



SIERRA CLUB
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Hudson/Mohawk Group



Sept 2003 Vol. 27 No. 7

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

Upcoming Events

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS

**Wednesday, Sept 24, 2003
7PM and Wednesday Oct 22,
2003 7PM**

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

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

ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER

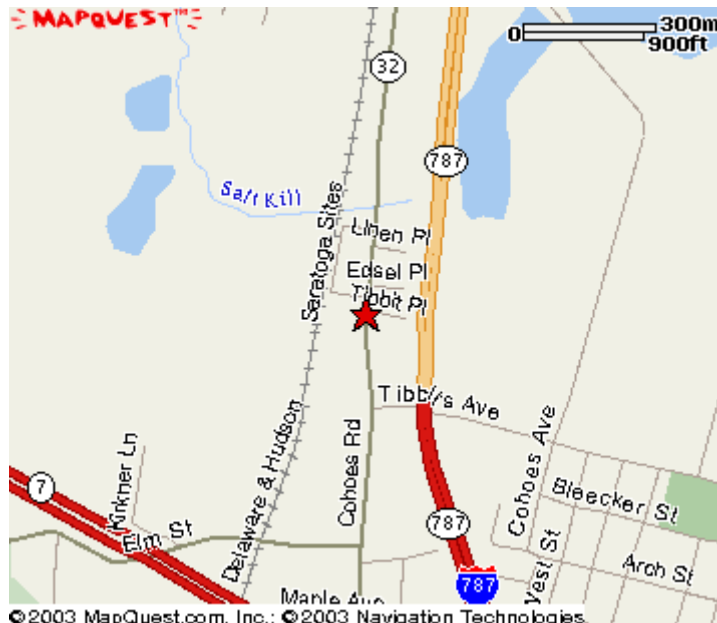
Friday, October 24, 2003

A new location for our Annual Awards Dinner will be Petta's, at 124 Duane Avenue in Schenectady, with our own private room. Celebrate the Sierra Club's part in saving the Woodlawn Preserve and helping in the formation of the Northern Pine Bush Coalition to fight sprawl in this important area of wetlands and pine barren. Local candidates for office will be invited to discuss their position on open space, sprawl, brownfields, etc. Awards will be given to some of our members for their conservation efforts. \$25.00 per adult, \$15.00 for children under 12. Call John and Peggy at 370-4932, or Pete at 489-5803 for details. Checks may be sent to **Sierra Club, Hudson Mohawk Group**, PO Box 8447, Albany NY 12208.

NORLITE CORPORATION - ON OUR WATCH LIST (AGAIN!)

by Pete Sheehan

There very well may be toxic releases again from the Norlite plant located in Cohoes. The company uses a rotary kiln to incinerate raw materials and produce a type of cement. There have been first hand accounts of chemical smells and burning sensations from skin coming in contact with water leading from the Norlite Plant flowing into the nearby Salt Kill. If that wasn't bad enough for the nearby community to endure, there are also reports of very thick dust and other residue on cars, window sills and other surfaces for those living within close proximity to the plant. These conditions were reported to the Sierra Club at our June conservation meeting by nearby Cohoes resident Tania Puckett.



This is certainly not the first time that toxic discharges of pollution at Norlite have been on radar. Norlite has been fined at least \$90,000 in the last three years under the Federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act as monitored by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) which issues permits for air and water discharges. For example, in 1999, total releases of chemicals were reported at 45,741 pounds according to the Toxic Release Inventory (TRI). Release of Toulene made up most of this - at 42,231. It was apparently reduced to 13,612 pounds in 2000 which needs some review. How it was reduced and where did it go and what's being discharged now are legitimate questions to ask.

(cont'd on page 3)

Hudson-Mohawk Group

| | |
|--|---|
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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

September 13, Saturday: Santinoni Preserve in the Fall.

A hike on the old carriage road of 4.75 miles, past the giant's chair, creamery and farm to the Great Camp, built of 13,000 logs from local trees. Located on Newcomb Lake, one can sit and relax or explore some of the trails around the lake, and enjoy the early fall at the only great camp that NY State owns. Call John and Peggy at 370-4932 for details.

September 27, Saturday: Cascade Lakes Stewardship Project. These spectacular lakes are exceedingly stressed by salt and sand from road maintenance. Join us for a rewarding AM clean-up of the lake shore. Picnic lunch and short hike in the PM. A fun and educational family outing in a beautiful setting. Call Roger Gray at 434-8681 for details.

September 28, Sunday: Hudson River Canoe Trip. We will canoe the placid Hudson River from Pleasantdale to Waterford and Lansingburgh, passing the historic waterfront and junction of the Erie and Champlain divisions of the Barge Canal. We will explore the mouths of the Mohawk River at Peebles Island, including visits to Buttermilk Falls and Bock Island, covering a total of 4.5 miles. We can also stop at the Waterford Canal Visitor Center. You must provide your own boat, flotation devices and necessary equipment. Meet at 1PM. Make reservations with Leader Warren Broderick 235-4041 or co-leader Lorraine Plauth 765-4937.

