



Hudson/Mohawk Group Jan./Feb. 2008 Vol. 32 No. 1



HUDSON/MOHAWK GROUP JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2008 VOL. 32 NO. 1

“Flipping” Public Subsidy Programs to Curb Sprawl, Revitalize Urban Areas

Change Needed in Empire Zone and Other Economic Program Priorities By Susan Lawrence

New York State and Saratoga County are committed to subsidizing development of a huge microchip manufacturing plant in Luther Forest in Malta, Saratoga County to the tune of \$1 million a job in public subsidies, including Empire Zone and Industrial Development Agency (IDA) benefits and a \$650 million State grant. Upscale rental housing gets Industrial Development Agency benefits in North Greenbush, and elsewhere in the greater Capital District while our cities collectively have thousands of vacant decaying properties. More than a billion dollars in State tax credits is available for developers who have build or are building high-income apartment projects and other projects in cleaned up brownfields when the developers' projects do not match the redevelopment plans of the low-income and frequently minority communities where the brownfields are located. The State tax credits structure has supported these high-end developments and not full clean-ups

All of the above reflect the need to fundamentally restructure public subsidies to focus on revitalizing our urban areas with existing infrastructure and curbing sprawl into the forests, fields and wetlands in our suburban and rural areas. In a welcome planning initiative, Governor Spitzer just announced a revised State plan for redevelopment of Harri-man State Office campus in Albany with the planning aimed at sustainable redevelopment using existing State

office buildings and building high tech and other private facilities. These facilities will take advantage of existing infrastructure and the nearby nanotech research complex associated with SUNYA without the need for substantial public subsidy.

Governor Spitzer took a major step to promote Smart Growth in the State when he issued on December 10 his Executive Order No. 20, “Establishing the Governor’s Smart Growth Cabinet”. To quote one of the Whereas in the Executive Order, ‘WHEREAS, the cornerstone of a “smart” long-term economic development strategy is sustainable development that capitalizes on existing infrastructure in our urban centers and other developed areas such as “brownfields”, while protecting the open space and natural resources that are critical to preserving and enhancing our quality of life’.

The Governor uses the Executive Order to create a “Smart Growth Cabinet” composed of the major State agencies and chaired by key staff of the Governor’s Office to comprehensively review state law, regulations, policies, practices and capital programs that impact on economic development and land use. The Cabinet will advise and make recommendations on the most effective mechanisms to promote “smart growth” including “alignment of state grant making and capital programs to foster “smart growth” development patterns in appropriate regions of the State”. (See p. 3, Col. 2)

A Warm Remembrance of a Good Friend and Environmental Stalwart: John Van Deloo

A dear member of our Hudson Mohawk Group, John Van Deloo passed away on August 26, 2007. We have and will continue to miss his positive and endearing presence at our Executive Committee meetings and the many outings John lead. We’ve included a couple of the letters from friends of John that certainly express our sentiments and feelings.

From Jeff Edwards, Planner Schenectady County Department of Economic Development and Planning: One of the first times, if not the first time, I met John Van Deloo was when he took me into the Pine Bush to help scatter the ashes of a mutual friend of ours, Clarence Gregory back in 2003. Clarence was an institution with the Schenectady County Environmental Advisory Council diligently doing the work no one else would do (taking minutes) and heading up the project to get a computerized mapping system available to the public in the County Library among his accomplishments.

This lead to us to working together on organizing efforts to protect the Woodlawn Preserve from development efforts that were proposed to invade the preserve. As I was working with many others to present what became overwhelming testimony before the City of Schenectady City Council, it became clear that John was more knowledgeable about the Preserve than anyone else. He had been organizing clean up efforts and leading walks through the preserve for years. The efforts to stop the development effort succeeded and John took the lead in working to realize his dream of assuring that the preserve would be protected forever. He formed and took the leadership role in the group that came to be known as the Friends of the Woodlawn Preserve, (See p.3, col.2)

Hudson Mohawk Group

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Clean Air Chair: *Susan Lawrence
Clean Water: *Susan Lawrence and *Aaron Mair and *Joe Gardner
Energy: *Pete Sheehan
Hudson River: *Aaron Mair
Sprawl/Smart Growth: *Susan Lawrence and *Virginia Traver
*Executive Committee Members

The Hudson-Mohawk Executive Committee Members meet the first Wednesday of every Month. Members are encouraged to attend! Please call the Co-Chairs 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 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. This newsletter is also published on our Group website at: www.newyork.sierraclub.org/hudsonmohawk

Sierra Club Program Series Starts Up Again

Our program series are held at the William K. Sanford library in Colonie, 7:00 PM
Jan. 22, 2008: Tom Thompson of Atlantis SunSlates will discuss the photovoltaic industry and his product, SunSlates. They are an attractive integrated roofing product. For information: <http://www.atlantisenergy.org/> Then, Pete Skinner from Earth Environmental Group and Betsy Wyman from SunDog Solar will discuss the solar thermal industry and how their products can help save energy for heating water renewably. Read more at: www.sundogsolar.net

Feb. 26: The Vanishing Snows of Kilimanjaro: Roger and Monica Gray will present a slideshow of their trek to the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro, the roof of Africa, and discuss climate impact on the mountain's snow covered peak, made famous by Ernest Hemmingway's short story, The Snows of Kilimanjaro.

