



The TRAILBLAZER

April 2006

Niagara Group of the Sierra Club

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Dinner in honor of Gen Robins

On February 28 the Niagara Group of the Sierra Club met at the Eagle House to honor Gen Robins for her decades of faithful service to the Club and for the environment. Several members of her family attended.

Tributes were made by speakers present and by letter from those who could not attend. A gift was also presented.

Gen, in her humble way, listened to the compliments and then said, "Who are you talking about?"

Then, typically, she responded by donating a beautiful painting of woodchucks by Alexander Pope to be auctioned through the Niagara Group website so as to raise more money for our work.

Gen is still a member and will still attend, but not as regularly as in the past. She will be spending more time in North Carolina but will always be a supporter and an effective environmental leader.

Fight to Save the Perrysburg Forest

Richard Lippes, representing the Friends of JN Adam, Dave Franczyk (Buffalo Common Council President) and others, appeared in Cattaraugus County Court recently with a motion that would void the NY State Contract to sell the Perrysburg Hospital and Forest to the Trathen lumber company.

Open to the Public!

Free Admission!

Conservation Conversations ... "The Wetlands"

to be held Saturday, April 1, 2006.

Morning session: Four speakers from 9 AM-12 NOON at the State University of NY at Buffalo, Amherst Campus, Clemens Hall, Room 120.

Lunch: Bring your own lunch or eat on campus.

Afternoon session: Hike at Great Baehre Swamp Amherst, at 1:30 PM.

For more information, contact Lynn at 716-825-7329 or by email at woodthrush3@hotmail.com

Sponsored by ADK Niagara Frontier Chapter, Sierra Club, & UB Greens

OUTINGS CALENDAR

April 14th-16th - Weekend in the Adirondack High Peaks

We still have spaces open for our Mt. Marcy hike. They are available on a first come, first served basis. Please contact Jane Jontz by phone (628-6934) or Mike Stroh by email (stroh78@adelphia.net) if you are interested.

Learn about the history of the Adirondacks while climbing to the highest point in New York State - the 5,344 ft. summit of Mt. Marcy. We'll discuss how, despite being protected, this wilderness continues to be negatively affected by human

impacts ranging from erosion to acid rain.

We will leave Buffalo Friday afternoon for the Adirondack Loj where we'll stay in the bunkroom for \$36 per person per night. Weather permitting, we will spend all of Saturday hiking Marcy, and we will take a shorter hike Sunday morning before heading back to Buffalo. This will be a strenuous trip and required gear will depend on the unpredictable Adirondack spring weather.

Saturday, April 8th - Erie County Forest Hike

We will hike several miles through beautiful forest and also assess an area that has recently been logged. We'll get a first hand view at the differences between a healthy forest and a timber farm, and discuss why the current management of our

forest has many local environmentalists in an uproar.

Meet at Tim Hortons in the Williamsville Walker Ctr. at 9am. Bring snacks and water. Contact Mike Stroh at stroh78@adelphia.net or Larry Beahan at 839-3112 with any questions.

Saturday, May 20 - Watkins Glen State Park

We will visit this lovely state park for some day hiking and to learn about the affects of the glaciers on our landscape. There are nineteen waterfalls and a lot of stairs so we will also have a good workout.

Bring your lunch, snacks, favorite hydration beverage and your desire to learn about this rugged gorge. If interested contact Jane Jontz at 628-6934 or at jontzja@hotmail.com.

Please log on to our website for outing updates and opportunities

HELP LITTLE DAVID FIGHT THE GIANT

Little David was small, but oh my! In the Biblical story, with God's help and faith in the rightness of his cause, he defeated the giant Goliath.

Residents are fighting a giant here. Chemical Waste Management, which is part of the 12 billion dollar Waste Management company, is bringing toxic materials from 30 states, Canada, and Puerto Rico to bury here.

They bury them near the Great Lakes, which contain over 20% of the world's liquid fresh water. PCBs from the land fill have leaked, year after year, into the streams and Lake.

