

Fresh Air



The Quarterly Newsletter of the Atlantic Chapter Mid-Hudson Group

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

CHAIR'S CORNER Joanne Steele

Gaia's Coming - We Better Get Busy! On April 6th, your Group sponsored **Neil Seldman**, president of the Institute for **Local Self-Reliance** (Washington D.C.) who spoke at Vassar at a Zero-Waste Forum organized by **Joel Tyner**, Dutchess County legislator. Seldman said: "The Dutchess County incinerator should be phased out immediately. It is a financial albatross." It's actually worse as it discourages recycling and prevents a local lucrative recycling cooperative/businesses to be set up. Find your Dutchess County legislator at (<http://bit.ly/mxNgzM>) or just contact them all(countylegislators@co.dutchess.ny.us)!

A number of you and I attended the April 11th Hydrofracking Rally (and lobbying) in Albany. Many hundreds of NY Sierrans attended. Thank you all! I also attended with some of you too, I'm sure, the May 2nd Rally in Albany. At (<http://vimeo.com/23281575>) you can watch the May 2nd rally at which a lot about hydrofracking was revealed by the speakers. Tell the others! And, if you need, get to the library to view it.

To keep up with hydrofracking in NY and elsewhere too, join our Gas Drilling Task Force (http://newyork.sierraclub.org/gas_drilling.html). Also, let's follow actively our 2011 NY legislative priorities (<http://newyork.sierraclub.org/Legislation.html>). On that site you can read our memos of support and/or opposition to the different bills. That enables you to contact all your state officials with your own support or opposition (<http://nymap.elections.state.ny.us/nysboe/>). Further, you can keep up with Sierra Club issues by joining the Sierra Club Activist Network (<http://connect.sierraclub.org/ActivistNetwork/home>). Now, in this newsletter, you'll find Marie Caruso's update on your Group's work on the Williams Lake development in Rosendale, Ulster County. I hope you can support that work, and join Marie in our efforts! (<http://savethelakes.us>)

To explore our environment remember to sign up for Outings at <http://www.meetup.com/SierraClubNY>.

You will find outings of all sorts and all over New York too. As for this neighborhood, **Andy Moss**, our Outings chair, posts our outings there as well as here. Dig in!

I hope you are all saving your good "stuff" for our annual Tag Sale which will be led again by your Vice Chair, **David Friedman** (vide infra). And, speaking of fundraising, we thank **John Kosticky** for his recent contribution to Mid-Hudson Sierra Club. That enables our efforts, and we are grateful!

I wish you all a happy, safe summer...and weather that we can recognize!



This photo shows drilling muds pouring out of the drill rig into lined pits.

MOVING PLANET (350.Org) – SAVE THE DATE

by Fred Doneit

Sierra Club members, save the date of Saturday, Sept. 24, 2011 to join in world-wide demonstrations to demand government action on climate change. The day is being called Moving Planet by the organizer, the **350.Org** group founded by environmental advocate and writer Bill McKibben. Environmental organizations in 188 countries are also participating in local events to draw attention to move our societies away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. We must reverse global warming caused by carbon dioxide concentrations in the Earth's atmosphere, now in excess of 350 parts per million, the recognized "safe upper limit." Our atmosphere is at 392 ppm, and is climbing.

This year's event will use non-CO2 producing transit to conduct a moving demonstration – by bike, skates, kayak, foot, horseback, etc. – to raise people's awareness to the possibilities. Sierrans could register their own event, or could join in one of the other local events that may best suit their preferred mode of non-carbonaceous locomotion. More detail about local events will be available this summer – the global campaign is described on the website for www.350.Org.

Photocopy this page and distribute widely

Fracking involves releasing natural gas and oil trapped in shale formations by drilling down to the shale rock formation (maybe deeper than a mile and a half), then drilling horizontally up to a mile within that shale layer, then laying steel pipe down and along, then encasing the pipe with concrete, then dropping in “shot” to blow holes through the pipe and the cement casing, then blasting at high pressures a mix of water, sand and chemicals (the “fracking fluid”) into the pipe to crack open (frack) the shale to liberate the gases. 596 chemicals have been identified so far in the fluids. The “hydro” is water taken from local streams and rivers, 1 to 7 million gallons per fracking. Each well can be fracked up to 18 times. The chemical water, about half of it, comes back up the wellhead (“produced water”) along with natural gas (methane) and other gases (radon, etc.). The Marcellus Shale, which underlays NY, is highly enriched in Uranium (Radium isotopes and Thorium) so the “produced water” comes back radioactive, and some of the half that doesn’t come back up the wellhead has been found in peoples’ well water. The “produced water” is dumped into local shallow pools to allow the volatile chemicals into the open air. The pools sometimes leak and break out into local water. Methane is a greenhouse gas twenty times worse than carbon dioxide. Much of it is not captured into pipelines above and below ground, but blows from the wellhead into the air (pollution) sometimes causing spectacular fires and, below ground, follows the cracks into water sources. (see “Gasland” and other movies)

Gas developers estimate that the reserves in the varieties of shale rock layers under the United States could supply us natural gas for 100 years.

Environmentalists say that fracking

1. reduces the landscape to an industrial waste site of dirt, pipes, continuous compressor noise, continuous light at night and a thousand tanker truck trips per frack on local roads
2. uses chemicals that are dangerous or extremely dangerous to human health,
3. drains drinking water from other users (e.g. local homes, businesses, towns and counties),
4. contaminates water supplies with harmful and radioactive chemicals (thousands of cases),
5. is a lot worse on our environment than a “transition” fuel (replacing coal and oil),
6. is bad for other businesses (e.g. no mortgages, no selling, farming, tourism),

Ten year’s experience of fracking the varieties of shale rock found underground in the US (west and south of NY) and recent science is proving the environmentalists right on all counts.

