



The TRAILBLAZER

January 2004

Niagara Group of the Sierra Club

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Ken Baer Visits Us!

Atlantic Chapter Chairman Ken Baer came to the December meeting of the Niagara Group. We greatly appreciate Ken's presence as he spoke with each of us individually, learned of our interests, and then brought us up to date on national and chapter events. He says that defeating George Bush for the presidency will be the number one priority, due to Mr. Bush's horrible environmental record.

Liz Kaszubski Receives Award

A major highlight of our meeting occurred when Liz Kaszubski was presented with the 2003 Blake Reeves Award for Environmental Leadership. The plaque read, "Presented this day, the 15th of December, 2003, with gratitude to Elizabeth Kaszubski for her dedication and leadership in the cause of wetland protection in the Buffalo Niagara Region, on behalf of the Sierra Club, Niagara Group.

Among her many achievements, Liz is primarily responsible for creation of the North Tonawanda Audubon Nature Preserve in the Klydel Wetland. She also serves on the Board of Buffalo Audubon, and is NYS Wetlands Chair for Sierra Club. She has worked as a Niagara Group ExCom member for many years. We are very fortunate to have a leader like Liz fighting for the future of our families and communities.

We celebrate with Liz her award, and even more here accomplishments and victories in behalf of our environment.

SPECIAL MEETING CALLED FOR FEB. 24

The Niagara Group of the Sierra Club will meet on Tuesday, February 24, at 6:30 p.m. at the Eagle House Restaurant, 5589 Main Street, Williamsville. We will see a presentation and hear from Kenneth Sherman, of Friends of the Buffalo Niagara Rivers.

Reservations are necessary! Dinner selections must be made known at the time you register.

The choices are:

Steamed Fresh Veggie with Rice

Chicken Marsala

Broiled Haddock Dijonaise

*All dinners come with salad, oven roasted potato, & desert for \$25.
(This pays for your meal plus 5 chances in the raffle for Gen Robins' painting!)*

**To make a reservation, call 751-3877
or e-mail stopat2@lycos.com.**

BRING A FRIEND!

*This is a great opportunity to
interest others in the Sierra Club!*

Cayuga Creek Stewardship Project Report

The FBNR Cayuga Creek Stewardship Project was launched this past September, 2003 with shoreline debris clean up of Griffon LaSalle (Griffon Park) Boat Launch and Jayne Park in the LaSalle area of Niagara Falls. Eighteen volunteers including 3 with canoes helped in the morning activity. The nine month long FBNR Stewardship Project effort has been made possible from a \$5,000 Niagara County Environment Fund grant, and will end May, 2004 unless further funding can be found.

The clean up was followed several days later with the project's first public meeting. An enthusiastic assembly of 42 Cayuga Creek residents was present at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church to endorse the Stewardship Project goals and offered scores of suggestions on what needs to be done. "The meeting was billed as a 'conversation' about the long-term viability of the Cayuga Creek corridor as a clean and healthy water body," said project consultant, Kenneth Sherman.

A panel of six community and government leaders joined the conversation. They included Niagara Falls City Administrator Al Joseph; Niagara County Legislature Chairman Sean O'Connor; Niagara Beautification Commission President Marge Gillies; Niagara County Commissioner of Planning Sam Ferraro; City Councilman and Co-chair of the Niagara Falls Waterfront Revitalization Task Force Paul Dyster; and Niagara Falls City Planner Pat Metzger. The panelist presented their views along side those of the public, and offered some guidance toward solutions.

A project team was formed after the meeting to sort out approaches to solving some of the Creeks' problems and advising the FBNR Board on policies and planning. Members include: Thomas DeSantis, chair; Gretchen Leffler, Donald Roberson; Pam Smith; Michael Calanan, Paul Dyster, Trudy Christman and Joe Paonessa. The Committee has been expanded to include Michael Thompson, Niagara County's Dept. of Planning, and Bradley Guay, Buffalo District Office, US Army Corps of Engineers.

