



SIERRA CLUB
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Hudson/Mohawk Group



Sept 2004 Vol. 28 No.6

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

Upcoming Events

October Annual Dinner

The Italian Community Center in Green Island will be the setting for a very special night on Thursday, October 28. First, the Honorable Michael McNulty will formally accept the Sierra Club endorsement for his re-election to another term in the U.S. House of Representatives for the 21st District. Mr. McNulty has been endorsed multiple times by the Sierra Club and has been a stalwart environmental protector. The Congressman will provide his view of the Bush environmental record from an ‘insiders’ point of view and talk about some of our most critical issues including clean air, clean water, renewable energy, wetlands protection and others. Come enjoy our raffle and year end awards presentations!

Please sign up now to reserve your spot. Tickets will be Thirty Dollars per person and Ten Dollars for children under 10. Call Pete Sheehan at 489-5803 or Roger Gray at 434-8681. Seating is limited so don’t wait!

PROGRAM SERIES

“Environmental Justice Networking on a Global Scale”

Tuesday, September 28, Town of Colonie Public Library. Doors open 6:30 Program starts 7PM

Aaron and Miriam Mair will present their experiences in helping frame the global dialog and action within the United Nations framework on Environmental Justice. A key focus of the framework is provision of clean, affordable water. They will talk specifically about their experiences in creating a Center for Sustainable Development in Panama.

The Bush Environmental Record - NOT!

by Roger Gray

As most Sierra Club members readily recognize, the term ‘Bush Environmental Record’ is an oxymoron. In fact, ‘Bush Environmental Debacle’ would be more accurate terminology. For the past three and a half years, the Bush/Cheney administration has been relentless in its roll-back of twenty-five years of United States environmental laws and policy.

We realize we’re largely preaching to the choir, but in case you have some friends who are wavering in their presidential selection, herewith is a thumbnail sketch of how bad the Bush/Cheney assault on the environment has really been.

Kyoto: We got a sense of how bad it was going to be as soon as Bush took office. In January 2001, he announced that the US would not agree to the international Kyoto Protocol, which required developed nations, including the US, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels.

Arctic: Later in 2001, the administration pulled out its Big Oil guns and tried to ram through Congress an energy bill which not only had mere window-dressing investments in energy conservation, but contained huge subsidies for coal and nuclear industries, and would have allowed drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Thanks to a tremendous effort by the Sierra Club and other environmental groups, the bill did not pass the US Senate.

Clean Air: On Earth Day 2002, Bush showed up in the Adirondacks to promote his so-called ‘Clear Skies’ initiative. Rather than clearing the skies, the Bush plan increased pollution credit trading levels, which have been recognized as putting northeastern states with strict emission controls at a disadvantage because we are downwind from the heavily polluting midwestern power plants. A couple of months later, one of the outcomes of Dick Cheney’s infamous secret energy task force was revealed: a significant weakening of the Clean Air Act, which, instead of requiring power plants and refineries to install modern pollution control equipment when they expanded operations, provided new loopholes to allow expansion with existing, polluting technology. Continuing the theme of more air pollution in 2000, Bush reversed a Clinton administration rule to limit snowmobile abuse in Yellowstone National Park, despite reams of evidence of the adverse air and wildlife impacts from the profusion of users in recent years.

Finally, around Christmastime 2003, in an incomprehensible gift to the nation, Bush’s EPA published new rules that would allow three times more mercury into the air as was allowed under the Clean Air Act. (You really have to wonder what these guys are thinking: don’t the Bush/Cheney offspring plan to procreate? What will their grandkids breathe, bottled air?)

Public Lands: The year 2003 saw the Bush/Cheney juggernaut move full-bore into a multifaceted effort to dismantle environmental protections on the United States’ public lands for the commercial interests of the few. In the most egregious use of double-speak since ‘Clear Skies’, Bush/Cheney foisted the ‘Healthy Forest Initiative’ on the public and Congress. The bill, touted as a way

(con’t on page 5 column 3)

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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 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. Contact John Nemjo for advertising rates.

