

Adirondack LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION

www.adklandowners.org

Spring/Summer 2015

Reflections *By Bill Hutchens, Sr.*

Editors note: To highlight the 25th anniversary of the ALA we asked our past president and founding member Bill Hutchens to offer his thoughts on our organization's history.



Chris Witting, titan of industry and CEO of the then huge Crouse- Hinds Company in Syracuse, said to me as I sat in his office: "You need to see Ron Stafford."

Stafford was the senior senator and chairman of the Senate Finance Committee who represented a large portion of the central and eastern Adirondacks. I didn't know him that well.

"I'll take care of it," Witting said and the meeting was over after a few pleasantries about the ancient days of his career when he had spent a year at my firm, Price Waterhouse, a connection which had brought me to him.

Two days later I was in Stafford's office in Albany. It was June, 1990 and I was just part of a small group of private landowners, who had cobbled together the Adirondack Landowners Association. It was our response to the Commission on the Adirondacks in the Twenty-First Century. To us...and many others...the Commission's report, while representing many laudable objectives for the Park, was also a direct threat to private property interests by suggesting the possible acquisition of various tracts of land. We needed advice on how to proceed and we needed support in Albany.

Ron Stafford pledged his support, opened doors for us, and even made the trek to the remote reaches of an Adirondack camp to attend

one of our first meetings that year. This support continued to the end of his life and was taken up enthusiastically and remains so today by Senator Betty Little.

As I reflect, I am reminded especially of our determination to fix in the minds of the public our passion for private property rights and the enhancement of good stewardship over lands for which we indeed hold a responsibility.

One of my earliest memories is of Bob Flacke at Brandreth Park, reporting under a hot summer sun on his dissension from the Commission report. He was preaching to the choir, of course, but it was an epiphany for me to hear the details of the case against this extensive document.

I recall testifying shortly after that in Albany before Assemblyman Maurice Hinchey's committee on the Two Billion Dollar Environmental Bond Act of 1990. Representing ALA, we were the only one that day voicing opposition to the Bond Act, which would have provided funds for acquiring private lands. Hinchey raised his eyebrows at me, but the Bond Act was later defeated.

There were meetings and correspondence with DEC which led to successful efforts (with Stafford's support) for recognition in the Open Space Conservation Plan of the principle of willing buyer/willing seller...putting aside the threat of eminent domain.

And then there were numerous white papers over the years skillfully authored by Counsel Frank Clark, and organizational efforts to support Peter Bertine and his League Club members in the Moose River Case and Doug Barclay in the Rivers Case. Mike Gridley reported on the Clean Water/Clean Air bond Act. There was the early support for George Canon and Jean Raymond in their formation of the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages and also support for agricultural and forestry interests in the state. Ginny Brandreth organized a tax conference in Saratoga, Governor Pataki signed Margot Ernst's steel sinker bill for fishing lines...it was acclaimed as "get the

lead out!" Long having done the job, Ingrid Smith was named "Executive Secretary!"

Spreading our message made recruiting new members for ALA an easy assignment and many pitched in and the membership grew. Meetings were held at various member camps and our first winter meeting at the Adirondack League Club established a benchmark for those to come annually. We often invited members of the political establishment to our meetings to share our views and receive input from them.

A stroke of great fortune for all those who believe in ALA was the engagement of our good friend and highly regarded Ross Whaley to take on the post of Senior Adviser for ALA.

Along with a coalition of groups orchestrated by the Common Ground Alliance, Ross led our role in the successful effort to eliminate Governor Patterson's proposed cap on state tax payments on the Forest Preserve which would otherwise have had severe impact on taxes on private lands.

We created a "Stewardship Award" to be given from time to time to those people or organizations who especially represented our standards. As a fundraiser for our various efforts, Tom Williams started the tradition of an auction of dusty stuff from camp attics which became a hotly contested battle for treasures which had not seen the light of day for generations.

