Chapter Debates Its Role in Promoting Affordable Housing in New Jersey

By Gina Carola, Chapter Conservation Vice-Chair (ginacorea@verizon.net)

At our April 14 Conservation Committee meeting, there was a spirited debate about what our role should be with respect to New Jersey’s need for affordable housing. Attendees pondered many questions: Is affordable housing an environmental issue? Is it an issue of racism and classism? Is it about Environmental Justice? Does the Sierra Club want to be pitted against the idea of affordable housing for all? Does affordable housing conflict with open space protection?

In the past, the New Jersey Supreme Court has found that municipalities are each obligated to create realistic housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons. A recent Superior Court decision requires that 155,000 units be built. An advocacy organization called Fair Share believes that 200,000 units should be built, and has sued every town in the state to force them to build affordable housing. The ruling and the lawsuits do not address issues of environment, transportation, jobs, infrastructure etc. Furthermore, many “affordable” units have only a 30-year deed restriction, after which they can be resold at market rate. Perhaps new legislation is needed to require that these issues be considered when municipalities grant permits - to prevent builders from hiring an army of lawyers to fight the municipal budgets of the towns defending their right to deny permits that don’t address these other issues.

Some of our members felt that we already have legislation that requires affordable housing. Rather, we need to consider putting it in appropriate places. For example, perhaps affordable housing should be sited close to public transportation access. It seems that environmentalists are mostly often pitted against developers, probably because builders look for the cheapest sites on which to build “your” open space! Most attendees agreed that, besides the degradation that this causes to open space, it is not always the best option for the people who need affordable housing. Rather, people need housing that is close to where they work – so they don’t have to spend a significant part of their income getting there – or where public transportation is available to them. This suggests the siting of affordable housing in cities and their immediate peripheries, perhaps as redevelopment rather than converting farmland or scat- tering affordable units in new suburbs.

Most agreed that Transit Villages (also known as Transit Oriented Development) are a good option for the idea of affordable housing. This would enable people to get to work using trains or buses whether or not they buy or rent market-rate housing or qualify for affordable housing units. This option helps to address climate change by reducing the number of cars on the road. A current Assembly proposal adds affordable housing to a bill about transportation. It is A-5926, the NJ Transit Villages Act.

Most of our members at the meeting agreed that the idea of transition to existing properties could be a solution for some NJ municipalities that have not yet met their affordable housing quotas. Old abandoned warehouses and other old buildings could be rehabilitated into affordable units. This would negate the need for laying new sewer and water lines. Nor would municipalities be burdened with building new or upgrading existing sewage treatment plants to handle additional load.

We also discussed the inability of minorities to get loans to buy homes - even if they are sold below market rate. Affordable housing is also needed for the elderly and disabled, not just for people who need to live near their places of employment. The Sierra Club’s national Board of Directors has declared that Environmental Justice is an important Club issue that needs to be addressed. All of us at the meeting agreed that affordable housing is an aspect of Environmental Justice, which needs to be considered when we consider development proposals. But a builder shouldn’t be granted a zoning variance just because he or she agrees to build some below-market-rate units among a bunch of McMansions all on that is left of a municipality’s open space. There should be exemptions for the towns but not loopholes for the developers. For example, a small farming community would be overburdened if forced to build affordable housing and the infrastructure needed to support it while a larger town could easily absorb that fair share, and the town could fill in any public infrastructure needed by redeveloping abandoned sites or rehabbing old apartment complexes. A builder should not be able to coerce a municipality to permit increased density for affordable housing units.

After much debate, here is what the Conservation Committee would like to see happen with respect to affordable housing, perhaps by legislation, perhaps by court order, perhaps by municipal initiative: that all new developments should include a minimum of 15% affordable housing. Note: Highlands regulations require 20%. Affordability should be in perpetuity, not loopholes for the developers. For example, perhaps affordable housing in Bergen County would be overburdened if forced to build affordable housing and the infrastructure needed to support it while a larger town could easily absorb that fair share, and the town could fill in any public infrastructure needed by redeveloping abandoned sites or rehabbing old apartment complexes. A builder should not be able to coerce a municipality to permit increased density for affordable housing units.

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The Sierra Club has long opposed the threats, along with the Sourland Conservancy. Both organizations contributed their strengths, synergistically, to achieve the mission of protecting the Sourlands.

Another threat to the Sourland ecology is the overpopulation of white-tail deer. Deer are a beautiful and graceful presence in nature, but have become a problem the last century as their natural predation has gone so much so that the forest can no longer regenerate. Deer eat tree saplings, most native plants, crops and suburban shrubs. Other impacts include such human health and the poaches four-deer collisions and tick-borne diseases. The Conservancy has joined with other stakeholders – ecologists, farmers, landowners, environmentalists and county officials – to solve the problem.

As part of its efforts to promote and protect the Sourlands, the Sourland Conservancy hosts an annual Sourland Mountain Music Festival, now in its 15th year. This year it will take place on June 25 at the Hillsborough Country Club. Check our sourlandmusicfestival.org to purchase tickets and see the lineup of great bands.

The festival offers wonderful food and activities for all ages.

And don’t forget to stop by the Sourland Club’s table and say hi. The Festival is for everyone and it’s for a wonderful environmental purpose – protecting Sourland Mountain. The New Jersey Chapter of the Sourland Club is proud to be a partner.

The EPA shut it in 1981 when they discovered that the soil included dissolved PCBs. In 2012 Honeywell accepted responsibility for the cleanup, along with the 25 other companies. The Northstar Company is doing the actual work, which should be finished in 2019.

The “soil solidification” process (in situ solidification, or ISS) consists of removing the contaminated soil from the site, mixing the latter with concrete that contains slag. Before the mixing is done, the concrete is sprayed with a material that contains lignin, a polymer made from coal waste and other residues that is less than 0.7 micrograms per cubic meter.

At the time of this writing, there have been two days on which airborne VOCs were measurable: both near River Road, less than 0.7 micrograms per cubic meter. An “action level” has been set at 1.5 micrograms per cubic meter. Once the ISS is complete, expected in November, a barrier/filter will be placed in the river outfall pipe, protecting the river from a potential release of contaminated water.

Some of the VOCs released into the air from the ISS are monitored at seven places on the perimeter of the site, and nine others in central Edgewater. Three of those, at Independence Harbor, City Place, and Independence Basin, have been two days on which airborne VOCs were measureable: both near River Road, less than 0.7 micrograms per cubic meter. An “action level” has been set at 1.5 micrograms per cubic meter. Once the ISS is complete, expected in November, a barrier/filter will be placed in the river outfall pipe, protecting the river from a potential release of contaminated water.

Is there an environmental issue that we’re MISSING? If so, please call or write to Club officers.
The Big Question
by Dick Cobey (dcobey@stjohn.edu)

The essence of tragedy, as in “Tragedy of the Commons,” is the impossibility of a satisfactory solution to a problem: no solution has a happy ending. That is the essence of an interesting new book, “The Wizard’s Ferry,” by Charles C. Mann (Knopf, 2018). It presents the classic confrontation among scientists between our founder John Muir’s preservation/wilderness approach, which resulted in our National Parks, and that of Clifford Pinchot, Theodore Roosevelt’s forerunner, which resulted in our National Forests, and which allows beneficial uses that include recreation but also sustainable harvesting of timber, and management for hunters and livestock grazing, including partial clearing.

