

Algonquin to Adirondacks Conservation Association

“Connecting with respect”

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Be Part of the Big Changeover!

Come to the A2A Annual General Meeting March 23rd

10:00 to 3:00 at the Brockville Museum

5 Henry St., Brockville, Ontario (Directions below)

Lunch and refreshments provided

This is your official invitation to attend the Algonquin to Adirondacks (A2A) Conservation Association AGM, where you’ll be part of helping make the decisions that will allow A2A to broaden its mandate and structure to serve partnering organizations and to function more effectively on the American side of the St. Lawrence.

In addition to electing a new Board of Directors, members will be voting on a draft bylaw to change the name of the organization to *The Algonquin to Adirondacks Collaborative*, amend its constitutional objects and amend and consolidate its bylaws. To see a copy of the changes (Bylaw 10) on which members will vote: Go to <http://www.a2alink.org> and follow the links to the on-line invitation.

We will also be looking over a new Strategic Plan.

Results of two major workshops, held in 2012, concluded that scientifically the A2A initiative is essential to sustain healthy native wildlife populations and human well-being in the years to come, and that in order to fulfill its mandate, the organization needed to broaden its focus. Acting on the advice of the proceedings of these two workshops, a number of committees were formed. They will be recommending changes for us to consider at the AGM. We hope that you can be part of this historic meeting, while meeting new & old friends!

Emily Conger — President

Directions from the 401: Take Hwy. 29 (Stewart Blvd.) exit south and keep going until the road winds around the Brockville courthouse, and then continue south on the same street, now called William. You’ll then cross King Street. Continue south down the hill (street now called Broad) until you come to Water Street, where you must turn or end up on a dead end at the St. Lawrence. Turn right (west) and go for 4 ½ blocks, passing the Beer Store and Hardy Park. The Museum is at the west side of the park at the corner of Henry and Water St. Tel: (613) 342-4397. <http://www.brockvillemuseum.com/museum/>



A2A Connecting People and Information

by Bryarly McEachern

In the A2A region, human connectivity is just as important as ecological connectivity for sustaining biodiversity and ecosystem function. Many researchers, non-governmental organizations and government agencies are doing good environmental work in the region, and the greater connectivity between these researchers and agencies, the greater their cumulative, positive impact. Collectively we can achieve more than any one of us can achieve alone, but we need to know who is doing what.

One way that A2A aims to support connectivity and collaboration among people and organizations is by creating a searchable database of relevant organizations/researchers, where partners of the A2A Collaborative can find out who is doing what in the region. The database lists researchers and organizations, their contact information (if shared), and relevant projects they are working on. If applicable, it also lists projects that they have done in the past. We hope to launch this database after the AGM in March.

A2A also supports information-sharing among partners of the Collaborative. Effective ecological planning depends on one's ability to access the best science available, so we need to know what research has been done and what research needs to be done. A2A has started a research database, which will act as a clearing-house of research papers, maps, and reports related to biodiversity and ecological connectivity in the A2A region. Stay tuned for further information about our launch of the research database and how it will be used.



Ecosystem Effects of Low Water Conditions in 2012

A report from the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA)

2012 proved to be a very dry year in the Cataraqui Region watershed, which extends through most of the “pinch-point” of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere area on the Canadian side. Much of what is reported is true for other areas in the A2A Region as well.

We started off the year with a warmer than average winter with very little snow. Minimal snow cover meant sparse spring runoff into lakes and streams in the spring, which caused below normal water levels. Warm weather and increased evaporation in March, and little rain in April further contributed to decreasing water levels. A Level 1 Low Water Level Condition was declared in May 2012. A dry summer intensified the conditions and a Level II Low Water Level Condition was declared in July 2012, the second highest level of concern.

During this time, the ecosystem of the watershed showed significant signs of stress due to the dry conditions. Many trees and shrubs showed droopy leaves while some went into early dormancy. Streams were reduced to shallow pools, and some dried up completely, which caused strain on fish and other aquatic species. The dry conditions also had an impact on the residents of the watershed as many landowners with wells saw a sharp decline in their water supply, and boaters had to be careful of shoals that were closer to the surface of lakes and rivers.

The watershed got some relief in September when we saw above average precipitation levels. Most streams and inland lakes responded with increases in water levels in early fall (though not back to normal levels). This relief was temporary, however, since in November, precipitation levels dropped off, causing lake and stream levels to again fall. According to Environment Canada, records for the CRCA area, November was the driest it has been in about 100 years. The long-term forecast for this upcoming winter (December-January-February) is for above normal temperatures and average precipitation, so it is possible this cycle may repeat itself next year.

