

The Trailblazer

The Niagara Group of The Sierra Club • <http://NiagaraSierraClub.com> • Vol. 50 No. 4 Oct 2015

Rise Up for Climate Justice Campaign *By Lynda Schneekloth and Roger Cook*

In the late afternoon on Sept. 24, 2015, over 300 people gathered in Niagara Square in downtown Buffalo, New York to initiate a three month campaign, RISE UP FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE. The date was selected in solidarity with Pope Francis' address to the joint session of Congress.

The campaign is designed to raise awareness of the upcoming UN Paris Climate Talks which we all know are critical to the future of our planet. As #ActinParis says, "We are the first generation that is seeing the lasting effects of the climate crisis, but may be the last generation that has the chance to do anything about it." Moreover, the title, "Climate Justice" builds on the message and language of Pope Francis and last year's People's Climate March.

The Sierra Club Niagara Group, with the support of the Interfaith Climate Justice Community, are asking ourselves: *What specifically can we do in the Western New York Region?* How do we get people involved? How can we encourage and support collective and individual action? This three-month campaign is designed to respond to these questions.

We have gathered a group of diverse partners for this campaign and they were evident in the rally. The vehicle we are using for organizing is the CLIMATE JUSTICE PLEDGE. We are asking organizations, elected officials and individual to sign this pledge. The language outlines the critical nature of the climate crisis and asks people:

- To call on President Obama to lead the world to a universal, legally binding agreement to cut greenhouse gas emissions with provisions to protect the poorest and most vulnerable and indigenous people.
- To meet with our elected officials and ask them to

sign the pledge and to work on policy and legislation to move to renewables and to develop a just transition strategy for impacted communities.

- To take action as groups and individuals on behalf of the Earth and future generations.

At the rally there was an hour of creative festivities focused on climate justice issues to generate an energetic crowd – dance, song, the U.S.S. Climate Justice moving boat, face painting, poetry readings by young people and information tabling.

The talks began with a rousing address by Common Council President Darius Pridden who proposed and had passed a resolution to affirm the Climate Justice Pledge by the Buffalo Common Council. The speakers included the range of partners: union brothers and sisters, with Deborah Hayes speaking for the Communications Workers of America; Sister Sharon Goodremote who spoke as a representative of Catholic Bishop Malone; Agnes Williams and drummers spoke on behalf of the Seneca and indigenous people; Maxine Murphey, from PUSH spoke about lack of affordability in the energy sector; Subashni Raj about her country, Fiji, an island on the front lines of climate change and others. Already 20 unions or union leaders have signed the pledge as have elected officials including State Senators Marc Panepinto and Tim Kennedy, Paul Dyster, Mayor of Niagara Falls. The Western New York Environmental Alliance, representing over 100 organizations, is a partner as well as the Partnership for the Public Good, PUSH, the Working Families Party WNY, the League of Women Voters, Buffalo/Niagara and many others.

And we have only begun. The next three months will be devoted to a widening of partners committed to taking action on Climate Change. We will be offering programs

and events for education, including solidarity with national/international programs as possible; we will be visiting the offices of all of our elected officials to push for their climate actions, we will provide support for everyone who wants to engage their organization, church or school in this campaign, we will all take what action is required to put pressure on Washington, and we will offer support for making individuals changes that move us to a more sustainable, healthy, and just life here on planet earth. During the Paris talks, we will be taking action to ensure that our small part of the world is aware and participating in this critical moment of history, where we hope, our generation will step up to its opportunity and responsibility.



Many thanks to the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo who provided \$4000 of grant support monies toward the Rise Up For Climate Justice campaign!!!

See more stories like this at NiagaraSierraClub.com

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SEE IMPORTANT ELECTION BIOS AND BALLOTS ON PAGE 2!

RECYCLING CORNER - Those Pesky Plastics...(Part 2)

By Ron Missel

I was told recently that no conventional plastic produced by man has yet to biodegrade. Since the process to produce plastic was developed in the early 1900's, and it takes plastic on average 450 years to biodegrade, that statement makes perfect sense. Let's do the right thing! Reuse or repurpose first; then recycle if you can't. The following common items are recyclable, but not in the conventional sense.

