

# Nepessing News

Spring 2014 - Earth Day Edition



SIERRA CLUB  
FOUNDED 1892

The Nepessing Group represents the Sierra Club in northern Oakland, Genesee and Lapeer counties

## Group Update

Denny Crispell, Chair

It seems so much is going on, how do I keep it straight. To start with, everyone received the next year's Executive Committee ballot and Outings Schedule in a timely manner. That is no small feat! Our Christmas Party at Ligon was attended by nearly 30 members. Thanks to all who contributed and brought a dish to pass. Then there was a New Year's Party hosted by Judy Bublitz at her beautifully restored farmhouse near Lapeer. Thank you Judy. If you stayed in Michigan this winter and did not hide in Florida, you know how tough it was. We had to cancel January's meeting because Mott Community College was closed due to a snowstorm. At February's meeting we were finally able to count ballots. Denny Crispell, Laurie Tata, Linda Berker, Jack Minore and Ellen Waara were elected to 2 year terms. The newly formed Executive Committee voted Denny Crispell Chair and Laurie Tata Vice Chair. Also the chairs for the various committees were decided upon. The only major change was that Ellen Waara was selected as the Group's Delegate to represent the group at the State Chapter. That is the one position where there is a considerable financial cost involved for the incumbent. Gloria Bublitz



presented our program telling about her service outings with the National Sierra Club at several National Parks. Some of our members helped Bob Simpson with the Wolverine Display at the Courtland Center. The Nepessing Group was very supportive of Jeff Ford and his study of the Michigan Wolverine. The Texas Hold'em fund raiser was very successful in February. Linda Berker, Richard Barron, Mike Haley, Jerry and Chuck Rodduck, Anne and Richard Naber, Ellen Waara, Ed Chuchvara, Terry Reechko and Jack Minore worked the event. Environmentally, these members walk their talk. March came and again Mott College was closed due to snow. The Executive Committee met at Little Caesars in Davison. Linda Berker updated us on the upcoming fracking meetings and forums. If you haven't heard fracking is coming to our area. Fracking is probably our biggest challenge yet. So we will need all our member's help with this one! *Gasland* is the first movie to watch. Why have the oil companies been exempted from the Clean Air

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Group Update	1
Earth Day Event	1
Gordy Schneider	2
Fracking	2
Vote environment	3
Flint River Cleanup	4
Easy Money	5
Art Benefit	6

and Water Acts if fracking is so safe?

## Annual Earth Day Celebration being held April 12th

By Suzanne Lossing

The annual Earth Day Celebration for Genesee County and surrounding areas is being held on Saturday, April 12th from 10am-3pm in the University Center (UCEN) building on the University of Michigan campus. This is a free event for people of all ages. Nepessing Group will be handing out free tree seedlings and we encourage you to stop by and hang out with us. The event has presentations ranging from Fracking, to cooking demonstrations. Joe Rogers from Wildlife Recovery will be presenting (live birds), along with other animal options such as Kreachter Konnections and Nature Discovery. There is a Green Craft Fair, and information from multiple organizations such as the Genesee County Parks, Edible Flint, Genesee Conservation Group, and Seven Ponds Nature Center. The Recycled Art

Contest is open to all ages. Check out the website: [www.earthday.mcc.edu](http://www.earthday.mcc.edu) for more detailed information.

## Gordy Schneider

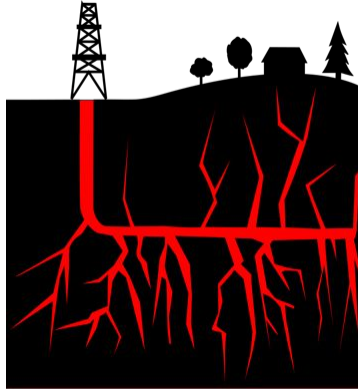
remembered by Denny Crispell

On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, a number of us attended the funeral of member Gordy Schneider of Lapeer. Many of our group knew Gordy and his wife Sue from all the years of hiking and backpacking.

I remember the first backpacking trip I led for the group to South Manitou Island in 1997. Sue and Gordy joined us for I believe their first trip ever. I say that because they had bought their tent at a garage sale and set it up for the first time while on the island. Then it rained! You guessed it. It leaked! That is a mistake only a novice would make. But they enjoyed the trip so much, it only whet their appetite for more. And I don't think they ever missed a trip. Camping and canoeing the Autrain and Two Hearted Rivers, backpacking the Porcupine Mountains, Jordan and Manistee River Trails, Shinglemill Pathway, North Manitou and Isle Royale. And don't forget every service outing at the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore. A week every summer working in the backcountry building trails, bridges, boardwalks, maintaining miles of trails, hauling material, erosion control, raised trails. But we did all this for our National Park because we take such pride in it.

