

Sierra Atlantic

The Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club — Serving New York State

Volume 36 Spring 2009

Natural gas rush: It’s time for the Feds to step up

by Stanley Scobie, Ph.D.

Though New York has 13,000 active oil and gas wells, until last year only a small group of insiders knew that the state sits atop a huge natural gas field locked in the Marcellus shale, a geological formation beneath four states (New York, Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania). Now, natural gas development is poised to begin at an intensive level never contemplated by state regulators.

While the Department of Environmental Conservation has begun to review its regulations governing natural gas extraction, it is clear from the dismal experience of Western gas-producing states, and the interstate nature of the resource, that the industry also should be subject to federal regulation. Drillers, for example, cross state lines to dispose of production waste fluids. Air pollution from drilling operations and massive withdrawals of water from rivers (used in production) show no respect for state boundaries.

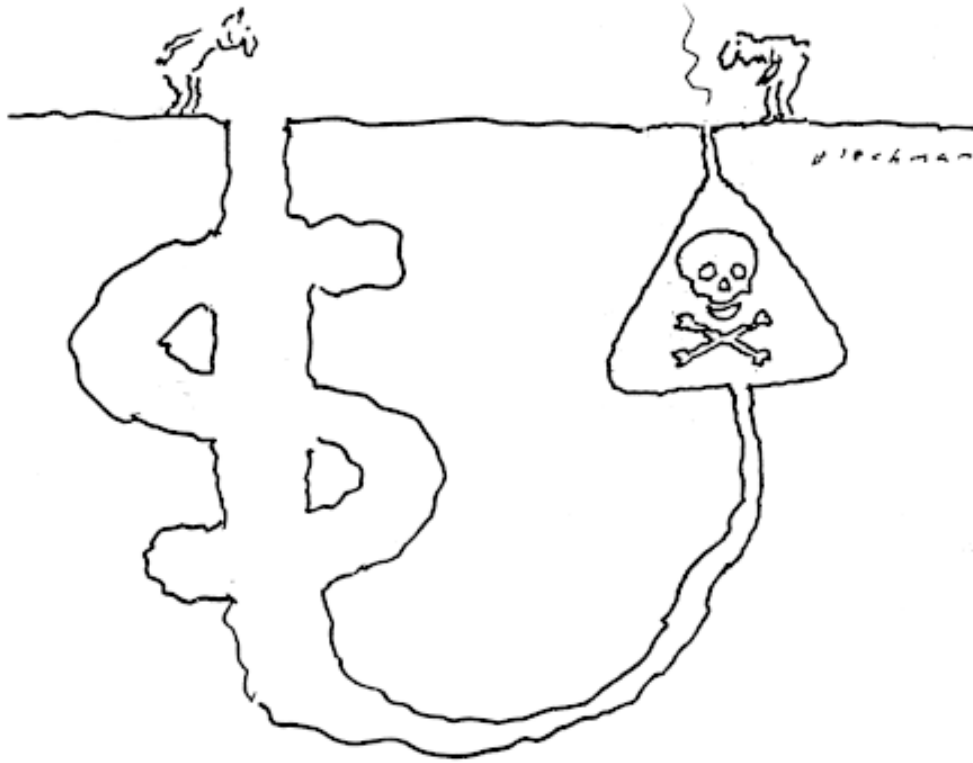
One would suppose that an industry that began in the 19th Century would be well regulated by now. But during the early years of the Bush administration, the oil and gas (O&G) industry won two major victories which rolled back environmental protection.

First, the Environmental Protection Agency determined that the hydrofracturing technology used to capture natural gas from tight shale formations poses no environmental or health problems, despite the use of toxic substances injected underground. It now appears the EPA’s conclusion in 2004 was shortsighted, premature, and possibly inappropriately influenced by O&G interests.

Second, then-Vice President Dick Cheney’s Energy Policy Act of 2005 exempted the O&G industry from federal clean air, clean water, and safe drinking water laws. The energy legislation suggested that individual states could impose replacement regulation. This has not worked out, and now, almost four years later, individual states are struggling with the problem in a very clumsy and mostly unsuccessful manner.

This leaves the southern half of New York vulnerable — including the watersheds of New York City (the Catskills) and the Southern Tier. Unless federal standards are re-established, far less competent regional bodies will continue to struggle with the core technical issues, distracted by the recession, stymied by political corruption, and out-gunned by a legion of well-financed O&G lobbyists armed with junk science.

The O&G industry has consis-



tently claimed that the chemicals and processes used in hydrofracturing are safe; yet it consistently refuses to disclose just what chemicals it uses. The logic is twisted. If the “frack” fluids are safe, why not disclose them, and why fight for exemptions that *no other industry* enjoys?

Most industrial activities are strongly controlled and physically segregated. We can usually choose to live nearby or not — usually not. However, O&G companies are not bound by zoning regulations or other “home rule” controls; they can set up operations wherever someone sells them a lease, including residential neighborhoods or the downtown area of a major city, as they are now doing in Fort Worth, Texas. Thus, the right-to-know principle becomes critically important. By this reasoning there is little or no basis for exemptions from clean air, clean water, or safe drinking water regulations, nor for any allowable secrecy regarding toxic or potentially toxic substances injected under residences and their water wells.

Right to know

To sharpen this point, consider that chemical disclosure requests by the DEC have, so far, produced woefully inadequate information from the gas companies. A typical response lists a variety of very generic terms, with no specific chemical names nor the amounts stored and used on site. While the DEC’s recent scoping document suggests that the agency will require chemical disclosure, it is silent on whether the information it obtains will be available to the public. Without such transparency, it will be very expensive and extremely difficult for homeowners and municipalities to test and moni-

tor their drinking water.

The industry claims that the chemicals it uses and the hazardous/toxic substances in “produced” fluids it brings to the surface (brine, heavy metals and some radioactivity) are so diluted that they couldn’t possibly be harmful. However, there is absolutely no grounded, coherent science that supports this assertion, in part due to the industry’s secrecy.

Anti-drilling activists target much of their criticism on the injection of hazardous chemicals deep under-

ground during hydrofracturing. However, before workers start huge, noisy, smoke-belching diesel engines that power the injection process, the chemicals are stored on drilling sites and diesel fuel is trucked in and transferred to tanks. Spills and accidents happen. Even best practices can’t prevent all of them. Reasonable regulations and enforcement, not blanket exemptions, provide incentives for better practice.

Cumulative impacts

Current state regulation treats each well as a separate entity, and up to 16 wells on one five-acre pad are allowed in a 640-acre unit. It simply makes no sense to ignore the cumulative impact of this process, but that is what the DEC does by assuming that if one well poses an acceptable risk, then it makes no real difference if a site contains 16 wells. In fact, exploiting the Marcellus shale is going to be a fairly major industrial activity, with air pollution from large diesel engines, dust from equipment moving over bare ground, methane gas releases, etc., over a three-year period and probably much longer — at each multi-well site. And there will be thousands (or possibly tens of thousands of wells) in the Southern Tier and the NYC watershed. This sort of development is not the quick-and-then-quiet activity often por-

continued on page 5

Support Chapter’s volunteers with annual March Appeal

Sierra Club volunteers across New York state regularly do the work of three with little or no resources. They are helping to protect clean drinking water from contamination and holding polluters accountable for their actions. They are teaching the value of energy efficiency and opposing new coal-powered plants. They are reading environmental impact statements, press releases, newspaper articles, and e-mails — and that’s just before breakfast! They do all of this, and then pay to photocopy educational material out of their own pockets, because they know that our funds are limited and precious. They would love to be able to expand their efforts, but lack the resources.

This March, the Atlantic Chapter is asking for your support — please give it, because it will be returned to you a hundred-fold, often in ways you will never hear of because our volunteers are there before a festering problem becomes bad news.

Look for the Appeal letter in the mail. To support the work we are doing in New York, you could use the reply envelope and tear-off enclosed in the mailing or simply send a donation today to:

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter
PO Box 886
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You may write a check payable to Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter in any amount, or donate by Visa or MasterCard by supplying your account number and expiration date. Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Thank you.



EXPLORE, ENJOY AND
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<http://newyork.sierraclub.org/>

EDITORS Hal Smith and Dorinda White,
hals205b@aol.com

ADVERTISING Circulation 40,000. Ad rates, specs and deadlines available upon request from Bobbie Josepher, bobbie.josepher@sierraclub.org

ATLANTIC CHAPTER STAFF
Conservation Director Norreida Reyes,
Norreida.Reyes@sierraclub.org
Conservation Associate Roger Downs,
Roger.Downs@sierraclub.org
Chapter Coordinator Bobbie Josepher,
bobbie.josepher@sierraclub.org

ATLANTIC CHAPTER OFFICERS
Chair Susan Lawrence, 518-489-5721,
shlawr2@aol.com
Vice Chair Frank Morris, 516-410-8461,
frankmorris@ecologicinvestor.com
Secretary James Lane, 212-697-8942,
JamesMLane@aol.com
Treasurer Steve Kulick, 315-476-0695,
kulicksw@mail.lemoyne.edu

CONSERVATION
Chair Jessica Helm, 631-849-5373,
helm_jessica@yahoo.com

SIERRA ATLANTIC MISSION *The mission of the Sierra Atlantic is to educate and enlist the people of New York state to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment. We will do this by providing information about important environmental issues; sounding an alarm when the environment is threatened; reporting on the activities, outings and campaigns conducted by the Atlantic Chapter; celebrating nature; and inviting our readers to join us.*

SUBMISSIONS

Send us a letter, an article, news briefs, comments, photos, graphics or other items of interest. Contact the editors at the e-mail address above for submission format and details. When querying, please write "Sierra Atlantic" in the subject line.

DEADLINES —

SUMMER ISSUE

May 15 — Final copy and camera-ready ads due

June 15 — Newsletter mailed to 40,000 members

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Message from the Chair

by Susan Lawrence

Yes, we can — 'green' and regrow our economy!

These are hard economic times for our country and world. Governor Paterson's 2009-10 Executive Budget calls for drastic cuts in state programs to protect our environment. We cannot stand aside and let this happen.

With our many dedicated volunteers across the state and our Albany staff, we will be fighting harder than ever to restore funding for these programs and push for new funding, laws and regulations to greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect our precious natural resources.

We need to tell the governor and Legislature loud and clear that we want the Environmental Protection Fund increased to \$300 million as required by law, not cut by \$95 million, and we want more jobs filled at the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), not a 240-job cut through hiring freezes and greatly reduced appropriations to DEC. These job cuts mean that DEC staff will be down below the massive staff cuts of 800 during the Pataki administration.

And our governments, businesses, and citizens need to move quickly to support major initiatives for a sustainable economy, a green economy, a low-carbon economy. President Obama, in his inauguration speech, said, "The world has changed and we must change with it." He also chanted with the people that day, "Yes, we can!"

Yes, we can take giant steps such as installing — on a massive scale —

If only three quarters of one percent of the state's geographic area was covered with solar installations, New York would have all the electricity that it needs each year.

solar energy units over flat roofs in New York City and parking lots and brownfield sites around the state. According to Professor Richard Perez, of SUNY Albany's Atmospheric Sciences Research Center, *if only three quarters of one percent of the state's geographic area was covered with solar installations, New York would have all the electricity that it needs each year.* If Germany, with much less sun than New York, can install solar energy in a massive way, so can our state.