(con't on pg. 2)

Be sure to read the editorial by Charles Lamb which appeared in *The Sentinel*. It deals with the attempt of the DEC to get approval of a totally inadequate plan for disposal of toxic wastes. You can read it on our website at www.newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara

(Cayuga Creek con't from pg. 1)

A second public meeting was held in mid November with another 40 residents present at the Prince of Peace Roman Catholic Church. At this meeting "residents affirmed a Project Advisory Committee recommendation that the Friends seek \$50,000 from the Niagara Falls casino revenue distribution (about \$10 million will be available)," reports Tom DeSantis Friend's Board member, and advisory committee chair. "The funds are to be used to identify and clean up dumped debris in the Creek, create an urban canoe trail, and support the organization in its effort to improve Creek ecology, and public access," Mr. DeSantis concludes. Ten residents who live along the Creek spoke at the Seneca Casino Revenue Distribution Commission hearing a week later in support of the Friend's proposal. A decision for 2004 funding is expected mid February, 2004.

The second community meeting heard presentations by Samuel Ferraro, Niagara County Department of Planning, and Phillip Berkeley, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Niagara County's 1997 Cayuga Creek Management Study Report recommended a clean up of debris in the creek, and support for a flood management study. Cayuga Creek has not had a clean up since the late 1960's as testified by several homeowners who have lived there for over 40 years.

The USACE 2002 Cayuga Creek Reconnaissance Report finds no Federal interest in funding a flood control project because of the limited damages from flooding and too few occasions. But the Corps' Reports does support a water management study which the agency is willing to undertake if there is a demonstrated local interest. The cost would be in the \$400,000 range and would require a 50% local match, half which would more than likely be in-kind by the local government partner. "Finding the \$100,000 might not be that difficult to find if the present studies being done by the New York Power Authority can be included, and / or the \$50,000 to the Friends might receive if funded from the Casino Revenue Distribution Commission," said Kenneth Sherman, project consultant. The Corps Report can be opened on line at: https://www.lrb.usace.army.mil/Get/File-4062/XXXXXX_R01.pdf

Ken Sherman, 523-3980, kensherman@fbnr.org, www.fbnr.org

Our Endorsed Candidates Fared Poorly in Nov. 4 Election

In Amherst, of our endorsed candidates only Bill Kindell won reelection. In Porter, endorsed candidate David Brooks was defeated. We're disappointed! Perhaps many people don't know of our endorsements, and don't understand the issues. Your co-editor is convinced that in Porter most people favor limiting growth of Chemical Waste Management, but when they go to the polls they aren't aware of which candidate has the strongest pro-environmental record. Many vote the straight party line. Perhaps, if we want to be effective, we must organize a much more vigorous campaign for those we favor, including door to door calling. What do you think?

A Local Source for Shade Grown Coffee

The following is a response to our article on Shade Grown Coffee in the October Trailblazer. Thanks for keeping us updated!

Shade Grown Coffee is available locally at the Ten Thousand Villages store under the brand name Equal Exchange. Shade grown coffee is grown under a canopy of taller trees which provide protection and nutrients to the coffee plants and prevent erosion of the soil. Shade grown farms also provide vital wildlife habitat for migratory birds such as warblers, tanagers, orioles and thrushes as well as indigenous tropical birds. Equal Exchange coffee is also fairly-traded and certified organic, which means that it is purchased directly from small farmer cooperatives, enabling them to farm sustainably.

Ten Thousand Villages is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide vital, fair income to Third World people by marketing their handicrafts and telling their stories in North America. The store is located at 5475 Sheridan Drive in Williamsville.

Exec Com Member Gen Robins Calls for Volunteers for WNED

Everyone knows that the quality of our air, water, and soils is being questioned today, and very little if anything is being done to improve it.

The quality of programs on our television is no exception, which is the reason to bolster in every way the programs emitted by WNED by joining their happy group of volunteers for the purpose of answering the phones for donations

It's fun and rewarding as some of our older Sierrans can vouch. We were also rewarded with food and drink to sustain us until quitting time. Best of all, we were always recognized on the air as from the Sierra Club, giving us a double purpose for being there.

