

Fresh Air

The Quarterly Newsletter of the
Atlantic Chapter Mid-Hudson Group



SIERRA
CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

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

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

Fall 2016 Vol. 48 Issue 3

Chair's Corner

Joanne Steele

Thank you to all Sierrans who wrote/called Governor Cuomo to deny the Section 401 Water Quality Certification for the proposed Dominion New Market Pipeline. Walter Hang of Toxics Targeting, added in his petition letter for us all: "and all other fossil fuel infrastructure projects in New York which require that certification because your Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has a well-documented inability to fulfill the applicable provisions of the U. S. Clean Water Act." We will know soon if enough concerned citizens acted, because the comment period ended August 5th. But call now, too! You can respectfully call Governor Cuomo during business hours at (518) 474-8390. Ask that Governor Cuomo *adopt a moratorium on approvals* for pipelines, power plants, storage facilities and other fossil fuel infrastructure projects! Tell him to be a Climate Change leader!

One of those Fossil Fool projects is to dump frack solids into New York (or anywhere's) Municipal landfills. Frack solids are the radioactive, heavy metal laden soil that is pulled up from out of the deep earth to make way for the pipe's insertion. This soil waste contains toxic chemicals and fluids, and should no longer be defined as "rock and soil" that can be disposed of in landfills.

Yet, the fossil fools want it to come under the same treatment! The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is currently revising its rules on how that (solid waste) soil has to be treated, handled, and disposed at Municipal landfills (note that *privately* owned landfills are not included). The proposed changes include improvements, but fall far short of addressing the environmental and health risks of frack waste, says Walter Hang. Let's take action, Sierrans, by telling the Governor and the DEC to keep frack waste out of New York landfills! Call or write the Governor (Governor Cuomo, NY State Capitol Building, Albany, NY 12224, (518) 474-8390) and Commissioner Seggos (Commissioner Seggos, 625 Broadway Albany, NY 12233-1011, (518) 402-8545). Take action: goo.gl/FApUxb

I thank the following people who contributed to our Mid-Hudson Sierra Club this quarter: Dawn Osselman, Henry Westmoreland, Charles Milligan, Marie Caruso and Henry Buser. Your contributions allow us to do our own work and to support the work of others as well (vide infra). To everyone: please remember to spy for us! Send us clippings and photos of your concerns and remarks on your local efforts, too! Again, thank you all!

Conservation Corner

Joanne Steele

Near the end of August the Catskills Heritage Alliance received a second favorable ruling in their case against Crossroads Ventures and the Shandaken Planning Board. New York State's 3rd Appellate Division prevented Crossroads from ignoring CHA's challenge to the permits for the proposed resort that CHA claims were wrongfully issued by Shandaken's Planning Board. CHA is now preparing for oral argument in September in their case against Crossroads and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Your Mid-Hudson Group supports the position and work of CHA with the aid of your contributions.

The United States' Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized its rulemaking proceeding by establishing new pretreatment standards which: "prohibit discharges of wastewater pollutants from onshore unconventional oil and gas (UOG) extraction facilities to publicly owned treatment works (POTWs)." This means that wastewater from shale fracking cannot be dumped into municipal treatment plants anywhere in the country! That's frack wastewater. Now for frack waste solids, we're only talking about New York so far. In New York State (vide supra), our DEC is about to make a rule(s) as to how frack 'soil' is to be treated by Municipal landfills. Keep pouring on calls and letters!

We environmentalists are working to strengthen our laws, pull our environmental agencies away from corporate money and dictation, and to get those agencies to do their jobs and protect our daily, ever more polluted Earth. Well, help is on the way from...the insurance industry! Three of the largest insurers, Aviva, Aegon and Amlin have issued a joint statement urging leaders of the G20 (the world's largest 20 economies) to build on previous commitments and end fossil fuel subsidies within four years, as the G20 meets in China at the beginning of September. Their statement read: "Given the urgency of the climate change crisis, underscored by the Paris agreement reached in December of 2015, the next steps on this commitment are long overdue." Aviva's CEO, Mark Wilson, said: "Climate change in particular

represents the mother of all risks—to business and to society as a whole. And that risk is magnified by the way in which fossil fuel subsidies distort the energy market. These subsidies are simply unsustainable." Yes, simply!

