

Earth Day 2000--Clean Energy Now!

April 22, 1970, thirty years ago, was the first nationally celebrated Earth Day. It was a call to action, and an awakening, as we realized many of our actions pollute, degrade, and destroy earth's life-sustaining resources. **Earth Day 2000** hopes to re-ignite the spirit of the first Earth Day. Its central theme is **Clean Energy Now**, and it holds up the vision of reducing our nation's reliance on fossil fuels through four major initiatives:

- **Clean Air:** By 2020, produce at least 1/3 of the nation's energy from renewable sources, and double the efficiency of energy use in homes, transportation, and industry.
- **Clean Power:** Clean up power plants by setting progressively tighter limits on all power plant pollution, including carbon dioxide.
- **Clean Cars:** Improve the fuel efficiency of new cars, SUVs, trucks and mini-vans to an average of 45 MPG by 2010
- **Clean Investments:** Quadruple federal investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency within five years. End coal, oil and nuclear subsidies.

Locally, the main focus of Earth Day 2000 will be at **Buffalo State College** where a Western New York regional festival will take place on the **afternoon of April 22**. Events and activities will be held all day. These include exhibits, demonstrations, tree planting, cleanups, etc. The morning features a keynote speaker or two. Other community-based events in the area will take place throughout all of April. On Friday, April 21 there will be a candlelight vigil on the steps of City Hall to honor those that have been affected by harmful environmental conditions.

Finally, embodying the Central Energy Now theme locally, a regional coalition has created the Clean Energy Now Challenge. Participants must design a program that commits their organization to energy conservation/efficiency, renewable energy, or energy awareness. These programs will be presented to the community on the 22nd.

For more information, or to take the Clean Energy Now Challenge, please contact **Stacey Vaeth** by e-mail at: svaeth@facilities.buffalo.edu or at 829 - 3535.

-- Stacey Vaeth

Sierra Niagara Meets with Giambra

On March 16th, Niagara Group Chairman, **Larry Beahan**, along with other fourteen environmental leaders in Western New York, met with Erie County Executive Joel Giambra. Jay Burney and Paul MacClennan, the publishers of Green Watch, a local environmental newsletter, arranged the meeting to provide the region's diverse environmental groups some face time with Erie County's new County Executive. After the meeting, Larry jotted down these quick impressions:

"We were surprised by Giambra as he unexpectedly popped into the room through a concealed door, joking, "I still haven't figured out all the secret passageways in this place." He was casually dressed, and though looking a little too slim, was full of energy. He was accompanied by Carl Calabrese, Deputy Executive; Bruce Fisher, his personal assistant; and Larry Ruben, Commissioner of Planning and Environment.

Each of us introduced Mr. Giambra to our respective organizations and environmental concerns. He and his aides offered comments, but without committing themselves to anything. In preparation for this meeting, I had asked our group's activists what local issues they would like to see brought to the table. My presentation was an attempt to synthesize and present their responses, as follows:

Libraries--Keep them small and local. No big hubs out in the corn fields with miles of new highways to reach them. Modernize but keep neighborhood libraries where they are.

Route 219--Why contribute to urban sprawl by building out another mile more of highway out to nowhere? Why encourage the drain of jobs and homes to the south?

Zoar Valley and Cattaraugus Creek--Tell DEC to protect the old growth in the Zoar Multiple Use Area. There are 400 year-old trees there. Take the Scoby Dam site under the county wing, as a park. Consider protecting the Cattaraugus with state and federal "Wild and Scenic" status. (Giambra's response on Zoar was, "Don't worry about Zoar Valley. Carl Calabrese has a cabin out there.")

County involvement in Zoning and Town Land Use--e.g., Amherst just passed a rezoning for a totally inappropriate large apartment development at Sutton Pond, a great fishing spot and a lovely

scenic wetland. The county should weigh in with advice to Corps of Engineers on matters like preventing building in wetlands and flood plains.

After I mentioned Sutton Pond, Larry Ruben remarked that "for the first time ever the county government sent a letter to a Town with advice on rezoning. We told Amherst that the Sutton Pond rezoning was a bad idea. "Great," I said, "Keep an eye on Amherst for us."

Giambra closed the meeting with a reaffirmation of his regionalist philosophy. He also suggested a reorganization of the Erie County Environmental Management Council in a way that would let it hear our concerns, and at the same time, deal with developers and agencies like the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In the meantime, Larry Ruben is to be our channel to the County Executive.

The fourteen of us will meet again on April 11 and begin planning the reorganization of the Erie County Environmental Management Council that Giambra suggested. Overall, I think this meeting was the start of a hopeful process in Erie County. We know the County Executive a little better. He now knows us. And without a doubt, we will be getting back to him."

