



IROQUOIS

MESSENGER

EXPLORE, ENJOY & PROTECT THE PLANET

newyork.sierraclub.org/Iroquois

EPA Supports Onondaga Lake Watershed Cleanup Funding Allows for Creation of New Advisory Position

The federal Environmental Protection Agency has provided \$260,000 to assist in the efforts to clean up Onondaga Lake. A portion of the funding will be used to provide the salary for a Watershed Coordinator, who will assist public and private agencies in the development of policies to control the flow of polluted water into the lake. Aimee Clinkhammer, previously employed as an Environmental Finance Expert at the Syracuse Center for Excellence, will serve as the Coordinator for the Onondaga Lake Watershed.

“Having one person in charge is a great step forward toward achieving our goal of a clean, healthy lake and watershed.”

In her role as Coordinator, Ms. Clinkhammer will work with businesses, community groups, local governments and the Onondaga Nation to plan for the restoration of health to the Onondaga Lake Watershed. She will also direct outreach initiatives aimed at explaining and promoting restoration and community access to Onondaga Lake and other natural areas within the watershed. She will help assess the impacts of proposed projects, land use planning and other decisions that impact the integrity of the lake.



Photo courtesy of the New York State Museum

According to Jack Ramsden, Iroquois Group Secretary, having one person in charge of coordinating all actions at various levels of government is a great step forward toward achieving our goal of a clean, healthy lake and watershed.

The Iroquois Group has been fortunate to confirm Ms. Clinkhammer as the presenter at our monthly program on Wednesday, May 28th (see back page). We encourage all persons and groups to join us for this special event. Space for group promotions will be available.

HANDS ACROSS THE SAND™

Founded in 2010, *Hands Across the Sand/Land* grew into an international movement after the BP oil disaster in April of that year. Thousands of people came together to join hands, forming symbolic barriers against spilled oil and standing against the impacts of other forms of extreme energy.



Hands Across the Sand/Land is about embracing energy sources that sustain our planet. It's aimed at steering America's energy policy away from our dependence on fossil fuels and toward clean energy. The goal is

to show government leaders that public support is strong for moving away from dirty fuels and adopting policies that encourage clean energy.

On May 17th, the Iroquois Group will join this international initiative on the shores of Lake Ontario at Southwick Beach State Park (see back page). We'll join hands to raise our community's awareness of the dangers of dirty fuels and the ground water pollution caused by fracking wells.

Join us as we clean the beaches of Lake Ontario and join hands with thousands of people around the world to say “no” to dirty fuels and “yes” to clean energy.

Sierra Club - Iroquois Group
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newyork.sierraclub.org/Iroquois

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We Want to Hear From You!

We're always looking for great stories from our members, so let us know if you'd like to write an article or book review for our next issue. Questions and/or Letters to the Editor are also welcomed.

New Members Welcome!



Membership is an important piece of the Sierra Club's mission, as it allows us to be a major political force and have the impact we need to create change in our world. Membership starts at just \$25, and you can join online by visiting www.sierraclub.org. Join the Sierra Club today, and add your voice to the thousands of Americans committed to leaving our children a legacy of clean air, safe drinking water, and natural grandeur!

From the Chair -

Dear Tree-huggers,

My feeder menu seems to have lost all appeal for the usual uninvited guests. Mostly because there are no deer and only a few squirrels in my woods. This is good for the birds - and means fewer trips through the snow for me - but is still a bit of a mystery. Maybe if I visited the city neighborhoods I would find my lost herd of nine deer, but the only squirrels I see are very skinny (or did not wait for the walk light to cross the road). So, if the few are so hungry, why not come to the feeder?



New ground and under-the-snow diners are two rabbits, one woodchuck, some mice and one very busy chipmunk. All gather under the same bush, so it must be a genial bunch.

No window traumas this season; a few knock-outs, but no fatal blows. There were a couple of "almost" disasters. A goldfinch, halfway into his summer colors, was at the feeder for a very long time when I realized his foot/claw was caught in the feeder and foiled all attempts at flying. I went out to help, and fear propelled him up and away. I checked the feeder, and there was quite a bit of blood, but no claw, so I hope all will heal. The very next day a junco was trapped in an old bird cage I use to protect the only plant I would like to see bloom in the spring. I went to the rescue, but the little bird suddenly found the energy to squeeze out to freedom. Maybe I should have just stayed away and let them work it out, but with sub-zero temps, it didn't seem like a good idea.

So spring is really here, and the flocks of cardinals have been replaced with goldfinches, finches, titmice, juncos, sparrows, red-winged blackbirds and, of course, the always present and cheerful chickadees. My latest sighting is a red grey squirrel. Not a red squirrel, but a red grey squirrel. Perhaps it was something it ate? Enough! get out there and enjoy!

For the Earth and all its Critters,
 Martha Loew

Local Anti-Fracker Wins International Award



Ithaca-based lawyer Helen Slottje has been awarded the world's largest prize for environmental activism.

Presented annually, the Goldman Prize honors grassroots environmentalists who have made significant efforts to protect and enhance the natural environment, often at a great personal risk. The prize amplifies the voices of these "everyday environmental heroes" and provides them with international recognition and financial support of \$175,000.

Slottje was presented with the award in recognition of her work to organize community-level fracking bans across New York State. In the past five years, she has helped enact bans in 172 communities. Her innovative legal framework has also allowed her to provide hundreds of hours of pro bono legal assistance to communities near Dryden, New York, where an anti-fracking law passed in 2011 led the gas industry to sue the town. The industry lost the battle in trial court and, following an unsuccessful appeal, the case is now before the state Court of Appeals, the state's highest court.

We congratulate Slottje and thank her for her tireless dedication to anti-fracking initiatives. Even if the state's five-year moratorium on fracking were to be lifted tomorrow, Slottje's work could cause major issues for energy companies, and that's well worth celebrating!

