



**MINUTES OF THE STATE LAND COMMITTEE MEETING
September 11, 2014**

Committee members in attendance included Agency Chairwoman Leilani Ulrich, Members Sherman Craig, William Thomas, Designee Robert Stegemann, Department of Environmental Conservation and Committee Chair Richard Booth. Members Karen Feldman, Dan Wilt, and Designees Dierdre Scozzafava, Department of State and Bradley Austin, Department of Economic Development joined the Committee. Also participating in the meeting was Executive Director Fred Monroe of the Local Government Review Board. Staff included Executive Director Terry Martino, Counsel James Townsend, Senior Natural Resource Planner Kevin Prickett, and newly appointed Deputy Director of Planning Kathy Regan.

The Committee meeting convened at approximately 10:45 a.m.

September 3, 1964 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act (K. Prickett)

In honor of its 50th anniversary, Kevin Prickett spoke about the Wilderness Act and reviewed information relating it to the Adirondack wilderness. He highlighted the ecological, aesthetic and recreational values of wilderness. He also discussed how historic and cultural connections exist in wilderness areas.

Mr. Prickett discussed the development of the Wilderness Act that was passed in 1964. He acknowledged its author, Howard Zahniser and his perseverance in promoting passage of legislation that would preserve wilderness areas throughout the nation.

Mr. Prickett also discussed the 1975 Eastern Wilderness Act, an important milestone in wilderness legislation. This Act demonstrated that lands which showed signs of human use, but were recovering, could be designated as Federal Wilderness areas.

Mr. Prickett concluded his presentation with a comparison between Federal and New York State wilderness and provided a summary of acreage protected as wilderness in the Adirondacks.

Commemoration, Overview and Highlights of the Wilderness Act and Its Historic Roots in the Adirondack Park (P. Terrie, Ph.D.)

Dr. Terrie reviewed the progression of wilderness since its inception in 1964 and spoke about the different values associated with wilderness in America. With the evolution of industry and the advent of the "vacation" ideal, the popularity of wilderness began to evolve as a means to recharge and heal from the impacts of industrial life.

Dr. Terrie noted that toward the end of the 19th century, the need to protect wilderness areas became more apparent. He also noted that the Adirondacks were at the forefront of this movement to preserve wild areas. The science of ecology evolved during the 1920s and was promoted by Aldo Leopold and others which lead to further strides to protect natural areas. By the 1930s, an identifiable public core existed which placed value on wilderness protection and the direct benefits gleaned by man from pristine areas.

Dr. Terrie spoke about the friendship that developed in 1945 between Howard Zahniser and Paul Schaeffer. In 1946 the two spent time in the Adirondacks, and it was realized by Zahniser that New York had a devoted section in the NYS Constitution that provided forever wild protection for the natural resources of the Adirondacks. Zahniser then began drafting language for the Wilderness Act to provide protection for Federal lands. Zahniser worked on 66 drafts of the Act which was finally passed in 1964, shortly after his passing. Dr. Terrie noted the many similarities between the Federal Act and SLMP definition of wilderness.

Dr. Terrie then spoke of the conflict that exists between protection of wilderness and the different ideals held by the American public. He also touched upon climate change and the impacts to the protected natural lands.

Committee Chair Booth queried why Congress did not create one agency for wilderness as opposed to the current situation where wilderness lands are managed by four different agencies. Dr. Terrie referred to a biography on Zahniser written by Mark Hardy which discusses the progression of the Wilderness Act and the complexities in its completion. This biography elaborates on the many dynamics of the various bureaucracies involved.

Counsel Townsend asked about the history of agricultural uses in Yellow Stone and the history of non-wilderness activities that

occur in wilderness areas. Dr. Terrie responded that there is a history of ignoring defined use in protected areas. The Wilderness Act itself allows for protection of human artifacts in classified areas and to the extent these areas are protected is somewhat contentious. It is a subject that continues to be discussed today.

Agency Chair Ulrich asked what should be done regarding the spread of invasive species, climate change and the potential threats to the Forest Preserve. Dr. Terrie responded that climate change concerns him but noted that in the Park there is protection via the constitution and for now that legislation should not be changed. He believes it would be unwise to begin instituting management policies for the Forest Preserve to protect it from unknown impacts.

Member Craig asked if projections can be made as to how future populations might view wilderness and its values. Dr. Terrie responded that it is important to continue to educate people on the important values wilderness areas provide.

Designee Stegemann noted that the population demographics are changing and asked if the view of wilderness might be looked at differently in the future. Dr. Terrie responded that it is an evolving situation of how human beings value open space and nature. He does not feel changing demographics are a threat to the protected wilderness areas and particularly to the Adirondacks. He sees it as an opportunity. Chair Ulrich said she sees it as a challenge due to the fear people still seem to have of wilderness.

Member Thomas asked about the negative response given from western legislators in response to the Wilderness Act. Dr. Terrie responded that the negativity was primarily for economic reasons due to the activities of mining, logging, etc. and the Wilderness Act was seen as a threat to these operations as it might diminish the available lands. Dr. Terrie stated that as a result of these concerns, the Wilderness Act was infiltrated with compromises.

Member Thomas then asked how the Wilderness Act influenced the creation of the Adirondack Park Agency. Dr. Terrie responded that the Act impacted the State Land Master Plan as can be seen in the similar language that was used in its creation.

Executive Director Martino asked about the cultural shifts that are being realized in society today and the tension between the

recognition of wilderness and its redemptive value and the view of imposition of authority and asked if this will continue to be a trend. Dr. Terrie responded that he believes it will be a case-by-case scenario and the future will be determined by cultures and traditions.

Committee Chair Booth noted the work done by Dr. Anne LaBastille in establishing wilderness areas in Central America. Dr. LaBastille also sat on the Park Agency Board for several terms during her career.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:05 p.m.