In 1999 scientists measured the ratio of plastic to food in a remote area of the Pacific Ocean. They found an astounding 6:1 ratio. There was six times more plastic for the fish to encounter than edible food. In 2008 the ratio at the same place was 46:1, FORTY SIX pounds of plastic 'food' for every ONE pound of food. Bibi Farber writes, "...contamination of the oceans now include polymer dust particles, a by-product of manufacturing, that makes it's way into the watershed. The oceans are completely contaminated with plastic waste. A single old plastic bag can trap, strangle and kill sea life and coral. Fish, birds and turtles are eating unprecedented amounts of plastic. It is killing them, and poisoning our oceans." Visit: goo.gl/PQdASY

What's the same about fracking fluids and chewing gum? Their ingredients are government secrets due to industry 'pressure'! According to Chemistry.About.com, chewing gum was originally made from tree sap called chicle, a natural rubber, and sometimes various waxes. But, "After World War II, chemists learned to make synthetic rubber, which came to replace most natural rubber in chewing gum (e.g., polyethylene and polyvinyl acetate)." Polyvinyl acetate (a type of plastic) is manufactured using vinyl acetate, a chemical shown to cause tumors in lab rats. The Canadian government was so concerned about vinyl acetate used in the production of chewing gum that they added it to a list of substances to be considered toxic. According to a article in *The Ecologist* (Jan. 2010 online), government regulators were forced to back down due to industry pressure. Does THAT sound familiar! Lookee here: manufacturers must be required to list ALL of the ingredients in their products, rather than using non-specific terms like "gum base," "natural flavors," or "fragrance." GULP! Visit: goo.gl/QIU4Pt

Election year is upon us, and many are saying that the results of the upcoming elections will have the most significant impact of any election in a long time. This November, besides the presidential election, elections for US Congress and the New York State Legislature will be held. The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter's Mid-Hudson Group encompasses Ulster and Dutchess counties, most of Greene and half of Columbia county, as well as a slice of Delaware county, and the races for US Congressional district 19, and for New York State Senate districts 39 and 41 are of local interest this year.

Sierrans may or may not realize that the Sierra Club endorses political candidates, or what the formal endorsement process involves. Candidates supported by the Sierra Club include those who champion legislation that protects clean air, water and our remaining wild places, who speak out against environmentally destructive practices, and who otherwise work to protect our natural heritage. For a Sierra Club endorsement to be considered, candidates must fill out a questionnaire, which differs depending on whether the candidate is running for a state-level or a federal-level seat. For a state-level endorsement, candidates must fill out a questionnaire which covers a range of environmental issues relevant to both their district and the state as a whole, such as the transport of crude oil through New York and the regulation of large water withdrawals from New York for export to other states. At the federal level, much of the focus is on the fight against climate disruption, and on putting the country on a path to 100% clean energy. The questionnaire that a candidate for US Congress

would be asked to complete covers things like keeping dirty fuels in the ground, policies for reducing carbon and methane pollution, and ensuring that trade agreements do not undermine our power to address climate change.

After the candidate fills out and returns the questionnaire, a meeting between the candidate and a group of Sierrans is held to discuss the questionnaire and the candidate's position on the issues. Sierrans from the relevant group (e.g., the Mid-Hudson Group) and from the chapter participate in the interview. Every endorsement must be approved by two entities. For a New York state endorsement, the group Executive Committee and the Atlantic Chapter Political Committee vote on whether to endorse. For a federal endorsement, the group makes a recommendation, and the chapter and national Political Committees do the voting. Information from the questionnaire and the candidate's website, responses during the interview, voting records and other sources such as position papers are considered.

Once a candidate has been approved for Sierra Club endorsement, he or she can use the Sierra Club name in campaign material and publicize the Sierra Club endorsement on campaign websites. Also, Sierra Club may choose to help the candidate's election campaign in various ways, such as encouraging Sierrans to volunteer for a campaign. By engaging in election activities, Sierra Club furthers our conservation goals and builds the organization. Individual members benefit by having more information on which to base their choices as voters and their activities as environmentally engaged citizens.

Sierra Club Political Candidate Endorsements for 2016

We should not forget that this November, congressional elections will be held in addition to the presidential election. The Sierra Club has endorsed several candidates of local interest:

- **Zephyr Teachout**, the Democratic candidate for representative, 19th US congressional district,
- **Sara Niccoli**, Democratic candidate for the NY State Senate, district 46, and
- **Chris Eachus**, Democratic candidate for NY State Senate, district 39.

