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Land Management, Conservation, and the Adirondack Park

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The Adirondack Park and Land Management

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 Source Project: People, Politics, and the Environment

BACKGROUND:
 The Adirondack Park, a region of New York State, was created in 1892 amid concerns for water and timber resources¹. The park is 6 million acres large, and some of the land is protected as Forest Preserve to keep it "forever wild"¹. In this region, land is owned by both the state government and private landowners. The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) was founded in 1971 to develop "long-range land plans" for both public and private lands within park boundaries.² This study looked at annual reports from the APA from 2015 to 2020 to see if their projects were oriented towards that goal.

METHODS

- APA annual reports from 2015-2020 were examined. Data from tables within the documents was put into graphs.
- Read articles about land acquisition
- Used official government websites for information about the park's history
- Readings about discourse, wilderness perception, and the APA's relationship with locals were also consulted.

RESULTS

- As seen in Fig. 1, the most consistent types of projects the APA engages with are the subdivision projects.
- Because a major focus of the APA is on development of land and managing resources, the consistency of projects related to developing/managing land makes sense.
- This does contradict the "forever wild" goal of the park altogether. Perhaps preservation is the responsibility of other programs, like the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).



Are projects approved by the APA from 2015-2020 aligned with preservation and land management goals?

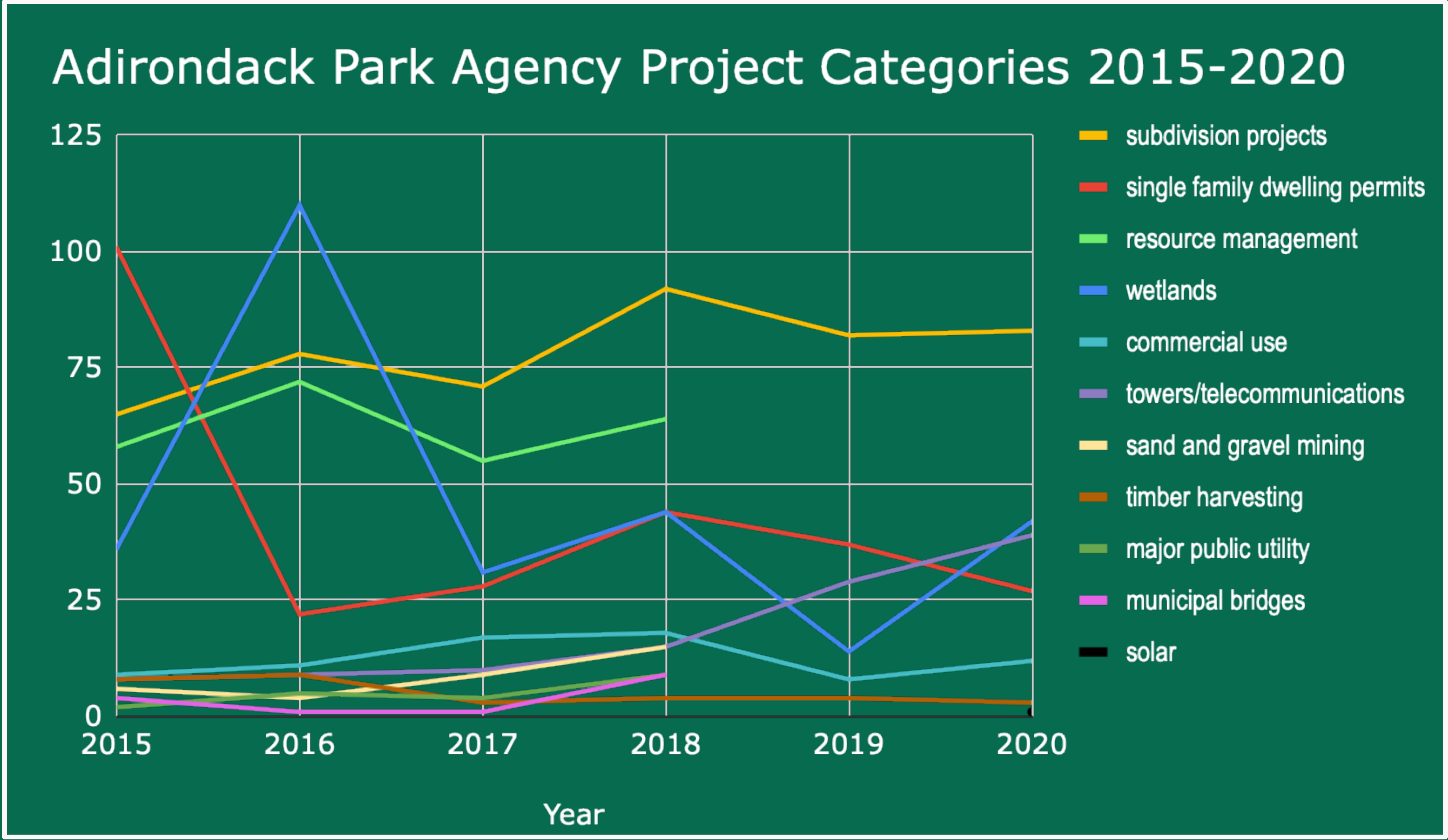


Fig. 1: categories of permits issued by the APA from 2015 to 2020.⁵

The Adirondack Park Agency's most consistent projects over the last 5 years are related to subdivision development.

