



**SIERRA
CLUB**
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Hudson/Mohawk Group



Jan/Feb 2006 Vol. 30 No 1

"Aspens" by Ansel Adams in This is the American Earth

Programs

These programs will be held at the Colonie Town Library, 629 Albany-Shaker Road (1/2 mile east of Northway Exit 4) 518-458-9274 Programs start at 7PM, doors open at 6:30PM.

Electronic Voting Systems - Tuesday, January 24, 2006 - See related article on this page, and program details on page 3.

"Take Back The Hudson" - Tuesday, February 28, 2005 Join us for a showing of the film "Taking Back the Hudson" produced by Marist College students about the plight of the towns of Hudson Falls and Fort Edward at ground zero in the fight over cleaning up PCBs in the Hudson River. Local high school students voice their concerns over the serious impact of PCBs on their families' health and the need for the clean-up. Chris Ballantyne, Sierra Club Regional Representative in the Northeast field office, will update us on issues regarding clean-up plans. In 2002 Chris received a Special Achievement Award from the Sierra Club for his extraordinary work in the campaign to force GE to clean up PCB's in the Hudson River.

Sierra Club Socials

Anyone interested in finding out more about your local Sierra Club? Join us for our Sierra Club Socials! They're fun-filled as we share ideas over great food and spirits. The dates for the first two Socials of this year are: **Thursday, January 19th, at the Malt River Brew Pub at the Latham Circle Mall; and Thursday Feb. 16th at the Troy Brew Pub on River Street in Troy.**

Call John Nemjo at 279-4777 for more information. Thanks, and see you there!

Your Vote Won't Count!

by Roger Gray, Hudson-Mohawk Group Executive Committee Member

Or it *might* not, if your county Board of Elections picks a direct recording device (DRE) voting machine, of the kind produced by Diebold, Sequoia, and Liberty corporations for your next election.

Why would your county do this? Under the federal 'Help America Vote Act' (HAVA), states are required to determine the type of voting machines they will use in order to receive federal funding to upgrade antiquated voting machines in time for the 2006 elections. Unfortunately, in New York State, the Legislature punted on this issue and passed a law in June 2005 delegating to each county Board of Elections (BOE) the decision for the type of voting system they will use. So, instead of having a uniform voting system across the state, carefully analyzed and selected by the State, we will likely have a balkanized system in which the voting machines will vary from county to county.

Even worse, as a result of heavy lobbying by the newly invigorated voting machine industry, county BOEs appear to be favoring the electronic touch-screen systems which are easily hackable and which do not produce a verifiable, auditable paper trail. **Consider the following:**

* Leon County, Florida cancelled its contract with Diebold Electronic Voting Systems after testing showed that the machines could easily be hacked, without a trace, to change the result of an election. The county switched to a paper ballot/optical scan system, which allowed for auditable recounts (Miami-Herald 12/15/05)

* The US Government Accountability Office (GAO), in an October 21, 2005 report, identified multiple examples of hardware and security failures in recent elections using electronic voting machines (www.gao.gov/new.items/d05956.pdf)

* After repeated glitches at the polls, election officials in Miami-Dade County recommended scrapping the county's \$24.5 million electronic voting system in favor of paper ballots with optical scanners. (South Florida Sun-Sentinel, May 28, 2005)

* When touch-screen voting machines made by Diebold malfunctioned in a March 2004 primary election, the state of California sued Diebold for allegedly lying about the security of it's equipment and sought a refund of \$8 million. Solano County, California, cancelled a \$4.1 million contract with Diebold, returned 1,200 touch-screen machines, and replaced them with paper ballot/optical scan machines (Los Angeles Times, 9/24/05.)

* In January of 2005, the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter passed a resolution urging the use in New York State of paper ballots with precinct-based optical scan tallying;

* In March of 2005, the League of Women Voters of New York State passed a resolution supporting use of paper ballot/optical scan voting systems (check out www.lwvny.org for action items). (cont'd on page 3)

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* Executive Committee Members

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 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, 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 \$6/6 issues; subscriptions for members are free.



Outings

Saturday, January 14th - Santanoni Preserve. Our annual X-ski to this famous Preserve. We will review the history of this unique area and see how the work is progressing to preserve this Great Camp. Always a great trip for beginner or experienced skiers. Call John at 370-4932 for more information.

Sunday, January 29th - Partridge Run Wildlife Management Area - Snowshoe, hike or x-country ski on 4,594 acres of uplands in the Town of Berne, Albany County. Learn of the State acquisition of open lands beginning in the early 1900's to benefit wildlife and use by the public. An easy 4.5 mile loop with a stop for lunch. Bring water and lunch. Contact outing leader Joe Gardner for details, time and meeting place at 518-439-8719.

Saturday, February 4th - Woodlawn Preserve, Schenectady - A fun showshoe in this unique area, just added to the New York State Open Space Plan. We will learn why it is a priority area and enjoy this little known jewel of a preserve. Last year there was no snow, so we enjoyed a great winter hike. One way or another it is a great outing in the center of the Capital District. Call John at 518-370-4932.

