



Connecting with Respect

The Algonquin to Adirondacks Conservation Association

19 Reynolds Road, Lansdowne, ON K0E 1L0

Re: Follow-up Invitation to A2A Research Workshop

Following up on our earlier invitation from A2A (Algonquin to Adirondacks Conservation Association), we would like to reconfirm our invitation and encourage you to participate in the research workshop **“A2A Region: Working Toward a Strategic Roadmap for Connectivity.”** A2A’s aim is to facilitate an initiative to ensure that important habitat is connected throughout the A2A region. The goal is to form a collaborative to draft a Regional Strategic Plan that will give direction for both research and on-the-ground action. To be successful, the Regional Strategic Plan must be solidly based on science. The goal of this workshop is to provide such a base.

The A2A region extends from the southern boundary of Adirondack Park in New York State to the northern boundary of Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario (see map below). The region is a critical link for maintaining habitat connectivity in Eastern North America.



The workshop will be held on Saturday, April 28th, at the Queen’s University Biological Station. Please

find registration and payment forms attached. Alternatively, you can go to the A2A workshop website (<http://a2aworkshop.weebly.com>), enter the password “connect”, and fill out the registration form and submit payment online. A day rate is available for those not wishing to stay over (see registration form). Researchers are invited to exhibit their relevant research in an open poster session. Thus, if you or your students have research related to landscape connectivity that you would like to share, please bring it in poster format and email us with the title of your poster. Posters will be displayed for the duration of the workshop, and participants will be invited to view the posters in the last hour of the workshop.

Workshop Aims

- a.) Determine existing knowledge and identify key research needs for developing a strategic plan for connectivity in the A2A region, including prioritization of core areas, wildlife linkages, and other areas of high conservation value, and their contribution to socio-economic well-being. The workshop will also address the main barriers to biodiversity conservation in the A2A region (e.g. public perception, climate disruption, transportation and energy production networks, ex-urban development, etc.)
- b.) Choose the optimal toolkit(s) for organizing data on the A2A landscape.
- c.) Determine research funding options, and how a regional collaborative can help.
- d.) Establish a Science Advisory Group.
- e.) Create a list of science-based priorities for connectivity work in the A2A region.

Expected Outcomes

- a.) A prioritized list of research and actions needed- ranked by their critical importance for regional connectivity and informing an A2A Regional Strategic Plan.
- b.) An updated, online research/researcher database, displaying what relevant research has been done, what research needs to be done, who is involved, and potential funding sources.
- c.) Recommendations for the organization of data on the A2A landscape.
- d.) Recommendations for how a regional collaborative be effective in promoting connectivity.
- e.) The creation of a Science Advisory Group.
- f.) Workshop proceedings.

Background

A2A's Vision and Mission Statements

Vision: We envision an Algonquin to Adirondacks region that preserves a rich mosaic of interconnecting habitats which sustain and enhance ecological integrity in a way that respects the people who live here, and which functions as a critical link in maintaining connectivity in Eastern North America.

Mission: We will 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 this goal.

Strategic Planning

The A2A region is extensive; it is slightly bigger than New Brunswick and slightly smaller than Maine. Developing a strategic plan, let alone implementing one, is well beyond the capability of any single organization. There are so many ecological, social, and political variations across the region that the process must be participatory, collaborative, and decentralized. Furthermore, a strategic approach is essential if duplication, wasted effort, conflicting initiatives, and missed opportunities are to be avoided.

It is critical that existing research and research-in-progress be incorporated into plans, policies, and on-the-ground work of organizations throughout the A2A region. This can only be done effectively via the development of a strategic plan, shaped by a collaborative.

A2A is not trying to re-invent the wheel in this regard. There are other organizations in North America involved in bi-national, large-landscape conservation initiatives. Examples are the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y) in the west, and Two Countries, One Forest to the east. Summaries of Y2Y's *Draft Strategic Plan 2012-2016*, its *Blueprint for Wildlife Conservation*, and a Wildlife Conservation Society report on planning for ecological connectivity are attached as examples of what can be done. Also attached are some sample tools that have been used to organize information on ecological and social landscape values (the High Conservation Value Forest Toolkit, Natural Heritage Reference Manual). Note: A third, The Sustaining What We Value project, will be presented at the workshop. We hope that these will help to prepare workshop participants for a productive day of strategizing when we come together on April 28th.