



The TRAILBLAZER

October 2004

Niagara Group of the Sierra Club

Vol. XXXVI, No.3

SPECIAL ELECTION ISSUE

All members are urged to vote for members of our Niagara Group Executive Committee. Biographical sketches of the candidates and a ballot are to be found in this issue. Be sure to vote, tear the ballot from the paper as indicated, and mail it to Steve Burns.

The Environment Needs John Kerry

The following article is taken in part from the July and August 2004 issue of The Planet. The Planet is the Sierra Club Activist Resource Paper.

“This year the choice for president could not be clearer,” said Sierra Club President Larry Fahn, announcing in May the Club’s endorsement of John Kerry for president. “We are faced with a choice between the most anti-environmental president ever and a true friend who would bring to the office a dedication to improving all issues facing the environment. The past four years have witnessed an outright assault on 30 years of environmental progress, selection of staunchly anti-environmental judges, backroom deals with polluting industries – the list goes on.”

As a senator, Kerry has consistently supported the Sierra Club’s agenda; the League of Conservation Voters this year gave Kerry a 96.5 percent career rating, the highest LCV rating of any presidential nominee ever from a major party. He has been a Senate leader on fuel efficiency, led the charge against the Bush administration’s attempts to allow oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and has strongly opposed the nominations of anti-environmental candidates for judicial and federal agency appointments. Kerry has championed legislation supporting Endangered Species Act protections, opposed efforts to open national monuments to drilling, voted to strengthen public lands protections, and opposed the Bush administration’s attempts to weaken Clean Air and Clean Water Act protections.

The Sierra Club’s Political committee sent an environmental questionnaire to all the presidential candidates earlier this year, and interviewed the seven Democratic contenders who returned the questionnaires. (President Bush did not return his.) “Senator Kerry had an amazing grasp of the issues,” reported Fahn. “This guy really gets it.”

So, Sierrans, tell your friends! Make sure they read this article. There are many Republicans who favor protecting the environment and haven’t kept up with the news. It’s up to us to tell them!

Sierra Club Niagara Group Endorses Candidates

by Jim Hufnagel, Niagara Group Political Chair

Niagara Group of Sierra Club has endorsed the following candidates for election this fall. We believe that these candidates represent the best that Western New York has to offer, and therefore merit the support and votes of local Sierrans. Each has a record of advocacy for the environment, and has submitted to a personal interview during which their experience and vision for the future was determined to coincide with Sierra Club goals

State Sen. Byron Brown, 60th State Senate District
Assemblymember Sam Hoyt, 144th Assembly District
Assemblymember Crystal Peoples, 141st Assembly District
Matt Bova, 62nd State Senate District
Rep. Louise Slaughter, 28th Congressional District
John Maggiore, New York State Democratic Committee
Michelle Marto, New York State Democratic Committee
Sen. John Kerry, US President

Candidates came to the attention of the Niagara Group Executive Committee in the following ways: either they contacted Niagara Group and requested our endorsement, they were endorsed in previous years, or a member such as you brought the candidate to the ExCom’s attention. After a vote, the proposed endorsee was approved by the Atlantic Chapter Political Committee, and in the case of Congressional endorsements, by Sierra Club national staff.

Nov. 2 will be a pivotal event for the environmental movement. The volunteer time, the campaign donations, the votes we make this fall might turn out to be the most important work we do for the environment in our entire life. Carpe diem!

Strategic Planning Retreat

We are going to have a Strategic Planning Retreat on November 12 and 13. The goal is to make our group as effective as possible. Eleven Executive Committee Members and/or Officers have committed to attend. I am sending out this announcement to you in hopes that you will choose to join us in this effort.

Here are the primary areas of focus:

We plan ahead - strategically - to win environmental protections

We work effectively together as leaders and activists

We build relationships with people and involve them in our work

We connect with our communities to protect the environment

Larry Beahan, Steve Burns and I participated in the retreat in June and if you have any questions about the content you can contact one of us.

Please join us. There is much work to be done. JJ

Jane Jontz: 628 6934, Larry Beahan: 839 3112, Steve Burns: 662-2853.

