



The TRAILBLAZER

July 2003

Niagara Group of the Sierra Club

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JOIN OUR RAPID E-MAIL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

While the Trailblazer goes to over 2,000 people, and will continue to do so, it is only published 4 times a year. In order to get rapid news of environmental matters, you need also to belong to the list serve!

Any Sierra Club member, or even interested persons who are not Sierrans but concerned about the environment, may join free of charge. Currently there are 60 members.

Once you are on the list-serve, you can send out communications on relevant matters and everyone on the list receives them. You also receive their messages.

To join, send an e-mail message to listserv@lists.sierraclub.org. In the body of the message write SUBSCRIBE ATL-NIAGARA-NEWS. Be sure to send this message using the e-mail account you will typically be using, since that is the one that will be entered. That's all you have to do! Once you've done that, you'll get a welcoming message describing hints on how to use the list from our webmaster Mike Kukla.

The only rules are to be civil to one another and to use the list wisely.

To receive fast-breaking news, announcements of major events, appeals to write to Congress quickly, etc., join the list-serve! You'll still get the Trailblazer too, of course, so now you'll have more ways of staying involved in advocacy for the environment.

New York Becomes Third Smokefree State

*Decision follows similar legislation in NYC,
Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester*

Legislation has passed that will provide ALL workers with a safe, healthy, smokefree workplace. The legislation follows in the footsteps of similar laws passed by legislatures in New York City, Nassau County, Suffolk County, and Westchester County.

"ALL workers (including office, restaurant, bar, bingo, bowling, casino, and nightclub workers) deserve a safe, healthy, smokefree work environment," says Joe Cherner, president of SmokeFree Educational Services, Inc. "No one should have to breathe tobacco smoke pollution to hold a job, because it causes cancer, heart disease, and respiratory disease."

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

- Margaret Mead

Congratulations to the Albion Board

On May 20 the residents of Albion secured a significant victory when the Town Board voted "NO" concerning a proposed Waste Management landfill. The grassroots group Stop Polluting Orleans County has been working for years for the environment. Town Supervisor Gene Christopher is quoted as saying, "The landfill would be an unforgiveable scar on our landscape."

Chief Weapons Inspector Blix's Amazing Comments

An Astounding Statement by UN Weapons Inspector Hans Blix (during an interview):

Norris: speaking of multilateralism, do you notice, as many have suggested, that there's an increasing unilateralist bent in the United States government?

Blix: Yeah. On big issues like war in Iraq, but in many other issues they simply must be multilateral. There's no other way around. You have the instances like the global warming convention, the Kyoto protocol, when the U.S. went its own way. I regret it. To me the question of the environment is more ominous than that of peace and war. We will have regional conflicts and use of force, but world conflicts I do not believe will happen any longer. But the environment, that is a creeping danger. I'm more worried about global warming than I am of any major military conflict.

Note: *the December meeting of the Niagara Group, Sierra Club, will be held on MONDAY, DEC. 15! This change for this month only is to stay away from the 4th Tuesday which is December 23.*

A New Way to Donate to the Sierra Club

If you go to the website, www.iwantcleanair.com, you will be given an opportunity to choose the Sierra Club for a gift from one of the sponsoring organizations. Try it out!

Our Counties Have Bad Air

The American Lung Association has rated Niagara, Erie, and Chautauqua counties as deserving an "F" grade for air quality; the lowest grade possible.

In its annual State of the Air Report released on April 30, the Lung Association gave these three counties an "F" for the fourth consecutive year.

This is a concern for the health of the people who live here and for the environment in general. We need to demand better.

TWO IMPORTANT STATEMENTS ABOUT GREEN POWER:

Green Power is Clean Power!

by Walter Simpson

Care about the environment? Want clean air? Interested in kicking the fossil fuel habit and promoting clean, renewable energy technologies? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you may want to switch to environmentally friendly green power from renewable resources for your home.

