

Sierra Atlantic

The Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club — Serving New York State

Volume 33 Spring 2006

This little community said 'no' to a factory farm

by Yvonne Tasker-Rothenberg

Who gets to decide what agriculture looks like in a community? Recently a group of stalwart citizens in Nichols (Tioga County) decided that, despite pressure from the Farm Bureau and from the NYS Department of Agriculture, they, the local people, should democratically decide whether to allow a Canadian chicken corporation in their town.

The saga began in late summer when neighbors found out that land in their neighborhood was being sold to the Canadian Drost family, for a chicken CAFO (confined animal feeding operation). The deal had been brokered by the county economic development and planning agency with zero input from the more than 100 neighbors who would be sharing their residential neighborhood with hundreds of thousands of chickens.

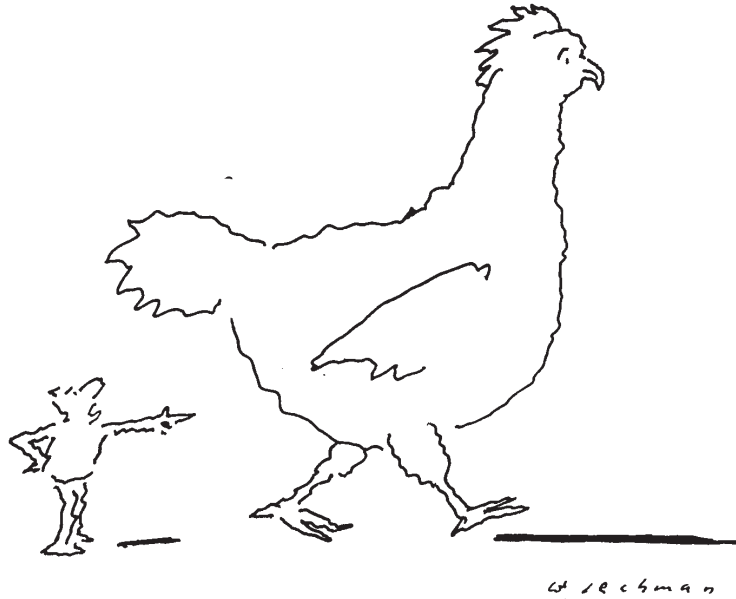
Agency staffers had taken the Drosts around the county looking for suitable land. The original choice was a parcel in Barton, but a good neighbor who found out what was going on bought the land himself.

Eventually, the Drosts chose a Nichols parcel adjacent to a housing development. A large part of the land is in Flood Zone A in a spillover area of the Susquehanna River. Neighbors became concerned that the operation would alter the flood plain, contaminate the aquifer, and disrupt the wintering of wild birds, and that they would be subjected to smells of chicken manure, to increased truck traffic, real estate devaluation and other documented abuses in chicken CAFO communities.

The town board met with two Tioga County agencies and with New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. All assured board members that such operations are well regulated and that there was nothing the community could do to restrict farming.

The board called a community meeting. To their credit, some of the board members were well informed enough to object to the Drost plan. Nonetheless, they informed the populace that there was probably nothing they could do to stop it. Farm Bureau members, never missing a chance to advance the corporate agenda, accused protestors of being against farming.

And so, the people organized. According to spokesperson Debbie Stephens, the close-knit community engaged in a collective effort to protect their homes. Stephens re-



searched chicken CAFOs on the Internet. She visited and filmed the Drost operation in Ontario and then circulated a DVD of her own responses to the Drost operation to her neighbors and to the town board. She wrote letters to the editor and spoke to the press.

Neighbors Tom and Penny Hunter and Shirley and Art Wilcox engaged the media, generating a lot of attention from newspapers and TV stations in the Southern Tier and northern Pennsylvania. Steve Crosse, who is very knowledgeable about farming, helped with providing farming information. About five people were actively working on the effort to inform their own community about the problems engendered by mega chicken farms. More than 100 families signed petitions and attended town meetings.

Finally, on September 28, after a lengthy public hearing, the Nichols

Town Board voted 4-1 to impose a nine-month moratorium on high-density development and commercial farming. The moratorium put the brakes on the process.

The Drosts had wanted to get started as soon as possible. They want to protect their markets in New York City. They have been sued in Ontario for being over their production quotas. There is also a possibility that the borders may close to chicken transport in the event of avian flu outbreaks. Facing a long delay and community opposition, the Drosts withdrew in January. As quoted in the *Sayre Evening Times*, "The people of Tioga County can sleep well, because the Drosts are looking elsewhere in New York state to place the farm, and have been since the end of 2005."

Spokesperson Debbie Stephens offered her advice to citizens threatened by industrial livestock operations:

- Organize the neighbors.
- Do research and arm yourself with facts. People are so surprised when they hear about the community impact of corporate farming.
- Establish a relationship with the press.
- Ask the town board for a moratorium.
- Don't cave in when state agencies say there is nothing you can do.
- Assert your civic rights.
- Work together and work hard.

I am pleased to say that we in the Sierra Club Farm and Food Committee had been working with the community. We provided information, contact people for advice and lots of moral support. We even scored a mention on Binghamton TV.

As for Debbie Stephens, she says she still eats chicken now and then, but prior to this, "I never thought about where my chicken came from."

I hope all of us are thinking about it.

Yvonne Tasker-Rothenberg chairs the Chapter's Farm & Food Committee.

For more information

- Contact Friends of Rural New York, a coalition which opposes the assault on our rural communities by livestock factories:

www.FriendsofRuralNY.org

- To learn about the Chapter's work on food and farm issues:

<http://www.newyork.sierraclub.org/conservation/agriculture/>

Trouble on (under) the Hudson

by Roger Gray

When the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declared 3½ years ago that General Electric (GE) must clean up 100 tons of toxic PCBs it has dumped in the upper Hudson River, it appeared that the Atlantic Chapter had won a famous victory. Finally, even George Bush's EPA had seen the light.

Then, last November, an ominous headline appeared in *The New York Times*: "Internal Federal Memo Casts Doubts on Hudson Cleanup."

A confidential memo written by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) finds fault with the GE-developed cleanup plan. It notes that instead of dredging many PCB "hot spots" as originally required, GE is now proposing

to "cap" the spots with sediment. The caps, according to the NOAA memo, would be washed away by storm waters. More troubling, the memo stated that GE planned to segment the cleanup into two phases, and that the success of Phase 1 would determine whether to proceed with Phase 2, containing more than 90% of the contaminated sites — a very loaded deck, with GE as dealer.

For that reason, the Atlantic Chapter has re-established its Hudson River PCB Cleanup Committee, with Pete Sheehan and John Van Deloo, MD, as co-chairs, to respond to these new developments.

The PCB Cleanup Committee was initially established six years ago to respond to years of malingering by GE, which has failed to remove more than 200,000 pounds of toxic PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) remain-

ing in the sediment from the 1.3 million pounds it had dumped in the river during its operation of a capacitor manufacturing factory in Hudson Falls.

The PCB Cleanup Committee was formed at the Chapter's 1998 conservation summit. Meanwhile, across the border in Massachusetts, GE was actively engaged in cleaning up a similarly PCB-contaminated stretch of the Housatonic River and surrounding shoreline, under a Superfund consent agreement with the EPA. The difference? The contaminated stretch of the upper Hudson was identified as the largest Superfund site in the nation — a 40-mile-long contaminated site, with a river running through it.

GE had good reason, and millions of dollars of precedent-avoidance, for its intransigence. At the time, GE was,

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Sierra Atlantic (ISSN 0164-825X) is published quarterly for \$1 by the Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club, 353 Hamilton St., Albany, NY 12210-1709; 518-426-9144, 518-427-0381 (fax)

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ADVERTISING Circulation 40,000. Ad rates, specs and deadlines available upon request from Moisha Blechman, Publications Committee chair, at 518-329-0531 or mblechman@earthlink.net

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SIERRA ATLANTIC MISSION *The mission of the Sierra Atlantic is to educate and enlist the people of New York state to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment. We will do this by providing information about important environmental issues; sounding an alarm when the environment is threatened; reporting on the activities, outings and campaigns conducted by the Atlantic Chapter; celebrating nature; and inviting our readers to join us.*

SUBMISSIONS

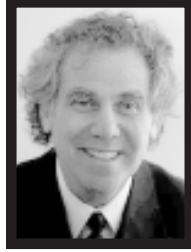
Send us a letter, an article, news briefs, comments, photos, graphics or other items of interest. Contact the editors at the e-mail address above for submission format and details. When querying, please write "Sierra Atlantic" in the subject line.

**DEADLINES –
SUMMER ISSUE**

April 15 — Article proposals due for review by Publications Committee

May 15 — Final copy and camera-ready ads due

June 15 — Newsletter mailed to 45,000 members



Message from the Chair

by Ken Baer

Help push wetlands and bottle bills through Senate

Over the last two years the Atlantic Chapter has invested a lot of time and energy in trying to pass a wetlands protection bill (The Clean Water Protection/Flood Prevention Act, A2048/S2081) and the Bigger Better Bottle Bill (A2517a/S1290a). Both bills passed the New York State Assembly in 2005, but never saw the light of day on the floor of the New York State Senate.

The Assembly has already re-passed the Clean Water Protection/Flood Prevention Act. John Stouffer and our new legislative associate, Theresa Cassiack, are working hard to get the Senate to join the Assembly and the Governor in agreeing to include legislation to protect wetlands in this year's budget. To build support we are asking majority party senators to co-sponsor S.2081.

We face a monumental effort in getting both bills through the Senate, as well as legislation that would fund the preservation of open space (the Community Preservation Act, A6450a/S3153) and a measure that would promote comprehensive land use planning (the Smart Growth Infrastructure Act, A3574/S2070). If these bills are to be enacted, we need the support of the Senate leadership!

