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Wilderness: The Engine of Change

David Olio

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What defines place? Typically, people, history, resources and geography comprise the identity of a location, such that visitors can glean a tenable sense of the culture. In contrast, the Adirondacks yields a multitude of identities and definitions, as its extensive and eclectic history dilutes a clear depiction of the place as a singular entity. In fact, its dualities consistently challenge itself, whether insider versus outsider legislative pressure, development versus preservation, or public versus private, the Adirondack region encapsulates contradiction. For this reason, the definition of ‘wilderness’ has undergone innumerable changes in turn with perception, leading to incessant battles over the land use of the Forest Preserve. Because the term ‘wilderness’ lacked an explicit definition, land in the Adirondacks could be manipulated for the individual perception of wilderness, as legislative mandates and decisions did not supply a concrete interpretation of the land use of ‘wilderness.’

Understanding the diversity of perspectives, therefore, provides the secret to the identity of the Adirondack Park. Looking at the work of two prominent citizen conservationists, John S. Apperson and Paul Schaefer, this paper will explore the value of preserving land in its natural state for future generations to enjoy. Nonetheless, legislative mandates ultimately shape the actions of the citizenry, so understanding the history of those decisions and the evolution of the concept ‘wilderness’ helps to explain the continuous discussion of land use. Finally, in order to evaluating the current perspectives on ‘wilderness,’ it is necessary to understand the current Adirondack discussion, which this paper will analyze by analyzing the approaches of Adirondack Wild, the Association of Adirondack Towns and Villages, the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter and the Adirondack Landowners Association. While these groups represent a few of the different interests for the use of the Park’s land, they are a small portion of the multitude of groups involved in the ongoing debate. In entirety, these differing people, organizations and

systems contribute to a collective definition of ‘wilderness’ and the resulting use of land, revealing a dynamic and conflicting battle.

I. The Legislative History of the Adirondacks

Because of the long legislative history of the Adirondack region, government decisions and actions simultaneously shape the definition of wilderness in turn with the actions of renowned conservationists, such as J. S. Apperson or Paul Schaefer, and the collective power and influence of advocacy and environmental groups. While each of these parties helps to direct public policy, in the end, the established policy can change the people and future of the region, making its creation an important landmark in time. Thus, a circular and heavily collaborative system evolves, which determines how the public in and outside the park perceive wilderness in the Adirondack region. This collaborative system ultimately determines how citizens, companies and government organizations decide to utilize the land. While the legislative past of the Adirondack Park largely represents a desire to preserve wild land for future generations, many there are many exceptions that have led to misuse and periods of degradation. Therefore, the lobbying pressure on federal and state representatives continues into the present, where citizens and organized coalitions struggle to contend with the influence of decisions made by the legislature. Ranging from mandates, taxes, lawsuits and land easements, government action impacts all levels of the Adirondacks.

First and foremost, the establishment of the Forest Preserve in 1885 stands as the inception of the protection and conservation of the Adirondack region as a wild destination. Though the Adirondack forest was now legislatively protected, the Forest Preserve still lacked some of the specific designations it needed to accomplish a strict goal of conservation. The vagueness of Article 14 and other small sections allowed for wide interpretation of the legislation

itself, submitting 'wilderness' to yet again persevere different interpretations for land use. For example, though the land was classified in 1894 as 'forever wild,' the convention failed to define the term 'wilderness, allowing different perspectives on wild to permeate the boundaries of the Blue Line. As evidenced by the plethora of advocacy and environmental groups that have been inaugurated in the park since the inception of the Forest Preserve, 'forever wild' is subject to yield to the interpretation of the individual or individual organization's definition. They could manipulate the term to suit their own goals, leading to disagreements over the amount of recreation that should be supported or the amount of permits that should be accepted by the legislature.

Similarly, in the Constitutional Convention of 1894, legislators again failed to define explicitly the meaning of 'wilderness,' composing the following edict instead:

The lands of the State, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by law, shall forever be kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold, or exchanged, or taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed.¹

What had they meant by wild forest lands? Who has access to private land? Can they be appealed further in the future? Although a step in the right direction, the Constitutional Convention's lack of foresight opened a battleground of citizen conservationists, corporations and private land owners to fight for their interpretation. Since then, thousands of amendments have been proposed, revealing a pattern of division among the people influenced by the legislation. While the success rate of these amendments remains extremely low, even a few successes can devastate the integrity of the park's wilderness. Those that have passed include the creation of ski centers at Belleayre in the Catskills and Gore and Whiteface in the

¹ "Department of Environmental Conservation." Article XIV of the New York State Constitution. Accessed August 10, 2016. <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/55849.html>.

