



eco-logue

*"Not blind opposition
to progress, but opposition
to blind progress."*

ROCHESTER REGIONAL GROUP

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SHOULD PARKS BE FOR PROFIT?

by Hugh Mitchell

The "Christmas Visions" light show (by an Indiana company) was to be in Mendon Ponds (nature) Park, but it ended up in Northhampton (nature) Park, supported and subsidized by Monroe County. So too the Lilac Festival 'show', which was originally quite a modest local celebration of lilacs, is now a huge and gaudy extravaganza in Highland Park. It is no coincidence that both events are the brain child of James LeBeau, a good friend of the County administration.

One problem concerns using public parks for private profit. A second problem is whether the administration has the right to limit access to sections of a public park to those wealthy enough to buy their way in, while using the public purse for the infrastructure needed to produce a private profit. The moral and ethical dilemma is clear.

An interesting sequence of facts involves some of the ways the Parks Department and other County agencies were called on to support the Light Show. Planning for the show at Mendon called for using the Parks Department budget to pay for building the electrical infrastructure (permanent electric poles, wires, etc.). When this plan failed due to citizen pressure, the show was moved to Northhampton Park, and it was too late to build the expensive electrical infrastructure. But the show must go on, so the county donated three electric generators.

Unfortunately these generators were a juicy target for a thief and were stolen. Presumably the County has come through again with more generators. The eventual price supports provided by the administration will undoubtedly exceed the \$10,000 LeBeau Productions has paid for a lease.

Besides the moral and ethical problems, in marketing our public parks for private profit there is another, broader issue. In my book all these light shows and Lilac Festivals are 'marketing nature'. The principle is no different from the TV ad which places a Ford Explorer SUV (the worst polluting vehicle) in the middle of a gorgeous healthy mountain scene. In environmental literature this has been called "The Machine In The Garden" and it is the diametric opposite of what nature is all about.

We shouldn't be sucked into wasting electricity on light shows or think we can buy a piece of a nature park, erect some lights, and still have it natural. Just as light shows in 'nature' are a contradiction, so marketing public parks is a contradiction. When the County does this, the parks are no longer public but private ventures.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

How Food Choices Affect the Environment

>>GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING<<

Thursday, January 27, 1999, 7:15 PM

Third Presbyterian Church

Did you know that the Northeast states currently import about 85% of our food? Are you aware of the animal-raising techniques used in massive factory farms? Where will these changes in food production take us in the next century? Are you aware of the effect of the typical American diet on the environment and world food supplies?

Come to our January program and hear from a panel of experts on the topics of community-supported local agriculture and vegetarianism. Presenters will provide an overview of their area of expertise and will then allow time for questions from attendees. We hope to see you there!

GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS

by Laurel Hopwood,

Sierra Club Biotechnology Task Force Chair

Our government has helped slip genetically engineered foods (GEFs) onto our grocery store shelves without safety testing and labeling. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has stated it is "not aware of any information showing that foods derived by these new methods differ from other foods in any meaningful or uniform way." By law, recognition of safety must be based on "scientific procedures." Yet, neither the FDA's records nor the scientific literature indicate that such a test exists for even one genetically engineered food. Without any scientific basis, the agency calls GEFs "substantially equivalent." Using this assumption, the FDA has become a promoter, rather than a regulator, of GEFs.

Here's the problem to human health in a nutshell — when you place a gene from an unrelated species into a plant, and then people consume those genes, the consequences are difficult to predict. For one thing, the foreign genetic material can adversely alter cellular function. Another source of potential problems is the routine practice of fusing powerful promoters which can end up causing overexpression of surrounding native genes, which can upset complex biochemical feedback loops and metabolic pathways.

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FROM THE CHAIR

Warm '00 greetings, fellow Sierra Club members. I know you optimists out there are disappointed. But we're all still optimists here and just have to keep on keeping on. The environmental

battles continue, the work is still to do. Cheer up and think about the bash we can have when we really enter the millennium on 12/31/00. As I write this in 12/99 I've been reading about how most people plan to hunker down at home for New Year's Eve...just in case. Not a bad plan. A far more sustainable, environmentally-sound way to start this turn of the Gregorian calendar. I personally will shortly be busy writing 2000 over and over in my checkbook, covering the January checks that would otherwise wind up as 19—oops!

We had a good year locally. Our Club is gaining more active members. Personally, I am thrilled to report that my co-chair Hugh Mitchell went to the right meeting, encountered Frank Regan, an accomplished Webmaster who said he would be willing to take on our publicity. Although I love doing P.R. it does involve routine work and deadlines as well as the fun stuff - writing news releases and calling TV and radio stations in an effort to draw attention to our events and labors. Having two co-chairs has also helped. Usually one of us is available to speak for our Rochester Region - and under the policies of the national group, ONLY a chair or co-chair may speak officially for our local group. Of course any member is warmly welcome to mention being a Sierran in a letter or meeting, but may not speak for the Group. This is the Sierra Club's way of guarding its hard-won impeccable reputation, both here and in Canada. Hugh and I check with each other and at least one other Executive Committee member before making an official comment.

