

The Trailblazer

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Annual Report from our Niagara Group Chair

By Lynda Schneekloth

This year for the Annual Report, I am going to use the framework suggested in the book, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy*. Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone have done us a favor by writing this book — and we certainly need the wisdom they have to offer. They suggest that all of us who care about the Earth, who love the amazing planet we inhabit, have three tasks: 1) **Holding Actions**, or what I call, stopping bad things; 2) **Developing Sustainable Practices** - saving the good while pushing creative, life enhancing ideas; 3) **Shifting Consciousness**, or as I like to suggest - Creating a new story. The old one of progress and endless growth certainly has reached an end, and we need to find a new way to swell on this earth.

This year our **Holding Actions** include: Don't frack; Stop using Coal and Natural Gas (aka Methane); Clean up West Valley; Don't expand, in fact close, Chemical Waste Management; Don't log the forest to fill a funding gap in the budget. Each of these 'bad things' has occupied the time and attention of the Executive Committee, volunteers, partners and members of the Sierra Club - attending rallies and hearings, written letters to

legislators and articles for local newspapers, held public presentations, worked jointly with many other environmental groups and actively joined with the efforts of the national Sierra Club's *Beyond Coal Campaign*.

On **Developing Sustainable Practices**, the primary work of the Niagara Group this past year has been on renewable energy with a focus on the Feed-In Tariff as a funding strategy for implementing renewables. We have an amazing Energy Committee that has worked tirelessly on this effort that includes countless meetings with elected officials, agencies, businesses and unions, attended and promoted rallies (Forward on Climate Rally in Washington DC; Rally for Renewables), and a media campaign with bill boards "Let's Turn, Not Burn". We've tabled over 30 events and held an Environmental Education Contest and worked jointly with the Buffalo Zoo on their Party for the Earth this last June.

Lastly, our **Shifting Consciousness** is ever so difficult to measure in our world. We've hit a tipping point in our environment, but our government and people move slowly to recognize the dire straits that we are approaching. However,

Michael Brune, head of the Sierra Club, was arrested for civil disobedience standing up for the urgency of action on climate change. Daily, more and more people have signed the Pledge of Resistance that they will take personal action to keep fracking out of New York. And recent polls show that 67% of Republicans and Right-Leaning Independents now believe in human caused Global Warming.

Many thanks to the many members of our group for contributing their energy, time, and tireless efforts toward protecting our environment. As suggested in the book, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy*. Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone say, "When we know the future isn't yet decided, there is room for us to play a role in influencing what happens." So on we go.

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RECYCLING CORNER - WHAT'S HAPPENING IN BUFFALO?

By Ron Missel

For the record, the US is the No. 1 trash producing nation in the world. Each of us generates an average of 4.5 lbs of trash a day. That's a lot of trash, and we're not accounting for industrial waste in these statistics. Reducing the amount of trash is another consideration altogether. But as long as it's generated, in whatever the amount, recycling is one of the ways we can minimize the problem.

The "recycling" record in Buffalo has not been very good, but it's improving. Up until a year or so ago, residents of Buffalo were recycling at the rate of 8% compared to a national average of 34%. But last year, the rate doubled to 16%. Why the increase in the Buffalo recycle rate? Last year, new "green" recycling totes were purchased and delivered to Buffalo city households along with an ad campaign to promote recycling. Further, a city 'Recycle Coordinator' position, vacant for longer than it should have been, was recently filled. I met the new coordinator, Susan Attridge, at a recent meeting of the Buffalo Recycling Alliance. She was excited about what is in the works and the renewed commitment the city is making to recycling. For example, the city now provides free recycle totes at outdoor activities, such as the art and ethnic festivals, "A Taste of Buffalo", and most any other public activity with large gatherings of people. The organizers need only ask for

them when they apply for permits. Her team has also initiated a 500-tote pilot program with the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority.

