



# The TRAILBLAZER

January 2005

Niagara Group of the Sierra Club

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## When the Going Gets Tough...

by Charles Lamb

Rather than giving in to discouragement, now is the time for friends of the environment to redouble their efforts.

In the November 15 issue of The Buffalo News, an article appeared entitled "Another Voice." It was written by Laura Scott who is an assistant editor at the Kansas City Star. Her summary of issues included the following: "Last month Knight Ridder Newspapers reported these statistics from Bush's first term: Superfund cleanups of toxic waste fell by 52 percent; warning about not eating tainted fish caught in rivers and lakes increased significantly; beach closings rose 26 percent; civil citations and criminal prosecutions of polluters dropped; and asthma attacks went up. Bush reversed course on a Clinton-era directive to protect forests from logging and destructive road-building, approved 74 percent more permits to drill for oil and dgas on public lands, and backed down from the federal timetable for ridding the air of mercury poison from power plant emissions.

Michael Levitt, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, told the New York Times that the election this month 'is a validation of our philosophy and agenda.' In addition to revising clean-air laws, that agenda is reported to include softening animal protections under the 30-year-old Endangered Species Act and opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas exploration. Americans should make it clear to their representatives that the environment still matters to them and that the election is not 'a validation' of the administration's agenda on the environment."

We in the Niagara Group of the Sierra Club will do our job to protect the environment. We urge others to join us, attend our meetings, become active in our work. As we used to practice over and over again in typing classes, "Now is the time for all good (people) to come to the aid of their country!"



## Niagara Group Winter Dinner Meeting

The Niagara Group of the Sierra Club will meet for dinner on Tuesday, February 22, at 6:00 p.m. at the Eagle House Restaurant on Main Street in Williamsville. Please come and bring guests! We are proud to have a well informed and highly motivated speaker, Kirk Johnson. Johnson made a presentation to the Finger Lakes Board of Governors last month and really made a strong case for the Allegheny National Forest.

Reservations are necessary, no later than February 17, and should be sent to Jane Jontz at 716 628 6934 or jontzja@hotmail.com. Each person will order from the menu, so the cost will be determined individually. We will have a private room for the dinner and program. Mark your calendars!

## 2004 Niagara Group Election Results

Seven candidates ran for positions on the Executive Committee, including Larry Beahan, Robert Ciesielski, Liz Kaszubski, Art Klein, Paul Maine, Genevieve Robins, and Ginger Ursitti. All 7 were elected because Jim Hufnagel has resigned from the Committee. Jim is no longer with the Sierra Club and we would like to thank him for many years of hard work. He has been an agent of positive change in the club. Thanks Jim!"

Thanks to all of you who work so hard to help us all have a better planet. For all of you out there who wonder if you can join this band of volunteers: We would love to have your help. Come join us! If you want to start by asking some questions please email me at jontzja@hotmail.com or call me at 716-628-6934. - Jane Jontz, Chairperson

## Priorities for 2005

The Niagara Group of the Sierra Club has set priorities for its work in 2005. The areas of concern are: Chemical Waste Management in Niagara Country, population, wetlands, and the Erie County Forest. The group will work on other concerns as well, but these will take priority. Come to the meetings; get involved!

The group agreed that its greatest accomplishment in 2004 was in the area of wetlands protection.

## Attack on the Forests

The New York Times published a major editorial concerning the Bush administration policies on national forests. Some quotations from that article appear below:

"The Bush administration has taken apart so many environmental regulations that one more rollback should not surprise us. Even so, it boggles the mind that the White House should choose an election year to dismantle one of the most important and popular land preservation initiatives of the last 30 years – a Clinton administration rule that placed 58.5 million acres of the national forests off limits to new road building and development.

