



SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

Hudson/Mohawk Group



March/April 2006 Vol 30 No 2

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

Programs

Programs are held at the Colonie Town Library, 629 Albany-Shaker Road (1/4 mile east of Northway Exit 4) 518-458-9274. Programs start at 7PM, doors open 630PM.

Tuesday, March 28, 2006

“People, Landscapes and Conservation in Northwest Yunnan Province, China” Ted Elliman, an ecologist, will present his pictures and talk about threats to biodiversity and conservation efforts in this biodiverse area of China, rich with snow leopards, red pandas, and 200 species of rhododendron. Ted has led natural history trips to Yunnan and has also done ecological surveys in China.

Tuesday, April 25, 2006

“Kilowatt Hours: A Plan to Re-Energize America”

We'll watch an award winning film by Jeff Barrie. From the coal mines of West Virginia to the solar and panel fields of Florida, he highlights solutions to America's energy related problems. Find out how Jeff and his wife Heather cut their energy bills in half and use a portion of their savings to buy green power. Best of all, 'Kilowatt Hour' will teach you how to dramatically cut your own energy bill. After the film we will have a group discussion on what we can do right now and in the future to save energy locally. Included in the discussion is the Sierra Club Cool City program and what you can do to participate.

NEW!

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE - see page 3

Solar Power: Rubber Meets The Road

by Pete Sheehan

The United States is in 'overtime', or the 10th inning, or whatever sports analogy or other cliché you'd like to use to describe the urgency of our need to switch to renewable energy. In this article, the various definitions/uses of solar power and relative costs of its implementation are discussed. Solar power can be used to lighten the electricity load of our residences and businesses, and increasingly can be used as a source to heat water, living spaces and pools. It produces no greenhouse gasses, or other toxic releases (i.e. NOx, etc.). If ever there was a time in this country's history when the stars are aligned to implement this technology, now is the time.

Solar for Electricity: Referred to as photovoltaics or 'PV', this technology uses doped silicon (in standard crystalline solar cells) to move electrons through a conductor to create electricity. The top efficiency of converting the sun's energy to electricity for such cells can reach as high as 20%. Basic 'grid-tied' PV systems consist of combined solar cells fabricated into large panels (3 ft. x 4 ft. approximately), an inverter which transforms DC electricity produced by the solar panels into AC electricity used in most houses and businesses and, in some cases a battery backup system for use when the electricity grid is out. In a typical grid connected system without battery backup, when the electricity grid is out, the PV system is out also. In contrast, off-grid systems are not interfaced to the electricity grid at all. Note that PV uses the sun's rays, not its heat. High heat (above 77 degrees F) degrades the output of the PV system.

The typical cost for a grid-tied PV system can vary according to the size, geographic location and other factors. On average however, the typical customer can expect to pay between \$7 to \$8 per watt on average. Therefore the gross cost of a moderately sized 2.5 kilowatt (kW) system would total between \$17,500 and \$20,000. With state (NYSERDA) rebates, currently at \$4 - \$4.50 per watt and the federal rebates capped at \$2,000 per system, an average PV system in New York would cost approximately \$7,400. That is a dramatic decrease from a decade ago. With rising electricity costs (for residential National Grid customers, the price of delivered electricity has increased by over 40% from last year), solar PV is going to make more and more sense. This will further reduce the payback periods. For commercial systems, the math works out better because the federal tax credit is 30% of the system cost, with NO CAP.

Solar for Heating Water and Spaces: Referred to as solar thermal, this technology uses collectors and tubes to heat water and transfer that water or a solution such as various glycol mixes to heat water or living spaces. Just heating water alone can cost the average residence anywhere from 15 - 30%. There are a number of different technologies (close loop, open loop) but the principal is the same.

(cont'd on pg 4)

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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.



