



eco-logue

Explore, enjoy
and protect
the planet

ROCHESTER REGIONAL GROUP

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Your Circle of Influence

by Laura Arney

We often think that our lowly efforts can not possibly make a difference in changing how government conducts business, how companies make decisions, or how groups operate. But if you stop to think about it, there are many times when you come into contact with individuals, government, or companies on a routine basis, either directly or indirectly through the choices you make. These are teachable moments.

For instance, when it comes time to make a yearly contribution to your retirement IRA, talk about what you are willing to support. In this setting, money talks. There is a real estate

investment trust that rehabilitates old buildings into new apartments. That's on my "OK" list. On the other hand, an REIT that funds office development complexes is a "no-go."

Look at the plastic recycling code on the bottom of grocery products you buy. If there are two similar products and one is in a container that is recyclable and the other isn't, choose the recyclable product. Are you wondering about the bottom line of your family budget? Remember to think about the future health consequences of incinerating plastic. Often it becomes dioxin, a persistent environmental toxin.

Do your civic, recreational or church groups still buy Styrofoam cups for coffee? This material will not biodegrade. Why not suggest paper or reusable cups? Better yet, you could buy the first box of cups as a gesture of your commitment. The cost in up front dollars is cheaper than environmental degradation. Styrofoam containers are also used in vending machines that dispense fishing bait. I have seen a river bank strewn with this litter. Ask the vender or store to use another product. Public pressure does change policies.

Make your Actions part of the Solution. And have a happy and re-creative summer.

Willowpoint and Irondequoit Bay

by Dan Grisley
Wetlands Committee Member

At the Willowpoint townhouse development in Webster, the builder, Mark IV, has made a proposal to the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC). This proposal, if permitted, will negatively impact the environmentally sensitive steep slopes and coastal area of Irondequoit Bay. The plan would involve widening and paving a narrow dirt road over the slopes from the plateau to the Bay. In addition, a dock extending 270 feet into the Bay having 46 boat slips is proposed.

Currently, storm water from the development is neither correctly retained or filtered before dumping silt into a class I wetland. In addition,

construction practices have resulted in severe erosion both on the slopes and on the road.

The steep slopes and shoreline in this beautiful area should be left in their natural state. They are part of the largely-undeveloped southeast shore of the Bay, one of the last such pristine areas.

A public hearing will be held by the NYDEC, probably in June. The date, and details will be published in local papers, and at the web site: rochesterenvironment.com.

Only a strong turnout of people speaking in favor of preserving this ecologically valuable area will prevent its degradation.

Environmental Education Training Program

The Rochester Group still has several openings for volunteers who want to attend the Atlantic Chapter's free environmental education training program. (See article in April/May *eco-logue*, page 3.) The Chapter plans to train a few Sierra Club volunteers who will coordinate and help others to work on state conservation problems. The focus will be to work toward making a difference in a few selected political races in key state areas. Rochester is one of these areas. *If interested in receiving this weekend training please call the Sierra Club number (585) 244-2625. Persons with some experience with Sierra Club are preferred.*



FROM THE CHAIR

by Frank Regan

Environmental Problems Don't Just Fade Away

Environmental problems create an interesting insight into that old philosophical paradox: If a tree falls in the forest and there is nobody around to hear it, does it make a sound? The answer from an environmentalist's point of view is, "Well, yeah."

Whether or not we are aware of any disruption in the state of our surroundings that keep us alive and well, it still occurs. Hence, if global warming turns out to be true ((which despite what Michael Crichton(of Jurassic Park fame) believes, most experts know is happening now)), then the seas will rise and millions of people will be displaced. And that's not the half of it.

No amount of ignorance on environmental problems will stop their consequences. If the media chooses not to cover changes in our local environment, those changes will still occur. Also, if our government plays down environmental threats and our media chooses not to focus on possible changes in our life support system, does that mean our environment becomes less important to our daily lives? Of course not. Nature will do what it does, a slave to its hard and cold rules, often seeking a cruel, dispassionate balance. The tree still falls in the forest and it may fall on us.

So, in these extraordinary times when media resources are at an all time

high, and the media's attention on the crucial issue of our environment is at an all time low, what are you going to do? Why not demand that the media do some muckraking on the environment? Why not petition your government to "preserve, protect and defend" our well-being? Why not ask the Democrat and Chronicle, why in world they would let Cory Ireland go, one of our area's top environmental reporters. Our best environmental reporters are our eyes and ears, whether we like the information or not. Oh, and get your neighbors to join our Sierra Club group and pitch in. If we cannot depend on our government or the media, then maybe we will just have to inform and protect the environment ourselves.