Adirondacks, in addition to a toll road which summits Whiteface Mountain. Therefore, a small misstep in the appropriation of 'forever wild' has arguably induced even more controversy than the article itself, as it created avenues for corporate interests to overcome the work of dedicated conservationists. Despite the negative outlook presented here, these measures have successfully conserved the Forest Preserve with only a few contestable points, indicating that New York State truly possesses an interest in protecting the region for its beauty and wildness.

Several decades later, preceding the classifications of land as having distinct guidelines for use and accessibility, Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Harold G. Wilm (1959-1966) began the battle of mechanization in the park. Wilm, though in charge of the state's conservation plans, consistently enforced his belief that "jeeps, dirt bikes, and snowmobiles should be used to access the remote Forest Preserve lands in order to relieve hunting pressure near roadways."² Because of this, much of the Adirondack region was compromised in the eyes of conservationists who, knowing the dangers of permitting easier access by destructive off-road vehicles, feared degradation of the environment. Nonetheless, Wilm significantly changed the direction of the Park by proposing the creation of 12 wilderness tracts in the Adirondacks and four in the Catskills for a total of 882,000 acres, in addition to banning mechanization through those regions.³ Here, the DEC made a clear statement to the public through its proposal that mechanization threatened the state of wilderness such that government mandates were necessary to protect the land as 'forever wild.' Later on, the state proved that true by approving the classification of land in more distinct terms through the State Land Master Plan.

² Warren, John. "How the Adirondack Forest Preserve was Motorized." *Adirondack Almanack*. September 22, 2015.

³ Schaefer, Paul. "Pathways to Wilderness." *The Conservationist*. Paul Schaefer, *The Adirondack Wilderness, Essays* [1]. Box 31: Folder 32.

While New York State was radically changing its determination and use of wild lands, national pressure simultaneously mounted to pass federal legislation with similar goals, therefore unifying the two legislative entities. Howard Zanhiser, a friend and associate of Paul Schaefer, lobbied intensively in D.C. for the Wilderness Act of 1964 after he had been inspired by the degraded environment surround Mt. McIntyre, where excessive logging had mutilated the landscape at a large scale. Having spoken with Schaefer over this issue, he brought the reality of New York's endangered forests to the capital to pass legislation that would effectively provide the nation with a concrete definition of wilderness: "an area where, in contrast to those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man—where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."⁴ Through Zanhiser's successful lobbying, national legislation made 'wilderness' a national concern, further exposing the Adirondack Park to the attention its ruggedly beautiful landscape deserves.

The last major change in management of the Adirondack Park occurred in 1971 through the Adirondack Park Agency Act, which created the APA, a division of the government entirely dedicated to managing the preservation and use of land within the Blue Line. Following this legislation, proposed by Governor Laurance S. Rockefeller, the agency produced the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan in 1987, which further classified use of the land as follows: Wilderness, Wild Forest, Canoe, Primitive, Primitive Bicycle Corridor, Intensive Use, Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers, Travel Corridors, Historic, State Administrative, and Detached Forest Preserve.⁵ The distinction between wilderness and wild forest has served to define what a true wilderness offers and needs in order for preservation, that being a complete prohibition of mechanization in those areas. Unfortunately, just like numerous other government organizations,

⁴ "Wilderness.net - 1964 Wilderness Act." Wilderness.net. Accessed August 10, 2016. <http://www.wilderness.net/nwps/legisact#2>.

⁵ "Department of Environmental Conservation." Adirondack Forest Preserve. Accessed July 26, 2016. <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5263.html>.

the APA has proven a difficult and burdensome body to contend with for the people of the Park. Communities interested in altering their land in any way, such as installing communication towers or constructing new parks, must apply to the agency for permission, which often becomes a tedious and frustrating process.

Trivial issues between the agency and the citizens of the Adirondack Park are inevitable, but undeniably, the APA stands as the benchmark of a century and a half of conservative, legislative and lobbying goals that have strived ultimately for the protection of the Forest Preserve. Among a tortuous route of legislative battles and proposals, these events dictate an evolving definition of the term 'wilderness' and therefore the future preservation of the park. Though complaints shall linger on about the implications and effects of each law, the imprint of preservation remains as the hallmark of the Adirondack Park.