Jessica Helm, our new Chapter conservation chair, writes in her column (page 4) about the 130,000 jobs

New York could gain in two years with a \$7 billion investment in green jobs. Today, the United States is losing 500,000 to 600,000 jobs a month. The federal stimulus funding is aimed at filling some of those jobs. We need to fight for those jobs to be green ones in so many areas.

Today, no jobs are available for the four out of five individuals who are unemployed. If our society totally reorients its activities toward a sustainable future — where we greatly reduce pollution and protect our nonrenewable resources and invest in human skills, not non-productive financing schemes — yes, we can completely regrow our economy.

Investing in new coal-fired plants, massive hydropower systems, new nuclear power plants, and even massive new gas drilling in the Marcellus shale formation are not sustainable options for the next five, ten, 20 or 30 years or beyond. These polluting fuel resources and plants will peak long before they would produce the power we need for years to come.

Instead, we need to greatly accelerate investments in energy conservation, efficiency and renewables to provide our electricity, heat our homes and businesses, power our industries, and provide our transportation.

Why do we ask you to donate to the Chapter's March Appeal?

Each March, the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter has a one-month window of opportunity to write to its members for donations that go directly to the Chapter's programs. You may have received or will receive shortly my letter asking for your donation this year to our March Appeal.

The Atlantic Chapter needs a very generous response to our March Appeal letter to support all our efforts for public funding, laws and regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a big way in our state and to protect our natural resources, including our drinking water, our wild spaces, and our farmlands.

Your donation to the March Appeal is critical to the success of the Chapter. Only a small portion of your membership dues come to the Chapter to pay for its many programs, including the work of our staff and many dedicated volunteers. The Albany Update column in this *Sierra Atlantic* (page 5) highlights the Chapter's "Clean Energy Economy and Clean Water" legislative priorities for 2009 and our first-ever statewide district office Lobby Day, March 6, when we urged our state legislators to prioritize green jobs programs and funding.

This year, we are dedicating some of our limited budget to special initiatives that will empower our members to lobby their public officials for greatly increased public funding for green infrastructure and green jobs, and other programs protecting the environment. The Chapter is also taking big steps this year to upgrade our "action alert" system and our website to inform our members and the public about critical environmental issues and how they can quickly act on them.

The Chapter's programs are the linchpin between the Club's national programs and the activities of our Groups in New York. A portion of our Chapter budget each year goes to support each Group. At the national, state and local levels, the Sierra Club is working more closely together to efficiently and effectively move our economy and society to a sustainable level.

Please give as generously as you can to our March Appeal for the Atlantic Chapter. Every donation is greatly appreciated. And, as always, the volunteer efforts of our many volunteers across the state make all the difference.

Susan Lawrence



Not everyone can make a large gift to protect the environment during their lifetime, but you can preserve the environment for generations to come by remembering the Sierra Club in your will.

There are many gift options available. We can even help you plan a gift for your local Chapter.

For more information and confidential assistance, contact:

John Calaway
Director, Gift Planning
85 Second Street, 2nd Floor,
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 977-5639 or e-mail:
planned.giving@sierraclub.org



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Hudson Valley veganic farm attracting worldwide attention

Creative technology, ban on manure draws backing from UN

Kate Khosla had a dream — to operate a small farm. Her husband, Ron, came to share her vision. With Ag-related degrees, but no practical experience, they took the plunge in 1999 and purchased 77 acres in the rolling hills of the Hudson Valley.

For 10 years, the Khoslas, who are Sierrans, have been transforming their dream into a successful reality: a full-fledged organic operation that provides their customers with more than 125 varieties of vegetables, fruits and cut flowers. They are a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) serving 200 families in the area.

Their Huguenot Street Farm is also veganic: unlike many organic farms, they won't use slaughterhouse by-products. They consider these wastes toxic and find their use completely counter to organic clean living.

They gave up their "certified organic" status when the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) took over certification of farms, but they haven't changed their growing practices, which are far stricter than the USDA. Ron credits support from the Sierra Club's Mid-Hudson Group and Atlantic Chapter with helping him to start a low-cost and less bureaucratic alternative to the USDA program. In 2002, the Chapter was the first organization to endorse his plan for a "certified naturally grown" initiative. It subsequently took root and today at least 100,000 farms worldwide are "certified naturally grown" operations. (See

A toddler helps Dad pick vegetables at Huguenot Street Farm in the Hudson Valley. Thanks to early recognition and support by the Mid-Hudson Group, the farm's innovativeness has made it a model for organic farmers worldwide.

grown.org.) Last year almost 100 farmers from around the country and world visited the farm to learn about their methods.

Ron works with the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements. He serves the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization as its international organic certification consultant.

Ron and Kate have made veganic farming a viable occupation, in part because they're growing truly great food. But they'll be the first to tell you it takes much more than that. To make their business cost effective they have had to be innovative, as well as becoming efficiency experts. Among the impressive list of Ron's innovations are a solar electric tractor (instructions are on their website), a radiant heating system for their greenhouse and the CoolBot, a system to run their walk-in cooler using a standard air conditioner.

Ron considers the latter to be his most precious invention so far. The New York State Energy Research and Development Agency is supporting it and the United Nations wants to put them in developing countries to reduce losses due to food spoilage.

Ron took time from his busy schedule to answer questions from the editors of *Vegetarian Voice* magazine.

In what ways is veganic/organic growing similar to traditional organic practices and where are the departures?

RK: The biggest difference is just in our fertility choices. Historically, organic farmers were very partial to the idea that animals and animal wastes are a necessary part of a healthy and holistic farm nutrient system. The farmer would keep animals (which were eating hay grown on that farm) and recycle the wastes back into the fields. Whether or not you are vegetarian, you can appreciate the "full-circle" ideals of those first organic farmers.

Now, of course, modern USDA certified organic farms are nothing like that. The organic industry on both large and small farms in the U.S. is completely wedded to factory-farmed confinement animal operations. Mostly it's the chicken industry, but there's also fish emulsion, bone meal, blood meal and

leathermeal that you'll find in labeled organic fertilizers.

Many other farms just get bulk drop-offs either by the dump truck load or in what are known as "1000-lb. Super Sacks" of offal, including the waste from the live animals as well the ground up and sometimes pelletized bodies of the culls. It's not just the cruelty that this represents but what you end up eating. When you bite into that USDA certified organic carrot that you probably bought at the health food store, you have to think about what those animals are fed, including antibiotics, hormones and growth regulators like arsenic. All that stuff builds up in the animals' bodies and then it's spread onto the organic fields. And right now, no one really seems to care.

There's a great report from the University of Minnesota from last fall about how the antibiotics used in the factory chicken farms does *not* break down in the chickens' bodies... does *not* break down after the [organic] farmer spreads it on his fields... and does *not* break down as it's taken up by the carrots and potatoes and lettuce you buy in your local health food store. But would you rather buy conventionally grown carrots (which also use factory farmed wastes) or conventional potatoes that are grown with "systemic"

pesticides that enter the tissue of the plant so the farmer only has to spray once a year (though you can never wash them off!)? It's just a really weird time to be trying to live "healthy" in the U.S. right now.

How do you maintain soil fertility? How do veganic methods create healthy, well-balanced soil? Do you depend on outside sources for any soil amendments? Do you think you could ever create a completely closed cycle on your farm?

RK: This could be a whole article in and of itself, but the crux is that we plant a lot of "green manure" cover crops. Basically, where another farmer might plant a hay crop to feed to his cows... and then he takes the manure from the cows and uses it to fertilize his vegetable crop fields and build up his soil, we do the same thing, but we just eliminate the cow from the picture. So... we grow crops to feed the micro-organisms in the soil. Some leguminous crops, like soybeans, peas and vetches, have a relationship with beneficial bacteria that fix nitrogen from the soil. Then there are others that we grow just to build up the carbon in the soil, which helps us to build up organic matter in general and helps hold water like a sponge. By eliminating the cow, we're actually more efficient.

Can we ever create a completely closed cycle on our farm? Well, we can't really make a completely closed cycle unless we want to start collecting all the waste from the hundreds of humans who get their summer produce here (including their bodies when they're done with them!). We compost everything we can, and encourage the farm members to bring their compost back to the farm as well. The local tree trimmers bring truck loads of wood chips, too. I think we're about as close as we can practically hope to be to run a closed system.

Would you say that your farm is more environmentally friendly than the standard organic farm that raises animals?

RK: Well... we visit a lot of farms, *continued on page 9*

Join us at awards dinner June 6

The Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club will host its first Annual Awards Dinner Saturday, June 6, at the Inn at Great Neck, in Great Neck, Long Island. The theme of the awards dinner is Green Jobs for New York State.

Very rarely does New York's environmental community have the opportunity to come together to celebrate our important work. What's special about this awards dinner is the breadth of its outreach. The Atlantic Chapter will be honoring not only our stalwart volunteers, but members of the labor, religious, student, business, and political communities, all united in their specific efforts to protect the environment.

The Atlantic Chapter Awards Dinner will feature an original art sale during the cocktail hour to support our Chapter's work. (If original artists would like to consider showing their work, or if there are any questions, please contact frankmorris@ecologicinvestor.com or (516) 410-8461 to discuss details.)

The cocktail hour, starting at 6 p.m., will be followed by dinner at 7 p.m. The Inn at Great Neck is a leisurely five-minute walk downhill from the Great Neck train station, 35 minutes from New York City. It's located at 30 Cuttermill Road in Great Neck.

For dinner tickets, please send a \$75 check, payable to Atlantic Chapter Sierra Club, to Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, PO Box 886, Syosset, NY 11791-0886. Donations are not tax deductible.

FRANK MORRIS

"Every good thing, great and small, needs defense." — John Muir

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Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.



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Conservation Action

by Jessica Helm, Conservation Chair

Are 'green' jobs any different?

Add the word "green" to anything these days and you give it a new market and a new image, without any real change required. Are green jobs any different?

Green jobs are real, and the opportunities are great.

Past economic growth and profit have relied on cheap and disposable natural resources. These resources were plentiful, and the immediate costs were very low compared with profits. The true cost of massive resource extraction, production, and consumption was hidden. The cost was hidden in emergency room asthma admissions and in polluted rivers, neurological disease in field workers and lung disease in mine workers, and in increasing levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide.

The good news is that these costs have become too great to hide. The true costs have grown so high that addressing them is becoming less expensive than business as usual!

Energy is a prime example of this

changing reality. Traditionally, the only costs that affected the energy market were the actual costs of fuel extraction and energy production. Then, in 2008, New York State Attorney General Andrew Cuomo reached an agreement with one of the nation's largest power plant builders, Xcel, that requires Xcel to fully inform investors about the risks climate change poses to its business. Now U.S. Energy Secretary Stephen Chu is saying that a tax on carbon could be in our future. As energy costs begin to include the costs to the environment, efficiency in every sector of the economy becomes a better investment.

Green jobs and businesses can turn a profit with conservation — income comes from protecting our resources rather than exhausting them. This is a paradigm shift.

At present, the focus is on green jobs related to energy production and efficiency, in part because these are the most obviously related to

fossil fuel use and climate change. To reduce greenhouse gas concentrations to safer levels (below 350 parts per million of atmospheric carbon dioxide, compared to 387 parts per million at present) will take a major sustained effort. Millions of workers will be needed across the country. A 2008 report from the Center for American Progress estimates that New York could add 130,000 jobs in just two years with a one-time \$7 billion investment in green jobs. That's six percent of a single year of the state's annual budget, or five percent of the portion of the stimulus package going to energy stimulus. By the second year the entire investment would be returned to the state economy in wages!