They continue to haul toxic wastes across the country, up to 400,000 tons annually, in thousands of trucks. Trucks can leak; one recently overturned and spilled its load half a mile from the school. This is a school of approximately 2,500 students with no monitoring or evacuation plan, only one mile from the hazardous waste land fill.

They bury them on top of unexamined atomic wastes from the Manhattan project. They bury toxic wastes despite a State Health Department order that the soil should not be disturbed. They continue to bury them even after plutonium has been discovered on the CWM site.

They continue to do this even though the New York State Department of Health documented "statistically significant male cancers" downwind, and the surrounding area shows 150% to 200% the expected male and female cancers, "not likely due to chance."

They hold open house events, including enticing children to their site, to talk about what good neighbors they are. They give gifts and pay funds to local municipalities in hopes they won't object to what they do. The use paid ads and mail slick propaganda pieces to every household talking about how wonderful it is to have them in our community.

They do all of this in an area that should be a tourist attraction for the world, just a few miles from Niagara Falls near the Niagara River. They do it despite a New York State law and Supreme Court order that there should be a geographically equitable siting plan for toxic waste disposal. They don't worry about the danger; they just want the money.

They do it because it is their business. They do it despite the fact that the citizens of this community and the New York State Supreme Court don't want us to be the only dumping ground for the entire northeastern United States. They continue to press for permits to enlarge and expand their facility. They count on the Department of Environmental Conservation to continue to give them permits, and our elected officials to look the other way and accept their money.

But citizens have organized in a group called Residents for Responsible Government. RRG will tell the public the truth. RRG works with the community to challenge their permits at public hearings. RRG employs lawyers to oppose CWM maneuvers in court. RRG is dedicated to protect our area and people.

But of course they don't think we can fight them. They're a giant! They have millions of dollars of funds to spend; they know we don't. They are sure they can roll right over local people and this community.

Well, little David didn't give up; neither do we. Would you like to help RRG/little David defeat the giant? Contact us at Residents for Responsible Government, P. O. Box 262, Youngstown, N.Y. 14174. 716-791-4562. www.rrg-wny.org.

- In behalf of RRG, Charles Lamb, 2nd vice president

(The Niagara Group of the Sierra Club is an ally of Residents for Responsible Government. The Niagara Group and the Atlantic Chapter have given funds to help in this fight against CWM expansion.)

ExxonMobil: Making Record Profits - Still Not Paying Damages

ExxonMobil announced a record-breaking annual profit of roughly \$36 billion for 2005- the largest profit in the history of corporate America. But despite record profits, the world's largest oil company has yet to pay a single penny in the damages they owe to the Alaskan fishermen whose livelihoods were destroyed by the 1989 Valdez oil spill.

On January 27th, Cordova's fisherman came to San Francisco to demand that the company pays its fair share. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments about whether the 30,000 plaintiffs affected by the spill will get the \$4.5 billion in punitive damages that was awarded to them, but never paid. Around 3000 plaintiffs have died while waiting sixteen years for ExxonMobil to pay punitive damages which amount to small change for the company.

The emotional story of the Prince William Sound fishermen whose lives Exxon changed forever was told February 9 at 8:30 PM EST/PST in the newest episode of Sierra Club Chronicles on Link TV. "The Day the Water Died" describes the largest oil tanker spill in American history - and how Exxon falsely promised they would pay for the damage. Sixteen years later, local communities are still waiting for their lives to become "whole" again. The full episode will be available for viewing and download for iPods at <http://www.sierraclubtv.org/>

B-roll of the fishermen reacting to the lawsuit and the town/port of Cordova is available at <http://www.sierraclubtv.org/pressroom/>. Segments of "The Day the Water Died" can also be used in conjunction with promotion of the episode. Please call for hard copies.

In a recent development, Bush said that Exxon's profits are determined by the market, and consumers should not expect a reduction in prices at the pump!

