

2013-J4555

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the National Wilderness Preservation Act of 1964, and the 120th Anniversary of New York State's Forever Wild constitutional protection

WHEREAS, The act of designating a wilderness by law, where nature's reign is given full expression, forever free from mechanization and human domination, is one of the most important acts of American democracy and governance; and

WHEREAS, Indians, from the Haudenosaunee, or Six Nations, to First Nations throughout America and Canada, were the first to prove that human spirit, survival and prosperity are inseparable from and dependent upon wild nature; and

WHEREAS, America's passion for designating, protecting, managing and recreating in wilderness areas has made it a global leader in wilderness preservation and stewardship, and a beacon which many other nations have followed; and

WHEREAS, New Yorkers have been at the forefront of such actions since 1894, when Article XIV, Section 1 of the State Constitution, the "Forever Wild" clause, was approved by the people; and

WHEREAS, Article XIV, Section 1 remains highly popular and unchanged today, 120 years later, encompassing 2.7 million acres of State-owned Forest Preserve in the Adirondack Park and over 300,000 acres in the Catskill Park; and

WHEREAS, It has been 50 years since Congress passed the 1964 National Wilderness Preservation Act authorizing a percentage of the nation's public lands be permanently protected for all their wilderness values, now amounting to over 109 million acres of designated wilderness spread across the country; and

WHEREAS, A New Yorker of much national influence, Bob Marshall,

created, with other allies, the Wilderness Society in 1935, which employed Howard Zahniser to create, over an 18 year period, the national coalition and legislative consensus to designate and expand a national system of wilderness; and

WHEREAS, Wilderness areas are where humans may experience most keenly our interdependence with all life, as well as solitude, recreational and spiritual nourishment, and the opportunity to experience land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions; and

WHEREAS, Wilderness areas also provide large monetary as well as non-monetary values, including backcountry travel, fishing and hunting, iconic wildlife habitats, and many billions of dollars of nature benefits or ecosystem services such as clean water, erosion control, flood prevention and storage of atmospheric carbon; and

WHEREAS, Eleanor Roosevelt was quoted as saying "perhaps nature is our best assurance of immortality"; the act of protecting, preserving, perpetuating and commemorating wilderness is our ultimate gift to younger and coming generations of all backgrounds in New York State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the National Wilderness Preservation Act of 1964, and the 120th Anniversary of New York State's Forever Wild constitutional protection; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve, The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, the New York State Department of

Environmental Conservation, and the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.