

# AJES

Adirondack Journal of  
Environmental Studies

## EXECUTIVE EDITOR

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## MISSION STATEMENT

The *Adirondack Journal of Environmental Studies* (AJES) exists to foster a dialogue about the broad range of issues that concern the Adirondacks and Northern Forest.

AJES serves to bridge the gaps among academic disciplines and among researchers and practitioners devoted to understanding and promoting the development of sustainable communities, both human and wild.

The journal purposefully avoids serving as a vehicle for any single or special point of view. To the contrary, in searching for common ground AJES welcomes variety and a broad spectrum of perspectives from its contributors.

## CONTRIBUTING TO AJES

We encourage the submission of manuscripts, reviews, photographs, artwork and letters to the editor. For additional information please visit the AJES website at [www.ajes.org/](http://www.ajes.org/) or contact Rebecca McKay Steinberg at [rebecca.mckay@aya.yale.edu](mailto:rebecca.mckay@aya.yale.edu) or 518-637-6003.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Visit AJES online at [www.ajes.org](http://www.ajes.org).

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## PREROGATIVE

# New AJES Leadership and Ongoing Challenges

By REBECCA MCKAY STEINBERG

## An Edit of Leadership

A common adage in the Adirondack Park is that to live in such a scenic area with a high quality of life, one must have a job or two (or three). Adding a substantial volunteer position on top of this does not indicate copious amounts of free time; it exhibits a proven dedication to a greater cause. After five years and many noteworthy accomplishments, Jon Erickson must be highly commended for leading the Adirondack Journal of Environmental Studies (AJES). As the executive editor of AJES, a Professor of Ecological Economics, and Interim Dean of the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Vermont, Jon helped form greater connections and collaborations among

researchers and academic institutions. He did not just bring AJES into the digital age by creating an online version; he had the foresight to successfully leapfrog AJES into a progressive open access journal and platform for rapid information sharing and dialogue at [www.ajes.org](http://www.ajes.org).

Prior to Jon taking the lead in 2007, Gary Chilson successfully managed AJES for nearly 14 years. Gary and David Vinopal, both long-time and esteemed professors at Paul Smith's College, co-created AJES in 1994 after astutely observing disconnect between academics and practitioners. Gary envisioned AJES as the tool with which to bridge the gap between academics, researchers, and decision makers by

creating an information-sharing forum with the overarching goal of aiding the effort in finding common ground among a multitude of viewpoints. At that same time, Gary and Thomas Pasquarello of SUNY Cortland were instrumental in creating the Adirondack Research Consortium (ARC) as an organization that would tangibly bridge various stakeholders from academics, to academic institutions, practitioners, business people, concerned citizens, and



Rebecca McKay Steinberg with the Absaroka Elk Ecology Project, University of Wyoming, Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem

others. These stakeholders voluntarily took on the mission of promoting greater knowledge and understanding of the region in order to find better information that can be used for better decision-making. He rightfully envisioned AJES as being a medium through which the ARC would

advance its mission to link those who generate information with those who can use it. Gary was recognized for his dedication and significant work at the ARC's 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on the Adirondacks.

The ARC became a non-profit in 2005 and hired its first part-time Executive Director. During this time, AJES extended its scope to the greater Northern Forest region, of which the Adirondacks are an integral part. Gary Chilson and others recognized the geographical and ecological importance of thinking and acting on a landscape-scale. By encouraging stronger communication and collaboration among researchers, academics, decision and policy makers, and the public, AJES has worked to

publish information spanning multiple disciplines and perspectives in search of finding common ground among various stakeholders in the Adirondack and greater Northern Forest regions.

Both Jon and Gary accomplished much in working to bridge information producers with information users by publishing objective information and making it more widely available. On behalf of the ARC and AJES, I would like to sincerely thank them for their exemplary work, inspiring commitment, and unconventional vision in helping to build the ARC into a well respected non-profit and for crafting AJES into a reputable publication.

True to the Adirondack adage, being an editor for AJES is a unique hybrid of three roles. It is part detective, part maestro, and part producer. It involves seeking out research contributions, orchestrating submissions, and leading the editing process. I am honored to take on these roles and challenges as the next executive editor of AJES, to build upon its history of notable accomplishments, and to lead the work towards achieving its original goals and future objectives. I am also excited to be a part of the ARC and its effort to be an agent of positive change in the region. There is both great need and potential for the ARC and its journal to help advance regional problem-solving efforts through shared information and collaboration.

