



**SIERRA CLUB**  
FOUNDED 1892

# Hudson/Mohawk Group



Nov/Dec 2004 Vol. 28 No 8

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

## Upcoming Events

### “Transportation Planning for the Capital District”

Tuesday, November 23, 2004

Doors open 6:30 Program starts 7PM

Town of Colonie (Wm. K. Sanford) Public Library (626 Albany-Shaker Road - just east of Northway Exit 4 and intersection of Wolf and Albany-Shaker Roads).

John Poorman, Director of the Capital District Transportation Committee will talk with us about how planning is done for highways, roads, and mass transit in the Capital District and the major transportation initiatives planned for the near and long-term future. The decisions made for investments in transportation infrastructure are critical to smart planning to protect our green spaces from sprawl, to revitalize our cities and older suburbs, while providing needed opportunities for economic growth.

### Conservation Committee

Wednesday, November 17th, 7pm

Call John VanDeloo 370-4932 for details

Wednesday December 15th 7pm

St. Pauls Episcopal Church, 21 Hackett Blvd., Albany. The conservation committee works on conservation issues and projects - all members are welcome to attend.

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**We have many positions that need dedicated volunteers. We need a few good people to help with conservation issues, fundraising, programs, environmental education and much more. Help us get the message out! Contact Susan Lawrence at 489-5721 or SHLawr2@aol.com**

## Sprawl = Poorly Planned Development = Money for Developers

### Schenectady County Sprawl

by John VanDeloo

Driving on Route 9 in Dutchess County last weekend I saw signs all along the road north of Hyde Park saying “Stop Sprawl - Call Town Hall”. Sprawl is a topic in many areas of upstate New York, and our own Capital District. We have heard of the fight in Saratoga County to stop runaway development, in Albany County to slow the same kind of development even into the hill towns, and on Krumkill Road in Albany. The list goes on as development pushes further from our cities and towns and into our farmlands and open spaces.

There are many definitions of what sprawl is and theories of what causes it, but the bottom line reason is money - fast, easy money for developers. Developers state that communities will expand their tax base and that taxes will go down, but what we almost always see is that residential housing causes increased taxes as cost of services goes up, with additional hidden costs to all of us. Sprawl pulls economic resources away from existing communities and spreads them over sparse developments far from central communities. It wastes tax money - on new roads, new water and sewer lines, new schools, and other services.

Why talk about little Schenectady County? Because taxpayers there are suffering from sprawl and being forced to pay for sewers they don't want, and spending money to put a water district in Princetown to encourage development along Route 20. Two perfect examples of poor planning, The Masullo Estates and White Birch Gardens, continue to flood and taxpayers are now starting to foot the bill to try to correct some of the problems. At the same time, the developers have plans to expand each project, even while admitting that there were design flaws in their initial projects. Several proposed apartment and condominium projects threaten the Great Flats Aquifer, the water source of 70% of the population of Schenectady County. Sprawl threatens our environment, our health and our quality of life in many ways. In Schenectady County we see this in the degradation of our city and ever higher taxes as our farms, open spaces and quality of life are threatened.

In Rotterdam a series of meetings about zoning changes began in May, at which time NO one spoke in favor of development or change knowing it would eliminate this beautiful rural area. Now the Town Board will make the final decision on one of three plans from Wilbur Smith Associates, and the public will have no say! Three sewer districts are being studied in the Burdeck St., Colonial Manor and Highbridge areas of Rotterdam. But the new sewer districts will cost taxpayers 625 to 968 dollars per year for 30 years, more than the State Comptroller's 525 dollar per year limit for a sewer district. One reason being discussed is the present sewage treatment has the capacity to handle only one of these districts and would have to be expanded. The real reason these are being pushed against the wishes of the taxpayers was stated by the Town Planner - developers would be eager to build if the sewer is constructed.

(cont'd on page 4)

## Hudson-Mohawk Group

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The Hudson-Mohawk Group Executive Committee meets the first Wednesday of every month. 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.

