



**SIERRA  
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## Hudson/Mohawk Group



Nov./Dec 2005 Vol. 29 No 6

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

Welcome to our new outings leader Joe Gardner. Joe is a local activist who is well known throughout the environmental community. He hikes extensively throughout the year in a wide variety of locations and is an excellent historian and raconteur. We are grateful for his many contributions to our group throughout the year.

Welcome to our new Group Treasurer Jim Dufresne. Jim is a talented guy who brings to his new position quite a bit of financial experience along with a cheerful outlook and a sincere dedication to the environment.

Our program schedule resumes in January. If you have an area of expertise that you would like to share with others please contact our Program Chair Susan Lawrence (see contact info on page 2.)

We welcome material for the Hudson-Mohawk Group newsletter, including letters to the editor and articles pertaining to conservation, recreation, education, organic food or farming, local preservation activities, or other materials relevant to the Sierra Club mission “Explore, Enjoy, Protect The Planet”. Submissions should be forwarded to the editor at Hudson-Mohawk Group, PO Box 8447, Albany, NY 12208-8447. We reserve the right to edit and keep all articles submitted. Views expressed by the author may or may not be those of the Sierra Club or the Hudson-Mohawk Group. Articles and letters should be signed and are printed at the editor’s discretion. See deadline information on the back page.

**Happy New Year!**

## Democracy in Action at Sierra Summit

by John VanDeloo

After 103 years of conservation work, why would the Sierra Club feel the need for a Summit meeting of it’s membership?

The Sierra Club Summit was held September 8 - 11th, 2005 at the Moscone Center in San Francisco. Seven hundred delegates set out to plan the direction the Sierra Club will take for the upcoming years in an exercise in grassroots democracy that the rest of the country could learn from. At the Delegate Direction Setting Meetings the main speakers Carl Pope, Greg Casini and Linda Rehnstrom explained the process and set the tone of what we needed to accomplish. Many of the Delegates had participated in the pre-summit direction setting process and were ready to act. Linda Rehnstrom made us feel as if we could mobilize humanity to a new awareness that people are part of our ecosystem and part of a network that we need to respect. Then came the first delegate session - questions started coming from the floor and the momentum seemed to come to a halt as concerns were voiced about the eight conservation approaches under consideration. Was this really where the club should be headed?

Debates, discussion and voices from the floor continued and drew Carl Pope back to the podium; one could see the democratic process working as it had in Athens thousands of years ago. The process continued and, after a vote to proceed with the modified conservation approach, democracy prevailed. The delegates voted Building a New Energy Future as the Club’s top priority over the next five years.

The Sierra Club called a Summit because it is the only democratic conservation group in the country and what it’s members think is what our Club leaders need to know. The leadership sees the changes that have taken place in our country and are looking for the members to give guidance in direction and goal setting. They know we are in a struggle, just as John Muir was, to protect our nation’s great places and wilderness from the robber barons; or as in the 1960’s to protect the public commons from being polluted by working to pass the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. What direction the club takes, how to get humanity to listen, and how to stop the destruction of everything that has been worked for in the past by our club members is the reason for this Summit.

Our leaders are asking for our help to get the Sierra Club on track to face new challenges. We all need to rethink our priorities (just as the Sierra Club is rethinking theirs) and decide what we want - a democracy where the peoples voice is heard or a government which ignores the wishes of the majority to follow the agenda of a few. For the Sierra Club to be able to face this new challenge the members need to step forward and take an active role. More of us have to become activists to continue the process that started at the Summit, a grassroots democratic process to educate and mobilize humanity in a wave that renews our democracy. We need a strong commitment to protecting our basic needs, such as clean air, clean water, and safer places to live for all citizens, rich or poor.

For more information on the Summit, including remarks given by keynote speakers Al Gore, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Chef Alice Waters, Comic Bill Maher, (among many others) visit [www.sierraclub.org/sierrasummit](http://www.sierraclub.org/sierrasummit)

## Hudson-Mohawk Group

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Sprawl/Smart Growth - Susan Lawrence, J. VanDeloo, Aaron Mair  
Energy - Susan Lawrence  
Pesticides/Clean Water - John

VanDeloo

Clean Air - Susan Lawrence

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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.

## Outings

**Saturday, November 12** - destination is the fire tower, spectacular view of all the short two mile hike to the the Adirondacs, with a 2,760 the East and West High Hudson. Call John at 370-

**Saturday, December 10th** - winter 8.5 mile hike, weather highest mountain around foot rise and hopefully with good weather, we will have a beautiful view of the Lake. Call John at 370-4932 for more information.

