



After the 2014 Forum: Climate Smart Communities: Let's Get With the Program

by Frank Regan

This year's forum brought in over 300 folks to hear about the state's Climate Smart Community (CSC) program. We also tried to get as many communities as possible west of Syracuse to join this volunteer program to help more New Yorkers adapt to and mitigate Climate Change. Sierra Club members succeeded in getting several communities to sign up.

Mark Lowery, manager of the program, spoke succinctly and forcefully about the findings of the Climate Change consequences in our region. Jeremy Moule, the sole reporter from Rochester who attended the event, summed up Mark's talk here: "Local governments should, at a minimum, develop plans to deal with current and anticipated hazards caused by climate trends, such as flooding and strong storms, said Mark Lowery." ("Making the case for local communities to act on climate change", April 18, 2014, *Rochester City Newspaper*)

Our frequent attempts to get all the local media engaged on what the state is doing about Climate Change and helping communities (via educational webinars, developing climate action plans, boosting energy efficiency, increasing active transportation and much more) was met with little success.

I mention this lack of media attention because it was one of the main goals of the forum: to move this worldwide crisis to mainstream local media. If the local media is not even provoked to attend to this issue when the state speaks locally on a matter of this magnitude, it does not bode well for engaging the general public either. Large as the Sierra Club is, we cannot address Climate Change without the full cooperation of a substantial percent of the public. This issue is like no other in history, but messaging Climate Change to a reluctant public is and has been a major hurdle for environmental groups.

In August of 2009, Rochester took the CSC pledge and has done much over the years with this program and other efforts to address Climate Change. Surf over to the city's Office of Energy & Sustainability webpage at cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=8589936085 and download the "Energy Management and Climate Action Status Report". It's a great start, but much more needs to be done by Rochester and other communities.



Pensive audience during the question & answer session

Mark did not cover all the consequences of Climate Change in our region, nor was he able to cover all aspects of the CSC program. We have materials about the program on our website: <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/rochester/Forum2014.html>

In the Q&A phase of the program, Mark was asked whether the CSC program has a good resource that lists all the ways local governments can promote and support a local food supply through good zoning, setting the example through local procurement for government agencies and schools, etc. Mark admitted that the program does not have expertise in urban agriculture, but that the CSC's site has webinars that touch on some of these issues.

The state's CSC program is a start. It is understaffed and most folks in New York State don't even know about its existence. We hope our efforts at the forum boosted public knowledge of this program, and that more public concern about the state's efforts will ramp up its ability to do more to address this worldwide crisis. The public must demonstrate that it demands that the state adequately address Climate Change, for your government is one of the very few groups that can be held accountable.

If your community has not signed the CSC pledge, please contact your community leader and get them to do so. Also contact Mark Lowery to continue the dialogue that we started at the forum at: Mark Lowery, Climate Policy Analyst, Office of Climate Change, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233, 518-402-8027, mdlowery@gw.dec.state.ny.us



From the Chair: Help Our Communities Get Climate Smart

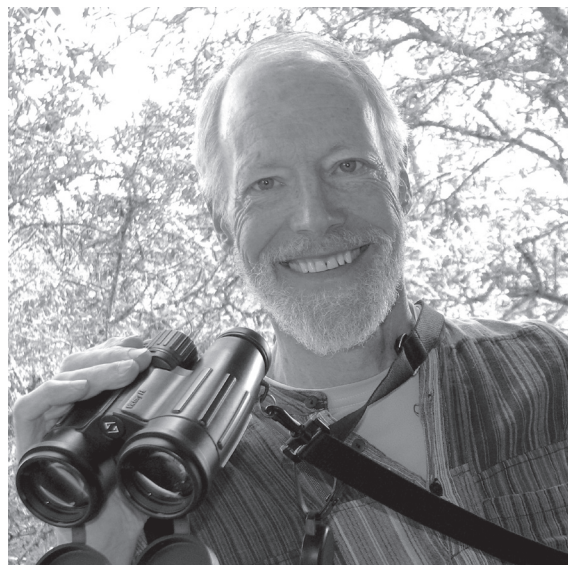
Thank you as always for being a member of the Sierra Club and supporting our work. I am pleased to report that we have had two major accomplishments since the last newsletter: our annual Environmental Forum on Climate Smart Communities and the visit to Rochester by a very talented and passionate young environmentalist, Charles Orqbon. You can read about the success we had with each of these events in this issue.

The Rochester Regional Group has set goals for the future to continue building new connections to youth and supporting their environmental projects, and to continue to engage other communities on the urgency of climate change for our future. One very concrete step these communities can take is to take the pledge to become a Climate Smart Community and begin serious planning for meeting the challenges climate change will bring.

There are now four Climate Smart Communities in our area: Rochester, Victor, Brighton and Irondequoit. Even within these communities, there are large numbers of residents who know little about climate change, or still believe it is not of great concern.

We wish to build on the success of this year's Forum to get more citizens aware and involved, and get more communities enrolled in the State's program. This requires coordinated efforts by a group of committed volunteers. It is a well-defined goal and very achievable, but we need help from you, our members, to achieve it. We can tailor tasks to your schedule and time available, but we cannot do it without more help.

So I am urging you to call me and leave your name and phone



number so we can put you in action. Please do it now, and we will get back to you within a day. We look forward to the opportunity to meet you and work together to insure a better tomorrow.

Peter Debes: (585) 271-4796

Peter Debes,
Chair

The Future of Fracking in New York State

by Robert Withers

The future of fracking in New York state has yet to be determined. However, every fracking activity is happening except drilling. Waste disposal is among the worst. 300,000 tons has been disposed of legally in the state of New York over the last several years. It has been coming each year in larger quantities. There are many sites accepting this waste. Most facilities are not equipped to properly handle the complex stew of toxic chemicals and radioactive waste sent their way. Effluent from water treatment plants has shown elevated radioactivity and the presence of many toxic chemicals.

If it weren't for specially granted exemptions fracking would be

illegal. The Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act among others have been set aside. As many as 300 ingredients go into a well for fracking. Many of them are highly toxic and labeled hazardous when they arrive at the drilling site. Through the magic of deregulation the effluent and drill cuttings, though toxic and radioactive, are not considered hazardous when they leave the site. Because it is salty, fracking fluid waste has even been used to de-ice roads.

The fracking industry has trouble with the weak regulations it faces. No one knows how much illegal dumping has taken place in New York. In North Dakota they recently found many tons of illegally dumped radioactive filter socks though there are dump sites designated to accept them. The

fracking industry has shown it can not be trusted. They have consistently lied about and misrepresented their actions. The law, the truth, the environment and our health are all endangered by the fracking industry.

A bill was recently defeated in the NYS Senate Environmental Conservation Committee that would have banned the disposal of all fracking waste in New York. The vote was 7 to 6. It fell along party lines. Until there is meaningful regulation and enforcement that protects the environment and the health of the citizens of New York the disposal of fracking waste should be banned. Every candidate and office holder should be asked where they stand on protecting the citizens of New York from the excesses of fracking.

Rochester Regional Group Brings 18 Year Old Greening Forward CEO to Rochester Schools

by Margie Campaigne

Charles Orgbon III is not your average high school senior. While still in elementary school, his concern for a littering problem on school grounds prompted him to start the Earth Savers Club. Then, he decided to create a website originally named Recycling Education, now Greening Forward. That's when this author found him, as I was also putting together a website that offered "green" tips and info, and links to hundreds of other environmentally-oriented sites.

Soon, Charles was also writing a guide to starting an Earth Savers Club for students in other schools to use. I wound up volunteering to help edit it, but at the same time was very impressed with his thoroughness and writing ability. Today, you can buy it on Amazon!

Following Charles' growth and progress was an adventure. He'd won many awards, and recognition, even meeting President Obama. Months ago, as the RRG was considering what to do for our annual April environmental forum, Charles' name was brought up, and another ExCom member looked him up on the web. While we chose Climate Smart Communities for our forum, our Chair, Pete Debes, a retired RCSD teacher, suggested we also bring Charles up from Georgia to address students right in their schools.

Fast forward to April. Within an hour after we picked Charles up from the airport, he was at School Without Walls, addressing a group of Windsor Wade's Global Studies Honors class, and Janet Siegel's science classes plus 3 other classes. Charles' talk and PowerPoint were well received. He also brought an inflatable Earth Ball, which proved popular to help keep student interest and attention.

That afternoon, we chauffeured Charles to the World of Inquiry School, to meet with Chris Widmaier's juniors who are in a Global Environment course through SUNY ESF. These students put their own Earth Day event together, and have organized an e-waste collection to help raise funds for a trip to Africa. We are sure Charles' own successes, despite obstacles, has encouraged them.

The next morning, Charles met with a couple of vastly different classes at East High School, taught by Dan Sullivan. One young man in particular really challenged Charles, and wanted to know for himself how to keep from being discouraged. (East High is a very large school, and its students are disproportionately disadvantaged economically, as



Charles Orgbon speaks with Chris Widmaier's class at World of Inquiry school in Rochester.

are a majority of RCSD students).

In the afternoon, Charles spoke at John James Audubon School #33, with about 200 of Scott Skolnick and Laurel Avery's 2nd graders. They were learning how environmental changes affect communities, in their Social Studies curriculum. After that, we met with several teachers who were helping to spearhead the school's Green Team.

Friday morning, invited by Ann DeMare, we visited Hope Hall in Gates, a private school for students with different learning styles. They were probably the most well-behaved and attentive group of all, and many expressed gratitude for hearing Charles as we were leaving the school. Charles' inspiring visit is another step for our Group to extend and develop our connections to youth in our area and support their environmental action.

TAX DEDUCTIBLE GIFTS: THE LESSER KNOWN FACTS

Your Rochester Regional Group is financially supported by the National Club with a portion of membership fees and by the donations that you send directly to us. Gifts to the "Sierra Club Foundation, Rochester Regional Group" are tax deductible and can be used to help us fund newsletter publications and educational programs. You will receive Foundation acknowledgement for the IRS.

Gifts made out simply to "Sierra Club, Rochester Regional Group" are not tax-deductible, but we can use them without restriction— that is, also for legislative advocacy. Please know that your donations, regardless of which type, enable us to make a difference for the environment right here at home. We have very low overhead compared to many organizations - 88.4% of your donation goes directly to the support of Sierra Club conservation programs. Your support is much appreciated.

Our address is: Sierra Club - Rochester Regional Group, P.O. Box 10518, Rochester, NY 14610-0518

National Climate Assessment Concludes that Climate Change's Dire Consequences Have Already Arrived

by Paul Sanders

The White House released its updated National Climate Assessment report in May. It expresses a grim view of the impacts of climate change. In a nutshell, the report concludes that climate change is happening, we're causing it and it is already causing problems for our species and our planetary ecosystem. It should no longer be thought of as a distant issue to be dealt with by later generations. As the *New York Times* reported, "[t]he effects of human-induced climate change are being felt in every corner of the United States,...with water growing scarcer in dry regions, torrential rains increasing in wet regions, heat waves becoming more common and more severe, wildfires growing worse, and forests dying under assault from heat-loving insects."

The report confirms that the global warming of the past 50 years

is primarily due to human activities, the burning of fossil fuels in particular. This human-induced climate change is expected to continue, and to accelerate significantly if global emissions continue to increase.

Climate change threatens human health and well-being, including through more extreme weather/climate events, wildfires, decreased air quality and diseases transmitted by insects, food, and water. Further, critical infrastructure is being damaged by sea level rise, heavy downpours and extreme heat (and these damages are projected to increase); water quality and water supply are put at risk in a variety of ways that affect ecosystems and livelihoods; and disruptions to agriculture are increasing and projected to become even more severe over this century.

Also of concern is the fact that ocean waters are becoming

warmer and more acidic, affecting ocean circulation, chemistry, ecosystems and marine life. Fortunately, the report finds that planning for adaptation to address and prepare for impacts and mitigation to reduce future climate change, for example by cutting emissions, is becoming more widespread. However, current efforts are insufficient to avoid the expected negative social, environmental and economic consequences.

President Obama summed it up to Al Roker of NBC News stating, "This is not some distant problem of the future. This is a problem that is affecting Americans right now. Whether it means increased flooding, greater vulnerability to drought, more severe wildfires — all these things are having an impact on Americans as we speak." It remains to be seen whether the American people will get the message.