Outings

Saturday, September 11 - Santonini Preserve

A great walk into the camp built on Newcomb Lake, a little less than 10 miles on the old carriage road, past the Ginat's Chair and the old farm that was part of the estate built around 1893. At the Great Camp we will discuss some of the history of the only Great Camp owned by the State. Fun for the family and last year we had two wonderful dogs with us enjoying a beautiful fall day in the Adirondacks. Call John at 370-4932 for details.

Saturday, September 18 - Woodlawn Preserve

Help us clean up and save this area of 167 +/- undeveloped acres in a Preserve in the City of Schenectady (see 'Conservation Projects' page 4). Starting at 9AM, bring workgloves, a small cart if you have one, and your energy; we'll review the history and you'll be glad you came. Call John at 370-4932.

Sunday, September 26 - Split Rock Tract

The longest stretch of undeveloped land left along Lake Champlain. We will walk around Hemlock Mountain to try to find Big Snake Bay and then onto Barn Rock Bay. Here we will find evidence of the Quarry which was started but never functioned after a terrible tragedy and discuss some of the long history of this area. Webb Royce Swamp is across Rt. 22J and, time permitting, can be visited, or a side trip up Pinnacle Mt. offers spectacular views of the Adirondacks from the east. Call John at 370-4932 for details.

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



Other Activities

Saturday, September 18, 10AM to 4PM - Wetlands and Bird Fest, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar

There will be tours of wetland areas and bird walks. The Hudson-Mohawk Group will be one of the many environmental organizations providing a booth with

educational information on wetlands. This is an opportunity to learn about the critical issues of wetlands and see them first-hand. Center programs are always a valuable resource for children and adults. To help our Group's booth, please contact Susan Lawrence (contact info in column 1 of this page).

Saturday, October 30th, 10AM - Reading the Mountains of Home - a lecture and outing led by Prof. John Elder

This is a joint program of the Grafton Lakes State Park and the Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy. Professor John Elder of Middlebury College will explore the relationship between our sense of place and our awareness of local stories -geological, ecological, and human. Following the lecture and brunch, interested participants can take an easy 2-3 mile hike along trails and old roads in the Shaver Pond area. Copies of *Reading the Mountains of Home* will be available for sale and can be signed by the author at the brunch. For registration and more information, visit www.friendsofgrafftonlakes.org and click on 'events'; or call Melissa Wright at Grafton Lakes State Park at (518) 279-1155.

Would You Like To Lead A Sierra Club Outing?

Share your love of the outdoors and meet some great people while doing it. Contact Bill Koebbeman at 399-5027

Activist's Corner

*Editor's Note - We would like to share with our readers some first hand accounts of Sierra Club members who have been involved in successful local environmental campaigns. We want to emphasize that preserving the dignity of our environment can have a positive outcome, and recognize the efforts of those who feel strongly and heed that call. Our congratulations this month go to **Louise Kirkpatrick** of Corinth, New York, and we thank her for sharing her experiences with us.*

We are the Citizens for Safe and Responsible Industry located in Corinth, NY. On April 19th, 2004 we formed this group to fight a Waste to Energy Incinerator proposed for our community. As a direct result of this proposal we delved into research on this topic and consulted Dr. Paul Connett in an effort to educate our community about the hazards of this type of industry. Dr. Connett is a tenured professor of Chemistry at St. Lawrence University. He warned us that for the diminutive amount of energy actually produced, the hazards and pollution of this project far out weighed the benefits.

Our community is situated at the Gateway to the Adirondacks, with the Hudson River weaving its way through our Village and Town. The majestic Adirondack Mountains are the views that embrace us. The proposed site for the incinerator is the old International Paper Mill bordering the Hudson River on 251 acres.

Beginning in April of 2003 with a 'secret tour' of American Ref-Fuel's Maryland Trash Plant, some local elected officials and key people in the development process were invited to the facility. In April, an article was published in the local papers informing the public of this Trash Plant visit. I was told at a Village Board Meeting they went as citizens and not elected officials and knew nothing more about the proposed incinerator.

March 11, 2004 a letter was received from American Ref-Fuel stating in order to go forward with the incinerator proposal, they needed an urgent request for an expression of interest by March 23, 2004, and a separate request for proposals (a bid for contract with NY City Department of Sanitation) by March 31st, 2004. If this bid had been accepted by New York City, 3500 tons of trash would be shipped to Corinth via rail and burned DAILY. This was my call to action; people needed to know what was happening.