Conservation Chair Report

Linda DeStefano

Sierrans Speak Out at Energy Hearing

Several members of the Iroquois Group spoke at the March 6th hearing on the New York St. Energy Plan. Representatives from many other organizations testified, as well. A common theme was that the draft plan needs more work, as it emphasizes expansion of the fossil fuel network rather than maximization of energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewables. A spirited rally preceded the hearing, and Jennifer Tuttle of Sierra Club's *Beyond Coal Campaign* was interviewed by the media.

Bomb Trains

This is the name Senator Charles Schumer gave to the railroad tankers carrying extremely volatile crude oil from the Bakken Shale in North Dakota. There have been several accidents involving these tankers. The most serious was an explosion in the province of Quebec in July, which destroyed part of a town and killed 47 people. An excellent report in the *Syracuse New Times* revealed that Onondaga County has no plan to deal with a similar disaster, even though these tankers regularly travel through Syracuse.

Sierrans Jack Ramsden and Linda DeStefano had letters in the *Post Standard* and *Syracuse New Times* (respectively) pointing out the need for disaster preparedness and, better yet, a moratorium on these tankers, at least until such preparedness initiatives takes place.

Rich Slingerland, Iroquois Group Water Issues Chair, points out that the danger from these tankers extends from the land to the water. Crude oil is transferred from rail tankers to vessels on the Hudson River. It is estimated that cleanup of a spill from a vessel accident would recover only 5% of the oil. What a tragedy this would be after so much restoration of the river has happened over the past several years. An example of a near miss happened in December, 2012, when a ship carrying crude oil left the Port of Albany but hit the shore. The hull opened but, fortunately, the tank was not pierced.

Climate Change Crisis

David W. Fischer, Iroquois Group Climate and Energy Chair, points out that, in a sense, Sierra views New York State's shale gas as its own version of the Alberta tar sands. Accessing more fossil fuels is not the answer to the climate problem, and our duty is to work to keep carbon sequestered.

Most attendees at the March 6th NYS Energy Plan hearing were against fracking. Unfortunately, the "Summary for Policymakers" issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states:

"Natural gas can act as a bridge technology, with deployment increasing before peaking and falling to below current levels by 2050. Thus, natural gas has a temporary role, but only if fugitive methane emissions can be curbed. And it must be produced safely, as our prior work on hydraulic fracturing has emphasized."

These statements seem to bet on the development of robust technologies to reduce fugitive methane emissions from fracking, but that seems highly optimistic.

Onondaga Lake

Jack Ramsden, our point person on Onondaga Lake, reports:

- NYS and Onondaga County announced plans to spend tens of millions of dollars on an amphitheater on the west shore of the lake, which would be built on top of dozens of feet of waste near the State Fair parking lots. This area was once promoted as a "natural area" traversed by the "Loop-the-Lake" trail extension set to open on May 18th.
- The Iroquois Group's May program will feature Onondaga Lake Watershed Coordinator Aimee Clinkhammer, who will present her first "state of the watershed" update.
- Honeywell announced that it should finish the dredging of the lake bottom this year, a year ahead of schedule. Capping and other projects will run through 2016, and monitoring will last indefinitely.
- The Onondaga Nation has filed suit with an international court over their land claims. The suit coincides with their proclaimed dissatisfaction with the extent of Honeywell and the NYS DEC's clean up plan.

You can receive information/updates about local environmental conservation issues by joining our Environmental Issues listserv. If you'd like to join, contact Linda DeStefano, Conservation Chair, at ldestefano3@twcnny.rr.com.

Sierra Club News, Sent Right to Your Inbox



Join our Iroquois "News List" to receive group updates and information, as well as reminders for upcoming outings and events. Frequency of emails is 3-4 per month, at the most. If you'd like to be added to our listserv, simply send an email to Iro-group@newyork.sierra.org and include the words "News List" in the subject line.

Note: This is a closed listserv. Your email address will not be visible or shared. You may unsubscribe at any time.

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Iroquois Outings & Events

Explore, Enjoy & Protect Our Planet

Sierra Club events are free and open to all (both members and nonmembers). Indoor programs are held at 7:30 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of every month (unless otherwise noted) at University United Methodist Church, 1085 East Genesee Street, Syracuse. Please park and enter on University Avenue.

INDOOR EVENTS

State of the Lake/Onondaga Lake Watershed

Wednesday, May 28, 7:30 p.m.

As the newly appointed Onondaga Lake Watershed Coordinator, Aimee Clinkhammer will address progress past, present and future as we experience a cleaner, healthier lake (see front page).

OUTINGS

Annual Lake Ontario Beach Cleanup & National Sierra Club Pipeline Demonstration

Southwick Beach State Park
Saturday, May 17, 10:00 a.m.

Help us "Draw a Line in the Sand!" Identify yourself as a volunteer for free admission and ask for directions to the meeting place. Event is free & open to the public. Rain date set for Sunday the 18th. If in doubt, call Rich at (315) 298-3130 for updates (see front page).

J.P. Morgan Chase Corporate Challenge

Onondaga Lake Park
Tuesday, June 17

Help us promote recycling at this popular Syracuse event. Visit our website for more information and contact Lisa Daly to get involved.

Camp & Kayak on the Wellesley Islands

Wellesley Islands State Park
July or Early August - Date TBD

Barbara Hupp, a member of the Sierra Club California Chapter, is working to achieve her certification as an Outings Leader. To fulfill one of her requirements, she is planning to lead a weekend event on Wellesley Island in July or early August. The outing will include guided nature hikes, bike trips to area parks and kayaking, and will take place rain or shine. Check our Meetup site or webpage for updates.