Saturday, February 18th - Hop Field, John Boyd Thacher State Park -Enjoy your choice of snowshoe, skiing or hiking in beautiful wintery Thacher Park. You will learn how this area was saved from becoming a limestone quarry by the namesake of the March outing. Warm-up area available. Call Joe Gardner at 518-439-8719.

Also, consider attending the W. Haywood Burns Environmental Education Center's conference: **'Healthy Urban Environments - Katrina, A Case Study'**. Reception 2/17/2006 at the NYS Museum 6 - 830 pm; Conference at the NYS Museum on 2/18/2006 9am - 5pm. Visit www.w-haywoodburns.org for more information. Snowshoers are invited to the reception and to join the conference at noon on Saturday.

Saturday, March 18th - Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center, Thompsons Lake - Snowshoe, ski or hike this beautiful lakeside area at the educational center. Learn about the many programs offered at the Center for both young and old. Call Joe Gardner at 518-439-8719.

* * * * *

We Need Volunteers Like You

You can make a difference by volunteering your time and talents to make the programs and goals of the Sierra Club a reality in your community, the State, and nationally. We have many volunteer opportunities - newsletter editor; work on Hudson-Mohawk Group conservation projects (like saving critical wetlands, watersheds, and open space); lead and coordinate Group outings; help with fundraising and publicity; working on environmental education includes our programs usually held at the Colonie Library, tabling at events, or any number of other ways. It's fun and rewarding, a combination that's hard to beat. See contact info on this page and contact the person responsible for the area of your interest.

Your Vote Won't Count... (cont'd)

* In September 2005, the Public Employees Federation Union passed a resolution supporting the use of paper ballot/optical scanning voting systems;

* In November 2005, the Schoharie County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution requesting the NYS Board of Election approve and certify "a paper ballot/optical scan voting system" as one of the voting systems certified and available to counties.

If we can't be certain that our votes will be counted and that the results can be verified with auditable recounts, participation in our democratic process will be discouraged.

Decide For Yourself Which Voting System Is Best For Your County:

WHAT: Public Lecture on Electronic Voting Systems, sponsored by the Sierra Club Hudson-Mohawk Group

WHO: Presented by Bo Lipari, Executive Director, New Yorkers for Verified Voting (www.nyvv.org)

WHEN: Tuesday, January 24, 2006, 7PM

WHERE: Colonie Town Library, 629 Albany-Shaker Road, (1/2 mile east of Northway Exit 4) 458-9274 (see page 5)

Grafton Lakes State Park To Hold 21st Annual Winter Festival

Grafton Lakes State Park and the Friends of Grafton Lakes State Park are co-hosting the 21st Annual Winter Festival at the park on Saturday, January 14th, 2006. Exhibits, vendors, and programs will be operating from 10 am to 4 pm.

In addition to the park's regular ongoing indoor and outdoor exhibits, the festival will feature environmental and recreational workshops and outings, including snow sculpture and snowball-throwing contests for the kids, horse-drawn sleigh rides, and dog sled rides. An entry fee is required to participate in the fishing tournament, but the Winter Festival itself remains free of charge.

Also available - an ice fishing tournament utilizing all the ponds in the park, a free snowmobile safety course, ice skating at Long Pond, and snowshoe rentals. For more information, please call the park at 518-279-1155.

Limited Number of Sierra Club Calendars Available

It's not too late - we still have a limited number of beautiful Sierra Club Wall and Engagement calendars available. Wall calendars are just \$10.00, the spiral bound Engagement calendars are \$11.00. Both provide daily inspiration from the beautiful photographs of the best of nature's splendor.

Please include calendar type, number of calendars, and include \$2.00 postage for the first three calendars, \$1.00 each additional calendar. Mail check or certified money order to Janet Given-Chen, 809 Karenwald Lane, Schenectady, NY 12309. Supplies are limited at this time and will be filled on a first-come basis. Check should be made out to "Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group".

You can pick these calendars up at **The Moon and River Cafe, 115 S. Ferry St., Schenectady** and save the cost of postage. Great Vegetarian menu!



photo: Robert White

It's time for America to get smart about energy and be less dependent on dwindling oil reserves. We need to increase our use of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar power.

Add your voice to protect the planet. Join the Sierra Club today.

Join today and receive a **FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!**



My Name _____

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City _____

State _____ Zip _____

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email _____

Check enclosed, made payable to Sierra Club
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Membership Categories INDIVIDUAL JOINT

INTRODUCTORY \$25

REGULAR \$39 \$47

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 0809**
Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Executive Committee Candidate Statements 2006 - 2008

Susan Lawrence -

I strongly believe that the Hudson-Mohawk Group needs to focus on protecting our critical open spaces from sprawl while working for revitalization of urban areas. We need to emphasize local energy conservation and renewable energy issues. We need to continue our fights against toxic pollution in our air, water, and land, including clean-up of PCB's in the Hudson River. We need to nurture a variety of opportunities for our members to become involved in conservation projects and environmental education.

