

Fresh Air



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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

It's officially summer coming up, but it sure felt like summer around here, two months ago, in April, at 86 degrees. The CO2 level is now 393. We are in climate change: it's not coming, it's here now! We know what's going the wrong way on that: ripping out acres of trees, clearing acres of pastures down to dirt and flaming off who knows how many metric tons of Methane from underground. Well, that's what three of your Board members saw in and around Dimock, PA last April 25th. We took a bus tour, sponsored by the SUNY New Paltz Environmental Task Force, to talk to the locals there and see for ourselves what hydrofracking is about. Our guide was a local Dimock activist.

We looked at developed sites, some in process, pipelines in preparation, compressor stations, and we visited activists' homes. As we approached the area, we saw beautiful green rolling hills, pastures, woods and valleys, streams, the Susquehanna. We saw farms with barns of various sizes and small houses with the garage doors wide open, the kids, the dogs, chickens, cows. Then we'd take a side road, so pretty, come over a rise and suddenly see an ugly industrial site of torn dirt earth, trees gone, pasture gone, pipes sticking up small and large, big pipelines, huge metal barrel-shaped containments, and the scattered-about orange Tonka toys, all right next door to a small farmstead. The workman with a stop sign on a stick, looked up at the bus as we all looked down in dismay at the garish scene.

Our guide warned how the guys sometimes call the cops on the bus tourists who step too far off the road. She added, "The cops come eagerly." She told us the Industry regularly buys ads and inserts in the local paper extolling their own virtue -- to the extent that the paper won't take any ad from the activists. Nor will the billboard company put up their signs. One homeowner now has one such sign (see photo) on the roof of his garage, visible to airplanes or the few who might travel the small road. The billboard company had put it up for only three days before they took it down saying it was "controversial."

Our guide said that in the town's 9 square miles, there are already 150 wells. Local homes with bad water (they tend to cluster) have their wells topped, high up on a white plastic pipe, with a venting cap which swirls as the methane and other poisonous gases exit the home's former water well. In its place is an adjacent "water buffalo", a very large plastic carboy plopped next to the house which carboy Cabot maintains, sometimes fills but covers from view with a 4x8 piece of plain, undressed plywood. (For more pictures, see our web-site <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/midhudson>). Only three years down the road of 15-year gas development plans, with all the apparent sanguine misrepresentations having been presented them by TV and local papers, the locals, by a large majority, like the gas development. Some post 'Thank You' signs on their lawns. There's one taped to the worn glass counter top at the local old wooden general store. Anyway, I guess they figure it's too late for them to stop what's already happened.

But it's not too late for us New Yorkers! In Ulster County, we're encouraging the legislature to pass strong anti-dumping (of frack water) legislation. Half the chemical water used to frack the PA wells come back up with the gases along with soluble earth salts, which contain heavy metals. The gas companies want to give that salty frack water, free to counties and towns for their use to de-ice the roads in winter. The probable harm to be caused to us is free too. I testified at a Hearing on behalf of the Club in support of the Ulster County legislature's passing



Photo Credit to Susan Lehrer: <http://bit.ly/LjZdmM>

STRONTIUM CHLORINE BERYLLIUM URANIUM ARSENIC
SULFATE ZINC DIBROMOCHLOROMETHANE
COPPER LITHIUM IRON
CALCIUM METHANE ALUMINUM BROMODICHLOROMETHANE
SODIUM ACETONE BARIUM ALUMINUM
METHANE LEAD BUTYLBENZYLPHthalate

FIX IT!

**THREE YEARS OF
CONTAMINATED WATER**

Billboard by Svetlana (Lana) Akhmadieva : <http://bit.ly/KIvY8u>

a law with strong deterrents to allowing the use of frack fluids. Their work is in progress, so far favorably supporting our position.

Our work continues as well. We Sierrans must continue to call Governor Cuomo for a ban of hydrofracking in New York ((877) 255-9417). Also, we continue on in the struggle for appropriate, right-size development of the former Williams Lake Hotel site (see Conservation Report). On March 21st we co-sponsored with Save The Lakes a "Hype vs. Realities" informational that brought out, apparently organized, very disruptive bullies. The organizers handled the scene with dignity and grace.

In your support of our work, we ask you to mobilize, with David Friedman's leadership, for our Annual Tag Sale planned for September 22nd. And, of course, anytime, all contributions are gratefully received. Also, we ask you to tell us of your concerns in your bailiwicks so that we might help you, too.