II. The Conservation Efforts of John S. Apperson and Paul Schaefer in Preservation of Wilderness

John S. Apperson (1878-1963), a Virginia native, moved to the Schenectady area where he worked as an engineer for General Electric despite his unfinished degree; however, what Apperson lacked in formal education he made up for in a tenacious approach to life, finding ways to achieve apparently impossible feats. Because of his avid outdoor recreational interests, including hunting, hiking, skiing, skate-sailing and more, he developed a fervent interest in the preservation of the natural world, which he felt offered the public an escape to find themselves in land undeveloped by man, an increasingly rare sight in the early 20th century.⁶ J. S. Apperson firmly believed that man should not abuse wilderness but rather should work to preserve it in its

⁶ "John S. Apperson Jr. Papers." John S. Apperson Finding Aids. Accessed July 5, 2016. <http://www.union.edu/library/arl-collections/finding-aids/apperson.php>.

natural condition so that future generations may have the opportunity to enjoy the recreational and spiritual values natural wild offers. Because of his passion, Apperson led the way as a citizen conservationist for the protection of wilderness as he saw it, founding advocacy groups, leading battles against the degradation of natural land and development interests, and aiding others in their education of the wonders of wilderness. He dedicated his life towards this work, regardless of his pecuniary gain or the exhausting work necessary for success in his exploits. Having engrained this philosophy as a driving motivation in his life, Apperson went on to protect the Lake George region through expelling “squatters,” “rip-rapping” the islands (a method of preventing erosion through reinforcing the banks of islands with rock walls) and fighting development pressures through purchasing and donating Dome Island to the Nature Conservancy for preservation purposes. His life serves as the archetype for selfless preservation in the name of a common good, such that one’s work will not only preserve a natural beauty but also inspire others for generations to come.

Although wilderness suffered many different definitions between the 19th and 20th centuries, Apperson had a clear and vibrant view of the purpose of natural land. When he immigrated to Schenectady, he developed a passion for outdoor recreation, beginning with canoe trips around the area and shifting into consistent explorations of Lake George and its surrounding territory.⁷ As a result of his experience in the outdoors, he determined that the wilderness needed to be conserved, but that it should be available for responsible recreational use. During his lifetime, the term ‘conservationist’ developed a negative connotation, in that opponents perceived them as trying to lock-up the woods; Apperson “wanted the public land kept public, and wild, so that it could be enjoyed in its natural state and he urged the value of the

⁷ "John S. Apperson Jr. Papers." John S. Apperson Finding Aids. Accessed July 5, 2016. <http://www.union.edu/library/arl-collections/finding-aids/apperson.php>.

[preservation of forest] for wild forest recreation.”⁸ Furthermore, he understood the failure of Article 14’s vagueness before many others recognized it as a problem for conservation. In a letter to one of his colleagues, Dr. William T. Hornaday, Director of the New York Zoological Park, Apperson wrote:

We have been struggling with a mixed purpose since 1885 with undesirable results...if we cannot agree on a purpose for the state land, we cannot hope to agree on a law to govern it...the Adirondack and Catskill Parks should be geographically separated from the land to be used as a forest preserve and governed by separate laws.⁹

His thinking did not come to fruition until the 1987 Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan, evidencing his incredible intuition and foresight for successful conservation. Due to this perspective, he worked tirelessly and successfully to prevent permanent structure or dwellers to permeate the wilderness.

In his conservation efforts, Apperson employed numerous tactics to accomplish his goals, but his personal attributes highlight his success stories. His pessimism for the difficulties of passing successful legislation lead him to over prepare for cases and ultimately develop an unparalleled knowledge of his preservation battles; however, his negative viewpoint developed from his observation of degraded land because he understood what failure entailed. His diligence became so well known that by 1930, some of the nation’s top conservationists were modeling their work after his, since his photographs of lumbering, erosion of Adirondack peaks and islands, and fire were so influential.¹⁰ Furthermore, Apperson used many associates, who were well-versed in conservation issues so that they could discuss current issues, propose legislation and strategize their interactions with politicians. His web of connections grew larger and larger, constantly providing him with the opportunity for help in areas of specialization,

⁸ Newkirk, Arthur E. Forest Preserve, Lake George and ‘Conservation’ Owe Great Debt to John S. Apperson. February 5, 1953. The Daily Gazette.

⁹ Apperson, John S. Correspondence: Opposition of the Amendment to Article 7 Section 7. 1915. Box 32: Folder 7.

¹⁰ Newkirk. A Skeleton Biography of John Samuel Apperson. Box 2: Folder 42.

whether that be science, law or politics. Having gleaned an eclectic set of connections, Apperson brought many of them together to form the Forest Preserve Association which had no dues, committees or formalities besides the annual meeting. The Association produced a pamphlet with Dr. Hugh H. Bennett, director of the Soil Erosion Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior, entitled “The Tragic Truth about Soil” to help him maneuver around the lack of funds provided for him. This exemplified Apperson’s desire to unify different organizations in preserving the Adirondacks, as they all shared a common goal. Soon after, more than 23,000 copies were published, reaching 25 foreign nations and beginning a greater approach to the problems of soil erosion.¹¹

