Stop Niagara County CWM From Expanding!

By Charles Lamb and Pamela Hughes

The Chemical Waste Management site located in Niagara County has been in operation since the 1990’s. The landfill will soon exhaust their current landfill area previously designated for dumping waste from all around the Northeastern United States. Therefore, they have proposed the construction of a new landfill covering 44 acres that would extend CWM’s permit to receive hazardous waste for an additional 20 to 30 years in the Lewiston-Porter town region.

Governor Andrew Cuomo appointed an eight member siting board to evaluate CWM’s proposal in order to determine if the relevant certificiates of enviromental safety/public necessity should be approved or denied based on health and safety, water supplies (including groundwater), and the necessity of the site. There is large public opposition to this proposal including the Town of Lewiston, Village of Lewiston, Village of Youngstown, Niagara County Legislature, Lewiston Porter School Board, and others who have been very vocal since this application was first submitted. Every restricted municipality in this area has stated opposition to a new landfill permit. Environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club, have long been in the front ranks of opposing hazardous waste disposal here in the watershed area of Lake Ontario. In 2010, the DEC stated that additional and expanded hazardous waste management facilities were unnecessary in New York. The disproportionate amount of waste disposal in this region compared to other counties and states deem this area unnecessarily weighted. In addition, landfilling is the least desirable method of disposing of hazardous waste. The existing elevated cancer rate in the surrounding region to CWM compared to state averages, and the fact that this proposed site borders the Lew-Port school system and residents, certainly is a contraindication to this future project. And the immediate economic benefit of expansion is greatly offset by disincentives to new businesses as well as promotion of this region as a center for tourist attraction with a newly expanded landfill presence. The landfill would retard economic growth and lower property values. Lastly, the morality of endangering the viability of the environment is not good stewardship of our earth.

Money talks, but so does ‘People-Power’. Large numbers of people need to become active in fighting against this new hazardous waste facility that would result in trucks bringing hazardous waste materials across our state. This is the last chance for the residents of Western New York to voice their opposition to the proposed landfill. Public hearings are scheduled for July 16th at 1:00 pm and 6:30 pm at Lewiston-Porter High School. Petitions are being prepared, and public comments can be sent now. Please help us in opposing this landfill expansion. Relevant addresses, contacts, and information are provided below.

Copies of the application are available through http.modelscity.wm.com/. Hard copies of DEC’s fact sheet, draft permit, and CWM application are also available at: DEC, Division of Environmental Remediation, 625 Broadway, 12th Floor, Albany, NY 12233, and at DEC Region 9 Office, 270 Michigan Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14203, contact person: Mark Passuite (716-851-7165), the Youngstown Free Library, and the Porter Town Hall. Comments can be sent to: James T. McClymonds, Chief Administrative Law Judge, NYSDEC Officer of Hearings and Mediation Services, 625 Broadway, First Floor, Albany, NY 12233-1550, or via email to CWMR-MU2@nys.dec.state.ny.us.
By Lynda Schneekloth, Chairwoman

We have had an incredibly active year with our Executive Committee and affiliated volunteers working on many environmental issues! I’d like our members to take a look at what has been happening over the past twelve months.

First, we have spent considerable time this year working closely with ArtVoice and publishers so that we can be more effective in all of our campaigns. To that end, five of our ExCom members participated in a seven week SC Leadership Training that allows the group to think back to the group for decision and changes to our operating procedures. We also engaged in a strategic planning session where we identified and confirmed that climate change and renewable energy will continue to be our primary campaign even while we attend to the diversity of issues facing us in WNY.

We are fortunate to have the head of the Atlantic Chapter Energy Committee, Bob Ciesielski, on our ExCom. We have also been working closely with the Beyond Coal campaign with both Jenn Tuttle and Charley Olena for three months. Our Energy Committee, headed up by Diane Curczak, has been working to institute good energy policies including a wind campaign, collaborating with the schools on solar energy generation, partnering with other organizations and unions to assist in the transition to a new energy economy. Under the leadership of Bill Nowak and Ellen Half, we now have a ‘Water Group’ that has had great success getting environmental articles published regionally. We continue to be concerned with the Governor’s proposed Energy Plan and have promoted efficiency and conservation, and are moving away from the proposed methane infrastructure development.

Although we are focusing on energy issues, we have not forgotten our long-standing commitments to West Valley and CWM nor shied away from new threats such as the proposed transport of high-level liquid nuclear waste from Chalk River, Ontario to Savannah River, SC. We continue our partnerships to build a large base for our key issues with groups such as the Sierra Club (WNY), Buffalo Recycling, NYS Drilling Defense, WNY Peace Center, CAC, and labor unions. Together, we show greater resolve toward challenging local environmental issues.

2014 Annual Awards

The Bruce Kaye-fish Award for individuals stewardship was given to Jay Burney for his sustained efforts to protect the heritage of our region. Naturalist, ecologist, educator, and advocate, Jay Burney has done exceptional work with the group with a variety of environmental groups. He currently is WNWEA’s Habitat Executive Committee Chair and manages the Habitat working group. Jay has accomplished many victories through his Learning Sustainability Campaign, his journalism on key issues, his management of the WNWEA Habitat Working Group, and most critically, his key role in the protection of Times Beach on the Outer Harbor of Buffalo. Thank you, Jay, for your dedication and unrelenting advocacy and activism for our environment!