Political Corner

Andi Weiss Bartczak

Two special Assembly elections in the Mid-Hudson region were held in March to fill vacant seats. With help from the rest of the executive committee I revised our political questionnaire and e-mailed it to the Democrat and Republican running for each seat. Only Frank Skartados and Didi Barrett returned completed questionnaires. After careful review, they were both endorsed by our executive committee, and the endorsements were confirmed by our Atlantic Chapter. Frank Skartados won overwhelmingly and Didi Barrett won in a closer contest. Winners of both races will be running for re-election in November.

The new Congressional districts are beautifully compact, obviously not constructed by the politicians. Most of us in the Mid-Hudson Group are in the new 19th C.D. Those of you in Orange County, the city and town of Poughkeepsie and south are in the new 18th C.D. Both have Tea Party incumbents.

Both Joel Tyner, a progressive environmentalist now serving in the Dutchess County Legislature, and Julian Schreiber, a blue dog Democrat with no electoral experience, will probably be on the ballot for a June 26th primary in the new 19th C.D. I am working on sending questionnaires to both candidates, in order to recommend one to Chapter for an endorsement in the Congressional primary. State legislative primaries will be in September.

In March, I was a panelist at the Left Forum (held at Pace University in Manhattan), to discuss theory and practice in ecosocialism. I maintained that we first need to educate ourselves about ecological problems (especially their causes), reconnect with nature, and then translate our knowledge and bonds with nature into actions that defend our environment and ourselves.

This is a year with Presidential, Congressional and state level elections. Please think of what you will do, as a donor, campaign volunteer, or both, to help elect candidates who truly value our environment. We need to support candidates dedicated to protecting the commons rather than to accepting campaign contributions from corporate polluters. If you identify yourself explicitly as a Sierran when doing such important work, you are also contributing to the Sierra Club's influence and credibility. I hope to see you on the progressive environmental campaign trail!

Needed: a resident of the new 18th C.D. to work on the Congressional primary and election.

Conservation Corner

Marie Caruso

The March 21 public forum which we co-sponsored with Save the Lakes turned out to be quite an ordeal, as it was packed with project supporters recruited by the developer, who engaged in loud and aggressive speeches during the question and answer period, disrupting dialogue about the substantive issues that had been raised. Coincidentally, Hudson River Valley Resorts (HRVR) had submitted its Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to the DEC just hours before the forum.

The mood a few weeks later, at the April 15 comedy fundraiser at the Rosendale Café, was precisely the opposite. A standing room only crowd of Save the Lakes supporters filled the Café with laughter, great vibes, and strong support for the work that organization is doing. Meanwhile, the FEIS submitted to the DEC on March 21, as of this writing, still has not been released for public review, and reportedly won't be until the developer has completed applications for all the various permits required by the DEC. Through a Freedom of Information request, however, a CD copy of this "preliminary" FEIS has been obtained and distributed by Save the Lakes for review by various experts and interested parties.

The FEIS indicates that the project has been slightly reduced in size, from 160 residential units to 154, and a few small resort buildings (e.g., teahouse, yoga studio) have been eliminated. Also, the site plan has been changed to move development away from areas deemed especially sensitive due to wetlands, bat habitat, and karst geology. The project is still much larger than the "Conservation Resort" alternative suggested by the DEC last August, which would substantially limit development to the footprint of the existing disturbed area.

With the promise of help from state Sierra Club Foundation funds, the FEIS is currently being reviewed by the expert hydrologist, Paul Rubin, and by Erik Kiviat of Hudsonia, as well as other experts associated with Save the Lakes and the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership. Initial reviews indicate that HRVR has failed to establish that Williams Lake holds sufficient water to supply this large project without serious damage to the ecology of the lake and its surrounding wetlands, and that habitats which are home to rare and endangered species could be placed at risk. The FEIS contains no absolute commitment to public access, and many project impacts in such areas as traffic, tax revenues, road damage from construction vehicles, and community facilities and services are not adequately addressed.

As usual, copious information is available on the website www.savethelakes.us, including a link to all of the written and verbal comments submitted last summer in response to HRVR's DEIS.

We had great hiking weather this Spring. In March I led a hike to Millbrook Mountain at Minnewaska State Park. The group got along great and shared lots of stories as we made our way along the trails. April featured a spectacular hike along the Kaaterskill Clove escarpment. We walked from one great vista to another along 1200-foot cliffs. This area is rich in history so I brought photos and stories to share as we moved from one historic spot to the next. On April 29th our Volunteer Coordinator, Marie Caruso led a relaxed hike at Bowdoin Park in Wappingers Falls. She had a great Sierra Club turnout accompanied by great weather.

We have other hikes in the planning stage. If you would like to join one of our outings, please be sure to visit www.meetup.com/sierraclubny to see photos of past outings, find new outings and if you haven't already done so, to join the Meetup group for automatic notifications and outing signups.

Hope to see you on the trail.

Program Corner

Wednesday, June 20th, 7PM.—"Population Effects on Climate Change" (with 6PM Sharing Dinner)

At 6 PM, bring your own Dinner and something to share (drinks will be provided). From the upstairs deck we will watch the setting sun over the headlands across from our watery Hudson River landing just below.

At 7PM the Presentation by Stacie Murphy, Press and Policy Associate for The Population Connection (formally Zero Population Growth). Bring friends!

This talk will focus on the strong causal relationship between rapid human population growth and most environmental crises facing the planet today. Ms. Murphy will also touch a bit on the other aspects of the issue—poverty, impacts on women, national security issues - and how universal access to voluntary family planning deals with all these. Bring your friends! Maybe review your Sierra Magazine (May-June) feature article, "Fighting Climate Change With Family Planning".

Please come early for our Sharing Dinner, all at the Hudson River Boating Association, 270 N. Water St., Poughkeepsie/ Hudson River Rowing Association is at the river, 270 N. Water St., Poughkeepsie. Directions at <http://www.hudsonriverrowing.org>.

Sunday, July 8th, 11 AM—Sierra Club Picnic. See box below.

As usual, we will not have programs July through September. Include your ideas for our programs by joining our Program Committee! Contact Joanne Steele, at sierraclubjoanne@gmail.com or by phone at (845) 338-0300.

SUMMER PICNIC!

On Sunday, July 8, 2012 you're invited to your Mid-Hudson Group's Family-Friendly Picnic/Barbeque. At 11 am we plan to gather at Wilcox Memorial Park, Route 199, Milan, NY. (bring a friend and stay as long as you like: Park closes at 8pm) Come enjoy a summer day in one of the most picturesque parks in the Hudson Valley. Bring your lunch and beverages and the Club will provide the charcoal. Will you please bring either a dessert or side dish to share? We will lunch around 12:30 pm. Don't worry if you can't arrive until later - you are welcome to join us at any time. After lunch relax in the shade with a cool drink and good conversation. Or take a hike (led by another Sierran), rent a boat, fish, or relax on the beach and swim. How about a lawn game, or Frisbee? You'll be among Sierra friends all the while. Meet your Executive Committee members, tell us about your community and find out what we are doing to protect our environment. Look for our Sierra Club banner. Please RSVP and tell us how many will be in your group. For further information, call or Email Andy Moss, our Outings Chair at: 845-336-5446 or andy@hvi.net.

(Also go to <http://bit.ly/ME2hct>—information about Wilcox Memorial Park) We know it will be a great day. Please come.

Wilcox Memorial Park offers: Two lakes; Fishing & boat rentals on the "upper" smaller lake; Sandy beach on "lower" lake with life-guards, bathhouse and snack bar; Barbeque stands; Picnic tables; 5+ miles of hiking trails; Beautiful lawns and scenery.

Besides lunch, here are some other items to consider bringing: Suntan lotion, Hat, Bathing suit, Beach towel/blanket, Sunglasses. Insect repellent, Beach chair if desired, Lawn chair (for picnic area), comfortable hiking/walking footwear, Frisbee/lawn game.

Directions: The park entrance is 1 mile East of the Taconic State Parkway off Route 199 in Dutchess County. (View a Google Map: <http://g.co/maps/agvnnv>) The closest GPS address is 1639 Rte. 199 Stanfordville NY 12581. Park phone: (845) 758-6100.

Parking Fees: County Resident Vehicles: \$5.00
Non-County Resident Vehicles: \$10.00

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

Non-profit Organization
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Newburgh, NY 12550
Permit No. 8604

ANNUAL TAG SALE

Our September Annual Tag Sale—
Bigger and Better than Ever!
Coming sooner than you think!

9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Saturday, September 22 (rain date September 23) at
Mulligan's Irish House, 2146 New Hackensack Road, Poughkeepsie

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 21).

The fall newsletter and facebook page will have drop off information and sale details.