

had broken down in August, the Sierra Club decided to make things a little more interesting. They told the media they planned to don tuxedos and picket the Whitney costume ball in Saratoga Springs on August 1. The Whitneys told the Sierra Club that they would cancel their agreement with the Nature Conservancy if the protest proceeded and would refuse to sell any of their land to the state or the Nature Conservancy. But the Sierra Club had not yet been informed of the deal for Camp Bliss and agreed to call off the protest in light of the agreement. They did not agree to remain silent forever.

Saturday afternoon, during the Whitney stakes, an airplane circled the Saratoga Race Course, pulling a banner that

read: "Governor... Save Whitney Park." The sponsor remained anonymous.

Where do we go from here?

The Council will continue to press for state ownership of as much of the Whitney Estate as the family is willing to sell. We don't want to be in the position of having to mitigate the environmental problems that the subdivision would bring through negotiation and compromise at the Adirondack Park Agency. That would mean the slow, yet inevitable destruction of the land's biological diversity and ecological integrity.

We would much rather see the land purchased for the Forest Preserve and set aside without any further development.

Over the next few months, we are hop-

ing you will help us with this task. All of us must keep the pressure up on Governor Pataki. Let him know that we are counting on his leadership to ensure that the land is protected and opened to the public.

Twenty, thirty or forty years from now, we can all tell our grandchildren what an amazing place the Whitney estate used to be before it was chopped into 300 acre ranchettes . . .

Or we can grab a canoe and show them how much more wild and beautiful it has become since the people of New York acquired it way back in the 20th century. The choice is ours. The responsibility to act is ours. We must do so before it is too late.

Help save Whitney Park!

## A Great Lot is Developing

*There is no reason to believe that the public will be  
a better steward of the land than private landowners*

BY CHRISTINE SNIDE

**H**amlet might have mused "To build or not to build, that is the question." The Whitney Park Great Lot Development has certainly spiced up the coffee hour conversations of patrons in our local restaurants.

At the heart of the question is the future of Marylou Whitney's 15,000 acres of property bordering Little Tupper Lake. After submitting an application to the Adirondack Park Agency for a subdivision permit, Mrs. Whitney was bombarded by the press and the public with questions about her right to develop, through subdivision, this "jewel in the Adirondacks." Seemingly overlooked is the fact that this property is owned outright by Mrs. Whitney — and not those who are voicing the loudest protests.

*Christine Snide is a resident and  
Town Supervisor of Long Lake.*

In 1996 Mrs. Whitney had applied for and received permission from the APA for a three lot subdivision on Whitney Park. In 1997, however, the rules were changed. Now the APA requires a master plan for her entire Adirondack landholdings, all 50,000 plus acres and not just those specified in the proposed development. This new requirement is currently being contested by Mrs. Whitney, et. al. (including myself). The plan to do absolutely nothing in the foreseeable future with these acres is, in itself, a plan.

Beyond that important issue, however, environmentalists state that developing the 15,000 acres around Little Tupper Lake will:

- destroy the ecosystem
- eliminate the indigenous strain of native brook trout found in Little Tupper
- create horrendous infrastructure expenses to the taxpayers of Long Lake

- and yet be sheltered under RPTL 480 or 480A.

Mrs. Whitney, and all the Whitneys before her, have proven themselves to be excellent stewards of their park. When the 1995 microburst destroyed hundreds of trees at Camp Deerlands, Mrs. Whitney went to great expense to restore them. The public's land managers are struggling, and will continue to struggle to clean up their trail system as a result of that blowdown. It is only through the volunteer efforts of the Adirondack Mt. Club and other such clubs, that hiking and snowmobile trails became accessible again. In Long Lake the prisoners from Camp Gabriels cleared the Lake Eaton snowmobile/hiking trail. Volunteers from Long Lake's local snowmobile club also assisted in trail clearing. Stewardship, while certainly a banner flown by all environmental groups, actually belongs to a variety of people throughout the North Country.

The six million acres in the Park currently owned by the State and managed by the DEC are proving to be more acres than it can effectively or efficiently manage. In my childhood, a summer hiking trip always included the firetower atop of Owlshead Mt. For a variety of reasons, lack of money being the greatest, the DEC tore down or deliberately made inaccessible all but a few of the Adirondack firetowers. Currently there is a DEC blessing to restore and replace them — at taxpayer expense. Curiously enough, the State Unit Management Plan is seriously overdue for an update, as dictated through its own regulations.

More to the point, when I participated in a June 1997 environmental debate at Camp Canaras opposite John Sheehan of the Adirondack Council, I remember him saying that he felt private development would mean the demise of the native strain of brook trout found in Little Tupper Lake. My rejoinder was that opening Little Tupper Lake to public stewardship would be a mistake. The public would certainly outfish it quicker than any group of private homeowners and the

public does not always adhere to the DEC motto of "Carry it in — Carry it out." They bring in uncovered feces that translates into giardia, litter for others to remove, campfires left smoldering which can result in fires, and other nasty habits.