So many of my stories include Gordy because he was there! A moose walking into our camp, a wolf encounter on the trail, a bear inspecting our camp, an

eagle snatching a trout out of the lake, a fox attacking a backpack, an otter playing on a log, two eagles fighting over a fish midair and then dropping it. Gordy picked it up and said, "Our breakfast!" It was good. Thank you Sue, for sharing Gordy with us. Someday, we will meet on the trail again.



## A FRACKING DISASTER!

By Linda Berker

The Sierra Club Nepessing Group has been in the forefront of efforts to inform our Genesee and Lapeer county citizens of the environmental dangers of the Oil and Natural Gas Industries' new push to acquire lands for exploration and production of Natural gas right here in our residents' back yards.

All natural gas operations produce fugitive greenhouse gas emissions. This often involves the release to the air of volatile hydrocarbons that are endocrine disrupters and may pose an increased risk of Cancer.

12% of wells drilled will produce "sour gas" which smells very bad like rotten eggs, flows along the ground, impairs the quality of life for those living in proximity to the well and can be deadly. One road worker has already been

killed and another injured by exposure to sour gas fumes in Otter Lake.

The new form of natural gas exploration coming to our homes is High Volume Hydraulic Fracturing, a process where toxic and carcinogenic waste is mixed with millions of gallons of drinking water taken from the groundwater at the well site, and then forced through a partially cement lined pipe thousands of feet below the ground to fracture the shale formations found there in hopes of releasing trapped natural gas. The water thus used is permanently contaminated.

Although "Fracking" with low volumes and pressures is not new, fracking at high volumes and pressures is and approximately only 50 such wells exist in the state. Two of these have caused significant contamination problems: one drawing down the groundwater by 11 feet with a nearby burned up well pump and covered with carcinogenic silica dust from the drilling process; another causing significant contamination of the groundwater aquifer when the cement casing failed.

The problems associated with High Volume Hydraulic Fracking include nuisance issues like dust, noise, light pollution and increased truck traffic (1500 or more heavily laden trucks per well). But the most serious problem other than air pollution is potential groundwater contamination caused when a well's cement job fails and contaminated fracking fluid then uses the well's pipe as a conduit to the drinking water aquifer. On the average, the industries' own statistics prove that 6% of cement jobs fail immediately

and over the next 30 years of operation, 50% of cement jobs will fail. Failure is not discovered until the aquifer is contaminated.

### ***What We're Doing***

On March 21<sup>st</sup> the Nepessing group participated in a Forum on fracking at the Forest Township Hall with approximately 200 citizens in attendance. On March 25<sup>th</sup> we sponsored a presentation by Christopher Grobbel, a noted Hydrologist and former DEQ employee working at fracking contaminated sites, where he presented to a capacity crowd of over 120. A similar presentation was sponsored by the Nepessing Group and Marathon Township at the Columbiaville Civic Center on March 26<sup>th</sup>.

Our next free informational event will be at the Pix theatre on April 26<sup>th</sup> with speakers including our own Paul Revere, the Lapeer County Sheriff Ron Kalanquin, Paul Young, Dean and Anne Sousanis, Joe Curry, Gary Cooley, Linda Berker and Clark Tibbits from 4:30pm - 7pm. Then we plan a Michigan beer and wine tasting with refreshments followed at 7:30pm by the Movie GASLANDS II.

We plan a fracking display and informational presentation at Earth Day celebration at Flint U of M on April 12<sup>th</sup> from 10am-4pm where we will be distributing 250 white pine seedlings at the Harding Mott University Center. Michigan plans to auction off mineral rights in public lands in Genesee, Lapeer and Oakland counties. The Nepessing Group has submitted formal comments to the Michigan DNR opposing the leasing of mineral

rights on public lands in Genesee, Lapeer and Oakland counties, questioning their legality, along with a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requesting documents where the State claims to have acted in accordance with the laws. You can download copies of these documents on our website at [www.michigan.sierraclub.org/nepessing/conservation](http://www.michigan.sierraclub.org/nepessing/conservation). We are also exploring additional events in Flushing, Metamora and Arcadia townships. Our group will continue our efforts to inform citizens about the hazards of fracking and will require continued funding to do so. Please continue donating to this effort if possible. Checks may be made out to the Sierra Club Nepessing group and mailed to Linda Berker at 9459 Lapeer Rd, STE 102, Davison MI 48423, or provided to any Nepessing Group board member at any event.

