

Rise and Fall of Adirondack Scout Reservation: 1990-99

By Peter Collinge

Adirondack Scout Reservation (ASR) was a joint venture between the Otetiana Council in Rochester and the Hiawatha Council in Syracuse. In 1990 it began to operate the summer camps at Massawepie Scout Camps and Sabattis Scout Reservation for the first time. (Note: Sabattis Adventure Camp, a nearby facility operated by a New Jersey council, was never part of ASR. All references to Sabattis in this text will refer to Sabattis Scout Reservation.) One reason the partnership made sense was that Massawepie and Sabattis are so close together: less than 15 miles as the crow flies. Unfortunately, people don't fly without planes, and the trip is 40 miles and 80 minutes or more by road. That fact was one of many details that made cooperation between the two camps a bit more difficult than perhaps was anticipated in the initial enthusiasm of the decision to work together. Regardless, the ASR partnership did operate successfully for nine summers.

ASR Starts Strong: 1990-92

As ASR started in 1990, not much changed from 1989, though there was a new Reservation Director, David Boshea, a retired Scout Executive from Michigan. In the winter and spring of 1990, staff was being hired, troop deposits of \$200 were due February 1, and troops were being encouraged to promote camp among their members. Wood Badge training course scholarships were publicized as available for camp leaders.

Of course, in Scouting a new reservation name meant that a new camp patch was needed! Scouts were encouraged to submit designs by February 15 for a contest, with a free week at any ASR camp as the prize. The winner was Ty Pitoniak from Troop 72 of Solvay, who submitted a design featuring a scene with an Adirondack loon. One other change for 1990 was that Massawepie had a new Property Superintendent: Mike Jackson. Dan Seaman had resigned to take a position outside of Scouting. Jackson had previous maintenance experience at Sabattis Adventure Camp.

The spring of 1990 continued with the usual Here's How meeting for leaders going to Mountaineer or Forester in late April, and reminders about fees, rosters, and leader applications being due June 1. Leaders on trail or out-of-camp trips needed to have first aid training and be certified as Trip Leaders. All Scout groups on the busses needed adult (age 21+) supervision riding with them. Busses would leave from and return to Monroe Community College, and leaders were reminded that no propane or liquid fuels could be transported on the bus.

Also as usual, volunteers were being sought for Skills Weekend (May 18-20, chaired by Dave Powelczyk) and Beaver Weekend (June 1-3, chaired by Greg McMahon). Troops going to camp were encouraged to bring a carload of adults, including new leaders who could see the camp "b.k." (before kids). Apparently the pleas for help were successful: 47 people attended Skills and 247 attended Beaver Weekend, hopefully all equipped with bug spray! A crew from Rochester Telephone Company started building the new COPE (Challenging Outdoor Personal Experience) course in Forester by erecting telephone poles.

During the summer, Dave Boshea worked out of Massawepie, but made frequent trips to Sabattis. The individual Massawepie camps were still run by the same camp directors as 1989 (Chuck Levengood at Mountaineer and Brad Alexander at Forester), and David Rennie directed Sabattis. Scouts and leaders returning to camp in 1990 saw relatively little change, other than the new COPE course at Forester. There was apparently a nice bump in Otetiana Council Scouts at ASR in 1990 vs. Massawepie in 1989, but some of that may have reflected troops attending Sabattis who were counted for ASR in 1989 but not for Massawepie in 1989. Separately, Chuck Levengood remembers that there were definitely some Hiawatha Council troops that switched to Mountaineer as the only dining hall option of the three ASR camps.

The camp kickoff for 1991 was held on Wednesday, October 24 at Temple Beth El. Troops could register for camp with a \$50 deposit. Also in October, the council published a camp "wish list" for donations, including snowmobile trailers, pickup trucks, cross-country skis. The camp property and off-season operation was still handled by the council; ASR only managed the summer operation.

By December, 49 troops from Otetiana Council had registered for 1991 summer camp. First aid, CPR, and lifesaving courses were being offered to help camp leaders meet certification requirements for trip and swimming supervision. Plans were announced for a provisional troop for Scouts not attending camp with their troop, rotating through the three camps (Mountaineer, Forester, and Sabattis), two weeks in each camp. Applicants were being sought for 140 staff positions, and were told that staff pay was being increased as attendance increased. The minimum staff age was reduced to 15, with Scouts age 14+ considered as CITs. Volunteers who could staff for part of the summer were welcomed.

Long-time Otetiana Council Scout Executive Jim Case retired at the end of 1990, and new Scout Executive Ray Blackwell started on January 1, 1991. By May, Doug Dillow was appointed as the new Director of Camping, though Dave Boshea still headed ASR. Dillow had responsibility for the two camp properties and for Cub Scout camping, which would be a council focus under Ray Blackwell.

By January, 1991, Mountaineer was full for weeks 3-5. For ASR overall, 115 units were registered for summer camp. As an incentive for troops to submit their additional \$200 deposit by February 1, leaders of troops that met the deadline were promised a special mug. ASR brochures were mailed to all Boy Scouts of both councils in February, and troops were offered help from a promotion team if needed to encourage Scouts to attend camp.

Dave Boshea would again be the Reservation Director in 1991, assisted by Bill Zinky. Doug Turner would again be Trek Director. Both Massawepie camps would have new camp directors for 1991: Rich Marsden in Mountaineer and Tom Johnson in Forester. Both were District Executives, which was common for most of Massawepie's history except for a brief period in the 1970s when non-Scouting professionals were used, and in some years after ASR. In those more recent years, when a single person directed the remaining camp and also usually had responsibility for all operations on the property, they often had a non-district council position like Program Director.

Massawepie tried various offerings over the years for older Scouts who were less interested in merit badges, but not ready or interested in a trek. In March, ASR announced a new program for 1991 during Week 6 at Mountaineer: the Ranger Program, for Scouts age 13+ as of August 1. Up to 24 Scouts would camp with four experienced adult volunteers, eat meals in the dining hall, and be involved in daily special activities such as wilderness camping, mountain climbing, forestry, etc. Evenings would be for fun and relaxation. The program was a success, with 10 Scouts participating.

