



# The TRAILBLAZER

April 2005

Niagara Group of the Sierra Club Vol. XXXVII, No.1

## Buffalo Limits Toxics

Buffalo plans to limit the use of persistent bioaccumulative toxic chemicals (PBTs) and becomes the first city in New York State to take this action. Similar actions have been taken in Boston, Seattle, San Francisco, Oakland, and in the states of New Hampshire, Washington, and Oregon.

The City Council passed a resolution urging purchasers to avoid products with PBTs. The Environmental Protection Agency says that they may release chemicals including mercury and dioxin. This is why they are dangerous for human health.

## Kirk Johnson Speaks at Sierra Club Dinner, Reveals Controversial Position

Kirk Johnson, Executive Director of Friends of the Allegheny Wilderness, spoke at a dinner meeting of the Niagara Group on February 22 at the Eagle House. There was a good attendance for this special event.

The Friends of the Allegheny Wilderness are trying to get certain areas within Allegheny National Forest set aside as wilderness areas. However, they also agree that other areas may be used for mining and logging. In the literature that Mr. Johnson distributed, the Friends point out that setting aside the areas they recommend for wilderness "...would not eliminate, or even significantly reduce, timber harvesting in the Forest... We recognize that timber management and oil and gas development are important and appropriate uses of the ANF, and we support the continuation of these practices on this 'land of many uses.'"

Another group, known as the Allegheny Defense Project, advocates no timber cutting at all in the Allegheny National Forest. We hope to have representatives from that group at our March meeting.

The Sierra Club's national position on this issue is to end commercial logging in national forests.

It might be possible to support the setting aside of certain areas within Allegheny National Forest as wilderness areas without endorsing timbering and mining in other areas. Some may consider that to be an attainable compromise; others may not be interested in anything less than saving all, not just 12%, of the Forest.

There will be further discussion of this issue at the Niagara Group's March 22 meeting.

*Hugh Mitchell, Conservation Chair for the Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club, is also expected to attend our March meeting. Hugh is a strong leader for conservation in the whole state.*

## Environmentalists Needed on the Greenway Commission *by Larry Beahan*

The Niagara Power Project, one of the largest hydroelectric plants in the world was carved into the wall of the Niagara River gorge fifty years ago to harness the power of Niagara Falls. Environmental laws then did not require any compensation for the damage to habitat, neighborhoods, people, flora or fauna which this entailed.

Ten percent of the Tuscarora Reservation disappeared into a giant reservoir, the dramatic flow of water over the falls has slowed, and constant fluctuation of river levels make the river banks unstable breeding areas, tons of fish are chewed up in the turbines, the gorge itself is marred with a huge concrete scar. The Robert Moses Parkway, part of the Power Project and another colossus of concrete, forms a barrier that separates the City of Niagara Falls from the still breath taking scenery of the gorge. There is an ecological price to pay for even "clean-green" hydro power.

Niagara Group members have participated over the last two years in the relicensing negotiations that will allow the power project to continue. The negotiations will generate a billion dollars or more over the next 50 years to compensate for some of this damage.

A good portion of that money will be spent on a Niagara River Greenway. *We are now working to persuade Governor Pataki to appoint two environmentalists, Barry Boyer and Margaret Wooster as Greenway Commissioners to influence the Commission to spend that money on something other than asphalt and concrete.*

## Julie Barrett O'Neil Receives Blake Reeves Award

At the Niagara Group's February dinner meeting, the Blake Reeves award was presented to Julie O'Neill. She is Executive Director of Friends of the Buffalo and Niagara River

Julie, together with Barry Boyer, led the Environmental Coalition during the Niagara Power Plant Relicensing negotiations for two years and did an outstanding job of keeping the various environmental groups together. Her work will help result in millions of dollars being designated for environmental projects.

Now she is helping direct the Niagara River Greenway Campaign, to try to be sure that the environmental money is used wisely.

She was our speaker at our 2004 dinner meeting. We not only congratulate and honor Julie, but thank her for her dedicated and effective work.