Time for Sierrans to vote for 2004

Please read the following

Larry Beahan

Sierra Club Ex-Com is hard work but when our efforts make a dent it feels great.

I've seen us get results. We protected the forests of Allegany State Park and the bird habitat of Joe Davis Park.

Through Sierra efforts and some other environmental outfits it begins to look like Zoar Valley old growth will survive and Erie County's Forest will have a good bit of it turned into a nature preserve while only some of it will be harvested and that in a much more environmentally gentle way than the County first proposed.

Belonging to the Sierra Ex-Com has put me in touch with information that put oomph into my letters to the editor, public speaking, e-mails and my book on Allegany State Park, *Allegany Hellbender Tales*. These are important tools.

In the past year, I wore out my butt as Sierra representative to the endless, droning, relicensing settlement meetings for the Niagara Power Project. That settlement could bring hundreds of millions of dollars to bear on the repair of the natural environment of Western New York's waterfront. An iron butt is an important environmental weapon too. *-Larry Beahan*

Robert Ciesielski

Practicing attorney since 1974 and member of the Sierra Club since 1988. Active in service trips and outings with Sierra Club. While Principal Law Clerk to former State Supreme Court Justice Joseph Kuszynski, assigned to "Love Canal" cases brought by residents against chemical companies and municipalities. Former Erie County District Attorney and Assistant New York Attorney General. Graduate of Canisius College and Georgetown University Law Center. Currently in private practice in the Buffalo, New York area. Resident of Amherst, New York. Married with two children. Member of various other environmental, educational, and community organizations. *-Robert Ciesielski*

Liz Kaszubski

We have the responsibility to inspire a love of nature in future generations. We have it in our power to protect what is important to us.

I currently serve Sierra Club as a member of the Niagara Group Executive Committee, as New York State Wetlands Chair, and as a member of the National Clean Water Committee.

Most activists for the environment begin their journey with a "cause". Mine was the threat in my community in 1996 of Benderson Development building a strip mall in the exemplary Klydel Wetland. We were able to stop many powerful developers. It was not enough, however, to just say, "Don't build here". For 8 years I have worked to permanently preserve as much of this wetland as possible and to help other folks who needed similar assistance in their communities.

I co-founded Citizens for a Green North Tonawanda and created a website dedicated to wetland and green space issues at: <http://www.geocities.com/ntgreencitizen/index.html>. I am a geologist. As a board member of Buffalo Audubon Society, a technical advisor for the Western New York Land Conservancy, and the Niagara County representative to the New York State Open Space Regional Advisory Committee, I worked hard to help create the North Tonawanda Audubon Nature Preserve in the Klydel Wetland. I also serve as its first preserve manager.

The threat is far from over. Developers continue to build

homes in wetlands with no notification whatsoever to future owners. Sierra Club, Atlantic Chapter, has made the passage of improved wetland regulations (NYS Senate bill S.4480) its number 1 priority. I would like to continue working on these efforts by Sierra Club and forge more partnerships with other organizations. *-Liz Kaszubski*

Art Klein

I desire to work on Executive Committee of the Niagara Chapter. My conservation and the environment time span and involvement parallel the path the environmental movement has traveled for the past fifty years. I was a hunter, trapper and fisherman in the 1940's and 1950's when I realized that my areas of concern were being destroyed. I was surprised that not too many people were aware that sewage was degrading Ellicott Creek.

Through the 1960's I worked on the waters throughout the Great Lakes and witnessed the degradation of our world. I was an Investigator in the Corps of Engineers from 1973 to 1990 regulating the waterways and wetlands. Based on my observations I promised more environmental involvement after I retired and here I am, a Sierra activist.

I am a long time bicycle and pedestrian advocate and active in outdoor recreation advocacy for over thirty years. In this I learned to seek pressure points to achieve desired advocacy results.

I enjoy an active outdoor life. I remain frustrated at the inability of government and society to act in a timely or appropriate way to environmental problems. I am convinced the collective knowledge and will of the Sierra and others will achieve better reaction and ensure good policy. I write at least one letter a week to a newspaper or legislator correcting and educating views of conservation.

