The Wilderness 50th Steering Committee will sponsor a public event in North Creek to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of The National Wilderness Preservation System Act of 1964.

The event will feature remarks by members of the Wilderness 50th committee, including but not limited to Adirondack Wild, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and Chad Dawson, Professor Emeritus at the State University of New York’s College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Professor Dawson is also the editor of the international *Journal of Wilderness*.

The event is also intended to recognize the legacies of Howard Zahniser and Paul Schaefer. The National Wilderness Act’s author and chief lobbyist Howard Zahniser took his inspiration from New York’s “forever wild” constitutional protection of the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve. That constitutional protection also marks its 120th anniversary this year (1894-2014). Zahniser said many times that New York State set the example for the national Wilderness movement and for the legislation. His legislation was signed into
law by President Lyndon Johnson on September 3, 1964.

Zahniser began to conceive of the law in 1946 on a hike into the High Peaks with the Adirondack wilderness conservation leader Paul Schaefer (1908-1996). The Schaefer family first came to Bakers Mills in 1923, and that is where Paul Schaefer matured as an outdoorsman and conservationist. Zahniser’s friendship with the Schaefer family led him to acquire a family camp near the Schaefer’s in Bakers Mills, where his family has vacationed ever since, and where Zahniser began to draft the legislation which went through 66 drafts before final passage. A conservation easement is being placed on the Zahniser camp and property earlier in the day by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

The theme for this year’s celebration is New York: Where Wilderness Preservation Began – Motivating New Leadership. The New York State Wilderness 50th steering committee is comprised of Adirondack Wild, the Nelson Rockefeller Institute of Government, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Committee members are working with many upstate colleges which have scheduled Wilderness 50th activities, lectures and field trips this fall. The goal is to encourage younger leaders to engage in thoughtful understanding, appreciation, care and stewardship of wilderness. A schedule of all college public events is posted at www.adirondackwild.org/wilderness50.

“Howard Zahniser often said that once the Wilderness Act was passed, the greatest challenge would be to keep wilderness wild,” adds Adirondack Wild’s David Gibson. “This remains one of our biggest challenges in the Adirondacks, in the Catskills and across the country. We invite people of all ages to explore how we can become better stewards of our Forest Preserve during this anniversary.”

A new commemorative film made for the anniversary, “Forever Wild,” will also be shown. The film was made for Adirondack Wild by Adirondack author and photographer Carl Heilman II and singer-songwriter Dan Berggren. The public is invited to engage in questions and discussion with members of the committee.

Free and open to the public, the event will be held at Tannery Pond Community Center in North Creek on Wednesday, September 10 from 5 to 6:30 pm. No reservations are needed. Light refreshments will be provided.