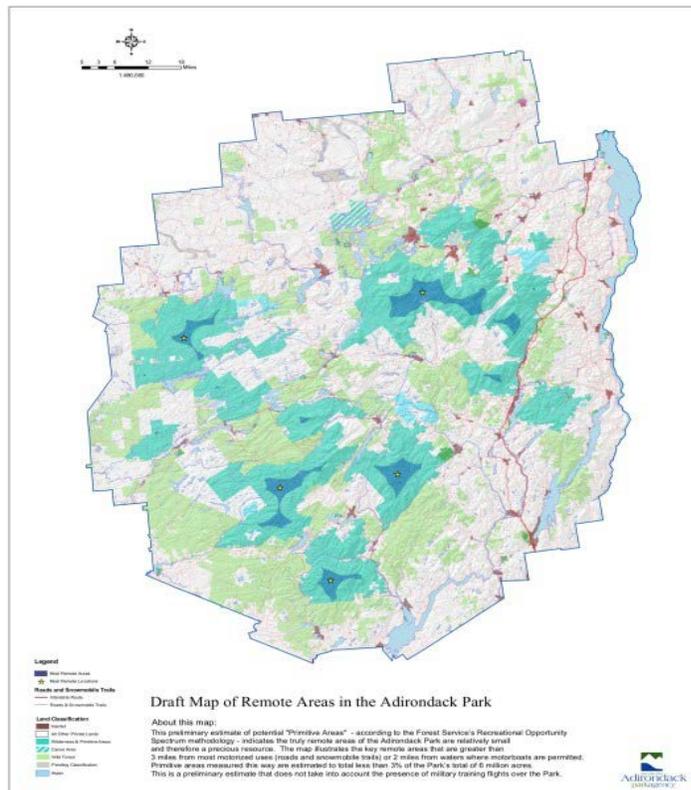


The Map of Adirondack Remoteness and Boreas Ponds

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Several years ago the Adirondack Park Agency mapped all the "Remote Areas" in the Park—those lying at least three miles from a road and at least two miles from any lake where motorboats are allowed. Less than 3 percent of the Park meets those criteria.

A caption states that the map "indicates the truly remote areas of the Adirondack Park are relatively small and therefore a precious resource." They are the dark areas shown on the accompanying map.

Given the region's network of roads, there aren't many opportunities left to create new Remote Areas in the Park.

Boreas Ponds is one of them.

Recently, I dug up a copy of the map and traced a circle with the Boreas Ponds dam at its center and a radius of three miles based on the map's scale. The results, though not surprising, are worth noting, given the controversy over the pending land-use classification of the 20,758-acre Boreas Ponds Tract:

First, and most obvious, none of the classification options proposed by the APA would meet the criteria. Under all four, state officials would be allowed to drive to the ponds to maintain the dam at the foot of Boreas Ponds. Also, the proposals evidently anticipate that the public would be allowed to drive at least partway to the ponds along a former logging road known as Gulf Brook Road.

Nor would the proposals of most environmental groups satisfy the criteria. BeWildNY, a coalition of eight organizations, supports allowing the public to drive to within a mile of Boreas Ponds. Protect the Adirondacks, though not a part of the coalition, favors this as well.

Some people have suggested that the public be allowed to drive only as far as a parking area built last year under an interim access plan. People had to walk 3.6 miles from there to reach the ponds. As the crow flies, however, the parking area falls within three miles of the ponds. So that fails as well.

As it turns out, Boreas Ponds would meet the criteria only if all or most of the tract is classified motor-free Wilderness. This is what two organizations, Adirondack Wilderness Advocates and Adirondack Wild, are proposing.

I'm not suggesting that the Remote Area criteria (adopted from the U.S. Forest Service) should decide the classification question, but they are something to take into consideration. There won't be many more opportunities like this.

As reported earlier, there is substantial public support for making all or nearly all of the tract Wilderness. Adirondack Wilderness Advocates reviewed the 11,000 comments received by the APA and concluded that 37 percent supported classifying the entire tract Wilderness. In all, 84 percent supported either AWA's or BeWildNY's proposal, according to the organization.

Incidentally, Bob Marshall, one of the original Forty-Sixers, saw roads as the biggest threat to wilderness. In 1936, he and a colleague compiled a list of the largest roadless areas in the United States. It included three tracts in the Adirondacks: the High Peaks, West Canada, and Five Ponds regions, all three of which are now designated Wilderness—with a capital W—by the APA.

The interiors of all three regions are among the bigger Remote Areas identified by the APA. Other substantial Remote Areas exist in the Siamese Ponds Wilderness Area and Silver Lake Wilderness Area. Smaller remote parcels can be found in other Wilderness Areas.

Also in 1936, Marshall penned an article (published posthumously) lamenting

the construction of the Calkins Creek truck trail in what is now the western High Peaks Wilderness, contending that the road wrecked the sense of remoteness he experienced as a young man. "The Cold River drainage is no longer a whole world where one can live the splendid life of the primeval," he wrote.

Marshall's love of primeval places led him to found the Wilderness Society, which later hired Howard Zahniser, who went on to author the Wilderness Act of 1964. The APA's definition of *Wilderness* is drawn from that law.