Now employing these techniques in each of his conservation battles, Apperson embarked on an illustrious career as a citizen conservationist, successfully thwarting development efforts and achieving huge conservation gains. Defeating the ‘squatters’ of Lake George was Apperson’s first major conservation win, since “the presence of squatters on these state-owned lands disturbed him as did the damage to the islands by high water.”¹² Because the great majority of islands in Lake George belonged to New York State, except some 18 tracts sold to private ownership around 1871, many citizens took advantage of the unoccupied land by building semi-permanent bases on the islands and enjoying rent, tax, and fee free living. Apperson believed that this practice was not only “unfair” but also directly violated Article 7 Section 7 of the State constitution, which “specifically identified that the forest lands of New York were not to be ‘taken.’”¹³ Though many supported Apperson in his disapproval of the ‘squatters,’ others wanted to reduce the strength of the forest preserve law for their own benefit,

¹¹ Newkirk, Arthur E. 1953.

¹² Newkirk, Arthur E. 1953.

¹³ Newkirk. A Skeleton Biography of John Samuel Apperson. Box 2: Folder 42.

arguing that the law was not clear and so they were entitled to this land. Here, the vague language of Article 14 manifests itself, subjecting wilderness to individual interpretation outside of the law. This pressure led to great anticipation for the Constitutional Convention of 1915, where Apperson and his allies overcame public and commercial pressure to amend Article 7 Section 7, where opponents were arguing for more lenient laws on land use.

After successfully defeating the proposed amendment to decrease the severity of Section 7, Apperson took to eradicating the law-breakers through his employment of his experienced network of connections. He learned all that he could about the deeds of the land to ensure the freeloaders had no right to stay and involved the local government officials who shared his concern with the “legality and morality of the problem.”¹⁴ Most significantly, he obtained warrants for removal from the Confidential Secretary to the Commissioner of Conservation, Warwick Carpenter. Apperson then employed this newfound power by notifying the ‘squatters’ of their illegal trespassing and use of the land, applying his personality in a matter-of-fact way to avoid unnecessary altercations; however, they often refused to take his warnings to leave seriously. Apperson would then gather many of his comrades and dismantle parts of the houses or structures that had been built in disregard to the law, inciting the trespassers to vacate the premise. Apperson defeated the illegal citizens, expelling them from their attempts at permanent homes in order to preserve the land for the use of public recreational activities for decades to follow.

Another example of Apperson’s relentless commitment to conservation relates back to the Lake George battle. In 1942, Apperson, along with a few other citizen conservationists, joined the state as plaintiffs in a lawsuit known as the Lake George Trespass Case. After a 15

¹⁴ Newkirk. A Skeleton Biography of John Samuel Apperson. Box 2: Folder 42.

year-long battle, they came out victorious in that the court ruled that “the state had sole right to regulate the water levels of the lake.”¹⁵ Apperson’s work proved instrumental in that his years of photographs of the changes occurring as a result of high water levels acted as crucial evidence in the case, as well as his success in employing the research of soil scientists who had studied the damage to soil as a result of the change in water levels. His own personal work for the past 30 years solidified a legislative victory.

Lake George faced additional pressure when a proposal for a north bound highway passing through Tongue Mountain and the narrows of Lake George came across the legislature. The proposed area, containing towering cliffs of rugged beauty, was still accessible to island campers and boaters, so the road would mutilate a pristine area of recreational enjoyment. Because Apperson had both a past history of being a successful engineer at one of the foremost engineering corporations and an accelerated understanding of the topography of the region as a result of his adventurous hiking habits in the region, he realized that the rugged formation of the region would escalate the economic cost of constructing the road. So, when Governor Alfred E. Smith visited the Lake George narrows, a trip proposed and executed by Apperson upon hearing that the governor was travelling to Saratoga for separate business, he himself realized the “disastrous effect the road would have on the natural beauty of the whole lake.” The governor then preceded to approve the proposed purchase of the Tongue Mountain land and surrounding regions to add to the state’s acquisitions.¹⁶

Despite his success, many doubted Apperson’s relentless efforts at conservation, as they believed a deeper motive must lie behind his selfless and exhausting work to improve the Forest Preserve for future generations. Nonetheless, Apperson solidified his legitimacy when he

¹⁵ Newkirk, Arthur E. 1953.

