

Briefing Note

ALGONQUIN – ADIRONDACK BIOSPHERE
Proposed Algonquin to Adirondack (A2A) Trail

There is an active proposal to develop a 670 kilometre trail connecting [Algonquin Park](#) (Ontario, Canada) and the [Adirondacks](#) (New York State, USA) to be known by the moniker A2A Trail. The idea for the planned hiking path was inspired by the wanderings of one cow moose, and it is being coordinated through the umbrella non-profit [Algonquin to Adirondacks Collaborative](#).

Background

A yearling cow moose was reported in June 1998 to the [New York State \(NYS\) Department of Environmental Conservation](#) (DEC) wandering in western New York State through Oswego and Wayne counties. When she reached a suburb of Rochester, the DEC decided it was prudent to relocate her before trouble ensued. On 16 July 1998 the cow was released in the [Huntington Wildlife Forest](#) (HWF) on land owned by the [State University of New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry](#) (see Map 3, attached).

The cow moose was to become the subject for research and thus, at time of capture, was tagged and fitted with a radio-transmitter collar. Her research-guardians bestowed her with the name "Alice".

In September 1998 Alice was observed with a young bull near Rich Lake. The pair stayed together until early winter¹, when the bull apparently moved east toward the Santanoni Preserve. Despite Alice remaining close to HWF roads, she was physically observed only three times from her date of release in the Forest through to April the following year.

In mid-April 1999 Alice moved off the HWF. She was later observed swimming across north end of Long Lake and subsequently radio-tracked to Sabattis, then Cranberry Lake. By September Alice had reached Star Lake. Alice left Adirondack Park near Harrisville and headed on a northwest track through US Army Fort Drum military reserve (107,265 acres)

to winter on a peninsula near Alexandria Bay on the St. Lawrence River, where she was monitored by the DEC in January and February 2000. Alice's wanderlust did not end there.

Alice as spotted by a fisherman in Ontario in May 2000. This meant she swam across the St. Lawrence down river from Lansdowne (Ontario) and crossed the busy four-lane Hwy 401.

Alice continued to travel northwest to Snow Road Station in June and reached a location near the



Young cow moose similar to "Alice".

Ottawa River just west of Renfrew in July 2000. During the winter of late 2000 she was located by an Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) biologist who was tracking elk about 17 kilometres south of Renfrew. This was the last recorded instance of Alice being observed alive.

Following an extended period of silence and no observations, Mike Wilton², a former Algonquin Park



biologist, flew over Algonquin Park in his aeroplane, equipped with a borrowed telemetry receiver, to search for Alice. On 29 August 2001 a signal was picked up in the east end of the park — the signal was transmitting in mortality mode³.

A crew from OMNR was dispatched and they located Alice's remains near Brigham Lake on the Baron River. Bones were scattered about: their condition indicated she had died some time ago, perhaps the preceding winter. While the cause of death could not be determined, circumstantial evidence would point to predation by wolf pack. Her age was estimated by tooth wear to be 3-4 years.

Alice's two-year trek from HWF in the Adirondacks to Brigham Lake, Algonquin Park, traversed a route of 570 kilometres (Map 3).

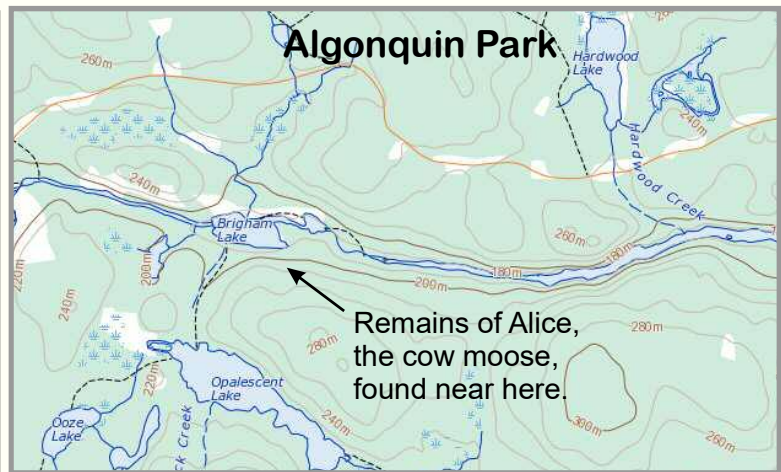
Algonquin – Adirondack Biosphere

Alice's journey provides an example of the need to preserve space for wildlife to roam. The Thousand Islands area is a sort of geographic funnel – Lake Ontario to the west and wide expanse of the St. Lawrence River to the east – providing the one place where animals can pass between New York State and Ontario relatively easily. The area is known as the Frontenac Arch (see Map 1, attached). The Frontenac Arch is a geological feature ridge of ancient granite, the backbone of eastern North America, that joins the Adirondack Mountains to the Canadian Shield. The Frontenac Arch lies northwest-southeast through the eastern portion of Ontario, from Algonquin Park, across the east end of Lake Ontario to the Adirondacks.

