



The Trailblazer

The Niagara Group of The Sierra Club • <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara/> • Vol. 46 No. 1 Jan2011

Banning Hydrofracking

In an historic vote, the New York State Assembly enacted a temporary ban on hydraulic fracturing which will remain in effect until May 15, 2011. The bill, *A11443B/S08129B*

The de facto moratorium that has been in effect for the past two years can be attributed to Governor Paterson because he ordered the NYS DEC to prepare a new environmental impact standards for issuing permits for high-volume hydraulic fracturing and the DEC has yet to finalize its work.

- Although the Governor vetoed the bill, he did extend a ban on drilling in the Marcellus Shale. He didn't want to ban all types of drilling everywhere, he said, but did put a halt toward the proposed hydrofracking in an extremely vulnerable area, so on the whole environmentalists applaud that move.

- On November 17th Pittsburgh became the first city in the nation to ban drilling outright. Residents of that city already have had a taste of fracking - literally. Beginning in 2008 the city's drinking water began turning smelly and brown after huge quantities of drilling wastewater were dumped into the Monongahela River, which supplies the city.

- The day after Thanksgiving, Governor Paterson acknowledged the role ordinary citizens have played in defeating dangerous drilling saying "This is a very good example of public participation. Our DEC...originally ruled that hydrofracking would not affect the water quality in the area, but we've received additional information and have not been able to come to a conclusion as to whether or not this is a good idea... We're not going to risk public safety or water quality... At this point, I would say that the hydrofracking opponents have raised enough of an argument to thwart us going forward at this time."

GROW WNY Has Information for You

by Angela Knisely

The Niagara Group of the Sierra Club has joined the Western New York Environmental Alliance (WNYEA) and is now part of the GrowWNY Website - <http://growwny.org>

GrowWNY (Green Renaissance of WNY) is a local source of information about living green--powered by more than 150 organizations collaborating for our regional environment.

Here, you can find information on everything from living greener to ways to enjoy the many natural resources our region has to offer. You can also find out how to get involved in the many projects being led by the nonprofit partners around the region. These projects range from beach clean ups to tree plantings to meetings where advocate support is needed to show policymakers why green votes are important votes.

Opposition to Jetboats Grows

by Bob Baxter

For years Lewiston resident Jerry Williams watched jet boats roaring up and down the lower Niagara River, at first just a few of them, then more. There was a lot not to like about them, including that they were detracting from the quality of life in the Village, the quaint, serene place that so many appreciate, but what really pushed the issue too far was when the Village sold a sizable chunk of public waterfront property to the Whirlpool Jet Boat business for one dollar.

When Williams called for a meeting in the Village Pub on 29 November, well over 100 people showed up to voice their displeasure with this waterfront give-away, the disruption jet boat wakes cause for small craft fishing, sailing, damage to fish spawning areas, shoreline erosion so severe that plants rare to our region have been destroyed along with the substrate they grew in, light pollution from Canadian docking areas, fleets of tourist buses parking in the Village, and the general noisy intrusion of a carnival amusement ride into an otherwise scenic river that extends far beyond the Village.

For the aforementioned reasons, the Niagara Heritage Partnership strongly supports Williams in his efforts to curtail the Whirlpool Jet Boat activities in the lower Niagara River. The Buffalo-Niagara Riverkeeper also supports these efforts. (It is NHP's hope that the jet boat operation will be "curtailed" out of existence.) To find out more and join in the fight, check out: www.savethelowerniagarariver.com

Let your voice be heard!
Bob Baxter, Conservation Chair
Niagara Heritage Partnership

An Author To Be Commended

Our Executive Committee member Larry Beahan writes for various purposes. Sometimes he writes informative and hard hitting letters to public officials on our behalf. Often he writes letters to the editor to alert the public to environmental concerns. He has also authored several books.

Now we see his picture and articles frequently in the Buffalo News as he writes on matters of human interest. Recently there was an intriguing article about the trolleys of days gone by, and how much they are missed.

While the article was nostalgic, it also was environmentally sensitive, reminding us of the better life we had when public transportation was more available.

GO TO OUR WEB PAGE
www.newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara

Read the following longer articles there:

- **Chris Burger's Fact Filled Presentation on Hydrofracturing & Horizontal Drilling**

- **A report by Nan & Walter Simpson of Bill McKibben's speech about climate warming.**

- **Lynda Schneckloth's report on the WNY Environmental Alliance 2010 Congress**

Niagara Group Elects Officers

Six persons were chosen to serve on the Executive Committee of the Niagara Group in the fall election. They will serve 2 year terms, joining 6 others who have one year remaining in their terms.

Those elected are: Larry Beahan, who led the ballot, Bob Ciesielski, Art Klein, Angie Knisley, Tim Tielman, and Paul Maine.

Comments on Robert Moses Parkway

by Charles Lamb

Date: Tuesday, November 30, 2010 9:41 PM
From: clamb9@roadrunner.com
To: Moses.Parkway.North@oprhp.state.ny.us
Subject: Comments re Niagara Gorge Corridor

I attended the meeting at the Niagara Falls Public Library on Nov. 30, and am now submitting my comments. Thank you for considering them.

