



## Hudson/Mohawk Group / May/June 2008 Vol. 32 No.



HUDSON/MOHAWK GROUP MAY/JUNE 2008 VOL. 32 NO. 3

### **Bigger Better Bottle Bill—It's Time Has Come!!**

By the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)

**The Bigger Better Bottle Bill:** 2007 marked the 25th anniversary of New York's Returnable Container Act, better known as the Bottle Bill. Passed in 1982, the bottle bill, which requires a 5-cent refundable deposit on beer and soda containers sold in New York, has been New York's most successful recycling and litter prevention program.

Over the past 25 years more than 90 billion bottles and cans have been returned and recycled through the bottle bill. More than six million tons of plastic, glass and metal have been kept out of our landfills and incinerators. There is less litter and broken glass in our streets, parks, playgrounds and beaches, making them safer, cleaner, and more attractive.

Our colleagues at NYPIRG, are now spearheading a state-wide campaign, with Sierra Club assistance to update and improve New York's bottle bill. More than 400 groups, businesses, and local governments support the "Bigger Better Bottle Bill," which would:

1) **Make our communities cleaner and increase recycling**

by updating the bottle bill to include deposits on non-carbonated beverages such as bottled water, iced teas, and sports drinks, which weren't included in the original law because they barely existed back in 1982. Today, nearly 3 billion non-carbonated beverage bottles and cans end up in the trash or polluting our state's rivers, beaches, and neighborhoods **each year** because they don't have a deposit.

2) **Generate new funding for local environmental needs** by requiring beverage distributors to transfer any unclaimed deposits to the State Environmental Protection Fund. Currently, beverage companies are keeping an estimated \$140 million a year in unclaimed deposits from bottles and cans that are not returned. New York is out of step with many other states, which require beverage companies to return unclaimed bottle deposits to benefit the public.

Legally, the bill would amend New York's Environmental Conservation Law § 27-1003(1) and the State Finance Law to expand and update the definition of "beverage" in the State Returnable Container Act the State Returnable (*see p. 2—BBBB*)

### **Cool Counties and Cool Cities: Dramatic Efforts Underway**

Schenectady County and the City of Albany are taking steps to reduce their respective municipal carbon footprints in a variety of ways. The Sierra Club is supporting these efforts which are in lockstep with our national Cool Cities program. For more information regarding the program, please navigate to: [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)

**SCHENECTADY COUNTY: Purchasing of Energy Star products:** Energy Star is a voluntary labeling program for manufacture designed to help consumers identify energy-efficient products to reduce energy costs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Schenectady County will give preference to Energy Star products when making purchases for county facilities where applicable. By using these products, the County will be able to significantly lower energy costs.

**Adoption of LEED Certification Standards for County Buildings:** The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ encourages and accelerates global adoption of sustainable green building and development practices through the creation and implementation of universally understood and accepted tools and performance criteria. Schenectady County will require that any new county facilities will be designed in accordance LEED standards.

**Transportation Audit of County Fleet:** Schenectady County will partner with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to perform a transportation fleet audit for Schenectady County. The audit will evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the county fleet with a goal of improving the energy and environmental performance of the existing county fleet looking at ways to reduce carbon emissions and petroleum usage.

**Promote Residential Home Energy Audits:** Schenectady County will partner with NYSERDA, through existing outreach programs, to present a public relations campaign to educate Schenectady County residents about ways they can improve energy efficiency within their homes and about financial assistance that is available through NYSERDA to defray the cost of making improvements. (*see p. 2 - Cool Cities*)

## Hudson Mohawk Group

**Co-Chairs:**\*Pete Sheehan, 489-5803,

[Psheehan74@netscape.net](mailto:Psheehan74@netscape.net) -\*Paul

Caver:753-4205,

[PaulCaver@usadatanet.net](mailto:PaulCaver@usadatanet.net)

