Local Governments and Watershed Management: Lessons for the Adirondacks

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Introduction

The Catskills and the Adirondacks share a defining characteristic beyond the fact that they both contain New York State Forest Preserve land. Each area consists of watersheds comprising multiple towns and villages with a strong sense of home rule. This sentiment can complicate natural resource management, as local governments are more prone to focus on immediate local concerns than on issues that cover larger spatial scales and longer time frames. Even if management strategies have the potential to produce benefits within communities, local officials may misunderstand or overlook them because of their complexity or resist them because they are viewed as another intrusion on local affairs.

This paper explains why watersheds are an appropriate scale for addressing natural resource management and nonpoint source pollution problems, and how difficult it may be to enlist local governments in their protection. We describe current efforts under way in New York City's Catskill/Delaware Watershed that attempt to engage local governments in the pursuit of downstream water quality. Individuals and organizations in the Catskills have learned from Adirondack issues. Now, lessons from the experience in the Catskill/Delaware Watershed can be applied to natural resource management in the Adirondacks. Notwithstanding the regulatory reach of the Adirondack Park Agency, local governments play a vital role in protecting the Adirondacks' watershed function and natural resources.

Watershed Management

With current interest in the Adirondacks focused on ecological and recreational value, we tend to overlook the watershed value of the region. Watershed value, in fact, was one of the motivating factors behind establishment of the Adirondack Forest Preserve (Brown, 1985). More than 230 water systems rely on water supplies that originate in the Adirondacks. Recently, beyond local issues of waterfront development and sewage treatment, broader watershed management issues have been linked with ecological values.

A watershed is an area in which all of the water drains into the same location. It is composed of surface and groundwater, soils, vegetation, animals, humans, and human impacts (Reimold, 1998). Thus, watersheds provide basic, defined levels at which to manage water and other natural resources. Omernik and Bailey (1997) point out that watersheds can serve as useful reference points within large-scale, ecoregional approaches to water resources management. Since they integrate social and environmental systems, issues surrounding freshwater ecosystems reflect the challenges and complexity of natural resource management (Naiman et al., 1997).

Watershed management is an outgrowth of the recognition of natural features of the landscape. Black (1996) succinctly defines watershed management as "the planned manipulation of one or more factors of the natural or disturbed drainage so as to effect a desired change in or maintain a desired condition of the water resource." The three general management objectives are rehabilitation, protection, and enhancement of the watershed. Water supply source protection rests on the simple idea that preventing contaminants from entering a natural source of water eliminates the need to decontaminate the water to make it suitable for drinking. To limit contamination, management efforts must be expanded to include the entire area from which water flows into the supply.

Quality and quantity of drinking water are a primary motivation behind water resources management and provide one set of criteria for management of natural resources within a watershed. The federal government has advocated a watershed approach for protecting public drinking water supplies, and federal water policy is stressing source water protection and pollution prevention as complements to the traditional focus on monitoring and treating contaminated water (USEPA 1999). For example, pursuant to the 1986 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974, the EPA responded to increasing occurrences of waterborne illnesses by promulgating the Surface Water Treatment Rule in 1989. Under the rule, unfiltered water suppliers who rely on surface waters may institute EPA-approved watershed management measures rather than construct costly filtration plants.

Such watershed management efforts seek to address problematic nonpoint sources of pollution (NPS). Nonpoint sources have multiple, diffuse origins that are more difficult to define and control than point sources. The pollution comes in many forms and is not restricted to chemical contamination; rather, the problems arise from a broad range of sources, including siltation, nutrients, metals, salinity, dissolved oxygen, pathogens, flow alteration, acidity, and pesticides (USEPA 1992). Watershed management is well-suited to nonpoint source pollution problems for at least three reasons: (1) periodic storm events

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Contribute NPS pollution from different land uses and management activities; (2) individual NPS impacts on water quality are difficult to quantify; and (3) NPS impacts vary with the source's location within a watershed (Goldfarb, 1994). The need for watershed management in the Adirondacks is heightened by the limited ability of its soils to respond to pressures from development and waste disposal.

