



Trailblazer

Niagara Group of the SIERRA CLUB

Vol. XXXII, No. 3, July 2000

Hillary Clinton Meets with Sierra Atlantic

On June 5, 2000, Senate Candidate, Hillary Clinton, spent an hour and a half with our Board of Governors at their Adirondack meeting in Garnet Hill Lodge near North Creek.

For my part, I told her about the US-Canada Clean Air treaty negotiations and pollution from Ontario's Nanticoke power plant reaching Buffalo. She responded, "You are the first to mention the issue to me. I will look into it." I later gave her a copy of the Sierra resolution on Nanticoke.

Mrs. Clinton proved to be well informed on New York State environmental issues. She stressed her thirty-year devotion to the health of children and particularly to environmental effects on their health. She repeatedly pledged her commitment to environmental protection.

Other issues that she addressed included: The Kyoto agreement; Opposition to Army Corps of Engineers national permits; Limitation of new power plant building along the Hudson; Protection of watersheds rather than spending money on filtration plants; Money to develop old industrial sites rather than letting development sprawl; Waxman and Moynihan standards on coal smoke pollution; Limiting nitrogen run off into Long Island sound; Cleaning up Onandoga Lake; Environmental causes of breast cancer.

It was impressive to see the power of Sierra's half million membership recognized by so influential a political figure as Mrs. Hillary Clinton.

Other BOG Business

I opposed the endorsement of Congressional Representative Sherwood Boehlert and suggested, when it became apparent that the Chapter would endorse him nonetheless, that we tell him Sierra is still concerned about his interventions in wetland development.

We reviewed the questionnaires we send political candidates. The Political Committee agreed to carefully consult with and include material from all groups in these documents.

The budget indicated that Atlantic Chapter expected to spend and receive \$256,297 this year. \$144,500 of that from dues, the rest from grants, bequests and an appeal. \$27,790 of the dues is passed on to Groups. Staff salaries and benefits are the largest expense item \$111,000. A few of us voiced opinions that more cash should flow to Groups.

--Larry Beahan

The Nanticoke Power Plant and the OntAIRio Clean Air Campaign

In the 1990's, the province of Ontario emerged as one of the worse generators of air pollution in all of North America. Ontario Power Generation's coal-fired plants currently emit nitrogen oxides (NOx), the principle precursor of ground level ozone, at a rate that is three times the smog-season rate allowed under the US Environmental Protection Agency's NOx reduction program.

In particular, Ontario Power Generation owns and operates North America's largest coal-fired plant, the roughly 4000 MW Nanticoke facility, located on the north shore of Lake Erie. On high smog days, Nanticoke's NOx emissions head directly into the greater Buffalo area, which is located only 63 miles downwind from the Nanticoke facility.

Moreover, Ontario's deplorable failure to reduce NOx emissions has become the chief obstacle in air quality negotiations between the United States and Canada, as the two nations attempt to amend the existing Canada-United States Air Quality Agreement with the addition of a so-called "Ozone Annex." Primarily, the Ozone Annex would reduce NOx emissions from coal-fired electricity generators. These ongoing negotiations began earlier this year in Ottawa on February 16.

With all of this as a backdrop, The OntAIRio Campaign was formed with the intent of pressuring Ontario to adopt and enforce stringent NOx standards. The OntAIRio Campaign is a clean air coalition of the Sierra Club of Canada, the Toronto Environmental Alliance and the David Suzuki Foundation. In the past few months, it has joined forces with allies across the border, including Niagara Group, Citizen's Campaign for the Environment, Great Lake United and others. Thus far, the most visible products of this bi-national effort have been a front page, feature length article that appeared in the May 26 issue of the Buffalo News; and a well-attended, well-publicized press conference and rally held in Buffalo on June 12th, which coincided with the unveiling of a full-size billboard ad critical of Ontario's pollution of Western New York air.

In addition, as a result of meetings with campaigners, Erie County Executive Giambra wrote Secretary of State Madeline Albright concerning the matter.