By March, 166 troops had registered for ASR camps. Troops that had submitted at least a \$25 deposit per Scout could pick up their Early Bird patches. Summer camp 1991 would have a few new offerings, especially the fully operational COPE course at Forester and the Challenge Valley obstacle/mud course at Sabattis. Otetiana Council had also purchased 12 new sailboats for Massawepie. And troops were promised that the trading posts would sell fruit juice in addition to soda.

In 1991 much of the staff training for all three camps was done during Staff Week at Camp Mountaineer. While the intention was good, to provide consistency in training throughout the reservation, this decision caused problems, especially for Forester and Sabattis. Typically during Staff Week the staff work on getting their camp set up and ready in between the various training sessions, but when the Forester and Sabattis staffs were at Mountaineer they couldn't do that. By 1992 training was primarily done back in the individual camps.

Also new for 1991: the “renowned” Kwahadi Indian dancers performed at ASR July 2 & 3. Over the summer Boshea announced that Sabattis would move from a 6-day week to a 7-day week, like Mountaineer and Forester, in 1992. Reservations for 1992 were accepted during the summer season, rather than waiting for fall, with a \$50 deposit. And a patch contest for 1992 was conducted at camp during the summer, though the deadline was later extended to December 1. Eventually, a design from Scout Chip Hahn of Troop 61 in Skaneateles was selected for the 1992 reservation patch.

The ASR 1992 season Kickoff Rally was held Wednesday, October 23 at Temple Beth El. Leaders of troops registered for 1992 received a 1992 leader mug. A new ASR camp promotion video was available for unit use.

In January, 1992, the new Beaver Weekend co-chairmen were already looking for volunteers. Don Whitcomb was handling BW promotion, and Chuck Fox would coordinate the various projects. One crew had a new coordinator: Wayne Sheeler had been asked to organize trail maintenance after a Scout at Mountaineer became lost overnight during the summer of 1991, when inadequately marked trails may have been one reason. The council was becoming more aware that keeping Massawepie’s many miles of trails, and numerous outpost camps, open requires considerable maintenance. (In March, 1991, the council had asked for units or individuals to volunteer to “adopt” a trail or outpost camp to maintain, but didn’t get much response.) Later in the spring, Whitcomb and Fox announced that the 1992 BW theme was “The Ultimate Challenge” (i.e. to get camp completely ready before summer, so that the staff could concentrate on training). Food would be in the Pioneer “Beaver Lodge” dining hall, followed by the First Annual Beaver Weekend Campfire.

By February, 117 troops were registered for ASR, and Mountaineer was full for Weeks 2-5. Promotion brochures were being mailed to all registered Scouts. Boshea announced that Serv-Rite Corporation of Pittsford had been hired to run the ASR food service operation. Their number one goal: “A well-fed camper is a happy camper.” They would be developing new menus, and mostly staffing with full-time year-round employees. The supervisor of the Serv-Rite camps section was an Eagle Scout.

In March, Ray Blackwell (Otetiana Council Executive), Bill Moran (Hiawatha Council Executive), and Dave Boshea (ASR Director) all acknowledged the need for improvement based on critiques of ASR 1991. Feedback on 1991 was gathered via in-camp critique sessions, letters, one-on-one discussions, and fireside chats in both councils. Blackwell, Moran, and Boshea said that they would work together, along with the facilities, advancement, and training committees of both councils and both Executive Boards to make progress, and listed 10 specific steps to be taken. Those steps included hiring a professional food service organization (already done: Serv-Rite), improving staff training in quality and customer service while returning some of the training to the individual camps, training camp management in supervision, staggering camp director terms so that not all would be new in the same year, and holding weekly pre-camp meetings in both councils to convey last-minute information.

By March, 167 troops were registered for summer. A return of the 1991 Ranger Program was planned for Aug. 8-22, with 24 Scouts per week at \$165/week, but in the end there was not enough interest and this didn’t happen. Some staff positions were still available, for age 18+ and lifeguards age 17+. Troops received the usual spring reminders: attend the April Here’s How meeting and bring the Senior Patrol Leader; submit full fees and rosters and leader applications by June 1; everyone at camp must have a medical form signed by a provider within 36 months (within 12 months if age 40+); and busses would leave MCC at 8 AM sharp, with adult supervision required for each group and no footlockers!

The 1991 camp directors all returned for 1992: Rich Marsden, Tom Johnson, and John LaRocca. That turned out to be especially helpful, since Dave Boshea resigned as ASR Director before summer, and was replaced on an interim basis for the summer by Dick Satterlee of the Otetiana Council staff. In honor of Massawepie’s 40th anniversary in 1992, a limited number of specialty items were sold in the Mountaineer & Forester trading posts.

A critique session for the 1992 season was held on October 15 at the Scout Servicenter. For 1993, when almost 3000 Scouts were expected to visit the 5000 acres of ASR, Forester would run for 4 weeks, Sabattis for 6, and Mountaineer for 7. Sabattis would be back to running for six days starting Sunday noon each week, while Forester and Mountaineer continued to run for seven days each week starting Saturday noon. Each camp had separate attractions: Sabattis had Challenge Valley and Graves Mountain; Forester had a COPE course and easy access to the Adirondacks' largest bog; and Mountaineer has a dining hall and a great aquatics program in the "heated lake." The 1993 Mountaineer/Forester fees would be \$137 for 1 week or \$237 for 2 weeks. Sabattis fees would be \$122 or \$222. An additional fee of \$10 per week applied if fees were paid after June 1. Bus transportation from Rochester or Syracuse cost \$40 round trip, or \$25 one way.

ASR Continues and Matures: 1993-96

In February, 1993, Bill Zinky was announced as the new ASR Director. Zinky had been Longhorn District Executive in Otetiana Council. Darin Doxey would replace Marsden as Camp Director at Mountaineer, and Tom Johnson would again direct Forester. The 1993 ASR promotional poster, with breathtaking photos of ASR, was mailed to each Scout. Leaders were told that mugs and patches would be handed out at camp in 1993, rather than in advance. Design ideas for the 1993 patch (round, maximum 3" diameter, including some Adirondack wildlife) were accepted from Scouts through March 15. The patch contest winner was Olive Mitra of Troop 341 in Pittsford.

