



**SIERRA
CLUB**
FOUNDED 1892

Hudson/Mohawk Group



March 2004 Vol. 28 No.2

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

Upcoming Events

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

MEETINGS - 7PM

Wednesday, March 17, 2004
Wednesday, April 21, 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 Chair John VanDeloo for more information (*Contact info pg. 2*).

Program Series

The History Of and Challenges To The Great Flats Aquifer

Tuesday, March 23, 7pm
William J. Sanford Library
Albany Shaker Rd., Colonie

Jason pelton, from Schenectady County Water Management, will give us an overview of the history of the Aquifer, how it was formed, and how it functions. Then the current challenges and problems will be reviewed and discussed.

SIERRA CLUB SOCIAL

Monday, March 8th, 7PM
Malt River Brew Pub
Latham Circle Mall

Join us for some good food, good cheer, and good conversation. Meet some of the Sierra Club activists, and find out how you want to be involved. We'll also be forming a Political Action Committee. (see pg 4) For more info, contact John Nemjo at 279-4777 or Johnnemjo@aol.com.

URGENT SIERRA CLUB BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION NOTICE

Editor's Note: In mid-March you will receive a ballot for the Sierra Club Board of Directors election. The current Board of Directors has asked Chapters and Groups to publish the following notice.

This year there is an unprecedented level of outside involvement and attention to the Sierra Club's Board of Directors election. Outside, non-environmental organizations have endorsed candidates in the Club's Board elections. Several outside organizations have endorsed Club Board candidates and are urging their supporters to join the Club as a means to influence club policy in line with their non-environmental agendas. Those outside groups that may be attempting to intervene in the Club's Board of Directors' elections include:

- * Center for American Unity - VirginiaDare/Vdare.com (a collective that includes 'white nationalist writers'.)
- * Coloradans for American Immigration Reform
- * Federation for American Immigration Reform
- * Fur Commission USA
- * Limitstogrowth.com
- * HempflagUSA.org - promotes marijuana legalization
- * National Alliance - 'ideology from a white racial perspective'
- * National Immigration Alert (NumbersUSA)
- * People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)
- * Project USA
- * Social Contract Press
- * Southern Poverty Law Center
- * White Politics Inc./Overthrow.com

The Sierra Club has become an even more influential and effective voice in American society over the last decade. Now it appears that non-environmental groups are trying to take advantage of the Club's open and democratic nature to influence the composition of our Board of Directors and our policies.

Faced with this threat, the Board of Directors urges every member of the club to ensure that the Sierra Club remains faithful to its environmental mission and principles. Please cast your vote in this years election as a means of demonstrating to outside groups that they cannot influence our organization. Vote for candidates whose experience matches what you believe the club needs. Vote for candidates endorsed by Club leaders whom you trust.

In addition to the information about candidates found in the ballot, some chapter and group newsletters will carry additional information. More can also be found on the Sierra Club candidate forum which you can reach from the Club's website. Democracy really does work - but only if we all vote. Help maintain the Sierra Club's tradition as America's preeminent democratic and grassroots advocate for the environment. *(additional info on page 3)*

Hudson-Mohawk Group

Chair	Susan Lawrence 489-5721 SHLwr2@aol.com
Vice-Chair	John VanDeloo 370-4932 JVDMD@aol.com
Treasurer/ Membership	Clarence Gregory, 393-7100 clarence.gregory@alum.mit.edu
Secretary 235-0728	Maureen Ferraro-Davis, maureenfd@aol.com
Conservation Chair	John VanDeloo
Environmental Justice	Aaron Mair, 465-8523 aaronmair@ahej.org
Newsletter	Janet Given Chen 346-5439 jgiven@nycap.rr.com
Outings	Bill Koebbeman, 399-5027 WKEBB@juno.com
Political Chair	Steve Redler 434-1540 steveredler@yahoo.com
Fundraising/ Programs/ Social Chair/ Volunteers	John Nemjo, 279-4777 Johnnemjo@aol.com
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Sprawl/Smart Growth - Susan Lawrence, Pete Sheehan
Energy - Susan Lawrence
Pesticides/Clean Water - John VanDeloo
Clean Air - Susan Lawrence
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The Hudson-Mohawk Group Executive Committee meets the first Monday evening of every month (except July). 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. Contact John Nemjo for advertising rates.