This is where you, the members of the Atlantic Chapter, can play a vital role.

We need phone calls, letters, and e-mails to certain state senators to urge them to become sponsors of The Clean Water Protection/Flood Prevention Act (S.2081) and The Bigger Better Bottle Bill (S.1290c). This legislation is not inconsequential. It is about ensuring clean drinking water, healthy streams, fewer floods, less pollution from landfills and less unsightly litter. Senators must understand that New Yorkers will be judging their environmental record based on their performance on these critical bills. We must be clear that if the Senate leadership fails to protect wetlands, then they are failing to protect our drinking water, and we will hold them accountable at the ballot box in November.

The adjacent list of all Republican state senators includes their contact information. Please feel free to call all of the senators listed. For those living in these Senate districts it is particularly important that you let them know that you are a constituent. You can find out who your senator is by going to

www.senate.state.ny.us

If you don't have web access call the Atlantic Chapter legislative office (518) 426-9144.

For senators who are listed as sponsors or co-sponsors of the bills:

- Please thank them.
- Urge them to do their utmost to convince the Senate leadership to close the gap in wetland protection

We need phone calls, letters, and e-mails to persuade senators to protect clean water and pass the Bigger Better Bottle Bill.

in the budget, and to move the Bigger, Better, Bottle Bill to the floor of the Senate.

If senators are not listed as a co-

sponsor of either or both bills:

- Ask them to co-sponsor the bills.
- Urge them to do their utmost to convince the Senate leadership to close the gap in wetland protection in the budget, and to move the Bigger, Better, Bottle Bill to the floor of the Senate.

Thank you for your time and effort in doing this important work. The quality of New York's environment depends on it.

When you contact any of the senators listed below, please make sure you indicate that you are a Sierra Club member.

Senator	District Phone	District Office Location
Alesi, James	585-223-1800	Fairport
Balboni, Michael W	516-873-0736	Garden City Park, L.I.
Bonacic, John B	845-255-9656	New Paltz
Bruno, Joseph	518-583-1001	Saratoga Springs
DeFrancisco, John	315-428-7632	Syracuse
Farley, Hugh	518-762-3733	Johnstown
Flanagan, John W	631-361-2154	Smithtown, L.I.
Fuschillo, Charles Jr. W	516-546-4100	Freeport, L.I.
Golden, Martin	718-238-6044	Brooklyn
Hannon, Kemp W	516-739-1700	Garden City, L.I.
Johnson, Owen	631-669-9200	Babylon, L.I.
Larkin, William	845-567-1270	New Windsor
Lavalle, Kenneth B * W	631-696-6900	Selden, L.I.
Leibell, Vincent B W	845-279-3773	Brewster
Libous, Thomas	607-773-8771	Binghamton
Little, Elizabeth O'C.	518-561-2430	Plattsburgh
Maltese, Serphin B W	718-497-1800	Queens
Marcellino, Carl W *	516-922-1811	Oyster Bay, L.I.
Marchi, John B	718-447-1723	Staten Island
Maziarz, George	716-731-8740	Wheatfield
Meier, Raymond	315-793-9072	Utica
Morahan, Thomas W	845-425-1818	Nanuet
Nozzolio, Michael	888-568-9816	Seneca Falls
Padavan, Frank B W	718-343-0255	Queens
Rath, Mary Lou	716-633-0331	Williamsville
Robach, Joseph	585-225-3650	Rochester
Saland, Stephen	845-463-0840	Poughkeepsie
Seward, James	607-432-5524	Oneonta
Skelos, Dean G.	516-766-8383	Rockville Centre, L.I.
Spano, Nicholas W	914-969-5194	Yonkers
Trunzo, Caesar W	631-360-3236	Hauppauge, L.I.
Volker, Dale M.	716-656-8544	Depew
Winner, George Jr.	607-732-2765	Elmira
Wright, James	315-785-2430	Watertown
Young, Catherine	800-707-0058	Olean

W = wetland cosponsor **B** = bottle bill cosponsor ***** = prime sponsor

To find out your Senators name and contact information you can go to the Senate web site: www.senate.state.ny.us. Then click on the "Senators" button on the left of the screen. You will then see a list of Senator's names and three choices for determining your Senator under the heading "Who is my Senator?". The zip code search is probably the most accurate, but you can also view a map of the district, or search by district number. If you don't have web access, call the Atlantic Chapter legislative office and we will look up the district for you. Thanks!

Major victory: settlement saves Stewart parkland from sprawl

by Jurgen Wekerle

After three decades of struggle, including litigation, the Atlantic Chapter and co-plaintiffs have won a settlement that will preserve about 2,000 acres near Stewart Airport in Newburg.

The battle began in 1971, when Gov. Nelson Rockefeller seized over 8,500 adjacent acres by eminent domain in 1971 to extend the airport runway and to provide a noise buffer zone. Rockefeller had visions of converting the former Stewart Air Force Base into a supersonic jetport for SST flights between London, Paris and the New York City metro region.

Since then, the buffer lands have been maintained by the DEC as a public recreation area and hunting cooperative while the ultimate fate of the airport was being divined.

During the mid-1980s, the state abandoned its grand design and announced plans to privatize the airport and to sell the buffer lands for industrial and business development.

By then, the local challenge to the Sierra Club had become the relentless loss of open space due to sprawl development in Orange County, the fastest growing county in New York. The destinies of the Stewart buffer lands and of Sterling Forest became joined.

In the case of Sterling Forest, our effort was to persuade the state to buy private property to create public parkland. In the case of the Stewart lands, our effort was to prevent New York from selling public parkland which it already owned.

In response, the Sierra Club be-

With incredible grassroots support and the leadership of Sierra Club members, about 2,000 acres have been preserved.

came allied with the Stewart Park and Reserve Coalition (SPARC), the Orange County Federation of Sportsman Clubs and many other local groups in a quixotic quest to preserve 7,000 buffer land acres.

In 1999, that effort led to NYS creating Stewart State Forest with 5,200 of those acres. At the same time, however, the state leased the airport to private interests and actively promoted the sale and commercialization of over 2,000 remaining acres.

Central to the development proposal was the construction of a new 1-84 highway interchange and a connecting road, ostensibly to provide a second access to the airport passenger terminal.

However, the primary goal was to build the infrastructure at public expense for intensive construction directly on the buffer lands and on surrounding private property. Had that occurred, more than 2,000 acres of public parkland would forever have been lost, and the ecological value of the newly minted State Forest would permanently have been nullified.

During 2000, SPARC, the sportsmen and the Sierra Club became co-plaintiffs in a federal law suit charging that the NYS Department of Transpor-

tation and the Federal Highway Administration omitted from the environmental impact statements the consequences of the highway projects on induced growth and parkland alienation.

The District Court ruled against us, stating that the lands were only "temporarily" used for hunting and thus did not qualify as parkland.

However, in December, 2003, the Federal Court of Appeals reversed that decision with a precedent-setting ruling, stating that even though the lands were never formally dedicated, they had been used as park and recreation lands for over 30 years and deserved the higher standard of protection afforded to parkland by the Federal Transportation Act.

In 2005, the state submitted redesigned highway plans, the endangered purple milkweed and Indiana bat were discovered on the lands, the DEC issued defective permits and the co-plaintiffs once again filed opposing law suits in both federal and state Supreme Courts. That prompted New York to initiate good faith negotiations with the co-plaintiffs, resulting in a mutually beneficial compromise reached at Thanksgiving.

Road construction may now proceed and several hundred acres at the periphery may be developed. The contested land, however, will remain in the public domain as open space and will continue in its current park use. The federal courts will monitor the consent decree and a comprehensive Unit Management Plan will be crafted.

All told, over 1,600 acres will be

added directly to Stewart State Forest. Several hundred acres more will remain undeveloped through easements and a runway protection zone. As a bonus, several hundred additional acres which border the New York City Catskill aqueduct will also be preserved.

The Sierra effort since 1972 has always been about protecting the land and the integrity of the wildlife habitat. Against all odds, that protection has now been accomplished. None of this would have happened without incredible grass-roots citizen support and without the leadership of Sierra Club members Sandra and Ben Kissam, who founded SPARC. Nor would this have happened without the many partnerships and the dedication of Carmen Heitzman, Tom Jefferson and the Orange County Sportsmen. Sierra Club activists in the trenches were Gerald Davison of the Mid-Hudson Group, and the late Ann Botshon, Betty Quick and John Gebhards of the Ramapo-Catskill Group, with a special thanks to John Stouffer, legislative director of the Atlantic Chapter and John Caffry, our remarkable attorney and negotiator.

The preservation of the Stewart buffer lands is a major victory for the environment and is a win-win outcome for those opposing land-guzzling suburban sprawl and for those favoring smart growth in the Hudson Valley and throughout New York and the nation. (Visit the buffer lands at: www.sparc.info)

Jurgen Wekerle is conservation chair of the Ramapo-Catskill Group and vice chair of the Atlantic Chapter.

Montreal outcome offers hope to global warming activists

by Moisha Blechman

We ended 2005 with two startling reports. The year was the hottest ever recorded, and CO₂ levels were as high they have ever been since the Paleocene epoch, 60 million years ago. That period of warming caused a massive loss of species.

It was against this backdrop that I went to the Kyoto Protocol Convention in Montreal. I was a delegate from the Sierra Club of the United States and a guest of the Sierra Club of Canada. There were about 450 of us from similar non-governmental organizations (NGOs) representing nations from all over the world. Greenpeace, NRDC and the World Wild Life Federation were among them. We met under the auspices of the International Climate Action Network (CAN).

