

# Member Spotlight: February, 2011, updated October, 2011

**Rob Sedwin, BWA's incoming President -- brings "newcomer" energy to a strong foundation.**

**Outgoing President, Pat Kennedy (PMK) interview with Rob Sedwin (RSED):**



PMK: How long have you been in the Poconos?

RSED: *My wife Sally and I moved our family to Poconos in 1991. Our oldest daughter was in 4th grade, the youngest daughter in kindergarten.*

PMK: Where had you been living?

RSED: *We had been living in Plainfield, NJ in Union County – a small deteriorating old resort city a short train ride from NYC.*

PMK: What drew you to the area?

RSED: *I came to work in the outdoor sports industry. Sally and I were attracted to the Poconos' lifestyle. It was a cleaner, healthier, and friendlier area. Still convenient to NYC and Philly metros, but housing was less expensive, educational opportunities were better for the girls. It was more of a playground.*

PMK: As we ask visitors to the BWA website -- What's your "watershed" address?

RSED: *We are in the Pocono Creek part of the watershed near Camelback. We found a neighborly place we love and could afford -- It's a cedar-sided townhouse community. One of those closed loop developments built in the late 80-90s like a village, with power underground. We can walk out the door and hike in a relatively undisturbed natural area – we see bear, deer, squirrels. It's a relatively short drive down a windy country road to Tannersville.*

PMK: What changes have you noticed in the region since 1991?

RSED: *When we arrived and for perhaps too many years after, what I noticed was relatively limited municipal involvement in development in the County. For example, in the construction of*

*our townhouses, my impression was there was an approval of the general plans, but no real post-construction reviews.*

*I've also seen a population explosion –people moving to Monroe County from urban areas, many for reasons like my family's, but many with little or no experience with the out-doors. I know it I putting stress on the watershed in lots of complex ways. But sometimes, I am shocked at the simple stuff -- people dropping trash along the roads, water and beer bottles on wooded trails, running ATVS through the creeks eroding banks. I don't think this behavior comes from harmful intent -- more of a lack of education about what I'll call outdoor manners.*

PMK: Why did you join the BWA and agree to serve on the Board?

*RSED: Well, first, I truly love the environment here. Until I joined BWA and learned more, I didn't realize how pristinely our regional waters have been maintained and how persistently some people have been fighting to keep them clean. Even with all the growth we have one of the greatest water resources in the east.*

*Second, I wanted to be part of the select group who maintained that, who set some standards in place, and raised levels of stewardship. We have this valuable asset, now we have to maintain it. Some who live here may not yet realize its importance to the value and quality of their homes. If we lose our natural environment, we might as well just be Newark, NJ.*

*Third, I saw a lot of people moving here that wanted this kind of outdoors experience, but didn't understand the kind of investment that's truly needed. I realized that without groups like BWA, and our county conservation district and some others we work with this could all slip through our fingers.*

*Fourth, what I'll call my sense of family and belonging came out. My children like it here. One lives in Philly, but loves to come back because of the playground we have here, the fun, the cleanliness, the chance to get out of the city; the other one wants to stay and live here. What am I going to leave them? And what are they going to have for their children when they have some?*

*Even though I may not look like it, I have a lot of personal attachment to the earth. I would go crazy if I worry about where we are going to be 500 years from now, but right now, in this lifetime, in this place, I want to do my small piece. The way I see it, if we all get involved, it creates a big movement.*

PMK: What do you see as your major contributions to BWA?

*RSED: Well, I'm an out-going, high energy, Type A kind of person. I've met a lot of different kinds of people here and I can get things done. I see myself bringing some new energy to an organization that been around for more than 20 years. As a relative newcomer, I ask questions about things people who have been involved for a long time take for granted.*

*I think I can widen popular understanding of the importance of the group's goals. Among other things, BWA is known as a watchdog. If you are seen as only a watchdog, people may raise a skeptic eye—thinking you are going to be annoying or get in the way.*

*BWA has a strong foundation; we're not just startup; we've done credible things, we can now build on that brand. I would like to take advantage of that solid foundation and move BWA to the next level of impact.*

PMK: What advice do you have for other people who share your thinking in this regard?

*RSED: We all need to set an example, set standards of environmental culture. Don't be pushy, just be a leader through example. Become a part of something, join an organization. We don't all have to have to do hands on work. Just become more aware of the small things that make a difference. Making your neighbors aware of this and the need to be more sensitive to how our big and small actions impact our water. To change to a direction that sustains the life we all came here to enjoy. If everybody takes little steps, it becomes a big march.*

*We need to keep educating in lots of different ways. If we are creating walking trails along our creeks, we should give the public the knowledge that the opportunities are there and available for them, and to be conscious of how easy they can be lost. But we need to be mindful of the need for education -- there should be signage, you know the old saying .. "take only pictures, leave only footprints. Please keep our water ways, our open space clean and healthy."*

*I could almost be a zealot and say people should be required to take a test and get certification to use the outdoors, so that they are aware of what impact they leave.*