In more recent times, the conflict extends to human population growth; do we “manage” the needs of an increasing population by technologies that extend the food supply, pioneered by agricultural scientist Norman Borlaug, the “Wizard” in the book’s title, or do we rely on high-tech as ultimately self-defeating, as argued by ecologist William Vogt, the book’s antagonist.

More specifically, do we allow our human population to increase, producing the food and other resources that will be needed, or do we intervene to limit growth, and thus limit all the angles? (Of course, in the real world of spatio political, there will be a fudge!) The two sides continue to call each other names: environmental challenges is Climate Change. The Wizards of today argue for nuclear power because there is no other good solution: and production is independent of the vagaries of wind and sunlight – and for the technology of carbon capture and storage. Today’s top Prophet is Lynn Margulis (1938-2011), an evolutionary biologist who believed that we, as a species, “are fate by natural law to wreck our planet, but not to know it, because we have will become extinct.” Evolution is supported by ideology; for some people religious (or humanistic) beliefs, for others political and economic beliefs. Both conceptions (or humanistic) beliefs, for others political and economic beliefs. Both conceptions (or humanistic) beliefs, for others political and economic beliefs. Both conceptions (or humanistic) beliefs, for others political and economic beliefs. It’s a good book!

I suggest that it connects to an interesting debate going on among our Chapter officers over the extent to which affordable housing should be an environmental concern – and our concern. See Gina Carol’s article on p.1. Affordable housing is an environmental concern with open space protection, and of course there’s John Muir’s dictum that, in the environment, everything is connected to everything! Assuming that it is an environmental concern, do we have Wazards and Prophets in our debate? The “technological” (wizardly) approach might be CO2M: the requirement for each municipal to satisfy a quota of affordable housing units. I’ve argued, unsuccessfully, for what I think is more a “ecological” – or sociological – (patter?ic) solution: something like the concentrated ethnic groups in “Concentration Camps” in the Tenement Museum on Orchard St. in lower Manhattan, (near where my father was born and grew up). They are approximated, I like to think, by some lively and thriving ethnic communities in New York today, such as in Bushwick. Better to concentrate, I think, than to spread people out! Europe and Asia offer partial clearing.

My editorial in the Jan-March issue of this newsletter attempted a survey of member interests. The response was insicine (p=16), but the results interestingly represented, ranked in clusters, below. Affordable housing seems to be an interest of many of our members.

1. Clean Air issues, solar energy, transportation, Passaic River, Pinelands
2. Natural gas & fracking, marine issues, water quality and habitat
3. Environmental Health, environmental health, affordable housing, land use, wastewater, waste management, etc. based environmentalism, GMOs, Alaska, New York City
4. Gender equality, asbestos, recycling
5. Delaware Water Gap, wetlands, Utah wilderness, tigers

Resolutions:
Approved by the Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) in March, April and May, 2018

The new officers welcomed in Rich Isaac’s Chair’s Message, above on this page, were approved.

I made the political endorsements described and listed in John Kashwick's Chair's Message in the Jan-March issue of this newsletter. The candidates for 2018 were approved. In May, we renamed our Environmental Justice Committee as the Environmental and Social Justice Issues Committee.

All our resolutions are now at www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/chapter-resolutions.
Some people think that leading pollution affects only lower-income people in urban areas. They are wrong. If you are a taxpayer, pay for the health consequences of this environmentally-caused illness. Lead poisoning is caused by unscrupulous landlords who allow children to live in apartments with peeling and chipped paint, mold, and dampness. It cannot be cured by window- and doormats. Such landlords are responsible for paying for local government payments to local officials coupled with a lack of funding for the workforce needed to inspect every apartment with children living in housing stock. In New Jersey there are about 2,500 new cases of lead-poisoning each year. Lead reduces the cognitive ability of children, as well as causing anemia, cardiovascular diseases, delayed development, and attention disorders. It decreases blood cells, and decreased ability to concentrate. It is linked to violent behavior. Lead is a crime against children. If it occurred in a white suburb there would be outrage, but because it mainly affects Black, Latino and other minority children it is met with mild indifference. Lead is an environmental injustice crime for which children will suffer for the rest of their lives.

Oppose Power Plant

(Continued from page 1)

ozone — and thus lung and heart disease, asthma, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis. NJ already suffers from some of the nation’s worst pollution.

The existing Ridgefield Generating Station is within two miles of the proposed Liberty site. It would double the local public health and environmental impacts of Ridgefield. Power plants require cooling water. The amount of water that would take 8.6 million gallons a day from a Meadowlands creek and discharge it, hot, somewhere! The natural gas will come from fracked shale in Pennsylvania and westwards, where another set of environmental degradation is taking place — another related story of elimination. New Jerseyians may be lucky that, as taxpayers, pay for the health consequences of this environmentally-caused illness. Lead poisoning is caused by unscrupulous landlords who allow children to live in apartments with peeling and chipped paint, mold and dampness. It cannot be cured by window- and doormats. Such landlords are responsible for paying for local government payments to local officials coupled with a lack of funding for the workforce needed to inspect every apartment with children living in housing stock. In New Jersey there are about 2,500 new cases of lead-poisoning each year. Lead reduces the cognitive ability of children, as well as causing anemia, cardiovascular diseases, delayed development, and attention disorders. It decreases blood cells, and decreased ability to concentrate. It is linked to violent behavior. Lead is a crime against children. If it occurred in a white suburb there would be outrage, but because it mainly affects Black, Latino and other minority children it is met with mild indifference. Lead is an environmental injustice crime for which children will suffer for the rest of their lives.

Initial treatment costs about $5,000 per child, with cumulative costs of $12,500 per year, and again by all the years in which children attend schools. In New Jersey we tax sharing under the Abbott model, because the wealthier school districts receive much less state aid and poorer districts get more to equalize child spending. It all comes back to greedy landlords who refuse to remediate their buildings. Lead poisoning is preventable. We all should care enough to demand that every child be raised in a home free of lead hazards.

GMOs in Pet Food Too?

Bon appetit!

OPPOSE POWER PLANT

Siuerr Club Marches for Science and the Environment

From a press release issued on Mar 14

The Sierra Club was one of many groups that marched for Science in Trenton on March 14th. Joining scientists, elected officials, and “ordinary” citizens, we defended the role of science in protecting the planet from climate change.

We spoke to Donald Trump’s Administration — and others who have gagged scientists by withholding their reports on the damage being done to human health, to natural habitat, and to the planet’s climate — by polluters, by our energy choices, and by economic expediency such as plastic bags. Trump’s EPA Administrator has been rolling back environmental protections. No testing and no information means no protection. That’s their mantra applied to drilling for oil on public lands. They stay on the market, weakening standards for cleaning up toxic sites, and allowing more air and water pollution. We need science to protect us from climate change and sea level rise, to refute fake news and fake science. The word itself derives from the Latin for knowledge and truth.

