

Voice of the River

2019 Annual Report





In It For The Long Haul

In 2019, your support advanced science and solutions that helped our communities protect their streams and lakes. This annual report summarizes the meaningful work that can be accomplished by a dedicated staff and an engaged community. Thank you for being part of our success.

In these difficult times we hope you, your families and friends are well, safe, and finding ways to enjoy life. There's no sugar-coating COVID-19. There are, however, gestures of humanity and many small kindnesses. For example, our Upper Jay neighbor who donated several masks to our staff – of the nearly 1,000 she's made for our community, for free. The nearby landowners who, by phone, directed us into their empty house to get batteries for machinery that died in the middle of a stream survey. And our federal, state, private, and NGO partners, working from home and taking a little extra time to help us secure permits for culvert replacements, to streamline funding, to reimagine outreach programs and invasive species projects. These small gestures, and the larger ones all around us, energize us.

Like every small business, the Ausable River Association is facing significant challenges. Thanks to your donations, we entered 2020 with a small cash reserve. In January, our board of directors approved a \$650,000 budget – reflecting increased demand for our work to reduce road salt impacts on our freshwater streams and lakes, to build flood resilience for our communities by restoring streams and replacing culverts, and to protect our native fish in the Ausable and Boquet Rivers. In March, as the pandemic shook New York, our staff shifted to home offices, adopted virtual meetings, and observed social distancing as we continued core field work

and moved projects forward. Early in the crisis, we halted our annual effort to gather donations from our business partners – most of whom were reeling from shutdowns. Grants and private requests we depend on for income in the spring were put on hold by many larger donors as they focused their resources on much-needed health care, food access, and on easing the burdens of displaced workers. Our income dwindled.

In response, our staff applied for the Paycheck Protection Program. Thanks to this quick action and our community bank's support, we were approved and received eight weeks of payroll assistance. But these funds fall short of filling the gap and creating stability for our efforts through the year. We're using all the tools in our toolbox – reimagining programs, partnerships, and projects, expanding earned income options, even briefly furloughing some staff prior to receiving PPP grant assistance. And we're talking to our steadfast donors and supporters. Our talented staff will continue pursuing our mission.

We are in this now, all of us, for the long haul. The coronavirus will remain a fact of our lives for some time. With your help and continuing financial support, the Ausable River Association will persevere - making a measurable difference for the freshwater we all rely on and love in the Ausable and beyond.

Thank you,

Chair - Board of Directors

Executive Director

500
Trees Planted
Along The
West Branch
Ausable River

56
Kilometers Of Stream
Sampled For eDNA

4,872
Stream Water Quality
Observations Made

111
Plant
Species
Identified
In Riparian
Survey

2,212
New Followers
Online


159
New Donors


2,133
Precision
Geomorphic Data
Points Gathered at
Future Restoration
Sites




Clean Water


Ensuring that our streams, lakes, and wetlands can support a full complement of human and ecosystem needs.


 Science & Stewardship Director Dr. Brendan Wiltse published the first peer-reviewed scientific paper by the Ausable River Association in the scientific journal *Lake and Reservoir Management*. The paper documented a reduction in mixing in Mirror Lake as a result of road salt runoff. Only a handful of lakes in the United States have a similar phenomenon documented in the scientific literature.


 The above work was presented at the North American Lake Management Society Symposium in Burlington, VT. Our staff continue to focus on the Ausable watershed while exporting our programs and knowledge to other regions, helping to address problems facing clean water across the globe.

 A \$175,000 technical grant was awarded to the Ausable River Association by the Lake Champlain Basin Program and New

England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission to quantify the total amount of salt being applied in the Mirror Lake watershed. This will allow our scientists to set salt reduction targets for the lake and identify practical solutions to achieve them.

 The 2019 SALT Summit came to Lake Placid, providing training to over 150 highway crew members, contractors, maintenance professionals, and concerned citizens on salt reduction strategies.


 Thirty stream sites were monitored bi-weekly, all-year long. Eight lakes were monitored monthly during the open water season. This concluded the first five years of regular monitoring in the Ausable River watershed and will be the basis of an upcoming watershed-scale report on water quality.


 AsRA's network of Porta-johns helped ensure a clean and healthy river and provided convenient facilities for travelers and river users.




Healthy Streams


Restoring shaded, cool waters with ample floodplains and self-regulating flows that sustain ecological diversity and thriving communities.