--Larry Beahan

Dianne D'arrigo And Steve Porter-- Two People Saving the World

Most Sierrans want to see our society living in a more balanced way--cleaner, sustainable, and in harmony with the other living things on the planet. Well, bringing about that kind of change takes a lot of hard work. The people who do that kind of work day after day are a special breed. They tend to work harder than the rest of us, and for less money. But we'd all be poorer in many ways if they didn't.

That's why the Sierra club is proud to bring two such people to speak to our members on **Tuesday, May 23 at 7:00 pm** in the Harlem Road Community Center, 4255 Harlem Road near Main Street in Snyder, NY.

Dianne D'Arrigo will discuss her work on the Radioactive Waste Campaign. Twenty years ago, she and other activists closed down the West Valley reprocessing plant with education, tenacity, and sheer courage. Since then, Dianne has worked in Washington D.C. for the Nuclear Information Resource Service (NIRS). NIRS has been at the forefront of all the nuclear power issues facing this country and has repeatedly beaten back Congressional attacks on nuclear safety and health. She will be speaking on a new threat to our health--a Clinton administration plan to allow highly radioactive wastes to be treated as ordinary scrap metal. This would allow radioactive metal to be mixed into our food containers, cars, houses, or anything metal. She will

also answer questions on nuclear power and the status of the struggles at Yucca Mountain.

Steve Porter has been an organic farmer for over 20 years. His farm, just outside of Elba in Genesee County, grows some of the finest produce in the region. Mr. Porter will discuss the practical aspects and challenges of organic farming. He will also describe their CSA program that lets consumers buy produce directly from the farm.

These people have both been "walking the walk" for decades. They also happen to be very nice and good speakers. Combined with some popcorn and refreshments, this should be an enjoyable and memorable event. Please call **Joseph DeMare** with questions or to RSVP at 937-4556. After the speakers, the regular ex-com meeting will be held.

--Joe DeMare

Good News For Zoar Valley?

Last October, it became known that the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) was tentatively formulating plans for the State multi-use area in Cattaraugus County known as Zoar Valley. These plans included the possibility of logging sensitive parts of Zoar, with tracts of old growth forest among the areas under consideration. The Buffalo News published a headline article on the issue; and news of this threat to one of Western New York's favorite natural recreation areas galvanized local activists. A coalition of about nine groups, including Sierra Club, formed an ad hoc coalition, known as "**Friends of Zoar Valley**" to oppose any logging of Zoar's old growth.

The disclosure of DEC's intention to log Zoar and the subsequent mobilization of opposition had a powerful effect on the entire issue, ultimately gaining the attention of Governor Pataki. Our Albany lobbyists told us the Governor wanted to avoid an unnecessary controversy. Word from the State has since reached us that the DEC would avoid logging "in the vicinity of the gorge." Since all of the old growth (and Valentine Flats) is "in the vicinity of the gorge," that implies that it would incidentally escape logging.

While encouraging, this is only a preliminary indication. It must be publicized in writing (and be ratified in the forthcoming master plan) to be a real decision. Furthermore, no specific mention was made of "old growth." The last statements made by the Regional Director Gerry Mikol were that he does not recognize that there is any old growth forest in Zoar Valley.

The Friends of Zoar Valley think that the DEC should delineate a "no logging" buffer zone around the ancient forest. Cahill's preliminary leaning to "not log in the vicinity of the gorge" is consistent with the coalition's consensus. The Friends of Zoar Valley coalition will try to derive an

exact buffer zone as the issue develops. All of the old growth grows no further than 300 feet from the canyon edge.

For now, environmental groups must take a wait-and-see approach. As soon as any important news (including schedule of the master plan) comes up, the coalition will meet promptly.

For more information on the issue or to join the Friends of Zoar Valley, contact **Bruce Kershner**. His number at home is 634-7158. His email address is bskershner@adelphia.net

--Bruce Kershner

Natureview Lawsuit

Late last year, on December 6, the Amherst Town Board voted to approve a conservation easement for 1300-acre Natureview Park. Members of our own Niagara Group have been among the leaders in the effort to win Natureview this permanent protection. The easement would have restricted usage of the property and preserved it as a natural area. Under the provisions of the easement, The Western New York Land Conservancy was to take title to the property.

Unfortunately, however, Natureview's future was seriously threatened on January 18 of this year, when a newly constituted Town Board voted to rescind that very same easement. What this measure means is that the Natureview property could be opened up once again to a variety of development proposals.

The Western New York Land Conservancy has since filed a lawsuit against the Town of Amherst. The Land Conservancy believes that the vote to rescind the easement violates the contract between the Conservancy and the Town, which they believe took effect when the Town Board first voted to grant it. **Richard Lippes**, who also happens to be the Niagara's group legal chair, will represent the Land Conservancy.

