

Reaching More Than
20,000 Sierra Club Members
in Massachusetts

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M A S S A C H U S E T T S

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CLUB

FOUNDED 1892

MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER

March 2009

To our Chapter Members:

To save paper, mailing, and Chapter resources, we are incorporating our 2009 fund appeal into this issue of the *Sierran*.

On page 8 you'll see that 2008 was a year full of activism and accomplishments for the Massachusetts Chapter. More important, we are all the deserving beneficiaries of a sea change in Washington — and the next few years are both our best chance, and probably our last chance, to mitigate impending environmental catastrophes.

Please contribute to your Sierra Club Chapter as generously as you can. Today.

R Philip Dowds,
Mass Chapter Chair

Massachusetts Sierra Club

CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2009

Phil Dowds, Chair
chapter-chair@sierraclubmass.org
617-354-6094

Erik Gehring, Vice Chair
vice-chair@sierraclubmass.org

Craig Altemose
craigaltemose@gmail.com

David Heimann
heimann.david@gmail.com

Deborah Holt
dholt@sierraclubmass.org

Craig Kelly
craig@craigkelley.org

Rouwenna Lamm
rouwenna@gmail.com

Peter Ruggiero
peter@sierraclubmass.org

Phil Sego
phil@sierraclubmass.org

CHAPTER STAFF

James McCaffrey, Director

Alexandra Oster, Administrative Assistant
office@sierraclubmass.org

Carol Oldham, Regional Representative
carol.oldham@sierraclub.org

LEADERS LIST

For information on local environmental issues, membership, meet the group of issue leaders listed below.

GROUP LEADERS

Cape Cod and Islands Group
Billie Bates, Chair
bcbs@yahoo.com

Greater Boston Group
Mary Ann Nelson, Chair
manelsonnew@gmail.com

Essex Group
Jim Amatucci, Chair
jim.amatucci@gmail.com

Thoreau Group
Dan Proctor, Chair
dproctor@sierraclubmass.org

CHAPTER ISSUE LEADERS

Conservation Chair
David Heimann
heimann.david@gmail.com

Energy Committee Chair
David Heimann
heimann.david@gmail.com

Legal Committee Chair
Mary Ann Nelson
manelsonnew@gmail.com

Sprawl Committee Chair
Mary Ann Nelson
manelsonnew@gmail.com

Public Lands / Forestry
Elisa Campbell
ecampbell@sierraclubmass.org

Coastal / Marine Chair
Blossom Hoag
blossomhoag@gmail.com

Education Chair
Dan Proctor
dproctor@sierraclubmass.org

Legislative Committee Chair
Leslie Doyle
doyleleslie@yahoo.com

Political Committee Chair
Phil Sego
phil@sierraclubmass.org

Population Chair
Anita King
413-268-9212

Transportation Chair
John Kyper
jkyper@sierraclubmass.org

Fundraising Chair
Phil Sego
phil@sierraclubmass.org

Volunteer Coordinator
Peter Ruggiero
peter@sierraclubmass.org

Environmental Justice Chair
Bob Murphy
murphydalzell@aol.com

Zero Waste
Lynne Pledger
Lynne.Pledger@sierraclub.org

Annual dues in the Sierra Club are \$39, of which \$1 is for a subscription to the Massachusetts Sierran.

COMING DOWN THE PIKE?

Letter from the desk of James McCaffrey, Director

Substantial transportation reform may be on the way as politicians struggle with an ever-widening backlog in the state's crumbling transportation infrastructure. Just how effective that reform will be in saving tax payer money while improving public transportation choices remains to be seen.

It began last year as a spat between the governor and then House Speaker DiMasi over whether gas taxes or toll increases should be used to fund "Big Dig" debt and decades of neglect. It has now widened into wholesale confusion as to how best to meet our transportation needs. Reform first and revenue later? Neither? Both?

In 2007 the Transportation Finance Committee reported that \$15 to \$19 billion is needed over the next 20 years to fix the commonwealth's transportation systems. Since then, the deepening economic crisis in America, and the commonwealth's own fiscal woes, have only made things worse, inspiring proposals from all directions. The governor has supported eliminating the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, and increasing tolls in certain portion of the state. The toll proposal met with mixed reviews from the public. Members of the legislature countered with a proposed gas tax increase, which theoretically spreads the burden more equitably.

The legislature convened a series of hearings in late December to discuss reforms and revenue, and the Senate has now offered a comprehensive reform-only package. Seeing an opportunity to seek true reform, several progressive members of the House, led by Representative Will Brownsberger, convened a series of meetings to hear ideas from advocates and politicians.

The result was a set of principles to support a viable revenue stream for our transportation infrastructure, while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector. The principles have now been endorsed by more than 25 organizations and dozens of legislators. The Massachusetts Chapter

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ON THE COVER: Trout Lily Photo by Elisa Campbell

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Elisa Campbell Editor
Ricki Pappo Designer
Megan Elder Assistant Editor
Jean Sideris Events Editor

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Working for the Future, Two Years at a Time

by Phil Sego

The legislature works in two-year cycles. We're now at the beginning of one of those cycles, and the Chapter's Legislative Action Committee has prepared bills and worked with representatives and senators to file legislation we want to see enacted. This year, we have greatly expanded our lobbying program to include bills in all of the Club's priority areas. We will also be supporting many other bills, and need help in researching and preparing written testimony. Please visit our website for more information.

Global Warming and Air Quality

- **No Increase in Coal Burning** Bans the new construction of coal-burning facilities or coal-gas conversion facilities. Coal produces more global warming CO₂ per unit of energy than any other fossil fuel. Its mining is environmentally devastating. There's no such thing as "clean coal," despite the hype that the coal industry wants you to believe. *Sponsored by Representative Lori Ehrlich. An Act to Reduce Coal Burning and Use.*

- **Incineration Moratorium** The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) instituted a moratorium on expanding trash incineration over 17 years ago. Incineration produces toxins such as dioxins, furans, and other particulates. As a source of energy, burning trash produces more global-warming CO₂ than natural gas, oil, or even coal. This bill makes our temporary moratorium permanent. *Sponsored by Representative Mark Falzone. An Act To Prohibit The Incineration Of Solid Waste.*

- **Healthy Breathing Act** Proposes to reduce the number of health problems that are caused or worsened by human exposure to fine and ultra-fine particulate matter that results from the burning of diesel fuel. This bill attempts to limit the construction of specific residential and institutional facilities within 500 feet of areas with harmful diesel exhaust. *Sponsored by Representative Denise Provost. An Act Reducing Human Exposure To Particulate Matter Pollution.*