"There are no compelling reasons to repudiate that rule and no obvious beneficiaries besides a few disgruntled Western governors and the timber, oil, and gas interests that have long regarded the national forests as profit centers. It's not even a case of election-year pandering to Western voters; indeed, early returns suggest that most Westerners below the rank of governor do not like the Bush proposal at all. Especially aggrieved is the so-called hook and bullet crowd –  
**(con't on pg. 2)**

(Forests con't from pg. 1)

anglers and hunters who, though overwhelmingly Republican, have become increasingly disenchanted with the administration's timid and in some cases careless policies on wetlands, mercury pollution and oil and gas exploration on sensitive public lands."

## **Elizabeth Kaszubski Testifies Against Lewiston Golf Course**

Elizabeth Kaszubski, state wetlands chair for the Sierra Club and a member of our Niagara Group Executive Committee, testified against the final environmental document submitted concerning the proposed new Lewiston golf course. Liz spoke about the wetlands on the site and the shellbark hickory trees that would be threatened by the development.

## **Save Zoar Valley Update**

*from Friends of the Ancient Forest*

From an environmental activist viewpoint this has been a busy & fruitful spring for Zoar Valley. We see many positive developments in regards to the approach the D.E.C. is taking with the upcoming Draft Unit Management Plan for Zoar Valley.

Albert Brown from Friends of the Ancient Forest (FAF) has met several times with Gerry Mikol, the Region 9 Director of the D.E.C., who is overseeing Zoar Valleys upcoming draft plan. Some of what FAF has been assured :

- All of the old growth will be protected (designation to be decided).
- A new statewide D.E.C. definition of old growth will also be included in the plan.
- There will be no new roads built in Zoar.
- There will be NO MORE commercial value timber sales from Trees in Zoar.

FAF is continuing to consult with the D.E.C. to ensure Zoar and all its flora, fauna, & amazing ecosystem gets the complete protection that it deserves.

We are encouraged by the progress. FAF will keep you up-to-date about developments.

## **Are We Humble Enough to Learn?**

We Americans like to say we are the greatest country on earth, and others would love to live here. Such self-esteem can be good, but are we humble enough to learn from others?

In an article in the November 18-14 weekly edition of the Washington Post, Jeremy Rifkin contrasts some of our prevailing attitudes with those in Europe, and notes the following:

"Americans have long associated freedom with autonomy, and autonomy with property. The wealthier you are, the more independent you are, the more secure you are. Europeans find freedom not in autonomy, but in embeddedness. For most Europeans, the community's quality of life is more important than an individual's financial success. The more communities you join, the more options you have for living a full and meaningful life. Belonging - not belonging- is what brings security."

"Where the American Dream emphasizes economic growth, the European Dream focuses on sustainable development. Environmental awareness is much higher in Europe than in America, even if sustainable development is beginning to make inroads here as well. Compared to us, Europeans are fanatical about conserving energy. When I stay in a major hotel in Europe, I have to insert my card key into a slot to turn the lights on in my room. I when I leave, I retrieve my key from the slot and the lights automatically turn off."

"Europeans accept heavy taxes on gasoline and opt for smaller cars to save energy and reduce the effects of global warming. America consumes nearly one-third more energy than the 15 most developed EU countries, even though they have a combined population that's nearly 100 million more than that of the United States."

The article continues. Food for thought. What are our values?

## **A Personal Note by Charles Lamb**

Your co-editor has a new car, and I love it! After months on a waiting list, I finally have my new Prius, the Toyota electric-gasoline hybrid. I find it roomy, comfortable, and great fun to drive. If you are in my vicinity sometime, I'd love to take you for a ride!

You probably know it switches from the engine to the battery automatically, so you never have to plug it in. I'm averaging about 48 miles per gallon so far. And it fits my philosophy. Pardon the personal note; this isn't a paid commercial; it's just a sharing of some personal happiness.

*Niagara Group Will Hold a Planning Retreat Friday evening, April 15th - Saturday, April 16th.  
For more information contact Jane Jontz at 716-628-6934 or jontzja@hotmail.com*

## **Warming the World to Dry Our Socks**

*(an excerpt from Common Dreams, 7/16/04, submitted by Gretchen Duling)*

Once, visiting a friend, I helped wash the dinner dishes. I soaped the plates and cups, and she rinsed them and stacked them in a dish rack. When we were finished, I asked where the dish towel was so I could dry. "Oh, don't bother with that," she said. "That's the air's job."