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We need science to protect us from climate change and sea level rise, to refute fake news and fake science. The word itself derives from the Latin for knowledge and truth. President Trump has cut the EPA in half. The remaining staff have been ordered not to use the term “climate change.” He lives in a fantasy world, not caring if homes are flooded, communities are destroyed, and people put in peril. When you cut lead funding, children will be poisoned. When you don’t clean up Superfund sites, communities will be poisoned. Perhaps the reason why Trump doesn’t want to remove Agent Orange from the Passaic River is that Agent Orange is a Russian code name.

We marched against those who deny evolution and probably gravity too. Against those who prosecuted John Scopes for teaching evolution. We marched for Galileo, Copernicus, and Isaac Newton, for Albert Einstein, Rachel Carson, Jonas Salk and Henry Fords, with toxic engineering, creating unnatural genes. These矮s are used for voting — to oust those politicians who are trying to destroy our environment.

Reminder on Behalf of Nesting Animals

Supplied by Suzanne Dragan, our wildlife correspondent

Here are some humane resources:

For “problem” Wildlife: www.humanesociety.org/animals/wildlife_neighbors/
For all wild birds to be freed: www.birdrescue.org
For birds: www.njwildliferehab.org; 908-647-2583.
NJ Wildlife Rehabilitators: www.state.nj.us/dpaw/gw/pdf/rehab_list.pdf
For injured or baby wildlife: https://njwater.org/4/found-an-animal
Wildlife Helpline: 1-877-472-8945 (a recording)

The Jersey Sierran: July–September 2018
From a press release issued on Apr 20

Murphy’s First 100 Days: An Environmental Score Card

As we’ve done with every new Governor, we are taking a look at Gov. Murphy’s first 100 days to see how his environmental policy is shaping up. In a sharp contrast with his predecessor, Gov. Murphy wants to move forward on protecting our environment, recognizing the threat that climate change and sea level rise pose to our state. He has several important clean energy efforts. He has started to deliver on some of his commitments including blocking offshore drilling, promoting environmental justice, and promoting clean wind power. On the other hand, he has also broken commitments and done some things to undermine progress on the environment and clean energy. There is a long way to go to achieve the goals set out in his election campaign.

Positive Actions Include:

- Appointing Catherine McCabe as DEP Commissioner. McCabe has integrity and professionalism, as well as many years of experience protecting the environment.
- Signing an executive order for developing 1,100 MW of offshore wind power, beginning the process of reaching our offshore wind power goal of 5,500 MW by 2030.
- Signing an executive order to incorporate environmental justice considerations into state agencies, departments, and plans.
- Signing an executive order to reopen the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).
- Supporting a complete ban on fracking and fracking activities in the Delaware River basin.
- Enacting a new law banning offshore drilling in state waters and bringing ashore oil drilled in federal waters off our coast.
- Halting logging on Sparta Mountain, though this may only be a temporary halt.

There are a number of campaign commitments that have been left unacted upon or are at risk from actions of the Administration. These include:

- Halting the Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion off the coast of Louisiana. The oil slick covered other eastern states will follow our lead. April 20th marked the eighth anniversary of California in adopting this kind of legislation, and hope that New York, Maryland and other states will follow our lead.

Another new Sierra Club website to explore: www.sierraclubgreenhome.com

Victory for Our Coast: Murphy Prohibits Offshore Drilling

From a press release issued on Apr 20

Governor Murphy has signed A809 (Land) into law, prohibiting offshore oil and gas drilling in the state’s waters and forbidding the DEP from issuing permits and approvals for activities associated with such drilling. We consider it a legitimate response to federal policies adopted by the Trump Administration, which is proceeding with seismic testing, an initial step.

The new law will also stop oil and drilling infrastructure from being transported from offshore into New Jersey. This is an important step to protect our coast.

The Trump Administration has introduced the National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program (National OCS Program), under which the Interior Dept. would auction oil and gas drilling in the Arctic Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, the eastern Gulf of Mexico and possibly US Pacific waters during the years 2019 to 2024.

The DEP has been spending millions of dollars to block the development. We believe that Murphy’s grades will increase as we work to fight this development.

Areas which still need to be addressed:

- The Governor has supported legislation that is green-cover for a giant nuclear subsidy. In reality, the “green” energy bill will significantly undermine renewable energy in New Jersey and possibly destroy our state’s solar program altogether. Murphy had opposed the nuclear subsidy. The bill has reached his desk and we hope he vetoes or Cves it.
- A dangerous bill that would allow DuPont to increase pollution is on the Governor’s desk. This bill will put more pollution into the Delaware by creating a loophole that redefines a hazardous waste facility, allowing them to dump toxic chemicals. We are asking the Governor to veto this bill.
- The proposed North Bergen Liberty Generating Project in the Meadowlands would be one of the largest power plants in the state and cost $1.5 billion. It would encourage fracking in Pennsylvania and send electricity to New York City. We need Murphy to stop this project.
- Actions need to be taken to stop the annual burn of $614 million of fossil fuel. We need the DEP and Gov. Murphy to halt this.
- Update the Environmental Justice Act. With the goal of 100% clean energy by 2050, the Water Supply Plan, and state’s outdated building codes.
- Require fossil fuel infrastructure projects demonstrate whether there are market-based, cost-effective and clean alternatives (to delay or avoid the project).
- Reiterate the Office of Climate Change.
- Support the Climate Change Act to reduce the risks of climate change.
- Require fossil fuel infrastructure projects demonstrate whether there are market-based, cost-effective and clean alternatives (to delay or avoid the project).
- Appoint people to environmental entities such as the Pinelands Commission and Highlands Council consistent with their conservation mission, and respect their independence to protect these critical resources.

Overall Grade for Governor Murphy’s First 100 Days: C

This C grade is still a vast improvement over Governor Christie’s record. We are optimistic that government policies for the environment in New Jersey can, and will, get better. We believe that Murphy’s grades will increase as we work to fight climate change, protect our environment, and promote green energy, making up for 8 years of inaction under Christie. We’re also confident that under Murphy, New Jersey can stand up against Trump’s rollbacks. We want to work with the administration so its grades keep going up over the next four years.

DEP Should Reject Heritage Minerals Project in Manchester

From a press release issued on Feb 8, edited by Maggie Yilmaz

Our Chapter opposes a massive sprawl development project in western Ocean Co. Howson Inc. wants to build 4,000 housing units on the former Heritage Minerals quar. This C grade is still a vast improvement over Governor Christie’s record. We are optimistic that government policies for the environment in New Jersey can, and will, get better. We believe that Murphy’s grades will increase as we work to fight climate change, protect our environment, and promote green energy, making up for 8 years of inaction under Christie. We’re also confident that under Murphy, New Jersey can stand up against Trump’s rollbacks. We want to work with the administration so its grades keep going up over the next four years.