 After five years of effort, the Ausable River Association completed the final habitat enhancements along the 1,100 foot channel restoration of the West Branch’s Dream Mile. This was one of our largest river restoration projects to date. The work improved water quality, ecosystem connectivity for native wildlife, and flood resilience along the road corridor. The project also allowed us to apply new construction and riparian restoration techniques that will inform future projects.

 Small streams and tributaries are essential to a healthy watershed. In early August, AsRA completed the retrofit of an undersized culvert on Otis Brook in the Town of Jay. The stream below the four-sided box culvert was badly damaged in Tropical Storm Irene. The project reestablished fish passage by building a natural step-pool system up to the culvert lip and stabilizing an eroding bank with a log vane and natural stone. Our efforts were rewarded on the last day by watching

a small brook trout swim up the newly formed steps, proving the value of stream connectivity.

 We exported our first Climate Ready Culvert outside of the watershed. Assisting the Lake George Association, Executive Director Kelley Tucker designed a fish-friendly, flood-resilient culvert for Foster Brook in Huletts Landing on Lake George. Meanwhile, in the Town of Jay, two culverts were prepped and funded for construction in 2020.

 Working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we completed two intensive topographic and geomorphic surveys on the East Branch. This data is informing the design and permitting of two extensive river restoration projects slated for construction in 2020 or 2021 near Upper Jay, NY. Both are part of the East Branch Restoration Plan – a comprehensive effort co-led by AsRA and funded in part by the Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery.



Biodiverse Habitats

Safeguarding habitats and ecosystems that foster native plant and animal species in and alongside streams, lakes, and wetlands.



AsRA's biologists continued monitoring riparian planting sites to understand the success of different species and care methods on tree survival. We monitored trees at three sites in 2019, identified shrubs, grasses, and flowering plants at three additional sites, and planted over 500 trees on the West Branch Ausable River.



We mapped trout distribution in 35 miles of local streams, focusing on the West Branch Ausable River headwaters. Maps are created using environmental DNA to understand the presence, absence, and abundance of native brook trout. Data are shared with the US Forest Service to become part of an aquatic eDNA atlas for the Eastern US.



We conducted stream fish population surveys on three East Branch Ausable River tributaries to understand population dynamics and compare density to strength of eDNA signals.



In partnership with SUNY Plattsburgh, we inventoried aquatic invertebrates at two East Branch Ausable River sites slated for future stream restoration projects. We also inventoried fish and invertebrate populations on White Brook in Wilmington.



Invasive terrestrial plants threaten native biodiversity and can destabilize streambanks. We mapped infestations of Japanese knotweed and purple loosestrife on 20 miles of streambanks along the West and East Branch Ausable River.



In 2019, we expanded our capacity to train young scientists by giving them opportunities to work in the field with experienced professionals. We hosted a Colgate University Upstate Summer Field School intern for eight weeks and hosted a high school student for two weeks of field and lab work. These training opportunities are an investment in young people that make a difference.



Enjoying The River

Promoting responsible, low-impact recreational opportunities and wise management practices that help protect Ausable waterways and adjacent lands.



With the support of the Lake Champlain Basin Program, we led six river tours in the watershed in summer 2019: three interpretive paddling trips, two interpretive hikes, and one field trip to stream restoration sites. These outings exposed watershed residents and visitors to the wonder of freshwater streams, lakes, their inhabitants, and the value they provide to our communities. We also updated our brochure describing the Lake Everest self-guided paddling nature trail.



Thanks to over 125 riders, the 8th Annual Ride for the River was a success. Bikers collectively rode over 4,340 miles to explore and support the Ausable watershed. They traversed sections of the East and West Branch Ausable River, stopping at three interpretive stations to learn about AsRA's programs and about practices they could pursue to protect their local waterways. A festive community party followed the ride.



We helped the Town of Keene protect seasonal streams running under portions of Old Mountain Road, part of the Jackrabbit Trail system. These small streams are part of the delicate headwaters of Nichols Brook, and their health is essential to a diversity of native species. Working with the Barkeater Trails Alliance, with support from Patagonia, we developed plans to remove the old culverts and build simple foot bridges that will move foot traffic over the streams, allowing them to flow unimpeded.