¹⁶ Newkirk. A Skeleton Biography of John Samuel Apperson. Box 2: Folder 42.

donated Dome Island to the Nature Conservancy, “to perpetuate the wild beauty of Dome Island, maintain the natural forest and soil conditions unimpaired, and to establish a sanctuary for all forms of native plant and animal life for scientific and educational purpose.”¹⁷ Apperson’s interest in the island had begun when he noticed a landslide, which had pushed 60 feet of earth into the lake, on the island in 1917 and began working to repair the damage done through rip-rapping and the replanting of disturbed vegetation. After years of trying to convince the state to purchase the land to no avail, Apperson decided to invest a large sum of his money, half of which he had to borrow, to purchase the island himself in 1949 knowing that a commercial vendor was seeking out Dome Island for the development of a hotel.¹⁸ In entirety, John S. Apperson’s life not only epitomizes citizen conservation but also serves as a testament to the quality and quantity of work necessary to preserve the Adirondack Park. Personally aiding in over 500 rip-rapping projects and helping to expel 700 cases of squatters, Apperson became one of the most successful and famous conservationists of the 20th century, inspiring numerous others to follow his footsteps in dedication to wilderness.¹⁹ In defining for himself what wilderness should entail, he established a goal to preserve the Adirondack’s natural landscape, forming friends, associations and legislation along the way. In his own words, the importance of the Adirondacks to his life: “the Lake is my wife, and the islands are my children.”²⁰

Following Apperson’s influential role as a leading citizen conservationist, Paul Schaefer became one of the drivers of the New York environmental movement throughout the 20th century. His passion for the Adirondacks grew out of his distaste for his carpentry apprenticeship, as his lack of interest inspired him to experience the serenity and freshness of the

¹⁷ Newkirk, Arthur E. 1953.

¹⁸ Newkirk, A Skeleton Biography of John Samuel Apperson. Box 2: Folder 42.

¹⁹ Newkirk, Arthur E. 1953.

²⁰ Newkirk, A Skeleton Biography of John Samuel Apperson. Box 2: Folder 42.

natural forest.²¹ His outdoor adventures consistently grew into an ardent passion for the wilderness he found, causing him to buy a cabin in the Adirondacks with his brother and begin writing his own essays and poetry on the boundless potential of the nature he saw. Specifically, the wild rivers captivated Schaefer, as their toiling and endless shape teased joy into his life. Writing in his essay, *Wild Rivers*, “I stood there in perfect awe at the perfection of nature around me. Then came the sudden realization that all of this might soon be lost forever...Here was wilderness—solitude, serenity and peace,” he indicates what a tranquil environment offers to the soul and how its loss could be reciprocated in the heart of man.²² For this reason, he dedicated himself to the protection of the lands, as he understood what many fail to, that the wilderness, land untrammelled by man, is irreplaceable and invaluable. He began educating himself and others on the need to not only preserve but also enjoy the wilderness recreation supplied so generously, meaning that, “We need to develop a rivers ethic which will go beyond legislative or State agency mandates [which] involves appreciation and understanding.”²³ His call to action asks to incite more citizen conservationists to undertake preservation as more than a hobby or interest, but as a life philosophy that includes wilderness in the individual identity.

Following this life-long commitment to preservation, Schaefer successfully prevented numerous development efforts, notably the 12-year battle against the Moose River Dam, therefore fulfilling the land ethic he promoted. A proposal, the Ostrander Amendment to Article 7, for the creation of a reservoir at Panther Mountain that would flood all of the Moose River plains with 40 feet of water emerged with the intent of developing hydro-electric power. This region held the largest winter yarding grounds for deer due to the food and shelter available there

²¹ "Paul Schaefer Collection." Paul Schaefer Collection. Accessed July 28, 2016. <https://www.union.edu/library/arl-collections/finding-aids/schaefer.php>.

²² Schaefer, Paul. *Wild Rivers*. The Conservationist. The Adirondack Wilderness, Essays [II]. Box 31: Folder 33.

²³ Schaefer, Paul. *Wild Rivers*. The Conservationist. The Adirondack Wilderness, Essays [II]. Box 31: Folder 33.

in addition to a sanctuary for other creatures, such as the otter, bear, fisher cat and birdlife, because of its character.²⁴ In order to achieve his goal, Schaefer worked tirelessly on many fronts to influence legislators, citizens and organizations to work on his behalf. He, in coordination with Edmund Richard, released educational and informative pamphlets so that he could develop a body of supporters who shared sufficient knowledge to combat the pressures of development. Significantly, Schaefer coerced the labor organizations to join him in a petition against the dam, a formidable task. Since the labor union, the United Steelworkers Union of America, understood the economic implications of such a large building project, they had initially backed legislators supporting the amendment; however, Schaefer, employing his extensive knowledge of the reservoirs damaging impact, convinced Anthony Berberi, the president of the USUA, to gather a petition with 200 signatures of their workers against the construction.²⁵ Though a 12 year battle, Schaefer's development of the Moose River Committee and successful pushing for the labor organizations position were monumental steps in dissolving a potentially devastating project.