**Conservation Chair:**\*Aaron Mair, [aaronmair@yahoo.com](mailto:aaronmair@yahoo.com)

**Fundraising :**Jim Dufresne: 233-7957, [Jdufre1928@aol.com](mailto:Jdufre1928@aol.com), John Nemjo, 279-0771, [Johnnemjo@aol.com](mailto:Johnnemjo@aol.com)

**Membership/Volunteers:** \*Virginia Traver 489-5758 [Virginiabt28@hotmail.com](mailto:Virginiabt28@hotmail.com)

**Newsletter Editor:** VACANT, send email to: [psheehan74@netscape.net](mailto:psheehan74@netscape.net)

**Outings Chair:** \*Joe Gardner, 439-8719, [jgardnir@nycap.rr.com](mailto:jgardnir@nycap.rr.com)

**Political Chair:** Steve Redler 434-1540 5721 [steveredler@yahoo.com](mailto:steveredler@yahoo.com)

**Environmentall Justice:** \*Aaron Mair, [aaronmair@yahoo.com](mailto:aaronmair@yahoo.com)

**Programs:** Pete Sheehan

**Secretary :** \*Paul Caver:753-4205

[paulcaver@gmail.com](mailto:paulcaver@gmail.com)

**Social Chair:** John Nemjo, 279-0771, [Johnnemjo@aol.com](mailto:Johnnemjo@aol.com)

**Tabling:** \*Virginia Boyle-Traver

**Treasurer:** \*Jim Dufresne

**Webmaster:** Tom Reynolds, [hm-webmaster@newyork.sierraclub.org](mailto:hm-webmaster@newyork.sierraclub.org)

**Saratoga County Conservation:** Bill Koebbeman, [wkebb@juno.com](mailto:wkebb@juno.com)

### Issue Gurus

**Cascade Lakes/Adirondacks** -\*Roger Gray and John Nemjo

**Clean Air Chair:** \*Susan Lawrence

**Clean Water:** \*Susan Lawrence and \*Aaron Mair and \*Joe Gardner

**Energy:** \*Pete Sheehan, Virginia Traver

**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](http://www.newyork.sierraclub.org/hudsonmohawk)

## Sierra Club Program Series Continues—Please Support Them

Our program series are held at the William K. Sanford library in Colonie, 7:00 PM. The last program for the year is shown below. We'll take the summer off and come back in September. Have any ideas on a program? please send an email to:

[psheehan74@netscape.net](mailto:psheehan74@netscape.net)

**Tuesday, May 27, 2008:** The Great Flats Aquifer is a major conservation issue for the Sierra Club because it is within our group boundaries and it is one of only 13 such aquifers in New York State. We are trying to protect it from further development. For more information, contact Aaron Mair at [aaronmair@yahoo.com](mailto:aaronmair@yahoo.com) Now, for our program, we're proud to have Jason Pelton, who is the Schenectady County Groundwater Planner for the County's Planning Department. He is an expert on the Aquifer which supplies drinking water to the City of Schenectady. His presentation is very informative so please join us at our last program for the summer.

*(BBB– cont'd from p. 1)* Container Act (the bottle bill) to include non-carbonated drinks other than milk and liquor, and to direct the unclaimed deposit money derived from that program to the Environmental Protection Fund.

The environmental community was very encouraged by the very supportive statements made by Governor Paterson at Tuesday's (April 15), Earth Day Lobby Day. While he stated that it would have been great to get the BBBB passed as part of the budget, he committed to working it out during this legislative session, now without the added pressure of passing a budget. This will be a tough task given the Senate's annual opposition to the bill, so he will need all the help he can get. The bill has passed in the Assembly.

*(Cool Cities - Cont'd from p.1)* **Recycling:** Among the proposals will be a directive for the County Manager to establish an improved recycling policy throughout the County's facilities. Recycling is one of the biggest individual contributions that can be made to the environment. It preserves natural resources, saves energy, conserves landfill space, lessens water pollution as well as reduces usage, and lowers the production of the emissions of gasses that cause global warming.