In March, Mountaineer Week 7 was eliminated, based on limited registration. Skills Weekend was rebranded as "Wilderness Engineers" and held May 15-16. "Busy Beavers" were recruited for Beaver Weekend June 4-6. One task was to clear branches and debris from camp trails and sites after some significant logging over the winter. At the recommendation of the NY Department of Environmental Conservation foresters, many dead and hazardous trees, mostly diseased beech and red maple, had been removed from Forester and Mountaineer. (Beech bark disease, a devastating disease complex affecting American beech trees, had become common at Massawepie. It was caused by the combination of a sap-feeding insect creating wounds in the bark and a fungus that then infected the tree, typically killing trees within 3-10 years. The dead and dying beech were susceptible to breaking off and falling on windy days.) This was a special safety project, not part of the regular Massawepie logging rotation program that had been operating at camp for years under a forestry plan. The 1993 project goals were that the Scouts would be safer and the forest would be healthier in the long run, but for the summer of 1993 the two camps looked dramatically different – much more open. Some Scouts and Scouters were not pleased, though most acknowledged the need to reduce tree hazards. Afterwards, 1500 spruce and pine seedlings were planted to replace some of the lost trees.

On June 3, 240 guests honored Bruce Russell, Silver Antelope and Area 7 President for the Northeast Region, BSA. The Campership Dinner, held at Oak Hill Country Club, raised over \$21,000 for camp scholarships. Chuck August chaired the dinner committee and Ed Ince was Master of Ceremonies. (At the 1994 dinner, Ince received the Scouter of the Year and Distinguished Eagle Scout awards.)

Every Wednesday night from June 23 through July 28 of 1993 there was a Massawepie Update session at the Servicenter for troops going to camp. Doug Dillow, now Director of Support Services, was there with either Frank Bouchard (VP Camping) or David Lippitt (Massawepie Committee Chair). One last-minute update: the NYS Department of Health (DOH) was enforcing a rule that swimming can only happen in "authorized" areas. Massawepie outposts were not authorized, which would require buddy boards, roped areas, lifesaving equipment, etc. The council was exploring getting a few outposts authorized. (Eventually, Powderhorn and Paul Bunyan were authorized for several years.) Also, the DOH said that groups leaving Forester or Mountaineer needed to have someone trained in Red Cross Responding to Emergencies (RTE), a 24-hour course. After trying unsuccessfully to convince the DOH that standard first aid training was adequate for trips to Massawepie outposts, ASR planned to offer a course each week at camp for \$6 for a leader from each unit to upgrade to RTE.

Overall in 1993, ASR had 2750 Scouts and over 700 leaders attend, served by 125 staff members including six international Scouts. Fall 1993 Kickoffs in Rochester & Syracuse were successful with 80 units attending. The new Health Department regulations were discussed, and units were told that an ASR survey was coming soon. The 1994 camp patch contest was announced with an entry deadline of January 15. A new mountain biking program was coming for Camp Forester in 1994, with instruction and a skills challenge course/trails. The camp fees for 1994 were announced. For Scouts, one week at Mountaineer cost \$145, at Forester \$140, and at Sabattis \$127. All fees increased by \$15 if not paid by May 16 (an earlier deadline than June 1 of previous years). A second week at any camp was \$115. Bus transportation was \$40 round trip or \$25 one way. There was a \$5 per brother discount, and additional leaders were \$30.

By February, Mountaineer was full for Weeks 2-5, but reservations were still being taken for Weeks 1 & 6. Fees of \$25 per Scout were due by February 1 to hold troop reservations. The 1994 ASR patch winner was Peter Patrician from Troop 96 (Hiawatha Council), and the Early Bird patch winner was Masum Stacey from Troop 275 (Otetiana). Peter Collinge, Work Weekend Coordinator, encouraged all troops attending Massawepie to send volunteers to Skills Weekend (May 20-22) and/or Beaver Weekend (June 3-5). For Beaver Weekend, 157 Scouters (132 volunteers and 25 council staff) participated. They completed the mountain bike pavilion in Forester, landscaping and tree planting near the Mountaineer dining hall, and many other tasks. Longhorn District's Slug Patrol had the most volunteers of any district: 40, followed by 35 from Great Northern District. Devin Dal Pos was the overall projects coordinator, with John Dunn at Forester & Larry Logory at Mountaineer.

Before the summer, ASR and Otetiana Council announced that Camp Forester would operate fully for the 1994 season and then close. Mountaineer and Sabattis will continue to operate as ASR. Forester attendance had declined from 779 Scouts in 1990 to 465 in 1994, despite the addition of a COPE course & mountain bikes, while Sabattis had grown from 875 to 1100. Forester's location at Massawepie was more remote than Mountaineer (though not more than Sabattis), making maintaining electric lines more difficult, and also a few of its troop sites were actually on Niagara Mohawk Company land rather than Scout property. Forester was only running for four weeks per summer; cutting to three weeks would make it difficult to attract staff, and continuing four weeks would not be cost effective. Instead, Sabattis would expand patrol cooking for 1995 and Mountaineer would offer limited patrol cooking. Non-Otetiana/Non-Hiawatha camp applications for 1995 would be held until October 1 to give traditional Forester units a first chance to sign up for the remaining two camps.

Both Massawepie camps had new directors for 1994: Jess Markel at Mountaineer and Marty D'Ambrose at Forester. Markel had previous experience as a camp director at Heritage Scout Reservation of the (then) Greater Pittsburgh Council, and had been promoted to a Senior District Executive in the Otetiana Council with the understanding that he would direct a camp. D'Ambrose was an experienced Otetiana district executive who had perhaps the harder task: keeping the Forester staff morale up for a final summer after learning that their camp would be closing. To his credit, he was able to convince the staff that they should work hard to make Forester's last summer its best yet.

Thinking back, Marty D'Ambrose remembers,

"The camp boasted a seasoned staff with some long-time Scouters like Ray & Addy Meyering and Bernie Bergmann. Abel Sussman was a very capable Program Director who assembled a fine mix of senior and junior camp staff as well as CIT's. Three international staff were assigned to Forester and they including Vicky H. from England, Vincent Pelletier from France and Andrew Duncan from South Africa. The staff did a masterful job of dressing the camp up with a traditional flare which, coupled with program features like a 35-foot tower in Deer Pond, made for a fun and exciting summer.