Nominating Statements for Hudson Mohawk Group Executive Committee—for the 2008 Calendar Year. (See ballot on back page.)

Theresa Cassiack: I have been a passionate environmentalist and conservationist for most my life. Growing up in the rural, southwestern part of the Catskills, I realized early on the importance that the land and the environment has on impacting humanity. While attending College at SUNY Albany, I discovered the New York Public Interest Research Group where I was introduced to an arena that fostered her passion for saving the earth. After a brief stint in Vermont, I returned to Albany to take on the role as Legislative Associate for the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter. I would be proud to serve on the Hudson Mohawk Group Executive Committee.

Paul Caver: I have enjoyed this last year serving as Co-Chair and being able to participate in the thoughtful discussions at the Executive Committee meetings. The number of local conservation issues we deal with is immense and we carefully choose our priorities. One of my major concerns is the recent resurgence in the media of nuclear power which I have written and spoken out against because it is not renewable and the environmental threat lingers for thousands of years. I do look forward to continuing this rewarding volunteer work in 2008.

Susan Lawrence: I have served as past Chair of the Hudson Mohawk Group and am currently the Conservation Chair for the Atlantic Chapter. These posts have provided me with a solid local and statewide perspective on our conservation issues and how we can effectively organize around them. The next year promises to be very active and I am looking forward to helping the Club face our challenges.

Aaron Mair: I am a 20 year veteran urban environmental activist as well as regional and national Environmental Justice organizer. I negotiated a federal RCRA settlement for the community of Arbor Hill and founding board member of Arbor Hill Environmental Justice Corp. I also served as Atlantic Chapter Chair in 2002 which provided valuable perspective of all the Club's conservation issues. It has been a pleasure serving on the Hudson Mohawk Group Executive Committee and I look forward to serving you for two more years.

Virginia Traver: I would like to remain a member of the Hudson Mohawk Executive Committee and continue to serve as Membership Chair/Volunteer Coordinator of the Group because I feel that I am just now beginning to get a perspective on what these jobs entail and their potential in the next couple of years. I want to continue to see the Volunteer list I've assembled expand and become more active. In regard to new members, we are more actively communicating with them to seek participation. This should make new members aware of our hope that they will become active and involved in Sierra Club issues. These projects are barely off the ground. I hope to have them up and running in coming months.

OUTINGS

(Key: H=Hiking, E=Education, C= Conservation, T=Trail Work, B= Boat)

Tuesday, January 8 - Huyck Preserve Snowshoe (C) (Sierra Club & ADK) Rensselaerville, NY, located just at the edge of the Capital District, is home to the Edmund Nyles Huyck Preserve. The Preserve comprises a beautiful waterfall and small lake. We will snowshoe up past the waterfall, around the lake and back down. The hike will be about 3.5 miles with 200 feet elevation gain—a good outing for beginning snowshoers or anyone interested in a pleasant walk on a winter day. Email leader for names of places that rent snowshoes. Meet 9:00 a.m. in the Slingerlands Price Chopper lot. Leader: Virginia Boyle Traver, 489-5758, virginiabt28@hotmail.com

Saturday, January 19 - Orienteering (Sierra Club & EMPO) (E) Thacher Park/Camp Pinnacle, Voorheesville, NY. Registration and Starts: 10am-noon. Contact: Phil Hawkes-Teeter, 518-872-1993, philht@nycap.rr.com

Sunday, January 27, Bearpen and Vly (Sierra Club & Catskil 3500 Club) (E) Distance: 8 mi. Ascent 1900', Elev. 3600', 3529'. Relaxed to moderately paced bushwhacks. Meeting Place/Time: Please contact leaders to register between Jan. 21-27; e-mail preferred. Leaders: David & Carol White; ccswhite@juno.com; 315-853-6942. (after Jan. 24, cell 315-853-1070)

Saturday, February 2 - Princetown Ski Trip (C2C) (Sierra Club & ADK) (H) The Geisingers will lead their annual ski trip through rolling woods and open vistas. They will start at 1:30 pm from their Ennis Road property. Join them for an invigorating trip in the hills 10 miles westerly of Schenectady and 1000 feet higher. Snowshoers welcome. Warm fire and beverages following trip. Call for postponement date if there is a lack of snow. David and Sandra Geisinger, 887-3030

Saturday, February 9 - Tongue Mountain Northern Traverse (B) (Sierra Club & ADK) We will spot cars and snowshoe the northern portion of the Tongue Mountain Range starting from the Clay Meadow trailhead and ending at the trail's northern terminus on Route 9N. Total distance will be approx. 7.5 miles. Leader: David Pisaneschi: 518-459-5969, dpisanes@nycap.rr.com, Time and Place: TBA Carpool fee: TBA (See back page)

