

## A Region of Beauty

### *Getting to know the Finger Lakes Region: A Show on Trails and Waterfalls\**

7:15 PM, Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003, Third Presbyterian Church

If you were asked to describe our unique region with its quiet splendors and hidden natural gems what would you say? How much do you know about the natural history and geology of the region or the rivers, lakes, trails and waterfalls of the Finger Lakes? A good way to get an answer to this question is to come to our Sierra Club program presented by local authors and experts **Sue and Rich Freeman**, publishers of guidebooks to the many trails, sights and family walks in Rochester and the Finger Lakes region. Their books include: *200 Waterfalls in Western NY*, *Snow Trails*, *Take A Hike! Walks in the Finger Lakes* and *Take Your Bike! Rides in the Finger Lakes*.



Ithaca Falls

The Freeman's Finger Lakes Trails & Waterfalls slide show will serve as a good introduction to our Rochester Regional Group theme for 2003 - "Getting to know the Genesee Bio-region". (See page 3 for more information about the Group activities relating to the Bio-region.)

Come to celebrate the Finger Lakes Region with Sue and Rich Freeman, 7:15 PM, Tuesday, March 11, at Third Presbyterian Church (corner of East Avenue and Meigs).

*\*This is a Sierra Club membership program; friends and the public are invited. A voluntary contribution to help cover costs is welcome at the door.*



Middlesex Valley Rail Trail

## Involvement

By Communications and Conservation  
Chairperson Frank J. Regan

This past year our Rochester Sierra Club has accomplished several objectives, including holding off the destruction of old growth trees in Hemlock, checking the Doyle Administration's Seneca Park Zoo expansion, and providing several successful public forums and educational programs. What might have we been able to accomplish if we had more help? As with most volunteer groups, only a small percentage of our membership actually does the work of the group.

Given the political climate, the job ahead of us is daunting. With the backdrop of a sputtering economy and the recent election setback to environmental gains of the last decade, Carl Pope, Executive Director of the Sierra Club, outlined the challenges that face the Sierra Club and the environmental movement. At a recent Sierra Club meeting in San Francisco, he stated: "They're coming after us, and they're not interested in compromise, they're not interested in moderation, they're not interested in working with us. They want to win." Bruce Hamilton, National Conservation Director for the Sierra Club states: "One major goal of the Sierra Club during the next two years is to shift the focus of the public from homeland security to understanding the threats to our environment."

If our Rochester group is going to make an impact on the myriad of environmental problems our area faces, we need individuals who can write letters, organize groups, research topics, and contact representatives when critical issues need tending. For example,

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## From the Chair



by Hugh Mitchell

In this time of unprecedented regressive assault on the American environment by the Bush administration, we need to be particularly aware of how government policies play out on the local scene. As has been said, ultimately all politics are local, so here's a few local concerns for 2003 with broader implications.

**Alternative energy for a staggering economy.** Last fall we had a program on energy awareness focusing on reduced energy use by such means as conducting an energy audit of your home and signing up for alternative power through buying into a New York wind power program. More visionary for the future is the Buffalo proposal to produce cheap energy using locally produced bio-mass rather than expensive coal or gas shipped in from great distances. This is worth considering locally. (*Contact Eric Smith, head of our Energy Committee, at rochester\_energy\_group@hotmail.com.*)

**Gas mileage counts.** Although it's hard to get around our near total dependence on automobiles, we can fight air pollution, global warming and our dangerous dependence on foreign oil by moving toward smaller, gas-saving vehicles. On this score the Administration has weakened the CAFE standards and failed to limit gas guzzling SUVs. Something you and I can do is to use a vehicle which gets at least 27 mpg.

**Local politics of conservation.** 2003 promises to be politically significant moving toward county elections which offer the first chance in eight years to elect environmentally conscious legislators and an administration which foreswears radical budget cuts effecting our local waters, farm lands and parks. One way of raising environ-

## Rochester Group Leadership 2003

At the annual Executive Committee meeting in January the offices listed below were filled by appointment or vote. Please note - more leadership help is needed as several important positions on the Ex-Com have not yet been filled. These include **secretary**, **membership**, and one **at-large** position. If you are interested in helping to steer the Rochester Regional Group please call Hugh Mitchell. (\* Denotes Ex-Com member)

