



The Trailblazer

The Nuclear Wasting of WNY

Toxic legacy of Manhattan Project

The following essay is based on comments made by Tim Henderson of Residents for Responsible Government (RRG), edited and adapted for publication. Henderson spoke at a May 22, 2010 rally at the Niagara Falls Storage Site in the Town of Porter. RRG seeks to inform residents on the hazards of toxic waste in Western New York, especially the chemical and radiological materials in and around the Niagara Falls Storage Site (NFSS) and Chemical Waste Management (CWM), which operates in the middle of the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works (LOOW), a major WW II munitions production and radiological handling and storage site.

Picture this area almost 70 years ago, with some of the country's most fertile and productive farmland. Second-and third generation farms growing fruits and vegetables bought largely by Gerber baby foods. Then, in 1941 the U.S. government, through the War Powers Act, seized 7500 acres for the purpose of building a TNT plant.

Farmers were given 30 days to harvest what crops they had in the fields and leave their houses, on which they were still required to pay the mortgages.

The area between Route 104 and Balmer Rd became a secure military compound. Some buildings were constructed to look like barns from the air, albeit with concrete walls two feet thick. Soldiers did not wear uniforms, but rather wore overalls to look like farmers. A "silo" was filled with high level K-65 uranium residue, which daily gave off radon into the air 1 thousands of times the acceptable limit. An area just north of Balmer Rd, known as the North East Chemical Warfare Depot, was used to store incendiary and napalm bombs. The igloos are still there, covered with vines. Fifty-year-old locks secure their doors. Thousands of animal carcasses from University of Rochester radiation experiments are buried just a few hundred yards from Porter Center Rd. A few hundred yards from here was a phosgene gas storage area.

De-classified documents reveal that the government was aware of this area's unsuitability for burying waste because of its high water table, but simply chose to

ignore the warnings for the sake of expedience. Some areas through the years couldn't be tested because they were too swampy.

An empty Nike missile silo sits nearby, once part of the 'iron ring' of missile sites in WNY which were constructed to protect us from the Soviet Union. Just to the south, after the war, part of the government land became Chemical Waste Management's mammoth toxic waste landfill, which it now wants to expand. My question is this: Who was in charge of protecting us from our own government?

What it did to this land is nothing short of criminal. In 1980, the high level K-65s were slurried through fire hoses, thus increasing the volume ten-fold, to over 250,000 cubic feet. The slurry was pumped from the "silo" into the basement of a burned-out building located

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After 30 years, an Allegany plan worth supporting

By Larry Beahan

A new master plan for Allegany State Park has been proposed that, after 30 years and multiple efforts, finally addresses the concerns of day-to-day users and environmental organizations. The draft plan was released by the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, which oversees Allegany, the largest state park and one of the most heavily used. The plan and the public review process are detailed at www.nysparks.com/inside-our-agency/public-documents.aspx

Previous attempts at a master plan were roundly criticized by the public in general and environmental groups in particular. A 1983 plan would have permitted logging in one quarter of the 65,000-acre park. Ordinary park users banded together with the Adirondack Mountain Club, Sierra Club, Foothills Trail Club, Citizens Campaign for the Environment and Audubon against the logging industry, as well as gas and oil drillers and a park administration that favored resource extraction over recreation and preservation.

The 1983 proposals died, only to be replaced by a 1993 plan that again threatened to violate the park's 100-to-350-year-old forest. Again massive turnouts of citizens rose to beat back the threat. Natalie Marchant of the band 10,000 Maniacs held a benefit concert for the park. A crippled American eagle met folks at the door of the hearing in Buffalo's Downtown Library, where the auditorium was packed to the rafters and the walls were papered with 10,000 signatures on a petition to shelve the plan.

Governor George Pataki halted it. The park was rid of lumbering and with minimal gas and oil activity, but still without a master plan to guide it.

The beginning of the end seems to be at hand with the April 14 release of the new Draft Master Plan. It is excellent, recognizing the tremendous recreational and ecological value of the park's forest left undisturbed.

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Oil spills, dirty coal, nukes, frack- ing: What to do?

By Bob Ciesielski

The Deepwater Horizon gushes oil into the Gulf of Mexico; mountaintops are sheared off and valleys filled as millions of tons of coal are burned, pouring greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere, a new generation of mini-nuclear plants is on the drawing board while no safe disposal site for their waste has been found; water infused with natural gas ignites out of a Pennsylvania kitchen tap after a Marcellus shale deposit is hydro-fractured. Is there no end to the consequences of our energy lust?

