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Hudson/Mohawk Group



Jan/Feb 2005 Vol. 29 No 1

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

Programs

**Protecting the Arctic National
Wildlife Refuge - Tuesday, January 25,
2005.**

Join us to watch the Sierra Club's compelling documentary **OIL ON ICE**, which connects the fate of the ANWR to decisions America makes about energy policy, transportation choices and other issues. Caught in the balance are the culture and livelihood of the Gwich'in people and the migratory wildlife in this fragile ecosystem. Join us in a group discussion of what we can all do to help protect 'America's Serengetti'.

**Clean Air For Your Community
Tuesday, February 22, 2005.**

Learn about Bush administration air quality programs that are gutting the Clean Air Act. We will discuss how to advocate for Clean Air policies and the implications they hold for your community, the nation and the world. Look for more information on this program on our HMG website.

Programs are held at the William K. Sanford Town of Colonie Public Library, 626 Albany-Shaker Road - just east of Northway Exit 4 and the intersection of Wolf and Albany-Shaker Roads. Doors open at 6:30, programs start at 7pm.

WINTERFEST

February 5, 2005 11am - 4pm

Our annual Winter fundraiser will be held at the Inn and Bistro at Saratoga Lake. You can enjoy a number of outdoor activities or just sit inside by a warm fire and meet some great people who are just as concerned about our environment as you are. Come on out and show your support - further details are on page 2.

Being Involved As Environmentalists: More Important Than Ever

by Susan Lawrence

It is critical that we all become more involved in trying to protect the environment of our community, our nation, and the world. Newspapers and other media sources are full of stories about global warming, yet the Bush Administration and Congress refuse to join the Kyoto Treaty, instead advocating the opening of the precious Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling for oil and gas. The Bush administration is also moving to gut the effectiveness of the Clean Air Act, including weakening controls over emissions from power plants. Our January and February Programs (see sidebar) will focus on these issues and how you can become involved.

Important planning is being done at the local level in the Capital District regarding future land use development and the protection of open space. Some high-growth localities like Clifton Park and Saratoga Springs (Saratoga County), and Bethlehem and Guilderland (Albany County) are in various stages of developing and implementing comprehensive land-use and open-space protection plans, there is also much citizen and local interest group involvement in Schenectady County. The Town of Colonie, another high growth area, is also in the process of comprehensive planning, but despite much solicitation from the Town for input there has been little public involvement to date. Many localities have yet to start this process. The Hudson-Mohawk Group is working to promote smart-growth planning in an effort to curb sprawl, protect farmland and other open space, and revitalize our cities (see Nov/Dec 2004 newsletter focusing on sprawl issues in western and northern Schenectady County.) Contact John VanDeloo or Aaron Mair to become involved in these efforts (contact info page 2).

We are planning an educational seminar on Saturday March 20th or 26th on planning/zoning and the SEQRA process. We will have more specific information in our March/April newsletter, but please pencil these dates in on your calendars.

It can be overwhelming to consider so many environmental issues and wonder where to begin. Focusing on a few key issues seems the only effective way. At our Executive Committee and Conservation Committee meetings for the Group we continually address these issues. Our Issue Gurus (page 2) are available for advice and support, and for sharing information on conservation efforts both locally and nationally. Get involved in your local government's planning/zoning activities. Land Conservancy organizations in our Group's area include the Albany County Land Conservancy, the Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy, and Saratoga Plan. Contact John Nemjo and Roger Gray, chairs of the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Adirondacks Committee to share your concerns about protecting the Adirondacks from development and other issues.

The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter has an important agenda to develop and lobby for State legislation to protect the environment. With the State Capitol

(cont'd page 3)

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The Hudson-Mohawk Group Executive Committee meets the first Monday of every month. 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.

Outings

Saturday, January 29th, 2005 - Santanoni Estate Join us for our annual XC-ski to this great estate. Last year was undescrivable - we basted in the sun and soaked in the solitude of this setting which energizes one to be at one with the mountains. Call John at 370-4932.

Saturday, February 5th, 2005 Winterfest! Our Annual Fundraiser at the Saratoga Lake Inn and Bistro - 11am until 4pm

Our annual Fundraiser, including outings, a program, and fun for all. We will discuss as many issues as possible, and if weather permits skate, ski or snowshoe on the lake and surrounding trails. Learn what your local Sierra Club Group is doing while sitting inside by a fire, what we can do for you and what you can do to help preserve your local environmental unique areas; or spend your time outside. Your contribution of 25.00 adults/10.00 children includes raclette, fondues and more, and will help raise funds for local projects. Call Peggy or John at 370-4932.