Further, natural gas producers under the Bush/Cheney (Halliburton) administration were given exemptions from a large number of environmental regulations (the “Halliburton Loophole”). Yet, there’s concern that the EPA (national) and state DEC do not have the staff to investigate. These agencies’ budgets have been severely cut under all federal and state administrations over the last decade.

The natural gas industry figures billions of dollars are available to them in these shales’ development (plays). They are spending massive amounts of money on our elected and appointed representatives and on media with the false message that gas-drilling is “safe.” It will take millions of us to wake to the above realities of hydrofracking to stop what many call a Disaster. The Sierra Club’s position (Atlantic Chapter) is that a total ban on hydrofracking in New York is necessary.

(References for above statements supplied upon request to Joanne Steele 845-338-0300).

D.E.I.S. FOR WILLIAMS LAKE RELEASED

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Hudson River Valley Resorts' project at Williams Lake in Rosendale was released for public review on May 4. Unfortunately, the Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) released the document without some of the revisions which they had previously required.

Although the problems with this document are too numerous to list here, an initial review of the DEIS shows that it remains deeply flawed. For instance, the hydrogeological studies which Dr. Ewers had found to be worthless have not been corrected. The developers have not provided an accurate bathymetric map which would prove whether Williams Lake can withstand the level of water withdrawal the project will require. Many of the details required for the various permit applications are missing.

There is no analysis of the impact of major construction traffic on the small roads surrounding Williams Lake during the 10-year build-out period, nor are there plans for mitigating the unacceptable levels of congestion likely to occur after the project is completed. Furthermore, the DEIS gives no guarantee of public access to any of the trail network, except that they promise to negotiate an easement for the section of the Wallkill Valley rail trail which passes through the property. No public access whatsoever is granted to Williams Lake itself.

Because several key exhibits and charts were missing when the DEIS was released, and permit applications had not been completed, Save the Lakes has requested that the public hearing, presently scheduled for June 6, be pushed back, and the written comment period extended to 90 days. At this writing, the deadline for written comments is July 12.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: (1) CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS:

Sometimes political pressure has caused the DEC to release DEIS's too precipitously. In this case the DEIS was released before all the requirements of the SCOPING document had been met. If you care about this area, please contact your county and state legislators and other public officials and express your concerns about the possible degradation of this extraordinary area by developers who have shown little regard for the natural features of the site and the rural character of the region.

The Town of Rosendale is divided on this issue. For this reason, Town authorities have held off on committing to the zoning changes this project will require. The Town is under no obligation whatsoever to change the zoning in order to accommodate this project. If you live in or near the Town of Rosendale, let your local officials know how you feel.

Letters to the editor can have an impact, as well, in determining public policy on this issue.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: (2) COMMENT ON THE DEIS:

Comments on the DEIS may be submitted to the DEC through July 12 (at this writing). For further information, Save the Lakes is compiling its own responses, with expert assistance, and detailing the ways in which the DEIS fails to meet the requirements of the final SCOPING document. Some of this information will be posted on their website: www.savethelakes.us. Please continue to check that website, also, for any changes to the hearing schedule or public comment period, or to help defray the considerable legal and expert expenses that group is incurring.

The DEIS itself may be downloaded from the developer's website: www.hrvresorts.info/public.html. Digital and paper copies can also be viewed at the DEC Region 3 office in New Paltz, and in Rosendale, at the Supervisor's office and the public library.

You may also contact me at mariehv@verizon.net or at (845) 452-9086—especially if you would like to help formulate your Sierra Club's response to this document.

Marie Caruso, Chair, Williams Lake Committee

mariehv@verizon.net; or (845) 452-9086

ZERO WASTE

From our Atlantic Chapter Zero Waste Committee (<http://newyork.sierraclub.org/ZeroWaste.htm>) states: The DEC estimates New York's recycling rate to be only 20%. The Zero Waste Committee concludes: " Burning and burying garbage wastes money, energy, and natural resources; it contributes to climate change and places an unfair pollution and health burden on nearby communities. Diversion saves energy and resources, and creates many more jobs in collection, processing, reuse of goods and remanufacturing of materials. Maximizing waste reduction and diversion will dramatically decrease waste sent for disposal over time by 70%, 80%, 90% and more..." So, we will compost our organics at home on a small patch of earth nearby, and separate out our recyclables. We can start today. We can do this. And we'll tell the others!

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Permit No. 8604

SAVE THE DATE

Mid Hudson Group's Annual Tag Sale—Bigger and Better than Ever!

Date: Saturday, September 17 (rain date September 18)
Place: Mulligan's Irish House in Poughkeepsie
Time: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Start saving your items to donate to the sale. As always, we're looking for good quality items. Our sale represents our largest fund-raiser. We're especially looking for sporting goods; household items (small); toys; books; small electronics; knick knacks; art work; and collectibles. Volunteer: If you can help out at the sale be in touch with David Friedman at 845-255-2635 (Barner Books) or email at: Friedman_David@msn.com Volunteers are needed for the day of the sale as well as the drop-off day (Friday September 16). The fall newsletter and facebook page will have drop off information and sale details.

ExCom Meetings

We hold our Excom meetings the 1st Wednesday of the Month at 7PM in New Paltz at Village Hall, 25 Plattekill. Please call Joanne Steele, chair, at 845-338-0300, to confirm the meeting time and place!