



The Voice of the River

Ausable River Association Newsletter

Education, Advocacy, Action! |

Spring 2011

Watershed Education

On a beautiful sunny day in late September Max Van Wie and Luke Peduzi launched on a canoe expedition to Lower and Upper Ausable Lakes. Their goal: to sample lake water and collect data on conductivity, salinity, pH, turbidity, and temperature. This activity was part of a yearly Keene Central School Environment Science class trip.

For the past two years the Ausable River Association has been testing water quality within the Ausable watershed. In order to extend the AsRA testing network, the Director has worked with watershed school students to teach them to test water quality. This beautiful example of educational collaboration has yielded valuable information

and provided meaningful educational opportunities for students.

The data that Max and Luke collected from the Ausable Lakes shows that the Ausable Lakes have good water quality. Results show extremely low conductivity and salinity. pH ranged from neutral to slightly acidic (7 to 5.75). (The pH of rainwater is naturally 5.5 on average).

Ed McNeil and Charles Canham, Ph.D. of the Cary Institute have also been examining the Ausable Lakes as part of a larger study to understand the cause of variations in lake chemistry across the Adirondack Park. Specifically, to assess the impact of air pollution and shoreline development on the concentration of nitrogen and phosphorus. The study is still in progress but preliminary results

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show the Lakes are relatively low in dissolved organic carbon compared to other Adirondack Lakes. Phosphorus concentrations are slightly higher than average compared to the other 442 Adirondack Lakes sampled. This is probably not unexpected since the Ausable Lakes are surrounded by old forest that does not use P as rapidly as managed forests. Nitrogen concentrations are typical of Adirondack lakes.

The Ausable Club is a good steward of the land and it shows in the water quality!



Photo by Mary Werner



ASRA

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ASRA Board Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month, at 6:00 PM, call for location. Community members are invited. Please call the ASRA office: 873-3752 or email info@ausableriver.org to confirm date and location.

In Memory of Fishermen

Jim Olmsted, a long term member of the ASRA board of Directors, avid fisherman, and life long learner succumbed to a three year long battle with Leukemia on March 24, 2011.

I first met Jim when I was a fledgling faculty member at Plattsburgh State. Jim always had more than a few kind words of advice and supported my heroic efforts to shape the minds of

young freshmen who attended my "Rocks for Jocks," Geology 101 Laboratory course. Later after he retired, Jim and I spent a summer collecting data for the "Rivermede" River Restoration project. One day our task was to conduct a pebble count. Jim was like a kid in a candy store. He identified, with geologic precision, every rock that came from the bottom of the river. Jim exhibited enthusiasm and energy for every task he undertook; whether it be selling raffle tickets for an ASRA fund raiser, removing Japanese Knotweed from his property, or simply attending monthly board meetings. His endless enthusiasm for the Ausable River and dedication to river improvement projects will be missed.



Jim collecting trash on Ausable "Green-up" day.



Wallace L. Stock loved to fish the Ausable and enjoyed many hours within its banks angling for trout. Wally felt strongly about the preservation of the natural, scenic, and wildlife resources in New York State. His family respected his love of fishing and acknowledged his favorite fishing river with a donation after his passing last fall.

The Ausable River is "home" to many legendary fly fishermen and ASRA is honored to carry on the conservation and protection of the river and its wildlife resources with the support of generous donations in memory of dedicated anglers.

Fly Fishing with My Father

by Emily Selleck, Keene Valley

My father always wore a fedora and a bow tie when he fished the Ausable River - or any river, for that matter.

He carried a wicker creel and a wooden net; and his bamboo rods – a Payne, a Hardy, and a Leonard - had been handed down to him by his father.

When I was ten, he took me to Beaver Meadow Pond on the East Branch of the Ausable River to teach me how to fish for browns.