October 4, Saturday: Canoe Little Tupper Lake. An easily accessed canoe area, Little Tupper provides a rare opportunity to paddle a large Adirondack lake without power boats! We will spend our time exploring this beautiful and scenic lake which is part of a historic Adirondack canoe route. A side trip can be made up to Rock Pond and would involve a short carry. Join NYS guide Jeff Dickinson for



Adirondack canoeing like it used to be. Gear and canoe rentals available. Call Jeff Dickinson for reservations at 518-648-5302.

***May through September: Sunday morning bike rides through Voorheesville/Helderburg Area:** Start about 7:15 AM, usually finished by 9AM. Mostly flat and very

scenic. A great way to start the day. Call leader Steve Redler (434-1540).

***Spring through Fall: The Saratoga Saunter:** An easy weekday morning walk. We will visit a variety of natural areas in Saratoga County with the objectives of a better understanding of our bio-region and make some new friends in the process. Call Bill Koebbeman (399-5027) for more information.

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 who want to enjoy and protect our environment. To become better involved, contact the following people (*contact information on page 2 of this Newsletter*):

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

Outings - Bill Koebbeman

Programs - John Nemjo

Fund Raising - John Nemjo

Newsletter mailings - Tom Blandy

NORLITE (cont'd from pg.1)

Ms. Puckett and her neighbors have written to the NYSDEC, the Attorney General's office, the New York State Department of Health and others including various lawmakers regarding the situation. As this issue goes to print, there have been no responses offering concrete action as of yet. We will be monitoring this situation very closely and have taken samples of the water to get them tested by an approved laboratory. We also plan to test some of the dust and other residue. If you can help in any way (distribute flyers, etc.) please contact Tania Puckett at 237-4923. If you can help defray the cost of the sampling, please make your check out to the **Sierra Club Hudson-Mohawk Group** and remit to: Sierra Club HM Group, P.O. Box 8447, Albany, N.Y. 12208.

Wetlands Under Siege in Saratoga County

by Bill Koebbeman

We recently had the opportunity to discuss the impact that development in Saratoga County is having upon wetlands and the 100 foot buffer that is supposed to be off limits to development to provide protection to them. Our focus was the Excelsior Park Development off exit 15 of the Northway outside of Saratoga Springs but our comments here are expansive to the general wetland permitting process. We met with both the DEC Region Five field staff that meets with the applicant/developer as the project gets off the ground and the central office staff. The discussion was revealing to say the least.

According to the DEC regulations (6 NYCRR Part 663) Class II wetlands, which is what these are "provide important wetland benefits, the loss of which is acceptable only in very limited circumstances". Scientific evidence is building that a buffer area much larger than 100 feet is needed to fully protect all the functions of a wetland. While the full 100 foot width is less than an optimum buffer (referred to as adjacent areas in the regulations) it should be considered a minimum protective buffer. Given the density of development and the steep slopes around these wetlands, the protective functions of the adjacent area are essential to the long-term preservation of the protective benefits of these wetlands. Unfortunately, one complete house and half of two others have been approved by the DEC for building within the 100 foot adjacent area.

What became very clear to us is that the region staff act as brokers during the "pre-application conference" with the applicant/developer. The conference purpose is supposed to be "If a person...wants to discuss with the Department any phase of the proposed project as it relates to the Act or other

(cont'd on page 5)

"Every good thing, great and small, needs defense." — *John Muir*

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Nominations Sought for Executive Committee

The terms of the following members of the Hudson-Mohawk Group Executive Committee expire at the end of December 2002: Melissa Clarke (who has resigned), Roger Gray, John Nemjo (who was chosen by the Executive Committee to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of Aaron Mair), and Pete Sheehan. The Group Bylaws require the Nominating Committee to place six candidates, who must be group members, on the ballot - two more individuals than terms expiring.

The terms of the following members of the Executive Committee expire at the end of December 2003: Maureen Ferraro-Davis, Clarence Gregory, Sue Lawrence, Jim Malatras, and John VanDeloo.

Executive Committee members are expected to attend monthly meetings and to volunteer time to participate in the administration and/or conservation program of the Group. Please help the Nominating Committee by suggesting potential candidates, who may include yourself. Phone Nominating Committee Chair Clarence Gregory at 393-7100 or Committee members Maureen Ferraro-Davis at 235-0728, Sue Lawrence at 489-5271, or John VanDeloo at 370-4932; or write to: Nominating Committee, Sierra Club Hudson-Mohawk Group, P.O. Box 8447, Albany, N.Y. 12208-0447. The deadline for nominations is October 7.

Newsletter Subscription

Unable to join the Sierra Club at this time, but I would like a subscription to the Hudson-Mohawk Group Newsletter? For \$5.00 you can receive the next 8 issues of the newsletter informing you of upcoming outings, conservation programs and much more. To order, enclose check or money order (payable to "Sierra Club Hudson-Mohawk Group") along with name and address, including city, state and zip and mail to:

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Three other sets and the Internet addresses at which to view them are:
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Nature's Details <http://store.yahoo.com/pomegranate/natdetsiercl.html>

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See page 1 for details

Hike-A-Thon
Sunday Oct. 5, 2003
See page 5 for details

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