FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE August 21, 2014

HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER SAYS HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ARE LINKED AND INSEPARABLE; CALLS FOR ACTION IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Burns Weston’s life in the Adirondack Park a Critical Influence on his Writing of Green Governance - Ecological Survival, Human Rights and the Law of the Commons

CONTACT:

Burns H. Weston, Author and Professor of Law Emeritus and Senior Scholar, Center for Human Rights, The University of Iowa, (518) 576-2250, email: burns-weston@uiowa.edu

Karen Glass, Librarian, Keene Valley Library, (518) 576-4335, email: kglass447@gmail.com

Dan Plumley, Partner, Adirondack Wild (518) 576-9277, (518) 524-7771 cell, email: dplumley@adirondackwild.org

(Keene Valley, New York) - Dr. Burns H. Weston, Bessie Dutton Murray Distinguished Professor of Law Emeritus and Senior Scholar of the Center for Human Rights at The University of Iowa, called for grass roots societal action to confront the threats of climate change. Dr. Weston spoke at the Keene
Valley Library on August 17. His book *Green Governance* is a study of intergenerational, equitable sharing of natural resources to achieve a more ecologically intact, resilient environment at home and around the globe.

“We were honored to host Burns Weston’s truly historic presentation of the essential concepts for moving towards much needed commons- and rights-based Green Governance,” stated Karen Glass, librarian of the Keene Valley Library Association whose summer lecture series is a favorite in the High Peak community and region. “Burns brings such a wealth of legal, human rights, and environmental expertise to the table, but spoke from his own life’s experience as an Adirondacker himself,” Glass added.

“My approach to this effort began when I first appreciated the potential degradation, loss, and die-off of our beautiful and incredibly valuable sugar maple forest in the Adirondacks,” Weston began his speech, noting that “it was the very real threat that, within 30 years time, my grandchildren may be robbed of the natural beauty and resource treasure that has so enriched my life here in the Adirondacks and which drove me to act. It was and remains unconscionable to me to sit idly by in the face of these threats, silent thefts of the natural integrity of our Earth by corporations and governmental inaction in the face of our ever dwindling ecological odds.”

From that pivotal recognition in 2006, Weston then joined commons scholar-activist David Bollier to undertake 6 years of international environmental and human rights law and policy research towards identifying critical societal strategies for action. Weston focused his presentation on his recent book with co-author David Bollier, independent scholar, author, and activist of the commons. Their groundbreaking book entitled *Green Governance: Ecological Survival, Human Rights and the Law of the Commons,* was published in 2013 by the prestigious Cambridge University Press.

Climate change is the critical game-changer, notes Weston. With the pace of change already occurring and impacting Earth’s ecosystems far and wide, he and Bollier recognized that human societies “will not succeed in overcoming the myriad climate change and other eco-crises to come through better green technology or economic reforms alone,” he observed. “We must pioneer new types of ecological governance that confront directly the historical practice of treating environmental issues as subservient and external to government priorities, political compromise, and favoritism for corporate profit and gain, forgetting that Mother Nature always bats last,” Weston stated.

To this end, Weston argued, we must honor the “historic practice of eco-sensitive commons stewardship of our natural resources and ecosystems now actively practiced by an estimated 2 billion people worldwide, or 1/3 our present global population.” And in so doing, he added, “it is our moral and legal duty, as human beings only temporarily on Planet Earth, to respect the
ecological rights of future generations, including all children now living.”

Therefore, Weston concluded: “we must integrate a truly commons- and rights-based approach to the preservation and wise conservation of the natural world and its resources. And it will have to be largely a democratic grass-roots effort, that leverages cooperation, bottom-up energies, and local knowledge in service to the preservation and sustainable allocation of Earth resources.” He added: “if we are really serious about global warming and climate change, we must demand that our national, state, and local governments protect existing commons from foreclosure via privatization and, indeed, nurture them and facilitate new ones by the same kinds of support they give to the corporate world: legal recognition, tax breaks, resources, coordination, public advocacy, etc.”

Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve, a non-profit dedicated to preserving the natural wild commons within and beyond the Adirondack Park and Forest Preserve, represent a regional entity in partnership and in support of Weston and Bollier’s call for rights-based Green Governance.

“That we have protected under the New York State’s Constitution in our Forest Preserve over 3 million acres as “Forever Wild” in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks is testimony to the will of New Yorkers to sustain and enhance our natural, wild commons for the benefit of current and future generations,” stated Dan Plumley, Partner with Adirondack Wild.

“Burns Weston and David Bollier’s critical, groundbreaking work impels us to go further in our conservation legacy so as to integrate the human right of all New Yorkers to see the Adirondack and Catskill Parks comprehensively protected. Our initiatives towards park reform are synergistically compatible and benefitted by the principles outlined in Green Governance,” Plumley noted.

Critical acclaim for Weston and Bollier’s new book comes from a rich array of environmental and public policy leaders including James Gustave Speth (Yale and Vermont Law School), Richard Falk (Princeton), Dinah Shelton (George Washington University) and former Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment for New Zealand, Sir Geoffrey Palmer.

For more information see:  www.commonslawproject and www.keenevalleylibrary.org and www.adirondackwild.org

-END-