The intersection of the Frontenac Arch and the St. Lawrence River Valley forms one of the great cross-roads of the continent. The Arch connects the Canadian Shield boreal forest to the forests of the Adirondack and Appalachian Mountains—a south to north/north to south migration route. The river valley is a route from the Great Lakes forest heartland of the continent to the forests of the Atlantic Coast. The [Frontenac Arch Biosphere](#) is at the centre of that intersection, where five forest regions merge, creating a tremendous wildlife diversity.

Vision

For years, conservationists had been proposing a connection between the Algonquin and Adirondack



Approximate location in Algonquin Park where Alice. The cow moose, perished after a 570 kilometre trek over 2 years from the Adirondacks, New York State.

parks that would be both a physical and symbolic joining of the two countries. Alice turned out to be the catalyst that got the wheels in motion.

Plan

Because the Great Lakes and the width of the east end of the St. Lawrence River make for effective natural barriers against animal migration, the Thousand Islands region is the only place animals can migrate for food, water, shelter or breeding. That ability to move makes for a healthier animal community.

In the 1990s, the [Ottawa Valley chapter](#) of the [Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society](#) (CPWS) convened a committee to discuss landscape conservation effort to ensure ecological connectivity and help restore biodiversity from Algonquin Park to the Adirondacks, along the Frontenac Arch. The first report about connecting Algonquin and Adirondack parks was published by CPWS in 1995 and is commonly referred to as [The Keddy Report](#).⁴ Alice's death became the impetus for the incorporation in 2002 of the Algonquin to Adirondacks (A2A) Conservation Association⁵ to enhance habitat connectivity and maintain native biodiversity in the region.

In the first decade (2002-2012) the A2A Conservation Association worked to support partner organizations, and conduct projects with their help, on the Canadian side of the Thousand Islands region of the St. Lawrence River. As noted above, this area was strategic because it is the pinch point of the A2A

region and communities on the Canadian side were engaged in conservation efforts.

Two visioning workshops in 2012 identified the need for the A2A Conservation Association to be reimagined as a Collaborative, and to shift its focus as a local initiative to being more regional with greater American representation. The inaugural A2A Collaborative Partner Meeting in 2014 saw 31 different organizations across the A2A region being represented.

A2A Trail

The idea of a 670 kilometre A2A Trail was announced at the 2014 A2A Collaborative Partner Meeting as a way to raise more awareness of the need to conserve the habitat and migration corridor for wildlife in the Algonquin-Adirondack Biosphere. Proponents of the A2A Trail liken it to a North American version of Spain's [Camino de Santiago](#) route. The A2A hiking trail would take travellers through both wilderness and developed communities with Alice's trek being the guide for the eventual route (see Map 3).

In the initial phase the A2A Trail will consist of
> 310 kilometres on existing hiking trails,
> 90 kilometres of rail-trail,
> 95 kilometres along main roads, and
> 195 kilometres along back roads.

The long-range plan is to develop trails to skirt public roadways and private land, much like the Appalachian Trail, which took 50 years to complete.

Although the A2A Trail project is still in its infancy, there are plans for intrepid groups to initiate the trail concept by undertaking an exploratory hike along the proposed route over a three-week period in October 2017 (details to be announced in the [A2A Spring newsletter](#)).

SLBM Trails

The 50-kilometre [SLBM Trails](#) – Spectacle Lakes / Bear & Burnetts Mountains – network straddles the proposed A2A Trail along Hwy 60 in the Upper Madawaska Basin (see Map 3).

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Reference & Additional Informations