Every week in the small local newspaper, I placed information on the toxic ash, dioxin, lead, and mercury emissions; how our food chain was being polluted, and the extensive health risks to people in the community. I wrote letters, and talked with other community groups and activists across the country by phone and e-mail, including the Sierra Club. The larger newspapers started writing stories and attending Village and Town Board Meetings, and my phone was ringing off the hook with people who wanted to get involved. A Petition to Oppose the Trash Plant was drawn up and published in a local newspaper, starting a response that became 3,449 signatures-strong (we have 6000 people in the Village and Town). People knocked on doors, stood on public sidewalks and in parking lots to obtain signatures. They had signs on their lawns, fences and vehicles stating 'NO TRASH PLANT'. Letters and phone calls flooded the Village and Town Halls in opposition to the incinerator and requesting the elected officials rescind the 'Letter of Interest.'

April 5th, 2004 our new Village Mayor Brad Winslow took his oath of office. Mayor Winslow published a detailed letter to the people in our local newspaper to address the now growing concerns regarding every aspect of the proposal and to come out in opposition to the project. Citizens for Safe and Responsible Industry confronted Village and Town Boards to provide an Information Forum. The request included speakers on both sides of the issue, and that the forum be open to the public.

June 16th, 2004 the Village Board met, with over 200 people and the news media attending. After hearing public comments on the issue, the Board voted 3 -0 to rescind the letter of interest.

June 22nd, 2004 was the date set for the Forum, and over 430 citizens attended that meeting. Dr. Connett spoke against the incinerator, and Ref-Fuel hired Laura Green, a Toxicologist, along with other speakers representing American Ref-Fuel. From the continued applause, Dr. Connett was well received by the people in attendance. American Ref-Fuel was not.

June 24th, 2004 the Town Board met with over 150 people and the news media attending. After hearing public comments on the issue the Town Board voted unanimously to rescind the letter of interest, thus removing Corinth from NY City's Department of Sanitation bid process.

Fighting this proposed incinerator became my full time job. There is power in numbers and they do speak to our elected officials. I hope this never happens to Corinth again, but at least now everyone knows someone is watching.

- Louise Kirkpatrick

Liberty...for all?



Giant Sequoias are the most massive trees on the planet—some stand as tall as the Statue of Liberty and date back 3,500 years, making them among the largest and oldest organisms on Earth. Now this historic conservation area is being threatened with plans to open the Giant Sequoia National Monument to the chainsaws of the logging industry. We need your help now—only an active citizenry can stop this destructive action that will forever damage treasures such as the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

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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.

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Conservation Projects - *John VanDeloo, Conservation Chair*

Great Flats Aquifer

Throughout our country and the world there is an ongoing challenge to keep clean, potable water available. Supplying water to over 200,000 people in the Capital District, the Great Flats Aquifer in Rotterdam is threatened as never before by sprawl and lax review by local officials. DEC has rejected the permits for one of the threats, the Putnam Woods Development, but the developer will be back. We have applied to Sierra National to take legal action if permits are approved in the future. If you want to help call 370-4932.

Wood Road, Clifton Park

Recognized for over a decade as an important habitat by Clifton park and the DEC for the survival of an endangered species, the area around Wood Road was to be protected according to a SEGR study done by Clifton Park and a contract signed by DEC, Clifton Park and a developer. Now these have been ignored and breached and the habitat bulldozed and removed by the truckload. Along with local activists, we will fight one step at a time on local, state and federal levels, if necessary, to reverse this wonton destruction of the Karner Blue Butterfly and its habitat. Call 370-4932 to get involved.

Corinth

Congratulations to Louise Kirkpatrick (see page 3) and the other activists who led the local grassroots action to block the burning of New York City garbage in the Adirondack Park.

Woodlawn Preserve

An area of 167 +/- acres containing over 400 native plant species, unique ecological areas, the highest dune in the Pine Bush, and wetlands that are the headwaters of the Lishakill Creek. The City of Schenectady has rejected development of the Preserve, but there are continued threats to this important area. We are asking New York State to add the Preserve to its Park system and perhaps obtain other lands to connect it to the Albany Pine Bush. To help out call 370-4932

Please join us at our next Conservation Committee Meeting Wednesday September 15th, 7PM, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church,, 21 Hackett Blvd, Albany.