Saturday, March 18th - Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center, Thompsons Lake - Enjoy snowshoeing or hiking in beautiful wintery Thacher Park. Learn about the many programs offered at the Center for both young and old. Warm-up area available. Meet at 9:00 AM. Call Joe Gardner at 518-439-8719. **H,E.**

Saturday, April 1- Highway Cleanup, Route 9, Latham Join us for our first clean-up of our new Adopt-A-Highway site. We have a two mile stretch of Route 9 from the bridge over the Mohawk south, and will work from 9AM til noon. For details call Virginia Boyle Traver at 489-5758. **C,T**

Saturday, April 15 - Woodlawn Preserve - Explore this newest addition to the Open Space Plan. We are cleaning up in preparation for the Bio-Blitz June 9 - 10th. We will review why it was added to the OSP and the future plans for the Preserve. Call John at 370-4932, or meet us at the end of Gifford Rd at 9AM. Rain date April 30th. **H,E,T**

Saturday, April 22 - Earth Day - The Long Path, Albany and Schenectady Counties - Celebrate Earth Day maintaining a section in our area of The Long Path, which extends from the George Washington Bridge to the Mohawk and beyond. Join mentor Fred Schroeder and others for an outing that will benefit all who hike this beautiful trail. Learn about Vince Schaefer of Schenectady and how The Long Path came to be. Call Joe Gardner at 439-8719 for the 9AM meeting location. **H,E,T**

Saturday, April 29 - Great Flats Nature Preserve - Our annual walk about, clean up and discussion of this unique area. We'll review the history and the present threats of development. After, with enough time, we'll head over to the Plotterkill Preserve to see how the waterfalls are running and look for spring wildflowers. Call John at 370-4932, or meet at trailhead on Campbell Road, Rotterdam at 9AM. Rain date April 30th. **H,T,C,E**

Saturday, May 6th - Cascade Lakes Project, Adirondacks - Help with the Hudson-Mohawk Group's semi-annual cleanup project along the Cascade Lakes. Take a short hike in the afternoon. Contact Ralph and Doreen at 346-2818 **H,T**

Saturday, May 13 - Woodlawn Preserve - Final work day before the Bio-Blitz! Cleanup, check trails, mark the major trails and whatever else we need to do to get set for the fun. Call John, 370-4932, or meet us at 9AM at the end of Gifford Rd. Rain date May 14th. **T,C,H**

Friday Noon to Saturday Noon, June 9 & 10 - Bio-Blitz in the Woodlawn Preserve, Schenectady - Come and help the biologists, botanists, entomologists and other scientists as they attempt to identify and inventory as many species from as many taxonomic groups as possible within a 24 hour period. This scientific race against time is co-sponsored by the Hudson-Mohawk Group and is as much fun as it is educational. It's a great opportunity for school groups to participate in a scientific study. To volunteer, or for more information, call John at 370-4932. **E,C,H,T**

Saturday, June 10 - Henry Gerber Reist Wildlife Sanctuary, Niskayuna - A walk in this national treasure, with Sanctuary Chair Carl George as our guide. The Reist is 112 acres of mostly gentle terrain, with some ancient sand dunes that need climbing. 1PM, The Center for the Forest Preserve, 897 St. Davids Lane. Call Joe Gardner at 439-8719 **H,E**

Key: H: Hiking E: Education C: Conservation T: Trail work

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

Q: What's the first sign of spring?

46er Outdoor Leadership Workshop

Friday to Sunday, May 5th to 7th, 2006 (sign up by April 20th)

An excellent opportunity for Outings Leaders and others to qualify for extended overnight away from cars camping. Applications must be in by April 20, 2006. This is a wonderful chance to get experience for wilderness camping. \$20.00 fee but \$10.00 will be refunded on completion of workshop. For information and application forms, write ADK 46ers, c/o Don McMullen, PO Box 126, Lake Placid, NY 12946.

Atlantic Chapter Albany Lobby Day

Join other Sierra Club members for a special lobby day for key legislation to protect and cleanup New York's water, stop global warming, preserve natural areas and more. Contact John Stouffer in the Chapter Legislative Office - (518) 426-9144 or john.stouffer@sierraclub.org for more information.