Another new Sierra Club website to explore: www.sierraclubgreenhome.com
Gov. Murphy’s Proposed Budget

From a press release issued on Mar 28.

A public hearing on the State Budget for the year starting this October has been held by the Assembly Budget Committee. It includes initiatives for clean energy and fighting climate change, but it continues the pattern of slashing the DEP's budget. This year the agency is allocated $275 million; down from $321 million last year. The proposal also diverts $140 million from the Clean Energy Fund.

After years of cuts, the DEP will lose money again: $80 million from NJ Transit, $50 million to replace lighting in government buildings, $2 million from the BPU. $5 million transferred to implement RGGI. All this from the Clean Energy Fund that was meant to support home weatherization, energy efficiency and green jobs. Ever since Christie was Governor, the Clean Energy Fund has become the state's ATM. He took $1.5 billion from it, now we are taking more.

The DEP budget has been cut 40% over the last 10 years; now it is being cut again, by another 14%. Worse: the loss is from operations: $215 to $207 million. According to the DEP's online database, total enforcement actions issued from 2008 to 2013 fell by 77%, and site inspections dropped 80% under Christie. Perhaps most seriously, lead is not being removed from drinking water. It should be important to build up morale and funding in the Department that's been disheartened and slashed over the last eight years.

Ironically, these cuts parallel an increase in the State's environmental income! There's $200 million from the Exxon-Mobil gas station settlement. $75 million from Volkswagen, and new tax income accompanying RGGI. In addition, the corporate business tax increases by 4% for DEP programs. None of this is showing up in the DEP budget.

We cannot increase renewable energy and support energy efficiency programs if the BPU's funding is flat. Without staff, it will be impossible for it to implement 100% business tax increases by 4% for DEP programs. None of this is showing up in the DEP budget.

On April 5, some of our members filled several bags of recyclables and trash in the Wharton State Forest, and also pulled out some tires that had been left by people who use the Pine Barrens as a convenient dump. We also came upon a TV and Computer graveyard and pulled 4 TVs and two computer monitors out of the underbrush to be towed away by the Forest staff.

On April 7, we joined high and middle school students from Camden to help the New Jersey Tree Foundation plant trees at the new Cooper's Point waterfront Park in Camden. This new park, adjacent to the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, is being built on the site of the former Riverfront Prison.
public outreach via town tabling; and visits to schools to teach students about the envi-
ronment. Our hope is to foster a love of and deep respect for our great outdoors.

As advocates, The Skylands Group works with other grassroots organizations to pro-
tect open spaces and water quality; promote clean energy; oppose privatization of our water and land public trust resources; and other local, national and global environ-
mental issues as they arise.

We table annually at Liscroft Farm’s Medicine Wheel Festival in May, host a summer picnic in July, conduct a Drive Electric Event in September at the GreenLife Market in Andover Township, and celebrate winter holidays in December. All our events are free of charge and open to the public.

CURRENT CAMPAIGNS: The Skylands Group advocates the protection of the Sparta Mountain Wildlife Management Area from logging done under the guise of creating ‘healthy forests.’

Forests throughout NJ have been and will be logged. Many of these forests are High Conservation Forests with closed canopies. They provide water to millions of New Jerseyans. Logging these forests will adversely affect the ecology of a Natural Heritage Priority Site in Franklin NJ.

The Skylands Group also opposes the Munsonhurst Planned Residential Development, which will adversely affect the ecology of a Natural Heritage Priority Site in Franklin NJ.

The North Jersey Group continues its concerted efforts of political engagement, rais-
ing environmental awareness, and activism.

The present political push is a continuation of the effort to elect people with an envi-
ronmental consciousness. Last fall Chairperson Buddy Jensen, Political Chair Jermaine Spence, and several other Sierra Club members went from door to door soliciting votes for representatives Gordon, Eustace, and Lagana. This year the effort will be on voter registration for the mid-term elections.

In early December the Passaic County Board of Freeholders announced at their meet-
ing that there will be no disk golf at Rifle Camp Park. The director announced that “they have listened to the people.” It seems that the consistent representation at every meeting and our 2500 signatures against the disk golf had an effect. The director also praised the passion and perseverance of all involved.

On January 15th, the Group showed the movie “Up From the Ashes” at the Ethical Society in Teaneck. Several hundred people attended and stayed for a discussion after-
wards. The event was well-publicized on our Facebook page, where 47 people had indicated their interest.

The Long Swamp issue is in limbo, as the neighboring buildings have hired a lawyer to prevent construction of a 14-story building (down from 17) between them. According to Laura Tracey-Coll, the developer imagines he is going to get a permit to do it. Finally, the Group continues to reach out to new and present members with social events. In early December we had an event at Brix City Brewery, where we introduced our new beer mug with the Sierra Club logo (free to newly signed up members). A severe snow storm kept the attendance down, but we will continue the outreach on February 25th, at Veggie Heaven in Teaneck, from 5 to 7pm.

There will also be more showings of two movies this winter, and a panel discussion on solar panels in May. In June we will have a picnic most likely at Rifle Camp.

MEETINGS AND EVENTS: Unless otherwise noted, meetings and outings are free and open to general public. Please check our Meetup page, Facebook page, or our website for meeting dates, times, and topics (see above for URLs). You can also email us at northjerseysierragroup@gmail.com.

Trail Maintenance: If you would like to be notified of our trail maintenance outings, please send Marty Cohen (pelil3141@gmail.com) an email.

The Group was organized in January 2011. Please contact any of the leaders below if you are interested in joining our campaigns to protect the environment. There are several North Jersey Group positions open.

Please also join the Gateway Group on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/groups/Gateway.NJ/. (also accessible from the NJ Chapter website)

The Gateway Group is serving Hillsdale, Elizabeth, and Essex County (except for Livingston, Millburn and Roseland)

Please contact Suzanne Trimmel, Gateway Group’s Chair, if you have any ideas or sug-
gestions for a program in the future. The Gateway Group is very grateful for the contributions of Anna Whitley, John Beadle, Barbara Conover, ZaShah Khademi, Bill Chappell, Steven Yafet, Anne Hirs, Paula Borenstein, and Brenda Toyloy.

The Gateway Group invites YOU to join in the activism and asks your support as we strive to address the many issues facing the urban as well as suburban communities.

Gateway has been involved in the recent Mass Audubon Climate March in NYC, stopping more surface parking lots in Newark, banning Fracking Fluids in Elizabeth, cosponsor-
ing a GMO documentary, and proposed development in Verona, a church expansion in Cedar Grove, the Pilgrim Pipeline, Keystone XL Pipeline, Fracking, Newark’s Covanta Incinerator, Passaic River Restoration Community Advisory Group, Maplewood Green Day, formerly the West Orange Seton Hall project, the Newark Water Wars, advocating
GROUP NEWS
(Continued from page 7)
for NJ Sierra endorsed candidates for State and National Offices, and supporting other environmental groups.

There are several vacant positions listed, along with a full list of officers. For further information about upcoming activities, volunteer opportunities, or to discuss any concerns please contact Suzanne Trimel 210-247-5057.

