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Hudson/Mohawk Group



Nov 2003 Vol. 27 No. 9

"Aspens" by Ansel Adams in This is the American Earth

Upcoming Events

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

MEETINGS

Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2003 7PM

Wednesday Dec 17, 2003 7PM

*St. Paul's Episcopal Church
21 Hackett Blvd., Albany*

All Members are welcome to attend the meetings. The Committee works on conservation issues and projects. Please contact Roger Gray, John VanDeloo, or Susan Lawrence if you plan to attend. *(Contact info pg. 2)*

Return of the Sierra Club Program Series

Location: Town of Colonie Library

Date: Tuesday, Nov. 11, doors open 6:30, program starts at 7pm.

We're starting off our year on a high note - literally. Versatile Dave Geisinger will start off by presenting his slide show on his visits to the **Pacific Coast Trail** - including the John Muir portion of that trail. See panoramic slides of the meadow and mountain vistas such as the Whitney area. Dave has many slides to show you!

Then he will present his struggle to help **control suburban sprawl** involving the Route 7 water expansion project which will affect three municipalities - Duanesburg, Schenectady, and Niskayuna. He will discuss his educational efforts with local and county officials in explaining the negative impacts that the extension of water pipes would bring.

Computer Mapping to Save Natural Resources

(See program description pg. 3)

Sprawl Always Costs the Taxpayer

By John VanDeloo

The Luther Forest Technology Campus (LFTC) is a perfect example of the sprawling development described in a just released Brookings Institution study of sprawl in upstate New York. Covering 1982 - 1997, the study states there has been a 30 percent increase in development (commercial, residential and industrial) even as the population grew by a mere 2.6 percent. The study states that higher city property tax rates, a lack of centralized land use policy and national demographic trends all lead to a lopsided settlement pattern in upstate New York, with cities losing people while many other areas gained. Saratoga County's population has increased from 122,000 to 201,000 since 1970. And the Saratoga Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) has refused to estimate in any meaningful detail the amount and impact of growth that will be induced by this massive sprawling development on 1,350 acres in Luther Forest.

Brookings Institution reported that building development occurred on 425,000 acres of wetlands, farms, forests, and wildlife habitat between 1982 and 1997. Our culture has always been one to consider growth and development as a positive activity since it broadens the tax base, but this view ignores the cost of developing and maintaining infrastructure and the cost of other government services it will require. Saratoga County's leaders like to point to their low taxes and low unemployment rate as a reason why people want to live there. However, promotion of sprawl increases traffic, replaces farms and forest with strip malls, factories and tract housing, and threatens to destroy what has made the county naturally attractive. While promising that local taxpayer money will not be used, this development is paid for by all of us as taxpayers.

It will cost \$72,000,000 of local taxpayer money to fund the county leader's plan for a huge water system, from the Hudson River in Moreau to Malta, and tens of millions of dollars to build a new Northway exit to serve the proposed LFTC in Malta and Stillwater. Other new roadways proposed include a by-pass around Round Lake in Saratoga County. Sprawl costs us all, in dollars, loss of open space, loss of farmland and in potential pollution. The SEDC, a county agency, has reported a budget of 2.7 million dollars to ensure this proposal is not rejected, as happened in North Greenbush after the local citizens revolted against this type of development. 100 foot tall transmission structures, truck load after truck load of toxic chemicals coming in, storage of these chemicals underground (leaks in similar chip fab plants in California have led to Superfund sites, to be cleaned up at taxpayers expense), transport of toxic waste to be incinerated in Cohoes or some other local area, cratopn of air pollution - the list grows and grows as to why this will diminish the quality of life and end up making the county a much less desirable place to live, all the while using vast amounts of taxpayer money to destroy the rural character of Saratoga County.

On October 16th the Malta Town Board declared the Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement complete, which is a necessary step before the town can decide whether to approve the plan for up to four computer chip fabrication plants in Luther forest.

(cont'd on pg. 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 235-0728	Maureen Ferraro-Davis, maureenfd@aol.com
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Environmental Justice	Aaron Mair, 465-8523 aaronmair@ajej.org
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Newsletter Distribution	Tom Blandy 274-2098 TBlandy@nycap.rr.com

Issue Gurus

Hudson River - Aaron Mair, Pete Sheehan

Cascade Lakes/Adirondacks - Roger Gray

Sprawl/Smart Growth - Susan Lawrence, Pete Sheehan

Energy - Susan Lawrence

Pesticides/Clean Water - John

VanDeloo 370-4932 JVDMD@aol.com

Clean Air - Susan Lawrence

Webmaster - Tom Reynolds
reynt0@cs.albany.edu

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, Box 8447, Albany, NY 12208-0447. 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

December 6 2003 - Hemlock Mountain

Depending on snow depth, either a hike or snowshoe of 5.5 miles around Hemlock Mountain in the Split Rock Mountain Tract, including a side trip to Barn Rock Bay on Lake Champlain. Moderate difficulty. Call John at 370-4932 for details.

January 17, 2004 - Santanoni Preserve

Our annual cross country ski trip, always a great trip, with about 10 miles of gentle skiing and a year of great memories. Call John at 370-4932.

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

VOLUNTEER CORNER

We really need your help as volunteers to make our Group an effective force in the community for pollution prevention and conservation of natural resources, particularly against the onslaught of sprawl. Take advantage of the many opportunities to make new friends and to enjoy and protect our environment. To become involved, contact the following people (*contact info on pg 2 of this newsletter*).

Conservation activities - Susan Lawrence, Roger Gray or John VanDeloo.

Outings - Bill Koebbeman
Programs - John Nemjo
Fundraising - John Nemjo
Newsletter Mailings - Tom Blandy



Santanoni Hike Enjoyed By All -

The Hike at Santanoni Preserve on September 13th was a great way to spend a beautiful early fall day. The rains held off as nine humans and two canines hiked along



the old carriage road, past the Giant's Chair, creamery and farm buildings towards the only Great Camp that New York State owns, built of 13,000 logs from local trees. Signs of Autumn color could already be seen. Also interesting were the quantities and different types of brightly colored mushrooms, thanks to the unusually wet summer. The intrepid group of Sierrans then opted for an additional 4.5 mile hike around Newcomb Lake, which was a bit more challenging than initially expected as the heavy winter had washed out some key traverse points. All survived in good humor, including Howdy, an 8 month old Labradoodle, and Bailey, a very energetic Springer Spaniel. The winter hike/ski/snowshoe event along this wide and nicely graded carriage road should be beautiful, so do plan on joining us. You won't be sorry!



(cont'd from pg. 1)

This allows the Town Board to refer the application to the Town Planning Board and the Saratoga County Planning Board for their comment and begins a final 30 day public comment period on the final document. The Board has to make a decision to rezone the land from undeveloped residential to a custom-written development district after this period and adopt a findings statement, which will state the campus' environmental impacts and what would be done to address them. The Planning Board intends to make a recommendation to the Town Board by November 18th on whether to create a new planned development district. In addition to scheduled discussions of the project at regular Planning Board meetings on October 28 and November 18, there are tentatively scheduled special meeting dates for discussion on November 5, 6, 11 and 12, all at 7pm at the Town Hall. The final decision is the Town Board's. "The goal is to make a decision, make a recommendation to the Town Board, on November 18th", said Planning Board Chairman Paul Sausville.

Since June 2002 the Luther Forest application has undergone hearings, workshops, and debate, and one would hope that local leaders somehow will see that development like the Luther Forest project is the last thing Malta and Saratoga County needs. Please contact Bill Koebbeman at 399-5027 or Susan Lawrence at 489-5721 if you would like to help get this plan rejected and focus on more sound regional land use.

HOLIDAY PARTY!

The Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk holiday party this year is to be held on **Friday, December 19th** at the home of Pete and Margie Sheehan, 32 Buckingham Drive, Albany. You can come right after work, starting about 5pm or so. Please RSVP to Pete at 489-5803.

Happy Holidays to all our members!

COMPUTER MAPPING PROGRAM (cont'd from pg. 1)

Monday, Nov. 24 7 - 9pm at the Schenectady County Public Library, 99 Clinton St (corner of Liberty) in the McChesney Room.

Join us for two exciting demonstrations on how we can use a computer based Geographic Information System (GIS) to protect critical natural resources such as wetlands, forests and watersheds in the Capital District from pollution and development, particularly from the impacts of sprawl. A SUNYA biology professor, Dr. Gary Kleppel, will demonstrate a proposal for a new user friendly GIS mapping system that will enable environmentalists to identify and set priorities for what key resources need protection in the Capital District, regardless of what the arbitrary town or city boundary lines are. There will also be a demonstration of the GIS based Natural Resources Inventory of Schenectady County that the public can access at the Schenectady Library to identify the County's natural resources. For more information contact Susan Lawrence or Pete Sheehan (contact info pg. 2).

Recommended Reading

You Can Prevent Global Warming (And Save Money) by Jeffrey Langhaz, PhD and Kelley Turner C2003, Andrew McMeel Publishing, 2003, 370 pages.

A very practical how-to guide with tips on how you can take action in your everyday life to reduce energy use and CO2 emissions resulting in global warming. Includes tips on reducing water and electricity use in your home, making home heating & cooling more efficient, saving energy with shade, reducing car use, recycling, and shopping and investing green.

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Pete Sheehan, left, presenting Clarence Gregory with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Clarence Gregory Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Thursday, October 23rd was the Hudson Mohawk Group's Annual Awards Dinner, held this year at Petta's Restaurant in Schenectady, N.Y. The setting was very conducive to a lively gathering and an interesting program held in a spacious private room, and the food was delicious. Featured speaker was Judith Enck, policy advisor to Attorney General Elliott Spitzer. Judith updated for us the efforts she spearheads for Atty.Gen.Spitzer, including his fight against the Bush Administrations efforts to rollback the Clean Air Act.