The political, financial, legal, and social aspects of controlling problems within a watershed are complex and merit a cautious approach (Vieussman and Welty, 1985). To be effective, watershed management requires participation by the various individuals and entities which may pose threats to the water supply. Natural resource management experiences have demonstrated the importance of including affected communities in the planning process (Perry and Vanderklein, 1997) and dispersing power among various stakeholders (Westley, 1995). Ecosystem management strategies are being promoted as a way to engage various parties in an effort of collaborative decision-making (Davidson and Moore, 1999) and are well-suited to problems that occur at a watershed scale. The adaptive, collaborative approach of such strategies offers a way to potentially enlist the support of local governments in the management pursuit, since municipalities will be more supportive of strategies in which they have a voice and some discretion (Schaeffer and Luzadis, 2000).

**The Importance of Local Governments**

Town and village governments may affect water quality in a number of ways through their right to self-government — often referred to as home rule. They may influence the type and location of activities within a watershed through the enactment of land use regulations, zoning, and planning. By doing so, they can help reduce the likelihood that water will be impaired by pollution. Requiring their own employees to adopt best management practices and facilitating such practices among others in the community are ways that local governments may help further protect water quality. These powers help illustrate why municipalities have been called "the front line of public land use control" (Platt 1991, 160).

Municipalities may also influence water quality by their inaction. As is the case in many natural resource management problems, political and watershed boundaries rarely correspond with one another. Indeed, water-related problems frequently exist within "problemsheds" rather than within political jurisdictions (Watershed Source Book, 1996). Despite its impact on water quality, watershed management and the control of nonpoint source pollution is often a nonissue to local decision-makers who perceive it as an ill-defined topic, think the evidence is inconclusive, and consider remedies to be impractical (Howe, 1985). Even if backed by legally mandated initiatives, local officials may fail to integrate new, complex, and narrowly framed environmental problems into their decision-making (Arnold and Gibbons, 1996). In addition, although subject to identical environmental regulatory mandates, local governments may vary in their responses to such regulations (Press, 1998).

Since their authority only extends to their own municipal boundaries, local officials tend to focus only on their own jurisdictions (Leiva, 1998). This may result in municipal officials ignoring downstream concerns in favor of local matters that affect their constituents. Moreover, national environmental goals may conflict with state and local goals, as subnational politicians often respond more readily to threats to local jobs than to environmental problems which may not surface until they are out of office (Manley, 1987). This complicates pollution prevention since local governments can play a vital role in watershed management.

The role of local governments in watershed management highlights a "paradox of scale" (Lee and Stankey, 1992). Watershed management deals with large-scale ecological processes, but local, small-scale institutions are required for effective management. Local governments are closer to site-specific pollution targets and have the ability to respond more quickly and flexibly to new information than large-scale institutions.

**Overcoming The Obstacles To Cooperation**

In the field of land use, states have enacted measures aimed at nonlocal control of local issues in response to the unwillingness and inability of local governments to consider regional impacts (Bolens, 1993). Nonlocal control of environmental conditions is a reaction to negative externalities. Negative externalities are characterized by two conditions: (1) the activity of one jurisdiction affects the welfare of another without taking the latter's welfare into account; and (2) the jurisdiction whose activity affects the others' welfare does not fairly compensate for the activity (Baumol and Oates, 1988). Federalism, with its reliance on state and local governments, encourages individuals in the offending jurisdiction to ignore the harm they cause to others, because those people who are impacted are not part of the decision-making process (Nice, 1987).

State environmental regulations have resulted in increased tension, sometimes escalating to conflict, between state and local governments over decision-making autonomy and priorities (Davis and Lester, 1989). Efforts such as state comprehensive planning and regulations are often limited by political, budgetary, and issue complexity problems (Kusler, 1980). Nevertheless, attempts have been made to overcome such obstacles.

