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Public Lands and Capitalism: The Case of the Adirondack Park

Weston (Trent) Fenner
Syracuse University

Abstract

This dissertation examines the tensions that surround land management in the Adirondack Park of New York State (NYS), while paying special attention to how the market intrudes into these conflicts. To look at these tensions, this project explores contests over the regulation of public and private land, conflicts over how wilderness is imagined and managed, and the controversies that flow from efforts to alleviate high-use problems in the Adirondack Park. These contests are the basis of the following research questions which reveal the impact of land management conflict in the Adirondack Park, and expose how the market influences park management and how it is protected from it.

First, the dissertation asks: how the Adirondack Park come into its modern form of hybrid land management, which manages public, private, and easement land primarily under one land management system? The analysis of archival documents reveals that land plans with the intention of keeping private lands rural and public lands wild, shaped this land management system. These land plans were reactions from countermovements which sought to protect the land of the park from the market, in the form of largescale housing development and mass tourism.

Second, the dissertation asks: how do stakeholders envision "wilderness" and how does that play into the management of "wilderness areas" and other lands in the Adirondack Park? The examination of intensive semi-structured interviews from members, leaders, and employees of conservation and environmental groups, shows that the sample has a diverse understanding of wilderness, however; these visions unite around the argument that wilderness should be a place where humans have a limited impact.

Third, the dissertation asks: what do stakeholders see as the causes and solutions to high-use, overuse, and overcrowding in the Adirondack Park? Intensive interviewing and archival research are used to look at how respondents define and identify the causes and solutions to high-use problems in the Adirondack Park. The archival data is used to see how people thought about high-use issues in the 1960s, and it shows that many of the same issues existed in different forms and proportions. The interviews show that the respondents believe high-use problems are caused by uniformed recreators and insufficient land management. The best solutions to these root causes are stronger recreationalist education and improved land management. When it comes to these solutions, the respondents primarily propose public-private solutions, instead of state run solutions. This demonstrates that a neoliberal mindset has seeped in.

The analysis of these questions demonstrates Philip Terrie's (2008) argument of "contested terrain" in action, where numerous parties are competing to enact their vision onto the land. This dissertation details several conflicts over land management in the Adirondack Park that connect to each other. Many of these land management tensions are also conflicts over the role of the state and market in the management of park lands—both public and private. The market's possible intrusion into the Adirondack Park in the shape of private development and mass tourism, produced a countermovement that led to sweeping land regulation. Managing high-use conflicts and maintaining "wilderness" conditions today often see private organizations and companies sharing in the work and management at a higher degree than the past. Most interestingly, the role of the private groups, sometimes for-profit groups, in this role is seen as normal, even desirable. Thus, the market's role in the Adirondack Park's land management is likely increasing, yet the in other ways people are still opposed to the market's desire to bolster mass tourism and create large scale developments.

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by

Weston (Trent) Fenner

B.A., Shippensburg University, 2008
M.A., Lehigh University, 2010
M.A., Syracuse University, 2015

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Syracuse University
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Table of Contents

Introduction: Capitalism and Public Lands: the Case of the Adirondack Park

Introduction

Parks and protected areas are often at the center of conflicts over who gets to use the land, how the land gets used, and the degree to which the land gets conserved. Groups and individuals are constantly fighting to implement their vision onto public land (Terrie 2008), whether that be a vision of a wild landscape with little human impact, or a vision of a landscape with intense recreational development that allows for easy access to scenic spaces. These battles are frequently charged, as people's identities and ways of life are intertwined with the land. The values and beliefs connected to social class, gender, and race, shape the meanings individuals attach to the land and influence how they think the land should be used economically, socially, and ecologically, creating further traction for conflict.

Deepening these tensions, "Places evoke emotion. This is what inspires people to work so hard to protect them" (Long 2022:63). Of course, what constitutes protection differs by the individual, and for some even includes extraction. Thus, conflicts over the way parks and protected areas are used, managed, and imagined are regularly fierce struggles that frequently play out over decades.

The Adirondack Park of northern New York State (NYS) is one such place where there has been and still is frequent conflict over the management of the park's land on almost every level, from how "wilderness areas" manage crowds to how private land is regulated to retain a rural landscape. *The aim of this dissertation is to examine the tensions that surround land management in the Adirondack Park, with special attention paid to how the market touches these conflicts*. The power of the market in these struggles is of particular interest because public lands are in many ways anathema to the machinations of capitalism which began and continue to

operate across the world by seizing publicly and commonly held lands in order to transfer them into private ownership to produce capital accumulation (Harvey 2003, Harvey 2005, Luxemburg 2004, Marx 2009/1867). This project seeks to shed some light on this incongruity by attempting to identify how the market influences struggles over the management of parks and protected areas and to examine the Adirondacks as a case of land management conflict that is entangled in social class and identity.

To analyze land management tensions in the Adirondack Park, this dissertation asks three primary questions about how the park is managed, which form the basis of each substantive chapter. One, how did the Adirondack Park come into its modern form of hybrid land management, which manages public, private, and easement land primarily under one land management system? Two, how do stakeholders envision "wilderness" and how does that play into the management of "wilderness areas" and other lands in the Adirondack Park? Three, what do stakeholders see as the causes and solutions to high-use, overuse, and overcrowding in the Adirondack Park? By analyzing these questions, the dissertation identifies and examines the impact of past and current land management conflicts in the park. The analysis of these questions also reveals how the market sometimes intrudes into the management of the park and how this land management system sometimes protects the land from market forces.

Archival research and intensive interviewing are implemented to answer these research questions. To be more particular, archival research is used to examine how the Adirondack Park's modern hybrid land management system came into being during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Task force documents, the files of land management organizations, and public comments are the focus of this analysis. Intensive interviewing is used to look out how stakeholders envision "wilderness" and what they think are the causes and solutions to high-use problems. This study

focuses solely on respondents that are members, employees, and/or leaders in outdoor, environmental, and/or conservation groups, for their inside and deep knowledge of land management. The archival data is also used to provide historical context to the analysis of high-use problems in the park. Specifically, any discussion of overuse and overcrowding from the above-mentioned documents is considered in the analysis. More detail on methodology will be covered in the substantive chapters.

To give a quick synopsis of the analyses: Examining the first question shows that the modern hybrid land management system of the Adirondack Park was born out of a taskforce that valorized a vison of public land that emphasized wilderness and "forever wild" values over the development of mass recreation and tourism. Taking the park in this direction further led to the park being moderately protected from the forces of capital since it largely safeguarded the land from mass recreation and regulated development throughout the park to protect its rural landscape.

The analysis of the second question reveals that a group of outdoor oriented Adirondack stakeholders have diverse visions of wilderness, but that those visions also coalesce around the idea that wilderness should be a space that is somewhat free from the influence of humans. These spaces, are thus, meant to be free from market forces.

The evaluation of the third question reveals that respondents primarily argue that the best solutions to high-use problems are (1) educational outreach programs that teach recreators about Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and (2) improved land management that properly addresses high-use and public safety. The respondents identify these solutions because they believe high-use issues are caused by uneducated hikers and bad land management practices. Interestingly, when it comes to enacting better education and land management, the respondents emphasize

public-private partnerships, over solely state-run solutions. Neoliberal responses that depend on the private sector have infiltrated the way people think about solutions to high-use problems.

These analyses tell the story of how the Adirondack Park came into its current form, and how contemporary conflicts of land management continue to shape it. When the choice came between developing the park along the lines mass recreation and tourism or keep it in its traditional form that stressed wilderness and "forever wild," it went with the latter. Elite forces in combination with conservation interests, along with the public, steered it in this direction, which keeps some parts of the market out the park. These and related tensions, however, still exist under this new system. There are still conflicts over the meaning and management of both "wilderness" and "forever wild" that affect how the park is run and experienced by individuals. Since these concepts mean different things to different people, these conflicts are inevitable, but there is often common ground that can be found. Further, surges in the number of recreators has put a strain in certain places in the park and on local communities, creating conflict over how to ease the issues caused by this high-use. Many of these issues around alleviating high-use problems are tied to how "wilderness" and "forever wild" defined, envisioned, and managed, as they create limits toward the solutions that can be used.

Case Background and Key Concepts

Background Information on the Adirondack Park

The Adirondack Park encompasses around 6 million acres of land in northern NYS, and it is a tapestry of public, private, and easement lands. It is enclosed on the map by the "the blue line," which was drawn on the first maps of the park; this blue line retains symbolic importance of the park's development to Adirondack stakeholders (Terrie 2008). There are numerous public land classifications, but the primary ones are "wilderness areas" and "wild forests." Wilderness

areas are meant to maintain the primeval and wild character of the land, while wild forests allow for more intensive recreation, like mountain biking (APA 2019). The public has access to all the public lands in the park as long as recreators follow the rules set out by that land parcel's classification. All the public lands in the park are considered a "forest preserve" and are protected by a "forever wild" statute in the NYS constitution. The result of this is that the public lands are largely managed in a way that maintains backcountry characteristics as opposed to mass recreation. It also means that extraction, especially logging, is forbidden on public land (see Schneider 1998, Terrie 2008).

Private land in the Adirondack Park is regulated by a land plan that aims to retain the rural character of the park. This land plan works by using density zoning, where there can only be a certain amount of development on a parcel of land depending on how it is classified (McMartin 2002). In effect, this clusters development in certain areas, allowing for open space throughout most of the park (APA 2019). The density of development allowed on particular classifications is determined by a slew of factors including biological and "public considerations," "unique features" like waterfalls, "existing land use," and "physical limitations" related to factors like "soil, slopes, and elevations" (Agency). Moreover, easement lands are private land where the owner of the land has sold off certain development rights to protect that land parcel, and often, nearby public land (Merenlender, Huntsinger, Guthey et al. 2004, Terrie 2008).

It is important to remember, before the park, and before Europeans, the land that makes up the Adirondack Park was mostly lived on by people of the Haudenosaunee, and in the east of the park, the Algonquian (Terrie 2008). Following the work of Otis (2018), a certain mythology developed around the history of indigenous people in the area of what is now the Adirondack

Park. According to this viewpoint, the territory of the park was unsettled before the arrival of Europeans into America, and thus, native people only seldomly used the land and never lived on it permanently. This way of thinking has pervaded scholarship on the park and the way current day "locals" of the park imagine its history (Otis 2018). However, new evidence (archeological), native history of area, and the use of older European writings about the territory of the park have seriously discredited this mythology. According to Otis (2018), this area was long part of Haudenosaunee and Algonquian homelands.

More specifics about the park's history and current systems of land management will be discussed throughout the substantive chapters.

Key Concepts: Wilderness and "Forever Wild"

There are numerous key concepts that are used in each of the dissertation's analyses. They will be detailed at length in the substantive chapters, but it is key to introduce the concepts of wilderness and "forever wild" here to prime the reader because they run throughout all of the dissertation's chapters.

There are many understandings of wilderness among the public and scholars. In the 19th century, Westerners went from seeing wilderness as a barren foreboding landscape to seeing it as a romantic space where individuals could escape the drudgery of day to day life (Nash 2001). In this frame, wilderness came to be known for its ability to provide spiritual and religious fulfillment through the experience of its sublime grandeur, while also being a place to practice rugged individualism (Cronon 1995, Nash 2001). Under this conceptualization of wilderness, the key property of wilderness is its separation from the human world. This is why our traditional and many times our legal definitions of wilderness define it as land that is free from human influence and maintains its primeval character.

William Cronon (1995), the most prominent critic and historian of this romantic definition of wilderness, argues that there is nothing primeval or natural about wilderness. The entire notion of wilderness is instead a historical and cultural construction. It is a cultural ideal because there is no such thing as untouched land since humans shaped these lands in the past and continue to do so in the present. Thus, the way wilderness is imagined has no connection to the material reality of the environment. The entire concept of wilderness is a romantic and elite ideal that separates humans from nature and creates a space for affluent tourists. Cronon (1995) nevertheless, argues that the ideals of wilderness retain worth because they give value to the nonhuman world. The critiques of wilderness spawned by Cronon, and the claims against those critiques will be described in chapter II.

Article XIV of the NYS Constitution protects the forest preserve lands (in the Adirondack and Catskills Parks) in NYS as "forever wild" (DEC). The opening lines of this provision which was adopted in 1894 state that, "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…nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed." Forbidding timber extraction in the park came into conflict with foresters that wanted harvest from the forest preserve. However, attempts to modify or abolish "forever wild" to allow for timber extraction failed repeatedly throughout the parks history (McMartin 2002, Terrie 2008). "Forever wild" also limits the types of activities allowed in the park and how the land is managed. Exactly what it means in terms of land management is a matter of fierce conflict (see McMartin 2002).

Outline of Dissertation and Chapter Descriptions

The dissertation is made up of three substantive chapters followed by the conclusion. Chapter I looks at the development of the modern hybrid land management system in the Adirondack Park. The second chapter examines the way a group of outdoor and conservation minded stakeholders envision wilderness. Finally, the third chapter analyzes what these stakeholders believe are the causes and solutions to high-use problems.

Chapter I analyzes data from Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks (TSC) and public comments data that was submitted to state in written form and spoken at public meetings. The TSC was convened in the late 1960s to look for solutions to growing development and management issues in the Adirondack Park, both on public and private land. Their work led to development of the Adirondack Park Agency, then the land plans for both public and private land, the cornerstones of land management in the park today. Exploring their documents shows that the TSC held a flexible but stringent version of wilderness and "forever wild," which led to a public land plan taking a shape that valued wilderness over mass recreation. The TSC was also focused on making sure the park kept its rural quality, though managing development of private lands. The analysis of the public comments shows the process of putting modified versions of these visions into action, which was sometimes contested. The wilderness and "forever wild" values of the TSC, combined with a public that mostly accepted their ideas, led to the formation of this modern hybrid land management system. Also, by doing so, much of the land became further protected from the market from a Polanyian (2001/1944) double movement.

Chapter II examines intensive semi-structured interviews from a group of Adirondack stakeholders on their visions of wilderness. The sample, for both Chapter II and III, is made up exclusively of leaders, members, and employees of outdoor, conservation, and environmental

groups. These are key informant interviews because the informants are knowledgeable on the topic and often have power of decision making in organizations (Gilchrist 1992, USAID 1996). In this case, they have deep knowledge of wilderness and land management and influence in related organizations. The analysis of these interviews demonstrates that the sample has a diverse understanding of wilderness, however; these visions unite around the argument that wilderness should be a place where humans have a limited impact. These results both merge and diverge from major contemporary theories on wilderness. They also illustrate why there are often conflicts over implementing wilderness management, as wilderness has an array of meanings to different people, creating grounds for tensions over ideal management. But, given there is overlap in these wilderness visions, it suggests there are grounds for compromise.

Chapter III uses intensive interviewing and archival research to look at how respondents define and identify the causes and solutions to high-use problems in the Adirondack Park. The archival data is used to see how people thought about high-use issues in the 1960s, and it shows that many of the same issues existed in different forms and proportions. Thus, high-use is no modern problem of land management. The interviews demonstrate that the respondents see high-use problems as being rooted in the actions of uneducated recreationalists and land management practices that fail to address current problems related to high-use. The best solutions to these root causes are stronger recreationalist education and improved land management. Interestingly, when it comes to these solutions, the respondents primarily propose public-private solutions, instead of state run solutions. This demonstrates that a neoliberal mindset has seeped in.

In conclusion, this dissertation analyzes land management tensions in the Adirondack Park in the past and in the present. There were numerous conflicts over how public and private land were to be regulated in the 1970s that carried on for decades. Today there are tensions over

how to put those regulations into action, as is evident in the multiple ways individuals believe wilderness should be managed and envisioned. The most contentious issue today in the park is likely the management of high-use problems, which needs to be managed within the wilderness and "forever wild" framework. The Adirondacks are a case of a park that has been shaped by land management conflicts of the past and today. Many of these conflicts also tie to relations between the state and the market—how the state constrains the market to protect the park and how the market still manages to influence the management of the Adirondack Park's land.

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Chapter I: The Rise of the Modern Hybrid Land-Management System

Introduction

The Adirondack Park is a six-million-acre park that encompasses most of Northern New York State (NYS) and is enclosed on the map by what is commonly referred to as "the blue line" (Terrie 2008). The park itself is made up of a mix of public lands, private lands, and easement lands. The public lands are legally defined as the "forest preserve," which is made up of numerous land parcels that are managed under different land classifications; the most common being "wilderness areas" and "wild forest areas." Private land in the park is subject to a parkwide system of zoning that regulates development to preserve the rural and wild character of the park. Easement lands are private property where land owners have sold certain development rights on the land to help conserve that land and often, neighboring public lands (Merenlender et al. 2004, Terrie 2008). This system of hybrid land management has no parallel in the United States, except for the Catskill Park, which does not regulate private land in the same way.

Given the uniqueness of the Adirondack Park's hybrid land management system, it begs the question: how did such a system develop? This paper aims to answer a part of that question, by analyzing changes to the Adirondack Park's land management system in the late 1960s and early 1970s. I will argue that these changes established the modern form of hybrid land management in the park and that these changes were guided by a unified vision of "forever wild" and wilderness, that was sometimes compromised due to political realities. In the process, I will detail how this particular notion of wilderness and "forever wild" came to dominate public lands management, and to an extent, private land regulation, in the park. To accomplish this, I will define and analyze this understanding of "wilderness," explain what it means in the present, and compare it to some facets of modern wilderness theory. Ultimately, the modern land

management scheme can be understood as a form of "double movement" in which the state moved to constrain market forces in the park by moving to restrain development on private land and by holding back mass tourism on and surrounding public land.

It is key to consider some of the important historical events that occurred before the shifts of the early 1970s in the Adirondack Park. The forest preserve and then the park were instituted for many reasons, but the chief concern was to protect downstate water which comes from the Adirondacks (Graham Jr. 1978, Terrie 2008). The forest preserve—the public lands—were formed in 1885, banning logging on these lands. In 1892, the entire area, including the private lands, was turned into a park. Then, in 1895, the Adirondack Park was inscribed into the NYS constitution. Most importantly, the "forever wild" statute was added to the NYS constitution with article XIV, declaring that forest preserve lands, "shall be forever kept as wild forest lands" (DEC). Much of public land management debate during the time period of this study is centered on how to put "forever wild" into action.

In order to study how the Adirondack Park came into its modern form of hybrid land management, as well as how it was shaped by "forever wild" and new legal interpretations of wilderness, the first half of this analysis examines documents from the Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks (TSC), a taskforce that started in 1968 to evaluate growing issues in the Adirondack Park. The TSC set the die for the future of the Adirondack Park because its work greatly influenced future land management plans. The analysis of this data reveals how a traditional but open notion of wilderness formed under the TSC, and how that notion, along with an strict vision of "forever wild" shaped Adirondack Park land management for the future. The second half of this paper analyzes and historicizes public comments data from the major land management plans that were instituted in the 1970s. This demonstrates the real

process of putting this vision of wilderness and “forever wild” into action, which included compromise.

Before delving into the analysis, this paper will first review major historical events and theory pertinent to the analysis and then detail its methodology.

Table 1. Key Terms		
Acronym		
TSC	Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks (1968-70)	Commission which Led to Future Regulation in the Park
SLMP	State Land Master Plan (established 1972)	Regulates Public Land in the Park
PLUDP	Private Land Use and Development Plan (established 1973)	Regulates Private Land in the Park
CD	Conservation Department (1911–1971)	Managed Public Lands in the Park before the DEC
DEC	Department of Environmental Conservation (established 1970)	Manages Public Lands in the Park by APA Regulations
APA	Adirondack Park Agency (established 1971)	Bipartisan Group that Regulates the Park

Case Background: Land Management Changes in the 1970s

During the 1960s, decades of tension in the Adirondack Park coalesced, as individuals became further alarmed with the direction the park was heading. At the time, approximately fifty years after its creation, housing development throughout the private lands of the park was largely unregulated and there was a growing interest in building expansive housing complexes that could threaten the rural character of the park. Within the public lands of the park, areas commonly thought of as wilderness were treated by the public and Conservation Department (CD) with little regard for key wilderness principles that had become popular, as was evident by the presence of floatplanes, the existence of truck roads, and the prevalence of human structures, including lush ranger stations (McMartin 2002).

In response, Governor Nelson Rockefeller, at the behest of his brother Laurence, proposed an almost 3-million-acre Adirondack National Park that would core out the most

popular areas of the state park. This proposal was almost universally despised in NYS for two primary reasons: (1) for residents, it meant that large parcels of private land would be seized; and (2) for conservationists, it would mean the end to the NYS constitutional "forever wild" protections for public lands which were considered stronger and more secure than the protections granted to national parks (Edmondson 2021). The national park proposal failed wildly, but there was still a need to address the growing issues in the Adirondack Park, thus in 1968 governor Nelson Rockefeller ordered the creation a taskforce called the Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks (TSC) (Siskind 2019). The TSC was tasked with investigating threats to the park's character and to propose potential regulation that could remedy these problems (Terrie 2008). The commissioners of the TSC were primarily made up of prominent citizens or elites, mostly connected to the Rockefellers, and they were supported by a highly skilled staff.

The TSC conducted and ordered numerous studies to examine the conditions of the Adirondack Park. Intense fieldwork was carried out by George Davis and Clarence Petty to evaluate the use and condition of forest preserve land to assess potential land classifications, building off the land evaluations conducted by the Joint Legislative Committee on Natural Resources (JLCNR) during the late 1950s and early 1960s (Edmondson 2021). The TSC also tasked the public with several questions which evaluated their vision of the park's future. Individuals and organizations responded to these questions and submitted written comments at public meetings held across the state. From the field research they completed, the studies they conducted, and from the public comments they received, the TSC concluded that a bipartisan and independent Adirondack Park Agency (APA) with the power to regulate both public and private land should be created to manage the park (Graham Jr. 1978, McMartin 2002)..

The APA quickly took up the recommendations of the TSC and began planning separate regulatory systems for both public and private land. On the public land front, closely following the TSC work and chiefly written by Peter Paine Jr., the APA wrote and passed the State Land Master Plan (SLMP), which enacted a new vison for public land management for the Adirondack Park (Davis 2009, McMartin 2002). The SLMP took all the public land, which is protected by the "forever wild" statute in the NYS constitution and divided it into seven classifications that determine how the land can be used and managed. The primary land designations in this classification scheme include "wilderness" and "wild forest." The wilderness designation affords the greatest protection to these lands by restricting most human made structures, limiting access roads, and constraining recreation to activities like hiking, paddling, and climbing. The wild forest classification is slightly less protective than wilderness, in that it allows for easier access to these lands and permits a wider degree of recreational opportunities. Wilderness areas are meant to maintain a primeval character that is largely free of human influence, while wild forests are designed to uphold the land's wild character but allow for higher usage and development that produces a lack of remoteness (DEC).

At the other end of the scale, the 'intensive use' classification sanctions substantial development like campgrounds and ski areas, such as Whiteface and Gore resorts. Although a flexible interpretation of "forever wild" was used to implement some intensive development on public lands, it is key to remember that those classifications have been used sparingly to maintain the wild character of "forever wild" throughout the lion's share of the forest preserve. Additionally, as this paper will show, "wilderness" was the centerpiece of this classification system, and that notion guided much of this land classification system.

Table 2. SLMP Land Classifications (Public land Classifications)	
Wilderness	Areas that are managed to be untrammeled and uninhabited by people, and to maintain the land's primeval character.
Primitive	Areas of land or water that are like wilderness but have something inconsistent with it or are not big enough to fit wilderness standards.
Canoe	Watercourses managed for a wilderness setting. (Akin to wilderness area)
Wild Forest	Allows for a "somewhat higher degree of use than wilderness, primitive or canoe areas, while retaining an essentially wild character."
Intensive Use	Where the state provides facilities like campgrounds and day use areas.
Historic	Includes historic structures and sites held by the state.
State Administrative	Areas for state purposes that are not for visitors.
***Classifications descriptions paraphrased and quoted from the APA's website (https://apa.ny.gov/state_land/Definitions.htm).**	

On the private land front, the final draft of the Private Land Use and Development Plan (PLUDP) was produced and passed by the NYS legislature at Governor Rockefeller's direction (McMartin 2002, Siskind 2019). By regulating its private lands, the PLUDP aimed to curb unchecked development and protected the region's ecology to retain the rural character of the Adirondack Park. With these regulations, the Adirondack Park finally became a cohesive park, as these regulations bound all its lands, both public and private, into to a comprehensive system of land management that made it unique from the lands outside of its boundaries (Schneider 1998). As will be argued, this vision of a comprehensive park emphasizes an open but strict understanding of "forever wild" and wilderness that values rural landscapes.

PLUDP classifies private lands into six categories—hamlet, moderate intensity, low intensity, rural use, resource management, and industrial use—based on factors like the land's ecology, its proximity to public land, and the existing uses of the land, to determine the degree of development which can occur within that classification category (Terrie 2008) (also DEC). This

system of regulation uses ‘density zoning’ which limits how many buildings can be constructed under each land classification, unlike the more widely employed ‘use zoning’ which determines what can be done on a parcel of land.

Table 3. Private Land Use and Development Plan (Private Land Regulations)	
Hamlet	“These are the growth and service centers of the Park where the Agency encourages development. Intentionally, the Agency has very limited permit requirements in hamlet areas.”
Moderate Intensity Use	“Most uses are permitted; relatively concentrated residential development is most appropriate.”
Low Intensity Use	“Most uses are permitted; residential development at a lower intensity than hamlet or moderate intensity is appropriate.”
Rural Use	“Most uses are permitted; residential uses and reduced intensity development that preserves rural character is most suitable.”
Resource Management	“Most development activities in resource management areas will require an Agency permit; compatible uses include residential uses, agriculture, and forestry. Special care is taken to protect the natural open space character of these lands.”
Industrial Use	“This is where industrial uses exist or have existed, and areas which may be suitable for future industrial development.”
***Classifications quoted from the APA’s website (https://apa.ny.gov/Property_Owners/LandUse.html#PvtLand_Def).**	

Framing Theories for the Analysis

This chapter brings together two broad theoretical domains: competing theories of wilderness and Polanyian theories of the double movement and embeddedness. These perspectives will be briefly reviewed here, as well as a quick synopsis of the rewilding concept.

Wilderness Theory

Firstly, theories of wilderness explain the conceptualization of “wilderness” and the role of wilderness in capitalist and modern societies. This section will briefly review Bill Cronon’s (1995) take on wilderness and the reactions to it, Neil Smith’s (1984) work on the production of nature and its relation to Noel Castree’s (2000) and Alfred Schmidt’s (1971) scholarship, and

lastly Andreas Malm's (2018) Marxist take on wilderness. It is important to note that there will be a more detailed review and analysis of wilderness theory in chapter II.

William Cronon: wilderness as a historical and cultural concept

Viewpoints on wilderness vary wildly within both the academy and the public (Vannini and Vannini 2016). According to Nash (2001), in the West, wilderness went from being understood as a desolate space in need of "improvement," to being understood as a space of sublime beauty. Wilderness became characterized as a place where one could practice rugged individualism, escape perils of the city, and experience spiritual and religious fulfillment (Cronon 1995, Nash 2001). From this perspective, the key attribute of wilderness is it separation from the human world. This is reflected in traditional and legal understanding of wilderness which conceptualize it as a space free from human settlement and influence.

Bill Cronon (1995) radically upset this romantic understanding of wilderness with his landmark work, "The Trouble with Wilderness," to the ire of many wilderness purists, and to the excitement of those who had long been unsatisfied with romantic takes on wilderness. For Cronon, wilderness is simply a historical and cultural construction that fails to match up with material reality. Wilderness is a cultural construct because humans have long shaped the land we consider to be wilderness and continue to do so to this day. Thus, wilderness is *not* separated from human influence. It is a historical concept because the definition of wilderness has shifted over time. For Cronon (1995), the notion of wilderness expresses an elite and romantic ideal, which divides humans and nature, while creating a space for affluent tourists. However, Cronon (1995) does argue that wilderness can be an valuable concept because it gives worth to the nonhuman world.

Cronon's work kicked off a firestorm of debate in the academy and within segments of the public. Critiques and support for Cronon continue into the present. This scholarship produced two (canonical) massive edited volumes—*The Great New Wilderness Debate (1998)* and *The Wilderness Debate Rages On (2008b)*—collecting writings from varying perspectives on wilderness. Much of this work can be broken down into realist, constructionist, assembaglist theory (these will be discussed in chapter II), and the debate continues.

Neil Smith and others: the production of nature

The groundbreaking work of Cronon (1995) owes some debt to Neil Smith's (1984) arguments on the production of nature. Similarly, though not focused on wilderness, Smith disputes the argument that nature is free from the influences of humans. For Smith (1984), nature is produced, and thus there is no pristine nature. To be more specific, nature is co-produced with humanity, especially in the realm of production and exchange, meaning any binary between nature and society is false. Smith is sometimes critiqued for being narrowly focused on capitalism's influence over this relationship, but his focus is on the how *human activity* shaped this, "coevolutionary relationship throughout history" (Loftus 2017:3)

Smith built his approach from Marx's understanding of nature, and moved past other Marxist visions of nature that had become overly urban and unable to connect with the rise in environmental consciousness among scholars (Loftus 2017). In the process, Smith did away with Alfred Schmidt's (1971) *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, which was the leading work on Marx and nature at the time. For Smith, "…Schmidt depicted the socialist relation to nature as conceived by Marx as 'pretty much like capitalism except worse: the domination of nature'" (Foster and Clark 2016, Smith 1984). Such a perspective was insufficient to Smith.

Following Smith (1984), Noel Castree (2000) argues that Marxian writings on nature have (1) shifted between constructionism and naturalism, (2) that those arguments enforce the nature-society dualism which is bound into bourgeois and radical eco-centric perspectives on nature, and (3) that the capitalist production of nature perspective on society-nature relations is a non-binary and theoretically rich way of understanding how the nexus between nature and capital works. This work by Castree (2000) helped bring new attention to Smith's production of nature approach, leading to new scholars taking up the perspective in their work (Loftus 2017). Castree then used this Smithian approach to help develop his work on the commodification of nature (see Castree 2005, Castree 2003).

It is important to note that not everyone, especially outside of geography, follows Smith's arguments on the production of nature. Many of these critics argue that it gives far too much agency to humans, and though it claims to be non-binary, it often devolves into dualisms (see Loftus 2017). For many eco-Marxists like Foster and Clark (2016), the production of nature approach, sees nature as completely subsumed by social production, which makes it a human exemptionalist paradigm. Humans have too much influence in socio-nature relations from this critique.

Andreas Malm's Marxist perspective of wilderness

Andreas Malm's (2018) Marxist perspective of wilderness is used in this chapter to understand how the TSC envisioned wilderness and "forever wild" in their work. From Malm's viewpoint, capital inherently seeks to exploit nature and thus, protecting wilderness spaces is an anti-capitalist endeavor. For Malm, wilderness is relative, meaning wilderness is best understood as something that exists in degrees, not absolutes. Hence, there is no "absolute wilderness," where nature exists in some kind of primordial bliss free of humans, but there are wild spaces

where humans have a smaller impact. Thus, wilderness is something which is very materially real, where ecosystems can run largely independent of humans. Wilderness is not just limited to some social construction or Western concept since it has a real physical component.

Karl Polanyi's Double Movement

Karl Polanyi's (2001/1944) seminal work in *The Great Transformation*, challenged the argument that a society guided by free markets has the capacity to create a utopia of personal freedom. This pits Polanyi against the neoliberal arguments of Hayek (2007/1944) and Friedman (2009/1962), who championed free markets and all they entail—deregulation, austerity, privatization, and so on. Neoliberal economic and social policies were taken into practice in the 1980s with the rise of Ronald Reagan and Margrett Thatcher, and then, only continued to propagate into the current day. Instead of a rise in personal freedom and economic prosperity for the masses, we have been met by a massive transference of wealth to rich and sharpening inequality (Harvey 2005).

According to Polanyi (2001/1944), free market economic projects are destined to create disorder because they rely on commodifying things which are *not* meant to be commodified. Specifically, commodifying labor, land (nature), and money, will cause misery for society and the environment, because they are *not* "genuine" commodities that were produced for sale on the market. These "fictitious commodities" are at the center of why neoliberal systems, or market fundamentalism (Block and Somers 2014), is disastrous for people and the environment, as labor and land cannot withstand the pressures of a "free" market without such harm. To illustrate, when land is commodified, it leads to nature being exploited and fragmented, threatening ecological systems which society is depends on. Commodifying labor creates a scenario where

people are the subject of exploitation, imperiling their wellbeing. Attempts to commodify labor and land will create such pain that it will generate calls from society to rein in these excesses.

For Polanyi (2001/1944) these demands against market extremes are called countermovements, and they are at the core of his concept: the double movement. To detail the double movement, it is when the pressures of the "free" market bear down on people and nature to the point where this destruction produces countermovements from society that call for protections for people and the environment. To illustrate further, the double movement can be thought of as a, "…swinging pendulum, where free market excesses come about and are then met by waves of social protests from people and their countermovements that demand safeguards for land, labour and money" (Brechin and Fenner 2017:407). It is key to note that these Polanyian countermovements are exclusively in response to commodifying labor, land, and money.

Polanyi (2001/1944) is also known for his take on embeddedness. For Polanyi, economic relations are embedded within society, and serve to provide for a society's material needs. The free market attempts to break this embeddedness, by separating the market from society. However, this is an impossibility for Polanyi, as economic relations will always remain tethered to society. These efforts to dis-embed the market from society, just create dislocations that harm to people and the environment, in their efforts to commodify labor, land, money. Thus, the market is embedded within society and trying to divide the two by ignoring socio-ecological constraints, leads to the rise of countermovements to protect people and the environment.

Rewilding

There are many ways to understand the concept of rewilding, but most crucial to this study and its respondents, is the idea that rewilding is the process of keeping land management

minimal to allow the environment the freedom to shape the land's ecology on its own (see Ponsford 2023 for definitions). Thus, in its simplest form, rewilding is letting nature run its course on the environment. For Monbiot the key to rewilding is the restoration of ecosystems, which can include freeing the environment of constraints like fences and drainages, and introducing keystone species like wolves, boars, and elephants (Monbiot 2014). Within this framework humans should have little role in managing ecosystems. Though there are many ways of understanding rewilding (reviewing these are beyond this chapter's scope), at its center rewilding is leaving the land to itself.

Methodology and Background

The following analyses are based on archival research conducted at the New York State Archives (NYSA) in Albany, NY, and the *Adirondack Experience: The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake* (ADKX) at Blue Mountain Lake in the Adirondack Park. Public comments data from the SLMP and PLUDP were the focus of study at the NYSA, while the TSC's files were the center of inquiry at ADKX.