AsRA's river steward maintained ten wader wash stations for West Branch Ausable River anglers and provided outreach and streamside education for over 600 river users. Check, Clean, Dry guidelines and public education are keeping our regional waterways safe. As a measure of our success, 78% of Ausable River anglers and boaters surveyed in 2019 practiced AIS spread-prevention methods before entering the river. There is still more work to be done, however, and it's critical we maintain a presence on the river in the fishing season.




Engaged Communities


Informed residents and visitors dedicated to caring for the health of the watershed where they live, work, and play.


 Our weeklong intensive teen camp, *Discovering the Ausable: An Aquatic Stewardship Program* completed its fifth year in partnership with the Adirondack Mountain Club.


 We hosted our first-ever *Wild & Scenic Film Festival*, with over 100 attendees joining us for an evening of inspiring and powerful films about communities making a difference for conservation.

 We teamed up with the Wild Center to contribute to an educational teach the teacher opportunity. Executive Director Kelley Tucker led tours of two field sites that have improved stream connectivity, health, and resilience in the Ausable watershed and serve as laboratories for learning the science of stream restoration. Teachers from across the Adirondacks and New England got to visit these sites, ask questions, and develop programming that will provide students with

opportunities to learn how conservation science informs the management of streams and lakes in our communities.

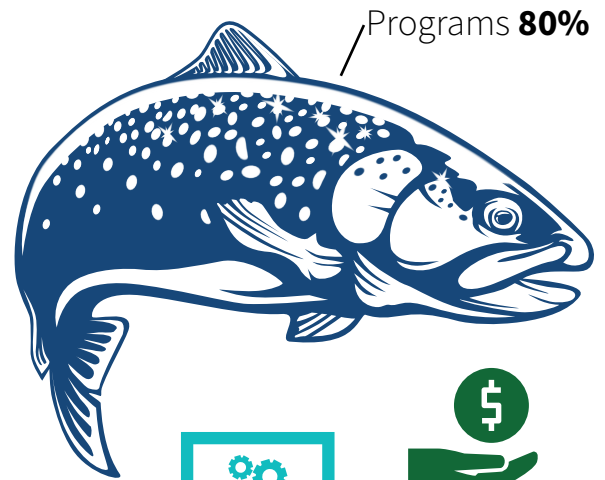
 Over a dozen technical presentations on the impact of road salt on surface and groundwater were made to community groups, municipalities, and advisory committees, and at conferences.

 Our public programs provided information and practical tools to hundreds of watershed residents and visitors. We disseminated information on river protection, science, and stream restoration at farmers markets and festivals, including the Mountaineer Trail Run, Ausable River Two-Fly tournament, Festival of Colors, and Whiteface Oktoberfest.

 The audience for AsRA's weekly e-newsletter grew to over 800 subscribers in 2019; our social media following is over 7,000. Added to our growing membership, that's over 8,000 engaged and informed residents and visitors.



How Your Support Was Allocated



Administration **10%**

Fundraising **10%**

Activities

As of December 31, 2019 (per independent review)

Support and Revenue

| | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Contributions & Membership..... | \$138,279 |
| Restricted Grants | \$171,970 |
| Program & Other Income..... | \$35,224 |
| TOTAL | \$345,473 |

Expenses

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Programs..... | \$241,818 |
| Office & Technology..... | \$54,710 |
| Fundraising..... | \$33,261 |
| Communications..... | \$28,846 |
| Professional Services..... | \$6,715 |
| Depreciation & Insurance..... | \$2,897 |
| TOTAL..... | \$368,247 |

Financial Position

As of December 31, 2019 (per independent review)

Assets

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Cash & Savings..... | \$116,696 |
| Other Assets..... | \$11,685 |
| TOTAL ASSETS..... | \$128,381 |

Liabilities & Net Assets

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Current Liabilities..... | \$93,277 |
| Unrestricted Net Assets..... | \$35,104 |
| Temporarily Restricted Net Assets..... | \$0 |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS..... | \$128,381 |

A copy of the latest annual filing for the Ausable River Association, Inc. may be obtained, upon request, from the organization (AsRA, PO Box 8, Wilmington, NY 12997) or from the New York State Office of the Attorney General, Records Access Officer, The Capitol, Albany, NY 12224 (www.charitiesnys.com) or by contacting 212-416-8401. You can obtain a description of the programs and activities that your contribution will support by contacting us at the above address.

Thank You

We rely on the support of donors who care about the Ausable River, its lakes and tributaries. Together, we make a difference.



Left & Right: © Brendan Witise

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