Conservation, of course. The cleanest energy, environmentally and morally, is that not used. But energy must be used, and consumer-citizens can have a say in what the source of that energy is.

The Sierra Club has always stressed conservation and renewable energy sources. With the environmental costs of energy consumption front page news across the state and country, now is the time for action to promote renewables can be most effective. The Sierra Club's Niagara Group website (www.newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara) posts a number of pending New York State bills which promote both these Sierra Club goals. The site also has a link to the addresses of State Senators and Assembly members. One also sees a number of bills, supporting memoranda, and sample letters of support.

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**Legislation
leads to
boom in
renewable
energy in
Ontario,
Europe**

New area wetlands plan in critical phase

By Liz Kaszubski

In a process that began with a request by the Sierra Club in 2005, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) undertook a project to update its wetland maps, critical in setting boundaries for development, which hadn't been updated in decades. Even as the updating project continues, the mayor of North Tonawanda is proposing to subsidize residential construction in its wetlands, and the towns of Amherst and Lancaster face unrelenting development pressure. The DEC has proposed additions to the state wetlands map which would protect lands in those three areas.*

The Sierra Club's Atlantic Chapter and Niagara Group are leaders in protecting New York's vanishing wetlands. The two received a grant from the National Sierra Club for a mapping project that compared US Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetland Inventory to state wetland maps. This project indicated the state

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Frack No!

By Larry Beahan

Marcellus shale Hydro-fracking is a whole new ballgame in New York State. It's not the 13,000 current dipping-pumps like the one behind your grandmother's barn. That one is vertical, 1000 feet deep and took only 100,000 gallons of water to frack.

A Marcellus behemoth burrows 5-15,000 feet down and a half mile out horizontally. To frack its shale, they need 2-9,000,000 gallons of water, often repeatedly. Its pad is 3-5 acres with storage lagoons for the contaminated radioactive saltwater it produces and a bank of five trucks running constantly to develop fracking pressure. How would Grandma like that? And they're talking 10,000 such beasts in New York's Southern Tier.

Frackers require tremendous quantities of fresh water and threaten to contaminate our surface water with a deluge of foul water produced by their wells. This year NYDEC placed a moratorium on such ruinous activity while they puzzle over draft regulations. This month the US federal EPA announced a study of the "adverse impact of hydraulic fracturing on water quality and public health."

Marcellus gas production in NY state could be worth \$22 billion over the next 20 years to natural gas companies. Compare that to \$160 billion in tourism spending, \$80 billion in hunting and fishing, and \$160 billion in agriculture the gas extraction would put at risk.

Lippes, Wooster, White get Niagara Group awards

Richard Lippes, noted environmental lawyer, Margaret Wooster, local environmentalist and author, and Gretchen White, co-editor of The Trailblazer, received awards at The Sierra Club's Niagara Group Annual Dinner in April.

Lippes received the Blake Reeves Award, named for the founder of the Niagara Group, for his decades of service to the community and the state. He has served on many local and state environmental boards and commissions and consulted and represented dozens of citizens and non-profits. He also has been a member of the Niagara Group, the Atlantic Chapter, and the National Sierra Club for decades, and is a current member of the Niagara Group's executive committee, as well as a former of the Group and the Atlantic Chapter.

Wooster, former executive director of Great Lakes United, received the Bruce Kershner Award for her dedication to protecting the Great Lakes and their tributaries. White received the Rachel Carson Award for her invaluable service in helping to edit and disseminate The Niagara Group's news articles via The Trailblazer.

Unwelcome guests were the topic of the evening's main speaker, Michael Goehle of the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Zebra mussels, Asian carp, and nightmarish beetles are only a few of the invasive species spreading across North America, upsetting citizens and ecosystems along the way. Best heed the warnings about transporting firewood.

Nuclear Wasting From front page

50 yards from the so-called Central Drainage Ditch, water from which eventually drains into Lake Ontario. Roughly one-third of the world's mined supply of radium sits in the basement under an out-of-date clay cap. This ore is from the former Belgian Congo and is many times hotter than domestic uranium. The half-life of the radioactivity is 1600 years. With rising cancer rates in our area, it just may be cutting many of our lives in half.