TSC and APA Data Collected at ADKX

At ADKX I was provided with a "finding aid" from the archivist that laid out the contents of each box the museum has with TSC files (and some early APA files), which I then used to select the boxes and files that I believed would best explore how the TSC came to develop their thoughts and policy recommendations towards land classification and wilderness. These boxes are made up of a multitude of documents, including internal communications, the minutes of meetings, communications to the governor, and numerous studies on issues such as easements, recreation, and private land. There is also a series of field reports that document fieldtrips throughout the Adirondack Park which were carried out to evaluate the conditions and uses of

these lands to help determine future land classifications and policies. These field reports were largely written by TSC staff member and future APA employee George Davis, who guided much of the taskforce's thoughts on wilderness. Davis and Clarence Petty conducted the majority of these trips, though numerous people took part, including Peter Paine Jr, TSC commission member and future APA commissioner. In addition to the Adirondack field reports, there are field reports from other outdoor locations like the White Mountains of New Hampshire and Baxter State Park in Maine, which were visited to assess how other organizations manage their wild spaces.

At ADKX I read through these files, with a particular focus on the field reports and documents related to potential land classification. I took detailed notes on the emerging themes I observed, such as a flexible understanding of wilderness, which guided my future coding of the data. Copies of the most important documents were made while at ADKX which were later entered into NVivo, where they were then coded, paying special attention to how the TSC understood and described wilderness, to evaluate how wilderness became part of their land classification system. Coding and memo-ing also reflect on how issues like overuse/high use and violations of wilderness principles were perceived at the time.

Public Comments Data at the NYS Archives

To acquire the public comments data, I used the "finding aid" provided by the NYSA to select boxes that contained public comments for the major land regulation plans—SLMP, PLUDP, and WSSRA. These public comments were collected at numerous public meetings held by the APA across the state and within the park to assess public sentiment toward the land plans. At these meetings, individuals and groups submitted oral and written comments to the public and APA. Often, participants would read prepared statements which would also be submitted in

written form. Boxes correspond to each plan and folders are based on meeting location, such as New York City, Saranac Lake, and Lake Placid. The data in these boxes largely include the written comments that were submitted and read at the meetings. Occasionally, the APA summarized comments that individuals submitted orally. For PLUDP, the APA took the interesting step of evaluating each comment to assess whether it was 'in favor of the plan,' 'not in favor,' or 'unrelated,' which was recorded in its own document. For each plan it was common for many organizations, including industry and conservation groups, to submit comments orally or written to all or most of the public meetings. The effect of this is that many of the public meetings repeat the same comments again and again.

Folders from each land plan were selected randomly and then examined. On the first readings of these files, I took notes on my initial thoughts and the patterns I observed, while also taking photographs of important documents. Later, I wrote memos and analyzed copied documents in NVivo, specifically to look for and then analyze pro and anti-regulatory attitudes, as well as any thoughts that showed competing visions of wilderness and "forever wild." While coding the data in NVivo, I took note of different forms of pro and anti-regulatory attitudes, as some anti-regulatory sentiments were based on the notion of "home rule" while some were based in a blanket hatred of regulation. Similarly, some pro-regulatory attitudes were rooted in keeping the park rural, wild, and ecologically sound, while others stressed how these regulations could enhance their own property. Coding also revealed numerous different sentiments against and for wilderness and other thoughts, specifically toward taxes and overuse.

Data collection was not complete before the closure of the NYSA archives due to the COVID pandemic. To rectify this issue, at my request and payment, NYSA created digital copies of public comments from the TSC, SLMP, and PLUPD. I selected folders for copying based on

meeting location and I attempted to balance meeting locations within and outside of the park. Most of these public comments were submitted in writing and often read orally as well at the meetings. The documents were coded and analyzed in the same style described above.

Findings Part I: Analysis of TSC Data

Land Classification and Wilderness Principles in the TSC

Though the TSC was primarily concerned with unregulated development on private lands in the Adirondack Park, it was also greatly focused on creating a system of land classification for the park's public land that seriously addressed "forever wild." The TSC sought to do this by proposing stricter controls for the vast majority of public lands (e.g., future "wilderness" and "wild forest" areas), while also creating certain land classifications that allowed for more recreational development. In effect, this produced different degrees of "forever wild."

Within the TSC's proposed land classification system, the category of "wilderness" garnered a significant amount of attention from the commission. Wilderness was clearly meant to be the star of the Adirondack Park's public land system. As the TSC stated in their "Goals and Policy Statement," "Within the classification system the highest priority goal IS THE PRESERVATION OF THE INTEGRITY OF THE WILDERNESS AREAS WHEREVER THEY EXIST WITHIN THE ADIRONDACK PARK" (emphasis in the original: (3/4/70)). This support for wilderness is evident throughout the TSC's files, given that there are numerous documents that demonstrate how seriously the TSC took wilderness management, including several field reports that describe visits to designated wilderness areas outside of the Adirondack Park (to see how other systems are run), documents from the U.S. Forest Service on their wilderness program, and numerous field reports from TSC staff members who visited areas of the park to determine their future classification and evaluate their potential for wilderness classification.

Though the TSC clearly had an understanding of what factors they thought should ideally characterize wilderness—human absence, untrammeled spaces, lack of development, and solitude—they also knew that the definitions of wilderness are subjective, and procedures to manage wilderness must be dynamic and site specific. They were also wary of purist definitions of wilderness since that would disqualify most land from being considered wilderness. The following quotations express these notions:

> A logical starting point lies in the definition of the word wilderness. The use of the word in the Bible implied a vast, uninhabited, desolate tract of land that stretched to the horizon and beyond. Using this definition would simplify wilderness management in the Adirondacks by eliminating the possibility of having a wilderness to manage. (Davis to TSC)

> It becomes readily apparent that definitions could entangle one. To a long time city dweller Central Park may be wilderness but to a purist there may well be no wilderness left in the world. The Commission will probably have to grapple with this problem of definition at a later date.

> …the intrusion of truck trails, ranger stations and a rather extensive trail and shelter system precludes consideration of these areas as an "ecological" wilderness. Rather they fall more logically into the "sociological" wilderness described by Spurr and discussed by Hendee. Summed up by Cowan 19[68] "the wilderness of the past has already gone beyond return and that we should depend upon the skills of the manager to assemble a new wilderness for new generations that it will enjoy as fully as the original one which, not having known, they will not miss." ("Outdoor rec in the ADK." my emphasis) [TSC cites in this passage: (Cowan 1968, Hendee 1968, Spurr 1966)]

Not only does this show that the TSC understood the pitfalls of wilderness definitions and their connection to wilderness management, but it also demonstrates that wilderness managers, thinkers, and the TSC were all well aware that pristine wilderness is an idea that rarely, if ever, matches a wilderness purist's reality.

The TSC was not guided by a purist's sense of wilderness, even if it was somewhat traditional. Instead, the TSC was thinking more in terms of what we would call re-wilding today—to allow a place to became wild again by giving it minimal management. This is specifically clear when the TSC references Cowan's statement, which claims that land managers should, "…assemble a new wilderness for new generations that it will enjoy as fully as the

original." Though that statement sentimentalizes the past, given these views, and as will be demonstrated further, the TSC was flexible with its vision of wilderness, allowing it to adapt with an area's history (and uses).

The TSC's dynamic understanding of wilderness would go on to shape the wilderness classification that that makes up a great deal of the modern forest preserve. A wilderness classification that limits humans to a light touch but still allows for human use and development. These ideas that emphasized the relative or subjectiveness of wilderness also influenced the greater land classification system because they sought to keep pockets (degrees) of wildness in most of the "forever wild" state lands. Also, their understanding of wilderness makes it clear that legal wildernesses must be created by people, by processes such as legislation and land management.

Wilderness Principles in Relation to Mismanagement and Overuse

More detail can be gleaned about how the TSC envisioned wilderness by examining the way their field reports detailed the mismanagement of public lands and the phenomenon of overuse in the Adirondack Park. Many of these reports took the shape of land management critiques, concerned with management failing to maintain "forever wild" and wilderness principles.

The TSC's documentation of the mismanagement of public lands in the Adirondack Park through their field reports reveals how the TSC's staff understood wilderness and "forever wild," by clarifying what they believed should be excluded from areas to be managed as wilderness. These field trips were mainly conducted by George Davis and Clarence Petty with the goal of, "figuring out sensible rules and standards for the forest preserve" (Edmondson 2021:107). During these fieldtrips, they kept an eye toward evaluating how the de facto wilderness areas

were managed, while also being tasked with determining what areas had the potential to be turned into official wilderness areas in the future. Much of this work built from Petty's intensive fieldwork evaluating the forest preserve with the JLCNR, which led to de facto wilderness areas, though failed to create official wilderness areas due to political realities. The field reports themselves are mostly written, by George Davis, though an occasional report or two was written by Peter Paine Jr.

To contextualize the land management philosophy of the CD at the time, it is important to note that the CD was run mostly by traditional foresters and game managers, who embraced utilitarian principles more than wilderness principles (Edmondson 2021, McMartin 2002). Many in the CD were less than thrilled with "forever wild" and its prohibition on timber cutting which they saw as key to managing healthy and productive forests, thus it is easy to imagine that they were not inclined to accept emergent wilderness principles that were developing further in their field and with the public.

Given the TSC were largely adherents of "forever wild" and fans of wilderness, it is no surprise that George Davis and the commission were critical of the way the CD managed the Adirondack Park's public lands. This critique, however, was always courteous and subdued. At its most scathing Davis stated, "It is recognized that the Conservation Department has many problems to contend with and the staff of this Comission [sic] does not even realize a large majority of them. However, the lack of thought and lack of functional land management planning were so evident that some comment seems appropriate" (HP Report). The reports easily demonstrate that the TSC was dissatisfied with the CD's land management and its lack of respect for "forever wild" and wilderness, but they also did not want to alienate themselves from the CD and the future DEC by openly disrespecting them. These field reports influenced their

conclusions, but they were for internal use, so even that subdued criticism was not public, and the TSC did not publicly place blame on the CD for management failures.

Nonetheless, these field reports tell us much about the history of Adirondack Park land management and the TSC's understanding of what is unfitting for wilderness. The problems recorded by the TSC were legion. They included issues like motorized transport in the de facto wilderness areas, the use of float planes, the existence of truck trails, the development of eroded trails, the creation of rogue spur trails, an overabundance of lean-tos, the presence of telephone wires, and overdeveloped ranger cabins. The following excerpts from the field reports document some of these problems:

> Our first view of the beautiful Avalanche Lake was the most aesthetically depressing of the trip. The beauty of this lake can only be appreciated by those who have seen it. Where the main trail crosses the outlet a telephone line has been strung across both the trail and the lower end of the lake. In addition to this, a 3 foot diameter spool of wire was left lying along the side of the trail. It is inconceivable that anyone would have chosen this location for a telephone line. (High Peaks Report)

> Lean-tos were found where none were mapped and vice — versa - none were found where they were shown to exist. The lean-to situation at Lake Colden and Marcy Dam is at or beyond the saturation point. Any more construction will result in a campground effect which is not tolerable in a wilderness area. (HP report)

> Trail maintenance was generally poor. Erosion was common on all trails. Perhaps the worst example of trail maintenance was on the trail from Marcy Dam through Avalanche Pass to Lake Colden. This trail is one of the most popular and heavily used in the high peaks region. Yet dangerous bridges were encountered. In two spots the trail disappeared into Avalanche Lake and the user was expected to cross rotten floating logs which had disjointed railings that give a false feeling of security. Few people advocate steel or concrete bridges in the interior areas but this is no reason that 'rustic but safe' design can't be utilized. It is recognized that the Department has very limited funds but it would seem reasonable that priority should be given to properly maintaining existing developments instead of building more which will just add to the maintenance inventory. (High Peaks Report)

> The litter problem along the trails and near the lean-tos was appalling. Though carelessness can never be completely overcome, it was obvious that no campaign was being waged to combat the problem. At no point in the entire trip did we notice a "Pack Out What You Pack In" or similar sign. (High Peaks Report)

> The Slide Brook lean-to is well located for persons desiring to climb the four peaks in a day's trip. The lean-to is in a small clearing and the remains of blacksmith shop may be found in the same clearing. *Once again, however, we noted the privy was located in a drainage*. (Dix Report; my emphasis)

> The Duck Hole itself was a lovely spot. One could only envy the ranger stationed here. The well-taken care of lawn in front of the rangers [sic] headquarters brought back memories of the power lawn mower being used at West Canada Lake. (Second High Peaks Report)

These are just a few examples of public lands and wilderness mismanagement that abounded in the Adirondack Park. The field reports express disappointment with needless markers of human presence like telephone wires and mowed lawns. They also indicate alarm with human traces that could be reduced, like the effects of camping and the ubiquity of litter. Not to mention the presence of privies on top of water sources.

Further, just as there are calls for limitations on use to protect the Adirondack Park against overuse today (to be discussed in chapter 3), there were those same calls (by a smaller group) when TSC was conducting its work, which they considered. These early concerns with overuse and potential limits on use clarify how the TSC understood wilderness. The following quotations describe the TSC's concern with overuse:

> Under severe slope conditions the worst enemies of a trail are the users. They actually love the land to death by their visitations and pressure which eventually breaks the holding surface root mat down and exposes the unconsolidated parent material. These conditions are further accentuated by local ecology and soil. For example, many steep portions of the Adirondack Mountain trails are gullies, caused by walking over loose unconsolidated glacial outwash covered by a thin easily worn organic mantle. (Quoted by TSC)

> The entire alpine ecology of some of the Adirondack high peaks is also slowly being destroyed through heavy use and the wearing away of a thin organic mantle which covers solid granite rock…Soon, above timberline, all that will remain is a solid granite cap served by deep gullies through the glacial soils reaching up through the forest cover where once trails were. (Quoted by TSC in outdoor rec)

> Overuse of the forest preserve must be controlled by appropriate means to prevent the destruction of the wild forest environment. (This is from the TSC recreation policy and is under a section titled 'overuse')

These statements show that TSC was greatly worried that overuse could ruin the character and ecology of wilderness areas and "forever wild" lands. There were great fears that the alpine summits would be destroyed, that trails would erode and devastate the ecology and soil of the area, and that overuse would simply annihilate the "wild forest environment."

The analysis of the documents pertaining to mismanagement and overuse, shows that TSC understood wilderness in a manner that partially valued human absence, while also taking into consideration the value of human use and recreation. This also means that the TSC was not interested in interpretations of wilderness that aim to completely erase human presence and

traces from wilderness areas. Lean-tos, trails, and safe infrastructure, were seen as key elements in areas managed as wilderness. Thus, they did not embrace a fully romantic vision of wilderness that erased humans, instead the TSC saw wilderness as dynamic, allowing for different human traces depending on the circumstances.

It is important to remember, though, that human impacts that could be reduced or eliminated were looked down upon by the TSC, including truck roads, litter, manicured lawns, and so on. Overuse was seen as a growing threat to wilderness and the TSC accepted that permits or limits on use may be needed in the future to preserve these spaces. However, they valued freedom in the wilderness and saw these actions as a last resort which is why this planning did not develop further.

Wilderness and Trailless Peaks

The TSC considered the many ways in which individuals understand and experience the wild and wilderness areas. As demonstrated, the TSC held onto a romantic understanding of wilderness that emphasized human absence, but they also recognized that wilderness principles are subjective. To accommodate this, it was understood that wilderness management must be dynamic and site specific, often allowing for human presence and traces. Not only did this mean that the TSC accepted that it would have to provide infrastructure outside of general wilderness principles to accommodate recreation and reduce its impact, but it also meant that they wanted to provide a space where people could experience something close to a purist's sense of wilderness. This is particularly evident in the way that the TSC venerated the experience of hiking trailless peaks in the Adirondack Park.

During its tenure, the TSC conducted a "trailless peaks study" that examined the use of trailless mountains in the Adirondack Park to make recommendations for their future

management. This study was concerned with all trailless peaks in the park, but it was predominantly focused on the trailless 46er peaks, as those peaks received the most use. Part of the study relied on fieldtrips to major trailless peaks such as Santanoni and Panther Mountains, as well as parts of the Dix Range, to evaluate their conditions. The TSC also relied on data collected from trailless 46er summit cannisters maintained by the Adirondack 46er Club. That data produced a table of ascensions from 1946 to 1966, which shows "a slow but significant increase" in use that the TSC predicted would continue to rise, and which history proved correct.

The conclusions of this study of trailless peaks demonstrate that the TSC was committed to promoting wilderness values throughout the park, and was willing to maintain specific areas, like trailless peaks, as spaces that a wilderness purist would consider wild. However, they realized such wildness may not be able to hold on forever in the face of mounting recreational pressures. All of which is demonstrated by the study's recommendations:

1. The trailless condition of certain major trailless peaks shall be permanently maintained by whatever means are necessary.
2. The trailless condition of all other major trailless peaks shall be maintained as long as possible.
3. A trailless peak policy shall be an integral part of the management as prescribed by the Management Guidelines for the Adirondack Park Forest Preserve.
4. Measures should be taken to relieve the pressure on all major peaks, both trailless and non-trailless, by publicizing the attractiveness of other mountains in the Adirondack Forest Preserve. [Recommendations from TSC's "trailless peaks study" (1970)]

Clearly the TSC saw a serious value in keeping trailless peaks wild, as their first recommendation stresses that "certain major trailless peaks" should remain free of trails "by whatever means are necessary." They build on this and advise that other trailless peaks should be kept trailless for "as long as possible." This trailless peak policy was slated to become an "integral" part of the Adirondack Park's land management system, which it essentially did, as many major peaks were left trailless throughout the park, and until recently, there were no plans to create official trails up the trailless 46er peaks. Of course, those mountains have long been home to clear but unmarked herd paths, even at the time of this study. The TSC valued

maintaining certain peaks in their wildest state, but upheld their trademark flexibility, accepting that many of these peaks would lose their wilderness qualities over time.

But why did the TSC see it as important to preserve spaces that matched up with a purist's vision of wilderness? Throughout the TSC files, they certainly favored "forever wild" and wilderness, though they rarely gave the recreational wilderness purist much clout. Nevertheless, in this case, they found it important to provide for a rugged form of recreation that depended on a less accessible and undeveloped setting. Or as stated by the TSC, "while many recreational uses are only enhanced by a wild forest setting, some types or recreational activities are dependent upon it" (Trailless Peaks Study). To maintain this activity, certain wild conditions had to be conserved. The TSC rationalized that even though the demand for trailless peak-bagging, "…is small in comparison to the magnitude of the demand for other forms of recreational services should not be allowed to detract from its importance. Unquestionably, there is both a need and a place for trailless peaks" (Trailless Peaks Study). Even though only a small group of people hiked the trailless summits, the TSC found it to be an activity worth protecting, likely given its dependence on wilderness values.

The comments of TSC staff members and quotations from their studies further illustrate their connection to these more purist visions of wilderness and detail their thoughts on the future of trailless peaks in the Adirondack Park. This is clearly demonstrated in George Davis' writeup of his and Petty's excursion to Santanoni and Panther Peaks:

> From Santanoni we bushwhacked north toward Panther Peak. This peak is recognized as a trailless peak. Crawling on our hands and knees through spruce and fir reproduction as thick as hair on a dog's back we can certainly attest to the fact that Panther deserves trailless designation…One experienced a feeling of great accomplishment and freedom in making this ascent. However, reaching the top of Panther we checked the ADK register and counted 145 signatures since July 18th [dates of trip 9/29 and 9/30]. This is rather startling for a trailless peak. It is feared that if this continues, or more likely increases, on such trailless peaks, a trail by use will evolve. It is a shame that this is destined to be as this will no doubt take away a great deal of the wilderness experience and feeling of accomplishment." (10/2/1969 - Field Report - Trailless Peaks and High Peaks Wilderness Area)

The admiration for a hardy experience is obvious here, as Davis describes the ascent as inspiring a sense of "great accomplishment and freedom." He also expresses fear that this type of wilderness experience and the feelings it creates might disappear over time due to high use. Davis further developed his thoughts on these issues in his field report that describes the TSC trip to the mostly (officially) trailless section of the Dix Range. In this report Davis acknowledges that there are heavily used herd paths, and though "intriguing," the trailless experience might be doomed due to heavy use.

Nevertheless, he continues to recommend that trailless 46er peaks remain officially trailless; a recommendation that made its way into the "trailless peaks study." This is likely because not all 46er peaks had well developed herd paths and also because even those herd paths offered a wilderness quality, as "…still offering one the challenge of attempting to follow what looks like a game trail" (Davis, Field Report 10/8/69). Davis' work shaped the "trailless peaks study," illustrating the formulations of its recommendations that considered the need for wild spaces.

The "trailless peaks study" and the TSC's exploration of trailless 46er peaks demonstrates their commitment to maintaining a purist's sense of wilderness in particular spaces, while still being somewhat flexible about wilderness principles and accepting that even the wildest spaces may change with use, regardless of management directives. The TSC's recommendations were largely carried out as many large peaks remain trailless in the Adirondack Park and the trailless 46er peaks still have no official trails on them.

In the vein of Andreas Malm's theory that emphasizes the relativity of wilderness, this illustrates that even wilderness areas, like in the Adirondack Park, are subject to different degrees of wildness within their own boundaries. In this case, intentionally so, as the TSC attempted to

keep some spaces, specifically trailless peaks, as rugged and somewhat inaccessible as possible, to support the loftiest wilderness values that are often exalted by wilderness purists. Again, the TSC's flexible wilderness principles are in action, not only demonstrating their take on wilderness, but showing that wilderness itself, arguably, works in degrees. The entire public lands system within the hybrid land management system within the Adirondack Park works in this way. Setting its sights on different degrees of wilderness and "forever wild" depending on the site, to create a park that best offers the most of these concepts.

Findings Part II: Analysis of Public Comments from Land Management Plans

Roadmap to Public Comments Analysis

After the TSC convened, it was time to put their recommendations into action. The APA was formed in 1971 and went about regulating public and private land in the park. Before the SLMP (regulates public land) was approved by Governor Rockefeller, and before PLUDP (regulates private land) passed NYS the legislature, there were public comments periods for both. This section of the chapter analyzes those comments to understand the fraught process of putting the TSC's vision for the park, "forever wild," and wilderness into action.

This section will give an overview of the public comments, then examine the comments on public land regulation (SLMP), then analyze the public comments on private land regulation.

Overview of Public Comments Analysis

Analysis of the public comments from the SLMP and PLUDP show that these comments largely reflect the way the literature describes public attitudes toward land management changes in the Adirondack Park during the 1970s. That literature argues that there was strong support for these measures downstate by non-residents, and a more varied response among park residents. Additionally, scholars have described this as a divide between pro-development forces, largely

associated with residents; and pro-conservation forces, mostly associated with non-residents (McMartin 2002, Schneider 1998, Terrie 2008). There was also a segment of individuals and groups that fervently opposed these land management changes since they saw them as a violation of their private property rights and home rule (Edmondson 2021, Schneider 1998, Terrie 2008). This opposition often broke out into civil disobedience and sometimes violence, marking the beginning of a movement that lasted well into the 1990s (McMartin 2002). All of these themes are well represented in the public comments data.

Nevertheless, the broad descriptions of public attitudes that make up the bulk of the literature misses much of the nuance that is evident in the public comments. For instance, a review of the public comments for PLUDP shows that a great deal of the negative comments from residents are chiefly in reference to how that individual's personal land is going to be zoned, not the entire plan or the notion of private lands being regulated to control development. In these cases, people are not focused on opposing the plan, they are instead looking for a more liberal classification of their own land. Further, the APA evaluated the public comments to PLUDP and found that a notable percentage of comments made at the meetings *inside* the park supported the plan. As the APA states:

> Speakers at the twelve hearings in the Forest Preserve counties were almost evenly divided between those favoring enactment this year of the Private Land Use Plan as strong or stronger than that proposed initially by the Agency (47%) and those who did not (53%)." APA-"A Summary" – The Park Agency Hearings

Thus, this suggests that residents were not united in opposition to PLUDP and the APA, which is what the public largely assumes and is suggested by Schneider (1998). This disrupts the common narrative that most residents opposed the APA from the beginning.

Further, through the process of building these land management plans, putting them up to public comment, and eventually formalizing them into law, we can see the process whereby the modern system of hybrid land management took shape in Adirondack Park. This process shows

us that a certain interpretation of "forever wild" and wilderness dominated; one that emphasized open space, ruggedness, and a lack of development, but at the same time, was fluid and site-specific, allowing for development when needed. To best enact this vision throughout the park, on state lands and to some extent on private lands—at least in terms of keeping space open, protecting its rural character, and protecting the public lands—there had to be some compromises to this vision. This was most evident in shoreline development, where many concessions were made to bolster development (McMartin 2002).

It will also start to become clear here how the double movement is expressed in these comments. In terms of public land, it is observed that many people are opposed to recreational development that could lead to the growth of mass tourism on the public land and neighboring land. Thus, they seek to avoid a type of market intrusion into public lands by emphasizing the management practices of "wilderness" and "forever wild." In relation to private land, there is a clear group of people that want to see pro-market development constrained by zoning laws. These arguments will come into formation in the conclusion.

Analysis of SLMP Public Comments (1972)

As the SLMP only set forth regulations on public lands, it was far less controversial than PLUDP's regulation of private lands (Edmondson 2021). Something akin to the SLMP was long seen as necessary due to the Conservation Department's (CD) and then the DEC's failure to manage the public lands in a manner fitting the 'forever wild' clause in the NYS constitution. This, however, does not mean that this plan was passed without controversy. Putting 'forever wild' into action is a challenging task, given that this concept has a multitude of meanings to different people (Terrie 2008). These disputes play out within the public comments for the SLMP.

Support for SLMP: pro-"forever wild" and wilderness sentiments

The public comments generally show approval for the APA's public land plan, which created several land classifications that determined the uses and protections specific public land parcels would receive. The following comments express this sentiment, in regard to the SLMP's protections for wilderness areas and "forever wild" standards:

> "I would like especially to express my support for the Agency's guidelines for the management of wilderness areas. The plan to manage wilderness areas in a manner consistent with the wilderness is highly commendable, and it seems reasonable and desirable to phase out all non-conforming uses within specified times. Hopefully this means that adequate means of enforcement will be also provided for." Elizabeth Pasti, Plattsburgh
>
> "We congratulate the Agency for its decision to begin that restoration by removal of non-conforming uses such as the 59.6 miles of snowmobile trails, the 600 tent platforms, telephone poles and lines, and ranger cabins, and any and all other items comprising non-conforming uses. We further endorse the proposed acquisition of properties by the state to supplement these areas." Coordinating League for Environmental Action and Renewal (CLEAR), Joan L. Sevitch Chairman
>
> "I strongly support the provision to remove from much of the state land all buildings and other structures, especially the "state" tent platforms that have despoiled so much of the lake-shore of the Preserve lands. These camps have been used exclusively by their owners and have prevented the general public from using these valuable portions of the Forest Preserve." Harold G. Klein – Plattsurgh

Like these particular statements, comments supportive of the SLMP are in favor of wilderness principles, especially those that eschew evidence of humans on land. All of these comments make the point that "non-conforming" structures like tent platforms, ranger cabins, and telephone poles, should be removed from the land. As Elizabeth Pasti states, "…to manage wilderness areas in a manner consistent with the wilderness is highly commendable." Public comments typically embraced romantic wilderness principles that promoted stronger protections for the land and deemphasized the presence of humans. Such comments show a group of respondents seeking to contain development on and market access to public land, by supporting "wilderness" and "forever wild" principles.

However, not all of this debate is exclusively tied to wilderness classification. Much of it is also tied to the "forever wild" statute in the NYS constitution which protects all forest preserve

land. “Forever wild” skews closely to wilderness standards but is technically less restrictive—legislatively—due to the SLMP, and most people supported this in the public comments. These new public land classifications gave each classification a different degree of protection under “forever wild,” with “wilderness” being the most restrictive and “wild forest” being somewhat less restrictive. Most individuals accepted and welcomed this notion for the future of the park. It was common for supporters of the SLMP to describe creating the tiered land classification system as an action that would protect the integrity of the park. Despite this, public comments are clear that individuals wanted non-conforming uses out of the potential “wild forests” areas and for those areas to embrace “forever wild,” just at a somewhat lesser degree than wilderness. For example, the tent platforms and other intrusions mentioned in comments above were also inside of potential “wild forest” areas, and it is evident those commentors wanted those intrusions excised from the forest preserve, regardless of the land’s classification.

The focus on eliminating tent platforms from public lands can be explained as counterreaction to what equates to the commodification public land. Essentially a pseudo-market working on public land. Tent platforms served to privatize parts of public land for the enjoyment of particular families and individuals at the expense of the public, by leasing small portions of public land to private citizens with the intent of letting them build a permanent tent platform which only the lessee could use. The platforms themselves were far from simple affairs, instead they were more akin to small cabins, given that they had wooden bases and walls, along with many amenities. Often those amenities included sinks, stoves, docks, and gas-powered generators (illegal). Many families held these leases through multiple generations, often seeing them as their own property. Such de facto privatization of public land boils it down to

commodity, where in this case, it is sold/rented by the government for private use. Supporters of the SLMP swiftly rejected such notions.

Introducing different degrees of protection for "forever wild" land actually solved a long running problem that vexed the conservation community and the public. Since before this system, all public land was intended to receive the highest degree of protection under "forever wild," it created problems when the state would receive land that included historic structures or something which failed to fit into the "forever wild" principle. In these cases, there would be intense debate related to whether the building or nonconforming element should be removed to fit "forever wild" standards. Even if individuals wanted a building or something else to remain, many would fight to have it removed because allowing it to legally remain would threaten the notion of "forever wild" throughout the park (Schneider 1998). With this new classification scheme this was no longer an issue because new classifications could allow for a historic building without threating the degree at which forever wild is enforced in more protected classifications like wilderness.

Light conflict: demand for stronger wilderness protections and dispute over particular classifications

The public land classifications themselves were not accepted without some conflict. There were a small number of conservation minded individuals that worried this classification scheme would generally degrade "forever wild," leaving the wilderness areas as the only wild places in the park. David Newhouse, the Chair of the Adirondack Mountain Club's (ADK) Conservation Committee at the time, expressed some of these sentiments on behalf of the club:

> "We also believe that the procured trend toward facilities development in wild forest areas is not in keeping with the wild forest character of the Preserve and urge that the Master Plan be amended to avoid seeming to recommend or authorize construction of facilities other than trails, lean-tos, pit privies, horse trails, fire rings and ranger stations. We also oppose expansion of use of motor vehicles or motorized equipment in the Preserve."

> "We commend the Agency and its staff on its excellent work and urge that the plan be submitted to the Governor without weakening changes but with some additional clarification to insure [sic] that it will not have the effect of accelerating the erosion of wildness in wild forest areas; to insure [sic] that they receive full constitutional protection."

The ADK is clear that there are certain types of development they do not want to see on public land, regardless of it being "wild forest" instead of "wilderness." They are also explicit in their concern over wild forest areas potentially not receiving "full constitutional protections" which would accelerate, "…the erosion of wildness in wild forest areas." Although these worries are uncommon in the public comments data, they do represent a central concern among a subset of conservationists that lean toward "forever wild" purists. Thus, there is a small divide among supporters of the SLMP, where some individuals and groups want more protection for the public land that the state is proposing.

Against the SLMP: anti-wilderness sentiments

The critics of the SLMP, which were somewhat rare, often criticized the wilderness designation because they saw it as inaccessible, only for the hardiest, and not for "the people." In general, the expressions in these comments were anti-wilderness, as they were against land management that did not prioritize human access and activities. The anti-wilderness comments typically came from a contingent of residents, town boards, and some sportsmen. They were angered because they believed that the wilderness designation would limit their access to public land and curtail their activities on it. There was also a class element, as it is suggested, activities common with working people of the time, like hunting and fishing, were less valued than middle class activities such as hiking and backpacking. The following comments demonstrate these themes:

> "The Board of Supervisors believes that the Master Plan has been conceived and executed without due regard for the needs of all of the people who inhabit the Park as well as the hundreds of thousands who have used it. After all, it belongs to all of the people, not just a select few" Hamilton Country Board of Supervisors

> "It is the opinion of this Town Board that the public lands in the Town of Schroon as well as in the Adirondack Park should be used for recreational purposes and enjoyed without being preserved to the extent that they are untouchable." Schroon Town Board

> "I hate to see you taking approximately 45 to 50% of all the land that the state owns for the so-called "wilderness", as you have labeled it and as you show it. In my opinion, you are taking too much for one class of people." Ed Morette of Ticonderoga at the Lake Placid Meeting 5/15/72

These comments are representative of anti-SLMP and anti-wilderness comments which see this land plan as advantaging the interests of middle and upper-class people at the expense of working-class people. These anti-wilderness comments foreshadowed the future of Adirondack land management, where it became common for a contingent of people to describe wilderness areas as discriminatory for its perceived lack of access.

In this rarer set of comments, respondents reject wilderness and its protections for land, but they also never make any comments that are supportive of opening public land to market backed forms of mass recreation and tourism. It seems like they want the public lands to keep their backcountry form, but want them to be more accessible than "wilderness areas" are, especially for hunting, fishing, and snow machines.

Analysis of PLUDP Public Comments: Private Lands

As PLUPD regulated private land in the park, it was easily the most controversial action the APA took during this period. Many Adirondack residents were shocked by these propositions given their inexperience with zoning, while developers and industry rejected any regulations that could impede their wishes and constrain the market (Edmondson 2021, McMartin 2002). The institution of this plan kicked up a firestorm that lasted decades; the beginnings of which are clearly illustrated by a particular subsection of public comments that vigorously opposed private land regulation and equated it to theft. This analysis of the public comments submitted for PLUDP identifies: (1) supportive opinions that contest anti-regulatory arguments, (2) nuanced

opinions toward the plan that were more than simple opposition or support, and (3) a contingent that expressed a vicious antagonism toward the plan.

Before we go further, it is important to quickly note that APA documents and early drafts of the PLUDP, show that the APA put in an effort to accommodate residents by giving towns the ability to build their own local development plans in line with APA standards. These attempts to appease residents failed to ease their fears and frustration and they largely declined to conduct local planning, which became a tactic to resist the APA in the future (Edmondson 2021). By refusing to take part in local planning they hoped to stymie the APA, because it would mean they would have to do all the planning.

