

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Camp Wild Air

and or common Component 3, Great Camps of the Adirondacks Thematic Resources

2. Location

street & number Upper St. Regis Lake

not for publication

city, town Upper St. Regis ☒ vicinity of

state New York code 36 county Franklin code 33

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Whitelaw Reid

street & number OPHIR Farm

city, town Purchase vicinity of state New York 10577

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Franklin County Government Center

street & number

city, town Malone state New York 12953

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1979-1980 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

city, town Albany state New York

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date NA

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Camp Wild Air is located on the north shore of Upper St. Regis Lake in the town of Brighton, Franklin County. The earliest permanent camp established in the St. Regis area (one of three areas of the Adirondack Region where Great Camp development was centered), Camp Wild Air was begun in 1882. Although no structures remain from this period (the result of fire and demolition), Camp Wild Air consists of 12 buildings of which 10 built between ca. 1890 and 1931 contribute to the historic significance of the property. The camp buildings, predominantly one-story structures, are clustered in a random pattern oriented south along the shore on a small point of land. The nominated property consists of the 29-acre parcel of the present and historic camp, and the property boundaries encompass all contributing historic features. Camp Wild Air is accessible only by water.

In its present form and complement of buildings, Camp Wild Air reflects the evolution of the property through several periods of construction and alteration. Built without an overall plan but containing buildings for specialized functions, the original camp of ca. 1882-1916 included a dining hall and staff quarters (both demolished, 1961), a main lodge and a bedroom building (both destroyed by fire, 1916), a sitting room (1890), carpenter shop (1890), two boathouses (1897 and ca. 1900), guide house (1895), billiard room, and guest house whimsically designated "The Bishop's Palace" (1908). The two principal structures lost in the fire of 1916 immediately were replaced with a new living room and bedroom cottage (both, 1917-1920). The final structure added during the period of historic significance was the playroom, a log-sided building of 1929. The camp buildings are characterized by small-scale, polygonal forms and the use of rustic native materials, including structural logs, log veneer sheathing, shingle roofs and bark-clad log porches.

The "living room," as the principal lodge of the camp is known, is a 1½-story cedar log structure with a cobblestone foundation. Its distinctive cruciform plan encloses one large living space surmounted by a wooden vaulted ceiling. The feeling of openness is enhanced by large gable end clerestory windows on three sides. The whole of the interior space is paneled with polished, narrow, beaded-board fabric in vertical, horizontal, and opposing diagonal patterns. Also of distinction are three small polygonal, log-veneered, single-story structures built at intervals directly on the lake shore with balconies that project over the water. In close proximity to the living room, these buildings extend over the lake, appearing to float on the water's edge. The principal buildings of the complex are connected by stone walkways; the living room is accessible from the principal landing dock via slate and cobblestone pathways and staircase.

The present living room building was altered with replacement window sash (the original having been of multiple panes) and with a dining room addition in 1961. The original porch which surrounded this building on four sides was partially removed at this time to accommodate the new dining room wing. An insulated, winterized cabin was added to the complex in the vicinity of the former squash courts in 1974. Aside from these alterations,

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Camp Wild Air, New York, Franklin Co.
Continuation sheet Upper St. Regis vic. Item number 7

Page 2

Camp Wild Air retains significant architectural integrity. Not only do primary structures retain their original appearance in most details, but interior furnishings and decorative items accumulated by three generations of the Reid family are retained in use and add to the camp's historic and architectural character.

The following is an annotated list of buildings and structures that constitute Camp Wild Air:

NYS033-06-0063-D03 Second Boathouse (c.1900) map key #1, Contributing
This is a rectangular, log-sided, single-story, gable-roofed, structure on the lake shore used for the storage of boats.