The sense of emergency was palpable. Huge banners at the conference hall proclaimed "Time is Running Out" and "A World of SOLUTIONS." We all shared a certain anxiety about the outcome. Were the nations going to work together? It did not help that Andrew Revkin, in a highly visible lead article in the Dec. 4 edition of *The New York Times*, questioned the underpinnings of the Kyoto Protocols and the possibility of success in Montreal.



The melting of the polar ice caps is one of the many pieces of evidence cited by scientists who report that the Earth's temperature is rising, with profound consequences for all living things.

In a move that exemplified the spirit and determination of the NGO delegates, Elizabeth May, executive director of Sierra Club Canada, immediately called Mr. Revkin to inform him of false statements and the importance of a more positive slant. He said he would come to Montreal.

Although the official delegates to the Kyoto Protocols are the only

ones who vote and make the final decisions, they were subject to pressure from interested parties. Despite a complicated and frenetic choreography, the NGOs were organized, disciplined, focused on a clear strategy and absolutely determined to win. They knew what to do, and they did it. Overwhelming visibility was key.

Every day at 10 a.m. the NGOs held a press conference to let the world know from their perspective what the voting delegates were thinking.

At 2 p.m. they met again to inform one another about the negotiations and how various nations were leaning on important points of policy and rule making. NGOs staged conferences with the delegates from their own nation to encourage them to act positively. Each NGO delegated for the task reported to the assembly. It was democratically decided by a show of hands what the important issues were for the CAN newsletter, "Eco."

The newsletter was written by NGOs in the wee hours of the night. It appeared early every morning in both French and English. This was the only newsletter of the convention and it functioned to keep the delegates focused on the important issues of the moment. It also criticized obstructionist behavior and designated the worst nations with the "Fossil of the Day" award. This was posted for all to see at the entrance to the convention. Most of the time the "winner" was the United States. "Eco" was an influential tool to help set the tone of the meetings.

The most powerful nation on earth and the nation that produces

continued on next page



Conservation Action

by Hugh Mitchell, Conservation Chair

Action committees focus on energy, global warming

A few weeks ago I had an experience which was both beautiful and frightening. While flying over New York City at night I was struck by the fantastic carnival of multi-colored lights stretching under the dark night sky. Here was the extraordinary power of one of the greatest cities in the world expressed in rich, multi-colored jewels of lights, strings of silver and gold, pearls of bridge lights outlining the high cables.

Could any art be greater or more serious? I was worried about what sprawled out below my airplane because it reflects few limits on the use of electric power, which is a major contributor to global warming. The miracle of the city's electric night shows how we have been seduced by cheap, abundant energy, so

much so that the U.S. uses 26% of the world's energy while we have only 6% of the world's population. Where will this end?

According to the National Commission on Energy Policy, America's energy future is expected to become more troublesome in the next 20 years because U.S. demand for fossil fuel is expected to increase as demands for electricity grow. There is a better way. We need alternatives to fossil fuel — and we need them now.

Action committees to focus on global warming and energy

Our Chapter has completed a vote on which conservation actions to focus on in 2006. (See article, page 11.) Global warming and energy concerns top the list, but a number of other action committees are directly

or indirectly addressing energy related issues. For example, our Farm and Food Committee, headed by Yvonne Tasker-Rothenberg, tells us that the American taste for a meat-based diet results in far more carbon dioxide release than plant-based agriculture. The committee recommends cutting back on meat consumption as an action every American can take every day to help the planet. This move is seconded by our Biodiversity/Vegetarian Outreach Committee, headed by Linda DeStefano.

The Energy Committee, headed by Annie Wilson, recognizes that conservation of electric power is the quickest way to make a difference in global warming. Annie reports that if we were to focus only on target dates requiring that a percentage of all electricity come from clean, re-

newable energy sources, it would make a tremendous difference. On the plus side this fall, the New York City Council passed an ordinance requiring that all new government buildings or renovations comply with green building LEED standards. Now, if we can demand that all new private construction follow the City Council's lead, the Big Apple will guide the way to energy conservation.

Like forests, wetlands absorb carbon dioxide, the chief greenhouse gas. Our Wetlands Committee, headed by Liz Kaszubski, has been working to pass Senate S.2081 — the Clean Water Protection/Flood Prevention Act — which will save wetlands as small as one acre. Recently, the Assembly overwhelmingly supported this measure and the governor's budget includes it. We need to tell Senator Bruno that the time has come to release his grip on New York's wetlands.

In 2006 our Chapter conservation program will take critical steps to address global warming in two ways. We are going to reorganize our Chapter conservation structure so all relevant conservation committees focus efforts on ways to conserve energy and limit global warming. Secondly, we plan to follow the national Sierra Club lead by pushing mayors all over the state to endorse the Cool Cities Strategic Initiative.

Cool Cities actions are designed to cut our dependence on foreign oil and save on fossil fuel use. (See www.sierraclub.org/global_warming/coolcities/.) Cities need to pursue a number of conservation strategies such as investing in cleaner, more fuel efficient vehicles, encouraging energy efficient buildings and making serious investment in renewable energy. The appeal of this idea is that it's a win-win approach, saving money while working to save the planet. We will be encouraging mayors all over the state to address the global warming crisis "one city at a time."

Lovins, Hansen to speak in Albany on climate change

Amory Lovins, energy guru and CEO of the Rocky Mountain Institute in Colorado, will participate in Albany Law School's day-long seminar on global warming April 18.

Open to the public, the seminar will also include Dr. James E. Hansen of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies; Elizabeth Kolbert, author of a prize-winning series on climate for the *New Yorker* magazine; journalists, professors, and attorneys. Goddard was recently in the news after he revealed NASA officials tried to block him from publicly speaking about the implications of his research on climate change.

For details, check: <http://www.als.edu>. The seminar, titled "Catastrophic Climate Change: The Science, the Social Costs, and the Race for Legal Remedies," will focus on the science of global warming and recent legal efforts to address it. Cost is \$20.

Montreal outcome offers hope to global warming activists

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25% of greenhouse gases is the U.S. Part of our nation's power derives from its ability to influence other nations. Another part derives from its membership in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP). Although the United States did not ratify the Protocol and become a Member of the Parties (MOP) to the Protocol, it nevertheless is a party to the decision making on how MOP will work. In that capacity the U.S. hoped to monkey-wrench the convention.

The levels of legal decision making are complicated. The U.S. objected to specific language, such as "process" and "dialogue," for which synonyms could not be found. In the end, the nations realized that the U.S. would accept no compromise language, and that it intended killing the only international mechanism to limit CO₂ emissions.

The Bush administration was the villain in the drama. It was not clear that Kyoto would survive.

I went to Montreal to demonstrate to the negotiating delegates that, while the American delegation was obstructionist, the American people support the Protocols. Our NGOs did this by hosting "side events." California, the eighth largest economy in the world, sent state commissioners from their utilities to explain how they are committed to cutting emissions 80% by 2050.

Greg Nickels, mayor of Seattle, spoke about the 190 mayors of U.S. cities pledged to do the same. David Foster, president of the United Steel Workers Union, the mayor of Biloxi, Miss., and many others came to speak. Sierra Club Canada invited Bill Clinton to speak at the last side event. Our great coup was that he

accepted as the official invitee of the City of Montreal.

Clinton's main points were, "Climate change is real, accelerating, and caused by human activities." He emphasized that we are globally interdependent and must work together; that there are exciting solutions; and that these solutions will create millions of jobs and be an enormous economic benefit to the U.S. and the world. Clinton suggested a novel approach to cutting emissions, namely that we could more readily agree on specific projects than on abstract goals, and that might be a more productive way to achieve these goals. His speech was so positive, it was almost joyful.*

A coalition of international youths staged creative events daily. For example, one day they gave out chinese fortune cookies with such messages as: "You will seriously negotiate for post-2012," "You will express political urgency on climate issues today," and so on. On John Lennon's memorial they sang appropriate Beatles songs, including a climate version of Yellow Submarine. They did this in a spot where the delegates could not escape it. They had to experience the event.

Towards the end of the convention, the U.S. walked out, refusing even to participate in the negotiations. President Paul Martin of Canada declared that the world will move ahead without the obstructionist Bush administration. "Bush's negotiators have shown how out of touch he is with the rest of the world, in-

* Bill Clinton's energizing speech is available at www.sierraclub.ca Scroll down to: POSTINGS. Click on: "Clinton in Montreal." The site also has details of what was accomplished in Montreal.

cluding the people of America."

On the last day, the delegates worked through the night and, in a flurry of activity into the wee hours, they passed the necessary language to ensure the launching of Kyoto Phase Two in 2012. If they had not done that at this meeting, the Kyoto Protocol would have ended forever. They passed the rules necessary to make the Protocols work. A decision was made to carefully prepare for the discussions at the next meeting in December, 2006, scheduled for Nairobi.

In sum, the delegates solidly affirmed the Kyoto process. They also formally affirmed that no nations have more at stake in the ongoing process than the developing countries who are the most vulnerable to climate change.

This victory was snatched from the policy makers of the Bush administration. It is probable that a crucial component in this victory was the strong presence of American business leaders, faith groups (including evangelicals), American youth, American labor, the mayors of 190 cities and the governors of 11 states demanding higher auto fuel standards.

At the end of the conference the Canadian prime minister declared: "There is such a thing as a global conscience."

There is a moral to this story. Bill McKibben, one of our greatest environmental writers, did not attend because he could not bear to watch the U.S. kill the Kyoto Protocols. But the NGOs refused to take "no" for an answer. They were resolute and energized. With diligence and intelligence they worked together. The impossible became possible.

Moisha Blechman chairs the Atlantic Chapter's Publications Committee.

Albany Update



by John Stouffer, Legislative Director

Pataki's '08 aspirations likely to shape 2006 legislative outcome

Will the New York State Senate act to protect our waters? Some unique factors are in play, but as always, it's up to us. "Even" years, or years when state legislators stand for election in New York, always stand out from the non-electoral years in that legislators do seem to pay a bit more attention to winning victories for key constituencies. 2006, however, should stand out from past "even" years in recent history.