Support for PLUDP: contesting anti-regulatory arguments

Overall, the public comments show overwhelming support for PLUDP outside of the park and moderate support within the park (around 40 percent support) according to the APA's own analysis. Thus, negative comments were not as prevalent as people typically make them out to be. Public comments supportive of the PLUDP sought to tear down arguments against private land zoning that claimed it as confiscatory and an economy killer. The following comments illustrate these arguments:

> "In summary, I can see nothing in this proposed plan which prevents us from developing all the recreational facilities we're going to be able to handle in the private sector of the Park. It may not allow for the quick, easy, huge profits which some people have been hoping for, but in the long run we'll all be better off to have the protection which this plan can provide instead. And to delay its implementation, in my opinion, only will slow up the good development which we all want to see come to the Adirondacks" Mrs. James E. Lamy - Saranac Lake

> "I submit that there is nothing in the Plan that will deter development in the Adirondacks. The Plan encourages development in the very areas throughout the Park where hopefully it will be least apt to injure or waste the natural resources that residents and non-residents alike recognize as our most important and treasured Adirondack assets…The Land is Designed to be Totally Responsive to Local Desires and Needs" Statement of Arthur V. Savage

> "The economic impact of continued non-planning is as frightening to me as the Agency Plan is to others. Without the Plan's meaningful controls the value of all land will fall as the undesirable and unsightly development spread." James Bailey – Plattsburgh

> "We like the proposed Agency plan because it maintains the value and character of the people's asset, the State owned Forest Preserve land within the Park. Permitting intensive development of private lands near "Forever Wild" state land would enrich the large landowner at the people's expense by lowering the value of neighboring State land. We want lumber companies to keep on lumbering selective, rather than surrender to the economic pressures of high taxes and land speculators. The time has long since passed when our State could afford uncontrolled speculative development of its best natural mountain and lake resource. The Adirondack Park Agency has truly represented all the people of the State in proposing safeguards for the natural resources of the Park." Statement of Frederick K. Hackett President of the ADK 1/15/73

These comments emphasize that the institution of PLUPD will allow for "good development" that will benefit the Adirondack Park economically and protect the park's public lands. For this contingent, regulation is the key to the park's future, allowing for rural and wild landscape. On the whole, supportive comments embraced the plan and countered anti-PLUPD arguments.

This focus on advocating for regulation demonstrates a Polanyian countermovement. For this group of people, the threat of market in the guise of almost regulation free development, constituted a serious threat to the park's environment and their way of life, which compelled them to support action against it. To constrain the market's negative effects on the park, they sought regulations that would ease the potential harms of development on the park's land and people. Essentially, this groups wanted the market firmly embedded into the socio-political sphere. They believed this would ultimately be best for the environment and the long-term economy of the park.

Complicated opinions

Many of the negative PLUDP comments are more nuanced than simple denunciations of PLUDP and the APA. In these cases, people and towns were looking to have their land, or the outskirts of their town, classified more liberally than the APA proposed. In rare cases, there were calls for more protection, as some towns desired better rules to protect the character of their land. To illustrate, the town of Wilmington wanted one of their corridors to be open to the more permissive "moderate intensity use" category and the town of Franklin sought a more development friendly classification because they argued that the APA's proposed classification

would impose an "unjust [economic] hardship." Similarly, the Raquette Lakes Boys Club desired a more liberal land classification to make it easier expand their facilities in the future. The Crater Club, conversely, worried that the "moderate intensity use" classification of land near them would allow the area to develop, "in a manner that would change the character of the area [rural]." These types of comments are common among anti-PLUDP comments, illustrating that they are not all simply wholesale attacks on the APA as the literature would have one expect. In these comments, therefore, we see a variety of pro-market sentiments mixed with protectionist sentiments, sometimes in the same comments.

Even though there is a great deal of nuance within the anti-PLUDP comments and a significant number of comments in the park that supported the APA, it is imperative to recognize that almost all the Adirondack towns and Adirondack politicians opposed PLUDP in some way. There was a diversity of opinions within the Adirondack Park but almost all of the representatives from local governments challenged the regulation of private land. This partially explains why Adirondack residents are so often described anti-conservation and anti-regulation. It is also due to a vocal contingent of people that opposed private land regulation within the park; a party that is well represented in the public comments.

Anti-PLUDP comments: strong opposition

The strongest oppositional comments came from a small group of residents, property rights groups, and businesses—developers and extraction—that were opposed to anything which would limit how they could use private land. Many were mainly concerned that PLUDP would stifle economic progress in the Adirondacks, leaving the region economically depressed. The most extreme comments consider PLUDP to be a violation of the people's constitutional rights, confiscatory, the same as seizure without compensation, a dictatorial action, and a land grab.

These critical comments also referred to residents as an oppressed group of people analogous to minorities. The following comments demonstrate some of these themes:

> "Contrary to the Sierra Club and the other do gooders as published in this notorious report - - - We here in the Adirondack Park can elect qualified people to manage our own Villages Towns and Countys [sic]. I also take exception to the act that were [sic] Idiots, I think some kind of Lame brain wrote this report. I also hope that Mr. Henry L. Dimond - the self anointed disciple of something never gets to be Governor or Senator of this Great State or the whole country could wind up in a Land Grab." John M. Spark -- NYC meeting

> "We have had several interesting experiences with members of such societies as the Adirondack Mt. Club, the Sierra Club, and other well organized and financed groups who would like to bring everything here to a screeching halt and return us all to the days of the cave man. Their purist concepts have prevailed with you on state owned lands, and no doubt you enjoy a marvelous rapport with them. However, this is not state land, you are talking about. This is private land. What right do these carpetbaggers have, who make up less than 1% of the population, to tell us what we may or may not do on our own private land?...What you propose here will lower our land values, make economic growth impossible, and tax us into oblivion. If this plan goes through as it is now, you might give serious consideration to the idea of putting the human population of the Adirondacks on the endangered species list. We deserve as much protection as any other form of life, and I might add that the vast majority of us have no intention of becoming extinct."
> Carol Gregou - Schroon Lake

> "The Schroon Taxpayers Association, Inc. cannot stand by and watch the State infringe upon the constitutional rights of its members and their neighbors, regardless of the ideals espoused to justify the illegal means. We will not relax until every unconscionable portion of The Plan had been deleted or made good. We will not relax until every vestige of subterfuge and conspiracy to seize our lands is laid to rest. We will not relax until justice is done. We will fight." Brian B. Turner -- President of Schroon Taxpayers Association

These comments which demeaned state employees, equated Adirondack Park residents to endangered species due to the imposition of regulations, and accused the state of seizing lands, are the beginnings of a movement that became very vocal during and after PLUDP was passed. They often protested, took part in civil disobedience, and sometimes resorted to violence and arson (McMartin 2002, Terrie 2008). This movement only became more intense, powerful, and disruptive over time. In the late 1980s and early 1990s they connected with the growing property rights movement, which intensified their brazenness via legal challenges and occasionally, violence; including burning down the barn of an APA board member (McMartin 2002). Only in the late 1990s and early 2000s did this start to deescalate, though there is still palpable tension.

Discussion and Summary

To review, the analysis shows that the TSC had strict vision of wilderness and "forever wild" that was also dynamic and site specific, where the standards of wilderness and "forever wild" could shift depending on desired uses of the area, its ecology, and its history. To illustrate, in the case of trailless peaks, the TSC wanted to keep these peaks as wild as possible. Doing so would create pockets of wildness that were wilder than the rest of the "wilderness." However, the TSC knew such a purist approach to wilderness could not apply to most places. In fact, they were well aware that the concept of wilderness is subjective, and that those "purer" spaces are only one grade in the wilderness spectrum. The TSC accepted that there would have to be recreational development and planning even in their wilderness areas, though they wanted to get rid of unnecessary traces of humans.

The examination of the public comments shows one process of putting the TSC's recommendations into action. The comments on public land regulation (SLMP) showed that most people were supportive of the regulations, while some wanted more protection for the land, and others were resolutely anti-wilderness. Analyzing the public comments on private land regulation (PLUDP) demonstrates that a large group of people inside and outside of the park supported the regulation for numerous reasons, including protecting the park's rural character. Others had complicated opinions and sought more liberal classifications for their land or their town's land. There was also a group that virulently opposed private land regulation, seeing it as a land grab, and a violation of "home rule" and their constitutional rights.

This returns us to the paper's primary question: how did this system of hybrid land management develop in the Adirondack Park? The analysis answers one dimension of this question by showing that the formation of the modern land management system was dominated by a particular interpretation of "forever wild" and wilderness, which was both strict and

flexible. Approaching land management in this manner firmly turned the park away from any chance of it implementing a land management system that prioritizes intensive recreational development in the shape of accessibility and amenity availability. Instead, the actions of the TSC and APA took the park in a direction that emphasizes the backcountry and wild aesthetic that they and most of the public saw fitting for a park under the protection of "forever wild."

This study also details how this hybrid land management system came into being by showing how the public supported or contested these changes via the analysis of public comments from the different land plans. Opponents of this new direction of land management often used utilitarianism and market logics to contest these changes, while supporters saw land as something beyond its monetary value. Challengers of this pathway did win some concessions but supporters of "forever wild" and wilderness largely won out. Thus, this paper illustrates how the TSC came to its strict but dynamic interpretations of "forever wild" and wilderness that shapes the park today, while highlighting part of the public reaction to these changes.

In terms of wilderness, the TSC set the mold for the park to be directed by a definition of wilderness that holds many romanticized characteristics of wilderness that valorize pristine nature, solitude, ruggedness, and to some extent, human absence. However, the TSC, then the APA, were keenly aware that such characteristics were largely social constructions. They knew no part of the park was "pristine" in the romantic sense and that these romantic understandings of nature are largely subjective. This is why their interpretation of wilderness became dynamic and site specific, allowing for certain types of recreational development and degrees of wilderness when deemed necessary.

"Forever wild" was constructed so that it would be applied in degrees throughout the park, depending on the land classification. Wilderness became the most protective degree on

"forever wild's" much wider scale, which allowed for far more recreational development on certain parcels of land depending on that land's natural characteristics and its history of use. Therefore, both wilderness and "forever wild" kept strict principles but balanced them with an openness that allowed for site-specific needs, creating different degrees of both.

It is key to remember that even though they proposed a tiered classification system, wilderness was the star of the TSC's proposed land classification system. Their documents clearly showed that this was one of their main foci for the public land, with numerous documents dedicated to what lands would become designated as wilderness and how it should be managed. Wilderness won out to take up almost half of the public lands in the park. For their wilderness classification, they knew that no land is pristine in the sense that it is free from the human touch, much like Howard Zahniser and others who worked on the 1964 Wilderness Act (Sowards 2022). In fact, the TSC must have been deeply influenced by the Wilderness Act, given they collected many documents that detailed that system of land classification. Much in line with the purveyors of the Wilderness Act, the TSC knew if they included such purist standards of wilderness, no land could be considered as such. So, even though the TSC included many romantic principles in their interpretation of wilderness they kept their definitions of it flexible and site-specific.

The changes to "forever wild" and the implementation of official wilderness areas into the park shaped the formation of its hybrid land management system. These changes, however, did not go uncontested. Analyzing the public comments for the land plans shows one dimension of the public reaction to the changes the APA and state made to the park, which were greatly influenced by TSC. The regulation of the park's private land was aggressively opposed by a contingent of people that saw it as a violation of "home rule"—the right for local areas to

oversee their own property. To them any regulation of private land was analogous to the seizure of private property, the killing of jobs, a drain on property values, and an economy killer. These comments, nonetheless, were only one group of people that did not represent the majority. Most of the comments either openly supported the plan or were somewhere in between because they did not openly oppose the regulation of private land, but they had concerns about specific parcels of land, usually their own. Though private lands are not protected by "forever wild," the TSC and APA saw this type of regulation as necessary to further protect "forever wild" on the neighboring public lands and to retain the rural quality of the park.

The changes proposed to public land management by the SLMP found even more support in the public comments. As Edmondson (2021) argues, there was far less controversy over land management changes for the public land than there was for the private land. That is largely true, but it should not undermine that there were individuals that opposed these public land plans that favored "forever wild" and wilderness, although in the minority. There was a contingent of comments from individuals and organizations that rallied against wilderness, seeing it as only for elite recreationalists, while disadvantaging the endeavors of working-class people, like hunting, fishing, and motorized sports. On the other hand, there are a series of comments that sought stronger "forever wild" protections than those proposed by the APA because they feared that having multiple land classifications would leave only wilderness areas as truly wild. Nonetheless, most of the public comments supported the SLMP and saw it as the best way to enshrine "forever wild" and wilderness principles in the park's management.

The TSC molded much the modern hybrid land management system in the Adirondack Park with their strict but dynamic interpretations of "forever wild" and wilderness that was implemented by the APA. This produced a park that rejected intense recreational development,

housing, and commercial development. Yet, it also formed a park that allowed for development and more intense recreational management when needed, especially to protect the park's natural resources.

Conclusion

This study brings two bodies of theory and literature into conversation with each other, theories of wilderness and Polanyi's theory of the double movement and embeddedness to argue that in the creation of the Adirondacks, conceptualizations of wilderness were deployed to justify constraining and embedding market forces.

A Brief Application of Wilderness Related Theories to the TSC

The TSC's work on the development of the "wilderness" classification and its interpretation illustrates Cronon's (1995) arguments about the historical and cultural construction of wilderness. This also ties partly into Smith's production of nature approach, in that we can think of "wilderness" as being produced by socio-nature relationships. As a management category, it is clear wilderness is constructed through political and social decisions. That is at work in the TSC's files, as the documents show the work they went through to decide what would and what would *not* be considered wilderness. Even when thinking of "wilderness" beyond a management classification, the TSC made several remarks indicating that wilderness is a subjective thing, not something with natural and unambiguous characteristics that everyone agrees on. Therefore, the work of the TSC demonstrates how "wilderness" is a historical and cultural classification, since it shows how choices have to be made to determine what wilderness is and how it is managed, and even those choices are flexible and change over time. From this view, "wilderness" is produced by socio-nature relations because (1) management decisions will

physically shape the land and how people interact with it, and (2) human interaction with the land in the past shaped the land before the "wilderness" classification.

Malm's (2018) dynamic conceptualization of wilderness largely fits with how the TSC understood and built the classification of wilderness. As the analysis shows, the TSC's vision of wilderness had romantic leanings, but it was also always dynamic in a manner that could adjust for site specific conditions. To illustrate: (1) the TSC understood that wilderness standards are often subjective or relative, and (2) they knew that they were creating wilderness areas by re-wilding (using today's terminology) particular spaces, not by simply preserving pristine spaces unaffected by humans. Malm's relative sense of wilderness frames the TSC's understanding of wilderness well because it explains wilderness as something which exists in degrees; matching with the way they treated the wilderness designation and the way they classified other "forever wild" state lands. Specifically, "wilderness areas" had different degrees of wildness within them by keeping certain peaks trailless, and the new classification system for public land created different degrees of wild for each of the classifications.

A Polanyian Application

Countermovements

The work of the TSC, then the passing of land management plans by the APA, are the products of a Polyanian (2001/1944) double movement. This is observable for both private and public land. A general countermovement formed that demanded the park remain rural and wild. For private land, the countermovement formed to combat market driven development that threatened the rural landscape. For public land, a countermovement formed to protect the wild character of the land from intense recreational development and market driven mass tourism that was becoming popular at the time.

To describe the countermovement focused on private in more detail: before density zoning was introduced by PLUDP, market forces had few restrictions on the park's private land. The market's freedom to extract natural resources and produce housing unabated threatened the park's rural character. Thus, the private lands of the Adirondacks were deeply commodified. In response to the potential and actual damage caused by this commodification, there were calls to protect the park (countermovement), which led to the creation of the TSC, then the APA, and lastly, PLUDP. This did not release the market's hold over the private lands of the park since development is still allowed within certain bounds and timber extraction faces only loose limits, but this markedly changed the power the market by placing restrictions on it. The structure of the Adirondack Park was greatly changed with the regulation of private land.

To look at the countermovement centered on the protection of public land: before the SLMP, public land was threatened by recreational development and the possibility of commercialized infrastructure inside and just outside of these lands. Given that the park was seen as wild, people generally did *not* want intense recreational development (e.g., easy access spots by road, overbuilt trails, etc.) that supports mass tourism, which aruably commodifies the land by proxy. Individuals also feared the development of infrastructure run by private business, like visitor's centers, restaurants, and hotels, that are common in national parks. In response to this direct and indirect commodification, a countermovement formed to keep the public land wild.

How the double movement constrained the market

This section of the chapter will argue that these countermovements were successful at constraining the market, and that led to the lands of the park being more protected from the market than most lands outside of the park. Special attention will be paid to how this came about.

The public lands of the park have long been protected from extraction, and after the institution of the stronger public land regulation (SLMP) in the 1970s, it became even more protected, by largely restricting intense commercial recreational activity. Before private land regulation (PLUDP) in the park, there was little to protect private land from the market, but after these regulations were passed, development was restricted to protect the rural character and environment of the park. As will be elaborated on, this shows that the park is protected from the forces the market in ways other lands typically are not, an illustration of Polanyi's conceptualization of the double movement and the ways in which the market is embedded within social and political systems.

Before the TSC, the Adirondack Park was organized by a structure that largely removed the public lands from capitalist exploitation, at least in terms of resource extraction, and left the private lands to the market's desires. The public lands were protected constitutionally by "forever wild," but its interpretation was subject to many conflicts over what exactly "forever wild" meant in practice for the management of the public land. One steadfast aspect of "forever wild" that stood almost without serious violation and challenge was its prohibition on logging (Terrie 2008). However, this take on "forever wild" did little to protect the public land from market backed mass recreation and tourism that was taking off during the 1960s on public land across the US. Infrastructure development (often privately run) inside the public lands and directly outside them threatened the wildness of public land. The potential for this to develop further was part of the reason the national park proposal was soundly rejected (Edmondson 2021, Terrie 2008). The formation of TSC was in part a reaction to a countermovement of people that wanted to see the park retain its wildness, in the face of recreational development.

As detailed above, the private lands of the park were quite open to different forms of capitalist exploitation before the land management changes of the 1970s that were guided by the TSC. Much of these lands were unregulated and when they were, it was only by local ordinances. Not that development always went unchallenged, but there was little to legally restrain housing development and resource extraction. It was exactly this lack of restraints, and the looming threat of major housing developments that partly sparked the formation of the TSC.

The TSC had to work from this starting with the goal of better protecting the park. This study shows that, at least in part, the TSC and APA further limited the power the market in the Adirondack Park with the implementation of its modern hybrid land management system. It further empowered "forever wild" to safeguard public land and introduced the "wilderness" land classification to extend even greater protections to certain parcels of land. The restrictions on the market over private land are even clearer. Development throughout the park became regulated. Large housing developments cannot be built without approval. Housing can only be so dense, depending on the ecology of the area. These limits on the market are not radical, but they are a big change from how the market worked before this land regulation. It is important to consider more deeply how these changes to "forever wild" and private land regulation affected capitalist interests and in what degrees.

"Forever wild" long protected the public lands of the park from most capitalist interests. The TSC and APA only strengthened those protections by implementing a stringent but flexible interpretation of both "forever wild" and wilderness. Timber and other forms of extraction remained out of capital's reach in the public lands. The SLMP takes the public lands further away from the grasp of the market by rejecting intensive recreational development that often offers deeply commodified experiences, including hotels on public land, viewing structures,

motorized tours, and so forth. The plans set by the TSC and put into law by the APA, excised many forms of intensive recreational development that were forming and stopped new ones from arising. This is an example of a double movement where the state moved to constrain the market's power over private land and public land in the Adirondack Park.

None of this is to say that SLMP has not allowed for some intensive development. It has. Its classification system has enabled some more intensive forms of recreational development when needed or demanded, but nothing at the level or scale that is evident in many national parks and recreational areas. The public lands of the park have a certain freedom from the market and commodification. As Malm (2018) argues, such spaces are fiercely desired by capital, and freeing them from its grasp, even partially, is an act against capitalism. From the Polanyian (2001/1944) angle, parks have been further removed from the market, freeing them from the damage of direct commodification that the market so often inflicts on them. The changes to the public land management further drove these lands away from the power of the market by taking a path away from mass tourism and recreation.

It is also necessary to ask how conceptualizations of wilderness influenced these structural changes to the Adirondack Park's public lands. The appreciation of the park as less developed and wild site has long inhabited people's imagination of the landscape. Most people that used the park went there to experience the backcountry to hike, backpack, fish, and hunt. This is one of the main reasons the national park proposal for the Adirondack Park failed; people did not want such a tamed experience of the land that would be offered by a national park. As the analysis of the public comments shows, most supported this continued vision and did so in ways that measured land beyond its market value. Individuals and groups strongly supported "forever wild," which protected the public land from extraction and intensive recreational development.

These attitudes supported and now maintain these land management changes that remade the structure of the Adirondack Park.

Pro-wilderness and "forever wild" attitudes enabled and retained this structural change to the park that lessened the commodification of private land, as gleaned from the public comments, are sentiments that again see land as more than just its market worth. Individuals that hold these attitudes assert that such regulations will protect the private land as well as the public land by protecting the land near its boundaries. Most interestingly, many argue that such regulation will actually protect the economy of the park by keeping away unwanted sprawl that will ruin the rural and wild character of the park that it depends on to attract visitors and new residents. To them, unchecked development will cause land values to plummet. In many ways these partially economic minded attitudes make sense since they are supporting a plan that only puts some restrictions on capital. The regulation of private lands does not serve to de-commodify all land, it instead focuses development into certain areas while restricting it in others, to protect the land *and* the economy. Thus, the structural changes that regulate the private land of the park are supported by attitudes that partially value land beyond its productive use while also aiming to use such protections to strengthen the economy.

The structure of the park—policies and land classification—was changed with the guidance of the TSC's work. This wove a new structure that put more limitations on capitalism inside of the park. It made it even harder for the public lands to be subject to the forces of commodification and it placed limits on the commodification of private land throughout the Adirondacks. Attitudes that value land beyond its productive worth support and maintain this structure on the public lands. For the private land, its structure of management is maintained by

attitudes which value land for its intrinsic qualities and for its economic potential. The point here is to maintain charismatic, wild landscapes while still allowing for economic development.

To reflect on these conclusions, public lands have long had a troubled relationship with capitalism. Many public lands in the United States are directly mired in commodification, given that they are spaces where productive activities like extraction and herding take place. However, many other public lands forbid such productive activities and they instead have been established to forward conservation and recreation. The public lands of the Adirondack Park fall into this category. For these types of public lands, it is more difficult to ascertain if they are de-commodified spaces that are somewhat released from market logics.

For the Adirondack Park, it is clear that its public lands have some independence from the market since it is free from extraction and many of the most intensive forms of recreational development. The question is how free is it from the market and to what degree? How successful was the double movement in constraining the market? Though, intensive recreation is uncommon in the park's public lands, more subdued forms of recreation like hiking, backpacking, climbing, fishing, and hunting do have commodified aspects to them. To illustrate, these types of recreation all have guiding services that take people out to experience these activities and/or teach people how to properly engage in them. The public lands support these commodified experiences. Further, the public lands themselves are advertised and used to draw in nature tourists that will spend money in town on gear, supplies, food, and lodging. It is difficult to argue that these factors directly commodify the public lands, but they do clearly *support* other forms of commodification. The public lands of the Adirondacks, and lands like them, do have some removal from capital and can offer a space where one can be free of its

strictures. However, these lands have a clear place in capitalism since they support other capitalist activities.

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Chapter II: Visons of Wilderness among Adirondack Stakeholders

Introduction

The following chapter analyzes how a group of recreation, conservation, and/or environmentally aligned individuals envision wilderness within the context of the Adirondack Park. Intensive interviewing is used to explore the respondents' understandings of wilderness and to assess how they think about wilderness management issues like high-use and trail maintenance. The participants sometimes discuss legal wilderness areas outside of the Adirondack Park and areas they imagine as wilderness but without the legal status. Nevertheless, the respondents primarily focus on wilderness and wild areas in the Adirondack Park, most often the High Peaks Wilderness Area, which is regularly considered the premiere wilderness area of the northeast.

Wilderness is a complex term with a long history that has a multitude of meanings depending on time, culture, and one's background (see Vannini and Vannini 2016). In the West, the accepted story of wilderness is that the concept went from describing "unsettled" lands as dangerous and unproductive, to describing those same lands as places of sublime beauty that are meant to be cherished and preserved (Nash 2001). This transition in understanding came during the romantic period, where the idea of romantic nature that emphasizes "pristine" nature/landscapes that would be despoiled by human settlement, came to dominate popular understanding of wilderness (Cronon 1995, Nash 2001). Popular imagination and budding public land management eventually came to reflect this way of thinking. However, moves toward eco-centric perspectives of the environment and, wilderness debates that point out the flaws in the concept of wilderness (see Callicott and Nelson 1998, Nelson and Callicott 2008b), have led

individuals and organizations to imagine wilderness differently from romantic notions or dismiss the term completely.

Regardless, it is key to understand how individuals envision wilderness because it can shape how legal wilderness areas and other wild lands are managed and treated. This is important in the Adirondack Park because there have long been conflicts over the designation and management of wilderness areas (see McMartin 2002, Terrie 2008). Theoretically, it is useful to see how these visions of wilderness match up and diverge from modern wilderness theory, so we can better dial in our theories to reflect current thinking on wilderness.

Analysis of the respondents' visions of wilderness shows three major conclusions: (1) most participants reject the idea that wilderness should be defined by romantic wilderness ideals that stress pristine nature and human absence; (2) visions of wilderness, even among a group of similar individuals, are often competing and contradictory; and (3) these contradictory and competing of visions of wilderness do loosely align in agreeing that wilderness should be a space where humans are non-dominant, though the shape of that is up to debate. This further shows how dynamic of a concept wilderness is and due to this fluidity shows that conflict over how to view and manage is inevitable, at least to some degree. That is fitting with the history of public lands and wilderness management in the United States as democracy increasingly brings more voices to the table (Sowards 2022). However, it also shows that there might be a center of which there is some agreement where we may focus.

Literature Review

Theories of Wilderness

There are numerous ways to understand what wilderness is (materially), what it means (culturally/ideologically), and what it produces (a place for recreation/a place of ecosystems). In

the 19th century, Westerners went from seeing wilderness as a barren foreboding landscape to seeing it as a romantic space where individuals could escape the drudgery of day to day life (Nash 2001). In this frame, wilderness came to be known for its ability to provide spiritual and religious fulfillment through the experience of its sublime grandeur, while also being a place to practice rugged individualism (Cronon 1995, Lane 2014, Nash 2001). Under this conceptualization of wilderness, the key property of wilderness is its separation from the human world. This is why romanticized understandings of wilderness and many legal definitions of wilderness define it as land that is free from human influence and that maintains its pristine character. However, that focus on human absence and pristine nature has served to erase indigenous history and expropriation from the land. Such a mindset has produced land management systems, often dubbed as fortress conservation, which further displaces indigenous peoples from their ancestral land (Harmon 1987, Hermer 2002, Roth 2008).

William Cronon (1995), historian and the most prominent critic of this romanticized definition of wilderness, argues that there is nothing pristine or natural about wilderness. The entire notion of wilderness is instead a historical and cultural construction. It is a cultural ideal because there is no such thing as untouched pristine land since humans shaped these lands in the past and continue to do so in the present. Thus, the way wilderness is imagined has no connection to the material reality of the environment. The entire concept of wilderness is a romantic and elite ideal that separates humans from nature and creates a space for affluent tourists. Cronon (1995) nevertheless, argues that the ideals of wilderness retain worth because they give value to the nonhuman world.

Cronon's work is at the center of constructionist understandings of wilderness. Theories on wilderness can broadly be broken down into four categories: constructionist, realist, Marxist, and assemblage.

The constructionists (see Baldwin 2009, Castree 2005, Castree and Braun 1998, Greig and Whillans 1998, Hodgins 1998, Plumwood 1998, Sandilands 2005) broadly hold with Cronon's dictums that claim wilderness is a sociohistorical construction bearing little resemblance to the material reality of places that we consider "wilderness." All of these categories of wilderness, including the constructionists, have many different ways of considering wilderness within their paradigm. For example, many but not all constructionists hold that wilderness is a harmful concept, that exemplifies colonialism and racism (Braun 2002, Nelson and Callicott 2008a).

On the other hand, realist[1] or materialist perspectives on wilderness are largely eco and biocentric, emphasizing the environmental benefits of areas where there is little human presence (see Clapp 2004, Lewis 2007, Moore 2014). For most realists, wilderness is a real material thing that is expressed in undeveloped spaces with flourishing ecosystems. For some within this viewpoint, wilderness is a place for hope and possibility, that opposes "business plans that are hideous and cruel" (Moore 2014).

Branching from the realist perspectives is the Marxist viewpoint on wilderness, as conveyed by Andreas Malm (2018), which is of course, a materialist orientation. From this perspective, wilderness is land that is somewhat free from the grasp of capitalists, who seek to dominate and exploit it to increase production. Thus, conserving land protects it from the jaws of capital. Another key point for Malm (2018) is that there is no "absolute" wilderness, but some

[1] It is worth noting, some, like Vannini and Vannini (2016), primarily see realist perspectives as viewpoints that defend traditional views on wilderness that eschew constructionist challenges.

areas are wilder than others and thus, from this point of view wilderness is relative and comes in degrees.

Lastly, assemblage perspectives try to reconcile the gap between realism and constructionism. For assemblage-ists, like Vannini and Vannini (2016), wilderness is best thought of as a meshwork where, humans and the material world intertwine. Wilderness from this viewpoint, is a relational achievement between human meaning and the material world.

Attitudes Toward Wilderness

Studies that examine attitudes toward wilderness are relatively rare in comparison to studies that look at general environmental attitudes toward parks, recreation, and land use. There are a few general studies about attitudes toward wilderness (Cordell, Tarrant and Bergstrom 1998, Cordell, Tarrant and Green 2003, Rudzitis and Johansen 1991), yet many of these studies are focused on looking at the viewpoints of residents that live near a wilderness area or a proposed one (Bauer, Vasile and Mondini 2018, Durrant and Shumway 2004, Lutz, Simpson-Housley and Deman 1999). These studies are easier to conduct in the US than they are in Europe, because unlike the in US, Europe has few legally designated wilderness areas with clear definitions. Without these clear conceptualizations of wilderness the term often becomes nebulous in survey research (Bauer and von Atzigen 2019).

To backtrack for a moment, as suggested, most of these studies on attitudes toward wilderness are housed within the environmental attitudes literature. Thus, it is important to first grasp the basic findings of that larger field to contextualize the wilderness literature. Most of this research looks at how different socio-demographic factors influence the way individuals think about the environment, specifically whether those attitudes are utilitarian or eco-centric/biocentric.

For example, cultural background has been shown to predict these views, with rural people being more likely to view nature/the environment in utilitarian terms (Buijs, Elands and Langers 2009, Fox and Xu 2017, Kloek, Buijs, Boersema et al. 2018). To narrow that down further, people with more functional ties to the land, like farmers and livestock owners, have utilitarian attitudes toward nature and prefer arcadian (pastoral) landscapes to wild ones (Fox and Xu 2017). From these same studies, it is clear that urban people prefer wilder landscapes and are more eco-centric than rural people (Buijs et al. 2009, Fox and Xu 2017). Further, political affiliation is a consistent predictor of these attitudes as well, which Cope, Muirbrook, Park et al. (2023) confirm in their study of rural towns in Utah. Unsurprisingly, conservative affiliations predict anti-environmental attitudes while liberal affiliations environmental views.

Returning to studies directly on wilderness, a survey of 1900 Americans on their wilderness attitudes, conducted by Cordell et al. (1998), found that the majority of respondents had positive attitudes toward wilderness and would prefer more wilderness to be protected by the state. In a follow up study, Cordell et al. (2003) took a 1994 national survey and compared it to data from 2000 with a smaller sample (but same approach) and found that a somewhat smaller group of people thought wilderness areas were too small (52 percent), and that Easterners, younger people, white people, and urbanites wanted larger protected wilderness areas. Overall, this research shows that people like protected wilderness in the US, but there are divisions based on socio-demographic factors, like the wider environmental attitudes studies.

Among these divisions, rural people have a higher threshold for what they consider wilderness, while urbanites are more likely to consider impacted areas as wilderness (Lutz et al. 1999). Rural people are also less inclined to like wilderness than other categories of people. Rudzitis and Johansen (1991) found that in counties with wilderness areas, locals are less

positive about wilderness than people that newly moved into the area. Similarly, in a random sample of people in small south-eastern Utah counties, Durrant and Shumway (2004) found that these residents were very negative about possible new wilderness areas. Closing out this theme, a study based in the south-Western Carpathian Mountains of Romania, found that locals (rural) were critical of planned wilderness areas in National Parks because they incorrectly thought these designations would come with more restrictions (Bauer et al. 2018).

In a qualitative study on the way individuals understand wilderness in the Adirondack Park, Vidon, Rickly and Knudsen (2018) interviewed 43 nature tourists. The study finds that nature tourists intellectually understand that the land is *not* some pristine, authentic idea that we see in the romantic fantasies of wilderness. Nevertheless, they find their experiences in "wilderness" to be meaningful, and an experience worth seeking. Wilderness is thus a state of mind for these respondents. Vidon et al. (2018) situate these observations in Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum, where wilderness is a third level simulacrum, making it hyperreal. For the authors it is also hypernatural because it simulates the desire for pure wilderness in a manner that actual nature is unable to.

Case Background

The Adirondack Park is an approximately six-million-acre park in northern NYS that is made up of public land, private land, and easement land. In 1885 certain state land was set aside and acquired to form a "forest preserve," that was protected by a "forever wild" statute that preserved it from logging. Later, in 1892, that forest preserve land and the larger surrounding area were turned into the Adirondack Park. Then, in 1894 the Adirondack Park and the "forever wild" statute were written into the NYS constitution, thus the park and "forever wild" became constitutionally protected (Schneider 1998, Terrie 2008). The park was primarily formed to

protect the waterways of the area because downstate industries were dependent on the quality of those waters which affected key structures and waterways like the Erie Canal and Hudson River; all of which were threatened by the timber industry's plunder of the Adirondacks (Graham Jr. 1978, Terrie 2008).

What is unique about the Adirondack Park is its system of hybrid land management, which encompasses and regulates both public and private land. The park is managed by Adirondack Park Agency (APA) and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). APA sets regulation and policy for the entire park, whereas the DEC manages and sets plans for the public lands, within the stipulations of the APA. The public land to this day classified as "forest perverse" land and is commonly referred to as such by the state and the public. In the 1970s the APA was formed and created different classifications for the public lands with differing levels of protections; there are many classifications, but most lands are either classified as the less restricted, "wild forest" or the most restricted, "wilderness." Although all forest preserve lands are protected by "forever wild," some, like "wilderness" have more protection than others. At this time the park also instituted parkwide regulations on private land development in the park to preserve its rural character (McMartin 2002, Terrie 2008).

The wilderness designation in the Adirondack Park is modeled after the 1964 Wilderness Act (McMartin 2002). Before the APA instituted the State Land Master Plan (SLMP) that set new regulations on the forest preserve, there were only de facto wilderness areas in the park. In the 1950s and early 1960s the NYS Joint Legislative Committee on Natural Resources (JLCNR) had an intensive land survey conducted where they identified 16 areas worthy of becoming wilderness, while also documenting threats to their wilderness quality. Due to conflict with the Conservation Department (CD) (forerunner of the DEC), which was made up of traditional

foresters and game managers, the land was not turned into official wilderness. However, the CD started treating those areas as de facto wildernesses, to some extent. These surveys helped form the work the APA used to pick areas to classify as wilderness.

