

Fresh Air



The Quarterly Newsletter of the Atlantic Chapter Mid-Hudson Group

Summer 2010 Vol.42 Issue 2

Website: : <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/midhudson>

CHAIR'S CORNER

Joanne Steele

What I forgot to tell you (how could I have!) when I wrote to you in our spring issue of Fresh Air about my having testified on Feb.17th before the Hudson Valley Catskill Regional SEQR (State Environmental Quality Review) hearings, is that when we introduced ourselves and I stated "Joanne Steele, Chair, Mid-Hudson Group Sierra Club", there was a sudden palpable hush in the room. People came to attention and heads snapped up. Make no mistake. It was "Sierra Club" that brought that palpable energy to the room. Yes. You should know this. Be proud of your membership. May you help us help Sierra Club stay true to its founding!

For those of you who are just sick and tired of what you see happening around you, consider now, right now, to join with us in making a difference! Email me at sierraclubjoanne@gmail.com or phone me at (845) 338-0300 to join one of our Committees. Read below for what we are up to (and would like to be up to)!

On June 16th we have a powerful show & by talk by Dan Guenther on mountain top removal energetically described in Program Corner by Program Committee Chair, Bibi Sandstrom. Join her on the **Program Committee**! And come on out to the meeting!

Conservation Corner reports on the talk by US Representative Maurice Hinchey that your Group co-sponsored on April 24th and on other important work that **Conservation Committee** members Marie Caruso and Peter Fiorentino are doing on our behalf on our **Williams Lake sub-Committee**. Join the Conservation Committee like Rick Andracchio, who now Chairs the **Anti-Litter sub-Committee**. At last, he contacted us and we are seeking help for his work. He needs help! If you can join him, he and you and we can get together a team to recycle the litter as well!

Rick writes: "The next time you take an exit ramp from the interstate or parkway, glance down. In Dutchess, Putnam, and Orange counties, most likely you will see McDonald's bags, beer cans, Wal-Mart plastic bags filled with garbage, and plastic water bottles. If you actually pull your car over, get out and look around, you may be astonished. Old tires, commodes, paint cans, construction debris, and household garbage are just some of the items dumped on a regular basis along entrance and exit ramps. In some cases, the reason is purely financial – the dump charges \$7.00 for each used tire you bring them, so it's "convenient" to just roll them down an anonymous bank. However, in most cases, it appears to be just a result of laziness and disrespect for others. Years ago I decided to do something about the assault on our public roads and with the support of the East Fishkill town supervisor, I clean the entrance/exit ramps as well as local streets whenever I can. I have long wished for just one other person who is as appalled at the amount of dumping going on as I am to join me on one of my 'clean-up' days. The location wouldn't matter; the way I see it, any area that is picked clean of litter and garbage is a victory for everyone." I share Rick's passion for his work, don't you? Join Rick! Also don't miss our Zero Waste Field Trip on Saturday, July 17th. It's listed under "Outings." Come see for yourself how local colleges have instituted and are implementing zero waste policies.

Our **Fundraising Committee** Chair, David Friedman, reports in Fundraising Corner, a new feature for Fresh Air. He gives us the how-to of donations to your Group, and on our Annual Tag Sale which is already scheduled for Saturday, September 25th. We are seeking a large-ish indoor site, preferably free or nearly so. David asks us, "Help protect our communities by helping in fundraising. Our local group has financial needs that go beyond our current resources. Help meet these needs by becoming involved on our fundraising team. Whatever your level of experience we can use the assistance. It's a great way to make a huge difference." Just contact David to pitch in: (Friedman_David@msn.com, or 845-255-2635). Not stopping there, David has created a Facebook page for us: look for the notice in this issue!

We, the Executive Committee (Excom), especially Bibi Sandstrom, are handling publicity, but we need a **Publicity Committee** to publicize our meetings and events to the local media and community calendars, to build relationships and contacts with that media, and to table as able among other tasks as seem appropriate to the Committee and Excom. Good on the phone? Gift of gab? Work at home? Help form our new Publicity Committee!

I, your Chair, need help with contacting Volunteers who contact us. That is, we need a **Volunteer Coordinator** who will keep in touch with those who contact us certainly quicker than I have been able to! My apologies to those of you who are waiting for a response!

Zero Waste Committee, a sub-Committee of the Conservation Committee needs to form and spring into action! There are now several zero waste committees with a variety of names already formed in our area that we could support with you all who would work much like our Williams Lake sub-Committee currently does. The definition of zero waste below is by Zero Waste International Alliance (ZWIA).

(Continued on page 2)

"Zero Waste is a goal that is both pragmatic and visionary, to guide people to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are resources for others to use. Zero Waste means designing and managing products and processes to reduce the volume and toxicity of waste and materials, conserve and recover all resources, and not burn or bury them. Implementing Zero Waste will eliminate all discharges to land, water or air that may be a threat to planetary, human, animal or plant health."