On the legislative front, nothing good has happened. The oil and gas industry has received an exemption from the Clean Drinking Water Act's protections during the Bush administration. Recently the Michigan Legislature passed a troubling package of bills giving oil and gas companies new tax breaks, just days before news broke of an oil spill of unknown size into Lake Michigan from a refinery in Indiana. The legislation, which now goes to Gov. Rick Snyder to sign or veto, would cut oil and gas severance taxes by 20 percent to 40 percent for so-called enhanced oil recovery operations, which involve pumping carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into almost depleted oil wells to extract previously unrecoverable oil.

Our elected officials should not be reducing state revenue and giving tax breaks to companies who put our Great Lakes, rivers, and streams at risk. Oil companies do not need tax breaks; they receive large subsidies from the federal government and are already one of the most profitable international industries, having achieved record profits both domestically and globally. At a time when there are many reasons to support reductions in fossil fuel use, Michigan politicians are supporting more extraction of oil and gas. Rather than continuing to give unnecessary tax breaks to wealthy oil and gas companies, Gov. Snyder and Michigan legislators should act now to upgrade Michigan's laws regarding oil and gas drilling, and demand that everything possible be done to stop the next oil spill or gas pipeline explosion that could cause devastating harm to Michiganders and our waters, including the Straits of Mackinac. Moving Michigan away from our dependence on fossil fuels to clean energy, instead of pandering to oil and gas companies, is what our state needs right now. Delaying legislative action only means delaying a cleaner, more reliable, more economically beneficial energy future for Michigan.

Please do all that you can, for instance: talk to your friends and neighbors; talk to your local cities and townships and ask them to enact a temporary moratorium and/or protective ordinances to regulate nuisances and require baseline water and air testing and reporting of the actual Material Safety Data Sheets for all

chemicals used in fracking; call your senators and representatives and the governor. Any small action you may take has the potential to be the one that changes everything!

If you wish to be placed on our email activists list, e-mail [lsberker@aol.com](mailto:lsberker@aol.com) and ask to be added.

## Vote for the Environment

By Jack Minore

The Sierra Club is neither political nor partisan; but the outcome of elections often determines the impact on environmental protections for years to come. It is critical to seek out information on the candidates running for all offices - from township to state and Federal positions. At the local level, zoning can impact water quality especially. At the state level, public lands and water and air quality are among policies that may be affected by the office holders - and it is the same for national offices.

Most responsible citizens vote in the general elections in November. By then, however, the outcome may already be decided because of the primary; so the primary elections may be more important than the general one. Moreover, YOUR impact may be much greater. Typically, at least twice as many citizens vote in the general as vote in primaries. That means that every primary vote is - essentially - worth twice as much as your general vote.



## Bike rides

By Jack Minore

Riding your bike (or walking) is good for your health - as well as for the environment. Some studies indicate that about half of all of our car trips are of two miles or less in length. Think about how much healthier for YOU and for the environment it would be if you chose to leave the car in the garage and walk or bike for those short errands. Need to get in shape for those short bike rides? Join the Friends of the Flint River Trail (FFRT) for leisure and gentle rides. FFRT rides are held every Sunday, May through October, at 2:00 PM. We expect to start the rides from the CURRENT SITE of the Flint Farmer's Market - but because the market is moving this year we may move about three blocks south just past the US Post Office, on a UM-Flint parking lot.



The rides are 10-12 miles and at a gentle pace. FFRT is a chapter of the Flint River

Watershed Coalition - [flinriver.org](http://flinriver.org) - and you can see more information on that web site under our trails chapter. Finally, one of our "hikes" this year is a "bike hike" on the Southern Links Trail - from Columbiaville to Millington and back (about 20 miles). That outing is July 26<sup>th</sup>.

## Become Part of the Flint River "Cleanup Team."

By Terry Reechko

The Nepessing Group is forming a team of volunteers to perform periodic cleanups along the Flint River downstream from the Holloway Reservoir. Member and volunteer Terry Reechko will be the team lead and organizer for cleanup days. The team members will perform everything from trash pickup to clearing logjams.

The objective of this team is to keep the river clean and enjoyable for all people who want to use it. The benefit for our members is the satisfaction that comes from hard work that would not get done otherwise. We are looking for volunteers who can help perform these functions. It can be as much or as little as you feel comfortable with. Two key things that we need are someone with a chainsaw and someone who can contribute a small boat with motor to get to the difficult logjams that are created over the winter.

Please call Terry Reechko to volunteer and join the team to carry out our objectives. Terry can be reached at 810-487-0125.