Outings

March 10, 2004 (Wednesday) - Buch Mountain We'll take the shortest, steepest and most scenic way up Buck Mountain, starting from Camp Chinchagook. There are lovely views of Lake George most of the way up, and a challenging little scramble near the top. Bring snowshoes and crampons, lunch, and wear appropriate winter clothing (not cotton). Approximately 3 miles round trip. Meet at 830am at the Northway exit 9 Park & Ride. Call to sign up and for further info. Leader: Lorraine Plauth 765-4937 (joint outing with ADK)

March 24, 2004 (Wednesday) - Sleeping Beauty This is a favorite 'stroll' up a small mountain on the east side of Lake George, using old carriage roads on easy grades. Fantastic views from the top looking down on Lake George. Bring snowshoes, lunch, and wear appropriate winter clothing (not cotton). About 6 1/2 miles round trip. Meet at 830am Northway Exit 9 Park & Ride. Call to sign up and for further info. Leader: Lorraine Plauth 765-4937 (joint outing with ADK).

April 4, 2004 (Sunday) 9AM - Dyken Pond An 'ecological community' (sometimes called a habitat) is a collection of interacting plants and animals that share a common environment. The Dyken Pond area, situated high on the Rensselaer Plateau east of Troy, is a land of varied forests, lakes, streams, and wetlands. Some 'northern forest' communities remind visitors of the Adirondacks, despite being less than an hours drive from Albany. During a leisurely 3-4 mile hike on well-maintained trails, we will pass through a number of ecological communities and learn how to tell one from another. Computer mapping in a GIS will be explained. Joint outing of H-M Group Sierra Club and the H-M chapter of AMC. Call leader Warren Broderick for details at 518-235-4041.



OUR ANNUAL WINTER COOKOUT WAS A GREAT TIME FOR ALL!

A dozen people and Gerard the Standard Poodle enjoyed a sunny Sunday at Moreau State Park. After setting up a fire and cozy camp, a fun 5 mile snowshoe around the lake brought us back to steaming plates of vegetarian chili, venison stew, and portabella mushroom burgers. Everyone had a good time, and all look forward to our summer hike and



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

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEAD AN OUTING?

Our group is looking for new outing leaders. If you've thought you might like to lead a day hike for the group, this is a great time to do it. We will have a special program to train new leaders in 2004. The outings program is important for new member recruitment, conservation education, just plain fun and good exercise, and you can be a part of it. For details or questions about our outings program call Lorraine Plauth (765-4937) or Bill Koebbeman (399-5027)

Hudson Mohawk Group Executive Committee

Support:

The Executive Committee believes the Board of Director election situation poses a grave threat to the integrity of the national Sierra Club organization. At its Executive Committee meeting on February 5, 2004, the Executive Committee unanimously passed the following resolution:

“The Hudson Mohawk Group supports the current Sierra Club position on immigration expressed in the ballot initiative passed by the national Sierra Club membership in 1998, and supports diversity in the Sierra Club.”

Sierra Club Ballot Statement, passed in April of 1998:

“Let’s focus on underlying causes, not symptoms”

The Sierra Club membership affirms the decision of the Board of Directors to take NO position on U.S. immigration levels and policies. The Sierra Club can more effectively address the root causes of global population problems through and existing comprehensive approach:

* The Sierra Club will build upon its effective efforts to champion the right of all families to maternal and reproductive health care, and the empowerment and equity of women;

* The Sierra Club will continue to address the root causes of migration by encouraging sustainability, economic security, health and nutrition, human rights and environmentally responsible consumption.”

Please hold your Sierra Club ballot until you receive the April newsletter.

We will canvas each BOD candidate for their position on the Sierra Club immigration policy, and we will provide this information for you in the April newsletter.

Notes From the Chair

by Susan Lawrence

I am writing as the new Chair of the Executive Committee of the Hudson-Mohawk Group. I had been serving as Vice-Chair and Co-Conservation Chair and am active at the Atlantic Chapter level, particularly as the Sprawl Conservation Subcommittee Chair.