**CITY OF ALBANY:** The City has begun in earnest in determining its carbon footprint so that it too, has a baseline from which to measure future reductions. Executive Committee members Virginia Traver and Pete Sheehan recently met with Doug Melnick, Director of Planning for the City of Albany. Mr. Melnick explained how the City is working with an organization, "ICLEI, Local Governments for Sustainability" which has produced a nationally recognized software program to assist governments in determining their baseline fuel usage. ICLEI has an agreement with the Sierra Club national office that permits Sierra Club members to assist their local municipalities in locating previous (usually about two-year old) fuel bills and entering them into the software program. This two year old "line in the sand" will be used to gauge progress as the program moves forward. For more information, go to [www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org)

This inventory of fuel usage includes city-owned buildings and vehicles as well as a portion of the sewage treatment plants which the City shares with Albany County. Through solid outreach, the City has reached agreements with the University at Albany to utilize graduate interns who have/will enter information into the ICLEI program and obtain baseline information. That information is to be shared with the Sierra Club and we will make it public.

A very useful and interesting aspect of this is the involvement, particularly for proponents of mass transportation is involvement of the Capital District Planning Commission. They have offered to release data regarding the number of vehicles entering the City of Albany each day. With this information, a baseline of (*see "Albany" p. 3*)

## OUTINGS

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

**Saturday, May 3, Taconic Crest** - Madden to Mattison Hollow Road (B) (Sierra Club & ADK) We'll spot cars and hike this southern section of the trail with a total distance of 10.6 miles which will include the Mattison Hollow Access Trail. Our route will take us over Rounds Mtn. with its bare summit and spectacular view. Leader: David Pisaneschi, 459-5969, [dpisanes@nycap.rr.com](mailto:dpisanes@nycap.rr.com) H,E

**Friday, May 9: Sierra Club Annual Fundraising Dinner** at New Visions, 334 Krumkill Road, Slingerlands, 12159 We're honored to have the Chief Pathologist for New York State DEC Ward Stone as our keynote speaker at our annual fund-raising dinner. Please reserve your spot today by sending an email to Jim DuFresne at [JDufrel928@aol.com](mailto:JDufrel928@aol.com) (and pay at the door.) Or you may fill in the reservation form below and mail it to: Sierra Club HM Group, P.O. Box 8447, Albany, NY 12208. Refreshments begin at 5:30 PM followed by buffet dinner at 6:30 PM. Seating is limited! Please join us for a fun and informative evening!

**Reservation Note: Please use form on Hudson-Mohawk Group March/April Newsletter. Ticket prices are \$30 for adults and \$10 for children under 12.**

**Thursday, May 29, Mt. Williams (B) (Sierra Club & ADK)** Mt. Williams in the Mt. Greylock State Reservation in Massachusetts offers a lovely view across the Berkshires. With the main road through the Reservation still under reconstruction, we will begin the hike at the Notch Road parking area, hiking the Bernard Farm Trail. 6 miles with 1600 feet elevation gain. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Defreestville 4 & 43 Park and Ride. Leader: Virginia Boyle Traver, 489-5758, H, E [virginia28@hotmail.com](mailto:virginia28@hotmail.com).

**Saturday, May 31, Bearpen & Vly:** Distance: 8 mi. Ascent: 1900', Elev. 3524'. Relaxed to moderately paced bushwacks. Bad weather cancels. Meeting Place/Time: Please contact leaders to register (email preferred). Leaders: David & Carol White #'s 859, 860; [ccswhite@juno.com](mailto:ccswhite@juno.com); 315-853-6942. H,E

