



"Remarks of John S. Banta, April 19, 2012"

For the beginning I owe thanks to Peter S. Paine and John Stock who were my hiring interviewers for the position that is now the Deputy Director for Planning (and to John Stock who taught me about the streets of Saranac Lake). I believe it was Jim Townsend, Cecil Wray and Jim Frenette who interviewed and Chairman Lefebvre who gave me the opportunity to serve as Agency Counsel (less agreeable than the Policy wonk role that Jim Connolly now honorably fills, but well suited to my legal training and love for this institution). I will omit many names here, some among my dearest friends, who share a passion for the Park.

I've had a unique opportunity as head of the Planning and then the Legal divisions at this Agency. In Planning we addressed the Official AppleDUP (that's the Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan) and Map during the 1980's, rebuilding the data and explanation of the map with Ray Curran and the RASS unit. The Agency discovered respect for the Map among local folks who may have first sought to change it. I got to work with GIS technology before its time and people like John Barge, the epitome of electronic and cartographic excellence and Henry Savarie who bled the Official Map in that day. With Jim Hotaling, we were steadfast in working toward stronger relationships with local government and he won national awards for the efforts.

Sometime early in my experience Steve Erman and I were traveling the road back to Ray Brook through Cranberry Lake and we asked "does this look like a Park." The answer can only be "the Adirondack Park", a Park of People and Natural Wonder -- Barbara McMartin's wonderful Centennial phrase -- with thanks to the many voices that fill the distinctive frame of public and private land that now seems familiar. It was still a mouthful at the time. Steve and I finished one of many late night returns to Ray Brook chewing on that one.

In the 1990's DEC and the Agency actually completed the High Peaks Wilderness Unit Management Plan (there were many earlier failed efforts), now among the 33 UMP's implemented by the Department in partnership with the Agency (hooray). The State Land Master Plan continues to provide a durable working framework for a wide spectrum of public recreation intended to be generally compatible with the "forever wild" principles that apply to Forest Preserve lands in the Park. There have been many classification decisions presented to the Governor, not the least of which were the additions of the Whitney, Round Lake and Little Moose Mountain Wilderness areas. The Agency and DEC have also resolved long-standing questions over snowmobile trail mileage and administration within the Wild Forest areas of the Park.

The Private Land Plan is a frame that is complex and hard to present in simple terms even today, and my second career at the Agency has been with the legal division working with the very fabric of the Adirondack Park Private and State land plans we have inherited. I am proud to have seen continued regulatory reform initiated by others including Dan Fitts, Ed Hood, Cecil Wray and Jim Townsend (and thanks Barb Rottier for your careful Counsel over many years). The simple language of the statute protecting shorelines from expansion of non-conforming structures is now implemented in the Agency's regulations. We finally have a comprehensible and easy to understand definition of boathouse. And shorelines will be better protected in the future. The Agency doesn't write a permit without a deep hole test pit that assures a working on-site sewage disposal system.

Does this look like a Park? The burden and privilege of this Agency is to communicate and administer the gift of Theodore Roosevelt's generation to present-day New Yorkers and the world, and its value to the residents of the 103 communities that share in its stewardship. You are the State Agency that speaks for the Adirondack Park, its residents, communities, State lands and other open space assets. This is 20% of the State of New York. It is perhaps better known around the world than to its residents. I wish you well. Thank you.