LIST OF UPCOMING EVENTS: There are no events currently on the calendar. For up to date information about programs please check the website.

Hudson County Group
Website: http://www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/hudson-county
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/HudsonCountySierraClub
E-mail: hudsonsierrach@gmail.com
OFFICERS: (*ExCom)
Chair: David ‘Ace’ Case* acecase88@gmail.com
Vice-Chair: Open position! Email Ace to volunteer!
Secretary: Patricia Hilliard* hilliard_patricia@hotmail.com
Treasurer: Open position! Email Ace to volunteer!
Political Chair: Seth Lubin* shlibn@gmail.com
Delegation Chair: Jon Perrelle* jonperelle@gmail.com
Program Chair: Hugh Evans* HLEvans.Sierra@gmail.com
Publicity Chair: John Ottomann* otto.pittsburgh@gmail.com
Membership Chair: Patricia Hilliard* hilliard_patricia@hotmail.com
Events/Programs: Steve Krinsky stevekrinsky@comcast.net
ExCom-at-Large: Nancy Booth* boothnancy1011@hotmail.com
Webmaster: John Ottomann* otto.pittsburgh@gmail.com
Art Director: Ann Marshall ann.marshall@gmail.com

MEETINGS AND EVENTS:
Third Annual Podluck Picnic: Sunday, July 15; 11am-1pm. Liberty State Park, 200 Pesin Dr, Jersey City. Bring your favorite dish with enough to share, or bring a pot of stew, chili, or cookies. pie, watermelon or bag of chips etc. Feel free to bring your own utensils to reuse. Liberty State Park at the picnic area behind the Admin. Bldg. look for the GREEN TABLES.

Hudson County Book Group. Thursday, July 26; 6:30-8pm. The Book Group will meet to read and discuss literature about environmental justice, conservation policy, climate change, sustainable development, etc. Look for updates on the NJ Sierra Club website and the Hudson County Sierra Club facebook page.

Hudson County Executive Committee Meeting: Sunday, Aug 19; 12-3:30 pm. Zepplin Hall Beer Garden, 88 Liberty View Dr, Jersey City. Regular meeting of the Executive Committee of the Hudson County Group. Free and open to the public.

Loantaka Group
(Morris and Union Counties (except for Elizabeth and Hillside), plus Livingston, Millburn and Roseland, approximately)

WEB SITE: http://www.sierrach.org/new-jersey/loantaka/
Loantaka now has a Facebook page. Please check it out and like it:
https://www.facebook.com/LoantakaGroup/NJC

OFFICERS:
Group Chair (Acting): Paul Sanderson 908-253-2414 paulmsanderson@aol.com
Treasurer: Paul Sanderson 908-253-2414 paulmsanderson@aol.com
Secretary: Scott McCarthy 813-767-5593 scottmcCarthy@thinklearn.net

Conservation Chairs:
Morris County: Jen Terrillo len@wildlifepreserves.org
Union County: Open Position!
Pineypaddlers Club:
Chair: Cea Carchia 908-892-7229 info@ccarchia.com
Programs: Ahlta Berthe ahlta.berthe@gmail.com
Fundraising Chair: Erin Hauker 732-669-0719 ericthomass@gmail.com
Outings Chair: Open Position!
Publicity Chair: Wynn Johanson 908-464-0442 wynn.johanson@comcast.net
Membership: Bruce Otwor 973-625-0792 strosr09@gmail.com
Webmaster: Wynn Johanson 908-464-0442 wynn.johanson@comcast.net

Upper Passaic
River Coor: Kathy O’Leary 908-647-2807 kcolearypcnj@gmail.com
Energy Issue Coor: Chris Fleishman 908-956-4855 chris.fleishman@gmail.com

If you might be interested in getting involved, come to one of our Executive Committee Meetings on the first Tuesday of the month and get to know us. Or come to one of our General Meetings on the second Wednesday of the month. There are no obligations and there will be no pressure.

To find out our activities, go to: http://sierrach.org/new-jersey/loantaka/
To join our e-mail list, go to: http://lists.sierrach.org/archives/nj/loantaka-news.html

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS: are held on the FIRST TUESDAY of the month at 7:30 pm at Library of the Chathams, 214 Main St, Chatham. All members are welcome at Executive Committee meetings. Right now, we have open positions on it! If you would like to find out more, please contact Paul Sanderson.

GENERAL MEETINGS: are held on the SECOND WEDNESDAY of the month at 7:30 pm at the Library of the Chathams, 214 Main St, Chatham. Come learn something new and make new friends. We welcome the chance to meet you and introduce ourselves. Please see the schedule, below, and join us! DIRECTIONS: posted on our website: http://sierrach.org/new-jersey/loantaka/

MEETING SCHEDULE:
July: summer vacation - no meeting
August: Summer vacations - no meeting

Sept 12: Meet your next Congresswoman, Mikie Sherrill! Mikie Sherrill is running for the NJ 11th District Congressional seat, which is currently held by Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen. Mikie will discuss her positions and then there will be a Q&A session.

ACTIVITIES:
The Loantaka Group is working with concerned citizens and local environmental organiza-
tions to protect open space and wildlife habitat in Morris and Union Counties, and to safeguard the water resources on which we all depend. In addition, the Group is actively involved in State-wide initiatives involving air quality, transportation, and envi-
ronmental legislation. Volunteers are always welcome. Call Paul at 908-235-2414.

Please consult our website (http://sierrach.org/new-jersey/loantaka/) for more information.

Central Jersey Group
(Mercer County and neighboring towns in adjoining counties)

WEB SITE: http://www.sierrach.org/new-jersey/central-jersey Or click from the NJ Chapter’s website. Please see the Outings list in this newsletter – or on Pineypaddlers.com.

OFFICERS:
Group Chair: Joanne Pannone 609-444-6992 pjawoodmeadowbrook@gmail.com
Group Vice Chair: Xiaoping Du xiapincling@yahoo.com
Secretary: Leona Fluck leona@pineypaddlers.com
Outings Coordinator: George and Leona Fluck georgeandleonaintown@gmail.com
Treasurer: Steve Eisenberg steveis@optimum.net
Program Chair: Joanne Pannone pjawoodmeadowbrook@gmail.com
Conservation Chair: Kip Cherry recycling@comcast.net
Webmaster: Scott Palmer KipTheSierraZsb2@gmail.com
Trails: Dave Matek matekDCC@Aol.com

Please join the Central Jersey Group of the NJ Sierra Club on the SECOND WEDNESDAY of each month, at 6pm. at Mercer County Community College. Pizza and snacks are provided before each presentation.

MCCC is located at 1200 Old Trenton Rd, West Windsor, 08550. Plenty of parking will be available in the normally-closed lot at the entrance to the Student Center. Just drive around to the entrance and you should find the entrance-arm in the sip-position.

We have much to talk about – current events, environmental policies, Climate Change, work with other community-based organizations to discuss our strategies – all to keep the momentum going to stop pipelines, polluting sources such as incinerators, generat-
ing plants, factories, LNG plants, power plants, airports, over-development, and opposition causing degradation to our air and water quality. We lobby for legislative changes to protect Mother Earth. We welcome your ideas and participation. Please RSVP to KipTheSierraZsb2@gmail.com.