Letter Concerning Houses on Wetlands

The following excerpt is from a letter to the editor written by Liz Kaszubski concerning houses built on wetlands. View the entire letter at <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara/>

...I know that there are homes being built in wetlands in North Tonawanda right now. City officials don't require the developers to do the kind of soil tests that would even have a chance of showing any similarities to soil problems in Amherst...

...I wish the Army Corps would use the study of Amherst to force some of the other towns in this area to properly test soils to protect consumers from future problems. It doesn't appear they can do that unless a town asks for assistance and N. Tonawanda doesn't want to know if their soils are poor for construction.

Nature View Park Gains Protection

A result of Sierra Club efforts is protection of the 1,250 acre Nature View Park in the Town of Amherst. At the first Town Board meeting in 2006 the Council voted unanimously to protect the park and maintain it in its natural state, ending a six year long preservation effort. On February 27 the new Town Supervisor Satish Mohan signed an agreement with the Western New York Land Conservancy for the group to oversee the park in perpetuity.

We are hoping that the presence of environmentally friendly Board members will help protect the few remaining pieces of wetlands and open space in town and promote a healthy quality of life for its residents.

Several Northeastern States Join in Effort to Curb Global Warming

(Much of the information in this article was taken from Environmental Defense Solutions and other such sources.)

Tired of waiting for the U. S. government to take action, several states are moving ahead on their own in an attempt to reduce greenhouse emissions which lead to global warming.

Although many may dislike the idea of bargaining in a “cap-and-trade” system, at least an effort is being made which shows that many intelligent leaders are taking the global warming problem seriously.

Governors of seven states in the Northeast have developed the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. New York is one of these states. Power plants in Connecticut, Maine, Delaware, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Vermont, and New York will promise to cut carbon dioxide 10% by 2019.

Massachusetts and Rhode Island backed out of the plan. Governor Weld, of Massachusetts, is a possible candidate for governor of New York at the next election.

New York has also adopted the greenhouse gas law for cars enacted some time ago in California.

For many people, a 10% reduction in 13 years is too little and too late, but at least it goes against the national policy of doing nothing effective and shows a rising concern and understanding that something must be done.

Union of Concerned Scientists Reports Interference; History Repeats Itself!

(Information taken in part from Time Magazine, Feb. 13, 2006)

During the past two years the Union of Concerned Scientists has collected over 8,000 names of scientists who accuse the Bush administration of intrusion into their world. These names include those of 171 members of the National Academies and 63 persons who won National Medal of Science awards.

Rather than hearing what the scientists wish to report as a result of their research, there seems to be a desire to influence them to produce results that are in harmony with pre-conceived administration policies.

One might be reminded of the incident in Biblical times when the representative of the king said to the prophet Micaiah, “Look, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king; let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably.” But Micaiah said, “As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak.” The passage continues by telling us that Micaiah’s message was not what the king wanted to hear! (See the 22nd chapter of I Kings).

We hope that our leaders today will listen to what reputable scientists have to say on the topic of global warming and other issues of our day, and not just insist that they say what the leaders hope to hear!

Erie County Forest Being Cut

We are dismayed to learn that logging has been taking place in the Erie County Forest without adequate planning or notification. There seems to be no consistent and approved plan for managing the forest available. Reportedly timber is being sold for far less than its worth. The Niagara Group intends to investigate this further, protest, and insist on adequate protection for our old growth forests.

More Churches Join Fight Against Global Warming

(Information taken in part from the New York Times)

While mainline churches have for some time advocated protection of the environment, this has not been a major concern for churches sometimes known as “evangelical.”

But now 86 evangelical Christian leaders have stated that we must fight global warming, because “millions of people could die in this century because of climate change, most of them our poorest global neighbors.”

Signers of a statement along these lines included Rick Warren, author of “The Purpose Driven Life”, leaders of the Salvation Army, and presidents of 39 evangelical colleges including Wheaton. Their statement asks for laws to require reduction of carbon dioxide emissions.

Others refused to sign, however, including Charles W. Colson, James C. Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, and Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Nevertheless, the conservative evangelical Christian movement has been part of the base for President Bush, and they may have more influence on policies than others. The group advocating action against global warming plans to release television and radio spots and start informational campaigns in churches and Christian colleges.

Hottest Year Should Be Wake Up Call - WBFO Commentary By Walter Simpson

Walter Simpson, member of the local Niagara chapter of the Sierra Club, used a wonderful opportunity on WBFO to speak about the impact of global warming on our society. To view the whole commentary log on to our website at <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara/>

SPRING SHORELINE SWEEP

Do you want to make a difference on your local waterway? Are you looking forward to springtime... and getting outside for some fresh air and exercise?

Here’s your chance! Buffalo Niagara Riverkeepers is gearing up for our annual Spring Shoreline Sweep, April 21-23, 2006. It’s a great opportunity to beautify the shoreline and show your appreciation for the environment and your community.

Whether you’re interested in volunteering as a site leader, an individual, or you have a school, church or community group looking for a volunteer project, please give us a call! We need help at over 30 sites across the region, so there’s sure to be a cleanup going on near you.

There are creeks, streams, and rivers in your neighborhood that need your help. We hope to hear from you soon!

To register or for more information please contact:

Robbyn Drake, Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper
617 Main St, M108, Buffalo NY 14203,
852-7483

We are also seeking donors of refreshments and materials for the event, so please ask about our “Wish List”

Revitalizing the Outer Harbor

(from River Keepers Website)

Sierra Club's Niagara Group strongly supports the revitalization of the Buffalo Outer Harbor through the development of mixed-use areas at both the Seaway Piers and southern terminal area. We also strongly advocate the creation of substantial parkland on the majority of the site. This vision is consistent with public demand for greatly increased waterfront parkland - not just trail areas - expressed repeatedly in over 40 years of planning documents for the site.

We also strongly oppose the sale of public waterfront land to private interests. The Outer Harbor is public trust property and must remain in public ownership. New development and waterfront vibrancy can be accommodated through the use of long-term (50 year) leases or other public-private partnerships.

If the NFTA no longer wishes to serve as the steward of the Outer Harbor parcel, another suitable public or not for profit entity should be identified to manage the revitalization of the site. Driven first and foremost by the desire to amass private financial gain, a private real estate developer is not an appropriate steward of the public right to access the regions rich waterfront recreation resources.

The waterfront belongs to the entire community and must remain in public ownership.

Sincerely, Chair Niagara Chapter, Sierra Club

Great Lakes Continue to be Polluted

(article based on column in Niagara Gazette)

According to an article by Aaron Besecker, which appeared in the Niagara Gazette on Feb. 9, more than 1.38 billion pounds of waste entered the air, water and land in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basin in 2002.

Tonawanda's Huntley Generating Station ranked 16th among facilities with the largest releases of air pollution in 2002, and 14th in releases of water pollution. The Welland Pant of Cytec Canada in Niagara Falls, Ontario, ranked 15th. Chemical Waste Management ranked fourth among facilities for on-site landfilled waste. AES Somerset in Barker ranked ninth in that category.

Derek Stack, executive director of Great Lakes United, said that "...the total amount of toxic pollution in the Great Lakes basin remains unacceptably high."

The study represents the first time for many years that pollution from both the U.S. and Canada have been combined and analyzed.

Paul Muldoon, executive director of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, stated that "The health of the Great Lakes is in real trouble because we forget pollution is still a real issue."

About 24 million citizens get their drinking water from the Great Lakes.

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 4th Tuesday of every month at 7p.m. at The Natural Sciences Complex at UB's North (Amherst) Campus, room 684. This is near the Govenors complex off of Sweethome Road at the Rensch entrance, north of Maple. All Sierrans are invited!

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Sierra Club
Niagara Group
25 S. Lincoln Ave. #307
Orchard Park, NY 14127



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