



SIERRA CLUB
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Hudson/Mohawk Group



Spring/Summer 2002 Vol. 26 No. 5 "Aspens" by Ansel Adams in This is the American Earth

Upcoming Events

Sierra Club Social
Monday, March 24, 2003
7:30 Malt River Brewing Co

Interested in getting involved with our local Sierra Club Group and making new friends? If so, join us for some light hearted discussions about who we are and how we work. For information contact John Nemjo at 279-4777. Malt River Brewing Company is just off the Northway and Route 9 at the Latham Circle Mall.

Wind Energy In New York State - What You Need To Know
Wednesday, March 12, 2003
SUNY CESTM Building
7 P.M.

With Governor Pataki's announcement that 25% of New York's energy will come from renewable sources, alternative sources such as wind will get a big boost. Hear the pros and even a few cons about wind generator siting in New York State. Representatives from several wind energy companies will be on hand to discuss the status of generating wind power in New York and how you can sign up to receive energy from the wind in your home right now. For information call John Nemjo at 279-4777.

The Center for Environmental Science and Technology Management is located at the corner of Washington Ave and Fuller Rd. Take I-90 to exit 2, proceed to the major intersection. Entrance is on Fuller Road.

WARNING:

From Texas and New Jersey Activists About St. Lawrence Cement Plant in Greenport and Hudson -

By Susan Lawrence and Pete Sheehan

Environmental activists from Texas and New Jersey visited Albany and Hudson recently to warn about air pollution dangers from living near cement plants operated by St. Lawrence Cement (SLC) and its Swiss parent company, Holcim. They related their experiences to local citizens concerned about SLC's application before the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to build a \$320 million dollar mining operation and cement plant outside of Greenport and Hudson, Columbia County.

Bonnie Sanders, from the African-American community of South Camden, New Jersey explained how SLC made many promises about jobs before a new cement plant was built there, but what resulted was only a few jobs and a lot of pollution. The plant, with its heavy issuance of particulate matters and other smog producing pollutants, has contributed toward increased health problems, especially asthma among young children. Sierra Club activist Joyce Hearst was instrumental in arranging for the spirited and heartfelt presentation by Ms. Sanders who is part of the environmental justice (EJ) community in South Camden under siege by SLC. Her presence in the EJ community in Hudson is important due to SLC's tactics of showering gifts and the promise of jobs in that community to encourage it to not oppose the plant. In our campaign here, we are trying to educate the community about the real consequences and encourage them to speak up with their own voice!

Jim Schermbeck and Kathy Hubener spoke of the huge increase in toxic air pollutants when Holcim built a cement plant in Midlothian, Texas. Holcim misled the local community about their plans for the plant. They have shifted from burning gas to burning hazardous waste and are now burning tires. In 2000, the plant issued more than 34,000 pounds of Toulene, a toxic substance not normally associated with cement plants. Holcim is asking for air permit approvals with 50% more pollution that would threaten the ability of the Dallas-Fort Worth area to meet Federal clean air standards.

Many environmental and community groups have joined together to wage battle against the SLC project in Greenport and Hudson, a mammoth 1,800 acre mining and cement production facility. It would produce 20 million pounds of air pollutants per year, increasing ozone in an area already exceeding national standards and spewing forth tons of small particulate matter (PM2.5) resulting in increased asthma.

SLC and Holcim could consider ways to upgrade their existing plants in the United States and their proposed plant in Hudson/Greenport to use more modern technologies as used in their European plants. The group of environmental organizations and concerned citizens groups opposing this new plant argue that

Cont. on p. 3

Hudson-Mohawk Group

Chair	Pete Sheehan, 489-5803 psheeha5@nycap.rr.com
Vice-Chair	Susan Lawrence, 489-5721 shlawr2@aol.com
Treasurer/ Membership	Clarence Gregory, 393-7100 clarence.gregory@alum.mit.edu
Secretary	Maureen Ferraro-Davis, 235-0728 maureenfd@aol.com
Conservation Chair	Roger Gray, 434-8681 rtg50@aol.com
Environmental Justice	Aaron Mair, 465-8523 aaronmair@ajej.org
Newsletter	Janet Given 346-5439 jgiven@nycap.rr.com
Outings	Bill Koebbeman, 399-5027 WKEBB@juno.com
Political Chair	Jim Malatras, 459-6952 greek45@yahoo.com
Fundraising/ Programs/ Social Chair/ Volunteers	John Nemjo, 279-4777 Johnnemjo@aol.com

