



The TRAILBLAZER

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Niagara Group of the Sierra Club

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Illegal Discharges To The Niagara River Persist

From a November 1, 2007 press release . Contact: Julie Barrett O'Neill, (716) 852-7483

Niagara River, NY: The same week that Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper was awarded a state Technical Assistance Grant for the assessment of contaminant migration from two Class 2 Inactive Hazardous Waste sites buried underneath part of Chemical Waste Management's (CWM) facility in Porter, NY, Riverkeeper staff observed an illegal foam discharge coming from CWM's lower Niagara River outfall.

Riverkeeper staff first noted the foam problem while on a routine monitoring inspection of the lower Niagara River on October 5th, and reported the discharge to NYSDEC officials. The raft of foam, approximately 20 feet by 4 feet in area and up to 2 feet high, was emanating from an "air relief pipe," and has been observed on several occasions as recently as October 26th. The outfall is located in the town of Lewiston directly across the entrance to Joseph Davis State Park.

Presence of the, thick, discolored, and acrid-smelling substance is a violation of CWM's State Pollution Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit requirement that clearly states to "not discharge floating solids or visible foam" into the Niagara River.

CWM's SPDES Permit is currently being evaluated and there are proposed modifications by NYSDEC to the permit. Public comments will be accepted until at least November 15,

2007*, and Riverkeeper encourages local residents to submit comments to NYSDEC about the CWM discharges.

"Even though this pipe is supposed to be carrying primarily treated wastewater leachate from CWM's facility we are concerned that the foam has not been tested, and there is no way to determine whether the substance posed an ecological or human health risk," said Julie Barrett O'Neill, official Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper and Executive Director of the organization. "CWM's facility is permitted to landfill numerous toxic substances, such as PCBs and mercury, and therefore any violation to their permit, even foam, should be investigated thoroughly."

Coincidentally, NYSDEC-Division of Environmental Remediation awarded Riverkeeper a \$50,000 grant to independently evaluate the assessment that "there are no off-site impacts from contaminants found at the former Air Force Plant #68 site", which is located under CWM's facility. Concerns are based on the network of underground pipelines potentially serving as pathways for contaminants into the groundwater, as well as the potential contamination of stormwater on site that is ultimately directed into the Niagara River outfall. The TAG project is supported by the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works (LOOW) Restoration Advisory Board and local groups.

Any resident who encounters foam, oil or spills on the river is encouraged to report them to Riverkeeper at 852-7483, or call the NYSDEC Spill Hotline directly at 1-800-457-7362.

*the comment period has been further extended.

The Fight Against New Coal Plants Continues

Governor Spitzer, Where Are't Thou?!

By Walter Simpson, Sierra Club Clean Energy for Jamestown Campaign

Environmentalists nationwide are fighting proposed new coal plants with increasing success. Four are proposed for New York State including two right here in Western New York - an IGCC plant at NRG Energy's Huntley Station in Tonawanda and a new circulating fluidized bed coal burner in Jamestown. Without full carbon capture and storage, both of these plants, if built, will spew unconscionable amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, worsening climate change. Moreover, even with CCS (essentially an undemonstrated technology) both of these facilities would rely on coal produced in ways which are destructive to the environment, e.g. strip mining or mountain top removal mining. Hence, Sierra Club's opposition to new coal plants.

Sierra Club has been most active challenging Jamestown's proposed new coal plant, arguing that it is completely unnecessary. Jamestown receives 80% of its electric power from the New York Power Authority, self generating or buying off the grid only 20% of its load. We have argued that the cheapest, most environmentally responsible way of meeting that load is to shut down Jamestown's old dirty coal Carlson plant, forgo the proposed \$145+ million new coal power plant, implement a comprehensive demand side management program to help customers in all rate classes become more energy efficient and use less energy, and invest in a modest amount of wind energy or a small biomass cogeneration plant to provide heat for Jamestown's district heating loop. But the Jamestown Board of Public Utilities will hear none of this and continues to push for a new coal plant. To make this plant appear environmentally responsible, they have teamed up with corporate sponsors like Praxair, Dresser Rand, consultants Ecology & Environment, and UB School of Engineering to propose that the plant host a demonstration project for carbon capture and sequestration. We view this demonstration project as a smoke screen and continue to oppose the plant. Even if the demonstration project was funded and implemented, there is no way to know in advance if it will work. Moreover, implementing a demonstration project for a few years is a far cry from a promise to use full carbon capture and sequestration for the duration of the plant's 50 year lifespan.

