



Fresh Air

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Mid-Hudson Group of the Atlantic Chapter

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This newsletter will be posted to our website along with all previous newsletters.

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Chair's Corner by *Lalita Malik*

We are just two months away from arguably the most important election that will shape our future, our children's and all subsequent generations. It is a time to focus on "our legacy". Will we leave the earth a better place or will we destroy it for the few billions that line the pockets of a privileged few? The outcome of the November 2020 elections will decide. And you must decide whom to vote for. The stakes are remarkably high. The progress we have made for clean air, water and the promise of public lands for all has been shattered.

Since 2017, Donald Trump has rolled back over 100 environmental protections, which will cause premature death and illnesses. Bob Heinemann's article discusses the staggering effect of the mishandling of the COVID-19 crises and the impact of rolling back the environment protections. If Donald Trump continues for another four years we may not recover from the harm he does during our lifetimes.

In addition to the presidency, there are several local, state and federal elections of equal importance this year. We must elect representatives that watch out for our interests and not just a select few. Our Political Committee chairs, Alison White and Nancy Severns have spent a considerable amount of time evaluating and interviewing each candidate for office. They use a well-defined process to endorse candidates that will support Sierra Club's goals.

The current administration is trying ridiculously hard (removing regulations, giving money) to save the fossil fuel industry, but it is failing. An abundant supply of oil has led to lower prices making it economically unfeasible to continue mining fossil fuel. [Check out this story by electrek.](#)

On the other hand, growth of renewable energy via solar and wind farms is increasing. We are fortunate to live in an environmentally friendly State that is doing an exceptionally good job of reducing carbon emissions, promoting the growth of renewable energy and fostering the adoption of clean energy solutions. One of these solutions is fuel efficient and electric vehicles. If we are going to combat global warming we must all do our part to reduce our use of fossil fuels while at the same

time, rewarding businesses that are investing in green solutions.

I started my journey towards reducing car emissions by purchasing my first hybrid, a Toyota Camry. As technology improved, the new cars added many safety features like lane assist, collision prevention and brighter headlights, to name a few. I decided to upgrade to a car with better safety features and selected a Chevrolet Volt—a Plug in Hybrid (PIH). With a range of 53 miles on a single charge, I have the capability of doing all my local driving on electric and using using hybrid mode for long distance trips.

Unfortunately, a month ago, someone rammed my car on the passenger side. The window shattered, and all four side airbags deployed. I got out by ducking under the airbags, but sustained a sternal fracture. My three-year-old car was totaled, but it's safety features saved me.

GM has discontinued the Volt, so I did not have a good choice for a PIH. I researched Electric Vehicles (EVs) and selected the Chevrolet Bolt. The 2020 model has a range of 259 miles. NYS has partnered with EVgo to build a network of fast chargers. GM and other private companies are also building a network of chargers. With over 40,000 charging stations in the U.S. I can drive to hikes all over the Hudson Valley, upstate and even cross country without fear of getting stranded with a dead car battery. Best of all, the car has a Five-Star rating from National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

There will be a good opportunity to learn more about EVs in September during National Drive Electric Week, which runs from September 26 through October 4, 2020. This is a nationwide celebration to raise awareness of the many benefits of all-electric and plug-in hybrid cars, trucks, motorcycles, and more. There will be virtual and in person events to talk to local EV owners/drivers. Check out the following web sites to learn more and sign up to join an event.

<https://driveelectricweek.org/?s=piaw>
<https://pluginamerica.org/>

There are two events coming to the Hudson Valley:

7th Annual Poughkeepsie Drive Electric Event

Sunday, October 4th, 10:30 am - 12:30 pm
Locust Grove Estate
Poughkeepsie, NY

National Drive Electric Week

Saturday, September 26th, 10:00am - 2:00pm
Ulster County Courthouse
285 Wall Street
Kingston, NY

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Political Corner by *Alison White and Nancy Severns*

What's at Stake This Election Year

Usually, in our Mid-Hudson Group newsletter, we try to address issues that are local to our Mid-Hudson Group geographical area. (Visit our website's "[About Us](#)" page to see our territory.) However, these are not usual times. It has been strikingly obvious over the past three-plus years that what happens at the highest levels of government affects each and every one of us.