Weatherization and home efficiency retrofits will provide a major opportunity for contractors, electricians, plumbers, engineers, and related occupations in the now sluggish building sector. Electrical utilities will need to work day and night

to meet the complex technical requirements of an electrical grid transitioning to renewable sources.

Our universities will train a generation of scientists and engineers in materials science, physics, and engineering. All this is from the energy sector alone. The logic of a sustainable economy also quickly expands to encompass food sources, drinking and waste water infrastructure, manufacturing and service industries, and ripples outwards to reshape every aspect of our world.

What can we do to help take our country and our ailing economy in this new direction? By supporting research and development in energy efficiency and renewable energy we can generate an ongoing demand for workers at every level from basic science to the rooftop. We can strengthen regulatory agencies and fund them to enforce our environmental laws, and reward good business practice by offering incentives for sustainable behavior. We can vote with our wallets by selecting locally and sustainably produced goods and services. Finally, we can talk to our leaders and tell them about green jobs. On May 5, our Earth Day Lobby Day will provide the perfect opportunity to do so — sign up for Action Alerts for more information: e-mail listserv@lists.sierraclub.org with the message "Subscribe ATL-ACTION-ALERTS@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG, your first and last name."

Darwin still influencing thought about the natural world

by Moisha Blechman

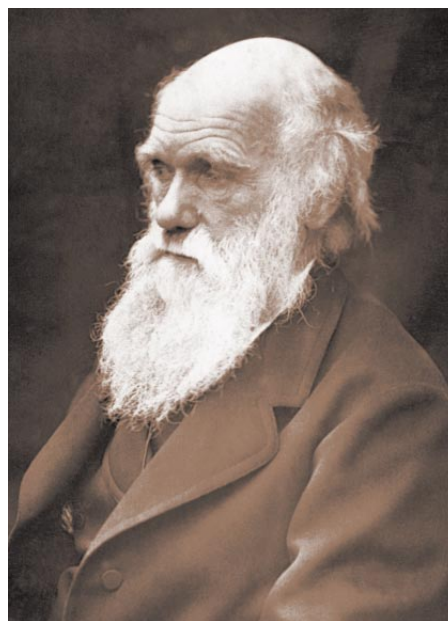
In 1837, 28-year-old Charles Darwin wrote in his notebook, "One species does change into another." At the time it was an inviolate truism that plants and animals were fixed and permanent. That point of view was a foundation stone for the entire international culture.

Challenging an entire culture is a serious undertaking and, interestingly, after 150 years, it is still going on. What was it about Darwin that opened his mind in such a complete and prescient way that *On the Origin of Species* is still alive both as a scientific text and as a great piece of literature? How is it that Darwin wrote a book that is today still considered the most significant single scientific book ever published, and that still exerts an extraordinary influence?

I am in awe of how Darwin thought very carefully and deeply about his observations and then said, in effect: I suppose this or that may well be true. He then explains the basis for his thoughts.

Ever since, scientists have been fleshing out these suppositions, in a detail Darwin never imagined, and in the process proving him correct. Although that detail represents 99 percent of our knowledge, it rests on Darwin's one percent. Scientists remain astonished at how much he got right. There was much he did not know, such as plate tectonics, yet science has come down solidly on his side. It appears Darwin's work is the backbone of the natural sciences.

Being a towering genius is not the



Charles Darwin

whole story of how Darwin became Darwin. We should take the opportunity at Darwin's 200th birthday to examine those factors that made his success possible.

The first is the intellectual milieu of his family. He grew up in a family who, over several generations, insisted on thinking freely for themselves. Intellectual prohibitions or mythologies did not exist. The Darwin family was considered progressive and "free thinkers." It is amazing the extent to which people close doors in their minds, effectively editing their thoughts before they even have them. Not Darwin's mind. It was wide open.

Second, Darwin was absolute in his fidelity to the truth, which he pursued through constant and passionate observation. And then he

connected the dots. In a way, how could he fail if all his thoughts were based exclusively on the observation of reality? But this is not easy to do. It takes rigorous discipline.

Darwin demonstrated that the pursuit of truth is the foundation of a rational society, which can make progress in either the arts or science only to the measure of its integrity.

For Darwin, nothing was too small

or insignificant to study. He could not help but mention that an animal or bird was wonderful. In time he called them his "ardent" loves.

How would he feel if he were alive today? He would immediately see that we, worldwide, are involved in the rapid dissolution of everything he studied.

Moisha Blechman chairs the Chapter's Global Warming Committee.



Executive Committee Report

by James Lane, Secretary

The Atlantic Chapter ExCom held its annual organizational meeting in New York City and thereafter in telephone conference calls. Elected Chapter officers for 2009 are: chair, Susan Lawrence; vice chair, Frank Morris; secretary, Jim Lane; assistant secretary, Harold Cohen; treasurer, Steve Kulick; Sierra Club Council delegate, Rachel Treichler; alternate Council delegate, Frank Morris; NERC delegates: Jessica Helm and Bonnie Lane Webber; first NERC alternate, Frank Eadie; second NERC alternate, Margaret Hays Young. The Steering Committee is Susan Lawrence, Frank Morris, Moisha Blechman, Diane Buxbaum, Jessica Helm, Jim Lane, Hugh Mitchell, Jurgen Wekerle, Annie Wilson. In the appointed positions, Jessica Helm succeeded Hugh Mitchell as Conservation chair, with Hugh now serving as assistant Conservation chair. The ExCom also adopted a calendar and a budget for 2009. The budget envisions a deficit (a drawdown from reserves), arising in part from difficult economic conditions and in part from initial outlays this year that, it is hoped, will improve our fundraising and online media abilities.

The Chapter will hold an awards dinner at The Inn at Great Neck on the evening of Saturday, June 6, in conjunction with the quarterly ExCom meeting. See page 3 for details. The Chapter made its first-ever endorsements for the national Board of Directors (see page 7). Finally, the ExCom approved Sierra Club participation as *amicus curiae* in *Save the Pine Bush v. Common Council of Albany*, a lawsuit involving the issue of standing to sue under state law.

Albany Update



by Norreida Reyes, Conservation Director

2009's core issues: clean energy economy, clean water

This message becomes clearer every single day: the success of both the economy and the environment are powerfully intertwined. In the midst of devastating losses in the stock and housing markets, an extraordinary opportunity has arisen to change the way the public uses energy, and to make great strides against global warming.

This year, the Atlantic Chapter has designated the twin core issues of a clean energy economy and clean water as our top legislative priorities in Albany. We are urging legislators and the governor to leverage federal stimulus monies in direct spending on clean energy technologies and ecological restoration investments that create the green jobs that will boost the state's economy. Billions of dollars and many tons of reduced carbon emissions are at stake.

This is why the Chapter organized our first-ever statewide District Office Lobby Day. As I am writing this, members of the Atlantic Chapter all across the state are poised to turn out in force on March 6 at local legislative district offices to urge state senators and assemblymembers to prioritize green jobs for a green planet. We will continue to keep the pressure on the Legislature as well as state agencies, as they will be directing the stimulus funds to localities through existing programs.

Although the state is set to receive billions in stimulus monies, it is also billions of dollars in budgetary deficit. The state's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) is slated to be cut by \$95 million — a 32 percent cut. The governor has proposed \$124 million

from unclaimed Bottle Bill deposits to help mitigate that loss, but the Bottle Bill was supposed to supplement the EPF monies, not replace them. If the Bottle Bill does not pass, then vital environmental protection programs — including open space initiatives — will be indefinitely on hold.

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is also losing many vital staffing positions through attrition due to budget cuts. Already understaffed for years during the Pataki administration, these disappearing positions greatly undermine DEC's ability to enforce laws and increase risks to the environment and human health and safety.

The turbulence from this time last year, beginning with the resignation of Governor Spitzer, is finally subsiding as our new Senate majority settles into its leadership role. Buffalo's Antoine Thompson, the new Senate environmental conservation chair, has a solid environmental track record and shares many of the Sierra Club's priorities. With Assemblyman Bob Sweeney, he is a co-sponsor on the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Control Cap bill, which has an excellent chance of passing this year.

Some of the top priority legislation that Albany staff and volunteers are working to enact this year include:

Greenhouse Gas Pollution Control Cap This bill would direct the DEC to develop programs that would reduce statewide global warming pollution 80 percent by 2050. Calls for reporting from all sources are to begin this year.

Wetlands Protection Act This would protect isolated wetlands of

one to 12.5 acres in size no longer protected under federal law.

Environmental Access to Justice Act This measure would restore the original legislative intent of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) by allowing groups of individuals to challenge a SEQRA decision if they can demonstrate that they will suffer harm as a result of proposed projects' environmental impact, without having to show that harm is different from that suffered by the public at large.

eWaste This bill would require manufacturers to submit for state approval an electronic waste management plan and implement the plan. Manufacturers would also be required to collect a minimum of 25 percent of their annual equipment sales (by weight) each year, and increase the collection rate to 45 percent.

Natural Gas: Feds should step up

continued from page 1
trayed by industry sources. We need a planned regional approach that acknowledges the profound impact that such development will have on the landscape and community life.

Recommendations

- The exemptions for the O&G producers in the 2005 Energy Act should all be removed. Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and Congresswoman Diana DeGette (D-CO) are working on this with H.R. 7231, but the Senate has no comparable bill at this time.
- The exemptions for O&G prior to 2005 (such as those in the Clean Air Act and in EPA regs under the Resource Conservation Recovery Act) should also be removed. The free pass for O&G should end. There are no plausible reasons for the industry not to bear the full real cost of production.
- The EPA has been foot-dragging since 2002 on implementing new requirements for spill prevention, control, and countermeasure (SPCC). Spills of dangerous, hazardous, and toxic substances are a major source of environmental contamination. Revised requirements should be implemented now.
- The Kid-Safe Chemical Act (H.R. 6100, and parallel bill in the Senate) is being sponsored by Senator Schumer, Congressman Hinchey and others. It could be invoked to control gas drilling, which is likely to impair

Marcellus shale natural gas drilling The Atlantic Chapter will continue to participate in the Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Study process to ensure that new applications to horizontally drill for natural gas in deep shale formations will be absolutely protective of water, air, ecosystem and our communities. Through legislation, we would like to see severance taxes and permit fee increases to support inspection and enforcement of the natural gas industry, more authority given to local governments to manage the impacts of drilling, full disclosure and accountability for drilling fluids and wastes, and authority granted to the DEC to regulate all consumptive water withdrawals.

At the time of this writing, the new Senate had not yet introduced all the new bills that would be pertinent to this column. Your Albany staff will keep you updated through Action Alerts and through the Chapter's Legislative Committee. There will be a number of opportunities to lobby for top-priority legislation. *Join us on Tuesday, May 5, Earth Day Lobby Day, in Albany.* June is always busy with a final legislative push — your participation to push priority bills can make all the difference in creating wins for the environment.

If you haven't already done so, please sign up for Action Alerts today! To do this, e-mail: listserv@lists.sierraclub.org with the message "Subscribe ATL-ACTION-ALERTS@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG, your first and last name."



One of the Chapter's top legislative priorities this year is the Wetlands Protection Act, which would protect wetlands of one to 12.5 acres in size. Wetlands in this size category are no longer protected under federal law. Also critical is passage of the Bottle Bill, which would help control litter and replace funds the governor proposes to cut from the state's Environmental Protection Fund.

water and air quality near schools, daycare centers, playgrounds, and parks. The burden needs to be placed squarely on industry to prove safety. The public cannot be expected to prove danger when industry is concealing the toxic chemicals it is using.