## Chapter Update

By T M Haley

Maybe this Chapter Update should have been done by the newly appointed Chapter Delegate Ellen Waara who now represents the 630 Sierra Club members belonging to the Nepessing Group. Ms. Waara has now attended three Michigan Chapter Executive (ExCom) meetings at her own expense, in the winter the cost is considerable. She was able to vote in the Fall 2013 State Chapter meeting when she covered for me when I stayed home with my crippled dog "the Wolf Dog" whose hind hips had failed and who died on the Saturday noon on the day of the Lansing meeting. I laid him to rest that day on a bank overlooking the Flint River at Denny Crispell's Estate. Prinz Eugen "the Wolf Dog" was a non-voting member of Michigan Chapter Sierra Club Executive Committee held on the Tahquamenon River during the summer of 2010. At that meeting, he barked more than I talked. Only 15% of the money the Sierra Club receives comes from the grass roots and 85% comes from big donors. Last summer, the Chapter lost some of that big donor support. The Chapter leadership asked the 8 local groups for financial support to prevent any staff terminations. The Nepessing Group Executive voted to give \$2,500 to the Chapter to prevent any diminution in Chapter's efforts. At the January meeting, the Chapter reported some big donor support had return and the groups could get a partial refund. In February, the Nepessing ExCom voted 7 to 1 not ask for a partial refund. In a memorandum to the ExCom, I

noted that there was a RIF (Reduction In Force) at the Chapter. Lynn Henning who worked on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation as a "CAFO cop" resigned from the state staff to work in a more regional arena. Lynn won international awards for her expose of CAFO farm pollution work in Michigan. I heard Lynn really did not want to leave the Sierra Club. Lynn's work over the years was well worth our financial support. Hence, there were sacrifices made by all. The Spring Chapter meeting will be held in Detroit on April 26, the same day of our fracking presentations at the Pix Theater in downtown Lapeer. I will not be at the Pix because Ellen will be at wedding in Bloomfield Hills on that day. Ellen has a dog in the environmental fight but is not crazy. Pets, family and friends come first.

## Easy Money

commentary by Denny Crispell



It was only a few years ago that I first heard the term "fracking." So I watched the movie "Gasland" and was stunned by the environmental damage being done by the oil companies and that the "Government" exempted these companies from the Clean Air and Water Acts. Why, to protect us or them? So now these companies have descended on our area, offering to lease mineral rights and enticing landowners with

visions of quick easy money. And you guessed it. Greed trumps fear! Something else I have heard, "Lying is just a form of free Speech!" Think about that when they tell you they have never had a leak, never fouled any drinking water, or polluted the air, never caused any health hazards for the families that live near the wells. So where are the studies? Why are there no studies? Why does no one report about the human health hazards? Alright, say your neighbor sells his or her mineral rights. The company starts drilling a well. What happens to your property values? Would you recommend anyone buying a house next to a gas or oil well? What if one is suddenly drilled near your home? If you want to shrug this off, look at your children or grandchildren. Can you still ignore it?

I don't know how to stop this, but we have to try. The Sierra Club, Land Conservancy and Lapeer Conservation District are sponsoring an informational meeting at the Pix Theater in downtown Lapeer starting at 4:30 pm on April 26<sup>th</sup>. There will be presentations, a workshop, and a movie explaining how hydro-fracturing works.

If people know and understand what is at risk, maybe they won't sell their mineral rights. Maybe together, we can stop this and protect our families and homes. We do not want our water poisoned! Do you?



## Fracking

By Ellen Waara

Today I find that my fracking attitude is attacking my peace of mind. After four meetings, my awareness of insanely unsafe methods of harvesting the last hours of ancient sunlight is more enlightened. If knowledge is power, hundreds of citizens in Rochester Hills, Otisville, Columbiaville, and a state wide gathering to respond to DNR leasing of public lands for oil and gas drilling seems to be gaining momentum this March/April.

Storm clouds portending disastrous accidents climaxed on Monday, March 25th when 12 barrels of Tar Sands crude oil were spilled into Lake Michigan in Indiana (seven million people's drinking water supply). Hearts are beginning to beat a syncopated collective call to slay the hungry oil/gas drilling beast (the most prosperous industry on the globe). According to Jim Nash, Oakland county's water commissioner, it is up to us to stop this unsustainable addiction, and shift to cleaner energy options.

Linda Berker has done a commendable job of organizing hydro geologist, Chris Grobbel's thorough and empowering community presentations in Marathon township and Otisville, sponsored with hard earned Sierra Nepessing poker

proceeds. She ably served on the panel on March 22nd, presenting the limited citizen liability capabilities, unless local villages and townships step up to the plate with legislation for sound, air, water and infrastructure protection. Options include initial testing of water prior to drilling, writing to the DNR to protest leasing in five counties of 22,000 acres of public lands before April 5th, drafting of local master plans that include protection of environmental resources, and arming citizens with the hard facts necessary for the long term impact of oil and gas drilling in our precious Great Lakes State.