My Sierra Activities include but are not restricted to urban sprawl, open space conservation measures including forest and Park Policies, and transportation. *-Art Klein*

Paul Maine

Earlier years spent in heavily wooded northern Wisconsin and in rural NYS, together with quite a few years' life in Europe have led me to be greatly interested in environmental conservation. My education includes a MSW from the University of Buffalo. I recently retired from employment as a supervisor in the child welfare field. Since about 1997 I have had the good fortune to be able to attend the monthly meetings of the Niagara Group, which I had joined in 1985. For the past two years I have been on the executive committee. I am interested in, among other things, finding ways for many more of our members to actively join in our efforts to enjoy and to conserve our environmental resources. *-Paul Maine*

Genevieve Robins

I was a young widowed mother of 2 boys nursing an elderly woman whose son was treasurer of the Niagara Group of the Sierra Club, and recovering in the same hospital from a ski accident. I wasted no time in running down 6 flights of stairs to ask him for a membership form. His name is Murray Warner. Thanks, Murray, for embarking me in a fulfilling interest which I still have at the age of 90.

The Radioactive Waste Campaign was one of our biggest in-

Executive Committee Members

biographies of the candidates.

terests having to do with proper disposal. Membership chair off and on since then. My interest in the preservation of nature has never diminished and I find that the presence of the Sierra Club in the country and elsewhere is more vital and necessary than ever.

I received a volunteer of the year award in 1982 from the group. I helped raise money by having garage sales and the sales of our own T shirts.

At present (2004) I am membership chair with two members to assist in welcoming new members which consist of an average of 60 new ones each month. At present we have 68 new members and a total of 2,289 members in the month of July, 2004.

- Genevieve Robins

Ginger Ursitti

I have always been a supporter of environmental advocacy groups, but I chose Sierra Club as my primary mission several years ago. I have learned a tremendous amount about activism and the local environmental community during my current term on the ExCom, and my role as the meeting secretary is a great motivator to keep active. This past year I began representing the general Sierra Club membership of New York State on the Atlantic Chapter Executive Committee, gaining exposure to political processes on the state and national levels (not to mention within the Club!).

My background as an environmental professional allows me a real-world perspective on environmental issues and keeps me intimately involved in planning and transportation. I have a particular interest in wetland issues, and I serve on the Board of the New York State Wetlands Forum.

A great benefit of participating in meetings and joining the list-serve is the chance to get to know other groups around Buffalo and joining those outings and campaigns, such as the Old Growth Forest Inventory, Audubon, Friends of the Buffalo and Niagara Rivers, Zero Population Growth, and Allegany Historical Society. Especially exciting this year is witnessing the coalition of every environmental group in WNY under the prospect of re-licensing the Niagara Power Project.

I have very much enjoyed working with some real activists over the past few years, and I would love the chance to continue as a member of the Niagara Group ExCom. Regardless of the outcome of this election, I will continue to work in the Sierra Club and campaign for the issues closest to my heart, mostly related to wilderness protection and preservation, but also for control of population growth, urban sprawl, and pollution, as well as environmental justice.

- Ginger Ursitti

NIAGARA GROUP OFFICIAL BALLOTS

IMPORTANT: Single memberships, use one ballot.

Joint memberships, use both ballots.

Ballots must be received by December 1, 2004.

BALLOT 1 BOARD OF GOVERNANCE AT-LARGE DELEGATE CHOOSE UP TO 6

- Larry Beahan
- Robert Ciesielski
- Liz Kaszubski
- Art Klein
- Paul Maine
- Genevieve Robins
- Ginger Ursitti

BALLOT 2 BOARD OF GOVERNANCE AT-LARGE DELEGATE CHOOSE UP TO 6

- Larry Beahan
- Robert Ciesielski
- Liz Kaszubski
- Art Klein
- Paul Maine
- Genevieve Robins
- Ginger Ursitti

ELECTION INSTRUCTIONS

To be eligible to vote in this election, you must have been a member in good standing of the Niagara Group as verified by a members mailing label.

Please read all the candidate statements on pages 2 and 3. Indicate your choices by checking the boxes next to the candidates names on the ballot. Each member may fill out only one ballot. Joint members use both ballots.

