

City Sierran

Sierra Club NYC's May Newsletter

Get Involved This Summer!

Paint a roof white. Plant a tree. Pitch in at an urban farming project. Help organize an event in your neighborhood. Post at SC NYC's Facebook page. Here's who to call to get involved. Read this newsletter for more information.

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A Message from the Co-Chair

By Dan Miner

There are more than 10,000 Sierra Club members in New York City, and this newsletter is for you. You probably donate to support Sierra Club's National activities, and may not pay much attention to the network of volunteers at the local group and state chapter levels. But you should. Much of Sierra Club's clout is derived from its large and active membership and volunteer base. One might compare National staff and programs to the visible portions of the tree, and the volunteer networks to its roots. Underground, within the roots themselves, two visions compete. The outcome will determine the future of Sierra Club.



The Club's National programs depend for stable funding on the long time members who know it well. Newer donors can choose among many environmental groups to support. **As the oldest grassroots environmental organization in the US, Sierra Club urgently needs to stay current, in order to keep attracting new members.** The replacement of Carl Pope with new Executive Director Michael Brune, the former director of Rainforest Action Network and a Greenpeace staff member, reveals a revitalizing sea change. **But local volunteers are the face of Sierra Club in NYC. If we are perceived as relevant, dynamic, and constructive, our activities will encourage New Yorkers to become new members. If we are perceived less positively, the reverse is also true.**

Yes, we support wilderness, conservation, and hiking, but those are far from our daily urban experience. To engage the majority of New Yorkers, those under 35, and those of diverse ethnic and socioeconomic groups, we must present a vision of sustainable urban life that transcends the often insular concerns of white, middle class environmentalists. Or, Sierra Club's presence in NYC will shrivel away like a drying leaf.

This newsletter represents our evolving experiment, to present the contemporary urban voice of Sierra Club. Some of us prefer to promote hands-on events that embody positive responses to climate change, and to partner with functioning green initiatives, bringing them to communities in need of them. We can connect the dots, instead of reinventing the wheel. We expect these projects to appeal to new participants, growing the Sierra Club NYC community of activists and new members. By articulating a positive vision of urban sustainability, in which our neighbor's short term and long term interests are better met, we can encourage more and more New Yorkers to get involved and make green choices.

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Painting Roofs White Keeps NYC Cool

NYC Urban Farming Projects Need You



By John Kolp

Get out on the roof with us this summer!

Last fall the City's pilot Cool Roofs program in Long Island City, Queens painted 100,000

square feet of traditional black tar paper roofs with highly solar reflective white paint. More than 30 NYC Sierrans volunteered last year on multiple dates and have the white paint on their jeans still to prove it! This summer's expanded program has an even more ambitious goal: painting 500,000 square feet of roofs.

NYC Cool Roofs is a green initiative to reduce energy costs, greenhouse gas emissions, and local temperatures by coating the roofs white. The coating is a three step process and buildings will require at least 3 days of work with 24 rain-free hours in between each step in order to be completed. Volunteers are encouraged to commit to taking a roof through all three phases, but can volunteer for one day. There will be many work dates - on weekdays as well as weekend - scheduled as the project unfolds.

You don't need any prior skills or experience. All volunteers are provided with training on the project and safety instructions. Simply bring your lunch and water bottle with you. Wear old work clothes. T-shirts and shorts or jeans are fine. Light-weight shoes such as sneakers are sufficient. Wear a hat and sunglasses.

NYC Cool Roofs is also seeking non-profit facilities willing to get their roof painted, for lower air conditioning needs, and lower energy bills. Since labor is the biggest cost in these projects, nonprofits with lots of friends willing to pitch in can save a lot of money quickly. Sierra Club will help your organization recruit volunteers from your neighborhood.

To register or for more information contact John L. Kolp at 212-400-8230 or jlkolp@yahoo.com.

NYC Service Cool Roof Tool Kit

http://www.nycservice.org/pdf/nycservice_toolkit_coolroofs.pdf

NYC DDC Cool and Green Roof Manual

http://www.nyc.gov/html/ddc/downloads/pdf/cool_green_roof_man.pdf

By Stephanie Corrado

It's time to get outdoors and enjoy the weather. If you're up for something more down to earth than a walk in the park, but don't want to make the long trip out of town for a wilderness excursion, take part in one of the City's many urban farming projects. They'll gladly welcome you for a few hours. No experience needed. **In the next few months, we'll be emailing Sierra Club members to come as a group for specific gardening days. For details, and email updates, contact Stephanie Corrado at 917.421.9719 or Stephanie.corrado@gmail.com.** Some partners so far include:



East New York Farms, United Community Centers, 613 New Lots Avenue, Brooklyn. Open volunteer days on the first and third Saturdays through the summer. Staff and interns will teach volunteers.

Added Value / Red Hook Community Farm, Bklyn. One of the City's largest urban farms. Saturdays through November.

Upper West Side Community Garden. Learn about flower gardening and landscaping; help host community events. Experienced supervision on weekends.

The Old Stone House, Park Slope. Assist the resident permaculture teacher with various gardening & composting projects.

St. Luke's Garden, West 141st Street, NY, NY. A community vegetable garden.

Horticultural Society of NY in East Harlem, the Bronx, Bed Stuy, & Staten Island. HSNY, the City's oldest horticultural organization, has volunteer opportunities at several urban farm projects. HSNY provides job training to some of New York's most underserved communities, including families and at-risk youth, constituents of social service organizations, and men and women who are and were incarcerated.

- HSNY is collaborating with Manhattan Land Trust's East Harlem Farm Project, which encompasses Papos Farm, Carver Garden and the East Harlem Community Garden. Gardening workshops as well as volunteer work days.

