The Trablaizer

The Nuclear Wasting of WNY

Toxic legacy of Manhattan Project

The following essay is based on comments made by Tom 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 United States 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 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 did it do 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 shurry was pumped from the "silo" into the basement of a burned-out building located south of the site.

Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, which oversees Allegany, the largest state park and one of the most heavily used. The draft 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 new master plan for Allegany State Park has been proposed that, after 30 years and multiple efforts, finally addresses the concern 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.

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 concern 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.

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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 torrents 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 save the place.

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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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 was awarded 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 member of the Group and the Atlantic Chapter.

Gretchen White, the Niagara Group’s executive director, Great Lakes United, received the Brace 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 Goebel 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.

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 recently. She died a long time ago from the cancer that defines 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 was also very concerned 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

The Solar Industry Development and Job Act (Senate 7093/A/Assembly 11004/A) 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 from new fossil fuel plants on a per unit basis by the year 2030, similar to a bill already enacted in California.

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What's next for water quality?

The Sunset bill for Mineral Rights usage in Allegany State Park (S7170/A9070) will hopefully result in a discussion of mineral rights in the park to the State after a waiting period. It is hoped that this bill will prevent the destruction of the Marcellus Shale 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.

Helping Mom and RRG make the world better

Ethan Fidelis, six, is the son of April Fidelis of the executive committee of the Kenton (New York) 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 Fidelis

Do you like to breathe clean air? Do you like clean water to drink? Do you want to fish in clean water? Do you want to live in a world free from nuclear weapons? Do you want to preserve our forests, our rivers, our lakes, and our air? RRG stands 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 my mom setting up and running the dinner dance.

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 the earth. I care about other people. Would you like to help our earth and community too?

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