We encourage you to get involved! Contribute to the campaigns, attend campaign events, and spread the word that these are candidates who stand for Sierra Club values and who strongly support many of the same goals as the Sierra Club. Each candidate has a web page where you can further inform yourself and get involved. And above all, GET OUT AND VOTE!

Here are some of the candidates' positions:

Zephyr Teachout / zephyrteachoutforcongress.com

- Get renewables (sun, solar and wind) in place immediately, in order to facilitate a ban on fracking.
- Protect our waterways and drinking supply.
- Build a political system where large donors are not in charge. Reverse the Citizens United decision.
- Provide public financing for all statewide and legislative elections.
- Reform FERC (the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) which is too entwined with business interests.
- Stop the Trans-Pacific Partnership.
- Put in place agricultural planning, to reduce the threat that big agriculture poses to the environment.
- Support family planning, to reduce population pressures which accelerate climate change.

Sara Niccoli / saraniccoli.com

- Work to reduce the effects of climate change.
- Redirect the \$9 billion in economic development subsidies that New York State currently gives to entities such as big box stores, and use the money to:
 - repair/upgrade the electrical grid to accommodate widespread use of solar energy
 - upgrade broadband capabilities state-wide to support well-paying work-at-home jobs.
- Support farmers' rights to save seeds, to support crop biodiversity and to prevent large chemical and seed companies from controlling crop varieties.
- Stop building oil pipelines in general and stop the Pilgrim Pipelines in particular.

Chris Eachus / chriseachus.com

- Reverse the funding cuts that have diminished the New York Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
- Enact laws that would put New York on a path to reach the goal of 50% renewable energy by 2030. Close down coal plants and assist communities with transition funding.
- Enact legislation to ensure that all major facilities, vessels and railroads that transport and store crude oil can cover the costs of a catastrophic accident.
- Fund the New York Solid Waste Management Plan to push towards the Zero Waste goal.
- Promote use of public transportation to reduce New York's carbon footprint. Give tax credits to employers who subsidize their employees' use of public transportation.

We Need Your Email Address: If you have not been receiving email news and updates from us (the Mid-Hudson Group), it may be that we do not have your email on file or your email has changed. If you would like to be an informed Sierran, please contact Dave Thomas, our Database Administrator: dave@davidalexanderthomas.com. Be sure to include your full name and email address in the body of the email.

GMO Bill (“DARK Act”) Signed into Law

by Andy Moss

On Friday, July 29, 2016, President Obama signed into law a bill often called the *Denying Americans the Right to Know* (DARK) Act, striking down Vermont’s law requiring clear, easy to read GMO labels on food packaging. The bill also preempts labeling laws in Connecticut and Maine, Alaska’s law requiring the labeling of genetically engineered fish or fish product, and seed labeling laws in Vermont and Virginia while also preventing other states from adopting similar legislation in the future.

Why was the bill created? Why are corporations reluctant to state that a crop or ingredient has been genetically modified? Could it be that they are afraid that if people *know* there are GMO ingredients they might actually ask questions or choose non-GMO products? As long as it is not on the label, people will remain unaware that much of their food is genetically modified.

A majority of Americans support GMO labeling, but unfortunately your federal legislators decided that you do not have the right or need to know how your food is produced. Just who do they represent? You and me? Apparently not. It is sad to note that 64 other countries label GMOs...but not America!

President Obama signed this giveaway to the Big Food industry, despite promising Americans he would label GMOs as part of his 2008 presidential run. The DARK Act is a prime example of how powerful corporate interests influence our legislators into acting on their behalf, not on our behalf.

The White House justified the DARK Act’s onslaught on local democracy on the grounds that the bill would create national standards for labeling of GE foods. It does nothing of the sort. According to Obama’s own Food and Drug Administration, if enacted, the

bill would exempt most current GMO foods from being labeled at all. The FDA further commented that it “may be difficult” for any GMO food to qualify for labeling under the bill.

The bill has a weak labeling requirement with no penalties for noncompliance, gives food companies the option to include QR codes or 1-800 numbers on packages, rather than clear labeling, and, thanks to loopholes in the bill, will likely leave many GMO ingredients exempt from any labeling requirements.