For example, the federal government shares power and responsibility with states in coastal zone management. The voluntary coastal program has used incentives rather than penalties to promote federal/state/local coproduction (Godschalk, 1992). Collaborative approaches have also emerged in state/local land use governance in which municipal governments choose the methods and techniques to implement state and regional planning standards. However, even though such measures are aimed
at affecting local government behavior, critical research on the local behavioral impact is limited (Bollens, 1993).

**New York State Watersheds**

Watershed Rules and Regulations

In an attempt to surmount jurisdictional conflicts, states may intervene to address pollution problems in watersheds located outside of a local government's borders by exercising their police powers to protect the public health. The New York State Department of Health is charged with overseeing drinking water supplies, and the State Public Health Law specifically charges public water suppliers with the responsibility of preventing the pollution of water supply sources. Under the Public Health Law, the New York State Department of Health may make rules and regulations to protect the watersheds of public drinking water supplies by controlling land uses in the watersheds. The department accepts and reviews proposed rules and regulations from municipal water suppliers, and, upon approval, implements the rules. More than 200 sets of watershed rules and regulations currently apply to New York State water supplies (NYSDOH, 1998).

The use of watershed rules and regulations declined as water supplies received treatment with increasing frequency and federal and state programs were introduced (Hennigan, 1981). Municipalities supplying water in New York State may also mistakenly believe they will not be subject to liability for failing to protect the supplies and their sources and, as a result, feel it is not their role to protect the source supplies (Meyland, 1993). Furthermore, even though local elected officials may be aware of state and federal standards, they often take the safety of their drinking water for granted in the absence of water-related illnesses (Brown, 1997).

**New York City Watershed**

The New York City Watershed is treated differently from other municipal water supplies in New York State. This difference is illustrated by noting that New York City's authority within its watershed is analogous to that of the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) (Nolon, 1997). Since the mid-nineteenth century, the ecological well-being of the Adirondacks has been linked to the welfare of the entire state (Terrie, 1997). As a result, the New York State legislature empowered the APA to exercise land use authority in order to promote a state concern: the use and protection of the Adirondack Park.
Similarly, New York State delegated sweeping powers to New York City to construct a reservoir system and protect the public interest embodied in a clean source of drinking water for the state's population and economic center. Like other water suppliers, New York City may recommend watershed rules and regulations to the Department of Health. Unlike other municipalities in the state, the city is authorized, subject to departmental approval, to "make such rules and regulations" for the protection of their water supply. They become New York City's rules to enforce itself.

Today, the New York City Watershed encompasses 1,968 square miles in all or parts of eight counties in New York State. The watershed is composed of three different reservoir systems: the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton. The watershed is a highly interconnected system, and activities all along the path to the city affect the average daily supply of 1.3 billion gallons. Comprising one of the world's largest surface storage and supply complexes, it is the primary source of drinking water for eight million people in New York City and one million upstate residents.

In 1989, the federal Surface Water Treatment Rule required the city to either filter its Catskill/Delaware water supply or institute EPA-approved watershed control measures. At the time, the city owned only seven percent of the land in its watershed and operated under a three-page water protection regime that had been in place since 1953. The outdated regulations did not reflect recent scientific and engineering information, nor did they evolve to embrace state and federal requirements in areas such as water pollution, drinking water standards, hazardous substances and wastes, and solid waste. (NYCDEP, 1993). To make matters worse, the population in the Croton watershed increased by almost forty percent between 1970 and 1990, and some planning experts predicted that the Catskills were on the verge of experiencing similar growth patterns (Gordon and Kennedy, 1991).

Since a filtration plant has been estimated to cost up to eight billion dollars, with annual operating costs of approximately three hundred million dollars, the city decided to amend its antiquated watershed rules and regulations in an attempt to avoid filtering the water.

