

Fresh Air

The Quarterly Newsletter of the
Atlantic Chapter Mid-Hudson Group



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Fall 2015 Vol. 47 Issue 3

Chair's Corner

Joanne Steele

In the win-some/lose-some department, the federal government's specification changes to make tanker rail cars safer will orphan approximately 60,000 DOT-111 cars to now require parking as they await either retrofitting to meet the tougher standards or are scrapped. The cars will require about 600 miles of excess rail line... somewhere. Turns out that there are up to 30 miles of track right here in the Adirondacks that are owned or leased by Iowa Pacific Line (IPL). In addition, IPL owns the financially struggling Saratoga & North Creek Railway (S&NCR) tourist line. At 100 cars/mile, IPL can park (for a fee) up to 3,000 cars on its 30 miles, which run in the High Peaks, some of it alongside the Boreas River and Hudson River. Ed Ellis, president of S&NCR, testifying in front of the Warren County Public Works Commission, stated that tanker car storage revenue in the Adirondacks could eventually be worth "seven figures" a year to the railroad. Buy, bye debt!

Of course, we are not to worry about these "residue empty" cars which all have a little Baaken Crude oil remaining, because they will not ignite and burn because the cars will be vented and not many of us will be there to be overwhelmed by the poisonous vapors, and the trees and other animals won't protest either. And we shouldn't worry that the little metal wheels of the cars will weld in time to the tracks, becoming permanent viewscape. Nor should we be concerned that the cars might

be cleaned (~\$4,000 each) right in place with who knows what fluid prior to their being scrapped.

The 30-miles include the spur to the old Tahawus mine and the main line track that runs through the Vanderwhacker Mountain area of the Forest Preserve and right alongside the Boreas River. Over five miles of IPL's Sanford Lake Rail Line runs through the new MacIntyre East Tract, close along the Hudson River. Ellis said his company believes it needs no outside permission to begin storing the tankers along the Essex County portion of the line and was informing Warren county merely as a courtesy. Well, the tracks in Essex County are owned by IPL. However, in Warren and Saratoga counties the tracks are owned by Warren County, and the railroad is only the lessee.

Our Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club unsuccessfully opposed a 2012 federal Surface Transportation Board ruling to reopen the line, which had been closed to freight traffic since 1989. Roger Downs, our Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club Conservation Director, said, "We would hope that the Adirondack Park Agency and local authorities have some local control. We are completely opposed to this plan." Yes we are!



Conservation Corner

Joanne Steele

Can We Protect Belleayre Mountain?

by Kathy Nolan, Chair, Catskill Heritage Alliance

On September 2, 2015, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) released the **Final Environmental Impact Statement** (FEIS) (<http://www.thelagroup.com/belleayre-resort-at-catskill-park/>) for the Belleayre Resort, the **Final Unit Management Plan** for the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center (<http://projects.chacompanies.com/belleayre/>), and a **Cumulative Impact Analysis** (<http://www.thelagroup.com/downloads/FEIS-PartC.pdf>).

These documents describe a Resort on 739 acres, with two hotels, spa, golf course, and 629 various lodging units, including freestanding time share buildings, plus plans for a potential \$75 million "Full Build Out" of the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center that involves New York State purchasing the old Highmount Ski Center with public funds and linking it to the Resort.

The Catskill Heritage Alliance (CHA) is one of the citizens groups that has argued most strenuously against this oversized, destructively sited project since it was proposed in 1999. We have long favored a smaller, lower-build alternative that would not harm the local economy or environment, while still giving our area an economic boost. Along with Sierra Club, we advocated for a major compromise along these lines when New York State and multiple large nonprofit groups decided to accept much smaller concessions from developer Dean Gitter and Crossroads Ventures, and to tie Belleayre Mountain Ski Center to the Resort, leading to their signing in 2007 an "Agreement in Principle" that provided for the kinds of costly, large-scale development now fleshed out in these documents.

CHA is carefully reviewing the final environmental documents the DEC has released. In consultation with our members and with Sierra Club and other allied groups, we are considering a range of options for responding, including possible legal action.

CHA believes that DEC's review of the resort and the proposed expansion at the Ski Center under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) was not carried out properly. As former DEC Commissioner Joseph Martens left office earlier this summer, he rejected the request of CHA and other groups to return to previously scheduled adjudicatory hearings on multiple aspects of the Resort proposal which we pointed out had not been adequately considered. State law provides for this hearing

process for a reason, and the review of the Resort proposal is not complete without it.

