



SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

Hudson/Mohawk Group



April 2004 Vol. 28 No.3

“Aspens” by Ansel Adams in This is the American Earth

Upcoming Events

Conservation Committee Meetings

Wednesday, April 21, 2004
Wednesday, May 19, 2004
St. Paul’s Episcopal Church
21 Hackett Blvd., Albany

All Members are welcome to attend the meetings. The Conservation Committee works on conservation issues and projects. Please contact Conservation Chair John VanDeloo for more information (Contact info pg. 2).

Program Series

Tuesday, April 27th, 2004-doors open at 6:30, Program starts at 7pm -
Town of Colonie Public Library
Environmental Effects of Acid Rain:
Current Status in the Catskill and Adirondack Mountains

Peter Murdoch has been a research scientist for over 20 years in NYS with the US Department of the Interior. His latest projects include designing integrated monitoring systems for Acid Rain and Global Warming for the US Government.

Sierra Club Social

Wednesday, April 14, 7:30 pm
Malt River Brew Pub
Latham Circle Mall

Join us for some good food, good cheer, and good conversation. Meet some of the Sierra Club activists, and find out how you may want to be involved. For more info, contact John Nemjo at 279-4777 or Johnnemjo@aol.com.

Political Action Committee

Monday, April 12, 7pm
St. Paul’s Episcopal Church

Guest speaker John Stouffer, Sierra Club’s Atlantic Chapter Legislative staff person, will speak on pending green legislation and upcoming elections.

URGENT! SIERRA CLUB BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION DEADLINE

According to national Sierra Club election rules, we were in error when we made reference only to the Groundswell website at the end of our March 2004 BOD election newsletter article. Noted below are websites from which members can obtain information about all BOD candidates. We apologize for this error.

At its March meeting, the Hudson-Mohawk Group Executive Committee unanimously agreed to provide the following information on the candidates in the Sierra Club Board of Directors election, based on their responses to questions posed in the on-line Candidate Forum:

Candidate	Member Since	Position on Current Club Immigration Policy
Nick Aumen	1988	Supports
Phil Berry	1950	Supports (Asks not to be elected; see ballot)
Morris Dees	2003	No response (Asks not to be elected; “)
Ed Dobsen	1967	No response
Michael Dorsey	1986	No response
Barbara Herz	1996	Supports (Asks not to be elected; see ballot)
Dave Karpf	1995	Supports
Dick Lamm	2003	Opposes
Kim McCoy	2003	No response
Frank Morris	1998	Opposes
Jan O’Connell	1976	Supports
David Pimental	1992	No position in Candidate Forum
Sanjay Ranchod	1994	Supports
Lisa Renstrom	1994	Supports
Karyn Strickler	2003	Supports
Robert VanDeHook	1999	No response

The Hudson-Mohawk Group Executive Committee, at its February meeting, reiterated its SUPPORT for existing Sierra Club policy on immigration, passed by the membership in 1998:

“Let’s focus on underlying causes, not symptoms. The Sierra Club membership affirms the decision of the Board of Directors to take NO position on US immigration levels and policies. The Sierra Club can most effectively address the root causes of global population problems through an existing comprehensive approach:

* The Sierra Club will build upon its effective efforts to champion the right of all families to maternal and reproductive health care, and the empowerment and equity of women;

*The Sierra Club will continue to address the root causes of migration by encouraging sustainability, economic security, health and nutrition, human rights and environmentally responsible consumption.

Please send in your ballots immediately, they must be RECEIVED by noon, Wednesday, April 21, 2004. For more info: www.sierraclub.org/bod/2004election/candidate_forum/; or www.sierrademocracy.org/; or www.Groundswellsierra.org

Hudson-Mohawk Group

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Sprawl/Smart Growth - Susan Lawrence, Pete Sheehan

Energy - Susan Lawrence

Pesticides/Clean Water - John

VanDeloo

Clean Air - Susan Lawrence

Webmaster - Tom Reynolds

reynt0@cs.albany.edu

The Hudson-Mohawk Group Executive Committee meets the first Wednesday of every month (except July). Members are encouraged to attend! Please call Susan Lawrence to confirm.