The Trump administration's dismantling of federal environmental protections, catering to the fossil fuel industry, blocking climate action, silencing government scientists, defunding the CDC and quashing its messages to the public are just some of the many bad policy decisions that continue to impact our daily lives. We are fortunate that here in New York State measures have been taken to preserve our air and water quality, protect our health, and work towards combating climate change. This has happened because we elected responsible adults to serve us in state and local government. But state-level action cannot mitigate all of the anti-science policies of the federal government.

The 2020 election will be the most consequential election of our time, and not just for the presidency. This election will determine our ability to act against climate change before it's too late. In November, we must elect responsible officials at all levels of government. The U.S. Senate elected in 2020 will almost certainly confirm the next Supreme Court Justice. The person you elect to represent you in Congress will either cast votes to protect our climate, our health, our air and water, or she/he won't.



Plan Ahead and Vote Early

It's imperative that we all vote in this election, that we urge everyone we know to confirm they are registered to vote, and that everyone has a plan for casting their ballot (by mail or in person). The most fail-safe way to vote is to put on your mask, go to your polling place and vote in person. If you are not comfortable or are unable to vote in person, vote by mail. By now we have all heard about Trump administration efforts to hamper the U.S. Postal Service and slow down mail delivery. Don't let them succeed! If you plan to vote by mail, do it as early as possible.

In-Person Early Voting

Early voting this fall will make voting easier than in previous years. There will be nine days of early voting (including weekends) from October 24 – November 1. Note: your polling place for early voting is not necessarily the same as your normal polling place! To find your polling place for early voting, go to <https://www.ny.gov/early-voting-new-york> and look for your county in the "County Boards – Early Voting Information" section, or check your county's Board of Elections web site:

Dutchess County: <https://www.elections.dutchessny.gov/voter-information/>

Ulster County: <https://elections.ulstercountyny.gov/>

Greene County: <https://www.greenecountyvotes.com/>

Columbia County: <https://sites.google.com/a/columbiacountyny.com/elections/>

Delaware County: <http://www.co.delaware.ny.us/departments/elec/elec.htm>

Voting by Mail

Every New Yorker can vote by mail if they choose. Under a new state law, New York will allow voters to request absentee ballots for the general election, and because of the COVID-19 risk, to specify "temporary illness" as the reason for voting by mail. Voters in New York can request an absentee ballot today – there is no need to wait until 30 days before the election as in previous elections. To vote by mail:

1. Obtain an absentee ballot application [HERE](#). You can also get an absentee ballot by stopping in at your local election office.
2. Fill out the application completely.
3. Submit the request to your local election office (find yours [HERE](#)). Although the deadline for requesting a mail-in ballot is Tuesday, October 27, 2020, you should request your ballot as far in advance of the election as possible – do it today!
4. When your ballot arrives, read it carefully and follow the instructions to complete it and return it.

Note: If you choose to vote by mail, you should expect to receive a ballot with two envelopes, an inner oath envelope and an outer return envelope. **IN ORDER TO HAVE YOUR VOTE COUNTED**, you must:

- Mark your ballot, place it in the inner envelope, and then SIGN and DATE the inner absentee ballot envelope in the

space provided.

- Seal the envelope, and place it in the outer envelope (which will have the Board's return mail information printed on it), and return it to the Board of Elections.

More details and county-specific voting information can be found at your county's Board of Elections web site (see the links above).



The Sierra Club has endorsed 11 local candidates ([see the list of endorsed candidates on our website](#)). These candidates are thoroughly vetted for their commitment to supporting legislation that protects clean air and water, and moves us forward to fight climate change.

We can do more than vote, and if there was ever a time to get involved, it's now. If you would like to help get any of our local Sierra Club-endorsed candidates elected, please contact Alison White (abwsierra@gmail.com), of the Mid-Hudson Group Political Committee. Even if we are not knocking on doors this fall, we can help our candidates by making personal contact through phone-banking and letter-writing.

Also, Sierra Club Independent Action has created the Battleground States Initiative, a massive grassroots program to contact voters in four battleground states which Donald Trump won by slim margins in 2016: Pennsylvania, Florida, Michigan and Arizona. Personal contacts to voters in these states will be made via targeted hand-written postcards, phone calls and text messages. Sierra Club, with its 3.8 million members and supporters, is positioned to run an effective operation. Volunteers are needed. This is a chance for you to make a real difference! [Read about Sierra Club Independent Action](#).

