

ASRA Newsletter

WINTER 2006

ASRA Begins Planning Process, Seeks Input

A lot of things can change over time. This is especially true with a dynamic river system. For example, floods may cause additional erosion, a new housing development may be constructed near the river's banks, or new invasive species may be introduced into the ecosystem.

Therefore, it is important for an organization dedi-



cated to the care of a river to periodically evaluate how the organization can better meet the changing needs of the river and the people who depend on that river. This is why the ASRA has been awarded an organizational support grant from the Lake Champlain Basin Program to undergo a planning process.

Over the next year, the ASRA will assess how the we can better meet the needs of the river and the citizens that use and appreciate it. By the end of the process, we hope to have a board and executive director who have receive

training regarding non-profit organizations. We also hope to have examined and revised as necessary the ASRA's by-laws, mission statement, and goals. Finally, we hope to compile a list that will be updated annually of projects that have taken place, are currently taking place, and issues that need to be addressed.

To meet these goals, we will be asking for input through special meetings and surveys. In addition, all members are welcome to attend our monthly board meetings, which take place at 6:30pm on the third Thursday of the month in the Jay Town Hall.

Volunteer Opportunities Abound

Are you a passionate editor? Do like meeting new people? Or, maybe you'd like to learn how to use a GPS unit? If so, we can help you and in the process you can help the ASRA! We currently need volunteers to:

- Edit newsletters, grants, and educational materials,
- Help with the stream inventory (we'll train you how to use our GPS units),
- Help with streambank stabilizations,

- Write articles for our newsletter,
- Help organize fundraisers, or
- Do the book-keeping,
- Suggest how your talents can best meet the mission of the ASRA.

All of these opportunities can be a one-time or long-term commitment. We're willing to accommodate your time schedule! For more information please call the director, Anne Lenox Barlow, at (518) 873-3752 or e-mail her at info@ausableriver.org.



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ASRA'S WISHLIST:

- Office Paper (preferably made from 100% recycled paper)
- Lined Notepads
- Envelopes in any size
- Shovels and spades
- Buckets/pails
- A canoe
- Hanging Files and manila folders
- Office Chair

If you would like to donate a please contact the director at (518) 873-3752 or info@ausableriver.org.

Wilmington Begins Waterfront Revitalization Planning

Since early December 2005, a group of residents, including property and business owners and recreational enthusiasts, has been meeting with community leaders and planning advisors as part of the Town of Wilmington Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, or "LWRP." The group constitutes the Town's Waterfront Advisory Committee, an important component in the LWRP development.

Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs are comprehensive land and water use plans for a community's waterfront area. An LWRP is used to define a community's vision for the future of the waterfront and to develop strategies for addressing critical waterfront issues, such as: enhancing public access; increasing water-based recreation and tourism; revitalizing underutilized waterfront areas; protecting natural resources; and improving water quality. An LWRP includes specific projects, programs, and other actions needed to implement the community's vision for the waterfront. Over 240 communities throughout New York State are currently participating in the LWRP process with the New York Department of State.

The Ausable River is an important part of Wilmington's past, present, and future. In the early 1800s, Lake Everest was created by the construction of a dam to power entrepreneurial activities. Today the river and lake are important resources for both residents and visitors. From concerts on the beach to fishing and canoeing, recreation and economic activity in Wilmington depend in large part on the health of the river.

However, recreational use of the River, especially in Lake Everest, has been impacted by a build up of sediment, which has reduced swimming and navigation on the lake, increased flooding and threatened the fishery.

The LWRP will help the Town develop strategies to protect and enhance the River and to identify potential funding sources for projects that are identified by the commu-

nity. For example, the community may wish to focus on techniques to reduce nonpoint source pollution and sedimentation, create a riverside walkway with historical kiosks, or enhance the existing beach area or create new opportunities for public access to the River.

Funding for the Wilmington LWRP is being provided by the New York State Department of State through a \$25,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Fund. Adirondack Sustainable Communities, Inc. (ASCI) of Wilmington is providing professional planning and design services for the development of the LWRP.

Essex County and the Advisory Committee are providing substantial in-kind support.

“Thanks to the grant from the DOS, we were able to contract ASCI to coordinate planning efforts to address long term waterfront management issues such as resource protection, enhanced recreational opportunities, public access, and hamlet revitalization” said Supervisor Ashworth. “Planning may take a year, then project implementation

“The Au Sable River is an important part of Wilmington's past, present, and future.”

Two-County Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan Started

Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc. is currently working through a NYS Department of State Local Waterfront Revitalization Program Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) grant, sponsored by the Town of Moriah, to update the *Clinton and Essex County Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan* (LWRP) that was completed in 1997. The 1997 plan provided a basis for the Byway corridor management plan of Lakes

to Locks Passage and has helped a number of communities on Lake Champlain to obtain grant funding for waterfront improvement projects.