Issue Gurus

Hudson River	Aaron Mair, 465-8523 aaronmair@ajej.org
Cascade Lakes	Roger Gray, 434-8681 rtg50@aol.com
Solid Waste/ Recycling	Clarence Gregory, 393-7100 clarence.gregory@alum.mit.edu
Energy	Jim Malatras, 459-6952 greek45@yahoo.com
Pesticides/ Clean Water	John Van Deloo, 370-4932 JVDMD@aol.com
Clean Air	Susan Lawrence, 489-5721 shlawr2@aol.com
ANWR/ World Trade	Paul Caver, 686-7290 paulscaver@aol.com

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, Capitol Station, Box 7194, Albany, NY 12224. 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

March 13, Thursday: Snowshoe/ Animal Tracking outing

-A naturalist guided snowshoe walk at Grafton Lakes State Park. Locate tracks, signs of feeding and other clues that tell the stories of animals living in winter. (A donation of \$1.00 per participant is requested by the Park). If you want to rent snowshoes please make your own arrangements by calling Grafton Park at 279-1155. For outing details call Lorraine Plauth (765-4937) or Bill Koebbeman (399-5027).



March 16, Sunday: Leave No Trace At Schodack Island State Park

Learn about Leave No Trace (LNT). Regional Trainer Ted Beblowski will lead our exploration of the new Schodack Landing. The topics are good hiking ethics and motivating others to respect our natural environment. Ted is LNT State Advocate for New York and a LNT Master Educator. The outing is free and open to all. Great for outing leaders. Joint hike with AMC and the Mohawk Valley Hiking Club. Contact Sierra Club leaders Lorraine Plauth (765-4937) or Bill Koebbeman (399-5027) for details.

March 22, Saturday: Family Outing on Maple Sugaring -

Bring the family to see the maple sugaring process. An outing of interest to all ages followed by a short naturalist guided walk at Grafton Lakes State Park. Snowshoes are needed for the walk. (A few snowshoes are available to rent at Grafton Park. Call 279-1155 to reserve.) Contact Lorraine Plauth (765-4937) for outing details.

April 12, Saturday: Family Outing at Emma Treadwell Thacher State Park -

Learn about the fascinating life

cycle and habitat needs of amphibians! Salamanders and wood frogs may be seen during this time of their spring migration. We'll start with a presentation at the new Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center, followed by a walk led by a naturalist from the Center. Joint outing with AMC.

Contact Lorraine Plauth (765-4937) or Bill Koebbeman (399-5027) for details.

April 27, Sunday, 10AM: Rensselaer County

Waterfalls - We will travel by car and foot to visit very scenic waterfalls at three locations in Rensselaer, East Greenbush and Schodack where streams drop to the Hudson River floodplain. We will study the botany, geology, and history associated with the waterfalls at a time of year when they are most spectacular. These waterfalls are also located at important early mill sites and one is associated with a fascinating chapter in Mohican history. The hiking will total 4 miles and will involve some short ascents and descents. Joint outing with the Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy. The outing will be limited to 30 persons, by reservation only. Contact leader: Warren Broderick (518) 235-4041.

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES BEGIN IN MAY.

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

Notes From The Chair - by Pete Sheehan

As you can see from this issue, we have turned part of our attention on the proposed St. Lawrence Cement Plant in Hudson. Although on the fringe of our catchment area, this plant, as currently configured, is nothing but bad news for our human health and the environment. Let me provide our readers with a sense of the situation. The Texas Natural Resources Conservation Committee, not known as a bastion of environmental protection, fined the Midlothian, Texas plant operated by the same company - Holcim (Parent of St. Lawrence Cement) \$223,125.00 for 15 major violations, including exceedences for volatile organic compounds (VOC's) and sulfur dioxide, to name a few. This is how St. Lawrence operates. Please take a few moments of your time to read up on this plant and make that phone call to Commissioner Crotty and the Governor and tell them what you think. I would like to thank the Hudson Mohawk's lead volunteers on this case, Joyce Hearst and Michael Eisenstadt, for their diligent organizing and outreach in this campaign!