## Niagara County Joins the Fight

(taken from a January 12 article in the Buffalo News and an article in the January 15 Sentinel)

Niagara County Legislature's Administrative Committee has voted to spend up to \$50,000 to hire Gary Abraham, an environmental lawyer, and two of his associates. This is being done to block Chemical Waste Management's expansion plans.

The vote came after Public Health Director Paulette M. Kline stated that New York was refusing to allow CWM to expand farther onto the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works site. In 1972 the Health Department had ruled that the soil was not to be disturbed, placing a 614 acre area off limits.

Lee Simonson, County Legislator from Lewiston, said they were trying to protect the health of county residents. "We intend to take this head on."

The Niagara County Health Department and the New York State Department of Health both have stated that there are concerns about radioactive affected property at CWM which have not been adequately addressed.

It appears that CWM has failed to abide by recommendations from the Atomic Energy Commission concerning use of the land.

CWM President Richard Sturges said he felt the state's latest letter was a request for more information and he felt the permitting process could still go forward.

A letter from the Health Department also showed that there is a structure on CWM property that is extremely contaminated with radioactive wastes, namely Radium 226, which DOH said "exceeded the criteria for unrestricted release on the inside surfaces of a warehouse." This structure is currently in use. Mr. Sturges said it had only minimal use and that "employees go in there on an occasional basis."

Residents for Responsible Government continues its efforts, in alliance with the Sierra Club, to protect the health and safety of our environment and citizens, and applauds the Niagara County Legislature and the Department of Health for their actions.

### **The Bigger Better Bottle Bill** *by Art Klein*

Since 1982, more than 80 billion containers bearing a 5-cent deposit have been redeemed under New York's bottle bill, contributing to a healthier environment, cleaner and safer communities, and a stronger economy.

Now we must work to ensure positive legislative outcome to the Bigger Better Bottle Bills namely (S.1290-a LaValle/A.2517-a DiNapoli) to expand New York's Bottle Bill and include deposits on non-carbonated beverages, such as bottled water, iced tea, juice, and sports drinks.

These bills also will right a long standing wrong and require the beverage industry to return all unclaimed deposits to the state to fund municipal recycling and waste prevention programs. The unclaimed deposits are currently retained by the beverage industry and form a nice profit margin sponsored by the taxpayers. We think the extra deposit funds should be used to benefit New York's environment. Michigan and Massachusetts already done so. It is in the public and conservation interests to get this legislation passed and return the money to the public.

The original bottle Bill by either recycling or disposing of beverage containers has saved New Yorkers more than \$300 million in landfill fees since 1983. Updating New York's law to include bottled water, iced tea, juice and sport drink containers makes a proven system even more effective. These beverages barely existed when the first bottle bill was passed, but now account for more than 22% of the beverage market.

The new Bigger Better Bottle Bill just will right a long standing wrong by diverting money back to the public and by including the newer market developments will get New York back on track by eliminating many the millions of discarded containers that now litter our roadways and parks.

Put the bottle bill to work for New York! Call your New York Assembly and Senate Representatives today! Or email: [assembly.state.ny.us](mailto:assembly.state.ny.us), [www.senate.state.ny.us](http://www.senate.state.ny.us) and while your at it inform Governor Pataki at [www.state.ny.us/governor](http://www.state.ny.us/governor)

The bottle bill has been an environmental success story for New York. But, we need your help to make it bigger, better and keep up with changing times. To find out more about this campaign, please visit: [www.nybottlebill.org](http://www.nybottlebill.org)  
[www.nypirg.org/enviro/bottlebill/bottlebillinfo.html](http://www.nypirg.org/enviro/bottlebill/bottlebillinfo.html)  
[www.newyork.sierraclub.org/tracker/a2517.html](http://www.newyork.sierraclub.org/tracker/a2517.html)

### **People of Faith Take Action on Global Warming and Power Plant Pollution**

*By Janet Allen, Ph.D. President, New York Interfaith Power & Light*

In the Winter *Sierra Atlantic* Charles Lamb wrote: "If care of the environment is a religious duty, let's enlist the faithful." Well, it is, and we are here. In fact, the faithful need to enlist your help.