Of the three players that define what happens in the New York State Legislature, the Senate leadership and Governor Pataki face new and unique challenges this election year. Since Governor Pataki is not running for reelection, this is the first statewide election that he will be able to sit out completely. Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and other players in the Senate leadership have to look ahead to a strongly contested effort to keep their majority status. For the Assembly leadership, with their 50-plus seat advantage, the question becomes how much political capital they will spend to take advantage of this somewhat unique electoral year to better New York's environment.

2006 marks the end of George E. Pataki's 12-year run as the governor of New York and the beginning of his serious run for president in 2008. His attention is most likely divided between putting the finishing touches on his legacy and creating a record that will appeal to Republican primary voters.

The question for the governor is whether his actions related to the environment this year will polish, or tarnish, his environmental record. The governor's most defining moment to date in 2006 is his budget proposal, which spells out a variety of proposals that relate directly to the Sierra Club's environmental priorities for New York.

The state Constitution grants New York's governor sweeping powers to define the budget. Governor Pataki gets to introduce bills that specify appropriations for various programs of the state government, how that money will be raised, as well as changes in state law that are necessary to implement the budget.

While there are many other ways for the governor to either increase or weaken environmental protection in the state, the budget process is one of the governor's most potent tools in changing state law. Governor Pataki's 2006 budget straddles the

Can Senator Bruno stonewall the environment again? To a large extent, the answer depends on how effective the Sierra Club and other environmental organizations are in making our issues known to New York's voters.

environmental issue, at least from the perspective of the Sierra Club's Atlantic Chapter priorities.

On the support side are proposals to expand New York's wetland protection law to protect "so-called" isolated wetlands. The governor's wetlands proposal is less comprehensive than the Clean Water Protection/Flood Prevention Act (A.2048/A.2081), but still provides protection for the wetlands that the federal government has abandoned.

Another proposal in the support column relates to expanding New York's Environmental Protection Fund from \$150 million to \$180 million.

One of the more prominent items in the governor's budget that we oppose is a proposal to create an all terrain vehicle (ATV) trail fund and an ATV program at the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Will Governor Pataki insist that wetlands are comprehensively protected, or establish a program at DEC to create ATV trails on public and private lands? In some part, at least, the answer to these questions depends on how he wants to be remembered by New Yorkers and how he thinks these issues will play with Republican primary voters in 2008.

The 2004 elections led to a surprise narrowing of the margin of advantage that the Republic Party holds in the New York State Senate. This result, combined with surprising Republican losses in municipal elections in 2005, has increased pressure on the Senate leadership to demonstrate that they represent an agenda in step with voters' concerns. It is not clear at the moment how environmental issues will factor into the calculations of the Senate leadership.

Last year the Senate leadership stonewalled the environmental community on its top priority issues, in-

cluding wetlands, the Bigger Better Bottle Bill (A.2517-a/S2190-a) and the Community Preservation Act (A6450A/S3153), which empowers towns to establish tax-financed funds to purchase and protect natural areas.

The Clean Water Protection/Flood Prevention Act would close a loophole that has allowed more than 150 wetlands in the state to be filled without any regulatory oversight. This is a core environmental issue, crucial to the protection of surface drinking water supplies, protection of healthy fisheries and protection against flooding, yet Senator Bruno felt comfortable with simply ignoring the issue in 2005.

The question for 2006 is whether Senator Bruno can stonewall on these issues again, with at least seven of his members currently representing districts in which Democratic party enrollment significantly overshadows Republican party enrollment. To a large extent, the answer to this question depends on how effective the Sierra Club and other environmental organizations are in making our issues known to New York's voters.

Last year the Assembly passed all

of the environmental community's must-do environmental legislation. This year the Assembly has already passed the Clean Water Protection/Flood Prevention Act.

The Assembly's leadership on these issues is greatly appreciated, but there is more that they could do. For example, if Assembly leadership made closing New York's wetland protection loophole a must-do budget issue, it would be very difficult for Senate leadership to stonewall passage of this issue.

Whether the unique circumstances of 2006 play out to the benefit or the detriment of New York's environment depends in large part on what we as Sierra Club members do. If we let our state legislators know that we want them to address an issue as critical as preserving the safety of our drinking water, or preventing our homes and neighborhoods from flooding, there is a good chance it will happen.

SPARC partner in debt

As reported on page 3 of this issue of *Sierra Atlantic*, the joint efforts of the Stewart Park and Reserve Coalition (SPARC), Sierra Club and the Orange County Federation of Sportsmen have come to a successful conclusion. Because of this effort, 1,900 acres of wild lands will be protected and open for use by hikers, bikers, equestrians, hunters and fishers.

This victory is especially important since Orange County, where these lands are located, is seeing open space destroyed by sprawl at a faster rate than anywhere else in the state.

That's the good news. The other side of this equation is that SPARC, our partner in this effort, has racked up an enormous legal bill. To help celebrate our joint victory and pay off the debt, visit the SPARC website, www.frontiernet.net/~sparc/.

Chapter hires new legislative assistant

The Atlantic Chapter has hired Theresa Cassiack as legislative associate in our Albany office. She is already hard at work on our legislative priorities.

Theresa comes to us with a diverse background in environmental activism and community organizing. She began her environmentalist career in high school and followed that thread to the present.

Theresa has worked at the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) and VPIRG. During that time she was successful in helping to pass the state's Clean Indoor Air Law, which banned smoking in most indoor establishments, including bars and restaurants. Most recently she was employed with the Sexual Assault Crisis Team in Montpelier, Vermont.

Theresa attended the State University of New York at Albany and graduated in 2000 with a degree in political theory. It was during this time that she discovered the Albany activist community and the work that needed to be done on the state and federal levels.

She got a summer job with

NYPIRG as a canvasser. She spent 15 weeks going door to door in the capital district urging citizens to take action on pressing environmental issues, including the refinancing of the state superfund and the pesticide neighborhood notification law.

During her junior year, she was a legislative intern with NYPIRG and served on its board of directors and as the youth liaison coordinator for Kids Against Pollution.

After graduating from college, Theresa spent the next two and a half years as a canvass director in the summers for NYPIRG, running offices in Albany and Syracuse, focused on raising money for the organization and teaching people how to get involved in local environmental campaigns. During the school year, she was a NYPIRG coordinator at Queensborough Community College and Purchase College.

In 2002, Theresa moved back to Albany to take a position as the NYPIRG public health advocate.

Bob Kerr, chair,
Office & Personnel Committee

Peak oil: Addicts in denial can't kick their habit

by Richard A. Rehberg, Ph.D.

[Before President Bush used addiction as a metaphor in his State of the Union speech, Richard Rehberg sent us this report.]

The United States suffers a serious problem of substance abuse. The substances we abuse meet three criteria of addiction:

- They produce pleasure.
- The more we use the more we want.
- The thought of withdrawal triggers pain, while the actual act precipitates a catastrophic cascade of events.

The substances: cocaine and heroin, and petroleum. Our purpose is not to discuss our craving for narcotics from Colombia and Afghanistan; it is to discuss our insatiable thirst for black gold from the Middle East, South America, Russia, Central Asia, Africa, and Russia.

The world does not face imminent exhaustion of heroin and cocaine; it does face imminent exhaustion of petroleum.

In the almost 150 years since its discovery, the world has consumed some 1 trillion barrels of oil; much of it by the United States. Annually, the world consumes 28-32 billion barrels of which the U.S. is responsible for about 6-7 bb, or 25%. Daily, the U.S. consumes about 22 million barrels. Two thirds of U.S. oil is imported.

The U.S. economy is almost totally dependent on oil. It powers 40% of our total energy "wants." Virtually everything we use embodies petroleum. The food we eat requires diesel for farm machinery, gasoline for truck transportation, and electricity for refrigeration and cooking. Oil fuels auto, air, and train travel. Oil is the feedstock for the plastics that shape our computers, our cell telephones, much of our clothing, and, importantly, the complex molecules



of many pharmaceuticals. Oil pumps and distributes the water we drink and the waste we dump. Oil is the essence of modern life.

Our thirst for this hydrocarbon knows no bounds. Like the addict who has built his or her world around that white powder, we have constructed our economy, polity, and society on this black liquid hydrocarbon. We have developed an addiction to oil and all that it produces. To pay for that dependency, we mortgage our geopolitical security and financial independence to petro-states, many of which are autocracies, politically unstable, or have populations hostile to the United States.

Petroleum geologists, among them M. King Hubbert, Colin J. Campbell, and Kenneth S. Dreffeyes, believe that between 2010 and 2030, humankind shall have extracted 50% of all recoverable petroleum. Economists, captivated by their belief in the "free market," argue that ever rising prices will produce ever rising oil supplies. A review of oil production in the United States, the most intensively and extensively drilled land in the world, where barrels per day peaked in the mid 1970s, lends no support

to that ideology.

Soon — sooner than many of us think — we shall have to come to terms with the geological fact that the Earth will no longer satiate our addiction to black gold. The sooner we end our denial of addiction, the earlier we seek treatment, the easier will be our withdrawal. Considering the inertia and corporate corruption of our elected political officials, our reluctance to develop alternative energy, and our lethargy in promoting conservation and efficiency, some writers, Richard Heinberg most prominently, believe that it already may be too late.

Peak oil, within the next one to three decades, then, will trigger a cascade of fascinating events perhaps unprecedented in human history. Energy prices will rise dramatically. Once markets sense that half of all recoverable oil has been extracted, consuming nations will race to capture what oil remains by bidding ever higher prices for the remaining barrels of oil. Suburban life built by cheap oil will become progressively untenable. As *Business Week* put it, "Big houses. Big cars. Now bigger bills. A lifestyle built on

cheap energy and cheap credit is [in] jeopardy."