The Trump administration has used the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to relax enforcement of environmental protections, and has rolled back car emissions rules that are essential to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, the crisis could in fact offer some hope for climate action. In restarting the economy after the pandemic, the opportunity exists to accelerate the shift to renewable energy, stimulating and incentivizing the renewable energy sector and building out needed infrastructure. But the only chance to make progress towards a more sustainable future is to elect candidates who will advance the environmental agenda.

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Legislative Corner by Bob Heinemann

Saving the Planet in the Time of Pandemics

Yes, the word is plural – pandemics. There is the severe budget crisis caused by COVID-19 which significantly reduces tax funds collected for everything, including environmental needs, and there is the anti-science pro-fossil fuel “policies”, if you can call them that, of the Trump Administration and Mitch McConnell, majority “leader” in the Senate.

This double whammy on the well being of our planet and all life on it has been geometric in its implications, not just for the present with more than 180,000 Americans dead from the virus, but also a conservatively estimated tens of thousands more deaths annually from the weakening of clean air and water regulations, the increase of pesticide use, and the significant increase of fine particulate matter in the ambient air causing heart and respiratory problems that are the direct result of the current administration's mindless and blind support of industry and anti-regulatory policies.

Let's look at the budget issues caused by COVID first. As recent as August, 2020, the projected budget deficit of New York was estimated at \$14 billion dollars, and that is annually. The change in monthly revenue compared with the previous year

over the most recent 3-month average was a drop of 37 percent.

Every State in the country is experiencing similar steep shortfalls in revenue at the same time that citizens have lost jobs, businesses, their homes and apartments. The Governor, of necessity, already has temporarily cut aid to some NY cities by 20 percent, which affects money for schools, local governments, and hospitals with more cuts likely to follow. The lifeline that all States and citizens require is comprehensive federal relief legislation which has been a non-starter with the Senate “leader” and the imposter-in-chief who is temporarily the President.

So far, to the credit of Governor Cuomo, New York’s environmental protection fund (EPF), which provides \$300 million dollars each year to support the CLCPA legislation to address the significant threat of imminent climate change and global warming, has not been reduced or transferred out to meet other shortfalls. The DEC remains at present at its current staffing level which is recognized as far too small especially with the mandatory goals of the CLCPA legislation looming just a few years from now. How long will the EPF fund remain intact? There are no guarantees.

On the climate denial front (the second great pandemic also caused by the current inept national leadership) environmental regulations have been rolled back. Since January 20, 2017 necessary laws for clean water and clean air have been weakened, abridged and largely ignored. The respected, non-partisan Brookings Institute has tracked this administration’s deregulatory actions and currently counts 74 actions expressly taken to weaken environmental protection. Here is a short list of some of the most egregious and idiotic actions taken that damage the environment. These actions also have a significant, negative effect on our health and longevity while speeding up the world-wide disaster of climate change:

1. Withdrew from the Paris Agreement to cut greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), signed by 195 nations including the United States.
2. Replaced the Clean Power Plan and eliminated most regulations that limit GHG emissions. Replaced it with the ironically named Affordable Clean Energy Rule which will result in only a one percent reduction in GHG emissions.
3. Abrogated California’s ability to set its own fuel emission rules which has been in place since 1970 under the Clean Air Act.
4. Weakened rules limiting venting of methane from oil and gas production on public lands.
5. Rolled back regulations on airborne emissions of mercury, a neurotoxin.
6. Reduced regulations on the disposal and storage of coal ash, a totally retrograde action.
7. Lifted bans on oil and gas exploration on public lands including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, parts of the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska, in coastal waters all around the United States, and in formerly protected National Monuments in Utah.
8. Intervened in fossil fuel infrastructure projects including the Keystone XL pipeline and the Dakota Access pipeline.
9. Refused to strengthen National Ambient Air Quality Standards for fine particulate matter and ozone.
10. Kept the pesticide chlorpyrifos on the market despite evidence of serious health risks.

Unfortunately, the list goes on and on, and it is still being added to in the most negative ways to weaken and remove environmental laws and regulations. The significant and negative effects of this assault on climate protections, of course, also falls disproportionately on lower economic communities, as well as Black, Hispanic and Native American communities whose lives apparently do not matter to the present “leadership” of our country.

