

A Report
On A Proposed

ADIRONDACK MOUNTAINS
NATIONAL PARK



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The attached study on the proposed Adirondack Mountains National Park is not an official report. It was prepared by an ad hoc committee as a matter believed to be worthy of public consideration.

This study was presented to Governor Rockefeller and to Secretary Udall of the Department of the Interior. Neither endorsed it, but both felt it of sufficient merit for further study. They have asked their respective staffs to analyze the proposal further.

Naturally a study of this kind has received considerable publicity within the State. For that reason it is felt that others who might be interested should also receive a copy.

Obviously a proposal of this magnitude will require full official and citizen consideration and discussion. It is not anticipated that the State of New York nor the federal government will have their comments prepared for at least ninety days.

If the proposed Adirondacks National Park is established, as suggested in our report, and joins the other 32 National Parks in the National Park System (only six of them east of the Mississippi River), the Adirondacks National Park will be the third largest in the country, exceeded in size only by Yellowstone National Park, with 2, 221, 772 acres and by Mount McKinley National Park, with 1, 939, 493 acres. The Adirondacks National Park would contain approximately 1, 720, 000 acres.

Respectfully submitted,

Conrad L. Wirth.

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Ben H. Thompson

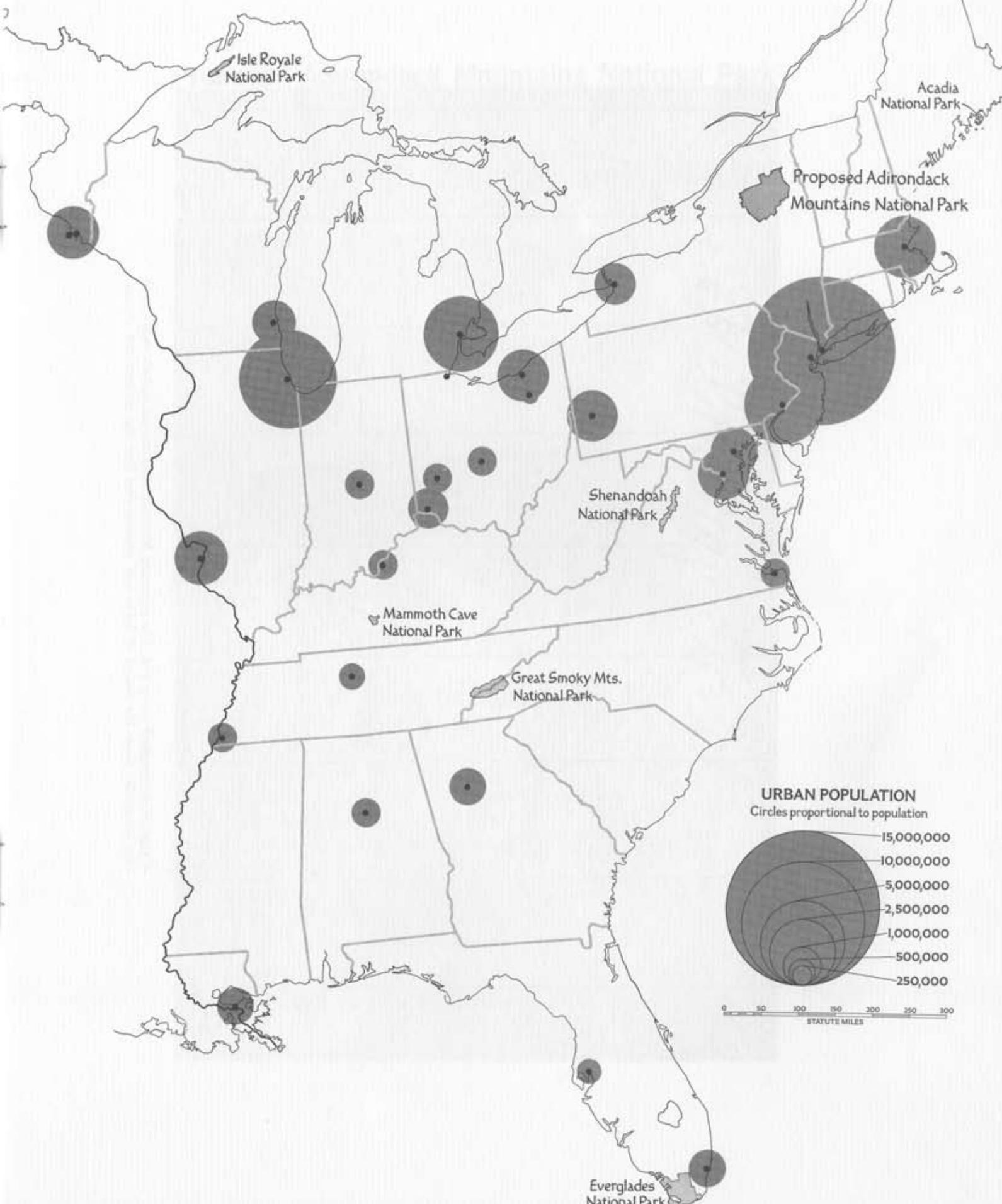
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NATIONAL PARKS AND POPULATION CENTERS EAST OF MISSISSIPPI RIVER





