



The Boreas Ponds: Adirondack Wild's Case for an expanded High Peaks Wilderness

A first impression of the Boreas Ponds is one of supreme mountain majesty. The High Peaks Wilderness looms just to the north. The declivity of Panther Gorge separating Mts Marcy and Haystack appears so close it beckons you. As your kayak slips into these waters, a great solitude embraces the water on all sides amongst dense stands of spruce and fir. Loons ahead on the first Boreas pond call repeatedly – they are completely unused to human contact. A red-tailed hawk soars over the second pond. In the fall, a migrating bald eagle passes high overhead. Paddling through the narrow entrance to the third pond, amidst spatterdock waterlily, one sees a heron rookery. A belted kingfisher rattles at the shoreline, breaking the silence.



This landscape, once an industrial forest and private retreat, easily meets the Wilderness definition, having gained “primeval character,” “affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable, with outstanding opportunities for solitude and a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.”

Traveling around the ponds on the former logging roads one is impressed with its wilderness potential. In a year or two, these old roadbeds will be swallowed up, reverting to spruce and fir. Moose tracks and sign of bear add to this impression. So do the rare birds which specialize and rely

on this boreal habitat for nesting and foraging. Near the High Peaks lie smaller ponds such as White Lily Pond where trout lie still in the shadows. Above that pond looms Allen Mountain – so close you feel its rugged outcrops.

Boreas Ponds and High Peaks Wilderness: Natural Together:

A well has a “cone of influence” around it. The well’s water quality declines immediately when a significant portion of that cone’s circumference is damaged. So it is with a Wilderness. The High Peaks Wilderness, as large as it is today (nearly 200,000 acres), still lacks all its natural boundaries. The Ausable River and Raquette River drainages of this Wilderness, on the north and west, are largely intact. The big missing piece of this “cone of influence” is the Boreas River drainage to the south. At its heart lies the 22,000 acre Boreas Ponds tract. By acquiring this, and designating it part of the High Peaks, that Wilderness will finally gain its natural boundaries, and a sheer size, level of protection, ecological stability, enlightened management, and recreational potential unsurpassed in the eastern United States.

No Place Quite Like It:

Few places in the northeast afford similar mountain and lake scenery and recreational potential in such close proximity. By classifying the area Wilderness, the quiet, remoteness and sense of solitude of the High Peaks during these recreational adventures are immeasurably enhanced. The major entrance, the 5-mile Gulf Brook Road, could be a Primitive corridor with Wilderness on each side. Because Boreas Ponds inhabits a natural bowl, its soundscape is vulnerable to motorized traffic spidering off of the access road. A Wilderness classification would prevent this. Also, the Boreas Pond shorelines are sensitive to overuse by campers; additional primitive camping locations along the Gulf Brook Road south of the ponds would take camping pressure off the shorelines. Auto traffic on the Road could be stopped at a control point short of LaBier Flow, a dammed section of the Boreas River, where trailhead registers would be placed, a Forest Ranger presence established, and boats wheeled or carried to the water. A day’s adventure would begin here. Perimeter parking would be matched to the land’s capacity to withstand use. The disassembly of the Boreas Lodge not only is essential to achieve wilderness conditions but it removes motorized traffic to the ponds and eliminates a costly white elephant five miles from the nearest highway.

Educational Opportunity:

One does not have to physically reach Boreas Ponds themselves to benefit. At several points along the Gulf Brook Road small parking areas could be established and future visitors could enjoy new hiking opportunities on Ragged Mountain, or fishing on Gulf and Andrew Brook. Where the Gulf Brook Road meets the Blue Ridge Road, informative signage about the Boreas Ponds tract could be established, directing visitors and recreationists not only to the Gulf Brook Road points of access, but also to a nearby interpretive center somewhere in the Town of North Hudson where the history, majesty and opportunities of this rugged place could be told, and information about

weather, recreational conditions passed on to visitors. Nearby businesses along the highway would benefit from this interpretive center.



Classifying Boreas Ponds as Wilderness:

This goal faces stiff opposition from some local governments and some sporting interests who want a “motorized wilderness.” They demand that Governor Cuomo keep Boreas Lodge in place, allow motor vehicles access right to the shoreline, widen and gravel the old roads for pick-up truck access right to the Wilderness boundary. Those who advocate for Wilderness must broaden their base and apply greater pressure, involving in the coalition those who feel that their favored sport and recreation is inseparable from and reliant upon wild places.

Governor Andrew Cuomo has the chance to acquire a Tract his predecessors could only dream of. Once acquired from the Adirondack Nature Conservancy for the “forever wild” Adirondack Forest Preserve, we must persuade the Governor and his Adirondack Park Agency to classify the tract Wilderness and finally complete the natural boundaries of the High Peaks Wilderness, the largest in the northeast. The entire tract easily complies with Adirondack State Land Master Plan guidelines for a Wilderness classification. For this to happen, we urgently must assemble a broad coalition of wilderness and outdoor enthusiasts for wilderness at Boreas Ponds.

This spring, 2016 please join the coalition by letting Dan Plumley or Dave Gibson know of your organization’s willingness to participate.

Contact us at www.adirondackwild.org.

Thank you.