscapes initiative, which partners with schools and landowners to create lasting outdoor classrooms across Rensselaer County. She holds a B.S. in Environmental Science from SUNY Plattsburgh and an M.S. in Park, Recreation, and Tourism Studies with a Graduate Certificate in Conservation Leadership from Old Dominion University. Her research has focused on visitor use management (VUM), barriers to recreation access, and stakeholder engagement, including extensive work with the National Park Service on VUM and planning and climate threatened resources. She is passionate about reducing barriers to outdoor access and fostering place-based learning that cultivates the next generation of conservation leaders and supporters.

Charlie Olsen serves as the Energy and Public Lands Policy Manager at the National Parks Conservation Association, where he works to advance a clean energy transition on public lands and waters while protect-

ing America's national parks from harmful energy and mineral development and policies. He previously worked on energy and mineral policy for the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee and now focuses on issues including hardrock mining reform, critical minerals, and public land management. Originally from Long Island, Charlie earned a degree in Environmental Studies from SUNY Plattsburgh, and now lives and works in Washington, DC. He is passionate about public lands, public transit, and outdoor recreation, and can often be found hiking or biking with his beagle, Mia.

Juliet Cook is an attorney practicing in the areas of real estate, wills, trusts and estates in Ticonderoga, NY. She has a degree in International Relations from Skidmore College and she earned her JD from Vermont Law School with a certificate in Food & Agriculture Law. Her practice often involves assisting clients with the regulatory intricacies of dealing with the Adirondack Park Agency. She has deep roots in the area, as her family runs a small farm at the base of Cook Mountain over Lake George, lands they have managed since the American Revolution. Juliet lives in the Champlain Valley, and enjoys the unique environment that the Adirondack Park provides.

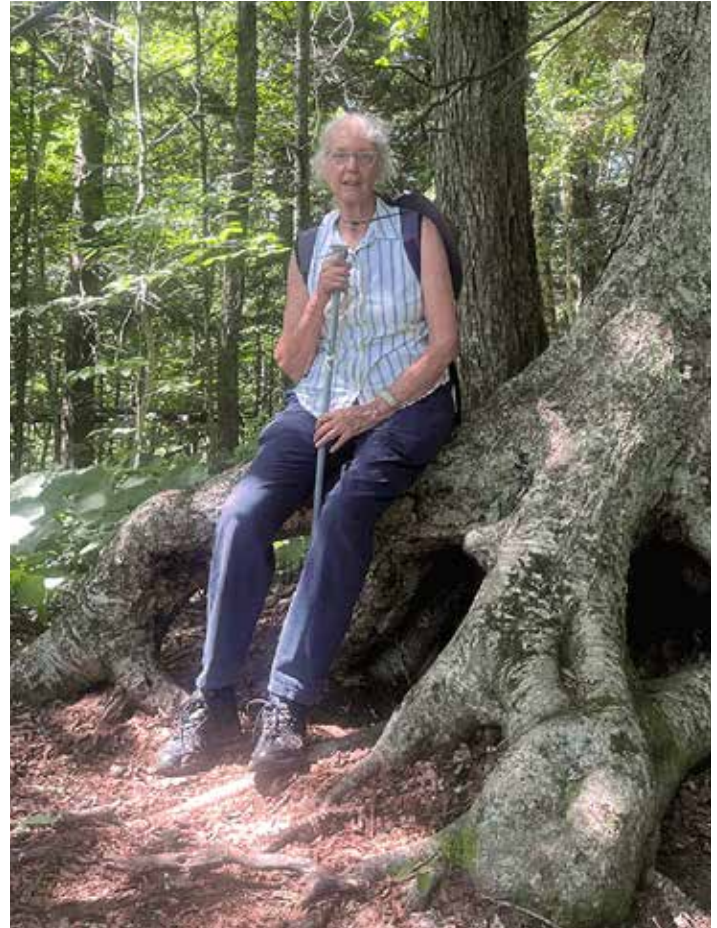
Remembering Evelyn Greene and Michael Wilson, Two Incredible Founding Directors of Protect the Adirondacks!

Evelyn Greene, long-time Adirondack Park environmental advocate and naturalist, passed away on May 27, 2025. The first thing to say about Evelyn is that everybody loved Evelyn.

For 50 years, Evelyn lived in Johnsburg, with her husband Don Greene, who died in 2019, and where they raised their son David. In 1976, they all moved to an old farm on the west side of Crane Mountain, which they all trekked around and over again and again. In the early 1980s, they moved to North Creek, though they continued to own the old farmstead. Evelyn was a botanist who explored the wild areas of the Forest Preserve. She hunted for rare orchids, botanized the ice meadows on the Hudson River in Thurman, catalogued moss, and she visited remote ponds, often carrying a Hornbeck canoe. When a customer showed up at his shop in Olmstedville, especially a woman, Pete Hornbeck would ask them how they heard about his boats, and many simply said “Evelyn.” Pete always joked that he should pay Evelyn a commission as she was his best sales rep. She took many people out to explore the Forest Preserve and paddle.

In the winter, Evelyn charted frazil ice on the Hudson River, the disk like crystals of ice that look like floating slush that form in the river’s rapids on cold bitter nights and are carried downriver for miles and gazillions of them form massive ice fields many feet thick and miles in length, with ice blocks the size of RVs. For years Evelyn wrote about the natural wonders of the Adirondacks in a regular column in The North Creek News Enterprise.

Evelyn grew up in the Forest Preserve and watched through the decades as it was expanded and enhanced. She saw the wildlands of the Forest Preserve as a great gift to New Yorkers and the world. To her, the Forest Preserve had a vital public purpose. She believed firmly that people needed wild spaces. In Adirondack Voices, a publication of Residents’ Committee to



Protect the Adirondacks, in the 1990s, she wrote: “The mothers and children of tomorrow will need more wild places to challenge and satisfy them, and to know the world as it once was.”

Evelyn grew up with Adirondack conservation. She is the daughter of legendary conservationist Paul Schaefer. But it was Evelyn’s mother Carolyn, an intrepid hiker herself, who led expeditions to the High Peaks with Evelyn and her siblings. Carolyn’s goal was for her children to become 46ers. Evelyn’s first High Peak was Mount Marcy at age 10 in August 1950. She became 46er number 110 in 1956 as a 16 year old.