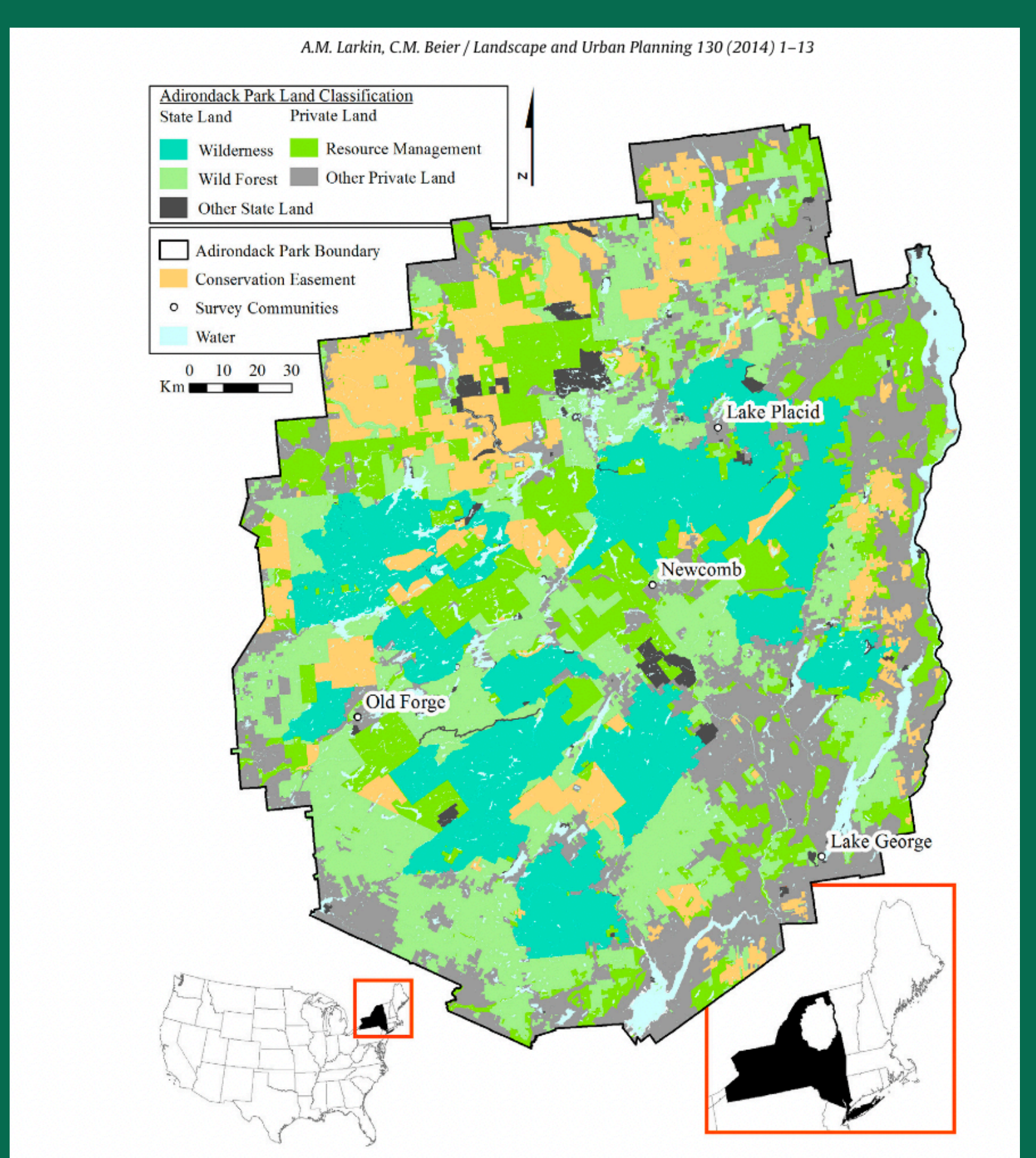


Fig. 2: Map of Adirondack Park, including land classifications. Taken from (Larkin & Beier, 2014).⁶

