

Looking for the Blue Line:

Can We Find Differences Between People Living Inside the Heavily Regulated Adirondack Park and Those Outside the Park?

"The lands of the state, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands."

With these words, written by the New York State Legislature in 1885, the Adirondack Forest Preserve was born. Nine years later, the Adirondacks became the first and only wild land preserve in the United States to gain constitutional protection. With 6.1 million acres the Adirondack Park in New York is one of the largest parks in the United States. The Blue Line is the commonly used term for the Park boundaries. In 2010 there were circa 130,000 people living full time in the park. It is estimated that another 100,000 people live in the park part-time.

In 1971 the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) was created to develop long-range land-use plans for both the public (40% of the park) and private lands (60%) within the Blue Line. The APA is a New York State governmental agency with a board that acts on Park policy issues and permit applications. The agency has to walk the fine line of allowing development and protecting the natural beauty of the park. Its regulations are often seen as too restrictive by some and too relaxed by others.

The question being addressed in this research is whether the Demographic, Social, Housing and Economic characteristics as measured by the Decennial Census and the American Community Survey are influenced by the location with respect to the Blue Line. In other words: are characteristics different in the park as opposed to outside the park. The question what caused those differences if they exist is not in scope for this research.

One would expect some difference in the density of the population and housing, but can we find other differences between the population within the Blue Line and outside the Blue Line. For example: Is there a difference in the age structure because of younger people leaving the area to find less restrictive opportunities elsewhere, or is the area attracting more younger people that come for the outdoor living. Could it be that there is a difference in sex-ratio? Does the lack of roads influence the travel time to work, the number of self-employed? Is there a difference in the age of the housing units, the cost of housing?

There are a couple of complicating factors in doing these analyses:

- The Blue Line does not conform to Census Geography:
The Blue line crosses Census Blocks, towns and villages so we have to make certain assumptions in using the Census Bureau products
- What is the comparison area?
The area within the Blue Line is well defined, but what is the area of comparison?
- ACS sampling error
How best take the Margins of Error into consideration

- There is a lot of seasonal fluctuation
How much of that fluctuation is lost in averaging out over time?
- Group Quarters
There are a couple of large prisons and other Group Quarters within and around the park that potentially can disturb some of the characteristics.



Figure 1: Location of the Adirondack Park

The research involves discriminant analysis and logit regression, including attempts to compensate for spatial auto-correlation. Coefficients will be determined based on data inside and just outside the park and these coefficients will be applied to all of New York to see whether or not other areas in New York have a population with similar characteristics as the population inside the Adirondack Park.