One of our needs right now is for outings leadership. We have had several successful outings recently under Shawn Coffee's leadership. Shawn is very knowledgeable and has done an excellent job, but he plans to leave the area later this year. We need someone else to begin working with him before he goes. Outings are traditionally the most active aspect of many Sierra Club groups. Not in Rochester though. This city as several long-established hiking clubs. Nonetheless, we feel there is a place and a need for outings that focus on the ecology. Again, the national controls are tight. Outings leaders must have training in American Red Cross First Aid.

I am pleased to report that our December 2 Citizens Public Hearing on Health Threats in the Environment was successful and very moving. Two

Vietnam veterans I had asked to testify were too sick to come, but we had powerful histories of deadly exposure to dioxin and were told of the danger of polyvinyl chloride - a common plastic. Only two of the many elected officials invited came - Brighton Supervisor Sandy Frankel and Rush Supervisor Terri Schmidt. Terri spoke as a breast cancer survivor as well. Now it is up to all of us to demand that our Congressional representatives pressure the EPA to release its five-year old final report on the dangers of dioxin.

A fervent thank-you to Janet Laird, who has acted as our Vice Chair this past year, organizing, facilitating, and timing our Executive Committee meetings. She is retiring - for a second time - to do other wonderful things.

- Gilly Burlingham

VOLUNTEER OPENINGS

- 1) **Program Chairperson:** To coordinate and organize Sierra Club programs. May serve on the Ex-Com.
- 2) Join an **Action Committee:** Clean Air/Clean Water; Population, Wetlands, Membership, Publicity, Publications, etc. Please call Hugh Mitchell 244-2625 if you are interested in volunteering to help.

**Sierra Club
Adirondack
Committee**

**IMAGINE THE GREAT
OSWEGATCHIE CANOE WILDERNESS
WINTER ACTIVIST TRAINING AND SKI TOUR**

WHEN: Saturday, February 12 --Sunday, February 13

LOCATION: Adirondack Hotel, Long Lake, NY

COST: \$25; includes lodging Friday and Saturday night, and meals Saturday and Sunday. (This conference is underwritten by the Sierra Club Northern Forest Ecoregion Task Force.)

SATURDAY: Be there for the roll-out of the Sierra Club's Great Oswegatchie Wilderness Campaign! Learn about: the potential for a 5090,000 acre canoe wilderness in the heart of the Adirondacks; historic Adirondack canoe routes in the Oswegatchie area; the economic benefits of wilderness preservation and how the paddle sports industry has helped the tiny Adirondack hamlet of Inlet, NY. Attend the premier of the Sierra Club's Great Oswegatchie wilderness slideshow. Help plan a spring Canoe Tour de Oswegatchie. Become a Sierra Club "Ambassador of the Great Oswegatchie!"

SUNDAY: Take a cross country ski tour or snowshoe in the Whitney/Lake Lila Wilderness area, the heart of the Great Oswegatchie.

FOR RESERVATIONS: Call the Sierra Club Northeast Office at 518-587-9166 or e-mail us at sierraatlantic@yahoo.com

BARGAIN ON CALENDARS

We still have a few year 2000 Sierra Club calendars left. Don't forget that this is our major fund-raising source for the local group. You can help us to put on our educational programs and print the Eco-logue by ordering one or more of these beautiful calendars from us. We have discounted what we have left.

Engagement calendars \$10.00 (originally \$13.99)

Wilderness calendars \$9.00 (originally \$12.91)

Pocket calendars \$4.00 (originally \$5.40)

Add \$4.00 shipping and handling for each order. If you live in the Rochester area and want to save \$4.00 for shipping and handling, I can probably deliver them to you.

Give me a call. -Paul Neumann, (716) 266-5376

ROCHESTER REGIONAL GROUP OFFICERS

Co-Chair	Gilly Burlingham	237-6378
Co-Chair	Hugh Mitchell	244-2625
Secretary	Sarah Boyce Fasick	582-3194
Treasurer	Dave Ruekberg	538-6463
Conservation & BOG Rep.	Chris Hayes	244-5267
Membership	Ginny Tyler	244-4084
Outings	Shawn Coffey	393-9064
Fund Raising	Paul Neumann	266-5376
Wetlands	George Parker	244-1040
Population	Hal Bauer	335-2623
Population Rep.	Ted Christopher	244-5726
Publicity	Frank Regan	271-0816
Eco-logue Edit.	Ray Nelson	342-2734

Genetically Engineered Foods - from page 1

Each of the above types of disruption can induce unexpected toxins, carcinogens or allergens — or degrade nutritional value in an unpredictable manner.