PLASTIC ID CARDS (*Gift, Credit, Debit, Health Insurance, Shoppers, Casino, etc.*) - There has been an increased proliferation of "gift and ID cards" in recent years. Most are made from # 3 polyvinyl chloride (PVC). The cards are definitely recyclable, but not in your curbside recycle box, as the small cards will NOT move through *Single Stream* conveyor systems. Instead, use a mail-back company such as Earthworkssystem.com (440-349-3434). They will take the cards for free, melt them down and generate new PVC sheets without adding chemicals or additional plastic. (NOTE: Cards can now be made from bioplastics (e.g., paper pulp, corn stalks, etc.) into materials such as *'Ingeo'*. Many retail operations, like Whole Foods and Macy's, are deploying these cards. They aren't compostable but they can be buried in the ground for complete decomposition. Check out Natureworksllc.com.)

KAYAKS AND CANOES - We don't often think about recycling large scale recreational items. We tend to keep them for a long time or pass them on

to someone else. Sometimes, though, they become damaged, worn or aged beyond functional use. Obviously, they won't fit in your recycle tote, but they are made mostly of recyclable plastics. To recycle, start by contacting the manufacturer to determine if they have a recycle program, or if they can advise on the best way to recycle. At the very least, find out what type of plastic material the unit is made from; then contact your hauler to determine if it can be recycled. Most haulers will take a large, recyclable item if it's cut into small pieces and placed in the tote, but cutting them up is not an easy task. You might also contact a canoe/kayak association for general recycling guidelines. Before buying another canoe or kayak, check with the manufacturer on their recycle policies, and look for a boat made out of recycled plastic.

CDs, DVDs & JEWEL CASES - I walked by my basement box of CDs, DVDs and jewel cases (holders) for the umpteenth time and decided it was time to get rid of them. If you're like me, you probably have a collection of obsolete CDs and DVDs that are no longer wanted or functional, and the cases they came in. **Best Buy** will take them (along with a range of other electronic devices) but there are also a number of mail-in houses such as the New Hampshire-based **CD Recycling Center of America** (<http://www.cdrecyclingcenter.org/> - 603-894-5553). Instructions are on the web-site, but you will have to separate the disk, case, tray and paper inserts before mailing. Once processed, the "new" material is a 99% clean polycarbonate resin that is pack-

aged and resold for remanufacture of the new items. Check out their website. You will feel confident that your CDs and case materials are handled responsibly.

PLASTIC TRASH CANS - Plastic curbside trash cans are typically made of high or low density polyethylene (HDPE or LDPE) or polypropylene. All are recyclable plastics. The big problem is size. They won't fit into your municipal recycle tote without cutting them up. Again, this task requires certain tools and some effort. Check for the policies on your municipal website or contact either your hauler or municipality by telephone. To avoid confusing the pick-up workers, label the cans "DAMAGED- TO BE RECYCLED". If there isn't a program for these items, talk to your municipality about establishing one. (FYI: The City of Buffalo does accept trash cans.)

PLASTIC BACKYARD PLAYSETS, TOYS & FURNITURE - Like trash cans, plastic furniture and play sets are made of polyethylene, polypropylene or polyvinylchloride - all recyclable materials. And like trash cans, size comes into play. **Modern Corporation**, a major local trash and recycle company, will take these items curbside, but they need to be cut up into pieces less than 4 feet. Once again, call your hauler or municipality and ask. And remember, many of these policies change frequently - generally for the good - so keep checking.

And don't forget, **buy products made from recycled plastic!**

Elections 2015: Time to Vote!

As a member of the Sierra Club, you are asked to participate in two elections this fall. The first is our Niagara Group election of members of the Executive Committee – see information in this Trailblazer. The other election is for members At Large for the Atlantic Chapter (New York State) of the Sierra Club. Information will be available in the next issue of Sierra Atlantic, and also on the website: <http://atlantic2.sierraclub.org/>. We ask for your considered participation!!!

Please read the following biographies of the candidates.

CHARLEY BOWMAN - I graduated from SUNY Albany in 1982 with a PhD in cell biology and several years later moved to Western New York to work at a SUNY Buffalo Biology laboratory. Our friends in Albany gave us a useful going-away present: a snow shovel. Following years of basic research on cell membranes, I retired from UB as a Research Assistant Professor. Throughout those years, I co-authored 20 refereed papers, numerous invited papers, and guest-lectured for many years. Following retirement, my volunteerism increased at the WNY Peace Center as its Interim Executive Director followed by my establishment of the Renewable Energy Task Force therein.

My interest in environmental issues is an extension of my anti-war activism, as well as Rita Yelda's wonderful work on WNY hydro-fracking issues, learning from her about the horrors of hydro-fracking. When the intensity of wars diminished in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station (NFARS) was again placed on the Pentagon's base closing chopping block. As the largest employer in Niagara County, we needed to find a new peaceful vision for the air base and popular support to deal with the urgent problems of climate change.