(Cont'd from p.1 "Flipping") Much more is needed. Assemblyman Brodsky called - during the 2007 State legislative session for major legislative reforms in the State's Empire Zone and IDA programs to redirect public subsidies to where they are most needed to revitalize urban areas and curb sprawl. Assemblyman Hoyt advanced legislation to establish in law the State's smart growth priorities and examine and refocus its economic development and other public subsidies to support smart growth principles. Other states with strong emphasis on comprehensive smart growth planning and subsidies have enacted such legislation. Also needed is enactment of New York State legislation promoting smart growth planning at the local and regional level with incentives for smart planning among local governments.

As environmentalists we need to understand how critical the type and availability of public subsidies for economic development and infrastructure is to determining land use and development patterns. We need to strongly support smart growth and just plain smart planning initiatives at the State, regional, and local level. You can contact your State or local government officials or legislators, participate in planning and budgeting decision-making at the local level, testify at public hearing on planning and public subsidies, and for some of us run for public office or seek appointment on key committees such as the local planning, open space and IDA committees.

(John Van Deloo—cont'd from p. 1) inviting those working with him to his house for regular meetings where he and his wife Peggy were gracious hosts, always serving pizza and drinks. I had met Peggy earlier in the year, when she volunteered to serve a term as a member of the Schenectady County Environmental Advisory Council.

John led the efforts to bring attention to the preserve by organizing the first Bio-Blitz in the Capital Region, where scientists work with amateur environmentalists to inventory the flora and fauna of an area. The event took place in the Woodlawn Preserve on a chilly and windy weekend but John was undaunted and welcomed each of us amateur scientists as

we put in time during the effort, which went 24 straight hours, and he again greeted us and collected and compiled our data when we returned.

John had been appointed by the Schenectady County Legislature to serve a term on the Schenectady County Environmental Advisory Council in the fall of 2006 when he found out that he was sick. He courageously attended meetings until one evening right before a meeting he called and left a message that I did not receive until after the meeting where he said that he was not feeling well and would not be able to attend. He was unable to attend any meetings after that and his condition steadily deteriorated. He fought his illness with courage but finally succumbed.

He did live to see his dream of a protected Woodlawn Preserve. His leadership helped convince the Mayor and the City Council that development should not take place in the Woodlawn Preserve. Efforts continue to not only protect the preserve but to make it a place that would make John proud as a center of environmental research and study, as well as recreation destination for nature enthusiasts like John.

From Gary Hughes, Director of Public and Community Relations—MVP Health Care: *John was first and foremost my doctor. The best one I've ever had. I enjoyed the comment about him drawing pictures on the examining table tissue paper because he did that every time I visited him. Anybody who says their doctor didn't spend enough time talking with them during their visit, never had an appointment with John. It was only a few years ago when I was elected to the Schenectady County Legislature that I learned of John's deep love for the outdoors and the environment. He was a great guy and a great physician and I will miss him dearly.*

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

Lobbying Efforts: We can really use your help with phone calling, letter writing, research, visits to legislators and staff and more to advance our 2008 Legislative Priorities. To volunteer for these lobbying efforts, contact Susan Lawrence at 489-5721.

Outings - Cont'd from p. 3

Wednesday, February 13, Dippikill Snowshoe (C+) (Sierra Club & ADK) A new snowshoe for me; I have wanted to try this in the winter. Owned by SUNY Albany, and located just off Route 28 in "The Glen," Dippikill is a pretty area with views of the Hudson River and a mountain pond. We will plan on 5 miles with 500 feet elevation gain. No snow or poor snow cancels. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Exit 9 park & ride. Leader: Virginia Boyle Traver, 489-5758, virginiabt28@hotmail.com

Sierra Club Annual Fundraising Dinner - Friday, February 29, 2008 at New Visions, 334 Krumkill Road, Slingerlands, 12159

We're honored to have New York State DEC Director of Legislative Affairs Chris Ballantyne as our featured speaker. Chris was formerly the Northeast Regional Director of the Sierra Club and brings a most interesting perspective at his new job at the DEC. Please reserve your spot today by sending an email to Jim DuFresne at JDufre1928@aol.com Or you may call Pete at 489-5803 to do same. Cost per person is \$30 for adults and \$10 for children 12 and under. Refreshments begin at 5:30 PM followed by buffet dinner at 6:30 PM.

SIERRA CLUB HUDSON MOHAWK GROUP BALLOT See candidate statements on page 2. Vote for up to five (5) candidates. Joint memberships get two (2) votes. Please cut out and send in an envelope and include your full name and return address. Mail ballot to: Sierra Club, P.O. Box 8447, Albany, NY 12208. Ballots must be postmarked by January 31, 2008.

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Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group

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