New York Interfaith Power & Light (NY IP&L) is part of a national effort by the faith community to promote good stewardship of God's gift of energy through energy conservation and the use of renewable energy.

*If you are a member of a faith community and are concerned about global warming and power plant pollution, we need your assistance. We need more volunteer members to spread the message. We need more congregations participating in NY IP&L.*

Why should congregations be concerned about energy?

Some of that monthly utility bill could be better spent on a congregation's core mission. And the savings can be considerable.

But the more important reason is justice. By using less energy, congregations help prevent further global warming and protect human health. Purchasing renewable energy supports clean energy for a sustainable future.

Congregations in New York State have some significant advantages: NYSERDA - The New York State Research and Development Authority offers low-cost energy audits and financial incentives and rebates for taking energy conservation measures. Why not start with an energy audit? The cost of the audit is applied toward the cost of any recommended work, so the audit is essentially free. And if your congregation needs assistance, NY IP&L has a revolving loan fund for that \$200 audit fee.

Energy choice - Most congregations in NYS can, for a small surcharge, choose "green" electricity through their current utility.

#### **Get your congregation on board with NY IP&L**

It's easy to become a member of NY IP&L. There is no cost. Just sign the Covenant, pledging to take at least one energy stewardship action among those listed.

Join NY IP&L, and you and your congregation will be on your way to becoming good stewards of God's gift of energy!

*More information and covenants are available on the website [www.nyipl.org](http://www.nyipl.org), by writing NY IP&L at 401 Parsons Drive, Syracuse, NY 13219 or by phone at (315) 487-5742.*

## 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.

### Efforts to Save Marcy Woods Continue

The Niagara Group has joined again this year with Fort Erie to urge that the beautiful Marcy Woods continue to be protected.

This beautiful site, *along Lake Erie on the Canadian side, and containing a rare forest*, does not yet have permanent protection. We are urging the government in Toronto to extend protection indefinitely, until a permanent and sound policy is adopted.

Please visit <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara/documents/> to view the letter written by Margaret Wooster for the protection of Marcy Woods. Niagara Group signed on to it along with many other environmental organizations.

### Spirit Wolf

In response to the article, "If Care of Environment is a Religious Duty, Let's Enlist the Faithful," which appeared in the Winter Sierra Atlantic, Mark W. Holdren mailed a copy of his book "*Spirit Wolf*," to Charles Lamb.

"*Spirit Wolf*" is described as "a mystical Adirondack journey." Mr. Holdren says the best way to order it is through [www.spiritwolf.info](http://www.spiritwolf.info). The cost is \$13.95 with shipping free. It can be ordered through bookstores or Amazon as well, but at greater cost.

Holdren writes, "Muir believed that wilderness was godful. *Spirit Wolf* is about the energy we feel when we sit by a mountain stream or watch the sun rise over a wilderness lake – an energy that is surely connecting us to something greater than ourselves."

### PCBs' "Most Likely" Not Coming to Niagara

Officials from the Environmental Protection Agency announced that contaminated sediment from the Hudson River are not likely to be headed to CWM Chemical Services in Porter for disposal.

The CWM site will "most likely not be the site" where the dirty sediment to be dredged from the Hudson River starting in 2006 will go, according to David King, director of the EPA Hudson River Field Office, in a release from the office of state Sen. George Maziarz, r-Newfane. The final decision has not yet been made and will not be made for several months, according to John Haggard, Hudson River Program Manager for General Electric.

GE has dumped an estimated 1.3 million pounds of toxic PCBs into the Hudson. Sites in Texas, Michigan, and Utah are top candidates because they are all accessible by rail or barge, an EPA requirement in this matter. CWM in Porter is not accessible by rail or barge.

### A Note from Our Membership Chair

To all new members of the Niagara Group of the Sierra Club: The staff extends a hearty welcome. A welcome card and information will soon be in your mailbox, but until then, here is valuable information.

