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## **New Study: Wilderness Helps Adirondack Economy**

by [Editorial Staff](#)

<http://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2016/05/study-wilderness-helps-adirondack-economy.html#more-61352>



A new study conducted by Clarkson University argues that the Adirondack Park's constitutionally protected Forest Preserve is an economic asset to the private lands and communities near it, and the wildest of those lands returns the greatest financial benefit.

Clarkson's study showed that people seeking to purchase homes and businesses in northern New York paid more for the same property inside the Adirondack Park than they would have outside of it. Buyers paid up to 25 percent more if that property was close to a wilderness area.

New York's Adirondack Park Wilderness areas, where motorized recreation is not allowed, constitute the largest protected Wilderness in the Northeast.

"In general, results confirm that private properties inside the Adirondack Park, all else equal, have higher values than those outside the blue line," says the study led by Clarkson School of Business Associate Professor Martin D. Heintzelman. "The results also suggest that proximity to protected land positively impacts property values. Specifically, we find that properties within 0.5 to 6 miles of wilderness are valued at up to a 25-percent premium." Dr. Heintzelman was assisted in the study by Ph.D. Candidate Chuan Tang of the Clarkson Institute for a Sustainable Environment.

The study analyzed more than 77,000 real estate transactions over a decade in the 12 counties that comprise the Adirondack Park, using proven statistical models and Geographic Information System mapping technology to assist in the analysis. The study also cites other research efforts that found similar economic benefits derived from wilderness protection, both in the Adirondacks and elsewhere.

The boost in property values for lands near wilderness areas was found to be statistically similar to the difference between homes situated on waterfront, which are worth an average of 27 percent more than similar homes located away from the shore, the study noted.

“Overall, our results suggest that wilderness land has significant positive impacts on nearby property values ... This result is reasonable since allowing motorized vehicle use in (other lands) may destroy wildlife habitat, degrade the region’s bio-integrity ... and produce undesirable effects like noise and pollution,” the study said.

“This result may indicate more economic activity in a local region, and surely points to increased amenity values for nearby landowners,” the report said. “These results do not mean that, in order to maximize property values, all public lands should be designated as wilderness, but that, at the margin, additional wilderness areas are likely to increase local property values. Economic theory suggests that as the amount of wilderness increases, each additional acre of wilderness will become less valuable than the last. Nonetheless, at current levels, the marginal value of additional wilderness is still positive.”

“Non-NY buyers pay more than 100 percent more for properties in the park than outside of the park ... More importantly, non-NY buyers also pay a much higher premium for properties close to wilderness land, compared with NY buyers,” the study said. “Specifically, non-NY buyers pay approximately 3 times more for properties that are within 0.5 miles to 3 miles of wilderness lands.”

The Clarkson study also confirms the findings of a recent tourism study of Essex County in the Adirondack Park, which found most visitors spent their time and money on non-motorized recreation.

Since 1895, all public forests inside the Adirondack Park are Adirondack Forest Preserve and are protected by the “forever wild” clause of the NYS Constitution. Adirondack Forest Preserve lands classified as Wilderness areas are generally further protected by prohibitions against motorized or mechanized recreation and access (except for people with disabilities). Hiking, climbing, paddling, sailing, hunting, fishing and camping are allowed on all Forest Preserve lands.

The study found that lands where visitors were allowed to drive their vehicles, snowmobiles, or seaplanes didn’t have the significant positive economic impact of Wilderness in terms of impact on local property values. “We do not find a significant impact on property values adjacent to Wild Forest lands,” the Clarkson study notes in its conclusions.

The findings of the Clarkson study correlate with the 2014 Leisure Travel Study: Essex County, New York conducted by the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism.

That report showed that 74 percent of respondents were attracted to visit the area by outdoor activities, and of that, 85.5 percent selected hiking, 55.7 percent selected paddling a canoe or kayak and 36 percent selected fishing as a key attraction to visit. In contrast, only 7.7 percent said that snowmobiling was a key draw for their visit. While 18 percent said they came for

bicycling, the study didn't differentiate between mountain biking on Wild Forest trails, or cycling in communities and on paved highways.

A copy of the study's report [is available online](#).