NYS033-06-0064-D03 Living room (reconstructed 1917-1920) map Key #2, Contributing
This principal lodge is a 1½ story, hip-roofed, log structure with a cobblestone foundation and wide porches. Its distinctive cruciform plan encloses one large living space and a small kitchen and dining room. The living room space is enhanced by a wooden, paneled, vaulted ceiling. The feeling of openness is enhanced by large gable end and clerestory windows on three sides. The whole of the interior is paneled with naturally finished, polished, narrow beaded-board wainscotting in vertical, horizontal, and opposing diagonal designs. A large stone fireplace and paneled chimney breast accent the space. The exterior of the chimney is cobblestone.

NYS033-06-0065-D03 Sitting room, also known as Little office (c.1890) map key #3, Contributing
This is a polygonal, log-veneered, single-story, hip-roofed pavilion built directly on the lake shore. The building has a stone foundation. Exterior features include a stone chimney, diamond-patterned wood casement window sash, and a projecting lake side balcony with rustic railings and shed roof. The interior of this single-roomed building consists of exposed studs against 4-inch-wide beaded wainscotting in opposing diagonals. The roof support system is exposed in a similar manner. A stone fireplace dominates the space used presently as a sitting room and office. The structure was moved to its present site in 1908. It had been the original Bishop's Palace.

NYS033-06-0066-D03 Bishop's Palace (1908) map key #4, Contributing
This is a polygonal, solid log, single-story, hip-roofed pavilion built directly on the lake shore. Exterior features include a stone chimney and diamond-patterned wood casement window sash. Interior features include beaded board wainscotting, a stone fireplace, and bathroom with original early nineteenth century fixtures and accessories extant. The building is now used as a guest cabin.

NYS033-06-0068-D03 Carpenter shop, also known as caretaker's house (c.1890) map key #6, Contributing
This is a 1½-story, gable-roofed, wood-framed, U-shaped service building which houses staff living quarters and the camp's carpentry shop. The carpentry shop is still in use for the maintenance of the property and it

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Camp Wild Air, New York, Franklin Co.

Continuation sheet Upper St. Regis vic. Item number 7

Page 3

retains original work benches and tools. Exterior features of the building include a shingled fabric, a recessed porch, tall lattice foundation screens and a brick chimney.

NYS033-06-0069-D03 Boathouse (c.1897) map key #7, Contributing

This is a 5-bay-long, 1½-story, wood-framed, shingled, gable-roofed service building which features two water slips, a boat ramp, and dry storage racks for canoes and guideboats.

NYS033-06-0070-D03 Winter cabin (1974) map key #8, Non-historic, Non-contributing

This winterized modern structure was built in close proximity to the old squash courts and its appearance does not intrude visually on the historic buildings in the camp complex.

NYS033-06-0071-D03 Guide house (c.1895, moved 1931) map key #9, Contributing

This is a single-story, gable-roofed, wood-framed, L-shaped structure.

NYS033-06-0072-D03 Woodshed (late 1930's) map key #10, Non-historic, Non-contributing

This is a rectangular, single-story, open shed screened in part by wood slats. It is used primarily as a wood shed. It has no architectural or historic significance.

NYS033-06-0073-D03 Billiard room (pre-1895) map key #11, Contributing

This is an octagonal, log-sided pavilion with wide overhanging eaves and a surrounding porch, the whole built on a wood deck and platform out on the waters of the lake. Exterior features include a massive stone chimney, diamond-paned windows, and rustic cedar log porch roof supports and railings. Interior features include exposed studs over beaded board paneled walls and a stone fireplace.

NYS033-06-0074-D03 Playroom (1929) map key #12, Contributing

The playroom building was constructed as a recreation space. Constructed of cedar log siding over a wood frame, it is a single-story, gable-roofed rectangular with multiple-paned double windows, bracketed gable end eaves, and small gable end screens. Interior features include an immense stone ashlar fireplace and chimney breast, and exposed roof support system of trusses and tie beams of sawn members. The space is presently used as a recreation-entertainment center for the camp.