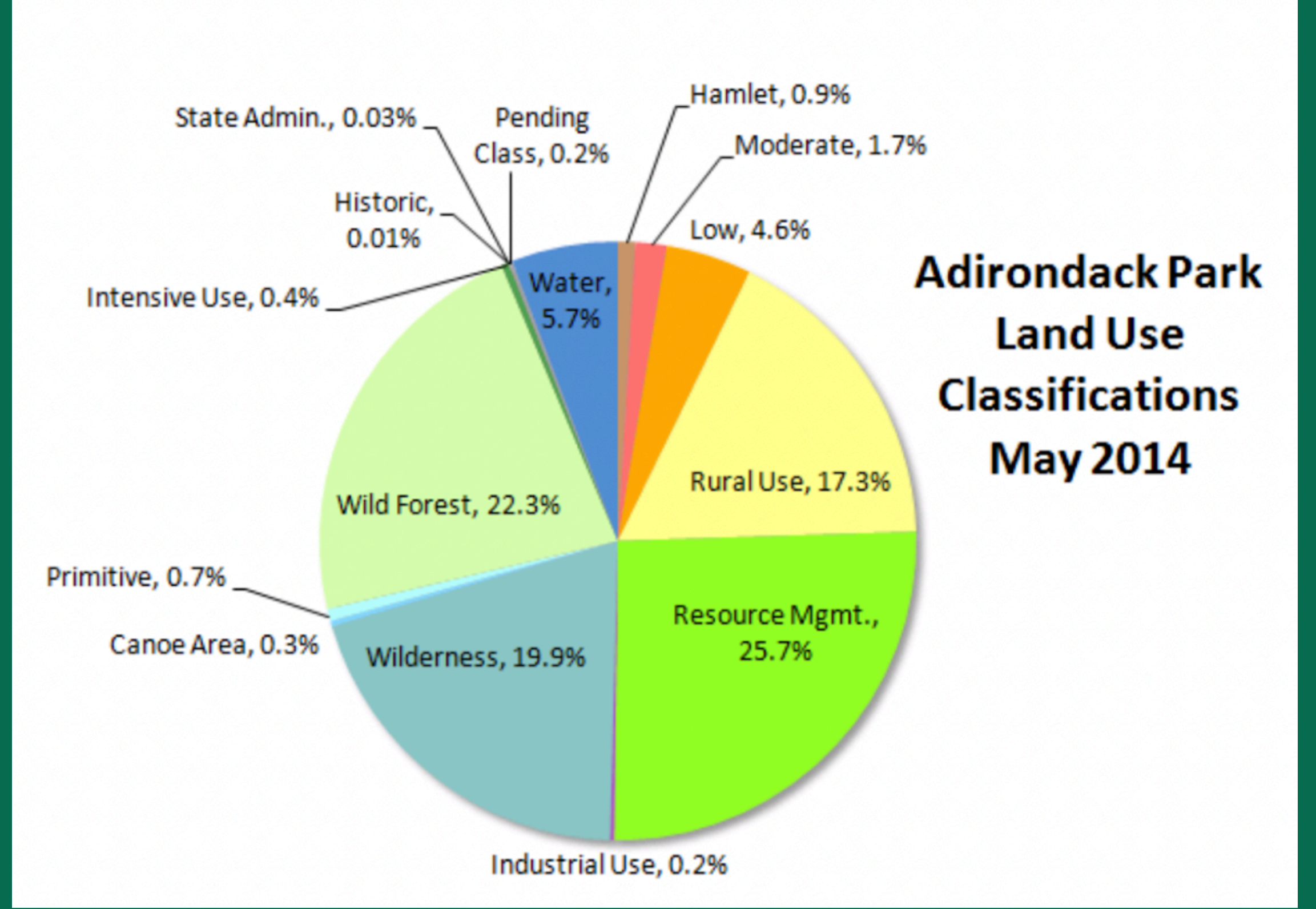


Fig. 3: Pie Chart of Land Use Classifications by the APA as of May 2014 (more recent charts could not be found). Taken from (About the Park, n.d.).¹

NOTES:

1. The 2020 findings may be altered due to the pandemic. It's likely that fewer projects were conducted due to lockdown restrictions, thus skewing data from that year.
2. Some annual reports did not include data for all of the categories. The 2019 and 2020 tables had no data for sand and gravel mining, for example. It's inconclusive whether or not projects related to these categories were conducted in those years.

