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MESSENGER

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VICTORY: Governor Cuomo Bans Fracking in New York State

Jack Ramsden

In 2009, the Executive Committee of the Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club voted to pursue a ban on high volume, hydraulic fracturing combined with horizontal drilling for natural gas (aka “fracking”). As this decision was inconsistent with the National Sierra Club’s position, it caused quite a stir.

As time went by, the national organization came around, eventually joining the Atlantic Chapter in their support of a ban on fracking. New Yorkers, however, didn’t wait for the national leaders to catch up. The New York State Sierra Club joined with other environmental groups and new coalitions that were being formed (such as ShaleshockCNY) and moved forward with marches, rallies, commenting, petition drives and lobbying of political leaders to demand a ban on fracking. And guess what? Our hard work and relentless dedication have finally paid off!

On December 17, 2014, in a televised meeting of Governor Cuomo’s cabinet, we heard the Commissioners of the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) tell our governor that they could not report favorably on the process of fracking. Indeed, DEC Commissioner Joseph Martens stated that he would issue a negative report to the governor on the draft supplemental generic environmental impact statement, which means that fracking will not be allowed in New York State. Yes, you read that correctly! Fracking is banned!

I think a quote from DOH Commissioner, Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D., will resonate long and loud into the future as the fight to save water, air and land continues:

"I have considered all of the data and find significant questions and risks to public health which as of yet are unanswered. I think it would be reckless to proceed in New York until more authoritative research is done. I asked myself, 'would I let my family live in a community with fracking?' The answer is no. I therefore cannot recommend anyone else's family to live in such a community, either."

A few years ago, this outcome was unimaginable. On December 17, we heard from two public servants and a governor who were finally responding to scientific evidence and the outcry from the citizens they serve. This has to give us hope for the future. Granted, it will be a future with some challenges and disappointments. The Iroquois Group fought to stop the wastebeds amphitheater and were disappointed

when our efforts proved unsuccessful. We continue in our work to halt the incineration of waste imported from Cortland County, and our struggle to convince our leaders to embrace a “zero waste” management future continues. So many of our politically endorsed candidates failed to be elected this year that there are big challenges in state and national legislatures. That said, rather than focusing on the negative, let’s imagine the possibility of our future successes.



After five years of rallies and demonstrations similar to the one pictured above, which was held in protest of the storage of fracked gas along Seneca Lake, the Atlantic Chapter has finally claimed victory in their war against hydraulic fracturing. Photo courtesy of Lindsay Speer.

In 2009, even the national leadership of the group we belong to opposed our belief that fracking should be banned, but that didn’t stop us. In 2015, we should take strength and energy from our success with the ban on fracking and pour it into renewables and fossil-fuel-free programs for the future. Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune issued a call at the end of the year for a future that was not only sustainable, but also socially just. All of this work will take the same effort, if not more, than our “unimaginable” success at banning fracking took. The National Sierra Club leadership is not in our way (now); they’re leading, and we should be enthusiastically thankful for that.

So, what do you say, Iroquois Group? Are we done? No, not even close. We have so much more to do to protect this beautiful area we live in. And now we know it won’t be fracked! Happy New Year - really!

Sierra Club - Iroquois Group
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sierraclub.org/atlantic/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 welcome.

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 sierraclub.org/atlantic/iroquois. 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,

Hope all had a great holiday season!

Welcome to winter, one of our best times to enjoy the birds. My yard is really fluttering with all the colorful birds of winter. There's a larger-than-usual collection of woodpeckers of all kinds, including a very busy Pileated Woodpecker working-up a major headache in a dead maple stump. The Red-bellied Woodpecker is handsome and stuck with a strange name; I would have called it a Red-headed Ladder-back.



Once again, the cute field mice have decided that my house is "home" for the winter. After they ate their way out of a few have-a-heart traps, and became comfortable sharing the cat food with my cat, the end had to come. I plugged holes under the sink, but still they came. Natural solutions suggested peppermint oil and cat urine - like put the litter where the action is. My kitchen now smells pepperminty. So far, so good (I did not choose the cat urine remedy). Anyone have a mouser cat for rent?