The summer ended on a sad note with the closing of a beautiful camp but not before many wonderful memories and friendships had been made. Competition between Forester and Mountaineer campers and staffs continued with the annual canoe race, which I can say as a participant was a feat of endurance I could not even fathom attempting today. The staffs had some fun with each other all summer long as well as with the Central team that supported us and all the visitors that came up from Rochester to see Scouting in action.”

Among the things that Forester’s staff was able to accomplish that summer was pulling one last prank on Mountaineer. Jess Markel remembers his Aquatics Director, Derrick Lawson, telling him at breakfast that all of the kayaks had disappeared. The boats were eventually located elsewhere on Massawepie Lake, but while looking for the kayaks Markel got a look at some of the Massawepie wildlife: a snapping turtle, ravens, and a bald eagle that then shot down toward the lake and came up with a large lake trout in its talons. After that, he says, “We were no longer upset about the kayak prank; we were feeling blessed to have witnessed such a wonderful display of God’s creations.”

Another memory that Markel had from 1994 was of the Week 5 Trail Blazer (First Year Camper) hike around Massawepie Lake. The previous year, the existing First Year Camper program had been renamed the Trail Blazers (later TrailBlazers) Program, and a hike around the lake (about 6 miles) was a key activity each week. In 1994, Richard “Yogi” Kinney was the Trail Blazers Director. He had excellent rapport with the younger Scouts, and Week 5 he led them on the hike around the lake. But halfway around, he fell and broke his ankle. Several of the camp staff on the hike started back to get help, and the other Scouts helped to keep Yogi comfortable, cool, and hydrated on a hot day. Once the runners reached camp, Markel sent some camp staff across the lake in the “rescue” motorboat to retrieve Yogi, along with several to continue the hike with the group. After returning from the hospital, Yogi insisted on staying in camp to finish the summer rather than leaving for home. “A Scout is Loyal.”

A final 1994 memory from Jess Markel was that because Week 5 had very high attendance and the staff was busy, he assigned his 10-year-old daughter Heather to be a guide for an incoming troop. Afterwards, the Scoutmaster said that she was the best guide they ever had: very knowledgeable (she had been at camp all summer) and helpful, plus the young Scouts followed her “like a puppy dog!”

In August, Scouts from Pittsford Troop 129, received some well-deserved positive publicity for their actions in the Adirondacks after leaving Camp Forester. During a high adventure backpacking week led by Ray and Anne Passmore, they found a dehydrated young man (formerly from Penfield and then a state trooper in Massena) near their campsite in the High Peaks. They gave care and notified a forest ranger, who later asked them to help carry the man from the Ore Bed lean-to to the Johns Brook Interior Outpost, where he was airlifted to medical care.

To encourage troops to register early, Bill Zinky announced that the 1995 ASR fees would remain the same as 1994 if the troop applied with a non-refundable \$100 fee by October 1. Otetiana troops were also encouraged to attend the annual ASR critique session on Wednesday, October 12 at the Scout Servicer, and assured that their feedback was valuable and needed for the camps to improve.

By January, 1995, Mountaineer Weeks 3-5 were full and closed. A total of 67 troops were registered for Mountaineer (57 Otetiana, 4 Hiawatha, and 4 out-of-council); 61 troops for Sabattis (31 Otetiana, 26 Hiawatha, and 4 out-of-council). Note the large number of Otetiana troops at Sabattis, the main patrol cooking camp now that Forester was closed. By March, Mountaineer was full for Weeks 2-5, and Sabattis was full for Weeks 3 & 4.

The ASR operation was successful enough that on February 13 the two councils signed a renewal joint venture agreement through 2000. That agreement was put together by David Lippitt, the Otetiana VP of Camping, and Father Jim Lang from Hiawatha Council. It was signed by the Scout Executives (Ray Blackwell and Bill Moran), Otetiana President David Klein, and Hiawatha VP John Chambers.

The Massawepie Conservation meeting was held April 17, chaired by Bob Hellman. This annual meeting was a longstanding tradition, and allowed the camp volunteers and key staff to interact with staff from the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Quite a few DEC employees typically attended. In addition to the meeting itself, they had a chance to chat with state employees from other departments/agencies who they didn't often see. Plus, Massawepie offered a free steak lunch to entice meeting attendance!

At the April 2005 Here's How meetings and through the *Smoke Signals* newsletters, camp leaders were reminded of Department of Health requirements for leading specific activities. If their unit would leave Mountaineer or Sabattis, then a leader needed Responding to Emergencies First Aid but not CPR. However, if they planned an aquatic activity, they would need a certified Lifeguard and either CPR-BLS or CPR for the Professional Rescuer.

The Massawepie Property Committee was looking for some specific skills along with general volunteers for Skills Weekend (May 19-21) and Beaver Weekend (June 2-4), including an experienced chipper operator, a telephone line installer, and someone to figure out low COPE safety & installation standards for Mountaineer. As an example of typical Property Committee creative scrounging, Oscar Lewis arranged for a used generator from the Rochester Housing Authority to be donated to Massawepie, and Don Whitcomb arranged for transportation of the generator.

Over 100 volunteers and council staff made Beaver Weekend 1995 a success. The Longhorn District Slugs & Slugettes, coordinated by Kevin Butler, again had the largest crew with 44. Great Northern (Bob Carafice, coordinator) and Northern Lights (John McParlin) Districts tied for second with 18 each. Chuck Fox's crew installed several COPE stations in Mountaineer, George Strick's crew set up a handicap accessible site in Mountaineer, and Victor Sinopoli & Lambert Hoch rebuilt the Mountain Bike Pavilion after its move from Forester to Pioneer. John Dunn coordinated the projects, Peter Collinge coordinated promotion, and Larry Logory was the Mountaineer site coordinator.

On June 15, Rochester Mayor William Johnson received the Distinguished Citizen Award. That was one of the last local events for Scout Executive Ray Blackwell, who became Director of Personnel for the national BSA on July 15. Tom Fitzgibbon started as the new Otetiana Scout Executive on September 1. Meanwhile, over the summer the various districts took turns at organizing the Massawepie bus loading for one week.