Those wishing to assist the Land Conservancy in its fight can help defray its legal costs by making a contribution to or joining the conservancy. For more information about the Western New York Land Conservancy, to join or to make contributions, contact: the Western New York Land Conservancy, at telephone 716-687-1225 or email: wnylc@wnylc.org

--Mike Kukla

The Sutton Pond Giveaway

The Amherst Town Board was not satisfied with merely threatening one wetland with development this past winter. It also voted to rezone 90 acres in northeast Amherst near 22-acre Sutton Pond, thus permitting the construction of 620

apartments in a now largely untouched area containing much wetland and lying in a floodplain. In exchange, the developer will cede the town 180 acres of federally protected wetland. The town board voted for this rezoning despite considerable opposition on the part of community residents, and even though the town's own Planning Board unanimously recommended that the town deny the rezoning.

Furthermore, the town board voted for this rezoning even though the State DEC wrote the Amherst Planning Department that the developer's environmental assessment form was "grossly inadequate" in its assessment of the wetlands impact of the proposed development, citing, among other things: loss of storm water retention; loss of nesting and brood rearing habitat; loss of wildlife diversity, interruption of the hydrology of the wetland; and risk of water pollution associated with construction and occupancy of the proposed housing. As a recent letter to the Buffalo News put it, "Amherst showed no concern for its residents. They will pay more taxes for the benefit of a company that doesn't pay theirs (the developer, Andrew Cutaia, owes Erie County more than \$140,000 in back taxes.) Once again, Amherst loses green space and the residents and environment are the losers...."

Amherst residents concerned about this bad turn of events should contact the Town Board. In addition, those concerned about development on wetlands elsewhere in the region can contact the Army Corps of Engineers, which has nationwide jurisdiction on wetland issues. In particular, contact

Diane Kozlowski,

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regulatory Branch,
1776 Niagara Street,
Buffalo NY,
14207-3199;
Email: celrb-regulatory@usace.army.mil

One final note: fellow Sierran, **Bob Collins** has done a magnificent job of following the Sutton Pond issue and organizing opposition to the apartment project.

--Mike Kukla

Benefit 5k Race for Alden Waters

Saturday, May 6 the Alden Land Conservancy will be holding a 5K race. The proceeds will help to purchase the North Woods and Slate Banks--two natural areas in the Village of Alden. The Slate Banks are of international significance because they contain rare fossils from the upper middle Devonian era while the North Woods protect the Village of Alden's. If you're a runner, please consider racing in Alden on the 6th (your chances of winning a medal are very good). Contact **Joe DeMare** at 937-4556 for an entry form or information.

--Joe DeMare

Welcome to Our New Members

Gen Robins and Steve Burns, chair and co-chair respectively of our membership committee extend a hearty welcome to all our new members. Our group has grown somewhat of late and now includes over 1700 members spanning Erie, Niagara, Orleans, Chataqua, Cattaraugus and Wyoming County.

Election Results

Over 100 Niagara Group members returned ballots for our recent Executive Committee (Ex-Comm) elections. The newly elected, or re-elected, members of the Ex-Comm are: Elizabeth Kaszubski, Richard Lippes, Joe DeMare, George Dillman, Jane Jontz and Jim Hufnagel. They join the following individuals on this year's Ex-Comm: Larry Beahan, (Chairperson), Blake Reeves, Mike Kukla, Gen Robins and Murray Warner. The terms of the latter group will be up next winter.

The Executive Committee meets regularly on the 4th Tuesday of each month at the Harlem Road Community Center, 4255 Harlem Road near Main Street in Snyder, NY. Meetings start around 7:30 pm. **All members have a permanent invitation to join the meetings.**

News Roundup

Robbyn Drake reports enthusiastic public support at a recent public hearing for a plan to remove a section of the Robert Moses Parkway between Niagara Falls and Lewiston, thus restoring public access to 6 /12 miles of the Niagara Gorge. For more information contact the plan's major backer, the Niagara Waterfront Revitalization Task Force, at **NWRTF**, PO Box 724, Niagara Falls, NY 14302-0724.

Liz Kaszubski continues her indefatigable defense of the Klydel Wetlands in North Tonawanda. We couldn't get a story together as this issue of the Trailblazer went to press, but for the latest on Klydel, consult Liz's web site at www.geocities.com/RainForest/Vines/3317/probst.html.

Deadline for the Next Trailblazer

The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of the Trailblazer is **June 10, 2000**. Please be advised that the deadline can be moved up if circumstances make this advisable. For more information on the Trailblazer schedule or to submit something, contact Trailblazer editor **Mike Kukla** at 882-9753; email: kukla@acsu.buffalo.edu. Submissions may be via email or ordinary postal service. My mailing address is Mike Kukla, 464 Grant St. Buffalo, NY 14213.

**Next Trailblazer Deadline:
January 10, 2000**

Articles for our next newsletter are needed by January 10! Remember, if you send them via email, type the message into the body of the email, *don't send it as an attachment*. Send your contributions to George Dillman. His email address is **gdillmann@juno.com**. If you want to send things snail mail, his mailing address is 351 Parkside Ave., Buffalo, NY 14214-1960; 838-2923.

--George Dillman

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