



Save the Pine Bush

May/June Newsletter

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Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner

Wednesday, May 18, 6:00 p.m.

Scott LaPoint

PhD Graduate Student working out of the State Museum
will speak about

Fishers in the Pine Bush and Greater Capital District: An Illustrated Presentation

Fishers are mammals related to martens, weasils and otters. They have long thin bodies, bushy tails and short legs. They climb trees and run fast on the ground and can even catch porcupines, which is quite a feat. And fishers have returned to the Pine Bush and the suburbs of the Capital District.

At the First Presbyterian Church, (State and Willett Sts, Albany, please enter from State St.). All-the-vegetarian-and-vegan-lasagna-you-can-eat, garden salad, garlic bread and homemade pies. Only \$10 for adults, \$5 for students, and \$2 for children. People who make reservations are served first. For reservations, please leave a message for Rezsina Adams at 462-0891 or Lynne Jackson at 434-1954 or email pinebush@mac.com. Interested people are welcomed to attend the program beginning at 7:00 for which there is no charge.

May Pine Bush Wildflower Walk Saturday May 21, 9:00 AM

Meet at :Collins Circle Bus Stop, SUNYA Campus 1400 Washington Ave. Albany

Leader : Amy Riley For more information, call John Wolcott at 465-8930

Enjoy a nice walk and a learning experience on a fine spring day in the Pine Bush. We will discuss how butterflies pollinate wildflowers. That is why Vladimir Nabokov found the Pine Bush to be a “sandy and flowery paradise.”

This walk is on the same day as the Lupine Festival at the Pine Bush Discovery Center . The Lupine Festival is from 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. Those wishing to attend both might want to bring a trail lunch or go to some nearby restaurant on The Schenectady Turnpike or the Western Turnpike. Actually the nearest restaurant to the Discovery Center is Northumberland Farms at the S W coner of New Karner Road and Albany Street unless the bar called Fatso Fogarty’s almost nest to the Center serves lunch as well as beer. Wear usual precautions against ticks.

The walk is free and open to the public!

www.savethepinebush.org

Habitat Restoration and Mitigation Project: How it Fits in to the Preserve Goals for Restoration”

*Neil Gifford Gives Save the Pine Bush
Dinner Talk in March, 2011*

ALBANY, NY - Neil Gifford, Conservation Director at the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, has been working in the Pine Bush since the early 1990s. He describes the mission of the Albany Pine Bush Commission, a body representing the many different governmental interests in the Pine Bush land, as “to preserve the pitch pine/scrub oak barrens” as authorized by Environmental Conservation Law Article 46 (1988) in which the legislature declared it is in the public

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No Frack-ing Way!

ALBANY, NY -At the April 20 dinner, speakers from four different organizations addressed a cause that united them: keeping hydrofracking out of New York State.

Roger Downs represented the Sierra Club, a membership grass roots organization. He said that he has never seen a movement attract so many people. For example, at a rally last week, 450 people registered to lobby and saw 180 legislators.

In a first draft environmental impact statement, Mr. Downs said that the DEC had not been looking at the cumulative environmental impact or at the impact of pipelines and compressor stations. He said that we have to “force them to do that.” The Sierra Club also wants a public health impact statement, but the DEC won’t do that until there is a spill”.

There are two bills that the Sierra Club is working on: A3245 is a local control bill. The industry maintains that they are exempt from local rules. Communities should have the right to enforce zoning regarding this. A7013 is a bill to close the hazardous waste loophole wherein frack

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interest to protect and manage the Albany pine barrens. To date, there are 3200 acres preserved outright as well as a 13,000 pine bush study area. Of that land, 6000 acres of open pine bush are left unpreserved, much of these are along I-90. As part of their protection and project renewal guidelines some areas are recommended for full protection, others for partial protection or for open space. The Commission hopes to protect 5000 acres of preserve in total at some point in the future. They want to allow folks to hike from Fuller Road to Woodlawn. In their most recent plan, they have asked for 526 more acres to be added to the Preserve.

The Preserve pine barrens management effort is aimed at making two major changes. The current pine bush land they manage has 13% pitch pine-scrub oak barrens, while the Preserve would like there to be 50% pitch pine-scrub oak barrens. Currently, there is 53% forest and they want there to be 17% forest. Neil says that this effort is conservation management reliant as there are limits to how much they can burn, unlike how it was in pre-Industrial times. They plan to remove 100% of black locust forest and white pine trees; 50% of the aspens; 30% of Appalachian Oaks and end up with 2000 acres of pitch pine scrub oak barrens. The prairie plants, he believes, will allow 45 species of "greatest conservation need" to continue to exist. He points to the recent increases in Karner blue numbers – from under 1000 to last year's estimate of 2000 – as evidence that the techniques they are using are working. Their goal is to get this preserve to support 7,000 to 13,000 butterflies. They have burned 1160 acres since 1991 and removed 200 acres of black locust, a tree that does damage to the soil by providing too much available nitrogen.

Out at the Wilton Preserve, where these massive restoration techniques are just getting underway, there are 21,000 Karner Blue butterflies by last year's count.

He was also proud of the partnership with Save the Pine Bush to restore the developed land at the Apollo site; due to the Save the Pine Bush lawsuit, the owners sold the land to the Nature Conservancy which restored the site using bulldozers; with the help of Farnsworth middle school students and the SUNY Cobleskill Horticulture program, the land was restored and there have been Karner Blues at the site since 1999.

Yet the main focus of this talk was the upcoming Landfill Restoration Plan – which is slated to restore very degraded land -- well, it isn't land at all, it's garbage which comes from the 41 lbs of trash a day that the average American produces. As we know, it also has lots

of governmental and corporate waste and large quantities of petroleum contaminated soil. The most recent expansion has taken 7 more acres of open space and the whole landfill does impact the preserve due to

- 1) Habitat loss, 2) Species loss, 3) Noise, 4) Invasive Species introduced – eg the phragmites which has colonized the old GAL, indicating disturbed soil, 5) Aesthetic impacts, 6) Odors, 7) Hydrolgical impacts such as removal of wetlands, 8) Prevention of wild fires – But the most important impact is – 9) FRAGMENTATION of the habitat, impacting species movement and access to different areas of the Preserve.

From a species conservation point of view, the restoration of a wildlife corridor between segments of the preserve is the most important goal of the restoration plan.

With that he also made it clear that the Preserve did not create nor control this new Restoration Plan. The City of Albany contracted with Applied Ecological Services to come up with a plan to turn the Landfill into Pine Bush land. The Preserve meets with AES every week, but only has advisory input. In fact, says Neil, if anyone has a problem with the Plan, they need to take it up with the City. The City is the entity which is libel if anything goes wrong. The Common Council recently released a million dollars of the projected \$18 million dollar cost to fund the first stage of the plan.

Neil repeated: "We have no authority over the Landfill itself." This work represents a partnership between AES and the Rapp Road Landfill, directed by Joe Giebelhaus.

Though Neil was originally skeptical about the ability of the City of Albany to restore a Landfill, he is convinced the Applied Ecological Services, led by Steven Apfelbaum and hailing from the Midwest, is up to the task. They were able to restore prairies on flat land in the Midwest which were able to support Karner Blue butterflies. Yet, the challenges of the steep slope, the wind erosion of sand, as well as the seeds of invasive species blowing in from surrounding Landfill are daunting.

So far they have collected 600 lbs of seed from 175 native species in and around the pine bush – and in this, the Preserve is working with AES. They aim to restore hydrology and plant a diverse plant community. With stream restoration underway at the bulldozed trailer park at Fox Run, and nurseries over there, they are planting a mixture including goats rue, dog bane, lupine, New Jersey tea, little bluestem grass, big bluestem, butterfly milkweed and other plants found in the Pine Bush ecosystem.

Once the landfill is capped they can work on test plots. They plan to experiment on the capped

landfill to find out how much sand they will need to cover the top and to find out how the roots will affect the cap. They aim to figure out if trees and shrubs will be possible to grow in the sand on top of the plastic cap. If they are successful, the size of the whole project will be 200 acres; they plan to remove invasive species from the surrounding lands to help give the sand on the cap the chance to grow native species.

Neil also believes that the quality of the soil is quite good which will stimulate good native plant growth. AES has actually refused some donations of sand which they felt were unacceptable for the purpose.