Moreover, DEC staff failed to consider the independent studies we sent them showing that the fully built-out Resort's 629 rooms and related amenities would be out of scale with the region, far too large to be economically viable, and a threat to local businesses and community character. DEC also gave short shrift to a lower-build, better sited "Wildacres Only" Resort alternative, until in its newly released documents, it dismissed it altogether. Many new elements proposed for the Resort, added after 2007, have never been examined in front of an Administrative Law Judge, despite their new and additional impacts.

Looking at the ski center, DEC rejected a four-season recreational design alternative that the independent civil engineering firm Alpentech, Inc. found to be superior to, and less expensive than, alternatives tying Belleayre to the Resort at the former Highmount Ski Center. The Alpentech alternative would have complemented a lower build alternative at the Resort and might have solved a host of environmental and economic problems associated with full build-out at both the Ski Center and the Resort, allowing the Resort to succeed financially without becoming so big that it dwarfed nearby hamlets and cannibalized more customers from local businesses than it attracted to the area. From the time of the creation of the flawed Agreement in Principle in 2007, we have made this case repeatedly both to the DEC and to the public.

Instead of requiring such modifications and a robust hearing process, the new documents DEC has released permit multiple hotels at the proposed Resort, extending development to higher elevations on Belleayre Mountain, while at the same time providing for New York State to purchase the old Highmount Ski Center with public money, potentially favoring the most environmentally intensive, full build-out option for the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center.

At this point, environmental and citizens' groups seeking to prevent the Resort from damaging the local environment and economy may have to go to court to obtain adjudication of contested issues, as previously determined to be necessary by an Administrative Law Judge and then upheld on review. In the end, litigation may be necessary to get DEC to follow its own regulations, to preserve the integrity of the state's environmental review process, and to obtain a result that serves the public interest.

Tesla Gets Highest Rating

Consumer Reports (CR) just rated the all-electric Tesla P85D at 103, past their top possible rating of 100. They said it was the best car they ever reviewed, stating "This is the first time that a car increases performance with all-wheel-drive and energy efficiency." Using fossil fuels to charge the new Tesla calculates to 87 mpg. By charging with solar, the sky's the limit! Tesla is building out technology (list price \$120,000) that will be available for the rest of us in 3 years (on Tesla's timetable...).

Some Conservatives, in the service of the oil companies and more war, are calling CR "prostitute" (unlike the oil companies on our government's dole) and criticize the P85D for lacking Gulp-size cup holders and taking up to five hours to fully recharge (guess those conservatives don't sleep). Worse for them, the P85D goes from 0-60 faster than any of their million-dollar gassers.



New York Conservation Law: SEQRA

When it enacted SEQR or SEQRA, (Article 8 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law) in 1975, it was modeled after the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The New York State Legislature stated that its intent was: "...to declare a state policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and enhance human and community resources; and

to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems, natural, human and community resources important to the people of the state." A local jurisdiction of the proposed land development project has to make a "positive declaration" which activates SEQR, or a "negative" one which bypasses SEQR. The Sierra Club has historically and continues to unequivocally support the use of SEQR regardless of the identity of the developer. It is disappointing, shameful even, that any environmental group acting as a developer would appear to attempt to shirk SEQR.

Stepping Up for the Climate

by Shelley Bance

After a hot summer, things will be heating up even more in preparation for the UN Conference on Climate Change in Paris from November 30 to December 11, 2015. President Obama's trip to Alaska and drought-stricken California highlights what we already know: the climate is changing. It's up to us to force those in power to put a halt to it.

Sierra Club members can do their part by attending the climate action rally on the **Walkway over the Hudson in Poughkeepsie on Friday, October 16 from 1pm to 5pm**. This is

the international day of climate actions. Organized by the *New Paltz Climate Action Coalition*, this rally is supported by our Group and other environmental organizations. Its intent is to send a strong message to UN summit delegates to enact measures to combat climate change.



All Sierrans should support this crucial event on October 16th! Stay alert for other events prior to, and after the Paris conference, including a global climate march on the weekend of November 28 to 29, with mass actions in Paris and worldwide. Help send a message to get the job done. Let's all do our part!

Stop the Pilgrim Pipeline!

by Shelley Bance

The ongoing debate over the Pilgrim Pipeline is prominent in meetings with packed halls of concerned citizens in our region. The pipeline would snake along the NY State Thruway and run under the Wallkill River in the heart of Gardiner. The potential impact on that town and the Gunks region would be terrible, not only from the construction but also the effect on surface waters, drinking water, and air quality. The pump stations, compressor stations, and spills involved with this project could permanently harm nearby towns and permanently pollute rivers as major oil spills have done in other states. The costly cleanups forever change the character of rural areas and endanger the health of citizens. The pipeline company does not pay for any cleaning or training for hazmat response—and then we the people have to pay to sue them to recoup the expense of their reckless "development".

At presstime, resolutions opposing the Pilgrim Pipeline have been passed by 19 New York towns, with Gardiner on board to be number 20. Resolutions have been passed recently in Tuxedo Park and Cornwall on Hudson. The resolutions have organized public opposition to the pipeline, but are symbolic and lack backbone. Landowners throughout our state have been approached for the past year and a half by representatives of Pilgrim Pipeline LLC, the corporation set up to get permitting for this destructive project—and its top executives are former Koch industries executives.

The good news? Grassroots opposition has not slowed down at all. Let your friends, neighbors, and townspeople know—and that includes your town officials, political leaders, business owners, and everyone else. The time to stop the pipeline is before application for a permit has taken place, which is NOW. Join the resistance movement, show up at meetings, sign petitions, and keep it up. For more information: <http://stoppilgrimpipeline.com>

Although this is considered an "off year", there are still elections. Make sure that you are registered to vote at your present address. If you select a party when you register, you will be able to vote in that party's primary. In non-primary elections, you can vote for a candidate in any party. If you want to vote in the Democratic presidential primary (probably Rodham Clinton vs. Sanders) next year, you will have to register or change your

registration to Democrat before October 9th THIS year. Check whether there are elections at your county or local level. Several candidates have contacted me as they are interested in a Sierra Club endorsement.

If you would like to get involved in environmental action on the political front, please contact: *Andi Weiss Bartczak*, andiwbartczak@yahoo.com, (845) 255-4371

Repair Café Gets Stuff Fixed

by John Wackman

Repair Café is a free community meeting place to bring a “beloved but broken” item to get fixed—for free. “Repair Coaches”—guys and gals with significant skills—make the repair while you watch...or help. A lot of stuff gets fixed. People leave very happy. The idea was born in Amsterdam in 2009 and has spread all across the U.S. There are Repair Cafés in six mid-Hudson towns: New Paltz, Rosendale, Gardiner, Kingston, Rhinebeck and Poughkeepsie.



Repair Café is about these things: Extend the life of stuff you care about. Honor the people who (still) know how to fix things. Preserve that knowledge, encourage it and pass it on. Get curious about the way things work. Use tools. Sit elbow-to-elbow at a work table with your neighbor. Have fun.

What kind of stuff gets fixed?

Our number one item is lamps (lamp parts are available “at cost”). Number two is vacuum cleaners. Beyond that, anything under the sun: mechanical and electrical; electronic and digital; clothing and textiles; things made of wood; jewelry; dolls and stuffed animals. When Wolf Bravo is there, tool and knife sharpening too.

Who are the Repair Coaches?

Guys and gals with significant repair skills who volunteer their time on a Saturday every other month. Some run professional repair businesses, and for them this is a way to get out in the community and get better known. Some are retired—the *Retired Men of New Paltz* group has stepped up nicely.

Upcoming Repair Café: Rosendale - Saturday Oct. 17; 10am - 2pm, St Peter’s Catholic Church

Find the full schedule and locations at: www.repaircafehv.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RepairCafeHudsonValley>

Outings News Andy Moss

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



On June 20th I led a hike to Bonticou Crag and Table Rocks on the west side of Shawangunk Ridge. We began our hike at the Mohonk Preserve’s Spring Farm trailhead. Although the day was cool and cloudy, three stalwart hikers joined me. The photo above was taken at the top of Bonticou Crag. Our day was cut short when it began to rain while we were having lunch but we all had rain gear and got back to our cars in good shape.

On August 27th our Program Chair, JoyAnn Savino facilitated a moonlight walk on the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail. There were about 30 attendees who enjoyed the 4 mile walk as the sun set in the west and basked in moonlight as the skies darkened.