New York's Largest Landfill Owners Approach Sierra Club

Tour of Seneca Meadows in Seneca Falls Offered

by Hugh Mitchell

The Rochester and Iroquois Groups of the Atlantic Chapter have been approached by the law firm representing the owners of Seneca Meadows landfill in Seneca Falls. The landfill owners are seeking a license to expand the operation by 75 acres. But Seneca Meadows is no meadow. It is a huge mountain of garbage which receives wastes from as far away as New York City. According to Rick Marx, consulting engineer for the Nixon, Peabody law firm, many of the most up-to-date environmental controls will be used in designing the expansion, including moving a creek, appropriately named Black Creek, which now flows through the property into a nearby wetland. Wetland mitigation measures are planned, measures which will need close scrutiny.

We have been offered a guided tour of Seneca Meadows by the operators,

and this promises to be like no other tour you have ever taken. We will drive to the top of the landfill, the highest point in the county (approximately the height of the Xerox building). From there we will be able to view Montezuma Wildlife Refuge which is in the drainage area. The tour is planned jointly with the Iroquois (Syracuse) Group of the Sierra Club and will start from the entrance to Seneca Meadows at 10 AM.

If you would like to participate in this tour, meet us at the lower parking lot of the First Unitarian Church at 9am, Saturday, June 11, for car-pooling and/or a map. Plan on about four hours. We can get together with the Iroquois Group for lunch after the tour. (No Garbage Plates please.)

Recycling Plant Tour

Most people don't think a lot about where things go after they are thrown away. You put stuff at the curb, and after a while it disappears. But that isn't really the end of the story. Monroe County has a progressive recycling program and has recently upgraded some of the equipment at its recycling center. This fall, the Sierra Club will sponsor a tour of the facility to learn how material is sorted and recycled, and where it goes in its next life.

We haven't fixed a date yet but expect the tour to be some time in September. Look for more details in the next issue of the eco-logue.

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 living in the Rochester Region, and available at \$10 per year to others.

Preserving Wetlands

by Mike Seager

The paperwork and bureaucracy involved in a construction project is daunting. Building a housing development might require dealing with the local town's planning, zoning, and conservation boards, the state Departments of State and Environmental Conservation, and the federal Army Corps of Engineers. All of these organizations require different permits, sometimes with conflicting requirements. Given the number of projects that get built, and the speed with which they seem to go up, you might think there is a honed and polished process for making sure all of these requirements are met. There is not.

Consider, for example, a hypothetical case in which a developer wants to build a project that will involve filling a small wetland. To the casual observer, the project might seem hard to hide from people in the town, and therefore hard to avoid going through the town's permitting process. But the DEC

personnel, who cover a large area of the state, are not apt to notice that a new project could effect a small wetland. It is the responsibility of the developer, and perhaps the town officials, to ensure that the DEC is notified of the project and that its procedures are followed. Army Corps personnel cover an even wider swath of territory, with only a couple dealing with all of western New York, and so they are easily left out of the whole process.

If the project's contractor and local officials don't notify these other agencies of the project, and so don't apply for their permits, how do they ensure compliance with environmental and other regulations? Obviously, they can't regulate a project if they don't know about it.

This is where ordinary citizens come in, and this is a lot of what the wetlands committee does. If there is a project that seems to be in violation of regulations, the first step is usually to figure out what agencies should be involved, and

then call them to see if they have issued permits for the work. In many cases we find they are unaware of a project, and our telling them about it is sufficient for them to get involved and ensure that the appropriate regulations are followed.

If you see a project that might be in violation of regulations, whether it is destroying wetlands, not handling stormwater drainage properly, causing erosion, or anything else detrimental to the environment, make some phone calls. The town planning board and the DEC are good places to start. If you don't want to do that, call somebody on the wetlands committee and we will try to make some of those calls. You can't expect to block many projects entirely, but you can try to ensure that they are carried out responsibly.

(For the wetlands committee, call Dan Grisley at (585) 671 5388, or e-mail Mike Seager at mike_seager@alum.rpi.edu.)

Rochester Group Receives Grant to Study Water Authority Expansion Plans

New \$140 million water treatment plant planned for Webster

by Hugh Mitchell

The Monroe County Water Authority (MCWA) is planning to construct a large, very expensive new water treatment plant in Webster. It will handle *50 million gallons per day* (mgd) initially, and will eventually move up to handling 150 mgd when fully built out. The cost of this development is estimated by MCWA to run between \$140 to \$150 million. Jim Smith, Director and Dick Metzger, Project Engineer have given several selective presentations about their plans. But the Sierra Club feels such a major change in our regional water systems deserves fuller public airing before it is approved, particularly because of MCWA's

history as one of the most important utilities to lay the foundation for sprawl development in Monroe County. (*See Sierra Club paper: Sprawl Follows the Pipes - 2000*) We need to ask "Why?" Why is such a large expansion of the piping system needed when population is not expanding and economic growth has been slow? Further, what will be the effect of the new plant on the Rochester City Water System, particularly on the water sharing contract which expires in 2008?