1. It is obvious that there are totally opposed opinions on what should be done. That means it is time for those in decision making roles to take everything into account and make a decision, even if it is an unpopular one. Do the right thing, not politically, but for the long range good of the area.

2. The person presiding did a fantastic job; it isn't his fault there is no consensus.

3. Here's a story to illustrate a point. I lived in E. Aurora before the Aurora Expressway (Route 400) was built. When it was proposed, and people who lived on Maple Road in E. Aurora heard that there would be an exit onto their street, they were up in arms! Too much traffic on a residential street, etc. But that exit onto Maple was done and it wasn't as troublesome as they thought. Now nobody protests it; everyone is used to it.

By the same token, Route 104 is a straight, direct road from Niagara Falls past the Library, City Hall, and straight up to Lewiston. People living there fear traffic increase, etc. That need not happen! Think how little traffic is on the Robert Moses Parkway now. If 104 was improved and made attractive all the people who live in Lewiston would discover that there is still an excellent corridor north.

4. I live in Youngstown; don't think that everyone who lives North of the City is against removal of the Parkway.

5. Tourism is the wave of the future for us. Love Canal hurt us; abandoned factories hurt us; Chemical Waste Management is a huge detriment. Tourism is the answer for us. A beautiful, natural park along the Gorge can do wonders for our area.

6. All of this leads me to the conclusion that my own hope is that you simply strengthen your resolve to face up to people who will be angry and move ahead with total removal of the Parkway.

-Charles Lamb

Why Get Involved?

by Charles Lamb

What is worth your time and energy? Everyone needs to have a set of values, and some causes that stretch one beyond self-centeredness. Those who strive only for self gratification always end up empty and dissatisfied. But those who find something to believe in, and who give themselves to that cause, find happiness as a byproduct.

A wise person once said that whatever your job in life happens to be, of course you have to “pay the rent.” By that he meant you have to do those things that are implicit in your employment, those things that your job requires. But then beyond that, he said, one needs to find something more. You need to pour yourself into something you care deeply about, and try to make a difference that will live after you.

There are many worthwhile causes. Parenting, of course, is one. Some get involved helping foster kids, or in volunteer work through organizations such as Girl Scouts. For someone else, it may be volunteering in a hospital, or at an SPCA. Some find their fulfillment through their occupations. For instance, a teacher may devote herself or himself beyond what is required by taking a special interest in helping a student who needs extra attention. A scientist may devote himself to finding a cure for some disease.

Each person can find their own interest, the subject that pricks their conscience, the one that becomes not a chore but a delight. They want to give more and more time to it; it is exciting and rewarding.

No cause is more basic than protection of the environment. Think about it. If we destroy our home, our base for life, the other causes go down the drain. Educating people, curing people, helping people in any way depends upon the fact that people have a place to live. If we make our earth-home so polluted that life is unsustainable, then there is no foundation upon which any other good cause can exist.

Readers of The Trailblazer are, no doubt, already convinced that protection of the environment is a worthy goal. Some become more involved than others. Opportunities abound for growth in our commitments.

The Sierra Club is the largest environmental organization in the United States. It has a chapter for New York State, and a group for western New York. While there are many other worthy environmental organizations existing, only a few have local groups. The Niagara Group of the Sierra Club offers opportunities for environmentally concerned people to interact with others who share their values, and to find ways to become more directly involved in environmental actions.

The Niagara Group has about 2,000 members. If one joins the Sierra Club that automatically makes one a member of the Niagara group if you live here, and a subscriber to the Trailblazer. Some people may be content just contributing and reading. But there is more that you can do!

The Executive Committee of the Group meets monthly at Daemen College. Anyone may attend. If you come, you’ll find a group of highly committed and very knowledgeable people there. As you hear their reports you’ll find yourself becoming more interested and involved.

Of course if going to meetings is not your “thing,” there are short-term projects for which one can volunteer. Sometimes we need to make phone calls or send e-mails to elected officials urging support of certain bills. Sometimes we need to be at a public event to hand out literature and provide a presence behind a display table. Sometimes we may have a chance to participate in hikes and canoe trips. We can invite others to become involved as well.

Don’t let your life go by without finding your cause and becoming an activist for it! If you agree that protecting the environment is of uttermost importance, and if you believe that the Sierra Club is an organization dedicated to that end, and if you want to find a local group through which you can learn and serve, you are invited to do so!

The Niagara Group of the Sierra Club is for you!

Letter from Lynda Schneekloth Concerning the Buffalo Waterfront

TO: Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation

RE: Buffalo Waterfront

Dear Corporation,
You have the responsibility and privilege to plan for Buffalo’s most public waterfront. I restate that this is the public’s waterfront, and any plans and expenditures should come with the blessing of this community. That being said, I strongly support the current proposal by PPG and others for you to halt all activity for a given period of time so that the larger community can be involved in this process in light of the withdrawal of Bass Pro, your centerpiece.