In May 2012, an epiphany occurred to me that the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station could become a gigantic solar farm, and immersed myself into learning the details of solar farming. These studies eventually led to an additional proposal for a solar farm over the 1,700 acre Lewiston Reservoir. Additionally, why not consider NY State superfund sites for solar farming? Love Canal — the mother of all such sites — could conceivably have a solar farm on top of that encapsulated mess. The proposition that if NY State considered the use of landfill sites for solar energy production at superfund areas, we could generate more than 50% of our energy needs; super solar generation from superfund sites.

All this renewable energy stuff is adding. My solar farm efforts eventually led to other interests and tasks such as the de-investment fossil fuel movement, opposing the Bakken oil "bomb" trains going through Upstate NY, and opposing the proposed gas storage in unstable salt caverns under the shores of precious Seneca Lake near Watkins Glen.

In summary, I reiterate what one Sierra Club Niagara Group member brilliantly said: "The enemy is not ISIS, it's the CO2 and CH4 in the atmosphere". "Nuff said. Let's get going!"

SARA SCHULTZ - Before I joined the Niagara Group Executive Committee in 2010, my activism was more on a personal level. I went to rallies and participated in clean-ups. I taught children, including my own, in camps, as a youth group advisor and at our Synagogue's religious school about how we need to live in harmony with our environment. I have been on the "green team" at all three of my places of employment. My lifestyle choices have followed my values, including eating a plant-based diet, driving the first hybrid and now a plug-in, living in a green certified home with geo-thermal energy and wind powered electricity, and paying close attention to the rules of reduce, re-use, recycle.

Getting active in the Sierra Club has opened up a wider range of opportunities to contribute. I am the secretary for the Niagara Group. I also Co-Chair the tabling committee, write articles, speak at public meetings, assist with the organization of events, lobby our legislators, participate in bomb-train counts and manage our Meet-Up page. I have been our State Delegate since January and I am eager to contribute to the Sierra Club on the state level.

I have been very active in my town with the "Amherst Against Fracking" group. Together with our small team, we have passed a resolution to ban fracking and fracking waste in our municipality. This resolution should be permanent legislation by this printing. Renewable energy, anti-fracking work, campaign finance reform, educating people about industrial farming and the devastation it is causing to both animals and the environment, and participation in interfaith environmental education are the areas that I am most passionate about. Finally, my husband and I are hoping to train as SC outing leaders next spring. We are both passionate about experiencing the natural environment and viewing wildlife. We would like to share our love of this with others. I hope to serve as an At-Large Delegate to the Atlantic Chapter to expand my activism statewide. I am very eager to serve this critical cause of environmental justice with passion and conviction.

PAMELA HUGHES - Watching the world unfold in front of my eyes early on in my life with hikes through the woods, climbing trees, and wading through creeks, I certainly was a nature girl. All my life, my passion for protecting the environment has been rooted in memories of the many losses of animal species, habitats, and pristine waters, transforming what once were unspoiled territories into leveled forests, smog and acid rain, polluted waterways, human encroachment into nature preserves, and an exponentially growing extinction/angered species list. I joined the Sierra Club Niagara Group in 2010. My interest in planting trees and issues of forest clear-cutting prompted my later nomination as Forestry Chair. There, I became directly involved with Niagara County Community College's plans for a roadway through the old-growth forest bordering their property. We successfully negotiated a plan to minimize the impact on the existing forest. I was then nominated to the Executive Committee in 2011 and later served as the Western New

York Environmental Alliance Delegate, Newsletter Editor (2012 to present), and finally in 2013, assumed the role as Vice-Chair. Over the past four years, I have represented the Sierra Club Niagara Group at public hearings for hydrofracking and the expansion of Niagara County's Chemical Waste Management facility, advocating in opposition of both issues. In addition, my role as Vice-Chair has entailed assistance with Sierra's operations, communications, and development of the 'Rise Up For Climate Justice' campaign this fall. It has been my privilege to serve side by side the caliber of knowledgeable and compassionate people in this group. My ongoing passion in protecting the environment in a range of roles and capacities remains strong and I hope that my efforts will make a difference in my corner of the world.

RICHARD LIPPES - My background and accomplishments may be summarized by the following description: As an Environmental Lawyer, I have handled many noteworthy cases, including Love Canal and as special environmental counsel for the plaintiffs in Three Mile Island disaster. As one of the original Executive Committee members in the Niagara Group over the last 44 years, I have also served twice as Chair over an 8 year period, been a member of Atlantic Chapter Executive Committee at various times, and Chairperson of Chapter Executive Committee from 1978-1982. In addition, I was formerly the Northeast Region Vice President of the Sierra Club, Founder of National Club Hazardous Materials Committee, and have been retained as the Sierra Club Chapter legal advisor for the past 42 years.

