

In June, I had the pleasure of attending the annual conference of Association of Environmental Studies and Sciences ([AESS](#)). The conference gave me an opportunity to revisit Portland, Oregon, a city I have come to admire for its natural beauty and leadership in sustainable living. It was also a pleasure to spend the time at the conference with Skidmore and Environmental Studies colleagues and Environmental Studies alums. While moving from one session to another during the conference, I realized that my choices were paralleling those of another attendee who always managed to bring the discussion around to the same grim question. Despite her best efforts in her classes, she explained, her Environmental Studies students always seemed to end the semester depressed and pessimistic because of the dire state of the environment.

It's easy to understand why students of Environmental Studies—faculty and students alike—might be a depressed and depressing group. The daily reports of the repeated failures to cap the BP oil well in the Gulf were the background of the summer of 2010; even though the well is finally capped, the scope of the environmental damage has yet to be fully realized. I'm sure many of us are still haunted by images of oil soaked pelicans. Meanwhile, the debate over hydraulic fracturing—fracking—in the Marcellus Shale region beneath New York State continues. The science behind global warming grows in strength, yet the politics and policies responding to Climate Change seem to be floundering in their conviction. Wildfires blazed throughout Russia this summer while flooding in Pakistan has left an already fragile country devastated. If part of the purpose of Environmental Studies is to solve the problems confronting environments throughout the world, it takes a strong character just to see beyond the problems to potential solutions.

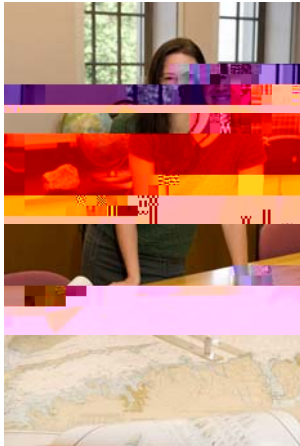
Yet the Environmental Studies students and faculty I worked with this summer and whom I've been meeting with early in the fall semester don't

seem overwhelmed with doom and gloom. Perhaps this is because they have come to understand that while analysis and problem solving are important approaches in Environmental Studies, they are not the defining reason for Environmental Studies. That reason lies in the pursuit of understanding our environment and the interweaving ecosystems that make it up. As part of the summer Collaborative Research Projects, senior Nick Liu-Sontag worked with faculty members Karen Kellogg (Environmental Studies) and Alex Chaucer (GIS) on "Visualizing Changing Landscapes and Resource use in the Saratoga Lake Watershed." Their research uncovered not only the

## Faculty Profile: Amy Frappier

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An assistant professor since the start of the 2009 academic year, Amy Frappier has brought her passion for the climate and its natural extremes to the Skidmore classroom. Pursuing her fascination for the natural world, Frappier earned her Ph. D. in Earth and Environmental Sciences from the University of New Hampshire in 2006 and taught for three years as an assistant professor at Boston College before coming to Skidmore. Throughout her professional career, Frappier has earned numerous research fellowships including the NASA Earth System Science (E.S.S.) Fellowship and the Science to Achieve Results (S.T.A.R.) Fellowship. She currently holds the Charles Lubin Family Chair for Women in Science.



Frappier explains, "I'm really interested in climate change, specifically how climate affects extreme events." Frappier explored her passion for extreme occurrences when she conducted her doctoral research on the geologic record of stalagmites from Belize and Central America. Through her studies of the chemical composition of the rocks, Frappier was able to determine at what point in history large hurricane events took place. By creating this "geologic archive," Frappier and colleagues can now extend the historical record and recreate storms that "as I like to say, our ancestors experienced but that we no longer remember." Through her

research, Frappier broadened the historical perspective of extreme events to more fully understand the changes we are seeing in our climate today and expecting to see in the future.

Since arriving at Skidmore Frappier has taught Climatology (GE 211), a Special Topics course on Global Biogeochemical Cycles (GE 351), and Oceanography (GE 112). She has co-taught the Senior Seminar in Geosciences (GE 377) with Kyle Nichols and Richard Lindeman. In addition, Frappier is currently teaching the Scribner Seminar Dangerous Earth (SSP 100-007) this fall, which explores how climatologic and geologic dangers impact our lives and activities as humans. The class examines the causes of natural

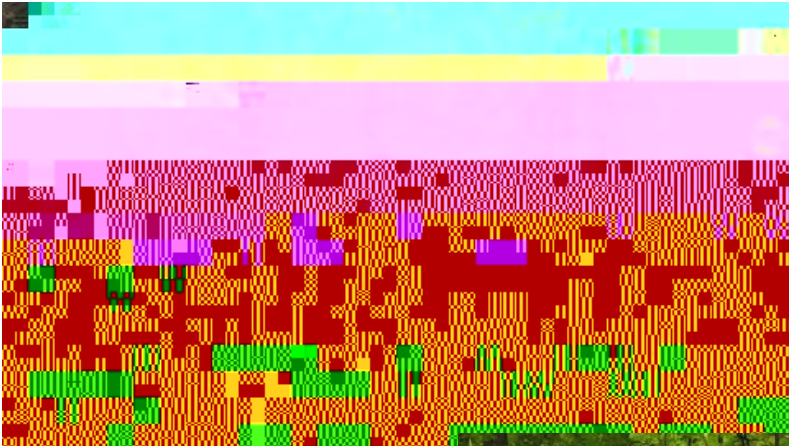
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## *Alumni Profile: Peter Olmsted*