Recently ALA has promoted a significant program for invasive species education and prevention that has brought statewide attention to this issue.

Looking back over these years, it has always been a joint effort. Many hands help to develop the ALA into a positive and constructive voice in the Adirondack community and today many more are working to meet the challenges that come with supporting our mission.

Proud to be celebrating our 25th year of Stewardship, Leadership & Friendship

Adirondack

LANDOWNERS
ASSOCIATION

Who We Are

ALA Officers & Directors

President

Thomas E. Williams
West Canada Preserve

Vice President

Neil Skotarczak
Miller Park Association

Treasurer

William Hutchens, Jr.
Livingston Lake Club

Secretary

William Clegg
Hollywood Club

Directors

Justin Potter
Dan Lynch
Wilbur Rice
Colin Bradford
John Ernst
Sally Hart
Jackie Rudolph
Gwen Krause
John G. Fritzinger, Jr.

Senior Advisor

Dr. Ross S. Whaley

ALA Members

Adirondack League Club
Adirondack Mountain Reserve
Ampersand Pond
Arquit Property
Asgaard Farm
Bay Pond Park
Big Wolf Lake Association
Boreas River Farm
Brandreth Park Association
Camp Otterbrook
Dug Mountain Ponds
Elk Lake Lodge
Finch Paper, LLC
Fisher Forestry, LLC
Grasse River Club
Harring Property
Heart Bay Environment
Hollywood Club
Johanson Family Property
Kildare Club
Livingston Lake Club
Matamek Corporation
McCavanaugh Pond Club
McClelland Family Property
Meenahga
Miller Park Association
North Woods Club
Our Woods
Paine Family Estate
Putnam Camp
Thisse Family Properties
West Canada Preserve
Wilmurt Club
Woolf Family Property



Looking Ahead

Tom Williams, ALA President



The Adirondack Landowners Association is proud to be celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Our founding principles regarding the unique stewardship role that private landowners play in the Adirondack Park are just as important now, as they were in 1990. Our membership represents a diverse audience of landowners, from small family preserves to large membership clubs. They are all linked with a common interest in the stewardship of the lands and waters that are in their care and with being a helpful and supportive neighbor to the communities that surround them.

The ALA has been involved in many important issues during our first 25 years, everything from advocacy for willing seller/willing buyer land acquisition to partnering with other stakeholders on important environmental issues, like aquatic invasive species. Our organization has grown steadily over the years and we are fortunate to have an active and engaged membership.

There are however, real threats to the public benefits of private stewardship in the Adirondack Park, and the most daunting one is property taxes. As I have stated in the past...New York State must develop better ways to recognize and invest in private stewardship, not only in the Adirondacks, but across the state. The private forest lands of New York State provide watershed protection, wildlife habitat, forest products for energy and lumber...and more. These benefits come with minimal cost to the general public, but the burden of property taxes will eventually erode the value of these benefits. Hopefully, our work with legislators, local government leaders and other stakeholders will lead to a reasonable solution to the property tax problem.

As we look ahead to the next 25 years, I am optimistic about the future of the Adirondack Landowners Association. Our past successes and the strength of our membership will help us continue to play an active and meaningful role in the issues facing the Adirondack Park.

ALA Statement of Purpose

The Adirondack Landowners Association is a group of private landowners, who collectively own over 200,000 acres of land in the Adirondack Park. Our membership, which totals over 5,000 individuals, is made up of clubs, family groups and private preserves, some with ownership dating back to the mid 1800's. We are significant employers, taxpayers, and contributors to the economic and environmental health of the Adirondack Park. The ALA has been a leader in the prevention of the spread of invasive species through education and advocacy.

It was founded to encourage continued stewardship and sound resource management of the land; to promote public awareness of the valuable role played by private landowners in the Park; to advocate laws, regulations and governmental policies that promote and facilitate good stewardship by private landowners and recognize and preserve their rights in the land.