In the meantime, the Niagara Group passed a resolution calling on the U.S. Government to ensure that the Ozone Annex genuinely protects our interests. We call on U.S.

officials to explicitly require that Canadian power plants adhere to the same standard for NOx emissions that American facilities must currently meet.

Niagara Group sent copies of the resolution, along with a background letter composed by Niagara Group Chair, Larry Beahan, to the Erie County Executive and Legislature and to Buffalo's Mayor and Common Council. Niagara Group also enlisted the aid of the Club's Atlantic Chapter to bring this issue before State officials such as Attorney General Spitzer.

Those interested may view a copy of the Niagara Group's resolution, along with Larry Beahan's accompanying letter, on the Niagara Group's web site (<http://sierra.bfn.org/>) in the Documents section.

In the past few years, the Buffalo area has seen a dramatic increase in high smog days. In fact, the American Lung Association recently gave Erie County a grade of "F" for its air quality, meaning that the county was in the bottom 60 percent of counties in the nation. Our air is getting dirtier. This is not a trend that we should allow to continue any longer. Our members are urged to help keep up the pressure on local politicians. Calls to County and City officials, and letters to the editor are in order.

(**Note:** This article was largely adapted from an earlier article by Dan McDermott of OntAIRio, which appeared in the newsletter of Great Lakes United.)

--Mike Kukla

Mark Your Calendar: Zoar Valley Hike, July 29th, 2000

As part of its efforts with the **Friends of Zoar Valley** Coalition, the Niagara group will be leading a hike in Zoar Valley on July 29.

Getting There--We will first congregate in the Tim Horton's parking lot, in the Walker Center, Main Street, Williamsville, near the 290. Plan to be there by 9:00am. From there, the group will caravan to Zoar Valley.

Route--The hike will start near Forty Road Falls, follow the Cattaraugus Gorge to Hair Pin Canyon, and then proceed onward to Big Falls and back again. The hike is comparatively easy and roughly 4.5 miles in length, round trip. The hike should take about two and a half hours. (A more detailed description of the route that we plan to follow, taken from Bruce Kershner's book, "Guide to the Ancient Forests of the Zoar Valley Canyon," can be found on our web site: <http://sierra.bfn.org/outings/zoarHike.shtml>.)

Gear-- We recommend the following items: hiking boots, insect repellent, sun screen, headgear. Also, bring your lunch and be prepared for wet feet.

Other Arrangements--Registration is not required, but we recommend that you notify us in advance if you plan on coming, so that we can better organize the event. For those needing rides or interested in conserving energy, we will try to arrange carpooling. Contact one of the following individuals, if you are interested in joining us, or would like further information:

Larry Beahan

phone: 839-3112

email: larry_beahan@adelphia.net

Mike Kukla

phone: 882-9753

email: kukla@acsu.buffalo.edu

As reported in the previous issue of the *Trailblazer*, it became known last October that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation was tentatively formulating plans for state land in Zoar Valley and that these plans included the possibility of logging tracts of old growth forest. In the wake of this information, a coalition of about nine groups, including Sierra Club, formed an ad hoc coalition, known as "**Friends of Zoar Valley**" to oppose any logging of Zoar's old growth.

Our hike is but one in a series of hikes being led by various of the Friends of Zoar member groups, in an effort to increase the numbers of those who've experienced, who treasure, and who, it is hoped, will be willing to defend Zoar Valley.

--Mike Kukla

Great Guest Speakers

On May 23, the Club was privileged to hear from two speakers who have been working to protect the environment for many years. **Dianne D'Arrigo**, a member of the Nuclear Information Resource Service (NIRS) told of the Clinton Administration's plan to allow radioactive metal from nuclear power plants to be cut up and sold for scrap. This would be done without ANY regulation or monitoring. It would mean that any metal object could potentially expose you to deadly radiation. Check their web page at <http://www.nirs.org> for more info.