Land Use

- **Public Lands Preservation Act (aka "No Net Loss")** Article 97 of the State Constitution requires that public land acquired for natural resource purposes not be used for other purposes or otherwise disposed of without a vote by two thirds of the legislature. There is hardly a city or town that does not have a park, play-



ground, conservation land, or other public land that is meant to be protected by Article 97. The bill would establish a policy that no change in use or disposition of Article 97 land occur without an alternatives analysis and provision of replacement land. *Sponsored by Senator James Eldridge, Representative Ruth Balser, Representative Frank Smizik. An Act Protecting The Natural and Historic Resources of the Commonwealth.*

- **Establish Old Growth Forest Reserves** In Massachusetts, there are only a few small areas of forests that have escaped the cutting in the past. These Old Growth Forests, which are unique habitats, have been catalogued, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife have designated many of them as Reserves. The next step is to give them permanent legislative protection. *Sponsored by Representative Stephen Kulik. An Act Authorizing the Establishment of Old Growth Forest Reserves.*

- **Local Control of Personal Watercraft ("Jet Skis")** Under current law, if a city or town wishes to place some restrictions on personal watercraft, such as limiting hours, or curtailing use during sensitive waterfowl migration periods, they are unable to do so. This bill would enable cities and towns to place restrictions on smaller bodies of water that are located completely within one municipality. *Sponsored by Representative Jim O'Day. An Act Relative to "Jet Skis," "Surf Jets," "Wet Bikes", and Other Personal Watercraft in Municipalities.*

Recycling and Solid Waste

- **Bottle Bill Update** Adds water, sports drinks, and other on-the-go beverages to our

There's no such thing as "clean coal," despite the hype that the coal industry wants you to believe.

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A Call for Energy Enlightenment

by Bob Murphy

If Americans can develop an energy justice program in the right way, we'll revitalize the global economy and save Mother Earth.

The people in Massachusetts aren't any better than other Americans; however, we can get to energy enlightenment while others are still dreaming. Every morning, the sun rises over the Atlantic Ocean so the new day dawns in New England before it reaches Detroit or distant California. While much of the country is still in bed, thousands of men and women in Massachusetts are pushing through traffic on their way to work. They're asking the right questions about energy matters. Many of the commuters think, "Does anybody care about what happens to me? This commute is becoming too expensive. Is there a better way to live and work?"

Call it a time of epiphany. In the early morning hours, when you want ordinary people to get to the heart of energy matters, ask them to reflect on their ordinary experience. Start the energy conversation by asking, "What do people actually need?" Massachusetts has some of the coldest winters and some of the highest energy costs in America. So it's an appropriate place to introduce the energy justice program. This is a radical program, but Massachusetts has a history of radicalism, and, sometimes, we lead the country in the right direction. We recognize that access to medical care is a human right. Because of our health and safety concerns, we can also say to America,

"Access to energy is a human right. We want all people, in all places, to have an adequate supply of energy that is safe, sustainable, and affordable." Not too much energy, because we're concerned about climate change, but, please, not too little energy when it's needed.

The world of energy is a world of disparities. Some families enjoy large houses, fully heated in the winter and air conditioned in

the summer, with three or four automobiles in the driveway. On the far side of town, people ask, "Will we pay for housing and groceries this month or will we pay for home heating and light?" At the bottom of the energy pyramid, you'll find the hungry and the homeless who beg for charity and compassion. They ask for blankets, for hot meals, and for a display of human warmth.

Massachusetts can become the moral light in the energy discussion. To do this we need some energy enlightenment. We need comprehensive programs that educate citizens about their energy rights and their energy responsibilities. Energy conservation is very important, but we need to know that some of our neighbors need more energy, not less, in order to survive. The Bay State needs all-year energy assistance efforts because, obviously, there's a need for refrigerators and lights during the summer. There's a need to improve weatherization and mass transit programs. Clean energy technology is needed, but don't ask the people in poverty to wait for 20 years while the benefits of new technology trickle down. The poor have been cheated and starved in the existing energy economy.

Move human rights concerns to the top of the energy agenda. Give special attention to the very young and to the very old, to the working poor, to people who lack adequate transportation, and to all of the others who are often dismissed by conservationists and the big energy corporations. If Americans can develop an energy justice program in the right way, we'll revitalize the global economy and save Mother Earth. ❖

Bob Murphy is an environmental justice advocate and serves as vice chair of the executive committee of the Cape Cod and Islands Group of the Sierra Club.

A comment from the Chapter Chair, Phil Dowds: "The challenges of climate change and energy reform are vast, forcing us all to re-prioritize our goals, and re-design the foundations of our society. Bob Murphy's views remind us of the complexity of these challenges, and how much dialog we will need before we get it right."



The *Sierran's* Future

by R Philip Dowds, Chapter Chair

Personally, I prefer paper (recycled, of course). Usually I can locate, extract and digest information and nuance faster from a collection of printed pages than from the glowing screen. I will subscribe to home delivery of the *Boston Globe* until one of us departs this world. But this last comment is not facetious: In April, the *Christian Science Monitor* shifts from daily print to web-based — and many analysts predict that the era of the daily newspaper will be over in a decade or so.

Thus with feelings quite mixed, we report that this will be our final issue of the Massachusetts *Sierran* as a quarterly publication. Each year the chapter will publish two issues: One in the spring coordinated with fundraising and the “annual report,” and one in the fall sequenced with chapter and public elections cycles.

Our decision to scale back on the *Sierran* is not one lightly taken. This quarterly magazine has consistently been one of the best periodical communications by club chapters, due in large part to the contributions of current editor Elisa Campbell, current Editorial Board Chair Erik Gehring, prior Editorial Board Chair Blossom

Hoag, and their many predecessors. It's also a primary link of connection between the chapter and each of our members — a consistent tangible reminder of our ongoing efforts that all members of the household are guaranteed to encounter.

Nonetheless, the advantages of shifting emphasis from print to Internet are undeniable. In 2009, we will revise our chapter website — www.sierraclubmass.org — to serve as a better archive of chapter policy and reference resource for those trying to track state conservation issues, and as a more timely report on the challenges and choices of the moment. The website will feature “prime pages” and other materials readily available for both screen reading and download/printing, facilitating dissemination of chapter news and views on current events. True enough, material waiting passively at a website never has the pro-active immediacy of paper in your mailbox. But our intent is that while the *Massachusetts Sierran* is a good resource for all, the website upgrade will be a better resource for most.

And — in a new reality characterized by increasingly scarce resources

and advancing costs of overcoming distance — we will save trees and fuel. As much as I like paper, it's not the future. (At least, not generated in large, redundant quantities that head off to the recycle bin a few days later; my co-housing community is now working on consolidating household newspaper and periodical subscriptions into a common reading room.)