In 1990, Evelyn helped to form the Residents’ Com-

mittee to Protect the Adirondacks (RCPA) to push for stronger environmental protections for the Adirondack Park and she never stopped. Evelyn was a founding director of PROTECT where she was a quiet, firm, persuasive force on the Conservation Advocacy Committee, arguing against motors in the Forest Preserve, and always-always-always stood up for Wilderness.

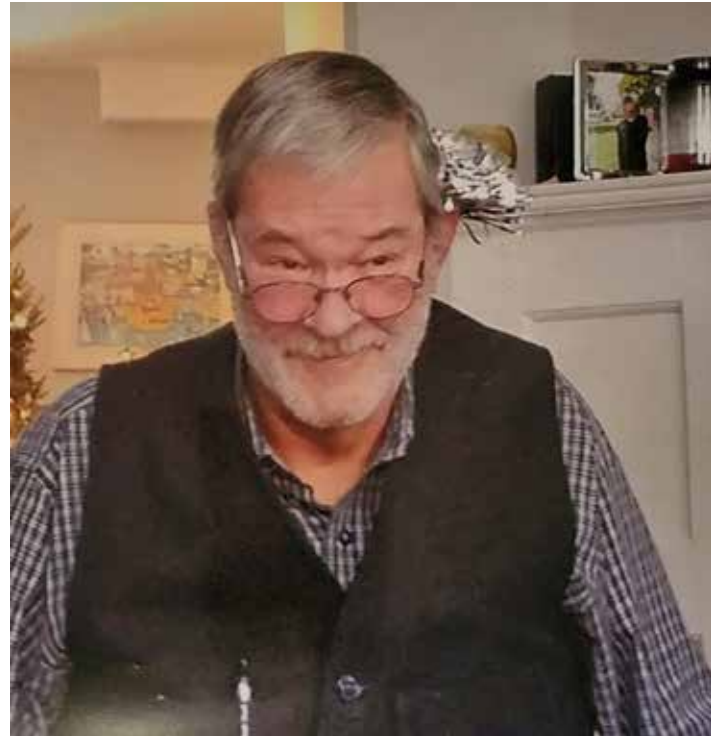
Michael Wilson was born in 1945 in Santa Monica, California, and passed away at the end of February, 2025 in Glenwood, Maryland. Michael and his family spent decades in the Adirondack Park immersed in the region's cultural history and environmental protection.

Michael spent most of his childhood in Eugene, Oregon, where he loved the wild places of Oregon and the West and paddled or rowed many of the area's biggest rivers, such as the Snake, Columbia, and Deschutes. His favorite was the McKenzie River in Oregon, where his ashes were spread. Michael said once that his boyhood was straight out of Norman Maclean's famous novel "A River Runs Through It."

After college and graduate school, where he earned a PhD in 18th century British Theater, Michael taught at Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage, Alaska, where he met his wife Beverly Bridger, and they were married for more than 40 years. They moved to San Antonio, Texas, where they taught at Trinity College. In the mid-1980s, they moved to Saratoga Springs, where they taught at Skidmore College.

Their time at Skidmore is when Michael discovered the fullness of the Adirondacks and the whitewater of the Hudson River, which gave him many great paddling and rowing experiences. His passion for the Adirondack Park grew intensely after 1990 when Beverly took the job as Executive Director at Sagamore Institute, south of Raquette Lake, and Michael signed on as the Associate Director. For nearly 25 years, Bev and Michael were quite a team, and worked to build Sagamore into a landmark historic site.

At Sagamore Institute, Michael took the lead in managing the Institute's educational and interpretation programs. He combined the social, ecological, and



architectural history of the Great Camp Sagamore with the history and politics of the Adirondack Park. In these years, Sagamore sponsored retreats for major environmental leaders such as Bill McKibben, Clarence Petty, David Foreman, David Brower, Terry Tempest Williams, and many others. Michael also led camping trips on the Hudson River, where he was a licensed guide, outfitted the trips with "dories" that were rowed through the rapids, boats that he built based on similar boats used in the West.

In 2008, Michael joined the Board of the Residents' Committee to Protect the Adirondacks (RCPA) and was a founding Director when the RCPA merged to form Protect the Adirondacks! He served as a member of PROTECT's Board, serving for a long time as a Vice-Chair, and was a leading member of the Conservation Advocacy Committee, from 2009 to 2025. Michael rowed one of his guideboats on Middle Saranac Lake and Weller Pond in PROTECT's 2018 Canoe-In for a Motorless Weller Pond protest. Michael Wilson's leadership at Protect the Adirondacks was bold and principled and we're tremendously grateful for all of his volunteer time and energy. The Adirondack Park was lucky to have him.

The Park's Watchdog

2024-2025 was a year of defending the protections for the Adirondack Park.



Over the past year, Protect the Adirondacks (PROTECT) has continued to lead the way in securing increased State funding for critical environmental programs, advocating for legislation that advances conservation and biodiversity, and closely monitoring permitting and management decisions by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) affecting public and private lands in the Adirondack Park.

As part of our ongoing mission, PROTECT pursues a comprehensive agenda each year grounded in advocacy, public education, independent oversight, scientific research, grassroots organizing, and legal action. These efforts are designed to strengthen protections for the Adirondack Park's natural resources while promoting the development of resilient, sustainable communities throughout the region.



Claudia Braymer, Executive Director



More information about all of the issues that we tackle can be found on our website (www.protectadks.org) in articles, comment letters, reports, and press releases. If you would like to receive our Conservation & Advocacy updates by email, please make sure that we have your email address on file. You can email us at info@protectadks.org to let us know that you want to receive correspondence from us by email.

Protecting Whitney Park: PROTECT has been leading efforts to add Whitney Park—a 36,000-acre expanse of largely undeveloped wilderness in the heart of the Adirondack Park—to the Forest Preserve. As of the printing of this report, Governor Kathy Hochul has expressed the State’s interest in purchasing around 32,000 acres for the public Forest Preserve. The property was under contract to be sold to a private Texas-based real estate developer who has publicly announced plans to transform the site into a luxury golf resort. This developer has stated a desire to build on 4,000 to 5,000 acres of the tract. PROTECT supports the Forest Preserve purchase, but has many concerns about the development, and will scrutinize all proposals and plans carefully.