I joined the Group's Executive Committee in 2001 and have been Conservation Co-Chair, Vice-Chair and since 2004, Chairperson for the Group. I am a Group representative to the Atlantic Chapter's Executive Committee and Chapter Sprawl/Open Space Chair.

In the last several years, I have worked with local activists for smart planning and against sprawl. I initiated a 2005 Seminar on Planning/Zoning and SEQRA, and have worked to emphasize volunteer development.

Paul Caver -

My name is Paul Caver and I am writing in hopes of becoming a member of the Sierra Club Executive Committee. I have the experience of having been on the Executive Committee previously and would welcome the opportunity again to serve in whatever capacity I can. It is more than obvious to me that my skills do not match the requirements of doing what needs to be done to preserve and maintain the environment in the many local and national areas in which the Sierra Club is involved. However, I have been a member for over 15 years and have consistently sought to find ways to make the small contributions that are possible. The dangers to the environment presently can hardly be overestimated; group efforts are our only real hope for change. I hope that by being allowed to work with the Ex-Com my own small additions to the effort can be part of the larger whole that makes the changes our planet requires.

John VanDeloo -

I have been an active member of the Executive Committee for several years and would hope to continue to work for our Group and the conservation of our environment. As Conservation Chair I have and am running several campaigns and hope to see our Group continue to lead on the state and local level on many issues: wetlands, sprawl, open space, energy, global warming, the Adirondacks and others. The honor of being our Groups' delegate to the Sierra Summit in September helped me have an even better understanding how the Club is working to remain the leader in the conservation movement and be more effective. It was a learning experience that I hope to use to make our group grow and function better.

At the same time I will continue to work on outings, leading both hikes and conservation projects at least once per month. I will continue to work on fundraising, such as our annual Awards dinner. We are in a critical time in our history, when the environment is under an unprecedented assault, and I will continue to fight for clean air, clean water, environmental justice and lend my support to all of our local, state and national issues.

To Make Your Voice Heard on “Draft NYS Voting System Standards” before the comment due date of January 20 to the NYS Board of Elections and also to your county before it adopts a new voting system, go to www.nyvv.org, www.nylwv.org; or www.newyork.sierraclub.org/electionreform/.”

All over America, cities, counties and states are launching an exciting grassroots movement to help solve one of our country’s most pressing problems: global warming. Frustrated by stalling on the federal level, local leaders are moving forward with innovative energy solutions that cut our dependence on oil, benefit public health and save taxpayer dollars. These mayors, county commissioners and governors are leading the way toward a safer and more secure future.

The purpose of these webpages is to provide a resource for citizens and local officials who are ready to act on the need to reduce energy waste and heat-trapping global warming pollution by taking real action in their communities. Here you will find inspiring city success stories from a broad range of cities, from larger metropolitan centers such as Salt Lake City, St. Paul and Charlotte to smaller cities like Twin Falls, Idaho and Waverly, Iowa.

The strategies that these and other cool cities are pursuing fall under three categories: **cleaner vehicles, energy efficiency and renewable energy**. Every one of these local solutions is already saving taxpayer dollars and improving public health by reducing energy waste and pollution. By taking innovative actions, forward-looking cities are re-energizing our nation, proving that we can solve global warming one city at a time.

See www.sierraclub.org/globalwarming/coolcities/intro/asp

The ballots below are provided for you. Use one ballot for an individual membership and two ballots for a joint membership. Please mail your ballot so that it is received by January 30, 2006 to: **Sierra Club Hudson-Mohawk Group, Elections Committee, PO Box 8447, Albany, N.Y. 12208-0447**. Your ballot will be validated by your mailing label.

2006 H-M Group Ballot		2006 H-M Group Ballot	
Vote for Three		Vote for Three	
Susan Lawrence		Susan Lawrence	
John VanDeloo		John VanDeloo	
Paul Caver		Paul Caver	

Upcoming Calendar of Events

Executive Committee Meetings -

Monday, January 9, 2006

Monday, February 6, 2006

Monday, March 6, 2006

Conservation Committee -

Wednesday, January 18, 2006

Wednesday, February 15, 2006

Wednesday, March 15, 2006

Meetings are usually held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 21 Hackett Blvd., Albany, NY. Members are welcome and encouraged to attend. Please contact Susan Lawrence if you plan to attend in case of change of venue.

Programs - (see pg. 1 for details)

Tuesday, January 24, 2006

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

Socials - (see pg. 1 for details)

Thursday, January 19, 2006

Thursday, February 16, 2006

North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners visit www.NABCEP.org to find a qualified Photovoltaic Solar Installer for your system

Gary S. Bowitch, Attorney
Environmental Law
Brownfields Redevelopment
Oil Spill Litigation
434-0327

Be An Underwriter!

Contact Janet Given-Chen for rates.
518-346-5439
JGiven@nycap.rr.com



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SIERRA CLUB SOCIALS

Learn how to help with important environmental issues, work on key political campaigns, or just make new friends who share the same values for a healthy environment. See page 1 for time and place.

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