For more systematic membership outreach, we will maintain SCAN, the Sierra Club Activist's Network email alert (available by subscription at www.sierraclubmass.org/action/scan.html). At two to three week intervals, SCAN provides announcements and volunteer opportunities to those chapter members most interested, and currently serves about 1,500 households. We also plan to institute the mailing of a one-time Welcome Package to households new to Club and Chapter membership, of which we have about 1,500 a year.

So, even if the *Sierran* appears less frequently, we will not be out of touch or hard to find. If you have comments to share regarding our shift in emphasis, or want to volunteer time and services to our Internet-centric communications upgrade, please phone us at the chapter headquarters in Boston (617-423-5775), or write us at office@sierraclubmass.org ❖

Long-Time Activist Mourned

Barbara Fegan, long-time activist with the Sierra Club and League of Women Voters, died in January at 87 years old. In 1982 Barbara founded the CoastWeeks Cleanup program which has become an annual event nationwide. In 1991 the Sierra Club recognized her as an environmental hero for helping establish the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary. She served for many years on the Sierra Club's national Coastal Committee, taking the bus to meetings, since she didn't drive. She was a selectperson in Wellfleet, MA from 1988-1994. In addition, she served on the board of the Association to Preserve Cape Cod for 13 years and was Massachusetts President of the League of Women Voters between 1979-1981. Barbara also helped to establish the state cancer registry and promoted right-to-know legislation.

In a 1992 *Cape Cod Times* interview she stated, “Democracy is not a spectator sport” which sums up her approach as an environmental and health activist. David Dow, says, “During my early leadership of the Cape Cod Group, she gave me the advice to think like the ranch owner and not the ranch foreman in running the group. It was one of the best pieces of advice that I have ever received because it recognizes the

key role of getting folks to take ownership of certain issues and helping remove bureaucratic roadblocks to their activism. Barbara came up with short, pithy statements that incorporated much wisdom in how to live a committed life. She may be gone, but will not soon be forgotten.”

“Barack Obama would have loved Barbara Fegan,” notes Bob Murphy, vice chair of the Cape Cod and Islands Group. “Barbara was the kind of person who cared about people and social justice, and also she cared about environmental protection. Her work for the Massachusetts state cancer registry and for right-to-know programs was extraordinary. She moved environmentalists and human rights advocates in new directions.”

She will be missed by all who knew her. Her example inspires us all. ❖



The Political Process and Corruption

by Phil Sego

The recent incidents of political corruption both here in Massachusetts and throughout the United States indicate that there are more than just a few bad apples in public office. It seems there is something terribly wrong with a system that appears to be rife with corruption. Is it possible that our government is here for those who are willing to “pay to play”?

The recent allegations of corruption are perhaps the tip of the iceberg. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has reported that there are thousands of corruption investigations going on. According to *USA Today*, North Dakota is the most corrupt state and Massachusetts rates 17th — a level of mediocrity that some of us feel good about. What is remarkable is that the least corrupt and most corrupt states are only separated by a few points. Also quite remarkable is that the statistics can only show who got caught — the visible part of the iceberg.

Most people think these are isolated incidents. Examining the past, like Boss Tweed’s fleecing of New York in the 1860s, or Charles Forbes’ embezzlement of one quarter billion just before the Great Depression, there seem to be some common

threads. The most obvious thread is that “Power Corrupts.” The opportunity to obtain a huge sum of money without having to sweat and toil is attractive. Boss Tweed and the rest of America’s most famous corrupt politicians suffered from temptation and the belief that they wouldn’t get caught.

Luckily, the FBI — and here in Massachusetts, the Office of Campaign and Political Finance (OCPF) — investigate allegations of graft. Due to their efforts, it is likely that many Massachusetts politicians have decided that taking a wad of cash just isn’t worth it.

But what about legal corruption? If the top executives of a company all “max out” (give the maximum donation allowed), they’ve broken no laws. And often the legislator can reap thousands or in some cases *hundreds* of thousands of dollars per year from industries that environmentalists typically loathe. Are these legislators being influenced by the receipt of thousands of dollars from the nuclear and coal industries? Is your voice lost because you only gave your legislator \$20?

Sadly, in many cases, the answer is yes. Since the majority of the work

that a legislator does is behind the scenes, and 90 percent of the bills proposed every year quietly die behind closed doors, you may never know if it was your favorite representative or senator who killed your favorite bill — as a favor to those who paid to play.

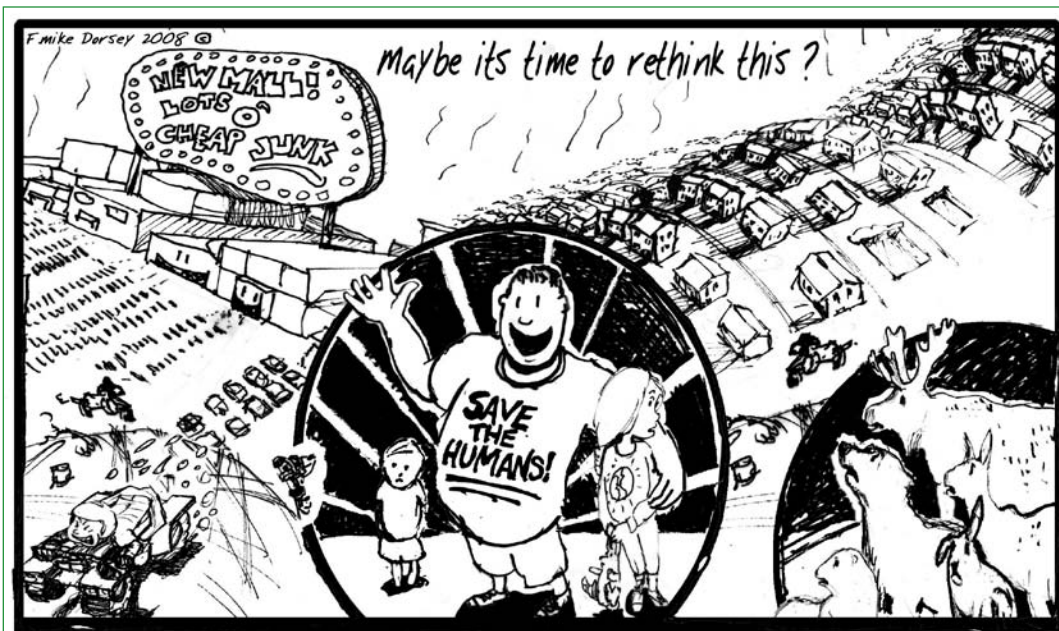
The Sierra Club has a unique role. Legislators listen to us. They know that our goal is to protect the environment. But many of them also listen to corporate lobbyists. And while the Massachusetts Chapter doesn’t donate to campaigns, their lobbyists and executives do.