MEETING SCHEDULE:
Our schedule of meetings is posted on the website and the Central Group’s Facebook Page.

Raritan Valley Group
(Middlesex and Somerset Counties and surrounding areas)


OFFICERS:
Chair: Gary Frederick 609-203-5382 gfredsierra@gmail.com
Membership: Rose Hornor 617-920-8006 ghhornor@yahoo.com
Political Chair: Daphne Speck-Barynski 732-930-5311 speckbary@comcast.net
Publicity Chair: Daphne Speck-Barynski 732-930-5311 speckbary@comcast.net
Secretary: Dan Levyio
gs: Open Position!
Treasurer: S. Pasicha
der: Paul Ehrlf
Outings: Events
Chair: Open Position!
College Liaison: Open Position!
Bee affairs: Brenda Bradley

Our monthly committee meetings are held on FOURTH WEDNESDAY of each month, from 7pm to 8:30, in New Brunswick. Meetings are open and free to the pub-
lic. We discuss the environmental news important to New Jersey and the Raritan Valley,plus discuss upcoming events, speakers, volunteer efforts, etc. To confirm the location of the meeting, please contact Gary Frederick at gfredsierra@gmail.com.

The issues of interest to our communities include but are not limited to:
1. Opposition to gas and oil pipelines that threaten our communities’ air and water.
2. Conservation and protection of the land that threaten our communities’ air and water.
3. Passage of and responsible enforcement of environmentally friendly zoning and development ordinances.
4. Prevention of conserved land from commercial or other development. We are for preservation of open space and preventing diversion of land from the state’s Green Acres program to commercial development.

We encourage you to attend your town’s planning/zoning board or land use board meetings. If you are aware of development proposals in your town that may have a negative environmental impact, please let us know by attending our meetings and by contacting Gary Frederick at gfredsierra@gmail.com. We are also interested in any envi-
ronmental news or events affecting Middlesex and Somerset counties and invite you to submit those items, as well.

Please share this newsletter with a non-member friend, inviting use of the coupon on p. 12.
**GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS:** Held bimonthly at the Skywalk Cafe in Toms River, except July and August. In July, we held our annual BBQ Fund-Raiser. August is an “outings month.”

**ACTIVITIES & ISSUES:** With all of the environmental challenges we face in the local, state, and national levels, our group is focused on a number of critical issues. Locally, we are state-wide fighting a myriad of over-development issues and our group with our allies is working hard to save Barnegat Bay and the Pinelands, two natural gems in Ocean County.

With Pres. Trump’s seemingly limitless assault on our environment, we’re also engaged in several national issues. Over 140 people from “Ocean” attended the People’s Climate March in April. And we work closely with the Alaska Wilderness League, the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance and Appalachian Voices to protect those precious sacred areas.

For more information on our activities and upcoming events contact our group Chair or visit our web site.

**West Jersey Group**
(Camden, Gloucester and Burlington Counties, approximately)

**WEBSITE:** http://sierraclub.org/new-jersey/WestJersey/

**FACEBOOK:** https://www.facebook.com/WestJerseyNSC

Link to our Facebook page and “Like” us to follow us on Twitter @WJSierraclub and Instagram @wjsierrachub.
GROUP NEWS
(Continued from page 9)

CURRENT ISSUES:

1. We have been blue-blazing the southern portion of what will be a continuous footpath between the southern and northern tips of New Jersey. Many others (and other groups) are contributing. Contact Dick for copies of some of our prelim- inary maps. Dick has also produced a brochure describing 14 historic walks in Egg Harbor City. Every municipality ought to have its own such brochure: this is a hint for you to try your hand at it! (2) There is “movement” on the prospect for a Community Solar Farm that would allow NJ Sierra Club members to purchase solar energy. More information will be provided as we get it.

2. Solar experiment in South Jersey, fueled by new legislation that prods the BPU, and a new continuous footpath between the southern and northern tips of New Jersey. Many others (and other groups) are contributing. Contact Dick for copies of some of our prelim- inary maps. Dick has also produced a brochure describing 14 historic walks in Egg Harbor City. Every municipality ought to have its own such brochure: this is a hint for you to try your hand at it! (2) There is “movement” on the prospect for a Community Solar Farm that would allow NJ Sierra Club members to purchase solar energy. More information will be provided as we get it.

3. Consider lobbying her/him to take on Clark’s Landing as an historic county park. (4) With the passage of a plastic bag restricting ordinance in Longport, there’s lobbying work to be done in each of our other municipalities! (5 etc.) Many other South Jersey issues are described in previous issues of this Newsletter; available on the Chapter website.

Some Possibly Relevant Activities of Allied Organizations:

August 1 and Sept 5 (first Wednesdays), 6:30pm: Atlantic County Friends of the Parks: Monthly meetings of Friends of the Parks, a group which works to improve and pro- mote the Atlantic County Park System. All are welcome. Warren Fox Nature Center (WFCN), 1346 American Way, Mays Landing. Milepost 15 on US Rte 50, 3½ miles south of Mays Landing. Contact Julie Akers, 609-452-5280.

July 25, Aug 22 and Sept 26: (fourth Wednesdays), 7pm: Atlantic Audubon Society is a lively member-organized with strong environmental programs and an excellent monthly on-line newsletter. Membership is free. Meetings are in the Galloway Twp Library, 306 E Jimmie Leeds Rd. www.AtlanticAudubon.org.

July 24 and Sept 25: (alternate fourth Thursdays), 6:30pm: Great Egg Harbor Scenic and Recreational River Council: Representatives of the 12 municipalities discuss river man- agement strategies. Open to the public. WFCN. Contact Julie Akers, 609-452-5280.

350.org South Jersey is an organization that opposes Climate Change, and that tries to hold monthly meetings at the Unitarian Universalist Church on Pomona Rd (Rte 575) opposite the Stockton College campus in Galloway Twp. Contact Glenn Klotz, glenn1949@gmail.com, or Ron Hutchinson. Hutchinson88@stockton.edu.

SINGLES SECTION
(A chapter-wide, special interest section offering hikes/cleanups, social gatherings, meetings, etc.)

Please join us! The NJ Singles Section was specifically created to offer a variety of sin- gles-oriented activities to NJ Sierra Club members and those who would like to know more about the group. Volunteers Needed! For more information, please email John at jkashwick@gmail.com or Robert at robertmz@att.net. Volunteers Needed! We are continuing to recruit volunteers and outings leaders. For more information, please email John at jkashwick@gmail.com or Robert at robertmz@att.net.

WELCOME TO THE HAUPT!