So, what must we do? Clearly, we must resist and oppose all of the policies and behaviors which harm our fellow citizens, neighbors in other countries, and the global health and well being of our planet. The best and only effective way to do that is on election day, November 3, 2020. That means voting for all candidates from the top to the bottom of the ballot who share our values, all the candidates supported by the national Sierra Club, the Atlantic Chapter and your Mid-Hudson Group. Those endorsements are posted on our websites.

To participate in the election you must decide how you will vote now. Whether it is in person, with a mail-in ballot, or by using a drop box at the polls (if one is available), find out what you need to do, and if possible, do it early. Make sure you know all the requirements of completing and signing a mail-in ballot, too. Do not let some technicality disallow your vote, whether it is a stray ink mark, initials instead of a signature, a tear in the ballot or envelope, or the lack of a postmark on the ballot. Hand deliver the ballot to the post office if necessary and demand that it be postmarked in front of you. Do whatever is necessary.

New York State will allow voters to request an absentee ballot if you are concerned about contracting or spreading an illness. Absentee ballots will not be mailed automatically. Voters may request mail-in ballots online, over the phone, in person or by mail. Election officials in New York are encouraging voters to apply for a ballot online rather than by mail to expedite the process. You may apply immediately. The State will begin mailing back ballots on or about September 18th. Use the link

below to go to the State's Absentee Ballot information page for all the details. You may also cast your ballot in person at early polling sites which open statewide on October 24. Voters also have the option of dropping off their mail-in ballots at early voting sites and at polling places on Election Day.

New York State absentee ballot information: <https://www.elections.ny.gov/votingabsentee.html>

We will not get a second chance after November 3, 2020. Vote like your life and the life of our planet depend on it. VOTE !!

MORE INFORMATION

COVID-19's effects on NY's budget:

<https://atlantic2.sierraclub.org/publications>

<https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/covid-19-toll-on-the-local-economy-a-preliminary-estimate-of-job-losses-and-tax-revenue-declines-april-2020.html>

<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/03/895384547/new-york-has-lost-a-greater-share-of-revenue-than-most-states-due-to-covid-19>

Trump's damage to environmental laws and regulations:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/04/climate/trump-environment-coronavirus.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/climate/trump-environment-rollbacks.html?mtrref=www.google.com&gwh=0C7335CFD77ABBC681562A347580A3E1&gwt=pay&assetType=REGIWALL>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_policy_of_the_Donald_Trump_administration

<https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/votervital/what-is-the-trump-administrations-track-record-on-the-environment/>

<https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2020/06/most-trump-environmental-rollbacks-will-take-years-to-be-reversed/>

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Energy Corner by *Nivo Rovedo*

Wither Blows the Wind? On Wind Turbine Misinformation.

Although wind represents a potentially essential part to ameliorating the climate crisis by providing a renewable, clean source of energy, there is disturbing anti-wind talk circulating. Part of this comes about because, once again, we are seeing the usual playbook when entrenched powers detect a threat to their dominance and profits.

In this case, it is the dissemination of falsehoods about the impacts of wind turbines on health, local livelihoods, and property values. While the agents behind these remain shadowy, suspicions would turn to the fossil fuel providers who stand to be sidelined as clean, renewable power starts to gain a larger foothold. And there is probably some psychosomatic ingredient to it as well.



Here is some context.

As you probably know, New York State is aggressively pursuing wind power in its push to get 70% of our electric power from renewable sources by 2030 and a zero emission electrical grid by 2040. It figures prominently in the State's energy portfolio as part of the 2019 law signed by the Governor called the **Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA)**.

Since downstate is where the greatest energy needs are located (about two thirds of NYS's total "load" is down there), it makes sense to have clean, renewable power generation in the vicinity, to avoid the cost and the environmental damage that augmenting transmission infrastructure often causes, as well power losses from long distance transmission. And since space is limited in the region and the wind for generation blows best off the coast, **Offshore Wind (OSW)** is a great idea.

In addition, with smart investing for the infrastructure needed for OSW turbine construction (ports, warehouses, assembly buildings, etc.), the Long Island region could become an OSW hub for a sizeable portion of the east coast as more states look to power up with turbines off their coast. The prospect for the permanent jobs associated with constructing and then maintaining them is very attractive. New Jersey has similar plans for OSW turbines along the Jersey shoreline and as a turbine construction hub.