Go to <http://www.sierraclub.org/committees/zerowaste/> to see more about ZWIA and what our National Sierra Club has in mind and, of course, for much more information on zero waste. Join, help form this cutting edge Zero Waste Committee!

If you are one of us who wants to hike or walk or enjoy and educate us about our gorgeous earth, you will want to join and help form our **Outings Committee**. Now, one of Sierra Club's rules is that you have taken a certified basic First Aid class and an on-line leadership training course.

We're lucky this year in that a National Outings training weekend will be held July 9-11, 2010 at Black Rock Forest's education center in the Hudson Highlands (near Storm King off Route 9W). Online information and registration for the outings leader training weekend is now available on the Sierra Club web site at <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/training/brochures/2010-new-york.asp>. Walk-ins will not be allowed. You will have to register and pay a fee of \$45 which includes meals (Fri. dinner - Sun. lunch) and bunk-style cabin lodging for Fri-Sat. An optional Basic First Aid class will be run on Sunday afternoon for an additional \$10. The organizer of this training is our own Atlantic's Chapter Outings Chair, Don Pachner, wildplaces@verizon.net or Tel. (914) 234-6618. Of course, let me know of your planned participation!

Don's site <http://www.wildplaces.me> provides us the following: "I myself am convinced that there has never been a greater need than there is today for the reporter and interpreter of the natural world. Mankind has gone very far into an artificial world of his own creation. He has sought to insulate himself, in his cities of steel and concrete, from the realities of earth and water and the growing seed. Intoxicated with a sense of his own power, he seems to be going farther and farther into more experiments for the destruction of himself and his world. For this unhappy trend there is no single remedy - no panacea. But I believe that the more clearly we can focus on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for its destruction" - Rachel Carson - April, 1952

OUTINGS

Saturday, July 17, 10am-12pm. "Zero Waste' Field Trip. Come see for yourself how a local institution (a college) has instituted and is implementing a zero waste policy. We will then visit a compost facility and constructed wetland which manages organic waste and its effluent to zero waste. Meet at the Greenway Facility at Vassar College Farm. The entrance is at the intersection of Raymond Ave. and Route 376 (Hooker Ave.) in Poughkeepsie. See Red barns on South Side. Enter at a sign for "Vassar College Farm". Follow the Farm road past the barns. Bear right around the barns and go through the gate. Community Gardens plots are on the left a Rugby field on the right. Follow the farm road almost in a complete circle. Go through the second gate to the Greenway Facility. For a map, go to <http://farm.vassar.edu/map/index.html> and click & drag on the map for "Greenway Environmental Services" area. Leader: Joanne Steele at (845) 338-0300 between 8A -9P.

PROGRAM CORNER **Bibi Sandstrom**

The new normal location for Speaker Socials is the Hudson River Rowing Association's boathouse, in Poughkeepsie. Directions to the boathouse can be found on their website, <http://www.hudsonriverrowing.org>.

DAN GUENTHER will be our **June 16th** speaker. Guenther, who previously spoke to Mid-Hudson Sierra about Community Supported Agriculture and organic farming, and who led a debate on foot about "The Farmer versus the Nature Educator", recently took a "climate change" sabbatical. He has come back from West Virginia "forever scarred" by what he witnessed during his six months working with anti-mountain top removal activists. He will describe his time there and the "moonscapes" the coal companies left behind.

He will also show "Coal Country", a 40-minute DVD produced by National Sierra Club, which examines the socially and environmentally devastating consequences of mountain-top removal coal mining. He will discuss the issue and also relate it to local struggles over natural gas fracking, which he calls the "mountain-top removal of the Hudson Valley", following the film.

Come learn about these truly explosive issues at the Hudson River Rowing Association's boathouse in Poughkeepsie at 270 N. Water Street, at **7:00pm [please note the earlier starting time]** on Wednesday, June 16th. It is free and open to the public, so bring friends.

As usual, we will not have programs July through September. If you'd like to include your ideas for our Fall member programs, consider joining our Program Committee by contacting Joanne Steele, at sierraclubjoanne@gmail.com or by phone at (845) 338-0300 (see Chair's Corner) or Bibi Sandstrom at bibis@juno.com.

Williams Lake:

The draft DEIS for the HRVR development at Williams Lake in Rosendale has not yet been released; in fact, the company’s initial draft was rejected by the DEC in part because the hydrogeological studies were not adequate. This validates our Group’s support for Paul Rubin’s work and our position that thorough hydrogeological studies which include tracer testing are required in order to adequately assess the project’s impact on the complex karst aquifer system that underlies this property.

Our response to Tim Allred, HRVR project manager at Williams Lake, was published in the Spring Sierra Atlantic. On April 8, we held a meeting with him that he had proposed in his previous letter to that publication. The most positive information gleaned at that meeting was the developer’s stated intent to reroute the rail trail only a short distance away from its historic route, to maintain its easy gradient and lake views, and to find a way to make it accessible to the public. In order for public access to be maintained in perpetuity, however, some sort of permanent easement will have to be obtained.