A typical Adirondack camp site. The proposed National Park would include many such sites accessible from the chains of lakes and streams that lace the Adirondack Forest.

Proposed Adirondack Mountains National Park

The name ADIRONDACK MOUNTAINS evokes visions of sparkling clear lakes in a forest setting, of dappled light and shadow on woodland trails that lead to blue mountains, of tumbling brooks and plunging streams, of peaceful, quiet camp scenes to which we want to return.

The name arouses thoughts of conservation battles to preserve this famous wildland area, of battles won and of a vast natural park that is there for all to explore and enjoy.

The qualities of much of the Adirondack Mountains region do indeed match our visions of it. The region is bounded on the east by Lake Champlain and Lake George; on the north by the St. Lawrence, on the west by the Black River and on the south by the Mohawk.

The headwaters of the Hudson begin in Lake Tear-of-the-Clouds near the summit of Mount Marcy, highest mountain in the State of New York. From the High Peak Region water flows away in all directions, forming the innumerable brooks, streams, ponds and lakes which make the Adirondacks unique and appealing.

Nearly thirty years ago a famous geologist said:¹

“For lakes amid mountains the Adirondacks are noteworthy. There are thousands of lakes in the glaciated part of Eastern United States . . . but most of them are in plains or plateaus . . . Even in the mountains of New England, lakes are few. On the other hand, the Adirondacks are said to have 2000 lakes and ponds. Half of them are in the mountains. It is here that the Lake District of England finds its counterpart both physiographically and esthetically.”

These lakes are remnants of the Ice Age. Glacial deposits have clogged the normal drainages, forming the great variety of lakes, ponds and swamps. Evidences of glacial action of many kinds are abundant in the Adirondacks, in the high peaks and in the valleys.

The Mountains themselves are formed of some of the oldest known rocks on the earth's surface — Precambrian rocks, formed over a billion years ago, from which many thousands of feet of later deposits have been eroded, exposing the deep root zone of an ancestral mountain system.

Composed of these ancient, hard, erosion-resistant rocks, the Adirondacks include 46 peaks approximately 4,000 feet high, two of which are over 5,000 feet — Mount Marcy, the highest, rises to an elevation of 5,344 feet.

¹Fenneman, Nevin M., *Physiography of Eastern United States*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1951.

A forest of birch, beech, maple, spruce and pine now blankets all but the high peaks of the mountains. Fish and wildlife are abundant. White tailed deer are plentiful. Moose and elk were once native to the region and might be restored. The larger carnivores, such as wolf and cougar, are gone, but bear, bobcat, fisher, marten, mink, otter, beaver and other fur bearing animals are present and some are common. Birdlife is varied and abundant.

Heavily logged late in the nineteenth century, much of the region has recovered, under both public and private ownership. It includes well-known resorts such as Lake Placid and Saranac Lake, as well as large areas of scenic wilderness.

NOT ALL IS WELL

The concept of the Adirondack Mountains region as being a vast continuous park, there for all to explore and enjoy has not, unfortunately, been translated into reality to the extent generally assumed.

