



Trailblazer

Niagara Group of the SIERRA CLUB

Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, January 2001

Public Hearing on the Adirondacks to be held in Cheektowaga on January 16

Have you ever enjoyed recreational activities in the Adirondacks or the Catskills? Would you like the opportunity to contribute to the preservation of these natural areas? You will have a chance to do so in the very near future. On January 16, from 5-9 p.m. at the Cheektowaga Town Hall, 3301 Broadway, The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will be holding a public hearing on its Unit Management Plans for wilderness and wild forest areas within the Adirondacks and the Catskills. Public comment obtained at this and other hearings throughout the State will be used to guide the future management of these areas. This is your chance to tell the state how you would like to see wilderness and natural areas managed and what sort of activities should or shouldn't be permitted on them.

The DEC states that the Unit Management Plans are intended to "assess the natural and physical resources present within a unit, identify opportunities for recreational use and consider the ability of the resources and ecosystems to accommodate public use. Further, they identify management objectives for public use which are consistent with the land classification guidelines and the wild character of these lands." The DEC also states that it is committed to informing and involving the public in this process of drawing up the management plans. Accordingly, we should take full advantage of this opportunity to make our views known.

Altogether, draft plans for twenty-three areas within the Adirondacks or Catskills are now or will be soon available for comment. Most of the areas are in the Adirondacks, and include areas such as the Whitney Wilderness, the Blue Mountain Wild Forest, the Champion River Corridor, and the Saranac Lakes Wild Forest. Some of the outstanding issues for these areas include trail usage by ATV's, widening of snowmobile trails, wildlife habitat, over- and under-use of the areas. DEC foresters will be on hand to answer any specific questions you may have about a particular area.

For more information about the Unit Management Plans, you can visit the DEC web site: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us> (click on What's New and then Unit Management Plans).

--Mike Kukla

Of E-mail and Voice Mail, Oil Spills and Landfills

One aspect of being Sierra Club's Niagara Group Chair is that it is like sitting at an old-fashioned telephone switchboard, except now it's email, snail mail and voice mail all flying at you--mostly email, these days. And thank God for email. How else could we get such rapid access to news and information about local environmental developments?

I send out a lot of stuff to the Niagara Group email list, but not nearly as much as I could send! I'm on the Allegany Defense Project Hellbender list. They send me things we could work on twice a day. Then there is the Great Lakes United email list, the DEC Environmental News Bulletin, a National Parks email list and a Forest Preservation email list, all of which are constantly suggesting things we should probably do. Tullia Limarzi and Stu Auchincloss from Atlantic Chapter Headquarters also keep the email humming.

I try to choose from all these requests and data what is practical for us and urgent. I call for volunteers when it is a question of meetings at which we should be represented, like the Pesticide Hearings and the Niagara Reserve Renovation Plan and the Amherst Master Plan Committee meetings.

Some appeals to the Niagara Group for help turn into organization builders for us. They add new activists. Recently, N. Jo Tufts asked us for help in her campaign to save the Park School woods. She started coming to meetings and we pitched in to help. Russ Lukes' campaign to protect the Lancaster-Bowmansville wetlands and flood plain brought him into our fold this year.

Here are two intriguing problems that came through the system this fall and have the potential for Sierra campaigns. These are just two of the many cases where people have asked our group for assistance with "everyday" environmental issues.

Jim Hausner spends a good deal of time hiking around Angelica where his brother owns a farm. Jim sees heavy truckloads of dusty waste materials coursing the country roads and the terrible eyesore of the dump itself. He complains bitterly of its high position where it may easily pollute the waters of this beautiful country.

Jim came to a meeting and presented his case. Art Klein, an old hand at cutting government red tape, agreed to look into it. Art found that, despite heavy protest by local citizens, the dumping company had gotten all the necessary permits to let them operate till 2007. We agreed that there was little we could do but watch the operation, collect names and data and come back in when they need re-licensing. We hope Jim will stick with us on this.