The most dramatic event of the summer was the derecho storm that hit the northwestern Adirondacks before dawn on July 15. A derecho is an intense, fast-moving, straight-line windstorm, as opposed to a tornado with swirling winds. This derecho or "micro-burst" toppled 30-60% of the trees on more than 100,000 Adirondack acres with winds estimated to be over 100 mph at times. Camp Sabattis was hit hard, while Massawepie was spared the worst effects as the most intense winds missed camp while devastating areas to the southwest to southeast of Massawepie, such as around Star Lake and Wanakena and Sabattis. Damage at Mountaineer was also lessened by the removal of dead and diseased trees that had been done in 1993. An article in the September, 1995, *Smoke Signals* newsletter described the intense experience of Troop 90 from Chili, which was at Sabattis after the closure of Camp Forester. Trees up to four feet in diameter fell all over camp in one intense but brief period around 5:30 AM, including between tents in which Scouts were huddled. Fortunately, there was only one injury at Sabattis, although there were fatalities elsewhere in the Adirondacks.

After that excitement, things mostly progressed as normal for the summer and fall of 1995. In February of 1996, Rich Marsden was announced as the 1996 Mountaineer Camp Director, a role he had also fulfilled in 1991 and 1992. In March, Bill Zinky advertised that he was looking for units to provide leadership, labor, funding, or materials for one of these five projects: replace boardwalk leading to the "Grasse River" (actually Massawepie Lake Outlet) bridge, convert part of the old

Mountaineer office into a first aid station, install an in-camp phone system in Mountaineer, install campsite drinking water bubblers, or repair campsite equipment.

Why should volunteers help at Skills Weekend (5/17-19) and/or Beaver Weekend (5/31 – 6/2)? An article in the May/June *Smoke Signals* gave 10 reasons: 1) Scouters are drawn to volunteer opportunities like a moth to light 2) Learn skills 3) Get a sneak preview of camp 4) Help get camp ready for your Scouts 5) Give camp staff more training time 6) The Adirondacks are lovely in spring 7) Fun and fellowship 8) Free food 9) Free lodging 10) "No rain or insects" (written on April 1!).

In fact, 115 volunteer and professional Scouters worked at Massawepie during Beaver Weekend 1996. The largest group was 32 Slugs and Slugettes from Longhorn District, coordinated by Kevin Butler. In second place, Great Northern had 21 beavers (up 3 from 1995), coordinated by Bob Laduca. And Howard Beye recruited 16 workers from Eagle District (up 4). Two special projects were completed: running a phone line across Massawepie Lake to Mountaineer, and building a handicap ramp for the relocated Mountaineer Health Lodge. Note: Since this was before cell phones, having a phone required wires coming from the main lines on NYS Route 3, so until 1996 only the warehouse, ranger's house, shop, and main office had phones. Other communication within Massawepie relied on FM radios, or "sneaker intercom" (walking to talk with someone).

During the Hotel Childwold era, there had been a separate "Massawepie, NY" postal address. Starting in 1954, Massawepie operated its own small post office during the summer, as "Massawepie Rural Station, NY." Pat Gleason remembers that, "The Post Office was in the Central Camp Office on camp property. It was still a Post Office into the 1970's. I know we were bonded, had to fly the US Flag when open, and kept the cancellation stamp, stamp inventory, and official papers locked in the safe. When we were doing the mail, we had to restrict access behind the counter. We also had to count the pieces of mail we canceled." Later, before 1996, the camp address was: Massawepie Scout Camps, HCR #3, Massawepie, NY, 12986. (12986 is actually the Tupper Lake zip code, of which Massawepie was a substation.) As of 1996, after the introduction of 911 emergency systems required street addresses for each property, the address became: Box 65 Massawepie Road, Massawepie Rural, NY 12986. (By the 2000s, that evolved to 65 Massawepie Road, Tupper Lake, NY 12986.)

John Zaffino was a Counselor-in-Training (CIT) in 1996 and remembers several things from that summer: there was a camp bus to take staff into town on their day off (though that ended in 1996 and for a few years staff had to scrounge for rides); popular cheers/songs included "Moo-Moo the Cow," the "Banana Cheer," and (on birthdays) "The Order of the Oar;" and in 1996 the entire staff site was moved by the staff under the direction of Assistant Camp Director Pat Bailey to an area southwest of the Handicraft Lodge. John also remembers a summer (maybe 1996 or one of the next few summers) when there were movie nights in the dining hall complete with pizza made in the kitchen.

In November, Bill Zinky announced that a brand-new promotional video for camp, developed by Time Warner, was available for use. Around that time, Jim Roth was announced as the Mountaineer Camp Director for 1997, and began looking for staff. Applications were available from Lisa Fernandes, who was the capable ASR/Camping Secretary for a number of years.

Easement; ASR ends; What next?: 1997-1999

The big Massawepie news for 1997 was announced by Governor George Pataki and the Otetiana Council Executive Board in April: New York State would purchase a conservation/recreation easement on the Massawepie property. The easement would restrict future development on much of the 3600-acre Massawepie property and preserve it for future public and Scouting use. The council would receive \$1.76 million from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund, which would allow reinvestment in the approximately 500-acre "Base Camp" area (Pioneer/Voyageur/Mountaineer) where development would be allowed. Per Gov. Pataki, this easement deal would protect the

Massawepie Mire, improve public recreational opportunities from September 1 through June 14 each year, and offer outdoor experiences for generations of Boy Scouts. The lengthy negotiations were assisted by the Nature Conservancy, which was convinced of the transaction's value since the property includes 10 water bodies, varied habitats including deciduous and boreal forests, and the Mire complex which is a classic northwest Adirondack landscape and breeding ground for the threatened spruce grouse. Even after the easement agreement was finalized, the process and paperwork took more time. The final easement was filed with the St. Lawrence County Clerk's office on May 6, 1998, after which the council received its payment from the state.