**Saturday-Saturday, August 9 - 16 Anaconda Wilderness Ramble, Montana (Sierra Club National Outing Trip Number 08147A)** Leaders: Michael Jensen and Jonas Wickham. The Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness offers extraordinary backpacking opportunities in Montana's Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest. The Wilderness spans more than 40 miles and 160,000 acres along the Continental Divide in southwestern Montana and offers big rewards. Fortunately for us it is far less visited than the better-known wilderness areas of Montana, even with its spectacular mountain grandeur. Michael Jensen 518-274-3578 [jensem@rpi.edu](mailto:jensem@rpi.edu) For a complete brochure visit: <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/national/brochure/08147A.asp> H, E

**New Staff at Sierra Club Office:** We'd like to welcome new staff Norreida Reyes (Conservation Director) and Roger Downs (Legislative Director) to our office at Hamilton Street (Albany.) They can be reached at 426-9144. Welcome to Norreida and Roger!

(Albany - from p. 2) commuter gas usage can be obtained. Although these vehicular miles are not the responsibility of the City, having a this information is an excellent start in determining the carbon footprint of all the commuters into the City each day. We believe that having these facts at our disposal can lead to furthering discussions about the potential for a commuter train up between Albany and points north (i.e., Clifton Park, Saratoga, etc.) Hopefully, this data will spur greater usage of car pools, other mass transit such as buses, and alternate forms of transportation such as bicycling. But, it all begins with data!

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### GOVERNOR PATERSON - OFF TO A GREAT

**START:** Governor David Paterson, who's been on the job for less than 100 days, provided some insight into what policies he might be pursuing for the remaining two months of the legislative session. Paterson spoke at Earth Day Lobby Day to environmental advocates, who were holding a rally in advance of Earth Day, and who were pleased by what he had to say. *"In the Paterson Administration, every day is Earth Day,"* said Paterson, to applause.

Paterson told them he's already opposed a planned liquefied natural gas plant in Long Island Sound, and has signed an executive order to reconvene a key alternative energy planning group (known as Article X for siting of power plants). He says he'll ban Styrofoam cups from all state run cafeterias, and will work to expand New York's bottle bill to include deposits on water and juice bottles.

Environmentalists were excited by Patterson's promises, and hoped that he would follow through on the lofty commitments made on Earth Day. The Sierra Club looks forward to

**Schenectady County: Monthly Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day: Friday, May 9** Schenectady County residents can pre-register for the Friday, May 9 Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day by calling 1-800-494-2273. Unwanted paints, solvents, lawn and garden chemicals, automobile fluids (except motor oil), household cleaners and other hazardous materials from around the house are accepted. Availability is limited and appointments are set on a first call first serve basis. Pre-registration is required to participate. The program takes place at the Schenectady County Farm at 24 Hetcheltown Road between 8AM and Noon. Collections occur monthly through November. A County Farm Permit is also required. For further information visit the County's Website at: <http://www.schenectadycounty.com> or email [jeff.edwards@schenectadycounty.com](mailto:jeff.edwards@schenectadycounty.com).

**EPF Fund Victory!** Thanks to the hard work and outreach of our friend and colleague Dave Pisaneschi and those of you who called your representatives to push for full funding of the Environmental Protection Fund. It was included in the recently adopted state budget at \$265 million! It funds many critical programs including land acquisition and conservation.

**GroSolar Presentation at our March Program Series.** Jeff Wolfe and Eliot Goodwin provided us with valuable information regarding the use of solar power as a source for electricity and for heating water. This eco-friendly technology avoids greenhouse gases and is a long term source of clean energy from the sun.

Look for future postings from groSolar in the future. In the meantime, contact them at 1-800-467-6527 or on the web at: [www.grosolar.com](http://www.grosolar.com)

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**Please join us for a fun and informative evening!**

**SIERRA CLUB HUDSON MOHAWK GROUP DINNER RESERVATION FORM:**

Mail this form to: Sierra Club, P.O. Box 8447, Albany, NY 12208. Ticket prices are \$30 for adults and \$10 for children under 12.

Please reserve a seat for myself and those people listed below (if applicable.)

\_\_\_\_\_

I've enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for the reservation(s) listed above.



**Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group**

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**Boulder, Colorado 80322-2968**

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