I then remember Mr. Sheehan saying that he did not foresee this property as open to that kind of recreation. I really question the merit of adding 15,000 acres to NYS Forest Preserve merely for the purpose of acquisition without benefit to the public. Environmentalists bandy around that catch phrase "recreational access" a lot but we should ask them to define what this includes. To some it is all aspects of recreation — hunting, fishing, canoeing, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing; to others all but canoeing would be forbidden. "Recreational access" is a term that merits a close watch and demands complete explanation if it is included in a land contract.

Private development, on the other hand, especially like the one proposed by Mrs. Whitney, would not pose such problems. Clearly the ecosystem under private development would not suffer the

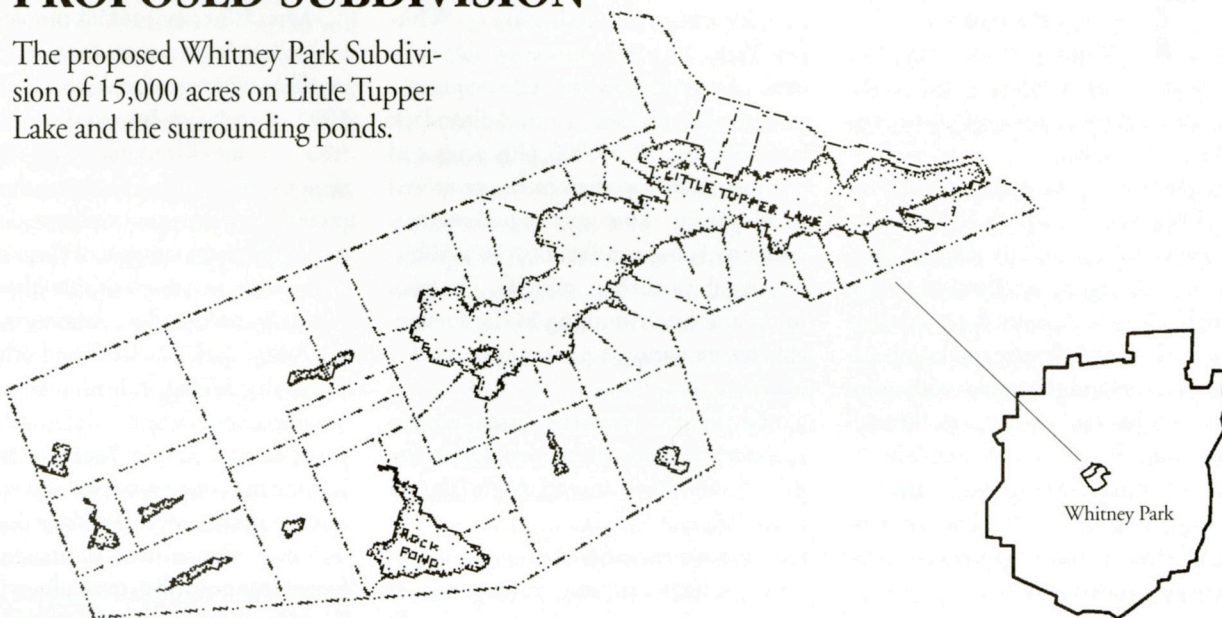
fate that public ownership would inflict.

The Road Not Taken could be the title of a rebuttal to the environmentalist's statement that private development will create horrendous infrastructure expenses for the taxpayers of Long Lake. We don't expect any new road expenses because all town and county roads in Hamilton County are automatically snowmobile roads. It is ludicrous to imagine homes in the half million to million dollar range wanting public snowmobiling zipping through their back yards. The Town of Long Lake is under no obligation to assume ownership of any road. Prior to such an act strict guidelines have to be met and approval has to be obtained from the Town Highway Superintendent, the County Highway Superintendent and the Town Board.

Whitney Park provides its own water and power supplies. They use the Long Lake transfer station and the Long Lake Rescue Squad. Circle Road, leading to Whitney Park, is accessed by two entrances off route 30 and is a county road. All other roads on Whitney Park are private and maintained as such. There

## PROPOSED SUBDIVISION

The proposed Whitney Park Subdivision of 15,000 acres on Little Tupper Lake and the surrounding ponds.