#### **AJES: Filling Gaps As a Means With No End**

The ARC and AJES now enter their 20<sup>th</sup> year in promoting unbiased and vetted information structured around the concept of identifying common ground in the Adirondack Park so that it can be secured through dialogue, information sharing, collaboration, and inclusive governance (see Roux et al. 2006). Unlike the recent 2012 election season, we do not want to get caught up in platitudes filled with cursory, vacant wording for the purpose of impressing the ears.

Talking about common ground may sound good and be a worthwhile goal, but what specific information is supposed to breed knowledge of common interests and the sound decision-making needed to secure them? To these ends, AJES works to present pertinent infor-

### **AJES is committed to publishing objective information spanning all relevant disciplines and valued topics in an effort to help build a basis of common knowledge and understanding in the Adirondack region**

mation based on four guiding principles: 1) transdisciplinarity, 2) accessibility, 3) problem-orientation, and 4) regional scope.

Most disciplinary academic journals have a narrow focus; however, AJES is committed to publishing objective information spanning all relevant disciplines and valued topics in an effort to help build a basis of common knowledge and understanding in the Adirondack region. Environmental studies, comprised of broad and diverse fields, recognizes that various human dimensions (e.g., psychology, sociology, policy sciences, economics, planning, governance) are fundamental to natural resource management. The social sciences are just as important as the natural sciences. Far too often, positivism dominates research and practice, which leaves many social sciences undervalued and underutilized. There is immense value and import in studying biophysical aspects of the environment from water quality, to wildlife ecology, and carbon sequestration, among innumerable other foci. However, people generally agree that not all of the problems we face in the Adirondack region are biophysically based. The problems and solutions associated with the conservation and management of biophysical aspects of our environment ultimately lead us into the realm

of people and how they perceive and manage these problems (see Brunner & Steelman 2005; Clark 2002; Clark et al. 2000). AJES has a breadth of topics that demonstrates the ARC's acknowledgment of transdisciplinarity as important in understanding the region's diverse problems. Integrating all relevant data and making it accessible to all will only serve to broaden and deepen our knowledge of the Adirondacks and to better solve regional problems.

The second guiding principle of AJES is accessibility. Standard journals are often inaccessible in terms of cost, readership, and authorship. Ironically, in the digital age of free information sharing, the majority of online journals and articles are expensive. Individual articles, let alone entire journals, typically have high fees that discourage and prevent readers from accessing them. Even if journals are available in hard copy form in select libraries, they may still be unknown or inaccessible to some. Many journals target a specific audience, are too technically written, and may not be unapproachable by or useful for a general audience. This limits potential readership and the utility of published information. The goals of targeting a broad audience and informing decision-making are precluded when using traditional journal formats.

In contrast, AJES is accessible financially and in terms of readership and authorship. AJES is disseminated through a free open access and online format that is available to all. Due to printing costs and a shoestring budget, the journal is also available for a small annual subscription fee for institutions and individuals who would like hard copies.

As Gary and David intended, AJES is unique in format by being an academic journal and regional magazine hybrid covering a wide range of disciplines, topics, and informed perspectives discussed with more rigor and insight. It is published for an educated and concerned readership extending well beyond academia. All too frequently, research and

ideas are kept within certain small circles (and sometimes just in file cabinets), thus limiting their visibility and usefulness. For example, there are numerous institutions located within or near the Adirondack Park that have professors and students researching various aspects of the Adirondacks. Without an outlet for disseminating this information, it becomes gray literature that is easily lost.

AJES is welcoming of all authors, not just academics, interested in contributing their knowledge of environmental, social, and policy issues and in sharing it with a broader audience. AJES values the *mētis*, or local knowledge, that people gain through practical experience. The informed public is an important constituency of AJES that is often overlooked and underappreciated by other journals. Building social capital begins with the idea that knowledge, and not only from experts, is important and useful. Relevant stakeholders should be included to advance the dialogue and to help build common understanding and ground. Being open access in structure and function encourages information sharing among all constituents of the Adirondack Park and beyond with the incessant goal of finding better information for better decision-making and practice.

The third AJES principle in information sharing is to be problem-oriented and to contribute to the larger body of information aimed at better understanding regional environmental management problems so better solutions can be recommended. Gaining knowledge requires first revealing what we have yet to learn about problems in managing the Adirondack Park. Problem-orientation is both a method and a larger goal for selecting, defining, and examining problems that are environmental, social, or political in nature (Clark 2002). The ARC and AJES are two groups that use a problem-oriented approach to help identify problems and to promote collaboration and build capacity for the social capital needed to solve them. Collaborative networks become the beams and trestles needed to build stronger bridges

between institutions, organizations, and businesses whose architecture and engineering can expand and adapt over time as needed. Construction must continue part-by-part until this infrastructure becomes a functional intersection of traffic continuously moving objective and practical information in multiple directions. By working to share information that bridges important constituents, problem solving becomes inclusive and collective, and this collaboration breeds more collaboration.