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) issued a draft of its proposed plan to protect the water supply in September 1990, but the uproar from within the watershed forced the City to rethink its position and to try to negotiate with upstate communities. Communities within the watershed reacted negatively to the proposed plan, which sought to improve water quality by addressing run-off problems associated with suburban sprawl and setting standards for sewage treatment and septic systems. It included changes to the antiquated watershed regulations and land acquisition by the City. Municipalities were among those who argued that the City's proposed plan constituted an improper expansion of its authority to regulate land use within other governmental jurisdictions.

After more than six years of contentious debate, New York State, New York City, the EPA, upstate communities within the watershed, and five environmental organizations signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on January 21, 1997. The $1.2 billion plan includes three major provisions: an attempt by the city to triple its land holdings in the reservoir drainage basin (without exercising its power of eminent domain); pollution control and economic development assistance for watershed communities; and the first revisions to the city's water protection rules since 1953 (NYC, 1997). As a result of the plan, the city received a Filtration Avoidance Determination from the EPA that lasts until 2002, allowing it to avoid constructing a filtration plant for water flowing from the Catskill/Delaware Watershed.

Local Government Implementation

Implementation of the MOA's watershed management strategies at the local level will be a function of several factors. Successful intergovernmental policy implementation depends upon the nature of the policy to be carried out, local commitment to the regulation, and local capacity for carrying out the program (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983; Van Meter and Van Horn, 1975). Political behavior will also vary according to officials' perceptions of their roles and the issue context (Goggin et al., 1990). Ingram and Schneider (1990) observed that statutory design and allocation of discretion to implementers should vary according to the context in which the measure will be implemented, with attention to such factors as governmental motivation, knowledge, capacity, and support.

An analysis of state wellhead protection programs demonstrates the tension among factors influencing local implementation in natural resource management (Scheberle, 1997). State wellhead program directors were asked to assess their programs and the factors which facilitate effective implementation. The officials stressed the importance of having willing local governments as the most critical factor. However, some local governments may be reluctant to engage in land use controls, lack technical expertise, and be unaware of the local benefits of such programs. Watershed management in the New York City Watershed faces similar hurdles.

Even though the New York State Public Health Law allows the city to effectively control land use within its watershed, continued filtration avoidance will hinge in large part upon the cooperation of towns and villages in the watershed. The National Research Council (2000) recently published an extensive report on the current situation in the New York City Watershed. The report noted the importance of local government planning and practices to the future of the watershed agreement, stating that "successful implementation of the MOA is the most important challenge facing the City's water supply managers."
Regardless of the success of the MOA, watershed management will likely always be needed to ensure the adequate protection of the city's water supply (Okun et al., 1997).

The MOA relies upon towns and villages in the watershed to help implement the rules, regulations, and programs at the local level. The municipalities are required to follow stricter watershed rules and regulations in their own activities, and municipal support is a key ingredient in areas such as wastewater infrastructure improvements, stormwater controls, and local planning initiatives. As a primary means for maintaining local support, the locally based, non-profit Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC) was established to administer and manage a series of programs aimed at protecting the Catskill/Delaware Watershed while helping to maintain the economic viability of its municipalities. The programs include septic system rehabilitation, stormwater retrofits, and new sand and salt storage facilities for watershed communities, as well as a low-interest loan program for area businesses. Twelve members of the CWC’s 15-member board of directors represent Catskill/Delaware towns, offering the towns a voice in day-to-day watershed management activities.

Technical and financial assistance are available to the localities from New York State and New York City. For example, the New York State Department of State has committed financial and staff resources to a Master Planning and Zoning Incentive Award program. The program provides assistance to towns and villages for activities including the development or revision of master plans, capital investment and management plans, and land use regulations. While participation in the program is voluntary, such assistance provides a mechanism for the municipalities to both protect the city’s drinking water and improve or maintain local environmental conditions. Planning activities are required, however, of municipalities receiving new or expanded waste water treatment plants. The New York City DEP has stepped up its presence in the area, and city staff interact with communities as they deal with the new regulations and try to bring their activities and plans into accordance with the new watershed protection scheme.