In the January 2003 issue of the Trailblazer we featured an article encouraging Sierrans to buy electricity for their homes from green power suppliers. Have you done that yet?! Well, if not, more help is on the way! Since that article was published, Sierra Club has joined a local coalition of 20 environmental and community groups which is getting the word out about green power. Called "WNY Green Power Is Clean Power," this coalition has created a "Green Power Purchasing Guide" which can be found on the UB Green website at: <http://wings.buffalo.edu/ubgreen/greenpower/greenpowerchoice.html> or call 829-3535 and request a paper copy.

There is no cost for the Guide which will answer all your questions and provide all the information you need to buy green power for your home.

Dirty Dozen Awards Presented

The Citizens' Environmental Coalition, a state-wide environmental organization, has awarded "Dirty Dozen" awards to those who deserve them most.

One award was given to the Cheektowaga Town Board for suspending its recycling program.

Another went to Chemical Waste Management of the Town of Porter.

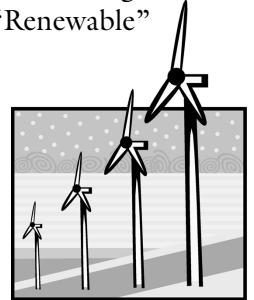
Tim Henderson, president of ROLE (Residents Organized for Lewiston's and Porter's Environment), made both presentations. He represented the Sierra Club, of which he is a member, ROLE, and RRG (Residents for Responsible Government).

Mr. Henderson said, concerning CWM, "We're asking CWM to be responsible corporate citizens in listening to the voice of the community in which they do business and withdrawing their ill-conceived plans for expansion."

You Can Contribute to a Hopeful Future Free from Smog, Acid Rain and Climate Changing Greenhouse Gases *by Derek Bareman*

For the first time in New York State history, it is now possible for residential electrical accounts in Niagara Mohawk Territory to actively support "Renewable" electricity that:

- Does not damage people's Health
- Is good for the environment
- Generates no climate changing Greenhouse Gases
- Creates no radioactive waste
- Preserves the world's resources



The Energy Cooperative of New York a member-owned, not-for-profit, cooperative located in downtown Buffalo is providing a 100% renewable electricity program to residential accounts in Niagara Mohawk Territory.

The renewable electricity offered in this program consists of 20% new Wind Power and 80% Biomass energy. The Wind Power comes from a wind farm in upstate New York (placed into service after January 1, 2000). The Biomass (Landfill Methane) power comes from a landfill in Lancaster NY. Each unit of landfill methane burned to create power removes the equivalent of 20 units of Carbon Dioxide out of the environment. At the same time it replaces a unit of fossil fueled electricity (and the CO₂ that would have been created by that fossil fueled energy).

The "list price" of this clean power is 1.1 cents more than the cost of conventional power. However, this program is the only renewable offering in Niagara Mohawk Territory that takes advantage of the cost savings that come with energy deregulation. When you take these savings into account, the net price falls to 0.6 to 0.8 extra per kWh (for an average sized residential account this works out to about 5 to 16 cents a day extra). This is also a very convenient program (you get the same Niagara Mohawk bill you always got, with the renewable energy on it, and you write the same check to Niagara Mohawk you always wrote – you pay them and they pay the Cooperative). For more information check the website: ecny.org (click on "Green Power") or call Derek Bateman at 842-1697 x 203.

Robert Moses Parkway Update

The Niagara Environmental Leadership Institute hosted a forum concerning the future of the Robert Moses Expressway on March 26.

There seemed to be unanimous agreement that the current experimental plan, in which half the parkway is closed and half remains open, satisfies no one. Hikers and bikers aren't interested in a deserted roadway, and those desiring faster travel are displeased to see half the road closed.

Bob Baxter of Niagara Heritage and other panelists made strong points for the closing of the entire parkway and the restoration of the area surrounding the gorge to its natural state. Salting the highway damages the ancient trees and other plants as it washes toward the river. And Niagara Falls residents are denied easy access to their waterfront.

