



Photos by Pat Hendrick

The fields of the Tucker farm treat passersby to a magnificent view of Whiteface Mountain and the McKenzie Range.

Farms, scenery at risk

■ *If farmers along a scenic stretch of Route 86 go out of business, the future may not be pretty.*

JACOB RESNECK

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The three-mile stretch of state Route 86 between Donnelly's Corners and Gabriels is celebrated for its spectacular views of Whiteface, McKenzie, St. Regis and other peaks—views greatly enhanced by farm fields that are plowed, mowed or grazed each year.

Yet the farmers who own these acres warn that the vistas, the legacy of ancestors who cleared the land more than a century ago, might not last forever.

"Everybody drives by and oohs and aahs at the view, but they don't seem to understand that you can't afford to keep it up," said Arthur Leavitt, who owns one of the largest farms on the ridgeline.

Leavitt stopped raising potatoes a decade ago, when he could no longer make enough money at it. Today he grows hay on parts of the 500-acre farm, which keeps the brush down and pays the taxes, but not much else.

Unless something is done, it may be just a matter of time before economic pressures force owners along this scenic highway to sell their land for development.

In September, in fact, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) approved a five-house subdivision on 123 acres formerly owned by Asplin Tree Farms. The land had been ►►



Could houses replace hay bales someday at the Leavitt Farm in Gabriels?