



The Trailblazer

The Niagara Group of The Sierra Club • <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara/> • Vol. 47 No. 1 Jan2012

Public Comment Period Extended!

On November 30, 2011, the DEC extended its public comment on the Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (SGEIS) concerning high volume hydrofracking and horizontal drilling until January 11, 2012. If you have not made a comment to the DEC concerning this vital issue, please go to our Atlantic Chapter's website at www.newyork.sierraclub.org and click on the gas drilling page. You will be directed on how to make an electronic comment to the DEC, or how to write your comments by regular mail to the DEC and Governor Cuomo. You may write more than one letter if there is an additional topic to mention. The Chapter website also permits you to be linked to sites that request a ban of the horizontal drilling technique in New York. You may also go to www.amillionfrackingletters.com if you wish to forward letters requesting a ban.

In months since our last newsletter, thousands of people attended four DEC public hearings on this crucial issue opposing the proposed SGEIS. Our Group has had segments of ads on WNED-AM directing listeners to our site www.stopdrilling-goclean.org. It has been revealed that the gas industry has spent \$747 million in the past 10 years promoting its drilling plan through political contributions, lobbying, and media propaganda. Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett, an avid supporter of horizontal fracking, received \$1.6 million in contributions from the industry. The inability of landowners in drilling areas to sell their property or obtain mortgages has been documented. So has destruction of the the landscape and waters of Pennsylvania, and the deceptive techniques used in the signing of gas leases.

If we really want jobs in NYS, we should follow the example of Ontario, Canada which has created 20,000 clean energy jobs since it adopted a Feed-in-Tariff in 2009. Ontario is predicting 50,000 renewable energy jobs by 2012. Its Conservative party, which hoped to knock out the Province's green energy job plan, was surprised by a stunning defeat by the Liberals and NDP in October, 2011 elections. Once clean energy is developed, the benefits to the general population and voters become clear.

A Sierran of Note

If anyone in our Niagara Group is Mister Sierra Club, it is Richard Lippes. An environmental attorney, Richard has been a member of our Executive Committee since 1971! He was chairman on four different occasions. He has served on the Atlantic Chapter as chair and has been Chapter Legal Counsel for the past 39 years. He was the first chairperson of the National Sierra Club Hazardous Substances Committee. The honors go on and on.

Richard continues to be deeply involved in our local western New York environmental efforts, not only through the Sierra Club but with legal advice for many other environmental groups. We are fortunate to have a person of such expertise and dedication serving among us.

Three Great Questions

By Lynda Schneekloth

1. If fracking is essential to America's energy independence, why aren't the frackers required to sell their gas in this country?
2. If fracking is safe for the environment, why did it need exemptions from the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts?
3. If fracking is safe for human health, why is it being banned in NYC and Syracuse watersheds?

Always Alert

Through the years, the Sierra Club stays on top of current issues with regard to the environment and mobilizes its members and others to become educated and active in protecting our health and home.

For many years we have been sounding the alarm about global warming and providing good documentation concerning the dangers caused by pollution. Recent news reports from responsible scientific groups warn that the rate of increase in global warming is exceeding earlier projections and despite our efforts the situation is becoming worse. Dramatic and destructive weather is one result of this. We need to redouble our efforts.

On the local scene we also continue to fight against any proposed expansion by Chemical Waste Management in Niagara County. Such expansion is not needed, according to the State Department of Environmental Conservation, and of course endangers our Great Lakes, our health, and our general well being. CWM continues its efforts to gain a permit for a major expansion.

In recent months we have been dealing effectively with a new issue, that of hydrofracking. This paper has carried many informative articles about the problems this process causes, and members of our group have written persuasive articles that have appeared in the Buffalo News and elsewhere. We continue to meet with political leaders in an attempt to convince them that the risks far outweigh the benefits. The film "Gasland" has been shown to many audiences.

Of course we have also worked to protect forests, both in Allegany and around Niagara Community College, and elsewhere. This article does not mention all the causes with which we continue to be involved.

For those who want to know about the environment, what the dangers are, how to protect it, and how to become active, the Sierra Club offers an opportunity for education and service.

ELECTION

Welcome to our new ExCom members for 2012: incumbents Richard Lippes, Lynda Schneekloth, Sara Schultz, and new members Pamela Hughes, Roger Cook and Larry Snider. Many thanks to our outgoing ExCom members Liz Kaszubski, Virginia Snider and the Rev. Charles Lamb, who have served the Niagara Group for many years.

The six elected members named above join six other members in forming the 12-member Executive Committee. The new members will serve a 2 year

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Niagara Group E-Mail News

The Niagara Group is expanding its e-mail communications. We will continue to have one to two "broadcast" or information only e-mails a month and will be adding an additional e-mail through Convio.

Through this new Convio program, participants will be able to receive (and respond to) Niagara Group Emails, Action Alerts, Surveys, Letters to the Editor (LTE), Call Alerts, and Surveys that are pertinent to local issues/needs.

Some Niagara members are already receiving our Niagara Group "broadcast" e-mails.