NYS033-06-0075-D03 Bedroom cottage (1917-1920) map key #13, Contributing

This is a 1½ story, shingled, wood-framed, gable-roofed structure, devoted to housing multiple bedrooms and bedroom suites. The principal suites used by the camp owner, consisting of two bedroom-sitting room groups, have exterior doors that open on to a long porch running the length of the building. This porch is supported by log posts and finished with rustic log railings. A central hallway divides the interior space and, lighted by attic dormers, leads to the attic hallway and four attic bedrooms. Each of these bedrooms is served by two brick chimneys which supply a brick fireplace for each room on both floors. The interior wood paneling of beaded wainscoting is painted white.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1890-1930 Builder/Architect unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Camp Wild Air is architecturally and historically significant as an Adirondack Great Camp in the Upper St. Regis Lake area that contains significant historic features from several phases of development between 1890-1930. The camps of this area developed in part from the practice of establishing day camps or tent camps on scenic islands and peninsulas for guests at Paul Smith's Hotel, a lakeshore resort. The popularity of the day camps led advocates to erect more permanent camps on favorite sites, sometimes leasing the land from the hotel owner. Although no buildings exist from this period, Camp Wild Air is believed to have had buildings erected as early as 1882, thus making it the first permanent camp in the Upper St. Regis Lake region. As developed between 1882 and 1890, this camp featured a compound building plan that may have been influenced by the early camps developed by William West Durant in the Raquette Lake area to the south; however, Wild Air demonstrated a more sophisticated architectural approach to the Adirondack rustic style as well as introducing a new form, the polygonal pavilion, to the style. The rebuilding and enlargement of portions of the camp between 1917-1920 (after a fire) is attributed to the nationally prominent architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White and is the only known example of that firm's work in the rustic camp style. The association with a leading architectural firm indicates the growing popularity of the camp form of resort architecture among leading American designers within a short time of Durant's development of the prototype at Pine Knot (1877). In the final historic phase of Wild Air's development, additional recreational buildings were added to the complex by a local craftsman (c.1930). The evolution of the camp over consecutive building seasons is typical of the development of the earlier camps. Camp Wild Air was developed by the family of Whitlaw Reid, publisher of the New York Tribune and a major public figure in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and has remained in the family since its construction.

The Whitelaw Reids began leasing and developing the camp property in 1886 and acquired by deed in 1890. As it evolved before 1910, Camp Wild Air represents a significant design contribution to the developing Adirondack Great Camp form. Wild Air's characteristic polygonal, log-veneered, single-room structures built as pavilions extending over the lake demonstrate a more imaginative use of form and siting than the contemporary Raquette Lake camps inspired by developer William West Durant. The polygonal form appears as a distinguishing feature in subsequent camp architecture throughout the Adirondack region, most notably in the work of Saranac Lake architects William L. Coulter and William Distin. The sitting room, billiard room, and Bishop's Palace embody the distinctive scale, form and materials replicated in many later Great Camps of the Upper St. Regis area. With its complement of extant service buildings, including two boathouses, a carpenter shop, laundry/staff house and a guides' house, Camp Wild Air is an important example of the self-sufficient Great Camp as it emerged in the north-central Adirondack region before World War I.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Camp Wild Air, New York, Franklin Co.

Continuation sheet Upper St. Regis vic.