- HSNY is creating an urban rooftop farm at WHEDCO's Intervale Green in the Bronx - the largest multi-family, EnergyStar affordable housing project in the nation.

New Direction in SC NYC Communications

By Gary Nickerson

At its March 11th meeting, the ExCom approved a report sketching a new strategy for communications for the New York City Group. The presentation described some of the major changes in how people receive and share information in the past twenty years. It then outlined a strategy that tries to take advantage of new technologies to reach beyond our base membership to other New York environmental activists we should target. The strategy relies primarily on Internet-based tools, including increasing our use of email: a more interactive web-site: and social networking tools like Facebook and Twitter. We would continue to publish the Newsletter, but most of its content would originate in our electronic media. Also, we would provide members with the option of getting the Newsletter electronically, rather than through the mail.

Changes have occurred both in Sierra Club membership and in the environmental activist community in New York. Nationally, the median age of Sierra Club members is 50, significantly older than the median age of American adults. Moreover, while Sierra Club membership among New Yorkers has declined substantially in the past decade, a whole new generation of environmental activists is emerging in the City.

In addition, how we get information has undergone one of the most profound changes in the past twenty years since the invention of the printing press. These include the virtual replacement of "snail" mail by email for personal communications; the rise of the web; video-sharing sites like YouTube and blogs; social sites like MySpace, Facebook, and LinkedIn; and personal communications with text-messaging and Twitter.

The use of newspapers and magazines has gone down as getting information from the Internet has increased. Most major newspapers now publish stories on their websites in advance of the actual print publication and are desperately trying to find a new business model that does not rely primarily on print. Only television, which long-ago displaced radio in importance, has held its place as a communications medium.

To meet these changes, we need to adopt a strategy that re-orientes our communications to new, younger activists while still meeting the needs of our current membership base. The strategy we propose includes a number of elements.

- We will create a mailing list of environmental activists that, like a similar national list, includes not only Sierra Club members, but also new, younger activists and supporters who are not in the Sierra Club. Thanks to Antuan Cannon, we now have a Facebook fan page, which can enable us to create a community within the Facebook world and even draw those who are not on Facebook into it. (By the way, the fastest growing group of Facebook participants is women 45 and older.)

- We will establish a presence on Twitter, the short messaging service, which is especially useful for alerts and quick requests. Also, we will look at texting both for networking and for instant calls to action as well as a fund-raising tool.

- We will redesign and rebuild the website so that we can more rapidly post content and make it more interactive. We and other environmental activists are engaged in many ongoing issues that should produce a stream of posts. Besides written posts, the website should contain videos, e.g., interviews of members and podcasts. Also, the site can provide an outlet for some of the work of our photography committee that is now seen only by a few. All of these steps will both increase our reach and make for more timely communications.

We will continue to publish our Newsletter. We will make two changes. We will offer an electronic delivery option, so that people can access and, if they wish, print the Newsletter from the web. This should be attractive to our membership because it flows from our values: It reduces the amount of printed paper that quickly gets recycled or trashed. It also saves money.

In addition, most of the content from the Newsletter will come from our ongoing electronic communications, including web posts and other material we put online. This will streamline the process of Newsletter production and provide those who read the newsletter in printed form with the major material we are putting online.

To carry out this project, we will need to recruit a number of writers. Fortunately, the material for content is great. At the ExCom meeting, for example, we had three reports, in one hour, about a debate between Annie Wilson and the Vice President of the Heritage Society, which was videotaped; an interview by Len Maniace; and upcoming activities by the Million Tree project. All of these could provide grist for all our media outlets. I do not think we will want for content.

SC NYC Group Executive Committee Election Decision & Update

The recent election for the group Executive Committee is not valid according to the national Club because members had a significantly shorter time for voting than the minimum four weeks required by the group bylaws. In reviewing complaints about the election, the national Club also found that the group must reduce the size of its Executive Committee from fifteen to nine members to comply with the group bylaws.

A new election must be held to choose five Executive Committee members with terms to expire at the end of 2011. More information regarding the schedule for this election, including a call for nominations, follows. Later this year, the group will hold another election to choose four members with terms to expire at the end of 2012. We greatly appreciate the participation of our members in NYC Group elections and will strive to ensure completion of valid elections in the future. If you have questions about this announcement, please contact national Club volunteers Tom Libby at tomlibby@yahoo.com or Jim Steffens at jjsteff@mhtc.net

NYC Group Executive Committee Election Notice: Call for Nominations

The NYC Group is governed by an Executive Committee composed of elected volunteers from the Group. The ExCom meets monthly to set NYC Group policy in conservation and administration, including the election of Group officers and Group representatives to the Atlantic (New York State) Chapter ExCom. Meetings are usually on the second Thursday of the month at the Group office in midtown Manhattan. Members are elected for two-year terms. There are nine seats on the ExCom, staggered so that half of them expire each year.

As explained in the above notice, the Group is conducting an election for five seats, with terms to expire at the end of 2011. Prospective ExCom candidates are invited to notify the Nominating Committee by email to jfrancis9@nyc.rr.com or by letter to Sierra Club Nominating Committee, 1350 Broadway, Room 201, New York, NY 10018 as soon as possible. Include your name, address, phone number, and, if available, an email address, along with any information that you think will help the Nominating Committee assess your candidacy.