Residents or businesses throughout the watershed that experienced difficulties during the dry conditions were asked to call the CRCA so that impacts of the low water conditions could be tracked. Some calls were received from residents whose wells went dry over the summer, and some concerns about people taking water from streams and lakes were passed on to the Ministry of the Environment for follow-up.

“November was the driest it has been in about 100 years”



Photo: Chris Van der Vyver

Partner Profile: YESeleven



Threatening Four-Lane Highway Across Northern New York State Stalled

For over fifty years, developers and some politicians in northern New York have dreamt of a new four-lane east-west highway across the region. If built, the highway, dubbed the “Rooftop Highway” by its proponents, would parallel the St. Lawrence River and 401 Highway in Ontario. But unlike the 401, which connects major metropolitan areas like Toronto and Montreal, the “Rooftop Highway” would connect the relatively minor cities of Watertown and Plattsburgh, which along with the villages between them are now served by U.S. Route 11, a mostly two-lane highway.

While the 401 is heavily traveled, actual traffic on the new highway would be light, and therefore economically questionable. However, proponents see the idea as an economic development strategy that would attract industry and other development to the sparsely settled St. Lawrence Valley. In recent years local public money has been poured into a major lobbying effort. Without being challenged, the idea of this mega project gained political traction, despite an unfavorable economic climate.

A game-changer occurred in 2011 when a local citizens group formed and openly opposed the “Rooftop Highway” idea. The group calling itself YESeleven advocates for upgrading and improving existing U.S. Route 11 as a less damaging and more realistic alternative to a new highway. YESeleven argues that it was flawed thinking that underlay the “Rooftop Highway” concept, citing studies conducted for the New York State Department of Transportation to show that it is not justified. The public became interested, particularly when YESeleven mapped out the likely route of the highway to illustrate the environmental damage it would cause.

Although there would be little traffic on the new 180 mi/300 km highway, there would be the direct loss of approximately 8,700 acres/3,500 hectares of farmland, forest and wetland habitat. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the extensive interspersed agricultural grasslands and freshwater wetlands in the St. Lawrence Valley creates habitat conditions that are critical to several species of rare migratory birds, which are declining elsewhere in the northeast. The fish and wildlife found in the St. Lawrence Valley have local, national, and international significance.

For A2A to maintain north-south ecological connectivity across the St. Lawrence River, the possibility of another east-west highway is threatening. Although wildlife under/overpasses could partially mitigate the direct threat to some mammals and reptiles, the direct loss of habitat and fragmentation of the landscape would be permanent and affect populations of wildlife.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo recently spoke about the “Rooftop Highway” in the St. Lawrence Valley community of Potsdam, indicating that fiscal constraints dictate that no monies will be appropriated to initiate the project in the near future, stalling the project for now. But the Governor made no mention of the environmental problems associated with the project, and suggested that the idea be further studied to determine if claimed future economic benefits are realistic. The highway’s proponents took the suggestion as proof the Governor thinks the concept has merit, and have pledged to continue its promotion. The controversy will apparently continue.

Website: <http://yeseleven.org/content/home>

by Richard Grover

“The purpose of YESeleven is to promote improvement of the US Route 11 transportation corridor, the lifeblood of our Northern New York economy.”

The Frontenac Arch Biosphere to host EuroMAB Conference



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Ecological Sciences for Sustainable Development



The Frontenac Arch Biosphere (FAB), right in the heart of the A2A Region, has won its bid to host the United Nations Man and the Biosphere EuroMAB conference.

This four-day conference, with delegates from international UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserves, will be held in Brockville from October 15-19th, 2013.

The theme for the EuroMAB conference will be centred on community engagement to achieve MAB objectives, with the fourth day being focused on sustainable tourism. The EuroMAB objectives include the goal to identify and assess the changes in the biosphere resulting from human and natural activities and the effects of these changes on humans and the environment, in particular in the context of climate change.

EuroMAB is the largest and oldest of the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Regional Networks. The EuroMAB program is made up of 52 countries, including Canada and the USA, and 284 biosphere reserves within Europe.

To read more about the EuroMAB program:

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/man-and-biosphere-programme/networks/euromab/>

To read more about last year's conference: <http://www.euromab2011.se>



Photo: Chris Van der Vyver

This is a great opportunity for the Frontenac Arch Biosphere and its partners such as A2A to display the region's rich resources in natural beauty and exceptional biodiversity, sustainable community development, and the great quality of life that we share.

To read more about the Frontenac Arch Biosphere: <http://www.fabr.ca/index.htm>

SIZE

The Adirondack Park is comprised of about 6.1 million acres (9,375 square miles).
The park is the size of the state of Vermont.
There's no marked boundary to the park, no "entrance gate" and no admission fee.
The Adirondack Park is the largest protected area in the contiguous United States.
The Adirondack Park is larger than Yellowstone, Yosemite, Glacier, Grand Canyon and Great Smokies combined.
The Adirondack Park challenges the traditional notion of what a park is.