• Build wastewater infrastructure now. One of the very clear needs in New York, and likely in other states, is for an order-of-magnitude improvement in the facilities for handling the extremely large volumes (millions of gallons per well) of the hazardous/toxic waste fluid produced by natural gas production. For example, Pittsburgh-area authorities had to stop disposal of drilling wastewater in the Monongahela River, a source of drinking water, after they discovered very serious contamination of the river. New York, too, lacks a coherent plan for disposal of large-scale gas drilling waste. Because there are no authorized treatment facilities, the current options include: (1) spreading on dirt roads, (2) trucking waste out of state, and (3) injection wells (to store the waste deep in the ground in perpetuity). None is a good option. The federal government should not allow gas drilling without proof of access to appropriate disposal facilities, preferably built by entrepreneurs or the O&G industry. Stanley Scobie, Ph.D., is a landowner in Binghamton, where he retired as a professor of psychology at Binghamton University. Roger Downs, Wes Gillingham, Deborah Goldberg, and Michael Lebron helped with development of this article.

Mamaroneck goes cool: Mom has no choice but to 'step it up'

by Catherine Hiller

Remember Step It Up? In December, 2006, five Middlebury students and their advisor, noted environmental author Bill McKibben, launched a website and a climate change campaign. They wanted to trigger a series of public actions on a single day, April 14, 2007, to call attention to global warming. Their method was Internet organizing: a flexible template that could be applied locally, offered downloadable posters and documents, and a dynamic, inspiring website. They ultimately initiated 1,400 actions nationwide.

I organized an event in Mamaroneck. Full disclosure: I was conscripted. My son, Jon Warnow, was one of those Middlebury students, and one day on the phone he said, "I can't believe there isn't a Step It Up event in Mamaroneck!" What choice did I have? Our rally at Harbor Island Park attracted kayakers, kite-flyers, singer Elza, and Congresswoman Nita Lowey. One hundred fifty people signed our petition.

When the chance came to bring about change, not just awareness, I couldn't resist. I signed on as the Cool Cities lead in Mamaroneck. Cool Cities provided our town with Sierra Club credibility, a national network and achievable goals.

The first step was assembling a Cool Cities group. I wrote to all the Sierra Club members in my zip code (most were actual, U.S. postal delivery letters!) and to everyone who had signed the Step It Up petition, asking them to meet in my home. I begged my husband, Mark Thompson, to sit in the room with us so the turnout would be less pathetic. I was happy when we got 11 people, and Mark volunteered to take minutes, which he has continued to do twice a month since December, 2007.

One meeting a month is not enough to accomplish much fast, so we meet twice a month. But meetings are onerous: everybody knows that! I decided to try a one-hour meeting policy. Somehow that one-hour limit makes us very efficient, and at 8 p.m., one hour is not a big commitment.

At first, in January, 2008, we were diligently working the Cool Cities steps. We knew we had a special opportunity because a new village administration with an ecologically-minded mayor had just been elected. Our first goal was to get the mayor to authorize a municipal greenhouse gas emissions audit, so we invited the mayor to an early Cool Cities meeting.

We were very surprised when she told our group that global warming was not even on her list of top 40 priorities! She sympathized, she said "some day," but she held out little hope for early action. She had too much else to do, having inherited many problems from the previous administration.

And, indeed, running a village is not an easy job. For a tiny salary, mayors often work ten-hour days and go to many meetings, most of which do not have a one-hour limit! Still, we



Activists in the town of Mamaroneck are planning the Earth Day launch of a new campaign, MAGnet: Mamaroneck Avenue Green Network. It will promote local shopping and recognize businesses with a sticker on their door if they take significant steps to green their businesses.

felt our cause had been unnecessarily deferred.

The mayor wanted to know what was involved in an audit, so we wrote a report. Steve O'Rourke, an active member of our group, arranged for an intern from the College of New Rochelle to input data into the audit software. We raised money through the WESPAC Foundation and an anonymous donor to join Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI). No response from the mayor and trustees.

We began reaching out to the community. We showed a film, "Six

Degrees Can Change the World." We set up a table at our Historic Street Fair, with an eco quiz and children's activities. We had a seminar with Rosalind Peterson, of California SkyWatch, in a local church.

We sent out minutes about all of our activities to many more than our core team. One meeting's minutes summarized our discussion about upcoming elections, noting that we wanted to throw our support behind those candidates who supported us. As we were disappointed by our current officials, we would be exploring our options.

Two days later we heard from the mayor, saying she was ready to authorize an ICLEI audit. Somehow, we had made it to a higher spot on her list of priorities! Coincidence? Perhaps. In any event, I was delighted to sit down and talk.

On October 14, our board of trustees and the mayor unanimously voted on a resolution to join ICLEI. The trustees will see that the village moves through ICLEI's five milestones of sustainability. We were glad to see that campaign literature for the fall elections stated that the trustees up for reelection had "worked with Cool Cities."

Now, as we await the result of our audit, we are planning the Earth Day launch of our new campaign, MAGnet: Mamaroneck Avenue Green Network. We will promote local shopping and recognize participating businesses with a sticker on their door if they take significant steps to green their businesses.

It has quickly become clear that our "interim project" is likely to keep us busy for years!

Catherine Hiller, a writer and editor (www.ExecutiveEditor.com), is a member of the Lower Hudson group and the lead of Cool Cities Mamaroneck.

Carbon reduction drive takes 'cool' Rochester by storm

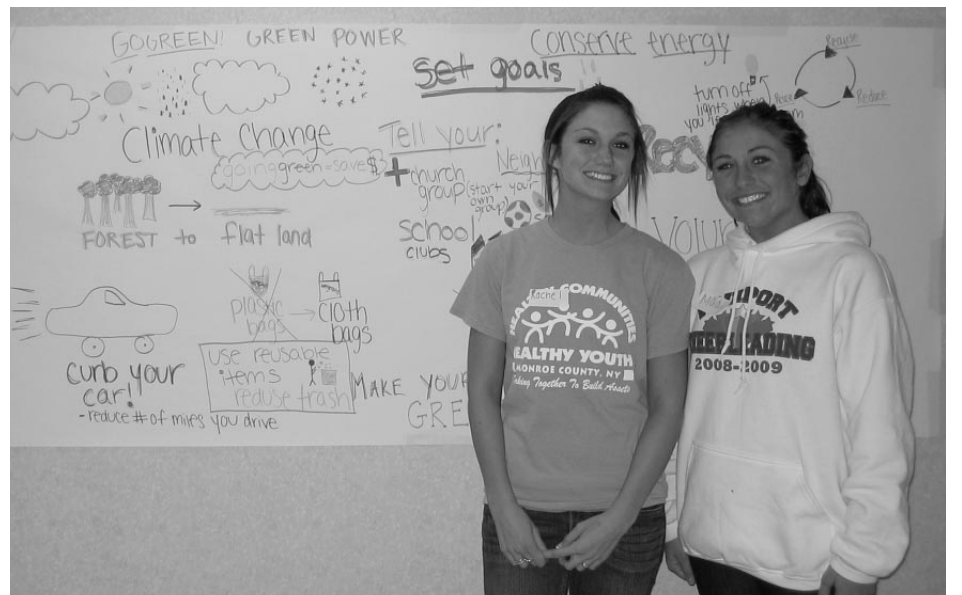
by Bob Siegel and Linda Isaacson Fedele

In keeping with Sierra Club's number one priority — addressing global warming via the Climate Recovery Campaign — the Rochester Group has been working to engage individuals and households in curbing carbon emissions. And, to put it mildly, we have rather ambitious plans for a major three-year campaign starting this year.

This past fall, our Global Warming and Energy Committee rolled out the Low Carbon Diet Challenge. We created partnerships with the City of Rochester, several suburban towns, and dozens of other sponsors, and together facilitated eight three-session workshops around the Rochester area. At each site, trained facilitators led discussions about how households can reduce their carbon footprint, and participants were challenged to reduce theirs by 5,000 pounds, five percent of the average household's emissions. The program was based on David Gershon's *Low Carbon Diet* workbook, which lays out actions to reduce household carbon emissions while saving money, energy, and, hopefully, the planet. The challenge was both to reduce one's household emissions and to compete against the other teams in the community for the greatest reductions.

In total, 119 households participated across the Rochester area. While not all households reported their results, we saw an average reduction of 10 percent in carbon emissions. Those reporting yielded the following statistics:

- cumulative household carbon emissions savings/year: 400,634 lbs.
- average household carbon savings/year: 10,828 lbs.



Students at Fairport High School prepared murals for the awards celebration. Other students provided child care while their parents attended carbon reduction workshops.

• total loss pledged by year's end via engaging others: 257,000 lbs./year.

Perhaps more impressive than the carbon emissions saved was the support garnered for this effort. Community leaders — including Rochester's mayor, town supervisors, village mayors, town supervisors, and the president of Rochester Institute of Technology — all supported the effort, enthusiastically encouraging participation, providing resources, and even taking the Challenge themselves, thus acting as true role models for the community.

At the completion of the Challenge, a grand awards celebration was held at Rochester's City Hall, hosted by the mayor and attended by participants from all eight sites and the general public alike. Individuals and teams were recognized for the greatest carbon reductions, and "just-for-fun" awards were given, too. Non-participant groups were also recognized for other environmental efforts, including newly established

town-sponsored "green teams," as well as grassroots environmental groups.

At the celebration, committee members announced that this was not the end, but the beginning of a major effort to "scale up" this initiative to a truly community-wide effort. The team threw down the gauntlet, announcing the ambitious goal of 100,000 or more Rochester area residents going through the program over the next three years, with the aim of reducing our region's annual carbon emissions by hundreds of millions of pounds. At this point, we knew that the program was a success based on the level of excitement generated, the level of support, and, perhaps most importantly, the number of volunteers who signed up to help continue the effort.

Our goals might sound bold, and they are, but the effort is also necessary, for the situation is dire. As Gershon writes, of all the options

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Of senators, CAFOs and cows

by Larry Beahan

[The following article first appeared as an op-ed piece in the January 5 edition of the *Buffalo News*.]

The Environmental Protection Agency is proposing a well-deserved tax on the greenhouse gas, methane, produced by New York state’s 146,600 dairy cows. Industrial farm lobbyists seem to have gotten to Senator Schumer, because he calls such control “absurd.” Tell the senator he has stepped into something that smells.

We all favored “right-to-farm” laws. Then corporations invented CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations). These polluting profit machines flew in under the radar. Now they produce 80 percent of our milk

and meat. We have 14 of them in Erie County. Wyoming County has the highest concentration of them in the state.

In 2003, 1,000 small New York state farms closed, unable to compete with expensive, federally-subsidized CAFOs. These factory farms can feed 7,500 cows jammed into tiny lots. The manure from these lots drains into lagoons to evaporate into the air and seep into the water.

In 1920 my dad was a 16-year-old farm hand on the Black River. Cows in his charge wandered in pastures. In a balanced cycle they ate the grass which their manure fertilized.

Now, oceans of cow manure produced by CAFOs are so far from crop lands that transporting it makes manure too expensive to use as fertil-

izer. It is loaded with bacteria: giardia, salmonella and E. coli. It is contaminated with hormones and antibiotics fed to the animals to keep them alive. Fumes given off are hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, methane and carbon dioxide. They are nauseating, irritating, flammable, explosive and potent contributors to global warming.

