



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

Public Comments on Hydrofracking and Horizontal Drilling

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 waste water 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 the 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 community and municipality drinking water, other than Syracuse and NYC, from fracking waste?
2. Proposed regulation 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 groups, industry representatives, and legislators and governmental leaders. Germany has been using feed-in-tariff 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.

Time for Sierrans to vote for 2012 Executive Committee Members

NIAGARA GROUP official ballots

IMPORTANT: Single memberships, use one ballot.
Joint memberships, use both ballots.
Ballots must be received by December 1, 2011

BALLOT 1 BOARD OF GOVERNANCE AT-LARGE DELEGATE CHOOSE UP TO 6

- Roger Cook
- Pamela Hughes
- Richard Lippes
- Lynda Schneekloth
- Sara Schultz
- Larry Snider

BALLOT 2 BOARD OF GOVERNANCE AT-LARGE DELEGATE CHOOSE UP TO 6

- Roger Cook
- Pamela Hughes
- Richard Lippes
- Lynda Schneekloth
- Sara Schultz
- Larry Snider

ELECTION INSTRUCTIONS

To be eligible to vote in this election, you must have been a member in good standing of the Niagara Group as verified by a members mailing label.

Please read all the candidate statements on page 2. Indicate your choices by checking the boxes next to the candidates names on the ballot. Each member may fill out only one ballot. Joint members use both ballots.

Please mail your ballot(s) to the address below in an ordinary letter size envelope, provided with the proper postage.

Send your ballot(s) to:

2011 Niagara Group Elections Committee
c/o Paul Maine • 264 Jersey St. Buffalo NY 14201-1043

Ballots must be received on or before 12/01/11

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 500 people as of this writing. The National Sierra Club is reconsidering its stance on using civil disobedience in crucial climate issues.

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 Knisley 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 Knisley 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 rocks deep in the earth. Gas extraction has been going on a long time in NYS, but this particular process is different because it drills 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, indus-

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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:

PhD candidate, MA in sociology, BS in biology and sociology.

1984-2010 Executive Director, Western New York Council on Occupational Safety and Health.

1972-1974, Director, Social Sciences College, SUNY at Buffalo.

Teaching experiences at various times at State University College in Buffalo, NYS School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell Labor Studies Program, Medaille College, Cora P. Maloney College, Erie Community College, Millard 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, Environmental and Occupational Committee, NYS Dept of Health Consumer Health Information Council
Chair, Buffalo Metropolitan Ministries Council on Economic Justice and Work
Love Canal Ecumenical Task Force of the Niagara Frontier,
Editorial Board, The Catalyst
National Biological Honorary Society

Pamela Hughes

Pamela Hughes is a Counseling Psychologist and 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, completing her postdoctoral residency. Though her education and experience has historically been in mental health services and psychological research, her first pastime and passion in life began with animal conservationism and environmental preservation.

Pamela initially became involved with the Sierra Club Niagara Group in August 2010 and promptly was designated as the Chair of the Forestry Subcommittee. She has also been actively involved with the Education subcommittee, developing ideas for the high school science competition in Erie County. Alongside other members of the Sierra Club, 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

Previous Positions Held: Niagara Group - member of Executive Committee for 40 years, from 1971. Former chair (four terms), vice chair, secretary, legal chair. Atlantic Chapter Chair, 1978-1982, member Chapter Executive Committee and Board of Governance 1976-1982, 2000 - 2005. Many Chapter committees, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Legal Counsel for past 39 years. National Founder and first chairperson of National Sierra Club Hazardous Substances Committee, Member of National Chapter Relations Committee, formerly Regional Vice President of National Sierra Club.

The Sierra Club has been the main environmental watchdog in Western New York since its inception. It is the most effective organization working to assure a clean and healthful environment that is run by its volunteers. In these difficult financial times in Western New York, the need for Sierra Club vigilance is as great as it has ever been. If reelected I will continue to attempt to assure that environmental issues remain on the local and national agendas, and not ignored due to financial constraints, homeland security, or natural resource needs.

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 Niagara environmental issues. 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 environmental have never been greater -- climate change, horizontal hydrofracking, continued contamination. All of these are assaults on the beauty and life sustaining ecology of our region, especially the water. 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.