In order to find answers and to initiate public discussion the Rochester Regional Group has applied to the Chapter Conservation Program and has

received an \$800 grant to fund research on the MCWA project. We intend to hire investigative reporter Jack Bradigan Spula to produce this study, as he did with our paper on the dangerous toxic wastes remaining at Air Force Plant 51 on Dewey Avenue. (*See: Deeply Planted - 2004*). Once the paper is complete we would like to hold one or more public hearings in Webster and possibly elsewhere.

If you are interested in helping with this important investigation please call our Sierra Club number and volunteer to join the Webster Water Treatment Committee. (585) 244-2625.



Meet the new ExCom

Here they all are, left to right, top to bottom

David Ruekberg (Fund Raising) has served as Fundraising Chair and Treasurer. He is a poet, and teaches English at Hilton High School. He lives on the Oatka Creek with his wife Leah.

Hugh Mitchell (Chapter ExCom rep) has had a strong love of nature and interest in preserving the environment since growing up in Northern New Jersey. After WWII he witnessed beautiful fields, streams, even huge wood lands being destroyed to build dull sub-divisions and malls. He has been a social worker and also has worked in the civil rights movement and later with Metro Act. His first Rochester environmental activity was to organize and lead a group called Actfore in an eight-year battle to save Genesee Valley Park. After retirement from New York State employment, he has spent his “social action” time working with the Sierra Club.

Michael Dahl (Political Chair) serves as political action chairman and as an active member of the energy committee. His main concern is global warming. He works as a clinical psychologist.

Bob Siegel (Energy Chair) is a professional engineer, author, inventor and consultant. He has written and published articles on sustainability and fuel cell vehicles. He has been interested in renewable energy and conservation since the seventies and would like to see this group do more to promote their use in this region.

Deb Muratore (Treasurer) joined the Sierra Club in 1989 (called the Year of Recycling). After a year she became the Conservation Chair. In 1997 she stepped down to return to school to finish her BS. She still attended meetings and tried to help out behind the scenes. After her graduation in 2002 she re-joined the Ex-Com as the Treasurer. Since then she has been to San Francisco for National Treasurer Training, with a follow-up training workshop with the Atlantic Chapter.

Laura E. Arney (Clean Air/Clean Water) is a biologist with a minor in chemistry. After obtaining her Environmental Management Science Certificate at RIT and an internship at Assateague Island National Seashore, she became interested in the Genesee River and Clean Air/Clean Water issues. Recreational canoeing and kayaking satisfy her need to get away and get outdoors.

Cecelia Crone (Membership Chair) is the mother of two grown daughters and currently works with the Rochester City Court.

Sara Rubin (Wetlands Chair) is a Rochester artist who has done graduate work in water biology and has attended and spoken at local and regional conferences on wetland habitats. She is interested promoting the preservation of the biodiversity of natural areas, especially vulnerable wetland systems,

through ecologically sensitive development (or non-development) on both the local and national scale.

Dina Stein (Secretary) has served in the workplace in many capacities but most recently as a Global Services Coordinator for SBC. She is a licensed massage therapist. She lives in Webster and is now a stay-at-home mom raising her two children with her husband Robin. She is interested in helping the Sierra club because she wants her children to know what a beautiful place this world can be.

Janice Clements (Co-Chair) has a diverse work experience, which spans corporate business, healthcare, and education/training. Her background includes quality improvement, team leadership and professional coaching. She enjoys the outdoors and the Rochester seasons and wishes more folks will get outside and enjoy the outdoors!

Frank J. Regan (Co-Chair) Frank has been active in the Rochester area environmental movement for almost twenty years. His Masters is in English, but his education on our environment came mostly by working with other people and managing his web site RochesterEnvironment.com. He hopes to help make the Rochester Group of the Sierra Club one of the most effective environmental groups around by radically increasing our interaction with our membership through insightful, monthly programs, an extensive e-mail list, post cards, web site, and anything else that will enable us to move quickly to protect our Rochester area environment.

Ray Nelson (Publications) Towards the end of his working career as an engineer at Kodak, Ray became more and more concerned about environmental issues. He joined the Sierra Club in 1981 but didn't become an “active” member until after retirement in 1986. He became Secretary for two years and in 1992 began a seven-year term as Chairperson. Since then he has been editing the *eco-logue* newsletter plus other publications as the need arises.