The United Nations warned, in *Livestock’s Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options*, “Livestock are responsible for 18% of greenhouse gas emissions, a bigger share than that of transportation.”

In *The Wasting of Rural New York State*, the Sierra Club quotes a former resident of Eden who lived next to a 400-head factory cow farm on Church Street in the middle of that village. He said, “They are making me ill in my own house.”

John Minick, of Ransomville in Niagara County, says, “You can sit in this house with the windows closed and taste it.” He lives a mile from a 3,000-head CAFO.

In the Finger Lakes region, the Mather family farm is near Willett Dairy’s 7,500-cow feed lot. Ground water and air pollution have forced the Mathers and neighbors to take Willett to court. They complained to me, “What about our freedom to farm? We can’t even go outside and breathe the air.”

The Freedom to Farm Law should protect farms — not factories, not CAFOs. It has tied the hands of local governments.

The DEC is understaffed and underfunded. In 2005, a huge CAFO manure lagoon spilled into 20 miles of the Black River, killing 375,000 fish. That disaster is a wake-up call to the DEC.

If Senator Schumer has been to Eden lately he did not inhale. I was at the Church Street farm recently. It smells bad.

Beahan is a member of the Niagara Group and serves on the Chapter’s executive committee. He also chairs the open space/sprawl committee.

Senator Gillibrand open to Club’s concerns

by Susan Lawrence

By now you have heard the news of Governor Paterson’s appointment of Congresswoman Kirsten Gillibrand as the junior U.S. Senator from New York.

The Sierra Club leaders and staff who have come to know Kirsten Gillibrand by working actively for her elections in 2006 and 2008 fully understand how well qualified she is to be our senator. The Hudson-Mohawk Group, the Atlantic Chapter and national Sierra Club strongly endorsed her in 2006 and 2008, and the national Sierra Club provided dollar and staff support to help with her key elections.

Kirsten has a keen intelligence and is amazingly knowledgeable about a range of key issues and priorities. She has been very open in



Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

meeting with her constituents, has held many open houses around the district and listens and learns, as well as very clearly communicating her thoughts to those attending.

I have been fortunate enough, along with other leaders from the Hudson-Mohawk Group and our regionally-based national staff, to have met with her at least three times for in-depth conversations on Sierra Club concerns. I assume her door will certainly be open to us in the future. She says she will work hard for initiatives to reduce global warming, including new technologies and development of green jobs for New York. Her track record to date as one of the new Congressional leaders who gets things done bodes well for our state.

Susan Lawrence is chair of the Atlantic Chapter.

‘Cool’ Rochester

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available to us, only energy conservation is immediately and affordably available to millions of people. Fortunately, it can also be tremendously effective.

So, we are now officially under-way on our scale-up efforts. We are planning a major roll-out in the spring. The new name is “Cool Rochester.” Results and information will be posted on www.greenopolis.com. We will be working directly with David Gershon, who will be helping us with strategy and logistics. He is concurrently working on the “Cool Mass” program, in which the goal is to have 25 percent of households across Massachusetts reduce their carbon emissions 25 percent by 2012. Perhaps a New York statewide effort is next?

For more information, e-mail CoolRochester@gmail.com; phone the Rochester Regional Group at 585-234-1056; or see newyork.sierraclub.org/Rochester/lcd.htm

Bob Siegel and Linda Isaacson Fedele are members of the Rochester Group’s executive committee; both serve on the Group’s global warming and energy committee, which Siegel co-chairs.



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Bridge, will bring together representatives from Canada and the U.S. to mark the treaty and call attention to the need to continue to protect the Great Lakes.

Several members from the Niagara Group attended a hearing called by the DEC in January to oppose an attempt by Chemical Waste Management to expand its current site without a new permitting process. The proposal, tentatively given approval by the DEC, does not change the boundaries of the landfill but reduces the size of the cap, greatly increasing the capacity so that 160,000 more tons of toxic wastes could be brought there. Bob Ciesielski, our Group chair, Art Klein, and others protested this and called upon the administrative judge to reverse this DEC approval. The Niagara County Legislature has stated that if it is not stopped it will initiate a lawsuit.

CHARLES LAMB

Susquehanna

Group focuses on gas drilling, partnership with sustainability coalition

Our principal activist focus in the past four months has been on the issues surrounding the proposed drilling for natural gas in the deep Marcellus shale formation. This region of New York’s Southern Tier and Pennsylvania’s Northern Tier are prime locations for use of new technologies for fracturing deep rock formations (about 10,000 ft. down) with high-pressure water which forces out natural gas. This involves use of very large volumes of water (millions of gallons), mixed with proprietary fracturing fluids of unknown toxicity, large numbers of heavy trucks to drill each well, considerable noise from the drilling, construction of access roads and “gathering” pipelines to connect wells to major trunk pipelines. To educate the public about this major threat to the environment, the Group (largely through the efforts of former Group chair Scott Lauffer) co-sponsored a forum last October, “Making Sure We Get it Right,” which brought in speakers from around the State. We have also scheduled films and future speakers at our meetings on the subject.

We are also linked with a new Binghamton Regional Sustainability Coalition (BRSC) which is promoting and coordinating sustainability issues in the region. Food issues (a food coop, community gardens, farmers’ markets, and accessible grocery stores) and the natural gas issue have been major foci. Our Chris Burger, chair of the Chapter’s solid waste committee, is co-leader of BRSC and is organizing a two-day, regional sustainability conference in Binghamton scheduled for mid-March.

The Group awarded its annual Lynda Spickard Award (for environmental service to the community) to Virginia Oggins, a community volunteer who served on and chaired many local environmental groups over the past three decades. She was particularly appreciated for her exacting diligence in getting things done and done right.

JULIAN SHEPHERD

Chapter endorses two for national board

You will be receiving a ballot for voting in the election for members of the national board of directors. The board has 15 members, with five elected each year for a three-year term.

The Atlantic Chapter recommends a vote for Lane Boldman and Frank Morris in the upcoming election for the Sierra Club’s Board of Directors.

Not to worry, Mr. Bush: You have your legacy — it's black, not green

by Moisha Blechman

During the election campaign in 2000, George W. Bush promised to cap CO₂ emissions from coal-burning power plants. Less than two months into his presidency, he reneged on his promise, declaring that CO₂ is not a pollutant and, therefore, not covered by the Clean Air Act.

This was the fastest turnaround on a campaign promise in the history of the presidency. It took years before Bush admitted that global warming existed, and more years before he finally had to recognize that it was due to man's activity.

In 2007, it took the Supreme Court to rule the inescapable truth, that CO₂ is a pollutant. Under the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is required to regulate pollutants. In defiance of the law, the EPA under Bush did nothing to regulate CO₂.

This was the single most defining environmental issue of the Bush administration. As the planet heats up, and the damage becomes increasingly apparent, George W. Bush will forever be the symbol of catastrophic global warming.

Up to his last days in office, he was fervent in his opposition to binding reductions of global warming pollution. (Under Bush's watch, global warming pollution increased by 6.6 percent and oil dependence grew by 10 percent.) As late as June, 2008, the White House refused to open an e-mail from the EPA reporting that global warming pollution from vehicles endangered public health.

In 2001, Bush rejected participation in the Kyoto Treaty.

Environmentalists felt that the manner of his exit provided the most sustained damage by casting doubt on the science that underpinned the need to deal with climate change. "The idea of a head of state putting the science question on the table the way that he did was horrifying to most of the rest of the world," said Eileen Claussen, president of the Pew Center on Global Climate Change. At each successive meeting of the parties to the Kyoto agreement, the Bush administration remained actively obstructionist. For example, in Bali in December, 2007, Bush refused to accept mandatory caps on emis-

Disinformation, echoed by big media, became a defining element of Bush policy. It confused the public enough to avoid significant backlash.

sions and tried to block agreement by the other nations to curb global warming.

Bush's disinformation became a defining element of his policy, which was echoed by big media, and confused the public enough to avoid a significant backlash. Never again would we see the mass outcry that created the EPA in 1970. The Administration's covert attempts to deny the science was exposed in October, 2004, when James E. Hansen testified before Congress that the Bush administration was rejecting or deleting material from his agency's reports on global warming. Interference with scientific findings became a standard tool in his anti-environmental strategy.

A key goal in Bush's environmental policy was the elimination of all regulations. He did this by repeatedly gutting or weakening the Clean Air and Clean Water acts, de-funding enforcement and falsifying data, as exemplified by decisions on arsenic, formaldehyde, mercury, lead, PCBs, and a common farm pesticide that kills honey bees. The Administration repeatedly declared the highly toxic air in New York City safe after 9/11, and pulled the rug out from under implementation of PCB cleanup in the Hudson River.

George W. Bush devoted himself to killing the Endangered Species Act (ESA). He did not succeed, but he substantially weakened it. One method of attack that he used for all the agencies was to hire a director who would subvert its purpose in every conceivable way. For example, the person who headed the endangered species program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intervened repeatedly to prevent new additions to the ESA list, and intervened improperly to overrule the recommendations of field biologists. The purpose was to release lands for resource extraction. This is why Bush fought endlessly to keep polar bears off the ESA list. He did succeed in removing ESA status for wolves and grizzly bears, which has opened up the slaughter of both. To date, upwards of 700 wolves have been killed.

It was for the same reason that in March, 2001 — soon after taking office — Bush started to roll back the "Roadless Rule" created by Clinton at the end of his presidency. Only roadless areas have a chance at remaining wild, and only they can be true sanctuaries for our dwindling wildlife and for maintaining a fraction of our ancient forests. These lands belong to the American people,

who, through millions of letters, declared their strong wish to keep the Roadless Rule.

Bush never considered his mandate to be from the American people. His mandate, rather, was from the coal, gas, oil and logging industries who funded his elections. He succeeded partially in certain states, and managed to open millions of acres to logging, drilling and mining. He emptied the huge and magical forest, the Tongass, from the Roadless Rule. The forest is now punctured with devastating clear cuts.

At the behest of the coal mining companies in Appalachia, the White House worked since 2001 to create a rule that allows mountaintop mining to continue and expand. The August, 2007, ruling will lead to the further pillage of vast tracks of land, the filling in of valleys, and the obliteration of hundreds of miles of streams.

Should citizens complain through law suits, Bush sought to stop them through the appointment of environmentally unsympathetic judges, including at the level of the Supreme Court. In July, 2005, for the first time in history, the U.S. Navy began conducting high-density sonar training without safeguards to protect whales as they either migrated or were in their feeding grounds. The suit brought against this tragically inhumane practice was defeated in the Supreme Court. The ocean has become a noisy place for many marine species who can no longer sing their songs or communicate with one another.

The Bush Administration energy plan called for oil, coal, gas and nuclear power, and no real program of research for alternative energies and the alternative lifestyle that is imperative for the age of peak oil.

The list of environmental transgressions goes on and on. But there are three other issues for which Bush bears responsibility. Their environmental consequences are of such tremendous magnitude they must be mentioned.

One problem area is the possible contamination of the DNA of all plant and animal species by genetically modified plants and animals. This is the baby of the Monsanto Corporation. The Bush administration did not require strong regulation of this initiative, and it was never properly tested once implemented. We do not know where it will go, but it could undo biological systems that proved themselves by trial and error over millions of years. This is a corporate money-making scheme that reasonable judgment would have rejected as unwise.