The fourth principle is to be regional in knowledge and impact. AJES is an important agent working towards finding common ground. The ARC and AJES are a part of this grassroots effort, but are not the only ones devoted to this exemplary and prospective goal. More than ever, there have been community-based organizations and non-profits working for positive changes towards greater self-reliance, resiliency, and sustainability while creating greater opportunities for creative, substantive, and effective dialogue and collaboration across the Adirondack region. The good works of many are making important and constructive differences. As the name of the Journal clearly suggests, its original and core focus has and will continue to be the Adirondack region; however, there is value in featuring information to help advance sustainable management of the Northern Forest region, of which the Adirondacks is an integral part. Despite its name, AJES is not intended to be an Adirondack-centric publication. It is important to not think of the Adirondack Park as an island, disconnected from larger biophysical, social, and political influences. Extending the disciplinary scope and geographic scale of AJES is important not only for the benefit of covering and servicing a larger interconnected bioregion (see AJES Volume 13, No. 2), but for also expanding the value and practicality of the Journal. Broadening the geographic region also broadens authorship, readership, information sharing, collaboration, and possible impact. Some have expressed an interest

in broadening the scope even farther to include similar multi-use protected areas on an international scale. I see the value in making this a long-term goal as AJES grows, for sharing information among similar protected areas on a global scale is interesting and useful.

AJES has a long history of bringing research to a variety of stakeholders in a way that no other regional publication does. My charge is to keep building AJES as a nexus through which crossroads of information interconnect and link research, the public, public and private sectors, and policy makers. It is an ongoing effort. The principles of transdisciplinarity, accessibility, problem-orientation, and regional scope have and will continue to guide AJES.

### Getting Involved, Moving Forward

To know where we are headed with AJES we must know where we have been and where we would like to be. Gary Chilson and Jon Erickson advanced the mission of AJES and its work to fill the gaps by funneling pertinent information through a single source designed to act as a fulcrum to balance a range of informed viewpoints. The work at AJES directly complements the ARC's goals of affecting decision-making and helping to support sustainable communities. The current leaders will be guided by the same principles as we find new ways of working towards the overarching goals of AJES.

AJES formally welcomes Associate Editor, Colin Beier, Ph.D. of SUNY ESF and a new Editorial Board representing many of the academic institutions in and around the Adirondack Park. The Editorial Board will help guide AJES by providing material reviews and strategic input. We are currently planning a number of initiatives to improve our reach and efficacy and to work towards achieving our objectives.

The first initiative is to conduct an outreach campaign to build a more formal network of academics, researchers, practitioners, and policy makers. The core of what we do at AJES is to

publish information that bridges people. The more high-quality information we get, the stronger and more traveled this bridge becomes. It is important to identify all those conducting research on relevant topics within the two-tiered focal areas of the Adirondack Park and the larger Northern Forest region. A stronger network will provide a more reliable and diverse base of articles to publish, thus allowing us to return to publishing two volumes per year online. Due to the high costs of printing and mailing, we anticipate publishing the print version once a year (or more if we can increase our partnerships and funding). This printed volume will highlight annual key articles of interest. Building a network of people will benefit everyone by increasing awareness of who people are, what they are doing, and how collaborations can best be facilitated.

The second initiative combines the efforts of the ARC and AJES to promote and highlight student research and professional development opportunities through conferences and publications. The ARC hosts the Annual Conference on the Adirondacks that provides a unique forum to bring together researchers, practitioners, industry and business people, academics, educators, students, and concerned citizens, among others. In May of 2013, the Annual Conference will be celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> year. The Annual Conference is one of the most important and celebrated events that the ARC hosts. It provides two days of presentations and discussion about a wide range of research topics significant to the Adirondack region. This is a unique event where people from around the region converge to share their research, work, and ideas with a wider audience. Attendees and their respective institutions and organizations can benefit from the networking opportunities and collaborative atmosphere. Practitioners and students are afforded often the only chance to communicate their research outside their organizational and disciplinary walls. The Annual Conference offers undergraduate and graduate

students a rare opportunity to deliver research presentations and posters. For example, my NCCC undergraduate students had the exciting opportunity to present their interdisciplinary research at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on the Adirondacks. Experiences like these become a valuable professional development opportunity and an asset to their resumes. The ARC is proud to announce that it will be hosting its first annual student research symposium to be held on Saturday, April 13, 2013 at Paul Smith's College. This conference will showcase student research from across the Adirondack Park. At the ARC and AJES we believe in supporting new generations of scholarship and research and will work to help foster and highlight these good works.