Those opposing the closing of the Parkway seemed

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Peace Bridge Asthma *by Larry Beahan*

“Wake up, Buffalo-Niagara the Peace Bridge is giving you asthma. Its twin will make you worse.” That’s what Dr. Jamson Lwebuga-Mukasa—I call him “Saint Jamie, Friend of Asthmatics”—has been shouting at a lot of deaf ears.

Lwebuga-Mukasa gives us this striking statistic: Between 1992 and 1996 Peace Bridge Traffic went up 23%. At the same time asthma diagnosis in ZIP code 14201, the closest to the bridge, went up 70 %. If this produced only a 15% increase in emergency room visits, then, over the life of the bridge, it would cost zip code 14201 \$36 million. Truckers stopping for a coffee and beef-on-weck under the bridge are not going to leave that kind of money for Buffalo coffers.

Doctor Lwebuga-Mukasa is Chief of the Center for Asthma and Environmental Exposure at the University of Buffalo. His research demonstrates that the West Side of Buffalo has much higher rates of asthma than the rest of the region or the nation. He shows that as (NAFTA) North-American-Free-Trade-Agreement diesel traffic across the Peace Bridge increased, West Side Asthma skyrocketed. Even the Peace Bridge Authority, who tries to ignore Saint Jamie, admits that traffic on the bridge produces from 6 to 32% of the pollution in the bridge neighborhood.

The message is simple. There is lots of asthma on the West Side. Diesel fumes produce asthma. Twin the Peace Bridge and there will be lots more of both over there. I was an emergency room doctor at Tachikawa Air Base in Tokyo in the 1960s. I flew over the pouring smokestacks of the Tokyo-Yokohama industrial complex. The irritating haze they produced sent airmen to us choking for breath with Tokyo-Yokohama Asthma. We cured them with transfers to the pure cool breezes of Hokkaido. Doctors at Buffalo General have no such easy solution for Somali or Puerto Rican immigrants with Peace Bridge Asthma.

Hufnagel and Mendel Attend Capital Hill Days

Jim Hufnagel and Frank Mendel recently attended Capital Hill Days in Washington, DC, an event co-sponsored by the Global Population and Environment Program of the Sierra Club. After attending two days of seminars and meetings highlighting the inextricable links between population and environment, the 200 attendees visited their representatives and senators to urge them to reverse current administration policies on international population stabilization.

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mainly to be concerned that an adequate corridor for traffic from the Falls to the northern communities of Lewiston and Youngstown be provided. Several suggestions were offered concerning how to provide adequate alternate routes.

A decision by the State on the future of the Parkway is expected in the fall, but could be delayed.

Larry Beahan, Art Kline, and Charles Lamb of the Niagara Group of the Sierra Club attended the forum.

West Siders can't hear Saint Jamie preaching over the din of misinformation from the Peace Bridge. The word on the street over there is, “Don't worry about asthma. The Peace Bridge people are going to give everyone a free air-conditioner. Sure we're sorry that a couple thousand people are going to lose their homes but look at the business we will lose if we lose the Peace Bridge.”

On Grand Island they understand Lwebuga-Mukasa. The word in the soccer-mom vans is, “Keep that traffic and pollution where it is. Don't spoil our river view. Don't mess with the cormorant hatcheries and the fish-spawning shallows. Leave the bridge where it is.”

Buffalo-Niagara, wake up. The health cost of that NAFTA diesel traffic is going to be on us. It is an ill wind and it will blow no one here anything good. It will breeze through us leaving only sickness and the expense of sickness.

Two suggestions: 1. Off-load NAFTA trucks and let their contents come across the border on fuel-efficient railroad trains. 2. Charge truckers the true cost of the bridge, including that of air pollution, its medical bills and compensation for our pain and choking.

If the Buffalo-Niagara Region can get together on this, there may be a day when a signature railroad bridge soars innocuously over the Niagara, when breezes off Lake Erie pour fresh air across all of our neighborhoods, and when every church on the West Side and a few on Grand Island bear a stained-glass window in which Saint Jamie, Friend of Asthmatics, majestically waves a sheaf of research papers turning back a poisonous flood of diesel trucks.