This is a critical time. We are working in coalition with ten other environmental groups, requesting that the DEC and EPA deny the construction permits Jamestown needs to build the plant. Meanwhile, the Spitzer Administration appears to be paralyzed on the issue of new coal plants, despite Eliot Spitzer's strong environmental record and the landmark action he took against polluting coal plants when he was Attorney General. While progress stopping new coal plants is occurring in states like Kansas (yes, Kansas!), the issue goes unaddressed by Spitzer and New York State leaders. This is embarrassing, disappointing and worrisome. Governor Spitzer, what are you waiting for?!

You can help by writing the Governor and asking him to demonstrate environmental leadership and take a strong

stand against any new coal plants. And to do that now. Please specifically mention the importance of stopping the Jamestown coal plant. A hard copy letter would be more effective than an e-mail.

Governor Eliot Spitzer
Executive Chambers
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

For more information about the campaign against the Jamestown power plant. Please contact me at enconser@buffalo.edu or 839-0062. Thanks!

Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement Signed by Town of Amherst Board

With input from the Niagara Group and the League of Women Voters, the Amherst Town Council has signed the Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement. More than 300 cities and large towns in the United States, including the City of Buffalo, have signed this Agreement. The Agreement is to reduce global warming carbon dioxide (CO2) pollution to 7% below 1990 levels by 2012. The National Sierra Club is promoting the Agreement as a tool in the fight against global warming. National has labeled this their "Cool Cities" campaign. The great response of localities means that action is being taken on a number of fronts on the climate change issue.

The Amherst Energy Conservation Committee is currently reviewing the facets of the Agreement and will report to the Town Board in January of 2008 with recommendations for implementation. Town Council member Debbie Bucki is the Council liaison to the Committee.

Bass Pro Won't be Built on Central Wharf

Due to the efforts of Tim Tielman, an ExCom member, and others, it appears that the attempt to place a Bass Pro megastore on the downtown waterfront are dead "in the water," or perhaps outside the water! The Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation and political leaders have agreed that Bass Pro will not be built on Central Wharf at the water's edge. Instead, it is proposed that the store be moved inland to the site now occupied by Memorial Auditorium, outside of the historic Canal District boundaries. The original plan of preserving the historic Canal District and making it an environmentally friendly place with open access seems to be back on track, although continued diligence is in order. In fact, the ever-bloating Bass Pro budget may cause it to die of its own weight, bringing renewed focus on Central Wharf, which the 2004 masterplan for the Canal District set aside as public space. "So, let's rejoice," Tielman says, "but let's keep our guard up, too."

Read more of the January Trailblazer at
<http://newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara>

Thank You, Bruce: A Hike in North Carolina's Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest and a Tribute to Bruce Kershner

This was a pilgrimage of sorts; a hike in a place that my spouse Beth Cohen and I never would have appreciated as much as we did (and possibly never even learned about) had it not been for our dear friend Bruce Kershner, who died in February 2007. Through taking multiple group hikes that he led over our years living in Buffalo, Bruce passed his enthusiasm for old-growth forests along to us—and we learned of the fabulous Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest, adjacent to Great Smoky Mountain National Park (GSMNP), only because of him.

One day a few years ago, we told Bruce of our upcoming vacation in the Smokies. He was almost as excited for us as we were, and invited us to his house so he could loan us maps (his idea, not ours). When we got to his place, he dumped map after map of the western North Carolina region onto his dining room table. He took one of the regional road maps and marked on it what he said was an “absolutely amazing” spot—the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest—and told us we simply had to go there.

As it turns out, though we were able to visit friends in Asheville, NC for a few days in September 2004, we never got into the Park, thanks to the series of hurricanes that came through the southeast U.S. that month. But this past summer—with a forecast of warm and only occasionally rainy weather for our scheduled time in western North Carolina—we made it to the Park, and we set aside a day to see the Kilmer Forest.

I have to admit I didn't know Kilmer wrote the famous poem *Trees* (“I think that I shall never see/A poem lovely as a tree...”), and even if I had had that knowledge, I doubt it would have spurred me to want to see this forest. What made me want to see it was how much Bruce raved about it.

A two-mile long loop trail is the only trail in the Kilmer Forest, but we didn't feel like we would be short-changed at all on this rather easy walk. The day before this we had hiked 9 miles, on a trail with 1200 feet of elevation change. That hike was a physical challenge, and difficult for that reason. The walk in the Kilmer Forest would be an emotional challenge.

The loop trail passes very close to a number of absolutely massive trees. Some are up to 450 years old, with bases up to,

I estimated, 12 feet in diameter. And they came one after the other, getting larger and larger as the trail wound more deeply into the forest.

We walked slowly around the figure-eight loop, missing our friend. We were here on a Sunday morning, and perhaps that was most appropriate, since although we were not in a typical house of worship this day, I felt a deep sense of awe and reverence for these trees. And I thought about Bruce a lot.