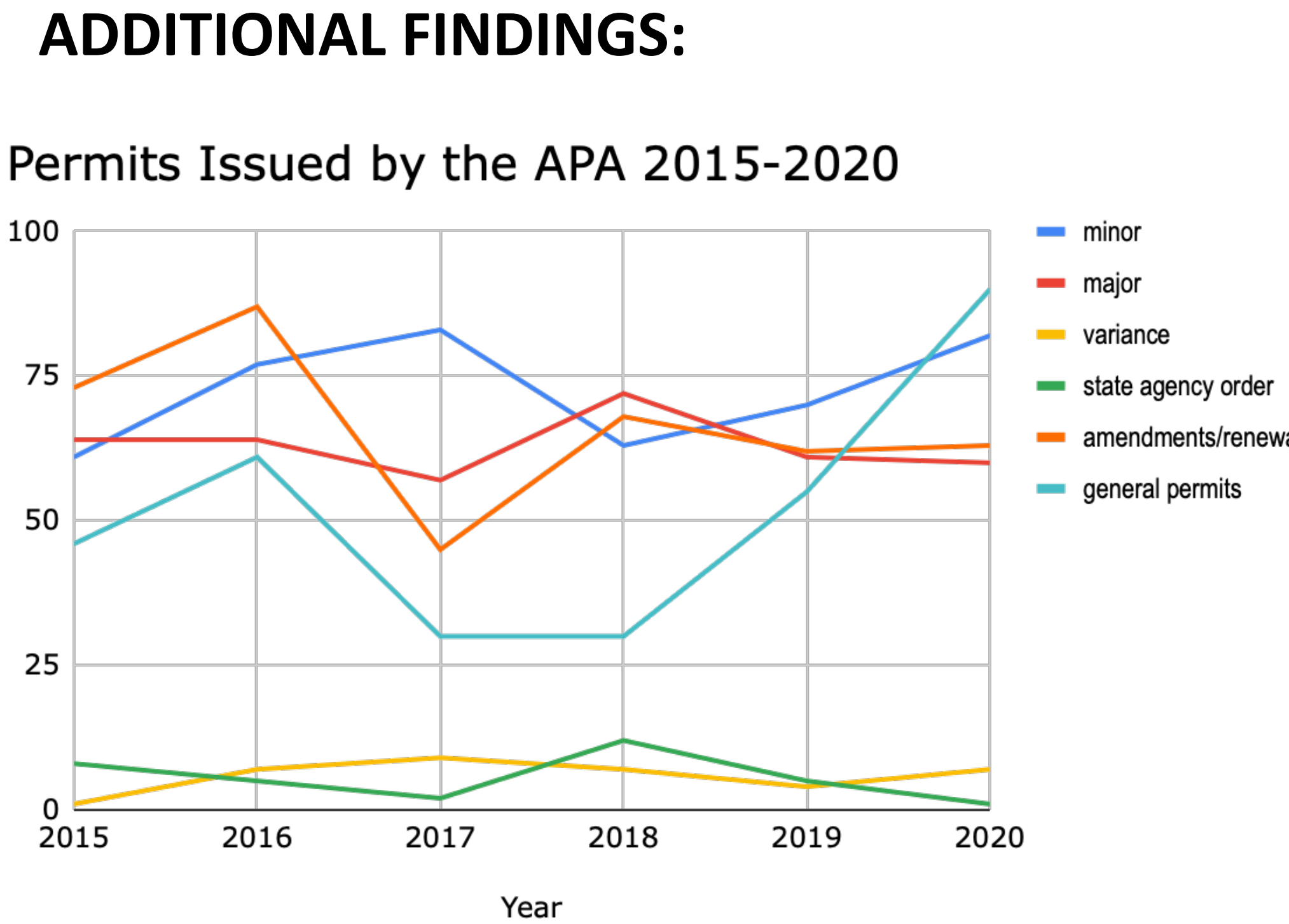


Fig. 4: Permits issued by the APA from 2015-2020.⁵

New York State Budget FY 2020-2021

Category	FY 2020 (millions)	FY 2021 (millions)	Change	
			Dollars (millions)	Percent
Department of Environmental Conservation	1,440	1,585	145	10%
Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation	397	372	(25)	(6%)
Department of Agriculture and Markets	118	130	12	10%
Department of Public Service	93	96	3	3%
Hudson River Valley Greenway	46	45	(1)	(2%)
New York Power Authority	36	31	(5)	(14%)
Energy Research and Development Authority	20	22	2	10%
Adirondack Park Agency	5	6	1	20%
Total Environment and Energy Spending	2,155	2,287	132	6%

Fig. 5: This chart shows how much the state government spent on specific departments. Taken from (NYS Environmental Budget, 2021).⁴

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- 3: Larkin, A. M., & Beier, C. M. (2014). Wilderness perceptions versus management reality in the Adirondack Park, USA,. *Landscape and Urban Planning, 130*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2014.06.003>.
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