You are now a member of the Niagara Group of the Sierra Atlantic Chapter. We meet at the United Methodist Church, 5681 Main Street in Williamsville at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of each month. For more information call 875-5226. - *Genevieve Robins*

### League of Conservation Voters Scorecard

The League of Conservation Voters has released its environmental scorecard for 2004.

The League keeps close track of the votes of Senators and Representatives on issues effecting the environment. They score people on their votes concerning such issues as the National Energy Policy, Tongass Protection, Forest Management, Yellowstone Snowmobiles, Environmental Funding, the Superfund Tax, Nuclear Waste Cleanup, etc.

Our New York Senators scored well and are to be congratulated. Clinton and Schumer both scored 100% favorable votes on all environmental issues.

In the House of Representatives, Louise Slaughter also scored 100%. Quinn's score was 9% and Reynolds was zero! Houghton scored 27%.

Nationally, in the Senate Democrats voted pro-environment 85% of the time; Republicans 8%. In the House, Democrats voted pro-environment 86% of the time; Republicans 10%.

Since Republicans now control both the House and Senate, our work is cut out for us as we urge our Democratic representatives to hold firm and not compromise and try to persuade some Republicans to vote in favor of a clean and safe and saved environment.

### Save the Hemlock Forest in Evans

Larry Beahan, our Forestry Chair, has written to the officials in Evans as follows:

Sierra Club Niagara Group urges you, the elected and appointed officials of the Town of Evans, to recognize the world class natural wonder you have within your boundaries, the 500 year old hemlock forest and lakefront sand dune at Pine Lodge.

Our members have recently visited the area. I personally worked one summer at Bennett Beach and am very familiar with those beautiful dunes and those woods. Expert foresters in our group attest to the unique value of this treasure.

We trust you to see that it is not destabilized and allowed to disappear under the understandable human impulse to live and build within it. Another house or worse yet a collection of houses there would mean the eventual if not the immediate end of that valuable, that irreplaceable fragment of our ancient forest.

### News Flash

Residents for Responsible Government announces an Environmental Summit, to inform persons about hazardous and nuclear wastes in Niagara County, at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday April 14. Note: the location of this event has been changed to the Lewiston Porter High School Auditorium. Probable keynote speaker: Ralph Nader. Phone 716-745-7037 for more information.

# More Ideas for Living in Harmony

*A letter to the editor from Jean S. Palas*

I really liked the “Living In Harmony” notations in the January 2005 issue of The Trailblazer. Here are a few more objectives I feel would fit into a program of “shopping with the environment in mind”. Hope you can use the ideas.

Encourage people to buy free range meats, hopefully fed with organic produce, and where no hormones or unnecessary antibiotics are used. Remind people that factory farms are one of the biggest polluters in the country.

Publish an update of the “Seafood Watch” – a National Seafood Guide. The one I carry in my purse was distributed as a courtesy of the Sierra Club and was last updated November 2003. Even if there is not a more recent update, I imagine many people have never seen this important guide and a printing of it would be great. If the Niagara Group can come up with some of the little purse cards – wonderful!

Encourage people to buy organic produce as much as possible. They avoid poisoning the land as well as themselves. And caution them to keep vigilant about organic products grown/raised in another country that could be raised here.

We sure do not want more outsourcing.

Encourage people to shop at the Farmers Markets when applicable. They will be getting farm fresh produce at less cost and supporting our local farmers.

Support and encourage restaurants to feature free-range meats and eggs – and order these meals.

Promote locally owned shops that sell organic and recycled products.

Perhaps some space could be allocated in the Trailblazer to note restaurants, shops and markets that meet the above requirements. And perhaps these businesses could be encouraged to give a discount to people presenting their Sierra Membership Card.

Perhaps if the Niagara Group of the Sierra Club actively pursues the “Living In Harmony” that Judy & Doug Turk promoted, the Buffalo News would give the project some coverage. These are topics very dear to my heart and I was excited to read the most recent issue of the Sierra magazine as well as the Trailblazer.

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](mailto: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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