To volunteer contact Lisa Napier, Volunteer Coordinator for WNED TV, at 716-845-7000.

- Gen Robins, membership chairman

Niagara Group to Reach Out to Students

The Niagara Group will plan to hold a meeting in the fall of 2004 on the University of Buffalo North Campus. A small committee is working to find a site, arrange an interesting program, and promote the event among students. A number of environmental groups already exist, and we want to form some alliances with students and interest them in becoming active in the Sierra Club. In unity there is strength!

Superfund Passes But No Thanks to WNY Representatives

Despite "no" votes by the western New York delegation, Superfund reauthorization was approved. When contacted to explain his "no" vote, one State Senator said it would be too expensive in western New York, and developers would simply choose other land rather than pay the costs of cleaning up contaminated land. Perhaps he felt the answer was to allow the contaminated land to be developed without being remediated first? However, the bill did pass without help from our representatives, so we can celebrate a victory.

From the Population Chair. . .

There is a growing awareness that women's health, and the environment, are inextricably linked. Sierra Club's Global Population and Environment Program works so that countries can ensure that women have access to voluntary family planning, economic advancement, and education - all of which contribute to increased opportunities for women to choose the size and spacing of their families. Enabling access to voluntary, safe and affordable family planning services and empowering women and girls helps to slow population growth, ultimately securing a more sustainable future for families throughout the world. The environment is protected and improved by slowing deforestation, pollution, wildlife habitat loss, global warming and urban sprawl.

Saving the environment by improving the status of women and children is an approach that is steadily gaining support. Environmental organizations such as Audubon, National Wildlife Federation and Sierra Club now have active population programs. These programs concentrate on voluntary family planning, women's empowerment, and decreasing childhood mortality.

Some of the duties of a GPEP activist involve educating both fellow Sierrans and the public about the role that population and the status of women plays in the environment. Likewise, many Sierrans have worked here in Western New York on Women's issues. When the women's movement joins forces with the environmental movement, we have the potential to be a very potent coalition.

How can you get involved? On April 25, join the March for Freedom of Choice in Washington, DC. Like previous mass marches on the Capitol and National Mall, it promises to be the experience of a lifetime. This march is to protest the Bush administration's deplorable policies towards women worldwide. Drop me an email at stopat2@lycos.com for more info.

– Jim Hufnagel

On December 10, Sierra Club Population Program Director Annette Souder came up from Washington DC to spend a day of population activism here in Western New York. First she and Niagara Group Pop Chair Jim Hufnagel appeared on the radio talk show Dialog, hosted by Scott Leffler, and discussed global family planning and women's health issues with a large call-in audience, then in the evening they presented at a program sponsored by Buffalo NOW (National Organization for Women) celebrating the 55th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, attended by several Sierra Club members.

Raffle Postponed

The raffle of Gen Robins' beautiful painting is postponed until our February 24 meeting. This allows more people to purchase chances. Send \$1.00 per chance, along with your name and address, to Steve Burns, 25 S. Lincoln Ave. 3307, Orchard Park, NY 14127. Or you can buy chances at the Feb. 24 meeting before the drawing.

Executive Committee Members Are Elected

Raymond Gang and Mike Stroh were elected as new members of the Executive Committee of the Niagara Group of the Sierra Club in our annual election. They join Jim Hufnagel, Jane Jontz, Richard Lippes, and Charles Lamb, who were re-elected.

All six ran unopposed. We hope that more Sierrans come forward to run for election to the ExecCom so that true contests will occur and more people will be involved. All are welcome to come to the regular monthly meetings, but only the 12 Exec Com members vote on business matters.

Continuing in office and up for reelection next year, if they choose to run again, are Larry Beahan, Paul Maine, Genevieve Robins, Ginger Ursitti, Art Kline, and Frank Mendel.

The Bucket Brigade to the Rescue *by Mike Schade*

What's that smell in the air? The Bucket Brigade is coming to WNY to find out!