State Wetlands Protection Act

It is absolutely critical for the NYS Senate to pass legislation to protect more than 250,000 acres of wetlands. The Assembly has passed the legislation. Contact your State Senator to pass A.2048/, S.2081, the Clean Water Protection/ Flood Protection Act. We are seeking localities to pass a resolution supporting this legislation. Go to www.riverkeeper.org for a copy of the model resolution and to sign a petition urging passage of the Act. The Sierra Club has been spearheading a coalition of environmental groups working for passage of this Act to protect isolated wetlands under 12.4 acres and wetlands nominally protected under Federal law but not effectively protected because they are not mapped by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. To help with this effort, contact Susan Lawrence or John VanDeloo (see contact info page 2)

Sierra Club Political Committee Up and Running:

Seeking New Members and Volunteers

Interested in how Politics works? Want to help the Sierra Club get the people we want in office elected? Want to make new friends and help your local community at the same time? Then the Sierra Club Political Committee is for you. We are growing our political outreach with a strong political committee and are looking at endorsing candidates in some very key races both locally and nationally in 2006. Join us as we go through the process of interviewing and endorsing those who will vote to protect our natural environment. The Sierra Club political committee will meet regularly on the second Wednesday of every month (March 8th and April 12th) at the Troy Brew Pub at 7pm. If you would like to get involved just stop by or give John Nemjo (279-4777) a call for more information.

Spring, Summer, Fall - Mountainman Outdoor, Old Forge and Inlet Enjoy the Oswegatchie and Fulton Chain waterways of the western Adirondacks. Watercraft Mentor John Nemjo invites Outings Leaders to qualify for regular and ICO outings in a particularly beautiful part of the Forest Preserve. Call John Nemjo at 279-4777.

A: Joe Gardner in his hiking shorts!

Drinking Water in Schodack -

From the Aquifer To Your Home

Wednesday, March 15, 7PM

Emmanuel Reformed Church, 1150

Maple Hill Road, Castleton

A Forum with a hydrogeologist from the U.S. Geological Survey on the aquifer under Schodack, Kinderhook and Valatie, and water issues in general. Sponsored by the Schodack Planning & Development Association, and the Schodack Area Land Trust. Information: Call Christine at 732-1213 or e-mail Schodack-Future@yahoo.com

Local Farming At Risk

Tuesday, March 14, 7:30PM

Shenendehowa United Methodist Church, 971 Route 146, Clifton Park.

Sierra Club Hudson-Mohawk Group is co-sponsor of this ECOS: Environmental Clearinghouse forum on preserving local farms and farmland. Information: call 370-4125 or e-mail ecos@global2000.net

Cool Cities Campaign

Our January/February 2006 issue described the Sierra Club's Cool Cities Campaign for states, counties, and localities to initiate efforts aimed at reducing energy consumption, using renewable energy and reducing auto emissions - all aimed at reducing global warming. To help us work locally with communities, contact Pete Sheehan, John VanDeloo or Susan Lawrence (contact info pg 2). Go to www.sierraclub.org/globalwarming/coolcities/intro.asp for more information.

Calling All E-Activists!

For more information about pressing environmental issues facing New York State and ways you can take action, join the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter's Action Alert e-mail list. To subscribe, send an e-mail to listserv@lists.sierraclub.org with your message "Subscribe ATL-ACTION-ALERTS@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG your first and last name.

Solar Power: (cont'd from page 1)

The efficiency of solar thermal systems is much greater than that of PV systems, and can even produce significant heating capabilities on warm, cloudy days. Typically, the system heats water in a solar storage tank before it reaches the regular water tank.

The cost of an average residential solar thermal system is usually between \$5,000 to \$7,000. At present, NYSERDA does not provide rebates for solar thermal systems. However, the federal rebates referred to above can be applied to solar thermal systems. As with residential systems, the rebate cap is set at \$2,000 but for commercial systems the rebate is 30% with no cap. It's an enticing arrangement for those wanting to use clean, non-polluting solar energy to heat their water and living spaces.