The State's goal is 9 gigawatts of OSW by 2035. It has now started the solicitation to companies for this power as it enters the second phase of the ramp-up. In the first phase, it secured some 2+ gigawatts for projects for which are now in the permitting phase. The hope is that this next request for proposals will bring us close to the halfway point to our goal. Inland wind farms in the upstate region have also been proposed as a renewable addition to solar or hydro power.

There is opposition from certain corners, and some of the arguments against wind turbines are without evidence, and sometimes without logical thinking. The vested interests are strongly involved.

Some eight years ago, the American Petroleum Institute wrote a pamphlet on techniques municipalities could use to oppose wind and solar projects. A group called American Bird Conservation (whose members and leaders are in fossil fuel companies and the American Chamber of Commerce) is opposed to wind turbines, supposedly concerned about impacts to birds. They publish questionable information on bird kills, loss of property values, and wind turbine explosions (but there is never any mention of how fossil fuel power plants destroy bird life and habitat).

We should recall that the current President of the United States has made remarks encouraging the notion that wind turbines cause cancer. In addition, some residents in wealthy communities on Long Island are opposed to the power cables from OFW landing at substations in their towns because of the temporary disruption that construction would cause.



When the first offshore wind farm in the USA (5 turbines off the coast of Block Island in Rhode Island) was proposed, fisherman said it would harm their livelihood by disrupting fish populations. Others thought the towering structures would destroy the ocean view and harm tourism. None of those fears were realized. **In fact, the towering turbines seem to have boosted tourism, acting as an attraction for folks curious to see them (and the future of power).**

In the 2018 Sierra Club documentary film *Reinventing Power*, interviews with Block Island residents made it clear the OSW was a positive addition: no harm to fishing or whales or tourism; and the noisy, polluting diesel-fueled power plant on the island was replaced by quiet, clean energy production. The opposition to a wind farm near Fort Drum tried to make the case that the turbines would affect the radar at the base, while the base command itself stated the turbines could be accommodated.

Bird kills at wind farms do regrettably happen, but the numbers are much lower than those caused by fossil-fueled power plants. An estimate in 2018 was that there are 3-5 birds lost/megawatt/year; while any bird loss is sad, the quantity of birds lost to fossil fuel operation is some 35 times higher than that due to the pollution, habitat loss, mining, etc. by the fossil fuel industry. And mitigation measures are taken at wind farms such as camera monitoring if endangered species such as bald eagles come near so as to halt turbines, or stop OSW turbine construction if whales are migrating in the area.

Opponents to a wind farm planned for the shores of Lake Ontario claimed property values would drop. Economic studies of the proposal indicated the property values would rise if anything given the influx of jobs. And payments from the project owners to towns help lower property taxes as well as fund town improvements.

Then there are the worries about noise.

In November of 2019, a symposium on wind power was held at the University of Buffalo. It was sponsored by the Alliance for Clean Energy New York (ACE NY), the New York League of Conservation Voters, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and New Yorkers for Clean Power. Experts lectured on the data that has been gathered and provided a scientific foundation for an understanding of wind turbine impacts. The video of several [segments of the conference can be seen on the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter website](#).

One presentation was given by Michael Hankard, a recognized acoustics consultant who has worked on wind turbine placement for over 50 projects in 15 states. He stated that New York State requires that the loudest wind turbine sound not exceed 45 decibels (dBa) outside a residence, which is the same average standard set by the World Health Organization (WHO). Moreover, outdoor sounds are automatically reduced by 15 dBa indoors, which brings the loudest indoor noise to a very quiet 30 dBa. He also debunked claims surrounding the impacts on humans of infrasound when it is produced by turbines. It is several orders of magnitude less than can be detected by the human ear.

On the topic of noise and health, Dr. Robert McCunney of the Pulmonary Division at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts, has conducted clinical studies on illnesses associated with noise. He pointed to several large studies that show that wind turbines do not create stress, sleep disturbance, or effect blood pressure. Minimal sleep

disturbance begins to occur when noise exceeds 46 dBA. One study comprised as many as 717,000 people in Denmark.

The conference included remarks by a local farmer, Jason Kehl of Strykersville, on his experience having had four turbines on his dairy farm for the past ten years. These turbines are part of a larger wind farm that encompasses neighboring properties as well. He has kept 150 cows which have not been adversely effected by the turbines. Mr. Kehl stated that wildlife including turkeys and deer have actually increased on his farm since the installation of the turbines and that he has noticed no bird deaths caused by the turbines.

