

**DEC WRAPS WILDERNESS IN RED TAPE THAT FREQUENTLY FAILS
TO PROTECT
02/15/00**

I am constantly being chided for avoiding controversial local issues, to which I plead guilty. One reason I do is I am reluctant to do anything that may adversely affect the livelihood of friends and neighbors.

Many of the local issues impact our lives on such a smaller scale when compared to state or federal levels. Many of the problems resulting from actions of local government are filtered down from the two above groups

I tend to be more tolerant of problems resulting from actions of local government. I believe in local issues being decided by local residents. It's easier to throw the rascals out of office for aberrant behavior.

In my humble opinion, all government agencies are empire builders. I learned this first-hand years ago when I worked for the state. They constantly probe and invent ways to expand their scope and influence.

The larger entity, the greater the budget. Bureaucrats translate this into higher salaries for administrators, who for the most part are political patronage appointees. Self-perpetuation of the agency, expanded regulatory potency, and votes are other equally important incentives.

Last, but far from least, is the overwhelming desire all social engineers have to tell others how they must live. They have power over the very people who pay for their often-questioned reason for their very existence.

Since you must have the picture I have tried to paint, I will leave you with your own personal exemplification.

The choices are endless, but I will cite just one of many where my contact has been extensive. It is the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Before venturing further let me state I believe it serves a useful and necessary function. Beyond that, my perception of its ultimate motives and objectives, along with its methods of achieving them, are less than honorable.

The field personnel are, for the most part, fair and evenhanded, and in many cases apologetic for their actions. The same can seldom be said for the political hacks insulated from public scrutiny with distance and devious legal maneuvering. These are the real empire builders who treat the lower echelon troops with the same disdain they do the public.

New York's Forest Preserve is second only in size to the Flathead in Montana. It is constantly being expanded by the state at the urging of several groups of radical left wing social engineers posing as environmentalists. Each new parcel is trumpeted by the governor as having been "saved." Saved from what?

Under stringent regulations imposed by the DEC and Adirondack Park Agency, nearly all development rights on private property are precluded. Harried landowners already overburdened by taxes and regulations are forced to capitulate and the land is funneled into the public domain.

Regulations bring me back to the gist of this missive. The state has never been consistent in its application of its rules. It has shown a definite partiality for certain groups or individuals and itself.

Two obvious examples were presented to me by logging operators who are personal friends and business associates of unquestioned honesty and integrity.

The first was issued a permit for temporary use of an old winter access road on a state Wild Forest Area to harvest timber on a large private tract. He was not permitted to make even minimal changes in the road surface or border trees.

When its use became virtually impossible, he sought to modify the permit. His appeal elicited no sympathy from Albany and he nearly went bankrupt. Coupled with other circumstances, he was forced to forego the job the following winter.

Two years later, a large industrial conglomerate whom a former DEC commissioner resigned his position for and joined, was given the contract.

Surprise! They were allowed to cut several mature trees, install culverts and spread gravel on the exact same road.

My next source had years of dealing with excessive and arbitrary DEC red tape. He presented me with evidence of its obvious contempt and disregard of the state's Forever Wild constitution prohibitions in the form of several pictures.

They are of many large mature red spruces that were cut in a classified Wilderness Area. The trees were cut within sight of the West Mountain Trail and used to bridge wet areas on the trail. Several dead standing and recently blown-down trees were not utilized. As an experienced woodsman, he found many areas were not warranted for bridging in a Wilderness Area.

Further, as a personal observation, while serving as a ranger in the 60s, I submit the following: I visited a campsite with the district ranger just as the camper finished cutting a dead

10-inch spruce in front of his tent. I was told to issue a violation ticket, which I did. The following spring we cut two huge live spruces to bridge the South Inlet, less than a half a mile from the same campsite.

I have concluded from my observations many of the state's actions serve only one useful purpose: They can always be used as a bad example.