In the spring, Ty-Ohni Lodge of the Order of the Arrow (OA) offered to bring the new camp promotion video to troop events so that Scouts and parents could see it. The OA's contact person was Chris Markel (former Camp Director Jess Markel's son), who was also helping to recruit staff. Also in the spring before camp, Gordon Lew was appointed as Director of Camping and ASR Director, replacing Bill Zinky who had moved on to another position.

The Campership Dinner on June 12 at the Genesee Valley Club honored B. Thomas Golisano as the Distinguished Citizen of the Year. Tickets were \$160 or \$1500 for a table of 10, with the proceeds helping to provide camp scholarships.

ASR served 2703 Boy Scout campers over the summer. Program improvements at Mountaineer included six new Sunfish, a new BB rifle program, an improved Handicraft area, and the Adventure Troop. Gordon Lew was already looking for staff candidates for 1998. He also had an extensive camp wish list: 48 6x6"x16' beams, 144 2x4"x12' boards, 32 plywood sheets, a used copier, two fax machines, and three small pick-ups trucks!

Oscar Lewis & Don Whitcomb chaired a successful 1997 Fall Skills Weekend September 26-28. Property Superintendent Mike Jackson worked with Niagara Mohawk volunteers to replace several telephone poles. Afterwards, on October 2-3, Ron Gill, Inc. drilled a new well, coordinated by Hydrosource, Inc. and Tisdell Associates Engineering. Initial flows for this well near the old Mountaineer office and the main Mountaineer water line looked good, and the system was tested and eventually approved by the Department of Health (DOH). The DOH for a number of years had not been satisfied with the camp using chlorinated lake water without a complicated and expensive filtration system. Multiple other solutions had been tried, including a failed previous well, so the successful new well was a relief to all involved.

In the fall, the council announced that a Massawepie Improvement Committee, chaired by Bruce Russell, had been created to examine the needs of the Massawepie property for Scouts. The goal was to move Massawepie into the forefront of Northeast BSA facilities. Committee members included David Klein, Tim Lynch, David Mitchell, Charles August, Edward Ince, Bob Hart, Mat Adams, Peter Pape, Dick Leo, Frank Strong, Frank Bouchard, and Charles Clark. They had visited camps in Rhode Island (Yawgoog) and Wisconsin (Tomahawk) and held leader focus groups at ASR over the summer. After reviewing the camp visits, Bruce Russell set up a number of sub-committees to consider program, finance, facilities, promotion, continuous improvement, staffing, and customer services. The sub-committees would meet, consult with Scouters and other resources, and report back.

On October 27 the Massawepie Improvement sub-committees reported. Tim Lynch reported on Program: Massawepie already has a lot of program options, but he and David Klein thought that delivery and refinement could be improved over several years. The Facilities report from Bob Hart and Ed Ince focused on food: the need for a patrol cooking option, and better meal delivery in the Dining Hall. Frank Bouchard reported that Staffing is key, and ideas for recruiting, organizing, and retaining staff were presented. The Finance sub-committee (David Mitchell) was charged to look at ways to fund some of the ideas presented.

By November, 1997, Mountaineer Week 4 was closed for 1998 with 295 Scouts registered. Mountaineer had 836 Scouts total registered over 6 weeks; Sabattis had 962 total. Eagle District had the most registered of the Otetiana districts with 14 troops and 379 Scouts. The 1998 Mountaineer fees would be \$165/Scout if registered before November 1; \$170 after that. The Sabattis fees were \$147/\$152. Camperships were available. Jess Markel would return to direct Mountaineer, as he did in 1994-95.

The three main Massawepie Improvement subcommittees (facilities, staffing, and program) unveiled their "strawman" concepts on November 12. These included a new or remodeled Mountaineer dining hall, all new tents and platforms, all new tables and benches in the dining hall, patrol cooking campsites, a BB rifle range, leader programs, and the best waterfront in the Northeast. Robby Reid from the BSA National Engineering Service visited Massawepie December 2-4 with Tom Fitzgibbon, Gordon Lew, and several Massawepie Improvement Committee members.

In January, 1998, Robby Reid reported to the Massawepie Improvement Committee from his December visit to Massawepie. He said that the property is beautiful but that food preparation and distribution were the greatest challenges, because the kitchens and appliances are antiquated and inadequate. Reid also said that the dining halls were well-built and should last several more generations with regular maintenance. However, the camp could use a training building, a nature center, staff housing, and better showers at Mountaineer.

The Otetiana Council announced in February that it was honored by Adirondack Nature Conservancy and Adirondack Landowners Association with the 1997 Stewardship Award for negotiating the Massawepie Easement "preserving the Adirondack character of the property." That same month, Director of Camping Gordon Lew honored Joe and Marge Gleason for their years of service as directors of the Family Camp at Massawepie since 1990. Family Camp, during the two weeks following summer camp, offers camping and cabins, and program opportunities in camp and in the Adirondacks, often for over 100 people. This recognition was presented at a meeting of the Youngtimers, of which Joe and Marge were members, who helped with council office support tasks.

On February 9, the Executive Board approved the recommendation of the Massawepie Improvement Committee to develop 20 campsites with all-new site equipment (including tents, cots, platforms, mattresses, latrines) on the northeast end of Massawepie Lake and completely renovate the Pioneer kitchen. Three food options would be available: dining hall, patrol cooking, and prepared meals delivered to the sites. Staffing will include 63 staff, plus 18 CITs in two 3-week sessions, with a scholarship program and veteran staff enhancement. Program enhancements would include an Adventure program for older Scouts, a leader training program, tradition/retention concepts, and better inventory and maintenance of program equipment and supplies. Planned new facilities included the 20 campsites, four program pavilions, rifle range, archery range, dining hall tables & benches, chapel, athletic building, signage, Order of the Arrow longhouse, trading post, climbing wall, rappelling tower, BB range, leader lounge/training facility, and nature/ECON building. Enhancements to existing facilities would include upgrading the staff cabins, infirmary, shotgun range, sailing base, dining hall kitchen, parking lot, and campfire circle, plus new staff housing in a renovated Gannett Lodge. Work would start that winter, and the facility will open for summer 1999 (later changed to 2000).