**Saturday, January 14th - Santanoni Preserve.** Our annual X-ski to this famous Preserve. We will review the history of this unique area and see how the work is progressing to preserve this Great Camp. Always a great trip for beginner or experienced skiers. Call John at 370-4932 for more information.

**Sunday, January 29th - Partridge Run Wildlife Management Area** - Join us on a winter outing of snowshoeing, skiing or hiking. Contact outing leader Joe Gardner for details, time and meeting place at 518-439-8719.

**Saturday, February 18th - Hop Field, John Boyd Thacher State Park** -Enjoy your choice of snowshoe, skiing or hiking in beautiful wintery Thacher Park. Warm-up area available. Call Joe Gardner at 518-439-8719.

**Saturday, March 18th - Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center, Thompsons Lake** - Snowshoe, ski or hike this beautiful lakeside area at the educational center. Learn about the many programs offered at the Center. Call Joe Gardner at 518-439-8719.

## Wanted: Outing Chair

Contact Bill Koebbeman at 399-5027 (WKEBB@juno.com). Responsibilities aren't full-time, just coordinate the outings and ensure the qualifications of outing leaders. Benefits include getting to know some great people with wide experience and varied interests and learn about some great new opportunities for your own outdoor adventures.



**Mount Adams.** The which has perhaps the most towers in the Adirondacks. A top of the 87th tallest peak in foot ascent to a peak between Peaks, that crosses the upper 4932 for more information.

**Black Mountain.** An early permitting, to the peak of the Lake George. With an 1100

## 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 to work on Hudson Mohawk Group conservation projects (save critical wetlands, watersheds and other open space); lead and coordinate Group outings; help with fundraising, publicity, and environmental education (our programs at Colonie Library, tabling at events). It's fun and rewarding, a combination that's hard to beat. (See page two for contact information for the area you are interested in.)

# The Relentless Destruction of Our Environmental Infrastructure

by John VanDeloo, M.D., Conservation Chair H-M Group

As this is being written the clear cutting of trees and infilling of wetlands on Putnam Road in Schenectady County is already allowing silt mixed with diesel fuel to run into the Great Flats Aquifer, the water source for Schenectady County. The future runoff from this development and others planned will stress and damage this precious water source for over 200,000 Schenectady County residents.

Public officials still fail to see the need to maintain and protect the environmental infrastructure to insure the health and well-being of the people who live in it. Massive profits and the promise of 'increased tax revenue' give developers a tremendous advantage against anyone who would oppose them. However, many of these projects end up costing the local taxpayer in many ways. A simple example: in the Schenectady Gazette last week (week of 10/15/2005) an article stated that the town of Duanesburg will have to raise taxes to pay for the cost of the zoning and planning needed to evaluate all the building permits it is receiving.

This kind of poorly planned sprawl costs us all. Some day soon we may have to spend millions of dollars to filter the water from the Great Flats (water that was up to now filtered naturally) if care isn't taken to control development in the recharge area. There are just some places that need to be left undeveloped to protect such a valuable natural resource.

There is another issue in Schenectady County - there have been almost weekly articles in the newspaper about a poorly placed subdivision in Princetown. A sewer system has just been completed around Mariaville Lale to protect it, and now a developer comes up with a plan to build a 17 house development around a State and Federal wetland that can only harm this watershed, as only three of the houses can be attached to the sewer. The soil is so thin in some areas that raised septic systems are needed. Several zoning variances are needed, and was discussed at an October 24th meeting. The Planning Board Chairman has already decided that a SEQR review or a comprehensive review is not necessary as 'things have to move along quickly to be fair to the developer'. The developer, at the same meeting, showed up with a lawyer and an engineer, and when asked why sewers were not included in the plan responded that they were 'cost-prohibitive'. It was also learned that there would be two shared, single lane driveways, each about a thousand feet, for several of the homes. When asked 'why not build a road' the answer was the same - 'cost-prohibitive'. In fact, one driveway goes over a causeway, crossing a pond that drains directly into Mariaville Lake, which frequently floods due to beaver activity. At this meeting, the chairperson stated that there was to be no 'privelege of the floor' for the public to be heard, even though it was on the agenda. Local residents are frustrated and feel they are being steamrolled by this locally influential developer, who is only out to gain profits from this venture quickly so as to move onto his next project.

Anyone intersted or who would like infrastructure call John at 370-4932.

## HOLIDAY GIFT MEMBERSHIP

**A Sierra Club Gift Membership is a wonderful way to let someone know you care—about them and the environment.**

Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!