Schaefer's victory over the Ostrander Amendment solidified his place as a leading conservationist in New York, earning him respect across the country from others working towards similar goals of conservation. In fact, Howard Zanhiser used Schaefer's victory as an archetype for a similar battle against a proposed dam in Echo Park, Utah.²⁶ Because of his success and notoriety, his writings and photographs received more attention, revealing his precision and talent in capturing the spirit of the Adirondacks. While he continued to fight for the

²⁴ Schaefer, Paul. Edmund H. Richard. "The Impending Tragedy of the Moose River Region: An Informative Letter on a Vital Adirondack Issue." Box 39: Folder 30.

²⁵ *Organized Labor and Panther Mountain Dam*. Adirondack Forest Preserve Library. Vol 10. Box 39: Folder 29.

²⁶ "Paul Schaefer Collection." Paul Schaefer Collection. Accessed July 28, 2016. <https://www.union.edu/library/arl-collections/finding-aids/schaefer.php>.

preservation of waterways and wilderness, Schaefer's education of future stewards and preservation supporters holds influence until today.

III. The Current Wilderness Advocacy Approach

Indubitably, the work of John S. Apperson and Paul Schaefer was wildly successful, yet the definition of wilderness is apt to change, just as the meaning of the Park's land continually fluctuates. For this reason, looking at modern implications of wilderness through the eyes, actions and accomplishments of specific advocacy and environmental groups will reveal the transition of Adirondack wilderness throughout the past century and into current perspectives. While ever-changing, this definition of wilderness ultimately shapes the use of the land in the park, and the dialogue which creates this duality must be explored.

In extension of the philosophy of Paul Schaefer and therefore J.S. Apperson, Adirondack Wild (Friends of the Forest Preserve) seeks to retain the same type of wilderness, in that land should not be altered by man that is classified by the state as 'wilderness.' In 1945, Paul Schaefer founded the Friends of the Forest Preserve during the decade long battle over the Moose River Plains. Since then, the organization has evolved into Adirondack Wild, making the preservation of land their strict and foremost goal, building even upon Verplanck Colvin's idea that, "Unless the region be preserved essentially in its present wilderness condition, the ruthless burning and destruction of the forest will slowly, year after year, creep onward."²⁷

Since their formation, the group has worshipped the rhetoric of Article 14 as a living covenant in that its principles should expand beyond legislation into a popular land ethic which

²⁷ "Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve." Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve. Accessed July 20, 2016. <http://www.adirondackwild.org/>.

governs the principles of the people, not just the law.²⁸ They contend that the Forest Preserve produces billions of dollars of economic benefit, not only through recreation but also through combating climate change and filtering our biosphere. Since more than 85% of the forests in the northeastern United States are found in the Forest Preserve, the retention of pollution, carbon and habitat areas composes an inestimable value, not to mention providing New York state with its fresh water supply.

For these reasons, Adirondack Wild has continued Paul Schaefer and John S. Apperson's dedication to education into their work, making it a top priority for their organization in unison with their lobbying and awareness efforts. Their program Educating for the Wild shares the experiences and knowledge of the organization with young, potential land stewards, applying the land ethic to future generations so their principles will survive. Through mentoring, they can help students in economic advancement and career development, turning the land ethic into a real and tenable prospect for environmentally focused students. In addition to education, the organization promotes land acquisition, advancing land easements and working with private landowners who sponsor responsible stewardship.²⁹ This collaboration may spark a relationship with the Adirondack Landowner's Association, who promote their own private landownership. Through an inclusive focus and a distinct vision, Adirondack Wild works to unite people and organizations in responsible, effective, and economically stimulating stewardship.

Although the Friends of the Forest Preserve has a large following, other advocacy groups formed depending on different interests and goals for their perception of 'wilderness.' The Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages protects and advances some of the smaller, local

²⁸ "Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve." Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve. Accessed July 25, 2016. http://www.adirondackwild.org/field_safeguard/index.html."

²⁹ "Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve." Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve. Accessed August 10, 2016. http://www.adirondackwild.org/field_extending/index.html.

voices within the Park, who feel the Park's strict land use regulations create economic difficulties as a result of the Park's strict land regulations. All of the members are elected officials in towns or villages which forges a connection between community, state and federal government, all of whom play a role in the management of the Adirondack Park. In their meetings, the members of this organization synthesize priority issues to an agenda so that the association can take them to the legislature and lobby on the behalf of these sometimes muted voices. In the past, the AATV has successfully opposed wolf reintroduction and was influential in "heading off a proposal by the Pataki administration to establish negotiated real property taxes on state land, rather than having local assessors determine them as they had traditionally."³⁰ Unlike Adirondack Wild, this group supports mechanization of wilderness lands as increasing the amount and width of snowmobile trails leads to economic gain during the winter season, suggesting that their view of wilderness should promote pecuniary success of community businesses. In general, the group looks to preserve the independent way of life that Adirondack citizens have enjoyed for centuries, meaning that they must be adequately represented in the APA as well as state legislature, and that some changes are necessary in order for these small towns to survive economically in a challenging era.