Tivoli Outing A+

More than a dozen Sierrians met on Saturday, February 8 for a wintertime exploration of the beautiful Tivoli preserve. We snowshoed and skied around this little known jewel in the center of the Capital Region. The Outdoor-a-Thon was complemented by sunshine and blue skies, a warm campfire, delicious chilis (both vegetarian and venison) and hot mulled cider. A special thanks to John VanDeloo for organizing the event, along with providing the cozy campfire, chilis and cider. We look forward to more outings before the winter is over!

St. Lawrence Cement, cont'd.

the plant's application should be revised now to provide for the technology 'Selective Non-Catalytic Reduction', used successfully in a German cement plant to greatly reduce nitrogen oxide, a key component of acid rain and smog.

Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) application is still under review by the DEC. A DEC administrative judge issued a ruling on December 7, 2002 that left a number of important issues open for adjudication by active parties in the case, including the issues of air dispersion modeling, short-term limits for nitrogen dioxide, PM2.5, noise, and visual and economic impacts. Friends of the Hudson and a coalition of environmental groups (including Scenic Hudson and the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter) are formal parties with the right to adjudicate the application using their own consultant's expertise.

There is a wealth of reading material about the very substantial negative environmental, visual, noise, economic and other aspects of the St. Lawrence Cement project. See the following web sites: friendsofHUDSON.com and scenicHUDSON.org/environment/stcp/campaign.htm.

Also, the 2002 book, **Proposed St. Lawrence Cement Plant in Greenport and Hudson** (publisher Citizens for a Healthy Environment) is a useful resource and can be found in local bookstores and libraries. In addition, see the article on the project in the Fall 2002 Sierra Atlantic.

If you would like to join with other Sierra Club members fighting this project, contact Joyce Hearst at 518-329-1133 or via e-mail at Gme1@earthlink.net.

Pedone Landfill by John VanDeloo

This illegal dump has been leaking lead and other hazardous waste for over a decade, and is located over a primary aquifer, the main water source for Schenectady County. Located in West Glenville on Rt.5, the Pedone Landfill is on part of the Great Flats Aquifer, one of two protected aquifers in New York State. Since 1985 the area has been used as a landfill, dump, and storage area. In 1988 Angelo Pedone was able to obtain a permit to operate the landfill, and removed 100,000 cubic yards of soil from 1.8 acres of this 7.8 acre site. While the permit was only for construction and demolition debris, considered non-hazardous, a DEC investigation found a mix of lead, pesticides, asbestos, PCB's and barium in the soil and water.

After one year the town obtained a court order that 'closed' the landfill, but illegal dumping has continued to the present, with little action by the state.

In 1993, during a DEC hearing, Pedone, who lives at 84 Ashdown Road, stated he had no assets and earned less than \$800 per week, and was unable to cap the landfill and monitor it. Finally, a fine of \$40,000 and an order to close cap and set up monitoring stations was decided upon. When Pedone failed to comply, a \$1.6 million default judgement against him was won by the attorney general. In 1994 the DEC classified the dump as Class 3 'low threat to the public and the environment, not requiring immediate action' - in spite of 5 gallons of lead containing waste leaking into the Mohawk River per minute! There has been no further testing over the last 9 years, despite further dumping of unknown substances. In December the state again cited him for using the site as an illegal solid waste storage site and for unlawful disposal of solid waste. The town has also ticketed him for violating the property's zoning.

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Protecting Our Nation's Waters

Pedone dump, cont'd.

Since the judgement he continues to work in the waste industry and has formed 3 or more corporations focused on waste disposal, registered under his name or including his Ashdown Road address. He continues to store containers of debris, violating local ordinances and state environmental laws, and has stopped paying taxes on his property.

When contacted, a spokesman for the DEC said "This case is fairly rare, an example of someone who has been able to escape responsibility for closing a hazardous landfill." We remember, though, that in the past the state has had to remove thousands of tons of contaminated soil from the former site of the Sousa Petroleum Storage facility in Schenectady, and from contaminated sites of numerous old gas stations, all at the expense of the taxpayers, rather than the people who profited from damaging our environment and endangering the public health.

What do we do? Contact state officials - the attorney general and the DEC - and demand they enforce the court orders now and begin criminal proceedings to enforce them if there is not an immediate response. Close all of Pedones corporations which have defied the law, and do not allow any further corporations to be formed that might be involved with this illegal activity. Contact the DEC and demand monitoring of the site as soon as possible.

Pedone dump, cont'd.