Election schedule

- Nominating Committee nominations: The Nominating Committee will report its list of nominees to the ExCom on May 24. The Committee will attempt to attempt to nominate at least two more candidates than the number to be elected.
- Nominations by petition: Any NYC Group member may become a candidate by submitting a petition signed by at least 25 Group members. Petitions must be received by the Election Committee (in person or by mail to Sierra Club Election Committee, 1350 Broadway, Room 201, New York, NY 10018) by June 7.
- Candidate statements: Each candidate may submit a statement of up to 250 words to be distributed with the ballot. All candidate statements (whether from Nominating Committee candidates or petition candidates) must be received by the Election Committee, in person or by mail, by June 7.
- The ballot issue of the City Sierran will be mailed on or about June 28.
- Ballot counting and candidate installation: Ballots will be due on August 9 and will be counted in the Group office on that day. Newly elected ExCom members will take office at the August meeting of the ExCom, currently scheduled for August 12.

Greening NYC's Neighborhood Networks

By Dan Miner

While the pace of climate change is accelerating, national and international actions have been stalled, and the issue is simply a low priority for the American public. As a result, some movement leaders have changed their strategy to refocus on local action. Rob Hopkins, founder of the Transition movement, now urges activists to ignore the next international conference, stay home, and start creating models for the world they want to see, in which carbon emissions are 90% below today's levels. 350.org's climate action plan for 2010 calls for organizing grassroots work parties to install solar panels, insulate buildings, plant trees and gardens. "We'll get to work to start changing our communities, and get to work to make our leaders realize that they actually need to lead," says [350's Bill McKibben](#). "It's a plan that may well break the logjam and get us moving. But only, of course, if we work together to make it happen." SC NYC is following their guidance.

Neighborhood Sustainability Events

One approach is direct promotion of volunteer projects. Another is our invitation to civic groups and leaders to jointly organize sustainability events in their communities. We suggest linking several co-sponsors and several presenting partners, through one or more events. They would be promoted locally, through existing neighborhood networks. Partners including NYSERDA, Con Edison, GrowNYC, and Solar 1 would tell residents about the immediate benefits their programs offer – lower energy costs, green jobs, higher quality of life, and better health.

New Messages

Climate change communications studies encourage advocates to address leading public concerns, like the economy and jobs. We can explain that green initiatives will cut costs, create jobs, and make communities more resilient. Acting now will have greater benefits later, by minimizing future economic impacts as energy prices go up. www.beyondoilnyc.org

Connecting the dots benefits everyone. Projects already making the City greener need more exposure. Many civic leaders and neighborhood activists will become sustainability boosters when they see the direct benefits, and they're presented with convenient ways in which to participate. By linking the two, environmental activists can open up the next frontier for green action in NYC: their own neighborhoods.

Some of the most promising innovations in NYC public affairs today are neighborhood-based sustainability groups, such as Jackson Height's Green Agenda, Sustainable Flatbush, and WEACT in West Harlem. We can hope that neighborhood sustainability events will result in highly visible projects and volunteer events, more services delivered, and the emergence of a new generation of local green leaders. To start one in your neighborhood, contact Dan Miner at 917.319.2924 or beyondoilnyc@yahoo.com, or Stephanie Corrado at 917.421.9719 or Stephanie.corrado@gmail.com.

Please share the flyer on page 14 with your elected and civic leaders!

Contact Sierra Club NYC for Email Event Updates

SC NYC volunteers cannot get in touch with you directly, but **we want to hear from you**, and **let you know about our events and legislative action alerts**. Go to www.nyc.sierraclub.org and sign up for email updates. Or contact us directly at beyondoilnyc@yahoo.com

What are your interests and priorities? How would you like to get involved? Let us know what you think.

Responding to the oil spill: reduce dependence on *all* oil

By Dan Miner

The spreading oil spill from the stricken *Deepwater Horizon* oil rig is a vivid reminder of the risks of offshore drilling. **A closer look at why offshore drilling is so compelling in the first place will show why we must reduce our dependence not just on deepwater oil, and foreign oil, but on *all* oil.**

At the beginning of the oil age, in the late 1800s, vast oil deposits just below ground level were easily found and tapped. BP isn't drilling 5,000 feet under the sea, and 30,000 feet further under the ocean floor, just to demonstrate its mastery of the world's most advanced oil prospecting technology. **The fact that deepwater oil drilling is taking place at all reveals that all the easily accessed oil has already been found. It is a sign of desperation.**

Advocates of "drill, baby, drill" pretend that deep sea oil can provide more than a sliver of our future energy needs, but U.S. DOE's Energy Information Agency has already reported that offshore drilling can only yield up to 200,000 barrels per day in 20 years – about 1% of America's needs. In a 2009 presentation, EIA's Glen Sweetnam revealed that the agency expects oil production from already existing conventional sources to peak in 2012, and vaguely pointed to "unidentified projects" to provide future growth in oil production. In the absence of these "unidentified projects," EIA expects global oil supply to decline by about 2% per year, from 87 million barrels per day (mbpd) in 2011 to 80 mbpd by 2015, while demand rises to 90 mbpd and decline 2% a year thereafter. **Basically, the EIA itself has no idea how production could increase after 2012.** <http://www.eia.doe.gov/conference/2009/session3/Sweetnam.pdf>, p. 8.

The implication, which environmentalists and climate change activists urgently need to understand, is that we will be facing a near term decline in oil production, and volatility in oil prices.

There is a silver lining to this challenge. We have to explain that reducing our dependence on all oil, as quickly as possible, is not an option. It's inevitable. We can either prepare in advance, or have it forced on us.

Communications studies show that framing initiatives as responses to climate change will likely get weak public support – but framing sustainability initiatives as ways to prepare for that volatility in oil price and

supply can get strong support.

As reported by the Pew Research Center, the top policy concerns of the American public are the economy and jobs, with climate change at the bottom of the list and dropping, with only 28% of the American public perceiving it as a priority. Climate change is often perceived as an abstract and uncertain threat, with impacts far in the future, or in distant places.