Since one of the main duties of the AATV remains proposing legislative goals for the Adirondack region, they release a set of expectations for the upcoming year which they believe will advance the region in the interest of the citizens of the Park. First, though the Adirondack State Land Master Plan is a hallmark of the legislative history of the region, the AATV proposed a few changes to preserve the land while simultaneously fostering economic growth within the

³⁰ McMartin, Barbara. *Perspectives on the Adirondacks*. 2002. Syracuse University Press. Syracuse, New York. pp. 329.

region.³¹ Mainly, that entails revamping the Snowmobiling, Sportsman's Access, Mountain Biking and Scenic Vistas sections, along with the Invasive Species designations. Their proposal represents a perspective of wilderness that caters towards the economic benefit of recreation over the strict preservation of natural forest, as the AATV needs to protect the people living in small towns and villages which do not have economic opportunities equivalent to fringe communities.

Next, the Association, joining numerous voices in the Adirondack region, proposed reform of the Adirondack Park Agency, as its processes of applying for development cost the people of the Park time and money that is virtually unavailable. The agency ultimately serves the population of New York as a whole, therefore battling with conflicting interests over Adirondack land use. While citizens outside of the park may promote a vision of land completely untrammled, citizens inside the park differ in that they realize interconnectivity between their towns is a necessary component of a healthy economic society. Because the agency has the ability to "oppose project application with litigation and oppressive fines," town governments struggle receive approval of their projects, which potentially act as vital life lines for small businesses.³² So, though the APA works on behalf of 'wilderness,' like most of the Adirondack features it is subject to change if another organization's perception of wilderness differs. In the same way, the AATV vibrantly proposes universal broadband and deployment to connect the region and offer business owners the same advantages that are becoming universally available. The organization has voiced unanimous support for the governor's proposed \$500 million "New York Broadband Program," which would connect businesses and communities by

³¹ "The Adirondack Park Consists of over Six Million Acres Which Is Located in the Northeastern Corner of New York State. The Adirondack Park Is the Largest Park in the 48 Contiguous States and Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon and Glacier National Park Would All Fit into It with Room to Spare. There Are 102 Towns and Villages Located within the Adirondack Park." Adirondack Association of Towns & Villages: Homepage: [Digital Towpath]. Accessed July 25, 2016. <http://aatvny.org/content>.

³² Adirondack Association of Towns & Villages: Homepage: [Digital Towpath]. Accessed July 25, 2016. <http://aatvny.org/content>.

January 1, 2019.³³ In order for the regions to join the information age and relieve themselves of the isolated business opportunities inherent with the Adirondacks, internet must be made available. Though the installation would not directly oppose land untrammelled by man, it would sacrifice some of the draw to the more remote locations in the park, as the escape from mundane urban life brings millions of people to the Park each year. Nonetheless, the Association of Adirondack Towns and Villages consistently supports measures that enhance the economic prospects for its citizens, even if that means compromising preservation slightly. They undeniably value preservation as a top concern, but the well-being of their citizens trumps all.

Representing national interests invading the Blue Line of the Adirondack Park, the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter has a mixed history in the park, completing numerous successful projects to protect the wilderness areas as well as a few blunders that put protected lands at risk for degradation. Ideally, the organization as a whole has been a resounding success in preservation and conservation efforts, even mirroring much of the work of Apperson and Schaefer in that they strive to encourage excursions into natural lands, especially for underprivileged communities; however, because of the enormity of their organization as a whole, the Adirondacks consume only a portion of its attention and resources. According to Barbara McMartin, “Sierra Club’s level of activity waxes and wanes according to the strengths and interests of its leaders,” meaning that its past doesn’t necessarily highlight its future.³⁴ For example, while the Atlantic Chapter was pivotal in creating large scale river access for the public to traverse through river previously owned and protected by private landowners, they don’t always have grassroots support, leading them to pursue projects that may not be desired. This occurred in 2000, “when the threat of ATV trails in Wild Forests promoted Sierra’s Adirondack chair Roger Gray to

³³ Adirondack Association of Towns & Villages: Homepage: [Digital Towpath]. Accessed July 25, 2016. <http://aatvny.org/content>.

³⁴ McMartin, Barbara. *Perspectives on the Adirondacks*. 2002. Syracuse University Press. Syracuse, New York. pp. 310.

propose a resolution prohibiting them,” leading a member to add snowmobiles to the same resolution until Gray wisely dropped the motion.³⁵ Although the organization had the protection of wilderness in mind, their external motives openly opposed the desires of citizens within the park.