This brings me to a very modest proposal. If you're wondering what (prior to Nov. 2) you can do about our deadly dependence on foreign energy, or about ever-rising utility bills, or about the flood of carbon into the atmosphere that's steadily raising temperatures, here's one answer: Let air and sun and wind do their job.

To be specific, buy 50 feet of clothesline and a \$3 bag of clothespins and become a solar energy pioneer.

The average American family devotes 5 to 6 percent of its annual electric budget to the motor and heating coils inside its clothes dryer. Undampening your socks ties you into the vast world energy grid, with its legacy of mountaintop removal coal mining, terrorist-vulnerable natural gas pipelines and all the rest. Which is OK - right? - because we all need dry socks.

## State Moves to Protect Central New York Wetland

*Lysander Project to Test Federal Wetlands Protection Rules (This news also encourages us in western New York to keep up the fight!)*

Attorney General Eliot Spitzer today announced legal action to protect a sensitive 19-acre wetland in Onondaga County.

The move by Spitzer's office is a direct challenge to the Bush Administration's interpretation of federal wetlands protection rules. The move is also an effort to address flooding problems in Central New York.

"New York's wetlands are being lost at an alarming rate," Attorney General Spitzer said. "And federal authorities are not doing enough to halt the damage. The Administration has interpreted the law in ways that violate Congress's intent to protect waters and wetlands. This approach undermines the protection of critical natural areas."

At issue is a recent decision of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which has claimed that it does not have legal authority to protect this wetland in the Town of Lysander in northern Onondaga County. The Corps says that the specific wetland in question — which is slated for development — is not a protected wetland because it is not connected directly to another water body.

Spitzer's office contends that the Lysander wetland drains directly into the Seneca River, approximately one-half mile away and is a protected wetland, according to federal law. Spitzer's office noted that construction of new housing tracts have already affected Lysander wetlands and that further development may exacerbate regional flooding problems as displaced water flows to downstream areas.

Spitzer said that while new development is welcome, the state must carefully monitor wetlands development because of worsening flooding problems, especially in Central New York. Projects with the clear potential to create an ecological imbalance should be modified, he said.

James Murphy, Wetlands and Water Resources Council of the National Wildlife Federation said: "The Army Corps of Engineers has taken a minor loophole and created a gap big enough to drive a bulldozer through and it's clear that its district offices are not going to close it. We're encouraged that the New York Attorney General's Office is pursuing this important case to ensure that new York's wetlands receive the protection required by law."

The Attorney General's office has filed a Notice of Intent to sue the Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency. The law requires that the agencies have 60 days to respond before a lawsuit is filed.

In August of 2003, a local builder, Greenfield Homes, LLC, requested that the Army Corps of Engineers determine that the wetland in Lysander is not protected by the Clean Water Act because it is not next to another body of water such as a river or a stream. The Army Corps' Buffalo District office agreed with the developer, ruled that the wetland is not protected under the Clean Water Act and is allowing the project to move forward. The Attorney General's Office, which became involved in the case after receiving complaints from local residents, is seeking to have the decision reversed.

Wetlands are important natural resources because they help prevent flooding, improve water supplies, provide wildlife habitat, ensure biodiversity and provide recreational and aesthetic enjoyment for many New Yorkers.

The case is being handled by Assistant Attorneys General Lemuel Srolovic and Lisa Feiner, with Environmental Scientist Charles Silver.

## Isle Royale

Isle Royale is a National Park which is an island in Lake Superior. It is a primitive island without motorized vehicles. I would like to backpack the forty-five miles down the center of the island and then take in some canoeing. If you are interested in this summer 2005 outing please let me know: jontzja@hotmail.com or 716-628-6934. - Jane Jontz

## Introducing Joe Gardella

Dr. Joseph A. Gardella, Jr., has been appointed to the Executive Committee of the Niagara Group of the Sierra Club, to fill out a term caused by a resignation.