This newsletter is published 5-6 times per year (or more) by the Hudson-Mohawk Group of the Sierra Club's Atlantic Chapter. Submit all letters, including name and phone number, to the editor to: Hudson-Mohawk Group, PO Box 8447, Albany, NY 12208-8447. We reserve the right to edit and keep all articles. Views expressed by the contributors may or may not be those of the Sierra Club or the Hudson-Mohawk Group. The subscription rate is \$5/5 issues; subscriptions for members are free. Contact John Nemjo for advertising rates.

Outings

April 4, 2004 (Sunday)

9AM - Dyken Pond An 'ecological community' (sometimes called a habitat) is a collection of interacting plants and animals that share a common environment. The Dyken Pond area, situated high on the Rensselaer Plateau east of Troy, is a land of varied forests, lakes, streams, and wetlands. Some 'northern forest' communities remind visitors of the Adirondacks, despite being less than an hours drive from Albany. During a leisurely 3-4 mile hike on well-maintained trails, we will pass through a number of ecological communities and learn how to tell one from another. Computer mapping in a GIS will be explained. Joint outing of H-M Group Sierra Club and the H-M chapter of AMC. Call leader Warren Broderick for details at 518-235-4041.

April 10, 2004 (Saturday) 10AM

Central Park Clean-Up There is a proposal being considered by the City of Schenectady to sell a 10 acre fragment of Central Park to a private developer for the purpose of building townhomes. Join us in a light clean-up effort and discussion on alienation of parkland and alternative uses for this wooded area on Golf Road and Oregon Avenue bordering the Schenectady Municipal Golf Course. Bring your work gloves and your ideas. Contact Janet at 346-5439.

April 18, 2004 (Sunday) Taconic Crest

Trail Join in with the Taconic Hiking Club helping to maintain this trail. After trail work there will be a presentation on wind power and discussion on siting of wind turbines, especially relating to the proposal to site several turbines on this trail. Contact John at 370-4932.



May 8, 2004 (Sunday)

Cascade Lakes Project -Join us for our annual service project, picninin and hike. Contact Roger Gray 434-8681, or Ralph & Doreen 346-2818

Hike Up Buck Mountain Stunning!

Three hikers enjoyed the beautiful sunny, blue sky day for the March 10th hike up Buck Mountain from Camp Chingachgook. Snow had dusted the ground and trees the night before, making the hike through the woods as beautiful as the views from the summit. We all agree that this is the best route up Buck with many opportunities to see Lake George and the Adirondacks beyond. It was a perfect day for a great hike so close to Albany.

Important Note: All outing members will sign an "Assumption of Risk and Release of Liability" sheet prior to participation in the outings.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEAD AN OUTING?

Our group is looking for new outing leaders. If you've thought you might like to lead a day hike for the group, this is a great time to do it. We will have a special program to train new leaders in 2004. The outings program is important for new member recruitment, conservation education, just plain fun and good exercise, and you can be a part of it. For details or questions about our outings program call Lorraine Plauth (765-4937) or Bill Koebbeman (399-5027)

Care for a spot of tea?

We have a limited number of Sierra Club teas available for purchase - Backcountry Berry is a loose premium herbal tea (18 oz.- \$10.95), while our English Breakfast comes bagged (25 bags to the tin - \$9.50)

Add \$3.00 per order for shipping (no charge if picked up at a meeting, of course).

Check or money order should be made payable to **Sierra Club, Hudson-Mohawk Group**. Please include your preference, quantity, price per unit and total cost, name and mailing address, and send your order to:

Janet Given-Chen
809 Karenwald Lane
Schenectady, New York 12309

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LEIPZIG STRING QUARTET
Saturday, April 3, 2004, 8pm
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MOZART PIANO QUARTET
Saturday, April 24, 2004, 8pm
Mozart, Schumann & Strauss

AMADEUS TRIO
Friday, May 7, 2004, 8pm
Cassado, Barab & Tchaikovsky

Emma Willard School
Rt 66, Troy, New York 274-2098

Tickets: regular \$19 (with this ad \$15)
student \$10

Earth Day Lobby Day

Albany's largest Earth Day event is Earth Day Lobby Day, scheduled this year for April 19th. A coalition of groups, including the Sierra Club, NYPIRG, Riverkeeper, Scenic Hudson, the Clearwater, and more team up to bring citizens and students from around New York to the Capitol for a day of lobbying, learning and networking on the state's most important environmental issues. This years agenda includes the bigger better bottle bill, expansion of New York's Wetlands law, promoting green energy development and fighting global warming, and fighting off legislation that could make you a criminal for belonging to an environmental organization (no joke - the bill is A.4884/S.2996).