Sara Schultz

I have always been a passionate supporter of the environment through my conscious choices in daily living and through the organizations I wish to support. I feel that now I need to devote my time to work on issues that are vital to the survival of our planet. I am a native of Western New York and I care deeply about the local environmental issues as well as our global challenges. Through my work at Roswell I have seen the effects of an unhealthy environment resulting in cancers that are avoidable if we had greater controls over our water, air agricultural practices and indoor pollution. This past year I have enjoyed being part of the Sierra Club community and would like to serve on the Executive Board so I can have greater input into the issues we support. I feel that there is a great connect between a spiritual practice and environmental justice. I am inspired to continue to have these two parts of my life inform one another.

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 been a member of the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo 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 but this 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 begin to understand how we are all interconnected and how individually and collectively we impact each other. With this understanding we can attempt to understand 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) and secondly, creating connections to 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.

Thank you for your interest and let me know if you need any additional information.

"Fracking" Continued

trializes rural landscapes to the point where neighbors can't sell their land, destroys roads and habitat, and generates greater ozone air pollution than vehicular traffic. And it is *not* the clean fuel the supporters would have you believe: studies have shown that this method of gas extraction creates as much greenhouse emissions as burning coal.

In spite of these problems, and in spite of the fact that France, New Jersey, Ontario and other places have banned horizontal hydrofracking, Governor Cuomo and DEC are going to allow it in parts of New York State. One reason has to be the political pressure brought by oil and gas companies and given that eight of the twelve largest corporations in the world are gas and oil related, these corporations have deep pockets. And by the way, what parts will be open to drilling? Well, everywhere except in NYC and Syracuse watersheds. Interesting. If downstate can't be fracked, then upstate should not either.

Missing from this conversation is the message to stop this search for more fossil fuels. It is past time to shift to renewable energy and the state should be using its powers to support the transition now with a plan that will, unlike the hydrofracking, create millions of jobs.

If you want more information on fracking or on proposals for renewable energy, check out the Sierra Club Niagara Group website (newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara).

A Sierran of Note

This month we're mentioning Bob Ciesielski (pronounced a lot like sea-shell-sky), who is our Niagara Group president. Bob is also an attorney. He is providing great leadership for our meetings, presiding in an easy manner but keeping things moving so that many issues are fully discussed and yet we conclude our agenda within the planned 2 hours every meeting! He also works hard between meetings, setting up events, going to hearings, obviously devoting himself to care for the environment. Thank you, Bob.

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 awed by the beauty of nature and grateful to the Creator. But we live in a time when the environment is being polluted and damaged to an unprecedented extent. Churches need to come together with a sense of urgency and commitment to stand up for the world God has entrusted to our care.

Two urgent and immediate concerns are hydrofracking and the disposal of hazardous wastes. Other issues will be brought to the fore in the future.

Taking a stand in behalf of preserving our land and waters and protecting the health of our people is a Christian duty. It is as much part of our Christian witness as Bible study or services of praise. Therefore the Western Area of the United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ is forming an Environmental Task Force so as to educate and mobilize our people. Each congregation needs to have one representative on this Task Force.

For more information email Charles Lamb at clamb9@roadrunner.com.

See the full letter on our website, newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara

ANOTHER EXCELLENT STATEMENT ABOUT HYDROFRACKING WAS WRITTEN BY DR. DENNIS DULING AND MAY BE FOUND ON OUR WEBPAGE; PLEASE READ IT!

The In(s) and Out(s) of Sierra Club/Niagara E-Mail

The Niagara Group is planning to use the "Convio" communication system later this year. This is being made possible through the assistance of SC National and our New York State Atlantic Chapter. Convio provides a way for members to have an integrated online experience with the Club. Through this system a member will be able to receive (and respond to) Niagara Group Email, Action Alerts, Surveys, Letters to the Editor (LTE), Call Alerts, and Surveys that are pertinent to local issues/needs.

Eventually we would like to have our quarterly Trailblazer sent electronically for those that wish to receive it in this manner (thus reducing paper usage).

Some Niagara members are already receiving our Niagara Group e-mail which is generally sent out 2 times a month. These e-mails are very basic ("broadcast" only) and are sent out through the SC system called HELEN.

If you are not receiving Niagara Group e-mail and would like to Opt-In - you can do so by contacting sierraclubangela@gmail.com. Members can always Opt-Out of our e-mail list at any time by using this same contact.

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.

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