Executive Committee Endorses Political Candidates

By Roger Cook, Political Committee Chair

The Sierra Club Niagara Group Executive Committee has endorsed sixteen candidates for local and regional offices. Our intent in making these endorsements is to identify the candidates who best represent and will support our mission:

To explore, enjoy and protect the planet. To practice and promote the responsible use of the earth’s ecosystems and resources, to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment, and to use all lawful means to carry out those objectives.

From a local standpoint, we identified candidates who are committed to preventing sprawl, protecting our air, water, and open spaces, and promoting effective use of our resources. In providing an agenda of issues to local candidates, we intend that our endorsed candidates will use this information as a guideline for introducing and fighting for legislation that will enhance the quality of life for the men and women in New York and protect the environment in which we live, work, and play.

To determine these endorsements, the Niagara Group’s Political Committee sent out a seventeen-question survey that addresses a variety of environmental, habitat, and wildlife issues. After receiving candidate responses, the Political Committee conducted a number of follow-up phone interviews with candidates for clarification of their responses. On the basis of this information, it recommended the endorsement of specific candidates. The Executive Committee members then received the Political Committee recommendations along with all of the candidates’ responses. At the September meeting they voted to endorse the candidates listed below.

All of the candidates we endorsed are in support of the following key issues:

- Opposition to National Fuel’s Northern Access Pipeline (which is proposed to go through many Erie County towns)
- Solar ordinances and solarization campaigns (for municipal buildings, residences, and business)
- Clean Energy Community and Climate Smart Community designations
- Ensuring that wetland, forest, wildlife habitat, creek, stream, green space, agricultural district, and water supply protections are incorporated into ordinances and/or Master Plans
- Adopting Town Energy Plans: energy conservation and renewable energy policies (in Master Plans and/or ordinances)
- Developing plans for a system of sidewalks, bicycle paths, walkable trails that connect town centers to schools, neighborhoods, libraries, recreational facilities, and other public areas throughout the town
- Advocacy for the expansion of public transportation (including electric buses) from outlying towns to the City of Buffalo
- Ensuring that IDA subsidies are given only to companies that adhere to job retention, labor, environmental, civil rights and anti-sprawl standards; and that “clawback” provisions are in place when companies fail to comply

Our Endorsements:

- Town of Tonawanda Council
  - Linda Chmura (incumbent)
  - William Conrad (incumbent)
- Town of Cheektowaga Council
  - James Rogowski (incumbent)
  - Brian Nowak (non-incumbent)
- Town of Amherst Council
  - Jon Hamann (non-incumbent)
  - William Krebs (Supervisor/non-incumbent)
- Town of Hamburg Council
  - Matthew Kohler (non-incumbent)
- Town of Lockport Council
  - Michelle Roman (non-incumbent)
  - Town of Amherst Council
  - Jacqui Berger (non-incumbent)
  - Brian Kulpa (Supervisor/non-incumbent)
- Erie County Legislature
  - Kevin Hardwick (incumbent, Grand Island/Toanwanda/City of Tonawanda)
  - Tom Loughran (incumbent, Amherst)
  - Patrick Burke (incumbent, S. Buffalo/Cheektowaga)

We strongly encourage our members to consider these endorsements when voting in November. Our strength as a voting bloc, and our ability to influence policy through our political participation, are among our greatest assets in protecting the Earth.
Elections 2017: 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.

PAMELA HUGHES - My history with the Sierra Club began in 2010 when my planting trees prompted my later nomination as Forestry Chair. In 2011, I was nominated to the Executive Committee, and later served as the Western New York Environmental Alliance delegate, Newsletter Editor (2012-2016), Vice-Chair (2013-2015), and finally assumed the role of Chair (2016-Present).

There has never been more urgency to address environmental issues and how in these politically and socially tumultuous times. My passion for protecting the environment has paralleled decades of activism needs to confront matters around loss of habitat, air and water pollution, and mass extinction of wildlife. Topping that urgency is the most crucial imperative of our generation: Climate Change! Our shared future is currently unknown and we have surpassed globally driven tipping points. But our purpose is clear: to mobilize our region toward protecting what we have left.

RICHARD LIPPE - 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 for a golden year. 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 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 acting as its Chair for the Advocacy Chair of the New York State Environmental Alliance and as the Board Member Emerita for the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper. I have been a strong advocate for clean, renewable, and the protection of the environment.

ROGER COOK - My interest in the environmental movement began with the Love Canal relocation effort. Subsequently, the Ecumenical Task Force helped form the NYS Environmental Task Force, a coalition of labor unions and environmental groups in communities around NYS impacted by toxic waste dumps. Also, at this time, I was 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 1990s, 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 and parts 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/environment/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.

LYNDA SCHNEEKLUTH - I would be honored to join the ExCom of the Sierra Club Niagara and support the work of this group. I have been an active member of the Niagara Group for over 10 years and believe that the work we do around climate justice and preservation of the world is critical. And of course, given the pace of climate change and the current context of the world, we have so much work to do to provide a habitable and just planet for future generations.

In my capacity as the practice of networking between the Sierra Club and many others in our region who are actively working on climate justice. I currently serve as the Sierra Club of Western New York Environmental Alliance and as the Board Member Emerita for the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper. I have also been participating with the Crossroads and the Interfaith Climate Justice Network. Because of the scope of climate change, we are in need of a very board movement to overcome the inertia and doubt to move into a more regenerative culture. I think that the Sierra Club is a good place to hold, with others, the nexus of change and to bring our experience and expertise to this work.

If elected, I will continue to serve as an active member of the board with the focus on movement building in the region.

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Nominees for 2018-19 term on Niagara Group Executive Committee

IMPORTANT: Single Membership - Use one ballot. Joint Membership - Use both ballots. Ballots must be received by December 25, 2017

NIAGARA GROUP OFFICIAL BALLOTS

BALLOT 1 BOARD OF GOVERNANCE AT LARGE DELEGATES

JOICE UP TO 6 BOARD MEMBERS

☐ DIANA STRABLOW
☐ SARA SCHULTZ
☐ PAMELA HUGHES
☐ RICHARD LIPPE
☐ ROGER COOK
☐ LYNDA SCHNEEKLUTH

BALLOT 2 BOARD OF GOVERNANCE AT LARGE DELEGATES

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☐ ROGER COOK
☐ LYNDA SCHNEEKLUTH

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:

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

*Ballots must be received on or before 12/25/2017*

HABITAT CORNER

• Ragweed is a wind-pollinated plant that benefits wildlife. Many grasshopper species live around the plant as well as caterpillars of several moths eat the foliage, flowers or seeds. The oil-rich seeds are a valuable source of winter food for birds and small mammals.

• Smartweeds are members of the buckwheat family and also are a source of food for wildlife.

• Canada thistle is a favorite weed of Goldenfinches while Goldenrod is a favorite of butterflies, bees and other pollinators.