The 1997 plan focused on Rouses Point and Plattsburgh, which positioned both communities for their current revitalization efforts. The updated plan broadens the scope of "waterfront" corridor, allowing many more communities in Clinton

County to have the opportunity for EPF funding. The following communities in Clinton County are now included in the Lake Champlain Waterfront Corridor: Town of Champlain, Village of Champlain, Village of Rouses Point, Town of Chazy, Town of Beekmantown, Town of Plattsburgh, City of Plattsburgh, Town of Schuyler Falls, Town of Peru, Town of Ausable. And as a result of the broadened scope, sections of the Au Sable

Tiny Snail Invades Western Trout Streams

When I think about a river, I think of strength. Rivers have the strength to destroy houses, roads, and other structures during floods. Even during normal flow periods, a river can move boulders. But, we must remember that rivers can also be weak. They are delicate ecosystems that can be drastically altered by our activities. And people in the western half of our country have learned this lesson the hard way.

In the mid-1980s, a minuscule creature, never seen in the United States, was found in Idaho's Snake River. The tiny invader is the New Zealand mud snail. And since its first appearance, the snail, like many non-native species, has spread and impacted the ecosystems of the Western trout streams.

The snails are prolific reproducers and colonizers. Almost all the snails are females and they reproduce by cloning. It is estimated that the offspring from a single female can multiply to 12 million snails in as little as two years. A consulting firm, EcoAnalysts, has been monitoring the snail's presence for the past six years. And they estimate there are 100,000 to 500,000 New Zealand mud snails per square meter on the rocks along a 60 mile stretch of the Snake. They occur in densities as high as 750,000 per square meter in several streams in Yellowstone National Park. In some areas, the tiny snails amount to more than 90 percent of the invertebrate biomass. That degree of dominance by a single species is typically found only in the most disturbed environments, such as highly polluted streams and sewage ponds.

The snails graze on algae. And at such high densities, these little snails eat all the algae in a river, leaving little to no food for native snails and other macro invertebrates. In fact, Eco Analyst has documented the invaders crowding out six species of native Idaho snails that are threatened or endangered. Other researchers have found the mud snails reduce the available food for insect-eating trout by consuming the mayflies, stoneflies, and caddis flies' food. The reduction in available food translates into fewer and smaller trout. In fact, anglers are already reporting declines in trout populations in some snail infested waters.

Trout eat some types of snails, but they don't do well eating the foreign snails. A study at Utah State University confirmed this fact. Last year a researcher at the University fed a dozen rainbow trout an experimental diet: three months of only New Zealand mud snails, alternating with three months on a normal diet. Trout flourished on the normal diet, but on the mud snails diet, one-third died and the rest suffered dramatic weight loss.

It is thought that the snails traveled here in shipments of trout eggs imported by fish farmers, who raise trout in springs along the Snake River. The newly arrived snails spread by hitching a ride to other watersheds on the gear of anglers and boaters. Since their arrival, the invaders have spread to every Western state except New Mexico. Every few months, researchers find the snails have colonized more streams.

Researchers hope to develop biological controls — organisms that would prey on the invaders. Most researchers are currently experimenting with bacteria that would kill the snails, but not harm native wildlife. State and federal agencies, universities, and groups like Trout Unlimited are providing some funds for the work, but far more support is needed, researchers say.

What does this mean for the Au Sable River? So far, the snail has only been found east of Colorado in a few places. But, that does not mean our river is safe. Many anglers travel from the west fish here and many of our local anglers travel west to fish. Therefore, it is important to thoroughly wash all of your gear prior to entering the Au Sable River after visiting a Western trout stream. With minimal effort, we can protect the River's trout fishery.



Figure 1. New Zealand mud snails on penny.

The Color of Water

If I told you to imagine a lake or a river, what color do you picture the water? If you are like most people, you are probably imagining clear, blue water. But water color can vary from clear to cloudy and from red to brown to green or gray in color. Why does water vary in color, you ask. Whether or not the water is clear or cloudy depends on the particles in the water. If the particles are dissolved then the water is clear. If there are suspended particles, such as clay or algae then the water is cloudy. The color of the water results from materials in the water reflecting back different wavelengths of the light spectrum.

Clear, blue water does not contain a lot of dissolved particles. As a result, the water reflects light. The longer wavelengths of light, toward the blue part of the light spectrum, penetrate into the water. And it is this blue that is reflected back into our eyes. And what about all the different shades of blue water you ask? Well, the shallow areas appear lighter blue or greenish blue while the deep areas of water appear dark blue.

If water absorbs the blue light, why is it that some rivers have no color, you ask. This occurs because the rivers run over bare rock without sediment or vegetation to become suspended in the water. In addition, the water is not deep enough for the long, blue wavelengths of light to be reflected back. Therefore, the water remains a clear color.

"Brown, cloudy, or murky, water is the results of eroding soil suspended in the water."



Have you ever noticed water that is clear, but brown or red in color? This is the result of dissolved organic material from the breakdown of plants and animals. The organic material leaches into slow moving streams, lakes, ponds, and vernal pools from surrounding forests, bogs, and wetlands.