Methodology

Intensive interviewing was used to examine visions of wilderness from Adirondack Park stakeholders. Interviewees were asked about their personal histories, their experiences in the Adirondack Park, how they feel about land management in the park, and what they think about overcrowding in the park, in relation to wilderness. The participants were also asked direct questions pertaining to how they understand wilderness, what they think are the tangible and intangible qualities of wilderness, how they understand the history of wilderness including indigenous history in these lands, how wilderness should be managed, and what they consider wilderness to be. These intensive interviews ranged from 20 to 90 minutes in length and averaged around 40 minutes. All interviews were conducted virtually or by telephone due to the COVID 19 pandemic. In total, 29 interviews were conducted until saturation was met and they were completed between 2019 and 2021.

Every individual in the sample is a recreator of some kind, whether that be a hiker, climber, skier, paddler, or a participant in a combination of these activities. The respondents often have leadership positions in recreational clubs, and/or are leaders or employees in major recreational, conservation, and/or environmental organizations. There are also conservation social scientists, conservation scientists, and ecologists among the interviewees who work for these groups. Thus, the sample includes people that act as: summit stewards, trail builders and maintainers, guidebook writers, education directors of recreational organizations, board members

of conservation and environmental groups, officers in recreational clubs, business owners with businesses related to recreation, mountain guides, and so forth.

Nine of the participants identify as female, while 20 identify as male[2], and 18 of the participants are residents of the park, 11 live outside the park. Given the characteristics of the interviewees, the sample is limited to individuals that are deeply involved in outdoor pursuits, conservation, and environmentalism. This means that the participants have a deep knowledge and experience of the wild and wilderness in terms of academic thought, policy, and personal experience. These are key informant interviews that allow me to collect data from respondents that are knowledgeable about the topic and have social and often, power of decision making in different organizations (Gilchrist 1992, USAID 1996)

Interviewing began by contacting outdoor groups around Syracuse and Albany NYS. After a few interviews through those groups, with their help, I made contact with outdoor and conservation groups based in or directly involved with the Adirondack Park. From there I continued to use snowball sampling and cold emailing to complete the interviewing. I ended the interviewing when it stopped producing new information. Though I principally focused my interviewing on finding people from particular groups and organizations, I only used this as a tactic to find participants from different background; participants were only interviewed about their personal views, not the outlooks of their organizations or groups.

The interviews were transcribed then coded for themes in NVivo. For the analysis of the interviews, I used the constant comparative method of coding by following Charmaz's (2014) frame of first conducting initial coding; followed by focused coding that is built out of that initial wave of coding. During the initial coding I went line by line through the data and assigned

[2] The gender imbalance in sampling is likely of product of surveying my focus on groups that have traditionally been dominated by men.

provisional and comparative codes, which was around 35 codes. Next, the focused coding took the most important and analytical codes from the initial coding then used them to categorize the data. These resulting codes, numbering about ten, allowed me to compare the respondents of visions of wilderness to each other. For example, I was able to compare codes like, “people belong in wilderness,” “against romantic ideas of wilderness,” and “doubts about wilderness,” against each other to find what matches and what differs between the codes/themes.

Findings

Summary of Interview Conclusions

Throughout the interviewing, most participants bucked the romantic notion of wilderness with its emphasis on human absence, the sublime, and solitude. Most interestingly, a fair number of respondents specifically rejected the idea of human absence within wilderness areas, a key facet to many visons of wilderness, including legal ones. Other key themes demonstrated in the interviews include seeing wilderness as an ideal or on a scale, where there is an ideal wilderness that we should strive for in wilderness management, and where wilderness can be measured on a scale, by degrees. Similarly, a contingent of respondents express what can be termed as “diverse visions of wilderness,” where understandings of wilderness are diverse, context dependent, and contain no absolutes.

Further, respondents often convey that people have a place in wilderness, countering wilderness visions that understand wilderness as a space free of humans. Within this theme, participants frequently argue that humans have a place in stewarding wild places and that wilderness is a part of human culture. Among these wilderness visions many respondents also believe that wilderness areas are places in which environments are meant to be rewilded or left to their own processes; in opposition to wilderness visions which see wilderness areas as

(supposedly) pristine areas that are to be persevered in a manner that prevents that environment from changing.

Lastly, some respondents have clear doubts about wilderness designations in the Adirondack Park. These interviewees doubt there is any "true" wilderness in the park, and they are critical of how widely the wilderness designation is used within the park, arguing that it impedes proper management of the land and that it is being used as a brand or attraction.

Wilderness as an Ideal or on a Scale

Throughout the interviews, there is a prevalent theme of respondents identifying wilderness as being on a scale (spectrum), where one side is the wild ideal we see in the romantic definitions of wilderness that stress human absence and pristine environments, while the other side is made up of spaces that include compromises to and degradations of wilderness, like overzealous forms of development (e.g. metal bridges) and overuse. Some people talk about the notion of 'pristine' wilderness in the vein of Weber's ideal types, in that it is something to aim for but not achievable due to a slew of factors, like human influence on the planet, past and present. Respondents sometimes reference Bill McKibben's *End of Nature* here to demonstrate that a purely pristine wilderness cannot exist materially. Thus, analysis shows that a group of participants (1) view wilderness on a scale (or spectrum) and (2) often in the same breath, argue that there is an ideal wilderness that should be aspired to when managing wilderness areas. Talk of an ideal wilderness often *directly* recognizes wilderness as on a scale, but it also frequently recognizes wilderness as on a scale *tacitly* because it recognizes other types of wilderness that fail to meet the ideal they set forth.

In the following statements, respondents argue that there is an ideal wilderness with ideal management practices, while also asserting that this archetype may be unachievable, yet still worth seeking.

> I think it's an ideal that we try to achieve, but I think the reality is that we're all, we are prone to fall short of it for a number of reasons…and so prior to Europeans coming to the Adirondacks, you know, there were native people here and there and they had a relationship to this place…I don't think you can characterize any land as completely untouched…those are sort of ideals, idealistic mindsets, or views that we have about the land- but they're not reality and *we may try to achieve them and with the recognition that we're never actually going to get there*. [Ben (36). My emphasis.]

> …I think we should all have a goal [wilderness being pristine or primeval], we should have the tippy top of that mountain that we're looking for. And so, I think that it is okay. But I also think at the same time, that we have to understand that wilderness is always changing. And it changes with or without us. And our role in that change. So, like, one of your first questions to me was about global warming. And so even if I never stepped foot in the wilderness, I am partaking in an effect on the wilderness by my decision making about something that might affect global warming…*So yes, I think there is this picture of wilderness out there [and] I kind of look at it as like the top goal*. But I also see myself standing in that wilderness. So, I'm a little bit contradictory about that. [Laurel (61) in response to being asked if she sees any issues with how wilderness is traditionally defined as pristine or primeval. My emphasis.]

> Because every time you add a cairn on top of the mountain, that's if I don't kick it over…[I] can rage, you know, every time [they] put in a bridge or mark a trail or do anything or put in a climbing bolt or a sling around a tree or whatever, you are degrading that ideal…and *I quest for the ideal, knowing that the ideal can't happen*. [Dean (67) in response to being asked to define overuse. My emphasis]

These themes are clarified when Laurel—a serious hiker and leader in several outdoor organizations—notes that the 'wilderness as pristine' standard should be the principal "goal" of wilderness management, while also recognizing that wilderness is dynamic, constantly changing on its own and through human actions. Given the dynamic nature of wilderness, for Laurel, the goal of pristine wilderness is unachievable, but it is something worth aiming for as a "top goal."

Ben, an expert on water quality and visiting assistant professor, expresses similar sentiments which claim that there is an ideal wilderness, but because there is no land that can be genuinely thought of as untouched due to human relationships with the land, these ideals about wilderness fail to meet reality. Regardless, there is value in setting one's sights on these ideals; a conviction that is captured when Ben states, "we may try to achieve them [wilderness ideals]…with the recognition that we're never actually going to get there."

Most poignantly, Dean—a guidebook writer, avid climber, and former English teacher—declares, “I quest for the ideal, knowing the ideal can’t happen.” Later in the interview, Dean reasons that ideal wilderness cannot exist given human influence on the planet; specifically, he notes Bill McKibben’s *End of Nature*, to illustrate that the notion of pristine nature, and by extension wilderness, is a fallacy. Dean even goes as far as calling wilderness a “non-existent ideal” and asserts that wilderness has been ruined on Mars, presumably by the presence of machines built by humans. Despite all these misgiving with ideal wilderness, it is still something which Dean and the others quest for.

It is important to consider that recognizing that there is an ideal form of wilderness means that the concept of wilderness is on spectrum. Thus, the participants show a complex understanding of wilderness which accepts that there are degrees of wilderness that often work on a scale, where the romantic notion of wilderness is unreachable but worth aiming for. To look more directly at wilderness as on a scale, we can look at Josh (67), who uses the phrase “degrees of wilderness,” when discussing the addition of an Americans with Disabilities (ADA) compliant trail to a local park. Josh recognizes that installing an ADA trail will lead to “increased damage to the place,” but it will still provide a type of wilderness for a larger swath of the community. Josh is a retired orthopedic surgeon and a leader in a hiking group.

Likewise, Laurel poetically describes her “absolute” vision of wilderness as a place where she may encounter a rare bird or bear, but not a person, and where she, “…might actually step…into the unknown, because no one has ever stepped…[there] before.” Beside later acknowledging that this “pure” idea of wilderness cannot exist, Laurel notes that wilderness can be experienced in many different types of environments. To illustrate, Laurel describes her experiences hiking to Rooster Comb (a smaller peak on the Great Range), by saying even though

it is close to a major road, it offers “beautiful wetlands” and “lots of birds,” and hence, it “feels pretty wilderness” to her. Laurel conveys these thoughts best when she states, “my feelings about wilderness [are] that you can really find it in a lot of different places.” The attitudes of a significant contingent of respondents demonstrates that they understand wilderness to be on a scale, and not fixed on human absence.

Throughout the interviews it has been rare to encounter anyone who believes completely in a romantic vision of wilderness that is dependent on human absence and non-interference, as well as the experience of solitude and large open spaces. These comments generally reflect that trend, and these respondents have the most sophisticated thoughts on the problematic nature of the romantic understandings of wilderness within the interviews. The participants, however, do not disregard the notion of wilderness as pristine or primeval as the ‘ideal’ wilderness that we should aim for when managing a wilderness or wild settings.

Diverse Visions of Wilderness

Akin to the “wilderness as an ideal or on a scale” theme is the “diverse visions of wilderness” theme. In both themes respondents articulate understandings of wilderness which see it as existing in a myriad of different forms; what distinguishes these themes from each other is that in the “wilderness as an ideal or a scale” theme, participants emphasize that there is an absolute or ideal form to their visions of wilderness, while in the “diverse visions of wilderness” theme, respondents largely indicate that the multiple understandings of wilderness are all equally valid, and that definitions of wilderness are largely unstable. Thus, under the “diverse visions of wilderness” theme, respondents recognize that there is a multiplicity of wilderness visions that are context dependent and that each vision in this array is a valid way to understand wilderness. Further, these participants often make statements which highlight wilderness as an imprecise

concept with shaky historical underpinnings, further illustrating the concept's shifting nature depending on the context.

The following statements demonstrate instances where respondents point out that there are multiple ways to think of and experience wilderness:

> I mean, you're not gonna have houses…[but] in some places, you will, right? Like, if we're talking about the Amazon, I would say if I were standing in the middle of the Amazon in, you know, in a, in an aboriginal community, or something, I would be like, "This is wilderness." (laughs)…*So, you know, what wilderness is, is like very fluid and, and different depending on the context of where you are.* You know, in the Adirondacks, just the way that I've been brought up, I want wilderness to be a place where there aren't very many people, like no people. Um, but that's only because I never was brought up here when Native Americans were living around in these areas. [Hana (age) wilderness in response to being asked how to define wilderness. My emphasis.]

> I think I'd probably stick with the classic, you know, 19, whatever, 1950 wilderness act definition…That's largely untrammeled by man…*I think you can have a wilderness experience in a lot of places (laughs)...you know, [that] are not labeled wilderness on a map*, but it's that, you know, that feeling that you have, that's hard to describe that when you go out into the woods, you're sort of, um, you know, uh, you're a visitor to a place; you're no longer in control. You're not, you don't have all those things that we have every day to keep us from the rain, from falling on our heads and the temperature around us within a fairly (laughs) narrow range. [Ben's response to being asked to describe wilderness]

Hana—a conservation social scientist and PhD—suggests that there is a multiplicity of wilderness definitions and that the concept is contextual, when she expresses that wilderness is "very fluid" and "different depending on the context of where you are." From this description, the way wilderness is imagined is dependent on factors like where you live, who you are, and what culture you are from. To further support this sentiment, elsewhere in the interview, Hana states that the definition of wilderness has, "…definitely got to be culturally and site-specific, right." Given this "cultural" and "site-specific" understanding of wilderness, Hana elaborates that based on her upbringing and her background in the Adirondack Park, her preferred wilderness is one with few people. However, she does not hold that preference as an ideal in which we should aim for, instead it is just her preference borne out of her background and social milieu.

Hana further emphasizes the diversity of wilderness visions when she indicates that our individual understandings of wilderness are all unique. This is clear when she says, "'What's wilderness?' So, you could like [ask] people and people and people and people all day long. It's just, like, not the same." As Hana notes here, the more people you ask about their understanding of wilderness, the more visions of wilderness you will get. In sum, Hana holds that there are many definitions of wilderness, all of which are site-specific and culturally informed, highlighting wilderness as a context dependent and dynamic concept.

Moreover, Ben's comments illustrate the diversity of wilderness understandings and the context dependency of these wilderness understandings from a different direction. Specifically, in that he talks *less* about the shifting definitions of wilderness, and *more* about the *experience* of wilderness. Thus, wilderness as an experience versus as a place, which is discussed above.

As Ben states, "I think you can have a wilderness experience in a lot of places (laughs)...you know, [that] are not labeled wilderness on a map." In this instance, the experience of wilderness is not limited to just legally defined wilderness areas, but to a variety of other spaces, especially the "wild forest" sections of the Adirondack Park. This idea, that wilderness can be experienced in many different areas, demonstrates that Ben's vision of wilderness is dynamic because this understanding of wilderness is not limited to one particular ideal, like the romantic conceptualization of wilderness that valorizes human absence and wide-open spaces. Rather, wilderness can be experienced widely, for instance, within isolated pockets in a busy park or slightly off the beaten path of a well-developed parcel of public lands.

Other participants highlight the diverse range of wilderness visions by discussing the shaky foundation of the term in as shown in the following comments:

> So, I find that *wilderness is an aesthetic concept*. You know, for example, if we define a wilderness as a place where people have never been in, it's never been developed, then we're ignoring 13,000 years of indigenous history and [in] the Adirondacks again, [there is] growing the evidence that people have always

> lived here and not just traveled through, but live here. So, I think that *wilderness is somewhat of an artifice as, as an idea. And that is not a negative*. [Paul (59). My emphasis.]
>
> Oh, that's a tough question, because you could go all the way back to…like pre-contact, pre-Colombian era where you can argue that *the native Americans who lived here at the time, like, should they have been counted as separate from the wilderness?* Like, we count people now or were they actually part of the wilderness because their management strategies, a lot of them have been lost and well, *maybe not necessarily lost, but just not followed by wilderness managers right now.* Like the use of fire, um, moving settlements to not staying in one place for decades or centuries at a time. [Ray (35). My emphasis.]

Both Ray and Paul show that the concept of wilderness has unstable historical underpinnings, given the indigenous histories in what is now the United States. Due to this history, Paul believes that wilderness is an "aesthetic term" and an "artifice," instead of being a hard material concept dependent on human absence. Similar to how respondents believe wilderness has an ideal form, Paul assumes that a pure wilderness would be free of human influence, which is why he sees the term as an artifice. Though, for him, wilderness is still useful as an "aesthetic" ideal to help manage public lands. Specifying on this point later in the interview, Paul is clear this "aesthetic" ideal for him is defined by letting a landscape grow unhindered by humans, not human absence. Regardless, Paul's musings show the tricky nature of envisioning wilderness; emphasizing how it is unstable, ever shifting, and context dependent. It is notable that Paul has a non-romantic understanding of wilderness since he is a leader in a wilderness advocacy group; a group many would assume would hold to romantic wilderness standards.

Matching with Paul's thoughts on wilderness, Ray—a conservation scientist—argues elsewhere in his interview that wilderness is a "management concept," for the same reasons Paul calls it an "aesthetic term." Ray also shows the nebulous character of wilderness when he speaks about Native Americans, where he wonders whether Native Americans should be considered as "separate from wilderness" or a part of it, because of the ways they managed and shaped the landscape. Here, Ray dances around an array of issues, including human absence and indigenous

environmental history, which all reveal that for these respondents, there is no one true definition of wilderness, indicating its diverse and contextual nature.

Respondents indicate that there is a multiplicity of wilderness visions, where each vision is dependent on one's background, as they are site-specific and culturally shaped. This indicates that wilderness is a fluid term, without fixed boundaries, and therefore, it can be experienced in numerous places that are not legally wilderness. Any attempt to give wilderness an ideal form that is reliant on a romantic conceptualization of wilderness is doomed because of human influence on the environment which renders those understandings null. This disruption of the romantic wilderness standards has produced many alternative ways to understand and experience wilderness. All of these factors illustrate that wilderness is a context dependent and shifting concept, while also showing us that the respondents largely reject the romantic idea of wilderness as a possibility.

Against Romantic Notions of Wilderness

The way much of the general public understands wilderness harkens back to the romantic era and the transcendentalist movement, including the thoughts of associated intellectuals like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and William Wordsworth. With the emergence of these movements, people went from envisioning wilderness as dark hostile land to seeing it as something which is sublime, rejuvenating, and pristine (Nash 2001). Although these movements have passed, they have left an indelible mark on the ways individuals think about and manage land. Specifically, from this legacy, many individuals now see wilderness as something marked by pristine nature, which is identified by the absence of humans and their traces on the land. In response, many lands were and are managed in manner to preserve their supposedly pristine form; in consequence, indigenous peoples were expropriated from many of their ancestral lands

(Sowards 2022). This way of thinking has dominated the management of numerous national parks and this type of fortress conservation has spread out across the world, leading to the displacement of many indigenous groups (Harmon 1987, Hermer 2002, Roth 2008). However, respondents routinely reject the key tenets of romantic wilderness, like human absence and the idea of pristine nature, which are at the center of these issues.

As the analysis has shown so far, few of the respondents, even when they see parts of the romantic vision of wilderness as ideal, see it as a possibility due to human influence on the environment. Other respondents recognize that there are multiple ways to understand wilderness, noting that wilderness definitions are fluid, site-specific, and culturally based. This context dependent understanding of wilderness disrupts the romantic notion of wilderness because it decenters the dominance of the human absence ideal and the idea of pristine nature from wilderness definitions. As will be argued, respondents also directly challenge the belief in pristine wilderness, often with an eco-centric approach.

The following statements from Mackenzie—an ecologist, research scientist, and PhD—express her dissatisfaction with linking wilderness to the idea of pristine nature:

> *…I don't think that any place on the planet is stationary, and unchanging, and I think it's really challenging to point to something and say, like, that is what we're striving for, and that's what we always want it to be. We know things will change forever*. I think it's more, um, there's a, for me, at least, it is whether or not it's a place that has the *ecological capacity to function without our intervention* and maintain itself. Um, you know, in the face of the next big, giant storm that comes through. [Mackenzie (47) in response to being read a Cronon like quote. My emphasis.]

> There are some qualities to what I think of as wilderness, in terms of its size and its sort of lack of infrastructure that make it able to have animals that behave in the way that they should behave, and can sort of fulfill their ecological roles. And meet their needs without intervention from us. So that's, I guess I agree with him [Cronon], that that we will never be able to sort of *identify an ecosystem that's…the same as it always has been, and it will never change (laughs), and therefore, that's what we call pristine. I think that's, that is sort of a foolish thing to strive for*. But I think that we can hope for a range of variability, and a degree of, of ecological function. But whether or not it is pristine, it's able to sort of maintain itself without us having to step in and do big things to try to protect it. [Mackenzie continued. My emphasis.]

Mackenzie's comments rail against the notion of romantic wilderness and its connection to pristine nature by criticizing the idea that a landscape can be preserved in an unchanging manner; a core objective of multiple land management systems including many national parks.

As Mackenzie argues, we cannot "identify an ecosystem that's…the same as it always has been, and it will never change," thus, "that is sort of a foolish thing to strive for." Because, "we know things [ecosystems] will change forever," and accordingly, aiming to preserve some vague concept of "pristine" nature is foolish; we cannot keep wildernesses and their ecosystems in some static form that certain individuals prefer. This diverges from romantic understandings of wilderness that valorize supposedly pristine lands, while seeking to preserve them in their current form in perpetuity.

Instead, Mackenzie holds an eco-centric understanding of wilderness, which is not about an ecosystem being pristine, but about an ecosystem being able to "maintain itself…without us having to step in and do big things to try and protect it." For Mackenzie wilderness is a large space where ecosystems can work freely; allowing animals to behave in ways that fill their ecological roles without intervention from humans. This is a far cry from the romantic notion of wilderness since it dismisses the idea of pristine nature as a fallacy, considering human history on these lands and developments in environmental science that shy away from the notion that nature is meant to exist in static equilibrium. Not to mention, romantic ideas about wilderness are largely about aesthetics and have little to say about functioning ecosystems.

Further, in the following comments, Hana continues to speak on the problems of defining wilderness around the idea of pristine nature, while Wilson explains that there are firm differences between the management of wilderness in the Adirondack Park and romantic wilderness.

> But I do understand that it's, you know, I get the motivation behind describing wilderness as pristine. But whether it actually [is]. You could have lots of arguments about why it might not be pristine, from things like past legacies of acid rain, or climate change, or all of ... [the] invasive species that maybe are not super evident. They aren't development, but they are certainly still impacting those to something, and for some might make them not pristine. *So pristine is, I think, a difficult word to hang on wilderness.* Um, although I understand why you would use a word like that (laughs). [Hana. My emphasis.]
>
> I've heard those arguments too [Cronon like arguments] and, yeah, I always go right back to the State Land Master Plan which…because what we're talking about here is the legally defined wilderness areas…*and a lot of people confuse that with, with the romantic*….Jeremiah Johnson's version of wild…[which doesn't] exist so much anymore…if it ever did. [Wilson (46). My emphasis.]

Hana describes the difficulty of hanging the weight of the term "pristine" on wilderness by explaining that environmental impacts like acid rain, climate change, and invasive species, although not always evident, still have serious impacts on an environment that negate it from being pristine. It seems to Hana that defining wilderness in connection to the "pristine" is unfair because if one uses that standard there would be no wilderness, and elsewhere in the interview she is clear that wilderness is a valuable concept and experience. Once again, these arguments chip away at the romantic notion of wilderness by criticizing the idea of pristine nature being at the core of wilderness.

Wilson makes a connected argument that separates the romantic idea of wilderness from legal wilderness areas which do not hold haughty standards of pristine nature and human absence. When asked about his thoughts on recreational development inside the wilderness areas of the Adirondack Park, specifically in relation to how some individuals see trail signs and lean-tos as too much development, Wilson contends that said argument is a product of people confusing legal wilderness with a romantic wilderness, which does not "exist so much anymore…if it ever did." In the context of the Adirondack Park, Wilson suggests that this type of non-development fails to fit with the State Land Master Plan (SLMP) that defines wilderness in the park. Wilson does not go into the specifics of these differences, but he does suggest it is related to the SLMP having a balance between recreation and conservation that does not try to

erase human use from the land. These statements suggest that the SLMP and the way it defines legal wilderness, is not marked solely by romantic wilderness ideas; there is a rupture between legal wilderness and romantic wilderness.

Respondents reject many central aspects of the romantic conceptualization of wilderness. Within this section of the analysis, participants are skeptical about the notion of "pristine" nature; a guidepost and goal that has been at the center of many forms of public land management, especially national parks in the US. These respondents find that to be a foolish set of principles for land management since the ideal of "pristine" nature is so illusory. Humans impact land too deeply for such a thing to exist and even without human intervention, landscapes and environments change over time; there is no static natural equilibrium. Lastly, some respondents see a rupture between the ideal of romantic wilderness and actual wilderness management. That separation is more closely tied to the romantic wilderness idea of human absence and its problematic nature. These issues with human absence or human exclusion in wilderness, their close ties to romantic conceptualizations of wilderness, and the way participants reject these vestiges of romanticism are explored below.

People Have a Place in Wilderness

In most of its modern and romantic conceptualizations, wilderness is valorized for being free from humans and human influence. Throughout the history of the United States, protecting land and establishing wild parks has largely been guided by the erasure of humans and their impacts on land. Wilderness policy itself codifies that people are only visitors within the boundaries of designated wilderness areas. Nevertheless, many respondents scoff at the idea that wilderness is defined by human exclusion and instead hold that people have a place in wilderness in a variety of ways. Most respondents reject any notion that a "true" wilderness must be

completely free from humans; they argue that humans have every right to use wilderness within certain limits. These ideas run counter to increasingly extreme human exclusion arguments which hold that humans should be barred from particular wildernesses and protected areas for environmental and conservation purposes, like E.O. Wilson's idea to preserve half the earth for biodiversity[3]. Further rejecting human exclusion, some respondents state that wilderness is equivalent to a cultural institution, where human history and culture are experienced. It is also common to see respondents stress that people must be caretakers or stewards of wilderness, locating humans deeply into the operations of wilderness. In summary, respondents reject the notion of human exclusion in wilderness by claiming (1) that humans belong in wilderness, (2) that wilderness is a human cultural institution, and (3) that humans must care for and steward wilderness.

(1) humans belong in wilderness

"I don't think wilderness is necessarily devoid of people." [Hana]

"I think they [people] are a part of it [wilderness], not apart from it." [Ben]

The preceding statements convey a sentiment a broad faction of the respondents hold: that people belong in wilderness. For these respondents, wilderness is not a place of human exclusion; rather, it is a place where people may practice an array of human activities and traditions. Many point out that wilderness is a human creation, bound in legislation, and it only makes sense that humans are able to use these lands, within certain limits. Others argue that humans are part of the natural world as much as any flora or fauna, thus, why should people be limited from accessing wilderness and wild lands? Given these points, some respondents believe

[3] To be clear, Wilson argued that conserved lands in such an arrangement could make way for indigenous people to live in these spaces and for people to visit them. The idea is that these lands should remain undeveloped However, it's unclear how such a thing could be done without displacing droves of people and tightly controlling human access to these lands (Busher and Fletcher 2020).

that humans have a right to wilderness. A few of these respondents highlight that wilderness should be managed with people in mind, especially from the global perspective, considering that many people inhabit wildernesses across the world. Almost all respondents, however, specify that human access and use of wilderness must be subject to certain limitations given how easily humans can degrade the environment. The following statements demonstrate these thoughts and arguments:

> *I think that we are a part of the system. I think we have absolutely as much right to be there as any other species.* But I think because of our capacity to change the environment, impact the environment, in ways that we do more so than other species (laughs), or at least disproportionately to the way that other species do, I think we need to be cognizant of our own sort of potential impacts. And attempt to tread lightly in those places, because they are the places…some of the most important places with regard to nature being able to be nature. *And so I would hope that humans, although absolutely should be able to visit and, and spend time in those places, for all the reasons that we would want to, I hope that we would try not to alter them and enable them to function as they would if we weren't there* [Mackenzie. My emphasis]

> I think that they [people] are a part of the natural world. They are a visitor to it [and] *they need to be thoughtful about they do while they're out there*. Those leave no trace principles. I wish every single solitary person who set foot on a trail and respected and followed those principles. And I think we're working toward that [and] I do think that's something that's become better known not only in the Adirondacks, but even nationwide. *I think we just need to be thoughtful users out there. I absolutely believe people do have a place out there.* [Laurel when asked how people fit into wilderness. My emphasis]

> Our "wildernesses" here are mostly "created" in areas where there was already a lot of human activity, and it makes sense for that activity to continue, as long as it does not damage the wilderness [such as starting forest fires, etc.]. [Toby (65) when asked how people fit into wilderness. My emphasis]

> …I work globally, and I work in all of these places with which really are wilderness, but they're, they have people and people are integral part of the environment. *And so that's, that's the way it is. And we should be able to manage the wilderness for these people.* And, you know, we do have a lot of people right now. So, problematic in some parts of the park [Adirondack Park]. There're other parts of the park that aren't overrun yet. I will never tell you where they are. I'm sure you already know. [Hana in responding to a Cronon-like statement. My emphasis]

Again, all of these respondents are clear: humans should *not* be excluded from wilderness. Their arguments against human exclusion, tacitly demonstrate that they know of and oppose human exclusion understandings of wilderness which imagines wilderness as only existing in areas that are free from humans and their works.

Mackenzie criticizes human exclusion when she states, "I do not think that people should be excluded from wilderness, and nobody should ever set foot there. I don't believe that."

Continuing this theme, Laurel argues, “I absolutely believe people do have a place out there [wilderness],” and Mackenzie declares, “I think that we are a part of the system. I think we have absolutely as much right to be there as any other species.” In this case, Mackenzie situates human use of wilderness within the viewpoint that humans are part of the system, and therefore, have the same right to these spaces as other non-human species. Hana takes this further by explaining that people are a key part of the environment in wilderness areas across the world; accordingly, wilderness should be managed for them. Though Hana is speaking internationally in this regard, she is clear in the interview that this applies to people that use the Adirondack Park as well, to some extent.

Although these and other respondents argue that humans belong in wilderness, they also contend that access to wilderness comes with certain responsibilities and limitations. Due to how easy it is for humans to quickly destroy and degrade wilderness and other wild areas, humans need to be careful with their individual actions and their management policies in these spaces. As Laurel explains, “…we just need to be thoughtful users out there,” and similarly, Calvin argues humans should be somewhat limited in their use of wilderness to ensure we avoid overdeveloping the wilderness. Toby believes that human access to wilderness is predicated on humans not damaging it. In a more sophisticated manner, Mackenzie states, *“*...I hope that we would…try not to alter them [wildernesses]…and [instead] enable them to function…as they would if we weren't there.” The point Mackenzie makes here, is that humans should limit our alterations to wilderness; alternatively, we should work toward creating conditions where wildernesses can function as if human influence were diminished. The respondents throughout the interviews firmly argue that humans must be careful in the way they use and manage

wilderness to avoid degrading it and to allow it to work in a way that is not dominated by humans.

In sum, respondents believe that there is a place for humans in wilderness, as a wilderness is more than a landscape devoid of humans and their works. Wilderness areas are spaces where humans play a part in natural systems just as nonhuman entities do. Human absence is not the defining feature of wilderness for these participants. Though, human use of and presence in wilderness spaces comes with limits that include careful use, and as we will see later, stewardship.

(2) wilderness as a cultural institution

The human absence ideal of wilderness, which is closely tied to romantic understandings of wilderness, aims to erase, or devalue human history and culture from our visions of wilderness. This often manifests itself in management policies that intend to erase human traces from wilderness areas, even when that results in hiding important human connections to the land. From this perspective of wilderness, humans are anathema to wilderness and any vestiges of their presence should be erased and that history forgotten. Nonetheless, respondents rarely agree with these visions of wilderness and extoll views of wilderness which value human culture and history within wilderness. Laurel and Wilson express these views:

> I do think we need to be thoughtful about those types of things [development in wilderness areas]. *But I also think that we shouldn't forget our history and connections that we've always had to the earth and how we want to nurture that and continue that and have that there for others.* So, when you say lean-tos, to me, they're quintessential back country. I think they're nestled into the forest. And they fit well, to the forest for our visitors. And it's a welcoming thing. I certainly prefer to see a wooden log bridge over a metal bridge, because doesn't fit as well in that wilderness space. *Um, but then there's the fire towers, which I love, and I think, affected our forest so that we have the forest we do no….* So, I think that when it comes to the traditional words that we use of non-conforming structures, I do believe that there should be an allowance for non-conforming historical structures. [Laurel. My emphasis]

> So, to me…you have…the romantic definition of wilderness and then the official definition, you know. So, you know, for some people who…when you say the word, wilderness, then *they*

> *immediately jump to the romantic definition*. You know…and they think that…this is a single person going in there. He's just spoiling it…putting up a trail or a trail marker [and that is] is negating the whole idea of wilderness, or what not. And, you know, to me that's who we... So yes, these are natural places, these are natural habitats, and we need them, and we need more of them. *But to me they're…wilderness as it exists today in the 21st century is as much as* ***cultural institution*** *as an art museum…So, you know, these places are important, they give people happiness. And also, it's important that people go out there and know them.* You know, like again some, you know, that these, you know, for opportunities to go out and, and have the same type of the experiences that I have. [Wilson (46). My emphasis.]

Laurel and Wilson see human history and culture as a component of wilderness; we can see this in action when Laurel declares that we, "shouldn't forget our history and connections we've always had to the earth and how we want to nurture that, and continue that, and have that there for others." This idea is used to justify allowing remnants of human history to remain in wilderness areas that are often seen as non-conforming to wilderness, such as fire towers and other historical structures. For Laurel the presence of human history does not degrade wilderness, instead it heightens it by highlighting human relations with nature.

Most interestingly, Wilson argues that modern wilderness is tantamount to a "cultural institution," just like an art museum. And just like any other cultural institution, it is imperative that people go out and enjoy what this institution has to offer. To support his point, Wilson directly critiques the use of the romantic definition of wilderness, specifically the human absence element of it that seeks to erase human traces on the land and its focus on solitude.

To conclude, the respondents highlight the importance of human history in wilderness and see wilderness as a cultural institution. These viewpoints disrupt the human absence ideal of wilderness, showing that such an ideal is not as popular as commonly assumed. They also challenge the idea that humans, through their presence and works, necessarily degrade wilderness areas, but are instead, a part of them.

(3) humans must care for and steward wilderness

Further dismissing the notion of human exclusion in wilderness areas, many respondents assert that people need to care for and steward wilderness; this may include responsible land management, volunteering as trail stewards that inform other users of proper backcountry use that protects the environment, and volunteering to maintain trails to ease damage from high-use. Such direct interference in wilderness violates the idea of human exclusion because humans are directly interfering with and shaping wilderness and wild areas. Some of these viewpoints are expressed below:

> **Author (WF):** So, how do you think people fit into wilderness?
> **Ben:** Uh, *I think they are a part of it, not apart from it.* You know, we're not separate from nature, so I think we have a place in wilderness…but I think that comes with a responsibility to manage it and [to] be good stewards of it. [Ben. My emphasis]
>
> But I do feel that trails, foot trails appropriately constructed can allow a person to enjoy and respect the wilderness. And I think that would give people a better respect for the environment in general, if they've experienced true wilderness. [Mia (77).]
>
> …just kind of relax and recharge a little bit, and actually kind of be caretakers of the area too. You know, we could just keep the place cleaned up and trails in good shape and educate people. [Matthew (65).]

Mia—a retired teacher, deeply involved leader and trail builder in hiking groups—states that being in wilderness and experiencing the proper management of a wilderness area can give people a "better respect" for the environment, suggesting that these experiences can lead individuals to support efforts to maintain wilderness and the environment.