If you are not receiving Niagara Group e-mail and would like to Opt-In - you can either:

- 1) Use the sign up page below: http://action.sierraclub.org/site/PageServer?page-name=SignUp_GRP_Niagara_SignUp, or
- 2) Contact sierraclubangela@gmail.com.

A New Co-Editor for the Trailblazer

After 10 years, and at least 40 issues, it is time for me to relinquish the job of co-editor of our Niagara Group newsletter. This is my last issue. Fortunately, Gretchen White, the co-editor who formats the paper and delivers it to the printer, is continuing in her position. And Pamela Hughes, a new member of the Executive Committee and a dedicated environmentalist, will become the new co-editor along with her. We're grateful to Pamela for stepping forward in this way.

I have had wonderful cooperation and have enjoyed the work. Many Sierrans have contributed articles voluntarily or upon my request. There have been few complaints and more expressions of appreciation for the news that has appeared. I've tried to be balanced, not concentrating too much on my own environmental priorities but covering a wide range of important issues.

Deadlines for future issues are March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1. Once copy is received my hardest job has always been what to shorten or leave out! Our paper isn't large enough to cover all that needs to be shared. I am grateful that Linda Ciesielski, daughter of our chairperson Bob, is webmaster for us and puts the articles that don't appear in the printed copy on our webpage. They can be read there at www.newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara.

I intend to stay active in the Niagara Group. We have many new members and I do believe it is healthy for some of the jobs to rotate and no one to become entrenched in one position too long. I'll probably be contributing more articles for consideration now!

Thank you for the trust you've put in me in allowing me to edit your newspaper for ten years!

~ Charles Lamb

VISIT OUR WEB PAGE!
www.newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara

The Trailblazer: Your Communication Tool

by Charles Lamb

The Trailblazer is the quarterly publication of the Niagara Group of the Sierra Club.

Most articles, over the past few months, have been written or edited by myself or by one of the Executive Committee members, such as Larry Beahan, Art Klein, Bob Ciesielski, Liz Kaszubski, Sara Schultz, Linda Schneekloth, Angie Knisley, or others.

There is no requirement that only Executive Committee members may write. Of course the editor

must choose among articles, perhaps shortening or editing some. And some are referred to the web page. Any member of the Sierra Club who receives this news letter is invited to submit articles for review and possible inclusion. If you have a strong feeling about an environmental issue, submit an article!

Give serious thought to writing... let's make our newsletter reflective of the views and commitments of our entire membership! Email your articles to Pamela Hughes at Trailblazer@roadrunner.com.

Sen. Grisanti Will Help Robert Moses Parkway Removal

State Senator Mark Grisanti has stated that he will bring the concerns of the Niagara Falls City Tourism Advisory Board to the attention of the State Parks Commissioner and Western District State Parks Director.

Grisanti is quoted in the Niagara Gazette as saying that removing the northern portion of the Parkway is an expensive project but that there are other ways to get to Lewiston.

Several members of the Tourism Board had expressed great dissatisfaction with the lack of progress and the long time that has gone by without action, despite studies and recommendations.

The Sierra Club has long been on record as favoring removal of the Parkway along the gorge of the Niagara River.

"Election" Continued

term, for 2012-2013. They join continuing members who are serving for 2011-2012. they may seek re-election in the fall of 2012 for the 2013-2014 term.

The continuing members are Larry Beahan, Arthur Klein, Paul Maine, Tim Tielman, Bob Ciesielski, and Angela Knisley.

Of course all Sierrans, and guests, are invited to our monthly meetings and may speak, join in the discussion, and bring items to our attention. The Executive committee members, however, have greater responsibility in that they are the ones who actually vote on motions.

The group meets on fourth Tuesdays from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at Daemen College on Main Street in Buffalo. We meet on the 2nd floor of Duns Scotus Hall, which is the building nearest Main Street. Ample free parking is available. There is an elevator. The second floor is two floors up from the ground floor. Our room assignment changes sometimes but signs are posted along the floor indicating the classroom in use for our meeting. Come!

2012 Will Be Year of Decision Regarding CWM Expansion

by Charles Lamb

According to the Department of Environmental Conservation, the permit application for expansion being prepared by Chemical Waste Management will be complete sometime in 2012.

Despite a finding by the DEC that there is no need for this expansion, and despite the fact that it will be harmful to the environment, health, and welfare of the area in my opinion, there is great danger that the permit will be approved. The Sierra Club and others who care about the environment will need to fight strongly against this expansion. Below is a short summary of some of the issues involved:

Chemical Waste Management (CWM), a subsidiary of Waste Management, is the only licensed commercial hazardous waste landfill in the Northeastern section of the U.S. Toxic materials are trucked here from 30 states. Trucks pass the Lewiston Porter schools located near the landfill.

The landfill is located in the watershed area of Lake Ontario. Twenty percent of the liquid surface fresh water of the planet is located in the Great Lakes.

CWM has been fined many times for violations. PCBs, which can cause cancer, have been found in the Lake. Trucks bringing the toxics have often been found to leak en route to the site. The New York State Department of Health has stated that the frequency of some types of childhood cancer is greater in the area around CWM and the Schools than elsewhere in the State.