Also in February, 1998, ASR Director/Director of Camping Lew reported that many staff were hired but there were a few openings in program, kitchen, and central office. Patrol cooking would be offered in Mountaineer to four troops each week in 1998, using dual-burner propane stoves and half-barrels. Cook-kits would be provided, but Scouts should bring utensils and mess kits. There were plans to fix up and reopen the Amazon Adventure area at Mountaineer, and there were also hopes to use rocks near Shotgun for rock climbing. The Order of the Arrow planned to have a strong presence in camp.

With the various improvements coming, and with Mountaineer Weeks 4 and 5 already full for 1998, the council had several incentives available to encourage units to sign up early for camp in 1999. They could qualify for an Early Bird patch by registering for 1999 at a 1998 Here's How meeting April 21 or 23 (or 22 in Syracuse). Units could also register at their billing conference at camp and get a "Year Ahead" flag streamer and patches. Finally, they could register for 1999 at the new September "Claim-Stake" event, and receive a Claim-Stake flag streamer and patches. The Claim-Stake would also include food, photos & videos, camp updates, and a chance to claim a site (as long as the size fit the unit). Deposits of \$25 per Scout, transferable but not refundable, were due by October 1.

By April, Mountaineer Weeks 2-5 were full, as were Sabattis Weeks 3-4. The total projected Scout attendance was 1646 at Mountaineer and 1626 at Sabattis. Preparations for camp proceeded much as usual: Campership applications were due April 15. Rosters, final payments, and pre-camp surveys were due May 15, and adult leader forms and Pack & Paddle forms were due 3 weeks before camp. Volunteers were needed for Skills Weekend (May 15-17) and Beaver Weekend (June 5-7). Staff Orientation meetings were scheduled for May 21 (Syracuse) and May 23 (Rochester). Staff manuals would be handed out, and staff could order any needed uniform parts then. They were asked to bring any certifications and two forms of ID to the meeting.

Tom Richards, President/CEO of RG&E and an Eagle Scout from Tay House Troop 19, received the Distinguished Eagle Scout Award (DESA) at the June 11 Campership Dinner at Oak Hill. Richards had served on the Camp Mountaineer staff for 1959 and 1960, and was Rochester Mayor in 2011-13.

One little-noticed event in 1998 could have ended differently. On a "Trail Day" in August, Peter Collinge went on trail as a leader with Troop 200 from Rochester's South Wedge. (As in most past years, in 1998 Massawepie had Trail Day, which was a 24-hour period in the middle of the week when the dining hall kitchen closed down and most staff had their day off. Troops cooked their own food, ideally after hiking to one of the many outposts on Massawepie Lake or on one of the ponds.) The Troop 200 group was camping at Blueberry Marsh outpost on Boottree Pond. Though he typically slept well, at about 3 AM Collinge woke suddenly. He wasn't sure why, until he heard a small, faint voice say, "Help!" At first, he thought he was hearing one of his troop's Scouts camped near him, but when he heard the cry a second time as he got dressed, he realized it was much further away and in the opposite direction. Collinge began bushwacking toward the voice using his flashlight, and yelled for the person to keep talking. Eventually he found a young Scout from another troop in the woods, far from any trail, wearing only pajama bottoms (no shirt or shoes). It turned out that the Scout had gone outside without a flashlight to empty his bladder, got turned around in the dark, and started walking in hopes of bumping into his tent. Instead, he was found far from his campsite (Beaver House) in an area with no trails, and headed for the Massawepie Mire. The coincidence of having another troop camped on the pond close enough to hear the wandering Scout may have saved the Scout from hours of being lost, saved his leaders from near-panic the next morning, and saved the camp staff from considerable searching the next day.

As a side note, a few years before this incident the Blueberry Marsh outpost had been moved further south to the former Forestry Outpost site about 2/3 of the way down Boottree Pond, after the former Blueberry Marsh site mostly flooded when the pond level rose. When the Scouts bought Massawepie in 1951, the water surfaces of Boottree Pond and Massawepie Lake were at roughly the same level, because water could still seep through the narrow glacial esker that separated those two water bodies. But over time that esker plugged up with organic material, and the level of Boottree Pond began to rise, flooding the edges of the pond where three outposts were. All three outposts had to be moved: Beaver House to a higher flat area nearby that already had been a tent area for that outpost, Blueberry Marsh to the south as mentioned earlier, and Sourdough to a hilly area to the east with little flat ground. Dead trees from the flooding are still visible around the pond at this writing in 2026.

Over the summer of 1998, 1605 Scouts attended Massawepie. The new Massawepie Development had everyone excited. Photographers from the BSA National Office spent three days at camp and took 9000+ photos of Scouts in action, some of which would appear in the next Boy Scout and Scoutmaster Handbooks.

In the fall, Scoutmasters and Troop Committee Chairs were invited to Third Presbyterian Church at 7 PM on October 6 to hear updates about the Massawepie Improvement Project, eat chili, and sign up for 1999. By that time, it was clear that Mountaineer would stay open one more year, to allow time to implement the plans for the "new Camp Pioneer." Richard McCartney would be the Mountaineer Camp Director. Meanwhile, some interim improvements were planned for 1999: staff would be increased from 50 to 63; program areas would plan for 350 Scouts per session; the Dining Hall would be limited to 250 Scouts (360 with staff & leaders); there would be space for another 150 Scouts doing patrol cooking, with new patrol cooking equipment; and afternoons will be "open program" (not scheduled merit badges); and Trail Day would be optional by troop and could be any day of the week.

The biggest change of all announced for 1999 was that Massawepie would now run Sunday noon through Saturday noon. After most troops had changed from two-week to one-week summer camp, the majority of other Scout camps were using a six-night schedule, and Massawepie now stopped bucking that trend. This change also meant the end of the bus transportation option, because the bus cost had only been reasonable when the same busses that brought the incoming groups up to camp could also take back the outgoing Scouts. Fewer troops had been using the busses anyway, as more adults (especially from suburban troops) were staying at camp for the week and could transport Scouts, but some troops that liked the bus option didn't appreciate the change. The six-night schedule did provide one improvement for the camp staff: almost all of them could have most of Saturday (and Sunday morning) as time off with few Scouts in camp. That gave the staff time to rest and recharge each weekend that reduced their chances of burnout by the end of the summer.