Saturday, February 19th, 2005 - Snowshoe the Woodlawn Preserve and the Lishakill Preserve, Schenectady County.

With enough sunlight we may include the Lishakill Preserve. Learn about the natural history of these areas and how they are related.

Join us at a local volunteer's home for warm cider and cookies and a discussion of what 2005 will hold for us locally. Contact John at 370-4932.

Other Activities of Interest ...

Saturday, January 22, 2005

20th Annual Winter Festival at Grafton Lakes State Park. Dog sled rides, horse sleigh rides, snow sculpture contests, youth hockey, ski and snowshoe outings, demos from EMS and other groups, orienteering and geocaching programs, and much more. A no charge, family fun event. For further info, contact Melissa Wright, Park Naturalist, at 518-279-1155.

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 Susan Lawrence at 489-5721 or SHLawr2@aol.com

2005 Donations for Work of the Hudson Mohawk Group

Thank you to our members who contributed to our Group's efforts in 2004 through many volunteer hours, but also through donations for particular conservation efforts, such as Luther Forest, and for our conservation work in general, or any of our other activities, including newsletter production and mailing. Our Group operates on an all volunteer basis with a very limited budget. If you are planning ahead for what organizations you will support with donations of moneys in 2005, please put the Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group on your list. We can use taxable donations to the Group for any purpose, including lobbying. Tax-exempt donations (checks made out to the Sierra Club, Hudson-Mohawk Group with Sierra Club Foundation on the memo line) are limited to some education and conservation activities. Please send any contributions to PO Box 8447, Albany, NY 12208-0447.

(cont'd) **Being Involved:**

geographically located in the heart of our Group, it gives many of us an opportunity to work with State elected or administrative officials on key environmental issues, legislation, or administrative actions. To receive Chapter Action Alerts send an email to listserv@lists.sierraclub.org with the message of "SUBSCRIBE ATL-ACTION-ALERTS@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG" followed by your first and last name. Find more about environmental issues for New York State by going to the Atlantic Chapter website www.newyork.sierraclub.org/ and reviewing the Atlantic Chapter's quarterly newsletter. There are other environmental organizations that have websites with valuable information on New York State environmental issues, including the Environmental Advocates (www.EANY.org), Public Interest Research Group (www.NYPIRG.org) and the Audobon Society. Generally, these other organizations share the same positions as the Sierra Club and their websites can be very helpful.

Some of the New York State agencies have very useful websites and publications on environmental issues, laws, regulation, programs, projects pending State approval, and funding sources. The DOS (Department of State) website has examples of local government initiatives for smart planning and improved planning/zoning. The DEC (Department of Environmental Conservation) website has information on the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). An invaluable guide to understanding how to become involved is the DEC's "SEQRA Cookbook". To stay informed about requests to DEC for environmental permits for air and water discharge watch the weekly Environmental Bulletin (ENB) on the DEC website. Finally, the State DEC and DOS jointly issued a "Local Open Space Planning Guide" in 2004 that has information on the local planning process, types of natural resources needing protection and tools to protect these resources. Many of these resources may also be at local libraries or in print from the State agencies.

For information on national and international issues, and what kind of action can be taken, go to the national Sierra Club website (www.Sierraclub.org). There you can find information about critical current issues and campaigns and can research Sierra Club policies on these issues. There is also an opportunity there to join a national action alert e-mail list. In addition to the Sierra Club magazine that all members receive there is a national newsletter available called "The Planet" for activist members.

Please contact us to keep us informed or seek support on issues that may be going on in your area. For more information on any of the above, other ways to get involved, or especially to volunteer in some way contact Susan Lawrence Group Chair, John VanDeloo Conservation Chair, or any of our 'Issue Gurus' listed on page 2 of this newsletter.



It took a public outcry and an act of Congress to save the gray wolf from literally vanishing off the face of the earth. But we did it. Today, a lot of other creatures face similar extinction. And unless we step up our efforts to protect their habitats, they may not be so lucky. At the Sierra Club, we've mounted a major campaign to defend the Endangered Species Act and preserve threatened habitats before their inhabitants are gone forever. Please contact us to find out how you can help protect threatened and endangered animals. Because no amount of popular demand can bring an extinct species back to life.

Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



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Membership Categories	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
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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: **F94Q W 0802**
Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

John Poorman on the Transportation Future of the Capital District Area

John Poorman, Executive Director of the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) gave us a very informative Power Point presentation at our November 23rd Environmental Program on how transportation planning is done for our metropolitan area, and what are some of the key policy issues and principles for transportation planning over the next 20 years. The CDTC serves an important function, under Federal law, as our metropolitan planning organization for transportation.

