



Hudson/Mohawk Group September/October



HUDSON/MOHAWK GROUP SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2007 VOL. 31 NO. 4

SIERRA SOCIAL SCENE HEATS UP IN SUMMER TIME

Garage Sale and Barbeque Highlight How We Connect - Please Join Us!



Recent swimming and barbeque outing at the home of Steve and Laura Davis (2nd and 3rd from left) was a great chance to catch up, relax and enjoy each other's company.

Sometime in our pursuit of a cleaner, cooler environment, we can forget that people make all the difference in our efforts. Summer time is a great time to keep this in mind. We had two very sociable outings this summer to drive this point home. First, Steve and Laura Davis were kind enough to host us and allow us to talk about personal, environmental and other "stuff." With kids and family in tow, it was a most pleasant Sunday! Then on the social/fundraising side, we had a garage sale at the home of Pete, Margie and son Corey Sheehan where we raised \$150 for the Group. Many thanks to Sierra Club members Paul and Kitty Sieloff who donated great items and helped to keep things running smoothly. The plan is to do the same next year and expand it with some high end furniture, etc donated from S.C. members. So, hang on to those items and look for information in our Jan./Feb 2008 newsletter for the May 2008 garage sale.

And on the social side, look for information on the revamped Sierra Social being organized by Treasurer Jim DuFresne and our upcoming October fundraising dinner.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING – PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

By Susan Lawrence

The decision-making process for development of the Round Lake Bypass, a \$30 million State Department of Transportation project to construct a 1.6 mile bypass around the 600-resident Village of Round Lake in Saratoga County, demonstrates why we as environmentalists need to be vigilant about how planning is done for transportation projects. As we have indicated in earlier articles in this newsletter, the planned route of this Bypass will go right through 400 acres of woodlands, forests, the Ballston Creek Valley and the Zim Smith and Malta Trolley Line trails and straight to the 1350-acre Luther Forest in Malta, where one of more giant chip manufacturing plants may be built.

We feel that NYS DOT did not follow the requirements of the State Environmental Quality State Review Act or DOT's policy to follow the principles of "Context Sensitive Solutions" in planning for this project. In developing the draft and final Environmental Impact Statements for this project, NYSDOT dismissed from consideration alternatives that would have negated the need for constructing a bypass by rerouting traffic onto alternate routes and traffic calming techniques for traffic going directly through the village. They dismissed alternate routes south and north of the chosen Bypass route that would have avoided the impact to the 400 acres of open space. We have been working for a number of months with local activists to convince DOT to change their approach to the Bypass but so far to no avail.

The process for developing the Round Lake Bypass project demonstrates the need to: develop open space inventories, identifying "Critical Natural Areas", green corridors, significant areas of green space, trails and other important features of open space, such as watersheds, wetlands, and forests, to protect them from transportation projects, other development and pollution. The next step is developing open space plans and identifying ways, including funding options to project that open space. We need to get involved with other environment activists, including land conservancy groups, and community planning officials in these efforts. As new highways and other transportation projects play a critical role in development, including sprawl, we need to pay particular attention to them. (continued, Please see page 3)

Hudson Mohawk Group

Co-Chairs:*Pete Sheehan, 489-5803, Psheehan74@netscape.net -*Paul Caver:753-4205
PaulCaver@usadatanet.net
Conservation Chair:*Susan Lawrence,489-5721 SHLawr2@aol.com
Environmental Justice: *Aaron Mair, 465-8523, aaronmair@yahoo.com
Fundraising :Jim Dufresne: 233-7957, Jdufre1928@aol.com
John Nemjo, 279-0771, John-nemjo@aol.com
Membership/Volunteers: *Virginia Traver 489-5758 Virginiabt28@hotmail.com
Newsletter Editor: Michael Divak, divakm@strose.edu
Newsletter Distribution
Outings Chair: *Joe Gardner, 439-8719, igardnir@nycap.rr.com
Political Chair: Steve Redler 434-1540 steveredler@yahoo.com
Programs: vacant
Secretary : *Paul Caver:753-4205 PaulCaver@usadatanet.net
Social Chair: John Nemjo, 279-0771, Johnnemjo@aol.com
Tabling: *Virginia Traver
Treasurer: *Jim Dufresne
Webmaster: Tom Reynolds, hm-webmaster@newyork.sierraclub.org
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Energy: *Susan Lawrence and *Pete Sheehan
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***Executive Committee Members**
The Hudson-Mohawk Executive Committee Members meet the first Wednesday of every Month. Members are encouraged to attend! Please call the Co-Chairs 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 11208-8447. We reserve the right to edit and keep all articles. Views expressed by 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. This newsletter is also published on our Group website at: www.newyork.sierraclub.org/hudsonmohawk

Cool Cities Campaign is Albany Bound

By Pete Sheehan

As reported in this newsletter previously, the national Sierra Club's Cool Cities campaign is headed our way. We have had preliminary discussions with the Commissioner Bill Bruce of the Department of General Services (DGS) for the City of Albany who is supportive of the goals of the program. It was an encouraging meeting indeed. We are now awaiting word from the Mayor's office on when and where our first meeting is to be. A number of cities across the U.S. including Albany have signed on to the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. Now comes the hard part of actually rolling up our collective sleeves and putting the principals of the Campaign to work.