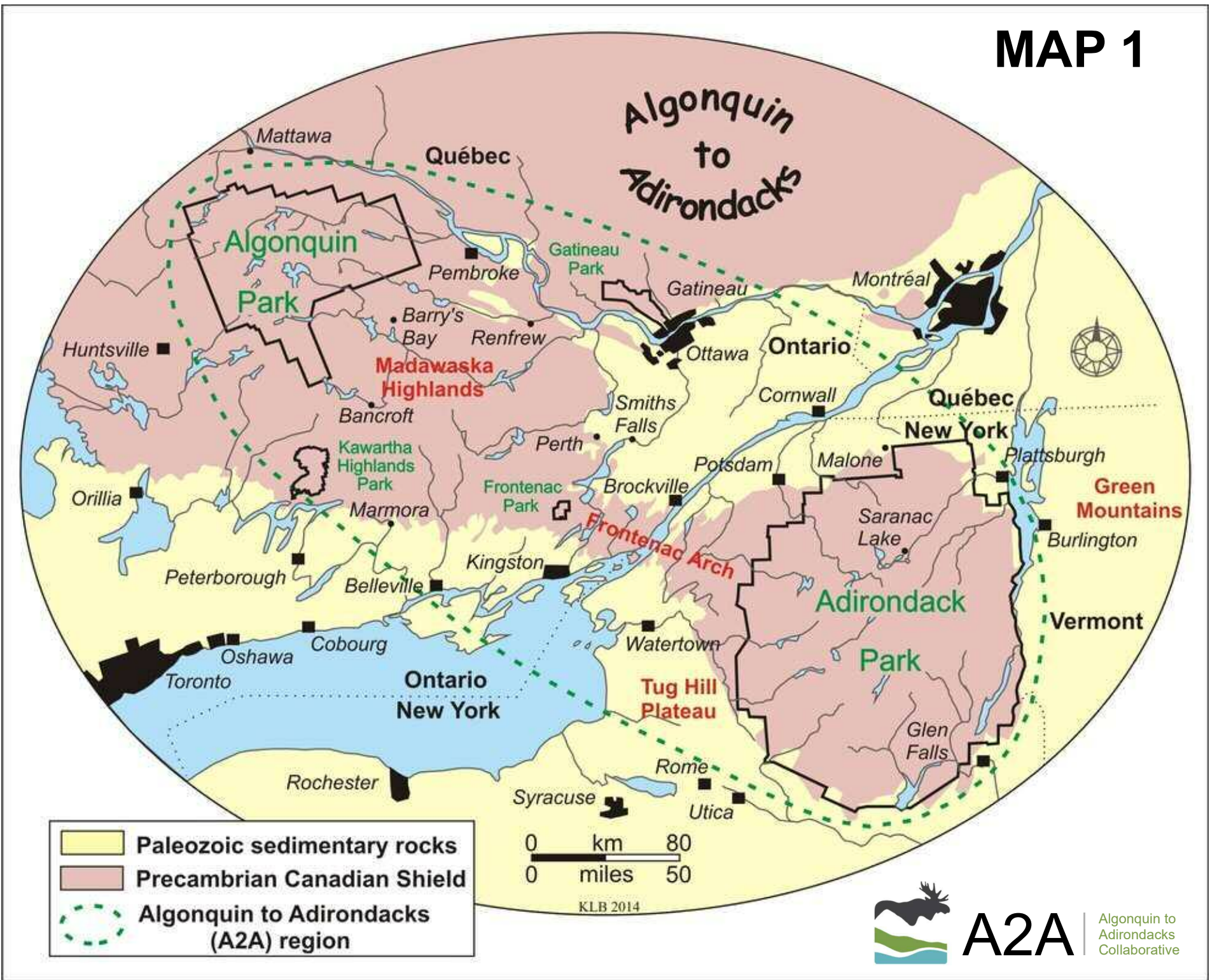
- 1) Algonquin to Adirondacks (A2A) Collaborative (www.a2acollaborative.org/)
- 2) State University of New York's College of Environmental Science and Forestry (www.esf.edu/aec/)
- 3) New York State (NYS) Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) (www.dec.ny.gov/)
- 4) Huntington Wildlife Forest (www.esf.edu/newcomb/facilities/hwf.htm)
- 5) Adirondacks (Park) (parks.ny.gov/regions/adirondack/default.aspx)
- 6) Algonquin Park (www.ontarioparks.com/park/algonquin)
- 7) Friends of Algonquin Park (www.algonquinpark.on.ca/)
- 8) Algonquin Eco Watch (www.algonquin-eco-watch.com/)
- 9) Frontenac Arch Biosphere (www.frontenacarchbiosphere.ca/)
- 10) Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (www.cpaws.org/) & Ottawa Valley Chapter (www.cpaws-ov-vo.org/)