First, on behalf of the members of the Hudson-Mohawk Group, I want to thank two people for four years of strong and inspiring leadership to our Group. Pete Sheehan served as Chair until this year, and Roger Gray served as Conservation Chair. Without the thousands of hours each year that our dedicated volunteers like Roger and Pete provide, we would not be able to take on key conservation fights and provide the environmental education and other activities that our Group continually does.

I look forward to serving as the new Chair. High priorities for our Group in 2004 will be working to fight sprawl and revitalize urban areas, protecting our environment from pollution and conserving critical natural resources as well as developing environmental education initiatives and recruiting more volunteers to help us in all these endeavors.

If you have questions, comments or suggestions for the Chair you can contact me directly, and I would encourage you also to contact one of the key volunteers listed on the masthead (page 2) to either volunteer or bring an issue to their attention.

Conservation Committee Report

At the January meeting the committee decided, because of the large area the Hudson-Mohawk Group includes, that there is a need for six subcommittees. The subcommittees will represent our four Capital District counties, and the areas north and south of these counties. This way we can focus on (and not lose sight of) local issues while still working on issues that affect the whole area and the state. **We welcome anyone interested in becoming a member of a local subcommittee to contact John VanDeloo at 518-370-4932 or email at JVDMD@aol.com.**

Currently, some of the local issues identified - in the South, the St. Lawrence Cement Plant is given prime importance. In the North, the use of motorized vehicles is felt to be of immediate concern along with tire burning as a means of producing energy. In Albany, revitalization of brownfields, tire burning, the health concerns at the Colonie site of National Lead Industries, the Pine Bush Project, and wetland issues were among the topics discussed. The plan for Schenectady is to meet with the new Mayor to work on developing a comprehensive plan to revitalize the city using the principles of Smart Growth. Among the main issues discussed in Saratoga the chip fab campus in Luther Forest Tech Park takes a high priority, along with the fight to preserve wetlands. The immediate concern in Rensselaer is whether a wind turbine project on the Taconic Crest is in line with or opposed to state and national policy, and the ongoing Besicorp project. State issues, such as wetland legislation and protection, Empire Zone legislation, renewable energy, and many others were discussed and plans of action formulated.

Any member is invited to our meetings to listen, give insight, and express opinions and ideas to help us work on these and other future issues. If you can't make a meeting, call or email your concerns. We appreciate member support.

Wetlands Appeals Board Hears SC Appeal of DEC Wetlands Determination

The Hudson-Mohawk Group of the Sierra Club has taken exception to a freshwater wetlands disturbance permit issued by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in Saratoga Springs. A Notice of Appeal and Appellant Brief have been filed with the Freshwater Appeals Board, a quasi-judicial body empowered to review DEC freshwater wetlands decisions. The permit approved clearing and grading in the buffer area of a 25 acre wetland near Exit 15 for the Excelsior Park development. The Appellants, the Sierra Club and Charles Morrison, a resident of Saratoga Springs, contend that there are material errors that subject the permit to abuse by the developer and that DEC has been arbitrary in its determination that the disturbances to the wetland are immaterial. DEC rejects these contentions and is defending its decisions before the Board. Oral argument will be held before the Board on Friday, February 13th in Ballston Spa.

State law recognizes the value of wetlands as essential for maintaining water quality, providing critical wildlife habitat, preventing flooding and providing aesthetic enjoyment. The law also recognizes the importance of public participation through public notice, public hearing and public comment. The Hudson-Mohawk Group of the Sierra Club is concerned that certain meetings between DEC and developers are occurring outside of NYS regulations governing these activities. One issue of the case is whether decisions and agreements are made at these pre-application meetings that prejudice DEC's consideration of later public comment. The Appellants believe the facts of this case bear on the fundamental right of citizens to a fair and equitable hearing of their comments and concerns regarding freshwater wetland issues.

For additional information contact William Koebbeman at 399-5027 (contact info on page 2)



Interested in Getting Involved?

We'd love to have you hang out with us. We have many positions that need dedicated volunteers. We are looking for a few good people to help us work on conservation issues, fundraising, programs, environmental education, and many other areas to help us get our message out. Contact John Nemjo at 279-4777 or email at Johnnemjo@aol.com for more information.