As a Sierra Club national outings leader I recently had the privilege to participate on two trips in the Sierra Nevada. The first was a trip for Grandparents and Grandkids at the Sierra Club’s Clair Tappaan Lodge near Donner Pass. The photo above was taken at the top of Squaw Valley, home of the 1960 winter Olympics. Just visible behind me are the restaurant, outdoor pool and outdoor ice/roller rink that we visited via an exciting gondola ride from the valley further below. I followed this trip with a lodge-based hiking trip in Bear Valley near Ebbetts Pass. Sierra Club national and international trips are well run and a great value. Visit sierraclub.org for more information.

Public Programs JoyAnn Savino

PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBIC. BRING A FRIEND!

Visit our website: sierraclub.org/atlantic/mid-hudson for more details.

Thursday, October 15th, 7:00 pm

Re-use, Re-cycle, Re-make...what fun!

Join us for a night of fun. Learn how to re-make and re-use items that you usually throw out into fun practical items. The intention of this program is to spread knowledge and awareness relevant to the current movement towards Zero Waste, Sustainability and Local Resilience. Our speakers: John Wackman from the Repair Café and Laura Petit from the New Paltz Re-Use & Re-cycle Center.

Location: Boughton Place, 150 Kisor Road, Highland 12528.

Directions: From the NYS Thruway, drive East on Route 299, 2.7 miles. Look for Raizman Auto Sales on your right. Turn right onto Kisor Road. From Route 9W, drive West on Route 299, 2.5 miles. Turn left onto Kisor Road at Raizman Auto Sales.

Thursday, November 12th, location TBA

A Night of Wildlife and Raptors

Please join us to welcome wildlife rehabilitator Annie Mardiney as she shares her joys and the hardships of caring for injured wildlife. Learn what to do when you find baby birds that have fallen from their nest, orphaned bunnies or an eagle tangled in fishing line. Learn what you can do to prevent injuries and death to our beautiful wildlife, from asking your town to install fishing line recovery tubes, to changing the type of rat poison or pesticides you use. Annie will also be bringing some very special raptor (owls and hawks) guests with her. She will have a small collection of wild bird artifacts that children can touch and lots of handouts. It will be a night to remember!

Please RSVP for programs: mhsierraprograms@yahoo.com

Visit our website at: <http://www.sierraclub.org/atlantic/mid-hudson> | Join our meetup at: <http://www.meetup.com/Mid-Hudson-Sierra-Club>

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Sierra Club
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ANNUAL TAG SALE

All proceeds benefit our Mid-Hudson Group

Calling all Sierrans! Please Donate, Promote, Purchase, Volunteer.

Saturday, September 26th, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Rain Date: Sunday, September 27th, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

*Drop-Off: Friday, September 25th 1:00 pm - 6:00 pm
(rain or shine or early on the day of the sale)*



Location: Mulligan's Irish House
2146 New Hackensack Road, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

DONATE: We are looking for donations of books, CD's, DVD's, toys with all the parts, hiking/camping equipment, sporting goods with some play left in them, tools, antiques, small furniture, kitchen items, useable glassware/kitchen items, art, camera equipment, etc. Your items should be in good condition. All electronics must be in good working order. We'd love to have kayaks, canoes, working bicycles and other quality sporting goods. Collectibles and antiques are very desirable as well. *Items should be clean and dust-free.*

We do not wish to sell clothing or shoes. Please donate elsewhere.

Can't make it to the Sale or Drop-Off? Let us know. ***We have volunteers who are willing to pick up goods or they can be dropped off early if need be. Call for more information.***

PROMOTE: Let your friends and family know about the sale. We have a poster on our website that you can download, print and post.

PURCHASE: Come to the sale and find great buys for yourself and others. The benefits are many — low prices, great selection, recycling goods, and helping your local Sierra Club meet challenges!

VOLUNTEER: We can use your help! Can you spare 3 hours or more? Let us know. Contact tag Chair David Friedman (see below).

DAY OF SALE ANNOUNCEMENTS: Any rain announcements or special pre-sale announcements will be on our tag sale hotline. Call 845-255-2635 for information.

To Volunteer, find out more information about donating, or for any other information regarding the sale contact David Friedman, Tag Sale Chair

David Friedman, Tag Sale Chair

845-255-2635 (Barner Books) • Email: Friedman_David@msn.com • Cell: 845-701-6229 (calls or text)