The biotech industry has developed corn genetically engineered with a bacterial toxin that acts as an insecticide. Are we supposed to eat that ear of corn and be confident that there's nothing in there that's going to harm us? Preliminary independent studies show that the application of glyphosate (Roundup) to Roundup Ready soy beans alters their phytoestrogen levels. Antibiotic resistance genes, which are commonly used in most GEFs fed to farm animals and humans, will encourage the evolution of multiple antibiotic resistance in pathogenic germs. The Sierra Club has called upon the Clinton administration for mandatory labeling, safety testing and post-marketing surveillance on all GEFs. We have joined with numerous consumer, religious, community, and conservation groups with the stance that information must not be shielded from public knowledge and scrutiny. Please ask your representatives to co-sponsor HR 3377, the Genetically Engineered Food Right to Know Act, introduced by Rep Kucinich (D-OH). For further information or to get a list of co-sponsors, please email Laurel Hopwood at jhopwood@wviz.org.

MINIMIZING EXPOSURE TO POLLUTION

by Ted Christopher

Efforts to reduce the possible harmful effects of toxic pollutants has traditionally been focused exclusively on reducing the toxic outputs of big sources like factories and automobiles. An alternative approach of carefully monitoring citizens and recording their toxic exposure levels has shown that indoor sources are in fact a much larger potential threat to human health. A synopsis of the findings of 18 years worth of such exposure-based studies can be found in the article "Everyday Exposure to Toxic Pollutants" by Wayne Orr and John Roberts (Scientific American, February 1998).

The pollutants considered included volatile organic compounds, heavy metals, carbon monoxide, pesticides, and fine particles. The fact that we spend on average of 95% of our time indoors combined with the cumulative success of previous environmental regulations has left indoor unregulated threats as the big ones. Some of the findings reported by Orr and Roberts included:

- "Even in the New Jersey cities of Bayonne and Elizabeth, both of which have an abundance of chemical processing plants, the levels of [the] 11 volatile organic compounds [present] proved much higher indoors than out. ... The chief sources appeared to be ordinary consumer products, such as air fresheners and cleaning products, and various building materials."
- "Cigarettes make up only 0.1% of benzene emissions but because of their proximity to humans are responsible for 45% of our exposure."
- "If truckloads of dust with the same concentration of toxic chemicals as is found in most carpets were deposited outside, these locations would be considered hazardous-waste dumps".
- "The pesticides and volatile organic compounds found indoors cause perhaps 3,000 cases of cancer a year in the U.S. making these substances just as threatening to nonsmokers as radon or secondhand tobacco smoke."

The article by Orr and Roberts also discusses preventive measures. This article is well worth obtaining.

WINTER OUTING ANYONE?

Would you like a chance to get out in the snow and do some cross country skiing or even snow shoeing? Shawn Coffey, our Outings Chair, will gladly set up an event. But rather than set a date with no idea as to the snow conditions, we're going to try a different idea. Shawn will keep a list of members who are interested, and when the good snow appears, probably in February, he'll give people a call and propose an outing. So, give Shawn a call now, and keep your ski's/snowshoes ready for the white stuff. Shawn's phone number is 393-9064.

ECO-LOGUE
 Rochester Regional Group
 of the Sierra Club
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CALENDAR

Jan. 6	Thursday	7:00pm	----- Clean Air/Clean Water Committee -----	----- 6 Sibley Pl.
Jan. 9	Sunday	1:30pm	Population Committee	6 Sibley Pl.
Jan. 13	Thursday	7:15pm	----- Ex-Com meeting* -----	----- St. John Meadows**
Jan. 20	Thursday	7:15pm	Wetlands Committee	495 Antlers Dr.
Jan. 27	Thursday	7:15pm	----- General Meeting: (see page 1) -----	----- Third Presbyterian Church
Feb 3	Thursday	7:00pm	Clean Air/Clean Water Committee	6 Sibley Pl.
Feb. 6	Sunday	1:30pm	Population Committee	6 Sibley Pl.
Feb. 10	Thursday	7:15pm	Ex-Com Meeting*	St. John Meadows**
Feb. 12-13	Sat.-Sun.		----- Activist Training, Ski Tour (see page 2) -----	----- Long Lake, NY
Feb. 15	Tuesday		Eco-logue deadline	
Feb 17	Thursday	7:15pm	----- Wetlands Committee -----	----- 495 Antlers Dr.
Feb. 27	Sunday	7:00pm	Eco-logue Mailing	6 Sibley Pl.

* Ex-Com meetings are open to members. Call Hugh Mitchell at 244-2625.

** Call Ginny Tyler, 244-4084 for directions

Visit our web site at www.sierraclub.org/chapters/ny/rochester

Call us at 716-987-9282

To add your name to our e-mail list, send your address to: hmitch@frontiernet.net