Item number 8

Page 2

A devastating fire in 1916 destroyed several of Camp Wild Air's dominant late nineteenth century buildings, including the main lodge and a three-story log bedroom building occupied by staff and guests. A new living room building and bedroom cottage were immediately built to replace the destroyed structures, with work completed between 1917-1920. The living room, or principal lodge, a log building with a distinctive cruciform plan, is the focal point of Wild Air. Characterized by its large enclosed living space, vaulted ceiling and clerestory windows, the building was constructed under supervision of architect William Rutherford Mead of McKim, Mead and White. Mead also consulted with Mrs. Reid on the design for the one and one-half story Shingle style replacement bedroom cottage (1917). With the addition of the log-sheathed playroom building in 1929, Camp Wild Air achieved its final appearance during the period of historic significance. The evolution of Wild Air over several decades is typical of accretive camp configurations and development during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Whitelaw Reid (1837-1912), for whom Wild Air was developed, first achieved journalistic prominence during the Civil War as a correspondent for military and political affairs for the Cincinnati Gazette. In 1869, he was appointed managing director of the New York Tribune. By 1872, he had become editor and publisher of the Tribune, at 35 the youngest editor of a major publication in the nation. Reid married in 1881; development of Camp Wild Air began soon afterward. In 1888, Reid was appointed Minister to France. At the Republican Convention of 1892 he was chosen by President Benjamin Harrison (also an Adirondack camp owner) as his running mate in an unsuccessful attempt to secure a second term. Thereafter, Reid returned to his duties at the Tribune where he remained until 1905, at which time President Theodore Roosevelt appointed him Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Retaining financial control of the Tribune, Reid moved to London, where he died in 1912 after seven years of diplomatic service. Camp Wild Air has remained in the ownership of the Reid family since its initial construction, and this long historical provenance contributes to its significance and its preservation.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 28.9

Quadrangle name St. Regis Mountain

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000

UTM References

A 18 558000 4917350
Zone Easting Northing

B 18 557810 4917300
Zone Easting Northing

C 18 557640 4917080

D 18 557530 4917210

E 18 557780 4917550

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property includes all that area delineated as lots 8 and 9 on the enclosed tax map.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Raymond W. Smith & Richard C. Youngken

organization New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation date July 1986

street & number Empire State Plaza Agency Building One telephone (518)474-0479

city or town Albany state New York 12238

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Julia S. Stope*

title Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation

date 9-11-86

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Camp Wild Air, New York, Franklin Co.

Continuation sheet Upper St. Regis vic. Item number 9

Page 1

Domblesky, Mary Ellen. "Research Report on the Great Camps of the Adirondacks." Unpublished study prepared for the Preservation League of New York State. Albany, NY, 1978.

Hooker, Mildred Phelps (Stokes). Camp Chronicles. Blue Mountain Lake, NY: The Adirondack Museum, 1964.

Reid, Mrs. Whitelaw, Letter to Mrs. Helen Rogers Reid, in the collection of Whitelaw Reid, October 25, 1917.