This moratorium should also be instituted because of changes in the region and world at large. The planning process when begun was focused on a ‘festival’ market idea – a great idea for the 1970s and 1980s. It is now 2010, climate change is no longer disputed, we are in a major recession, and the world as we had anticipated even as late as 2004 is no longer here. It is time to reassess what this front room of the City of Buffalo might be, and how to make it work for all the citizens.

I am going to go through a series of proposals for different parts of the waterfront that I believe should be considered as you move forward. All are premised on four ideas:

- the waterfront belongs to everybody and should be totally publicly accessible;
- the process by which any development occurs should be equitable and used for public services, not subsidies;
- the public infrastructure improvements should focus on public transport and not cars;

The Latest Regarding CWM Expansion Plans

The Department of Environmental Conservation has completed its long delayed Siting Plan. The plan carries very good news which we celebrate as a victory. The plan declares in no uncertain words that there is no need for another toxic waste landfill and says that is the primary finding of the plan.

The problem that still exists, though, is that later the siting plan says that a permit might still be granted if it could be shown that such a landfill would be of economic benefit to the community.

The Niagara County Legislature has passed a resolution saying that CWM is an economic negative, holding down property values and causing people not to wish to move to Niagara County. The Town of Lewiston and the Lewiston Porter School Board have already stated opposition to any expansion by CWM.

However, CWM is making large monetary gifts to many groups to show how beneficial they are. To their credit, the School Board refused such a gift. But fire departments, libraries, a hospital, and other groups don’t see the ramifications and simply think it is foolish to refuse to accept monetary gifts.

So our battle continues. A siting board will be appointed soon to review specific requests. We must continue to counter CWM propaganda and newsletters and convince this board, once it is appointed, and the public at large that CWM expansion would be a disaster, and would make Niagara County the toxic waste dump for decades to come.

We continue to try to educate people that land filling is the least desirable method of disposing of toxic wastes, as the Sierra Club has stated and as the Department of Environmental Conservation has itself confirmed.

The Siting Plan in its entirety can be downloaded from the DEC web page.

• people are going to move back to places like Buffalo from the southwest because we have water and food security; we should be preparing urban neighborhoods for them.

Let’s start with the Erie Canal Harbor area, the hot spot of our current dispute. The 2004 plan that was painfully constructed with a sophisticated and enormously open participatory process should be the foundation of any movement here. This should be an authentic experience of a reconstructed Erie Canal that is in place, and small scale buildings along the various historic streets. (No more canals!) This should include retail and commercial on the 1st and 2nd floors, and living above. We should no longer build areas without housing as people are going to increasingly need to be able to move on public transport or their feet.

I deeply regret your decision to tear down the Memorial Auditorium in pursuit of a fantasy of Bass Pro. That has left a giant whole in the fabric of the city – one that should NOT be filled by a parking garage. The building could have been used for a multi-modal center (as was proposed), and if protected from weather, would have found a public reuse overtime. At this point, there is no demand for the scale of building that would need to be put in place, so I would suggest that it be turned into a large green gathering space for concerts, pick-up sports, and so on. Don’t just leave it with a wall around it, care for it in an inexpensive way until there is a demand for its development.

Other comments: Clean the waters!!! Spend the NYPA money you have received not to build parking garages, but to clean up the Hamburg drain upstream so that the water in the Erie Canal is safe. This might involve working with neighborhoods along the main arteries of this drain, back into the center of the city.

Do not build a ‘bridge to nowhere’ across the Buffalo River! Leave the Outer Harbor as the region’s Great Lawn with a few recreational amenities supported in the warm season through water taxis that move people back and forth across the Buffalo River. We have an empty city and to create internal sprawl by building on the Outer Harbor in the year 2010 is unfathomable in light of the need for compact and sustainable urban places to live. Housing belongs in or adjacent to existing infrastructure and services – such as the Erie Canal Harbor or Erie Street or the East Side.

Look again at the proposal for Erie Street in the city’s Queen City Waterfront – Buffalo Waterfront Corridor Initiative: A Strategic Plan for Transportation Improvements. The best way to connect the City of Buffalo to its waterfront is to start at the edge of the city and build down to the water’s edge. The proposal to straighten Erie Street to its historic character, and then build mixed use retail, commercial and housing will bring people from the downtown in the same way that the Erie Canal Harbor will. These two projects, connected along the water’s edge, restore Buffalo’s connection between the city center and the various waterfronts. It is time to replace endless parking lots with building fabric – places where people can live.

There are many other waterfronts in the city, but this area at the confluence of the Buffalo River and Lake Erie is your responsibility. This area is not a blank slate; it has a history and it contains the desires of many. Treat it with loving care, make it open and welcome. This can be done in small and incremental steps, nourishing small things, programming, and maximizing the connections between land and water.

Take a breath. Institute a moratorium and public planning process.

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and upcoming events, visit**

<http://newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara/>