Near term costs and benefits are more persuasive. A Columbia University report on climate change communications explains that people are more likely to make the more sustainable choice when clearly shown how it will minimize their risk of losses from near-term threats with visible local impacts. Many sustainability initiatives can be reframed as preparation for higher energy costs to attract broader support – and oil price increases are likely by 2015 or before, according to a growing consensus of expert observers and business leaders.

Environmentalists should tell government and civic leaders what's going on, and urge them to expand their strategy for promoting sustainability initiatives from one that primarily speaks to climate change and environmental benefits, to one that also focuses on economic benefits. That is, both cost savings – and buffering the impacts of oil price shocks.

Global oil production will reach its maximum levels within five years, states the *UK Industry Task Force on Peak Oil and Energy Security*, and then go into permanent decline. Britain is unprepared for the coming oil shortages and price spikes. "Governments need to urgently, urgently wake up," Richard Branson, CEO of Virgin Group, told the BBC.

The US military has warned that surplus oil production capacity could disappear within two years and there could be serious shortages by 2015 with a significant economic and political impact.

Unlike the effects of climate change, impacts of higher fuel prices will be local, near term, and immediately evident. They will include higher costs for building heating homes and transportation - commuting, trucking goods, and operating police, fire, school and garbage vehicles. Higher fuel costs will also reduce discretionary spending, and increase risk of loan defaults. Government, business and civic leaders should promote sustainability initiatives in ways that will maximize their public support and (...go to **Page 11**)

Gas drilling - the final wake up call

By Gusti Bogok, with assistance from Carl Arnold

The Marcellus shale is a vast methane-rich rock formation that lies 6,000 to 9,000 feet below the Catskill Mountains, the Delaware River Valley and the Allegheny Plateau, spanning parts of Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, West Virginia and Ohio. Until recently, gas extraction from shale rock was not economically viable. But soaring energy prices and Halliburton's 1949 development of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing techniques have facilitated an upsurge in methane mining throughout the US. Companies such as Halliburton, Cabot Oil & Gas, Encana Gas & Oil, XTO, Chesapeake Energy and others are salivating at the trough, aggressively promoting this unconventional process. They tout it not only as a potential boom in tough economic times, but also as a way to produce a "clean" transition fuel to satisfy our nation's growing energy demand while reducing dependence on foreign fossil fuels. Closer inspection of consequences of this form of drilling in states where gas drilling is underway, reveals a different story.

The clean fuel myth. Although natural gas may *burn* cleaner than coal, the process of extracting it is highly destructive and anything but clean. Hydrofracking involves injecting water, sand and hundreds of mostly toxic chemicals at extremely high pressure deep into the ground and setting off explosions horizontally to release the gas embedded in the rock. Each well may be fractured up to about 18 times, and each fracking requires two to nine million gallons of water, as well as 600 to 800 truck trips to deliver fresh water to a well pad and hundreds more truck trips to move the contaminated fracking fluids offsite. Much of the contamination comes from naturally occurring chlorides, heavy metals and radioactive materials — in NY State, notably radon, boron and uranium — released from the shale and brought up with the mud and wastewater. But the "produced water" also contains fracking fluids — tens of thousands of gallons of industrial chemicals, including known carcinogens and endocrine disruptors, such as benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene.

Approximately 30% to 70% of the fluids, pumped at 4,000 to 8,000 pounds pressure, remain underground, allowing contaminants to seep through both existing fissures and those created by what the industry terms "mini-seismic events. This toxic brew finds its way into underground aquifers, rivers, streams, surrounding landscapes and agricultural lands. Underground toxic plumes in various parts of the US have already spread in unknowable directions at un-

knowable rates. One plume under Newtown Creek (below Brooklyn/Queens) has been a scandal since 1977. Another in Sublette County, Wyoming, became known shortly after drilling began there. By November 2008 it had spread 28 miles.

There are barely enough wastewater plants to handle even present waste, let alone the many billions of gallons of contaminated waste that would result if drilling proceeds at the pace that corporations intend. Present wastewater facilities are unable to filter hydrofracking waste. There are only two processes that might work—reverse osmosis and dialysis, but facilities capable of these two processes are extraordinarily expensive to build and require exorbitant amounts of energy to operate. Even if treatment plants were built and worked as intended, the problem of how to deal with disposal of the filtered toxics would remain.

Air pollution and accidents. Gas drilling emits greenhouse gases and ground ozone with a 200-mile radius toxic footprint. Harmful diesel fumes and noise are emitted round-the-clock by truck traffic, compressors, and other equipment. Despite claims of drilling safety by the gas industry and New York's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), occurrences of groundwater contamination, explosions, accidental spills and cases of inflammable tap water are mounting. Recent Marcellus shale drilling in Dimock, Pennsylvania resulted in contamination of nine private drinking water wells. A single gas well in North Brookfield, NY blew out 11 drinking water wells. In the small rural town of Dish, Texas, the ozone level has surpassed congested urban levels and asthma and lung disorders are on the rise.

