The Trailblazer

The Niagara Group of The Sierra Club • http://newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara/ • Vol. 46 No. 4 Oct 2011

The Latest News from our Chairman Bob Ciesielski

The public comment period concerning proposed NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) regulations for high-volume hydrofracking and horizontal drilling for natural gas should have begun by the time you read this article. The regulations have been prepared by the DEC’s Division of Mineral Resources (DMR) staffed by a number of employees and consultants with ties to the gas industry.

The regulations amazingly ban hydrofracking and horizontal drilling in the New York City and Syracuse watersheds, but not in the rest of the State. The proposal’s executive summary disclaimer states that high-volume hydraulic fracturing (HVHF), could have “significant adverse effects on water sources in the State”. The official reason given for exempting NYC and Syracuse from horizontal drilling is that those cities lack water filtration facilities. The regulations ignore that standard wastewater treatment plants, which treat drinking water for most upstate cities and towns, are incapable of removing the chemicals found in fracking waste.

So the Governor and DEC seem willing to sacrifice the clean water, health and safety of the rest of the State. The DEC has long admitted that drilling of thousands of HVHF gas wells creates industrial zones. We are asking all our members to publicly comment to Governor Andrew Cuomo and the DEC on this most crucial issue.

Here are some comments you may consider:

1. What steps are being taken to protect State communi- ty and municipality drinking water, other than Syracuse and NYC, from fracking waste?

2. Proposed regulations do not ban use of any chemicals by the industry no matter how dangerous.

3. How can the waste be properly treated if it continues to be labeled as “industrial” waste, instead of “hazardous” waste as it properly should be?

4. Current regulations will permit drilling to begin before health issues have been completely considered.

Please go to the Atlantic Chapter’s website at www.newyork.sierraclub.org or our Niagara Group website at www.newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara for further issues to discuss and for contact information for Governor Andrew Cuomo and the DEC.

Niagara Group Energy Committee

The Niagara Group’s Energy Committee, chaired by Diane Ciurczak and Roger Cook, are taking positive steps to show what renewable energy can do to develop green jobs and protect our climate and health. With the help of committee member Rick Steinberg, the committee has approached the City of Buffalo School Board and Common Council about utilizing green energy sources such as solar and geothermal to provide electricity to the Buffalo school systems. Such technology has been shown to be a great cost saver for school districts in other parts of the country.

Committee members, led by Bill Nowak, are developing a White Paper on the benefits of Feed-In-Tariff’s (Clean Contracts), concerning clean, renewable energy sources in New York State. The committee members are working with Atlantic Chapter to present the information to other environmental, industry representatives, and legislators and governmental leaders.

German have been using feed-in-tax and currently has 370,000 clean energy jobs. (So much for the hydrofracking industry’s claims of job development).

The country currently has 17% of its electricity being produced from renewable energy sources, with a goal of 35% by 2020. Additionally, the country is determined to eliminate nuclear power plants by 2022, and continued to reduce its use of fossil fuels. These are the benefits that could be awaiting New York State.

Tar Sands and Civil Disobedience

In the end of August and early September, Bill McKibben organized civil disobedience at the White House to protest construction of a pipeline to deliver tar sands energy from Canada to the United States. Tar sands, one of the dirtiest fossil fuels, is being extracted in western Canada and completely destroying the ecology and water ways of the area. Jim Hansen, famous NASA climate expert who has been warning of global climate change for years, has been arrested, along with over 900 people as of this writing. The National Sierra Club is reconsidering its stance on using this energy.

Nonviolent civil disobedience, based upon the premise of truth and the love of God and humanity, have been used by Gandhi to oppose colonialism, and by Martin Luther King, Jr. to further civil rights. The cause of conserving a livable climate and planet for our children is a similar noble goal.

Tabling Committee

The energy enthusiasm of our Sierra Club tabling committee continues to grow. The committee has been chaired by Angie Kinsley for the past several years and has grown as an important means of spreading environmental education. Special thanks to Angie and her fellow committee member, Vicki Southall, Virginia Snider, Art Klein, Diane Ciurczak, Judy Fitzgerald-Dolan, Jay Wopperer and Matt Kinsley for their continued involvement.

So What’s "Fracking"?

by Lynda Schneekloth and Sara Schultz

There has been a lot of heated talk recently about ‘fracking’ or ‘horizontal hydrofracking’ or ‘hydraulic fracturing’ – all words new to most of us. The gas and oil companies are promising clean energy and jobs to keep the state going and the opposition argues that this activity will ruin New York.

So what is this and why should I care? The short technical answer is that fracking is a new process for extracting methane (natural gas) held in deep rock in the earth. Gas extraction had been on going on a long time in NYS, but this particular process is different because it drills many miles down into ancient and radioactive rock, and uses millions of gallons of fresh water, sand, and over 600 chemicals, many of which are known to cause cancer.

Some of this water stays deep in the earth and some comes back up contaminated not only with the chemicals sent down, but also with radioactivity. A clue that there might be something problematic about this process is that, unlike historic gas extraction, this process is exempt from the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and the Toxic Substances Control Act.

This process has destroyed the water supply in some communities, has negatively impacted water sources, industries...