As a third initiative, AJES will work to encourage students to publish their research manuscripts. Although AJES has always welcomed students to submit manuscripts for peer-review, we will be creating a student research development program designed to encourage student research, provide writing guidance, and to offer professional development opportunities. AJES will devote a special section of the online and print volumes to featuring select undergraduate student articles. We will partner with interested colleges and universities to encourage undergraduate students to turn their senior theses and capstone projects into publishable manuscripts. AJES editors also highly encourage graduate students to publish masters and doctoral research. Students who submit their research to AJES will learn first-hand about the writing and editing processes. Upon publication, they will have an additional accomplishment to add to their growing resumes.

Lastly, the fourth initiative is to better link the ARC's conferences and workshops with AJES. AJES exists because of collaboration while simultaneously promoting it in order to work towards achieving its goals. The link between the ARC and AJES will be strengthened by publishing abstracts, more formally

encouraging conference and workshop presenters and attendees to submit manuscripts to AJES, and by highlighting future collaborations and good works that evolve across the region. These events draw people, ideas, and much palpable energy that can be harnessed to form meaningful collaborations that work towards shared goals. Tracking and highlighting these collaborations on [ajes.org](http://ajes.org) will work to increase their visibility and may spark additional collaboration and article submissions.

### Concluding Thoughts

In a 2005 prerogative, Gary Chilson called for creating a research agenda that fits into a broader and collaborative research effort. This would create more organized and transparent research whose findings would be widely accessible and thus more effective at informing decision-making. The photo from this article, taken in 1967, shows people from ADK's climbing school ascending cliffs above Keene Valley. This is an apt analogy describing AJES' work to build capacity through collaboration and to advise better decision-making through information sharing. Working towards our ultimate goal and common interest of building sustainable and vibrant human and non-human environments is an uphill climb; however, it supported by many who comprise a strong and reliable foundation of skill, talent, and expertise to draw upon to meet the challenges as we move forward and upward.

There is a constant need for AJES because it fills a unique role in the region by better connecting researchers and to better connect information with decision makers, practitioners, and a myriad of stakeholders. As past AJES editors, Gary and Jon worked to close this gap in various ways. Even after nearly 20 years, filling this information void is an on-going challenge. The mission of AJES has remained steadfast, but achieving our goals must be approached in increasingly adaptive and creative ways. Folks who have lived and worked in this region know that the larger goals of

finding common ground and informing better decision-making are difficult, but not impossible. You will see over the next year new initiatives that allow AJES to continue growing to meet the needs of the region and its stakeholders. It is an on-going effort where small achievements must be acknowledged and celebrated, and the momentum used to keep moving forward.

AJES needs continued support to reach these goals. AJES does not only need publishable materials, but it needs financial support to ensure it stays an active, sustainable, and useful twice-annual publication. We cannot do this without you. I strongly encourage you to become a partner of the ARC, attend conferences and workshops, subscribe to AJES, and submit materials for publication. There is still much to do and there is much more potential to realize. With great people, great minds, and an even greater purpose, we will work towards achieving our goals in the upcoming year. Let's keep moving forward.

#### Acknowledgements

On behalf of the AJES Editorial Board, I would like to thank Paul Smith's College for supporting and hosting the ARC and AJES. I personally extend a deep appreciation to the following people who have made a positive impression in remodeling my post-graduate goals. First, I would like to thank the ARC's Executive Director, Dan Fitts and the ARC's President, Dan Spada for being visionary leaders committed to supporting the goals of AJES. I would also like to thank Jen Kretser of the Wild Center for convincing me to help reverse the Adirondack's "brain drain" by staying here and looking for career opportunities. Thank you for providing me an incentive and opportunity to stay in the Adirondacks. I would also like to thank Gary Chilson, Jon Erickson, Henning Pape-Santos, and all who have devoted their time and energy to the ARC and to AJES over the years. I look forward to working with the ARC Board of Directors as well as AJES Associate Editor, Colin Beier (SUNY

ESF), and the new and growing AJES Editorial Board, which currently consists of Brian Chabot (Cornell University), Stacy McNulty (SUNY ESF), and Tom Young (Clarkson University).

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*Abandoned Adirondack beaver meadow*

KEN RIMNEY