Support county and town officials to stop any further illegal use of this site. Ask the DEC to begin to study cumulative effects of this and other identified hazardous sites on the Great Flat Aquifer on our air, water, and soil. Demand that Angelo Pedone and anyone who fails to take responsibility for this kind of flagrant activity will be dealt with in a fashion that will be an example to anyone else that may follow in his soiled footprints.

Help Wanted:

Newsletter Party Volunteers and Leader - This job requires nothing more than 2 - 3 hours one day per month to label and sort our newsletter for mailing. We would like a leader and several volunteers (5 - 6) to take over this task so that our volunteers working on the conservation issues can devote more time to the issues. The meeting is usually the last week of the month. Simple organizational skills needed, lots of time to talk!

Programs Chair - We need someone to plan and conduct our monthly issues programs. You don't have to come up with a program each month, just organize it.

Fundraising Chair - We need someone to sell ads for our newsletter, organize calendar drives, and other fundraising activities. Work from home and attend one meeting per month.

Call John Nemjo at 279-4777
johnnemjo@aol.com

by John Van Deloo

In 1972 the Clean Water Act was passed. As enforcement began, Lake Erie came back to life, the Cuyahoga River outside of Cleveland stopped bursting into spontaneous fires, and a typhoid shot was no longer recommended before going into the waters of the Potomac. Success has been remarkable, considering the opposition to the Act and the cost of implementation, but maintaining clean water is a never ending task. The federal courts are being asked to cut back the reach of the Act, as in the January 2001 ruling by the Supreme Court concerning 'isolated' waters.

On January 15, 2003 an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking was issued by the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers that removes Clean Water Act protections from many non-navigable, intrastate, and so-called 'isolated' waters, which up until now have been protected as 'waters of the United States'. The effect would be to remove as much as 20% of the nation's waters and wetlands from protection by the Clean Water Act. Wetlands and small streams are rarely isolated, pollution dumped into headwaters normally end up in lakes and rivers downstream. There are numerous examples in our own area, such as depleted uranium in an old reservoir on Patroon Creek downstream from the National Lead site, PCB's spread the length of the Hudson and its estuary
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Widening Routes 9 & 20 in East Greenbush

by Susan Lawrence and Jeanne Casatelli

On February 11, local citizens and business people participated in planning workshops on the widening of Routes 9&20 in the Town of East Greenbush, Rensselaer County to recommend changes along the road side that would protect and enhance the local community. Residents from East Greenbush, the City of Rensselaer and Schodack as well as several other communities attended the workshops facilitated by consultants Fraser and Associates, and nationally known road expert Walter Kulash of Glatting Jackson. They all worked together to identify what amenities could make the businesses, residential areas, schools, other public facilities, and green space along the road more accessible to traffic and pedestrians.

The State Department of Transportation has already done much of the construction work to widen Routes 9&20 in East Greenbush from a four- or five- to a six-lane road, creating an expressway that encourages growth to leapfrog the established areas of Rensselaer and East Greenbush and sprawl out to rural space without infrastructure. Local community involvement is now essential to protect and improve the accessibility and attractiveness of this older suburb and adjacent Rensselaer.

At the February 11 workshops, participants sat around long tables with maps and recommended how improvements such as new lighting, signage, tree plantings, more traffic lights and pedestrian crosswalks could slow down traffic and make access to side roads, businesses, and public facilities much easier. Planning took into account the different types of properties along the Routes 9&20 corridor and two major side roads.

Routes 9 & 20 cont'd.

The consultants and graduate planning students from SUNY Albany guided the participants at the session in how to think about their community's characteristics and future development. The consultants had worked with local officials at earlier sessions.

The State Department of Transportation's new mission statement is to take into account the views of the community in major road projects. The East Greenbush experience demonstrates that local activists still need to get very involved very early in the process to make sure that happens.

For more information on this exciting effort for community involvement in life changing road widening projects, contact Community Action Network through Jean Casatelli at (518) 477-6618 or e-mail her at jcrness@aol.com

Waterways, cont'd.


from sites in the Hudson Falls and Fort Edward areas, PCB's and a myriad of other hazardous wastes flowing from the Dewey Loeffel site down a tributary into the Valatie Kill and on into Nassau Lake, to name just a few.