Political Action Committee Forming for 2004 Elections

The Hudson-Mohawk Group is reviving the Political Action Committee and all members are welcome to contribute their input and energy. The committee will work on providing support to candidates who are supportive of environmental issues in our communities, statewide and nationally. This year State Assembly and State Senate offices are up for election as well as of course the Presidentail race. We will be injecting environmental issues into the candidates' races and hopefully will provide the public with valuable input into their environmental records. And of course OUR NUMBER ONE GOAL IS TO START THE NEXT YEAR WITH A NEW PRESIDENT! We will also work to support good environmental legislation and oppose legislation and governmental decisions that will ruin our communities. **We will be having our first planned meeting in conjunction with our Sierra Club Social on Monday March 8 at 7PM at the Malt River Brew Pub in Latham Circle Mall.** Contact Steve Redler (*info on pg.2*)

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Luther Forest Tech Park Can Be Defeated - Let's Look At The Record

by Tom Blandy

The days when *everybody* believed that development, any development, is 'progress' are gone. A great many people in Malta and Stillwater don't want the Luther Forest Tech Park. They know it will increase traffic, make for strip malls and other roadside ugliness and increase taxes, not lower them. Malta activists and we Sierra Club member-activists can say this with authority because we have been door to door in the community and hear a thumbs down from most of the people we talk to. Don't want it, wish it would go away.

The same folks unfortunately believe it will happen anyway. There is too much money behind it, and the politicians are all for it, and what can you do? Veterans of environmental struggles know that THIS AIN'T SO. The battlefields of the last 50 years are littered with the corpses of sure-fire projects that couldn't be stopped, but were. The common denominator in all cases was *determined organized opposition by large numbers of citizens*. Here is a partial list of defeated projects in New York State:

- *Washington Square through-highway, NYC - defeated and all autos banned.
 - *Storm King Mountain Pumped Water Storage, Catskills - defeated.
 - *Westway, NYC - gigantic filling of Manhattan shoreline - defeated.
 - *Center Square, Washington Park, Albany - giant freeway exchange with extensions north and south - defeated
 - *Loudonville Rd, Colonie widening from City Line past Siena College - defeated
 - *InterPower coal fired generation plant, Waterford. Opposition was told they had a 1% chance of defeating this - defeated 1994.
 - *North Greenbush computer chip plant - defeated 2000.
 - *Hudson River PCB cleanup - defeat for GE despite multi-million dollar PR.
- I have more examples too numerous for this space. *Don't give up the fight!*

Say NO! to Snowmobile Superhighways in the Adirondacks!

New York desperately needs a comprehensive, coherent snowmobile plan to address snowmobile use and abuse in the Adirondack Park. Unfortunately, the plan released December 22, 2003 by the Department of Environmental Conservation falls vastly short of that goal.

* Tell the DEC you want more quiet and solitude in the Adirondacks, not more snowmobiles.

*Tell the DEC the Comprehensive Snowmobile Plan must go back to the drawing board:

NO snowmobile superhighways in the Forest Preserve!

NO expansion of the 848 mile snowmobile trail limit in the Forest Preserve!

NO deferring trail locations to future UMPS!

NO ignoring the polluting effects of snowmobiles!

Send a letter to:

Erin Crotty, Commissioner

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

625 Broadway

Albany, New York 12233-4254

The DEC is accepting comments on the plan until March 31, 2004. To view DEC's Draft Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park, check the DEC website, or email lfadk@gw.dec.state.ny.us for a copy.

For further info contact Roger Gray (contact info page 2)

Watch Our Website For The Latest Information on Events, Meetings, Etc.

Besides our newsletter, you can check our Group Website www.newyork.sierraclub.org/hudsonmohawk for information and updates on events, outings, and environmental issues, and how you can participate. We will include some key community meeting notices. Anyone wishing to post an item on our Website needs to forward it to Susan Lawrence or John VanDeloo (contact info on page 2).

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Remember These Dates - Social on March 8 with Political Action Committee Meeting, Conservation Committee March 17, Program March 23, Conservation Committee April 21, Program (to be announced) April 27. More details inside.



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