Please detach this page and fold and secure as indicated in the directions below (tape please, no staples!). Make sure your mailing label is facing out and your ballot is sealed inside the fold. Please mail your ballot(s) in an ordinary letter size envelope, provided with the proper postage.

****Please note that this year, the Elections Committee requires the use of an envelope for returning your ballot.****

This will greatly decrease the chances of your ballot being damaged in the mail and will help ensure its secrecy.

Send your ballot(s) to:

2002 Niagara Group Elections Committee
c/o Steve Burns • 25 S. Lincoln • Orchard Park 14127

BALLOTS MUST BE RECEIVED ON OR BEFORE 12/01/04

FOLDING STEP 1: Fold TOP edge down to this line. ↑

FOLDING STEP 2: Fold BOTTOM edge up so your mailing label faces outward. Tape lightly if you wish, but do NOT staple.

Volunteers Needed - The Executive Committee would like to collect names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of those who would, under certain circumstances, donate some time and energy. If you are in that list, please send your name and contact information to our president, Jane Jontz, at jontzja@hotmail.com, or mail it to Charles Lamb at 335 Walnut Lane, Youngstown, NY 14174.

Niagara County Legislature Urges Health Department to Prohibit Excavation at CWM Site.

A resolution was passed at the Niagara County Legislature meeting on Sept. 7 which included the following wording:

SO THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the Niagara County Legislature strongly believes that the disturbance of the soil at CWM could potentially have a significant effect on the environment, similar to what has been seen at the LOOW site immediately adjacent to CWM, which has been restricted to public access or use for decades, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Niagara County Legislature formally urges NYSDOH to include the SEQRA review process in its deliberations before approving any soil excavation activities, or considering the revocation or amending of its orders, which prohibit CWM from disturbing the soil at its hazardous waste site because of the potential of residual soil and groundwater contamination and the effect on the environment.

Stop Factory Farming

by Yvonne Tasker-Rothenberg, Chair, Atlantic Group Farm and Food Committee

New York State's rural landscape is being attacked by CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations). There are now more than 600 permitted CAFO's in our state and over 150 of them are in the Niagara group region. CAFOs in Wyoming and Genesee Counties are among the most prolific manure producers of all New York Counties. We are seeing disastrous effects on air, water, public health, animals and communities.

You can be a part of stopping the proliferation of industrial livestock operations. Contact the Atlantic Group Farm and Food Committee for our free brochure: *Stop factory Farming and Protect Rural New York!* Email FarmandFoodComm@yahoo.com or call 315.446.8622.

Erie County Forest by Larry Beahan, Forest Chair

The lucky people of Erie County own 3000 acres of lush forest twenty miles south of Buffalo in the Town of Sardinia. Parks Commissioner Larry Jasinski says his new forest management plan is, "First for environment, second for recreation, and if there is economic benefit, that's last." Joel Giambra sent it to the legislature saying it's for a "healthier" forest but he didn't ask us, the owners of this forest what we thought of the plan, nor did he do the Environmental Impact Study required by the State Environmental Quality Review Act.

This commercial logging plan for 60% of the forest (one of its authors called it "a management plan on steroids") calls for herbicides, clear-cutting patches, taking all hardwoods over twenty inches in places, no size requirements on buffers, no specific logging-road soil erosion plan. It does call for the clearing of fire lanes.

When was the last forest fire in Erie County?

Four forest experts told me this is a timber-harvesting plan, and not a very good one.

The people of Erie County might prefer to do their skiing, hiking and nature appreciation in a real forest rather than a tree farm. These woods belong to all of us. Planning for them should be a public process.

Sierra representatives have voiced criticism of this plan and have received some personal assurances that a much more eco-friendly plan is in the works for **our** forest. To underscore our concern however we have joined with Audubon, Foothills and ADK to retain environmental attorney, Richard Lippes to raise this matter with County Executive Joel Giambara in a formal letter. We are waiting for the new plan.

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 United Methodist Church of Williamsville, 5681 Main Street. All Sierrans are invited!

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Sierra Club
Niagara Group
791 Parkside Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14216

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