In December, 1998, the Massawepie Improvement Committee gave some updates. The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) had waived jurisdiction on the Massawepie Improvement Project, so the Town of Pierceland would be the lead agency, and the Health Department would review blueprints. Three projects did not need any approvals and were moving ahead: the road to new upper Pioneer campsites (being done by Curran Logging, including laying stone to raise the crown), the drainage system for that road, and further development of new campsites that were "roughed" the previous February. Those campsites still needed stumps and brush removed, then grading and levelling for tent platforms. The Facilities Committee was working with Lance Morgan on kitchen designs. Other designs were being reviewed for two new showerhouses, a chapel, pavilions, and a leader training center. David Lippitt was working on perfecting program elements. Bob Carafice was leading the promotion and marketing team, with an ambitious goal of increasing annual long-term camping from 50% to 75% of Otetiana Scouts.

Troops were encouraged to come to Third Presbyterian Church on January 25 to hear further Massawepie project and program updates for 1999, and to give ideas for 1999 collectable camp memorabilia. The Dining Hall was already full for Weeks 2, 4, 5, and 6.

By March, 1999, all summer dining hall weeks were full, and a waiting list had been started. There were spaces available for patrol cooking except for Week 3. The council was offering courses in Responding to Emergencies (RTE) First Aid, since each troop going out on trail needed a leader certified in RTE. Bob Carafice, the Council Camp Promotion Chair, reminded troops that district camp promotion teams were available to visit meetings upon request.

In April, the dissolution of Adirondack Scout Reservation was announced. There had been some squabbles between the two camps over ASR finances, and in the end both councils decided that they would prefer to run their own camps independently. Gordon Lew would no longer be running camp, so

Ed Caldwell had been promoted to become Director of Support Services, a position that had been reinstated and included managing both Otetiana camps. The only space left by then at Massawepie for 1999 was for patrol cooking Weeks 1 and 6. To entice units to consider patrol cooking, they were also allowed to choose to have lunches in the dining hall.

During Beaver Weekend (June 4-6), Ty-Ohni Lodge of the Order of the Arrow (OA) was also holding a Brotherhood/Service Weekend at Massawepie. They hoped to bring more than the 16 participants who had attended in 1998. Adult Arrowmen were asked to come and bring three or more youth. The OA volunteers would mostly be setting up campsites.

Before summer, the council announced that youth fees for the "new Camp Pioneer" in 2000 would be the same as 1999: \$165 per week for early bird registration and payment, otherwise \$180, plus \$125 for a second week. Brothers received a \$5 discount for each brother. The fee for adults was \$50 each. To maintain quality experiences, the dining hall would be limited to 230 Scouts per week and the limit for patrol cooking would be 188 Scouts. All in-council troops, and 1999 Mountaineer out-of-council troops could reserve a site at the 1999 Here's How meetings or over the summer. Deposits of \$25 per camper were due November 1. Reservations were opened to all out-of-council units December 1. Campership applications were due April 15, and full payment was due May 15. Unpaid slots would be reallocated. No refunds were to be given after May 15.

Leaders planning to attend camp in 2000 were invited to a rally at Summerville Presbyterian Church on November 10. They were asked to bring any new ideas and also feedback on 1999. Camp registrations would be taken. Every week was still available, at least for patrol cooking. But leaders were warned that camp might fill up quickly once registration opened to out-of-council units on December 1.

In the November, 1999, *Smoke Signals* newsletter, the leader of a troop that had been doing patrol cooking since 1970 gave a testimonial about the patrol cooking option at Mountaineer in 1999. He said it was well-organized, the equipment was good, and cooking didn't interfere with program opportunities. (The camp had one advantage when implementing patrol cooking in 1999: Camp Director Rich McCartney had previously worked in a patrol cooking camp for six summers, including as a Commissary Director.) In the same newsletter, Ed Caldwell asked for donations of canoes, sailboats, furniture, snowshoes, taxidermy work, Adirondack decorations, and household/kitchen items for camp.

In November, Ed Caldwell also announced that the Trek Building, Sports Pavilion, and one Program Pavilion at Pioneer were completely framed in. Foundations were complete for both showerhouses and the Ecology Building. Kitchen work had started, as had construction of a new well. The Campfire Circle had been graded and benches were being cut. Half of the troop sites had platforms set up, and the water tower road was complete. Ed Caldwell thanked the Fall Skills Weekend volunteers and said the impressive progress couldn't have been made without them!

By December, 1999, with Dining Hall camping at Pioneer in 2000 already full for Weeks 2-6, the council was promoting Massawepie High Adventure Treks and Work Weekends. Canoeing and hiking treks were available in the beautiful Adirondacks with a trained Voyageur guide, and could be customized. The trek deposit was \$200, with trek fees of \$245-315 per person due June 1. Partial camperships were available for treks, as for summer camp. Doug Turner had been the Trek Director since 1988, which was quite impressive since summer camp staffs tend to have high turnover, and he wasn't done yet! Don DeClerck, who supervised maintenance for both Massawepie and Camp Cutler, was eagerly looking for volunteers to come for Skills Weekend (May 12-14) or Beaver Weekend (June 2-4). With the looming move from Mountaineer to Pioneer, plenty of work needed doing!

As part of the planned improvements for 2000, the camp would be piloting pre-camp merit badge sign-ups to streamline that process, which formerly often required waiting in line at camp. After troops received a full schedule of merit badges (with some but not many changes from 1999), registrations would be taken first-come, first-served, with a Scout's rank breaking any ties. No class assignments would be made until a troop had submitted its pre-camp survey, roster, and final fees. Changes could still be made at camp. The days of online registration were still in the future!

As the 1990s closed in December, a final update told of more progress in getting Camp Pioneer ready. The dining hall kitchen had been gutted and new underground plumbing laid out. All old asbestos remnants had been removed. The campfire circle had been trimmed and graded, with clay & stone ground cover. All but one new septic system was complete. The new well was producing plenty of water, and the concrete pad for the water tank was poured. Good weather had helped the construction move along, though the Adirondack winter was starting to slow some work as expected. But hopes were high that everything in the "new Camp Pioneer" would be ready for the summer of 2000!

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