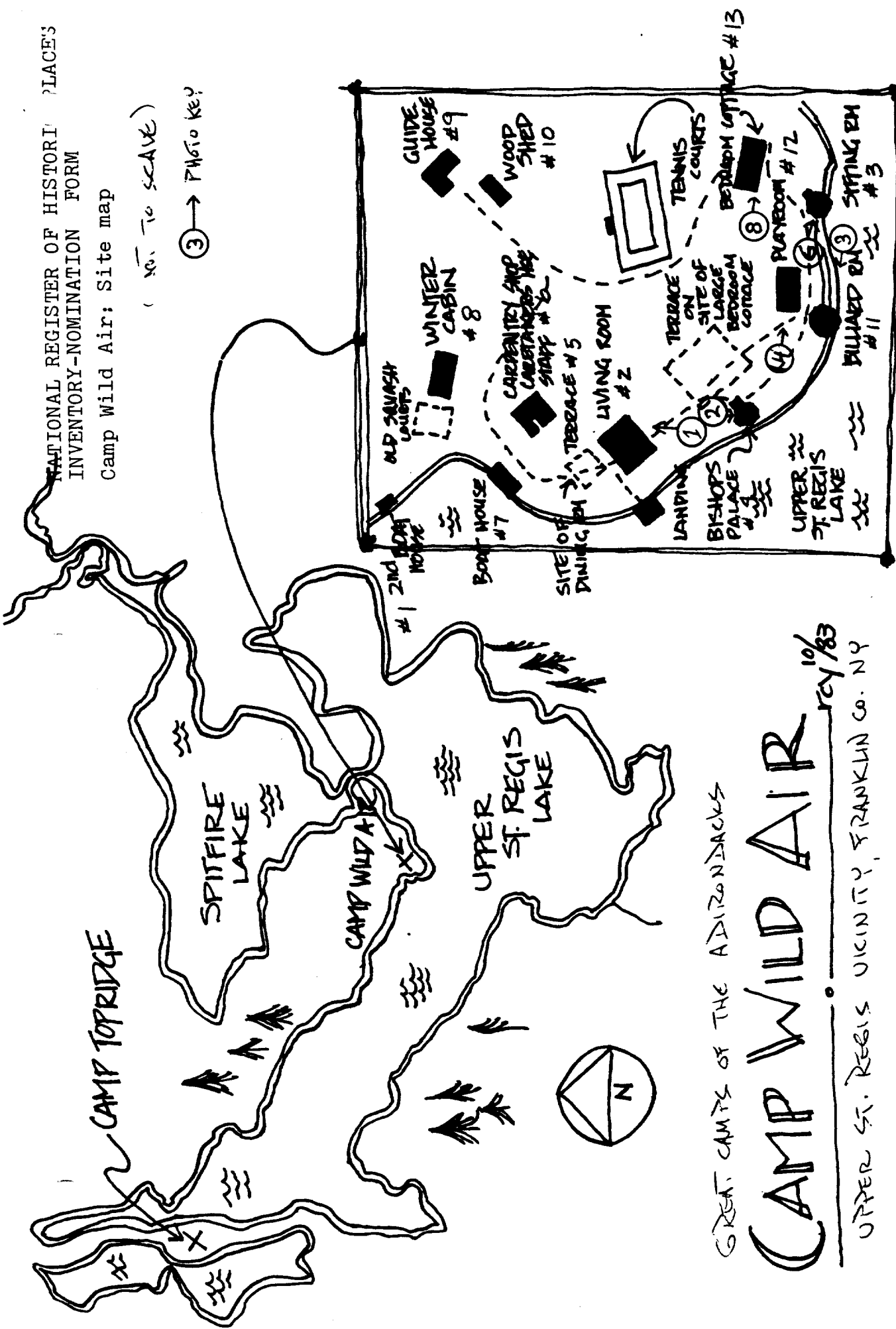
Reid, Whitelaw. Letter to Miss (sic) Waite, Preservation League of New York State. Ophir Farm, Purchase, NY. August 13, 1981.

Reid, Whitelaw. Interview with John C. Haggard. Camp Wild Air, Upper St. Regis Lake, NY. August, 1978.

Camp Wild Air: Site map

(NOT TO SCALE)