Endnotes

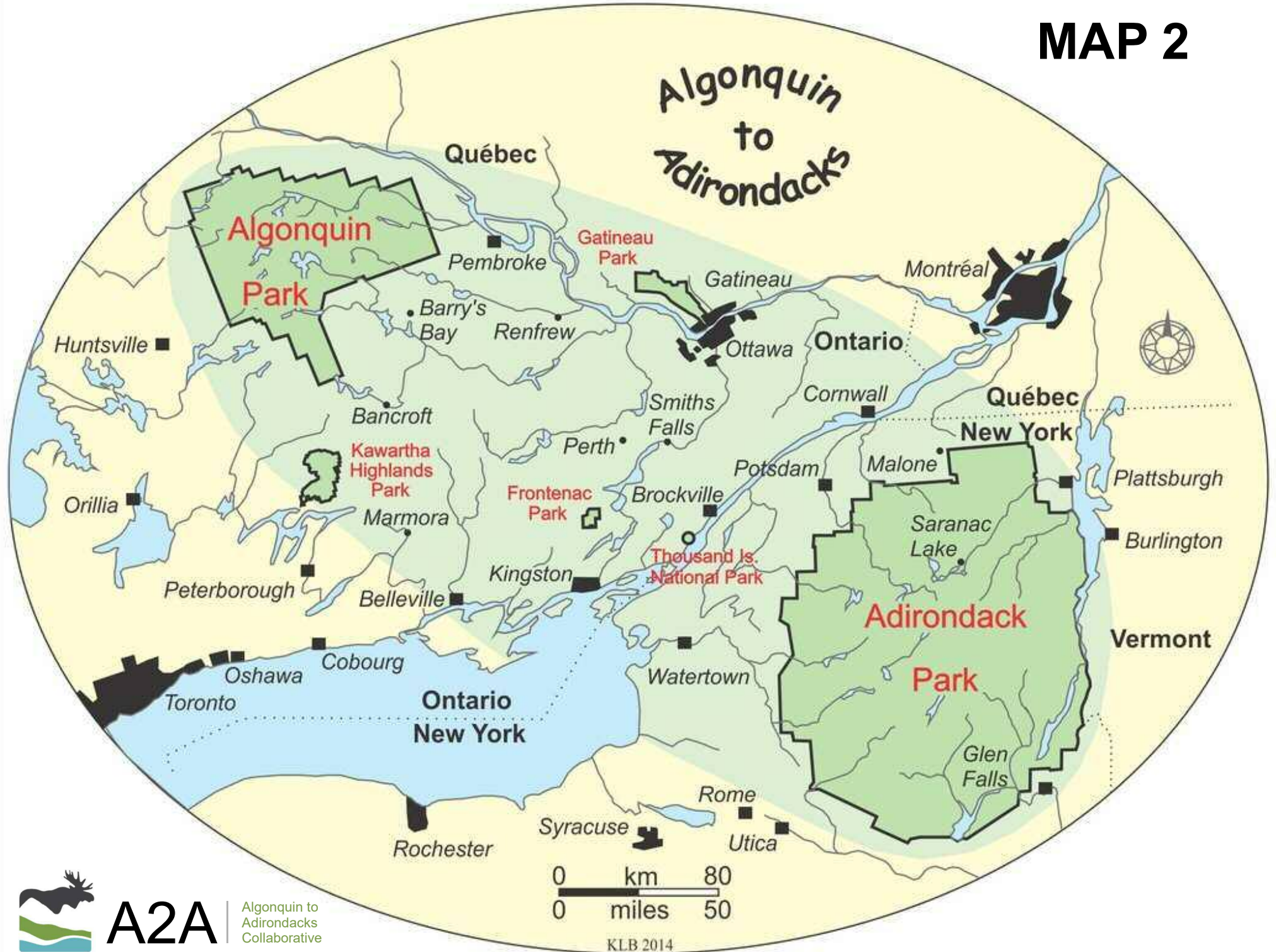
1. The age at which a cow will reach maturity is dependent on her body size which is influenced by climate, hereditary traits, and nutrition availability. When a cow does become sexually mature, usually between 16-28 months of age, her breeding season will begin in late September and continue through mid-October. May is the typical calving season.

Bulls usually become sexually mature the fall after their first birth but are unable to compete for mates due to their small body size in comparison to older bulls. The reproductive cycle for bulls begins in spring with the growth of antlers.
2. Mike Wilton retired in 1996 after 35 years service with Government of Ontario, 31 years as wildlife biologist in Algonquin Park. Upon retirement, Wilton became founding President of [Algonquin Eco Watch](#).
3. The transmitter pulse rate doubles when the collar has not been moved recently.
4. Keddy, C. (1995). [The Conservation Potential of the Frontenac Axis: Linking Algonquin Park to the Adirondacks](#). Ottawa: Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Ottawa Valley Chapter.
5. The organization is similar to its sister conservation corridor in western North America, the [Yellowstone to Yukon \(Y2Y\) Conservation Initiative](#).