Left: Summit on Prospect Mountain where the Department of Environmental Conservation originally proposed to cut more than 13,000 trees for views. Top: Moose Pond, part of the 36,000-acre Whitney Park property that is up for sale that PROTECT is pushing for Forest Preserve acquisition. Above: Claudia Braymer, Executive Director, and Christopher Amato, Conservation Director and Counsel, lobbying in Albany.



Whitney Park is one of the last great unprotected tracts in the Adirondacks, encompassing 22 lakes and ponds and over 100 miles of undeveloped shoreline. The property is an ecological treasure, harboring rare wildlife species and uncommon plant communities, and its lands and forests serve as a vital carbon sink, absorbing carbon dioxide and mitigating climate change.

Most important, Whitney Park forms a critical ecological bridge between the William C. Whitney Wilderness, Round Lake Wilderness, Five Ponds Wilderness, and Sargent Pond Wild Forest. Bringing Whitney Park into the Forest Preserve would create a contiguous, 213,000-acre network of protected lands and waters—a once-in-a-generation conservation opportunity that would ensure full public access to this remarkable tract of wilderness in perpetuity. In furtherance of its efforts, PROTECT has met with DEC Commissioner Amanda Lefton and with State legislators, organized letter writing campaigns to Governor Hochul, organized a “paddle protest” on waters adjoining Whitney



Park, and published numerous articles in news outlets advocating for the State to purchase Whitney Park and add it to the Adirondack Forest Preserve.

Keeping Motorized Vehicles Out of Wilderness Areas: PROTECT joined with other leading Adirondack advocacy organizations to successfully oppose proposed amendments to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan that would have permitted motor vehicle

access—including cars, trucks, and ATVs—in Forest Preserve lands classified as Wilderness, Primitive, and Canoe. The amendments, put forward by APA, aimed to expand motorized access for people with disabilities, but posed serious threats to the integrity of these highly protected lands and were inconsistent with both the Master Plan and Article 14 of the New York State Constitution—the “Forever Wild” clause. PROTECT has long supported the goal of universal access to the Forest Preserve but insists that such access must be achieved in a lawful and constitutional manner.

Following numerous meetings with representatives from the Governor’s Office, DEC and APA, PROTECT and its partner organizations succeeded in persuading APA to withdraw the proposed amendments. This outcome represents a major victory in safeguarding the ecological integrity and legal protections of New York’s most sensitive public lands.

More Funding for Environmental Programs: We had a great turnout for Adirondack Park and Environmental Protection Fund Lobby Days with over 120 members and supporters of PROTECT and 26 other Adirondack organizations standing up for the Adirondacks. The final enacted 2025-26 budget was a resounding success, boosting the Environmental Protection Fund to \$425 million to provide desperately needed funding for land conservation, acquisition, and stewardship of our precious state lands, including:

- \$50 million for state land stewardship, including \$10 million for Adirondack and Catskill visitor safety and wilderness;
- \$2 million for the Survey of Climate Change in Adirondack Lake Ecosystems (SCALE);
- \$1 million for a Carrying Capacity Study of Saranac Chain of Lakes;
- \$1.25 million for the Timbuctoo Summer Climate and Careers Institute;
- \$250,000 each for the Paul Smith’s, Newcomb, ADK, and Catskills visitors centers;
- \$200,000 to the Adirondack Watershed Institute;
- \$200,000 to the Whiteface Atmospheric Research Station;
- \$1.5 million for the SUNY-ESF Applied Forestry Institute.



Left page: Paddlers on Forked Lake for the “Paddle for Wilderness” to advocate for adding Whitney Park to the Forest Preserve. Photo credit Mary Jean Bland. Left page lower: Folksinger Barry Oreck sang in homage to Wilderness and Hornbeck Boats founders Pete and Ann Hornbeck at the Paddle for Wilderness. Above: Adirondack Park Lobby Day 2025 in Albany was a big success.

In other budget initiatives, the Clean Water Fund was funded at \$500 million, \$1 million was allocated for the African-American Experience exhibit at the Adirondack Experience, and \$300,000 was provided for the Adirondack Diversity Initiative.

Carrying Capacity Studies: Holding DEC Accountable for Protecting Adirondack Waters: PROTECT continues to press DEC to fulfill its legal obligation



under the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan to conduct carrying capacity studies for water bodies throughout the Adirondack Park. Carrying capacity studies are critical tools that assess the maximum level of development or recreational use a water body can sustain without causing harm to water quality, fish and wildlife habitats, scenic and aesthetic values (such as noise and light pollution), and the overall recreational experience.

In 2024, PROTECT filed a lawsuit seeking to compel DEC to conduct a long-overdue carrying capacity study for the Saranac Chain of Lakes. This interconnected network includes Upper, Middle, and Lower Saranac Lakes, as well as Weller Pond, Second Pond, Fish Creek Ponds, Square Pond, Little Square Pond, Copperas Pond, Floodwood Pond, Rollins Pond, Whey Pond, and Follensby Clear Pond. One of the most heavily used lake systems in the Adirondacks, the Saranac Chain is a complex mix of Forest Preserve and private lands, with significant public access points, campsites, marinas, and boat launches. In April, the

Supreme Court in Albany County dismissed our case. We have since filed a notice of appeal with the Appellate Division, Third Department.

Despite this legal setback, PROTECT achieved a major policy victory in 2025, successfully advocating for the inclusion of a \$1 million allocation in the Environmental Protection Fund specifically for a carrying capacity study of the Saranac Chain of Lakes.

However, DEC has so far failed to take any meaningful steps to utilize these funds or initiate the study—despite its legal responsibility to do so. We remain steadfast in our commitment to holding DEC accountable. Through continued legal action, public advocacy, and policy engagement, PROTECT will use every available means to ensure the timely and thorough completion of this essential environmental study.

Protecting Wildlife and Biodiversity: PROTECT continued its strong advocacy for biodiversity conservation before both DEC and the State Legislature. This



year, we submitted detailed comments on the draft Species Status Assessments and the preliminary list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)—key foundational elements in DEC’s development of an updated State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). In our most recent comments on the draft SWAP, we expressed serious concerns about the exclusion of wolves, cougars, and Canada lynx. Omitting these species sends a misleading message to the public and conservation stakeholders, suggesting there is no potential for the re-establishment of breeding populations in New York. This exclusion marks a regressive step away from DEC’s prior recognition of these species’ conservation importance and is inconsistent with DEC’s Species Status Assessments, the status of these species as New York-listed endangered species, and the actions of peer agencies in other states.