Chair	*Hugh Mitchell	244-2625 goshawk@frontiernet.net
Vice-Chair, Publications	*Ray Nelson	342-2734 rlnelson@eznet.net
Treasurer	*Deb Muratore	385-9743
Conservation, Communications	*Frank Regan	frankrrr@rochester.rr.com
Clean Air/Clean Water, Kandid Coalition, Rediscover Genesee	*Laura Arney	334-8548 larney@rochester.rr.com
Energy Committee	Eric Smith	576-1421 esmith@hotmail.com
Fundraising	*David Rueckberg	538-6463 drueckberg@msn.com
Outings	Howard Camp	473-1410 thecamps@frontiernet.net
Political Action	*Michael Dahl	586-4618 MichaeleDahl@aol.com
Wetlands	George Parker	442-2483 georparker@hotmail.com

mental consciousness is to join our new bio-regional awareness project, headed by Laura Arney. This project will focus on rediscovering the Genesee River through canoe trips, mapping, trails and river access. Another way is to get in touch with our Political Action Committee headed by Michael Dahl. (*Contact: MichaeleDahl@aol.com*)

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## Genesee River Project Begins

by Laura Arney

Here's a chance to get in on the ground floor of a new project that will be fun, educational, and worthwhile. (What more could you want?) The Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club has secured a grant from the Atlantic Chapter to locate access points on the Genesee River that will enhance recreation for canoeing and kayaking in both the slow languid downstream sections as well as the lively upper reaches.

Exploration and recreation are by-words of the Sierra Club and we don't have far to look for a place to explore. A river runs right through our midst. It's so close we often forget it's there. And when we do see it, we're not likely to think about its size and variety. It's 158 miles long, and descends a total of 2030 feet from its source in Pennsylvania to its mouth at Lake Ontario. It comprises everything from a rushing brook to a relatively placid, slow moving river. So what about getting out and riding the river in a canoe or kayak? There's a section of the Genesee that can be matched with just about everyone's skill level and

risk tolerance. In addition, the water level varies from month to month, providing changing moods. Some section can be canoed even in drought years.

Our project will be divided into three phases. Phase I, in winter and spring, will be the time for library research work. During Phase II, in summer, we'll be traveling to get on-the-ground (or on the water) facts, designating lunch stops and thinking through logistical issues. In Phase III, in the fall, we will lay out

and finalize a brochure to be distributed among interested members and the public.

We know there are lots of people who love the river and even some who have a special spot they might like to share. We welcome people who have a special talent or interest in learning about the Genesee River. Please call Laura E. Arney 334-8548 or see an Executive Committee member to volunteer. The project is beginning now.



Putting in near Cuylerville

### Zoomer

We're about to roll out the beta launch of a new national Sierra Club Web site feature called Zoomer - - and we want to give you a sneak preview of it. Surf over to <http://zoomer.sierraclub.org> Zoomer is a guide to Web sites that provide zip-code based (or sometimes county- or state-based) information that will be of value to those who care about their backyard environment. In fact, we think it's a resource that will keep folks coming back to our Web site any time they're trying to track down local information, whether they want to check where to get rid of their old paint cans, find out about Superfund sites near them, learn about local wildlife or check the day's pollen count in their region. Check it out. Go to Zoomer, enter your zip code, and then click on a Resource of Interest.

### Planning for the Environmental Forum

We are planning our most popular event, the Fifth Annual Environmental Forum. It will be held Thursday, April 10<sup>th</sup> at the First Unitarian Church. As in the past there will be time for lively discussion and we will invite local environmental organizations to set up information booths. The proposed topic is **Environment 2003: National, State and Local Issues**. We expect to recruit three speakers who are interesting, have special knowledge, and will address one of these topic areas. The speakers will be followed by public forum participation.

A major event like this can be costly, particularly if it involves honoraria and/or travel expenses for out of town speakers. If you would like to help us make this a truly memorable event please consider making a donation to Sierra Club for this program. You can do so by sending a check made out to **Sierra Club Foundation**. (Write #FC1959) on your check with a note "For use by the Rochester Regional Group") and send it to *Sierra Club, P.O. Box 39516, Rochester, NY 14604*.

## The Ice Is Melting

by Michael Dahl, Ph.D.

Since agriculture began, the earth's climate has been remarkably stable. Now, the earth's temperature is rising, apparently due to the greenhouse effect--the warming that results from the rising concentration of heat-trapping gases, principally carbon dioxide in the atmosphere

As Lester Brown points out in Eco-Economy, this rise in CO<sub>2</sub> concentration comes from two sources: the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation. Each year, more than 6 billion tons of carbon are released into the atmosphere as fossil fuels are burned. Estimates of the net release of carbon from deforestation vary widely, but they center on 1.5 billion tons per year.