MAP 1



MAP 2



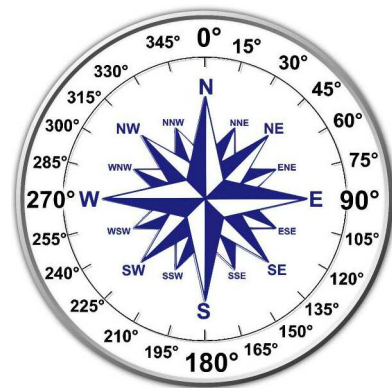
A2A

Algonquin to
Adirondacks
Collaborative

KLB 2014

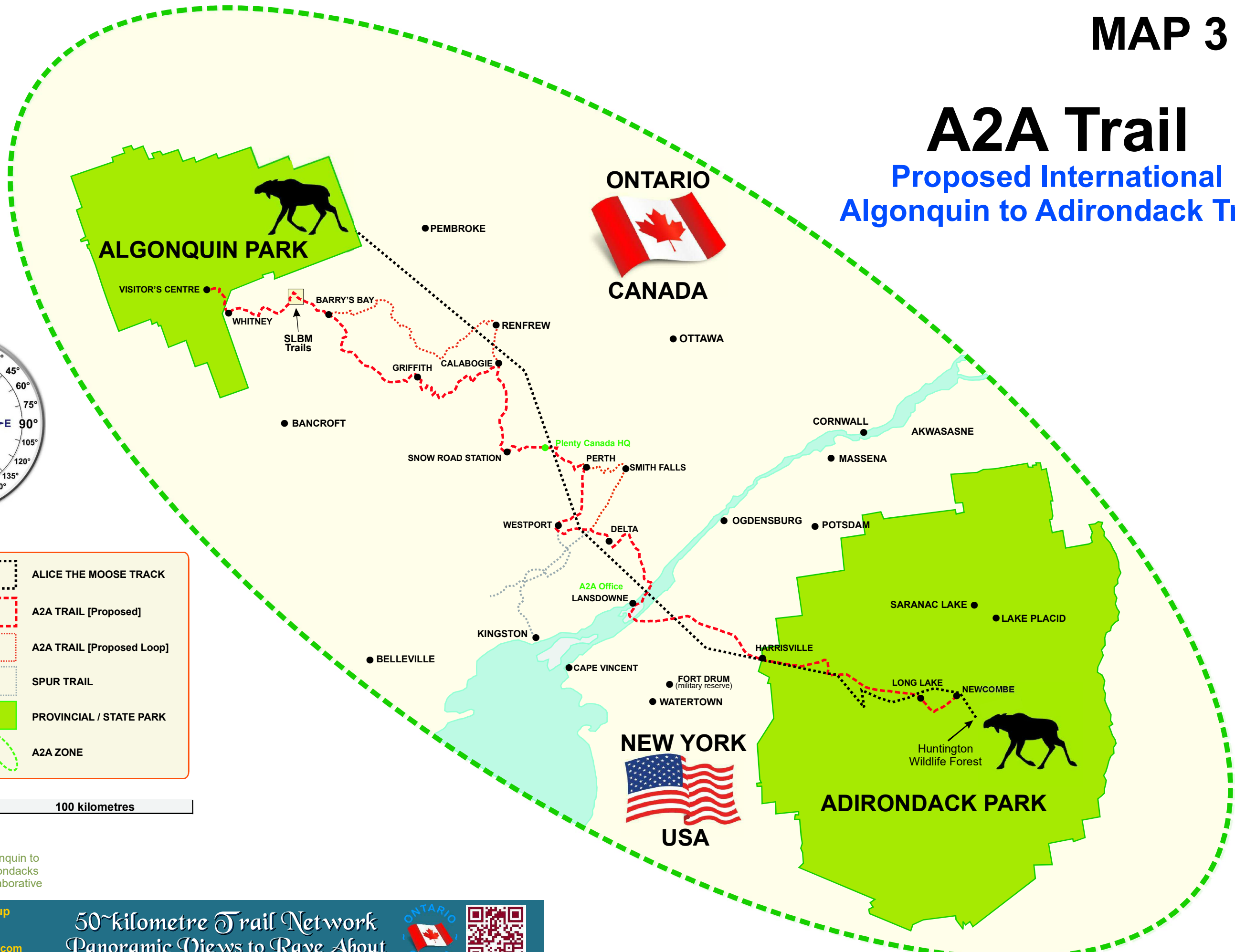
A2A Trail

Proposed International
Algonquin to Adirondack Trail



- ALICE THE MOOSE TRACK
- A2A TRAIL [Proposed]
- A2A TRAIL [Proposed Loop]
- SPUR TRAIL
- PROVINCIAL / STATE PARK
- A2A ZONE

100 kilometres



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