The many sided reality of the conservation status of this famous State Park project is:

that after more than 80 years of land acquisition within the authorized approximately 6-million-acre park boundary, the so-called "blue line," only 40% of the land has been acquired for park use; most of the public park land is in tracts so scattered that the Adirondack Mountains State Park is not, in fact, a reality – after 80 years it is largely a fiction;

much of the wild forested land that people see as they drive the main highways or canoe the waterways is privately owned; it is in a wild state principally because economic opportunities and pressures have not yet brought the drastic changes that they inevitably must, if these lands continue to remain in private ownership indefinitely;

often in seeking out the hidden lakes and ponds one encounters NO TRESPASSING signs put up by private owners, including private clubs which control immense areas for the use and pleasure of their limited memberships;

private holdings include much of the shores of lakes and streams; many of the large private holdings are being logged; the public acquisition program has decreased to a rate that would take 125 years to acquire another million acres, at present land values, unless there is a major change in the program.

Recognizing the weaknesses of the present park program and the latent danger to the public's interests in the area, it is proposed that a bold new program for preservation and use of the Adirondack Mountains area be adopted — namely, that the best of the area be made a National Park.

WHAT IS A NATIONAL PARK?

The Congress in 1916 defined the purpose of national parks “. . . to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”²

Former National Park Service Director Newton B. Drury stated the role of National Parks as

“. . . lifting people out of their everyday routine, in opening to them new vistas, in revealing to them something of the majesty of this country when first viewed by the explorers and the pioneers, in teaching them through interpretive methods the story of earth-building processes through the milleniums, the evolution of plant and animal life, and the relation of these to each other and to their environment . . .”³ Freeman Tilden has spoken of the national parks as

“. . . the conserving of resources that are not to be expressed in terms of money, but embrace the moral, spiritual, and educational welfare of the people and add to the joy of their living.”⁴

When people think of national parks they are apt to think first of the older ones that were established in the public lands of the West — Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon — but there are also national parks in the East, established after lands had been bought for that purpose — Acadia in Maine, Isle Royale in Lake Superior, Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, Shenandoah in Virginia, Great Smoky Mountains on the border of North Carolina and Tennessee, and Everglades in Florida. These are the kinds of areas that have been established as national parks and have been enjoyed by millions of people each year. They are the great scenic places of America — they have often been called the crown-jewels of our Country. There is great variety in them but they are all managed to be preserved and enjoyed, as specified by the Congress, and once a Congress creates a

²Act of August 25, 1916.

³The National Parks, What They Mean to You and Me, by Freeman Tilden, published 1951 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York.

⁴The National Parks, What They Mean to You and Me, by Freeman Tilden, published in 1951 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York.

National Park, the record indicates, it is never returned to non-park status. Protection and dependability of management is assured and perpetuated. While the National Park Service administers 214 areas, only 33 of them are established as national parks, the remainder being national monuments, historic sites, seashores and related reservations.

Despite the claims of individuals and groups seeking special privileges, the national parks belong to all of us and pay dividends constantly in the enrichment of life, in outdoor recreation and education, in inspiration and a deeper sense of patriotism.

THE NATIONAL PARK PROPOSAL

The suggested boundary for the proposed Adirondack Mountains National Park is shown on the center spread map. It includes some 1,720,000 acres of land and water, of which about 1,120,000 acres are owned by the State and about 600,000 acres are privately owned.

The suggested boundaries include the High Peak area in the eastern portion, extending generally to the route of the Northway, and the more extensive lake and stream area for which the Adirondacks are so noted, extending westward to Cranberry Lake and Fourth Lake of the Fulton Chain of Lakes, and southward to include Indian Lake, the Cedar River headwaters and a representative portion of the region of innumerable small and generally secluded lakes and ponds south of the Fulton Chain of Lakes.

The proposed park includes the best of the varied natural scenes and physiographic features that characterize the Adirondack Mountains region, with spacious area in which large numbers of people can enjoy wildland and be properly provided for and, additionally, in which there can be kept forever wild great areas of wilderness accessible by trail and canoe.

The suggested boundary does not include extensive State owned lands (1,280,000 acres) more remote from the High Peak area and easily accessible which have long been used for hunting, a majority of the extensive privately owned commercial timber lands, many scenic lakes heavily devoted to vacation homes, resorts and related establishments, and additional areas of predominantly private and commercial lands south and east of North River.

Within the suggested national park boundary, there are five suggested village and resort exclusions or enclaves, shown diagrammatically, with area for the expansion and growth of resort and related service activities. Within these the villages would manage their own affairs essen-



Heart Pond and Mt. McIntyre—typical of the virgin forest covering much of the High Peaks area that would be managed for its wilderness values.

tially as they have heretofore. These encompass the villages of Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, Fourth Lake-Inlet area, Blue Mountain Lake and Indian Lake. It is expected that the principal accommodations and services of a commercial nature sought by park visitors would continue to be provided in these village and resort enclaves and in nearby village and resort areas outside the proposed park.

WHAT WOULD NATIONAL PARK STATUS ACCOMPLISH?

Establishment of an Adirondack Mountains National Park would make possible the preservation and public enjoyment of an outstandingly scenic and unique area of importance to the whole nation. Without such action, these values risk the danger of being seriously impaired or destroyed.

It would bring the national recognition that the area should have had long ago, and, with that, the vast resources of the national government for the acquisition, protection, development and interpretation of this truly nationally significant area for the enrichment of life.

It would strengthen the Country's National Park System. It would bring within easy reach of the 100 million people who live in the northeastern portion of the United States a national park perhaps second only to Yellowstone in size and diversity.

It would bring to bear the legal resources, the traditions, skills and dedication of the National Park Service which has built an unmatched record in park conservation.

It would forge an outstanding program of State and Federal cooperation with appropriate and mutual benefits — the State conveying to the Federal government for park purposes more than a million acres of lands which it has acquired and protected and the Federal government assuming the much larger obligation of completing and operating the national park for all time. The State would thus be relieved of national park responsibilities which it should not have to carry and could devote its resources to State Park and related natural resource conservation programs.

It would assure the preservation of larger areas of wilderness than is now possible under the fragmented land ownership pattern, the consolidation of public lands for public use and enjoyment, the provision of park facilities and services that are essential to public wildland use. Collaterally, national park visitation would bring economic benefits to neighboring communities, as it has with every National Park now in existence.

WHY A NATIONAL PARK IN THE ADIRONDACK MOUNTAINS?

There are several cogent reasons.

1. The area is of national significance, since there is no wild area of scenic mountains, lakes, streams and forest of comparable quality and magnitude anywhere else in the eastern half of the United States. It should belong to all the people and be accessible to those who seek it.
2. There is need for a large national park within practical reach of the 100 million people who live in the northeastern quadrant of the United States. Within an easy day's drive of the Adirondack Mountains there is a population of some 55 million people.
3. The proposed Adirondack Mountains National Park would not duplicate existing national parks. It would supplement them.
4. Forty percent or 2,402,000 acres within the "blue line"—the authorized boundary of the Adirondack Mountains State Park — have already been acquired by the State at a cost of some \$18,600,000—an outstanding conservation achievement that should make establishment of a national park in the area a feasible project.
5. Laudable as the Adirondack Mountains State Park program to date may be, continuation of it under present authorization, procedure and funding provides no guarantee of ultimate success in consolidating the public land holdings and actually creating a park. Indeed there are very grave latent threats to the park program, as already indicated, and resolution of the problems will require greater public resources than the State should be expected to provide.

Acquisition of the undeveloped private lands within the boundaries of the proposed national park may well cost an additional \$60 million.

The Congress has already established the principle that the acquisition of land for nationally significant areas in the National Park System, i.e., Cape Cod and Fire Island National Seashores, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Guadalupe Mountains National Park and others, should be accomplished with Federal funds. The Adirondack Mountains is such an area.

6. The present State Constitutional authority for the management and public use of lands acquired for Forest Preserve purposes does not provide the positive authority needed to manage them

for public park purposes, namely, authority to conserve them and to provide for their enjoyment in such manner as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

The State Constitutional provision governing the forest preserve lands states:

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

Legal interpretations of this article have been liberal but they have left the State Conservation Department without clear authority even to provide family campgrounds; nor can detached parcels of land be exchanged to consolidate public holdings for better protection and public use.

It is suggested that policies promulgated by the Congress in authorizing the establishment of other nationally significant park areas in which there are already developed communities, i.e., Fire Island National Seashore and Grand Teton National Park, might be equally adaptable and useful in the proposed Adirondack Mountains National Park. Briefly, the suggested policies might be included in legislation authorizing establishment of the proposed park and might include the following:

1. The Secretary of the Interior would promulgate zoning standards, formulated in cooperation with the towns, to guide town zoning within the authorized National Park boundaries and in communities at park entrances. Such zoning standards should help protect park values and potentialities and help protect private lands and developments within or adjacent to the park.
2. Within the specified village and resort exclusions the Secretary of the Interior's authority to acquire land by condemnation would be suspended
 - (a) unless zoning failed to comply with the approved standards or unless a property owner failed to comply with town zoning consistent with the approved standards,
 - (b) unless necessary to provide public access to lakes, streams, or other important park features.
3. In the rest of the park, under zoning consistent with the approved standards
 - (a) private homes built prior to a date specified in the legislation and essential surrounding land, usually not exceeding three



Blue Mountain Lake. This lovely lake studded with islands is adjacent to one of the five suggested service areas within the proposed National Park.

- acres, would not be subject to purchase by the Federal Government except by voluntary negotiation;
- (b) existing commercial ventures consistent with park purposes would not be subject to purchase by the Federal Government except by voluntary negotiation;
 - (c) commercial ventures not consistent with park purposes (including subdivision of land for sale and commercial timber production) could be acquired by the Federal Government for park purposes by condemnation if necessary;
 - (d) essential existing mining ventures (including National Lead Company's titanium mining operation) would be expected to continue indefinitely, with authorization for the Secretary of the Interior to cooperate with the mine owners to minimize impairment of park values;
 - (e) undeveloped land would be acquired for park purposes as rapidly as possible by transfer, purchase, exchange, donation, or condemnation;
 - (f) exchange of State lands outside the park for private lands within the park would be possible only with State approval.

Additionally, it is suggested that in the legislation authorizing establishment of the proposed park, the Federal Government

- (a) seek authority to provide parkway type access to the park where needed to avoid village traffic congestion or other obstruction of public access to the park at or near park boundaries;
- (b) seek authority to make payments to towns in lieu of taxes for a period of 20 years, diminishing the payments by 5% per year, for lands now subject to State payments to the towns in lieu of taxes, and authority to make such payments in lieu of taxes for 20 years, diminishing the payments by 5% per year, for lands acquired by the Federal Government for park purposes, similar to the system of payments in lieu of taxes authorized by the Act of September 14, 1950, adding Jackson Hole to Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming.

Consistent with long accepted national park policy, the proposed Adirondack Mountains National Park would be a plant and animal sanctuary to permit restoration as nearly as possible of wildlife and the natural environment to the grandeur that the area possessed when frontiersmen first saw it. Recreation fishing would be permitted as in the other national parks.

SOME ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED PARK

As a basis for estimating some of the economic implications of the proposed Adirondack Mountains National Park, let it be assumed that establishment of the park could be authorized in 1968. It would be useful to estimate some of the costs and economic impact of the park at the end of the first 5-year period after enactment of the authorizing legislation, 1973, and at the end of the next 10-year period, 1983. By that time land acquisition, park development and staffing should be largely accomplished and the potential visitation trend well established. These developments would influence and generally indicate the economic impact of the park on nearby communities.

SOME ESTIMATED COSTS

Land Acquisition

Estimated area of privately owned land within the proposed park boundary, exclusive of the resort village enclaves, as shown on the centerspread map . . . 569,400 acres

It is assumed that 90% of the private land would be acquired for park purposes during the 15-year projection period at an average cost of \$100 per acre for *undeveloped* land, 512,460 acres \$51,246,000

If the land acquisition proceeded fairly uniformly throughout the 15-year period, the annual rate of acquisition per year would average about \$ 3,800,000

Maintenance and Operation (Including Salaries)

Since the present estimated annual cost of maintenance and operation of the proposed park area is approximately \$1.9 million, and assuming a growth rate of 10% per year, the annual maintenance and operation cost would be: in 1973 \$ 3,650,000
in 1983 \$ 6,150,000

Capital Improvements

Since capital improvements for Great Smoky Mountains National Park (an Eastern mountain park about one-third the size of the proposed Adirondack Mountains National Park) averaged \$1.5 million per year during the 10-year Mission 66 period, it is reasonable to project a comparable capital improvements program for the proposed national park, annually of some \$ 3,500,000

Payments in Lieu of Taxes

Payments made by the State to the towns in lieu of taxes from the State owned lands in the proposed national park are estimated (based on 1966 data) to total \$1,970,000 per year.

The full value of the State owned lands within the proposed national park is computed at \$59 million, based on State Board of Equalization and Assessment data.

If, as proposed in this report, the payments now made to the towns in lieu of taxes were to be assumed by the Federal Government and be diminished by 5% per year, until phased out at the end of 20 years, and if land acquisition by the Federal Government for the park were to proceed about as projected, with payments in lieu of taxes to the Towns for each new land purchase diminishing 5% per year until phased out at the end of 20 years, it is probable that the reduction in the old in-lieu payments would about equal the increase in the new in-lieu payments and that each annual in-lieu payment to the towns, therefore, would not change significantly during the 15 to 20 year land acquisition period.

Thereafter the in-lieu payments would diminish at 5% per year until terminated at the end of 20 years.

Wood Using Industries

The sawmill industry in the Adirondacks is a declining one. The hardwood timber which supported a boom immediately after World War II has been cut out. Commercial access to old growth birch and maple on some State lands might bring a profit to some loggers but within less than five years all the old growth would be gone.

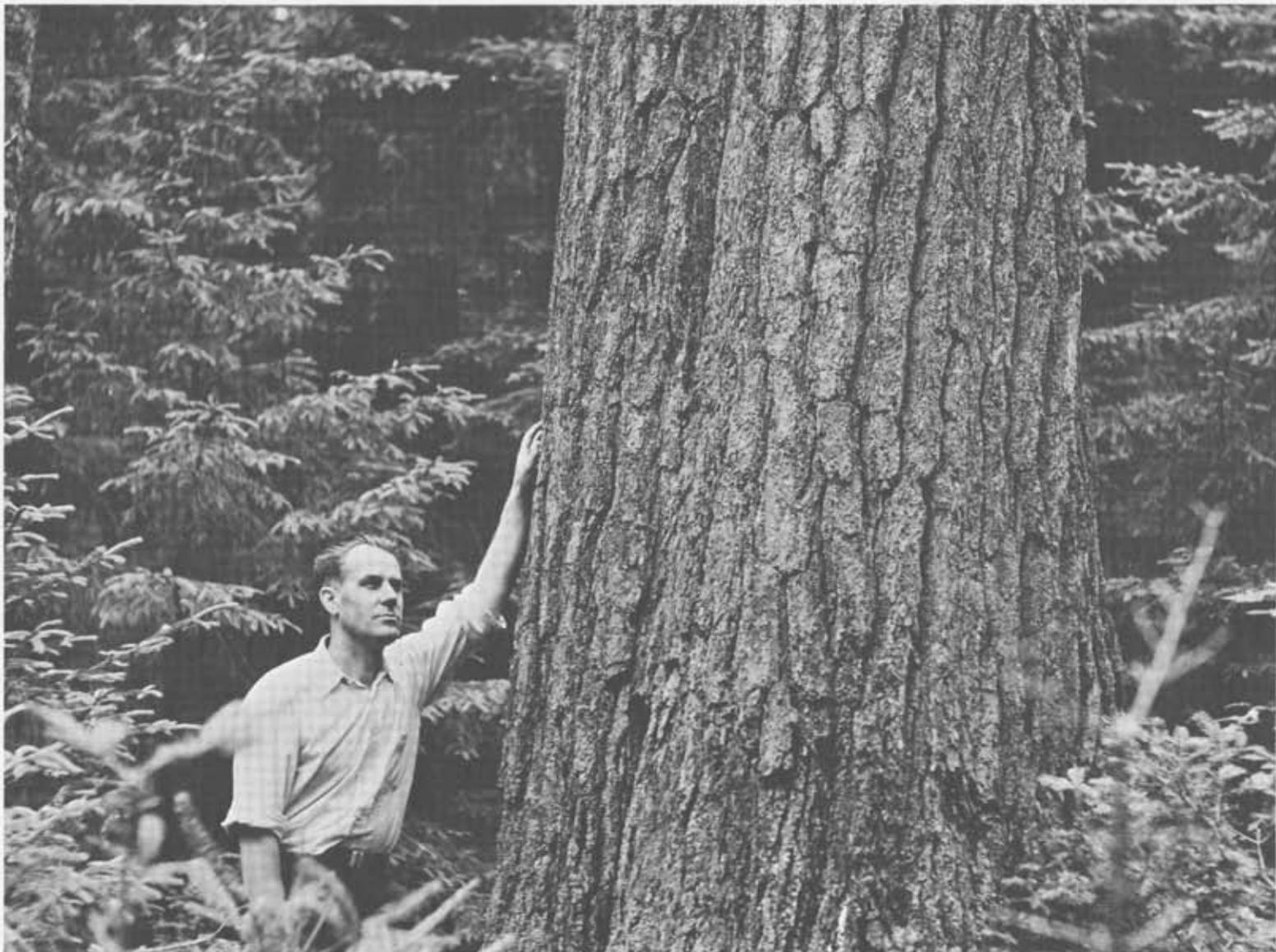
Several pulp and paper companies own significant acreages within the proposed National Park boundary. Land acquisition must include provision for equitable exchange of lands in order that the economic impact of the park upon these local industries may be minimized.