The Dark Side of Thick, Green, Uniform Lawns

by Peter Debes

Lawns are...let's face it—in your face when it comes to people driving by your house. Many of us have come to treasure a lush, uniform green living carpet surrounding our homes. Lawn care businesses thrive on this necessity/desire and help to promote it. There is, however, an ecological dark side to creating this luscious looking lawn. It is wreaking havoc in your environment. Let's see what pulls it over to...the dark side.

A uniform yard of green grass is abhorred by nature. Horticulturists call it a monoculture--which means it is almost entirely just one species of plant. Any natural habitat you go into will have a variety of species of plants, which then supports a wider variety of animals. Your yard is no exception. It is a

good place for many things to grow and they compete for the space. As nice as a lush uniform lawn looks, it signifies that you had to interfere with nature in a big way to produce it. Light sabers don't work here. You had to use poisons to kill off all the other species besides grass and then douse it with many more nutrients (fertilizer) than it usually would get. And those poisons do have effects on other plants and animals--even you. That is why signs are there warning you not to walk or play on it right after it has been treated. With heavy rains, some of that stuff runs off, into streams or sewers and eventually ends up in lakes and rivers, where we really don't want them. The extra fertilizer then helps fuel toxic blooms of algae and other organisms, or gives a boost to invasive species. All of this because we succumbed to the

dark view- that anything other than grass in the yard is ugly, an abomination that must be destroyed. And since the other guys keep making their way back, we have to keep doing it, over and over again.

So wait! Listen. Can you hear the voice of the Sierra Club? USE THE FORCE! Appreciate diversity in your lawn. Your lawn will hardly be taken over by weeds, if you stop using all that stuff. If you get too many, dig them up by the roots with a little weeder tool and strengthen your muscles to be a Genuine Yard Warrior. Compost the things! Make them into natural fertilizer. Be proud of the new look in your yard because it you used THE FORCE to see it in a new way. And get out there and win over your neighbors too. Together, we will take them to the GREEN SIDE.

Help Us Stop Preaching to the Choir

by John Kastner

New York State's farmland, water supply and scenic beauty remain vulnerable to fracking. We have no ban, not even a moratorium. The DEC has said it will not issue any drilling permits through 2015, but there is nothing to hold them to this. Meanwhile, gas drillers continue to roll up an impressive and depressing string of victories. The town of Painted Post has won the right in court to sell municipal water to Pennsylvania fracking interests. A bill to stop the dumping of fracking wastes in New York was defeated in committee. Then, Senator Charles Schumer declared that fracking enjoys support among Democrats and that it works well.

The gas industry monopolizes the public ear by spreading tons of free speech (money) all over the media and gains access to power by doing the same with the elected officials who, theo-

retically, are supposed to be representing our best interests. One struggles with how to counter this one-sided onslaught.

Recently, I've been thinking about what Martin Luther King, Jr. was able to accomplish in employing churches to organize grassroots campaigns that ultimately won African Americans legal guarantees of their civil rights. Are not clean air and clean water civil rights? Is the right to work a civil right? If the gas industry promises 20,000 (temporary) jobs, are not the 58,000 permanent jobs that would be created by converting New York to 100 percent renewable energy promised by the Jacobson plan better? Is it not better to preserve the \$140,000,000 per year New York earns from agriculture, wineries and tourism than to give the water these industries depend on to gas drillers who may bring New York \$20,000,000?

Water is a common right. It be-

longs to us all. No one has the right to alter or remove it from public use. Jobs are good. We choose the path that leads to the most jobs - permanent jobs that enhance and protect our children's futures. That's our message, but we have to stop preaching to the choir and start informing the congregations - other congregations, not just our own. This message is for Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians, Christians, Muslims, Jews, atheists - club to club, neighbor to neighbor. It's called grassroots organizing and it has to be done until we have numbers that really frighten politicians. The Tea Party has done this to great effect. Why not us?

We need YOU to look around for opportunities to cross lines in your own neighborhoods - NOW. If we are going to save our state and planet from the fossil fuel juggernaut, we have to get creative, get busy and stay on message.

What Color is Your Picnic Basket?

by Margie Campaigne

Picnics are one of our favorite summer activities! Food, friends, family, fun! What foods are your favorites? Watermelon, mac salad, baked beans, hots & burgers?

