



SIERRA CLUB
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Hudson/Mohawk Group



Jan/Feb 2004 Vol. 28 No. 1

Aspens by Ansel Adams in This is the American Earth

Upcoming Events

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

MEETINGS - 7PM

Wednesday, January 21, 2004

Wednesday, February 18, 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 Co-Chairs Roger Gray, John VanDeloo, or Susan Lawrence for more information. (Contact info pg. 2).

Program Series

Tuesday, January 27, 2004

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Location: Town of Colonie Library (William J. Sanford Library, Colonie)

Doors open at 6:30, program begins at 7PM sharp. We open the New Year with two outstanding gifted speakers and educators on a wide variety of subjects.

Tuesday January 27 - Dave Diligent of the Cornell Cooperative Extension will enlighten us on two hot topics: *Endangered Species* - a presentation of the global view and slide show of habitat destruction and how it affects so many species, from the Panda Bears in China to the Karner Blue Butterfly in Albany's Pine Bush. Also, *Indoor Air Quality* - Got the sniffles or just feeling lethargic? It may not be a cold, but poor air quality including mold or carbon monoxide poisoning. Dave will also present information on the dangers of radon and asbestos, and how to detect and deal with these dangers.

(Events cont'd on page 3)

Revitalization of the Capital District

by Susan Lawrence

It's time for localities in the Capital District to work together on a county-wide and regional basis for revitalization of the Capital District by focusing economic development in areas that need it most. Economic development initiatives requiring construction of new infrastructure and facilities too often seem to be announced on almost an ad hoc basis without any apparent planning on how the initiative would be the most cost effective approach with the least impact on the environment.

The Luther Forest Technology Campus project is now before the Malta and Stillwater town boards for decisions on whether to develop a 1350 acre forest with a microchip manufacturing technology park four times as big as Crossgates Mall. This project has been driven by the Saratoga Economic Development Corporation (SEDC), the Center for Economic Growth, the State Economic Development Corporation and big league politicians, including Governor Pataki, Senator Bruno, and Congressman Sweeney.

The Campus is proposed as a so called 'shovel ready site' that could entice one or more of the huge international chip manufacturing companies to come to the Capital District and build the four chip fabs over a period of about twenty years. This will require a new water line from the Hudson River for plants that will use up to 15 million gallons of water a day, a new sewer line and treatment facilities, new roads including a new exit on the Northway, and major new power lines - hardly a 'shovel ready' project.

The SEDC has used the tool of developing a Generic Impact Statement for the chip-fab project to project a shovel ready image, but has left many questions unanswered about the tremendous societal and environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated, including the induced sprawl in this basically rural area.

The parties who developed the Luther Forest project argue that the chip plants must be located in a new high tech park developed in acres of green space far from roads and railroads to prevent vibrations in the manufacturing facilities. Yet special construction is underway for new buildings on the State University at Albany campus that will be vibration free for computer chip research and experimental production. So if this can be done at the SUNYA campus, why not build new chip fab plants someplace other than Luther Forest, perhaps on Brownfield sites. This assumes that the plants can be constructed and operate with adequate pollution protection for workers and the community, an assumption that runs counter to some of the experiences of chip fab plants and their workers.

The localities in the Capital District, and concerned citizens (such as environmentalists) need to set priorities for economic development that take into account major conditions and factors other than what businesses (particularly large and multinational businesses) are in effect demanding when they choose to locate in the Capital District. Our urban and suburban areas have many un- and underemployed people, and need to grow and attract business in their communities. This will save on building from scratch the costly infrastructure of roads, water, sewer, and power transmission lines

(cont'd on page 3)

Hudson-Mohawk Group

| | |
|--|---|
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Issue Gurus

Hudson River - Aaron Mair, Pete Sheehan
Cascade Lakes/Adirondacks - Roger Gray
Sprawl/Smart Growth - Susan Lawrence, Pete Sheehan
Energy - Susan Lawrence
Pesticides/Clean Water - John VanDeloo 370-4932 JVDMD@aol.com
Clean Air - Susan Lawrence
Webmaster - Tom Reynolds
reynt0@cs.albany.edu

The Hudson-Mohawk Group Executive Committee meets the first Monday evening of every month (except July). Members are encouraged to attend! Please call Pete Sheehan 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 to the editor to: Hudson-Mohawk Group, PO Box 8447, Albany, NY 12208-8447. Include your name and phone number. 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

Saturday, January 17th - Princeton Ski Trip

David and Sandra Geisinger will lead their annual ski trip through rolling woods and open vistas. They will start at 1:30pm from their Ennis Road property. Join them for an invigorating trip of about 5 miles in the hills located about 10 miles west of Schenectady and about 1000 feet higher. Snowshoers also welcome. Call Dave and Sandy at 887-3030.

Saturday, January 17th - Santanoni Preserve

Our annual cross country ski trip, always a great time, with about 10 miles of gentle skiing and a year of great memories. Call John at 370-4932.

