

AWA names three to leadership team

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KEENE — Adirondack Wilderness Advocates announced three new changes to its leadership, including a new chair of its board of directors, a new addition to the board, and a new technical advisor. These changes add new knowledge and professional experience to the organization.

New board member



Scott van Laer (Provided photo)

Scott van Laer, a retired forest ranger, joined AWA's board of directors in June. Van Laer served as a forest ranger for 25 years, much of that time in the High Peaks Wilderness Area, before retiring from the force earlier this year. Today he is the director of Paul Smith's College's Visitor Interpretive Center.

"Having grown up in the Adirondacks as the son of a forest ranger I became aware of the majesty of the wilderness at a very early age," van Laer said. "As I grew older, I learned how rare wilderness really is, worldwide and particularly in the northeast. Once I became a forest ranger myself, I saw the human pressures placed on wilderness and the need for appropriate staffing and stewardship. I admired the advocacy work by AWA for some time and am excited to join the organization so I can remain engaged in protecting the Adirondack wilderness."

White named board chair

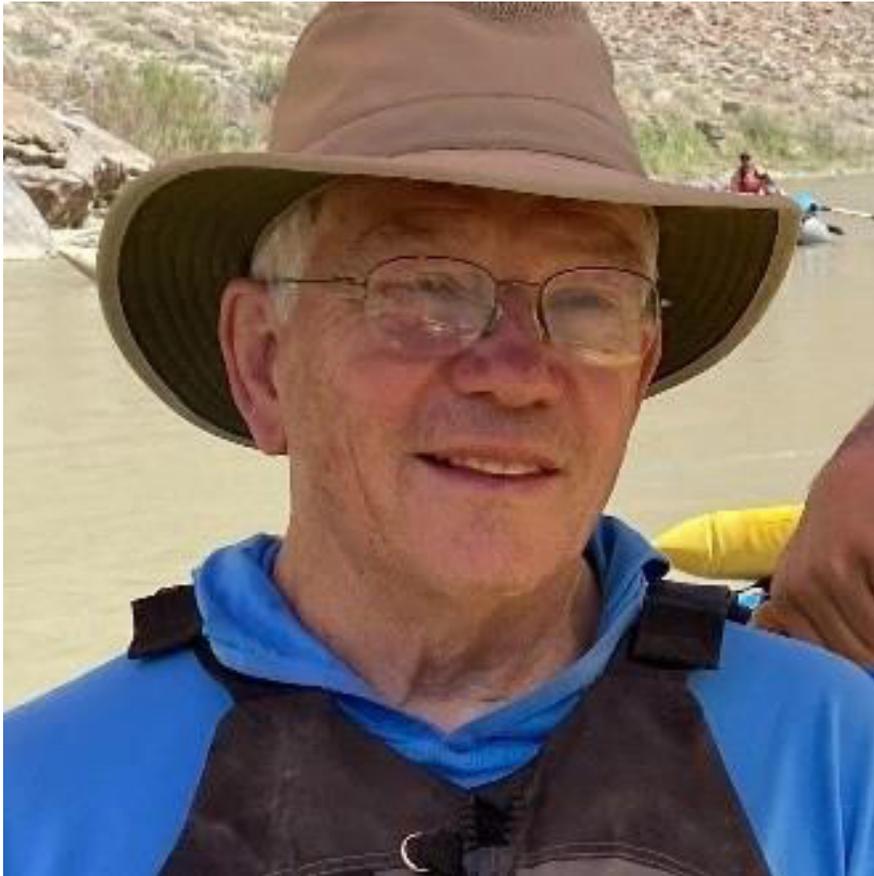


Kayla White (Provided photo)

This spring AWA's board of directors voted unanimously to elect Kayla White as chair, succeeding co-founder Bill Ingersoll, whose term was expiring. Kayla has been active in the organization since its founding in 2016, and she has been a member of the board since 2018. White is a decade-long employee of the Adirondack Mountain Club, and now serves as the stewardship manager for the Adirondack High Peaks Summit Stewardship Program. She is also on the board of the Waterman Fund, an organization that preserves wildness and Northeastern alpine areas.

"I'm excited to take a leading role in AWA," White said. "With our efforts in the High Peaks Strategic Planning Advisory Group, designing a visitor use management app, and unwavering advocacy for wild places, AWA is growing into a leading environmental advocacy organization."

Dawson joins as technical advisor



Chad Dawson (Provided photo)

Chad Dawson, a SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry professor emeritus and former Adirondack Park Agency board member, has joined AWA as a technical advisor. Dawson recently joined the board of directors of Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve, which has historically been the environmental organization most closely aligned with AWA's mission and goals.

This connection has provided the two organizations an opportunity to form an alliance. The goal of this alliance is to identify and advance pilot projects to help build a world-class adaptive management model for the Adirondack Park, with Dawson, who is one of the world's foremost experts on wilderness management, at the center.

"Collaboration is the way forward in conservation and preservation," said Dawson. "Working collectively toward positive actions and activities will probably accomplish more than continuing to turn the political heat up on state government to do its job and do it better. Not that we let the state shirk its responsibility, rather that we find people who want to move forward with sustainable planning and appropriate management whether on county or private lands to set an example and demonstrate the possibilities."

Founded in 2016, AWA is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the knowledge, enjoyment, expansion, and protection of the wildest places in the Adirondack Park.