Other ongoing activities include retention as general counsel for many local environmental organizations, including Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper, and Atlantic States Legal Foundation. I am co-founder of the American Clean Water project and currently dealing with many legal cases of people whose water has been contaminated by hydro-fracking. As an active member of the anti-fracking crusade, I am compelled to continue legal action against the consequential results of hydro-fracking well into the future.

LARRY SNIDER - Over the last decade, it has become increasingly clearer to me that the earth needs some good advocates. In my opinion, protecting the earth is really a life issue and I wanted to make a difference in the world. The Sierra Club is one of the best environmental organizations and vastly knowledgeable on how to protect and advocate for the environment on a real and practical level.

Before becoming involved with the Sierra Club, I also participated in my local Church's Diocesan wide (regional) committee called the Buffalo Diocese Care for Creation Committee. This committee is focused on environmental education and advocacy, and I was directly involved in creating and producing a weekly

bulletin called "God's Green Earth". From there, my interest grew in expanding my activism.

As a licensed CPA in NYS, I am proud to have served with the Niagara Group, such a committed group of people, as the Treasurer for the Niagara Group over this past four-year term. Previously employed with NYS Department of Taxation and Finance with over 21 years of experience, I have the knowledge and experience to present new ideas and methods of utilizing our limited funds and have ensured that we have been good stewards of the monies at our disposal. I am especially proud of our Executive Board in raising funds for the Niagara group's accomplishments. As an Executive Committee member, I have also participated in the last three rallies sponsored by the Niagara group, including Washington DC in 2013, New York City in 2014, and the recent Buffalo Rally this past September. Building more awareness and activism in the WNY region is so very important in accomplishing our goals of defending our planet and addressing climate change. It would be an honor to continue my service for another term on the Executive Committee of the Niagara Group.

ROGER COOK - My interest in the environmental movement began with the Love Canal relocation effort where I helped organize the religious community (Ecumenical Task Force) toward advocating for relocation of the residents. Subsequently, the Ecumenical Task Force helped form the NYS Labor-Environmental Network, a coalition of labor unions and grassroots environmental groups based in communities around NYS impacted by toxic waste dumps. Also, at this time, I became director of the Western New York Council (COSH) where we were able to engage workers in the fight for safer workplaces and communities. In the early 1980s, we joined the national OSHA-Environmental Network (co-chaired by the AFL-CIO and the Sierra Club); locally WNYCOSH worked with the local Sierra Club in part of the national effort to implement the Clean Air Act, which was under assault by the Reagan Administration.

My years of environmental/workplace safety and health activism has spanned from 1978 to the present 2015. My main interest is in building coalitions among labor/environmental/community activists to protect the environment, including the workplace environment. When workers are successful in eliminating unsafe chemicals in the workplace, both the environment and community benefit. Today, climate change has become a key issue for our society; workers are very interested in the "green economy" because it can bring jobs in the manufacturing and installation of renewable energy, and the retrofitting of homes. Having served on Executive Committee of the Niagara Group, I would like to continue my partnership work between labor, environmental, and community activism, forming systemic alliances that will ultimately strengthen our ability to achieve our common goals.

Nominees for 2016-17 term on Niagara Group Executive Committee

**IMPORTANT: Single Membership - Use one ballot.
Joint Membership - Use both ballots.**

Ballots must be received by December 25, 2015

NIAGARA GROUP OFFICIAL BALLOTS

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

- Charley Bowman
 Sara Schultz
 Pamela Hughes
 Richard Lippes
 Larry Snider
 Roger Cook

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

- Charley Bowman
 Sara Schultz
 Pamela Hughes
 Richard Lippes
 Larry Snider
 Roger Cook

Election Instructions:

To be eligible to vote, you must be a member in good standing with the Niagara Group as verified by a member's mailing label. Please read all of the candidates' statements on Page 2. Indicate your choices by checking the box next to the candidates' names on the ballot. Each member may complete one ballot. Joint members may complete two ballots. Please detach this page and mail your ballot(s) to the address below in an ordinary letter-size envelope with proper postage. Send your ballots to:

2015 Niagara Group Elections Committee
Sierra Club Niagara Group • P.O. Box 1127 • Williamsville, NY 14221-1127

Ballots must be received on or before 12/25/2015