Do we want small streams and wetlands to be filled, dumping discharges into our waterways without permits? We need to educate our local news agencies, politicians, and government that there is no need to change the Clean Water Act rules that worked so well in restoring and maintaining the 'chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters', the stated goal of the Clean Water Act. We need to be sentinels whenever we can to prevent a few persons from profiting at the expense of all Americans, and to prevent the formation of a new crop of Superfund sites that damage our health and drain the resources of our people.

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Weekly Activities Beginning in May

* May through September: Sunday Morning Bike Rides in Voorheesville/Helderburg Area. Start about 7:15 am, usually finished by 9 am. Mostly flat and very scenic. A great way to start the day. Call leader Steve Redler (434-1540).

* Spring through Fall: The Saratoga Saunter - An easy weekday morning walk. We will visit a variety of natural areas in Saratoga County with the objectives of better understanding of our bioregion and make some new friends in the process. Call Bill Koebbeman(399-5027) for more information.

* Beginning in May: Weekly walks open to the public led by the staff of the Emma Treadwell Nature Center. Call the Center at 872-0800 for more details.

Help Wanted:

Environmental Education Chair - Attend events that allow for the Sierra Club to have a booth and dispense literature, and sign up new members. 1 - 2 events per month and one meeting is all you have to commit to.

Conservation Activists - Have an issue you would like to work on? Attend our monthly Conservation Committee Meetings and get involved. One meeting a month and some leg work in between to keep up on how Sierra can get involved and make a difference.

Political Activists - Work on the Sierra Club endorsement process. Interview candidates, work on campaigns, have a direct voice with our elected leaders. It's fun and addicting! You may even one day run for office yourself. I did!

Assistant Membership Chair - Help organize members database and take newsletters to the post office. Work from home, attend 1-2 meetings per month. John Nemjo 279-4777

Conservation Committee Update

The Hudson Mohawk Group Conservation Committee held its organizing meeting for 2003 on January 22, 2003 and identified the following issue areas as priorities for this year: (lead organizers names are in brackets)

Hudson River/PCBs (Aaron Mair): Continue organizing efforts to support the Sierra National's Hudson River Environmental Priority Education Campaign (EPEC).

Sprawl (Pete Sheehan, Susan Lawrence): This topic generated by far the most discussion and identification of issue areas. Future meetings will discuss specific areas of focus.

Article 10 Reauthorization (NYS Power Plant Siting Law) (Susan Lawrence): Work with Atlantic Chapter Legislative Director John Stouffer and with other Sierra Groups around the State to develop and advocate for improvements in the power plant siting law.

Dewey Loeffel Landfill (A state Superfund site larger than the Love Canal) (John VanDeloo): Work closely with the Rensselaer County group, UNCAGED, to advocate for a DOH health study in the area, and to support the group's resolutions before the Rensselaer County legislature.

Other issues (as time permits): Greenfield/Mt. Desolation Stripmine, Wetland Issues, etc.

The next Conservation Committee meeting will be held at 7pm on March 26, 2003. (The fourth Wednesday of each month). All members are welcome. If you would like to attend, please notify Roger Gray (rtg@aol.com), John VanDeloo (jvdmd@aol.com), or Susan Lawrence (shlawr2@aol.com).

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Send ad copy and payment to:

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3695 Rt. 2
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Wanted

Office Space

Our local group needs an office to conduct board meetings (no more than 15 people), store campaign and educational materials, and house a local phone, computer and other office machines and supplies. If you have some available space in the Albany area and are willing to donate to help our local group in its fight to protect our environment, then please call John Nemjo at 279-4777.

New! Sierra Club E-Newsletter

In the months when this newsletter is not published, we will attempt to send a smaller version electronically. To sign up for this, as well as monthly reminders of upcoming events, send your email address to Pete Sheehan at psheeha5@nycap.rr.com

Volunteers

We Need You!

Whether you have only a couple hours each month or have an interest in getting into the nitty gritty of some of our most pressing conservation issues, we need you.

Our success depends on active volunteers. Many of the jobs do not require any experience other than the willingness to spend a small amount of your free time to help us get our business in order. You'll find a congenial group of like-minded people who care deeply about protecting the environment in which we live. Read the job descriptions on page 4 to find your niche.

And don't forget our membership drive. (See page 4 for more details). With more members our voice becomes stronger and the environment comes out ahead.



Hudson-Mohawk Group Newsletter
Capitol Station, Box 7194
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