The release of CO<sub>2</sub> from these two sources is simply overwhelming nature's capacity to fix carbon dioxide. When the Industrial Revolution began in 1760, carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels were negligible. But by 1950, they had reached 1.6 billion tons per year, a quantity that was already boosting the atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> level. In 2000, they totaled 6.3 billion tons. This four-fold increase since 1950 is at the heart of the greenhouse effect that is warming the earth.

At the start of the Industrial Revolution in 1760, the atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration was estimated at 280 parts per million. By 2000, it had reached 370 parts per million, a rise of 32 percent from pre-industrial levels.

Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels have risen each year since annual measurements began in 1959, making this one of the most predictable of all environmental trends. Physics textbooks point out that as atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels rise, so will the earth's temperature, and this is exactly what is happening. The 14 warmest years since record keeping began have all come since 1980. Ris-

ing temperature leads to more extreme climatic events--record heat waves, the melting of ice raising sea level, and more destructive storms.

Ice melting is one of the most visible manifestations of global warming. In the Arctic Ocean, sea ice is melting fast. As recently as 1960, the Arctic Sea ice was nearly 2 meters thick. In 2001, it averaged scarcely one meter. Over the last four decades, the ice sheet has thinned by 42 percent and it has shrunk in area by 6 percent. Together, this thinning and shrinkage have reduced the Arctic Ocean ice mass by nearly half. A recent study by two Norwegian scientists projects that within 50 years the Arctic Ocean could be ice-free during the summer.



In 2000, four U.S. scientists published an article in Science magazine reporting that the vast Greenland ice sheet is starting to melt. It is gaining some ice in higher elevations on its northern reaches, but it is losing much more at lower elevations, particularly along its southern coasts. This huge island of 2.2 million square kilometers (three times the size of Texas) is experiencing a net loss of 51 billion cubic meters of water each year, an amount approaching two thirds of the annual flow of the Nile River as it enters Egypt.

The Antarctic Peninsula is also losing ice. In contrast to the North Pole, which is covered by the Arctic Sea, the

South Pole is covered by the continent of Antarctica, a land mass roughly the size of the United States. Its continent-sized ice sheet, which is on average 1.5 miles thick, is relatively stable. But the ice shelves, the portions of the ice sheet that extend into the surrounding seas, are fast disappearing.

A team of U.S. and British scientists reported in 1999 that the ice shelves on either side of the Antarctic Peninsula are in full retreat. From roughly mid-century through 1997, these areas lost 7,000 square kilometers as the ice sheet disintegrated. But then within scarcely one year they lost another 3,000 square kilometers. Delaware-sized icebergs that have broken off are a threat to ships in the areas.

The mountain glaciers are also melting worldwide. The snow and ice mass is shrinking in the world's major mountain ranges: the Rocky Mountains, the Andes, the Alps, and the Himalayas. In Glacier National Park in Montana, the number of glaciers has dwindled from 150 in 1850 to fewer than 50 today. The U.S. Geological Survey projects that the remaining glaciers could disappear within 30 years.

These "reservoirs in the sky," where nature stores fresh water for use in the summer as the snow melts, have been there ever since irrigation began, supplying farmers with water for several thousand years. Now suddenly, in a matter of years, they are shrinking and some could disappear entirely, sharply reducing the water supply for irrigation and for cities.

We don't have to sit idly by as this scenario unfolds. There may still be time to stabilize atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> levels before carbon emissions lead to unmanageable climate change. The melting ice is an indicator of things to come.

# Outing Schedule - Winter/Spring, 2003

Unless otherwise noted all Outings are to start at the listed time from the lower parking lot at First Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Rd South, Rochester. Wear clothing and boots appropriate to the weather.

Date/Time	Destination	Leader	Special Equipment
February 15 at 9:30 am	Ski trip to Durham-Eastman Park	Howard Camp	
March 22 at 10:30 am	Identifying trees in winter at Hopkins Farm and Bentley Woods	Trish Wright	Bring Bag Lunch
April 19 at 10:00 am	Hike at Montezuma refuge for observation and study of fowl migration patterns	Howard Camp	Bring Bag Lunch
May 3 at 9:30 am	Waterfall hike in the Letchworth area, adjoining a newly developed game area and the Finger Lakes Trail, with an orientation to the geology of the Mudville area.	Charles Appel	Bring Bag Lunch
July 12, Start time TBD	Study visit to Native American sites, Gonandagan to Bare Hill	Cathy Gill	Bring Bag Lunch

## Ski Durand Eastman Park

Sorry folks, this one is not for educational purposes. This will just be a winter wonderland tour of one of the natural gems of Monroe County. The myriad nooks and paths of Durand-Eastman Park are largely unknown, even to many local residents. Car pooling start from First Unitarian Church.