Among the things I thought about was the poem he wrote in our copy of his book, *The Sierra Club Guide to the Ancient Forests of the Northeast*:

“*To Beth and George:*
In the hushed silence
Of the Forest Primeval,
You can hear the
Voice of your soul.

May the wisdom
Of the ancient forest
Always bring
You inspiration.”

And I thought about how I wouldn't get to see him anymore. But I'll always remember the many gifts of his time and knowledge he gave us—especially his knowledge about the Kilmer Forest.

Do go see it someday, if you're able. It's just as amazing as Bruce said it was. —George Dillmann

George Dillmann is a former member of the Niagara Group ExCom. He now lives in Ithaca, NY.

When one reads about Bruce Kershner's life and the hike in the mountains, it teaches us the value of such excursions. This is a challenge to others to follow the example set. When one gets into nature, takes hikes, experiences the outdoors, one learns to value nature and becomes more committed to saving our environment. The article above should teach us and inspire us to walk among the trees and learn the value, far beyond cash value, of saving our natural resources.

A Word from the Niagara Frontier Wildlife Habitat Council

The Conservation Fund publishes a book titled, *Greenways, A Guide to Design, Planning and Development*. Perhaps reading about the American Greenways' program will shed illumination that a genuine greenway is...non-motorized. The perplexing question we need to ask is: why has the rest of the United States progressed 20 plus years ahead of the thinking found in our western New York region, the home of two natural treasures, Niagara Falls and the Niagara gorge. The Niagara River is recognized globally as a significant migratory route for the world's avian community.

It may surprise readers to learn these economic development facts about greenways:

...the governors of five New England States officially recognize open space as a key element in the “quality of life” in their region. They credited “quality of life” as providing the

foundation of a multi-billion dollar tourism industry and bringing rapid economic growth to the region.” (Governor's Committee on the Environment, 1988)

A poll commissioned by the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors found that natural beauty was the single most important criterion for tourists in selecting a site for outdoor recreation.” (Scenic America, 1987)

In 1991, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing resulted in \$5.3 billion of annual spending in California. Of the 9.2 million people participating in wildlife-related recreation, 32 percent fished, 6 percent hunted, and 71 percent pursued wildlife viewing. Thirty percent of the total national wildlife-related recreation expenditures (\$18.1 billion in 1991) was related to wildlife viewing and photography. (U.S. Fish and

"Wildlife Habitat" con't from pg. 3

Wildlife Service, 1993) A total of nearly 2,000 California jobs are supported by bird watchers. (Loomis and Unkel, 1989)

Bicycling is a lifetime activity retained from childhood into later years. By the end of 1993, there were more than 100 million bicyclists in the United States. (Bicycle Federation of America, 1994).

Another rapidly growing greenway related activity is cross-country skiing. Over 50 percent of participants interviewed were between the ages of 25 and 44. (Ski Industries America, Inc., 1988)

Eco tourism is an environmentally responsible form of travel in which the focus is to experience the natural areas and culture [the scenic resources] of a region while promoting conservation and economically contributing to local communities. (Adventure Travel Society, 1994)

Activities associated with fish and wildlife-related recreation include: fishing, hunting, bird watching, and wildlife photography. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 108.7 million people in the United States took part in wildlife-related recreation in 1991. Expenditures by these participants were \$59 billion.

In 1990, 8.8 million people jogged at least twice a week, an increase from 8.1 million in 1987. Nearly \$12 million was spent on athletic footwear in 1990. (U.S. News and World Report, April 1, 1991.)

People spend more on leisure and recreation than the US Government spends on national defense or housing construction."

In summary: Eco-tourism is comprised of three components: heritage, cultural, and scenic tourism. It is the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry. It credits "quality of life" as providing the foundation of a multi-billion dollar tourism industry and bringing rapid economic growth to the region.

I have a resource book called the "Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails, and Greenway Corridors." I'll be happy to share it. I gave a copy to Niagara River Greenway Commissioner, Paul Dyster. We thank the Sierra Club for its vision in endorsing Robert Moses Parkway removal along the Niagara gorge rim.

*Michelle Vanstrom, President
Niagara Frontier Wildlife Habitat Council
400 Glengrove Drive, Youngstown, NY 14174 • 745-7625*

If you have information you wish to share or copy for use in the Trailblazer, please send it to Charles Lamb at 335 Walnut Lane, Youngstown, NY 14174; clamb9@roadrunner.com or 716-745-7037. Deadlines for the year are as follows: February 1, May 1, August 1, and November 1.

The Niagara Group of the Sierra Club meets on the 4th Tuesday of every month at 7p.m. at Daemen College, Duns Scotus Hall, room 219. All Sierrans are invited!

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