What can you do to fight this “legal corruption?” They say that the best disinfectant is sunlight. There are at least two websites that corporate-influenced politicians fear: www.followthemoney.org and www.mass.gov/ocpf. The OCPF data is not as user-friendly, but has much more information. If you’ve been asked for a donation from a candidate, check to see how their campaigns are funded. Are they raising \$200,000 from lobbyists and industry political action committees? Are most of their major donors in other regions?

As the Chapter’s Political Chair, I know that voting really matters.

And as voters, it’s our responsibility to look past the glossy brochures and the snappy yard signs. Voting records are only part of the story, and it’s up to each of us to care enough about our votes to really know who we’re voting for. ❖

Phil Sego is chair of the Chapter’s Political Committee and devotes his “spare time” in the Sierra Club to solid waste issues.



BOOK REVIEW:

The End of the Wild

by Stephen Meyer

2006

Boston Review and the MIT Press

97 pages

\$15.00

by Daniel Marien

From the book:

For the past several billion years, evolution on Earth has been driven by small scale incremental forces, such as sexual selection, punctuated by cosmic scale disruptions... Today, the guiding hand of natural selection is unmistakably human... [T]he average rate of extinction over the past hundred million years has hovered at several species per year. Today the extinction rate surpasses 3,000 species per year ... Over the next hundred years or so as many as half of the Earth's species ... will functionally, if not completely, disappear. The land and the oceans will continue to teem with life, but it will be a peculiarly homogenized assemblage of organisms unnaturally selected for their compatibility with one fundamental force: us. Nothing can change the current course ... the race to save the composition, structure, and organization of biodiversity as it exists today – is over, and we have lost.... Of course, the end of the wild does not mean a barren world... Life will just be different: much less diverse, much less exotic... Everyone will enjoy English house sparrows; no one will enjoy wood thrushes.

Weeds, relics, and ghosts

The emerging biosphere presents three kinds of species. The *weedy species* are the relatively few generalists, readily adapting to human-disturbed environments. They flourish in a variety of ecological settings, switch easily between food types, and breed prolifically. These species thrive in the new biosphere. There are five times more raccoons per square mile in the American suburbs than in the country side.

Relic species, a larger category, will likely survive human impacts but are



African lion

Photo by Dr. Nathan Myhrvold; used by permission

quickly losing ecological dominance in their original settings. They will endure at the margin of human-disturbed environments. If sexy and lucky enough, they might become the beneficiaries of active conservation programs, transforming them into carefully managed “boutique species.” The Northern Right Whale and the Panda come to mind.

Ghost species might seem to be thriving today, but will unavoidably disappear this century. Many, like the East Asian giant soft shell turtle, cannot adapt to human-disturbed environments. Others, tunas and marlins for example, are hunted to extinction.

Containing the tide, for now

Human impacts examined one by one may seem controllable. Habitat destruction through urban sprawl can be contained through smart growth, for instance. But this hope depends on an illusion. “The power of human selection comes from its multiplicative nature. Small effects of one type are multiplied by small effects of others.” Meyer convincingly illustrates this claim with a survey of the interlocking pressures faced by the California tiger salamander.

Conservation should be not abandoned, however. *Laissez faire* would make things much worse. In the short term, we should intensify conservation efforts so as to minimize damage to the web of life. First and foremost, we must develop an ecological identity acknowledging the connections

between how we live and what happens around us. “Demanding ... ten-mile-per-gallon armored transports to move groceries home means drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.” According to Meyer, only in the very long run, four or five millions years from now, can we hope to push back human-driven evolution and let natural selection regain its former predominant role.

The book does not fully discuss the why and the how of its ultimate project of restoring natural selection to its former dominant role. The question of why biodiversity should be protected has been discussed elsewhere. However, the daunting intellectual and political questions of how to re-center species selection around natural processes remain unaddressed, here or elsewhere. Whether the goal is practical enough to be meaningful for environmental activism and policy remains debatable.

No single book can be expected to do everything. This essay shakes complacency, illustrates the startling on-going extinction of species, points out the limitations of current conservation policies, and successfully argues a fundamentally disturbing idea: the wild is no more. Here is a tiny book packing a mighty punch. It will become required reading for anyone interested in biodiversity. ❖

Daniel Marien has served on the executive committees of the Chapter and the Essex Group.

A Year of Accomplishment

by James McCaffrey

The Sierra Club, the nation's largest grassroots environmental organization, is uniquely structured into chapters and groups under an umbrella national organization. Forty years ago local Sierra Club members formed a New England Chapter, which eventually evolved into state-wide chapters. Currently in the Massachusetts Chapter, a staff of two works alongside dozens of dedicated volunteers on a variety of issues, trying to improve our local and global environment every day.

In 2008, the Massachusetts Chapter supported and helped win many prominent victories in the state legislature:

- A landmark **Environmental Bond Bill** which approves \$1.7 billion for environmental and conservation priorities, more than double the previous bond bill.
- **The Green Communities Act**, an omnibus energy package which will bring sweeping reforms to reduce energy usage and promote efficiency.
- **The Oceans Act**, which creates comprehensive ocean zoning for Massachusetts waters to guide industrial activities including fishing and wind farm siting.
- **The Global Warming Solutions Act**, which requires that the state reduce its emissions 80 percent by 2050, with an interim goal of 10 to 25 percent reductions by 2020.
- **The Green Jobs Act** - a new law to spur growth in the green jobs and renewable energy sector.

In September we hosted *Energy Solutions Day*, organized by Carol Oldham, the Club's newly hired Northeast Regional Representative. More than 400 visitors to the Boston Common enjoyed an afternoon of music and fun while learning about conserving energy, buying locally produced foods, and other easy actions concerned citizens can take to lessen their carbon footprint on our planet.

Sometimes however we are at loggerheads with our state government. Last year was no exception, as we fought efforts by the state to lift the ban on incineration of trash, which would dramatically increase airborne toxins, as well as proposals to reduce environmental permitting requirements and protections for coastal tidelands.

Forestry also became a major focus in 2008 as the state increased timber harvesting in our state forests. The Chapter continues to push for strong enforcement of Green Certification standards by testifying at numerous public meetings and working with a broad coalition of groups to ensure the highest level of oversight on how our public lands are managed.