Matthew—a plumber and leader in a hiking organization—points out that people should be caretakers of the land; working to leave trails cleaned up and in 'good shape," while also trying to educate others in these practices. Similarly, while arguing that people are a part of wilderness, Ben explains that comes with the duty to become good stewards of it. By asserting that people must care for and steward wilderness, the respondents are indicating that people belong in wilderness and showing that they are at odds with extreme interpretations of the human absence ideal of wilderness.

Most of the respondents live up to this ideal by practicing stewardship and/or contributing to responsible management of wilderness and public lands. For instance, Ben worked for a major environmental group and runs environmental research; Mia served on a conservation committee in a subgroup of a large outdoor organization and builds trails; and Matthew was the chair of a subgroup of the same outdoor organization. The participations in this research also include several individuals that have and currently work as trailhead and summit stewards, as well as many other trail maintainers, environmental researchers, and leaders in environmental and conservation organizations. This group of people is deeply dedicated to stewarding wild lands.

Wilderness as Created, Rewilded, or Recovered

Wilderness critics often invoke the presence of human impacts and history on land to argue that such land cannot be "true" wilderness. This argument depends on an extreme interpretation of wilderness as a place of human exclusion. On the scholarly side, this is often used to argue that there is no such thing as wilderness; from the non-scholarly and activist anti-wilderness side, it is often used to agitate against wilderness designations and management. For the former perspective: why should we idealize land so? For the latter viewpoint: if a parcel of land is not wilderness, why protect it as such?

However, as we have seen, most participants deride the human absence ideal of wilderness, thus it is not *the* defining feature of wilderness for them. Of course, this does not mean that the participants see wilderness as a space rife with human infrastructure and presence. For some, it is about letting the land become somewhat self-willed, where nature is the dominant force. In this line of thought, wilderness designations have the intention of creating, rewilding, or recovering a wild space. The following respondents demonstrate these thoughts:

> So, you know, thinking about that, this…what we have right now has grown back, and can change, and can change for the better. *So, I like to kind of think of when I'm thinking about wilderness, kind of not just what it currently is, but what it can be.* [Kara. My emphasis]

> **WF**: Okay. And to follow up on what you're saying there, how do you feel about people defining wilderness as a "recovered," like you said, or rewilded?
> **Paul** (59): Oh, that's definitely important. So, the Boreas has campaign, one of the repeated objections to classifying it as wilderness from people who were advocating for access was, "It's not a wilderness, anyhow, you know, it's not, it was logged, it's got logging roads"…[but] all that stuff that describes almost the entire high peaks. *These areas could recover.* And by the way, the case of the Boreas is tragic. That stuff was totally overstated. It's quite wild…Nonetheless, land can recover. [The] Adirondack Park is artificial, right? It was created by legislation. It existed at the pleasure of the people. And, you know, I don't know how much of it's recovered, but way more than half. *So, recovered wilderness is just as important or even more important than anything, any other type of wilderness.* [Paul. My emphasis]

> **WF**: So, wilderness is often described as pristine or primeval land. What do you think of that description?
> **Ray**: In an ideal scenario, I would go along with that, but you just don't have very much of that anymore. So, I'd say wilderness really being more of a management concept at this point. For places that are considered wilderness now, *allow them to rewild and try and return [them] to as close to that state as possible, whether that is elimination of former infrastructure or just not investing more into it, just being allowed to return to it*.

Most poignantly, Kara states, "So, I like to kind of think when I'm thinking about wilderness, kind of not just what it currently is, but what it can be." This statement makes it clear that for Kara, designating land as wilderness can let it become something other than what it is or was. Specifically, something wild. To deepen this argument, she also explains in the interview that institutions like the state are too hung up on the presence of physical structures on land restricting wilderness designations. To Kara—a leader in various outdoor organizations, summit steward, and wilderness advocate—this is "short-sighted" because the entire Adirondack Park has been impacted by logging, fires, roads, and so on, yet it is still home to premiere wilderness areas. This is why we should be thinking in terms of what land can be, instead of what land is or was.

Wilderness as rewilding is an important notion because it combats anti-wilderness narratives which try to shutter wilderness designations and wilderness guided management due to current and past human impacts on the land. Paul tells this story in the Boreas Pond saga of the Adirondack Park, where a new parcel of land was up for designation, leading to a pitched fight

over whether it would be classified as wilderness or not. Unsurprisingly, the anti-wilderness contingent used the history of logging, roads, and dams, to argue against a wilderness designation. Paul, however, sees those arguments as bunk, given that the most classic wilderness areas in the Adirondack Park experienced the same human use at some point. In fact, according to Paul a great deal of the park is recovered wilderness and such a designation on Boreas Pond would continue this history. Given this past, recovered/rewilded wilderness is a key type of wilderness that is just as important as other types of wildernesses.

Ray holds similar ideas which are demonstrated when he uses the term rewild to express letting land return as close to a "pristine" state as possible; typically including some infrastructure removal. Further, Benjamin—a leader with an Adirondack land organization—speaks to the power of recovering wilderness:

> …but *I know a lot of the wilderness here is recovering wilderness*, I'd say, you know, particularly, I think of the Five Ponds area…[I] remember at the 50th anniversary for the wilderness act, I led a group of students into Cat Mountain, and it was great, cause we stopped at one of the ponds along the way and read some of Bob Marshall's journals about when he was walking through that same area and talking about it from when he would have been there.... the twenties, thirties, I forget when he would have been there…but you know, it was interesting cause he was talking about, it was hit, it all been logged pretty recently. He was hearing the local locomotive going through, over seeing the smoke from it, uh, cause that's how they're getting all the logs out of the area. *And now it's, you know, it, that's a really an example, which I think is an important one that if we let things heal in a way, um, natural processes can take over again*.

Using the venerable wilderness advocate Bob Marshall, Benjamin gives an example of a landscape which Marshall experienced being transformed into recovered wilderness over time. Most importantly, Benjamin explains that he sees a recovered wilderness as a space where natural processes have a chance regain dominance. As he says more poetically later in the interview, "…it…definitely has more of a feel of moving towards a spectrum of being more or natural wild space."

To conclude, the idea of wilderness as a place of recovery and rewilding stands in stark contrast to anti-wilderness sentiments that use human traces and presence as a reason to oppose

wilderness classifications and management. It also stands against scholarly arguments which often dismiss the concept of wilderness because of human use of the land. The way the respondents understand "recovered," "rewilded," and "types" of wildernesses are complex, but their views plainly stand against the human absence ideal of wilderness and similar notions. Lastly, such arguments align closely with many wilderness advocacy groups and land trusts, like the Northeast Land Trust, that preserve land with the intention of letting it rewild.

Doubts and Issues Regarding Wilderness in the Adirondacks

On the whole, respondents support wilderness designations and disregard harsh interpretations of the human absence ideal of wilderness; however, there is a contingent of respondents that hold serious doubts about whether the lands of the Adirondack Park constitute a "true" wilderness. Most often their doubts are centered on the legally classified wilderness areas, which they consistently see as overrun by people, too close to population centers, and too developed with user infrastructure, like trails, bridges, and so forth. Not to mention the history of human impact on the land. In contrast to other participants, these respondents largely accept the human absence ideal of wilderness; in effect, they disqualify land with what they consider to be too much human use or history from being wilderness. Much of this specifically manifests with the history of the humans in what is now the Adirondack Park, including the history of indigenous peoples, the history of extraction, and the history and current state of tourism.

Toby expresses his doubts about wilderness in the following comment:

> *A true wilderness would be closed to humans*. No scientists, reporters, politicians, rangers. No one. There would a fine for entering; and if you entered the area there would be no rescue if you got into a problem. Now this idea will not gain traction for one predominant reason: *most so-called "wilderness advocates" are actually "playground for my sport" advocates*. So, what we have for "wilderness" is actually a hybrid. The trails and other facilities in the wilderness are NOT part of the wilderness. A trail is unquestionable "trammeled by man." The wilderness is the land surrounding the trail. [Toby]

Toby claims that "true" wilderness excludes all humans, which is an extreme take of the human absence ideal of wilderness that bars any land with human traces or presence from being

wilderness. Though, Toby is particularly interesting because even though he claims that "true" wilderness areas are human free; he still accepts that hybrid like wildernesses in places like the Adirondack Park exist. For him, all the user infrastructure in the park is not part of the wilderness, but the land outside of that infrastructure is wilderness. The notion Toby holds of a "true" wilderness does not dismiss the wild character of certain parts of the Adirondack Park.

Toby also explains that he sees most wilderness advocates as individuals that want to maintain these spaces as a playground for their sports. This questioning of wilderness advocates' sincerity like Toby expresses here is quite common in the popular press and some environmental and conservation groups. In these cases, recreationalists are often called 'jocks' by those that strongly favor human absence since they believe recreation may impede wildlife, disrupt ecosystems, or devalue the character of a wilderness. Such individuals often ignore the problematic nature of the human absence ideal. Interestingly, this conflict is rarely if ever discussed within academic scholarship. A clear disconnect from popular culture.

Further, Thomas (70)—a trail building and maintaining leader, guidebook writer, and longtime Adirondack hiker—has serious doubts about whether particular wilderness areas in the park constitute wilderness due to heavy use. For instance, Thomas argues that the crown jewel of the Adirondack Park—the High Peaks Wilderness—is simply not wilderness, and thus, should *not* be classified as such. Due to how much use the High Peaks Wilderness gets, Thomas believes that it should be classified more liberally. A less restrictive designation would allow the High Peaks to receive more intensive land management (using machines) that would work better to blunt the impact of the crowds. Or as he says, "if that [the High Peaks] were designated, a…wild forest…you could do a lot of things that might be…beneficial as far as…[for] protecting

the resource." Then, other areas that are wilder and used less could have the wilderness designation to maintain that preserves that setting.

Thomas is also skeptical about the wilderness designation in the park because he believes it is being used as brand to attract tourists. He believes that the mentality of state leaders and the park is: "We want to have as many possible acres in the Adirondacks classified as wilderness, whether it's wilderness or not." Thomas argues that the state and others are trying to bolster wilderness areas in the park without regard for the character of the land, leading to bad designations that impede land management tactics.

Echoing Thomas, Toby argues elsewhere in his interview that there is just too much pressure to continue classifying land as wilderness and expanding it to attract more attention, to the detriment of the wild. Or, as he says, "many so called wilderness areas have been force fit into that category by relentless advocacy for more and more "wilderness." From these perspectives, wilderness has become more of a brand to attract visitors and gain prestige, than a method to properly manage and classify land.

To conclude, in opposition to most of the respondents, there is a group of participants which have serious doubts about the validity of the wilderness classification in the Adirondack Park. Many of these doubts are focused on the presence of humans and human use of the land, as well as the encroachment of development along the borders of wilderness areas. These participants accept the human absence ideal of wilderness to a much further degree than other interviewees, who usually contest it much further. For this contingent of wilderness skeptics, wilderness has unfortunately become a brand to promote and push onward, at the cost of properly managing the land.

Discussion

The analysis of the interviews shows that respondents hold a wide range of wilderness visions that defy stereotypical assumptions about what wilderness means to individuals. Any attempt to construct a singular understanding of wilderness from these visions is destined to fail; not only because there are so many individual understandings of wilderness, but because individuals themselves hold multiple visions of wilderness that are sometimes contradictory.

For instance, participants regularly dispute the notion of pristine wilderness but will often fall back on using the term "true" wilderness in their descriptions, implying that the idea of a pristine, human-free space, plays some part in how they think about wilderness. Regardless of this, a major theme that weaves its way through the multitude of wilderness visions observed in the interviews is the rejection of the romantic understanding of wilderness that stresses human absence. As these respondents are deeply involved in environmental, conservation, and recreational causes and management, they are well versed in the history of the term wilderness and in environmental science, thus they understand the foolishness of assuming that any land is free of human influence, which guides their thoughts on wilderness.

Based off these observations, the analysis lands on two central points: (1) that there is a multitude of wilderness visions between and within individuals, with many interconnections and contradictions, that elude conventional understandings of wilderness; and (2) within these wilderness visions, most individuals reject the romantic conceptualization of wilderness that is defined by pristine nature and human absence.

As the chapter shows, there are many distinctive and complementary ways individuals understand wilderness, from envisioning it as something on scale to defining it as a space where humans firmly have a place. Though most respondents reject the romantic ideals of pristine nature and human absence, it is still common for them to lean back into those characteristics

when describing wilderness. This is most evident with participants that see wilderness as on a scale, where the "pure" side of the scale is marked by an ideal wilderness that embodies these romantic ideals. However, these respondents have a complicated relationship to this "ideal" wilderness category, because most participants make it clear that no such pristine wilderness exists now or in human history, but they still see reaching it or enacting some degree of these characteristics as their central aim for wilderness management. What this means is that many of the respondents that desire an ideal wilderness also hold ideas that stand in stark contrast to human absence and pristine nature.

Take Laurel, she lucidly explains that she believes there is an "absolute" or "top tier" of wilderness that is marked by pristine nature. For Laurel this is what wilderness management should be working toward even though she sees it as an impossible standard. These views are further complicated by the level at which Laurel believes that humans have a place in wilderness as long as people are conscientious users of the land. Laurel firmly supports the presence of fire towers and lean-tos in wild and wilderness areas, emphasizing her view that human connections to history on the land are important, as lean-tos are a staple of backcountry history and fire towers have shaped the forest.

On the surface these are seemingly contradictory beliefs—the belief that pristine nature is the ideal form of wilderness V the belief that humans are an instrumental part of wilderness—but they are not completely irreconcilable. It does demonstrate that respondents often have visions of wilderness that oppose one another but it is not as simple as saying individuals hold contradictory visions of wilderness that are incompatible. Instead, there are some clear linkages between the components of these visions that make them reconcilable, or at least not completely antagonistic.

To begin, as it has been discussed, few of the respondents believe that an ideal wilderness is something which is reachable, so it is not that they expect to find or create a "true" wilderness borne out of romantic ideals, but that they want certain characteristics from that fable retained or acted out. Specifically, that the land be unmarred by human use and action; not in the sense that humans have no influence over the land or have not shaped it in some way, but in that humans do not dominate the land, where such undesired domination can range from overdeveloped recreational infrastructure to industrial development.

This study shows that there are numerous visions of wilderness that conflict with and complement each other, but by and large, almost all of these visions clarify that wilderness areas are spaces where humans should *not* be the dominant force. Although most of the participants believe that humans belong in wilderness to some extent (in certain situations, even living in it), they also firmly demonstrate that this use of the land should *not* dominate the environment. From this perspective, the idealizing of romantic nature and using it as a fallback to think about wilderness is less an objective and more of way to envision wilderness as space where humans play second fiddle to ecological processes, regardless of the shape that takes.

Building off this point, these thoughts about ideal wilderness as a goal or a benchmark to think about wilderness, can only be seen as a touchstone because almost all the participants reject human exclusion and the idea of pristine nature in practice. These are key tenets of the of one romantic vision of wilderness that is easily the most popular in the US and has guided land management in public lands like the national parks. There are numerous ways participants rebuff this line of thinking that attempts to keep humans from being an important part of wilderness.

For example, it is common for these participants to claim that humans have a place in wilderness, which they detail by explaining that: "humans belong in wilderness," that wilderness

can be understood as a cultural institution, and that "humans must care for and steward wilderness." In these cases, respectively, respondents express that humans are free to experience wilderness within limits, that wilderness is part of human culture and history, and that humans need to responsibly manage and maintain wilderness for the future. Echoing Kara: humans are a part of wilderness, not separate from it.

Further, many of the respondents openly challenge the idea of romantic wilderness as an illusion or aesthetic that has little to do with how we actually manage public lands, especially wilderness. One's understanding of wilderness being context dependent—site specific, culturally shaped—burns away at the idea that wilderness is defined by human absence and pristine nature because there can be many different ways to think of wilderness that are not beholden to this romanticism. Throughout the interviews respondents regularly challenge the assumptions that lie at the base of romantic wilderness.

Conclusion

The analyses presented in this research have direct connections to (1) theories of wilderness, (2) the strained battle to implement "forever wild" in the Adirondack Park, and (3) user and management conflicts over romantic wilderness standards. The visions of wilderness that are expressed by the respondents both fit and diverge from contemporary theories and philosophies of wilderness. This illustrates that these theories can help us understand and explain these wilderness visions but fail to capture them in their totality, indicating the use and limits of wilderness theory. Turning "forever wild" into practice has been a contentious endeavor since that statute was applied to the park and then written into the NYS constitution. Just as with wilderness, this is because idea of "forever wild" means different things to different people, depending on their conceptualization of wilderness, experiences, and background. This research

shows that conflicting visions of wilderness further complicate the management of "forever wild," especially in wilderness areas. Lastly, respondents' wilderness visions often conflict with wilderness management in the Adirondack Park because management policy often reflects austere romantic standards of wilderness and because their management style does not focus on ecosystems.

Connections to Wilderness Theory

Analyzing these visions of wilderness indicates that there are numerous pathways to understanding this concept, but among this sample, the respondents are largely united around challenging the assumption that wilderness should be defined by pristine nature and human absence. Before concluding, however, it is important to consider how these wilderness visions match up with and differ from modern wilderness theory and popular thoughts on wilderness. To start, it is key to ask how these thoughts on wilderness relate to constructionist (see Baldwin 2009, Castree 2005, Castree and Braun 1998, Greig and Whillans 1998, Hodgins 1998, Plumwood 1998, Sandilands 2005), realist (Clapp 2004, Lewis 2007, Moore 2014), assemblage/meshwork (Vannini and Vannini 2016), and Marxist (Malm 2018) theories of wilderness.

As for constructionist perspectives, they are made up of a diverse collection of theories, but they are mainly connected to Cronon's (1995) assessment in "The Trouble with Wilderness" which argues that wilderness lacks material reality because it is merely a socio-historical construction and that wilderness is a place for bourgeois recreation. Others take this further, claiming that the term wilderness is without value and often harmful, as it often embodies racism and colonialism (Braun 2002, Nelson and Callicott 2008a).

Many of the respondents express thoughts that see wilderness as a socio-historical construct, thus aligning with constructionism. These interviewees elaborate that these places are only wildernesses because we define them as such. Most of the respondents are aware of indigenous influence and human history on the land, voiding the ideas of pristine nature and human absence that characterize romantic wilderness. Kara makes not that the traditional way we view wilderness is Western in origin, and that there are serious issues with those assumptions. However, fitting with Cronon, but diverging from other constructionists, they still see wilderness as useful term, and as something to experience and protect. I believe that this partly because the respondents mostly define wilderness outside of pristine nature and human exclusion, the most problematic aspects of romantic wilderness. Losing this baggage and defining wilderness as something that is a part of human culture and history, makes the idea easier to accept.

Realist perspectives of wilderness mainly see it as a material reality and emphasize the ecological value provided by wilderness (Clapp 2004, Moore 2014). These outlooks are characterized by eco-centric or bio-centric approaches that focus on understanding wilderness as a space for biological and ecological growth, where wilderness is valuable for its ecological processes. Within these theories, wilderness is much more than a space for humans. Most of the respondents fail to talk at length about the ecological qualities of wilderness, except for the conservation scientists and social scientists. This group of respondents do mention the value of wilderness for its ecological roles and discuss how humans sometimes impact its functioning; for example, one details their study where they observed animals avoiding spaces that see heavy use from humans. Though most of the respondents make little mention of the ecological or biological values of wilderness, they do often espouse that humans should not be the dominant force in wilderness, which does align with realist perspectives. Respondents do not often say it outright,

but it is fair to say that they see wilderness as more than just a social construction because they rarely make any mention of it being simply a human illusion and it is instead a real place that they often enjoy, study, and protect.

Similarly, the Marxian perspective on wilderness, as theorized by Andreas Malm (2018), can be arguably categorized as a theory under the umbrella of realist perspectives. It shares many of same attributes with realism as it is a materialist perspective that asserts that wilderness is something that is materially real. From this perspective, wilderness is a space that is somewhat free from the grasp of capital, and protecting it is an anti-capitalistic endeavor that frees it from exploitation. More importantly for this analysis, Malm argues that there is no "absolute" wilderness, but some areas are wilder than others and thus, from this point of view wilderness is relative and comes in degrees.

These ideas align with many of the respondents' visions of wilderness, as there is a group of participants that sees wilderness as something which comes in degrees, where a space may become less or more wild depending on which degree it is at. The notion that wilderness is relative also matches up with respondents that acknowledge there are numerous—context dependent—ways to envision wilderness. Unsurprisingly, however, no respondents discuss wilderness as space free from the bounds of capital, but they matchup with another Marxian assumption shared by other realist perspectives: that wilderness is a space where ecosystems and biological cycles can have some independence from humans. As demonstrated, respondents assert that wilderness is space where ecological processes are somewhat free from humans.

Conflicts of Translating Wilderness and "Forever Wild" into Practice

Though these visions of wilderness moderately unite around the idea that wilderness should be defined by spaces where ecosystems are dominant, there are still disagreements as to

what this means this in practice. The numerous contradictory and competing visions of wilderness themselves indicate how much individuals disagree on the way they believe wilderness areas should be managed. This phenomena links to and builds on the work of Adirondack historians Philip Terrie and Barbera McMartin, who document the conflicts of managing land inside the Adirondack Park. McMartin (2002) argues that one of the central conflicts of managing the Adirondack Park has been the process of translating "forever wild" into practice, which has shaped the park, especially its public land. The root of this conflict stems from the lack of clear standards over what "forever wild" means in practice, considering this is a fluid concept that takes many shapes. The "forever wild" statute in the NYS constitution is not synonymous with wilderness, but wilderness does rely on this standard. In the Adirondack Park, wilderness has been translated in Adirondack Park land management to have the greatest degree of "forever wild" protections.

McMartin (2002) illustrates how contesting ideas about what constitutes "forever wild" led to numerous conflicts with the management of "wilderness" and "wild forest" areas, including conflicts over the presence of fire towers, groomed ranger stations, camps, road access, and so on. To describe one of these conflicts, DEC experienced strong resistance from a faction of the public when they attempted to remove, by burning, specific ranger cabins that were classified as nonconforming structures in wilderness areas. Efforts to burn the cabins were thwarted by opponents that blocked access to the cabins, likely tipped off by Adirondack based DEC rangers. The cabins were eventually removed by clandestinely bringing in rangers from the Catskills to burn the cabins (McMartin 2002). These clashes can be looked at through the lens of conflicting ideas over what constitutes wilderness.

This research narrows McMartin's work to focus on the potential difficulties of translating a fluid concept like wilderness into actual management practices, a more restrictive and complementary aspect of "forever wild." Even among this sample, which is largely homogonous, given it is made up entirely of individuals that are involved in outdoor recreation, conservation, and environmentalism, there is still a wide array of wilderness visions that only unite in saying that wilderness is a space where nature should be dominant over humans. From these wilderness visions, even bringing that unifying aspect into practice is difficult.

For instance, respondents like Mackenzie and Hana, argue that putting this form of wilderness into practice is a site-specific process depending on local cultures, histories, and ecologies, and thus, wilderness areas would look significantly different from place to place. Others have different ideas about human made structures in wilderness areas; some like Laurel want to see parts of human history like fire towers and lean-tos remain, but others like Mia want to fewer human structures in wilderness. On the maintenance side, there are participants like Thomas that want more latitude in the tools and tactics they use to maintain trails in wilderness, like year-round chainsaw use and more ample use of machines to bring in equipment and maintain the trails, which could arguably protect the area better and let ecosystems run more unencumbered by humans. However, other participants like Paul and Wilson would like to see those tactics continue to be curbed because they believe it will lead to more development that would make humans more dominate in these spaces.

This research adds to public lands and Adirondack research by further illustrating how conflicting visions of wilderness complicate the management of wilderness areas. The difficulty of implementing these differing visions of wilderness, even when they coalesce around a central theme, like keeping wilderness as an ecosystem dominant space, is an example of Terrie's (2008)

concept of contested terrain. Terrie broadly uses this term to describe the constant struggle between various factions in the park to reach and carry out their goals and desires on the land of the Adirondacks. The competition between these factions is primarily over "who the land is for" (e.g., tourists V locals) and "what it is for" (e.g., tourism V extraction | conservation V development). Since there is no shared vision over these factors, there is inevitably conflict over how to manage the park. This applies to all aspects of the park, especially the public land, as Terrie (2008) documents many historical examples of conflict over the application of new "forever wild" and wilderness standards when official wilderness and wild forest areas were created in the park, including the previously stated controversies over roads and developed ranger stations.

This research extends Terrie's scholarship by showing that even a similar group of people with a somewhat united vision of wilderness can produce enough conflicting ideas around their unified idea that it is hard to translate what wilderness is into one cohesive set of policies, especially in the Adirondack Park. There will inevitably be conflicts over how to manage wilderness areas because there are so many ways to envision what wilderness is and could be.

In sum, this research further develops McMartin's and Terrie's scholarship by exclusively applying their arguments to conflicts over wilderness management. For McMartin's work, it shows how struggles over "forever wild" are intensified when wilderness comes into play, given wilderness is just as, if not a more dynamic concept than "forever wild," which lacks a unified vision that can be put into action. For Terrie's work, it is another example of "contested terrain" in action, but it is also unique because it shows that battles over the purposes of public land can occur even among a homogenous group of people with similar beliefs and visions.

User and Management Conflicts Related to Romantic Wilderness Standards

Wilderness areas in the Adirondack Park were made in the image of the Federal Wilderness Act (as described in chapter I) and thus, reflect some of the romantic wilderness ideas which the act embodies—humans only as visitors and solitude (see Sowards 2022). That is not to say that federal wilderness areas and Adirondack wilderness areas are completely beholden to romantic wilderness standards like maintaining pristine wilderness and human exclusion, but they do carry some of these principles. Wilderness areas in the Adirondack Park specifically, do carry romantic ideals but they were interpreted in a site-specific manner by the TSC and APA that translated "wilderness" in a manner more pliable to the Adirondacks, as I have detailed in the first chapter. For example, wilderness areas in the park may see people only as visitors like federal wilderness areas but there is almost unrestricted human access to these areas, meaning there is little human exclusion. There is a core disconnect between the romantic principles at the center of the Wilderness Act and the views of the interviewees. Though there were many disagreements among the respondents, they are all critical of romantic conceptualizations of wilderness, to some extent.

The participants' visions of wilderness largely lineup behind the idea that wilderness is a place where humans should be non-dominant, and ecosystems should be able to function as unencumbered from humans as possible. Federal and Adirondack wilderness areas were *not* built around the idea of ecosystem maintenance and health, as that type of bio/eco approach had not yet entered into environmentalist and conservationist perspectives. Therefore, this is a related site of tension between the attitudes of the participants and how wilderness is managed in the Adirondack Park. Respondents conflict with some wilderness management policies in the Adirondack Park because (1) some of these policies too closely mirror strict romantic ideas of

nature which the respondents reject, and (2) this style of management does not deeply take into consideration ecosystem health.

On the first front, some of these conflicts are startlingly clear. For instance, wilderness areas in the park initially attempted to and still do, to some extent, try to erase human history; this included trying to remove fire towers and other human structures in wilderness. Respondents like Laurie and Wilson vehemently believe human history is a part of wilderness, hence to them, these nonconforming structures should remain. In the case of fire towers this way of thinking has largely won out and those structures have been left in wilderness areas for recreational enjoyment, which are widely enjoyed by the public and respondents. As has been detailed, Laurel is a strong supporter of fire towers and is a leader in an organization that maintains them. For her these traces of human history do not degrade wilderness, but instead serve to highlight human relations with nature.

There is also often discontent over how trails are managed in the park, in that the park would be better served by more liberal trail maintenance methods (machines/chainsaws) than the restricted methods that are shaped by romantic standards. The opposition against these restrictive maintenance standards, that we dee with respondents like Thomas, argue that easing these restrictions would allow the park to be wilder and better preserved since these methods would make it easier to reduce erosion and other damage from recreators. Similarly, respondents like Mackenzie and Hanna, support these high impact maintenance methods should for high-use areas to preserve the land.

On the second front, current management of the park does not focus *wholly* on letting ecosystems run freely. Management mostly concerns controlling recreation with some regard for ecosystems, mostly in the form of traditional conservation. Thus, these practices fail to align

with the visions of participants that stress wilderness as a place for rewilding, who would like to see ecosystems face little interference from land management. For instance, Ray, who would like to see the land be allowed to "return" by eliminating old infrastructure and/or investing in resources that allow this.

Keeping wilderness management close to romantic ideas which stress preserving a landscape as it is runs against modern ideas of rewilding which more deeply consider what land can be instead of focusing on what it was at one particular moment, as Kara expresses. This also matches closely with respondents that hold eco and biocentric viewpoints of wilderness like Mackenzie, who are concerned with issues like high-use pushing animals like birds, from their habitats.

In Sum

The research shows that even among a homogenous group of people there are still competing and contradictory understandings of wilderness. There is some overlap between these wilderness visions which shows that the respondents largely favor wilderness as a space where humans are non-dominant, but what that looks like for each person differs. This not only illustrates that there will be conflict over the management of wilderness areas, but it also shows that there will likely be some strongly shared wilderness principles among individuals that can be the base of some consensus. Land managers can capitalize on this consensus to appease stakeholders in wilderness areas like the ones of the Adirondack Park. Finding such balances clearly cannot eliminate conflict since even within some shared vision there will still be disagreement on how to act that out, however, it can limit conflict by narrowing what people are arguing over. Further study on wilderness visions would benefit from a wider and more diverse

group of wilderness stakeholders to learn more about how these visions align and divide individuals.

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Chapter III: High-Use in the Adirondack Park

Introduction

In 2021 *Mother Jones* published an article by Stephanie Mencimer titled "Monsters: The Idiots Defacing Our National Parks" with the subheading, "These people never should have left their couches." This piece details the "epic destruction" being caused by visitors to parks and protected areas throughout the United States; including, "…forest fires, graffiti, trash, [and] human waste." Mencimer spares no quarter for these wayward recreators, calling them idiots, yahoos, and describing their behavior as stupid. Some of this is tongue in cheek, but it points to the growing hostility toward novice outdoor recreators that often harm the resource unintentionally…and sometimes intentionally. It also describes the core problem of outdoor recreation: how do we allow people to use the land for recreation while conserving it?

For decades individuals have decreed that we are loving public lands to death. According to this perspective, human impacts on the land from outdoor recreation and visitation are deeply affecting the land for the worse. In the last ten years, with spikes in visitation to parks and protected areas, this alarm has only grown. It has not only been the topic of magazines like *Mother Jones*, but also of major periodicals like *The New York Times* (Times 2021, Waterman 2019), *The Guardian* (Simmonds, McGiveny, Reilly et al. 2018), and the *Los Angeles Times* (Martin 2017). Local newspapers and magazines in mountain towns frequently run articles on "overuse" and "overcrowding" on their nearby public lands. And of course, issues with public land use are often the subjects of focus for outdoor periodicals such as *High Country News* (Thompson 2021) and *Outside Magazine* (Pearson 2022). What this demonstrates is that overcrowding, overuse, and high-use in and of public lands is a national and local issue that garners serious public attention.

The Adirondack Park is one such place that has been deeply affected by high-use. For the Adirondack Park, it is clearly a regional and local issue, but it is also a national issue. Returning to Mencimer's incendiary *Mother Jones* article, she dedicates a significant portion of the piece to discussing the difficulties faced in the Adirondack Park by high-use. Mencimer describes an uptick in unprepared hikers approaching the mountains without maps, headlamps, and sufficient clothing, sometimes in flip flops. Unsurprisingly, the article goes on to show that there has been a surge of rescues of unprepared recreationalists that has stressed the resources of the DEC. Local newspapers like the *Adirondack Explorer*, *Adirondack Almanack*, *Adirondack Daily Enterprise*, all run articles on these issues regularly. Given the national, regional, and local interest in high-use issues on public lands, in addition to the very real impacts high-use has on the land and safety of recreators, examining how individuals understand high-use, overcrowding, and overuse in the Adirondack Park has serious scholarly and practical value.

Through intensive interviewing, this chapter looks at the attitudes a group of recreation, conservation, and environmental leaders, workers, scientists, and volunteers hold toward high-use issues in the Adirondack Park. Specific attention is paid to what the respondents think are the causes of and solutions to these problems. Archival research is also used to understand how Adirondack Park stakeholders thought about high-use issues in the late 1960s and early 1970s to contextualize modern viewpoints on high-use. On the conceptual front, the chapter also analyzes the distinct and overlapping elements of the terms high-use, overuse, and overcrowding, which are often used interchangeably by the public and some scholarship.

Examining the history of high-use on public lands shows that there has long been concern with human impacts on parks and protected areas, including both the degradation of the resource and the social experience of the lands. On the scholarly side, research on carrying capacity and

high-use related problems started in earnest in the post-World War II period, corresponding with the expansion of leisure, travel, and outdoor recreation in the US (Manning 2013). Overcrowding and overuse of public lands spiked in the late 1960s and 1970s with the hiking and backpacking boom caused by better outdoor equipment and the growing interest in recreation (Chamberlin 2016). This was all too apparent in the in the Adirondack Park during this period, as many accounts of the time describe the mountains as covered in litter, with degraded infrastructure and trails (see chapter I). However, over time, with the introduction of Leave No Trace principles (trail etiquette) and stewardship efforts, some of these issues were eased in the Adirondacks and throughout the US. Even with these successes and efforts, the continuous rise in outdoor recreation has left many public lands like the Adirondack Park feeling the impacts of high-use.

The analysis of the interviews shows that the respondents primarily argue that high-use problems can be resolved with more education and improved land management. For the interviewees, this is because these problems are rooted in: (1) uninformed hikers causing disproportional harm to the resource and (2) bad land management that increases the harm done by recreators to the resource and the social experience. The arguments made by the respondents fit with many of the recommendations that are made regionally and in the Adirondack community. For example, the call for better state funding which could provide improved educational programs, better trails, adequate parking, and so on. The thoughts expressed by the respondents also matchup with the carrying capacity literature. To illustrate, this literature argues that the amount of change stakeholders find acceptable to public lands from use is dependent on their norms and values. Since this group has strong conservation and environmental values, it is no surprise that they are less tolerant of change on public lands, especially in wilderness areas. This demonstrates the power of this normative theory and further confirms this literature's

findings that stakeholders in wilderness areas are less tolerant of change. Lastly, in terms of solutions, the respondents mainly emphasize public-private partnerships to ease high use problems. There is little talk of the state entirely addressing these issues, showing the respondents have accepted a neoliberal framework for land management.

Methodology

For an exhaustive account of the sample and the methods used for interviewing the respondents, please refer to the methodology section in Chapter II. Similarly, for a full detailing of my archival research process, please refer to the methodology section in Chapter I. What follows is a brief recap of those methodology sections, written in the context of the high-use question.