Allegany Hellbender Tales

Allegany Hellbender Tales, Larry Beahan's new book about Allegany State Park, is now available on Amazon.com, in bookstores or from Larry at 716 839 3112 or larry_beahan@adelphia.net

The book is a collection of stories from the Park. Larry and his family have been going there since 1927. He is a member of the Park Historical Society where he has gleaned lore of Park concessionaires, foresters, fire tower preservationists, one room school house students, campers and the Civilian Conservation Corps. Larry describes a prehistoric mountaintop fortress and George Heron, past President of the Seneca Nation, telling of ghosts. Larry deals with much of the history of the defense of the forest against exploitation for timber, natural gas and too much recreation.

The book costs \$14.95, is 240 pages long, has 100 black and white photos, is paperbacked and its cover bears a photo from the Buffalo Museum of Science archive of a two and a half foot long Allegany Hellbender, a salamander that once was common in waters near the Park and may return someday.

Community and Environmental Groups Issue "Prescription for Environmental Health" In National Day of Action for Clean Air at Kodak *by Mike Schade*

Students and community members from across the country held the first-ever National Day of Action for Clean Air at Kodak on April 23rd. Actions took place at more than twenty drug-stores that sell Kodak film nationally, urging storeowners to join in the call to Eastman Kodak: Stop producing cancer-causing chemicals! In Rochester, NY near Kodak's corporate headquarters, activists staged a colorful street theater protest outside, dressed up as a nurse and doctor, and handed out "prescriptions for a clean Kodak" to people entering the drug store chain.

"Today citizens are raising their voices to demand that Kodak become a world class leader in clean production," said Kathy Curtis, Executive Director of Citizens' Environmental Coalition. "As NY's number one manufacturing polluter and one of the largest emitters of cancer-causing chemicals in the country, Kodak needs to make a commitment to protecting the health and well being of people in the US.

A recent report, Toxic Releases and Health: A Review of Pollution Data and Current Knowledge on the Health Effects of Toxic Chemicals published by the US Public Interest Research Group found that Rochester, NY, ranked 1st in the nation for overall releases of cancer-causing chemicals between 1987-2000. Of the 64.4 million pounds of carcinogens released over that pe-

riod, more than 58 million pounds were air releases of dichloromethane by Eastman Kodak Co. In addition, Eastman Kodak's Kodak Park facility in Rochester ranked nine among the top 100 facilities nationwide for TRI releases of dioxin and other carcinogenic chemicals in 2000.

According to the NYS Department of Health (DOH), "(W)omen living near Kodak Park had approximately an 80% greater risk of developing pancreatic cancer," increasing to 96% for women living near Kodak for more than 20 years. The NYS DOH reported that between 1983 and 1995, 446 Monroe County children were diagnosed with cancer. In 1997 alone, 33 cases of childhood brain and spinal cord cancer were reported within a five-mile radius of Kodak Park. The families of five children with brain and spinal cord cancer have filed a \$75 million lawsuit against Kodak. For more information, please reference the campaign's website at www.kodakstoxiccolors.org

More than 20 groups in 7 states participated in the first National Day of Action for Clean Air at Kodak today. The events were coordinated by Citizens' Environmental Coalition, a NY statewide grassroots environmental organization with over 14,000 individual members and 110 member groups, which has been working for 20 years to solve and prevent pollution problems.

If you have information you wish to share or copy for use in the Trailblazer, please send it to Charles Lamb at 335 Walnut Lane, Youngstown, NY 14174 or clamb0@prodigy.net or at 716-745-7037. Deadlines for the year are as follows: February 15, May 15, August 15, and November 15.

The Niagara Group of the Sierra Club meets on the fourth Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. We will meet at the United Methodist Church of Williamsville, 5681 Main Street, on March 25 and until future notice. All Sierrans are invited!

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