Currently, Buffalo residents are assessed an annual user fee for garbage totes. The fee is based on the size of the tote. The more trash that's recycled, the smaller the garbage tote required, and residents save money! Business recycling is another story. All businesses are required to recycle paper, cardboard, glass, plastic, and some metals. Violations are subject to fines. Businesses also pay for trash removal — some through city programs, but most through independent haulers. And like households, businesses can reduce their trash removal expenses by recycling more. Unfortunately, many don't. The city's recycle tote project with BMHA is a legitimate effort to do something about the problem in one segment of the business community. (FYI: Any commercial dwelling of more than two units is considered a business.)

The Buffalo Recycling Alliance (BRA) is also focused on increasing recycling in the business community. Dialog is underway with local business associations and organizations. Headed by Sam Magavern, BRA formed about a year ago and is an offshoot of Partners for the Public Good (PPG). The group is comprised of representatives from local environmental organizations, businesses offering environmental services, concerned citizens, and public officials like Susan and her counterpart from Erie

County — Gary Carrel. The objectives are broad and still in definition, but the early efforts have been focused on education and public outreach, including focused recycling initiatives. For one, key members of the group have been working with Buffalo City School officials to ensure all schools have a viable recycling program. And last month, in conjunction with Global Youth Services Day, BRA aligned with the Community Charter School and Assistant Principal Andy Prinzing to conduct a neighborhood work and educational project. Students canvassed the neighborhood - both picking up trash and talking with homeowners about recycling. The activity was a success and hopefully will be repeated in other areas of the city. For more information on BRA and recycling in Buffalo, go to <http://www.ppgbuffalo.org/citizen-power/buffalo-recycling-alliance/>.

While there is much more work to be done to reach the 34% national recycling average, we are heading in the right direction. At least some of that success can be attributed to the organizations and individuals referenced in this article. Awareness continues to increase both locally and nationally and that's good. If we all do our part, and encourage our governmental officials to keep recycling activities on the agenda, we will begin to progress toward higher percentages of recycling in our region.

New Environmental Radio Station in Buffalo

By Jack Kanack

Great news Sierrans - we now have a voice! WBNY 91.3 FM broadcasting from Buffalo State College is now airing a one hour show dedicated to the environment, highlighting issues that are important to the people of Western New York. The show airs from 11 am to 12 pm every Monday and I'm your host. Please feel free to call in questions to (716) 878-5104. If you are located outside of the Buffalo metropolitan area, you can listen live on the internet: <http://www.buffalostate.edu/wbny/webradio/> (Click on Listen Live Now).

Scheduled guests have previously included: Charley Bowman from the Western New York Peace Center talking about his Gigantic Solar Array Project for the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station and Lewiston Power Storage Reservoir; Rebecca Newberry from the Western New York Clean Air Coalition talking about the Tonawanda Coke Plant and the potential \$50 of \$200 million award settlement designated to stay in the community. Discussion also included truck fume pollution by the Peace Bridge with studio testimonials from West Side residents; Lynda Schneekloth, Chair of the Sierra Club Niagara Group and everyone's favorite environmental guru, covered all things environmental from Feed-In-Tariff to Fracking to West Valley Toxic Waste Site, and provided updates on our own Niagara Group's progress with local issues. Please join me on this new venue for our local region to become even more involved and informed about our environment.

New York Crossroads Rally and March in Albany

By Sara Schultz

On June 17th, Sierra Club Niagara Group had coordinated and organized two buses with around 100 people, and many carpoolers, to depart Buffalo and join over 2,000 enthusiastic demonstrators at the 'New York Crossroads Rally and March' in Albany. We were determined to be the largest group in recent history to raise our voices against hydraulic fracturing and tell Governor Cuomo to ban this practice in New York. There on the East Capital lawn we listened to many inspiring speakers such as Lois Gibbs (founder of Love Canal Homeowner Association, who first discovered her son's elementary school was built on a toxic waste site later identified as Love Canal), Sandra Steingraber (an acclaimed ecologist and author who has explored the links between human rights and the environment), Arun Gandhi (Gandhi's grandson), Oren R Lyons Jr, (the Native American Faithkeeper of the Turtleclan, Seneca Nations), actress Debra Winger (who owns a home on the shale in the Catskills), Phil Aroneanu (Co-founder & US Campaigns Director at 350.org), Alex Beauchamp (Food and Water Watch), Congressman Maurice Hinchey, and "Gasland" director Josh Fox, among many others. We understood from Dr. Marc Jacobson, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Stanford University, that New York could be independent of fossil fuels within decades if we have the will to do it. We already have the technology and the ability! The icing on the cake was the clear ringing voice of singer-song-writer Natalie Merchant that lifted us even higher with a