ALA Member Profile: Brandreth Park Association



Shingle Shanty Pond

tion. The Brandreth Park Association holds recreational rights to the adjacent properties of Brandreth Associates, which owns approximately 2250 acres, and Friends of Thayer Lake, LLC, which owns 15,500 acres. The Friends of Thayer Lake, LLC property is covered by a "Forever Wild" Conservation Easement held by Sweet Water Trust.

NUMBER OF MEMBERS: Approximately 90, with many additional family members.

STRUCTURE: A tenancy-in-common composed of 120 interests, governed by the Brandreth Park Association. Members of the Brandreth Park Association include both Owners and Associate Members, who enjoy many of the same privileges of Owners, with the notable exception of the right to build a camp. Members of BPA must be descendants of Benjamin Brandreth.



Black Bear at the Outlet

In 1851, out of an original 50 townships of the Totten & Crossfield Purchase offered for sale by the State of New York, only 5 remained. Decades before the railroad boom and the Adirondacks became a fashionable destination, a remote property without any rivers suitable for getting logs to market was likely considered worthless by most.

Brandreth has telephone service, but no electric service. Most camps use unfiltered and untreated water drawn directly from Brandreth Lake for drinking. The recreational use of gas powered watercraft is prohibited.

ESTABLISHED: March 21, 1851, when "The People of the State of New York, by the Grace of God, Free and Independent... granted premises unto said Benjamin Brandreth, his heirs and assigns, as a good and indefeasible estate of inheritance forever."

LOCATION: West-Central Adirondacks, due north of Raquette Lake.

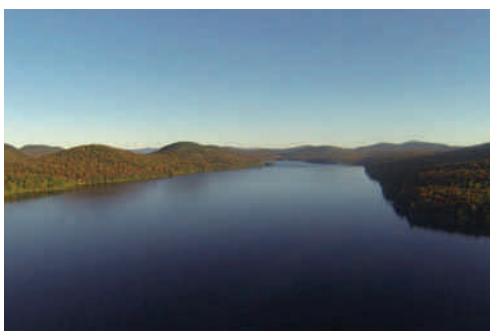
ACREAGE: The Brandreth Park Association owns approximately 9950 acres, most of which is centered around Brandreth Lake, but includes a parcel at the former Brandreth Sta-



Frosty Winter Morning

INTERESTING FACTS:

Brandreth Lake is the third deepest lake in the Adirondacks at about 175 feet, after Lake Champlain and Lake George. Like the other two lakes, Brandreth Lake formed when a block of the earth's crust subsided between faults, creating a geological feature known as a graben. Today, the members of Brandreth Park are fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth generations of descendants of Benjamin Brandreth.



Brandreth Lake Aerial View

Forests, Regulations and Taxes

Dr. Ross Whaley

ALA has been actively involved in discussions with the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) regarding changes in regulations on clear-cutting and with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) on proposed changes to the 480-a Forest Tax Law.



APA's regulations--At the present time if an Adirondack Park forest owner proposes clear-cutting more than 25 acres of forest, they will need an APA permit. Most everyone agrees that the current regulations are technically flawed. Amongst other restrictions, they require leaving 30 Sq Ft. of basal area of trees on the site. There appears to be agreement that post harvest regeneration should be measured in stems per acre of appropriate species rather than basal area, which would allow removal of the seed trees after adequate regeneration has been established. Beyond that there has been over a year of discussion between APA, landowners, foresters and environmental organizations regarding what else should be included in the regulations.

480-a Tax Law--If forest owners presently participate in this property tax reduction program they can save 80 percent on their annual tax bill, but will pay a stumpage tax at time of timber harvest. To participate the land owner needs a forest management plan approved by DEC. Eligibility is limited to owners of more than 50 acres of forest land. Participants cannot develop their land for a period of 10 years while participating in the 480-a program. Further details of the current 480-a program can be found on the DEC website. The proposed changes offer three different options. Under the first option, the landowners can participate in the current program, but they must own 1000 acres or more, instead of the current 50 acres. Option 2 would be available to owners of over 25 acres who are enrolled in a DEC approved certification programs. And option 3, "Time of Harvest" is available to owners of 25 acres or more, but broadens the definition of eligible land and the purposes for which an owner might harvest trees. Under both option two and three, the tax benefits differ from the current 480-a program.