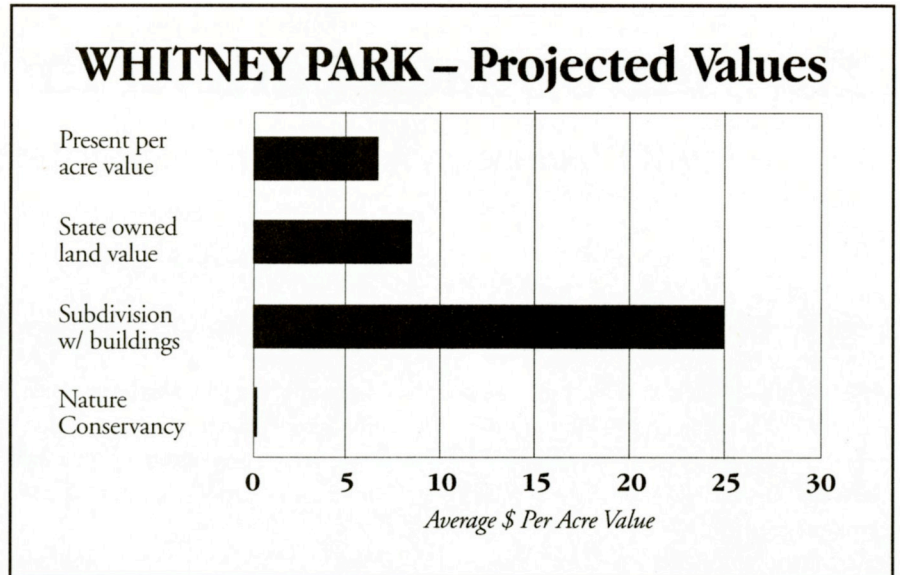
MAP BY NANCY BERNSTEIN

would be no change to the town infrastructure other than in a positive way.

Private development would initially create construction jobs and eventually lead to seasonal or full time positions for caretakers, cooks, babysitters, cleaners, plumbers, electricians, etc. It would also identify Long Lake as a destination for a high class of residents and increase the local business for gasoline, groceries and other dedicated services.

Taxes, always a topic of dissension, play an important role in the future of these forest acres. The graph accompanying this article shows the estimated tax revenue based on 1997 Town of Long Lake tax information for this development. Please note what happens when a not-for-profit (NFP) organization acquires this land. This leads me to wonder if the concession New York State made to Adirondack communities, by giving the towns and villages veto power over NYS acquisition of private land, holds any merit. Consider this: Whitney Property is purchased by the Nature Conservancy. Now there is no longer any tax revenue on these 15,000 acres. The Nature Conservancy sells this property to New York State; putting the property back on the tax rolls. Would the town be foolish enough to veto such a purchase? Somehow that old adage "Half a loaf is better than none" is good enough to eat.

Finally, all properties under Real Property Tax Law 480 and 480A are entitled to tax deductions to encourage timber management. Taxes are returned to the town through a stumpage tax when the trees are harvested. It recognizes logging as a viable industry and an integral part of Adirondack history. Properties, such as Whitney Industries, enrolled under 480 (old law) are *not* required to file a forest management plan. Those properties enrolled under 480A (newest law) *are* required to produce a forest management plan every 10 years. In a transfer of ownership, the development properties would lose the 480 status but would qualify for the 480A status, excluding the lakeshore and residential areas. This would involve an active forestry plan and chain saws and



log trucks and skidders, Oh My! I would file the possibility of these elite homeowners seeking tax shelters through 480A under 'Fat Chance.'

Location, location, location. Realtors stress location as a key factor in determining market value. Ironically, if the 15,000 acres of Whitney property were located outside the infamous Blue Line there would be no controversy. There would be only local zoning ordinances, no master plan requirements and little involvement from environmental groups. What a difference a mile makes when measuring location on an APA color coded map.

Location within the Blue Line literally determines the value of the property and dictates any current or future use. For example, during a 1995 road project off Route 30, Pike Industries located their stone crushing and blacktop operation on International Paper (formerly part of Whitney Park) property. This site is miles from the sight of any passing pedestrian or motorist. Nevertheless, they were forced by the APA to spend \$5,000 to repaint all their equipment from their trademark yellow to Adirondack brown in order to "disguise" their operation from the public. This is the type of frivolous and expensive APA regulation that starts the hairs rising on the neck of a local Adirondacker.

Who is the local Adirondacker? He or she is the person who grew up on fish

and venison; whose roots bore deep into the unyielding mountain soil; whose art is the pink and blue sky in the morning and the salmon colored sunsets at night; who endures brutal winters just to witness another wondrous spring; who will help his neighbor if asked, but also respects his privacy. He or she is the person who will work a variety of jobs to exist in their mountains; who will forgo wealth in an urban area for the scent of balsam and who will look with distrust on anyone who dictates what you can or cannot do on your own property.

The advent of the APA brought forth a barrage of rules, regulations and restrictions that have created an "us against them" attitude. To be told you cannot do certain things with your property if you live in Long Lake, but it doesn't matter if you live in Plattsburgh, is distasteful and difficult to comprehend. To hear the hue and cry from every environmental group about erecting million-dollar homes in a private setting, yet little outcry about a maximum security prison in an adjacent Adirondack town, seems contradictory.

Salmon Rushdie writes, "In this world without quiet corners, there can be no easy escapes . . . from hullabaloo, from terrible, unquiet fuss." The common ground, for all of us, is acknowledging that this pristine area under discussion is truly a quiet corner. It should not be subject to an unquiet fuss.