March 22, Sierra Club Michigan hosted a daylong power packed presentation by Dr. Grobel, attended by eight group members, building a powerful foundation from shale formations to DNR psychology to building alliances, versus alienating our land/lake guardians. We were cautioned to take a long-term local perspective to maintain momentum over the long haul. Reading plat maps, strategizing on responses, and giving up fairy tale security from insufficient government resources are all sobering reality checks.

Our power lies in our collective capacity to educate, inspire, and guard our treasured homeland. April 26 at Lapeer's Pix Theatre, a collaboration of hard working volunteers from the Flint River Coalition, Lapeer Land Conservancy and Sierra Club are hosting a five-hour presentation on fracking, and Josh Fox's Gasland II movie. Please promote with social, snail and voice mail.

The Sierra Club Nepessing Group is being heralded by the

Michigan chapter Conservation Committee as leading state activities, and we are proud to be a part of educating, informing, and inspiring community action and Earth advocacy. Thank you for the part **you** play, it is an essential fiber for a new tapestry of sanity and sustainability we must weave.

## Art Benefit for Nepessing Group

Member Suzanne Lossing's senior art show "Growing with Natural Inspiration" is a creative discovery of experimenting with clay and glass materials. She has selected artwork to benefit Sierra Club/Nepessing Group. She is excited to highlight our Nepessing Group and long standing community engagement. Preliminary preview of the show will be available on Saturday, April 12th at the annual Earth Day Celebration for Genesee County. The University of Michigan's Art Gallery is located on the first floor of the University Center (same building as the Earth Day event). The artwork will be on display from April 14th until the Closing Reception on Friday, May 9th from 5:00pm to 7:30pm. Refreshments are available at the Closing Reception and the Silent Auction bidding process will end at 7:15pm. She invites us to come and experience her process of incorporating bluegills in her artwork, along with artwork incorporating clay, leaves, and glass.

## **FRACKING IN YOUR BACKYARD?**

**APRIL 26, 2014**



### **THE PIX THEATER**

**172 W. NEPESSING ST, LAPEER, MI 48446**

**Become Informed Today!**

*List of Presenters*

#### **WHAT I SNAGGED ON THE MANISTEE**

**A Fisherman, Paul Young**

#### **FRACKING SCIENCE: WHAT WE'VE LEARNED**

**Lifelong Educators, Dean & Anne Sousanis**

#### **OUR PRECIOUS WATER AT RISK**

**Water Well Driller, Joe Curry**

#### **MY DREAMHOUSE LOST**

**Homeowner, Gary Cooley**

#### **OUR LAND LEGACY**

**Lapeer County Sheriff, Ron Kalanquin**

#### **LANDOWNERS PROPERTY RIGHTS**

**Certified Environmental Attorney, Linda Berker**

#### **PROTECTING LAND WITH CONSERVATION EASEMENTS**

**Lapeer County Landowner, Clark Tibbits**

**Speakers and Question & Answers from 4:30 to 7:00 p.m.**

**Michigan Made Beer & Wine Tasting and Refreshments**

**Movie Gasland II, Free Showing from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.**

**Sponsored By:**

**LAPEER LAND CONSERVANCY**

**SIERRA CLUB NEPESSING GROUP**

**FLINT RIVER WATERSHED COALITION LAPEER CHAPTER**

**For More Information Contact:**

**pmccree@chatfieldschool.org**

**and/or Linda Berker, Attorney 810-653-8242**

Nepessing Group  
P O Box 436  
Montrose, MI 48457



Make everyday Earth Day,  
please recycle!

---

*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*

[www.michigan.sierraclub.org/nepessing](http://www.michigan.sierraclub.org/nepessing)

---

#### **Board Members and Volunteers**

At-Large	Fred Townsend
At-Large	Ellen Waara
At-Large	Jack Minore
At-Large	Carol Graham
At-Large	Thomas Haley
At-Large	Linda Berker
At-Large	Terry Reechko
At-Large	Laurie Tata
At-Large	Denny Crispell

#### **Officers**

Chair	Denny Crispell
Vice Chair	Laurie Tata
Treasurer	Richard Naber
Secretary	Mike Haley

#### **Committees**

Conservation	Ellen Waara
Outings	Denny Crispell
Political	Laurie Tata
Media/Programs	Bob Simpson
Membership	Laurie Tata
Fundraising	Linda Berker
Newsletter	Lynn Livingston