These residues of war are so toxic that the Environmental Protection Agency has said, if released into the environment, 1 in 2 people nearby would develop cancer. Such a landscape makes the Love Canal look like a health resort.

Now, lest we feel singled out, all Manhattan Project sites around this country have abysmal environmental records. Hanford, Savannah River, Oak Ridge, and Fernald, Ohio — all those communities share our frustration, struggles and high cancer rates.

Endless studies and data compilation bring little comfort when done by the very agencies that caused the problems in the first place. Sometimes you have to take action. The residents of Fernald, that got their K-65s from Lewiston in the 1950's—yes, it is possible to ship waste OUT of Lewiston—sued the federal government and were awarded \$75,000,000.

When 15 independent PhDs from the National Academy of Sciences studied the Niagara County waste site, they recommended the waste be moved to a place "isolated from mankind." Yet it lies just one mile from the Lewiston-Porter school and across the street from a campground and hydroponic operation. We're told that there is no money to remove the waste, yet \$1,000,000 is spent annually for security, watering the clay cap and mowing the grass. This will have to continue for at least 1600 years at a cost of 1.6 billion present-day dollars.

So, just how contaminated is this site? While surveying an area proposed for a new HW landfill, plutonium was found on the ground. Which is considerably riskier to civilization than the yet-to-be found plutonium in Iraq we went to war over.

We are tired of being lied to. Tired of endless studies. Tired of meetings with bureaucrats skilled in the art of delay bringing us back to where we started. Since I've been going to meetings in the 1980s, the only change that has occurred is in the letterhead of the agency in charge—AEC to the DOE to the Army Corps, dividing responsibilities between FUSRAP and DERP-FUDS programs. DERP-FUDS? Really, Elmer J. Fudd could have done a better job.

It is never too late to do the right thing. The only acceptable acts are to get the radioactive stuff out and deny CWM's request for expansion. It makes absolutely no sense to clean up one site and expand another. Neither site is compatible with the healthy, vital, and thriving community we owe future generations no less.

Saving Our Waters

By Art Klein

I note the President of the Tonawanda Common Council voices frustration that the city must end the combined storm sewer facilities that are vestiges of the 19th Century.

Likewise, a State Senator in Niagara County scurries about Albany to reset wetlands protection that began in 1970 with the Clean Water Act (CWA).

One asks on what planet do they reside?

It disappoints that these folk think that cleaning up the mess is the job of the next downstream entity or the next generation.

Their attitudes ensure that since the CWA was passed, supposedly to restore the waters of the country to drinking water quality, we cannot even swim in them most days and have to pay enormous sums to remove sewage and render them potable.

The DEC and the EPA do not invent new regulations but are charged with a long-range effort to restore the nations waters. Cleaning these waters is not just a legal requirement but also a moral obligation but funding is always short of need.

The waters of the Great lakes are a Public Trust and it is our duty to ensure that they are a worthy a legacy as we can improve and pass on.

(Previously in the Buffalo News on May 25, 2010)

Genevieve Robins

Genevieve Robins, long time member of the Niagara Group of the Sierra Club, passed away recently in Charlotte, North Carolina, where she lived for the last few years. She was 95 and had attended Sierra Club Executive Committee meetings until recent years. She had a long history of advocacy for the environment.

Genevieve Robins was born on June 17, 1914, and was the wife of Harold Robins, MD, mother of two sons, and grandmother of three children. She was a graduate of Buffalo General Hospital School of Nursing in 1937. She advocated for peace and health concerns, volunteered for Meals on Wheels, and in nursing homes. She wrote many articles about environmental and habitat preservation concerns. She once donated a beautiful piece of art to the Niagara Group for sale so that the Club could receive the funds.

Donations in her memory may be made to the Sierra Club, Niagara Group, c/o 94 Lamarck Drive, Amherst, NY 14226.

What to do From front page

The Solar Industry Development and Job Act (S[enate]7093A/A[ssembly]11004A) bill would permit fixed rates of return to solar energy producers for the sale of renewable power to utility companies. Predictable revenue makes it possible for solar energy providers to obtain financing. The Solar Industry bill has a goal of 5,000 megawatts from solar producers by the year 2025. Similar legislation in Europe and Ontario has led to job development and fantastic growth of the renewable industry.