Make plans now to attend. For more information, contact Sarah Kogel-Smucker in the Sierra Club chapter office at 518-426-9144 or Sarah.Kogel-Smucker@verizon.net. Please provide your name, address, and phone so we have a sense of what legislative district you are in.

Earth Day '04

*Celebrate by giving someone
a Sierra Club Membership in
commemoration of Earth Day*

Join today and receive a **FREE Sierra Club
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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.

Enclose check and mail to:

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P.O. Box 52968,
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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Donations for Luther Forest Campaign

You can help us work with local activists to stop the development of four huge microchip manufacturing plants in the 1350-acre Luther Forest in Malta and Stillwater, Saratoga County. First, you can make a donation to the Sierra Club, Hudson-Mohawk Group with "Luther Forest" written on the memo line. These donations will be used to pay for the costs of educating citizens, research and lobbying. Many hours of dedicated work by local activists from the Coalition for Responsible Growth and Sierra Club members have raised major concerns about sprawl, pollution, and many other negative impacts of the project to the attention of the town planning boards and councils. For more information on the issues of this massive chip fab development, you can go to the Coalition's website Maltatechpark.com, where you can sign a petition to go to local officials urging them to vote "No" on the Luther Forest Technology Campus project.

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To NIMBY Or Not?

Just say the word "NIMBY" (an acronym for 'Not In My Backyard') and a negative image arises of a provincial, self-centered someone who can't see beyond his own backyard. Hypocrisy comes to mind, as the belief is that a NIMBY cares little about what happens in your backyard, just keep it out of mine. There are web sites devoted to turning that NIMBY into a YIMBY, advising that by ignoring the diehards and putting the focus on 'swing voters' who are still undecided and open to argument much can be gained.

Not all NIMBY, however, is negative. As Robert F. Kennedy Jr. points out in 'the riverkeepers: two activists fight to reclaim our environment as a basic human right' (John Cronin and Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.) environmentalists and community groups should wear NIMBY as a badge of honor. He reminds us that some of our major environmental victories, such as the rebirth of the Hudson River, the victory of Storm King, the death of Westway, Love Canal, and others were all fostered in a spirit of NIMBY and helped give rise to our Clean Air and Water Acts. He goes on to state that NIMBY veterans quickly become NIABY's (not in anyones backyard), and that industry is responding. We need to remember "Think Globally - Act Locally" - we experience the environment where we live, otherwise any fight is just an abstract exercise. I am a NIMBY and I am proud. *Janet Given-Chen*

Sierra Club Amplifies Issue on Wind Turbine Siting -

September 26, 2003

"Sierra Club strongly supports the development of substantial wind resources for electricity generation. Wind power is a clean, emission free, renewable resource that can help reduce our dependence on polluting fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas) and nuclear power for electricity. The consequences of our continued dependence on burning fossil fuels for electricity include global warming, acid rain, smog, increased incidence of asthma and other respiratory diseases, and other forms of pollution and natural resource damage, including mountaintop removal and strip mining. While there are drawbacks to all forms of power generation, we strongly support wind power where it can be responsibly sited and generated as part of the answer to those problems.

We particularly support the development of wind power on agricultural land where wind production complements existing land use. Sierra Club opposes development in protected areas such as national and state parks, national monuments, wilderness areas, wildlife refuges, designated roadless areas, critical habitat for wildlife, areas of cultural significance and other areas that have special scenic, natural or environmental value. In these areas, it is inappropriate to build power plants, roads, transmission lines, or any other structure related to energy development. Sierra Club urges the Public Service Commission to adopt siting criteria for wind power installations to ensure that the renewable portfolio standard encourages the appropriate siting of these facilities."

	MOVING?
	Attach current mailing label here and write in new address below. (Please allow 4-6 weeks processing time.)
Sierra Club P.O. Box 52968 Boulder, Colorado 80322-2968	Name _____ Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Controversy On The Taconic Crest Trail

by John VanDeloo and Janet Given-Chen

There is a proposal to site wind turbines at the Berlin Pass in Rensselaer County. The Berlin Wind Project (www.berlinwind.org) is 'a study of the potential to harness wind at the Berlin Pass to produce electricity.' Sponsored by Williams College, the website states it is educational in its primary purpose, but with the potential to become practical if the project proves feasible. Here we present two opposing points of view on this project. Please let us know what you think, and consider joining us on April 18 at the Taconic Crest Trail to see and hear for yourself what may be gained or lost.