Despite minor inadequacies, the Atlantic Chapter embodies much of the work of Paul Schaefer, as they consistently work to extend protected natural forest and include others in experiencing its beauty and serenity. Currently, they are working on increasing the amount of land classified as wilderness, specifically the Essex Chain of Lakes Lands in order to protect these vulnerable lands from mechanized use, especially against water craft.³⁶ Introducing motorized boats into this region would likely result in zebra mussels and Asian clams entering the ecosystem as invasive species, producing an inimitable disruptor to the natural ecosystem.

Additionally, the Atlantic Chapter has asked for its members to oppose the development of a 6,000-acre mega resort, deemed the Adirondack Club & Resort which they believe the APA misjudged in its evaluation. The agency approved the development of the project ignoring the fact that 77% of the land was classified as ‘resource management’ land, initially defined for timber and agricultural production.³⁷ Because of its scattered history, the Atlantic Chapter developed a reputation of hypocrisy, sometimes appealing to the interests of the citizenry and other times supporting development. Nonetheless, disregarding the inter-organizational changes inherent with constantly changing leadership, the Sierra Club represents a national interest adjusting to the needs of a small but vital feature of the American wilderness. They consistently

³⁵ McMartin, Barbara. *Perspectives on the Adirondacks*. 2002. Syracuse University Press. Syracuse, New York. pp. 310.

³⁶ "Adirondacks." Atlantic Chapter. Accessed July 25, 2016. <https://atlantic2.sierraclub.org/conservation/adirondacks>.

³⁷ "Adirondacks." Atlantic Chapter. Accessed July 25, 2016. <https://atlantic2.sierraclub.org/conservation/adirondacks>.

reinforce the need for preservation above development and sponsor legislation which benefits not just the public, but future generations.

Lastly, the organization which seems to differ most from the previous groups, the Adirondack Landowners Association, represents the interest of private landowners resisting the state's consistent pressure to purchase land. The ALA believes that "private landowners were as important as the state in conserving open space," but typically, this means blocking their land off to the open public. The ALA Spokesman Frank Clark believes that there are rivers and streams better off than exposed to the public, as their access would decrease the feasibility of stewardship.³⁸ Incontrovertibly, stewardship of private lands plays key role in preserving backcountry and open space, as backed by numerous conservationist groups; nevertheless, the ALA collectively represents ownership of a quarter million acres of noncommercial Adirondack lands, therefore holding a large proportion of influence in the region. Although the majority may claim to heed to a preservationist philosophy, the minority is always keen to stray to a different interpretation. Thus, the Adirondack Landowners Association stands for the difference between land untouched and land touched for individual benefit.

Unlike the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, the ALA strongly opposes the interconnectivity between waterways, arguing that a landowner holds the right to use and restrict their land in whatever manner they choose. While activists tout the navigability of these rivers, the ALA works to intervene on the behalf of their members "behalf of members to protect their right to manage access to some of the most important and sensitive areas of their property."³⁹ This desire for restricted access is a unique feature to the ALA, as most other organizations seek to

³⁸ McMartin, Barbara. *Perspectives on the Adirondacks*. 2002. Syracuse University Press. Syracuse, New York. pp. 297-98.

³⁹ "Home." Adirondack Landowners Association. Accessed July 25, 2016. <http://www.adklandowners.org/>.

open wilderness to the public, as long as responsible use continues; however, one of the strengths of the organization is their commitment to stewardship. Many of the members have held their estates for generations, dating back even 150 years. Due to their familial ties to the land, these individuals pride themselves on maintaining the natural beauty and landscape of their property, therefore preserving it for their future inheritors. The Adirondack Landowners Association embodies a very different perspective on wilderness, such that they value the land just as much as anyone else, perhaps more, yet believe they alone are entitled to enjoy it.

The Adirondack Park stands alone in wilderness preservation. Through a varied history of timbering, forest fires and development, the Forest Preserve has survived and become a land unlike another with its winding rivers, towering peaks and untouched forest. Nonetheless, its defining feature remains the lack of an explicit identity. 'Wilderness' has altered the land for the better and for the worse, with parties fighting over its meaning for a century and a half. Developers demean it, conservationists cherish it and legislators shift with the throws of public opinion and majority. In the past, legislation has altered the public's perception of wilderness, either through a lack of clarity or an improvement on past failures, yet ultimately closing in on a sufficient plan for preservation. Clear in the work of John S. Apperson and Paul Schaefer, people shape that legislation, so understanding their influence exemplifies the intense meaning the land holds for thousands of citizens. And, while advocacy groups continue the work of the past, their existence is vital to the character of the Adirondacks, for it is the discussion of the regions duality which defines itself. A time will never emerge where one definition of wilderness exists, but a healthy conversation and consistent cooperation with one another will protect the vital, natural forest while stimulating the economy. Looking forward, wilderness prevails physically, philosophically and eminently.

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