All parties to the agreement acknowledge that involving the towns and villages in watershed management will not necessarily be an easy task. In addition to having a strong sense of home rule, the municipalities possess an historic animosity toward the city that dates back to the construction of the city’s reservoirs. Overcoming this distrust is critical to making the municipalities feel like partners with the city. Local government cooperation will also be a function of how well the municipalities understand and embrace the various nonpoint source pollution control measures. The Memorandum of Agreement aims to build and maintain community ability and willingness to take part in watershed management through continued assistance from and interaction with the state and the city.

Watershed management strategies like those employed in the New York City's upstream municipalities offer a way to manage natural resources and curb nonpoint source pollution, but measures will only be effective if they positively influence behavior in local communities. Even though the state may preempt local home rule, regulatory and nonregulatory management strategies will function better if municipalities are supportive. While cooperative local governments will not guarantee successful implementation, problems will almost certainly arise when local implementers are unfavorably disposed to a policy — they will likely be no more than half-hearted "reluctant partners" (May and Burby 1996, 172).

Lessons for the Adirondacks

Local governments play an important role in providing and protecting resources for citizens; and local support is required if natural resource protection is to be institutionalized (Neville, 1999). The success of policies aimed at nonpoint source pollution and other issues covering wide geographic areas will depend upon their social and behavioral effectiveness among town and village governments in those areas. Managing natural resources across geopolitical boundaries will ultimately require a combination of both regulatory and nonregulatory tools (John, 1994). Regardless of the strategy, intergovernmental environmental policies may ultimately be judged upon the extent to which they engender wise choices by the affected levels of government (May et al., 1996).

Organizations and individuals interested in the Adirondacks should watch what happens in the Catskill/Delaware Watershed, since municipalities in both regions are faced with the reality of living under regional control. These issues persist regardless of funding levels appropriated by New York City, New York State, or other public or private sources. As in the Catskills, watershed management in the Adirondacks also needs to be a collaborative effort that engages local governments. In both areas, the ability and willingness of towns and villages to participate in natural resource management with the regional entities will play an integral role in meeting management goals for drinking water and other watershed resources. Understanding the dynamics of town and village decisions in the Catskills, as well as the interactions among the various parties involved in managing New York City’s Catskill/Delaware Watershed, informs water quality discussions in the Adirondacks. The lessons learned from watershed management may also be applied to other natural resource management situations that rely on local governments.

The Adirondack Park Agency administers most land use rules and regulations along the Adirondack Park's rivers and wetlands (Ulmer, 1994). However, the APA's land use planning and control authority is insufficient to ensure adequate protection of the area's water quality. Under the Adirondack Park Private Land Use and Development Plans.
two-tiered system, the APA is ultimately responsible for the largest, most environmentally sensitive projects within the Park (Task Force, 1994). Local governments are encouraged to plan, and APA assistance is available to them in their planning efforts (Liroff and Davis, 1981). Nevertheless, municipalities retain considerable discretion. For example, development within hamlets is unaffected by density limits and lot sizes, and APA jurisdiction does not apply to an estimated one-half of the residential development in the Park (Thordilke, 1998). Thus, local governments are at the forefront of development activities that can be a major source of nonpoint source pollution and watershed degradation.

The Adirondacks' natural resources form the cornerstone of the region's economy (Thordilke, 1998). Accordingly, there are potential economic benefits to local governments in the Adirondacks from their engagement in watershed management. The waters of the Adirondacks are a focal point of the region's aesthetic and recreational value. By helping to protect water resources, local governments contribute to the maintenance of the beauty that entices people to live in the region. Such measures also contribute to the health of income-producing recreational resources. For example, sediment loading to the Boquet River may compromise the aesthetic and recreational values that draw people to the river and Lake Champlain (Ulmer, 1994). By destroying spawning and over-wintering habitat of stream and lake fish, sedimentation can detract from the local economic value of a healthy fishery.