A Plea to Help Save the Taconic Crest From Development -

Barton McLean of Save The Crest, Petersburg, N.Y.

Save the Crest is a grass roots organization of local people living among the slopes of the Taconics who wish to preserve their special character intact. It was formed as a response to the threat of a wind turbine farm proposed on the top of Berlin Pass, which is at the heart of the Taconic Crest Trail.

The greatest agony among we who favor both wind power and wilderness preservation is that the very places where wind power can be most effective and will be promoted are exactly the places which are the jewels, the treasures of our trail systems, namely the high, exposed areas, the very places which the Sierra Club has fought so hard to preserve intact over the years.

The Taconic Crest Trail, from Petersburg Pass south to Rt. 43 in Hancock, is perhaps unique in New York State as being the longest contiguous straight line mountain ridge trail. When compared to the 15 mile Great Range trail in the High Peaks, or the c. 18 mile Dry Ridge Trail in the Catskills, our Taconic Crest Trail, for all its modest elevation, logs 21.6 miles unbroken by structure or road. When entering south from the Petersburg Pass trailhead, one immediately is plunged into the most spectacular area of the trail, from there to Berlin Mountain, a mere 2.7 miles. And it is this very area, that of Berlin Pass, where the wind turbines are proposed, that is one of the very few entirely open ridge areas of the whole 21.6 miles, which is otherwise largely wooded.

This whole area has been the recipient of much recent preservation activity on the parts of many conservation entities, a summary of which is highlighted in a policy statement found at www.rtlc.org/taccrest.html

We seek the Sierra Club's support in stopping this wind turbine project. Perhaps its pertinent to envision what might happen if the Sierra Club does not act, and by default give tacit acceptance. As the wind turbines are built, and assuming they become economically feasible, towns all along the Crest, such as Petersburg, Hoosick, Stephentown and New Lebanon, will be wanting to seek out wind farm energy company participation as a means to enhance their tax base. This may be viewed not as simply a plea to help save our local area, but serve as a wakeup call for similar conflicts that will inevitably arise across our state and the Northeast. Help us save one of the last wilderness ridge hikes in Central New York.

contact Bart McLean at mclmix@aol.com

Project Status -

Professor David Dethier, Williams College

The landowner (Williams College) has asked the Town of Berlin's permission to put up a 165-foot tower to measure wind speeds for a year, or possibly a year and a half, depending on when we start to measure. The impacts of such towers seem to be minimal - they're guyed, they don't have a foundation and at 8.5" wide they are nearly invisible except at low angle light or when they're covered with rime. The College has no plan to put wind turbines at Berlin Pass and the administration will not begin a serious discussion of the economic and environmental issues posed by a wind farm until after wind speeds have been measured and analyzed. An active group of Williams College students and young alumni are enthusiastic about the concept of the College generating green energy from wind. They have put up and maintain berlinwind.org, a site which focuses on the wind potential at Berlin Pass and on wind energy in general. As this site notes, community response to the wind machines at Searsburg (a ridgetop site) in Southern Vermont has been positive and the environmental impacts of the project remarkably small. Those machines and the revenues they generate add considerably to the tax base of that small community. The Hoosac Wind project on nearby Florida Mountain (Massachusetts) will add substantially to the local tax base of two communities and produce minimal demand on town services. It is harder to project precise economic benefits of a project to New York communities such as Berlin, but the experience from the two wind projects constructed most recently in western New York suggests that there are substantial financial benefits to local towns.

David Dethier is Professor and Chair of the Department of Geosciences at Williams College. Contact him at David.P.Dethier@williams.edu



“One touch of nature...makes all the world kin.” *John Muir*

April 21 is John Muir’s birthday - 166 years old this year. Help us remember his legacy by volunteering to keep his vision alive.

We have many positions that need dedicated volunteers. We need a few good people to help with conservation issues, fundraising, programs, environmental education and much more. Help us get the message out. Contact John Nemjo at 279-4777 or johnnemjo@aol.com.

Watch Our Website For The Latest On Events, Meetings, Etc.