There are three strategies involved in the Cool Cities campaign which are:

- Cleaner/Greener Vehicles
- Energy Efficiency
- Renewable Energy

Accordingly, we will be looking at everything from energy audits of city buildings and properties to installing compact fluorescent light bulbs to integrating cleaner burning city vehicles and installing solar photovoltaics and/or solar thermal systems up on city-owned roof tops. We are not limited to these options however and helping the City of Albany put together a sound plan will be our first goal.

To get more information on the Cool Cities campaign, please navigate to: www.coolcities.us At the site, you can read about real action taken by such cities as New York which installed energy efficient lighting in ALL of its traffic signals, saving \$6 million a year in energy and maintenance costs. It also contains useful information on how to get started in your municipality.

We will need help doing such things as promoting, educating, researching, grant writing and many other activities if this effort is to succeed in Albany. If you'd like to get involved or start in your area, please contact Virginia Travers at virginiabt28@hotmail.com (489-5758) or Pete Sheehan at psheehan74@netscape.net (489-5803) for more information.

Comprehensive Planning to Begin in the City of Albany

The City of Albany is taking another step forward toward what we hope will be creation and adoption of a City wide comprehensive master plan. To say the least, a lot of actions have to take place before this is reality but important steps were taken in August to make this happen. First, the City's Department of Development and Planning received a grant from the American Institute of Architects under its Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) program. The SDAT team, comprised of sustainable design professionals has been visiting and evaluating Albany and its potential for sustainable design. It states that it upholds the values of multidisciplinary approaches to planning and objectivity of all participating team members. A number of our Hudson Mohawk Group Executive Committee members participated in the local charettes (planning/envisioning exercises), held from August 6-8 at the College of St. Rose which were well attended. However, we are concerned about adequate representation from the Arbor Hill, West Hill and South End communities. These areas have been neglected for too long and we want to ensure they are afforded a place at the table. As was noted by Co-Chair Pete Sheehan during the charette, Albany suffers from an image problem of disinvestment, abandoned buildings, crime and other urban issues in the neighborhoods mentioned above. Any and all plans must address these. We want to ensure that the final product does not just become another set of books up on the shelf of Albany's officials. We plan to participate in a positive and forthright manner with the purpose of creating a meaningful framework for a master plan which encourages people to move into Albany and make it a destination.

OUTINGS

(Key: H=Hiking, E=Education, C= Conservation, T=Trail Work, B= Boat)

Sunday, September 9 **North Dome & Sherrill (Sierra Club & Catskill 3500)** Distance: 6.5 mi. Ascent: 2500', Elev. 3610',3540'. A moderately paced bushwack. Bad weather cancels. Meeting Place/Time: Please contact leaders to register between Sep. 4 - 7. Leaders: David & Carol White #859 & 860; ccswhite@juno.com; 315-853-1070. **H**

Tuesday, September 18 **Evening Paddle - Hudson & Mohawk Rivers (B/C) (Sierra Club & ADK)** Launch either at the south end of First St. in Waterford or the west end of 123rd St. in Lansingburgh and meet on the river. Be on the water before 5:30 PM. We will visit the falls on the south side of Peebles Island then head down the Hudson and poke up into the Mohawk's south branch. Just show up. Leaders: Dave Pisaneschi, 459-5969 & Ellen Luchsinger. **B**

Thursday, September 20 **ALANDER MTN. (C+)** Alander is a long favorite of mine in the Southern Berkshires. At 5 miles round trip with 800 feet elevation gain, the trail crosses streams, winds through mountain laurel and blueberry groves, and ends at the summit with panoramic views. Meet at 9:00 AM at the Defreestville 4 & 43 Park and Ride Lot. Leader: Virginia Boyle Traver, 489-5758 or virginiabt28@hotmail.com. **H**

Saturday, September 22 **Siamese Ponds Trail Work (B+) (Sierra Club & ADK)** We'll hike in from the Rt. 8 trailhead to the ponds, with special emphasis on the section of trail from the lean-to to the ponds. Activities will include trail work (brushing out, water bars, etc.) and trash removal. Nothing is going to be difficult or physically demanding, but this is a work trip. This is your chance to join the Wilderness Committee on a work trip in to the Chapter's wilderness area and give something back to the mountains. Bad weather postpones to the next day or following weekend. Leader: David Pisaneschi, 459-5969 or dpisanes@nycap.rr.com. **H, C, T**

Saturday, September 29 **National Public Lands Day** - Protect the Pine Bush Preserve. 9 AM - Noon. Please join us on **Preserve Pick-up** in cleaning up the Pine Bush. We will be working along the roadsides and trails of the Preserve. As last year, Sierra Club offers to support our volunteers. Meet at the Pine Bush Discovery Center, 195 New Karner Road, Albany. Contact Joe Gardner to sign up. 518-439-8719, jgardnir@nycap.rr.com. **C, T**