Professor Simon Chapman of the University of Sydney School of Public Health in Australia, wrote a book entitled *Wind Turbine Syndrome: A Communicated Disease*. He has toured Europe to investigate the claims of this alleged malady (a supposed combination of illnesses caused by wind farms).

He visited regions throughout the continent that have a large number of wind turbine farms. Northern Germany and Denmark both have an especially high density of turbine farms. People in these areas are not even aware of the term “Wind Turbine Syndrome” or illnesses attributable to turbines. His book discusses how new technologies often spur fears of health effects, citing the claims of illness with the introduction of electricity and telephones.

People are susceptible to the negative influence of publicized claims. This harkens to the psychosomatic realm. In Australia complaints about wind turbines are prevalent where negative publicity has preceded construction. Professor Chapman notes the alleged disease “Wind Turbine Syndrome” is oddly an “English speaking phenomenon”, and that critical health cases have not been reported or substantiated in peer-reviewed journals.

Looking at the alternative to renewable energy production, that is, fossil fuel power, Dr. Jonathan Buonocore of the Harvard School of Public Health, pointed to the numerous health dangers of small micron-sized particles from fossil fuel combustion. He also discussed his scientific model showing the benefits of substituting renewable energy sources and removing fossil fuels from the electric grid in different parts of the country. The model demonstrated that the largest health benefits from the reduction of fossil fuel use would be in the Great Lakes and Northeast regions.

In summary, harnessing wind power is a positive step forward. I will refrain from using the pun that the answer to our energy needs “is blowin’ in the wind” (since solving the climate crisis is much more involved than that). But getting the facts on wind energy is a breath of fresh air, isn’t it?

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Conservation Corner

State Throws Obstacle in Path of 850 Route 28 Development

by *Marie Caruso*

Opponents of the proposed concrete and steel manufacturing plant to be built on lands surrounded by the Bluestone Wild Forest are exultant over a letter issued on August 7th by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). The agency has withdrawn its “no impact” advisory of last October and recommended that further studies be done to investigate significant historic features that may be present on the site. This recommendation was based on a field study by Paul Rubin of HydroQuest, funded by Catskill Mountainkeeper and the Woodstock Land Conservancy. Rubin found such features as an intact quarry cliff face, stone walls, and a historic quarry road on adjoining state lands which likely extend onto the 850 Route 28 property.

According to OPRHP, the area is part of the Hemlock Historic Quarry District, which may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places “...for its potential to inform our understanding of historic bluestone quarrying methods...” Further assessment is needed to determine what historic resources are present in the project area and how blasting and construction activities would affect them.

Here are links to view the letter from [OPRHP](#) and the [Daily Freeman](#) article reporting it.

At the June 15th Town of Kingston Planning Board meeting conducted via WebEx, the developer, responding to concerns previously raised, gave a lengthy presentation about their stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP). According to them,

with all the measures they plan to take, water leaving the site will be free of sediments and of higher quality than it is right now.

Consultants to the planning board raised some questions about the planned water usage and measures being taken to mitigate visual and sound impacts from the site. Particularly impressive was a presentation by Dana Lodico, who asserted that the impacts in the developer's sound study are vastly understated.

In addition to calculation errors, she stated that they failed to analyze the impacts of blasting vibration, truck noises, back-up beepers, and noise from planned nighttime operations, to name a few.

The developer's representative, at the end of the meeting, promised that they would respond to all of the concerns that have been raised, including those submitted in several expert studies funded by Catskill Mountainkeeper and the Woodstock Land Conservancy. A public hearing on the project will be scheduled after the developer has submitted those responses. There has been no word, as of this writing, as to when that will occur. The project has not been on the planning board agenda for the last couple months, and at this writing, is not on the agenda for their September 21 meeting.

In the meantime, the Town of Kingston Planning Board has been dealing with another mining operation: a renewal for a mining permit at 530 Route 28. This quarry, which also abuts the Bluestone Wild Forest, is a short distance west of the Thruway traffic circle and highly visible from Route 28. This proposal has not triggered much public concern because, although there will be some short-term blasting, the owner's stated plan is to resume mining only long enough to clear about 8 acres of land and prepare the property for use as a commercial business site. A public hearing on this issue is on the agenda for the September 21st meeting.