**YES! I'd like to give a holiday gift membership to:**

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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: **Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968**

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**Explore, enjoy and protect the planet**



## It's That Time Again!

Order now for Holiday gift giving. Our beautiful wall and engagement calendars are always appreciated. You get better pricing when you order through the Hudson-Mohawk Group, and your order through us helps support local conservation work.

Retail is \$11.95 for wall, \$12.95 for the engagement calendar. Our member price is just \$10.00 for the wall, \$11.00 for the engagement. Add \$2.00 for s/h for the first three calendars, an additional \$0.75 for each additional calendar.

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Mail order to: Janet Given-Chen  
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Check or money order only. Include ship to name and address. Thanks!

## Wal-Mart Watch Higher Expectations Week, November 13 - 19

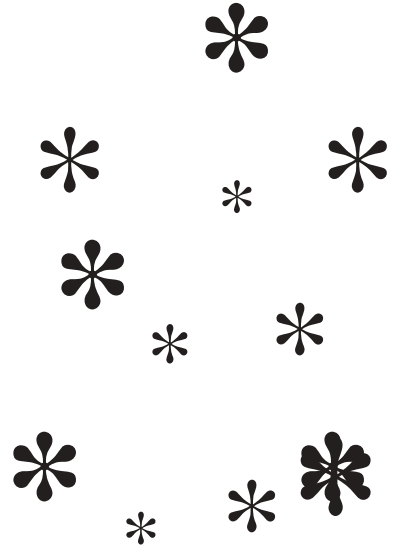
Are you concerned and just plain mad about Wal-Mart's building big box stores in rural and suburban green spaces, hurting local businesses, and their deplorable business practices (such as low wages especially for women, lack of health care benefits) etc.? Then participate in "Higher Expectations Week" November 13-19. In the Capital District, the Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group will join with labor and other organizations in press events, public rallies, and documentary movie showings to educate us all about Wal-Mart's harmful policies and practices. Concerned citizens are fighting to stop construction of new Wal-Mart stores locally in Brunswick, Ballston Spa, Rotterdam and elsewhere - join them in the fight.

The Sierra Club is a founding member of Wal-Mart Watch, which is organizing the events of November 13-19. (Go to [www.Walmartwatch.com](http://www.Walmartwatch.com) for more information about this campaign). Contact Susan Lawrence (shlawr2@aol.com or call at 489-5721 or 424-6296) to become involved locally. We need people to come to rallies, sponsor house parties and other events during the week. See our website [www.newyork.sierraclub.org/hudsonmohawk/](http://www.newyork.sierraclub.org/hudsonmohawk/) for details on events during the week.

To order a Wal-Mart Watch video, go to [www.walmartmovie.com/buy.php](http://www.walmartmovie.com/buy.php)

## *Notes From The Chair -*

*Thank all of you who have contributed in one way or another to the Sierra Club in 2005 at our local Group, State, National or International level. Many of you contribute countless hours on conservation projects, lead outings, conduct environmental programs, man tables at public events, lobby legislators, help with fundraising, participate in rallies and many other activities. Sometimes you work in your local community to protect precious natural resources, including wetlands and watersheds, and to curb sprawl. Others work to stop air and water pollution in our community and the world. Finally, as members, all of you contribute to fund these efforts. Best wishes for our environmental work in 2006.*



*Susan Lawrence*

## **Nominations Sought for Hudson-Mohawk Executive Committee**

The two-year terms of five of our Hudson-Mohawk Group Executive Committee members expire in January of 2006. The Group by-laws require the Group Nominating Committee to place seven candidates (Group members) on the ballot (two more than terms expiring).

Please help by suggesting potential candidates (you may include yourself). Contact Nominating Chair Pete Sheehan, or the other Nominating Committee members Roger Gray, Tom Blandy, or Bill Koebbeman, and submit a 150 word or less statement to support your candidacy.

## *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 12208-0447. This will help with all our many activities, including our 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 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!

***Upcoming Calendar of Events***

November 7th, Monday - ExCom Meeting

November 16th, Wednesday - Conservation Committee Meeting

December 5th, Monday - ExCom meeting

December 15th, Thursday - Deadline for Jan/Feb newsletter submissions.

December 21, Wednesday - Conservation Committee Meeting.

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.



Address Service Requested:  
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PO Box 42968  
Boulder, Colorado 80322-2968

***HAPPY HOLIDAYS!***

See page 4 for the calendars on your gift-list.

North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners visit [www.NABCEP.org](http://www.NABCEP.org) to find a qualified Photovoltaic Solar Installer for your system

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