Hunting

From the best available records, it is estimated that about 3,550 deer were taken by hunters from the proposed park area in 1965, about 5% of the total deer kill for the State.

About 340 bear may have been killed by hunters in the proposed park area for 1965, about half of the total bear kill for the State.

The annual small game kill within the proposed park area is an insignificant part of that for the State as a whole, except that the proposed park area may provide between 15% and 20% of the ruffed grouse hunting ground for the State as a whole.



This forest giant is one of the few remaining specimens of the once extensive stands of White Pine in the Adirondacks.

Area of State owned land remaining open to hunting within the "blue line" is nearly 1.3 million acres, in addition to which there are another million acres of public hunting lands outside the "blue line."

SOME ESTIMATED ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Estimated present annual summer visitation in the proposed national park area is as follows:

Public campgrounds	781,000 visitor days
Interior areas reached by hiking and canoeing	130,000 visitor days
Attendance at privately owned facilities . .	<u>1,403,000</u> visitor days
Total	2,314,000 visitor days

Expenditures per visitor day are estimated at \$2.37 for public camps and for the interior areas. Expenditures per visitor day at privately owned facilities are estimated at \$23.00.

Fall, winter, and spring visitation in the proposed national park is estimated to be 16% of the summer visitation.

On the basis of these visitation and expenditure estimates, it is computed that some \$40 million are spent annually in the area of the proposed national park and its immediate vicinity.

Since visitation in the areas of the national park system increased during the 10-year Mission 66 period by 116%, the same annual rate of visitation increase may be assumed for the proposed national park.

On that basis, it is estimated that in 1973 there would be 3,650,000 visitor days and that in 1983 there would be 4,240,000 visitor days.

Using the present visitor day estimated expenditure rate, it is computed that visitors to the proposed national park in 1973 would spend in the park and its immediate vicinity some \$63,000,000 and in 1983 some \$136,000,000.

These expenditures would be reflected in increased local tax revenues, increased employment and increased business income, as they have in the vicinity of the other national parks.

SUMMARY OF BENEFITS

Establishment of the national park as proposed herein and its acquisition, development and operation by the Federal Government would result in the following benefits to the State during the projected 15-year period:

Maintenance and Operation, Including Salaries

(Transfer of qualified State employees working in the area at the time of park authorization could be provided for in the legislation.)

1968 — 140 employees \$1,900,000

1973 — 190 employees \$3,650,000

1983 — 250 employees \$6,155,000

Or an average annual rate of \$ 4,028,000

Capital Improvements

Average annual rate \$ 3,500,000

Payments in Lieu of Taxes

Average annual rate, approximately \$ 1,970,000

Land Acquisition

Average annual rate \$ 3,800,000

Average Annual State Governmental Benefits Total \$13,298,000

Additionally, park visitors' expenditures would increase from the present estimated annual gross amount of \$40,000,000 to the 1983 estimated gross amount of \$136,000,000.

The principal lands to be acquired for the park would be the undeveloped lands, with practical and effective safeguards for homes and other developed properties.

Park development, operation and maintenance during the first 15 years after park authorization would be comparable to that of other national parks and would be a responsibility of the Federal Government.

Payments to the towns in lieu of taxes would remain about at their present rate for 15 to 20 years, after which they would diminish 5% per year until terminated.

There would be some local loss of pulp and paper industries, which might be offset by land exchanges.

The proposed park area is not one of the State's important hunting areas except for bear and, to a lesser extent, for ruffed grouse.