You Can Make A Difference by Volunteering with the Hudson-Mohawk Group. To volunteer to work on conservation issues, environmental education programs, fundraising, election issues, outings, newsletter distribution or other Group activities, please use the contact information found on page 2.

Of Further Interest...

Trailpass/ATV Trails - Has anyone had experience with an organization called "Trailpass", which encourages construction of ATV trails on private land? We would like to know what rights property owners on adjacent parcels have in controlling the nuisance effects of this trail construction. Please contact Dan LaGasse c/o Sierra Club, 353 Hamilton St., Albany, N.Y. 12210.

Fuller Road, Queensbury - In 1995, without any public notice or input, the Queensbury Town Board passed a resolution illegally closing a middle section of Fuller Road within the Adirondack Park. Since then numerous officials have attempted to prevent public use by using barricades and intimidation, and have pretended the road has been transformed into private property, essentially gifting it to a former Corinth couple with political connections. Follow the nine year battle of a few courageous activists, and lend your support to this precedent setting cause - visit www.Fullerroad.com

(cont'd from page 1)

Help Build Democracy! Help Get Out The Environmental Vote! September 18 - 19, 2004

Join the bus trip for the Northeast's part in the National Sierra Club's "Environmental Voter Education Campaign". Help make sure that people who care about the environment get out and vote in the November election. Call Mark Bettinger or Mary Ann Jaffee in the Northeast Regional Office (518) 587-9166 if you are interested.

Nominations Sought For Executive Committee


The terms of the following members of the Executive Committee expire at the end of December 2004: Roger Gray, John Nemjo, Pete Sheehan, and Tom Blandy. The Group by-laws require the Nominating Committee to place six candidates, who must be Group members, on the ballot - two more individuals than terms expiring. 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 by suggesting potential candidates, who may include yourself. Contact Nominating Chair Janet Given-Chen, or Nominating Committee members Susan Lawrence, John VanDeloo, or Maureen Ferraro-Davis (contact info on page 2). Thanks for your help!

The Calendars Are Coming!

Next month we will be offering for sale Sierra Club 2005 Wilderness Wall Calendars, Engagement Calendars, and Holiday Greeting Cards.


Sierra Club Calendars are among the most popular nature calendars ever published. Their classic formats, awe-inspiring photography, and quality production have made them perennial favorites as gifts or for personal use.

It's not too early to start thinking about your holiday gift giving. Plan now and help support your local Sierra Club Group in their efforts to preserve our environment.



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"The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness" John Muir, *John Of The Mountains*, July 1890.

... - NOT!

to reduce property damage from catastrophic wildfires, in truth, exploited people's fear of forest fires to open remote old-growth forest areas to logging, while doing nothing to clear brush and thin trees around populated areas, as it purported to do.

Recognizing that a frontal assault to open pristine wilderness areas like the Arctic for oil and gas drilling were highly unpopular, the administration, simply by directives to federal land managers, authorized leasing five million new acres of public land for more than 83,000 new oil and gas wells in some of the nation's most sensitive environmental areas, such as the Alaska coastline, the Rocky Mountain Front Range, and river basins in Montana and Wyoming.

In July 200, the Tongass and Chugach National Forests' old growth areas fell to the administration's first of many 'exemptions' to the Clinton era 'Roadless Conservation Rule', opening these magnificent, old-growth, unique temperate rainforests to logging. Then, falling like timber cleared with a drag chain, the nation's roadless areas in Wyoming and Utah were also opened for logging and mining.

Sadly, the list goes on and on, including rollbacks in drinking water and wetland protections, roll-backs in hazardous waste site protections, roll-backs in prohibitions on ozone-layer damaging chemicals and much, much more.

Please check out the Sierra Club website, and click on 'wwatch' for a full accounting of the environmental travesties committed by the Bush/Cheny administration. Then, tell a friend about all you've learned, 'for our families and our future'.

(Ed. Note - Next month we look at Kerry's record on the environment)

Use Our Website:

For news on issues and activities, we invite you to use our website at www.newyork.sierraclub.org/ HUDSONMOHAWK

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Annual Awards Dinner
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