There will be tests for 7 years until the Landfill closes and the actual restoration will begin. The test plots will be monitored but as yet there is no mechanism to release the data from these experiments to the public. Neil cannot release the results and says we have to petition the DEC to give us the results if we want to also monitor whether the plan looks possible judging by the experimental data from the test plots. In the past, the DEC has resisted giving us critical data such as Karner Blue counts despite our foils, (although they eventually released these numbers to the Times Union at which time they were released to the public.)

It will take public vigilance to make sure that the public and the Common Council gets unbiased information from the data regarding whether this plan can work – independently from the estimation of the consultants who get paid if it does work but not if it is abandoned as unworkable.

The way the Plan is designed there should be extensive monitoring of biocommunities in the covered cap; that monitoring should persist for 10 years. After closure, the vegetation is slated to be managed for another 20 years. Neil is anticipating that especially huckleberry, sand cherries and scrub oak will be able to grow there even if trees cannot. These plants are good food sources for wildlife. In addition, Neil is impressed with the AES's plans to restore hydrology by creating dams that will allow the pools and riffles to exist in the streams (that is places of fast and slow flow) which should help restore a biofiltering system which could improve the water quality of water flowing into Rensselaer Lake.

If anything should happen to the infrastructure – if it isn't sound – again, the City is libel.

Neil repeats and underscored the underlying principle that ecorestoration is essential to mitigating historical ecological impacts; simply buying land is not enough.

Note on one form of Ecorestoration: The Albany Pine Bush Preserve not only uses the

strongest form of glyphosate, Accord, to kill hundreds of acres of Aspen and Black Locust; they have also paid outside applicators to manage hundreds of acres of the native scrub oaks with herbicides. The management around and on the landfill cap is also expected to rely heavily on “chemical management,” using a variety of herbicidal poisons.

In contrast, the Woodlawn Pine Bush Preserve in Schenectady just issued their own Master Plan which reads “No Chemical Management will be used.” (2011, Don Rittner et al)

The public is encouraged to attend the quarterly Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission meeting on 6/16/11 at 9:30 am at the Discovery Center. This is a good place to ask questions about herbicides and wildlife, plans to burn atop the landfill and other matters of concern.

Researching the Unpreserved Lands

by Andy Arthur

ALBANY, NY - Two months I ago I wrote about the research I was doing into unpreserved Pine Bush parcels. I have gone through most of the 1994 Save the Pine Bush (SPB) Preservation Plan and have learned a lot about the lands that either are undeveloped, preserved, or sadly developed. I have collected tax maps from many of the surrounding municipalities and have checked many of them against tax rolls to find out their current status, ownership, and value.

I’ve discovered many interesting parcels, most from the 1994 study, that 17 years later still deserve preservation. Some are even government property – but not slated for preservation! I have made several FOIL requests to the Pine Bush Commission, to receive GIS Shapefiles for Computer-based Mapping, so SPB can have the same analysis tools available as the Commission. I also am starting to spend more time researching political and financial connections of developers and landowners. It’s helpful to know if a decision-maker has met with a lobbyist or received a campaign contribution prior to deciding on fate of these lands.

Public records research alone won’t Save the Pine Bush! We need people who live in communities around the Pine Bush to provide SPB with information on proposed developments. If you hear something, tell us! If you know decision makers – from the Pine Bush Commission to your Town Board Members to County Officials, we need your help to lobby them. And SPB always can use your financial support – we all hope elected officials make the lawful decision to preserve these important lands – however sometimes it may take expensive litigation to protect these lands. Thank you for your help!

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water is not considered hazardous. He added that we have not updated oil and gas regulations since 1972.

Mr. Downs told us that in Bradford, PA there was a huge blowout and citizens were evacuated. In a school in Wyoming, children are being told not to go outside. He stated: “Hydrofracking is coming to New York unless we stop it.”

Laura Haight talked about her work with NYPIRG, a student run organization with campus chapters. She said that college students were “very involved” in the fracking issue.

The good or not-so-bad news is that funding for the Environment Protection Fund was kept at the same level as last year and that this was a “victory.” In previous years, the funding was badly cut.