Larry Murphy lives in Limestone on Nichols Run, a small stream that drains via Tunongawant Creek and into the Allegany River. Oil spills have come down that creek several years ago and again during the past three months. He is exasperated by the vague answers to his repeated complaints to the DEC, the EPA and the Cattaraugus County Health Department. Sierra Club had done something about oil spills in nearby Chipmunk so he called the Sierra Club Headquarters in San Francisco. They referred him to Niagara Group by way of Tullia Limarzi at Atlantic Chapter Headquarters in NYC.

I was concerned because in the past we've opposed the capping of 50 to 100-year-old wells in Allegany State Park's maturing forest. We had never heard of oil spills from them. Fortunately Larry Murphy's problems were from an active oil field to the east of, and not from, the Park.

Murphy said that in August 2000, and again in November, a week before I called him, quantities of crude oil came down Nichols Run. In November, DEC sent in an oil spill team from Buffalo that tried to contain the spill with bales of hay. Murphy said that the soiled hay would be left on his property. But he was chiefly concerned that no one seemed to be doing anything to stop these spills from contaminating Nichols Run, the Allegany River and the local drinking water supply.

I called Chris Miller, the DEC oil officer in Olean. He was aware of both spills. He said the oil company involved had had a separator tank leak in August and their very old pipe system break down for the November spill. They had been fined for the first leak and would probably be fined for the second one, he said. He gave me the impression that the DEC and the company in question were doing what they should do to control the messy business. Miller said he'd be glad to talk with Murphy. I checked with an environmental lawyer who said he might be able to help, if Murphy would call him.

I spoke to Larry Murphy ten days later. He had been in touch with Miller. He had not called the lawyer. Bright yellow crude had come down Nichols Run three more times in those ten days and the spill crew had been back twice. There is clearly Sierra type work to be done in Limestone, but whether we have the will and wherewithal to do it is something for us to ponder. Any suggestions, any volunteers, anyone want to get dirty?

--Larry Beahan, Niagara Group Chairperson

Why You Should Join Our Email List

In an earlier issue of the Trailblazer, I announced that the Niagara group now has its own email discussion list, one officially sanctioned by the national Sierra Club. As Larry Beahan's preceding article indicates, the Group's email list has begun to enhance the Niagara Group's conservation efforts considerably.

To demonstrate this a bit further, I'd like to offer a very partial enumeration of public hearings and other environmental events of local or statewide importance which have recently been announced via the Niagara Group's email list:

- ① A public meeting in Niagara Falls, NY sponsored by the International Joint Commission on the Great Lakes as part of its effort to assess the status of the restoration of the Niagara River.
- ② A public session to review efforts under the Niagara River Toxics Management Plan to reduce toxic chemical inputs into the Niagara River. The U.S. EPA and the State DEC are co-sponsors of this event.
- ③ A public hearing sponsored by the DEC's Bureau of Pesticide Management to gather public comments on the Neighbor Notification Law of 2000. Potentially, this law could require that neighbors be notified when pesticides are applied in residential areas, a right currently enjoyed only by residents of certain districts downstate.
- ④ Three public hearings on The Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council's final draft of the Long-Range Transportation Plan 2025 for Erie and Niagara Counties. Among other things, this plan is a blueprint for spending \$4 billion over the next quarter century. This Long-Range Plan could have a decisive influence on the battle against unchecked suburban sprawl and could affect, for better or worse, regional quality of life for decades to come.
- ⑤ A call for volunteers to sweep local shorelines in the aftermath of an outbreak of infectious botulism, which has recently killed hundreds of waterfowl along the shores of Lake Ontario.

Illustrating a very important point, however, every one of the events mentioned above will have already taken place by the time you read this. Quarterly newsletters, such as the Trailblazer, just cannot always reach people in time with word of the latest happenings. However, had you too been subscribed to the Niagara Groups email list, this wouldn't have happened. Along with our other subscribers, you too would have gotten words of these hearings, and many other events as well, too numerous to mention here, in a timely enough manner to respond in whatever way you thought appropriate.

So, if you have email, **please consider joining our list**. You'll be much better informed about local environmental issues and events; and enjoy a much better chance of responding effectively to issues of importance to you.

There are a variety of ways you can join the list. All are easy and only take a few minutes.

1) Go to the Niagara Group Web site and fill in the form found at:
www.sierraclub.org/chapters/ny/niagara/generalInfo/mail.asp

2) Email me at kukla@acsu.buffalo.edu and ask me to add you to the list.