Economic boon. The argument that gas drilling will boost our ailing economy is debatable. Many studies of gas drilling's economic effects have been based on input-output ("economic impact") analysis, which does not account for embedded costs of environmental damage, general wear and tear to infrastructure, health effects, and the negative impacts of pollution on property values and key industries, such as tourism, hunting, fishing, wine-making and farming.*

While gas and oil companies anticipate receiving free federal stimulus funding for energy production — a questionable subsidy for a polluting energy source at best — the industry further enjoys the benefit of full exemption from liability thanks to the Cheney/Bush 2005 Energy Policy Act, which gutted the strict environmental regulations that had protected US citizens

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Gowanus Canal Added to EPA Superfund List

By Diane Buxbaum and Irene Van Slyke

Members of the Gowanus Canal Committee of the NYC Sierra Club were elated when on March 2nd, Judith Enck, Regional Administrator, Region 2 EPA announced that the Gowanus Canal would be placed on the National Priorities List of the Superfund. We, the Sierra Club activists, the activists in the communities adjacent to the Canal, Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill, Park Slope and all of the other activists helped to make this happen. We were there. We acted and it happened. This was a hard fought victory for all people who care about the Canal. The Coalition of community groups of which the Sierra Club was a member was up against the Mayor who opposed Superfund designation.

The coalition generated over 13,000 comments to the EPA during the comment period that ended in July 2009. And slowly gathered support by local elected officials. About 90% supported designation. The EPA indicated that EPA's decisions are usually announced twice a year, in September and again in March. EPA continued to have regular community meetings throughout the year. September came and went. No word. But activists and residents were completely aware of the pressure that the Mayor and City officials were bringing to bear on the EPA's Administrator Jackson, and upon elected officials such as Senators Schumer and Gillebrand. They even went so far as to ask the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to withdraw its request for Superfund status. In December 2007 NYS DEC's Commissioner Pete Grannis had requested Superfund status in a letter to the EPA. Well, the City did not prevail. Sensible people, activist groups and a dedicated environmental agency came to the only reasonable decision, to clean the Gowanus, once and for all.

On March 4th EPA returned to Carroll Gardens and announced their decision. EPA's Walter Mugdan, Superfund Program Director, Christos Tsiamis, Project Manager for the Canal and Natalie Loney, Community Involvement Coordinator were greeted with cheers each time they spoke. The auditorium of PS 58 was packed, and we were told once again not to expect the cleanup to happen overnight, that it would take 10 to 12 years, but that it would be done and done well. And now the work begins. Superfund designation makes sure that the original polluters clean up the mess they left behind.... *(Continued on page 13.)*

(Gas drilling, continued from page 8)

for over 30 years. For the rest of us the financial toll would be astronomical. Clean-up costs, damage to roads and infrastructure, loss of water for homes and farms, healthcare costs for those exposed to toxic chemicals in their drinking water or affected by harmful fumes — these burdens would be shouldered by local municipalities and individuals. In short, profits would be privatized and costs would be shifted to the taxpayer, including the cost of billions of gallons of fresh water that industry could freely expropriate from our rivers, streams, lakes and aquifers. Clearly, the risks of gas drilling to New York State are unacceptable. With thousands of gas wells on the horizon, hydrofracking could turn the Southern Tier into an industrial wasteland. We, as residents who value our natural landscapes, our health, indeed our very survival, must not allow this to happen. Instead, we must join with the many environmental and civic groups calling for a statewide ban on hydrofracking. The massive funding wasted on building an elaborate infrastructure for yet another outmoded, toxic and finite fossil fuel resource would be more wisely invested in conservation education, as well as clean, renewable

energy sources, such as wind, solar and geothermal. In this way, NY State could lead the way in preparing for inevitable declines in present fuel resources, catch up with our friends in Europe and Japan, and help mitigate the worst effects of climate change.

“Unanswered Questions About the Economic Impact of Gas Drilling in the Marcellus Shale: Don't Jump to Conclusions, Jannette M. Barth, PhD, March 22, 2010”

Get involved: sign the Petition to Ban Drilling in New York State <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/NY-Statewide-Ban-On-Natural-Gas-Drilling>

<http://un-naturalgas.org>
<http://www.newyorkwater.org>
<http://chenangogreens.org>
<http://damascuscitizens.org>
<http://waterunderattack.com>
<http://delawarerivkeeper.org>

...Chair's Message, continued...

With climate change accelerating, our goal can be nothing less than the creation of a mass movement for sustainability, as quickly as we can. By using the Sierra Club name to create synergistic collaborations, we are accelerating the greening of the City, while building Sierra Club's viable future presence in NYC. **The proof is in your hands. Sign up for email alerts. Join us on the roofs and in the gardens.**

This fall there will be not one but two elections. Your vote is extremely important. In winter of 2008 only 100 people voted. In winter 2009 the number rose to 360, out of 10,000. Your vote counts.

Another vision has dominated Sierra Club's NYC group in recent years. By focusing on the ability to oppose or support projects, a small number of members became entranced with the power of saying no, on behalf of Sierra Club. There has been an obsession with exact adherence to formal rules and procedures, often coupled with an indifference to results, effectiveness, and growing the organization. Here's one example. When I started as Chair in January of 2008, the group 19 listed committees.

On contacting their chairs, a handful sent back detailed replies. Many were no longer active or did not reply. Others had only a few volunteers, and neither a clear plan of action or ongoing activities. It was like a small grocery with ads in the window, and empty shelves inside. Sadly, my suggestion that committees either create plans to expand and carry out activities or be dissolved met with vehement resistance. Some of the committees listed in this newsletter are inactive, but members demand they be listed anyway.

Even now, some individuals still think that naming someone as a committee chair is all that is needed to produce results, but that method has been tried, and has failed. The result has been a virtually invisible and ineffective NYC Group. Some wish to continue telling this story.

If a sickness causes the Club's roots to shrivel at the Group and Chapter level, even the powerful National organization will suffer. Environmentalists will support other groups. You can decide which story will prevail. This summer and fall there will be two elections. Your vote is extremely important. In winter of 2008 only 100 people voted. In winter 2009 the number rose to 360, out of 10,000. Your vote counts. Join me in the weaving of a new story. Thanks.

