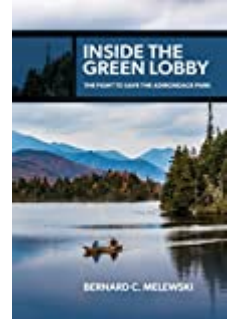


**Bernard C. Melewski.** *Inside the Green Lobby.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021. 276 pp. \$24.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-4384-8668-0.



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Written during an era of intense twenty-first-century partisan acrimony and an ever-widening partisan gap on environmental protection issues, *Inside the Green Lobby: The Fight to Save the Adirondack Park* offers a window into not only the daily work of environmental advocates, but also how bipartisan lobbying and legislating worked during the 1990s and early 2000s. The book is a memoir of Bernard Melewski's tenure as the head lobbyist for the Adirondack Council and his daily efforts to build legislative and executive support to protect the ecosystems of the Adirondack Park. The Adirondack Council is a New York State-based nonprofit group focused on protecting the largest state park in the lower forty-eight states of the United States. Much of the organization's work is at the state level, but it is also deeply involved in federal issues that affect the park. Melewski's recounting of his work as the council's head lobbyist in Albany is incredibly detailed, and often entertaining, and he allows readers to submerge themselves in the day-to-day activities and strategizing of the advocates working for a small organization

that wielded tremendous influence in New York State. One of the core lessons Melewski offers readers is that public-interest political influence can be built by focusing on the practical, self-interested goals of both an organization and government officials. Accordingly, Melewski explains how using that strategy he developed and cultivated relationships with Republican and Democratic state legislators, regulators, governors, US senators and representatives, and President George W. Bush. The other core lesson of the memoir is the role persistence, resilience, and flexibility play in nonprofit advocacy. As a result, *Inside the Green Lobby* ought to be a useful resource for scholars interested in governance and activism. The book also serves as a set of primary sources for students to study how the policy "sausage is made" at both the state and federal level.

Unofficially, the book can be divided into three sections: an opening chapter about the Adirondack Council's decades-long fight to prevent further private development inside the park after 1980, a section of nine brief vignettes illuminating

some of the oddities and contingencies that affected Melewski's work to protect the park, and a final chapter discussing the decades-long fight after 1990 to stop acid rain from poisoning park ecosystems. The middle chapters offer readers humorous and illuminating stories about Ausable Club members trying to lobby a regulator while wearing bowler hats and carrying umbrellas, tips received about a prison construction plan in the park, a fight over milfoil eradication, clandestine road trips to document illegal docks and vacation homes on Erie Canal reservoirs, and more. Each step of the way the reader is reminded of the role of contingency in historical events and the entrepreneurial spirit of Melewski and his small team at the Adirondack Council working with small budgets, smaller office spaces, and big ideas.

The opening chapter, "The Land Campaign," exhaustively narrates the efforts to limit new development inside the "Ten Jewels of the Adirondacks" as identified by the Adirondack Council in the 1990s. Environmentalists and Governor Mario Cuomo's own Commission on the Adirondack Park of the Twenty-First Century both identified a renewed push for large residential development in the park as a major threat to the 1894 requirements of the New York Constitution that the public lands in the park "shall be forever kept as wild forest lands" (p. 5). By the 1980s timber companies and the estates of wealthy residents who owned tens of thousands of acres inside the park were beginning to sell off their lands to developers. The commission and the Adirondack Council worried that the developments and infrastructure would diminish the adjacent "wild forest lands," including shorelines and bodies of water. The chapter describes in great detail Melewski's efforts to convince the Democratic and Republican governors, the Republican state senator for the region, and Democratic Long Island politicians to support plans for the state to acquire those lands and incorporate them into the forever wild land matrix of the park. By 2020 all ten "Jewels of the Adiron-

dacks" had been acquired by the state or were protected by conservation easements.

The chapter "The Air Campaign" concludes the substantive history of the book and focuses on Melewski's efforts to convince government officials to further reduce power plant pollution that contributed to acid rain. The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, signed by President George H. W. Bush, created a cap and trade system for reducing sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide pollution over time, but by the early 1990s it had already become clear that the system was not reducing emissions nearly enough to stop acid rain from continuing to poison Adirondack ecosystems. The chapter chronicles Melewski's efforts to work with Republican governor George Pataki, Democratic senators Peter Moynihan and Charles Schumer, Republican senator Vic Damato, and eventually, President George W. Bush and his administration. The most important lessons from the chapter are the ways in which scale and scope matter in political organizing. Because the council's mission was focused on the Adirondack Park, and because acid rain was one of the two main threats to their mission, Melewski was tightly focused on policies and programs that specifically reduced acid rain-causing pollutants. Concomitantly, national environmental groups were committed to reducing the emissions of the four main industrial air emissions, including carbon dioxide. The national groups tended to vilify the council for being willing to accept new regulations that only accounted for acid rain-forming pollution and not holding the line on mercury and carbon dioxide. Melewski's telling of his story also helps the reader understand how personal relationships and trust contribute to policy-making. For example, Melewski and his team continued to pitch President George W. Bush on the idea that he could finish what his father started by tightening up the regulations his father signed into law. They continually engaged in conversation, and to the Bush administration's credit, they were willing to continually listen. In 2002, Bush gave an Earth Day speech in the Adirondacks

about acid rain. And by 2005, Bush had authorized new regulations to reduce sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions, while the administration's plans to reduce greenhouse gasses and mercury emissions were watered down by negotiations and subsequently floundered in the legislative process.

Melewski's memoir is a useful primary source for researchers interested in understanding how the public interest advocates went about their daily work, strategized to pursue policy goals, and adjusted to current events and unforeseen opportunities and setbacks. Additionally, the "Air Campaign" chapter illuminates some of the power dynamics between state and national environmental groups as well as the ways in which varying scales and scopes of organizational missions can create cross-cutting goals and agendas. The memoir is also a valuable tool to gain insight into the complexities, intricacies, and patience involved with generating legislative and regulatory actions at the state and federal levels. Possibly most useful for historians is that Melewski's narratives offer rare windows into how bipartisan advocacy worked in New York and Washington, DC, during the 1990s and 2000s. As a teaching resource, the middle section of nine brief anecdotes could be a valuable tool for students to gain insights into the role of contingency in political history, the role of entrepreneurialism in policymaking, and the role of relationships and trust building in the legislative process.

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