Our Group continues to maintain that a private, luxury housing development of some 160 homes and an exclusive resort hotel and spa is not an appropriate development for Rosendale’s greatest natural asset, one that has hosted many community events and offered superb fee-based recreational activities to the public for nearly 80 years. We believe that the property can and should be developed in a way that continues to offer public access and preserve the site’s unique natural, geological, and historic resources.

Your Group ExCom hopes our local members will support the preservation of Williams Lake through citizen action and financial support for our work in this area. If you live in or around the Rosendale area, make your concerns known to your public officials. And funds are needed in order to support the scientific studies and expert testimony required during the SEQRA process to illustrate the many ways this project is likely to negatively impact the environment. For more information, please visit the website

www.savethelakes.us.

You may assist our Group’s scientific work related to Williams Lake with a tax-deductible contribution to the Sierra Club Foundation. (see Fundraising Corner for how-to)

Forum with Congressman Hinchey:

Congressman Maurice Hinchey gave a most interesting presentation at a forum that our Group co-sponsored with Save the Lakes on April 24 at the Rosendale Theatre. He spoke about his bill to authorize a study to determine whether the Hudson River Valley should be made a unit of the National Park Service. No other area, he stated, has played such a significant role in the development of this country. Although no forced land acquisitions would be permitted, such a designation could bring greatly enhanced recognition and levels of federal funding for parks, historic sites, and the protection of natural and recreational resources throughout the area.

Hinchey also spoke about how the loosening of safe drinking water regulations under the Bush administration helped open the flood-gates for hydrofracking to extract natural gas in the Marcellus shale, which has caused many problems with ground water contamination. He has introduced legislation to tighten up these regulations again and require drilling companies to disclose the chemicals they are injecting into the ground.

A new website for energy conservation:

For some simple, inexpensive ideas on conserving energy, check out the website **www.ideadutchess.org**. This is the website for the Independent Dutchess Energy Alliance, chaired by Mid-Hudson Sierran and Vassar professor Lucy Johnson.



David Friedman

The title of our page on facebook is: Mid-Hudson Group - Sierra Club. Check out the early page work so far---facebook is always a work in progress and it changes quickly when we're all involved. If you have a facebook account, sign up to follow the page. I highly recommend that you get a facebook account.

Looking to save energy at home, in your car or at work? The U.S. Department of Energy posts dozens of ideas on its site at **http://www.energysavers.gov**.

FUNDRAISING CORNER

Imagine having to say it WAS such a nice place to live. Our region is under constant threat of undesirable change. Change by “developers” wanting to cut corners at the environment’s expense: drillers who pump unknown chemicals into the ground below us, businesses trying to find a quick and easy way to handle their dirty byproducts, the State proposing the gating of some of our historic sites and beautiful parks. All of this and more. Lend a hand and support your local group in being a strong watchdog and advocate. Your gift to the local chapter will stay right here in the mid-Hudson region and be used to make sure the Sierra Club is there to be heard, seen, and make a difference. Gifts to the Group’s general operating fund (payable to Mid-Hudson Sierra Club) are not tax deductible. However, if you wish to make a tax-deductible donation, make it payable to Sierra Club Foundation and mail to Mid-Hudson Sierra Club, POB 1012, Poughkeepsie NY 12602.

Save the Date: Our Annual Tag Sale to be held on Saturday September 25, 2010

We’re gearing up for the annual Tag Sale – so start setting aside items. We’ll list drop off information in the next issue of Fresh Air and also check out Facebook (Mid-Hudson Valley Group – Sierra Club) for updates. We’re looking for books, cd’s, toys with all the parts, hiking/camping equipment, sporting goods with some play left in them, tools, antiques, small electronics, kitchen items, glassware, pictures, camera equipment, etc., all in good condition. All electronics must be in good working order. Large furniture items, clothing and shoes are NOT big sellers so please don't bring these.

David Friedman

Conference: “Global Climate Change and Capitalism.”

The 2010 Annual Summer Conference of the Union for Radical Political Economics (URPE) will take place July 30 - August 2, at the Epworth Center, High Falls, NY. The theme of this year’s conference is "Global Climate Change and Capitalism". Heterodox Economists of all persuasions have been assigned to find creative solutions, and to provide serious analysis of climate change – especially the economic causes and consequences. Political Economy papers have been sought from disciplines including sociology, political science, urban studies, and anthropology in addition to economics. The conference always includes relatively more technical presentations of Political Economy research from scholars and graduate students in all stages of development, as well as more popular and activist oriented presentations. For more information about URPE (Union for Radical Political Economics) or the Summer Conference, visit (www.urpe.org) which includes a section on the Summer Conference.

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Poughkeepsie, NY 12602
Permit No. 59

Mid-Hudson Group
Sierra Club
P.O. Box 1012
Poughkeepsie, NY 12602