We also urged DEC to reinstate the common loon to the SGCN list and the SWAP. Downward trends in reproductive success and continued threats to this species and its habitat warrant inclusion. Removal of

Above: Wolf mistakenly killed near Cherry Valley, in Otsego County in Upstate New York in 2021, now featured in the New York State Museum exhibit “Canine Contrasts: Unraveling Wolves and Coyotes in New York.” Left: The channel from Lower Fish Creek Pond to Upper Saranac Lake. Despite a legal requirement, continued development, and their popularity for boaters of all kinds, there has never been a carrying capacity study for the Saranac Lakes Chain.

loons would risk reversing decades of conservation efforts to protect this iconic species.

In the Legislature, PROTECT continued to advocate for the wolf protection bill, which would require DEC to collect DNA data from large wild canids taken by hunters and trappers and to produce a report on the status of wolves in New York State. We worked with other advocates and the bill’s sponsors to make some changes to the language and the bill passed the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee but unfortunately stalled in the Senate. Support for this legislation has continued to grow.



Conserving and Promoting Private Forests That Store and Sequester Carbon:

Forests are critical ecosystems that provide a wide array of environmental benefits, including wildlife habitat, flood mitigation, and protection of air and water quality. Forests also absorb and store carbon dioxide that can offset greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the impacts of climate change. According to the New York State Climate Action Council, New York's forests store an estimated 1,911 million metric tons (MMT) of carbon—ten times more than the amount of carbon emitted from the State's energy sector annually—and sequester approximately 26.6 MMT of carbon dioxide annually. Around 70 percent—13.7 million acres—of New York forest lands are owned by private landowners and the majority of all the carbon storage and sequestration in the State occurs on these lands.

PROTECT strongly supported a new bill providing a financial incentive for private landowners to maintain wild forest lands. State law currently provides real property tax reductions for landowners who manage fifty or more acres of their land for timber production



pursuant to a timber management plan approved by DEC. Landowners who meet these criteria are eligible for a real property tax exemption of up to 80 percent of the assessed valuation of the lands. The new bill expands the existing real property tax incentive to landowners who place at least ten acres of forested property under a conservation easement that ensures that the land will be permanently conserved as wild forest and prohibits the cutting, removal or destruction of trees on the tract (with certain exemptions such as DEC-approved actions to address invasive species). The bill also authorizes State assistance to municipali-



Left top: PROTECT supports an amendment to the Forest Tax Law that would provide a financial incentive for private landowners to permanently conserve their forests without cutting, removal or destruction of trees. Lower Left: APA Board Members at the August 2025 meeting, including new Board Member Jose Almanzar, second from left. Above: DEC Commissioner Amanda Lefton during her confirmation hearing before the State Senate. Right: PROTECT Board member Sid Harring with Claudia Braymer and Chris Amato at Adirondack Lobby Day at the State Capitol in Albany.

ties that lose real property tax revenues as a result of landowners enrolling in the program by tapping into State revenues generated by the real property transfer tax to offset lost real property tax revenues.

Leadership Changes at APA and DEC: This year saw major leadership changes at both APA and DEC. Governor Hochul nominated Rush Holt, Jr. and Jose Almanzar to fill two vacant seats on the APA Board and Governor Hochul nominated Amanda Lefton to be DEC Commissioner following the departure of Basil Seggos. All three nominations were confirmed by



the New York State Senate. In October 2025, Governor Hochul appointed Mark Hall as APA Chair.

Updating and Improving the APA Act: The Adirondack Park Agency Act (APA Act), enacted in 1972, has



remained virtually unchanged for more than 50 years. In that time, the Adirondack Park has entered a new era—facing unprecedented environmental, social, and economic pressures. Climate change, overuse of trails and waterways, fragmented forests, an acute shortage of affordable housing, and outdated development standards now threaten the long-term health of both the Park's natural resources and its communities. The APA Act must be modernized to meet these 21st-century challenges. A comprehensive update is needed to ensure that the Park remains resilient, ecologically intact, and economically vibrant.

A modernized APA Act should strengthen protections for sensitive water bodies, wetlands, and shorelines; prevent forest fragmentation and habitat loss; establish science-based, climate-smart development standards; and ensure that the ecological carrying capacity of the Park is not exceeded—on both public and private lands. An updated APA Act should also create meaningful incentives for affordable and workforce housing; promote environmentally responsible development in

land use classifications able to support it; safeguard the long-term viability of critical economic drivers; and assist local governments with planning tools to build sustainable, resilient communities.

PROTECT is working on a multi-year, nonpartisan effort to re-imagine and strengthen the APA Act. We are gathering input from a wide range of stakeholders—environmental experts, local officials, business leaders, community members, and others—to help shape a pragmatic and forward-looking legislative blueprint. In parallel, we are actively engaging with members of the New York State Legislature and their staff to discuss pathways for reform. These efforts aim to align ecological protection with economic opportunity—ensuring that the Adirondack Park thrives for generations to come.

APA Continues to Rubber Stamp Projects Without Adequate Review: Over the past year, APA has approved numerous major development projects without requiring fundamental baseline ecological data and



Left: Proposed subdivision to the Adirondack Park Agency fails to meet basic conservation design principles of protecting natural resources, clustering development, and maintaining connectivity. Above: New docks constructed in wetlands in Ampersand Bay on Lower Saranac Lake without a wetlands permit from APA.

without applying widely accepted principles of environmentally responsible planning and design. One of the most concerning aspects of this trend is APA's failure to require applicants to identify, map, and assess vernal pools on proposed project sites. These seasonal wetlands are critical breeding habitats for amphibians and other wildlife and are explicitly protected under amendments to the Freshwater Wetlands Act, which took effect in January 2025. APA's continued disregard for this requirement not only undermines the intent of the law, but places vital ecosystems at risk. Additionally, APA has routinely approved large-scale subdivisions that fragment the landscape, failing to cluster development in a way that protects habitat corridors, forest integrity, and open space. This practice runs counter to

both the APA Act and core principles of conservation design—principles that have been widely endorsed by scientists, planners, and conservationists for decades. PROTECT continues to submit detailed comments on private land development proposals that expose these regulatory failures. We are urging APA to enforce its own statutes, integrate current ecological science into project review, and adopt a more precautionary and conservation-minded approach to land use planning.

