

Adirondack Almanack
August 5, 2016

Former Finch, Pruyn Lodge At Boreas Ponds Demolished

<http://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2016/08/conservancy-begins-demolishing-lodge-boreas-ponds.html>

by [Phil Brown](#)



Photo of partially demolished lodge taken by Nancie Battaglia on July 24

A large lodge at Boreas Ponds built by Finch, Pruyn & Company has been demolished, removing one thorny issue facing state officials responsible for drafting a management plan for a recently acquired tract of Forest Preserve.

The Adirondack chapter of the Nature Conservancy, which sold the ponds to the state this year, hired a contractor to dismantle the lodge. The state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) agreed that the lodge should be removed — even though local officials wanted it to stay.

Rob Davies, director of DEC's Division of Lands and Forests, told *Adirondack Almanack* that it was not feasible to keep the lodge, partly because of the cost of maintenance, partly because it was a “non-conforming structure” in the Preserve. He said the project, including removal of debris and rehabilitation of the site, should be complete this month.

North Hudson Supervisor Ron Moore said he thought the lodge could have been used as a ranger outpost, information center, or overnight lodge as part of a hut-to-hut network. Yet, he understands that it would have been expensive to maintain.

“We knew it was coming,” he said of the demolition. “It’s a disappointment, but I realize the financial aspects of it.”

Finch, Pruyn, which sold its lands to the conservancy in 2007, built the wooden lodge as a corporate retreat [on the south side of Boreas Ponds](#) in 1996. From its porch, visitors enjoyed a spectacular view of the ponds and the High Peaks beyond. Moore said he’d like to see the cleared site used for lean-tos or tent campsites.



The Adirondack Council provided the second photo, taken August 4, showing the vacant site.

It was no secret that the 3,300-square-foot lodge would come down. Michael Carr, the head of the conservancy’s Adirondack chapter, had said so at a gathering this spring at which Governor Andrew Cuomo discussed the purchase of the 20,758-acre Boreas Ponds Tract.

At the time, Carr also announced that the conservancy would provide \$750,000 to spur recreation-oriented economic development related to the former Finch, Pruyn lands. The conservancy had earlier provided \$500,000 for similar projects.

Steven Engelhart, executive director of Adirondack Architectural Heritage, said the building is not historic, so his organization did not advocate for its preservation. He added that he is pleased that DEC may preserve an older cabin on the property.

Willie Janeway, executive director of the Adirondack Council, thanked the conservancy and DEC for removing the lodge. “Its retention would be inconsistent with a Wilderness classification,” he said. “More importantly, its impact on the remote character of the site was a concern.”

In the coming months, DEC and the Adirondack Park Agency will decide how to manage the Boreas Ponds Tract. One question is how much of the tract should be motor-free Wilderness and how much should be Wild Forest, a less-restrictive classification that allows some motorized use as well as mountain biking.

Also at issue is whether Gulf Brook Road, a seven-mile logging road that leads to Boreas Ponds, should be open to motor vehicles. Environmental groups and local towns say the general public should be able to drive six miles up the road, as far as LaBier Flow. From there, canoeists could paddle and portage about a mile to the ponds themselves. Hikers could reach the ponds by continuing up the road on foot.



Photo of intact lodge taken by Phil Brown.

The towns would go further toward facilitating public access, proposing that the disabled, guides with their clients, and people who obtain a special permit be allowed to drive closer to the ponds. The towns also want logging roads around the the ponds open to mountain biking—an activity that would not be allowed under plans backed by the environmental groups.

“To benefit the towns, it’s all about access and recreational opportunities,” Moore said.

Wilderness purists argue that the Gulf Brook Road should be closed in its entirety (to both motor vehicles and bikes) and allowed to revert to a footpath. Still others argue that the road should end somewhere short of LaBier Flow.

The road has been gated at its start since the state acquired the Boreas Ponds Tract in the spring. Moore said he hopes DEC will open the road as far as LaBier Flow under an interim-access plan that is in the works.