

ALBANY

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REPORT

End of an EANY Era

Jeff Jones

Following a dramatic year in which she led New York's environmental movement to one of its most important victories in years, Val Washington announced her resignation as Environmental Advocates' executive director. Washington is leaving to become counsel to the New York State Trial Lawyers Association.

In a statement, EANY Board President Oakes Ames praised Washington and her leadership. "This has been one of the most successful years in Environmental Advocates' 34-year history and we have much to celebrate," Ames said. "Working in cooperation with colleague organizations and grassroots activists from across the state, we saw some of our hardest fought initiatives signed into law, including the landmark brownfields legislation, an initiative to which Val Washington dedicated seven years of tireless advocacy. This tremendous accomplishment is part of Val's legacy, and as she leaves our organization and moves on to tackle other challenges, she does so with the heart-felt appreciation of a grateful board of directors."



EANY Board President Oakes Ames introduces Val Washington, the group's former executive director, for closing comments at the Advocate Award's Gala. More than 250 EANY supporters packed the Yale Club November 10, 2003 for the organization's annual New York City event.

"Leaving Environmental Advocates was a difficult decision," Washington admitted. "Every success we have had has been the result of a coalition effort, and could not have happened without a base broad and deep enough to counter formidable anti-environmental, anti-regulatory forces. These successes are a tribute to the collegiality and mutual respect that is, perhaps contrary to the conventional wisdom, the rule rather than the exception among our many and diverse organizations."

Ames announced that the board has launched a national search to find the organization's next executive director. At year's end, that process is just getting under way. Meanwhile, EANY's day-to-day operations are being managed by a four-person staff management team in consultation with Ames, Board Vice President Julie Robbins and other executive committee members. The management team includes Assistant Director Patti Kelly, Program Director Anne Reynolds, Finance Director Pat Sterling and Communications Director Jeff Jones. ☞

Ambitious Legislative Agenda Planned for 2004

The new state legislative session is set to begin January 7 with the Governor's annual State-of-the-State message at the Capitol in Albany. Environmental Advocates has announced its legislative agenda for the new year. The program, along with the organization's priorities for the state budget, is available at www.eany.org under Capitol Watch. EANY's staff and board have decided to build on the successful passage of comprehensive brownfields legislation in 2003 by expanding work on community preservation. With an estimated 174 acres of land consumed by development daily, the need to promote sensible land use planning in the state is obvious. Over the past 30 years, the New York City metropolitan area has experienced a 13 percent population increase but a 60 percent increase in developed urban landscapes. Other areas of the state are experiencing similar development explosions while population growth remains minimal. According to EANY Program Director Anne Reynolds, that makes it all the more important to create aggressive and effective state-level planning initiatives. ☞



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Working to protect New York's community
of people, land & wildlife for over 30 years.

Through direct advocacy, coalition building, citizen education and policy development, Environmental Advocates of New York works on a comprehensive agenda designed to oppose threats to the environment, to preserve natural resources and human health, and to fight for high drinking water and air quality standards. Its sister organization, EPL•Environmental Advocates, has worked for over 30 years to convince state policymakers to support environmental protections.

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Great Lakes Agenda 2004

Jeff Jones

Water diversion and water quality are the two top items on the agenda for environmentalists concerned about the future of the Great Lakes and the Great Lakes Watershed. Both issues are set for major action in the new year.

“Millions of families depend on Great Lakes water for our health and survival, but the reality is that the states and provinces in the Great Lakes Basin have little control over what happens to the water,” said EANY Great Lakes Project Director David Higby. To correct this, the eight Great Lakes governors, in partnership with their two Canadian counterparts, have drafted a major amendment to the Great Lakes Charter, the 20-year-old agreement covering water diversion in the Basin. The amendment, called the Annex, waits only for sign-off by the 10 state and provincial governors. “The Annex contains a number of important water-use protections, including requirements that projects prove they will do no harm, include all reasonable conservation measures and provide a net benefit to the Great Lakes and their tributaries,” explained Higby, who noted that Gov. George Pataki has supported the Annex and has entered the negotiations at key points to keep the process on track and to make sure the agreement is not weakened. According to participants, the talks are scheduled to wrap up early next year. “With the long negotiations over the new agreement coming to an end, we need Governor Pataki to remain vigilant and involved,” Higby said.

In addition to amending the Great Lakes Charter, Congress is considering funding a restoration effort modeled on the one now underway in the Florida Everglades. Congress has been considering Great Lakes restoration funding legislation since an April 2003 General Accounting Office report concluded that the federal government’s efforts to protect the Great Lakes were ineffective and in disarray. Some members of New York’s congressional delegation, including Buffalo-area Rep. Thomas Reynolds, have suggested spending as much as \$6 billion on a 10-year restoration effort.

The Great Lakes hold 95 percent of the freshwater in the United States and supply drinking water for over 33 million people living in New York and other states in the Great Lakes Basin. The Lakes host a sport fishery valued at over \$7 billion annually. And with more than 10,000 miles of shoreline, the Great Lakes are a valuable resource for recreation, tourism and economic development. On December 16, EANY, the National Wildlife Federation and Great Lakes United conducted a joint press briefing on the 2004 agenda. Afterward, the groups presented Pataki with more than a thousand postcards from people living in the Great Lakes Watershed urging him to continue his efforts to get the best possible deal for New York. 

Protecting New York’s Stake in the Great Lakes

Deb Sgambelluri

Under the leadership of Regulatory Watch Project Director Karen De Vito, Environmental Advocates has joined with the Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Network and Fund (GLAHNF) and is now serving as the main contact – or “hub” – for grassroots organizations in New York State concerned with protecting the Great Lakes. GLAHNF was created in 1996 to provide information and financial support through grant giving to grassroots groups working to safeguard and restore shorelines, inland lakes, rivers and wetlands in the Great Lakes Basin. As New York’s hub, Environmental Advocates has been assisting these organizations in the grant application process, producing a monthly electronic newsletter called *New York Aquatic Habitat Watch* containing helpful contact information and funding resources, and alerting advocates of pertinent news and events. The Great Lakes represent 20 percent of the Earth’s available freshwater, yet overdevelopment and unchecked industrial dumping has led to unsafe levels of toxic pollutants such as lead, mercury and PCB’s throughout the Basin. “Because New York has significant shorelines on two of the lakes, and can be thought of as the most downstream of the eight Great Lakes states, we are especially vulnerable to regionally generated waterborne toxins and to potential harm from deviations in the water level,” says De Vito. “That’s why Environmental Advocates is making a major commitment to protecting the Great Lakes Basin, one of the world’s most important watersheds.”

To learn more about preservation efforts in the Great Lakes region, visit www.eany.org/issues/greatlakes.html or the Great Lakes Directory website at www.greatlakesdirectory.org. To receive *New York Aquatic Habitat Watch* via email, contact Karen De Vito at kdevito@eany.org. 

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