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Mount Marcy, New York's highest point at 5,300 feet, as seen from Mount Haystack. (Photo courtesy of D. Tripp via Wikipedia)

Joe Dowd: Dreaming of Adirondack vacations from a social distance

By: Joe Dowd April 30, 2020

Let me begin by saying I'm not a woodsy, outdoors kind of guy.

As a teenager, my parents owned a summer home in Schroon Lake, N.Y., in the center of the Adirondacks. They wanted to get the kids out of the sweltering "city" that was Long Island and escape to the North Country's fresh air and natural wonders. The latter included steady clouds and rain along with incessant swarms of black flies.

To someone who preferred baseball games and ocean breakers, the dark recesses of Upstate New York gave me the chills. The lake itself was as tame as it was cold. The locals claimed giant lake trout roamed its depths, but I never so much as caught a perch in that lake. Never.

One day, my father decided to take me mountain climbing. He was in his prime, a New York City fire lieutenant at the time; I was about 14, skinny and slightly asthmatic.

Up we went Mount Severance, which I recall rising some twenty-five-thousand-feet into the clouds. Memory is a funny thing: I just checked; Severance tops out at 1,700 feet. What I do recall is the final push to the top, swarmed by bugs, and my father deciding we'd sprint the last 100 yards or so. He left me there on the trail, panting; I watched him charge off to the summit. When I arrived, panting and wheezing, he just smiled.

Doesn't this sound like fun?

If so, I've got hopeful news for you: You could be just a month away from your great Adirondack vacation.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo hinted last weekend that he was considering partially opening certain regions of the state, including Central and Northern New York, perhaps as early as mid-May.

This news has been eagerly anticipated by my daughter the naturalist, who is set to return to the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) near Lake Placid for a second summer of climbing mountains and offering instructions to hikers. She has been waiting to return to this untamed wilderness filled with bears and bugs from the very moment she left ADK last November.

In fact, the governor's announcement sparked a six-hour conversation on Saturday night between Emily and three friends from ADK, all of whom can't wait to return to the woods together.