rewritten rendition of Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land"...tailoring the lyrics as "New York is my land, New York is your land . . ." How poignant it was that she had taught young children to sing to us the words of activists that walked the walk so long ago.

Many testimonies were given of the devastation and destruction that fracking has had on the health of communities, close by and across the country. One of the speakers urged us to travel to Pennsylvania whenever we could to show our support to the many farmers and homeowners who no longer can drink from their own wells or keep their windows open during the day. It was made clear, over and over, that clean water and clean air is our human right. Fracking threatens that right and we need to make noise now before our state has millions of gallons of toxic water pumped into our land, threatening our fresh water and air only for the benefit the fossil fuel industry.

If you are wondering what steps you can take, please write, call or visit your representatives, especially Governor Cuomo. Tell your legislators that you are against fracking in our state. It is easy. It is important. If there are gatherings or rallies, try to attend (they are actually a lot of fun). If you are a person of faith as I am, then take your prayers and put them into action. Join us in being the voice, the hands and the feet that stand up and protect our Creation. We will not have a second chance. Let us preserve Mother Earth for today and future generations.

Volunteers and the Sierra Club

by Angela Knisley

The Sierra Club is one of the oldest and most influential environmental organizations in the United States. Founded in 1892 by John Muir, our motto is to "explore, enjoy and protect the planet." Although a national organization, the Sierra Club has regional groups like the Niagara Group, who work to protect the regional environments and to work on issues pertinent to that region. In Niagara we have a magnificent land and water that needs our care and stewardship, and we need everybody to participate in the work. Indeed, Sierra Club members and volunteers are at the core of our success, so please join us!

Fill out the form below to get involved with the Sierra Club - Niagara Group and we will get in touch with you. Thanks for your interest!

Become member of one of the Sierra Club Niagara Group committees (membership, program, outings, energy, "grass-roots" communication such as tabling, working on "phone banks", etc.)

Work on newsletter and web-site

Work on political action committees (Renewable Energy, Anti-fracking, West Valley, CWM toxic dump site, etc.)

Write "letters to the editor", politicians, etc.

Work on political campaigns for politicians that support environmental causes

OTHER (specify _____)

NAME: _____ TELEPHONE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

Please mail to: Sierra Club, 601 W Ferry Street, Buffalo, NY 14222
or email to sierraclubangela@gmail.com

Gigantic Solar Array Project

By Jack Kanack

The Western New York Peace Center is proposing a Gigantic Solar Array Project for the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station and Lewiston Power Storage Reservoir. The combined costs of both projects would be 1.18 billion dollars for a fixed tilt panel and 1.22 billion dollars for a 1-Axis panel. The power output of both projects combined would be 694 Gigawatt hours/year.

For the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station the project would use 543 Acres and demolish the Air Reserve Station while keeping the runways viable for airplanes. It would cost \$283 million to build and create \$143 million in local spending. The construction period would be 17.1 months and during construction 390 construction jobs would be created with 359 related jobs. Once running operations and maintenance costs would create another 36 permanent jobs at an average salary of \$42,000.

For the Lewiston Pump Storage Reservoir the project would use 1,677 acres. It would cost \$892 million to build and create \$422 million in local spending. The construction period would be 20 months and during construction 1,228 construction jobs would be created with 1,131 related jobs. Once running operations and maintenance costs would create another permanent 111 jobs at an average salary of \$42,000. These projects will not only supply jobs for our region, they support our goals for replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy.