

Fresh Air

The Quarterly Newsletter of the
Atlantic Chapter Mid-Hudson Group



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Chair's Corner

Joanne Steele

We won again? Maybe not yet? The DEC issued its **Final Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (FSGEIS)** on May 13, 2015, completing the environmental review of high-volume hydraulic fracturing (HVHF) begun in 2009. [see <http://www.youngsommer.com/2011/attorney-articles/hydrofracking-in-new-york-a-brief-overview>]

The time is now past the 10 calendar day minimum for the DEC to present the legally binding Findings Statement, which will enshrine the state's fracking ban. However, neither Cuomo nor the DEC have the power to unilaterally and permanently ban fracking. Only the legislature can do that. However, a ban would be difficult to break if the DEC's Findings Statement selects from the FSGEIS: (1) *only the no action alternative* (denial of permits); (2) Zucker's Department of Health (DOH) key public health recommendation ("absolute scientific certainty is unlikely to ever be attained."); and (3) *cannot* be revisited without conducting a *new* SEQR (State Environmental Quality Review). This third point in itself would close a giant loophole for possible fracking later on. These are the three points to make in your, yet another, call to the Governor at 1-518-474-8390. So, we all must get on the phone yet once again, and call the Governor. Tell the others! Thank you all for your caring actions!

Interestingly, the two other action alternatives in the FSGEIS presented for possible selection in the Findings are: limited permitting and green fracking. Limited permitting satisfies the residents' desires in four Southern Tier NY counties adjacent to Pennsylvania (which allows fracking): Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins counties. Green fracking involves using no water. Twenty two million dollars (water wells cost \$6-\$8.5 million) has been invested by a group of frackers in the "Nettles" well in Ohio. They are using a mix of 3 to 1 liquid butane and petroleum oil. "Nettles" has been producing for the last 3 months at only half that of water-using wells. Not a success. The FSGEIS made no choice of the three possible alternatives. Either of the last two could enable fracking in NY to begin in the future. So, call the Governor! A copy of the FSGEIS can be found at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/75370.html>. There is an executive summary.

An acceptable Findings Statement still leaves NY with an abundance of further unanswered environmental problems. The DEC sets no limit to the tonnage of radioactive Marcellus drill cuttings sent to a landfill with the excuse that the drill cuttings are pre-frack! (They are pulled out of the ground to allow the pipe to be pushed down into place.) However, the soil and rock of the drill cuttings are loaded with water soluble radium (half-life of 1,600 years) which will be in the landfill's leachate after a rain (and is also in the flowback water from the fracking). Then there's the multi-millions of gallons of clean water being taken from NYS for current fracking in Pennsylvania, which will continue. Then there's the many new pipelines (for gas or for oil) and pipeline compressor stations in the works. In Orange County, Minisink has kids complaining of chronic nosebleeds, rashes, migraines, and dizzy spells possibly (do you think?) from the smell in the air which ranges from rotten eggs (hydrogen sulfide) to burning paint. Property values are plummeting. Minisink's nosedive in quality of life is believed by locals to be due to the Millennium Pipeline Company, which runs two 6,000-horse power natural gas compressors within town limits. Then there's the infamous Seneca liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) industrial storage facility and a methane expansion facility on the shores of Seneca Lake, with plans to store methane, propane, and butane in unlined, depleted salt caverns that were never engineered to store anything. The Findings Statement won't affect that, either. So, we need our legislature to get busy! Sign on to the

Legislative Call led by Roger Downs, our Conservation Director, every Friday at noon. To participate, email Roger or Caitlin Pixley at roger.downs@sierraclub.org, or caitlin.pixley@sierraclub.org.

Now, good news! New York State DEC on May 21st issued a Letter of Intent to rescind its previous Negative Declaration and Notice of Complete Application for Global Companies' Port of Albany proposed air permits. Global has until May 31st to respond to the letter. It appears that the DEC will now require a full environmental review of the Tar Sands-by-Rail Facility. The DEC wrote: "In reviewing the 19,000 comments submitted during the public comment period significant issues were raised that meet the state regulatory standard to rescind the Negative Declaration for the project. For example, there is not sufficient information to evaluate how the proposed project would comply with the hydrogen sulfide ambient air quality standard." They continued: "Further, because of the close proximity of the 137-unit Ezra Prentice Homes residential housing development to Global's facility, the potential for these proposed changes to have significant adverse impacts on the environment must be fully analyzed." This victory was organized relentlessly by Sandy Steubing and others of PAUSE (People of Albany United for Safe Energy) and was fully supported by lawsuits by Sierra Club and Riverkeeper. Ours was considered by DEC to be so frivolous that the DEC considered to hold us liable for their attorney's fees! (Do we now get *our* attorney's fees back from DEC?) Riverkeeper responded to the news, "In the event of a spill, the toxic, sinking crude would mix into the water column and be unrecoverable." http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/permits_ej_operations_pdf/globalnegdec0515.pdf

On March 21st, the **United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) held an Annual Meeting in Tarrytown** to discuss the NRC's assessment of safety performance at the Indian Point nuclear power plant located in Buchanan. Attendance by hundreds of citizens, who, from their testimony, were motivated by concern for the recent leak at the plant, which was shortly followed by a fire incident, and also for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) having issued its approval on March 3, 2015 for Spectra Energy's proposed high pressure gas pipeline to be sited alongside Indian Point. Paul Blanch, a nuclear expert who has worked at Indian Point, said that "the NRC's safety analysis is based upon false, inaccurate, and unsupported information." He claimed that the NRC reduced its projected calculated "risk" of an explosion by more than 10,000 times, without supporting data but with false probability data. He said that the recent fire of the main transformer may have been avoided had the full NRC not negated a court decision from the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (ASLB). Continuing, he said that new data from an inside source appears to indicate that million gallon fuel storage tanks within a gas line blast radius may contain flammable material. In response to three formal requests, the NRC had refused to provide a definitive response, he said. The NRC chair promised to us all that he would respond to Mr. Blanch's statements in writing. We will hold him to that statement!

The Raging Grannies "sang" two very appropriate songs. A young girl representing Earth Guardians (www.earthguardians.org) pled for our developing and using alternative (Climate Change saving) energy. She was roundly applauded. Some people wore red kiddy fire chief hats and many in support waved scarlet-red dinner napkins. Citizens from NYC were also present. Employees and Labor Union representatives spoke in favor of keeping the plant and everything else just as it is, and is planned. These comments were followed by applause and loud YEEAAHs. We were provided Life Saver mints (individually wrapped) and York mints (the small ones) and cups of water as snacks for the 3-hour muster.

Your ExCom was asked by people living on Plains Road in New Paltz to intervene in their struggle after the town had drilled a water well on property adjacent to theirs, with plans to purchase the land for a million dollars or so. The intent was to provide them with water while NYC repairs its aqueduct, during which time it would be unable to provide water as usual to the town. The problem on Plains Road was that the town's well drew the water level to below the residents' wells. The town countered their protestations with the offer to hook them all up at the Town's expense to town water from their new well and presumably from the aqueduct when it resumes delivering. The difference is that the Plains Road residents will now have to pay for water for which they didn't have to pay previously. Your ExCom discussed this situation, felt empathy for the residents for this sudden change and their future costs, but decided that was not an environmental issue.

We are glad to help tame distressing developments. We need to hear of these problems early on, not after you are exhausted with

rejections from a number of agencies, because then it is more difficult to get them to change their minds, regardless of the correctness of your concerns. For us to help, we need YOU to chair the committee and we will help find other committee members. The ExCom consists of nine very busy people who cannot take on more than we already do. We cannot keep up with taming or stopping developments in our six counties without your letting us know about them as early as possible.

Right now, we are working on getting the town of New Paltz to issue a Positive Declaration on the Testimonial Gateway Development, which would require a comprehensive environmental impact statement (EIS) on all of the various projects associated with that development. We realize that the various projects that together constitute the Testimonial Gateway Development are extremely complex and pose significant environmental concerns. We'd appreciate you, as our members, to support our efforts and contact the town Board at <http://www.townofnewpaltz.org/town-board>. Thank you for all your help and support.

Stop The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)

by Shelley Bance

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is an expansive multi-country trade agreement being negotiated in secret between countries in the Pacific Rim and Canada and the United States. It will grant enormous rights to large corporations, including the power to decide our laws, and make it harder to safeguard our air, land and water. Though some tout it as a plan that will create jobs and foster international trade on a beneficial level, the Sierra Club is opposing its efforts due to the environmental impacts of the agreement. Though a deal has been cut in the Senate for Fast Track Authority on the bill, it is currently stalled in the House of Representatives. It's not too late to get involved and make your opinions heard.

If you're feeling complacent now that our governor has banned fracking in New York State, the struggle is not over yet. The TPP agreement with 10 other countries could dramatically increase exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to overseas markets without any domestic oversight. What does this mean for us in the U.S.? An increase of dirty fracking and carbon emissions, stress on sensitive ecological areas, an increase in natural gas and electricity prices, and increased use of dirty coal power. Another backside? The TPP is being negotiated in near complete secrecy, with none of the texts made public, but only to business representatives who serve as official U.S. trade advisers. The vote is now in Congress, where the agreement cannot be amended or environmental protections strengthened.

The reality of increased fracking across the U.S. is enabled by

the fact that the Department of Energy (DOE) will lose its authority to regulate exports of natural gas to countries with which the U.S. has a free trade agreement that includes "national treatment for trade in gas." That means automatic approval of LNG export permits to interested TPP countries, like Japan — all without review or consideration.

It gets worse. The DOE is even considering applications to export almost 45 percent of U.S. domestic gas production, which means more fracking and price increases that impact us all, not to mention more dirty coal power. And to top it off, the TPP dispute resolution process will enable foreign TPP corporate investors to sue the U.S. if our local or national government enforce environmental laws that will prevent corporations from profiting off their investments — including future profits they might have made — with no cap on the amount they demand! That means they gain the ability to challenge fracking bans in U.S. states. Yes, really.

And as we all know, the environmental impacts associated with natural gas exports don't stop at the drilling site. The gas travels through pipelines across public and private land and through export terminals. That means dredging and expanded shipping facilities that take a toll on coastal communities. The result? LNG's carbon footprint is just as dirty as coal.

So, what do we ardent Sierra Club members do to stop this disastrous trade agreement in its tracks? Contact your Senators and U.S Representatives and urge them to publicly commit to voting against Fast Track Authority for TPP. For the Senate, call 1-877-415-8656. For the House of Representatives, call 1-888-454-0483. This is a crucial vote that will affect us all. Do your part in rejecting TPP.

PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBIC. BRING A FRIEND!
Visit our NEW website: sierraclub.org/atlantic/mid-hudson for more details.

Tuesday, June 30th, 7:30 - 9:30 pm

Sunset/Moonlight Walk on the Wallkill Rail Trail

Join us for an evening walk along the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail from New Paltz south towards Gardiner. Moonrise will be at 7:07 pm and sunset will be at 8:35 pm. As the skies darken we will hopefully have an exciting sunset over the Shawangunk Ridge during our first hour and then soothing moonlight for our return to New Paltz. The moon will be nearly full so with clear skies we will have a beautiful walk in the moonlight. Wear comfortable shoes, bring a hat or jacket in case it cools off and don't forget a flashlight or headlamp.

Directions to Sojourner Truth parking lot and boat launch:

Drive down Main Street (Rt 299) in New Paltz and make a left onto Water Street just before the Wallkill River bridge. (Coming from the West, make your first right after crossing the Wallkill River). Continue on Water street and bear right as it becomes Plains Road. Look for the parking area on your right. Here is a map link: <https://goo.gl/maps/gvqoD>. Note the open space leading to the Wallkill River just above the words Plains Rd. on the map. That is the Sojourner Truth parking area.

Please RSVP: mhsierraprograms@yahoo.com

Outings are posted at: meetup.com/SierraClubNY and our group's meetup site: meetup.com/Mid-Hudson-Sierra-Club

Note: Although both sites will have information about the outing, I use the SierraClubNY meetup to run the outing. Please RSVP on this site if you wish to attend.

HELP WANTED

Our group is in need of volunteers to lead others on walks, hikes, and other activities. If you are interested in becoming an outing leader, please contact me: Andy Moss, Outings Chair, (845) 336-5446 or andy@hvi.net.

On April 11th an intrepid group joined me for a hike to Gertrude's Nose at Minnewaska State Park. The weather was blustery and cool with only a few breaks of sun. Nevertheless, spirits were good and we enjoyed numerous views along this trail of woods, cliffs and ravine.



THREE VIDEOS OF NOTE

1) More on microbeads: find the **"Beat the Microbead"** consumer lists and App, and report new products containing microbeads at: www.beatthemicrobead.org. 2) Thank your Mother: Think your cellphone use is safe? How about that **new meter** that Central Hudson wants to attach to your house or apartment or apartment complex? <http://goo.gl/n0qqm6>. Watch the video of Martin Blank, PhD, spokesperson for the International Scientist Appeal on Electromagnetic Fields at www.EMFScientists.org. 3) Climate Change is Simple? Yes, it is says David Roberts at the TEDx Evergreen State College talk. Check out the video at <https://goo.gl/6vZjRI> — Oh, and pass it on!

Sierrans Honoring Wild Earth

by Shelley Bance

Strengthening connections through experiences in nature is often a goal of Sierra-based wilderness programs, but it's also the goal of Wild Earth, a nonprofit organization in the Hudson Valley. The Mid-Hudson Sierra Club is lending its support to Wild Earth, which sponsors nature-based programs for children, teens and adults, as well as schools and groups. The programs draw on a broad spectrum of teachings, from indigenous cultures to modern natural sciences, with nature immersion as a path to building ecological, social and cultural resilience.

Participants enjoy new adventures, such as learning primitive skills and crafts with multi-generational mentors. On explorational treks through the forests of the Shawangunk Ridge, young people build forts and leaf shelters, uncovering the mysteries among



logs and rocks. Youths from urban areas play nature-based games that expand awareness and enjoy stories and songs by visiting elders. Wildlife tracking, archery, harvesting wild food, and stream ecology are some of the skills and knowledge learned at the workshops and summer camps for children from kindergarten through high school, and personal empowerment is often a result.



In April, 37 students from the JFK Elementary program in Kingston excitedly left their school classrooms to embrace the great outdoors. Simon Abramson, Associate Director of Wild Earth, noted the "amazing success" of the program and that "their enthusiasm for the outdoors was incredible!" He expressed gratitude to the Mid-Hudson Sierra Club for its support of their endeavors.

In Newburgh, 20 teens from the Boys & Girls Club explored Scenic Hudson's protected Snake Hill land and learned skills for shelter building, friction fire, and cordage, along with nature awareness and team-building skills. Later this spring, 50 middle school students will have a similar opportunity.

The Mid-Hudson Sierra Club encourages its members to lend their talents by volunteering for Wild Earth, based in New Paltz. For information, go online to WildEarth.org or call (845) 256-9830 or email: info@wildearth.org.

David Friedman, Vice Chair of the Mid-Hudson Sierra Club, states: "It's thrilling that the Mid-Hudson group has decided to lend active support to a local environmental group that is deeply involved in connecting young people to the natural world. I hope that, as time passes, the Mid-Hudson group and Wild Earth will form a strong collaborative bond to offer our constituencies greater opportunities for environmental experiences and activism."

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In commemoration of “Earth Week”, over 20 people participated in the joint venture of the Mid-Hudson Sierra Club and ADK on April 19 to clean up litter at Waryas Park on the Poughkeepsie waterfront. There was loads of litter, but we made the place sparkle. We separated out the recyclables, which several people took home to dispose of, since we didn’t spot any recycling containers at Waryas Park.

Following the clean-up, we enjoyed a lunch of various nibbles and excellent home-made wraps made by Sierra’s program chair, JoyAnn Savino. Good weather helped to make this event a fun and productive way to honor our Mother Earth.



*“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,
Nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”*

— Dr. Seuss, The Lorax

SAVE THE DATE
Our annual tag sale is coming Sept. 26