But many of the issues we work on carry over from year to year. The Chapter has long sought favorable review of the Cape Wind renewable energy project. Climate change has already resulted in changes in New England weather patterns and shifting species habitat, and in order to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions the US will need to build many similar projects. As Cape Wind's environmental review nears completion, we have great confidence that our concerns regarding wildlife and environmental impacts will be adequately addressed.

2009 will be a very exciting and productive year for the Massachusetts Chapter as we celebrate 40 years of protecting the environment in the commonwealth. Many challenges lie ahead, and we hope you'll join us in our ongoing efforts to continue to protect our common wealth — the air, land, and water on which we all depend. ❖



As Jay McCaffrey notes above, the Massachusetts Chapter had a successful year in 2008. In order to maintain this vital work in the coming year, the Chapter needs your assistance. Your generous contributions will support continuing efforts to preserve public lands, protect marine and coastal habitats, conserve energy and invest in non-polluting sources of electricity, improve public transportation, and pass important legislation at the State House. Please help fund these efforts.

Included here is a return envelope for your usage, but you may also donate online at www.sierraclubmass.org Please donate generously today so we can all enjoy a healthy tomorrow.

From the Director (continued from page 2)

Executive Committee supports this progressive set of principles, which includes a gas tax increase to help fund public transit, provided there is relief for families that are hardest hit by such policy changes.

But we need to do more.

A Call for Comprehensive Reform

About a third of US greenhouse gas emissions come from transportation. To cut these emissions by 80 percent — the target most climatologists agree is appropriate for staving off the worst consequences of climate change — many related reforms are needed urgently.

Any reform would require at a minimum the following three overriding principles:

- Passenger vehicles overall must become twice as efficient as they are now.
- We must shift away from single-occupant passenger cars towards greatly enhanced transit services.
- We must reduce the length, time and cost of travel generally, by living and working closer together. For that to happen, we need safe and vibrant cities.

Why a Gas Tax Can Help

A properly implemented gas tax could significantly improve the way we fund

transportation in the commonwealth. Gas tax funds should be fully dedicated to transportation programs. Funds should be distributed equitably to the entire transportation network — both roadway and public transportation. A tax increase would need to be sufficient to keep current systems safe and fully operational while providing money to enhance existing public transportation.

Inefficiencies and inequities in our public transportation systems are most noticeable in low-income areas. In many of these parts of our state there simply are no public transportation choices, making driving a necessity. In the short term, the legislature should work to minimize the direct impacts of any fuel tax increase on lower-income households who cannot afford to replace inefficient vehicles and who have no other options for travel. In the long term, proper investment of gas tax revenues in creating safe and convenient choices for all Massachusetts residents will help reduce this burden on low-income families.

Help on the Way?

All of this comes at a time when Washington may in fact be sending more money down the pike as part of President Obama's economic stimu-

lus package. But these monies must be invested wisely. Massachusetts received much credit for its initial stimulus proposal list of projects which included only transit projects and fix-it-first initiatives for roadways and bridges, unlike many states which suggested the money be used to expand existing highways. The list is now being revised, but money received as part of a stimulus package must not be used to forward costly and questionable expansions with staunch public opposition, like the Silver Line Phase III or the Urban Ring.

It is clear that some kind of agency reform is imminent, but to be truly effective it must be accompanied by revenue generating components such as a gas tax. There may be efficiencies gained by combining some agencies or even eliminating others, but simply tearing down one bureaucracy, and replacing it with another just because the public is crying out for "reform" will not truly solve our problems.

The Sierra Club will be working closely with the legislature to achieve the very best reforms to create a truly viable transportation infrastructure that offers safe and affordable transportation choices for all Massachusetts residents. ❖

Working for the Future (continued from page 3)

existing successful bottle bill. This bill would raise \$15 million in new funds for the commonwealth at no additional public costs. It would decrease landfill use, save energy and oil, decrease litter, and create jobs in the recycling sector. It would increase the recycling rate of non-covered containers (which is now only 20 percent) to 80 percent. *Sponsored by Representative Alice Wolf, Senator Cynthia Creem. An Act to Improve Recycling Rates in the Commonwealth.*

• **Plastic Bag Ban** Plastic bags kill at least one billion birds, fish and mammals every year. Plastic bags in the environment are a worldwide crisis: they're slow to break down, and when they do, they turn into toxic compounds. Only 5.1 percent are recycled. Inexpensive and prac-

tical alternatives exist, from paper, safe biodegradable plastics, and reusable cloth bags. *Sponsored by Senator James Eldridge, Representative Matt Patrick. An Act Relative To Decreasing Environmental Hazards, Toxins, and Litter.*

Transportation

• **Unburden the MBTA's Debt Load** During the Big Dig construction, the T was forced to accept \$2.9 billion of the project's debt. Due to the payments on this and their existing debt load, the T is struggling to maintain service and equipment. This bill requires the state to assume the \$2.9 billion in debt, which allows them to maintain service objectives. *Sponsored by Representative Alice Wolf. An Act Improving the Finances of the*

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.

• **Preserve the North South Rail Link (NSRL) Right-of-way** The purpose of building the NSRL is to create the backbone for a modern, efficient, convenient rail service that offers an attractive transportation option for residents and tourists traveling throughout New England and the entire Northeast. Completion of the NSRL would eliminate 583 tons of CO₂ every day. This bill would study the best corridor for the link and protect it from future building construction that could prohibit its establishment. *Sponsored by Representative Mary Grant. An Act To Preserve The Right Of Way For The North South Rail Link.* ❖

Power Plant Free-For-All

by Victor and Paige Impink

There's a free-for-all in Massachusetts. Although more electrical capacity already exists in New England than is needed for several years in the future, power plant developers are working to develop a large number of unnecessary fossil fuel-burning plants. The implications locally and globally are significant.

ISO New England (ISO-NE) is the non-profit organization that manages the grid in New England. In December 2008, ISO-NE hosted a Forward Capacity Auction in order to procure the projected 32,528 megawatts (MW) required for 2011-2012. In fact, the Auction met that goal, and did so leaving almost 15 percent excess supply on the table. Separately, ISO-NE's 2008 Regional System Plan lists more than 13,000 MW of plants currently under development across New England, and the majority of these were not included in the auction. In other words, the projected energy needs for 2011-2012 were more than met in the Auction, *without* including plants under development. We just don't need the additional power, and we surely don't need it from fossil fuel.

An example: Billerica

To look at a specific example under development, consider the "Billerica Energy Center," which is designed to operate on natural gas and diesel. Navasota Energy of Magnolia, Texas working through local companies, have identified a location in North Billerica as an ideal site for its very large, six-stack, 348 MW power plant.

From the developer's perspective, the site is absolutely perfect. Water for pollution control, some 60 million gallons per year, is available, directly or indirectly, from the Concord River, which flows a few hundred feet from the proposed site; existing transmission lines are two tenths of a mile away; an interstate natural gas pipeline runs through the site; and Route 495 is three quarters of a mile

Concord River near the proposed site



Photo by Victor Impink

away, affording easy truck access for delivery of aqueous ammonia, diesel fuel which is used as a backup fuel if gas isn't available, and many other materials necessary to keep the plant running. Developers see the site as cheap to develop and operate.

From a nearby resident's perspective, the site could hardly be worse. Although the site is zoned industrial, there are many residences, schools, day care centers and the like within a one-mile radius in Billerica and the bordering communities of Chelmsford, Tewksbury and Lowell, and many more beyond. The introduction of dangerous air pollutants such as fine particulate matter (PM2.5), about which the health impacts are not well understood, and other toxic emissions is unacceptable. There is also the potential for significant impact to the water sources of Tewksbury and Chelmsford, and there are the problems of ensuring safety, including the effect on the already strained first responders, and managing significant increases in local traffic.

Environmentalists cringe at the close proximity of the site to the Concord River and the destruction of wetlands and vegetation that the plant and transmission lines would cause. These are under discussion with the Billerica Conservation Commission, and the developer has suggested the "relocation" of thousands of square feet of wetlands and the removal of over 12,000 square feet of canopy, which means cutting trees down to the stump. These are

unacceptable impacts to a fragile and important ecosystem.

In addition, the plant would emit green house gases, including, at capacity, some 428,000 tons of CO₂, thus increasing total emissions from electric utilities in the commonwealth by more than 1 percent. Such an increase when we need to stem global warming and its impacts is unthinkable. Building more fossil fuel-burning power plants in Massachusetts simply doesn't make sense.

What do we do?

There are two fronts in this effort. First, we must continue and grow local efforts to repel the raft of advances by developers with proposals for fossil-fuel power plants like the one in Billerica.

Second, as a commonwealth, we need to rethink the free-for-all that is being allowed. Plants can not be sited without holistic consideration for what need exists and for factors like local air quality and environmental impacts.

And finally, we must improve efficiency, aggressively pursue clean alternative energy sources and most importantly, conserve. ❖

Paige and Victor Impink are raising awareness in opposition to the proposed Billerica power plant and other development projects in Massachusetts. You can email them at info@billericapowerplant.org To learn more about the Billerica proposal, view the public meeting schedule, and stay informed about the issue, visit <http://www.BillericaPowerPlant.org>

Alewife Silver Maple Forest Continues in Jeopardy

by Ellen Mass

When House Bill 21 to acquire the Belmont Uplands silver maple forest passed in both houses of the state legislature this past summer, environmental supporters and Belmont, Cambridge and Arlington residents celebrated what appeared to be a win. But with shrinking budgets, housing pressures and equivocation from the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the governor vetoed the acquisition bill.

None the less, efforts to protect the Belmont Uplands forest continue. In early winter we held a forum and rally to engender support for a Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Massachusetts Land Court hearing process. At the rally Representative William Brownsberger stated unequivocally that the Belmont Uplands, with surrounding wetlands, marshes, pond and river, is not a good location for a housing complex, even one with affordable units. Other representative groups echoed his stand.

The Belmont Conservation Commission (BCC) is pursuing an independent town process with DEP. The BCC denied the developer, O'Neill, permits based on insufficient information, and faulty and incomplete wildlife and runoff assessments. None of the information met low impact development standards. When the DEP issued a superceding order, the BCC filed an immediate appeal. BCC is working with the town towards adjudicatory hearings which will include environmental and neighborhood interveners, including Friends of Alewife Reservation. Belmont has re-engaged consultant Scott Horsley into the process because of his earlier assessments concerning storm water and storage designs.

In the meantime the neighbors have become Plaintiffs and have raised over \$70,000 to protect the local woodlands and their homes. Both their homes and nearby wood-



David Brown leads wildlife walk

Courtesy of FAR

lands receive flood waters and sewage back-up from faulty pipes that have been left in the wetlands since the Wetlands Protection Act was passed in 1983 and continue to carry sewage from Belmont down stream through Alewife Brook.

The Environmental Committee of the city of Cambridge held two hearings about the sewage problem; both concluding that sewage should not be allowed through Cambridge and that the forest should not be removed for flooding protection. Last year, City Councilor Craig Kelly (also on the Massachusetts Sierra Club Chapter's Executive Committee) guided the Cambridge City Council to unani-

mous approval for a resolution stating that unless a sewage discharge plan from the O'Neill developers could demonstrate benefits for Cambridge, permits should not be allowed.

Since then, however, O'Neill requested and received flood storage permits from the Cambridge Conservation Commission, despite the ongoing Belmont Uplands hearings between Belmont and DEP and the local land court litigation which could continue following the state decision.

Letters concerning due process and special urban open space needs should be written to Mystic River Watershed legislators: Senators Patricia Jehlen, Anthony Petrucci, Steven Tolman; Representatives William Brownsberger, Paul Casey, Paul Donato, Denise Provost, Carl Sciortino, Stephane Smith, Timothy Toomey, and Alice Wolf. ❖

Ellen Mass is the Founder and President of Friends of Alewife Reservation Inc. (FAR). FAR conducts a Summer Ecology Camp annually for city youth and many community service projects and tours. alewifecamp_08@wikispaces.com www.friendsofalewifereservation.org

2009 Chapter Election Calendar

Appointment of nominating and election committee:	May 1
Receipt of names for nominating committee consideration and ballot issue petitions:	July 1
Qualification of ballot issue:	July 1
Nominating committee report of names of nominees:	July 15
Certification of ballot issue:	July 15
Receipt of candidate petition:	August 14
Qualification of petition candidates:	September 1
Production of eligible voter list:	September 15
Printing and mailing of ballots in the Sierran:	October 1
Receipt of ballot deadline:	October 30
Count of ballots at Sierra Club chapter office:	November 14

All Massachusetts Sierra Club members are invited to submit their names for nomination to the Massachusetts Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) and the executive committee of their groups (Greater Boston, Essex, Cape Cod and Islands, and Thoreau). The ExCom of the chapter and each group serves as its board of directors, establishing priorities, goals, strategies, and policies. To submit your name to the nominating committee, please contact the chapter chair in May or June. Email us (chapter-chair@sierraclubmass.org) or call (617-423-5775) for copies of petition forms.

