



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NEW YORK STATE ADAPTATION PRACTITIONERS NETWORK RECOGNIZES AUSABLE FRESHWATER CENTER AS WINNER OF INAUGURAL NEW YORK STATE ADAPTATION AND INNOVATION AWARD

The Ausable Freshwater Center's staff and board are honored to receive the 2025 NYS Adaptation and Innovation Award in the category of small community infrastructure. The awards were announced this past Friday by the New York State Adaptation Practitioners Network. "This year's winners highlight a range of approaches to strengthening resilience—from large-scale urban infrastructure and ecological restoration to grassroots visioning for neighborhood adaptation," said Neeyati Johnson, NYS Adaptation Practitioners Network Manager. "Collectively, they illustrate the creative, science-based, and equitable solutions that will be critical as New York faces rising seas, extreme heat, flooding, and other climate-driven hazards."

Noted in the release, "communities across New York State are suffering from the impacts of worsening climate hazards. The awarded projects showcase the gold standard of climate-resilient infrastructure that enhances communities and mitigates hazards. Through this process, the Network aims to highlight infrastructure projects and adaptation programs that New Yorkers can envision and adapt for their own communities. Selections were made by a multidisciplinary panel of judges, including designers, architects, advocates, community engagement specialists, and scientists, and informed by the Network's Principles of Resilient Infrastructure."

The East Branch Restoration Plan, which began in 2019 with support from the Town of Jay and the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery focused on the lower half of the river and has continued to include the upper East Branch Ausable River in the Town of Keene, was selected as the winner in the small community category. The project was nominated for recognition by Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) Energy Circuit Rider Carlie Leary, who serves as Climate Smart Communities Coordinator for the North Country region. Leary said, "The Ausable Freshwater Center project is science based, community-oriented flood resilience at its best — led by a nonprofit collaborating closely with local government to honor and rebuild the river's ecological integrity."

"The East Branch Ausable River Restoration Plan is a model for helping Adirondack communities embrace and restore their essential rivers and streams as they build flood resilience," said Ausable Freshwater Center Executive Director, Kelley Tucker. "The Adirondack Park is defined by its precious freshwater systems. Working with our communities we're building a better future for the Adirondacks through effective, science-based stewardship of freshwater systems. We deeply appreciate the engagement of our many partners, especially the Towns of Jay and Keene, streamside landowners, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Thanks to the NYS Adaptation Practitioners Network and our colleagues at ANCA for this recognition."

The winners of this year's awards are:

[Ausable River Restoration Program](#), Town of Jay, New York Award Category: Small Community Infrastructure
The impacts of 19th century industrial logging shattered the health of Adirondack rivers. These essential systems are slow to heal and exceptionally vulnerable to the increasingly severe storms of a changing climate. The [East](#)

[Branch Restoration Plan](#) is a comprehensive strategy to restore self-sustaining stream health to the East Branch Ausable River and create flood resilience for the rural communities that live near and rely on it. Led by the Ausable Freshwater Center, the Plan's 13 principal restoration projects were developed using rigorous scientific field assessment, historical knowledge, and community input. The result: cooler waters, reduced erosion, functional floodplains, less vulnerable infrastructure, more predictable flooding, and reduced emergency response costs. Supporting projects include climate-ready culverts, riparian ecosystem recovery, and native plant propagation at the Ausable Conservation Nursery.

[Cayuga Creek Stream & Floodplain Restoration](#) Town of Niagara, New York

Award Category: Mid-Sized Community Infrastructure

Led by Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper and partners, the Cayuga Creek project protects 30 acres of land while rerouting a degraded, channelized creek into a newly constructed channel that reconnects the stream to its historic floodplain. The restoration reduces chronic neighborhood flooding, improves water quality, and creates valuable fish and wildlife habitat. Community outreach—including door-to-door engagement, site walkthroughs, and public meetings—was central to shaping the project. BNW is currently seeking funding to complete a full trail system that will provide formal access to this site and enable continued community engagement through stewardship.

[Hudson River Park's Gansevoort Peninsula](#) New York, New York

Award Category: Large Community Infrastructure Project

Hudson River Park's 5.5-acre Gansevoort Peninsula demonstrates how highly constrained urban shorelines can be transformed into resilient, ecologically vibrant public spaces. Once a sanitation site, the area now features Manhattan's first public beach and its first salt marsh on the Hudson River's east side. Designed with extensive community input, the park balances active and passive spaces while providing tidal protection, ecological enhancement, and recreational access. The sub-tidal elements have already served as a precedent for future resilience projects across New York.

[Hunters Point North Vision Plan for Resiliency](#), Long Island City, New York

Award Category: Climate Adaptation Program

Hunters Point North Vision Plan exemplifies how community-driven climate adaptation can create a more resilient, equitable neighborhood along a vulnerable, urban riverfront. Developed through grassroots leadership by Long Island Community Coalition/Hunters Point Community Coalition and extensive public participation, the vision transforms a half-mile on the East River in Queens with an industrial history into a vibrant creative, mixed-use community. Innovative, multi-benefit strategies (such as resilient open spaces, living shorelines, a resiliency hub, and land value capture) dramatically reduce climate risks. The plan aligns with – and exceeds – state and city adaptation goals and serves as a replicable model for how communities can proactively shape more resilient futures.

The NYS Adaptation & Innovation Awards are made possible through the collaboration between The New York State Adaptation Practitioners Network – convened by Rebuild By Design + NY Water Resources Institute + Syracuse Environmental Finance Center – in partnership with The Rise to Resilience Coalition, New York Disaster Interfaith Services, The New York Climate Exchange, New York Sea Grant, Rainproof NYC, the Stormwater Infrastructure Matters Coalition, and the American Institute of Architects New York.

About the NYS Adaptation Practitioners Network

The [New York State Adaptation Practitioners Network](#) brings together non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and community-based organizations to advise the state government on adaptation policy implementation. The Network works to connect practitioners, share knowledge within the professional practice, and identify best tools and resources for adaptation. The New York State Adaptation & Innovation Awards recognize best practices in adaptation to model the kinds of adaptation projects that are possible across New York. The Network has identified [Principles of Resilient Infrastructure](#) to outline characteristics of ideal projects.