

## Healthy Lakes, Healthy Lives!

By Wayne Howard,  
Great Lakes Committee Chair

Founded in April 2005, the Great Lakes Committee has been actively involved in public outreach and legislative advocacy, both locally and nationally, to promote protection and restoration of the Great Lakes.

We've been preparing to promote the message of "Healthy Lakes, Healthy Lives" since September 2006, through training and conferences in Cleveland, Rochester, Detroit, and Buffalo and collaboration with the National Sierra Club Great Lakes Program and the Healing Our Waters Coalition (HOW).

HOW is a coalition of more than 90 environmental groups, working to provide a united voice for the support of National and State Great Lakes legislation. The purpose of the training is to help us effectively engage the public for their support of this vital legislation.

We have a great opportunity! Meaningful Great Lakes legislation has been introduced in the new Congress. In early March, we went to Capitol Hill for Great Lakes Week to lobby our local delegation and to encourage them to co-sponsor recently introduced legislation.

The health of our Lakes is seriously threatened by problems such as untreated sewage and invasive species. The Great Lakes ecosystems are at a tipping point of ecological collapse.

The good news is that we have manageable solutions to these problems.

The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy is a comprehensive plan to repair and upgrade sewage treatment, clean-up polluted harbors, restore wetlands, and prevent unwanted, new species from invading the lakes.

We have prepared a presentation entitled "Great Lakes Restoration – What YOU Can Do to Help," and presented it to the Federation of Monroe County Environmentalists on April 23rd. Our goal is to reach out to environmental and conservation organizations. If you know of a group that would like to see our presentation, please contact us.

Fall plans include a presentation and workshop for our general membership. We will also be starting a program to encourage and support the formation of Great Lakes Committees in other New York State Sierra Club Groups in the Great Lakes Basin.

To learn how you can support the effort, please visit [www.HealthyLakes.org](http://www.HealthyLakes.org) and our website, [http://newyork.sierraclub.org/rochester/great\\_lakes.htm](http://newyork.sierraclub.org/rochester/great_lakes.htm)

If you love the Great Lakes and would like to attend a committee meeting, please see our schedule in this newsletter (page 4).

(see also Laura Arney's article on this page for more information on committee projects,)

## Great Lakes Committee Local Outreach

by Laura Arney

Our local Great Lakes Committee (GLC) meets to Learn about the issues, Teach what we have learned, and Advocate for specific programs to address the issues.

LEARNING-One issue in the Great Lakes is septic systems and sewage treatment facilities that are outdated and poorly functioning. In April 2007, a small group of GLC members joined a tour of the Monroe County Frank VanLare wastewater treatment facility to learn about wastewater processes.

We learned that, when wastewater arrives at the plant, debris is raked off the top first. This debris might be trash from the streets or trash put down the toilet. We learned that natural micro-organisms at the plant are the main driver of the sanitary system. Nutrients are removed from the organic solids by "good bugs." And it takes a knowledgeable crew to keep the system in balance.

An upgrade at VanLare came with the removal of incineration as primary disposal of solids. The change to land-filling solids allows generation of methane as an energy source. Effluent (exiting water) is chlorinated to kill pathogens before releasing them to the deep lake several miles off shore. It seems our Monroe County Department of Environmental Services is recognized as an up-to-date facility that is proactive with its improvements. (Laura Arney does work for Monroe County DES at VanLare Wastewater treatment facility).

TEACHING-In August 2006, committee members Susan Stinson,  
(continued on page 3)

## From the Chair



by Deb Muratore

### Reading and Telling Our Stories

The theme of the recent Sierra Club Chair training that I attended in San Francisco was how to engage people by "Telling Your Story." Telling our story helps to re-inforce our strengths, identify our weakness and educate ourselves. When we exchange our stories, interests can be identified and bonds can be formed. Here's an opportunity to share your story.

About a year ago at one of the Excom meetings Nancy asked and answered a question. "How can I better educate myself on environmental issues? Let's form a book discussion group." We

all thought it was a great idea. I asked if we could pick a book with a happy ending. Here's a list of the books we've read.

*Plan B 2.0 Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble* by Lester Brown. "Plan A, our present world "plan," is leading toward economic decline and eventual collapse.... Plan B will move the world on to an environmental path that will sustain economic progress."

*Collapse, How Societies Choose to Fail Or Succeed* by Jared Diamond. This is an anthology of civilizations in the world that have faced collapse and why they have or have not fallen.

*Hope, Human and Wild True Stories of Living Lightly on the Earth* by Bill McKibben. "I no longer think fear is sufficient motivation to make changes... Real hope implies willingness to change. We need a vision of recovery, renewal

and resurgence. There isn't a solution - there's a path thru the woods."

*The Omnivore's Dilemma A Natural History of Four Meals* by Michael Pollan.  
*100 Ways American is Screwing up the World* by John Tirman

"The American ideals have brought monumental achievements. ... What we don't know so well is how and why so much of what America does in the world has gone awry, or worse, has gone as planned with disastrous results.

We're taking the summer off - take this time to pick up any one or more of these books. Then join us on Sept 10th at 7pm at the Friends Meeting House. We'll post the next book on our website.

## Toilet Debris

by Laura Arney

The Environmental Forum is a great place to meet like-minded people. At our recent event, I met Ann Germanow who has a campaign to reform the way we think about toilets. She says not to use the toilet as a garbage can. You'd think this would not be hard to do but according to Ann, today there are many manufacturers that give confusing information about disposal of their products. Consider the words "flushable", "dispersible", "biodegradable." Although the terms are correct, the reality is the products do not disintegrate, decompose or disperse in the time allotted for them to travel in the sewage treatment system. These items have to be screened out when they arrive at the sewage plant and transported to the landfill. ("read"-extra cost, salary and tipping fees.) So, the moral of the story is put them in the trash in the first place and not in the toilet. Ann is lobbying local public facilities to spread the word. See the work being done in the UK. . <http://www.bagandbin.org/index.php>. Ann can be reached at [scensiblesource@gmail.com](mailto:scensiblesource@gmail.com)

## A Fond Farewell, David

David Ruekberg has decided to take a sabbatical from the Excom. Here's a partial list of his contributions: Treasurer; Fund Raiser; planning organizing and heading up the Fall Festivals and Calendar sales; recruiting for the ExCom elections and counting the ballots; helping initiate and organize the Book Study group; organizing the behind the scenes tasks at the Environmental Forums such as managing group tables and supplying refreshments; writing articles for the Eco-logue; helping out at the Winter Solstice parties. And let's not forget that he always brought the beer! His enthusiasm and willingness to help wherever it was needed have been crucial to the success of the group. You will be sorely missed, Dave, and it will be difficult to fill your shoes. Please enjoy your sabbatical and - no pressure - but hurry back! Thank you for everything you've done and for being a wonderful friend.

## Group Receives Generous Foundation Grant

The Rochester Regional Group would like to thank Leslie Krause for another generous grant from the May Houck Foundation. This is the second year we have been fortunate enough to receive their support. The grant will be used to help fund education programs about the environment such as our efforts to teach people about the rare natural value and wisdom of preserving Hemlock & Canadice Lakes.

The Sierra Club is funded in two ways: by your regular dues and by earmarked contributions to the Sierra Club Foundation. Although regular dues aren't tax deductible (because we work politically) grants to the Sierra Club Foundation are tax deductible because it is set up as a separate 401(c)3 entity. At tax time you might want to give support to the Rochester Group and get a tax right-off by contributing to our educational foundation.

Eco-logue is published five times a year by the Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club, PO Box 39516, Rochester, NY 14604-9516. Subscriptions are free to Sierra Club members and available at \$10 per year to others.

## Must We Burn Coal?

by Laura Arney and Robert Siegel

Think about it....“Every time you turn on lights here in Rochester, explosives go off in the hills of Appalachia.” This is the message that Julia Bonds, leader of Coal River Mountain Watch, had to tell when she and Patty Sebok came to Rochester to talk about the mountain top removal (valley fill) method of mining coal that is polluting valley headwater streams, dislodging and cracking homes, and changing well water quality. Three million pounds of explosives are used every working day to get coal for electric power generation. The Sierra Club, Environmental Justice, and other groups are involved in this issue in Tennessee and West Virginia. Our Rochester Regional Group helped support Julia and Patty’s visit to Rochester on April 14<sup>th</sup> when she spoke at Corpus Christi. They also showed a terrific film about the issue “Black Diamonds.” We hope to screen it later this year. Very few people appreciate the environmental and social devastation that the coal industry has wreaked upon the Appalachian region.

This is not to mention the tremendously harmful impact of coal

burning on our global climate. For every ton of coal burned, approximately three tons of carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere. And there are a lot of tons burned, over a billion annually. This is why, according to an EPA report released this week, coal-fired power plants contribute 40% of America’s carbon dioxide emissions, more than all of our cars and trucks combined.

This is not just a problem in Appalachia. Russell Station, in the town of Greece burns coal and is in fact one of the dirtiest coal plants in America. RG&E just announced that they plan to invest \$500 million in Russell Station rather than shut it down. According to RG&E spokesman Bob Bergin, a new plan calls for Russell Station to be redeveloped as a “modern, efficient and more environmentally sensitive plant.” But it will still be burning coal in the future in spite of using a new supposedly “clean-coal” technology. So-called “clean coal” refers to a series of technical options ranging from gasification to scrubbers that remove sulfur and nitrogen oxides from the effluent. In general, they do little to reduce greenhouse gases, except by

virtue of any efficiency improvements they realize. There has been speculation that carbon sequestration could be added later, if necessary, but this is a ploy that the coal industry is using to get these plants built now before regulations become more strict, as they must. Sequestration has not been proven. No one knows if it can be done at all, never mind economically. There is no other human activity more detrimental to the looming climate crisis than burning coal. Yes, America’s energy demands are high, too high, in fact, especially when compared to European countries with comparable living standards. And yes, we have a lot of coal here. But a recent report by the American Solar Energy Society demonstrates that all of our demands can be met with a combination of renewables and efficiency, never mind good old-fashioned conservation. Burning coal was yesterday’s solution which begat today’s problem. It also does nothing to help people who are living with the dirty methods of extracting coal. Learn more at [www.mountainjusticesummer.org/facts/steps.php](http://www.mountainjusticesummer.org/facts/steps.php).

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## Sierra Club Outings, Summer, 2007

### The Wild Side of Letchworth

Saturday, June 16

This trip will visit the lesser-known East side of Letchworth State Park, generally far less known to most visitors. Howard Camp will lead us down a part of the southern end of the park, offering numerous spectacular waterfall views (2 to 3 miles, with a few difficult stretches). WE will meet at 9:30am at the First Unitarian Church parking lot, 220 South Winton Road, Rochester.



### An Intimate View of Honeoye & Canadice Lakes

Saturday, July 14

Come and see why these lakes are such regional gems! We will be exploring some of the best woodlands, tracking up a glen. Our guide, Peter Debes, will help us learn to identify trees, shrubs, as well as anything of interest that we may stumble upon. Bringing a picnic lunch is advised. Meet at 9:30am at the First Unitarian Church parking lot, 220 South Winton Road, Rochester.

*Gt. Lakes Committee* (cont. from page 1)

Laura Arney, and Janet McLeod participated in a DEC educational program called Project WET for school teachers. Environmental concepts were demonstrated with clever projects and games which could hold the interest of energetic students. On Saturday May 5, 2007, these members participated at the Seneca Park Zoo in the “Our Fragile World” event geared for adults and children. Emphasis centered on the Lake Ontario watershed, the limited quantity of accessible clean fresh water in the world, petitions to preserve Hemlock Lake watershed, and informational handouts.



ROCHESTER REGIONAL GROUP  
 OF THE SIERRA CLUB  
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## CALENDAR

June 5	Tuesday	5:30 PM	-----	ExCom meeting <sup>1</sup>	-----	Saint Thomas Episcopal Church <sup>3</sup>
<b>June 16</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>9:30 AM</b>	-----	<b>Outing: Wild Side of Letchworth -- meet at First Unitarian Church parking lot<sup>4</sup></b>	-----	
June 19	Tuesday	7:30 PM		Global Warming/Energy Committee		Saint Thomas Episcopal Church <sup>3</sup>
June 26	Tuesday	7:00 PM	-----	Great Lakes Committee meeting	-----	Brighton Library <sup>2</sup>
<b>July 14</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>9:30 AM</b>	-----	<b>Outing: Honeoye &amp; Canadice Lakes meet at First Unitarian Church parking lot<sup>4</sup></b>	-----	
July 17	Tuesday	7:30 PM		Global Warming/Energy Committee		Saint Thomas Episcopal Church <sup>3</sup>
July 24	Tuesday	6:30 PM		Great Lakes Committee picnic		Call Wayne Howard, 359-0782, for location
<b>Aug 12</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>1 to 4 PM</b>	-----	<b>Ansel Adams Community Day</b>	-----	<b>George Eastman House<sup>6</sup></b>
Aug. 12	Sunday			eco-logue deadline		
Aug. 14	Tuesday	5:30 PM	-----	ExCom meeting <sup>1</sup>	-----	Nancy Dean's home <sup>7</sup>
Aug. 26	Sunday	7:00 PM		Eco-logue mailing <sup>8</sup>		
<b>Sept. 10</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>7:00 PM</b>	-----	<b>Book Study Group</b>	-----	<b>Frienda Meeting House<sup>5</sup></b>

<sup>1</sup>Open to members. Call 234-1056

<sup>3</sup>2000 Highland Ave. (at corner of S. Winton Rd.)

<sup>5</sup>84 Scio Street

<sup>7</sup>6 Sibley Place

<sup>2</sup>2300 Elmwood Ave.

<sup>4</sup>220 Winton Rd. South

<sup>6</sup>500 East Avenue

<sup>8</sup>Call Ray Nelson 342-2734 for place and time

Visit our web site at <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/rochester>

Also worth a visit: <http://rochesterenvironment.com>

To add your name to our E-mail list send your address to [FrankRegan@RochesterEnvironment.com](mailto:FrankRegan@RochesterEnvironment.com) and put

“subscribe SC Mailing List” in the subject line.

Call 585-234-1056 for Sierra Club voice mail.