Seeking New Approaches to Cleaning up Perchlorate

by David Dow

Robert McKeever, a student in the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department (CEE) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass), and his advisor, Sarina Ergas (associate professor in CEE), are testing a batch reactor system to bacterially degrade perchlorate contamination in the groundwater at the Massachusetts Military Reservation (MMR).

Perchlorate

Perchlorate is a propellant used by the military in rockets and flares to mark targets. It is also found in home cleaning products such as borax, some fertilizers and rockets used in fireworks displays. Perchlorate is a salt which behaves like the plant nutrient nitrate in the soil and moves rapidly from the soil surface to the underlying groundwater where it becomes a pollution plume. This toxic chemical has negative effects on the thyroid gland posing a threat especially for babies and children that depend on thyroid controlled hormones for their development.

Treatment

Perchlorate is a contaminant at Camp Edwards from former training by the

Massachusetts Army National Guard (MANG) and military contractor testing. The soil and groundwater cleanup is being conducted by the US Environmental Protection Agency - Region 1 under the jurisdiction of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

The University of Massachusetts CEE pilot treatment system uses a large polyurethane tank which has a five-inch layer of gravel on the bottom. The gravel helps distribute the contaminated groundwater which is pumped up from depths where the plume occurs. The rest of the tank is filled with 200 liters of oyster shells and sulfur pellets. The oyster shells provide the proper alkalinity for the perchlorate degrading bacterial strain cultured by another UMass scientist, Klaus Rudolph Nusslein (Microbiology Department). The sulfur pellets act as a nutrient and electron donor for the bacterial reduction of the perchlorate to water and chloride ions.

The pilot project is also evaluating the potential of bacteria to degrade two other explosive contaminants, HMX and RDX, found in plumes at the MMR as a result of military training and disposal activities. Currently the perchlorate contamination is

removed by ion exchange resins and the HMX/RDX is removed by activated carbon treatment. The current technology removes the contaminants from the pumped groundwater and stores them on the resin/activated carbon surfaces. These surfaces are periodically removed and treated to remove the contaminants which are regulated as hazardous chemical wastes.

Regulation of Perchlorate

EPA has chosen not to develop a maximum contaminant level for perchlorate in drinking water, so the remediation cleanup standard at Camp Edwards is set by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MA DEP). The MA DEP's standard of 2 parts per billion is the nation's lowest. The relative importance of fourth of July fireworks in the Town of Bourne and plumes from Camp Edwards Central Impact Area on the perchlorate contamination outside the northwest corner of the MMR has long been a contentious issue between the regulators (EPA and MA DEP), concerned citizens of Cape Cod and the military (MANG and the Army). Fortunately for the citizens of the commonwealth, MA DEP has been vigilant on this issue. The Cape Cod and Islands Group has encouraged this diligence. ❖

For decades, David Dow has been the Sierra Club's expert on pollution at the MMR and efforts to clean it up.

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A recent model HP, Epson, or any major brand inkjet printer for standard letter-size paper.

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BOOK REVIEW:

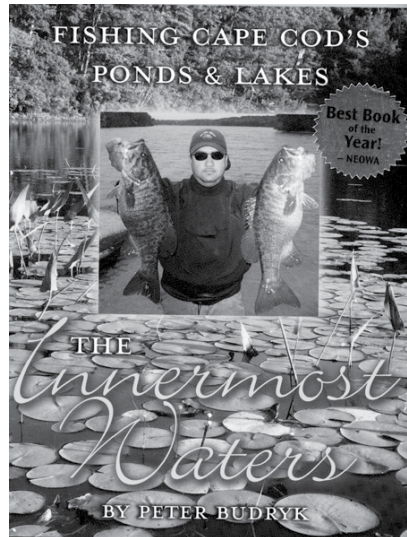
Fishing Cape Cod's Ponds and Lakes: The Innermost Waters

by Peter Budryk
2005

by Jan E Dizard

The recovery of the striped bass and bluefish, one of the lamentably few success stories of restoration in the Atlantic (and not without its downsides — but that's another story) has meant that for the past 10 to 15 years, fishing on the Cape has been limited to fishing for only blues and stripers. The recovery of these two species came at the same time that the movie *A River Runs Through It* became a box office hit. Fly fishing for stripers and bluefish soared and in the bargain the Cape's fresh water fishing was eclipsed. I know whereof I speak: I've been going to the Cape for the past 10 years with eyes only for stripers and bluefish. On one trip small craft warnings were posted so my companions and I fished tidal creeks, much as we would have fished inland trout streams were we in Western Massachusetts. Truth be told, though I still thrill to the rise of a brown or rainbow trout, the tidal creek stripers are bigger and scrapper than the trout in the streams I fish in Western Massachusetts. There are some exceptional trout in the waters around me but only the most accomplished anglers find them. Mesmerized by stripers and bluefish, it never dawned on me to fish the Cape's fresh waters.

Peter Budryk has opened my eyes to a whole other dimension of fishing on the Cape. People who have fished the Cape's fresh water may well regret Budryk's guide. The attraction of stripers and blues left the fresh water aficionados to themselves. Budryk has let the cat out of the bag. "There's fish in them there ponds." I, for one, will pay far more attention to the "innermost waters" as a result of reading Budryk's book.



Fishing Cape Cod's Ponds and Lakes is not a coffee table book, but rather a more in-depth look at the Cape's fresh water fish. The first third of the book is a useful guide to sport fish and also includes a bit of the Cape's natural history. A number of the species now inhabiting the Cape are not endemic and have been introduced to the area. Budryk does not engage in reflections about the virtues of native versus exotic species; he is intent on catching fish whatever their pedigree. Though many readers of this newsletter may take offense at the unabashed embrace of catching fish, no matter their provenance, there is a refreshing straight-forwardness to this book. Why should going fishing be freighted with heavy philosophical quandaries?

The remaining two-thirds of the book present guides to each of the ponds and lakes on the Cape. The problem with fishing guides is that they are traditionally only interesting to anglers. If you are not fishing, one pond is like any other pond, save for ponds with "improved" beaches that are great for young kids and their otherwise distracted parents. Thoreau got about as much mileage out of a pond as anyone could. Budryk is no Thoreau but like Thoreau he is a close and attentive observer of the natural world in which he finds himself.

Budryk's book will accompany me to the Cape this summer and I will use it to introduce my grandchildren, who have already been smitten by bluefish and stripers, to appreciate even more the biotic richness of the Cape. Thoreau famously said in his essay *Walking*, "...in Wildness is the preservation of the World." Catching fish may not preserve the world, but fishing keeps many of our fellow citizens concerned about the environment. Whether he intended it or not, Budryk has implicitly made it clear why anglers and conservationists need to forge a common cause. ❖

Jan Dizard is the Pick Professor of Environmental Studies at Amherst College. He is also the author of books about hunting in contemporary American society.