Snow is where we are, so hope all get out and enjoy, or sit by the fire and enjoy the view.

For the Earth and all its critters (with the possible exception of field mice),

Martha Loew

Expert in Reuse Based Enterprises Visits Syracuse By Vicki Baker



Neil Seldman, co-founder & president of the ILSR. Photo courtesy of ilsr.org

The Iroquois Group and the Jamesville Positive Action Committee (JAMPAC) recently sponsored a program by Neil Seldman, Ph.D., co-founder and president of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR) in Washington D.C.

Seldman discussed the many challenges posed by Onondaga county's waste incinerator and municipal waste stream, as well as the highly controversial Ash to Trash Proposal. Attendees also learned about communities across the country who have invested in jobs from recycling. The event was a great success, and the local legislators in attendance thanked the

Iroquois Group for hosting such an informative presentation.

Whatever the result of the Ash to Trash proposal, Seldman's presentation opened minds to the environmental possibilities of protecting our planet while dealing with our waste. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Ash to Trash Proposal can be viewed and/or downloaded at: bartonandloguidice.com/cortlandonondagapartnership/home.

Unfortunately, no alternatives to the Ash to Trash Proposal have been brought forward. Right now, the only things standing in the way of the importation of garbage to burn are the Onondaga County and Cortland County Legislators. The OCRRA Board has voted unanimously in favor of the proposal despite the fact that there has been no approval to rescind the law banning importation.

Conservation Chair Report

By Linda DeStefano

Onondaga Lake Amphitheater

The Iroquois Group was one of many local organizations opposed to the planned construction of an amphitheater on the shore of Onondaga Lake. The Group's statement on this issue expressed concern that the "...project was being planned with little thought to preserving the undeveloped land left around Onondaga Lake." Sadly, we and the natural area where the amphitheater will be built - including the many wild animals who call it home - lost the battle when county legislators voted 12 to 5 to approve the plan.

Ash to Trash Proposal

This past October, the Iroquois Group had the privilege of sponsoring an event featuring Neil Seldman, Ph.D., co-founder and president of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. For a recap of Seldman's presentation, "Expanding Recycling and Economic Development in Onondaga County," please see the facing page.

Inspiring Conference on Fracking Infrastructure

Approximately 200 activists gathered at Ithaca College on November 15, 2014 for the *Protecting Communities from Fracking's Collateral Damage Conference*. Attendees and presenters shared information and strategies to combat New York State's rapidly expanding fracking infrastructure, which includes the transport, disposal and storage of fracked gas.

Topics of discussion included the dizzying array of new pipelines, compressor stations, storage facilities and landfills for radioactive drill cuttings that are either in operation or being proposed.

Another hot button issue on the agenda were the bomb trains (a.k.a. "moving pipelines") that carry explosive fracked crude oil through New York State (including Syracuse) en route to their final destinations.

According to conference presenters, one of the biggest challenges for bomb train activists is untangling the intertwined ball of state and federal regulatory agencies. Bill and Sandy Podulka, Lindsay Speer and others put together a guide, "Who Regulates What," to help activists know where to go to intervene. Various interactive maps were presented, including one that depicted all of the schools within a mile of the tracks bomb trains utilize.

Conference presenters included dedicated professionals and grassroots activists who had to learn very rapidly how to fight a proposed plan which would endanger their families and community. Solidarity abounded as seasoned activists helped new leaders. Those who have been peacefully blocking Crestwood's attempt to store methane in salt caverns under Seneca Lake were especially lauded.

You can receive information/updates about environmental conservation issues by joining our environmental issues listserv. To join, please contact Linda DeStefano, Conservation Chair, at ldestefano3@twcny.rr.com.

Our Website Has a New Look!

By Dan Shanahan



As you've most likely noticed, the Iroquois Group's website has undergone a major overhaul. Over the past few weeks, our Webmaster has updated it to conform with a recent Sierra Club initiative.

In 2010, the Sierra Club Communications/IT Committee began pursuing a Content Management System (CMS) for Chapters and Groups to use when developing their websites. After evaluating their options, the Committee agreed to work with Drupal, an open source content management platform powering millions of websites and applications across the world.