I watched him cast, counting out loud on the back cast “One...” and holding it for “two, three...” and “four” on the forecast. I swear nothing moved but his forearm from the elbow, back and forward, from 10 o’clock to 2 o’clock. The fly landed perfectly, exactly where he wanted it, without a ripple, then sunk slowly to where a brown trout was waiting. A swirl of gin-clear water, a brief tussle, and the trout was artfully scooped out.

Now, it was my turn. “Think like a trout,” was my father’s only advice. I took the rod and looked out over the still water.

“Think like a trout. Count One, Two, Three, and Four,” ran through my mind as I tried to emulate the man standing by my side. On the count of “Four”, I cast forward with such vigor my feet slipped out from under me, and, to my great chagrin, I found myself underwater.



“Well, that’s the right idea,” my father said as he pulled me up on shore. “Try again.”

On my next attempt, I kept my feet, but my line landed in a heap, causing the water to break apart in noisy ripples.

There were many more attempts that day; and almost all had their inglorious moments. I was sure the fish were laughing,

but I was as certain as my father was patient that I would finally land one.

Long shadows of late afternoon had spread across the pond when at last I hooked a brown. My heart was pounding. I was so afraid it would get off the hook that I waded in to try to net it, forgetting that I must “Keep the tip up” my father was calling out to me. With me waist deep in water and the rod being all of nine feet long that was no easy matter, but I did it! And soon the fish was in my net.

“Were you thinking like a trout?” my father said as we walked back to the cottage.

“I was thinking I want dinner,” I answered.

“Well, that’s the right idea,” he replied.

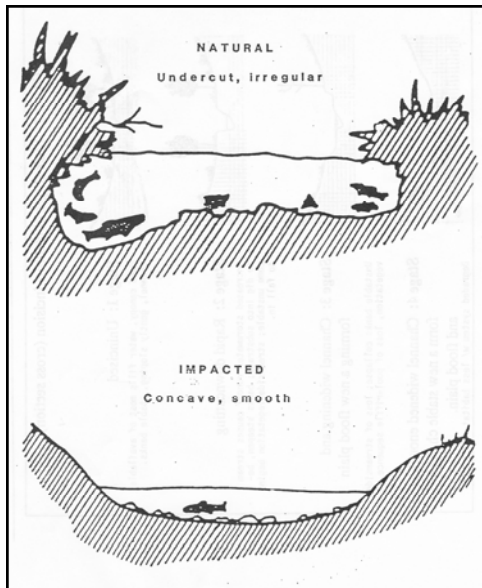
This article won first place in the DEC outdoor writing contest and was first published in the December 2010 *Conservationist* magazine.

Wild River?

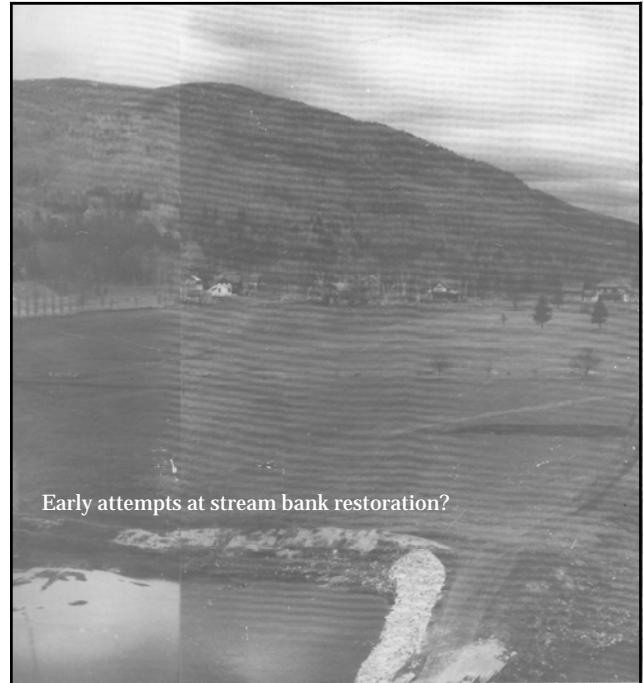
In the valley of the Ausable, natural conditions have given rise to a river that is endowed with habitat for Brook Trout and other Salmonids. Rivers are complex natural systems influenced by climate, geology, topography, and vegetation. A stable river maintains a fine balance between water and sediment inputs. In the absence of any unnatural disturbance, all of the components of a river system work together to maintain deep pools and shallow riffles that provide conditions that support all phases of the trout life cycle.