Intensive interviewing was used to look at how the respondents understand high-use issues in the Adirondack Park. During the interviews, respondents were asked about their personal histories, what they do in the Adirondack Park, and how they understand wilderness from several different facets. They were also asked about their viewpoints on high-use issues, like overuse and overcrowding. Initially this part of the interview was intended to prime the respondents to talk about wilderness, but it quickly became more important than a simple priming phase. Instead, it regularly took over half of the interviews and often bled into the sections of the interviews that were focused on wilderness. On the whole, the respondents were more than happy to discuss high-use issues with me and revealed that they had strong views about it at the ready. There was no need for them to think at length about their responses; they already knew how they felt about high-use. Clearly, this is a key issue that occupies the minds of Adirondack stakeholders. Therefore, the way the respondents think about high-use issues quickly became a topic of focus in the dissertation.

The interviewing focused on conservation and environmental associated individuals. With this concentration, the sample came to be composed of recreation, conservation, and environmental leaders, workers, scientists, and volunteers. Many of these stakeholders have some to significant influence in Adirondack based groups. I focused on these key informants because I want to understand what well informed and possibly powerful people think about issues in the Adirondack Park. It is key to understand their viewpoints because they make up an influential faction that can shape policy in the park (Gilchrist 1992, USAID 1996).

The interviews themselves lasted between 20 and 90 minutes and averaged around 45 minutes. There are 29 interviews in total, with nine of the interviewees being female and 20 being male. That discrepancy might be a product of how male dominated some of these groups are. Virtual meetings and phone calls were used to conduct the interviews due to ease and the pandemic. Interviews began with outdoor groups in the Syracuse and Albany NYS areas. From there, interviewing branched out into the park, focusing on individuals associated with park-based groups. Snowball sampling and cold emailing was used to find respondents. Interviewing was conducted until saturation was reached.

The interviews were transcribed then coded in NVivo. I used the constant comparative method of coding following Charmaz's (2014) frame of first conducting initial coding; followed by focused coding that is built out of that initial wave of coding. This came out with the codes concentrating on the perceived causes and solutions to high-use issues. Permits, one solution to high-use, had its own specific codes attached to it.

The archival analysis section of this chapter relies on research conducted at the NYS Archives (NYSA) in Albany, NY. I looked at public comments made to the Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks (TSC) and to public comments that were gathered

before the implementation of State Land Master Plan (SLMP). While examining these comments, I was looking for references to and descriptions of high-use problems like overcrowding and overuse, to historicize the issue.

For the TSC public comments, in 1970 the TSC asked the public a series of seven questions that pertained to how individuals would want the Adirondacks to be managed in the future, which they would use to shape their reports. Public meetings were held, and the participants' comments were transcribed verbatim, which are what I analyzed. For the SLMP public comments, several public meetings were held across the park during 1971 and 1972. The APA (who ran these meetings) accepted written comments and heard oral comments (many of which were prepared statements that the APA also received in written form). The APA also summarized the oral comments that were made at the meetings, often detailing who made such comments and the gist of what they said. I focused on this document to guide me when going through the public comments for each meeting. The other files for each meeting do not include transcribed comments made at the meeting, but instead include the written comments. I analyzed these written comments, which were often given orally as well, and the summarizing document.

To find these documents, I used the "finding aid" provided by the NYSA to select the boxes that contained public comments files for the TSC and SLMP. As stated, I examined these files for any comments that referenced high use issues, like failing infrastructure, litter, dumps, crowding, and so forth. When such comments were found, I made a digital copy of them using Scanner Pro and saved them to a cloud network. I also transcribed these comments into single file, where I could quickly organize them. Transcription, instead of copy and paste from the digital files, was necessary because the text translate for PDFs does work well with typewriting

from the 1960s and 1970s. Coding was unneeded because this file solely collected references to a single theme—"high-use issues in the past."

Literature Review and Case Background

The following literature review is broken into four parts: carrying capacity literature, Leave No Trace (LNT) background, Adirondack thought on high-use issues, and neoliberalism. Each section is only a brief review that provides the information needed to understand the analysis. The survey of the carrying capacity literature (the primary section) will go over scholarship that explains how carrying capacity is measured for parks and protected areas. The LNT section will quickly discuss the implementation and effects of this trail ethic. The Adirondack thought section will detail some of the ways the Adirondack community and press talk about high-use issues. Lastly, the neoliberalism section will concisely review this concept in relation to public-private partnerships. Certain literature and conceptual arguments—the history of high-use issues and the differences and similarities between the concepts of overcrowding, overuse, and high-use—are discussed throughout the paper when they are pertinent to the analysis, for clarity's sake.

Carrying Capacity Literature

Within this context, the concept of carrying capacity refers to how much recreational use a park or protected area can withstand without destroying the social experience of the land and/or its ecology. Though in looser terms, the idea of carrying capacity goes back to at least Malthus, with clearly a different scale (Manning 2013). Much of this literature is uncritically framed through Hardin's tragedy of the commons argument, where public lands are seen as common pool resource that can be ruined by individuals overusing them. Ignoring the many problems with the tragedy of the commons argument which are far beyond the scope of this paper, from

this viewpoint, access to a common pool resource either needs to be regulated by the state or privatized to conserve it. (Hardin obviously being a proponent of privatization). Thus scholars like Manning (2013), draw from Hardin's idea to argue that land management actions must assert "mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon" to avoid the tragedy of the commons in parks and protected areas. To put that more simply, to conserve land and the social experience, management decisions (regulations) must be made to restrict how recreators experience the park or protected area—permits, rules that limit people to trails, regulations that forbid people from ecologically sensitive areas, and so. However, those regulations must be mutually agreed upon by the public, reflecting the norms and values of the stakeholders.

According to Manning (2013) there are three dimensions to developing a carrying capacity for a park or protected area: (1) resource, (2) managerial, and (3) experiential. One, "resource" refers to the natural resource or parcel of land that is being protected. This dimension examines how the ecology of the land is being affected by recreation and how much it can sustain without serious damage. Two, the "managerial" aspect denotes the type of management and management considerations the park or protected area has. Each park or protected area has its own goals for land management that must be considered. For example, areas managed as wilderness are meant to be kept wild, even if recreation must be limited. Third, and most importantly for my purposes, "experiential," which considers how people experience the land. This looks at the quality of the experience and the type of experience recreators want to have. For instance, are the trails too crowded; are the trails too damaged? How much of either of these factors are acceptable to stakeholders in a given area? Has the land been too modified by recreation for stakeholders to enjoy?

The experiential aspect of carrying capacity means that the amount of change that is acceptable to stakeholders from recreation is socially determined by their norms and values. This is a dynamic component of carrying capacity that changes from place to place and by the type of stakeholder. Because of this, there is no one "experiential" measure of carrying capacity, and it is part of what makes it so difficult for a park or protected area to determine this measure. In order to figure out how much change is acceptable to the public in a specific area, managers and social scientists must find the stakeholders' "limits of acceptable change" (LAC). Research has shown that areas intended to be wild, like wilderness areas, have stakeholders that tolerate little change to the resource (low LAC), while stakeholders of recreation-based areas accept more change to the resource (higher LAC) (Manning 2013, Manning and Krymkowski 2010). The notion of LAC illustrates that *part* of carrying capacity is a social construction because it is determined by what people subjectively see as acceptable, not by a scientifically established material standard. Of course, not all of carrying capacity can be a social construction because there are environmental limits on the land.

As has been alluded to, carrying capacity and more specifically, LAC, are shaped by the norms and values of stakeholders. Carrying capacity scholars like Manning (2013), rely on "normative theory" to ascertain the LAC for parks and protected areas. The plus side for scholars and land managers here is that norms are fairly easy to measure, and there are long established tools for doing so.

Lastly, for most parks and protected areas management actions are taken ad hoc, and are often based in anecdotal evidence (Manning 2013). Beyond doubt, that is a less than optimal strategy. The carrying capacity literature recommends that parks and protected areas form visitor user management frameworks (VUMF) to guide their management decisions. These are

largescale and detailed plans for parks and protected areas that set forth desired conditions and the tools to reach and maintain them. These frameworks provide the management actions that are implemented, then monitored for effectiveness, and lastly, adjusted if needed to reach desired conditions (NPS). VUMFs are used throughout the US, including in National Parks.

Leave No Trace (LNT)

LNT is an educational program that relies on a land ethic that emphasizes seven principles: plan ahead and prepare; travel and camp on durable surfaces; dispose of waste properly; leave what you find; minimize campfire impacts; respect wildlife; and be considerate of other visitors (Marion 2014). LNT is a national program, and it is a guiding ethic for parks and protected areas like US national parks, and outdoor organizations like NOLS, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and the Adirondack Mountain Club.

As will be discussed further in the history section, an ethic for outdoor recreation became necessary in the postwar period due to the boom in leisure and wealth (Simon and Alagona 2009). In particular, during the 1960s and 1970s, with the rise of new recreational technology and a growing interest in recreation, there was a hiking and backpacking boom that led to many new outdoor recreationalists entering parks with little regard for low-impact recreation (Chamberlin 2016). Due to the damage that was being done by hikers, backpackers, climbers, and others, a new ethic was needed.

Different low-impact educational programs were instituted by federal land management agencies, like the NPS and USFS, in the 1960s due to these spikes in outdoor recreation (Marion 2014). It became clear to land managers that they needed to supplement new regulations they implemented to control high-use issues with educational programs in the late 1960s and 1970s (Marion and Reid 2001). Low-impact recreation also began to predominate as an ethic for

outdoor recreationalists, which is demonstrated by the many books that were written on the subject during this time, including: "*The Wilderness Handbook* (Petzoldt 1974), the Sierra Club's *Walking Softly in the Wilderness* (Hart and Club 1977/1998), [and*] Backwoods Ethics: Environmental Concerns for Hikers and Campers* (Waterman and Waterman 1979)" (Marion and Reid 2001). The adoption of low-impact ethics had great results in reducing the degradation seen in many parks and protected areas (Marion and Reid 2007).

The institution of a national LNT program was first brought about as a partnership between NOLS and USFS in 1991, and over time, with more agencies brought into the mix, the program was expanded and turned into a nonprofit organization in 1994 (Marion 2014). Educating recreators in LNT is a priority for many land managers because it is an effective and low-cost way to reduce degradation in parks and protected areas, before use limits or supplementing them. Regulations that limit recreationalists' access to the land are often alienating to the public and thus, education is often the first priority.

There is a robust literature that demonstrates changing environmental attitudes and increasing awareness of environmental problems, through practices like education, is ineffective at shifting behaviors to be more environmentally sound (Gustafson and Rice 2016, Heberlein 2012, Ortega-Egea, García-de-Frutos and Antolín-López 2014, Saylan and Blumstein 2011, Stern, Ardoin and Powell 2017). Research has shown that changing attitudes is difficult, and when they change it is often in unexpected ways. Even if one could find consistent ways to change environmental attitudes, it is unlikely that it would change behaviors because they are greatly affected by situational factors (Heberlein 2012). From these findings, one could reasonably ask how LNT can be effective in practice? However, the forms of education discussed here are not about changing deeply held attitudes or just giving people knowledge,

they are about changing short term behaviors. For example, ensuring that recreators approaching alpine zones stay out of the alpine grasses. Or, reminding hikers to pack out their trash, including organic waste like orange peels and apple cores. LNT is a set of practices, not a set of attitudes. As will be shown LNT has had success in the Adirondack Park, and the respondents stand by this approach.

Adirondack Thought on High-use Issues

High-use issues like "overcrowding" and "overuse" are hot topics in the Adirondack Park. Numerous magazines and newspapers frequently run stories on overuse, and it has been a concern for land managers going back to at least the 1960s with the TSC. Groups like the Adirondack Council, the ADK, and Protect the Adirondack are seriously invested in finding solutions to the problem. Opinions and potential plans to remedy the situation are often polarizing to general stakeholders and recreationalists. Issues include a wide range of problems but primarily concern addressing public safety and the degradation of the environment and social experience. Public safety has become an increasing concern with overloaded parking lots that cause many people to park unsafely on busy roads and/or walk on them. There is the potential for serious accidents in this case. There are also more frequent rescues of unprepared hikers that leave the DEC strained. On the environmental and social degradation side, trails and the land are often being overburdened. The Adirondack Council calls this overuse, which includes, trail widening, soil compaction, erosion, vegetation loss, the contamination of water (by human waste), wildlife impacts, safety, and the loss of solitude.

The ADK runs educational programs that teach recreators LNT principles with the intention of alleviating overuse. They are one of the major figures in the highly successful summit steward program that educates users on how to experience the alpine zones properly.

However, some have criticized the ADK for being recreation focused and self-interested in the maintenance and profitability of its properties at the expense of the land, since they have often gone against proposals that would limit use (McMartin 2002).

Further, the Adirondack Council is a nonprofit that is dedicated to "ensuring the ecological integrity and wild character of the Adirondack Park" (Council 2023b). This group looks at many issues that affect the park, but one of their primary foci is easing high-use issues. They make recommendations, educate about the overuse, and help fund research on it, like the 2018 study that found there is at least 130 miles of trail in need of serious maintenance or to be rebuilt (Council 2023a). Since they recommend permits and limitations for certain spots, they often attract the ire of recreationalists.

Protect the Adirondacks! is a "grassroots" nonprofit that is "dedicated to the protection and stewardship of the public and private lands of the Adirondack Park" (Adirondacks! 2023a). They have had tremendous legal success in protecting "forever wild" in the park's public lands, and have sometimes attracted criticism from various groups for their "purist" view on "forever wild." Overuse is one of their concerns and they provide detailed information on hiking areas outside the "overused and crowded High Peaks Wilderness Area" (Adirondacks! 2023b).

Magazines like the *Adirondack Explorer* frequently write about high-use issues throughout the park. For example, they have produced articles on how other parks and protected areas handle high-use to explain different options that could be used in the Adirondack Park. The *Adirondack Explorer* has also detailed people's experiences with use permits in other areas, showing how those permit systems work and the benefits and expenses they carry. *North Country Public Radio* also regularly runs stories on high-issues, including shows/articles on rescues and management options for the park (Russell 2023). And various opinions on high-use

issues are run in the *Adirondack Almanack*, a community powered-bulletin board. Here you can find people bemoaning overuse, others arguing it does not exist, individuals demonizing permits, and others proposing permits and use limitations. In all, there are many different viewpoints in the Adirondack Park on high-use.

When it comes to recommendations to address high-use issues in the park, there have been many proposals from advisory groups and the DEC over the decades. It is far beyond my scope to detail this complex history, so a very brief overview will suffice. In the *Adirondack Almanack,* Gooley (2016) documents there have been several proposals to limit use or introduce permits in the park since the 1970s. McMartin (2002) detailed history of people protecting the Adirondack Park covers several efforts to introduce regulations that would possibly limit overuse, including the Citizen's Advisory Committee for the High Peaks Wilderness Area Unit Management Plan, starting in 1990. More recently, the High Peaks Advisory Group (HPAG), made up of expert and influential community members, made their final recommendations in 2021. As they say, many of their proposals build on ones that have been made by previous groups. These recommendations are guided by several priorities, but the primary ones are the protection of wilderness and public safety. Within this context they make many recommendations, including: create an ongoing advisory group, create a VUMF to guide management, and better funding.

Neoliberalism

There are numerous understandings of and histories of neoliberalism in academia (see Foucault 2008, Peck 2010). Sometimes different labels are used to describe the same phenomenon. For example, scholars like Block and Somers (2014), use the term market fundamentalism instead, given that they see it as a more accurate and accessible description of

the phenomenon. Some Marxists object to the name because to them it is only describing the tendrils of capital at work; there's no need for another word; it only hides what we have long lived with (Dunn 2017).

Nevertheless, neoliberalism is a concept that has rooted itself into the social sciences and become the dominant way to describe the accelerating forces of capital, especially in the form of the market taking over state functions. The reasoning given for neoliberalism's value, from its perspective of its supporters, is that it liberates entrepreneurial freedom, spreading freedom to all. Key neoliberal thinkers, Hayek (2007/1944) and Friedman (2009/1962), strongly argue that freeing the market is the key to individual freedom and prosperity.

According to Harvey (2005), neoliberalism works through an institutional framework, "characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (2). The state's role is to only to bolster the market and free it from regulations. Such a pathway leads to deregulation and privatization, which takes the state out of or greatly reduces its role in many of its traditional responsibilities—regulation of the market, social and environmental welfare (see Harvey 2005). Thus, we have seen the rise of public-private partnerships, where the state pays or allows a private entity to take over what would typically have been government service, like paving roads, public water systems, and education. Many observers argue that these tactics end up being more expensive for citizens and government, while frequently creating inferior services.

Thoughts on Describing Related Phenomena: Overuse, High-use, and Overcrowding

Drawing on the knowledge of the respondents and the writings of outdoor organizations, the concepts of overuse, high-use, and overcrowding are both distinct and overlapping. Overcrowding is generally used to describe when there are too many people using a parcel of public land, like when Delicate Arch in Arches National Park is flooded with visitors to the point

where it ruins the social experience for visitors or when the Franconia Ridge in the White Mountains of New Hampshire is so swamped by recreators that individuals are forced off the trail into the fragile alpine grasses. The concept of overuse is typically used to describe when recreators use an area to the point where there is significant damage to the resource, including recreational infrastructure, like trails. For instance, the deeply eroded trail up to the popular Balanced Rocks and the trail up to spectacular and easy to access high peak of Cascade Mountain that has ballooned to over 15 feet of width at some places, are both examples of overuse in the Adirondack Park (see Council 2023a). High-use is a term that is most-often used by land management professionals and research scientists to denote that an area is experiencing an extensive number of users that may or may not be taxing the area, according to the interviewees. The concept of high-use does not assume that that the area is being damaged from recreational use because the trails and other infrastructure may be able to handle a high number of visitors with only limited adverse effects on the resource. Modern trail building creates trails that can handle high-use, like the new path to the scenic Jay Peak ridge and the eastern approach up Van Hoevenberg Mountain in the Adirondacks.

Further, research scientists and land managers most interested in high-use are focused on gathering data and establishing baselines to determine if and the degree to which high-use of the resource is causing its degradation. The High Peaks Wilderness Area experiences high-use in the popular peaks above 4,000 feet in elevation, but the extent of the damage these peaks are experiencing is hotly debated by land managers, hikers, and the media. Experts concerned with high-use want to further study these areas with empirical rigor to determine if and how areas are being degraded. With such analysis it is possible to ascertain the best ways to manage the area to reduce the impact of high-use.

Overcrowding is a concept that is most often used in public lands and land management literature to examine the high number of recreators using parks and other publicly accessible lands. Much of this research is centered on studying how recreators' experiences of the resource are affected by crowding, instead of material damage that crowds may cause (Manning 2003, Sayan, Krymkowski, Manning et al. 2013). In the Northeast it is just as common to talk about overuse, at least among the respondents. Though land managers, recreators, and the media in the northeast discuss the issue of overcrowding, they just as frequently talk about overuse. In terms of overuse, the focus is far more on the material damage to the trails and ecosystems on public lands, than the subjective quality of an individual's outdoor experience. Overuse is the topic of a myriad of social media threads, news articles, and is a key issue for conservation groups like the Adirondack Council.

Of course, overcrowding is still an issue in the northeast and the Adirondack Park, mainly because it overlaps with the concept of overuse. Overcrowding exacerbates the conditions that create overuse—uninformed users, impacts to poorly built trails, and so on. It is thus clear how all these concepts overlap. Overuse can be caused by overcrowding and high-use. Overcrowding is itself a form of high-use. Each concept can breach into the next.

Findings: The History of Overuse, Overcrowding, and High-use in the Adirondack Park

The Adirondack Park felt the impact of growing use in the post-war period. Specifically, the park began to experience degradations from intensive use with the hiking and backpacking boom of the 1960s and early 1970s. At this point the park was dealing with a serious litter problem, deteriorating trails, perceived overcrowding at high-use areas, and bad management. Little was being done to curb these problems. When it came time for the park to take new direction, stakeholders pointed out these dire conditions to policy makers. In this section, I

review the public comments gathered by the TSC on the public's desired future for the park, and the public comments the APA received for the SLMP[4]. This analysis shows that high-use is more than current problem, and has instead been a serious concern for decades.

While planning for the future of the park, the TSC asked the public to respond to a series of seven questions (see table 1) on how they wanted to see it managed. Within these responses, many complained that overuse and overcrowding was degrading the land and harming the recreational experience and they wanted something done about it. The TSC itself also documented these issues in their own field reports (see chapter I). During the public comments for the SLMP, stakeholders pointed out that many areas were often too crowded for wilderness areas and that limits on use and permits might be necessary to inhibit these oversights. There were also explicit frustrations with overuse and fear that it would become unmanageable over time.

Table 1. Questions asked to the public by the TSC
1. What should be the long range State policy toward acquisition of additional forest preserve land?
2. What measures can be taken to assure that development on private land is appropriate and consistent with the long range well being of the area?
3. What should be the State policy toward recreation development in the area?
4. Should there be federal participation in any phase of the plans including a limited park or wilderness area?
5. Should there be a greater management flexibility in some portions of the area?
6. Should there be even stronger safeguards for the wilderness portions?
7. Should procedures be developed for a more flexible policy regarding consolidation of public lands?

Public Comments to TSC's Questions

[4] The SLMP or State Land Master Plan regulates public land in the Adirondack Park. This created the current land management classifications that are used on the park's public lands.

For many individuals that submitted comments to the TSC's questions, the conditions of the Adirondack Park backcountry were horrific. Take the comments of M.I. Walsh of the *Adirondack Wilderness Camp* as an example:

> I have been very fortunate in that many of my trips have been through the removed, untouched areas of the Adirondacks; which even in five years have diminished considerably. Now there are four-lane hard [sic; he meant to say 'herd paths'] leading up almost every trailless peak; small deposits of orange peels and gum wrappers are hidden under every convenient movable rock, and old bunt-out fire places are left beside brooks and ponds, or burnt into the duff. Walking through the woods it seems that one can never escape the refuse that campers have left scattered behind them in the wilderness.
>
> A specific example of this kind of thing is the Van Hoevenberg trail up Marcy; which, to me is nothing short of disgusting. Paper, half-eaten food and gum wrappers almost cover the trail. The second Plateau Lean-to is nothing more than a garbage dump, spread out over an acre of Mary's side. Some camper used the outhouse as firewood, another made his campfire inside the lean-to, leaving a black scar on its floor. The fireplace has been completely ruined and there is no grill to speak of. Scattered throughout the surrounding woods are countless small dumps. The list goes on. [Lake George Meeting]

Walsh describes a landscape ruined by litter, where one cannot "escape" its touch. Informal trails, or herd paths, have been turned into overused trails. Campers have damaged privies and lean-tos. One would think his comments are simple hyperbole, but other comments corroborate this description of the Adirondack backcountry.

Comments from the Sierra Club and Per O. Moberg of the Long Island Environmental Council and Nassau County Fish and Game Association describe similar trail conditions in the Adirondack Park and propose solutions:

> Public use has created a serious nuisance of trash and garbage in many beauty spots, and SCD rangers, who have more useful things to do, are too often occupied as garbage collectors. A general cleanup should be undertaken. This could be done by a joint effort of a State agency using helicopters in remote areas, and of club organizations like the Sierra Club. We pledge our support of such a project. We do just this in the Sierra Nevada and would like to do it here. Then, once the cleanup campaign has restored some order, steps should be taken to keep the area policed…A Sierra Club rule is to take nothing out but pictures and memories and leave nothing behind but your footprints. This attitude could be encouraged in many locations and enforced in others. [Sierra Club at the Lake George Meeting]
>
> We are also very much disturbed by the lack of maintenance for remote areas - garbage is accumulating at an alarming rate at many remote campsites. The education and information of how to use the Forest Preserve is the responsibility of the Conservation Department. We are submitting a copy of recent letter to Commissioner Kilborne on this subject. We believe it illustrates a major current problem that this Commission should address itself to. [NYC Meeting; January 22, 1970]

These comments describe a backcountry ruined by pervasive litter; an issue that they want to see addressed. Both responses here identify education as a tactic to solve the liter problem and they argue that the state must be at the forefront of such an effort. Interestingly, better education is the primary solution contemporary respondents still see to the current problems with high-use.

Further, other responses detail that overuse and overcrowding are a general problem. These phenomena, along with too much recreational development, are also argued to threaten wilderness and "forever wild" values. Mr. Elliott K Verner, head of the Adirondack Mountain School and director of the Adirondack Camp in Long Lake and Per O. Moberg again, share these sentiments.

> In the high peaks region, for example, we have had in this period a highly questionable development of a horse trail system, and an excessive use of motorized equipment for administrative, maintenance and development purposes. *There has been gross overcrowding much of the time at such places as Marcy Dam and Lake Colden, and the expansion of inferior facilities goes on without end, when what in fact is needed is peripheral control of public access*. In another so-called "wilderness area" you can find motorboats on an interior lake, and a tracked vehicle has been observed tearing up foot trails on missions of developing pedestrian bridges in back country. Throughout the Adirondacks for decades small dams, intended to "enhance science beauty" or to "improve the fishing" have, in fact, contributed to the artificialization of the wild. The list is endless. [Verner; Saranac Lake Meeting, February 18, 1970] [my emphasis]

> Administrative regulation *can very simply take care of special area protection from misuse or overuse by man. The consideration of an area carrying capacity in terms of people - rather than whitetail deer - appears to date to have been totally absent from the Conservation Department's rule book*…In conclusion, we need the Adirondacks preserved as a wild forest area now more than ever before, and we are deeply concerned that contemporary desires or pressures will destroy this wilderness heritage of ours, <u>be it through development, overuse or</u> flooding. This commission can serve the cause well by reaffirming in its final report that the 75-year-old constitutional mandate of Forever Wild is still valid. [NYC Meeting; January 22, 1970] [my emphasis]

Moberg and those he represents are deeply concerned that overuse will damage the park's wilderness heritage by compromising the mandate of "forever wild." They want to see the state take action, specifically by using some kind of carrying capacity to regulate recreationalists, which the state has failed to do. They snidely remark that more attention is paid to the carrying capacity of deer than people. Verner shares these fears and is also concerned that too much recreational development, on top of overcrowding, is compromising the wilderness experience.

Through these comments we see the deplorable conditions of the Adirondack backcountry in late 1960s. Stakeholders wanted the backcountry to be cleaned up and hoped that education efforts spearheaded by the state would help. Eventually education did play a large part in getting trash off the mountains. The state, with private partnerships, contributed to that success. Other stakeholders were concerned that overcrowding would degrade wilderness values and wanted recreationalists regulated by carrying capacity.

Public Comments to the SLMP

The public comments to the SLMP show that stakeholders are more concerned with the causes of and solutions to overuse, than they are with describing it. There is also talk about the possibility of limiting use and introducing permits to control overuse and protect wilderness values. These comments are likely more focused on hard steps toward easing high-use problems because these public comments are addressing actual land management regulation and they hope their considerations will be taken into account.

The key point that is demonstrated through these public comments is that overuse was a serious concern at the time, as it is again today. Both stakeholders and regulators were worried about its effects on the land and the outdoor experience. This is evident in Peter S. Paine Jr's comment to *Adirondack Life* magazine in 1971, where he states that, "Severe cases of over use of lands, leading to erosion, littering and the destruction of the environment exist in certain areas, notably the high peaks region. Yet there are vast tracks which receive little or no use." Paine was the principal author of the SLMP, showing that regulators took the threat of overuse seriously, which is reflected on the regulation itself.

These concerns are shared by Paul W. Weld M.D. chairman of and speaking for the Genessee Valley Chapter of the ADK, and David Newhouse:

> Garbage dumps, especially near leantos in the High Peak Area should be eliminated and the concept of packing out of solid waste encouraged and enforced. Leanto areas should be maintained and regularly checked for conformity to the above by a carefully trained work corps. There is no reason why the unsightly areas near many leantos cannot be eliminated in the very near future. Though overuse of many areas is a problem, maluse [sic] is the greater problem. [Weld; written comment submitted to SLMP Public Hearing; Rochester, NY; May 18, 1972]

> Several aspects of the application of wilderness classification to the High Peaks Area have been of concern. Because of the rapid increase in backpack camping and tenting, frequently involving inexperienced people, the supervision of public use to precent starting of fires, pollution of streams and other damage to the wilderness resource present increasing problems. The hazards involved, especially in winter, present problems of rescue and aid to injured persons and the numbers of people in the area increase the possibility of fire. [Newhouse; written comment submitted to SLMP Public Hearing; Lake Placid, NY; May 15, 1972]

Weld argues that dumps near lean-tos and their immediate surroundings need eliminated. Fascinatingly, he also contends that "mal-use" of the land is a bigger problem than overuse. This aligns with how many of my contemporary respondents think about high-use, in that the land is not being overused, but being used inappropriately. Newhouse brings up another contemporary issue that my respondents make note of—inexperienced hikers. These hikers are argued to do more damage to the environment because they have not learned LNT practices. Newhouse links these inexperienced hikers to damage like fires and worries that they will be more prone to need rescue. These thoughts show that overuse was taken as seriously in the past as it is today.

Other comments note the destruction caused by overuse to argue that hard, maybe unpopular, approaches need to be taken to ease the situation. Philip Terrie, who became the preeminent Adirondack historian, and the Sages' from Syracuse/Jamesville submitted such comments:

> Finally, what the Agency terms "Recreational Use and Over-use": As anyone who has climbed Marcy in July or August is well aware some sort of quota system has to be applied to certain over-used regions, particularly of the eastern High Peaks. I hope that means of applying a system of limiting the number of persons in a particular wilderness area at one time and of directing those who cannot be accommodated in one area to another be explored as soon as possible. Why not this summer? [Philip Terrie; comment submitted to SLMP Public Hearing; Old Forge, NY; May 17, 1972]

> One of the major problems is that of numbers. Hikers and backpackers are killing alpine vegetation in the High Peaks Area. The trail to Marcy Dam from Heart Lake looks as if there was a buffalo stampede. We support efforts to distribute the people but are afraid this is insufficient. Hard and sometimes unpopular decisions must be made. The carrying capacity of an area must be measured and somehow a system set-up for limiting the usage to this capacity. Baxter State Park in Main uses a permit system that seems to work, as do certain National Forest wilderness areas in the West. We are in favor of such a scheme for trails and

> campsites in areas of the Adirondacks. [Martin and Samael Sage; comment submitted to SLMP Public Hearing; Old Forge, NY; May 17, 1972]

Both Terrie and the Sages discuss limiting use to take pressure off the resource. Terrie discusses the possibility of establishing a quota system for overused areas like the eastern High Peaks, with the hope that people who cannot be accommodated in these areas, are dispersed elsewhere. The Sages are also concerned with the High Peaks, particularly the alpine vegetation, which was greatly damaged at the time. They argue that a carrying capacity should be established and limits on use placed around it. For them, a permit system, like the one used in Baxter State Park and others out West, should be the solution to implement.

Many of these comments, like Terrie's and the Sage's, are very open toward limits on use and permits. Take the following comments as further evidence:

> Being familiar with the High Peaks area, we strongly support the guidelines listed in the Plan for remedying the over-use of the region. Strictly limiting the number of hikers and issuing permits for advance registration is a must. We also suggest limiting access to the area from Heart Lake campsite also. The inclusive private lands should be negotiated for at the earliest opportunity. [Seifried, Massaro, Seifired, Eckhert (relation unknown); comment submitted to SLMP Public Hearing; Old Forge, NY; May 17, 1972]

> "Recent conditions in the High Peaks area leads us to conclude that restrictions on usage density are essential for that region, and probably will be needed for other regions as usage increases. Too many people trying to enjoy a wilderness destroys the wilderness character and negates the purpose of the wilderness experience. We suggest that a reservation system be adopted for the High Peak region, with controlled access. A Conservation Officer at each entry point, equipped with a teletype connected to a reservation bank, may become a necessity if this area is to retain its wilderness nature. [Joel J. Fleck, Secretary Explorer Post 17; comment submitted to SLMP Public Hearing; Old Forge, NY; May 17, 1972]

Seifired et al. and Fleck believe that some type of permit system is needed in the High Peaks. The Sierra club also agrees with this assessment, stating that, "…a permit system and closure of areas are very acceptable and should be used where needed to prevent overuse." This group of individuals and organizations that submitted comments might simply be unique, but it is interesting to see so many people advocate for limits on use, since it is such an unpopular idea with outdoor recreationalists today.

Further, Fleck argues that limits on use might be necessary for the area to "retain its wilderness nature." This is a common theme in the comments. Stakeholders fear that overuse and crowding will threaten wilderness values. In their comments, Rochows of Ithaca and Tupper Lake, fear that the Adirondack Park is becoming so busy one cannot enjoy "a reasonable wilderness experience." To them, even wilderness areas have often become too crowded. Thus, there has long been a fear that too many people in the outdoors will ruin the experience.

Findings: Respondents' Views on the Causes of and Solutions to Overuse

Contemporary respondents from my interviews are concerned with causes and solutions to high-use problems. This section documents what the respondents believe are producing high-use and what they think can ease these problems.

Lack of Education causes Overuse | Better Education can Alleviate Overuse

Respondents regularly blame the damage caused by overuse on uninformed hikers that fail to practice proper outdoor etiquette and Leave No Trace (LNT) principles. They argue that this has become even more pressing with the rise of "new hikers" and "COVID hikers", which has brought in groups of inexperienced recreationalists into the mountains that are unfamiliar with backcountry etiquette. This group of respondents does have its concerns with overcrowding, as it will lead to more user impacts on the land, but they believe much of this impact can be diminished with better education.

Respondents argue that without proper education from sources like trail head stewards, summit stewards and forest rangers, overuse problems can quickly occur. To illustrate, the respondents talk about the impacts from uneducated hikers in several connected ways. Some stress that this lack of education is far more important than simply the number of people that come into the park. Take the following the statements:

WF: Do you think crowds are damaging the high peaks region ecologically?

> Matthew: *I don't think so. If they're educated*…if people would stay on the trails, it'd be fine, because the trails could take it, but some people [are] just not educated and they go off the trail and they'll leave waste on the trail and things like that…I mean, people that are, you know, *people are just leaving toilet paper right in the trails, they aren't following the rules, they just need better education for some of the hikers up there…the new people* [laughing]. [my emphasis]
>
> Jake: *But the ignorance of a lot of people who are hiking is a bigger issue [than overcrowding] as far as I'm concerned.* So, I think this Leave No Trace behind thing which is second nature to most of us who have been outdoors for a long time is a probably a good industry…*certainly part of the problem is [the] number of people, but it's also a lack of education of the people who are going into the wilderness and [without knowing] how to treat things.* [my emphasis]

Both Matthew and Jake make it clear that they believe a lack of education is more harmful to the land than crowds.