Every time one talks about the rapidly deteriorating environment, the conversation comes to rest on population. There are those who pollute a lot, and those who pollute much less, but all people eat. The population of the world is way beyond a sustainable level. Clearly, to avoid mass starvation and cruelty, there must be a program of rapid population reduction. Bush did the opposite. He insisted on basing aid to foreign countries on the condition that they reject family planning and

contraception. The same was true in the U.S. The government spent billions on it, and it did not work. This has nothing to do with "faith." It has everything to do with a "growth economy" which needs ever-increasing consumer demand. Yet we are rapidly facing the limits of growth, and the probability of collapse.

The third area of great concern is war. The planet cannot afford more war. The total carbon footprint of American wars and the maintenance of more than 700 bases is probably unknowable, but the Pentagon uses 320,000 barrels of oil daily for transport, and is the single largest user of oil in the world. What the 130,000 U.S. contractors in Iraq are burning is unknown.

Today's wars use depleted uranium (DU). The word "depleted" gives the wrong picture. DU particles remain radioactive for 4.5 billion years, the same age as the planet. When a bomb containing DU explodes, it releases DU oxide particles so small they penetrate the protective tissues of the body and travel in body fluids to all the organs, where they lodge and start to bombard neighboring cells. This action damages DNA, breaks down the inter-organ communication system, and leads to malfunction of vital organs. It may express itself as cancer, mysterious maladies all over the body, and horrific birth defects, a major concern of pregnant Iraqi women. New bombs are larger and throw radioactive DU particles higher, where they are caught by wind currents and will travel anywhere in the world. The decision to wage a war which has resulted in the explosion of over 1,500 tons of DU in Iraq is the responsibility of the Bush White House.

There have been many articles proposing a commission to examine the subversion of the law and the uses of torture in defiance of the Geneva Convention. It is considered by many to be necessary if we are to avoid future abuses of this kind. Otherwise, they are effectively accepted and will happen again.

I think it is even more important to establish a commission that will examine the full thrust of the Bush anti-environmental agenda. In 2004, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., wrote a book, *Crimes Against Nature: How George W. Bush and His Corporate Pals Are Plundering the Country and Hijacking Our Democracy*. Bush had four more years to compound the environmental tragedy of his policies. He used them up to the last possible moment.

An environmental commission examining the full sweep of the Bush administration's destructive initiatives will serve to inform the people of what we need to repair. Unfortunately, when it comes to global warming and other forms of pollution such as genetic codes and DU, the past eight years will have a lasting impact. I don't think we can quantify, or even yet comprehend, the legacy that Bush has left us. Much of it is forever.

Blechman chairs the Chapter's Publications Committee.

Sierra Student Coalition offers summer training

The Sierra Student Coalition is gearing up for another summer of leadership training. This year it will run nine Summer Environmental Leadership Training Programs (Sprogs) around the country. These week-long programs teach high school and college-aged youth how to be effective advocates and provide grassroots organizing skills.

Programs range from June to August, with the majority occurring in July. More details at: www.ssc.org/sprog

Hudson Valley veganic farm attracting worldwide attention

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and I think most of the small organic farmers I know take excellent care of the animals they have, and they are actually a pretty healthy component of the farm. I don't get how they can be so nice to them, and then eat them. One guy proudly claimed he makes such great friends with his pigs that they happily follow him right up the ramp to the slaughterhouse each fall. It's so weird to me.

I think the far bigger negative environmental issue is all the farms that rely on factory farm wastes for their primary nutrient source — and that now certainly includes the majority of farms we visit, which is such a shame.

I got a call from a small NOFA-NY [Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York] USDA-certified organic farmer this year who was telling me how messed up his soil tests were from putting tons of factory farmed chicken waste (which are high in salts and phosphorous from their crushed bones).

I hear the same stories from California, where they have even less rain. The salts build up, the land is destroyed. So I wouldn't say it's the keeping of animals that's so much the problem as the using of animal wastes.

What type of equipment do you use? With rapidly rising energy costs, do you think your farm serves as an eco model for others running small-scale farms?

We're all about appropriate technology. There's great stuff out there that's so helpful to small farmers — it's just finding and modifying it so that it works to improve our methods and reduce labor. We farm with two solar electric tractors that I designed and built myself using the old Allis-Chalmers "G" tractors from 1947. [The instructions are posted for free at www.flyingbeet.com/electricg. Dozens have been built around the country.]

Our farm is also part of an exhibit in the Museum of Natural History called "Water" because we use a high-tech system of solenoids on timers with an oddly configured electric pump to manage irrigation on the farm, minimizing waste of water, labor and pumping fuel.

In 2006, I patented a new approach to cooling for small farms [www.storeitcold.com] which wouldn't even have been technically possible just 10 years back but now saves us over 50% on electricity costs (now small grocery stores, food coops, restaurants... and ironically mortuaries use our system, too!) We use sensors and small motors to take a new approach to heating the greenhouse that saves us hundreds of dollars in propane each year. So, we *love* technology!

One important concern for farmers, of course, is crop yields. Have you been able compare yours to that of other organic and conventional (chemical) growers?

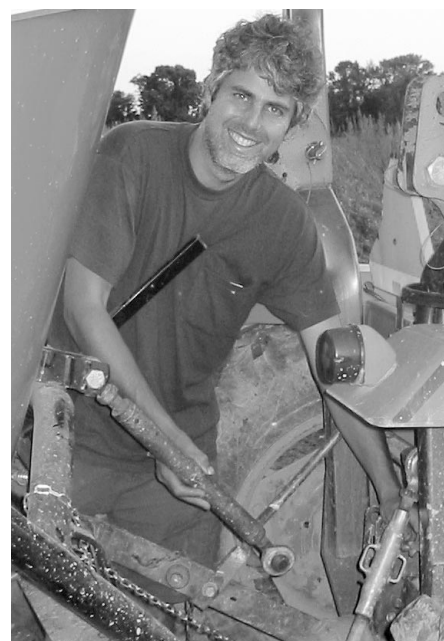
RK: This is a great question. Our yields have been increasing steadily per acre every year. We harvest about four times the tons of vegetables per



Sierran Kate Khosla drives an electric-powered cultivator developed by her husband, Ron. It's a clever reconfiguration of an old piece of Allis Chalmers gasoline-powered equipment. Dozens of other farmers have used his conversion plans to make obsolete equipment "green."

acre as we did six years ago, and certainly our harvests per acre of most crops are well above even conventional national acreage yields. I wish I could say it's just because of how great our veganic growing methods are, but I don't believe it's true. After 10 years in this, I think it's more a question of spacing, weed control, and managing nutrients and water in a healthy soil environment. No doubt veganic farming builds up an excellent soil, but I've also seen some excellent healthy soils and management practices on both conventional and more "normal" organic farms.

Modern day veganic/organic growing appears to have its



Ron Khosla

roots in Europe. Khadigar Farm in Maine has been using veganic methods for decades, but there appear to be few other such farms in North America. Do you see this situation changing here?

We have a great new program called the North American Vegan Agricultural Network and, with their help, we've launched a new certification program for veganic farmers here, but we haven't had a chance to publicize it at all... The certification program is at www.certifiedveganic.org. It's a free system, based on the Certified Naturally Grown program we started in 2002, which has grown to almost 800 farmers around the country (and is *not* veganic). I hope both those things will give the move-

ment a great boost forward!

There appears to be a growing number of outbreaks of food poisoning attributed to plant foods, such as the recent case of tomatoes contaminated with salmonella. What is the real source of such contamination? As the number of conventional farmers switches to using standard organic methods, do you envision the situation growing worse? Do vegan/organic methods reduce the risks?

There's no doubt veganic methods limit our exposure to salmonella and other pathogens in our vegetable crops. Animal production is a major source of contamination, with 10 percent of cows acting as carriers for salmonella not to mention the salmonella (and so many other disease organisms) present in poultry. But as a veganic farmer, I often hear that organic farming with manures is the culprit, and although I agree that organic farmers should stop using manures from factory farms, it's for reasons other than salmonella contamination, because the standards require long intervals between the application of the manure and harvest of the crop (there are no interval requirements for conventionally grown produce). Rather, I am more concerned with long-term sustainability issues and contamination of our food supplies with antibiotics and hormones as well as antibiotic resistance from factory farming techniques (not to mention the ethical considerations).

The CDC claims there are over a billion cases of salmonella poisoning in the world each year. It doesn't just happen on organic farms. Many conventional farms use animal waste in their food production, and skyrocketing fertilizer costs means the use of animal manures is increasing everywhere. But even if you eliminated manure, animal waste is impossible to avoid. It comes from neighboring farms, from irrigation water that's come from hundreds of miles away (or flooding, which happens more now with global warming) and it comes from the humans in processing and cleaning plants — not to mention wild animals.

It's more important now than ever

before to buy local and to get to know your farmer. Ask them if they use factory farm wastes in their crop production and about sanitation and storage of crops before you pick them up. We visited one small farm that was giving out carrots they'd picked the night before. Rats had obviously been climbing over the carrots and munching away, so chewed up pieces of carrot and fecal matter littered the bins. They rinsed them out, but it was pretty gross. We didn't hang around, but I wondered if the CSA members noticed, cared or were just too afraid to ask. You have so much more power than you know just by asking questions! Most people aren't bad, they just need an extra push to goodness!

Contamination can happen at so many different stages, and I think in general it's going to hit the plants post harvest. Organic farmers are very regulated in the timing and use of manures, so that stops contamination from those sources actually. Conventional farmers using manures are *not* beholden to those rules, so I'd actually be more afraid of what they are doing, but again, I think the real problem is in the packing and sorting facilities post harvest.

What advice would you offer the home gardener who wants to grow vegan/organic?

Get the book *Growing Green* from Chelsea Green publishing and get started! And go easy on yourself. I've seen so many people try to get started and then give up. The first three years are the hardest, so don't make things so hard on yourself that you're likely to fail and then stop forever. There is a great program in India I worked with (that I was initially ideologically opposed to, but I've since completely changed my mind) that prohibited small farmers from using pesticides but allowed them to "fall back" on using smaller and smaller amounts of chemical fertilizers. The net effect on transitioning hundreds of thousands of peasant farmers to a system of truly sustainable production over three to five years was *much* greater than when they got them all excited about changing everything overnight. Farming teaches you to be patient. I'm a big proponent of incremental, yet constant, progress forward!

This article is adapted with permission from a longer interview in the Vegetarian Voice, which is published by the North American Vegetarian Society, PO Box 72, Dolgeville, NY 13329; www.navs-online.org/

For More Info

Huguenot Street Farm is located at 205 Huguenot St., New Paltz, NY 12561. Ron and Kate Khosla can be reached at farm@flyingbeet.com. To learn more about their farm, visit <http://flyingbeet.com>.

For information about the international Vegan Organic Network, go to <http://www.goveganic.net/>

Pick your passion

WHATEVER YOUR INTERESTS, opportunities abound to work with fellow Sierrans to enjoy, explore and protect the beautiful state of New York. Listed here are the names of conservation committees and their chairs. Pick your passion and join us.