Assemblyman Kevin Cahill did respond to the letter we sent him in May expressing our concerns about the proposed 850 Route 28 facility and the illegal storage of equipment and construction materials on the site. He said our concerns were "well-taken", his office is monitoring the situation, and the issue of the materials being stored on the site "...is problematic as it appears to have been done without appropriate permits." However, in a letter to a town resident who complained about activities at the site, the town attorney asserted that the activities were legal, as "Contractors' Equipment Storage" is a presently allowable use under the property's current MU-2 zoning.

There appears to be no immediate way to curtail the present activities at the site. Even if the town's actions were successfully challenged in court, we've been advised, the town could remedy the situation simply by issuing a permit for these activities.

Many citizens and environmental groups, including Mid-Hudson Sierra, continue to push for a full Environmental Impact Statement and a comprehensive environmental review to assess the many negative impacts this proposed plant will have on the surrounding Bluestone Wild Forest, Onteora Lake, and Pickerel Pond.

To obtain further information, sign a petition, or make a donation, visit the website saveonteoralake.org or send an email to bluestoneforest@gmail.com to get regular updates on this issue, or sign up for weekly updates from the Woodstock Land Conservancy at maxanne.wlc@gmail.com.

Invasive Plants

by Nancy Severns

A native species is one that historically occurred in a particular area. Certain non-native species are called "invasive" as they can cause the extinction of native plants and animals, reduce biodiversity, compete with native organisms for limited resources, and alter habitats. Invasive species have a significant effect on our natural resources, human health, and economy.

By forming monocultures, invasive plants pose a serious threat to the biodiversity of our fish, wildlife and native plant communities. Invasive plants have the potential to degrade their habitats and to eliminate important shelter and food sources in the

ecosystem.

As an example, one invasive plant that spreads rapidly and forms monocultures is Japanese knotweed (pictured). Japanese knotweed was introduced into the U.S. from Eastern Asia (Japan, China, Korea) as an ornamental plant in the late 1800s. It has also been used as an erosion control plant. The plant, which can grow from three to 15 feet tall, has bamboo-like stems and is sometimes called Japanese bamboo. Once established, it can spread rapidly and overwhelm native plant communities.



Invasive plants outcompete and displace native plants that many native wildlife species depend on for food and cover. A healthy plant community has a variety of herbs, shrubs, and trees. A variety of food and cover fosters more animal species and larger populations. In addition to displacing native species, invasive plant monocultures provide habitats for non-native wildlife.

Massive stands of purple loosestrife in our wetlands have crowded out the cattails and other indigenous plants. The Invasive Plant Council of New York State has identified purple loosestrife as one of the top 20 invaders to the state. Invasive species and subsequent habitat loss are responsible for many of the bird extinctions since 1800, and threaten at least 69 species according to the National Audubon Society.

In New York, the Audubon Society identified two areas that are being threatened by the spread of invasive species; the Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge, which is one of the most important grassland bird breeding and wintering areas in the state, and the Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge on Long Island. At Wertheim, American Black Ducks are threatened by ecosystem changes caused by phragmites, a perennial, aggressive wetlands grass. Each of these sites are important habitats for many endangered and threatened species. The National Audubon Society recently cited the Wertheim Refuge as one of the top ten priority spots in the nation in need of protection.

Information in this article was sourced from Audubon New York and New York Invasive Species (NYIS.info)
<https://ny.audubon.org/conservation/invasive-species>
http://nyis.info/invasive_species/japanese-knotweed/

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Outings Corner by Andy Moss

COVID-19 restrictions continue to take their toll on outdoor activities. All national trips that begin between now and the end of 2020 have been canceled to protect travelers and staff. Some trips remain listed as active as they work to reschedule them for a later date. Participants on those trips have been notified by their leaders.

Many 2020 trips have been rebooked for 2021 and are now available for reservations. In addition, there is a new batch of trips for 2021 including international and winter domestic.

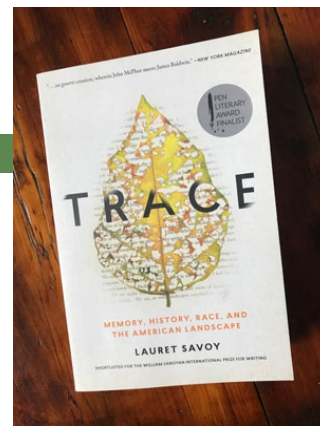
[Browse the full lineup here.](#) Other 2021 trips will be launched according to the normal new trips schedule.