Sierra Club NYC Joins Mass Transit Campaign

At an April rally at Penn Station headlined by Rev. Jesse Jackson, labor unions and environmental organizations demanded more funding for transit agencies across the country. With service cuts afflicting bus and train riders in dozens of major cities, the "Keep America Moving" campaign is focused on securing funds to maintain transit service. The aim is to pass legislation in Congress that would make federal operating aid for transit permanent. SC NYC testified with WEACTION, Transportation Alternatives, Straphangers Campaign and Tri-State Transportation Campaign. <http://www.twulocal100.org/node/3831>

Sierra Club NYC on WNYC's Leonard Lopate Show

On April 20, WNYC's Leonard Lopate spoke with Dan Miner and urban planning professor Joan Fitzgerald about how US cities are leading the way toward more sustainable forms of economic development...and how New Yorkers can start greening their neighborhoods with community sustainability events, white roof painting, community gardening...and worm composting boxes. Listen online at: <http://www.wnyc.org/shows/lopate/episodes/2010/04/20/segments/72>

Responding to the oil spill...

... from page 7...

prepare us for the inadequately discussed and increasingly likely outcome of higher fuel prices. This will increase our resilience in increasingly turbulent times, and create green jobs that can't be outsourced.

In April 2008, Sierra Club NYC published a report about preparing for more volatility in fuel price and supply. NYC Council Members and many senior members of the Bloomberg Administration were notified of its recommendations, including: (1) revising all City planning and budgeting decisions to accommodate potentially higher energy costs; (2) creating contingency plans for price spikes; and (3) promoting sustainability initiatives to buffer rising energy costs.

Since then, the city governments of San Francisco, CA, Portland, OR and Bloomington, IN have published detailed reports on this topic. See links to those reports at www.beyondoilnyc.org.

It's time for government, business and civic leaders – as well as environmentalists - to acknowledge that our dangerous dependence on oil must be scaled back quickly.

"Analysis of Crude Oil Production in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," US EIA, 2008 [http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/servicerpt/anwr/pdf/sroiaf\(2008\)03.pdf](http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/servicerpt/anwr/pdf/sroiaf(2008)03.pdf)

"Impacts of Increased Access to Oil and Natural Gas Resources in the Lower 48 Federal Outer Continental Shelf," US EIA, 2007, www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/aeo/otheranalysis/ongr.html

"Meeting the World's Demand for Liquid Fuels," U.S. EIA, April 2009, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/conference/2009/session3/Sweetnam.pdf>, p. 8.

"Oil crunch 'just 5 years away'," Feb. 11, 2010, BBC; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/8508323.stm>

UK Peak Oil Task Force, <http://peakoiltaskforce.net/>

"The Joint Operating Environment," U.S. Joint Forces Command 2010 report, pages 24-29; http://www.jfcom.mil/newslink/storyarchive/2010/JOE_2010_o.pdf

Inner City Outings: Kids Take to the Ice

By Gary Nickerson

The weather outside might be frightful, but that did not keep the participants in the Inner City Outings program from going out in the snow. Several groups braved the elements to head for Bear Mountain and ice skating. For not a few, this was their first excursion on the ice. Fortunately, friends with more experience and adult volunteers helped the newbies get their skating feet on, and everyone had a great time. The kids from PS 241 ate their lunch in the Carousel, accompanied by hot chocolate.

An added bonus of a trip to Bear Mountain was a visit to the Bear Mountain Park Zoo, which is not something everyone knows about. It is a short walk from the Bear Mountain Inn and skating rink and features animals that are native to New York State. Notably, most of the animals and birds in the zoo have been rescued. Because of their injuries, the animals could not survive on their own in the wild. My personal favorite is the fox. I love asking the kids how the fox looks like a cat? (Look at the ears, eyes, and tail and how they pounce on their prey.) The Kingsbridge and Camp Interactive kids also both went on treasure hunts in the snow north of the city. They had to follow clues from site to site to find the treasure. Camp Interactive youth reporters ended their story with the comment, "Most of us were wet, hot and sweaty by the end of the day, but we had a blast and can't wait to put our skills to the test next month!"

In December, kids from PS 241 visited the Stone Barns Farm Center for Food and Agriculture. Stone Barns Farm is a working farm dedicated to teaching and training. The farm uses rotational planting to keep up soil quality and produces a wide variety of vegetables, some of which were still growing in December when we visited them. They also (humanely) raise chickens for eggs and meat, sheep for wool and meat, and turkeys and two different kinds of geese. All were in their winter protected housing. However, this didn't keep the sheep dog from lunging at one of the students who it thought was a danger to its charges.

As you can see, the Inner City Outings program is active year round. Read more about these trips and about our program at <http://nycico.sierraclub.org>. This is a great volunteer activity and for more information write to or email Gary Nickerson (gary@gwntec.com). If you love the out of doors and you love children, you should be hiking with us.

Brooklyn Bridge Park Update	Gowanus Canal Wastewater Bypasses & Smell Sources
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By Diane Buxbaum & Irene Van Slyke

The Sierra Club joined seven neighborhood and civic groups in a meeting with elected officials to be briefed on the Memorandum of Understanding between local elected officials and the City of New York regarding the Brooklyn Bridge Park. The MOU foresees a possible transfer of the “park” to the City. The Empire State Development Corporation, a public authority, now owns most of the land. The civic groups had united around designating the land as parkland, and against privatizing the park by building luxury housing.

State Senator Daniel Squadron and Assemblywoman Joan Millman explained that in the face of the City’s and State’s determination to build housing in the park to finance park maintenance, they had worked hard to improve the plan going forward.