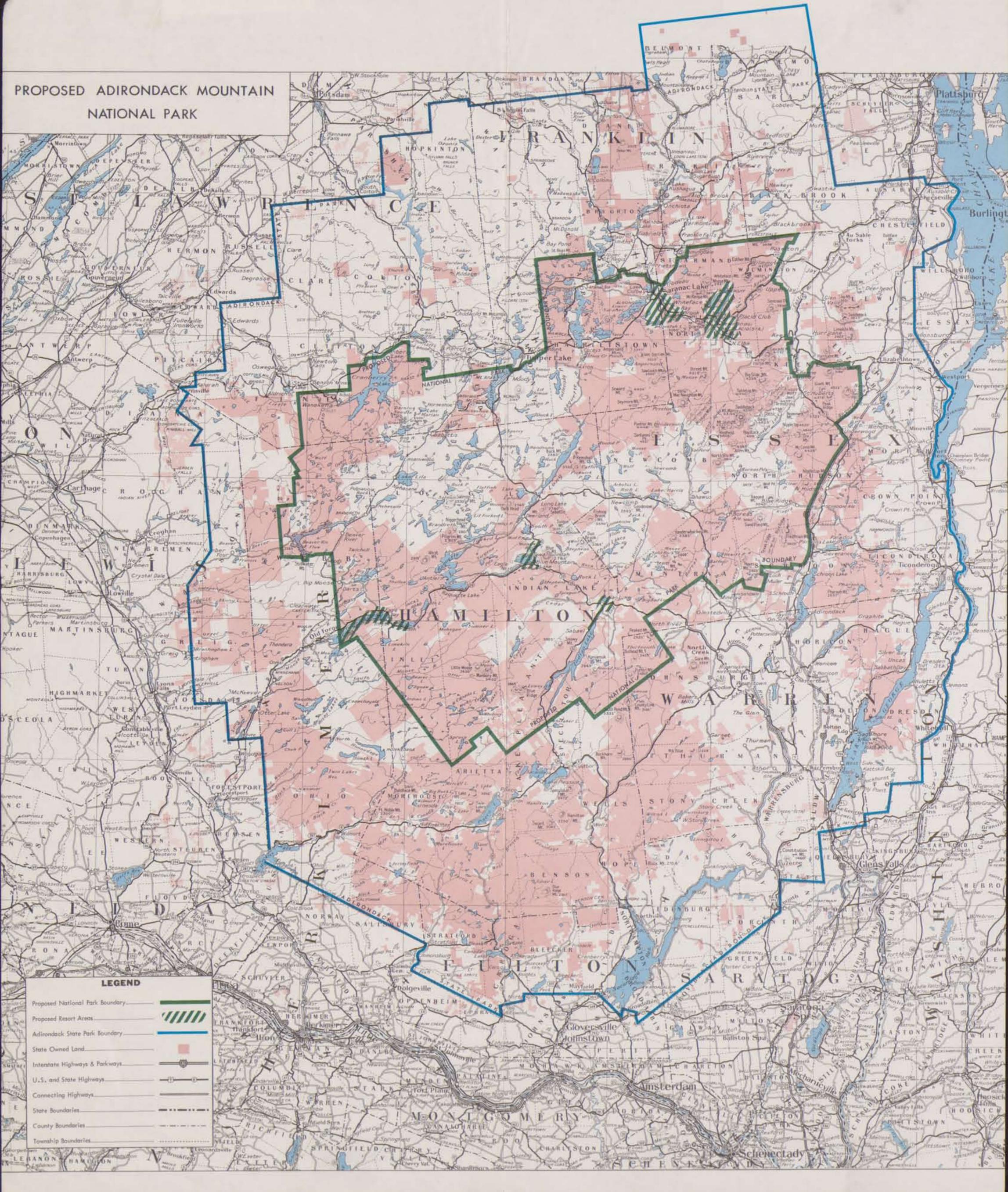
New money would be brought into the Towns in which the proposed national park is situated by Federal Government expenditures for park development, management and operation and by the expenditures of the increasing number of visitors.

The Federal Government would benefit by transfer from the State of 1,120,000 acres of State owned land with an estimated present market value of \$59,000,000 and on which the State has constructed public use facilities at an estimated cost of \$13,400,000.

The National Park System would be strengthened by the inclusion of a great national park of unique and outstanding character, near the Country's largest population centers.

While the economic considerations indicated herein are important, they are collateral to the real purpose of the proposed Adirondack Mountains National Park, which is to preserve a unique segment of our Country for human enjoyment.

PROPOSED ADIRONDACK MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK



LEGEND

- Proposed National Park Boundary
- Proposed Resort Areas
- Adirondack State Park Boundary
- State Owned Land
- Interstate Highways & Parkways
- U.S. and State Highways
- Connecting Highways
- State Boundaries
- County Boundaries
- Township Boundaries