Besides our newsletter, you can check our Group Website www.newyork.sierraclub.org/hudsonmohawk for information and updates on events, outings, environmental issues, and how you can participate. We also will include some key community meeting notices. Anyone wishing to post an item should contact Susan Lawrence or John VanDeloo (contact info page 2).

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DID YOU LIVE NEAR NL INDUSTRIES IN COLONIE, NY?

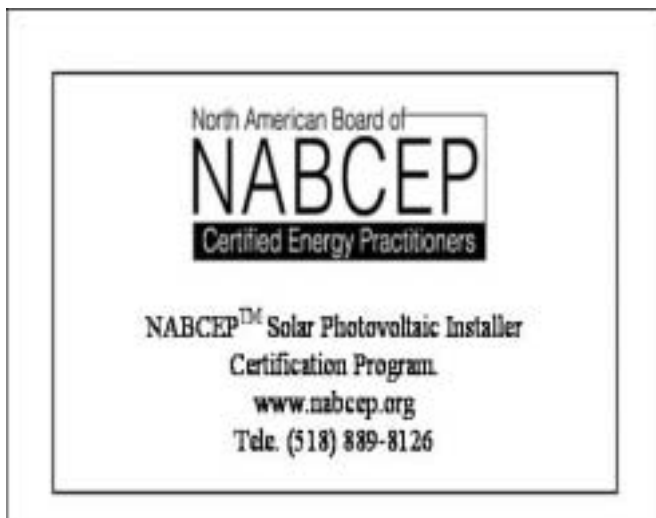
NL Legacy Lives On At The Colonie Site

by Janet Given-Chen and Roger Gray

Currently known as The Colonie Site, this 11.2 acre parcel is located at 1130 Central Avenue in Colonie, N.Y. It includes the property formerly owned by National Lead (NL) Industries, and three other properties - a Niagara Mohawk substation, Town of Colonie property, and CSX rail property. NL operated the plant from 1958 until its closure in 1983. They used radioactive materials including depleted uranium (DU) and smaller amounts of thorium and enriched uranium, among a smorgasbord of other chemicals, to build 30mm cannon penetrators for the Air Force and dynamic flight control ballast weights for aircraft. In 1979 DU particles were found in air filter monitors approximately 10 and 26 miles from the NL factory site at two Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory (KAPL) facilities. Leonard Dietz was a senior researcher at General Electric then, working at KAPL, which GE ran for the U.S. Navy. KAPL did not process DU, so Dietz determined that it came from NL. He compiled and submitted a report to the Navy, but it was not released to the public for many years. At the same time the State agencies were finally investigating NL; they ordered NL to terminate operations following a Department of Environmental Conservation finding that the amount of DU discharged in January of 1980 was many times over the allowable state standard. The year following its closure the Department of Energy purchased the NL property for \$10 to facilitate the cleanup (which so far has cost the taxpayers over \$100 million dollars) as the site was legislatively added to a federal cleanup program at the initiative of the Senator Alfonse D'Amato. In a letter to the editor of The Gazette dated December 3, 2003 Leonard Dietz states, "One might be tempted to believe that when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers finishes cleaning up by the end of 2004, that the site will be in pristine condition. I wish this were true". He goes on to describe cleanup guidelines the Corps uses compared to natural uranium in local soils, concluding that "... 50-100 times as much U-238 will be left at the NL site as occurs there naturally...They must be viewed as permanent environmental contamination." Cost recovery actions against NL can still be initiated when the cleanup is done.

Many residents of the area want answers about what these toxic and radioactive emissions have done to them, and whether pollution still remains in the community. In response to these concerns, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) conducted a Public Health Evaluation (site review and evaluation of possible disease threat). The results did not satisfy the residents concerns. Over 300 active community residents, the Citizens Environmental Coalition (a statewide group that has worked on the NL site for over 20 years) and Assemblyman Bob Prentiss organized an initial Health Survey to gather information. They are working to have a comprehensive health study of the community impacted by NL Industries pollution. They also want more comprehensive testing and a full cleanup of the site, and financial compensation for victims with related health problems.

For further information, *especially if you were a resident of that area*, contact Assemblyman Bob Prentiss at 455-4178 (prentir@assembly.state.ny.us) or the Citizens' Environmental Coalition (CEC) representatives Anne Rabe at 732-4538 (Annerabe@msn.com) or Tom Ellis at 453-8874 (findfastest@juno.com).



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