OFFICERS:

Chair: Ron Pate npate31@verizon.net

Outings Chair: Joyce Haddad jkhaddad@juno.com

Conservation Chair: Joyce White joyce.white.exec@gmail.com

Treasurer: Joe Prebish Joe.Prebish@kraft.com

Social Chair: Jeff Sovelove Hiker_Dood@yahoo.com

Programs Chair: Liz Prebish jkashwick@gmail.com

Publicity Coordinator: Liz Prebish jkashwick@gmail.com

Membership Chair: Lynn Kavanagh lynnkmaun@comcast.net

Nominations Chair: Nancy Sullivan nancysullivan@comcast.net

2015 Executive Committee members: Roxanna Fanelli, Joyce Haddad, Ron Pate, Joe Prebish, Jeff Sovelove, Daphne Speck Barronsky, Joyce White.

Volunteer Opportunities: We need volunteers in all areas of the state to run events. Volunteers needed as hike leaders, Fundraising Chair/Co-Chairs, and members of all com- mittees, including planning social events and conservation activities. Please attend an executive committee meeting or email any of the officers if you are interested. You may co-chair any position with a friend, if desired. We’re happy to help you learn the ropes.

GENERAL MEETINGS: Casual pizza gathering, introduction to club issues and activi- ties, speakers, and letter-writing at the Chatham Library. Dates and topics will be announced on our listserve; see above for subscription information.

ExCom meetings take place as needed at various locations. All welcome. Contact any officer for information.
Several of our Gateway and Hudson County Group members have contributed to this 11-mile effort, led by the NJ Bike & Walk Coalition and the 11th Annual National Memorial Trail Alliance (911 NMT). The Greenway is a rail-trail conversion of the former New York, Westfield Line. It was described in an article on p. 4 of the Jan.-March issue: of our newsletter and would include in a much larger, 15-mile route, connecting the three places named above: New Jersey City, Schencksville Pennsylvania and The Pinetum in northern Virginia. The collaboration is proposed as a fitting tribute to the innocent lives lost in the 9/11 terror attacks, but also an important step in the development of the Essex-Hudson Greenway. The 911 NMT Greenway group has been developing it into a shared use path for walkers, joggers, and bike riders.

A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all outings if the event description specifically includes a precaution: A parent or other responsible adult must accompany participants on all...
OUTINGS (Continued from page 11)

Volunteers Council for their 9th Annual Cleanup at Mercer County Park. Help us pick up litter and trash as we enjoy a scenic walk along lake Mercer and the lowell needed task. For you or your kayaks/canoes to collect trash on the lake (life jackets must be worn). Bring lunch and water. Bring gloves, trash bags will be provided. Contact leaders to confirm the cleanup. George & Leona F: 609-299-2574 or leona@pineypaddlers.com. (C)

Sep 8 (Sat): Paddles to the Cloisters via George Washington Bridge Urban Hike (Out of site). The 10.5 mile route will cover more miles in 8 hours on foot and bike paths and walkways. Favorites: the Palisades, the Hudson River, the George Washington Bridge, the Cloisters. Facilities: Restrooms available every 2 miles. Bring lunch and water required. Sneakers are advised. For the no-pets badge, please check the http://www.njpalisades.org/roswodloch.html. Please visit our maps for parking and trail information. Registration required. Contact leaders to confirm trip and meeting location. George & Leona F: 609-299-2574 or leona@pineypaddlers.com. (C)

Sep 14 (Fri): Canoe/Kayak Cedar Creek (Ocean Co.). 9am. It’s the Virgin boar paddle! We’ll eat cake and good cheer! Meet on foot to & from the Cloisters. The 1.5 mile route is the minimum. Bring one of the previous Paddles boats. Rentals can be rented from Cedar Creek Campinggrounds@cedarcreekresort.com or 529-504-1413. Contact leaders to confirm trip and meeting location George & Leona F: 609-329-5743 or leona@pineypaddlers.com. (W)

Sep 16 (Sun): Canoe/Kayak the Oswego River (Burlington Co). 9am. We walk 8 miles from Lake Oswego to Harttle River. Meet at lake Oswego. Boats can be rented from Mickey’s Pine Barrens Canoes/ Kayak Rental 609-299-1580 or www.nanoscanoeal.com. Contact leaders to confirm trip and participation George & Leona F: 609-299-2574 or leona@pineypaddlers.com. (W)

Sep 25 (Sun): Canoe/Kayak the Delaware and Raritan Canal on World Rivers Day (Somerset Co). 9:30 am. World Rivers Day is a global celebration of the world’s waters, observed every year on Sunday in September. The D&R Canal is a drinking water resource for almost 2 million residents of NJ. Our 4.5 mile round trip will be on the Gagaggowack-Bailey Mills section of the canal. Rentals are available from Giggstown Canoe and Kayak Rental. Bring lunch and water. Please register with leaders for details and to confirm the trip. George & Leona F: 609-299-2574 or leona@pineypaddlers.com. (R)

Sep 26 (Wed): Canoe/Kayak the Mullica River (Burlington Co.). 8:30 am. This is a 12 mile trip for Group/Section paddlers! Expect downpours and possible hundred degree temperatures! Also have launched Puntins Adventures and we’ll be Puntins Adventures for our shuttle with http://www.puntinsadventures.com. Contact leaders to confirm the trip and meeting location your participation: George & Leona F: 609-299-2574 or leona@pineypaddlers.com. (W)

Sep 29 (Sat): Hill Race Allaire State Park, Wall Twp (Monmouth Co). 9:10 am. An easy fall walk in this lovely county park. About 9 miles, easy pace, some ups and downs, bring plenty of water. Hiking Boots and day pack with snacks required. Supporter recommended. Contact leader to register and learn meeting place: John Landmesser. (SN)

Sept 50 (Sun): Canoe/Kayak the DAR Canal (Ocean Co.). 9am. It’s Autumn and we’re paddling the 12-mile section of the Canal from Cherry Tree Lane to Kangos. Rentals are not available. Contact leaders to confirm trip and meeting logistics George & Leona F: 609-299-2574 or leona@pineypaddlers.com. (C)

Upcoming ExCom Meetings:

All members are welcome to attend these monthly statewide policy deliberations, held on SECOND and FOURTH Sundays, and the second Monday of each month. For details, including agendas and travel instructions, are available from Rich Issacs, the Chair. (Best confirmed)

Conservation and/or Political Committee meetings usually start at 10am; Environmental Justice Committee at noon. Lunch is otherwise shared at noon. The main meeting starts at 1pm. The following items are presented by Group/Section Chairs; Outings are vetted by the Chapter Outings Chair, to propose articles, essays, letters, poetry and artwork. Guest speakers are invited to share their expertise with us. A few highlights from past issues:

- Jul 14, Aug 11 and Sep 8, all at the Reformed Church of Highland Park, 21-29th Ave. (about a mile north of the New Brunswick train station)

MEMBERSHIP COUPON

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MEMBERSHIP FEES

MEMBERSHIP COUPON

The Jersey Sierran: July–September 2018

The Chapter website, http://www.sierraclub.org/new-jersey/, has been upgraded to provide much useful information.