PROTECT Continues Legal Battle to Safeguard Wetlands in Lower Saranac Lake: PROTECT has filed an appeal challenging a lower court's dismissal of its lawsuit against APA for approving a major commercial marina expansion on Lower Saranac Lake without requiring a wetlands permit. The project involves the construction and installation of extensive new infrastructure—including floating docks and pilings—across approximately 27,000 square feet of protected wetlands at two separate locations on the lake. Despite the clear environmental impact, APA allowed the project to proceed without requiring the applicant to se-



cure a wetlands permit. This legal battle follows a prior decision by the Appellate Division, Third Department, which annulled APA's original wetlands permit for the project issued in September 2020. The court ruled that APA had improperly lowered the wetlands' regulatory value to justify the permit, thereby misapplying its own wetlands protection regulations. In response to that ruling, rather than requiring a new wetlands permit, APA inexplicably approved the revised project without any wetlands permitting at all—despite the continued and substantial impact on sensitive wetland areas. PROTECT's appeal of the lower court's dismissal seeks to hold APA accountable and ensure full compliance with New York State wetlands regulations. Oral arguments in the case are scheduled for January 2026.

APA is Still Missing the Boat on New Wetland

Protections: As of this report's publication, nearly a year has passed since critical amendments to New York's Freshwater Wetlands Act took effect. DEC moved efficiently, releasing draft regulations in time for robust public comment and finalizing them ahead

Above: Mountain bike race course jump constructed on Whiteface Mountain without an approved Work Plan. Right: Mountain bike race course track constructed on Whiteface Mountain exceeds current trail standards guidance for mountain bike trails on the Forest Preserve.

of the January 1, 2025, implementation date for the statutory changes. In stark contrast, APA has yet to update its own regulations to reflect these important changes—despite repeated requests from PROTECT and other environmental organizations to do so.

Among other improvements, the new statewide amendments extend protections to vernal pools—seasonal wetlands that provide essential breeding habitat for amphibians and support biodiversity. However, due to APA's inaction, vernal pools within the Adirondack Park currently receive less regulatory protection than those outside the Park. This regulatory gap is not just a technical oversight—it represents a meaningful ecological failure. PROTECT continues to call attention to APA's failure to act and is raising this issue in public



comments on proposed development projects where the Agency has neglected to require assessments of vernal pool habitat or to incorporate basic protective measures.

Forest Preserve Work Plans: Ensuring Transparency and Constitutional Compliance: PROTECT continues to actively monitor DEC’s preparation of Work Plans for management activities on Forest Preserve lands. The requirement for these detailed Work Plans is the direct result of PROTECT’s landmark legal victory, which successfully challenged the constitutionality of DEC’s proposed snowmobile trail network—a project that would have entailed the cutting of thousands of trees and major terrain alterations in violation of Article 14 of the New York State Constitution. In response to that decision, DEC adopted a new Commissioner’s Policy requiring that all proposed management activities on Forest Preserve lands be guided by a formal Work Plan. These plans must now be subject to public review and comment and must explicitly assess whether the proposed actions comply with the

“forever wild” protections enshrined in Article 14. PROTECT’s review and comments on proposed Work Plans have already led to meaningful improvements. For example, our advocacy resulted in a significant reduction in the number of trees slated for removal to maintain scenic views from Prospect Mountain. We continue to closely scrutinize all proposed Work Plans to ensure that Forest Preserve management remains fully transparent, legally compliant, and protective of the ecological integrity of these constitutionally protected public lands.

ORDA Constructs Illegal Mountain Bike Racecourse on Whiteface Mountain: In 2025, the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) prepared a draft Work Plan for, and then constructed, a major downhill mountain biking racecourse on Whiteface Mountain—part of the protected Adirondack Forest Preserve—in direct violation of Article 14 of the New York State Constitution, commonly known as the “forever wild” clause. Disregarding the New York Court of Appeals’ landmark decision in *Protect the Adiron-*



dacks! Inc. v. Department of Environmental Conservation and Adirondack Park Agency, which strictly limits allowable terrain alteration within the Forest Preserve, ORDA proceeded with extensive and intrusive development as well as cutting 30 trees. The project involved significant modification of the mountain's natural features, including the construction of large, boulder-strewn jumps, high artificial berms, steeply banked turns, and multiple newly graded areas—features explicitly at odds with the constitutional protections affirmed by the Court.

Compounding the issue, ORDA undertook this construction without securing the legally required approvals from DEC, including approval of its draft Work Plan that PROTECT opposed in public comments to DEC. The course was completed in time to host an international mountain biking competition from October 3–5. PROTECT played a central role in bringing this violation to the public's attention and notifying DEC. PROTECT has called on ORDA to promptly release a draft remedial Work Plan for public

Above: PROTECT worked to develop a draft amendment to resolve many problems at Mount Van Hoevenberg while ensuring ORDA has the lands it needs to host events. Right: PROTECT continues to advocate for better trails management in the Forest Preserve.

comment. This plan should outline a clear timeline for the removal of all illegal structures and the full restoration of the altered terrain on Whiteface Mountain, in compliance with the Constitution.

Mount Van Hoevenberg Constitutional Amendment Ballot Proposal for November 2025: PROTECT is urging New Yorkers to vote “YES” on a proposed amendment to Article 14 of the New York State Constitution. This amendment would authorize the continued use and improvement of certain facilities at the Mt. Van Hoevenberg Olympic Sports Complex, previously constructed by ORDA. The amendment permits the State to use up to 323 acres of Forest Preserve land within the Mt. Van Hoevenberg complex for a range of winter sports-related activities and infrastructure.



These include trails, buildings, water lines, and parking areas. To facilitate this, the amendment provides an exemption from the constitutional prohibition on tree-cutting within the Forest Preserve, as mandated by the “Forever Wild” clause of Article 14. As a compensatory measure, the amendment also requires the State to acquire and add at least 2,500 acres of new land to the Adirondack Forest Preserve. These lands must be of equal or greater value than those being utilized and are subject to legislative approval. This amendment is necessary to retroactively authorize previously unlawful development at the Mt. Van Hoevenberg site and ensure that ongoing improvements—funded by hundreds of millions in State investment—comply with the State Constitution. The proposed amendment is on the ballot for a statewide vote in November 2025.