This past year, the Committee took the project one step further, developing several website templates for Chapters and Groups to choose from when updating their websites. The templates were designed to provide a unified user experience among all Sierra Club websites while allowing enhanced content sharing among Chapters and Groups.

We're happy with the results, and we hope you will be, too! Visit us today at: sierraclub.org/atlantic/iroquois. Our old URL will redirect users to the new page until further notice.

Join the Sierra Club Executive Committee

The Iroquois Group has a lot of work to do, and we could really use your help! Our day-to-day activities and affairs are handled by an Executive Committee of eleven members who serve two-year terms. The Committee meets on the second Wednesday of each month, and meetings last approximately one-to-two hours. Topics of discussion include outings, programs, legislative actions and political endorsements.

Ideal candidates should be comfortable working on a team and have a reasonable amount of time to dedicate to Group activities.

If you think you might be interested in joining the Executive Committee, just give us a call or drop us a letter/email (our contact information is on the facing page). We also invite you to attend one of our monthly meetings; come see what we're all about (Executive Committee meetings are open to all members of the Iroquois Group).

Syracuse Sierra Club Meetup Group

All Iroquois Group outings and programs are now listed on Meetup.com, the world's largest network for local groups and organizations. The Iroquois Group's unique web address is: Meetup.com/Syracuse-Sierra-Club-Meetup-Group.



We also use Meetup to communicate last-minute updates on our outings and programs, including cancellations due to weather, changes in dates, times or meeting places, etc. Be sure to check in often, and stay tuned for our May and April outings and programs, which will be posted soon.



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Iroquois Outings & Events



OUTINGS - We're always looking for interesting places to explore. Have a favorite spot you'd like to share? Interested in leading one of our outings? If so, email Michelle Wolfe at mjw451@aol.com.

Onondaga Creekwalk

Sunday, January 4, 2015 - 2:00 p.m.

Kick off the new year with a vigorous walk along Onondaga Creek. The 2.6 mile trail is paved, but be sure to wear good hiking shoes or boots, as it may be icy. We'll park/meet at the first Solar Street parking lot for Destiny USA. Look for the tan Hyundai with the Sierra Club sign!

Explore Old Fly Marsh

Sunday, February 8, 2015 - 2:00 p.m.

This preserve contains a 45-acre marsh and pond that are regular resting spots for migrating waterfowl. It also includes a mature forest with a wide variety of flora. Directions to Old Fly Marsh can be found at: cnylantrust.org/preserves.html. The parking lot where we'll meet is about ¼ mile east of the intersection on the north side.

Baltimore Woods in the Winter

Sunday, March 8, 2015 - 2:00 p.m.

This beautiful 180-acre area in Marcellus has more than six miles of hiking trails we can explore, depending on our group's whim. Please note that dogs are not allowed. Baltimore Woods is located at 4007 Bishop Hill Road, Marcellus. We'll meet in the upper parking lot.

PROGRAMS - All programs are held at 7:30 p.m. at the University United Methodist Church, 1085 East Genesee Street, Syracuse. Please park and enter on University Avenue. Programs are free and open to all.

Fossil Fuel Divestment on Central New York Campuses

Wednesday, February 25, 2015

Students from several CNY campuses will report on their ongoing efforts to convince their respective colleges/universities to divest their fossil fuel investments. Attendees are sure to draw some inspiration from their dedicated efforts.

Time for an Update on Onondaga Lake

Wednesday, March 25, 2015

The dredging of Onondaga Lake is complete! Water quality is the best it's been in 100 years, and more than 110 species of fish, birds and mammals have returned to wetlands in the area. Join us as Honeywell describes their success and shares their plans to further restore the lake that has gone from "polluted" to "swimmable."

Prospects for the Environment Following the 2015 Elections

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

Celebrate Earth Day with this informative presentation by Roger Downs, Atlantic Chapter Conservation Director. Downs will report on the activities of the new Legislature in Albany and discuss the status of the Atlantic Chapter's efforts to date.