③ → PHOTO KEY



GREAT CAMPS OF THE ADIRONDACKS

CAMP WILD AIR

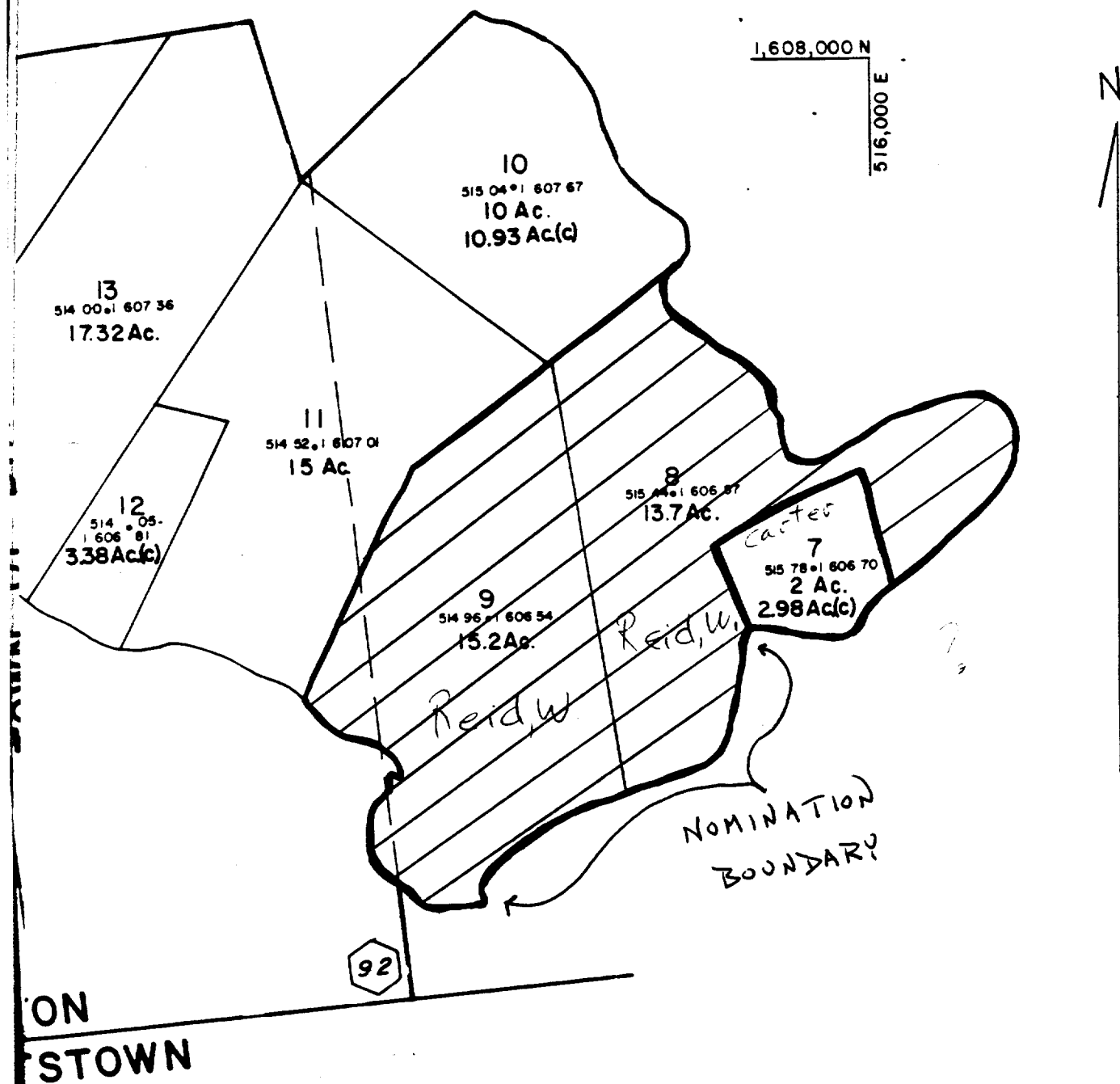
10/83

UPPER ST. REGIS VICINITY, FRANKLIN CO. NY

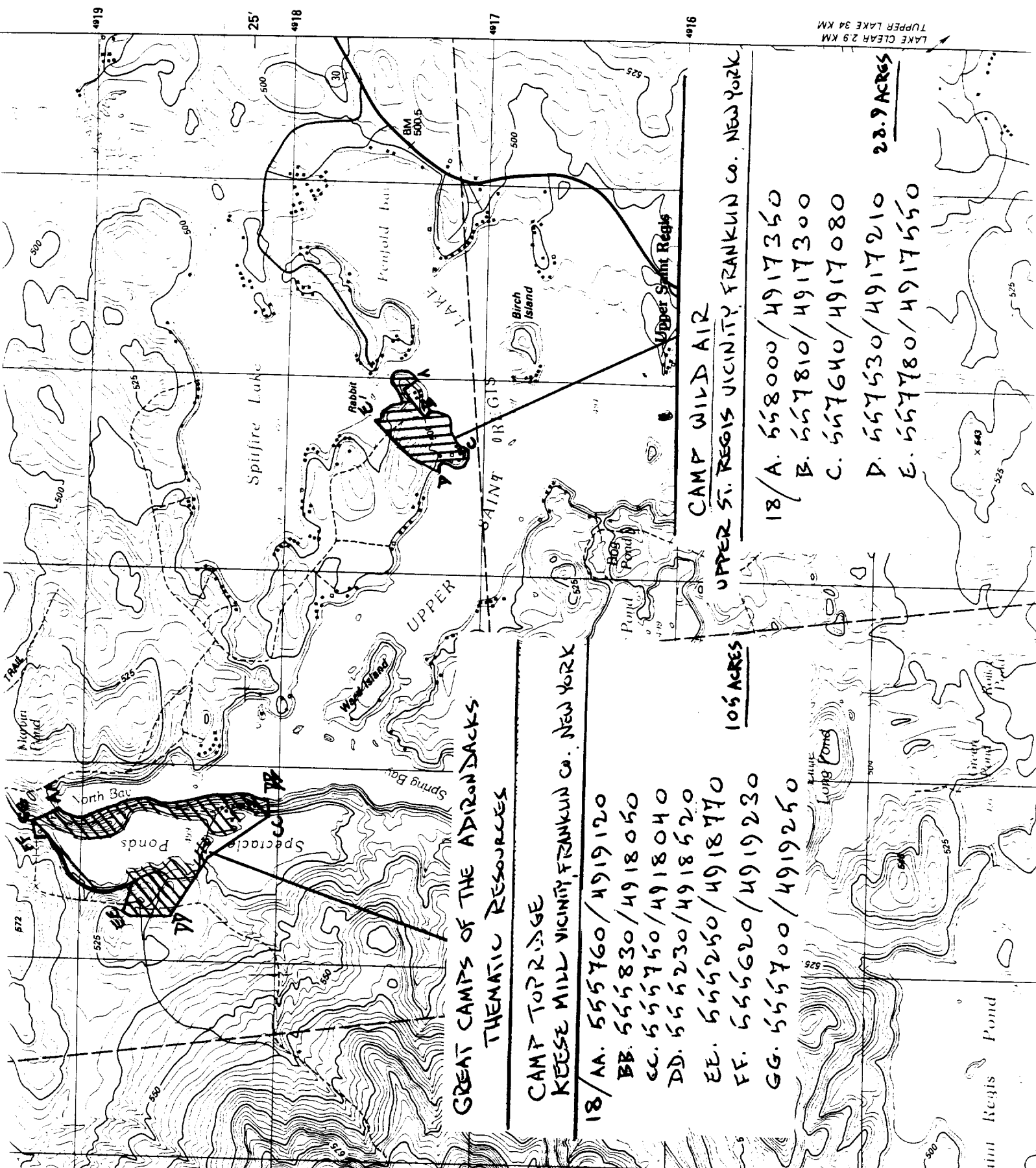
CAMP WILD AIR,
WHITE LAKE ROAD
BLK 1, LOTS 8, 9

UPPER ST. REGIS VICINITY, FRANKLIN CO. NY

GREAT CAMPS OF THE ADIRONDACKS



AR MAP
TOWN OF BRIGHTON
FRANKLIN, CO., NY
SECTION #409 9/11/75
1" = 400'



GREAT CAMPS OF THE ADIRONDACKS
THEMATIC RESOURCES

CAMP TOP RIDGE
KEESE MILL VICINITY, FRANKLIN CO. NEW YORK

- 18/AA. 555760/4919120
- BB. 555830/4918050
- CC. 555750/4918040
- DD. 555230/4918520
- EE. 555250/4918770
- FF. 555620/4919230
- GG. 555700/4919250

105 ACRES

CAMP WILD AIR
UPPER ST. REGIS VICINITY, FRANKLIN CO. NEW YORK

- 18/A. 558000/4917350
- B. 557810/4917300
- C. 557640/4917080
- D. 557530/4917210
- E. 557780/4917550

23.9 ACRES

LAKE CLEAR 2.9 KM
TUPPER LAKE 3.4 KM