On a lighter note, **Carlton Porter Sr.** talked about how his organic farm has grown some of the best produce in the region without pesticides or chemical fertilizers for over 10 years. Porter Farms is offering their vegetables directly to consumers through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. For less than you'd pay at Tops for pesticide-drenched Mexican produce, you can get an overflowing bag of fresh, locally grown, organic vegetables from Porters Farms each week all summer. Call **757-9383** for more details.

Request from the Political Chair

Democracy is in a crisis in the United States. Big money from big corporations has been drowning out all dissent, all deviation from corporate politics, all difference between the parties. However, we have a weapon the corporations do not have and cannot match or defeat--ourselves. If we band together to make sure the right people get into office and the environmentally irresponsible ones are kicked out of office, we can beat big money with our own volunteer labor. You are not being asked to pick up a rifle and jump in a foxhole, but you are being asked to fight for your country.

We need to be a factor in the fall elections. I am asking for at least 10 volunteers from the general membership to create a kind of Sierra Club "Flying Squad" to distribute leaflets, man phone banks, etc. in the fall. Ten dedicated people can make a huge difference. Please give me a call at 937-4556.

--Joe DeMare

DEC's Environmental Justice Advisory Group (EJAG) Meets In Buffalo

On June 1st, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's recently formed Environmental Justice Advisory Group (EJAG) met at the Adam's Mark hotel in downtown Buffalo. This was one of four public meetings EJAG is hosting around the state this summer. The group's mission is to solicit public comments on environmental justice (EJ) issues in New York, and to then make recommendations to the DEC so that the latter body can develop a comprehensive statewide plan for addressing EJ issues in New York.

EJAG consists of 19 members from around the state. Most are private citizens, though a few are employees of state agencies, including the DEC. I was impressed with the ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity of the group. Approximately 25 people attended the Buffalo meeting, and after a short introduction, EJAG spent the rest of the evening soliciting people's opinions on EJ issues.

Issues raised included: pollution on Native American lands within the state, DEC's shortcomings with keeping the public informed about the status of agency action and policy development, conflicts between previously existing businesses and residential development which later comes to occupy an area, and finally, class-based environmental injustice.

--George Dillmann

Niagara Group Launches Web Site and Email Discussion List

You may have noticed that this issue of the *Trailblazer* has already made a number of references to the "Niagara Group's Web Site." A lack of space this issue precludes an announcement with more fanfare than this, but, yes, we have indeed developed and launched a web site since the previous issue of the *Trailblazer*. The site's main address is

<http://sierra.bfn.org/index.html>

The site will attempt to supplement the *Trailblazer* with materials which we can't include in the newsletter or which we need to bring to public attention more quickly than the quarterly format of the *Trailblazer* permits

Complementing both our newsletter and the web site, we have also taken advantage of the national Sierra Club's electronic resources and established an email discussion list. The discussion list will be exclusively concerned with Niagara Group news and issues. The national Sierra Club informs us that ours is only the second email list thus far established within the Atlantic Chapter.

To join the listserv, you must first *subscribe* to the list. You can do so by sending an email message to the Sierra Club's listserv at the following address:

LISTSERV@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG

Include the following line in the body of your message:

SUB ATL-NIAGARA-NEWS Your Name

Once you've subscribed, you can begin posting email to the list--i.e. to whomever else is subscribed to our list--simply by sending an ordinary email message to the list's address:

ATL-NIAGARA-NEWS@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG

Niagara Group members with questions or comments about the web site or email list; or members interested in contributing to the web site, can contact the webmaster, **Mike Kukla**, at 882-9753 or kukla@acsu.buffalo.edu

--Mike Kukla

Deadline for the Next Trailblazer

The deadline for submitting articles for the next issue of the *Trailblazer* is **September 10, 2000**. For more information or to submit something, contact **Mike Kukla**, 464 Grant St. Buffalo, NY 14213. Email: kukla@acsu.buffalo.edu. Phone 882-9753.

--MK

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