Food, one of the most energy intensive sectors (it takes 10 calories of hydrocarbon energy to produce 1 calorie of food energy), will become more local and organic in response to escalating costs of energy, fertilizer, and transportation. Our economy, built on cheap oil, will undergo major change, precipitating, in turn, political and social change, some perhaps abrupt and non-linear. Geopolitical instability may emerge as nations compete with one another, not necessarily peacefully, for remaining energy supplies. Life as we know it will experience a revolution few are capable of imagining.

What can be done to ease the transition? Making up for a lost 30 years, we must:

- ensure that informed and honest elected officials address the implications of peak oil
- accelerate funding for alternative energy
- embrace re-centralization of our lifestyles around major urban hubs,
- develop rapid, high-speed long distance rail systems — the most efficient transport mode
- control human population to the lower carrying capacity of an energy-starved world.

However shocking, peak oil will have one beneficial effect: unless we revert to coal, the depletion of oil will reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide, thus mitigating global climate change. After all, 2005 has been the warmest year on record!

Richard A. Rehberg is former director of the Program in Administration, Binghamton University, where, among other subjects, he taught graduate seminars in environmental policy. He currently lectures on major environmental issues and is now organizing a national conference, "Energy and the City: Challenges and Opportunities of the Coming Carbon Crises."

Peak oil: Preparing for the coming energy crisis

by Dan Miner

President Bush said we are addicted to oil, and he's right, but neither his belated admission nor his policies go far enough. We will have to break the addiction, not to Middle Eastern oil alone, but to all oil, because of other parts of the energy dilemma he didn't address. If we deal with them, we can make the transition much less difficult than it will be otherwise.

During the 20th century, oil became our energy source of choice. Consider how much of human activity completely depends on cheap supplies of fossil fuels, and the depth of the addiction is clear.

Further, we take oil completely for granted until our access is constrained, which happened in the last few years, with oil prices climbing from \$28 to more than \$70 a barrel. Goldman Sachs has warned of higher prices for at least five more years and spikes to over \$100 per barrel, but

Even small supply disruptions can have surprisingly severe impacts. With fiercer hurricanes, and growing tensions with Iran and Venezuela, new crises will soon emerge.

here's why that prediction is too conservative:

The world's steadily increasing demand for oil has grown to nearly match the combined production capacity of all oil fields, which means that reserve capacity has virtually disappeared. National security experts predict that because of this, even small fuel supply disruptions can have surprisingly disproportionate, severe economic impacts. We've

seen this theory confirmed by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. With the Gulf of Mexico a bowling alley for climate change-amplified hurricanes, and growing tensions with Iran and Venezuela, new crises will soon emerge to test the theory again.

In the past, we could respond just by finding and drilling more oil, but we won't have that option for long. Oil, gas and coal were all formed millions of years ago, and only finite quantities exist. Most of the easily accessible fuel supplies were found a long time ago, and now, new discoveries are small and few.

When half of all the earth's oil is used up, production will decline, and the remaining oil will be increasingly expensive to extract. Predictions regarding the time of world oil production peak vary, with the U.S. Geological Service calculating its arrival in 2037. The Association for the Study of Peak Oil, an international group of geologists and other scientists, claims that peak will arrive by 2010.

The Hirsch Report, commissioned by the U.S. Department of Energy, states that "the peaking of world oil production presents the U.S. and the world with an unprecedented risk management problem. As peaking is approached, liquid fuel prices and price volatility will increase dramatically, and, without timely mitigation, the economic, social and political costs will be unprecedented." Congressman Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD), founder of the Peak Oil Caucus in Congress, affirms the report's call for a national emergency effort to buy time with energy conservation and efficiency while we develop alternative fuels and solar and wind power.

This is also the program to slow global warming, the other consequence of our fossil fuel addiction. The abstract threat of melting icecaps has not motivated comfortable Americans, but a fuel-depletion induced recession may economically force us to cut back. If enough of us

continued on page 10

Out-of-step Jamestown plans coal-burning power plant

by Walter Simpson

The City of Jamestown is planning to build a \$145 million 40-megawatt coal-burning power plant. The new plant will use fluidized bed combustion and other pollution control technologies. As such, it will produce substantially less acid-rain causing pollutants than the old coal burning power plant it is replacing but only slightly less carbon dioxide, thus continuing to fuel global warming and climate change.

The Atlantic Chapter and other environmental groups, including NRDC, NYPIRG, Pace Energy Project and the Environmental Advocates of New York, have criticized these plans and called on the City of Jamestown and the Jamestown Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to identify environmentally responsible strategies for meeting Jamestown's electric needs — including energy efficiency and conservation, and renewable energy resources. While expensive, the use of natural gas would also be environmentally preferable to coal.

Global warming, fueled primarily by the burning of fossil fuels, is among the most serious problems facing our society today. The April 2003 report, "Confronting Climate Change in the Great Lakes Region," published by the Union of Con-



cerned Scientists and the Ecological Society of America, identified likely impacts from global warming on New York State, some of which are as follows:

- By the end of this century, temperatures are expected to rise 6-7 degrees in the winter and 7-8 degrees in the summer. Extreme heat will be more common.
- Precipitation is likely to increase in the winter and decrease during the summer when drier soils and droughts could adversely affect agriculture.
- Great Lakes levels are expected to decline, reducing wetlands, groundwater recharge, and hydroelectricity generation. Declining Great Lakes water levels will also adversely affect shipping.

- Summer stratification of lakes will increase, adding to risk of oxygen depletion and formation of deep water "dead zones" for fish and other organisms — especially in Lake Erie.

- Summer heat-related deaths are expected to increase.

- Higher temperatures, more air conditioning, and greater electricity consumption and generation will increase the formation of ground-level ozone and thus exacerbate asthma and other respiratory diseases.

- Property damage will increase because of more frequent extreme rainstorms and floods.

It is imperative that our energy practices change in order to mitigate global warming and consequences like these.

It is disturbing that Jamestown is considering making a long-term commitment to a new coal-fired power plant while the rest of the region is turning toward more sustainable energy policies. Both Governor George Pataki and Attorney General Eliot Spitzer have been vocal proponents of the need to address power plant pollution.

New York is in the process of implementing a Renewable Portfolio Standard to shift the mix of generation away from dirty conventional sources of energy and toward clean renewable sources. And New York

has been a key participant in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) with other Northeast states to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide from power plants in the region.

The Jamestown BPU calls its proposed new plant an example of "clean coal" technology, but this is a misnomer, since the new plant does not sequester carbon. Coal is the most carbon-rich fossil fuel and burning it produces the most carbon dioxide per kilowatt hour. Thus, Jamestown's plans to build a coal burning power plant are seriously out of step with state and regional efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

New York has vast untapped potential for energy efficiency. An analysis conducted for the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority found that in New York a majority (77-81%) of efficiency strategies examined are cost-effective even in areas of the state, like Western New York, which have the lowest electricity prices.

Jamestown's residential customers paid \$.0467/kWh and used, on average, over 9,000 kWh in 2004. Jamestown's price of electricity is sufficient to provide an incentive for conservation and efficiency. And high levels of consumption show room for improvement. The same is likely to be true in its commercial and industrial sectors.

While there has been some renewed energy efficiency activity in Jamestown (perhaps spurred by criticism by the Sierra Club and others), the BPU's last serious efforts in this area — in the early 1990s — suggests that the time is ripe to try again. Technological advances over the last 15 years increases the potential for improvements. Moreover, energy efficiency has consistently been shown to be more cost-effective than building new power plants.

A recent analysis suggests that some of Jamestown's power needs could be met by new wind energy and that this electricity would be cheaper than the relatively expensive electric power from the proposed plant.

Ironically, Jamestown has been recognized as an environmental and energy leader. Its district heating system is regarded as a statewide model. Regrettably, Jamestown's plans to build a coal-burning power plant contradict its previous environmental commitments.

Walter Simpson is an energy professional and member of the Atlantic Chapter's Energy Committee.

Cornell expert: Making bio-fuel takes more energy than it yields

by Susan S. Lang

Turning plants such as corn, soybeans and sunflowers into fuel uses much more energy than the resulting ethanol or biodiesel generates, according to a new Cornell University and University of California-Berkeley study.

"There is just no energy benefit to using plant biomass for liquid fuel," says David Pimentel, professor of ecology and agriculture at Cornell. "These strategies are not sustainable."

Pimentel and Tad W. Patzek, professor of civil and environmental engineering at Berkeley, conducted a detailed analysis of the energy input-yield ratios of producing ethanol from corn, switch grass and wood biomass as well as for producing biodiesel from soybean and sunflower plants. Their report is published in *Natural Resources Research* (Vol. 14:1, 65-76).

In terms of energy output compared with energy input for ethanol production, the study found that:

- corn requires 29 percent more fossil energy than the fuel produced;
- switch grass requires 45 percent more fossil energy than the fuel produced; and
- wood biomass requires 57 percent more fossil energy than the fuel produced.

In terms of energy output compared with the energy input for biodiesel production, the study

found that:

- soybean plants require 27 percent more fossil energy than the fuel produced, and
- sunflower plants require 118 percent more fossil energy than the fuel produced.

In assessing inputs, the researchers considered such factors as the energy used in producing the crop (including production of pesticides and fertilizer, running farm machinery and irrigating, grinding and transporting the crop) and in fermenting/distilling the ethanol from the water mix. Although additional costs are incurred, such as federal and state subsidies that are passed on to consumers and the costs associated with environmental pollution or degradation, these figures were not included in the analysis.

