



Connecting Communities, Protecting the River

December 7, 2011

Greetings, Friend of the Ausable River,

What a remarkable time to take on directorship of the Ausable River Association (AsRA). As I am sure you know – either from your own personal experience or from the news – Tropical Storm Irene brought disastrous flooding on August 28 to the communities of the Ausable River watershed. In short order, Irene dropped approximately 60 billion gallons of water across our watershed, primarily in the High Peak headwaters. And all that water had to go somewhere; families lost homes, farmers lost crops, and businesses lost revenue. Loss has been pervasive. Three months have passed since a river gauge in Au Sable Forks clocked the river at 18.43 feet – eleven feet above flood stage – and people are still hard at work cleaning up and rebuilding.

Some good has come from this record-breaking storm, though. Communities came together as neighbors helped neighbors. Everyone contributed: road crews made roads passable, town leaders advocated in Albany for disaster funding, firefighters organized clean-up efforts, community groups created relief funds, and everyone else helped in the ways they could. These efforts continue today.

The Ausable River Association is doing what we can too. While we weren't repairing roads or providing emergency services, we continued to do what we do best and what no other organization does for this river and its communities – scientific analysis, community education, collaboration building, and watershed management planning.

This spring, AsRA will unveil a watershed management plan four years in the making. This plan will help the community address environmental issues throughout the watershed while balancing the need for economic growth and public safety. The management plan, written with input from communities and experts, will summarize a decade of scientific research, will capture what people value about the river and what they're concerned about, and will recommend projects to improve the ecosystem's health and protect the resources we all value. Only AsRA has taken the lead on this type of initiative for the Ausable River.

But, as you know, AsRA is not all about planning – we're also about doing. Thanks to the expertise and dedication of AsRA's previous director, Carol Treadwell, we've gotten a lot done this year. We secured federal funding for the Town of Jay for two projects that improved public safety while allowing fish access to 11 miles of tributary. We hosted a well-attended *River Walk* event to educate

community members about stream corridor management. We're convening agencies, organizations, and municipal leaders to talk about river restoration after Irene. We worked with partners to inventory undersized culverts that block fish passage and prioritize them for replacement. Our River Steward completed another successful season working with anglers to prevent invasive species from spreading into Ausable waterways. We restored and stabilized 170 feet of fast eroding stream bank, and created excellent trout habitat in the process. We organized volunteers for tree plantings and debris cleanup. We updated our organizational by-laws and completed a visionary strategic plan, which we will make available in 2012. We continue to work behind the scenes to bring attention, resources, and funding to the Ausable Watershed. And the list goes on.

As the banner hanging outside the Town of Keene offices affirms, we are all in this *together*. This watershed community experienced disaster together, we responded together, and now we're all doing what we can to help each other.

The Ausable River Association envisions a resilient and healthy river ecosystem supported by vibrant communities of residents and visitors. I'm honored and energized to bring my ten years of conservation science and community education experience to help AsRA achieve this vision. But we need your help.



Banner hung outside Town of Keene offices in response to Irene flooding

Please show you share our vision of a healthy river and healthy river communities by donating what you can – \$10, \$50, \$500, or more if you are able – to AsRA this December. We're all in *this watershed* together and your financial contribution has perhaps never been more relevant than it is today. I hope you celebrate the Ausable River Association as a valued resource for your community.

Thank you for your generosity, particularly during these difficult times, and your commitment to protecting the character and integrity of this place we all love.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Corrie Miller".

Corrie Miller, Executive Director

P.S. I very much look forward to meeting those of you I haven't yet met.