With maintenance financing the crucial issue, the MOU requires the hiring of a consultant to study alternatives to financing the park. And, while the MOU does not halt housing construction, it does put off construction for at least 18 months for the John Street site in DUMBO and for another three years for Pier 6 at Atlantic Avenue. Public hearings will be held to allow public input regarding alternative sources of income for the park.

Designation of permanent parkland remains a major issue that is not resolved in the MOU. Senator Squadron found the legislative route “risky,” due to possible opposition by legislators either in the Senate or Assembly. In the meantime, construction of various park amenities will go forward including an open tennis court, ice skating rink, and a floating pool.

The Sierra Club, during hearings on the planned housing, had vigorously opposed any residential development in what was billed as a public park. The Sierra Club also filed objections to erect huge wave attenuators around a marina and floating walkways. The NYS DEC did allow the project to go forward but it seems that those features will not be built in the near future.

By Edgar Freud, P. E.

The Gowanus Canal is a manmade Brooklyn waterway constructed from the Gowanus Creek in the 17th to 20th centuries. According to Owls Head Wastewater bypass data for 1999 to 2008 that was collected by the Interstate Environmental Commission (IEC) Bypass Working Group, bypasses occurred on the average 5.7 times a year with an average flow of 60 million gallons per year (Mg/yr). The Canal foot enters the Upper NY harbor by Gowanus Bay and its head by the flushing tunnel which is connected to the Buttermilk Channel. During normal operating conditions the sewer interceptors carry the neighborhood sewage to the Owls Head or the Red Hook Wastewater Treatment Plants. Wastewater bypasses are damaging environmental events consisting half the time of untreated sewage. The causes of the bypasses are: (a) storm overflows, commonly called CSOs because higher sewer daily/hourly flow than the sewer design capacity primarily from rain and snow events; (b) illegal connections; (c) blockage in regulator; (d) valve left open; (e) treatment unit off line; (f) blockage in interceptor; (g) power outage; (h) pump failure; (i) human error. Bypass events are reported within 24 hours to the IEC Bypass Working Group. Unreported bypass events result in fines to NYC DEP. Tabulation of decade records show that 2005 to 2008 have more bypasses than the decade average. NYC DEP studies show that increasing annual rainfall is related to the increases. During normal operating conditions the sewage flows in the interceptors to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. During a bypass the sewage flows from the interceptor through its affected regulator, into the outfall and into the Canal. When the storms are intense street drains may backup and flow into the Canal. In conclusion, bypass events contribute to the Canal’s bad water quality and odor.

Recommendations

- Promote citizens reporting of bypasses through 311.
- Have NYC DEP install online water quality monitors at 5 sites in the Canal. Dissolved oxygen, temperature, E-coli concentrations, and hydrogen sulfide detectors are prime measurement candidates.
- The odor, sediment, and water pollution in the Canal are due to centuries of neglect. More funds are needed for cleanup than are currently in progress with City and State funds.
- Have NYC DEP examine the combined sewer capacity of the Gowanus Canal outfalls. Make NYC Dept. of City Planning and DOB limit building development so that bypasses are decreased to zero.
- Implement Smart CSO Discharge Technology for the Canal Watershed with additional feature of monitoring and reporting bypass events.

References: Interstate Environmental Commission, Bypass Working Group, Annual data, private email, May 2009; NYC DEP, Draft Sustainable Stormwater Plan, October 1, 2006; Smart CSO Discharge Technology for the Gowanus Canal Watershed, Bart Chezer, February 20, 2010, NY/NJ Baykeeper. Thanks to Interstate Environmental Comm. Engineer Peter Sattler and the SC NYC members who provided data and encouragement.

To their credit National Grid (formerly Brooklyn Union Gas) already has started the process of contacting present owners, and performing tests supervised by the NYS Department of Health. Eventually the NYS DEC will consider all data and decide on a remediation plan. The community will be involved in the planning and dissemination of information through a Community Advisory Group which will be formed in the near future, and also via a Technical Advisory Grant, that will be awarded to an appropriate local group which will be able to obtain expert help to explain to the community some of the technical issues that will be encountered. Thanks to State Senator Velmanette Montgomery, the first elected official to support Superfund Status, Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, State Senator Daniel Squadron, and State Assemblywoman Joan Millman, among others. If you would like to work on the cleaning of the Gowanus Canal, as it takes place, please, contact Diane Buxbaum, Chair, Gowanus Canal Committee at ddbuxbaum@earthlink.net or 718-855-2399.

Events from American Littoral Society

Jamaica Bay Boat Cruises: May 29 (2-5pm) and June 27 (5-8pm) 3-hour narrated cruise into the backwater marshes of Jamaica Bay. Learn about the history, ecology and wildlife of this 13,000 acre estuary preserve. See nesting peregrine falcon, osprey, egrets & terns. \$45/per person includes wine & cheese, fruit, snacks, guides. Contact (718) 318-9344 or driepe@nyc.rr.com

Horseshoe Crab Walks - May 15 (Plum Beach, 9am) and May 30 (Jamaica Bay Refuge, 10am) - See the ancient horseshoe crabs as they come ashore to mate and lay eggs during peak shorebird migration time. Learn about the biology & ecology of these primitive animals - and get to touch one ! Kids invited. Contact (718) 318-9344 or driepe@nyc.rr.com. *FREE*

Montauk Spring Weekend, June 11-13 - Hike the natural woods, dunes and beaches and stay at the luxurious Manor House. \$365 includes 2 nights, 5 meals, 5 guided hikes, 2 evening programs plus free pickup at LIRR station in Montauk. Contact (718) 318-9344 or driepe@nyc.rr.com. www.alsnyc.org



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Welcome to The New York City Chapter of The Sierra Club



The Sierra Club's members are more than 1.3 million of your friends and neighbors. Inspired by nature, we work together to protect our communities and the planet.