"The United States desperately needs a liquid fuel replacement for oil in the near future," says Pimentel, "but producing ethanol or biodiesel from plant biomass is going down the wrong road, because you use more energy to produce these fuels than you get out from the combustion of these products."

Although Pimentel advocates the use of burning biomass to produce thermal energy (to heat homes, for example), he deplores the use of biomass for liquid fuel. "The government spends more than \$3 billion a year to subsidize ethanol production when it does not provide a net en-



ergy balance or gain, is not a renewable energy source or an economical fuel.

"Further, its production and use contribute to air, water and soil pollution and global warming," Pimentel says. He points out that the vast majority of the subsidies do not go to farmers but to large ethanol-producing corporations.

"Ethanol production in the United States does not benefit the nation's energy security, its agriculture, economy or the environment," says Pimentel. "Ethanol production requires large fossil energy input, and therefore, it is contributing to oil and natural gas imports and U.S. deficits." He says the country should instead focus its efforts on producing electrical energy from photovoltaic cells, wind power and burning biomass and producing fuel from hydrogen conversion.

Susan S. Lang is a science writer for Cornell News Service.

What you can do

Send letters in opposition to the plant to Governor George Pataki, NYS Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, DEC Commissioner Denise Sheehan, and PSC Chairman William Flynn.

For more information about the Sierra Club's campaign for clean energy for Jamestown, please contact Walter Simpson at enconser@buffalo.edu.

Letters

Bruno constituents: Give Joe your bottles

We're writing to express our frustration with the "bottling up" in the Senate of any legislation permitting deposits and returns for plastic and glass containers, especially those plastic water bottles which seem to be everywhere along trails and roadsides.

We [are asking whether] constituents of Joe Bruno would be willing to save those plastic bottles, maybe in large 30- or 50-gallon plastic bags. If and when the deposit bill comes up,



these constituents could take those bags of bottles down to Joe's office (with press coverage, especially if lots of bottles are collected) and present them to him or his secretary.

The point would be made that denying recycling of these containers doesn't stop them from existing, and that if they are not recycled, they do become someone's problem.

Why not let them be the problem of the person responsible for the problem?

PAUL K. AND DIANA S. PRAUS

Coal, oil, gas, kerosene are also solar power

The winter issue (Volume 32) of *Sierra Atlantic* was one of the best in years. I read the article, "Is Heating With Wood Environmentally Responsible?" by Stephen C. Nicholson with much interest — and relief.

My wife and I are both products of the environmental movement of the early 70's, and continue today to be as earth-friendly, resource-conscious and environmentally responsible as we can. We have heated our log home with wood harvested from dead trees on our country property for the 20 or so years we've lived here in Holley.

Nicholson's article finally put to rest some of my greatest fears concerning our decision to heat with wood, those centering on global warming and on both carbon dioxide and particulate matter release.

While obviously passionate for his cause and caught up in its message, Nicholson parenthetically, albeit correctly, equates firewood as "...really solar power." He is telling us that the sun's energy that was captured by the tree in the photosynthetic process is being released from the wood to warm our homes. That's all true, and makes us wood burners feel more earth-friendly and semi-solar compliant in one simple sentence.

However, his "...really solar power" argument then must hold true for the other less-friendly energy sources he cites. Gas, oil, LPG, coal and kerosene (fossil fuels) are simply longer-term storage forms of the sun's energy than his benevolent tree.

Here I must also point out that "electricity," whether generated by hydroelectric or even wind, fits neatly into his "...really solar power" defense. Readers must step back and realize that the sun's energy ultimately drives the planetary winds and water cycles. The only non-solar exceptions to his "electricity" statement are friendly geothermal sources like those employed and embraced by our Icelandic neighbors, and the not-so-friendly nuclear power generator proliferation we Sierrans have come to despise. As nasty as some other sources of energy may be, in the final analysis, we are not willing to trade off on the nuclear option and damn all future generations with the everlasting curse of radioactive waste.

STEPHEN BLOCH

KENNETH R. KLOPP

Mideast oil boycott is not a good idea

In the Winter 2005 *Sierra Atlantic* Richard Rehberg encourages people to buy gasoline only from companies that don't import oil from the Middle East. I'm not sure this is a good idea.

An oil company that doesn't import oil from the Middle East is probably getting it from either the U.S. (and therefore probably lobbying for oil drilling in ANWR and other ecologically-sensitive areas) or an impoverished third-world nation that can't afford to enforce pollution or worker-safety standards on oil operations within its borders. At least when a multinational oil company negotiates with a wealthy Middle Eastern government, it's a negotiation between equals, and that government can actually make some demands.

Every nation on Earth will eventually run out of its own oil reserves; some have already done so. When a country has none of its own oil left, it becomes 100% dependent on imported oil, and its government and economy become hostage to the whims of oil-producing nations and corporations. A patriotic American wants that day to be as far away as possible, and therefore favors using *mostly* imported oil at present, so that when oil becomes (inevitably) even scarcer and even more valuable, the U.S. will still have some. The Bush Administration's policy, of course, is the exact opposite: use up the U.S.'s relatively small oil reserves as fast as possible, to hasten the day when the U.S. is 100% dependent on foreign oil, and a future president of the U.S. is obliged to kiss the feet of the Prince of Saudi Arabia.

Reducing domestic oil extraction has at least two other benefits. First, it would raise prices, thereby encouraging conservation and alternative-energy research. Second, since American-based corporations would have less interest in encouraging oil consumption, there would be less pro-consumption, anti-conservation lobbying pressure on U.S. and state governments.



Real estate broker offers \$2,000 for largest dead coyote

by Harold Bauer, Ph.D.

Dick Kraft Real Estate of Honeoye (Ontario County) is offering a \$2,000 Grand Prize to the shooter who kills the biggest coyote before the competition ends March 26. The bounty is likely to cost the lives of many coyote families.

In February, several local pro-coyote advocates took out a half-page advertisement in the *Valley News* discouraging the prize hunt. The ad included a color photo of two coyote pups by their den. An Auburn-based group, "Save the Crows," is advocating a NYS Assembly and Senate bill prohibiting prize hunts. For some perspective on the issue, see the state endangered species list at the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation website, www.dec.state.ny.us.

Coyotes, *Canis latrans*, are the best runners of all canids, can leap 14 feet, and cruise at 25-30 mph;

they travel up to 400 miles and are strong swimmers. They are opportunists who eat rabbits, enormous numbers of mice, other rodents and carrion.

A coyote stalks like a pointer, freezing before it pounces. As a local keystone in our food chain, it is one of the last two-foot-tall predators of larger and small prey in the East. They are rare, though hunting them is legal with a DEC-issued permit.

Kraft's \$2,000 prize will attract money-seeking hunters. Farmers shooting at a rare coyote pestering their chickens is one thing, but this big-prize contest shows that one estate broker has money to kill!

Appalled? To express your views, you may contact Dick Kraft at the Honeoye Business Park (4838 Business Park, Honeoye, NY), or call him at 585-229-5253, ext. 27.

Harold Bauer, a member of the Rochester Group, is chair of the Chapter's Wilderness & Wildlife Committee. For more information, call him at 585-335-2623.

OUTINGS • OUTINGS • OUTINGS



Get Out There

There's nothing like learning about nature with fellow Sierrans. New York's Groups offer a great variety of activities — and lots of them — for you to have fun while expanding your understanding. For an up-to-date list of Sierra Club outings, go to <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/outings>

If you need information, have questions about the Atlantic Chapter Outings Committee, or wish to volunteer, call 212-791-2400, option 1, or send an e-mail to acocoutings@pobox.com

Pick your passion and help preserve state's environment

WHATEVER YOUR INTERESTS, opportunities abound to work with fellow Sierrans to enjoy, explore and protect the beautiful state of New York. Below are the names of administrative and conservation committees, subcommittees, campaigns and task forces of the Atlantic Chapter as well as its 11 regional Group chairs.

Unless otherwise noted, the persons listed after committees are their chairs; where a "contact" is listed, no chair has yet been appointed and you have an opportunity to show some leadership skills.

Chapter Administrative Committees

Bylaws & Standing Rules Julius Shultz, 914-946-1271, origdax@aol.com
Environmental Justice Samara Swanston, 718-565-0529, fotlah@earthlink.net
Financial Affairs Chris Hayes, 585-244-5267, antlers@frontiernet.net
Honors and Awards Ginger Ursitti, 716-874-6769, ginger_u2001@yahoo.com
Membership Martha Loew, 315-492-4745, mloew@twcny.rr.com
Office and Personnel Bob Kerr, 518-869-1034, rkerr2000@earthlink.net
Political Harold Cohen, 718-998-0805, hcohen5608@earthlink.net
Publications Moisha Blechman, 518-329-0531, mblechman@earthlink.net
Webmaster Mike Stroh, 716-694-4092, stroh78@adelphia.net

Chapter Conservation Committees

CONSERVATION CHAIR Hugh Mitchell, 716-244-2625, goshawk@frontiernet.net
Adirondacks John Nemjo, 518-279-0771, johnnemjo@aol.com, and Roger T. Gray, 518-434-8681, rtg50@aol.com (co-chairs)
Air Quality Warren Berger, 212-663-3768, greenwarren33@yahoo.com
Airports Karen and Julius Shultz, 914-946-1271, origdax@aol.com (co-chairs)
Biodiversity/Vegetarian Outreach Linda DeStefano, 315-488-2140, linpar@acmgfcu.net
Clean Water/Watershed Jay Laubscher, 212-566-6275, heylobster@hotmail.com
Energy Annie Wilson, 212-388-9780, mamamita88@aol.com
Environmental Education Maureen-Ferraro-Davis, 518-235-0728, maureenfd@aol.com
Farm and Food Yvonne Tasker-Rothenberg, 315-446-8622, ytaskerr@twcny.rr.com
Global Warming Moisha Blechman, 518-329-0531, mblechman@earthlink.net, and Hugh Mitchell, 716-244-2625, goshawk@frontiernet.net (co-chairs)
Great Lakes Wayne Howard, 585-359-9782, wdhoward@rochester.rr.com
Hudson River PCB Cleanup Pete Sheehan, 518-489-5803, psheehan12@netzero.net and John Van Deloo, 518-370-4932, jvdmd@aol.com (co-chairs)
Legislative John Klotz, 718-601-2044, jklotz@walrus.com
Open Space Susan Lawrence, 518-489-5721, shlawr2@aol.com
Population Diane Buxbaum, 718-855-2399, ddbuxbaum@earthlink.net
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Executive Committee Report

by James Lane, Secretary

Atlantic Chapter elects officers

At the Atlantic Chapter ExCom's January meeting in New York City and in a follow-up telephone conference call, the ExCom elected Chapter officers, Steering Committee members, and the national Council Delegate and Alternate, and approved committee appointments. [See list of officers at left.]