The governance mechanisms set up in the Catskills offer examples for Adirondack communities, policy-makers, and regulators. The New York City Department of Environmental Protection and the APA both have authority from New York State to regulate activities in towns and villages in the pursuit of environmental goals. However, meeting those environmental goals requires that affected local governments take an active role in managing the natural resources. To that end, local organizations have been created for the DEP and APA to work with. The Catskill Watershed Corporation is a locally run entity established to administer programs and provide a forum for interaction with the New York City DEP. In the Adirondacks, the Local Government Review Board was established to advise and monitor the activities of the APA. While the Review Board is enjoying increasing input in the deliberations of the APA, their participation in the planning process for state lands is limited (McMartin, 1999). Although the CWC maintains a more active administrative role than the Review Board and is not intended to be a DEP watchdog, it could provide lessons for how the Review Board could fully reach its potential as a locally based partner.

The Coalition of Watershed Towns in the Catskill/Delaware Watershed looked to the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages (AATV) for advice in the past. Now, the AATV could be informed by the experiences of the Coalition. Each organization represents the interests of towns and villages located either entirely or partly within the boundaries of their respective regions. Both organizations originated with a critical issue facing localities and provided important representation. The Coalition of Watershed Towns played an active role in the initial negotiations with New York City and, after the crisis, went dormant. However, the municipalities soon saw the value of the organization and reinvited the Coalition to continue to look out for the interests of its constituent local governments and residents. The AATV organized in response to the report of the Commission on the Adirondacks in the Twenty-First Century. The AATV might look to the continually evolving role and experiences of the Coalition of Watershed Towns for examples of ways to represent its members in interacting with Adirondack regulators.

Whether it be the APA learning from the New York City DEP, the Local Government Review Board learning from the Catskill Watershed Corporation, or the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages learning from the Coalition of Watershed Towns, each comparison has the potential to help inform the participation of Adirondack local governments in natural resource management. Engaging local governments is an effective way for local residents to be represented in broad planning efforts (McMartin, 1999). Indeed, Adirondackers want to be involved in decisions affecting the region. To that end, local residents have called for five members of the APA board to be chosen by the locals (Knott, 1998).

The APA has worked with communities within the Park on cooperative studies and analyses of land use that have resulted in locally adopted initiatives and approved local land use programs. Many analyses now need to be updated, and work remains for advancing the land use partnership arrangements (Lefebvre, 1998). Lessons from the Catskills could inform the ways in which municipalities are involved in Park planning and organization by suggesting strategies for promoting planning and best management practices among Adirondack towns and villages. For example, the Department of State's Master Planning and Zoning Incentive Award program in the Catskills shows how funding and technical assistance for local governments could be tied to programs designed to protect the Adirondacks' natural resources.

Planning assistance is not the only incentive that can help promote natural resource protection in the Adirondacks. Economic development assistance can be tied to programs and projects that are consistent with goals for ecosystem conservation and restoration (Luzadis et al., 2000). The Catskill Fund for the Future was created under the New York City Watershed Agreement as a vehicle for supporting environmentally responsible economic development projects in the Catskill/Delaware Watershed. Under the
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program, the Catskill Watershed Corporation offers a mixture of loans and grants to new and existing businesses and organizations engaged in practices that will not degrade the water supply. The Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA), which receives more than 75 percent of its funding from the state, assists small businesses in job creation and helps advance the regional quality of life (Knott, 1998). The economic development programs under way in the Catskills offer current examples for how ANCA assistance could be linked to environmental goals in the Adirondacks.