Following that line of thought, Mia an experienced trail builder and outdoor leader, opines about "new hikers" and other uneducated recreationalists, as well as the basic struggle of large groups of people entering wild areas:

> It's a gorgeous area [the High Peak], and the mountains are challenging and they're beautiful, and so *we are beginning to love them to death*. We went through something like this in the 70s as well. And it's reoccurring now. *And many of the people that are using the park are not familiar with basic trail etiquette, "Leave No Trace" and that sort of thing.* (laughing) So, we're finding…people desecrating the environment. Let's put it that way. Because they don't know any better. *If not, they're not really familiar with how, you know, how you respect the environment and yet use it without abusing* [it]. [my emphasis]

Mia eloquently expresses that uneducated hikers and uninformed "new hikers" frequently abuse and "desecrate" the park, but to her this has historical parallels. This is a phenomenon she and other respondents saw in the 1970s that was greatly alleviated with education. To Mia, this is another round of a cycle where we now again need better education and other solutions to reduce the damage from overuse.

A simple reading of Mia's comments here would make one think that she harbors ill will toward uninformed and new hikers, but that is not the case. What Mia and others are clarifying is that we simply need to do a better job of ensuring that uneducated hikers learn how to properly recreate in the backcountry, so they are not hurting the resource. Many interviewees note that we were all new at some point and we all made mistakes that violated LNT principles, and thus, we

must give inexperienced recreators some leeway. Genuine hostility to new recreators is shunned for this reason, except in extreme circumstances, like driving a Jeep Cherokee into Marcy Dam from an old jeep road that is closed to motor vehicles and travels a wilderness area. Mentioned by the respondents, this is an infamous example of abuse that caught the attention of the media and was endlessly discussed on social media.

In sum, the respondents discuss overuse as being caused by a lack of LNT education and ignorance toward trail etiquette held by particular recreators, mostly new ones. Overcrowding is not necessarily connected here but most see it having some influence. It is more that the damage produced from overuse is the product of people that are not "respecting" the space, than crowds alone. But it is key to remember that these respondents aren't placing the blame on these people's dispositions or bad intentions; they believe they are simply uneducated and if they knew better the problem would resolve itself.

The premise behind this line of thinking is that an individuals and groups can greatly reduce their impact on the land if they follow LNT guidelines. The respondents believe that a considerable amount of the harm produced by overuse is the product of hikers being ignorant of LNT principles. Given this, they argue that one of the best and easiest solutions to overuse is to educate hikers on best practices. For example, Kara argues that summit and trailhead steward programs have been effective in easing ecological and trail damage caused by recreational use. Kara remarks that in terms of management, these stewardship programs are economical to carry out and they are proven to be effective. As Kara states, "It's the cheapest option. It's the cheapest investment you can really make. It doesn't cost that much money to have a person on the ground…and we know it works…We know that if you put an educator up in a fragile ecosystem you can change behavior. We know it changes behavior." From Kara's perspective, much can be

done to handle high-use, like educational stewardship programs, before we consider limiting use through systems that limit the number of recreators, like permit systems.

Paul shares Kara's sentiments when he describes how effective summit and trailhead steward programs have been in the Adirondack Park. He emphasizes their use of science and data as part of their success in educating and changing the behaviors of visitors. Paul stresses the success of education programs, when he states that, "Overall, education in the form of stewards, rangers, and assistant rangers has proven to be a massive difference maker. Trash is down, vandalism is down…education is powerful." Most interestingly, Paul goes further into detail here, explaining how, even with sharp rise in use, many aspects of the backcountry environment have improved over the last 20 years. As Paul states, "Even in these heavy times [of use], summits are better protected than they ever were; vegetation is growing back. If you go to the high peaks, as much as I do…[and you] hear about all this overuse stuff, you have to reconcile that with the fact that the High Peaks region is [in] far better shape now than it was 20 years ago." Parts of that statement would likely be controversial to many of the respondents, but practically all would agree that through education, there has been tremendous success in the recovery of the alpine tundra, as well as a marked reduction in litter from the past.

Daniel, a local business owner and hiker that has completed a grid of the 46ers, details how the process of a trail head stewardship works when he explains that, "stewards actually assess people as they're walking up and say, 'Hey, like…well, what kind of experience do you wanna have today? I see your footwear and [it] doesn't look like you're carrying…enough gear or...when you get to the top there's no concession stand up there.' And people like that reach people really well." Not only do people learn proper behaviors, but they learn what they need to enjoy the day and be safe; a process visitors are responsive to. At popular spots this is

particularly necessary, as Travis, an environmental scientist and officer in an outdoor organization, describes, "…you see people going up Cascade [in] furs and, you know, big Ray Ban sunglasses, and a single bottle of water in their hand, and flip flops. It's craziness. Absolutely. Craziness." Some of the respondents express that recreators are especially responsive to stewards, given that individuals "want to hear from a person" and not scroll a screen for information. Laurel, a leader and officer in several outdoor organizations, mentions that educating and preparing individuals for their hike as a trailhead steward at the Cascade Mountain trailhead also lets her, "…come away from those days feeling really, really good." So, according to the respondents, trailhead stewardship and other forms of in-person education are rewarding and a superior way to educate recreators on trail etiquette.

Wilson, a wilderness advocate and guidebook writer, complements Laurel statements, when he highlights the importance of trailhead stewards and other officials that may be able to communicate with recreationalists before they venture into the backcountry, like DEC rangers, because of how effective they can be at guiding behavior. Given its tangible results, Wilson has great respect for the summit steward program, but he is insistent that there should be more officials and stewards in the front country educating people before they can get into trouble and/or do any damage to the resource. Summit stewards are effective, but they can only help protect summits, whereas trailhead stewards (like Laurel) and forest rangers can educate recreators before they enter the backcountry. Therefore, this comment and others express that recreators need to be educated on multiple fronts, including at the trailhead, on the summits, and to a lesser extent, on the DEC's webpage which explains LNT principles and lists trail conditions.

Lack of Forest Rangers Causing Overuse | We need more Rangers to Ease Overuse

A sizable number of respondents believe that overuse is being worsened by a lack of forest rangers and/or a shortage of DEC funding. The perceived dearth of rangers in the Adirondack Park is a contentious issue that is often discussed in the media and by Adirondack stakeholders. These rangers are employed by the DEC and their supposedly insufficient numbers are often attributed to the DEC being poorly funded. This deficient funding also makes it difficult for the DEC maintain infrastructure and other functions. Respondents often note that in comparison to the past, the Adirondack Park was better staffed with rangers who had less land to patrol. Today, this smaller number of rangers are often tied up with search and rescue operations and law enforcement efforts, making it less common for recreators to encounter rangers in non-emergency situations. These respondents make two major arguments in relation to ranger staffing: (1) that being overstretched has taken rangers off the "frontline of education" where they can help keep recreators informed and prepared for their outdoor excursion from the start; and (2) more rangers are needed to better enforce the rules, regulations, and laws of the Adirondack Park, which are often violated to the detriment of the environment.

Laurel explains in detail the need for more rangers, given the educational role they play:

> …we really need the presence of educators. *The number one person to be doing that would be our New York State Forest Rangers*. And they are stretched incredibly thin. If you look back in fairly recent history…you will see that there were many more forest rangers. So that the average hiker could go out on a trail, and hike, and encounter [a ranger], probably half the time they were out there. And now I hike at least once a week, and often more throughout New York State Catskills and Adirondacks. *And it [has] literally been years since I have seen a forest ranger out on a hike*. I have seen forest rangers on a trail because they were involved in [a] rescue. And I have seen forest rangers when they were invited for a special event. But to just run into a forest ranger who was out on routine patrol is something I haven't seen in years. So, *I think they're the frontline of the education that all of us could use*, myself included, because I may not be up to date on the fact that that perhaps there's an aggressive bear somewhere, perhaps bee's nest somewhere, perhaps there is a flooded section of trail from beaver up ahead. [my emphasis]

For Laurel, rangers are key for their educational capacity, something which is now lacking because there simply are not enough rangers to play a serious educational role. As Laurel explains, rangers are stretched thin now, but in the past, it was common to casually encounter

them while recreating in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. Clearly, Laurel and other respondents are disappointed with the decline in ranger presence. As established, most of the respondents find education as the key to addressing overuse, and forest rangers are an important faction to impart this education. Laurel even believes they should be "the number one person" to provide this education, which should keep people safe and protect the resource.

Both Mia and Thomas share similar sentiments, as they argue that there needs to be more rangers who focus on education. Thomas, a guidebook writer and prolific hiker, states that the DEC, "need more rangers, but they need more rangers whose approach is to educate, not to punish or demean," and such rangers can educate so users will, "manage themselves, and the terrain, and the resources better." Thomas argues that recreators respond well to this type of treatment and education, which makes them want to come back again, but in a more responsible and prepared manner. For Thomas and many other respondents, it is important to have well-tempered rangers that are focused on education because that protects the resource and the safety of recreators.

Mia directly says that the DEC needs more rangers that, "educate people about trail etiquette, not getting lost, leave no trace, and carry(ing) the 10 essentials." She goes on to say, "I think I'd like to see the state actually fund hiring people at trailheads to educate people about the trails." Mia would like to see more DEC funding for having educators at the trailheads, before recreators start their hikes. Though, Mia fails to specify whether that be rangers or trailhead stewards. Regardless, she is arguing there needs to be more DEC funding funneled into education via the addition of rangers and support for education at trailheads. Wilson says agrees with such sentiments, as he argues that "upfront trail interaction" by "uniformed staff" like a DEC ranger, other DEC employee, or other trained party, is instrumental in "guiding behavior on

the trail." There is a clear desire to see more funding and resources (rangers) put into educating recreators right at the trailheads.

A smaller group of respondents argue that there also needs to be more rangers to properly enforce the laws and regulations of the park. There are many rules for recreators that are designed to protect the resource which are sometimes violated. For example, camping is prohibited in non-designated spots above 3,500 feet in elevation to protect these more sensitive ecosystems. Setting up camp in alpine zones, like near the summit of Mt. Marcy, is seen as especially egregious, and will make quite a stir in the hiking community if discovered. According to the respondents, more rangers would lead to better enforcement of rules like these. Keep in mind these respondents do not mean rangers should be focused on enforcement at the cost of education. These respondents do find education a key responsibility of rangers, but they also emphasize the need for enforcement. As Nolan, a fire tower steward and climber, states, "I think…enforcement is probably…[the] missing element there…laws are on the books." Madalyn also says we have all this legislation, but "how do you enforce them" when there are only so many rangers with law enforcement abilities. The theme is that rangers are needed for education and to enforce the rules.

To bring these details together, respondents argue that more DEC funding is needed to provide more, and better resourced forest rangers will ease the impact of overuse. They believe this will blunt the impact of overuse because more rangers will mean that there will be more rangers available to communicate with the public. As discussed, recreators rarely encounter rangers outside of emergencies and official events. Running into rangers while hiking or at the beginning of a hike is now relatively rare. They argue that more rangers will make it possible to have more roving forest rangers in the backcountry and more rangers at the trailheads, where

they can talk to hikers before they start their journey. This theme overlaps with the previous theme, in that it emphasizes the importance of education in easing overuse. More rangers would also mean better enforcement of rules that are meant to protect the ecologies of the Adirondack Park.

Bad Trails and Poor Infrastructure Create Overuse | Better Trails and Infrastructure will Alleviate Overuse

Respondents often blame the existence of badly designed trails and other poorly maintained infrastructure for the degradations caused by overuse. In this case, if recreational infrastructure were better built, they argue, it would both greatly alleviate the damage produced by overuse and allow more recreationalists to use the land with less of an impact. For these respondents crowds are only a concern when they overtax poorly built trails and other infrastructure, they are not necessarily the cause of overuse. The trails in the Adirondack Park (especially the High Peaks Area) and the Northeast as a whole, were built long before sustainable trail building became a priority. Switchbacks, manageable grades, and other sustainable trail building tactics common out West are rarely seen in the Northeast. Respondents point out this legacy of bad trails and argue that sustainably built trails are needed to ease overuse and also highlight other infrastructure shortcomings.

Badly built trails are the most frequent issue respondents bring up when they discuss the connection between infrastructure and overuse. Josh, a retired professor and officer in an outdoor club, argues that the old trails in the park were made by simply following drainages straight up the mountains, creating trails that are too steep, making them become extremely prone to erosion. As he vents, "…we're all frustrated [by how] the trails were laid out by old man Phelps," and "if I had a magic wand and 100 million dollars, we would…redo a lot of the trails

to make them much more self-sustainable, hardened, [and] ecologically friendly for the volume of traffic up there." To explain, old man Phelps refers to Orson Schoefield Phelps (1817-1905), or colloquially Old Mountain Phelps, who was a legendary Adirondack guide that laid out many trails, including the first trail up Mt. Marcy (Forty-sixers 2011).

Humorously, Josh opines that years ago, he and a group of "trail people" tried to count the number of switchbacks in the Adirondack Park offhand, and they could only come up with five. He does acknowledge this has changed today with the addition of a few new modern trails, like the one up to the ridge of Jay Mountain, but it still stands that vast majority of trails in the park are dated and a product of a long-ago history. This legacy has left the area with trails that are unable to handle the number of people (crowds) that are using the trails today, leading to overuse, or what Josh calls it, "[an] ecological disaster."

Parking is another infrastructure issue that is regularly mentioned by the respondents, though the state's actual management of this will be covered in more detail below in the "*poor management*" section. As discussed, many popular trailheads have little in the way of parking, making it difficult for recreators to find spots on busy days. Further, even larger parking areas, like the Loj, often get overwhelmed. Daniel claims that the Adirondack Park has "more of a parking problem than anything else" and that enhancing shuttle services may ease the problem. Better parking would lead to a better experience for Daniel; however, he does not detail how he thinks this would reduce overuse. Building on the thoughts of Daniel and Dean, Laurel believes that a park wide shuttle system, like ones utilized in the national parks, could greatly enhance the infrastructure of the Adirondack Park. This would alleviate the chaos of the parking areas and the war for parking.

Matching with most of the respondents, Alina, a climber, high-angle rescue volunteer, and a leader in a climbing organization, contends that the park has less of an overcrowding problem and more of an infrastructure problem. For her, overcrowding is only an issue now because the infrastructure of the park cannot handle the crowds. Visiting major parks throughout the United States has shown Alina that these issues can be better handled. As she states, "I think that having traveled across the country to various national parks and other big recreational areas, you see all of this traffic…and just having proper parking lots, having bathroom facilities, having proper trail maintenance to support the volume of people [does a lot]." For Alina, better infrastructure, which is evident in national parks and other major destinations, can greatly improve how an area handles crowding.

These respondents are clear in their belief that overuse is the product of poor infrastructure, not crowding. Better trails, proper parking lots, better privy availability, and so forth, can manage the increasing number of recreationalists that are visiting the park. As Sam sums it up, "…I would love to see the state invest in infrastructure, which really to me…means [managing] human waste, trail infrastructure, and then education [programs], [and] stewardship programs." For the respondents there are many avenues to improve the park's infrastructure. Most notably, the respondents believe that better trails are of paramount importance.

Poor Management Worsens Overuse | Better Management Can Ease Overuse

Overlapping with and an expression of the "bad trails and poor infrastructure" theme, is the argument that poor management of the land and recreation is worsening overuse. This section discusses how respondents argue that management decisions can produce and worsen overuse, and how those choices have led to the poor infrastructure just discussed. Many of the respondents believe that the state has failed to properly manage the resource, accelerating

degradations from overuse. They specifically identify the management of parking as a primary management failure. Additionally, the respondents contend that the DEC's structure and underfunding has aggravated these problems.

One of the most prominent management issues brought up by the respondents is the state's management of parking, specifically the state using limits on parking to control crowds and cut off potentially dangerous parking. The respondents roundly believe that using parking as a proxy to control crowds has been a failure. As Mackenzie explains, "…the approach [the state's], thus far, as far as I can tell, has just been, 'Well, if we limit the parking available, then fewer people will come.' Which is not true. That's never been true." As many of the respondents explain, limiting parking has never worked to reduce the crowds, instead it has just led to recreationalists parking farther and farther away, sometimes to dangerous and illegal parking spots. On busy days hikers might add four to six miles onto already long hikes because they cannot park in the ideal parking area. Clearly this has not worked as the state intended.

Benjamin argues that there simply is not enough parking for the number of people that the backcountry can manage. For him, this limited parking often causes crowding and other issues in the front country because people are bunched together. As Benjamin states:

> …as it is now, there are certain areas, at least here in the Keen Valley area that [have] inadequate parking for what would probably [be] an acceptable carrying [capacity] in the backcountry. And so, it creates a sense of overcrowding in the front [country] and issues of safety.

As Benjamin explains, there are *certain* areas, *not* all areas, of the backcountry that can manage more recreators. These areas are poorly served because there is not enough parking for those that want to venture out farther. Instead, limited parking areas are mostly filled up with people that only venture into the heavily used front country of wild areas. The result is that the front country feels crowded and some recreators are pushed into unsafe parking areas.

As Alina points out, limiting parking also creates competition for parking between rock climbers and hikers because hikers are being pushed into parking areas that are usually used by climbers. Alina describes this issue at length:

> They [the DEC] say they're trying to limit usage through parking lots, and that's never an appropriate management solution. And from a climber's perspective, it's actually made a huge competition between user groups because many hikers are using traditionally used parking lots for climbers as trailheads for hiking. And hikers will arrive…currently it's as early as 3:00 AM in the morning, but, you know [more often], 5, 6, 7 in the morning to go hiking for the day. And most climbers tend to arrive a little later than that…waiting for the weather to warm up or whatever (laughs)…It's created a competition.

Alina's description of the parking situation shows that there is competition among and between different types of recreationalists. Hikers using traditional parking areas used by climbers can also create safety issues. Many climbing parking areas have no access to official hiking trails, and instead only have access to herd paths and trails that go to the cliffs. Alina explains, "…there is…a safety concern, we don't want people going to the cliff that are unprepared or think that they can scramble around or walk around to the top, and potentially get into a bad situation." The competition for parking, which has been made worse by management choices, can be dangerous since it may push hikers to paths that are beyond the typical hiker's skills.

Some respondents believe that poor management is the result of structural problems within the DEC. According to many of the respondents, part of the issue is that the DEC is generally underfunded. They simply do not have the money and people to institute the changes many of the respondents want to see. Widescale education programs, enough rangers to be at all the major trailheads, rebuilding trail networks, are largely beyond the DEC's means.

Regardless, according to the respondents, there are other problems with DEC that create mismanagement. Travis argues that the DEC lacks the expertise that is needed to manage the park properly and that they are very insular. As Travis states, "[DEC staff] don't' reach outside of the region to see what other wilderness areas [are doing]," and though there have been

improvements with the unit management plans, "…those need professional environmental planners involved…not people that are learning on the job." To these respondents, the structure of the DEC generates bad management and overuse. This is mostly a product of underfunding which hamstrings the DEC, and this is worsened by a its insularity and lack of expertise. To be fair, though not mentioned by the respondents, being insular and understaffed with experts, might also be a product of underfunding.

Most of the respondents believe that there is a slew of management practices that the state should be doing differently to better manage and reduce overuse in the Adirondack Park. Infrastructure problems, like unsustainable trails, privy availability, parking, and so forth are made worse by poor management. The structure of the DEC and its lack of funding worsen these management failures. As the respondents make clear, parking is a notable management failure. According to them, the state has only increased the competition for parking and pitted user group against user group. Their attempts to control crowds through parking have been a failure. It has also made the social experience of recreating much worse, since individuals must endure parking wars on busy days. Another management issue not yet discussed is the perceived failure of attempting to disperse hikers to reduce use in highly used areas. To many of the respondents, this has yielded few tangible results, and they argue for a different approach.

Solutions, Dispersal V Sacrifice Zones

A common practice that is used by land managers to deal with overcrowding and overuse is to encourage visitors to frequent areas that see less recreators than high-use areas; a practice known as dispersal (see HPAG 2021). This strategy is employed in the Adirondack Park, especially in the High Peaks region. The DEC provides lists of alternative hikes to substitute for

more popular hikes, where the resource is strained, and parking lots fills up fast. The intent is to disperse recreators to alleviate this strain on the land.

Dispersal is a popular and old approach to addressing overcrowding and overuse. Many parks throughout the US use this tactic and it has been talked about in the Adirondack Park since at least the formation of the SLMP. During the public comment review for the SLMP (1971 and 1972), many remarks were made that advocate for spreading use outside of busy areas. Some of these comments bemoan that the High Peaks region sees so much use while other areas of the park see so little use. In a letter submitted to the Lake Placid meeting in 1972, Elizabeth Pasti of Plattsburgh comments, "Hopefully the plan [SLMP] will truly encourage increased use of the little used southern parts of the Park, so that the very heavy usage of the High Peak area will not be allowed to ruin the fragile ecology of the area." Dispersal was also on the minds of the SLMP's architects. The principal author of the SLMP, Peter S. Paine Jr., commented in the 1971 Spring edition of *Adirondack Life* that, "Severe cases of over use of lands, leading to erosion, littering and the destruction of the environment exist in certain areas, notably the high peaks region. Yet there are vast tracks which receive little or no use." Given this history and the widespread use of dispersal, it is unsurprising that some of the respondents are supportive of this practice, finding it a viable solution to overuse and parking issues. As will be made clear though, support for dispersal is a minority position among the respondents.

Matthew and Josh are among the interviewees that support dispersal. Josh bemoans that the state is failing to get that message out that, "…there are so many other incredible places other than the high peaks. So how do we…get people to areas that [are] not as well known, which are wonderful hikes." Matthew, a former officer in an outdoor club, echoes this sentiment when argues, "…if we can get them interested in some other places, besides just the high peaks, it

might help…it's a big park." These arguments reflect current land management policies that prioritize dispersal.

Nonetheless, dispersal has become subject to scrutiny both inside and outside of the Adirondack Park. Critics, including many respondents, claim that dispersal only pushes recreationalists into areas that are even less equipped to manage recreators, which leads to overuse in these alternative locations. Just as important, dispersal does little to reduce the numbers of people that visit popular areas, nor does it influence their behavior to be more line with LNT principles while they are there. According to the respondents who oppose dispersal, the best option is to create "sacrifice zones" that can withstand hordes of visitors without damaging the resource. They term these "sacrifice zones" because these places must include heavily developed infrastructure that is often frowned upon in the backcountry and especially within wilderness management. Creating these sacrifice zones would allow use to be focused in particular areas that are already subject to high-use, and this would take pressure off the greater resource.

Paul opposes the "default assumption that dispersing people is a good idea" and believes concentrating use is a better practice. He argues that dispersal is an "escape" from an ecological standpoint, because, "…there's growing evidence that dispersal is bad for ecosystems. That it'd be much better to, if you want to protect the wilderness, concentrate people at Cascade; concentrating people…going up Mount Marcy, and try to reduce the impact on many other trails." Laurel shares these concerns, when she details how dispersal has created havoc at lesser used areas, producing overuse on trails that see little maintenance. Hana, a conservation social scientist, represents many of the respondents' thoughts on dispersal when she states:

> And I'll say this…I would rather see some sacrificial areas with a lot of people being funneled into one place where management can happen in a functional way rather than spreading this problem out over the entire park. Because there's not enough management resources to manage the whole park.

These respondents see dispersal practices as missteps that spread environmental degradations throughout the park, instead of reducing them. Their thoughts express more modern conclusions about dispersal and its failures.

Dispersal is a long used and popular approach to overcrowding and overuse in the US. Drawing on Paul, it has become the “default” tactic to deal with these problems. In line with this, some of the respondents do support dispersal. However, the tide has been changing and dispersal practices are now being reconsidered as evidence of their effectiveness is being challenged. In the Adirondack Park, more and more people are criticizing the dispersal of hikers to less used areas as those areas are starting to face damage from overuse. Fitting with this trend, far more of the respondents oppose dispersal than support it. Instead, the respondents argue for concentrating use in areas that can be made to better manage it, which will take pressure of less visited areas.

Peak and Hiking Challenges Increase Use

There has been a proliferation of "peak challenges" inside that Adirondack Park which challenge hikers to climb a list of mountains to be included in a numbered roster of finishers and/or to join a club. Finishing these challenges usually includes the award of a patch and finisher number. The oldest of these peak challenges, and one the oldest in the US, is the Adirondack 46er. Becoming a 46er requires hiking all 46 peaks above 4,000 feet in the Adirondack Park. These peaks were selected from elevation figures listed in the 1927 book *Peaks and People of the Adirondacks* (Forty-sixers 2011). This challenge is easily the most sought after in the park today, and arguably the most difficult.

Numerous smaller peak challenges have sprouted up in the last 20 years, including the Fire Tower Challenge, Saranac 6er, Lake George 12ster, Lake Placid 9er, Tupper Lake Triad, and the Fulton Lake Trifecta. Many respondents blame these challenges for spreading overuse

across the park. The mentality of this complaint is that the challenges are attracting more people into areas and mountains that are not prepared for the volume of recreators the challenges are producing. Travis expresses these critiques and argues that these challenges fail to "compensate" for the damage they create:

> Going to places that you expect [it] to be remote…are no longer remote because of people being there. The promotional activities, both the Adirondack 46ers [and] the Saranac 6er, the Lake Placid 9er…the Fire Tower Challenge, all those that lead to significant overuse for the resource without compensation for the damage that it causes…the 46ers spend a lot of time and money and resources trying to do trail work but they're being far outstripped by what damage is happening.

Not only does Travis argue that these challenges generate more overuse, but he also contends that these challenges give little back to the community and resource.

The Saranac 6er is run by the town of Saranac Lake to benefit the area and draw in more tourists, though its generous success has created high-use that has caused problems for residents of the general area. As Hana notes, she lives close to one of the challenge's hikes and the increased traffic and overflow parking from the challenge has created issues for residents. These irritants have generated calls for ending the Saranac 6er which are gaining serious traction.

Travis argues that the 46er club does not contribute much to the Adirondacks in comparison to the use they create. Other respondents challenge that assertation. For example, Laurel and Madalyn, both leaders, stewards, and organizers in the club, detail the many ways the 46ers give back to the land. Madalyn for example, volunteers as a summit steward; a program which the 46ers contribute a significant amount of money. Laurel often volunteers as a trailhead steward in a program that the 46ers run and primarily fund. The 46ers have long run a correspondent program where a 46er mentors an aspiring 46er, giving them tips for completing the challenge and helping them learn LNT. The respondents also detail that the 46ers put on various outdoor workshops and contribute to "adopt a highway." In sum, the 46ers provide

money for conservation and education, and they volunteer thousands of hours to outdoor programs.

In sum, many respondents blame the explosion of peak challenges for increased high-use in areas which only used to see low-use. They believe that this has created cases of overuse that have damaged the trails and the environment of the backcountry. In some cases, they have created chaos for residents by overwhelming parking areas. On the whole, the respondents do not want to see more of these challenges come about. In some cases, they would like to see some of these challenges end.

More and Better Data is Needed for Solutions

A subgroup of respondents, made up mostly of recreation management professionals, argue that creating solid solutions to high-use/overuse/overcrowding requires far more data and research on the problem. To start, Sam mentions that there has been little data collection of recreational and natural resource impacts on the land, making it difficult to know the extent and nuance of the problem. Sam also notes that barely anything has been done to measure how the social experience of being in the wild had been affected by high-use. These sentiments are expressed when Sam states:

> …I think there's still a lot of data collection that needs to happen…[there] hasn't been a lot of data collection and monitoring. And not only monitor…recreation impacts or natural resource impacts [but impacts] of the social experience that we all enjoy in the park too. And, 'cause it's kind of the sliding scale, these perceptions of wilderness…especially in the High Peaks region, and how is that impacting visitors? I think it's an issue and…we need to study it more.

With these words, we see that Sam argues that more data must be collected to properly understand what high use is doing to the resource. As mentioned earlier, Sam (and Kara) avoid the term overuse because it assumes there is degradation without the data collection to back it up. When Sam speaks about the impacts to the social experience of wilderness, he is referring to a major concern that some hold: that the experience of being in the wilderness is ruined when there

are too many people in the backcountry. Though this is less of a concern among the respondents, it still a key issue in land management. The manner in which an individual's experience of the wild is influenced by high-use is of course, subjective. Quiet, solitude, or however one would like to define it, is often thought about as one of the intangible qualities of wilderness; something that is clearly difficult for a land manager to measure. Sam realizes this problem, thus when he speaks to these impacts, he mentions that perceptions of wilderness are on sliding scale. Measuring one's social experience of the outdoors in relation to high use is tricky, but it still a key element of this data collection. In fact, it is the focus of most scholars that study the effects of overcrowding.

Sam argues that the goal of this detailed data collection and monitoring is to fully create iterative management policies, where data-based approaches are put into action, then measured for results, then fine-tuned as you go along. As Sam explains, "We need to come up…with some solutions and really take…an iterative management approach and…collect data, make management decisions, see how that management decision impacts things, and then tweak things…into the future." This iterative management approach is the among the most detailed of the science-based solutions that respondents offer to the issue of high-use.

Both Kara and Paul discuss different but related approaches to overuse that are dependent on the careful collection of data. Kara notes that "we need more baseline data" because it doesn't exist, and Paul argues that we need, "science and data" to move forward with solutions. With such data at hand, Kara believes we should build a plan like Sam's iterative approach, where there are points of action for when damage thresholds are met. Kara explains this in the context of DEC's proposed Visitor Management Framework:

> …we can kind of put these caps in place and then once we reach those [caps] being 'like, okay, well, what is the next step for how we manage [this]'…say you get 10% in one area of vegetation damage, 'what is the

> next action?' You have these action items. And then [if there is] even more damage, 'what's the next step we take'?

Kara has a clear science-based vision for a management framework that would address high-use, which works by implementing a set of "action items" when certain thresholds are reached. Like Sam's proposal, Kara's proposal for dealing with high-use is a complex but sensible system based on data. As Kara says, "we just really need…concise decision-making," in a framework that addresses high-use. This evident in both Sam's iterative approach and Kara's framework (based on DEC's work), as they both have clear steps to take based on what the data says for the situation. Interestingly, Kara claims she is no expert, but she is very well educated on high-use and works professionally in recreation. Many, including myself, would consider her an expert.

Aligning with the others, Paul generally says that science needs to be a bigger part of the approach to easing high-use. For Paul, too much in the Adirondack Park has been guided by anecdotes and politics surrounding overuse. The responses Paul has seen so far to crowds and high-use have simply been guided by people's impressions of the (possible) problem, not science. In some of these situations, he believes people are playing politics to work out their own aims for the parks, though he does not specify. Likewise, when discussing high-use, Ben is "hesitant to use the word overused" because we have no assessment of carrying capacity or limits of acceptable change. Work needs to be done to establish these management practices and that is reliant on data collection. Without more data, claiming that the resource is overused "implies that the soliton is to reduce the amount of use (laughs)."

To conclude, for this group of respondents, finding proper solutions to the perils of high-use is dependent on the collection of data to create science driven approaches. Without this data collection we fail to know what types of impacts high-use has on the land and the social

experiences of recreators. For the respondents, better data collection is the key to creating effective strategies that can address high-use.

Permits

The possible introduction of use permits in the Adirondack Park, specifically in the High Peaks Wilderness Area, has long been a specter to many recreationalists. The idea of using permits in the Adirondack Park goes back until at least the formation of the SLMP. During that process, there were many discussions about the possibility of a permit system in the future of the park. According to writer and experienced Adirondack recreator Lawrence Gooley in the *Adirondack Almanack*, permits have come into discussion many times since then, including in the late 70s and the 80s (Gooley 2016). Very much from a recreator's perspective, Gooley argues that these were "scary proposals." Limiting use and permits also came up during the 1990s Citizen's Advisory Committee for the High Peaks Wilderness Area Unit Management Plan. During those hearings, many Adirondack Club members spoke out against permits, by arguing that overuse use is overstated. McMartin (2002) claims that these efforts did substantial damage to limiting use in the High Peaks and that it was in the financial interest of the club.

Yet, talk about permits has returned today as use of the park and the High Peaks has once again increased. ADK certainly has not come out to support limiting access to the park or the use of permits, but other groups have. The Adirondack Council has increasingly been calling attention to and discussing overuse in the High Peaks and they have become far more open to the institution of a permit system. Among this push for limiting access, as discussed, the first permit system has been added to the Adirondack Park on AMR property. Though it is called a reservation system, it is in all but name, a permit system. This system controls access to the

public easement trails on AMR property, which can be used to access several High Peaks that are on state land. Thus, in a limited way, permits have entered the Adirondack Park.

However, respondents generally oppose the introduction of permits throughout the park and the greater High Peaks Wilderness Area. Keep in mind that most of the interviews were conducted before the introduction of the AMR's pilot "reservation" system and their comments rarely have any relation to this program. But some of the respondents clearly knew this was going to happen in some way, and some respondents even commented that AMR is the one place that where permits could reasonably be used. It was clear some change was coming to how public access was managed at AMR.

Barriers to Permits

Respondents largely believe that a permit system in the Adirondack Park is unworkable for a number of reasons. Chiefly among these reasons is the belief that the park's physical structure is untenable to a permit system. They argue that there are simply too many entryways to access the public lands of the park to seriously enforce any type of permit system. To the respondents, instituting a permit system is just too hard with the park's structure and far beyond the state's capabilities. As Wilson argues, "…if we can't control parking…I'm gonna agree with people who say we wouldn't be able to control a permit system either."

Laurel and Paul further spell out why they believe a permit system would be unfeasible in the Adirondack Park:

> Laurel: I do not believe because of the basic structure of the park that a permit system would work. I do not believe that it could be enforced. Um, there are just too many entrances to our Adirondack Park trails. And I cannot imagine how much money it would cost to set up a system and to actually make the system enforceable.
>
> Paul: …we don't have the environment for it [permits]. We don't have gates. We don't have entrance areas. We don't have ranger headquarters like national parks. We don't have a way to funnel people like Acadia [National Park]. We have 6 million acres, the size of Massachusetts with hundreds of access points. You can pull off the road and go hiking anywhere you want…so, [it's] pretty hard to find a way to manage and enforce a permit system.

Both Laurel and Paul illustrate that the “basic structure” of the park with its “hundreds of access points” makes it far too hard to run a permit system in the park.

This structure, along with the lack of state funding, make it hard for the respondents to imagine a properly managed permit system with enforcement. As Josh comments, “I don't know how you'd enforce it.” Similarly, after explaining the issues with the park’s structure, Kara argues, “we don't have the personnel to even like enforce those permits.” For Kara the park would need radically more forest rangers and DEC personnel to go out and check permits to make a permit system work. As Kara explains:

> DEC is greatly underfunded. They do not have enough staff…they're constantly just kind of out dealing with rescues. There are days where they're doing multiple rescues at a time…so, you know, they're stretched thin as it is. And so just to think about, you know, putting in a permit system, you would want to greatly increase the amount of DEC staff that's able to implement and enforce a permit system.

The current funding and staffing reality for the DEC, means a permit system is unmanageable according to Kara.

In sum, these respondents contend that the use of permits is impractical in the Adirondack Park. The structure of the Adirondack Park, with its myriad of access points, is vastly different from national parks and other wild areas that widely use permits, as they have limited and controllable entry points. The Adirondack Park is also different from those other parks because, as Kara says, “people live and work in the Adirondack Park.” No other park in the US has people living and working in it at the scale of the Adirondack Park. Trying to limit access points would have serious consequences for daily life in the park. Further, setting up a permit system is far beyond the current capabilities of the state. The DEC would need vastly more funding and resources to institute and enforce a permit system, given the park’s structure.