OUTINGS

Organic Farm Tour & Picnic Saturday, July 23

Join us for a summer afternoon tour and farm picnic at Peacework Organic Farm in Newark, NY. The farm tour and organic education program will be led by Elizabeth Henderson, an expert organic farmer. We will meet at 1:00 PM, Saturday July 23, at the lower parking lot of First Unitarian Church for car-pooling and/or map & directions. The tour will begin at 2 PM and will be followed by a picnic. Bring a dish to pass and basic picnic things including liquids. The farm will provide organic salad vegetables. We will be back to the Unitarian Church by about 7 PM. For additional information contact Hugh Mitchell at 244-2625.

Walk a Little-Known Wilderness Saturday, August 20

Explore a hidden treasure close to home. Once a target practice area for Rochester Police and now abandoned, the hills and forests southeast of Irondequoit Bay offer special opportunities for solitude and exploration. Meet at 9:30am in the lower parking lot at the Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Rd. South for carpooling. Level of difficulty: easy. Contact Howard Camp for additional information: 473-1410, or at thecamps@frontiernet.net.



Hiking & Visit Weathersfield Wind Farm Saturday, September 17 (tentative)

A guided tour of the 10-wind-generator wind farm near Gainsville, N.Y. plus hiking on local trails. All day outing. Details to follow.

ADK Outdoor Expo by Mike Seager

On Saturday, June 11, from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM, the Genesee Valley Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club will host the Outdoor Expo at the beach area of Mendon Ponds Park. The ADK Expo is a gathering of lots of outdoor clubs and vendors, with table displays, opportunities to try canoes, kayaks, and other equipment, and a wide array of workshops. There is something of interest to anybody who is interested in the outdoors.

The Sierra Club will have a table there, to promote our message of environmental stewardship to people who appreciate the outdoors. We need volunteers to help staff the table. Volunteering is easy: take a couple hours

to chat with people who stop by, fill them in on what we are doing and what we are going to do, hand them some relevant fliers, and answer whatever questions they have. (We will have a couple people at the table all the time, so there will be somebody around to help with the tough questions.)

If you can spare the time, we would appreciate your help. I suggest planning to spend half a day, or even all day, at the Expo. Take a couple hours of that time to help at the Sierra Club table, and spend the rest of the time enjoying the show. If you can help, please call me (Mike Seager) at (585) 414-6511, or send me a note at mike_seager@alum.rpi.edu.

CALENDAR

June 9	Thursday	5:30 PM	ExCom picnic	6 Sibley Place
June 11	Saturday	9:00 AM	Tour of Seneca Meadows Landfill (see page 2)	Meet at First Unitarian Church²
June 11	Saturday	6:00 PM	ADK Event (see page 5)	Mendon Ponds Park
June 21	Tuesday	7:30 PM	Alternative Energy Committee	25 Brook Hill Lane, Apt. E ^{4,5}
June 28	Tuesday	7:30 PM	Wetlands Committee	150 Sunset Drive, Brighton
June 28	Tuesday	7:00 PM	Great Lakes Committee meeting	Brighton Library, 2300 Elmwood Ave. ⁶
July 19	Tuesday	7:30 PM	Alternative Energy Committee	25 Brook Hill Lane, Apt. E ^{4,5}
July 23	Saturday	1:00 PM	Outing: Organic Farm Tour & Picnic (see page 5)	Meet at First Unitarian Church²
July 26	Tuesday	7:30 PM	Wetlands Committee	150 Sunset Drive, Brighton
Aug. 11	Thursday	6:30 PM	ExCom meeting ¹	Chestnut Court, St. John's Meadows
Aug. 14	Sunday		Eco-logue Deadline	
Aug. 16	Tuesday	7:30 PM	Alternative Energy Committee	25 Brook Hill Lane, Apt. E ^{4,5}
Aug. 20	Saturday	9:30 AM	Outing: Little Known Wilderness (see page 5)	Meet at First Unitarian Church²
Aug. 23	Tuesday	7:30 PM	Wetlands Committee	150 Sunset Drive, Brighton ³
Sept. 17	Saturday	TBD	Weathersfield Wind Farm (see page 5)	TBD

¹Open to members. Call Hugh Mitchell at 244-2625.

²220 Winton Rd. South

³Call Sara at 442-6890 to confirm

⁴Call Bob at 256-3846 to confirm date

⁵Call Michael Dahl, 586-4618 for directions

⁶In large public room off of magazine room

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 and put "subscribe SC Mailing List" in the subject line.

Call 585-244-2625 for information about Sierra Club events and voice mail.