Dr. Gardella is a Professor of Chemistry and Associate Dean for External Affairs in the College of Arts and Sciences at SUNY, Buffalo, where he has been since 1982. He holds a Ph.D in Analytical Chemistry from the University of Pittsburgh and has also done postdoctoral research.

Joe currently serves as a volunteer or appointed advisor on a variety of community service projects, including the Buffalo Pest Management Board, the City of Buffalo Environmental Management Commission, etc.

He has worked with the following community driven toxic issues: Seneca Babcock, Hickory Woods, Bellevue in Cheektowaga, Lewiston Porter Schools, and the Toxic Waste Lupus Coalition. He also serves on St. Joseph University Parish Social Justice Committee, and was awarded the CEC Environmental Hero award last year.

We are honored to have Joe on our Executive Committee!

## Robert Moses Parkway Update

Across the country, cities are removing outdated and unsightly highways in order to open up waterfront access to the public. San Francisco, New York, Portland and Toronto have all enhanced their standard of living, and increased property values, by removing these waterfront highway barriers to provide open space, parkland and other amenities.

Sierrans have been working for years to have the Robert Moses Parkway removed. The Parkway cuts off the City of Niagara Falls from the Niagara Gorge and River. Last December, we thought our efforts were ended when Commissioner Castro issued a report establishing the Parkway as a permanent fixture in this beautiful natural area. Since then, we have gained the support of the influential Seneca Nation of Indians, and the City of Niagara Falls itself.

In addition, we have applied for settlement money from the Power Project relicensing to be used for restoration of the Gorge rim, including Parkway removal, remediation of construction sites, and relocation of a Parks garage presently located on the Gorge rim.

## Victory over Waste Management, Inc. — North Carolina

In Oak Ridge, NC, Neighbors for Environmental Safety Today (NEST) celebrated the end of a 10-year fight against Waste Management, Inc. When it opened in 1990, the Piedmont Landfill in Oak Ridge was supposed to last 23-30 years. However, the landfill has reached full capacity in just 14 years. Over the past 10 years, as the site began to fill more quickly than anticipated, WMI has made seven attempts to expand Piedmont Landfill. Each time, NEST fought to ensure expansion didn't happen. WMI's most recent attempt was a massive 300-acre expansion. This year, NEST won the battle once and for all, and the Piedmont Landfill has now been capped and closed.

## LIVING IN HARMONY

**HOLIDAY IDEAS** that show *you care* about the earth and the people and animals that live there:

Make an **organic gift basket** for a host/hostess gift or general giving (unlimited possibilities).

Buy a **rechargeable** battery system for all those toys, etc. (Caution: these batteries last a LOT longer, but should be recycled when they can no longer be recharged.)

Buy **organic cotton** clothes, sheets, blankets, and more for yourself or for gifts. (Cotton is one of the most heavily sprayed crops).

Make a donation to **Heifer Project** International in honor or memory of a family member or buy a membership in an environmentally focused group such as the **National Wildlife Federation**. The NWF also has wonderful magazines for all ages...great gifts with no wrapping!

**Gift certificates, magazine** subscriptions, etc need little, if any wrapping paper and can make wonderful gifts.

Purchase a good quality **air filter** or **water filter** for your family.

Purchase cards, wrapping paper, etc from **recycled paper**. (We recycle so we need to also BUY products from recycled materials.)

Remember as you purchase and use **candles** that there are many that give off dangerous **chemicals** as they burn. Lori's, Wegman's Nature's Marketplace, and other natural food stores carry safer ones.

And please remember that many **fragrances** contain **carcinogens** (**cancer** causing ingredients) and neurotoxins. For potpourri, try cooking (on low heat) some water with lemon peel, cinnamon, cloves or similar spices. This imparts a wonderful festive mood with no damage to you or your **pets**. Just watch that it doesn't boil dry!!!

Put your holiday lights on timers and consider the energy usage as you plan. They add a lot to our festivities and planning wisely can lower your energy cost and usage.

*Happy Holidays.. Judy and Doug*

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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