The Blake Reeves Award, given in honor of the founder of the Sierra Club Niagara Group, recognizes an organizational leader who has used environmental causes such as clean water, renewable energy, and climate justice. This year’s award goes to ArtVoice editor, Geoff Kelly. Since 2006, ArtVoice has been one of the few media outlets in our region that publishes clear progressive articles about social, economic and ecological implications of our current cultural practices. ArtVoice is the only monthly magazine started by Jamie Moser in 1990, initially focusing on those issues exclusively on arts and culture. In 2006, Geoff Kelly was hired as editor to build a broader base and add subject matter that included the political and economic scene from a more edgy and progressive position. For example, the section “NEWS Briefly” is always filled with short and easily readable research specifics that reveal the shenanigans of our elected officials and those with power. As Editor, Geoff has brought on excellent writers: Bruce Fisher (Director of the Environmental Justice and Policy Studies at Buffalo State, Political and economic analysis, focus on water and infrastructure), Mike Niman (President of the Journal of Media Ethics Buffalo State, political analysis that uncovers hidden and not-so-hidden agenda of the rich and famous), and Buck Quigley (Regular on ArtVoice Daily, was the one who identified past reported hydro-fracking fiascos at the University at Buffalo). They have conducting in-depth analyses and critical writing about the important issues that impact our everyday lives. From our perspective and mission, ArtVoice has not shied away from critical environmental issues that seem to be ignored in other media venues. When I think of the Blogosphere, I think of Geoff Kelly (part because of media like ArtVoice and people like Geoff, Mike, Bruce and Buck. We owe them a huge “thank you” for their vigilance and insight.

The Sierra club wants you to get outdoors and experience the beauty of the natural world. We are proposing some excellent opportunities in the following link and encourage you to be involved. And if you would like to join a committee that will plan and coordinate Sierra-sponsored outings (hiking, kayaking, biking, x-country skiing and nature walks), or serve as a trip leader, please contact Ron Missel (716-913-7866 or rmissel4@gmail.com). If you know of other groups offering similar activities and would like to see them listed in the future, also contact Ron.

ADK (Adirondack Club) – ADK sponsors frequent local day and evening hikes, bike trips, paddles, x-country skiing, as well as regional Adirondack and Canadian overnight outings – both tent camping and lodge stays. Each event has a group leader and members are expected to participate in two activities annually before joining ADK. Annual membership fees are $50 – $75. Contact: http://adk-nyc.org/join/adk

Footpath Trailclub – Activities include group hiking on numerous Western New York trails. You are allowed to participate in three activities annually before joining. Annual membership fees are $22 – $30. Contact: http://www.footpathtrailclub.org/

Buffalo Audubon Society – Local activities and nature hikes occur frequently throughout the year. Memberships are $25 – $35 annually, but you can attend some programs as a non-member for a small fee. Contact: http://www.buffaloaudubon.org/

Sierra Club National – A wide range of national and international paid trips are available throughout the year for all ages and interests, including ‘service’ trips at reduced rates. Consult the back pages of Sierra magazine, or peruse the web site at: http://www.sierraclub.org

Tiff Nature Preserves – The Buffalo Museum of Science, the affiliated Tiff Nature Preserve offers hiking trips and nature programs. Located across from the Small Boat Harbor, it is open 10 am to 4 pm, Wednesday through Saturday, and 12 to 4 pm on Monday. Visit: http://www.sciencebuff.org/tiff/nature-preserves/visiting-tiff

Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve & Environmental Education Center – Conveniently located in Depew, DEC-managed Reinstein Woods is open to the public weekdays and weekends and includes guided hikes, scheduled programs, and public hiking trails. Check the web-site for times and activities. Contact: http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1837.html

Meet Up – “Meet Up” is the world’s largest online social network of local groups. The intent is to get local people together with common interests. Log on to the following link, then ‘click on’ ‘Find’ top left to browse the numerous listings. You can even create your own event or group in the ‘search box’ mid-page. http://www.meetup.com/about/

Buffalo Niagara RiverKeeper – RIVERKEEPER is a community-based organization dedicated to protecting the quality and quantity of water, including cleaning up pollution, restoring fish and wildlife habitat, and enhancing public access through greenways that expand parks and open space. There are numerous volunteer opportunities and occasional public programs. http://buffaloriverkeeper.org/

LOCAL OUTDOOR COMPANIES SPONSORING ACTIVITIES & TRIPS

Paths, Peaks and Paddles – Activities include free weekly paddles on Ellicott Creek across from the store on Ellicott Road, paid overnight excursions, out-door events, such as backyard birding and the end of term canoe trip (for those with snowshoes), and whitewater rafting on Cattaraugus Creek. Check the web-site for activities and contact information. http://www.pathspeakspaddles.com/

Adventure-Call – Activities include paid whitewater rafting and kayaking trips on Cattaraugus Creek and the Genesee River in the Letchworth State Park gorge (Seeing the gorge from the top is spectacular, but paddling through it and looking up provides an altogether different view.) http://adventure-call.com/

MEMBER TRIP/ACTIVITY RECOMMENDATIONS

NOTE: If you’ve had a particularly memorable outdoor excursion, let us know about it and we’ll share with our fellow Buffalo Niagara Sierra Club membership. Send a brief email summary to Ron. Include the date and relevant contact information.

October 27, 2013 (Submitted by Ron Missel)
I spent the weekend kayaking at Fish Creek Cabin Resorts in TARBEG, NY, a little northeast of Oneida Lake. The resort includes a dozen cabins on the banks of Fish Creek. The cabins are all well maintained and have all amenities. The owners, Tim Schoen and his brother, are gracious hosts. Activities include shuttles for white water kayaking, canoeing, fishing on the lake, rafting, water kayaking/canoeing in summer and fall, fly fishing and canoe fishing all season, and access to snowmobiling and x-country skiing. If nothing else, the fall foliage is outstanding. Feel free to call me direct at 716-913-7866 if you have questions. http://fishcreekcabin.com/sorti/press-press.com/