## Outings

**Saturday, November 13 - Pine Orchards** On Route 8 in Wells, this walk culminates in an isolated grove of enormous white pines that are 200 to 250 years old and have trunks that exceed six feet. On this moderately easy four mile round trip we will learn about old growth forests. We will also visit the Oregon Trail and walk through an old growth forest to the waterfalls on Stony Creek, an easy 2.4 mile round trip. Call John at 370-4932.



**Saturday, December 18th - Sleeping Beauty.** Either hike or snowshoe, depending on conditions, this 4.5 mile loop on the east side of Lake George and enjoy the wide vista, from the mountains of Vermont to the high peaks. A moderate hike or snowshoe. Call John at 370-4932.

## Notes From The Chair

As we near the end of 2004 and look forward to 2005, I want to extend a very appreciative **Thank You** to our Hudson-Mohawk Group members, whether you have supported the work and goals of the Sierra Club at our Group, State, National, or International level. Many of you are contributing hundreds and even thousands of volunteer hours needed to work on conservation projects, conduct outings, put on environmental programs, provide educational tables at public events, work in any way on producing and distributing our newsletter, help with fundraising, work on elections, and other activities. Many of you are working in your local community to help plan wisely for future land use and to protect precious natural resources, including wetlands, watersheds, forests, farmland and streams and rivers. Others are working to stop water and air pollution in their community. Sometimes we work on an issue with our Group in the lead, and sometimes we work as a team with local community and other environmental groups. Finally, some of you have made contributions to our Group to fund all these activities.

The year 2004 has been a critical one in terms of trying to elect leaders and influence those in office to enact legislation, support funding, and institute regulations that will improve the quality of our natural environment. Thank you to all of you who, by phone call, contribution, volunteer hours or otherwise, helped in this effort. Best wishes for all our environmental endeavors in 2005.

*Susan Lawrence*

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### Consider a Holiday Gift Donation To the Hudson-Mohawk Group

You can give a Holiday gift that says to the recipient "I care about the environment we live in." Please give a donation in their name to the Sierra Club, Hudson Mohawk Group, PO Box 8447, Albany NY 12208. This will help with all our many activities, including conservation work, programs, education, lobbying, outings, and newsletters. (This donation will be taxable).

If you wish to give a tax-exempt donation (which we can only use for some education and conservation costs) you can make the check out to the Sierra Club Foundation with the Hudson Mohawk Group on the memo line.

We operate on an all-volunteer basis, with a very limited budget. Any donation you give will be greatly appreciated. Thanks!

## Activists Corner

*Editor's Note: Bart McLean and his wife Priscilla have been Sierra Club members for 20+ years. They became concerned with the potential Berlin Wind Farm proposed by Williams College (see H-M Group newsletter April 2004.) He recently wrote to update us on the outcome of that project.*

Dear Sierra Exec Friends,

Earlier this summer, the Berlin Zoning Board received a letter from the lawyer representing Williams College officially withdrawing its request for a permit to erect a wind anemometer on Berlin Pass, after the Board previously had directed Williams to come up with professional representation, a 15,000 dollar escrow deposit before Williams could go forward, and a full SEQR review demanding that they also include the whole wind farm proposal, not just the initial step with the anemometer tower. Since many of you had put some considerable thought and effort into this issue, I just wanted to inform you of the final decision, which effectively halts any activity on the Pass and preserves it as a (relatively) pristine and wild area.

Yesterday I hiked up to the area and beyond to Berlin Mountain from Petersburg Pass. I saw many people (lots of families with children) on the way and the parking lot was full in this height of the leaf colors. And I was reminded that there simply is not any other comparable experience in the whole capital area where one can comfortably park and hike so easily to a remote mountain ridge area with such a spectacular view unspoiled by industrial, commercial, or residential intrusion. There is no doubt in my mind that the wind farm would have destroyed that feeling of peace and remoteness. They just don't make any more of these places and I'm glad that (at least) the Berlin Zoning Board saw this as their justification (and said so in the minutes). You might also be interested to know that Mason Hubbard, our Town Supervisor here in Petersburg, also opposed the wind farm, saying to me that the Taconic Ridge represented the soul of the Petersburg residents.

How ironic that the local leaders and residents saw in the wild beauty of the Taconics something that the supposedly more aware and active environmental organizations were unable to do with a clear voice.

Although I realize that you were divided on this issue, I think you all handled it with supreme class, giving both sides a fair hearing and spending not a little of your own energies in the process. For that, I and the folks from Save the Crest want to thank you all.

Cordially,

Bart McLean

*Conservation Chair John VanDeloo responded:*

I think the Club in general almost always looks at the level of local activist commitment and that this is one of many factors that influence our actions, but we do not rush to a decision without research, discussion and when need be obtaining outside expertise. After a great deal of debate and research, including personally visiting three wind farms, I discussed with experts in San Francisco getting approval for us to get legally involved if need be. The members of the ExCom also voted to send a letter to Williams College in opposition to the project. As this was a new topic for us we may have been a little slow in coming to our conclusion to oppose the wind farm. A few Excom members thought at first that we should support all renewable energy sources until we considered the siting issue and fully realized the unique area that would be impacted and the question of the local climates influence on the wind turbines.

If there is a need to deal with any other local issues around you in the future please contact us. We will always do our best to obtain as much information as possible in order to make as informed a decision as we can. *JVD*

## GOING, GOING... GONE?



Sea turtles date back nearly 90 million years and are among the Earth's oldest surviving species. Yet the Kemp's Ridley sea turtle is quickly fading away—it is losing its habitat at an alarming rate. At the Sierra Club, we've mounted a major campaign to defend the Endangered Species Act and preserve threatened habitats before their inhabitants are gone forever.

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Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

Enclose check and mail to: **F94Q W** 1  
Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968 **0802**



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**Sprawl** (cont'd from page 1)

Development follows pipes, even where it is not wanted or needed, and even where it is detrimental. In Princetown, Metroplex has put 284,750 dollars into a proposed water district - *in the hope of encouraging development* -causing enough confusion that the town had to hire a part-time planner to sort out confusion among the planning, zoning and town boards and to streamline the process for the developer *at taxpayer expense!*

What is right here? Nothing - no comprehensive development plan for Rotterdam or the County, taxpayer money wasted, poor planning, special deals for developers (selling two acres of town land for one dollar to the developer of proposed condominiums on Putnam Road and giving a negative declaration of environmental impact to this development which threatens our water source). Residents have changes thrust on them that will forever change their way of life and are being ignored.

Runaway growth is not inevitable. Developers push this type of piecemeal sprawl, shifting costs to taxpayers. Developers should be required to pay impact fees to cover the costs of new roads, schools, water and sewer lines; in addition property tax impact studies on new developments should be required. Elected officials should promote regional planning combining transportation, land use and environmental planning efforts. We need greater public involvement in land use planning processes and plans to build more affordable housing close to transit and jobs. Sprawl hurts us all and costs us all.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Watch Our Website:**

[WWW.NewYork.Sierraclub.org/hudsonmohawk/](http://WWW.NewYork.Sierraclub.org/hudsonmohawk/)

**ExCom Candidate Statements for 2005/2006**

**Tom Blandy:** I think as an ExCom member I have toiled creditably for Sierra not so much in the outdoors/hiking way but on issues and campaigns.

\* Attended and participated in lots of H-M Group meetings and outings

\* Made a nice 2-sided A-frame type sidewalk SIERRA CLUB sign with logo.

\* Honchoed the Newsletter labelling and mailing (with Lucinda Schoonbeck). We manage to make the labelling sessions cheerful and get people to come back month after month

\*In the Malta chip-fab controversy went door-to-door numerous times leafletting, talking to folks, and going to rallies and public meetings.

\* Tried to be positive and appreciate what others do.

\* Oh, and other stuff I've forgotten.


At this moment I'm going to swing state NH working with *SierraVotes.com* every weekend, and then the whole pre-election and election day week. The special mission is to get low-turnout areas of urban NH to vote by taking

compare-Kerry-and- Bush environmental literature door to door, and then phone call reminders.


The Sierra Club high command takes this vote effort very seriously. Larry Hahn, SC President, came one weekend to participate and urge us troops on. One more reason to take the SC seriously: It thinks things through, and acts, and *is* a class act. I'm privileged to be a part of it.

**Roger Gray:** The Sierra Club is one of the most unique organizations in this nation, embodying our best concepts of democracy. The Sierra Club gives tools to, and empowers individuals to speak and work on behalf of our magnificent environment. It is the local groups and the local chapters where groundwork is laid to rally activists on local, statewide and national issues, and the national organization gives the local groups clout. As a member of the Hudson Mohawk Group Executive Committee for more than a decade, I firmly believe that it is this emphasis on our grassroots that makes the Club effective.

## SIERRA CLUB 2005 CALENDARS



**Sierra Club 2005 Engagement Calendar**  
Week-by-week format, featuring 57 spectacular photographs and "wire-o" binding.



**Sierra Club 2005 Wilderness Wall Calendar**—Spiral bound, month-by-month format, featuring 12 majestic North American landscapes.

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<b>Natures Details -</b> color photos by Charles Gurche			Mail requests to: Janet Given-Chen 809 Karenwald Lane Schenectady, NY 12309

\* \* \* \* \*

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

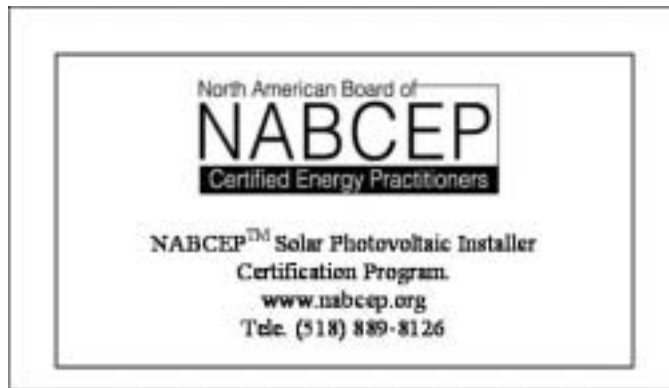
**Roger Gray:** (*cont'd*) It has been a great honor to work with the tremendously dedicated local activists on the many efforts undertaken by the Group, such as the Hudson River/GE/PCB campaign, the Great Oswegatchie Canoe Wilderness Campaign, the campaign to keep the Adirondack Whitney Park wild, the effort to keep and preserve the wetlands in Saratoga State Park from becoming fairways, and many others. I would appreciate your vote. Thank you.

**Pete Sheehan:** I am a past-chair of the Hudson-Mohawk Group and have continued to serve over the last year as an ExCom member. In that time, I have had the opportunity to talk to many dedicated Sierra Club members who give up their time to help in the many ways they do. Being able, in some small way to help them express their concern about our environment is a very heartening and encouraging process for me. The Sierra Club has a very interesting organizational chart - the members are placed at the top! Therefore, they drive the agenda and are the ones to get the real work done in many ways. That is certainly true for members of the Hudson Mohawk Group. Without it, we would not be able to accomplish all that we do - including our very successful Hudson River/PCB campaign.

The other members of the ExCom have been very supportive and this is one of the most effective and insightful boards I have been associated with. I would like the opportunity to continue my involvement with the Executive Committee and continue my volunteer work with the Sierra Club for two more years.

*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 it is received by November 30, 2004 to: Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group, Elections Committee, PO Box 8447, Albany, NY 12208-0447. Your ballot will be validated by your mailing label.*

2004 Hudson Mohawk Group Ballot		2004 Hudson Mohawk Ballot	
Vote for Three		Vote for Three	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tom Blandy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tom Blandy
<input type="checkbox"/>	Roger Gray	<input type="checkbox"/>	Roger Gray
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pete Sheehan	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pete Sheehan
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	



*Interested in advertising with us? Contact Janet Given-Chen for rates (contact info pg 2)*

*\*\*\* Happy Holidays \*\*\**



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Ballot on page 5

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