Friday - Sunday, October 12 - 14 **Camp Hoover near Preble, NY (between Syracuse and Cortland). - Outings Leader Training (OLT) Workshops** The purpose of this training is to provide leaders with the skills to address leadership and group management issues that may arise on short outings (day-hikes) and longer duration, more remote outings. Leader training is a never-ending process, so whether you're an old hand or have never led before, you're invited to attend a weekend of interactive learning. Check-in begins at 5:00 pm. & dinner from 6:00 pm and ends after workshop close, raffle and lunch on Sunday around 1 p.m. The cost is \$45. This includes all meals, snacks, lodging (bunk style), materials, raffle entry, and an Outings t-shirt. As an added benefit, this workshop will fulfill both the Outings Leader Training 101 and Outings Leader Training 201 requirements. REGISTRATION - register online, at ww.sierraclub.org/outings/training/ Limited to 50 people - first come, first served. Questions? Contact the Sierra Club Outdoor Activities Training Manager at outings.training@sierraclub.org or at (415) 977-5711. **E**

Saturday, October 20 **Historic Forest Coverage at Grafton Lakes State Park (Sierra Club, GLSP, GHS & RTLC)** Geographic Information System (G.I.S.) has mapped and analyzed forest coverage in Grafton Lakes State Park, using both current maps and maps from over 200 years ago on settlement, forest, soils, terrain and hydrology. As a result the reforestation that has taken place in the past

century can be compared to the original old growth forest. W. F. Broderick of the State Archives will present on the results of his work. Following the brunch and presentation we will take an auto tour (with limited hiking) of the State Park. Meet at the Grafton Inn on Route 2 at 9:30 for the brunch, which is by reservation only (made by Tuesday, October 16). The brunch costs \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. For brunch reservations and additional information call Melissa Miller at Grafton Lakes State Park at 279-1155, or email Melissa.A.Miller@oprhp.state.ny.us, or the Rensselaer-Taconic Land Conservancy at 238-2832, or email RTLCL@RTLCL.org. **E**

(continued Transp from P.1)
The State Environmental Quality Review Act and associated regulations require the lead agencies to consider alternatives to a proposed project and the environmental impact of the project and possible alternatives as well as ways to mitigate the environmental impact of the project or its alternatives. SEQRA prohibits segmentation of the review of the consideration of projects and their alternatives. We view all the planning involved in developing the chip fabs in Luther Forest to be done on a segmented basis, including first the new zoning and other requirements for construction of the chip fabs, the new County water system to supply water for chip fabs, and the related Round Lake Bypass. In addition, the State DOT's Context Sensitive Solutions principles require a comprehensive examination of a number of factors in deciding on how transportation projects will be considered by the State DOT and other parties involved in the decision-making process, including the affected communities. These principles (developed on a national basis by the National Association of State Highway Officials) require: that the proposed project "preserves the natural needs of the areas", "satisfies both the transportation and community needs as agreed to by a full range of stakeholders" and "shows measurable success in improving the community's environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic and natural resources, above and beyond mitigation requirements". This process requires early and continuous public involvement in project development. That is where we as environmentalists have a right and need to get involved from the start. For more information on "Context Sensitive Design" go to: www.gtempo.org/Programs/Resources/ContextSensitiveDesign.htm.

SAVE THE DATE!! Sierra Club Annual Fundraising Dinner

Friday, October 26 beginning at 5:30.

Check out our web site for details soon at:

www.newyorksierraclub.org/hudsonmohawk

Be An Underwriter!

Contact Michael Divak,

Newsletter Editor, for rates at
divakm@strose.edu

Saturday, September 29: Hike and Cleanup in the Adirondacks: Join us and enjoy the beautiful vistas offered up at the **Cascade Lakes** in the Adirondacks. This is our semi annual cleanup along Route 73 on the way to Lake Placid. The cleanup will be followed by a short hike in the afternoon. Contact Ralph and Doreen at 346-2818.

SIERRA SOCIAL IS BACK!! If you are a new member of the Sierra Club or one already and looking for a chance to get out and talk about the issues and **have fun**, this is for you. We'll meet at Uncommon Grounds in Albany on Tuesday, September 25 beginning at 8:00 PM. Look for our table in the back. Contact Pete at 489-5803 for details.

Call for Nominations to the Executive Committee:

We have four members who are up for reelection to the Hudson Mohawk Executive Committee. They are: Virginia Travers, John Van Deloo, Paul Caver and Susan Lawrence, plus one open seat (total of nine slots on the Committee.) **We encourage our members to get involved and put their names up for nomination.** Please contact Pete Sheehan at psheehan74@netscape.net (489-5803) if you are interested. The ballots will be included in the next newsletter (November/December.)

Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group

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Sierra Club

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