Both the APA regulations and 480-a tax reform are still being reviewed by the respective agencies, and will undoubtedly change before final submission to the Park Agency Board, the Governor and the legislature. For a more complete description of these program changes please visit the ALA website.



Summer Harvest in the Adirondacks

ALA Recognizes NYS Senator Betty Little

Our annual winter meeting held at the Adirondack League Club this past December was a great success. We had a record turnout for the event which included a wonderful social hour followed by a delicious dinner with little auction fun thrown in to keep things lively.

The highlight of our meeting was the presentation of our 2014 ALA Stewardship Award to NYS Senator Betty Little. Betty is well known to ALA members and to just about everyone else in the north-country. She has worked tirelessly to help promote a better quality of life for Adirondack residents while at the same time supporting sound conservation and stewardship of both public and private lands in the Park. We were honored to have her with us and pleased to be able recognize her for the great work she does for the Adirondacks.



2014 ALA Stewardship Award presented to NYS Senator Betty Little.
[l-r] ALA Senior Advisor Ross Whaley, Senator Little, ALA President Tom Williams

In May of 1996, the Adirondack Landowners Association began the tradition of periodically presenting a Stewardship Award at their annual winter meeting. Over the years, ALA has recognized many worthwhile organizations and individuals for their stewardship contributions to the Adirondacks.

Don't Forget Them...

The ALA lost a number of dear friends during 2014 and 2015, they were all dedicated to our organization and we treasure the memory of their time with us.

Ted Wickersham

Rose Marie Laucik

Donald Potter

Adirondack League Club Celebrates 125 Years

John Marwell
ALC President



As the Adirondack League Club, a founding member of the ALA, joins in celebrating the ALA's 25th anniversary, we look back and forward as we recognize the significant contributions of both organizations to the well-being of the larger Adirondack community.

With the common commitment among its members to responsible land conservation and stewardship of private preserves throughout the Adirondacks, the ALA has contributed significantly to the preservation and well-being of the entire Park.

Issues affecting private land ownership like: stewardship, public ownership access and use and real property taxation and regulation will continue to stimulate debate throughout the Park. The ALA represents a very important voice on behalf of private stewardship, a key and substantial constituency that contributes so much to the preservation of open space, clean air and water, healthy forests, wildlife habitat and to the economic viability of our precious local communities.

Additionally, we want to recognize that last summer the ALC celebrated the centennial of Mountain Lodge (the Summer House) on Little Moose Lake. The Lodge was rebuilt following a devastating fire in 1913 and reopened in 1914. This year the ALC celebrates the 125th anniversary of its founding in 1890 when the combination of the Bisby Club with the Anson Blake Estate and other tracts created the preserve. The founders adopted the following objectives, which are embodied in the Constitution of the ALC and remain as vital today as they were 125 years ago:

(1) The preservation and conservation of the Adirondack forest and the propagation and proper protection of fish and game in the Adirondack region;

(2) The establishment and promotion of an improved system of scientific forestry; and

(3) The maintenance of an ample preserve for the benefit of its Members for the purpose of hunting, fishing, rest and recreation.

These objectives have been religiously adhered to over a span of 125 years. As a result, the Club property of approximately 53,000 acres remains today a scientifically lumbered wild forest area, virtually none of which has been destroyed by fire. The Club provides a "living laboratory" for the research on the effects of acid deposition on waters and soils, fisheries management, and so many other related topics. Our 60 year partnership with Cornell University and their Adirondack Cold Water Fisheries Research program has provided great benefits to the Adirondacks, upstate New York communities and beyond.

Please visit the membership page on our website to download an application to join the ALA

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