Changes to the river or alterations within its watershed disrupt its balance and result in changes to the channel. Examples include: watershed land use changes, channel modifications, large storm events, or flood plain encroachment.

The Ausable River is the life blood of the valley and its inhabitants; historically it was employed as a highway to move products. Large boulders



Rivers carve channels with a width and depth adequate to carry the amount of water in an average annual high flow. A stable channel will possess deep pools with a cross-section similar to the Natural channel cross-section depicted above.



within the streambed were demolished in order to facilitate log drives and prevent log jams. Floodplains were cleared for agriculture, gravel was mined from the streambed to provide construction material, and development on the floodplain squeezed the river into a narrower corridor.

The long-term and unintended result of these changes, in some cases, is a channel that is shallower and wider than Mother Nature



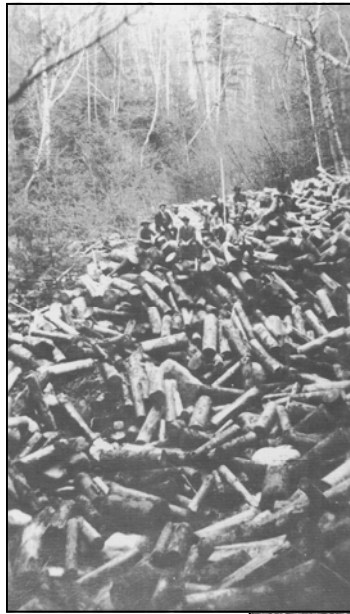
Charcoal Kilns constructed to supply fuel to Iron Forges and Bloomerys. Similar Kilns once sat on the banks of the Ausable River near Church Street, Keene. Photo from McMartin, 1994.

Tame River?

intended (see figure to left). Rivers have long memories and though the forests have returned and the industries have disappeared, the changes precipitated in the river remain. It takes time for a river to adjust and regain its fine natural balance.

Stream restoration projects can help a river regain lost habitat by returning the channel to its natural shape. Much of the West Branch Ausable is endowed by favorable geology, protected state forest, and deep bedrock gorges and therefore maintains a stable channel naturally. The East Branch has less favorable geology and restoration projects are underway to help it regain its past habitat.

Today the Ausable River remains the life blood of the valley but fishing and scenic tourism are now the mainstay of the economy. The Ausable River Watershed is world renown for its trout fishery, spectacular beauty, and exceptional recreational opportunities such as hiking, whitewater kayaking, and skiing. The Ausable River Association is dedicated to



the restoration and preservation of the natural, scenic, and recreational resources of the river and works to foster cooperation among stakeholders, decision-makers, scientists, and the broader public for the benefit of the Ausable River and its watershed.



References

Manchester, Lee, 2008, Photos from the Plains of Abraham by Mary MacKenzie: Makebelieve Publishing, Jay, New York., 371 p.

McMartin, Barbara, 1994, The Great Forests of the Adirondacks: North Country Books, Utica, 240 p.

Plunz, Richard, ed., 1999, Two Adirondack Hamlets in History: Keene and Keene Valley: Purple Mountain

The Ausable River was once a major corridor for transporting logs to saw-mills. Photos from Plunz, ed., 1999 and McMartin, 1994, Manchester, 2008.



Ausable River Association 2011 Calendar of Events And Volunteer Opportunities

To receive notices of activities send an e-mail to info@ausableriver.org

Friday, April 22, Earth Day! River Clean-up at TLC Lodge, Au Sable Forks.