Continued on back page
The Niagara Group Election Biographies

Please read the following biographies of the candidates.

Roger Cook

Roger Cook has submitted a complete resume that is available for review; see our webpage. Relevant highlights include the following:

1984-2010 Executive Director, Western New York Chapter on Occupational Safety and Health
1972-1974, Director, Social Sciences College, SUNY at Buffalo.

Teaching experiences at various times at State University of New York at Buffalo, Genesee Community College, State University of New York at Fredonia and Labor Relations, Cornell Labor Studies Program, Medaille College, Cora P. Malone College, Erie Community College, and Medaille and Fillmore College, and Social Sciences College of NY.

Memberships at Various Times in the Following:

NYS Pollution Prevention Institute Advisory Board
NYS DEC Advisory Board on NYS Product Procurement
Co-Chair, NYS Zero-Lift Task Force
Chair, Educational and Occupational, Committee
NYS Dept of Health Consumer Health Information Council Chair, member Metropolitan Ministries Council on Economic Justice and Work
Love Canal Ecumenical Task Force of the Niagara Frontier, Editorial Board, The Daily Star, National Biological Honorary Society

Lynda H. Schneekloth

I am asking for your support to be elected as a member of the Ex Com of the Sierra Club Niagara Group. I have served on the board for the last 4 years and would welcome the opportunity to continue in that role. I bring 20 years experience as a board member of the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper and on-going interest in cross border issues. I have been involved with environmental issues throughout my life. I have just retired as a Professor at the School of Architecture and Planning and continue to work with the Urban Design Project at UB. Challenges to our regional environment and quality of life will have to be climate change, horizontal hydrofracking, and continued contamination. All of these are assaults on the beauty and life sustaining environment of our region. Given the importance of our environmental work and the challenges ahead, I would like to continue efforts to collaborate with other environmental organizations and also to expand into partnerships with other sectors who share a concern for the quality and health of our home.

Roger Cook

Larry Snider

My name is Larry V. Snider and I have been a supporting member of the Sierra Club for several years. I am also a member of the Buffalo Niagara Care for Creation Committee for at least three (3) years. I was also recently involved in the creation of a five minute educational video on the local Sheldon Wind Farm which featured the reality and power of this alternative energy form right here in Western New York. I would like to produce similar videos on other currently viable alternative energy forms in New York State. The success of these videos will depend on the focus, time and other available resources.

Fundamentally, I firmly believe that we need to understand and respect creation and that in reflecting on it we need to understand also the interconnectedness and how individually and collectively we impact each other. With this understanding we can attempt to under stand the most pressing problems in society and begin to plan and implement changes for the greater good.

Personally, I believe that changes to our energy grid and transportation system can have the greatest impact on curbing climate change and the associated problems of degradation to our environment (i.e. pollution, lack of bio-diversity, and indirect effects such as obesity, etc.). I would expect my planned focus to be two fold: first, educational and awareness building of the real and present day potential of alternative energy choices in our area (and around New York State in general); secondly, I would like to invite other Sierra Club Groups and Chapters to increase our effectiveness as to what we end up deciding to do as the Sierra Club Niagara Group as a whole.

I look forward to hearing from you if you are interested and let me know if you need any additional information.

For more news, archives, and upcoming events, visit newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara

Lynda H. Schneekloth

Pamela Hughes

Pamela Hughes is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in private practice both in Lewiston and Niagara Falls. In addition to her practice, she is employed at Roswell Park Cancer Institute, communities in cross-border Niagara. Through her education and experience has historically been in mental health services and psychological research, her first pastime and passion in life began with animal conservation and environmental preservation.

Pamela initially became involved with the Sierra Club Niagara Group in August 2010 and promptly was invited to join the Ex Com of the Forestry Subcommittee. She has also been actively involved with the Education Committee, developing ideas for the high school science competition in Erie County. Alongside other members of the Niagara Group, Pamela participated in lobbying politicians toward the promotion of renewable energy while providing some feedback on the deleterious effects of horizontal hydro-fracking. She aspires to accomplish much more with our local environmental challenges through networking with the Western New York Environmental Alliance as the designated liaison and Sierra Club representative through the end of this year.

Richard Lippes

Richard Lippes

New Environmental Group formed

A letter calling for a new environmental group has been sent to every congregation in WNY of the United Church of Christ and of the Disciples of Christ last August. Representatives from congregations of any other religious group are also welcome to join. The group plans to work in close cooperation with the Sierra Club and with Residents for Responsible Government as well as with other environmental groups. There is power in our unity. A portion of that letter appears below.

Caring for the environment is part of our Christian stewardship. We are called by the Creator to care for the environment. Thank you, Bob.

An other excellent statement about hydrofracking was written by Dr. Dennis Duling and may be found on our webpage; please read it!

If you are not receiving Niagara Group e-mail and would like to Opt-In - you can do so by contacting sierra

cambie9@roadrunner.com. More information on the Niagara Group’s use of Convio, Opt-In lists, etc. will be coming in our winter Trailblazer as well as in our regular Group e-mails.

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DENNIS DULING AND MAY BE FOUND ON
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October 2011

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