John emphasized a shift in planning - that transportation improvements not be regarded as an end in itself but as a means to some key community priorities, such as quality of life, environmental health and enhancement, and economic vitality. He also pointed out that plans for future improvements anticipate using existing funding sources for existing transportation corridors (eg, Route 5 between Albany and Schenectady) and expanded mass transit, but do not project major new funding for what we might consider as sprawl-inducing projects, such as a new Exit 11A from the Northway to Luther Forest. For more information on CDTC planning, refer to the CDTC's website www.cdtcmppo.org, CDTC itself, or contact your local public library.

Watch Our Website

www.newyork.sierraclub.org/hudsonmohawk/

Annual Awards Dinner

The Hudson-Mohawk Group held its Annual Awards Dinner on October 28th at the Italian-American Center in Green Island. Congressman Mike McNulty was the featured guest speaker. Congressman McNulty spoke passionately against the roll-backs in environmental standards and the fiscal irresponsibility during the past four years of the Bush administration. The Group presented Congressman McNulty with its "Defender of the Environment" award for his many years of support of environmental issues in Congress, and his record three consecutive years with a 100% rating from the League of Conservation Voters.

Awards were given to the following Hudson-Mohawk members:

Louise Kirkpatrick received the "Activist Achievement Award" in recognition for her work in organizing grassroots opposition to a proposed garbage incineration project in Corinth, New York. (The proposal was defeated).

Bill Koebberman was recognized for his many years of work protecting wetlands in Saratoga County, and in appreciation of the years he has invested as the Group's Outings Chair, with the Group's first "Clarence Gregory Distinguished Service Award". The Award was named for a long-term member of the Group who has served with tremendous dedication, perserverance and commitment to the goals of the Sierra Club.

Lucinda Schoenbeck was recognized as the Hudson-Mohawk Group "Volunteer of the Year" for the work she has done tabling at special events and especially in appreciation for coordinating the Group's newsletter distribution.

Aaron Mair, the Group's Environmental Justice Chair, and former Atlantic Chapter Chair, currently a member of the National Environmental Justice Committee, was recently named to the Sierra Club's National Sprawl Committee. Aaron was recognized with the Hudson-Mohawk Group's "Environmental Leadership" award for his leadership in the Chapter's Clean Hudson River campaign, and his leadership on urban environmental quality issues.



Chris Ballantyne, Director of the Sierra Club's Northeast Field Office, presents Congressman Mike McNulty with the Hudson-Mohawk Group's "Defender of the Environment" award at the October 28th Annual Awards Dinner.



Louise Kirkpatrick receiving the “Activist of the Year” award from Susan Lawrence, Group Chair



Bill Koebbeman receives the “Clarence Gregory Distinguished Service” award from Pete Sheehan



Roger Gray presents Aaron Mair with “Environmental Leadership” award.



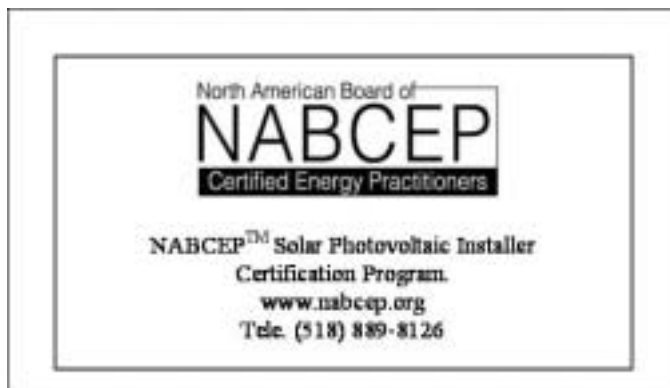
Lucinda Schoenbeck receives “Volunteer of the Year” award from John Nemjo.



There's Still Time To Order Your 2005 Calendars!

Our inventory is limited but there is still enough left to be able to offer special close-out pricing on our beautiful Wall and Engagement calendars. Please specify Wall (Ten Dollars) or Engagement (Eleven Dollars), add 2.00 S/H for first calendar, 1.50 each additional calendar. Tax is included in this special price.

Check or money order should be made out to Sierra Club Hudson-Mohawk Group. Mail your order to: Janet Given-Chen 809 Karenwald Lane, Schenectady, New York 12309.



Interested in advertising with us? Contact Janet Given-Chen for rates (contact info pg 2)



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Winterfest

Bistro at Saratoga Lake
February 5, 2005 11A - 4P
See page 2 for details

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