DEC Trail Standards Remain in Limbo: PROTECT continues to participate as a member of the DEC Working Group responsible for revising and updating statewide trail standards for public lands. The draft standards, released last year, provide detailed guidance

on key aspects of trail construction and design, including the width of the cleared corridor, tread width (the walkable surface), construction techniques, and clearing heights. These standards are intended to apply to all trail types—hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, horseback riding, and snowmobiling—based on the intended and anticipated level of use. While PROTECT supports the development of consistent, environmentally responsible standards, we remain deeply concerned about DEC’s ongoing efforts to apply snowmobile trail parameters that would violate Article 14 of the New York State Constitution—the “forever wild” clause that governs management of Forest Preserve lands. We submitted formal objections to the proposed snowmobile trail standards, which include excessive trail widths and intrusive construction techniques incompatible with constitutional protections. To date, DEC has not responded to our concerns, and the finalization of the revised trail standards remains pending. PROTECT will continue to monitor and intervene to improve trails management throughout the Forest Preserve.



Debar Lodge to be Removed: DEC is moving forward with plans to remove Debar Lodge and its associated complex of structures from the shore of Debar Pond in the northern Adirondacks. As part of this process, DEC has released a Draft Scope for public comment under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), outlining its intent to develop a new Unit Management Plan (UMP) for the Debar Mountain Complex. According to the Draft Scope, DEC has determined that it has neither an operational need for the existing buildings nor the resources to properly manage them. As such, the agency proposes to clear the site of all structures and restore the area to a wild forest condition. The buildings are located within the 82,000-acre Debar Mountain Wild Forest, where the presence of such development violates the “forever wild” protections of Article 14 of the New York State Constitution. Previously, DEC had proposed reclassifying the site as an Intensive Use Area and transferring the lodge, along with adjacent Forest Preserve lands, to a private entity. That proposal met with strong public opposition, led in part by PROTECT. In response to

Above: It’s time to tear down the dilapidated Debar Lodge and rewild the site for public use. Right: Lake George near Blairs Bay where ProcettaCor, an aquatic herbicide, was used by the Lake George Park Commission to treat invasive Eurasian watermilfoil.

this outcry, DEC withdrew the reclassification plan. We commend DEC for this course correction and urge the agency to follow through on its stated commitment to remove these unconstitutional structures and restore the Forest Preserve at Debar Pond to its rightful wild state.

Long-Term Water Quality Monitoring Enters its 28th Year: 2025 marked the 28th year of the Adirondack Lake Assessment Program (ALAP), a long-standing partnership between Protect the Adirondacks and the Adirondack Watershed Institute (AWI) at Paul Smith’s College. ALAP has three primary objectives: 1) collect long-term water quality data on individual lakes and ponds in the Adirondack Park; 2) provide long-term trend data to local residents, lake associa-



tions, property owners and local governments to support water quality protection efforts; and 3) develop a comprehensive profile of water quality conditions across the Adirondack region. The program relies on trained volunteers who collect water samples, which are then analyzed by scientists at AWI. Over nearly three decades, ALAP has become a cornerstone of science-based environmental advocacy in the region. Its data is instrumental in shaping public understanding and informing policy, particularly in the ongoing effort to reduce road salt pollution in Adirondack waters.

Concerns Persist Over ProcellaCOR: The aquatic herbicide ProcellaCOR is being increasingly applied in Adirondack water bodies to control invasive Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM). Despite repeated calls from PROTECT for an adjudicatory hearing on the use of this relatively new herbicide, APA has not held one. PROTECT remains concerned about the potential short-term impacts on non-target native plant species and long-term ecological effects, especially in cases

where ProcellaCOR is applied repeatedly in the same water body year after year. While we recognize the importance of managing EWM, we believe that ongoing chemical treatments are not a sustainable solution. Instead, we advocate for active, long-term management strategies that minimize ecological disruption and preserve the health of native aquatic ecosystems. We continue to closely monitor the science surrounding ProcellaCOR's environmental impacts and will persist in pushing for greater oversight, transparency, and accountability in its use.

Throughout all of this work, the members of Protect the Adirondacks are what sustain us. Your financial support and membership, letters, public comments at hearings, and volunteerism fuels our work and builds a record of success, year after year, for helping to keep the Adirondack Park a vital, wild, and beautiful oasis.

Thank you for being key to the work of Protect the Adirondacks! Your involvement is important to everything that we do.



Adirondack Lake Assessment Program Completed its 28th Year in 2025

The Adirondack Park Lake Assessment Program (ALAP) is a partnership between Paul Smith's College Adirondack Watershed Institute and Protect the Adirondacks. 2025 marked the 28th 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. Here's a list of the 76 lakes studied in 2025:

Amber Lake

Arbutus Lake
Augur Lake
Austin Pond
Big Moose Lake
Blue Mountain Lake
Brandreth Lake
Canada Lake
Caroga Lake (East)
Caroga Lake (West)
Chateaugay Lake (Lower)
Chateaugay Lake (Upper)
Chazy Lake
Clear Pond
Cranberry Lake
Eagle Lake
Eli Pond
Elk Lake
Fern Lake
Follensby Pond
Friends Lake
Garnet Lake
Green Lake
Gull Pond
Highlands Forge Lake
Hoel Pond

Indian Lake (Franklin Cty)
Irving Pond
Jordan Lake
Kiwassa Lake
Lake Adirondack
Lake Clear
Lake Colby
Lake Madeline
Lake of the Pines
Lake Ozonia
Lake Rondaxe
Lake Titus
Lens Lake
Little Colby Lake
Little Long Lake
Little Simon Pond
Long Lake
Long Pond
Loon Lake (Franklin Cty)
Loon Lake (Warren Cty)
Lower Beaver Pond
Lower Saranac Lake
Middle Saranac Lake
Moody Pond
Moss Lake

Mountain Pond
Mountain View Lake
Osgood Pond
Otter Pond
Paradox Lake
Pine Lake
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Ragged Lake
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Rich Lake
Silver Lake
Simon Pond
Split Rock 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

Saratoga Outdoors Generously Supports Protect the Adirondacks through the 1% for the Planet Program



In 2024, Protect the Adirondacks joined 1% for the Planet as an Environmental Partner. We were sponsored by Saratoga Outdoors, a popular outdoor recreation clothing and equipment store on Broadway in Saratoga Springs. In December 2024, Saratoga Outdoors generously awarded more than \$24,000 to Protect the Adirondacks as a 1% for the Planet member. John Nemjo, founder and owner of Saratoga Outdoors, and a Board member of PROTECT, made this generous donation through the store's participation in 1% for the Planet.