If greening your lifestyle, you probably thought about what to bring (and not) to your picnic:

- Picnic basket or backpack for tableware, condiments
- Reusable or compostable plates, cups (no Styrofoam)
- Cloth napkins, sponge for cleanup
- Reusable bowl covers
- Drinks in beverage coolers. Provide receptacles to collect cans and bottles
- Pail labeled "To Compost" for inevitable leftovers on plates

How about the sustainable aspects of the food itself? Locally

grown from farmer's markets, CSA's (Community Supported Agriculture) and stores that source food from local growers are all good choices. Buying organic is best. Conventionally-grown foods depend on farmers using pesticides, hormones, chemical fertilizers, etc., while organic farmers use no chemicals and farming methods that enhance, rather than deplete, the soil.

A plant-based diet is healthier for the earth. Estimates of the carbon footprint of raising livestock for human consumption are between 18 - 51 percent of total carbon emissions, per the World Watch Institute. Also, more people can be fed per acre of farmland when used for growing food for humans rather than for livestock.

But I can't just give up what I've been used to eating my whole life and switch to eating carrots and

celery sticks! You can still enjoy many of your favorites - meatless hotdogs, chick'n nuggets and patties have fooled meat-eaters. Veggie burgers come in dozens of varieties, plus veggie sausages, deli slices, ground meat analogs, roasts, etc. Buy in regular supermarkets, health food stores and food co-ops.

What about eggs and dairy products? A tofu egg-less salad is delicious! You'll also find egg-less mayo, cheese-less cheese, dairy-free milks and vegan margarine. Substitute freely in your favorite recipes. Find new recipes in cookbooks, websites, magazines and our local Rochester Area Vegetarian Society. Their newsletters have tasty, tried true recipes in each issue: <http://rochesterveg.org>.

Don't wait! Go shopping, get cooking, grilling or barbecuing... Let's eat!



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Summer 2014 Calendar

All Committees are local volunteer groups of the Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club

Date	Day	Time	Calendar/Event	Place
June 23	Monday	6:30-8:30pm	Global Warming & Energy Committee Meeting	First Unitarian Church, Room 201, 220 Winton Rd. S., Rochester, NY 14610
June 24	Tuesday	4:30-6:00pm	Zero Waste Committee Meeting	Rochester Greenovation, 1199 E. Main St. Contact Frank for ?s: fjregan@gmail.com
June 24	Tuesday	7:00-9:00pm	Great Lakes Committee Meeting	Asbury First UMC 1010 East Ave. (smaller bldg. just west of main bldg.)
July 22	Tuesday	4:30-6:00pm	Zero Waste Committee Meeting	Rochester Greenovation, 1199 E. Main St. Contact Frank for ?s: fjregan@gmail.com
July 22	Tuesday	7:00-9:00pm	Great Lakes Committee Meeting	Asbury First UMC 1010 East Ave. (smaller bldg. just west of main bldg.)
July 26	Saturday	10:00am-6:00pm	Ganondagan Native American Dance & Music Festival	Ganondagan State Historic Site Victor
July	Sunday	10:00am-6:00pm	Ganondagan Native American Dance & Music Festival	Ganondagan State Historic Site Victor
July 28	Monday	6:30-8:30pm	Global Warming & Energy Committee Meeting	First Unitarian Church, Room 201, 220 Winton Rd. S., Rochester, NY 14610
Aug. 5	Tuesday	6:30-8:30pm	Executive Committee Meeting	Harro East Bldg., 400 Andrews St., Ste 600
Aug. 25	Monday	6:30-8:30pm	Global Warming & Energy Committee Meeting	First Unitarian Church, Room 201, 220 Winton Rd. S., Rochester, NY 14610
Aug. 26	Tuesday	4:30-6:00pm	Zero Waste Committee Meeting	Rochester Greenovation, 1199 E. Main St. Contact Frank for ?s: fjregan@gmail.com
Aug. 26	Tuesday	7:00-9:00pm	Great Lakes Committee Meeting	Asbury First UMC 1010 East Ave. (smaller bldg. just west of main bldg.)

Executive Committee meetings are open to Sierra Club members. All other meetings are open to everyone.

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