Do you want to know how to find out what you are breathing and if there is a link between pollution and health problems? The "Bucket Brigade" is a simple, but effective, tool that dozens of communities are using to find out for themselves what chemicals are in the air. Armed with their own data and information about the health effects of chemicals, these communities are winning impressive reductions of pollution, safety improvements and increasing enforcement of environmental laws.

The "Bucket Brigade" is named for a easy to use air sampling device housed inside a 5 gallon plastic bucket. The "Bucket" was developed in Northern California in 1995 by an environmental engineering firm in order to simplify and reduce the costs of widely accepted methods used for testing toxic gases in the air.

Citizens' Environmental Coalition (CEC) is teaming up with the national Global Community Monitor and is working with community groups in Cheektowaga, Tonawanda, and Rochester to schedule bucket brigade trainings in Western New York in late January.

*Contact CEC at 716-885-6848 if you are interested in attending one of these trainings. **For more information about the bucket brigade, log onto www.bucketbrigade.net**

Keep Pressing to Save Zoar Valley

We have already passed a resolution, as the Niagara Group of the Sierra Club, urging protection of the Zoar Valley old growth forest. Public hearings were held on October 21 and 23, and written comments were requested through December 1. That date is past. However, we need to keep informed about developments and to continue to keep up pressure to protect this treasure. You may write to Governor George Pataki, State Capitol, Albany, NY 14224 with copies to Mr. Wayne Cooper, Regional Forester, NYSDEC, 182 East Union, Suite 3, Allegany, NY 14706 at any time. Ask him for an update on the forest and urge him to be vigorous in protecting it. A designation is not enough unless enforced.

Interested in a Summer Outing?

Our Chapter Chair, Jane Jontz is looking for individuals who are interested in participating in an outing this summer to either Katahdin/Acadia, the White Mountains, or Isle Royale. This trip will be a strenuous backpacking trip for her-that may or may not be strenuous for you. If you are interested in any of these locations please give her a call: 628-6934. Thanks!

Niagara Group Wetlands Committee Update *by Liz Kaszubski*

Currently, our focus is on protecting and preserving New York's vanishing wetlands, alerting regulatory agencies at both the state and federal levels when enforcement compliance action may be required, and providing public comments concerning wetland-related issues.

On the local level, we continue to watch the news about the "sinking suburb" of Amherst, NY. Many of the homes that now have expensive-to-fix foundation problems were built in hydric (wetland) soils. The US Army Corps of Engineers will conduct a study of the problem soon.

In the neighboring community of the City of North Tonawanda, Sierra Club and Citizens for a Green North Tonawanda filed a 60-day notice with the US Environmental Protection Agency under the citizens suit provision of the Clean Water Act for violations by the City in wetlands. The City is negotiating with Sierra Club et al to reach settlement before the case goes to court.

Sierra Club had a vital part in saving the Klydel Wetland in North Tonawanda. Thus far, of the original 102 acres of wetland mapped by

the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, about 75 acres of 100% forested wetland remain undeveloped. Of that, 36 acres is now owned by the Western New York Land Conservancy and is maintained by Buffalo Audubon Society as the new North Tonawanda Audubon Nature Preserve. With an additional 9 acres owned by the city school district, a total of 45 acres is now available to the public. For more information pick up a trail brochure at the North Tonawanda public library or check out the following web sites:

<http://www.geocities.com/ntgreencitizen/index.html>

or

<http://www.buffaloaudubon.com/>

In light of a devastating US Supreme Court decision that is rapidly removing federal jurisdiction for "isolated" wetlands, we will be taking actions soon to protect New York's wetlands through new legislation initiated by Sierra Club. The bill introduced in the NYS Assembly is # 7905.

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: March 10, June 10, September 10, and December 10.

The Niagara Group of the Sierra Club meets on the fourth Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at the Harlem Road Community Center, 4255 Harlem Road south of Route 5 (Main Street). All Sierrans are invited!

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