Another wide-ranging alternate energy bill is the Renewable Energy Source Act (S2715A/A187A, previously titled the Green Energy Jobs bill), which would set rates for many renewables including solar, wind power, geothermal and hydro producers.

The New York Climate Change Pollution bill (S4315/A7572) requires a reduction of carbon and greenhouse gas emissions by 80% from current levels by the year 2050, similar to a bill already enacted in California.

The Sunset bill for Mineral Rights usage in Allegany State Park (S7170/A9070) will hopefully result in reversion of mineral rights in the park to the State after a waiting period. It is hoped that this bill will prevent the destructive practice of mega-hydrofracturing for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale of Allegany State Park.

The Sierra Club Niagara Group urges you to write your New York representatives and your local newspaper urging support for the bills.

**For more news that's hotter than hot,
breathtaking archives, and upcoming
events, visit
<http://newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara/>**

Helping Mom and RRG make the world better

Ethan Fideli, six, is the son of April Fideli of the executive committee of Residents for Responsible Government. His citizenship essay won first place in the annual Orleans Niagara Writing Contest!

**What Being a Good Citizen Means to Me
By Ethan Fideli**

Do you like to breathe clean air? Do you like clean water to drink? Do you want to fish in clean water?

My mom is the president of a group called RRG. RRG stands for Residents for Responsible Government. RRG and my mom stop garbage companies from bringing dangerous, hazardous waste to our community.

I help my mom and RRG make the world better. I do this by helping with a dinner dance. The dinner dance raises money for RRG. My sister, Savannah, and I help by setting tables, making baskets and cleaning up. Another time, I sold baked good with my friends and sister, and donated the money to RRG.

I do these things because I care about th Earth. I care about other people. Would you like to help our Earth and community too?

Wetlands From front page

maps overlooked substantial wetlands and were in urgent need o updating. Yet the DEC will only continue to update the state wetland maps if it receives letters supporting the effort. (For more information, refer to the NYS DEC Environmental Notice Bulletin at: enb@gw.dec.state.ny.us)

Interactive state wetland maps can be viewed on-line at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/38801.html>

The Sierra Club urges letters of support of wetlands protection via e-mail at r9dep@gw.dec.state.ny.us, or via U.S. mail to NYS DEC - Region 9, 270 Michigan Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14203, attention Chuck Rosenburg (for Erie Co.) or Kenneth Roblee (for Niagara Co.). Letters can be faxed to (716) 851-7005. Information by phone:(716) 851-7010.

This information may also on the Niagara Group website www.newyork.sierraclub.lrg/niagara under "To DEC in support of WNY Wetland Map additions."

Although all comments are welcome, the most valuable are those substantiating the presence of expansive wetlands-- direct observation and photos of wetlands and seasonally flooded areas, comparisons to US Fish & Wildlife Service National Wetland Inventory maps, aerial images, and the presence of wetland plants and hydric (wetland) soils as shown in the county soil survey.

**Proposed Erie County additions are CC-45 (Amherst) and LA-18 (Lancaster). For Niagara County, TE-39, TE-40, TE-41, TE-43, & TW-31 (North Tonawanda) are proposed.*

Correction

In the last Trailblazer it was mistakenly noted that the Department of Energy had recommended no action concerning removal of radioactive material at West Valley. The recommendation was for phased removal. The web page newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara entitled "DOE Delays 10 More Years on Reprocessing Waste Cleanup" corrects the error. - Charles Lamb

Allegany From front page

Logging is not the issue this time; policy now prohibits commercial logging in state parks. The threat is private mineral rights. Under half of the park mineral rights are privately owned. US Energy Corporation has threatened to drill deep horizontal, high-volume-hydrofracked Marcellus Shale wells in the park that would have pads, or wellheads, of five acres.

This threat is being met by a proposal to designate 85% of the park Park Preserve, the same "Forever Wild" protection granted the Forest Preserve in the Adirondacks. Park Preserve status will make it possible for the State to reject oil or gas exploration proposals. In addition, the new plan will designate Allegany as: Natural Heritage Area and a Bird Conservation Area.

The plan is not perfect. It is overgenerous in new trail incursions into the forest. Too much bicycle, horse, snowmobile and foot traffic makes the deep woods less hospitable to creatures that need them: the pileated woodpecker, wolverine, fox and bear. Further, National Fuel's 9000-acre gas storage area above France Brook will not be included in the Preserve.