Hitches in the System: One of the main impediments to larger scale adoption of PV in the U.S. are the utility and other regulations. For each utility or service region, there is typically a cap on how much renewable energy can be fed into the electric grid. Typical utility regulations state that the total rated generating capacity for solar electric generating equipment owned or operated by customers (considered as 'generators') in the electricity grid's service area is equivalent to one tenth percent of the corporation's electric demand for the year. **That number is pathetically small.** On top of that, a number of utilities inflict expensive standby and other charges which add significant cost to the consumer.

Resources for Change: It is clear then, that the major battle for increased renewable energy adoption is in the New York State legislature and the Public Service Commission. For more information about state rebates in New York and other parts of the country, please go to the Database of State Incentives for Renewable Energy at www.dsireusa.org For information about hiring a nationally certified PV solar installer, go to the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners at www.nabcep.org

Upcoming Program: Tuesday, May 23rd at the Colonie Town Library - Discussion, slide show and hands-on demonstration of solar PV and hot water system technologies by professionals from Renewable Energy, LLC. Learn more about state rebates and tax credits, sales tax exemptions, federal tax credits and how they can be used for your solar PV or solar hot water system. We'll have another reminder about this program in our upcoming May/June issue.

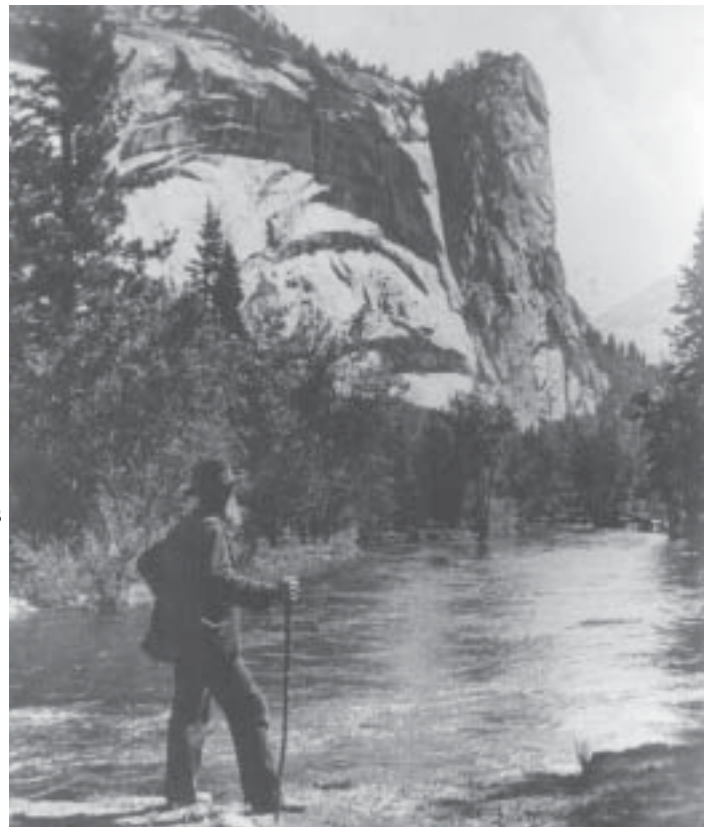
April 21 - John Muir's Birthday

In 1892, John Muir wrote to the editor of Century Magazine "Let us do something to make the mountains glad". So they founded the Sierra Club, the first major organization in the world dedicated to using and preserving wild nature. It is from this act that the modern ecology movement was born.

Throughout his life, Muir was concerned with the protection of nature, both for the spiritual advancement of humans and, as he said so often, for nature itself. This dual vision still informs the ecology movement and inspires millions to reform their thought and minds, to orient themselves as part of nature. Though the arguments in favor of ecological thinking are often couched in scientific terms, the basic impetus remains as Muir stated it "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe".