“Having started Mountainman Outdoor Supply Company in the heart of the Adirondacks in a small abandoned pizza shop in Inlet, New York, in 1993, we have never felt more a part of the Adirondacks as we do now. Having sold off our original locations in the Adirondacks in 2023, we still hold this unique region,



and its abundant wild lakes and Wilderness, in our hearts, and look forward to supporting Protect the Adirondacks in the years to come as they strive to keep it forever wild for us and future generations. We are happy to have forged this relationship and encourage all businesses in the region to do the same to protect not only the wild nature that exists but our livelihoods as we help thousands upon thousands of visitors enjoy its wonders every season of the year,” said John Nemjo, of Saratoga Outdoors.

PROTECT Annual Meeting at Paul Smith's was a Hit



Protect the Adirondacks held its annual membership meeting in July at Paul Smith's College. The meeting was attended by over 80 members and elected a new slate of Board members, including Roger Gray, Patty Morrison, John Nemjo, Dave Quinn, Barbara Rottier, Chris Walsh, and Peter O'Shea. Reports were provided to members on organization finances, membership, and conservation and advocacy.

The highlight of the meeting was a talk by climate change activist and author Bill Mckibben, where he urged all attending not to give up hope or stop fighting. Bill ran through a litany of observations about the low cost of alternative energy and strides other countries and communities are making to try and put the planet on a better course. He provided hope in these dark times and optimism that citizen action ceaselessly applied can still win the day.



Bill Mckibben and Claudia Braymer

House Parties Help Spread the Word About Our Work



This summer, members of Protect the Adirondacks hosted house parties to introduce our work to their friends and neighbors and help to expand membership and support. Board member Lorraine Duvall generously hosted a successful house party in August in Keene and George and Anne Stowers graciously hosted a house party in Loon Lake. Last Spring, Barbara Rottier and Dick Jarvis also hosted a house party at their home in Vermontville.

House parties are informal and easy, and are a great way to help spread the word about our work. Anyone who is interested in hosting a house party for Protect the Adirondacks for their friends, family, and neighbors should contact us at (518) 251-2700 or email us at fundraising@protectadks.org. House parties are a great way to help build support for the conservation and environmental protection of the Adirondack Park.



Top: Anne Stowers and Claudia Braymer at a house party hosted by Anne and George Stowers at their home in Loon Lake in August. Above: Claudia makes the case.

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Elaine Woroby
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Gerald Zahavi
Adam Zeff

*Deceased at time of publication.

Protect the Adirondacks makes every effort to assure the accuracy of this list of generous donors. This list is for donors from July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025. If you see an error, we apologize and ask that you please bring it to our attention. Thank you very much!

Tributes

In memory of Marlene Heldman Bond

Mary Lynne Heldman
Johnsburg Central School Teachers
Association

In memory of Billy Curran

Anonymous (3)
Dennis Alonso
Ftara Barlin
Rita and Robert Bennett
Bill Bush
Herb and Sue Cohen
Raymond Curran
Bettijane Forrester
Bob Glennon
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Barbara Rottier
Jill Russell
Amy Tefft
Andy Von Kennel

Grateful Acknowledgment of Donors 2024-2025

In memory of Evelyn Greene

Eileen Egan Mack

In memory of Gerry Humes

Russell Dalton

In memory of Dale Jeffers

Mary Ellen Albert
Sarah Blume
Mary Burns
Ken and Jackie Fanion
Jason, Heidi, Soraya and Blais Fanion
Gary and Debbie Jakaitis
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In memory of George Rote

Kelly Smith

In memory of William T. Russell, III

Anonymous

In memory of Gerhardt Storsberg

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Julie and Gregory Bennincasa
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In Memory of Michael Wilson

Jack Hailey
Audrey Merriam
Jack and Rachel Stucker

In honor of the marriage of Kate Berdan and Mike Calma

Maggi and Doug Royle

In honor of the marriage of Kathy Nahor Samad and Naeem Samad

Susan Dixon

In honor of Peter Bauer

Peter Paine, Jr.

In honor of Dean Cook

Juliet Cook

In honor of Caroline Corbett and Family

Teresa Crowe

In honor of Dolores Grupp

Lauren Luckert

Corporate Match

GE Foundation
First Source Credit Union
Pacific Electric & Gas

Special Thanks

Adirondack Watershed Institute at Paul Smith's College
Caffry and Flower Law Office
Saratoga Outdoors

Adirondack Lake Assessment Program

Adirondack Ecological Center
Adirondack White Lake Association
Big Moose Property Owners Association
Blue Mountain Center (Eagle Lake)
Blue Mountain Lake Association
Brandreth Park Association
Brantingham Lake Community Association
Canada Lakes Conservation Association
Chateaugay Lake Association
Cranberry Lake Boat Club
John Duryea (Eli Pond)
Elk Lake Reserve (Clear Pond and Elk Lake)
Fern Lake Association
Friends of Long Pond Association
Friends of Moody Pond
Friends Lake Association
Garnet Hill Property Owners Association
Garnet Lake Civic Association
Green Mountain Tennis and Swim Club
Gull Pond Property Owners Association
Hawkeye Conservation Association (Silver Lake)
Hank and Margaret Kinoshian (Lens Lake)
Highlands Forests LLC
Hoel Pond Association/Roseanne and Tom Neuhard
Victoria Kneirnam (Austin Pond)
The Kildare Club
Lake Clear Association
Lake Colby Association
Lake Titus Protective Association
Little Long Lake Campers Association
Little Simon Pond Association/Birchery

Camp

Long Lake Association
Loon Lake Community Association
Loon Lake Park District/Town of Chester
Lower Saranac Lake Association
Matamek Corporation (Ragged Lake)
John McGlade (Lake Adirondack)
John Monroe (Mountain Pond)
Mountain View Association, Inc.
TNC-Adirondack Chapter (Chazy Lake, Chateaugay Lake, East Caroga Lake, Follensby Pond, Middle Saranac Lake, and Paradox Lake)
Rex Niles (Moss Lake)
North Country Camps/Nancy Gucker Birdsall
Osgood Pond Association
Paradox Lake Association
Raquette Lake Property Owners Association
Rondaxe Lake Association
Robert Shwajlyk (Pine Lake)
Shore Owners Association of Kiwassa Lake
Star Lake Protective Association
Tahawus Club
The Northwoods Club
Phyllis Thompson (Simon Pond and Tupper Lake)
Trout Lake Association/Stacy Webb
Twitchell Lake Association
West Caroga Lake Association
Windover Lake Association

Join the Adirondack 500

This is the best investment you can make in Adirondack Park conservation and environmental protection.