Chapter Conservation Committees

- CONSERVATION CHAIR** Jessica Helm, 631-219-6449, helm_jessica@yahoo.com
- Adirondacks** Roger Gray, 518-434-8681, rtg50@aol.com
and John Nemjo, 518-279-0771, johnnemjo@aol.com (co-chairs)
- Air Quality** Warren Berger, 212-663-3768, greenwarren33@yahoo.com
- Airports** Julius Shultz, 914-946-1271, origdax@aol.com
- Biodiversity/Vegetarian Outreach** Linda DeStefano, 315-488-2140, ldstefano3@twcnny.rr.com
- Clean Water/Watershed** Carolyn Zolas, 718-884-8482, zolas@optonline.net
and Julie McQuain, 212-477-0472, jmpmedia@aol.com (co-chairs)
- Energy** Annie Wilson, 212-388-9780, mamamita88@aol.com
- Environmental Education** Jeff Bohner, 607-621-8241, jbohner@stny.rr.com
- Environmental Justice** Aaron Mair, 518-374-5243, aaronmair@yahoo.com
- Farm and Food** Erin Riddle, 607-372-5503, erinriddle@verizon.net
- Global Warming Coordinating** Moisha Blechman, 518-329-0531, mblechman@earthlink.net
- Great Lakes** Wayne Howard, 585-359-0782, wdhoward@rochester.rr.com
- Hudson River PCB Cleanup** Bill Koebbeman, 518-399-5027, wkebb@juno.com
- International Population** Diane Buxbaum, 718-855-2399, ddbuxbaum@earthlink.net and Kathy Schwarz, 914-631-1560, k_schwarz54@yahoo.com (co-chairs)
- Open Space/Sprawl** chair TBA
- Solid Waste** 607-692-3442, cwburger@aol.com
- Sterling Forest/Highlands** Jorgen Wekerle, 845-744-5116
- Sustainable Forestry** Gerald Davison, 845-339-4509
- Toxics** Joe Gardella, 716-833-6735, gardella@buffalo.edu
- Transportation** Bart Chezar, 718-636-3157, bchezar@nyc.rr.com
- Wetlands** Liz Kaszubski, 716-695-3570, lizanddan@juno.com
- Wildlife & Wilderness** Hal Bauer, 585-335-2623, hbauer@eznet.net

Group Chairs

- Finger Lakes** Kate Bartholoemew, 607-228-7371, kbarthol@watkinsglenschools.org
- Hudson-Mohawk** Paul Caver, 518-753-4205, paulcaver@gmail.com
- Iroquois** Tasha Cooper, 315-446-3750, tasha.cooper@gmail.com and Martha Loew, 315-492-4745, mloew@twcnny.rr.com
- Long Island** Frank Morris, 516-410-8461, frankmorris@ecologicinvestor.com
- Lower Hudson** George Klein, 914-941-25505, lowerhudson@gmail.com
- Mid-Hudson** Bibi Sandstrom, 845-255-5528, bibis@juno.com
- Niagara** Bob Ciesielski, 716-634-3394, rmciesie@yahoo.com
- New York City** Dan Miner, 917-310-2924, danminer@licbdc.org
- Ramapo-Catskill** Stanley Mayer, 845-342-3997, mayerstanley@hotmail.com
- Rochester** Deb Muratore, 585-385-9743, deb.muratore@hotmail.com
- Susquehanna** Scott Lauffer, 607-341-3746, lauffer@frontiernet.net

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Get Out There

There's nothing like learning about nature with fellow Sierrans. New York's Groups offer a great variety of activities — and lots of them — for you to have fun while expanding your understanding. For an up-to-date list of Sierra Club outings, go to <http://newyork.sierraclub.org>, open the box that says "Select a Place" and look at what the local groups offer.

Or, subscribe to the Chapter's Impromptu Outings listserve. Log onto <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/outings/> and scroll down to the waving hikers. Then click on "Join or leave the list" and follow the links. For more info, call Bob Susser at 212-666-4371.

Lows Lake and Floatplanes: Unhappy Together in Adirondacks

by Roger Gray

The Sierra Club has joined with the three Adirondack advocacy groups to oppose a NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) decision to allow floatplane use on Lows Lake in the Adirondack Park.

The other groups are the Adirondack Mountain Club, the Association to Protect the Adirondacks, and the Residents Committee to Protect the Adirondacks.

Ten-mile-long Lows Lake is in the western Adirondack Park. It lies within the Sierra Club Adirondack Committee's proposed Great Oswegatchie Canoe Wilderness, a potential 500,000-acre wilderness in the western Adirondacks. Lows Lake is northwest of Little Tupper Lake, where, in 1997, the Sierra Club Adirondack Committee first formulated its Great Oswegatchie Canoe Wilderness proposal with its successful Save Whitney Park campaign. This resulted in New York's acquiring 15,000 acres surrounding, and including, Little Tupper Lake, subsequently designated as a wilderness area.

Lows Lake currently is part of the Adirondack Park's Five Ponds Wilderness Area. So, what are floatplanes doing in a state-designated wilderness area, where motorized use is prohibited? Therein lies another chapter in the fascinating but complex tale of the administration of the Adirondack Park under the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP), adopted in 1987. Administration of the APSLMP requires approval of Unit Management Plans (UMP) for the various parcels which make up the Adirondack Park.

The UMP for the Bog River Complex and Lows Lake, approved in 2003, called for the phase-out of floatplane use over a five-year period, ending January 30, 2008. According to the DEC, "The decision to eliminate float plane access was based on two factors: (1) the UMP's conclusion that significant user conflicts between float planes and paddlers were occurring; and (2) the desire to fulfill the management goal in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP) of establishing a Lows Lake-Bog River-Oswegatchie wilderness canoe route."

Unmentioned in the DEC statement is the fact that as part of the state-designated Five Ponds Wilderness, DEC is mandated to prohibit or remove from the lake any non-conforming use, including motorized use.

According to an October 10, 2008, article in the *Syracuse Post-Standard*, "Floatplanes were rare on Lows Lake until the mid-1990s. Sometime before 1990, non-native bass were illegally introduced into the lake, and as public awareness of the bass fishery grew, floatplanes and motorboat use increased."

Lows Lake is the centerpiece of two grand canoe routes. One route starts at the eastern end of the lake,

traverses the length of the lake, and then connects by a carry to the upper reaches of the Oswegatchie River. Another potential route would link Lows Lake with Lake Lila and Little Tupper Lake.

But, back to the APSLMP story. Rather than moving forward to implement the requirements of the 2003 UMP to end floatplane use of the lake, last year the DEC proposed an amendment to the UMP which would extend floatplane use on the lake for another 10 years. In May, 2008, the four groups opposed this decision and filed an Article 78 suit against the DEC to require it to implement the floatplane ban. The Adirondack Park Agency (APA), which must approve all UMPs, in a noteworthy rebuke to the DEC last October, rejected the proposed amendment to the UMP and sent the DEC back to the drawing board.

In response to the APA decision, Neil Woodworth, executive director of the Adirondack Mountain Club, stated, "There is much more at stake here than whether commercial floatplanes should be allowed on a particular Adirondack lake; the real issue is whether DEC is bound by the provisions of the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. APA said today that they are."

But the story does not end there. Instead of accepting the decision of the APA, the DEC has proposed a revised UMP which continues to allow floatplane use on Lows Lake under special restrictions. The four groups are continuing their Article 78 suit against the DEC to require conformance with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan in the management of Lows Lake. Stay tuned.

Roger Gray co-chairs the Chapter's Adirondack Committee.

What You Can Do

- Send a letter to the NYS DEC and the APA. Tell them to adhere to the APSLMP and prohibit floatplanes on Lows Lake:

Peter J. Frank
NYS DEC, Lands & Forests
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233
lfadk@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Curt Stiles, Chairman
Adirondack Park Agency
PO Box 99
Ray Brook, NY 12977

- Please consider a tax-deductible contribution to the Adirondack Committee Fund to help pay the costs of the lawsuit. Mail your contribution to: Adirondack Committee/Lows Lake, Sierra Club, 353 Hamilton Street, Albany, NY 12210.
Please make checks payable to Sierra Club Foundation/ Adirondack Committee Fund.



Wheel of Seasons

by Rick Marsi

Journal chronicles signs and songs of spring

Do I hear songs of spring? Has the basement flooded, the first fresh beer can sprouted at road’s edge? These things have happened. A warming time is upon us.

At this time of year, writers note spring signs in journals. Their entries contain welcoming reports of early arrivals. First woodchucks and red-winged blackbirds often are noted, as if to prove with written words that we were abandoned but not forgotten by the migrants and hibernators who left winter in our laps. The journals also brim with goodbyes: to the wood smoke smells, turkey tracks and ski trails that always make winter worthwhile.

Here are several entries from last March’s diary:

3/13 — A dark morning with wind whipping from the southeast. Huge flocks of Canada geese flew low overhead, pushed hard by a jumbled tailwind. One flock suddenly veered in honking confusion over the river, its wedge-shaped ranks faltering. Any thoughts of dropping in were vetoed by consensus. The squadron re-

grouped and flew on.

3/14 — What are the colors of early spring? They include brightening yellows on a weeping willow in full sway; reds on soft maple buds, swollen with spring’s promise of leaves and flowers; orange legs and green heads on male mallards, pink feet on bufflehead drakes, the blood-red bill of a common merganser — all designed to enhance breeding appeal.

3/15 — Robins appeared in the snow this morning, their flock having arrived overnight. They sat on fence posts, or scratched through new powder, wondering where to find food. Male robins come back first, traveling north with warm weather. Some books say you can count on their arrival when average daily temperatures reach 35-37 degrees. It was 40 today, which didn’t appear to be helping.

3/16 — Digging around in the woodpile, I uncovered a sleepy woolly bear caterpillar. It uncurred in response to the warm hand engulfing it. Usually we see woolly bears doing the opposite: curling into a



With spring arriving, young robins won’t be far behind.

ball of hairy bristles as a defense mechanism. This works with most predators, but not skunks, which roll the caterpillars on the ground until their hairs fall off and then eat them.

3/17 — A true sign of spring today. With sun streaming through an upstairs window, the season’s first cluster fly appeared. It did a few lazy figure eights around a ceiling light,

dipped into a stall maneuver, flopped on a window sill, turned over on its back and expired.

3/18 — The river is high, muddy and filled with ducks. Lesser scaup, ring-necked ducks and goldeneyes fill binoculars. Goldeneye drakes paddle about in a dither, pursuing hens and throwing their heads backward in a time-honored courtship ritual. By early April, these brass-eyed divers will be gone, headed for the forest country of Canada, New England and the Adirondacks.

Also on the river: a caddis fly hatch. Adult caddis flies are poor fliers, and today’s cool temperatures made matters worse. Most of them preferred crawling about on the bank, membranous wings folded over their backs, normally twitching antennae stone-still.

In summer, caddis flies can emerge from rivers in slow-moving swarms that fly blindly toward car and street lights. The Pan American Exposition of 1901 had to be moved from its originally selected location near Buffalo’s Niagara River when a few million caddis flies descended upon it in unprecedented swarms. Not today — much too cold. But tomorrow may bring warmth and a host of spring migrants. Tomorrow or the day after that.

Naturalist Rick Marsi, a member of the Susquehanna Group, is a journalist, public speaker and leader of eco-tours. His book of favorite nature columns is Wheel of Seasons, available at www.rickmarsi.com. ©2009 Rick Marsi

Chick peas, garbanzos or cecis: By any name, they’re the same versatile bean

by Betsy Naselli

Here chick chick, here chick chick! This is how we used to encourage the hens to their food dish so we could gather eggs when I was young. These days, as a vegetarian, the chicks I am gathering are of another sort: chick peas. Or garbanzos. Or ceci beans. By any name, they are all the same delicious, nutritious, and versatile bean. They are available dried or canned, or ground into flour.

Chickpea flour, known as besan or gram flour in India and farine de pois chiches in France, is commonly used throughout India and in parts of the Mediterranean. It may be made into pancakes, pizzas, dumplings, soups, stews — you get the idea! In France a street food called socca is nothing more than a chickpea flour pizza.