**SIERRA
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Next Steps for Sustainability in NYC

Combine neighborhood networking & events with pragmatic, positive messaging.

Sierra Club NYC invites government officials, civic leaders and groups to join us in organizing sustainability events in your neighborhood. We propose to combine multiple sponsors and multiple presenters, with targeted local outreach. We'll customize several 5 – 10 minute presentations based on local needs. Facilitated Q & A and networking will link neighbors to services, and catalyze partnerships. This new model for sustainability events has something in it for everyone.

Facing challenges to the City's sustainability and prosperity.

- PlaNYC, the Mayor's excellent long-term sustainability plan, is a work in progress. It and other City green programs need support from neighborhood groups and more participation.
- Funding for vital long-term City initiatives is threatened by the economic crisis.
- Without progress in energy conservation, mass transit, renewable energy and climate change adaptation, our quality of life will deteriorate.
- Surveys show the top public priorities are the economy and jobs. With climate change impacts seen as uncertain and far away, response to it is a low priority.
- Despite tangible benefits of green programs, they are underutilized by New Yorkers.
- Electric and oil costs are expected to keep going up. www.beyondoilnyc.org

Visualizing the green, sustainable NYC of 2030. Taking next steps toward it today.

- Non-environmentalists are more likely to participate in programs when framed in terms of direct personal benefits, as well as in moralistic appeals.
- New Yorkers will be more motivated to participate in sustainability programs in order to lower their future energy costs than to lower carbon emissions or protect the environment.
- New Yorkers are more likely to attend nearby sustainability program events in their own community, co-sponsored by multiple civic leaders and neighborhood groups.
- Service providers include Con Edison, NYSERDA, GrowNYC and Solar 1.
- Civic leaders can increase local service delivery, while being perceived as green leaders.
- Connecting neighborhood groups and service providers is likely to result in high visibility demonstration projects and coverage in local media.

Contact Dan Miner at beyondoilnyc@yahoo.com or 917.319.2924, or Stephanie Corrado at 917.421.9719 or Stephanie.corrado@gmail.com www.nyc.sierraclub.org

Say no to more dirty, dangerous offshore drilling. **www.SierraClub.org/oilspill**

Our hearts go out to the families of those who were killed in the Deepwater Horizon drilling-rig disaster. This terrible tragedy is a sad reminder that oil is dirty, dangerous, and deadly. This is a national emergency. We need President Obama to stop all new drilling off America's coasts immediately and permanently. This dirty and dangerous practice has no place in a 21st century energy economy. Instead of risking our lives, our coasts, our clean air, and our security by perpetuating our addiction to oil, it's time to build a clean energy economy that means more jobs, less pollution, and real energy independence. Enough is enough. Hardworking Americans should not be left to clean up after oil and coal companies that are raking in billions in profits.

Our leaders need to know that America stands with our families on the Gulf Coast. That we want BP's oil spill cleaned up quickly, and that BP should be held accountable. We'll be holding rallies across the nation calling on President Obama and Congress to stand strong with the Gulf Coast. Help by holding rallies in your area.

The coal mining and oil disasters of the past few weeks should be a wake up call and a turning point. It's time to finally embrace the kind of clean energy solutions that already exist and end our dependence on dirty, dangerous fossil fuels. Go to www.SierraClub.org/oilspill and find out how to host a Clean It Up Event between May 6 and 16th.

The End is Near..... but we get to choose the ending!

That's the conclusion of a team of researchers from NASA, NREL, Architecture 2030, and Columbia University. Architecture 2030 joined together with this remarkable team of scientists and engineers to tackle the critical question, "Can CO2-emitting coal be phased out by 2030?" We're happy to report the answer is a resounding yes! This is particularly good news because the alternative ending is rather dire. To quote from the team's paper, Options for Near-Term Phaseout of CO2 Emissions from Coal Use in the United States, which will be published in the June print edition of the American Chemical Society's journal *Environmental Science & Technology*:

"The only practical way to preserve a planet resembling that of the Holocene [i.e. the world as we know it], ... is to rapidly phase out coal emissions..."

This sets up an immediate choice. We can phase out coal CO2 emissions by 2030 and keep the planet we have or we can continue with 'business as usual' and hope for the best in one of the craziest games of risk the world has ever known. Which ending will we choose?

Architecture 2030 is advocating for phasing out coal CO2 emissions by 2030. One, because we think this game simply isn't worth the risk, and two, because the U.S. already has everything it needs to get the job done. We don't have to wait on 'clean coal' technology, technically known as carbon capture and sequestration (CSS), which is decades away and may not be proven economically or technologically feasible. We can phase out coal emissions with existing know-how and off-the-shelf technologies. For the full paper, go to: http://www.architecture2030.org/pdfs/CoalPhaseoutUS2030_full_EST.pdf

Sign up for Sierra Club NYC Email Updates

SC NYC volunteers would like to hear from you, and notify you about our events and legislative action alerts.

Go to www.nyc.sierraclub.org and sign up for email updates. Or contact us directly at beyondoilnyc@yahoo.com

What are your interests and priorities?
How would you like to get involved? Let us know.

**Sierra Club members are invited to observe our
monthly Executive Committee meetings.
Let us know what you think.**

1350 Broadway, 2nd Fl., NY, NY 10018
Every 2nd Thursday of the month from 6:30 to 8:30 pm.
Members are invited to attend & observe.

Please contact 917.319.2924 to confirm meeting time & date.



Sierra Club - New York City Group

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