New York State would be wise to recognize the savings that could be incurred by having supportive local governments in the Adirondacks. The local technical and financial assistance being provided by New York State and New York City to Catskill/Delaware towns and villages is intended as an investment that lowers the long-term cost of protecting the city’s drinking water. Likewise, New York State investment in the Adirondacks could help preserve the watershed function and protect the area’s natural resources. Informed local decision-making is a key to effective management programs in Adirondacks, but municipalities may lack the resources for planning and stewardship. At the same time, intermunicipal competition for development results in local decisions that may not consider cumulative, regional, and watershed-wide impacts (McCough, 1990). By investing money and technical resources in Adirondack communities, the state could help town and village governments be in better positions to enact protective measures and participate in efforts that reach beyond their own municipal borders.

“The uniqueness and challenge of the Adirondacks is to integrate economy with ecosystem, commerce with conservation, and people with place” (Erickson, 1998, 29). Similarly, the watershed management strategies currently in place in the Catskills are occurring within a living landscape. The rules, regulations, and partnership programs designed to protect the New York City drinking water supply are being carried out in an area comprising a rich mixture of towns, villages, and watershed lands. Watershed protection is being promoted in conjunction with, rather than separate from, the vitality of local communities. Involving these same localities in natural resource management at scales that surpass their local temporal and spatial scales will remain a key challenge for managers and policymakers concerned with both the Catskills and the Adirondacks. The Private Land Use and Development Plan was not intended to put a stop to all development in the Adirondacks; rather, it was designed to guide development in such a way that the region maintains the qualities that originally led to the establishment of the Park (Graham, 1978). Maintaining these natural resource qualities will continue to be a function of both the APA and Adirondack local governments.

REFERENCES


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The Adirondack Journal of Environmental Studies is expanding its regional focus to the Northern Forest

Since its inception in 1994, the Adirondack Journal of Environmental Studies (AJES) has focused on promoting the development of sustainable communities, both human and wild, within the Adirondack Park portion of the Northern Forest. The journal will continue its theme of sustainable development but will now expand its regional focus to include the entire Northern Forest.

Stretching its focus from the Adirondack wilderness communities, across Vermont and New Hampshire, to the industrial forest communities of Maine enables the journal to address problems of developing sustainable communities common to the entire region. In addition to broadening its regional focus, the journal will make articles in archival issues fully searchable and available on-line to broaden its accessibility and usefulness. Together, these changes are expected to increase the number and variety of manuscripts and art submissions as well as the authority, reputation, and practical use of the journal.

AJES (ISSN: 1075-0436) is indexed in Environmental Periodicals Bibliography and has contracted with Congressional Information Service, Inc. to be abstracted in Environment Abstracts.

Articles published in the AJES are transdisciplinary in nature and written in a readable style somewhere between a magazine and an academic journal to foster the journal’s motto: “seeking common ground among a multitude of viewpoints.” Formats include peer-reviewed commentaries and analyses as well as feature articles, interviews, organizational profiles, research news, book reviews and an opinion forum. Artwork by regional artists is featured throughout the journal to promote the development of the visual arts in the Northern Forest and to help make the journal more approachable despite its scholarly treatment of the issues. Thus, AJES readers are educated though not necessarily academic people concerned about the Northern Forest bioregion and seeking to understand and help facilitate the development of sustainable communities.

The peer review process used by the AJES for its Commentary and Analysis sections is currently overseen by the Adirondack Research Consortium’s Editorial Review Board. The Adirondack Research Consortium (ARC) was established in 1994 in tandem with the release of the first issue of the AJES and is a transdisciplinary professional society organized to promote research-informed policy-making within the Adirondack Park. The ARC is composed of social and natural scientists, humanists, and representatives of advocacy groups, state, regional and community development agencies, local governments, and businesses. In addition to its Editorial Review Board, the ARC maintains a website, an electronic discussion network, and organizes an annual conference for workshops, issue discussions, poster sessions and paper presentations. With the expanded focus for the AJES, the peer review process will be modified to utilize the expertise of regional reviewers across the Northern Forest.