Most of us Americans might recognize them as the third bean in a three-bean salad, or realize that they take the leading role in traditional hummus. But, try out the recipes here to enjoy the versatility of this great little bean. One cup of chickpeas has 269 calories and 14½ grams of protein. Chickpeas are high in manganese and folate.

If using dried chickpeas, one cup of dried chickpeas yields three cups of cooked, drained chickpeas. To cook, soak dried beans overnight, drain, and in a medium pot add six cups of water and bring to a boil. Cover and cook gently for one to three hours until they are tender, not

mushy. You may add about one teaspoon of salt at the end of cooking if the recipe you are making doesn’t call for any. The cooking water can be saved and used as a vegetable broth.

The flour is generally found in the natural foods section of your supermarket, at a natural foods store, or at an Indian grocer.

The recipes below feature chickpeas with seasonal produce. Enjoy!

Chickpea Stew with Spinach

1½ C dried chickpeas, prepared as above, drained, or two 15-oz. cans, rinsed and drained

2 celery stalks, cut into ¼-inch dice

1 lb. spinach, trimmed, washed, and cut crosswise into thin ribbons (or two bags baby spinach)

1½ - 2 t. sea salt

¼ C olive oil

1 medium onion, peeled and finely chopped

4 to 5 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped

3 medium tomatoes, peeled and finely chopped (or 1 can of chopped tomatoes)

Hot red pepper flakes to taste (optional)

Put the chickpeas and spinach in a large pot together with the celery and sea salt. If you cooked the chickpeas yourself, cover with the reserved cooking liquid. If you are using canned, cover with about one cup water. Bring to a boil, turn the heat to low, cover and simmer until the spinach is tender.

Meanwhile put the oil in a large

frying pan and set over medium high heat. When hot, add the onion and garlic and reduce heat to medium. Saute until the onion just begins to brown a little.

Add tomatoes and cook for three to four minutes. Transfer contents of the frying pan to the pot with the chickpeas and spinach. Stir to mix and continue to cook gently for another five to ten minutes. Add more liquid as necessary, and season with red pepper flakes to your liking.

Chickpea Crepes with Asparagus and Cheez Gravy

1½ C spelt flour

½ C chickpea flour

1 t. salt

2 T olive oil

2 C water

Combine the flours and salt in a medium size bowl. Add the water and oil and blend until completely smooth with an immersion blender or a hand held mixer. (If you own neither, mix with a fork for an honest three minutes.) Cover and let sit in the refrigerator for half an hour or so.

Preheat an 8-inch crepe pan or skillet, preferably non-stick. Spray with nonstick cooking spray or lightly coat with olive oil. Pour ¼ C of batter into pan; tilt and rotate so it covers the bottom. When the top looks set, and the edge is just beginning to brown, flip and cook the other side for just about one minute.

Remove by folding into quarters or by stacking on a large plate, with a piece of waxed paper between each

crepe. Cover with foil as you make the rest of the crepes.

Cheez Gravy (adapted from the *Uncheese Cookbook*)

½ C whole-wheat pastry flour

½ C nutritional flakes

¾ t. salt

Pepper

1½ C non-dairy milk

1 C vegetable broth or water (or cooking water from chickpeas)

2 T balsamic vinegar

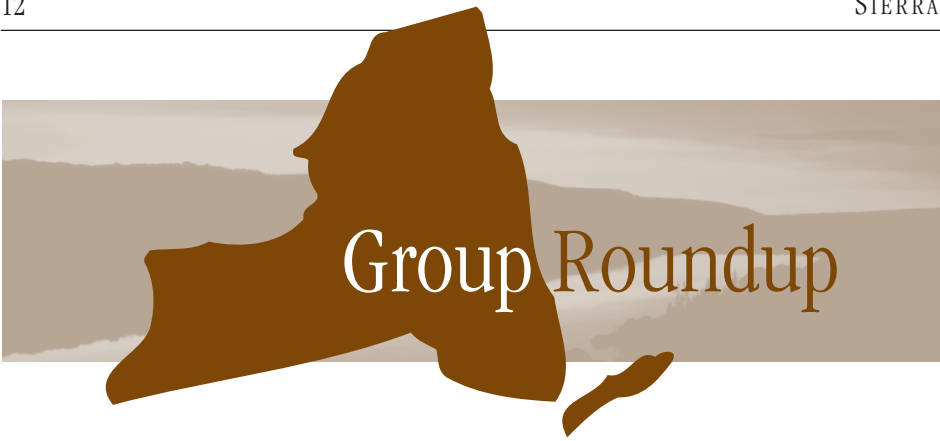
2 T sherry (optional)

Place flour, nutritional yeast, salt and pepper in medium saucepan and stir to combine. Gradually whisk in nondairy milk, beating well to avoid lumps. Whisk in remaining ingredients until very smooth. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to low and cook, stirring almost constantly with the whisk until thick, hot and bubbly, about five minutes.

Serve crepe filled with steamed asparagus, or steamed spinach or another vegetable or medley of your choice and pour a bit of the gravy over top, or serve it on the side.

Betsy Naselli owns The Holistic Lifestyle Company in the Syracuse area. www.TheHolisticLifestyleCompany.com

The Atlantic Chapter encourages you to move toward a plant-based diet to protect the environment and human health and to make better use of natural resources. To learn more and to receive more recipes, contact the Biodiversity/Vegetarian Outreach Committee at ldestefano3@tucny.rr.com or 315-488-2140 and the Farm and Food Committee at FarmandFoodComm@yahoo.com, or go to www.newyork.sierraclub.org/ and in the “Select an Issue” dropdown list select “Biodiversity/Vegetarian Outreach” and “Agriculture.”



Finger Lakes

Forum on gas drilling impacts drew front page coverage

The *Elmira Star Gazette* gave front page coverage to our February gas drilling forum on the health and environmental impacts of new gas drilling techniques. Attendees viewed a documentary film on the impacts of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing in Colorado. The film features landowners and town and county officials discussing the impacts of the gas drilling on their lives. The film also features Dr. Theo Colburn, a research chemist who lives in Colorado, discussing her studies of the chemicals used by gas drilling companies. The film was followed by discussion. About 70 people attended.

Dr. Colburn’s website, <http://www.endocrinedisruption.com/>, gives the results of her studies of the health effects of the products and chemicals used in the gas production process. Her research provides a glimpse at the patterns of possible health hazards for those living in proximity to gas development.

Iroquois

Lisa Daly named ‘City Democrat of the Year’

The big news was that our own Excom member Lisa Daly was honored by the Democratic Committee of Onondaga County as City Democrat of the Year. She was recognized for her role as Central New York coordinator for the Obama campaign, overseeing 800 volunteers and as director of new media for the Dan Maffei congressional campaign. It was a great event, dinner and reception, attended by over 200.

Now that “green” is in, there are many conferences to attend, and the most prominent one here is the annual Cazenovia College symposium. This year it’s titled, “Smart Growth and Transportation.” A fine array of speakers from EPA, New York state, NRDC and NYSERDA; U.S. Congressman Michael Arcuri; moderator Kit Kennedy; and a great breakfast and lunch all contribute to the popularity of this event. As in the past, Iroquois members will be assisting.

We will wind up our season of monthly programs with our annual forum in May. All the many environmental groups in the area are invited to table, net-

work, and hear a presentation on home energy efficiency and sustainable energy systems. This always is a well-attended and popular event.

MARTHA LOEW

Long Island

Program on reducing home energy costs, solar systems set for April 18

On Saturday, April 18, at 1:30 p.m., the Long Island Group has arranged a two-hour educational program on reducing home energy costs. It will be held at the Heritage Center at North Shore Heritage Park, Mt. Sinai.

Attendees will get a tour of a very efficient public building and learn ways to reduce their home’s energy consumption (costs) while making it more comfortable.

Presenters will include a tour guide from the Heritage Center at North Shore Heritage Park and Chuck Schwarz, from L.I. Green, who will describe home energy audits and how to get one for no (or very low) cost. Two vendors will jointly describe the solar systems their companies install (PV and hot water) and explain how you can get a system with no out-of-pocket costs in excess of what you are paying today.

Lower Hudson

Group opposes airport expansion which could threaten reservoir

The Westchester County Airport is an ongoing concern. It is only 250 yards from the Kensico Reservoir through which the drinking water of New York City and Westchester flows. In past years, we were able to pass resolutions through the Westchester County Legislature, the NYS Assembly and Senate calling for no expansion, no additional hangars, no additional parking or impervious surface. The county has an environmental program for the airport but has given leases to JetBlue and NetJets. Flights are down but passengers have nearly tripled. There has been an increase in parking for NetJets, resulting in more impervious surface, and an application to build a parking garage at the edge of the airport has just surfaced. It could add 1,400 additional parking spaces to the 1,200 on airport property. This would almost certainly result in increased flights of private and corporate jets. County officials are unwilling to assist in stopping this project; that leaves the ball in our corner.

An effort is under way by the Metropolitan Transit Authority to establish a regional bus system including Westchester and Nassau counties using 21st century technology, including bus rapid transit. We intend to get involved.

JULIUS SHULTZ

New York City

From birds to coal plant financing to energy volatility, Group stays active

- Jack Hoyt is organizing birding trips at Gateway National Park and Floyd Bennett Field.
- Annie Wilson has submitted testimony on air emissions regulations pertaining to Con Edison’s 14th Street generating plant, pointing out that the adjacent East Village has one of the City’s highest incidences of childhood asthma. Annie continues her advocacy in support of carbon taxing as opposed to cap and trade.
- The New York City Group partnered with the national Sierra Club’s coal campaign to bring former NYC Deputy Comptroller Tom Sanzillo to speak on how major banks are taking a big risk in financing new coal plants. Not only are such plants likely to be bad investments, imperiling bank shareholders, but such financing also weakens the market for the new renewable power infrastructure we need to build.
- Conservation Chair Margo Bettencourt is working on upcoming events, and welcomes prospective volunteers.
- Secretary Jim Lane is overseeing the group’s participation in an annual street fair.
- Chair Dan Miner edited The City Sierran’s 16-page newsletter, with the help of layout wizard Richie Villavicencio. Read it online at www.nyc.sierraclub.org, thanks to webmaster Wendy Siegel.
- Dan continues to spread the word about the importance of preparing for the return of high oil prices, as world oil production has peaked and is expected to go into permanent decline imminently. Since many non-environmentalists still don’t take climate change seriously, pointing out the certainty of higher prices is perhaps a more persuasive approach, and one that dovetails with SC’s Cool Neighborhoods program, Mayor Bloomberg’s PlaNYC, and President Obama’s green recovery efforts. Dan is trying to enlist support for Intro. 0891, which would create a NYC Council Energy Volatility Task Force. He is also enlisting volunteers to organize neighborhood green action forums and networks. At these events, established sustainability programs such as the NYS energy agency, local gardening groups, and the Office of Emergency Management would pitch their programs to network partners and neighbors.

DAN MINER

Niagara

International celebration of Boundary Waters Treaty scheduled for June 13


Approximately 100 people came together for a general membership meeting in January at the Buffalo Historical Society. We viewed the award winning film, “Flow,” which stressed the importance of protecting our water everywhere on this planet.

The group is getting ready for some major events during the Year of Shared Waters. On June 13 we will celebrate 100 years since the Boundary Waters Treaty was signed between the United States and Canada. Many events are planned during June 5-14, but the one on the 13th, held at the Rainbow

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