Clean-up is between 10am-3pm, "Rain or Shine." Come all day, or drop in for a few hours. Bring heavy work gloves and sturdy shoes or boots. This project is being coordinated in cooperation with Tahwus Lodge Center (TLS) located at 14234 Rt 9N on Main Street, Au Sable Forks at the Bridge.

Saturday, May 7, 10 am to Noon Trees for Trout! Tree Planting Day



Meet at the Iron Bridge on River Road, North Elba. Plant trees to help shade the river and create trout habitat.

Saturday, May 21, 6:00 AM Ausable Two-fly Contest, Wilmington Visitors Ctr.
6:00 AM AsRA *Stop Rock Snot* "Cleaning Station" and information session.

Sunday, May 22, 2-4 AM, River Clean-up day, Meet at Lake Everest Beach, Wilmington for riverwide cleanup. Volunteer Thank You picnic 4-6 PM. Garbage Bags provided. Bring gloves, wear sturdy shoes.

Saturday, June 18, 12 - 2 PM The Great Adirondack Trail Run.

A Run for the River . Festival at the Mountaineer, Keene Valley
Music, food, refreshments, and fun for all ages.

Sunday June 26, 9 AM - 2 PM Native Plant Sale, Keene Farmer's Market. Purchase plants native to northern New York for your garden. By planting natives gardener's can eliminate the risk of introducing invasives into their gardens and lawns.



AsRA Strategic Planning

The Ausable River Association Board of Directors undertook a major internal planning process over the past year. The goal was to bring focus to the organization, identify the steps toward long-term sustainability while helping it grow.

The five year plan identifies goals for improved governance, community visibility, and lays out program objectives.

We would like to thank the community members who gave input for the pre planning evaluation:

Jim McKenna
Suesie Doolittle
Betsey Lowe
Mark Wilson
Jay Rand
Gerry Bocher
Steve Reis
Susan Pulitzer
Rebecca Kelley
Craig Breshires
Rhonda Butler
Ben Strchshculte
Tom Conway
Gary and Allison Follis
Viny McClelland
Michelle Burns

The Dobin's
Tom Mitchell
Bob and Nancy Peters
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Wendy Hall
Audrey Hyson
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Ray Curran
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Lorraine Duvall
Emily Selleck
Bill Ferbee
Marcy Nevelle
John Davis
Connie Prickett
Steven Englehart

Donors

(June 1, 2010 to May 31, 2011)

AsRA is dependent upon the generosity of its donors and the strength of its volunteers to

carry out river protection projects.
Thank you for your support!

Anonymous (2)	Alison & Gary Follos	Heather Lucero	Larry Philips & Beti Spangel
Mary Ashmead	Mr & Mrs J.G. Fritzinger, Jr.	Nils & Muriel Luderowski	Placid Boatworks
Marie Barrie & Ted Stork	Mark Gallogly & Lise Strickler	Roland & Pam Machold	Seymore Preston
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AsRA Conservation and Community Projects 2011

The Ausable River Association has been funded for two important conservation projects in Summer 2011. First, the River Steward program will continue this summer. The River Steward will be on the banks of the Ausable spreading the message to anglers to “Check-Clean-Dry” equipment in order to avoid bringing invasive species like Didymo and New Zealand Mud snail into the pristine waters of the Ausable.

Second, The Ausable River Association (AsRA) has received two awards that will fund trout and salmon habitat improvement. The projects will identify and replace structures that act as barriers to the passage of fish and other aquatic organisms. Maintaining connections between rivers and small tributaries is important for protecting

trout, salmon, and other aquatic organisms. Trout rely upon small upland tributaries for spawning and refuge from warm summer temperatures. Dams, culverts, and bridges can altered flow and block upstream movement to important refuge streams. Connectivity to upland tributaries is becoming even more critical as temperatures in valley bottom streams rise due to climate warming.



AsRA's community projects include helping the Town of Wilmington develop a Paddling Nature Trail on Lake Everest. Stormwater controls for Keene Valley, and assistance to the Town of Jay for removal of the Upper Jay Reservoir Dam.