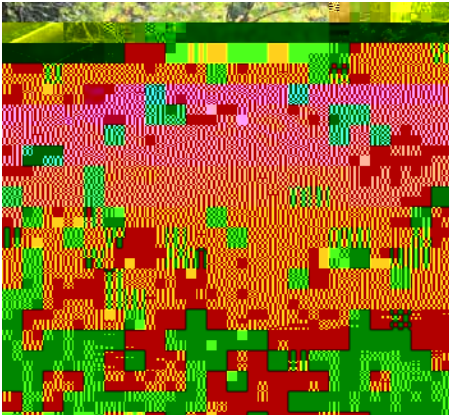
policy throughout the state and across the country. In this role, Peter assisted Senator McDowell in drafting and passing legislation to expand the state's commitment to deploying renewable energy resources. Peter comments, "While our federal government struggles to adequately address climate and energy concerns, many







Environmental Studies majors and faculty before (above) and during a canoe trip on the Kayaderosseras Creek (below) to kick off the start of the senior capstone seminar.



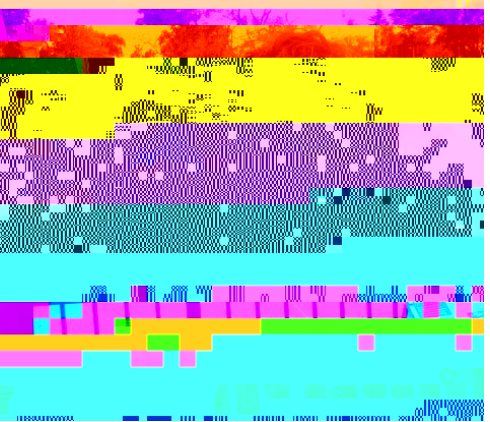
Dawn Harfmann '10 leads an educational tour of the North Woods for students and faculty (above).

Josh Ness (above) in the new SAIL lab. See the [SAIL page](#) for more information and [pictures](#).

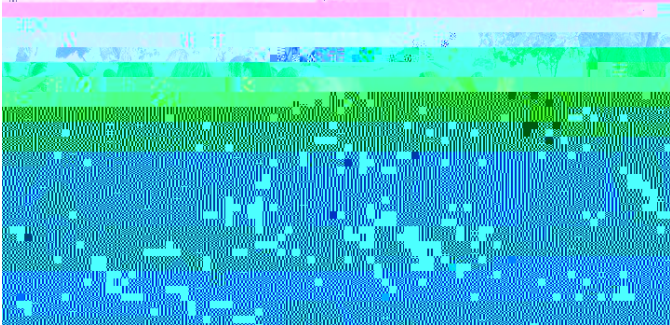
ES students conduct research all year long; here two students are measuring dissolved oxygen in Loughberry Lake.



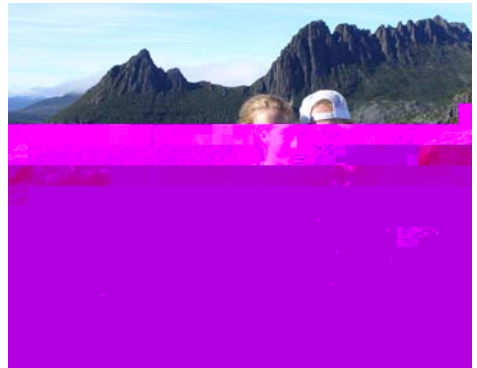
A majority of our majors study abroad—Nick Liu-Sontag '11 (below) dancing as part of his cultural immersion on the [SIT India](#) program. Maranda Duval '11 (in green shirt on right; also, see page 1) in Tanzania as part of the [IHP Rethinking Globalization](#) year-long program. See our [on-line photo album](#) for more pictures and descriptions of student research on a variety of abroad programs.



Vince Weeks '10 taking in the [PCB dredging](#) operation on Roger's Island as part of an ES fall trip to the site with faculty, students and representatives from General Electric (above).



As part of her [SIT Australia](#) program, Claire Superak '11 (far right) hiked Cradle Mountain in Tasmania. Claire then did her independent study research with a University of Tasmania faculty member on a project evaluating rural tree decline and deforestation of degraded agricultural land.



The Water Resources Initiative (WRI) at Skidmore College brings together students, faculty and community partners to investigate our local water issues. Through courses and research, WRI helps us better understand the multiple perspectives that influence how we interact with our water resources on both a local and global scale.

“The Capstone process is really like giving birth to a child,” said Professor Josh Ness, who led the 2009-2010 Studies in Environmental Sustainability course along with Professor Karen Kellogg. The audience laughed; professors, students, and community members were gathered in Davis Auditorium to hear eleven student presentations, culminations of their research over the past academic year within the Environmental Studies major.

Ness displayed photographs of the 22 seniors at work in the classroom and continued his analogy. Pointing to a picture of Jim Turley, Dana Leonard, and Stephanie McGurk wringing their hands, Ness described the worry that goes along with giving birth to a child, or project: you do your best and hope that it

turns out alright. In the picture, Eij Dibern-Dunlap and Zach Rowen, hands in pockets, take a step back to look at their partners' handiwork. While the analogy drew laughter, Ness was right about the effort, dedication, interest, and commitment that went into the research projects.

Though past Capstone projects were focused primarily on water issues, the Class of 2010 broadened its scope to explore a variety of environmental issues within the Saratoga Watershed. Mel Ausanka-Cruess and Stephanie McGurk began by introducing SWAN, or the Saratoga Watershed Awareness Network, an online education guide that the pair created to spread awareness about issues within the watershed. Using previous Capstone projects and their own research, the pair highlights photo-