Brown, cloudy, or murky, water is the results of eroding soil suspended in the water. This cloudiness is also known as turbidity. Where does the soil come from? In lakes strong winds and waves may stir up sediment from the bottom of the shore area. Eroded soil enters rivers as a result of heavy rains and spring snowmelt. If there is a lot of commercial or industrial development (i.e. parking lots, buildings, and roads), the runoff can cause a stream or river to appear gray. This is due to the mix of pollutants found in urbanized areas.

There are two types of green water. Most often we see water that is green because of suspended particles of living material, most often an algae bloom. A bloom is when algae or other microscopic organism grow in large numbers. Some algae, known as diatoms, will make the water look brown, while an organism called *Euglena* will cause the water to be a cloudy red. Finally, there are a few lakes in the world that appear clear and green. These lakes get their distinctive color from a combination of deep, clear water and calcium carbonate from limestone bedrock.

So, next time your out by the AuSable River, take a look at its color. Depending on your location and the time of year, you will see different colors and degrees of clarity. Take note of the color changes and try to determine why you are seeing these changes!

ASRA Recently Awarded Several Grants

The Au Sable River Association has recently been awarded four grants from two different funders. Three of the grants are project specific, while one helps cover general operating costs.

Over the next year we will be using the money from one grant to re-exam the Association's mission, goals, and by-laws. This process will involve board and executive director training, member meetings, and public input to make sure we are doing the best to serve the River and the people who live, work, and recreate in the AuSable River Watershed.

Another grant will continue to fund the general stream inventory. This year we will focus on mapping all of the erosion

taking place along the river through the use of global positioning systems (GPS) and geographic information systems (GIS). We will also be gathering maps and data from state, federal, and local agencies as well as other non-profit organizations to create an interactive, computer generated GIS map of the watershed. All future data gathered on the river, including the erosion data, will be used to keep the map up-to-date. The map, in turn, will be used to inform the ASRA and others of the River's health.

Finally, the third project specific grant will help the ASRA and the Nature Conservancy map all the location of Indian Cup Plant, a non-native species growing along the banks of the East Branch and Main Stem of the AuSable

River. The partnership will also result in an Indian Cup Plant fact sheet and management plan. All three of these grants were awarded by the Lake Champlain Basin Program and funded by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The fourth grant was awarded from the Ruth M. Kuhfahl Designated Fund by the Adirondack Community Trust. This grant was not designated for a specific project. Grants and gifts not designated for a specific project are especially helpful to the Association. These monies allow us to complete projects that require more money than originally budgeted, work on projects that are not funded through a specific grant, and research new projects.

Two County Revitalization Plan (continued from page 2)

iver have been included.

The purpose of the waterfront revitalization plan is to create a strategy for community revitalization. Input is being sought from each community for two key tasks:

1. Identify historic, cultural, open-space and recreational resources, on both land and wa-

ter, that can play a role in stimulating economic development.

1. Identify projects that fulfill the plan's seven goals and objectives of recreation, transportation, rural development, tourism, public places, environment, and education.

Development of the plan is being coordinated through the Clinton County Coalition for Heritage, Arts, Recreation and Tourism (CHART), Clinton County Planning Department, with staff support from Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc. The planners will assist each community in defining projects and positioning each community for future grant funding.

Trail Festival

The Mountaineer in Keene Valley is once again sponsoring a trail festival to benefit the Au Sable and Boquet River Associations. The event will include an 11 mile trail run over Giant Mountain, a 3 mile fun run, interactive educational presentations, food, and good cheer.

The festival will take place at the

Mountaineer on June 17th. For more information regarding this event or to volunteer, please contact the ASRA office via phone, 518-873-3752, or e-mail, info@ausableriver.org

Even if you don't run, there will still be plenty of fun at this event so be sure to stop by and show your support!

Au Sable River Association

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*Working to protect and
enhance the natural and
cultural resources of the Au
Sable watershed.*

We're on the Web!
www.ausableriver.org



This newsletter was funded through a grant provided by the Lake Champlain Basin Program. For more information visit www.lcbp.org

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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Members,

I would like to introduce you to the newest addition to my family. On January 2, 2006 I gave birth to our first child—Henry Matthews Barlow. As you might imagine, Henry's birth changed our lives drastically. There are the obvious changes—night feedings, diapers, and a plethora of baby gear. And as you can see in the picture, I did a lot more work at home with my laptop while Henry napped in his carrier.

But, there were also the changes one can never prepare for. These are the large array of emotions that come along

with a child—the love, the joy, and the concern for the future.

I am grateful for all these changes. But, I am especially grateful for the emotional changes. Henry reminds me why it is important to be concerned for the future. I know how much I appreciate my hikes through the forests and along the Au Sable River. I want to help preserve that for both today's and tomorrow's children.



And therefore, I feel it is important to thank all of you. By being members of the ASRA, you too are helping to keep the Au Sable River a healthy, diverse ecosystem that my son and the sons and daughters of others can appreciate for years to come.

Anne Lenox Barlow