One notable change in the committee structure was the abolition of the St. Lawrence Cement Task Force, in light of the defeat of the proposed plant. Based on input from each Group and from the legislative director, the ExCom approved conservation priorities and legislative priorities for the coming year.

An issue of general concern across the state is climate change/global warming. In the Legislature, we expect to press again for the wetlands bill that attracted much support last year. The ExCom also addressed specific issues of creating a new Brooklyn Bridge Park and protecting the Shawangunk Ridge.

Administratively, the adoption of a Chapter budget for 2006 was accompanied by the establishment of new procedures for the submission and review of the Groups' financial reports. The remaining quarterly ExCom meetings will be held in Albany, Beacon, and Syracuse.

At-large election results

The winning candidates for at-large delegate to the Atlantic Chapter's Executive Committee were Jack Hoyt, Diane Buxbaum, Ginger Ursitti, Rachel Treichler, and Jim Lane. Vote totals were, Jack Hoyt: 251; Martha Loew: 220; Diane Buxbaum: 270; Yvonne Tasker-Rothenberg: 191; Ginger Ursitti: 272; Hugh Mitchell: 220; Rachel Treichler: 233; Jim Lane: 247; Frank Morris: 206.

Chapter sets 2006 conservation priorities

There are so many threats to the environment. Unfortunately, the Atlantic Chapter has limited resources to work on them all, so we identified and prioritized the issues of greatest concern by running a state-wide survey of issues and then asking our 11 Chapter Groups to vote on these conservation topics, placing them in priority order.

This year 22 active Conservation Committees were identified. Clearly topping the list of Chapter concerns

are global warming and energy, followed closely by clean water/NY watersheds, sprawl/open space and air quality.

Our second ranked group of committees include wetlands, population, farm and food, Adirondacks and solid waste. (See list of conservation committees and leaders at left.)

These top 10 committees will receive priority funding in our budget, but the remaining concerns will also receive attention.

What matters most to you?

The environment of New York state needs your effort. Below is a list of some of the issues and activities of concern to the Sierra Club's Atlantic Chapter. Please mark up to four of these that most interest you. Your choices will be sent to the appropriate committee chair. You may send an e-mail with this information to the Chapter coordinator (bobbie.josepher@sierraclub.org) or mail this coupon, with your name, address and e-mail address, to **Member Questionnaire, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, PO Box 886, Syosset, NY 11791-0886.**

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adirondacks | <input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity/Veg. Outreach | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Farm & Food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising | <input type="checkbox"/> Global Warming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Open Space |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Population | <input type="checkbox"/> Solid Waste |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sprawl | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife & Wilderness | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

I would like to be on the Chapter listserv to receive **state** action alerts.

I would like to be on my Group listserv to receive **local** action alerts.

Please print:

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GE cleanup

continued from page 1

and still is, the responsible party for 78 Superfund sites across the nation. GE is currently engaged in an effort to overturn the U.S. Superfund law, which allows the government to hold polluters liable for the cost of cleaning up toxic discharges.

The PCB Cleanup Committee had its work cut out for it. Led by community activist and new Sierra Club member Aaron Mair, the committee tried a novel approach, unlike the tactics of other Hudson River activist groups. Up to that time, others had been essentially haggling with GE and the EPA over concentrations of chemicals in the water column — an approach which had stalemated for several years at the “my scientists are better than your scientists” mode. And the EPA dithered.

Mair’s perception was that this issue was much more than a problem of the chemistry of the Hudson River water column — it was a real people problem. Members of low-income communities up and down the river, from Hudson Falls to Manhattan, were using fish from the river as a significant source of protein for the family table — fish laced with so much PCB toxin that in some cases, if disposed of legally, the fish should have been sent to a certified hazardous waste landfill. PCBs in the river had, and have, a direct impact on low-income communities.

The Atlantic Chapter’s entry into the Hudson cleanup campaign invigorated the Hudson River activist groups and heightened media focus on the issue. Sierra Club National Conservation Director Bruce Hamilton was so impressed by the Cleanup Committee’s planning matrix that he worked to have the Hudson River campaign designated a national Sierra Club Environmental Public Education Campaign, with Club financial resources assigned to campaign activities. With the assistance of the Club’s Northeast re-



Prior to a U.S. EPA hearing in Hudson Falls, Sierra Club demonstrators urge GE to clean up the PCBs in the Hudson River at this rally in November 2000 organized by the Atlantic Chapter.

gional office, the committee turned out hundreds of protesters and speakers at EPA hearings on the cleanup in communities up and down the Hudson, from sub-zero nights in Saratoga to sweltering afternoons in Kingston.

Committee Chair Aaron Mair was interviewed by Paul Raber for a large story on the Hudson River PCB contamination for *Sierra Magazine*, and he was featured on the banks of the Hudson in a large segment in Bill Moyers’ weekly PBS television program, *NOW*. The cleanup became the pet project of a columnist for the *Albany Times-Union* newspaper. All this media coverage, hundreds of letters written to the EPA, hundreds of hours of public statements at EPA hearings, hundreds of words of editorial opinions — from *The New York Times* to the *Troy Record* — culminated in an EPA decision that everyone hoped for, but no one expected.

Almost all of the Chapter’s work on the Hudson River campaign oc-

curred prior to the 2000 Presidential election. In July, 2001, George Bush was in the White House and Christie Todd Whitman, former governor of New Jersey, was his newly appointed administrator of the EPA. It had announced that, after more than two years of hearings and studies, it would issue a ruling on the Hudson River cleanup. One could almost sense the media collectively holding its breath. The Albany press whispered in a small article that Governor Pataki had made an unscheduled, unannounced visit to Whitman, speculating that he was lobbying for a full cleanup of the PCB contaminated sites. There were rumors of GE Chairman Jack Welch calling the White House to press for no cleanup; GE’s party line was that “the river is cleaning itself.”

Finally, on August 1, the EPA announced that Whitman had given her final approval to a plan, developed under the Clinton administration’s EPA, requiring GE to commit to a full cleanup of the PCB-contaminated

sites in the upper Hudson River bottom. Governor Pataki applauded the decision, asserting, “Science supports the EPA decision.” It was all over but the champagne. Oh, and that pesky dredge plan.

Flash forward four years, a Bush re-election, and two new EPA administrators, Christie Whitman having resigned after too many confrontations with the Bush administration over enforcing federal environmental regulations.

We are too close to success on this issue to let behind-the-scenes maneuvering at the EPA dilute the complete cleanup of the Hudson River PCBs. Please contact Pete Sheehan or John Van Deloo through Chris Ballantyne at the Sierra Club’s Northeast regional office (518-587-9166) if you would like to help out.

Roger Gray is a member of the Hudson Mohawk Group’s Executive Committee.

Peak oil: Preparing for the coming energy crisis

continued from page 6

grasp the big picture, as Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope writes, we may be able to link the urgency of the coming crises with progress towards sustainable solutions.

What if we don’t? Price hikes and supply disruptions may be downplayed as temporary setbacks, or blamed on their immediate causes, such as profiteering oil companies or terrorists. That will perpetuate complacency we can’t afford and distract the public from the big picture. Worse yet, those explanations can justify endless military campaigns for control of dwindling oil supplies when we need to break free of them instead.

Joining the list of short-sighted solutions are temporary substitutes like nuclear power and coal. Both will leave enormous environmental damage long after their resources are used up, with the main problem, our need for permanent and renewable energy, left unresolved for impoverished future generations. Likewise,

neither ANWR, tar sands, oil shale, hydrogen cars, nor cold fusion can be brought to market in time to make a difference.

A massive transition to a sustainable energy infrastructure is the only thing that will work. It will yield vast new business opportunities, greater national security, and a cleaner and safer environment, while slowing climate change. Sweden is taking this route, planning to be oil-free by 2020. To follow their example, we should look at future fuel price shocks as opportunities to educate our communities about the full scope of the energy dilemma.

After reading the Hirsch Report, prudent leaders in government, business and media will envision their constituents waiting in line for \$8 gasoline, and will want to know what to do. Building ethanol and biodiesel plants will take time, but there are ways to conserve fuel in a hurry, such as highway speed limits, reduced fees for public transit, car pooling, and telecommuting. Can we

get these programs set up and promoted before they are needed? Initiatives to get travelers out of cars and into buses and trains will begin as emergency measures, but will become standard practice. After a few fuel shocks, and an invigorating campaign of public honesty, we may be collectively willing to trade our SUVs for a robust national rail system.

Moreover, with much of our food supply shipped cross-country in gas-guzzling trucks, it’s a matter of time before farms start springing up within a short drive of cities, not because of the slow food movement, but simply to cut costs.

The first step on the path of adaptation is raising public awareness. A conference set for April 27–29 in Manhattan will bring national and local experts to address the fuel depletion problem. For conference information and the report, “*Preparing NYC for the Coming Energy Crisis*,” go to www.peakoilnyc.org.