CWM's landfill, by their own statement, will be full and closed within 5 years unless they are allowed to expand. They are preparing a permit application to greatly enlarge their territory for a new hazardous landfill to be opened.

The Department of Environmental Conservation of New York State, in its recently issued Siting Plan, has said that there is no need for another toxic waste landfill in New York State. However, the same Siting Plan says that a permit might be granted if it were for the benefit of the community.

CWM is making gifts to many community groups, such as the Fire Department, Library, etc. and publishes and distributes brochures frequently in Niagara County stating how they are good neighbors and are of benefit to the community. The Lewiston Porter School Board declined to receive a monetary gift, stating that that would be inconsistent with their position of opposition to CWM expansion.

The Town of Lewiston, Village of Lewiston, Village of Youngstown, Lewiston Porter School Board, and the Niagara County Legislature, as well as the Erie County Legislature, have all gone on record opposing expansion of CWM. The Niagara County Legislature has stated in a resolution that the presence of a hazardous landfill is detrimental to the economic well being of the County.

Some years ago Residents for Responsible Government, a local environmental group, lobbied for a law prohibiting permits for any hazardous landfill in the watershed area of the Great Lakes. It passed almost unanimously but was vetoed by Governor Pataki. The group rallied and got the same law passed again, only to see it vetoed by Governor Spitzer. Reasons given were far from convincing, but it was noted that Waste Management had made large donations to both Governors' campaigns.

The Department of Environmental Conservation has stated that landfilling is the least desirable method of disposing of hazardous wastes. Better methods, as also outlined by the Sierra Club, would be (1) to produce fewer toxics, (2) to recycle them, (3) to decontaminate them on site. If landfilling is to be done at all, it should be far from human habitation and certainly far from the Great Lakes.

While preserving the quality of our water is of importance to the whole country, those of us who live in western New York near the Great Lakes and who have concern for the environment have a special responsibility to be good stewards of the Lakes and their fresh water.

Large Delegation Attends Dansville DEC Hearing of 11/16

by Bob Ciesielski

Thanks to Niagara Group people who attended the hydrofracking SGEIS hearings before the DEC in Dansville New York on Wednesday November 16th. Because of the speaking schedule only Angie Knisley, Jay Wopperer and myself were able to speak. However, Art Klein, Lynda Schneekloth, Larry Snider, Vicki Southall and Judy Fitzgerald-Dolan were present at the hearings. Another 10 people came down from Buffalo on the Food & Water watch bus, and there were also other Sierra Club members, including P.J. and two ladies who have lobbied with us in the past.

Angie gave a great presentation on concerns as a private water well owner in a rural setting. Jay spoke to an accidental blowout in Cattaraugus County several years ago which extended over a mile along the surface features. Jay also mentioned the availability of clean energy development in Germany and the number of jobs produced. I spoke to the amount of money going into the fossil fuel propaganda campaign (three quarters of a billion dollars in 10 years), the viable alternative of renewable development through feed-in-tariff, including biogas and wind income for farmers, and the questionable life expectancy of casing cement and the effect of tens of thousands of wells.

Roger Downs and Caitlin Pixley from Albany staff were there. Roger and several others challenged the manner in which the hearings were being conducted, including the doubling up of the SGEIS hearings with the hearing for drilling regulations. Rachel Treichler and Hal Bauer also spoke. There were a number of complaints from people who wanted to speak but couldn't. Only 60 people spoke in the morning session, although 154 people had submitted speaking cards. Most of the potential speakers would have been against hydrofracking.

Many of the pro-frackers were farmers trying to hold onto their land, who have been fed a steady diet of industry propaganda by their landowner groups. Statements such as "hydrofracking's been going on for 40 years ... the chemicals are safe ... we trust the DEC ... this is an economic panacea ... we toured the PA sites and there are all pristine ... and there are no problems with drilling in PA" were standard rote.

Opponents organized a large press conference. The Finger Lake residents are very concerned about water quality and the changing of the entire nature of lakes region – to an industrial landscape which will never be recovered.

Thanks again to all..

The Spiritual Dimension of Environmentalism

A desire to protect our health and the health of our children motivates many to become environmentalists. For others, protecting our beautiful earth and waters from being spoiled is a strong reason for involvement. For still others, there is a religious motivation.

People with a spiritual commitment see creation as a gift from God and a trust from God. We are to be stewards, caretakers of the environment. The earth is not ours to despoil, but to value and protect. What we do is as directly related to religious service as attending worship, teaching in religious education, or singing praises.

Scientists and religious leaders may approach the need to protect the environment with different emphases, but with the same conclusion. We must protect our home! All other worthy causes become irrelevant if we destroy our place of being.

Surely only the uniformed, indifferent, or those motivated by short-term greed will fail to want to learn more and do more to protect our fragile environment from reckless assault.

We may never have the funds to counter the propaganda of those who wish to use our natural resources for short term profit, but we can win the struggle by enlisting more and more people in the worthy cause of saving the environment. We hope our Niagara Chapter of the Sierra Club and this Trailblazer will be effective in that effort.