Saturday, January 24th, 10AM - Snowshoe on Fire Tower Trail at Grafton Lakes State Park

As part of the Park's Winter Fest, we will snowshoe (or hike if there is no snow) for about 3 miles (one way with cars spotted) on old roads, featuring a scenic view. Please provide your own snowshoes. Meet at Mill Pond parking lot on North Long Pond Road, Grafton. Call leader Warren Broderick at 235-4041 for details.

Saturday, February 7th Winter Cookout/Outing

Explore Moreau State Park in the winter, and enjoy a winter cookout. Bison and vegetarian chili, Portabella burgers and more for the cookout. Lots of trails for X-skiing, snowshoeing, or hiking depending on the weather. Call John at 370-4932 for details and to let us know how much food to prepare.

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



2004

Calendars

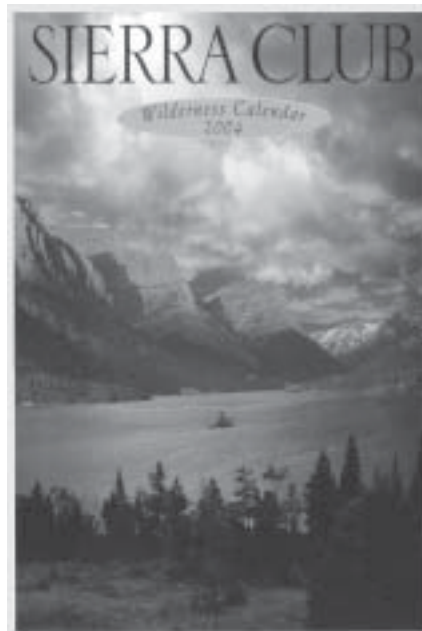
Available

We still have Sierra Club wall and engagement calendars available. Keep track of your daily activities and upcoming Sierra Club events while supporting the conservation work of the Hudson Mohawk Group of the Sierra Club.

The calendars retail price is \$11.95, however, the member price is just \$9.50. (\$10.50 for non members). Add \$2.50 for s/h for the first 3 calendars plus \$.75 for each additional calendar.

Make your check payable to Sierra Club Hudson-Mohawk Club, and mail your check and request to:

Sierra Club
Hudson-Mohawk Group
PO Box 8447
Albany, New York 12208-8447



Events *(cont'd from page 1)*

Tuesday, February 24, 2004

Todd Fabozzi of the Capital District Regional Planning Commission will present a special views and insights and insights of suburban sprawl in the region - from the bird's eye to on the ground in our urban areas. Come get the big picture of how some inappropriate zoning and lack of planning decisions have impacted both our rural landscapes and our urban cores. Then, get energized on what you can do in your community to make it more livable, walkable and ascetically pleasing. After hearing Todd speak, you should have a good reference base of knowledge to begin serious discussions with your local town boards, planning departments and zoning officials.

Sierra Club Social

Monday, January 12, 2004

7:30 PM

**Malt River Brew Pub
Latham Circle Mall**

Interested in getting involved with your local Sierra Club? Want to meet some of the people working for you to make your community a better place to live? Want to get out, eat some good food, drink some good local brew and maybe make some new friends? Then the Sierra Club Social is just for you.

Join us on the second Monday of each month at the Malt River Brew Pub in the Latham Circle Mall at 7:30 for fun, food and great conversation. There are no commitments to get involved, but we'll be happy to discuss your interest if you are considering helping our local group. We look forward to seeing you there!

Revitalization

(cont'd from page 1)

and facilities.

Some localities in the State are working together to plan for economic development. Even though counties do not have local zoning powers they are authorized by State law to prepare comprehensive land use plans. Cities, towns, and villages can, by intermunicipal agreement, join together to approve zoning and other measures to implement these plans.

A Broome County coalition brought together County and other local planners, economic and workforce development officials, local legislative representatives, SUNY Binghamton and others to set priorities for future development. They prepared a plan for downtown Binghamton revitalization and the redevelopment of the many Brownfields in Binghamton and other localities. In Tompkins County, comprehensive economic planning is being used to get Federal funds for environmental protection, including farmland conservation. In Ulster County, localities are working together to plan for infrastructure development, including water facilities, shared services and farmland protection. Genesee County prepared a comprehensive plan with many stakeholders working together on issues such as economic development, land use and infrastructure development.

Last spring, the State Legislature passed major legislation to renew the State program for cleanup of Superfund sites and to initiate a major State program for clean-up of Brownfields. This legislation provides incentives for localities to plan proactively, as Troy has done, for cleanup and reuse of their Brownfields. The Capital District needs to aggressively plan for cleanup, marketing, and reuse of these sites.

Another area that now needs State legislative and administrative reform is the Empire Zone program. Initially enacted in 1986 as a program to promote growth of businesses in concentrated poor areas, primarily in cities and other localities, it has been massaged by law and by those administering the program so that the Saratoga Economic Development Corporation is trying to get Empire Zone status, with all its real property and other tax breaks for the chip fab plants that would locate in Luther Forest. The towns of Malta, Stillwater, and Saratoga County have a much lower rate of unemployment than the cities of Schenectady, Troy, Amsterdam, Albany, and Rensselaer. These later communities are the ones that most need to use Empire Zone programs and other public economic development incentives, much of them administered at the discretion of the local industrial development authorities.

The Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group urges concerted public, business and community efforts targeted to regrowth of our urban areas. Locating new business parks in giant tracks of forests or farmlands is not the answer. It paves over green space, negatively impacting watersheds, wetlands, wildlife, and 'quality of life', while inducing greater sprawl from increased ancillary business growth and residential development. In considering where to locate all the new projected high tech and other businesses that may come to the Capital District, it is important for the decision makers and anyone who influences them to take into account the full costs and benefits of where these businesses locate or grow. Identifying all costs and benefits would account for projected employment, business income, and taxes paid and forgiven, but also for costs of infrastructure and environmental impacts.

To help us understand the issues more, we invite you to attend a Sierra Club program meeting, February 24th with Todd Fabozzi, a planner with the Capital District Planning Commission. Working on revitalization of our urban core and fighting sprawl is a major priority of the H-M Group. We can use your help in working together on major projects like Luther Forest or issues like these in your community. To help, please contact Susan Lawrence, John VanDeloo, or Roger Gray (contact info page 2).

Donations For Luther Forest Campaign

If you would like to provide financial contributions to help the Hudson-Mohawk Group's work on the proposed microchip plant development in Luther Forest, Malta and Stillwater, you can send a check to the Sierra Club, Hudson-Mohawk Group and write on the memo line "Saratoga Spa Development". We are working with local Sierra Club members and other local activists to try to stop this project. However, if it ultimately is approved in some form, we are also trying to reduce the many negative impacts on the community.

You may make your contribution to either the Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group or the Sierra Club Foundation Saratoga Spa Development:

Sierra Club Hudson-Mohawk Group - Contributions and gifts are not tax-deductible; they support effective citizen-based advocacy and lobbying.

Sierra Club Foundation Saratoga Spa Development - Contributions and gifts are tax-deductible as charitable contributions; they support grants for public education, research, and public interest litigation to further the Sierra Club's conservation goals.

Mail you check to:

Sierra Club, Hudson-Mohawk Group
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Albany, New York 12208-8447

Thank You!



Make the Sierra Club part of your New Year's Resolution—Give a Sierra Club Membership to protect the wild now and for the next generation.

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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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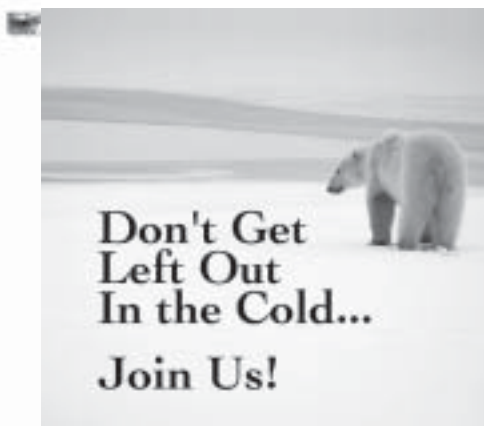
Notes From The Chair - by Pete Sheehan

We hope the New Year finds you all rejuvenated and ready to face the many challenges ahead - both locally and nationally. We have one of the largest development projects ever planned up in the towns of Malta and Stillwater - that being the Luther Forest Development, including the planned Chip Fabrication plant. Although there are no tenants or definitive plans at the time of this writing, the Saratoga County Economic Development Corporation is moving ahead with its GEIS and plans to take water from the Hudson River about 10 miles away. Congressman John Sweeney is procuring funding for a cloverleaf of asphalt and cement around Northway Exit 11; meanwhile the cumulative environmental impacts of this whole project will threaten the existing peace and quiet in these relatively quiet towns. If you live up near there or are concerned about it, let us know - we have work to do together.

I don't think I have to remind you of what national election is taking place this year (do the initials GW make you wince?) with huge environmental impacts - again. Many of you prefer to work on regional and national issues and politics of same. We have issue coordinators nationally - (see page 2) and we have a Political Committee ready to work on endorsements - but we need help - so make 2004 the year you get back in the race - and thanks!

Last, but certainly not least, many thanks to Steve Sullivan for his kind contribution of gifts for our raffle - complimentary dinners from his fine restaurants in Saratoga, The Olde Bryan Inn and Longfellows. We encourage our readers to visit the establishments of our kind donors. Many thanks, Sully!

We're Looking For A Few New Faces!



Yes, the Sierra Club wants you. Our local group is looking for some bright new faces to help us with the challenges ahead. No experience necessary. You can help us in areas you feel comfortable with. There are many jobs that need to be done that do not involve public speaking, lengthy government meetings, or detailed scientific awareness. Some of the current positions available are:

- Assistant Volunteer Coordinator
- Fundraising Chair
- Programs Chair
- Newsletter Technicians (labelers)
- Conservation Committee Members
- ...and more!

Call today to help us in our fight for a healthier and cleaner local environment. Contact John Nemjo at 279-0771 (evening) or 279-4777 (daytime).

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Monday, January 12, 2004

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