Dan Miner chairs the NYC Group’s Energy Committee.

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Here's to the harbingers of renewal

by Rick Marsi

The early bird catches a mouthful of snow, frigid water and mud everywhere.

So what? To a bird, navigating through mud, cold and snow constitutes a mere day at the office.

The last night in February, Canada geese by the thousands flew over. These were not golf course squatters — year-rounders averse to the rigors migration inflicts. These were south-to-north fliers, aloft where, on clear days, a goose-eye-view spans 50 miles.

Their honks filtered down from invisible places. They fell softly, like parachutes, intermingling with raindrops that melted snow drifts piled around us. Swirled by a changeable southerly breeze, the calls swelled and diminished, their volume distorting, as illusive and ephemeral as shimmering heat on a highway.

Let it snow, let the wind shift and slam those geese right in the face. Let it force them to land on a frozen lake, cupping their wings, dropping through a driving snowstorm. Exposed on the ice, they will tuck their webbed feet into soft belly down. They will thrust their heads under their wings. Then they will sleep, facing into the wind, as the snow piles against their pale breasts.

Robins, too, will arrive before anyone says life is easy. Poking about, they will seek out the seeps where spring runoff has melted deep snow.



If the ground is exposed, they will toss up wet leaves, seeking comatose grubs rich in protein.

If it snows again, robins will flock to the fuzzy red fruits of last season's gangly staghorn sumac, a species detractors insist is a weed not a tree.

I don't care what it is: it saves robins hit hard by March storms.

And then there are redwings, those blackbirds whose calls say as much about spring as the high-flying honk of a goose.

It is not a "pretty" song, this harsh trill observers describe phonetically as *o-ka-lee* or *honk-a-ree*, but it tells us the marshes and corn fields are thawing, that muck is replacing hard frost.

The call of redwings says pond ice

has lost its translucence, turning dark as it turns into slush. It tells me male redwings will soon set up shop — one pair on my small pond but dozens on larger wetlands.

If you want to feel spring, sit and watch a male redwing. When the male arches forward on its perch, spreads its wings to the side, flashes its red shoulder patches and lets loose with a loud *honk-a-ree*, that tells other male redwings the territory in question is claimed.

If two males are perched in close proximity, and both birds crane their necks skyward, pushing their bills in the air — while at the same time exposing their shoulder patches — the signal is obvious: each bird has approached the other's territorial boundary too closely.

While you watch, if you see the same male attending two redwing females, you should conclude male redwings are polygamous, which is true. Males usually try to stagger their breeding and young-rearing

duties by waiting until Mate No. 1 has begun incubating eggs before initiating courtship behavior with Mate No. 2.

Here's to it all: procreation, March, mud and renewal. Here's to the harbingers, anxious to get the wheel turning.

Naturalist Rick Marsi is a journalist, public speaker and leader of eco-tours. Contact him at www.rickmars.com. ©2006 Rick Marsi

Bird anthology a bedtime tonic

The Bedside Book of Birds: An Avian Miscellany, by Graeme Gibson, Random House, 2005. 365 pp. \$29.95 hardcover.

by Julian Shepherd

Most anthologies of bird lore that I have encountered excerpt writings from ornithologists or bird-watchers. Graeme Gibson's book of writings has cast the net much more widely, drawing from sources ranging from African folktales to T. S. Eliot, from ancients like Pliny and Bede to current authors, and from renowned ornithologists like Darwin and Audubon to others famous as literary giants, such as Hardy and Kafka.

But all the pieces at least mention birds and most center on birds as charismatic, interesting, beautiful, and/or spiritual animals. The book is very aptly titled and subtitled.

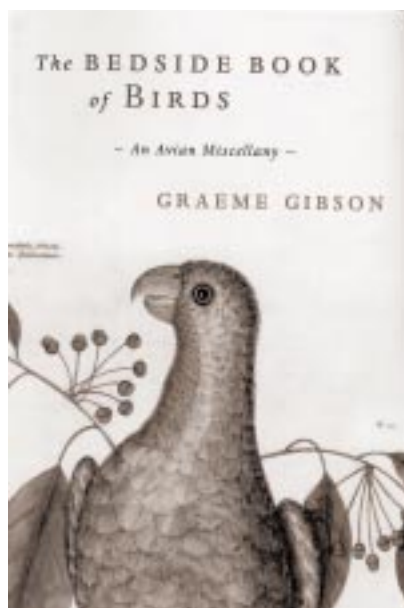
As a bedtime tonic, I found the excerpts which range from a paragraph to five or six pages well-suited to my two- to ten-minute time until collapse. And they certainly are miscellaneous, though the author does arrange them loosely into nine foci. As one might expect, many extol the wonders of birds, but others relate some less attractive aspects of birdlife, and some are more concerned with the way human activity has affected birdlife.

In the author's words, the book is "not so much about birds themselves as it is about the richly varied ... relationships that we have established with them."

As a mundane scientist/naturalist, I had less patience with some of the more fanciful (and often factually incorrect) excerpts, but found many others surprising and interesting. The author prefaces each of the nine sections with a few pages of his own, which are admirably and interestingly written.

An additional delightful feature are numerous (close to 100) drawings and paintings (most in color) of birds from the world's great artists of all times, including many anonymous traditional objets d'art. There is something for everyone in this book.

Julian Shepherd, a member of the Susquehanna Group, is an associate professor of biology at Binghamton University.



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Group Roundup

Iroquois

Group promotes verifiable voting

The Iroquois Group believes that verifiable voting is essential for electing leaders who respect our environmental goals. For this reason we have devoted much energy to promoting voting machines that provide a verifiable paper trail. We have joined with the League of Women Voters in promoting dialogues with many other civic groups throughout the county. It has been a difficult task, as New York has yet to certify machines. Linda DeStefano has led the task force.

On May 31 we will host our annual Environmental Forum. All environmental groups in our area are invited to "table," network, and focus on a common topic, which this year will be "The Search for Your Sustainable Energy." The forum will feature "how-tos" by specialists in retrofitting your home.

Lower Hudson

'Against all odds' victory scuttles sewage plan

The NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) has announced that it is no longer pursuing a plan to divert sewage from Yorktown to Peekskill. We have opposed the project from the beginning and supported Sierran Marian Rose, president of the Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition, and Drew Claxton, a councilwoman from Peekskill.

The failing Yorktown sewage system needs updating. Several hundred home septic systems also need repairs. Diversion would have sent raw sewage to an already overloaded plant in Peekskill, an underprivileged, struggling community. The sewage would then have gone into the Hudson River. That made it both an environmental and an environmental justice issue.

Our problem was that the project had the support of some environmental organizations and key local officials. NYS Watershed Inspector General James Tierney said that efficient, modern sewage treatment technology will be used to upgrade the Yorktown plant, enabling it to produce a cleaner effluent.

A fly in the ointment: the DEP might grant a variance to increase the Yorktown plant's ability to pollute, which could lead to increased development in the watershed.

Mid-Hudson

Musician to donate one-third of CD monies to Group

To help promote his new CD release, "Bluebird in the Snow," award-winning Ulster County singer/songwriter James Krueger is offering to donate \$5 from the CD's \$15 purchase price to the Mid-Hudson Group. CDs must be purchased directly from his Kingston based label, Contemporary Acoustic, by calling 845-331-5851, or through his web site, www.jameskrueger.com. If ordering on the web, please put "Mid-Hudson Sierra" in the "Comments"

field on the checkout page. Songs can be sampled from his web site. James' music celebrates the beauty of the natural environment, especially the Catskills, where he lives.

Victory in the Catskills

In September, the Catskill Preservation Coalition, which opposes the "Crossroads at Belleayre" project, had a strong victory. An administrative law judge ruled that 12 significant issues raised by the Coalition, of which Sierra Club is a member, are "substantive and significant" and requires that they be reviewed in relation to the environmental impacts of the project. Basic issues such as water supply, quality of life and community character, and impacts on wildlife will require further legal review and will slow the process of this unhealthy hotel/golf course development. For more info about the Catskill Preservation Coalition, contact Jim Mays at jmays@hvaccess.com

Susquehanna

Group presents Spickard Award to lifelong 'watchdog'

The Susquehanna Group presented its annual Lynda Spickard Environmental Award to Harriet Marsi, a long-time advocate for the local environment and living example of caring for the world in which she lives. She inspires others to protect wildlife and wild places.

A True Cost of Food dinner was held the same evening, attended by Harriet, her son Rick [See Rick Marsi's column, page 11], and 40 other guests. Although it was a challenging time of year to use locally grown products, some were able to use their own products which they had frozen.



Harriet Marsi

Niagara

Webmaster keeps site attractive, informative

The Niagara Group invites everyone to look at its superb web page. Thanks to the work of webmaster Mike Stroh, the site is attractive, up to date, and has many links. For our current work, be sure to click on The Trailblazer to read our news articles, and go to Success Stories to read about help to our area from the Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Network and Fund. The website address is <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/Niagara>.

For the February meeting, the group met at a restaurant for a dinner to honor long-time member Gen Robins and to thank her for all of her work as membership chair.

Rochester

"Green" business leaders to headline Earth Day forum

In celebration of Earth Day, the Rochester Group will present its eighth environmental forum, "Global Warming Solutions that Work," on April 20, 6 p.m., at the First Unitarian Church of Rochester, 220 Winton Road South.

The two forum speakers are committed Upstate business leaders whose manufacturing companies are highly involved with renewable energy.

Roger Saillant, president and CEO of Plug Power, will speak about "A Workable Transition to Renewables;" and Bob Bechtold, president of Harbec Plastics, will address the question, "How Can Western New York Respond to the Challenge of Global Warming?"



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