3) Subscribe yourself directly to the list. Just send an email message to LISTSERV@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG. In the body of your message, put the following line:

SUBSCRIBE ATL-NIAGARA-NEWS Your Name

--Mike Kukla

Niagara Group Member Nominated for National Wetlands Award

In recognition of her devoted and persistent efforts to preserve the Klydel Wetlands in North Tonawanda, Niagara Group Member and Wetlands Chair, **Liz Kaszubski** has been nominated for the Environmental Law Institute's 2001 National Wetlands Award. According to the Institute, "The award honors individuals from across the country who have demonstrated outstanding innovation and dedication to wetlands protection and restoration. The winners provide a shining example of how individuals can make a difference."

In addition to her efforts with the Niagara Group, Liz is also a director of the Buffalo Audubon Society; a co-founder and web master of Citizens for a Green North Tonawanda grassroots activist group; and a member of the technical advisory board of the Western New York Land Conservancy. In September 1998, she received an environmental award from the Adirondack Mountain Club for her efforts to save the North Tonawanda's Klydel Wetland from development.

These credentials, however, cannot convey the depth of the technical and legal knowledge that Liz brings to her battle to save local wetlands. Nor do they convey her willingness and savvy in fighting both powerful developers and stonewalling government officials in order to preserve wetlands. She is truly an asset to our group, and to the Western New York

region as a whole. Let's hope she wins this award for she truly deserves it.

--Mike Kukla

February Ski Outing in Algonquin Park

Sierrans are offered an opportunity to enjoy a short retreat in the snowy northern woods of Algonquin Park from Sunday to Wednesday, February 18 to 21 (Presidents weekend.) You must have good Nordic ski skills to participate.

Accommodations are in an Eco Lodge, located in an isolated corner of the great Canadian Wilderness. You have to ski about 3 kilometers from the parking area to get to it. There is no electricity; cooking and lighting are done with propane. A sauna and hot tub, both heated with wood will soak away the aches and pains after exploring the 50 kilometers of back country trails. Sleeping accommodations are bunkrooms-- male & female, with some bedrooms available for couples.

The cost of this outing is about \$170.00 Canadian, all-inclusive. Call **Art Klein** at 693-1082 for more information, or to make reservations. Art can also be reached via email. His email address is happyk1@aol.com.

--Mike Kukla

League of Women Voters to Make January Presentation on Suburban Sprawl

Preceding our regular meeting on Tuesday January 28, Denise Herkey of the League of Women Voter's will be making a 40 minute presentation of Suburban Sprawl, its causes and effects, as well as approaches to dealing with it. Things will get started about 7:00pm. As usual, we will be meeting at the Harlem Road Community Center, 4255 Harlem Road, near the corner of Harlem Road and Main St. in Snyder. Art Klein, Chairperson of the Niagara Group's committee, on sprawl arranged this presentation. Call Art at 693-1082 for more information. Again, Art's email address is happyk1@aol.com

This is a good time to remind our membership that we regularly meet at the Harlem Road Center, on the 4th Tuesday of each month, usually at 7:30 pm. **All members** are welcome to attend the monthly meetings.

--Mike Kukla

News Roundup

Niagara Group Chair **Larry Beahan** has recently had a book published. Entitled “*My Grampa's Woods, the Adirondacks,*” this 173-page work five generations of the Beahan family and their lives in the Adirondacks.

Atlantic Chapter Legislative Director **John Stouffer** ventured forth from Albany on a snowy evening to visit with the Niagara Group in November. During the November meeting, he listened to our concerns, offered his advice and signaled the desire of the Chapter to be of greater support to the Groups in their local and regional efforts.

Fellow Sierrans **Robbyn Drake** and **Marilyn Reeves** and their cohorts within the recently-formed group Amherst Quality of Life are putting together a scorecard of votes by the members of the Amherst Town Board. The scorecard will reveal the voting records of the Board Members with respect to town legislation that contributes to or deters suburban sprawl. More word of this exciting and invaluable project to come in future issues.

SIERRA CLUB
NIAGARA GROUP
5 Darwin Drive
Amherst, NY 14226

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 868
Buffalo, NY