## Winter Tree Identification

Have you ever wondered how to name a tree, without the aid of green foliage? Trish Wright will be guiding us to an awareness of trees from our own Genesee Valley biosphere. We will be learning the unique species characteristics of branches, bark and the like. Backpack a lunch. Start from First Unitarian Church.

## Springtime at Montezuma

Many Western New Yorkers are not aware that bird watchers from other states visit our area as a prime location for observing migrating wild birds. The Montezuma swamp is one of these desired venues, and it also offers one of the few protected examples of the lush wildlife-fostering wetlands that once covered much of our part of the State.

## Hidden Waterfalls

The region of Mudville south of Letchworth State Park provides a wealth of little known areas of natural beauty, broad vistas, forgotten history and access to one of the longer cross-country hiking trails in our region. This trip will provide a small slice of orientation to these little-known treasures.

## Win a Free Trip to San Francisco

No this isn't a lottery. All you have to do to take advantage of this tremendous opportunity is volunteer to be Membership Chairperson for the Rochester Regional Group. The Sierra

Club will fly you to San Francisco for two days training **free**. And being membership chairperson is really a reward, because you'll be helping the Sierra Club to be successful in defend-

*Involvement continued from page 1*

when when we learned that the Neighborhood Pesticide Notification Law was coming to a vote by the Monroe County Legislature, we had a week to research the topic, contact groups who have already dealt with this issue, write statements, copy and get the message to the press. While the result of this effort is still pending, the hard work of a few individuals made a difference in how the issue is being deliberated.

What can you do to help? While your financial support is critical, a small amount of time can also make a big difference. Our groups have several positions we need filled to get the message out. You can find out more through the Eco-logue (see page 2), our web site, and our e-mailings. Go to our new web page for the Conservation Committee (<http://newyork.sierraclub.org/rochester/conservation.htm>) and see what you can do.

ing our environment.

For information (what's a membership chairperson anyway?) or to volunteer, call Hugh Mitchell at 244-2625.

# CALENDAR

Feb. 13	Thursday	6:30 PM	----- ExCom meeting <sup>2</sup> -----	St. John's Meadows
Feb. 15	Saturday	9:30 AM	XC Ski Outing Outing, Durand Eastman Park	meet at First Unitarian Church <sup>1</sup>
Feb. 19	Wednesday	7:30 PM	----- Wetlands Committee -----	150 Sunset Drive, Brighton
Feb. 26	Wednesday	7:30 PM	Energy Committee	25 Brook Hill Lane, Apt. E, Penfield <sup>5</sup>
<b>Mar. 11</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>7:15 PM</b>	<b>----- General Meeting, Finger Lakes Trails (see page 1) -----</b>	<b>Third Presbyterian Church<sup>3</sup></b>
Mar. 9	Sunday		Eco-logue deadline	
Mar. 13	Thursday	6:30 PM	----- ExCom meeting <sup>2</sup> -----	St. John's Meadows
Mar. 19	Wednesday	7:30 PM	Wetlands Committee	150 Sunset Drive, Brighton
Mar. 22	Saturday	10:30 AM	----- Outing: Trees in Winter -----	meet at First Unitarian Church <sup>1</sup>
Mar. 26	Wednesday	7:30 PM	Energy Committee	25 Brook Hill Lane, Apt. E, Penfield <sup>5</sup>
<b>April 10</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>6:00 PM</b>	<b>----- Fifth Annual Sierra Club Environmental Forum -----</b>	<b>Third Presbyterian Church<sup>3</sup></b>

<sup>1</sup>First Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Rd. South

<sup>2</sup>Open to members. Call Hugh Mitchell at 244-2625.

<sup>5</sup>Call Michael at 586-4618 for directions

<sup>3</sup>East Ave. at Meigs, Rochester

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 [frankrrr@rochester.rr.com](mailto:frankrrr@rochester.rr.com)

Call 244-2625 for info about Sierra Club events and voice mail.