The book's author, Peter Budryk, is a Sierra Club member.

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Subscribe to SCAN — the Mass Sierra Club Activist Network e-mail list! As a SCAN subscriber, you'll receive information about critical environmental issues facing Massachusetts residents. You'll also be informed of upcoming events, outings, lectures, and meetings. You'll be told of ways to get involved in protecting the environment in your community or region.

To subscribe, visit www.sierraclubmass.org and click on the SCAN button on the left side of the screen.

We will never share your name or e-mail address with any outside entity. Anyone can subscribe. SCAN is a low volume "announce only" list, usually one or two messages per month.

SPECIAL EVENTS

GREATER BOSTON GROUP GREEN BAG LUNCH

Currently scheduled for the 3rd Friday of the month 12-1 (We may change the day to Thursday)

GREATER BOSTON GROUP ENERGY MOVIE NIGHT

Second Friday of the month at MIT every other month (March, May, July, September, November)

Contact Blossom Hoag
blossomhoag@gmail.com for more information.

NON-SIERRA CLUB EVENTS

6th ANNUAL EARTH DAY SUSTAINABLE LIVING FESTIVAL

April 18

Time: 10 AM to 2 PM

Mary Jeanette Murray Bathhouse
Nantasket Ave., Hull

10th ANNUAL EARTH DAY CLEANUP

Saturday April 25, 9 AM – 12 PM
Along the Charles River, Greater Boston, MA

Join more than 2,000 volunteers in helping preserve the health and beauty of the Charles River. Gloves, trash bags, and a free t-shirt will be provided for all volunteers.

Call 781-788-0007 x303 or visit www.crwa.org/cleanup for more information.

27th ANNUAL RUN OF THE CHARLES CANOE & KAYAK RACE

Sunday April 26, 10 AM – 5 PM
Greater Boston, MA

Professional, amateur, and recreational canoe & kayak races include international, national, and local racers. Races include the \$5,000 Professional flatwater marathon, 24-mile relays, and 19, 9, and 6 mile races. Contact 508-698-6810 or rotc@crwa.org to register.
www.charlesriver.org

• OUTINGS •

Please see the website
for information.

www.sierraclubmass.org



On New Year's Day Bob Leverett, Old Growth guru and big tree expert, came out in the cold and new snow to measure this Black Birch on the University of Massachusetts Amherst campus. Bob reported it is 8.8 feet around and 82.7 feet tall.

Photo by Elisa Campbell

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GROUP & CHAPTER MEETINGS

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are at the Chapter's office, 10 Milk St., Suite 632, (enter at 294 Washington St.), Boston. For all meetings and events, please check the Chapter's website for current information:

www.sierraclubmass.org

MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

March 8

Time: 1 PM

Future meetings, all on Sundays at 1 PM: April 19, May 31, July 12, September 20, November 8, December 20.

All members welcome and encouraged to attend. The executive committee considers the Chapter's positions on a variety of environmental matters. It also maintains the organization's health and guide its efforts. Please contact the chapter office for more information: office@sierraclubmass.org

CHAPTER POLITICAL COMMITTEE

March 11

Time: 6:30 PM

Future Meetings: April 15, May 13, June 17, July 8
Help elect environmental candidates! During the first half of 2009, the committee will be reviewing candidates for municipal elections throughout the state and any legislative special elections. Be part of our effort — drop by our next meeting! All Sierra Club members are welcome — and input from our members is encouraged! We have openings on our committee and need your help! Contact Phil Segó, at cpc@sierraclubmass.org for more information.

GREATER BOSTON GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

March 10

Time: 6:30 PM – 8 PM

Second Tuesdays of each month at the Sierra Club offices: April 14, May 12, June 9, July 14, August 11, September 8, October 13, November 10, December 8.

Regular business meeting of the local Sierra Club Group. All members welcome! Meetings are on the second or third Tuesday of each month. Address correspondence to the attention of the Greater Boston Group at gbg2009@sierraclubmass.org

THOREAU GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

March 19

Time: 7 PM

The Thoreau Group covers the communities of Acton, Bedford, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Stow, Sudbury, Wayland, and Weston. All members are welcome! For details, questions, suggestions, please e-mail thoreau@sierraclubmass.org

Subsequent meetings: third Thursdays of each month: April 16, May 21, June 18, July 16, August 20, September 17, October 15, November 19, December 17.

GROUP & CHAPTER MEETINGS

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are at the Chapter's office, 10 Milk St., Suite 632, (enter at 294 Washington St.), Boston. For all meetings and events, please check the Chapter's website for current information: www.sierraclubmass.org

GREATER BOSTON GROUP PARK COMMITTEE

March 18

Time: 6:30 PM – 8 PM

The new Greater Boston Group Parks committee will provide Sierra Club members concerned about their local parks an opportunity to work together. We hope this committee will also follow proposed Article 97 transfers at the local community level to prevent the loss of open space and park lands. This is a great opportunity to leverage your work as a friend of your local park to be part of a larger effort. The first meeting will be organizational and discuss the local Art. 97 process. This meeting will take place at the Sierra Club office or by conference call. Contact Mary Ann Nelson 617-442-0123 or manelsonnew@gmail.com.

NORTH SOUTH RAIL LINK COMMITTEE

March 19

Time: 7 PM – 8:30 PM

Subsequent meetings: May 21, September 17

The purpose of building the North South Rail Link project (NSRL) is to create the backbone for a modern, efficient, convenient rail service that offers an attractive transportation option for residents and tourists

traveling throughout New England and the entire Northeast. People are concerned about continued airport and highway expansion and its detrimental effect upon the environment and the economy. The NSRL will close the only gap in the East Coast's inter-city rail system. Help this committee work towards protecting the corridor and achieving improved rail transit. Contact Mary Ann Nelson 617-442-0123 or manelsonnew@gmail.com.

BOSTON INNER CITY OUTINGS

May 12 (focus on summer trip planning)

Time: 7:30 PM

Upcoming meetings: September 8 (focus on recruitment/training), December 8 (year end recap, 2010 planning)

Boston ICO is a community outreach program that provides opportunities for urban youth and adults to explore, enjoy and protect the natural world. We are looking for leaders! We lead monthly, day and overnight trips in Massachusetts and neighboring states including canoeing, hiking, snowshoeing, biking, apple picking and camping. We will be planning spring and summer trips and will hear updates from our leaders. For more information: www.sierraclubmass.org/ico/icosite/index.html

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