Against Permits: Prioritizing the "Public" in Public Lands

The vast majority of respondents oppose permits for a variety of reasons. When I asked Matthew about his thoughts on permits, he responded by saying, “I think you’re going to find that a lot of hikers are going to be against that [permits].” To put it mildly, his prediction was correct. In addition to the structural barriers discussed above, respondents raise many other reasons for opposing permits.

Unsurprisingly from a sample of individuals that all recreate seriously in the outdoors, many find that a permit system would be restrictive to their freedom to hike, climb, ski, and recreate. Lucy sums up this sentiment when she states, “I think it's gonna be a pain [permits]; I don't want to have to get a permit to go on a day hike.” Further Lucy does not believe crowding and overuse have gotten to the point where such “drastic of a change” is needed. For her, if you hate crowds, you can easily strategize to avoid them. For example, she often hikes on Sundays instead of Saturdays, since Saturday is the busier day.

Daniel shares similar opinions to Lucy. He dislikes permits for several reasons, but he is chiefly aggravated by their possibility because he likes to have flexibility in his hiking schedule. To illustrate, if Daniel gets up on a Wednesday and decides he wants to go on a hike on that Wednesday, he does not want to be incumbered by a permit system that may not allow him to go on a hike that is “literally in my [his] front lawn.” As a proprietor of a hostel, along with his partner Tara, the High Peaks are quickly at his disposal. Locals in general, and among the sample, are often vexed by the idea of permits because they are particularly stifling to people that can easily go into the mountain whenever they please.

Further, Daniel and Tara want the park to continue with its “public and private marriage” that allows people to visit, live in, and run businesses in the park, without degrading the resource. To them a permit system might threaten this marriage by deterring people from visiting the park.

They also have philosophical and ethical concerns with permits. Daniel argues that with so much money invested in the park, no one should be turned away from it. Tara states, “It's the people's park. How do you set those sort of limits on it, right? I don't know.”

Dean and Nolan also share the belief that permits will drive people away from the park and that there are ethical issues with limiting use. When I asked Dean how he feels about permits he responded by saying he is, “strongly against [them]…because [they are] just an effort to discourage people from enjoying what is theirs.” He continues by explaining that, “New Yorkers have paid for this gigantic piece of socialism…we own it. It’s ours. So, let’s share it. We all have a right to it.” For Dean, permits not only deter people from coming to the park, but they also infringe upon our rights to experience it.

Nolan follows this line of thought when he describes permits as a “dangerous precedent” for public lands, with the emphasis on ‘public.’ Nolan also worries that if permits are too difficult to obtain it would “deter like a lot of people from coming to the area” and possibly hurt local businesses. Permits are an “extreme option for Nolan and he ponders, “how a jurisdiction could limit…access to resources.” Along with Dean, Daniel, and Tara, Nolan sees ethical problems with restricting the use of public lands.

On the land management front, both Sam and Kara argue that permits should be a “last resort.” Sam emphasizes that permits have to be in the “land manger’s toolbox” but at the moment, we are not at that stage. Kara states that before permits are implemented, we must, “…try all these other things [education, etc.] and then if pretty much everything else doesn’t work, then maybe in some locations, limitations might make sense.” Ben explains:

> I think that it's possible that [permits] would be necessary in the high peaks, but I think without a planning process that really defines what the problems are, how much we've exceeded any indicators or thresholds in terms of natural resource impacts or social impacts in terms of wilderness perception, and then also invested in the education and the infrastructure…I think it's just too early to even be, to be discussing them as something…we should be considering right now.

For Ben, we do not have nearly enough data to even be thinking about permits at this point. In sum, for these respondents, that work closely with land managers, permits are a long way off.

Permits are almost wholly rejected by the participants. The structure of the park makes such a system infeasible to them. Many are concerned that permits would impede on their freedom to enjoy the mountains. Others fear it would deter people from visiting the Adirondacks and harm local businesses. Among these sentiments is the belief that using permits has seriously ethical issues. Lastly, for those most versed in land management, permits are only a last resort; to only be instituted when they must and when data backs up their use.

Equity Concerns

A few of the respondents reject or are uncomfortable with permit systems because they believe permits will further marginalize groups that have been excluded from the outdoors. Non-white Americans have long been made unwelcome in the outdoors and this has led to their underrepresentation in outdoor recreation. Black Americans and others have faced outright discrimination that has left them closed off from parks (Finney 2014, Taylor 2016). Many of the respondents are aware of this history and these current conditions. They believe permits would further reduce marginalized groups from accessing the mountains because they would pose as another obstacle. Paul speaks to these concerns:

> And then there is also the equity issue. A permit system or limited entry system is going to disproportionately affect people who are already underrepresented here in my Adirondack Diversity Initiative…It's not an idea that I find would be the least bit effective.

The Adirondack Diversity Initiative is a group that works to make the Adirondacks more inclusive and welcoming. Several of the respondents contribute to this initiative. Paul argues that the goals of the Adirondack Diversity Initiative will be harmed by the introduction of a permit system because it will affect underrepresented groups more than the historically white population

that recreates in the Adirondack Park. Sam shares this general concern when he states, “I definitely have questions about equity and inclusion over [a] permit system; making sure people have access to the outdoors.” As with Paul, Sam thinks that permits will further limit access to groups that are marginalized in the outdoors. Permits are seen as something which can cause greater harm to diversity and inclusion in the Adirondack Park and some of the respondents oppose such a system on this basis.

Discussion

Respondents have a diverse collection of thoughts towards addressing the issues that accompany high-use, overuse, and overcrowding, yet they are largely aligned behind major tactics that ease such issues. The respondents primarily emphasize education, better management, better funding, and more detailed data collection as solutions to the high-use problems the Adirondack Park has been facing over the last ten years. The use of permits to alleviate high-use issues is generally frowned upon and seen as a last resort. These opinions and attitudes held by the respondents reflect many of the arguments made in the carrying capacity and overcrowding literature. Similarly, their thoughts also align with many of the assertations made by the Adirondack Park community more broadly, including articles in the local media and within community-government task forces and the High Peaks Advisory Group (HPAG).

Table 2. Key Terms

Acronym	Meaning
HPAG	High Peaks Advisory Group
LAC	Limits of Acceptable Change
VUMF	Visitor User Management Framework

As demonstrated throughout the chapter, there are many solutions to high-use issues proposed by the respondents, however, many of them are directly related to the need for increased education, better management, and better funding. In many cases better management includes public-private partnerships, like the summit and trailhead steward programs. In other cases, this may be completely on the state, for example, hiring more forest rangers or creating better parking. But these mostly lean into public-private partnerships, as trail upkeep and building often relies on volunteer crews as much as professional groups. Sometimes infrastructure like lean-tos are built and maintained by volunteers, within state guidance. Data collection is typically done by non-profit groups. These public-private partnerships are seen as the foundation for solutions to overuse.

Inadequate funding is a dire matter for the respondents and other stakeholders because proper management is dependent on adequate funding. The HPAG makes this clear in their report, as they recognize most of their recommendations are only possible with an improvement in funding. They explicitly call for better funding and detail how funding is often stymied by being part of a fund that requires competing with other NYS environmental projects. The funding issue is such a severe problem that HPAG even recommends raising money from private sources to help fund park projects (HPAG 2021). None of the respondents directly argue that the private sector should make up for funding shortfalls, but they do advocate public-private partnerships, which is another way of using the private sector to make up for funding problems.

Overall, the thoughts of the respondents apply to and conform with the carrying capacity literature. As discussed earlier, carrying capacity is more than simply a measure of how the resource is impacted, it is also determined by how much change stakeholders find acceptable. Stakeholders may accept a great deal of change to an area, like in a recreationally focused

protected area, or they may accept little change, like in a wilderness area (Manning 2013). These Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) are essentially social constructions that depend on the stakeholders' norms and beliefs.

So, how do the respondents' thoughts on the causes and solutions to high-use issues relate to carrying capacity and LAC? The attitudes and opinions of the respondents broadly show that they are less tolerant of change. From this view, use should be controlled and only be lightly affecting the resource. The analysis of the interviews illustrates this by detailing how the respondents are distraught by trail damage, water contamination, failing infrastructure, and so on. Further demonstrating a less tolerant LAC, the respondents largely want light recreational development which does not degrade the wilderness settings. In sum, the respondents are less tolerant of change because they hope to protect the wilderness qualities of the park.

The social objectives of carrying capacity in this case are the protection of wilderness and "forever wild." As detailed in chapter I and II, wilderness and "forever wild" are primarily social concepts that favor an ideal material setting, that may or may not exist. As Manning (2013) explains, research has shown that LACs for wilderness areas tend to be far less tolerant than LACs for other protected areas, which we see in this study. Thus, there is a clear alignment with the carrying capacity literature.

To speak more about the reasoning behind the respondents' desire for little impact to the resource, Manning (2013) and others explain that the way people determine what they believe is the proper LAC and carrying capacity for an area is dependent on their norms. Meaning, these scholars, especially Manning, use normative theory to ascertain how individuals think parks and protected areas should manage carrying capacity. Applying this normative theory, the norms conveyed by the respondents express environmental and conservation ethics that value the

protection of land. At least in terms of wilderness areas, the respondents believe that the land should be protected as well as it can be from use. This means that recreation should not shape the land or confine the growth of ecosystems. As detailed in chapter II, the respondents hold many attitudes toward wilderness, but they widely see it as a space where nature can be unhindered. Said norms explain why the interviewees express opinions that suggest a less tolerant LAC.

The carrying capacity literature also argues that parks and protected areas need strong VUMFs to properly manage land and recreation. Too many land management decisions are made ad hoc and in the moment without a formal VUMF to guide the measures being taken (Manning 2013). The respondents themselves, especially the recreational professionals, complain that many management choices are made ad hoc, lacking central plans and the proper data that would make their tactics more effective.

There have long been calls for the Adirondack Park to establish something akin to a well-defined VUMF for the High Peaks Wilderness (McMartin 2002).The most recent of these came from the HPAG, which recommends employing a third-party to develop a VUMF that would then be implemented. Recently (April 2023), the DEC did just that, and hired a private group with experience creating VUMFs for the National Park Service. This group, Otak, will generate a VUMF for the High Peaks Wilderness over the next two years while taking into consideration the attitudes and desires of recreators, data on impacts to the environment, trail conditions, educational programs, and so forth. The respondents do not directly mention VUMFs, but several do talk about the need for wide-scale planning for the High Peaks and the Park. What they are detailing is essentially a VUMF.

The interviews show that the respondents want better central planning that would be provided by this management framework. To conclude, the respondents' thoughts on easing

high-use issues conform with much of the carrying capacity literature and many of the arguments made by the broader Adirondack Park community, especially advisory groups like the HPAG.

Conclusion

The analysis of the interviews shows that the respondents emphasize public-private partnerships to address high-use issues. Simply saying that the state should take the wheel to fix problems related to high-use is a rare sentiment among the interviewees. Instead, potential solutions often come in the shape of private entities working with and sometimes being directed by the state. For example, the summit steward program is mostly run by the non-profit ADK, with significant funding and direction from the state. The summit steward program is also funded by the ADK, the 46ers, and other non-government organizations. There is little expectation from the respondents that a program like this would be run by the state with state employees. Thus, the interviewees demonstrate a neoliberal sensibility that accepts the type of austerity that has caused the state to pull back further from its typical duties, like managing public land. This ethic, which accepts public-private partnerships to make up for the shortfalls of government, is invasive to the environmental movement and it is prevalent here. The dependence on this viewpoint narrows potential solutions to high-use issues and environmental problems.

Matt Smith's comments on the *Inside the Line Podcast*, demonstrates this willingness for public-private partnerships and the challenges that accompany them. When speaking on the value of volunteer trail crews, Smith comments:

> It's kind of funny, cause if you thought that every time you like a had a pothole on the road…you needed to get [it] fixed, you needed to get a volunteer crew to together to fix the potholes in your neighborhood, that would be crazy. How would you leave it up to just random people to go and fix your state's infrastructure? *But somehow that's become the norm when it comes to trails*. Somehow the state hasn't figured out how to fund the initiatives that everyone wants.

This reliance on volunteer labor is far from a localized occurrence. It is taken for granted that trail work will be farmed out to volunteers and sometimes, skilled professionals that are contracted by the government to complete the task.

Before Smith makes the comments above, he says, "I'd love it if the DEC would hire just 100 people to work the trail…[but] they have a budget to work with just like everyone else, and that's where the volunteerism really just plays such a huge role in building the trails." In this statement, you can see that Smith accepts that the state lacks the funding needed to transform the trails into sustainable designs; a belief that is shared by most of my respondents. Volunteers organized by specialized non-profit groups are tapped to fill the void left by the state, but there is only so much that can be done by volunteer groups and thus, gaps are left.

As mentioned, the clearest example of these public-private partnerships is the ADK managed summit steward program. Throughout the chapter I have explained that this program has been successful in recovering the alpine grasses of popular High Peaks. To the respondents and others, it is a shining example of how education can alleviate high-use problems. However, it makes sense to ask why such an important program is being run by the ADK and not by the state. Why are private and volunteer stewards being used to educate people instead of rangers with enforcement abilities? Yet, none of my respondents question how the summit steward program is run, or if it would ideally be managed by the state instead of a private entity. It seems as if this public-private partnership, which makes up for the shortfalls of government, has been completely accepted by the respondents, a group of conservation and environmental leaders, workers, and volunteers.

Volunteer trail building and maintenance is also deeply entrenched in land and recreational management. Many of my respondents have played a part in building trails and

sustaining them, in the Adirondack Park and outside it. Thomas's grandfather played a part in constructing some of the most important trails in the High Peaks and Thomas himself has been deeply involved in trail work in the Adirondacks. Before this period however, trails where largely designed by guides and climbers, particularly from Keene Valley and Lake Placid, and many were "roughed" out by 1910 (Terrie 2008). The state also played a role in developing future trails, but it is clear that the building of trails in the park has been a collaboration of private individuals, non-state entities, and the state. To further illustrate, the ADK maintained and built many of the trails throughout the High Peaks and it runs private professional trail crews today. In this way, individuals, like my respondents, are primed for modern public-private partnerships that dominate land and recreational management.

In conclusion, the respondents largely accept public-private partnerships to address problems caused by high-use. It is rare that any respondent outwardly claim that the state alone should fix these issues. This acceptance of public-private partnerships narrows solutions to high-use problems and takes pressure off the state, as the respondents simply cannot imagine a strong state that can fix recreation and conservation problems on its own. This neoliberal sensibility which accepts that the state neither has the funding or resources to fix problems is endemic to the environmental movement, which is evident in its constant desire for market solutions and ecological modernization to fix environmental problems. The outdoor community reflects the environmental movement's neoliberal ethic that depends on non-state actors and actions to fix problems. Of course, the management of high-use problems could greatly benefit from a better funded and skilled state. Though, that is hardly even envisioned by the respondents.

It is worth noting that I am not critiquing the value of public-private partnerships in public lands management; a space where the state has significantly retreated. They have done

their best to fill in for government shortfalls. To illustrate, the ADK's summit steward program, has had great success and is beloved by the respondents and others with good reason. Volunteer trail building and maintenance keeps thousands of miles of trail from retreating back into forest. What I am arguing however, is that a stronger state that contributes far more to these programs would be immensely beneficial. Given the current hold of austerity and low taxes for the wealthy, much cannot be expected from the state, but without even a vision of a stronger state, this had no hope of changing.

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Conclusion: Overview, Role of the State and Market on Public Lands, and Future Directions

Overview

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the conflicts that arise from land management policies in the Adirondack Park, while paying special attention to the role that the market may play in these struggles. To look at these tensions, this project explores contests over the regulation of public and private land, conflicts over how wilderness is imagined and managed, and the controversies that flow from efforts to alleviate high-use problems in the Adirondack Park.

Many of these conflicts are connected to the tensions between the state and market. Specifically, this tension is over what roles that state and market should play in the management of parks and protected areas. The state manages land based on the dictates of its (largely) democratically determined management plans and laws. In the case of the Adirondack Park that is the SLMP for public lands, and the PLUDP for private lands. In contrast, the market has the tendency to seek profit from the management of these lands, directly or indirectly, whether it violates these plans or not. Housing development, and the creation of infrastructure for mass recreation and tourism are two pathways the market has sought inroads in the Adirondack Park. Also, the market, in the guise of private organizations, is playing a bigger role in the direct management of the land in the park. These conflicts often frame or are in the background of other tensions in Adirondack Park land management.

Further, contests over land management are inevitable because individuals and groups have competing visions for the purposes and future of the land (Terrie 2008). Even when there is agreement over a general vision, like managing land as “forever wild” or “wilderness,” there is

often conflict over how to bring this vision into reality because these concepts have a multitude of meanings that change based on a person's background. However, this research also shows that there can be points of agreement over which management policies can be formed. For example, the respondents generally agree that wilderness should be a place where human impact is limited, and that easing high-use requires better education and land management.

Analyzing these conflicts over land management in the Adirondack Park demonstrates a particular case that can tie to others in the US. To illustrate, the Adirondack Park itself is a case of a massive collection of public lands that are heavily used, which often creates tensions for users and nearby residents of the land. This is much like many small and big parks throughout the US. It is also a case of early private land management that was enacted to retain the rural character of the landscape. This itself is something unique and rarely enacted, especially in the Northeast. And it is a case of land management that is constantly evolving. Acting out "forever wild," "wilderness," and regulating private land is something which is constantly changing in accordance with new visions of these concepts and regulations.

The case of the Adirondack Park and its conflicts teaches us many interesting points. It shows us how ideas of "wilderness" and "forever" wild get hashed out in practice, both in the past and in the current day. It also demonstrates Polanyi's (2001/1944) double movement in action. The initial land regulations that formed out the TSC and were put into practice by the APA, were reactions to market forces that wanted to develop the park. Further, the study shows how people can have hold conflicting ideas—over wilderness—at the same time. Many participants hold that the romantic idea of wilderness is flawed but will often fallback on the idea that wilderness is a place *completely* free of people. Lastly, what constitutes high-use is partly a social construction, as half of it is based on how much material impact recreators find acceptable.

Chapter I examines how the Adirondack Park developed its modern system of hybrid land management, in relation to Polanyi's (2001/1944) double movement and theories of wilderness and nature (Castree 2000, Cronon 1995, Malm 2018, Smith 1984). The chapter shows how the TSC, with its focus on "wilderness" and "forever wild," set the die for land plans that emphasized a stringent but flexible interpretation of these concepts. The analysis of the public comments shows one facet in the process of putting these plans into motion and the resulting conflicts. Through these countermovement driven land plans, the park became further managed in a way that restrains the power of the market to exploit the land, by limiting private land development and holding back mass tourism.

Chapter II looks at how stakeholders envision wilderness in the Adirondack Park, in comparison to competing wilderness theories (Callicott and Nelson 1998, Cronon 1995, Moore 2014, Nash 2001, Nelson and Callicott 2008a, Nelson and Callicott 2008b, Vannini and Vannini 2016). The research shows that the respondents hold a diverse set of wilderness visions that include viewpoints such as, understanding wilderness as on a scale, seeing wilderness as part of human culture, and envisioning wilderness as a rewilded space. It is common for these different visions to conflict with one another, but they coalesce around the idea that wilderness should be an area where humans are non-dominant, and ecosystems can somewhat run without human interference. Though, of course what that means in practice, is different for each person.

Chapter III focuses on understanding what the respondents see as the causes and solutions to high-use issues in the Adirondack Park, while engaging with the literature on carrying capacity (Burns, Arnberger and von Ruschkowski 2010, Manning 2013, Miller, Fefer, Kraja et al. 2017), and to an extent, neoliberalism (Harvey 2005, Peck 2010). The respondents generally see uneducated hikers and bad land management practices as the causes of high-use

problems. Thus, the solutions they see to these problems are more recreator (LNT) education and improved land management. Most interestingly, enacting changes to education and land management are regularly seen by the respondents as something that would be conducted in a public-private partnership, instead of simply a state solution. To some degree, neoliberal thinking, in response to dwindling public resources, has been embedded here.

Synthesis

Conflict

The empirical chapters of this dissertation all detail conflicts over land management viewpoints and decisions in the Adirondack Park's past and present. Therefore, they all demonstrate Philip Terrie's (2008) argument of "contested terrain" in action, where numerous parties are competing to enact their vision onto the land. There was deep conflict over the regulation of private land between pro-development forces and forces that wanted the land to retain its rural landscape. This kicked off a deeply antagonistic conflict that lasted decades and that sometimes included violence (see McMartin 2002, Terrie 2008). There was also conflict over the new regulations for public land, but not nearly at the same a fever pitch as there was for private lands. Here the conflict was over emphasizing "wilderness" and "forever wild" over mass tourism and intense recreational development.

The conflicts over land regulations discussed here are best envisioned as contests between the state and market. The state response to the emergence of largescale housing development and mass tourism in the 1960s and early 1970s shows the power of the state to regulate the market's power over land. The plans of the TSC, which were carried out by the APA, demonstrates a classic case of Polanyi's (2001/1944) double movement. In this instance, there was great worry over major (practically unregulated) housing projects that were planned for the

Adirondacks and it was feared this would ruin the wild and rural quality of the park (Schneider 1998, Terrie 2008). This along with other development in the park created a backlash and produced calls for this development to be curbed by regulation. Similarly, some, like Laurance Rockefeller, wanted the public land managed to accommodate mass tourism, like many national parks at the time (see Edmondson 2021). Such plans faced stiff resistance because it would run counter to the Adirondack Park's history of "forever wild." This would have also let the market further intrude onto public lands and neighboring land with the building of new infrastructure. Like the threats to private land in the park, the threats to the "forever wild" quality of the public lands from the market, generated calls for regulation. Thus, this demonstrates the power of the state to constrain the market, while shaping how the land looks, is used, and managed.

Public land management in the Adirondacks ultimately prioritized "wilderness" and "forever wild," opening up a future where there would be continued conflict on over how to bring these terms into practice. The research shows that even with some agreement among the respondents that "wilderness" should be a place where humans are non-dominant, what that means in terms of policy differs for each person. It is no surprise that we see continuous conflict over how to manage "wilderness" from general recreators and land managers, when we see that conflict even among a homogenous group, like the respondents. The interviewees regularly bring up conflicts over the management of wilderness; many of which are topics that are often in the local press and discussed on social media. For example, the failed efforts to classify *all* of the Boreas Pond tract as wilderness, and overdeveloping wilderness with too much infrastructure.

Some of the conflict over wilderness management overlaps with tension caused by management efforts designed to alleviate the effects of high-use. How is a "wilderness" supposed to remain wild when it becomes crowded, and the trail becomes overused? Wilderness

hypothetically should be a space where an individual can experience some solitude. Wilderness is also ideally a space where human impacts on trails and other infrastructure are minimal. What does that mean when an overused trail is eroded and becomes 12 feet wide in spots, like the trail up Cascade Mountain? Maintaining that spot as "wilderness" even when it is classified as such is questionable to many. However, efforts to make said spots become more fitting of the "wilderness" label are often met with critique.

To illustrate, building a new sustainable trail to replace the overused trail to Cascade Mountain is frequently criticized for cutting through trailless forest and adding mileage to the hike. Or, take the example of competing visions of crowd management: dispersal versus sacrifice zones. Dispersing recreation to many sites instead of just one popular site is meant to protect that popular site, but many argue this just leads to more areas getting overused. Advocates of sacrifice zones believe popular areas should be build up infrastructure to handle high-use with minimal impacts at the cost wilderness values. Critics, however, argue that sacrificing the wild quality of the land is not worth it.

Solutions to the conflicts created by high-use are increasingly being addressed by public-private partnerships that allow private organizations and companies to play a part in carrying out land management. For example, LNT education programs throughout the US have private backers and organizers, and many national parks permit systems are handled by private companies that take a significant portion of the money produced from the permits. The respondents just assume that public-private pathway will be the way in which many of their solutions to high-use conflicts. In this way the market and private sphere has infiltrated the management of public lands, and the visions individuals have for the management of public lands.

In sum, this dissertation details several conflicts over land management in the Adirondack Park that connect to each other. Conflicts over the specifics of the land plans that form the modern hybrid land management system link to today's tensions. Bringing into action "wilderness" and a new interpretation of "forever wild" has produced conflict over what areas should become wilderness and how each wilderness area should be run. Those standards also tie to conflicts over the management of high-use issues. Plans to ease high-use problems may push against wilderness standards, while doing nothing may degrade wilderness standards even further by allowing crowds to harm the environment and social experience of the backcountry. These conflicts over public land management are inevitable, as we have different visions for the land, and this work shows how they span and connect over time.

Many of these land management tensions are also conflicts over the role of the state and market in the management of park lands—both public and private. What is the place of the *state* in the land management of parks? What is the role of the *market* in the land management in parks? Traditionally, the management of parks are the domain of the state, but the market has long had an interest in how those lands can produce wealth[5] and increasingly, in the operation of land management. The market's possible intrusion into the Adirondack Park in the shape of private development and mass tourism, produced a countermovement that led to sweeping land regulation. Managing high-use conflicts and maintaining "wilderness" conditions today often see private organizations and companies sharing in the work and management at a higher degree than the past. Most interestingly, the role of the private groups, sometimes for-profit groups, in this role is seen as normal, even desirable. Thus, the market's role in the Adirondack Park's land

[5] In extraction and tourism. Also, the US national park system was supported by rail companies that saw the profit in transporting people to these destinations. See Sowards, Adam M. 2022. *Making of America's Public Lands: The Contested History of Conservation on Federal Lands*. New York, NY: Rowman & LIttlefield

management is likely increasing, yet the in other ways people are still opposed to the market's desire to bolster mass tourism and create large scale developments.

Flexibility in Land Management Policy and its Relation to Social Constructionist-Materialist Interaction

These conflicts themselves illustrate the processes and effects of putting land management into action. Most notably, this study carefully shows how official wilderness designations were implemented in the park, then continues to show those effects into the future by illustrating how people have different views of how wilderness should be managed and how wilderness management can influence the tactics used to address high-use problems. As a whole, this shows that land management is something which is constantly changing. It is not static. Land management tactics, even those under the same classification, change in relation to what is most valued by stakeholders and by what the current conservation science says about the land. The dissertation shows how this has changed over time, from de facto wilderness areas that had high impact management, to official wilderness areas that reflected the wilderness values of the 1964 Wilderness Act, and then to today, where wilderness management is now taking ecological science more seriously in management tactics.

Conflict over high-use issues brings to light how social construction and material processes interact. It has long been established in research that part of carrying capacity is a social construction. These specifically are the limits of what people see as acceptable change to the environment from human use (Manning 2003). The other part of carrying capacity being the material change to the environment. This dissertation shows that people have varying ideas of what acceptable change is to the environment. For instance, some believe that trails in wilderness areas should be narrow and largely undeveloped, whereas others argue that trails should be

developed to manage high-use, protecting the greater environment at the expense of wilderness characteristics. The study also shows that high-use problems are not just a modern issue. We can see people talking about high-use in the 1960s, though they were arguably less tolerant of change and more concerned for how overuse would affect the park in the future.

Next Steps

There are many ways in which this research could be taken further. Most interestingly, more could be done to study attitudes toward and the processes of public-private partnerships on public lands. This dissertation only shows that the respondents often jump into seeing public-private partnerships as the ideal solution to high-use problems, it does not evaluate how these programs have intruded onto public lands, their history, or how stakeholders feel about them.

There is a lot to learn about the workings of these public-private partnerships. It would be useful to know how these private organizations become engaged with the state and how they carry out their tasks in relation to the state's requirements. Thus, how were these private entities able to contract with the state? What part did they play in this, and what part did the state play in it? Answering these questions has the potential to explain whether the state seeks out the help of private industry or if these private organizations work to intrude into the state's domain. Of course, there could be a messier path that sees both sides partially engaged in these tactics.

Looking at these questions practically, examining one particular private organization, like Otak, would be the easiest path to looking at these processes. Also, focusing on the inner workings of an organization could reveal how they see the relation between profit and quality of work on state lands. It would be necessary as well to see how the state, like the DEC, works with these groups. That could reveal how they value them and show what place they think they play in

land management. Such a study has the potential to show how state and market relations work within land management.

The history of these relations would be key to study too, in order to see how these relationships differed from the past. As documented, there is a long history of volunteer and private organizations building and maintaining trails throughout the US. This continues to this day and most land managers rely on these efforts. Given this, it is key to ask how this past and current situation differs from bringing in for-profit groups to build trails and build infrastructure (when that is done). Even with volunteer group work, it would be useful to see how these relations with the state have changed over time, as it could reveal if it has become even more important to save money, given the drying up of state funding.

This study shows that this group of respondents assumes that their proposed solutions to high-use issues will be implemented through public-private partnerships, like the Adirondack education programs. It reveals that this neoliberal mindset which sees the state as unable to properly carry out its tasks without private help has set it. However, this trend was only identified in the data analysis, and thus, the study does not ask what the respondents think of public-private relationships. The respondents may assume public-private relationships are the solutions to high-use issues but that does not mean they see it as an ideal solution. They may instead, ideally see these solutions as carried out exclusively by the state, with no outside inference. If so, that could indicate that they oppose neoliberalism more broadly. Looking at how individuals think about land management public-private partnerships, can illuminate how people understand the role of the state and market on public land.

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Curriculum Vitae: Weston (Trent) Fenner

P.O. Box 424, Brodheadsville, PA 18322
(570) 977-7847
whfenner@syr.edu

Education:

Ph.D. Syracuse University, Sociology. Expected 2024.
Dissertation: Public Lands and Capitalism: The case of the Adirondack Park.

M.A. Syracuse University, Sociology. 2015.

M.A. Lehigh University, Sociology. 2010.

B.A. Shippensburg University, Major in Sociology; Minor in Anthropology, summa cum laude. 2008.

Research and Teaching Interests:

Environmental and Natural Resource Sociology; Social Theory; Political Sociology; Political Economy

Experience:

2019-Present ***Part-time Instructor****,* Syracuse University

- *Introduction to Sociology,* Spring 2022, Spring 2023, Fall 2023
- *Social Problems, Fall 2023*
- *Introduction to Sociology (asynchronous online),* Summer 2019, 2020, 2021
- *Social Problems (asynchronous online)*, Summer 2022
- *Introduction to Sociology (synchronous online)*, Fall 2021

2019-2020 ***Teaching/Graduate Assistant*****,** Syracuse University.

- *Social Problems*, Professor Arthur Paris, Spring 2019
- *Environmental Sociology,* Professor Rebecca Schewe, Fall 2019
- *Research Assistant,* Professor Rebecca Schewe, Spring 2020

2014-2015 ***Instructor/Graduate Assistant*****,** Syracuse University.

- *Introduction to Sociology*, Fall 2014 and Spring 2015

2011-2014 ***Teaching/Graduate Assistant***, Syracuse University.

- *Sociology of Families*, Professor Margaret Usdansky, Fall 2011 and Spring 2012
- *Social Theory,* Professor Gretchen Purser, Fall 2012
- *Graduate Assistant*, Professor Steven Brechin, Spring 2013 and Fall 2013
- *Ethnic Inequalities*, Professor Amy Lutz, Spring 2014

2010-2011 ***Adjunct Professor***, Northampton Community College, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
- *Principles of Sociology*; Two Sections in Fall 2010 and two Sections in Spring 2011.
- *Principles of Sociology: Writing Intensive*; One cross-listed Section in Spring 2011.

2008-2010 ***Teaching Assistant***, Lehigh University.
- *Introduction to Sociology and Social Psychology*, Professor James McIntosh, Fall 2008
- *Introduction to Sociology and Social Psychology*, Professor Jackie Krasas, Spring 2009
- *Human Communication*, Professor Robert E. Rosenwein, Fall 2009
- *Introduction to Anthropology*, Professor Bruce Whitehouse, Spring 2010

Peer-Reviewed Publications:

Brechin, Steven R., and Weston H. Fenner. 2017. "Karl Polanyi's environmental sociology: a primer." *Environmental Sociology*. 3(4): 404-413.

Broyles, Philip. and Fenner IV, Weston. 2010. "Race, human capital, and wage discrimination in STEM professions in the United States" *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. 30(5): 251-266.

Select Presentations:

2023 Fenner, Weston. "High Use and Overuse in the Adirondack Park"
- Presented at 2023 Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, Burlington, Vermont

2022 Fenner, Weston. **"Perspectives of Wilderness in the Adirondack Park of New York State, USA"**
- Presented at 2022 International Association for Society and Natural Resources (IASNR) Virtual Conference

2021 Fenner, Weston. **"Visions of Wilderness in the Adirondack Park"**
- Presented at 2021 International Association for Society and Natural Resources (IASNR) Virtual Conference

2020 Fenner, Weston. **"Capitalism and Hybrid Land Management: A Review of Public Comments"**
- Presented at 2020 International Association for Society and Natural Resources (IASNR) Virtual Conference

2008 Broyles, Philip. and Fenner IV, Weston H. **"The Racial Pay Gap of Chemists"**

- Presented at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Eastern Sociological Society, New York City

2007 Fenner IV, Weston H. **"Content Analysis: United Kingdom and Pennsylvanian Universities"**
- Explored racial diversity observed on United Kingdom and Pennsylvanian University web pages
- Presented at Ethnic Studies Colloquium, 2007 Shippensburg University

Grants and Honors:

2022 **Roscoe Martin Fund for Dissertation and Thesis Research Award**, Maxwell School, Syracuse University

2021 **Summer Dissertation Fellowship**, Graduate School, Syracuse University

2020 **Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award**, Graduate School, Syracuse University

2020-2021 **Sociology Department Dissertation Fellowship**, including stipend, Sociology Department, Syracuse University

2020 **Roscoe Martin Fund for Dissertation and Thesis Research Award**, Maxwell School, Syracuse University

2019 **Roscoe Martin Fund for Dissertation and Thesis Research Award**, Maxwell School, Syracuse University

2019 **Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Award (Not Funded),** National Science Foundation

Applied Research:

2010 ***Research Assistant,*** Survey of Graduate Student Housing Needs, performed by the Lehigh University Social Science Data Center.
- Responsible for questionnaire design and analysis of survey data.

2010 ***Research Assistant***, Girls on the Run of Lehigh Valley Program Evaluation conducted for Lehigh University's Social Science Data Center.
- Statistically evaluated the Fall 2009, Spring 2010, and Spring 2011 programs.
- Completed a cumulative analysis of four successive programs.

2010 ***Research Assistant***, Lehigh Valley Research Consortium.
- Collected and organized data on social, political, and economic indicators.
- Paid part time research assistant, Summer 2010

- Part time research assistant for a Lehigh University research practicum, Spring 2010

Professional Memberships:

- American Sociological Society (Environmental Sociology and Marxist Sociology sections)
- International Association for Society and Natural Resources
- Rural Sociological Society (Natural Resources Interest Group)