

YET ANOTHER AREA TARGETED FOR A BAN ON FLOAT PLANES

September 18, 2001

This is being written from the perspective of a 74-year-old with a long association with the wilderness aspects of the Adirondacks. It has been an integral part of my life in both work and recreation. I have enjoyed and reveled in every moment of it. Like the parent asked to choose between his children I cannot segment them in order of importance to me. Of all of them my experiences with local bush pilots are among my most memorable and satisfying.

Prior to 1972 there were few if any rules or regulations restricting the use of float planes on State lands. With its inception in that year the Adirondack Park Agency promulgated sanctions that limited use of such vehicles including float planes. With their implementation hundreds of lakes and waterways became off-limits to float planes.

Areas that for years were quickly and easily accessed by persons of all ages and physical conditions became accessible only for those physically fit and able to go in by foot. These changes did not occur immediately or stabilize at that time. It has been an ongoing process that continues to this day.

As I write this, the latest proposal to ban float planes from yet another popular fishing lake is in the works. The details are outlined in a draft for the Bog River-Lows Lake Unit Management Plan. The usual public hearings have been held to give the impression we the public's opinions matter. I for one have little faith in local public concerns ever being considered. I have two good reasons for my belief. A former State senator and good personal friend assured me that all any State public hearing was held for was to give the public the perception that their opinion was being considered, when in truth the proposal is already a done-deal. I write this to show support for my fellow local business people and our local economy. The situation is made more onerous since much of the area involved is private land and its owners will be excepted from many of the restrictions.

Float planes and bush pilots have been a part of the Adirondack scene since 1926. My first experience with it began a scant 11 years later and continues to this day. Bush pilots are as much a part of our history and traditions as are guides and loggers. I am saddened that my eight grandchildren will never have an opportunity to gain the same sense of those annals as I have.

Recreation users have not been affected by the restrictions on float planes. As a former ranger I cannot adequately put into words the benefits and help they tendered to me and the State as a whole. Be it searches, rescues, fire detection, fire suppression or routine maintenance of facilities, there is no duplicating their utility value. Much of their time and cost is donated as well.

It's ironic from my viewpoint that the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) itself is perhaps one of the biggest losers in eliminating their use from State lands. To quote an old phrase "No good deed ever goes unpunished".

As a wilderness addict of long standing I fully understand those wanting a wilderness experience. No one can reasonably argue that there is a dearth of areas in the Adirondack Park where one can do that. Since we have more than enough of those possibilities already why try to make another out of an area that is partially owned by private interests whose rights will not be impacted.

To make a long story short, I urge everyone to make your feelings known to the DEC by writing your comments to the following: Stewart Brown, NYDEC, 6739 US Highway 11, Potsdam, NY 13676.

Do not let the State cave in again to a small elitist group without a whimper.