Local outings are also cancelled for the rest of the year. I encourage you to go out as much as you can on your own or with your immediate family to enjoy the outdoors.

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Book Review by Sarah Kennedy

Published in 2015, Lauret Savoy's *Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape* is perfect reading in today's turbulent time, touching on so many of the issues of



the day. Savoy reckons with this nation's telling of history and issues of racial justice. She also turns attention to how important it is that we care about our ecological footprint, and she looks at the impact we make not only in the U.S., but in this interdependent world in which we live. Finally, this book is part travelogue, as Ms. Savoy visits places in search of answers to her questions and to find evidence of, and connection to, her ancestors.

Savoy presents a personal view of our nation's history and how it has affected generation after generation of people in her own family. She is subtle, making connections between her close observations of the landscape with her own sense of self. One such passage is about her understanding of resilience. She writes, "Sand and stone are Earth's memory...At a young age I began to hope that despite wounds a sense of wholeness could endure. That each of us possesses a *hardness*—not harshness, not severity, but the quality of stone or sand to retain some core though broken again and again." She later returns to this imagery. "What of us? What of who we are is owed to memories of blood or culture, custom or circumstances? To hardness? What makes an individual in a sequence of generations?"



Traces left along the Divided Lot Trail at the Mohonk Preserve

This book is part memoir, and Savoy's personal recollections are beautifully, if sometimes painfully, recalled. Some of these vignettes make clear why the teaching of history in this country must be completely revised to include different perspectives about our nation's foundational stories. She recounts feeling left out by those who lived in earlier times and whose writings were of importance to her. Aldo Leopold's book *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* was a formative book for her. This book is considered crucial to our understanding of ecology. Savoy loved Leopold's descriptions of the natural world, and seems to have felt a strong kinship with him. On the other hand, she writes, "I couldn't understand why, in a book so concerned with America's past, the only reference to slavery, to human beings as property, was about Ancient Greece." Despite her love of his writing, she also felt totally left out and unseen, asking, "Did Aldo Leopold consider me?"



Scotts Bluff National Monument, Nebraska where there are visible traces of pioneers' wagon tracks

While reading *Trace* I found myself slowing down to think about what Savoy was sharing with me and asking me to consider. I have visited many places she writes about in the book, from National Parks to historic sites around the country. When I go again I believe I will be more observant of our past and the untold stories that leave their marks upon the land.

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Letters from our Members

Editor's note: Send us a letter about issues that are important to you—whether local, state or national. Please submit your letter to our Newsletter Editor: Andy Moss, at and@hvi.net. Our submission schedule is posted at the bottom of our website's [Newsletters](#) page. We will consider letters of up to 250 words. Your letter will be published in the next newsletter upon review and acceptance by the editor. Subjects should focus on Sierra Club areas of interest: conservation, environmental protection, political action, climate change, getting outdoors, etc. Visit the [Sierra Club](#), [Atlantic Chapter](#), or [Mid-Hudson Group](#) website to learn more about where we stand.

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Fundraising by David Friedman

Make A Gift - Make A Difference

Our local group depends on the support of volunteers and the generosity of our membership. The work of the group takes Sierra Club volunteer effort, and of course funds. We hope that you will consider making a gift to the Mid-Hudson group of the Sierra Club. In these turbulent times it's vital that we all do what we can to speak out and work for the protection of our environment and the future of our world. We welcome and appreciate your support, and encourage you to consider providing financial support for our efforts. Our mailing address is at the bottom of this newsletter.

To speak about specific opportunities, or with any questions, please contact David Friedman, Friedman_David@msn.com or our Treasurer Ralph Pollard, ralphpollard@verizon.net.

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The COVID-19 crisis has not passed and continues to disproportionately harm Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people and other communities of color. The pandemic has revealed how the communities hardest hit are often the same communities that suffer from high levels of pollution and poor access to healthcare. The fight for environmental justice cannot be separated from the fight for racial justice.

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[Visit our Facebook Page](#)
[Visit our Meetup website for Programs and Outings](#)

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You can find the names of our Executive Committee members on our website:

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