Clarence Gregory was awarded the Hudson Mohawk Group's Lifetime Achievement Award. As you can see from Clarence's statement on pg. 6, he has dedicated himself to strengthening the voice of the Sierra Club for over 33 years, and has always shown a willingness to assume whatever responsibilities the Group has needed. His loyalty and attention to detail have been a cornerstone of the Group, and we all join in thanking him for his work over the years. Clarence, we salute you!



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 Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group

Candidate Statements for Sierra Club, Hudson Mohawk Group Executive Committee 2004 - 2005

Susan Lawrence

I am privileged to have served on the Hudson Mohawk Group's Executive Committee starting in 2000 and as Vice-Chair since 2001. I also serve as one of the Group's Conservation Co-Chairs, as a representative to the Atlantic Chapter Executive Committee, and as Chair of its Sprawl Subcommittee.

While serving on the Group's Executive Committee, I have developed monthly program meetings, initiated the Group's efforts toward cleaning up the Superfund site at Dewey Loeffel Landfill, and played a key role in the Group's negotiations for air quality improvements in the Besicorp cogeneration project (power and paper recycling plants in Rensselaer. I am working with local activists and Sierra Club volunteers to fight the development of huge chipfab plants in Luther Forest in Malta and am involved in the development of a computer mapping system to identify the critical natural areas to protect from development in the Capital District.

I look forward to serving another term on the Group's Executive Committee, with my priorities focusing on conservation work, particularly sprawl related projects. It is very important for our Group to provide a variety of opportunities for our volunteers to become involved in conservation projects, environmental education, outings, and social events.

Maureen Ferraro-Davis

I have been an Executive Committee member since January 2000. I serve as Group Secretary and as a Group Delegate to the Atlantic Chapter. I have worked on issues such as the Hudson River EPEC Campaign, Arctic Wildlife Refuge, wetlands and sprawl. With your support I would like to continue to advance the work of the Sierra Club as a Hudson Mohawk Group executive committee member. I believe that now, in these lean economic times and faced with the actions (or lack thereof) of the current administration in Washington concerning environmental matters, we - the grassroots members of the Sierra Club must maintain our right to be heard. Please allow me to continue to 'fight the good fight' with your vote and thank you for your support of the Hudson Mohawk Group.

John VanDeloo

Some of the biggest challenges to our environment locally and nationwide are happening right now. As one of our three Conservation Co-Chairs I attended a weekend long conservation summit this spring with some of the state executive committee members and other group conservation chairpersons, where plans to combat sprawl and other issues were formatted.

Sprawl, clean air, toxic dumps, clean water, mining and blasting in Saratoga are some of the issues I have worked on for our group. I have lobbied the legislature for the Brownfield and Superfund site bill. I have recruited new activists and new members, organized our first annual Summer Breakout picnic at Moreau Lake State Park, and a winter ski/snowshoe cookout at Tivoli Preserve in Albany. I've also organized and led several other outings during the year.

I have learned a great deal and hope to continue to serve on our local Group Executive Committee. I will continue to work to strengthen our group by working on functions such as membership, outings, fundraising, etc., and to help our Hudson Mohawk Group grow to be an even more effective voice in defending our environment.

Clarence Gregory

I have been a life member of the Sierra Club since 1969, and a member of the Hudson Mohawk Group since its formation in 1971. Although I joined the club to support wilderness preservation and to participate in outings, I found the club had a need for volunteers to handle administrative activities. Accordingly, I have served as Group Membership Chair since 1976 and as Group Treasurer since last year. I maintain the group's mailing list and participate in labeling and mailing the group's newsletter. I have also handled other group administrative tasks such as making required revisions to the group's bylaws. I have been Chair of the Atlantic Chapter's Finance Committee since 1988 and have worked to make effective use of the limited club funds made available for New York State.

Janet Given Chen

I have been a member of the Sierra Club for the last 2 years, and have served as the Newsletter Editor over the past year. I am deeply concerned about the impact that poor planning and overdevelopment has had on our environment, our health and our well being. Exposure to these issues in our beautiful region has made me more aware and eager to pursue activities that will support and protect our environment. As a member of the Executive Committee, I will continue to promote the work of the Hudson Mohawk Group and support their conservation efforts in whatever way needed.

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The holiday season is just around the corner. Why not take care of your holiday shopping list while supporting the conservation work of the Hudson Mohawk Group of the Sierra Club!

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The ballots below are provided for you. Use one ballot for an individual membership and two ballots for a joint membership. Please mail your ballot, so that it is received by November 30, 2003 to: **Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group, Elections Committee, PO Box 8447, Albany, N.Y. 12208-0447.** Your ballot will be validated by your mailing label.

2003 Hudson Mohawk Group Ballot		2003 Hudson Mohawk Group Ballot	
Vote For Five		Vote For Five	
	Susan Lawrence		Susan Lawrence
	John VanDeloo		John VanDeloo
	Maureen Ferraro-Davis		Maureen Ferraro-Davis
	Clarence Gregory		Clarence Gregory
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(see pg. 1)

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