This bill potentially violates several amendments of the Constitution. Since nearly 100 million Americans, predominantly the elderly and low-income population may not have smartphones, the bill is discriminatory. The idea that you should spend hours in the supermarket searching websites to find out if products you buy are genetically engineered is absurd. There are several organizations that have vowed to go to court to fight this bill as discriminatory and unconstitutional.

How did this bill get to the president? The DARK Act was not subject to any hearings. No expert testimony was taken. Rather, it was the result of back room dealing between a few senators and industrial food and biotech companies.

And it’s not over yet. You soon will be eating more “Frankenfoods” without knowing it. The genetically engineered Arctic Apple was recently approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to be sold in grocery stores. GMO apples are just the first of many fruits to be modified, coming soon: GMO peaches, pears, cherries, bananas, and oranges. And with the passage of the DARK Act, you will not be able to tell which is which.

There are numerous websites with more information. Here are some: fooddemocracynow.org | organicconsumers.org | foodandwaterwatch.org | nongmoproject.org

We Need Volunteers

We are seeking individuals who would like to get more active with us in stopping Climate Change and Protecting Our Environment! If you can spare a few hours a month, you can make a difference.

- We are looking for two good people who will report quarterly to us on the fossil fuel industry’s sneaky plotting on our environment — by participating in a state-wide group phone call each week.
- We also need two more good people who will report quarterly on

what our New York State representatives and Senators are doing for our environment by participating in a state-wide group phone call each week the legislature is in session.

- Our Programs Chair would like you to help us put on Sierra Club Programs in your area of our six counties! We have the programs (you may want to suggest one, too) and you have the area!

Email or call our Volunteer Chair, Marie Caruso at mariehv@verizon.net or (845) 217-5236.

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, November 17, 7:00 pm

Join us for a visit to the Hudson Valley in the Ice Age and Beyond!

Enjoy a journey back 20,000 years to the Ice Age with Bob and Johanna Titus, science professors and authors of *The Hudson Valley in the Ice Age: A Geological History & Tour*, as well as popular articles and books about the geology of the Catskills and greater Hudson Valley. Whether you’re a roadside tourist, an art aficionado, a summer picnic fan, or an avid hiker, they will suggest places that you can go and see for yourself the geological history of this wonderful region. They connect the geological past to the area’s history, culture, and industry and discuss how processes that occurred all those years ago are still impacting the area today. They’ll also discuss topics that they are currently engaged in investigating, and a few they are planning for in the near future.

Thursday, October 13, 7:00 pm

“Liberty and Justice for All Life Forms”

As our elections near, we need to remember the intentions of Our Founding Fathers and Mothers!

We are pleased to welcome Professor Evan Pritchard, a descendant of the Micmac people, part of the Algonquin nations, as well as the founder of the Center for Algonquin Culture. He will speak about the Eastern Woodlands (Native American) Roots of American Democracy, showing how these original political systems attempted to insure liberty and justice for all Life Forms, not just human ones. Many Native nations had elected officials who were shamanistically gifted and whose sole job was to represent the interests of what we call “nature” and not those who elected them. The Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, and other similar groups are our only vestige of this kind of democracy. The talk will be followed by a Q & A and book signing.

Please RSVP for programs: mhsierraprograms@yahoo.com

Location: Boughton Place, 150 Kisor Road, Highland 12528. **Directions:** From the NYS Thruway at New Paltz, drive East on Route 299, 2.7 miles. Turn right onto Kisor Road. From Route 9W, drive West on Route 299, 2.5 miles. Turn left onto Kisor Road.

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

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

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Newburgh, NY 12550
Permit No. 8604



ANNUAL TAG SALE

All proceeds benefit our Mid-Hudson Group

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

Tell Your Friends and Neighbors About Our Tag Sale.

Saturday, September 24th, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Rain Date: Sunday, September 25th, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Drop-Off: Friday, September 23rd 1:00 pm - 6:00 pm

(rain or shine or early on the day of the sale)

Paula's Public House, 2146 New Hackensack Road, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

(formerly Mulligan's Irish House) Located 1.6 miles past the intersection of Raymond Avenue & New Hackensack Road (Rt. 376)

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. Small electronics must be in good working order. Please, no *large* electronics! 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 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.**

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)