Adirondack 500 is group of dedicated donors who commit to an annual contribution at the level of their choice to support the important work of Protect the Adirondacks. Adirondack 500 donors pledge to give annually at levels of \$250 to \$10,000.

Financial support for Protect the Adirondacks is one of the best investments a donor can make in conservation and environmental protections for the Adirondack Park. Protect the Adirondacks has won big victories that have wrought major changes and long-lasting reforms to protect its natural resources and improve the management of the Adirondack Park and the Forever Wild Forest Preserve.

So far, we have 280 individuals, families, and businesses participating in the Adirondack 500 and we're looking for 220 more. For more information on the Adirondack 500 program call (518) 251-2700 or email us at info@protectadks.org. We're happy to talk with you about how to structure your gift and we have volunteer financial advisors ready to help with advice on donations. Thank you very much!

2024-2025 Financial Summary

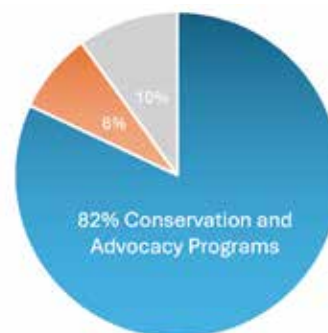
Assets	2024-25	2023-24
Cash	\$13,603	\$6,247
Cash (Designated)	-	54,307
Cash (Temporarily Restricted)	50,478	48,323
Cash (Permanently Restricted)	-	42,660
Investments - Board Designated	43,721	39,113
Investments - Unrestricted	331,067	322,439
Investments - Permanently Restricted	542,177	515,055
Property (Adirondack Research Library)	450,000	450,000
Property (Headquarters/Furnishings)	200,028	207,596
Total Assets	\$1,631,074	\$1,685,740

Revenues	2024-25	2023-24
Contributions & Grants	\$346,425	\$300,377
Dues & Fees	56,155	58,035
Investment Income	18,826	19,430
Realized Gain (Loss) on Investments	20,671	0
Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Investments	41,114	58,272
Event Income	0	0
In-Kind Donations	0	0
Program Services	35,379	49,998
Miscellaneous	0	0
Total Income	\$518,570	\$486,112

Program, Administrative & Fundraising Expenses	2024-25	2023-24
Program Expenses	(82%) \$463,183	(88%) \$456,623
Administrative Expenses	(10%) \$54,295	(4%) \$22,346
Fundraising Expenses	(8%) \$44,423	(8%) \$40,221
Total Expenses	\$561,901	\$519,190

Expenses	2024-25	2023-24
Salaries	\$320,601	\$310,632
Payroll Expenses & Benefits	45,957	40,958
Contracted Services	0	0
Insurance	1,181	2,771
Occupancy Costs (Headquarters main.)	41,278	3,618
Supplies	5,477	22,099
Printing	25,672	18,116
Postage	12,778	6,102
Conferences & Events	2,820	4,197
Bank Charges	2,504	2,201
Advertising	2,100	2,425
Dues & Subscriptions	779	1,226
Legal Defense	23,264	11,499
Professional Fees & Services	10,724	10,563
Travel	6,788	8,304
Website, Software, Technology Services	10,180	10,476
Investment Fees	0	0
Program Expense	42,230	56,592
Miscellaneous	0	0
Depreciation and Amortization	7,568	7,411
Total Expenses	\$561,901	\$519,190

2024-25 Total Resource Allocation



Administration 10%
Fundraising 8%
Programs 82%

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 (\$200,028) is located in Johnsbury, NY.



Help secure the future of Protect the Adirondacks!

- Join the Forever Wild Legacy Group -

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. Gifts from the Legacy Group are managed in the Forever Wild Endowment Fund that supports the grassroots organizing, advocacy, research, independent public oversight, legal defense, and other vital work of Protect the Adirondacks. The endowment ensures that these programs are 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 Community 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 members of the Forever Wild Legacy Group include:

Valerie and James Bayley
David and Joanne Brauer
Richard Ferro
Ewa Hammer
Sidney and Michelle Harring
Hans Himelein and Janice Kyle
Dr. Herbert Hudnut
James and Sheila Hutt
Richard Jarvis
Eugene and Carolyn Kazcka
James McMartin Long
Barbara Rottier
Phyllis Thompson

For more information on the Forever Wild Legacy Group call (518) 251-2700 or email us at info@protectadks.org.

Thank you very much!



Protect the Adirondacks
PO Box 48
North Creek, NY 12853



Help us keep the Adirondacks wild and beautiful

Please make a special contribution today to help Protect the Adirondacks continue defending and protecting the wild lands and waters you love. Please help Protect the Adirondacks preserve the wild character of the Adirondack Park

for current and future generations to enjoy. To become a member today and add your voice to many others, visit us online at www.protectadks.org, or return the completed form below.



Yes! I want to help protect and defend the Adirondacks!

PO Box 48 North Creek, NY 12853 info@protectadks.org protectadks.org

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Please make checks payable to: Protect the Adirondacks! For credit card circle one:
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☐ \$100 ☐ \$75 Family ☐ \$50 Individual ☐ \$_____ Other

Name(s)

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City State Zip

Email Address

Please sign me up as a Monthly Sustainer.
Charge \$_____ to my credit card once
each month.

Phone number
My company _____ has a matching gifts program.
My gift is in honor/memory of _____

Thank you very much for your support!

Contribute online at our secure website www.protectadks.org