GEOGRAPHY & FEATURES

The Adirondack Park contains 85% of all wilderness in the eastern United States — the largest wilderness east of the Mississippi.
The Adirondack Park has over 2,000 miles of hiking trails; these trails comprise the largest trail system in the nation.
Contrary to popular belief, these mountains are not old, "worn down" peaks, but relatively young mountains. It is theorized that there is a geologic "hotspot" beneath the Adirondacks that causes continued uplift at the rate of 1.5 - 3cm annually.
The western and southern Adirondack area is a gentle landscape of hills, lakes, ponds and streams, along with the highest mountains in the state. The 46 High Peaks (over 4,000 feet) include Mount Marcy, the highest point in New York at 5,344'.

WATER

Within the park are 3,000 lakes & ponds and more than 1,200 miles of rivers fed by an estimated 30,000 miles of brooks & streams
Special regulations govern 1,200 miles of Adirondack river corridors, designated as part of the New York State Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River System.

OWNERSHIP

The park is a patchwork of public and private lands.
State-owned Forest Preserve comprises 2.6 million acres (42%) and is protected by the state constitution as "forever wild."
Approximately 3 million acres are privately held but sparsely populated.
Visually, very little difference exists between state owned and privately owned land.

PROTECTION

The New York State Legislature created the Adirondack Park in 1892 by enacting measures that guaranteed public lands would remain "forever wild" - the strongest such law in the United States.
In the last 100 years, state purchase has increased the Forest Preserve from 680,000 acres to its present 2.6 million acres.
The "blue line", originally encompassing 2.6 million acres, now encircles nearly 6 million acres (roughly the size of Vermont).
The Adirondack Park Agency was created in 1971 to encourage wise land use planning for the region.

PEOPLE & THE PARK

Approximately 137,000 people live in the Adirondacks twelve months of the year.
The park is home to 200,000 seasonal residents. Hamilton County has the largest percentage of 2nd homeowners in the nation.
There are over 100 villages and towns within the park but no cities. It is the largest area without a city in the state.
An estimated 7-10 million tourists visit the region annually.
60 million people live within a day's drive of the Adirondack region.



Photo: Chris Van der Vyver

Official Plans—Important for Wildlife, Important for People

A2A has been involved in the planning process for Official Plans, which direct land use planning in municipalities in Ontario. Municipal land-use planning is one of the most powerful tools we can use to make sure that development does not further fragment habitat, especially in the “bottle-neck” area near the St. Lawrence River. A2A has recently submitted comments on the Official Plan of the Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands, which is at the “pinch point” of the A2A migratory pathway, since it extends from Seeley’s Bay and Lyndhurst to the north down to the St. Lawrence, the narrowest section of the region. For that reason, maintaining and enhancing the health and vibrancy of habitat and habitat linkages in this township play an essential role in ecosystem health and thus human health for the entire A2A region.

There are many other key municipalities that have important roles to play within the A2A region. If your municipality is reviewing or rewriting its official plan, we may be able to make suggestions that will help with improving wildlife habitat and connectivity and the ecological services they provide to all of us.

You can contact us at:
www.a2alink.org/get-in-touch.html



Photo: Chris Van der Vyver

Northern MapTurtles [Graptemys geographica] - North Buck Lake

**For those of you who have not yet renewed for 2013,
we are including a membership form...**



ALGONQUIN TO ADIRONDACKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION 2013 Membership

Our mission is to provide leadership and facilitate collaboration among partners to restore, enhance, and maintain ecological connectivity, ecosystem function, and native biodiversity, while respecting sustainable human land uses in the Algonquin to Adirondacks region. We will work at international, national, regional, and local levels to develop strategic and site-specific initiatives to achieve connectivity.

New Membership _____ Membership renewal _____

Cost \$25.00 per year

Please send to 19 Reynolds Road, R.R. 1. Lansdowne ON K0E 1L0 in Canada
or P.O. Box 1 Wellesley Island New York 13640 in the U.S.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email Address: _____ Website: _____ Affiliation: _____

I would you like to receive information from A2A including notices of upcoming events by regular mail _____ by e-mail _____.

_____ I would like to make a charitable donation* to A2A to connect and protect habitat for this region's wildlife and for improved air and water quality of \$250 _____ \$100 _____ \$50 _____ \$25 _____ Other _____.

Would you like to volunteer for A2A? _____ If so, in what capacity? _____

I have the following talents/interests that might be helpful to the A2A effort:

Comments: _____ *Charitable receipts issued for Canada.

www.a2alink.org