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July 4

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July 4
Gov. Murphy’s Roaring Start: A Good Week for the Environment

From a Press Release issued on Feb 2, edited by Maggie Ylnaz

The week of Jan 29 was good for the environment. In his first full week in office, Governor Murphy signed an Executive Order to put New Jersey back into the Northeastern States’ Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and another one to begin the construction of offshore wind turbines. He also proposed a full ban on fracking in New Jersey and dropped the suit previous Governor Christie had filed against the EPA’s Clean Power Plan. To top it off, the Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Plant announced that it will close in October of this year.

RGGI is a ten-state compact to reduce climate change, air pollution and fund clean energy projects. In 2015 Christie pulled NJ out of RGGI – without consulting the Legislature. RGGI had created almost 1,800 jobs and reduced pollution. Our withdraw- al had cost us more than $100 million. $500 million awaits us when we rejoin. That money will help environmental programs, expand renewable energy, create jobs, reduce greenhouse gases, and help middle class families save money on their electric bills.

On Jan 5th, Murphy cancelled a lawsuit against the Obama Administration’s Clean Power Plan. In the previous March, President Trump had signed an Executive Order to eliminate the plan, despite the fact that the carbon pollution from fossil fuels is linked to life-threatening air pollution like the smog that triggers asthma attacks. A consortium of environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, is challenging the Trump Administration’s repeal of this Plan.

On Jan 11th, Murphy signed an Executive Order to pursue NJ’s offshore wind goal of $500 MW by 2030. The Order directs the Board of Public Utilities to find a funding mechanism. Christie had signed the Wind Economic Development Act, but never pro- duced financing for it.

On Feb 1st, Governor Murphy sent a letter to the Delaware River Basin Commission stating New Jersey’s position on their proposed fracking policy. (The Upper Basin includes the Marcellus Shale formations in Pennsylvania and New York State – that contain natural gas.) Murphy will only support the policy if it absolves New Jersey from responsibility for accepting frack water. This will protect the drinking water for more than three million people in NJ.

On Feb 2nd, Exelon Generation Corp. announced it would close the Oyster Creek Nuclear Power Station in October, a year ahead of schedule, and a decade earlier than it is licensed for. Oyster Creek has been a safety threat to Ocean County, polluting Barnegat Bay with heat – killing thousands of fish over the years. The plant has suf- fered severe compressor failure, mercury leaks, bomb failures, and drywall liner erosion. Shutting it down will reduce algal blooms, improve fish populations and help restore the overall ecosystem of Barnegat Bay.

This first week was good, but there is much more ahead of us: electric vehicles, clean energy, the “plastics” problem, fixing public transportation, Environmental Justice, and protections for clean air, clean water, and open space.

Murphy Commits to Rejoining RGGI

From a press release issued on Feb 26, edited by Joe Testa

Governor Phil Murphy has formally notified governors of states that belong to the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) of his administration’s commitment to rejoining the regional climate change compact. RGGI is currently comprised of Delaware, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont. This follows the Governor’s January Executive Order put- ting our state back into the initiative. There is legislation pending implement RGGI, and to also prevent future Governors from pulling out.

By working with the governors of the region, New Jersey has taken an important step towards a greener future and fighting back against climate change. Our residents have seen the impacts of climate change firsthand and demand action. A report by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners found that, before Gov. Christie pulled us out of the compact, New Jersey’s participation in RGGI created $151 million in economic value and almost 1,800 jobs in the state. Throughout the region, RGGI saved customers $1.1 billion on their electric bills and $174 million on gas bills, offsetting the $912 million paid by customers. RGGI’s ener- gy efficiency programs helped keep $705 million in the regional economy instead of going out of state fossil fuel interests.

The money collected from RGGI will help environmental programs, expand renew- ably, create jobs, reduce greenhouse gases, and help middle class families save money on their electric bills. In neighboring New York, RGGI has generated $700 mil- lion for investment in clean energy and energy efficiency and created 16,000 new jobs since the program started. They are investing $850 million in a clean energy bank to give out loans to businesses with revenue from the RGGI program.

With the Trump Administration’s constant rollbacks of environmental regulations and denial of climate change, it’s more important than ever that New Jersey create strong environmental and clean energy goals. Rejoining RGGI is just the beginning. It’s up to the states to work together to reduce greenhouse gasses because the fossil fuel in the White House won’t.

Monster in the Meadowlands: Murphy Must Reject Proposed Power Plant

From a press release issued on Apr 25, edited by Joe Testa

The Diamond Generating Corp. is looking for NJDEP approval to build a gas-fueled power plant in the Meadowlands. The proposed $1.5 billion North Bergen Liberty Generating Project would be one of the largest power plants in the state, sending electricity to New York City. The plant would go on a 15-acre parcel near Railroad Ave on the banks of Bellman’s Creek in an industrial section of the town.

Putting a giant natural gas power plant in the heart of the Meadowlands is a terrible idea. Not only would it threaten an already sensitive ecosystem, but it would pollute our air and water and seriously undermine our renewable energy goals. The DEP can- not approve permits to allow this plant to ruin the Meadowlands near communities already overburdened by pollution.

These types of plants are monsters of air pollution, emitting heavy metals and chem- icals such as ammonia and nitrogen oxide. Natural gas power plants are not a clean bridge fuel as some people claim - they are a bridge to the 1990’s.

Our environmental justice communities already have some of the worst air quality in the nation. Building another massive gas power plant will only exacerbate their health problems. We have serious ozone pollution in New Jersey; almost every county that conducts monitoring has a failing grade for ozone. Our ozone levels are so high that it may put sensitive individuals at risk, including children, the elderly and people suffering from asthma, heart disease and other lung ailments.

A monster plant like this would use millions of gallons of water per day for its cool- ing system. The resulting steam will carry downwind heavy metals like lead, algae- cides and fungicides, and volatile organic compounds. This will have significant impacts on environment around this facility. The companies that make cooling towers warn that this chemical drift could kill plant life near cooling towers.

This project must be examined in context with the other infrastructure it would connect to, and lead to being built in New Jersey. There would be more pipelines and compressor stations, including the proposed Gateway Project expansion. Despite our state having an oversupply of natural gas, fossil fuel interests are continuing to push for more gas pipelines and infrastructure. Much of this gas is likely to go out of state or export, not to service the people of New Jersey.

The Meadowlands is an oasis of nature, an environmentally sensitive area in one of the most developed places anywhere in the country. In the Meadowlands you can be kayaking between salt grass and then turn the corner to see the New York skyline. Its resources are important for flood control, fisheries, and migratory birds. Even though New Jersey has the lowest MTA ridership in the nation. Building another massive gas power plant will only exacerbate their health problems. We have serious ozone pollution in New Jersey; almost every county that conducts monitoring has a failing grade for ozone. Our ozone levels are so high that it may put sensitive individuals at risk, including children, the elderly and people suffering from asthma, heart disease and other lung ailments.

Our environmental justice communities already have some of the worst air quality in the nation. Building another massive gas power plant will only exacerbate their health problems. We have serious ozone pollution in New Jersey; almost every county that conducts monitoring has a failing grade for ozone. Our ozone levels are so high that it may put sensitive individuals at risk, including children, the elderly and people suffering from asthma, heart disease and other lung ailments.