John Muir 1838 - 1914

Reprinted from The Ecology Hall of Fame - Dedicated to the heroes of the American Environmental Movement
www.ecotopia.org



Keeping Open Space Open

by Bill Koebbeman

In Saratoga County, land has become so scarce and valuable that even protected natural areas are being threatened with development. Two recent projects illustrate the extreme pressure on open space in many areas of New York State. These two projects need our immediate attention, but they also show the need to consider the broader implications of projects that menace protected lands.

First, a development project adjacent to Saratoga Spa State Park in Saratoga Springs. This 18 acre development borders the 308 acres of park land where the Sierra Club opposed a proposed golf course back in 1998. Now Victor Gush, developer, is proposing that the State Park allow him to build a road through a small corner of that park land to access his property. In exchange for the road, Gush would construct a parking lot and additional trails. However, the justification for this swap is weak, as there is an existing system of trails built by volunteers on the 308 acres with a parking lot. We need the city of Saratoga Springs to oppose this use of park land for the benefit of a private developer.

The second threat to protected open space is the Round Lake bypass road for the Luther Forest Technology Campus in Malta, New York. Saratoga County has designed a road from Northway Exit 11 through open space and wetlands in the Round Lake area. 65 acres of land, 20 parcels, will be taken by eminent domain if the owners are not willing to sell. One of the owners is the Saratoga Land Trust, now known as P.L.A.N. This land was to be protected from development forever but the county now plans to take it through eminent domain. We should oppose both of these projects, first because their benefit to the public is questionable, and second because they would set very bad precedents should they go forward. These uses of park land and eminent domain should be reserved for the most serious public needs. We must require the most careful scrutiny and highest level of justification for these projects. They will not pass that test.

Help Wanted: Newsletter Editor

The Hudson-Mohawk Group is seeking an individual to assume the position of Newsletter Editor for their bi-monthly newsletter publication. The job description: "To publish a newsletter that reflects the Club's conservation priorities at the local, state and national level, and informs local members about outings and other events in their area."

Prerequisites - Some experience with desk-top publishing programs, ability to work with a deadline, and the desire to work with a diverse group of environmentally conscious people.

The Sierra Club offers compliance guidelines, on-line tutorials, and training programs. The H/M Group executive committee and general membership offers experience, support, and the comradery to help you get the job done.

If you have the interest and would like to learn more, contact Susan Lawrence, Chairperson at 489-5721 SHLawr2@aol.com or Janet Given-Chen at 346-5439 JGiven@nycap.rr.com

everyday  is earth day

Earth Day '06

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| LIMITED INCOME | <input type="checkbox"/> \$24 <input type="checkbox"/> \$32 |

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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet.

Upcoming Calendar of Events

Executive Committee Meetings -

Monday, March 6, 2006

Monday, April 3, 2006

Monday, May 1, 2006

Conservation Committee -

Wednesday, April 19, 2006

Wednesday, May 17, 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 -

Tuesday, March 14 (pg. 3)

Wednesday, March 15 (pg. 3)

Tuesday, March 28 (pg. 1)

Tuesday, April 25 (pg. 1)

Tuesday, May 23 (pg. 4)

Political Action Committee - (see pg. 3 for details)

Wednesday, March 8, 2006

Wednesday, April 12, 2006

Garage Sale to benefit the SC Hudson/Mohawk Group

Saturday, April 22, 2006

Contact Pete Sheehan

32 Buckingham Drive, Albany

for this great event

(H) 489-5803 (W) 426-2624

We Need Volunteers Like You To Make Our Group Effective

You can make a difference by volunteering your talents and time to make the programs and goals of the Sierra Club a reality in your community, the State, and nationally. We have many volunteer opportunities in the area of energy conservation, sprawl, pollution, environmental education, outing leaders, publicity, fundraising, and more. See contact info on pg. 2 and contact the person responsible for the area of your interest.

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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Political Action Committee

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 3 for time and place.

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