Recent events have caused NYPIRG to focus more extensively on issues outside of the state legislature. NYPIRG is working with other groups to oppose the relicensing of the Indian Point nuclear reactors which are located near two active fault lines. Gov. Cuomo has called this a “catastrophe waiting to happen.” NYPIRG has also raised safety concerns about the reactors in Oswego, which are the same design as the Fukushima Daiichi plants. Ms. Haight said that groups must redouble their work to replace nuclear energy with clean, safe and renewable energy.

NYPIRG is also opposing Mayor Bloomberg’s proposal to pilot thermal “waste-to-energy” technologies in New York City. Ms. Haight said that the newer technologies, like gasification, pyrolysis, and plasma arc pose many of the same problems as mass-burn incinerators and have a very poor track record in other countries, including explosions and malfunctions.

In terms of legislation, Ms. Haight told us that the legislature has decided to “extend their vacation because they have worked so hard.”

Marcy Stengel from Environmental Advocates spoke. Environmental Advocates most important activity at this time is the launching of a media campaign to inform New Yorkers about hydrofracking. Local and statewide groups have formed a coalition to encourage New Yorkers to stand up for their rights, to get information on the complex issues regarding hydrofracking and to connect with legislators. The coalition is pooling resources to say with one voice, “We are concerned about New York State’s water.”

Oil and gas companies are claiming that opponents of hydrofracking are unpatriotic, don’t support job creation don’t care about the State’s economy. None of this is true. The groups in the coalition may have different opinions about hydrofracking but all agree that right now clean

water is the most important issue.

Standing-in for Citizens’ Environmental Coalition Executive Director Barbara Warren was Jim Travers. CEC, a statewide environmental health organization whose motto is “bringing the grassroots to the statehouse to advocate for safe and healthy communities,” was founded in 1983 by Tom Ellis and Anne Rabe to assist NY activists combating pollution in their communities.

Mr. Travers outlined CEC’s priority issues and main campaigns as being focused upon Toxic Chemicals; Zero Waste; Radioactive Waste; Nuclear Power; Climate Change & Clean Energy; and the Marcellus Shale Gas Drilling.

Water is NY’s greatest natural resource and we cannot risk its health for a fuel we do not need. CEC is opposed to Hydrofracking. There may be a 20 year national supply of gas contained in the entire Marcellus Shale Deposit, but it may take 60 years or more to extract it all.

The gas industry wants at least one wellhead to be located on every 40 acres of land throughout the entire shale deposit. Each wellhead can have up to 40 individual horizontal wells drilled. Each well demands between 1 and 8 million gallons of water to facilitate the drilling process. At a minimum, each maximized well site will need 40 million gallons of water. At a maximum, such a site would need 320 million gallons.

The industry tells us that only 1% of the fluid contains toxic chemicals, but we’re only able to recover 15% of that pumped underground. If we use the larger water demand figure, nearly 272 million gallons of contaminated water will remain unrecoverable underground. And that’s only from one wellhead. Thousands of wells are planned. “Where will the water come from?” Mr. Travers asked.

Picking up on a point raised earlier by Roger Downs, Mr. Travers spoke about the need to regulate the transport and disposal of the toxic wastewater recovered from gas drilling. Currently, a driver and his rig must be certified to haul the hazardous chemicals used in drilling fluid to a drill site, but no such requirement is in place for vehicles or drivers hauling away the recovered and now possibly radioactive toxic wastewater. Regulation of the transportation of drilling wastes should be instituted.

In closing, Mr. Travers suggested we visit CEC’s website (www.cectoxic.org) and sign on to the Nuclear Information and Resource Service letter to President Obama, Congress and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission calling for the closing of Indian Point and all 23 of our nation’s aged GE Mark I nuclear reactors. He also asked us to also sign NIRS petition for a Post-Fukushima Program for Increased Nuclear Security and Safety, which is also linked to on

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CEC's home page.

Mark Schaeffer spoke about the disruptive climate changes that scientists have been warning about are now here. Mr. Schaeffer noted the eastern United States has been swept by a second huge wave of deadly tornadoes in a month. Globally, 2010 was the wettest and warmest year ever measured, with a record number of record high temperatures. The Asian record of 129 F was set in Pakistan, where floods drove 20 million people from their homes last summer; 4 million are still homeless. World food prices were driven up by drought and unprecedented wildfires in Russia. Glaciers on every continent have receded decade by decade; the ice over the Arctic Sea melted through in recent summers. As Bill McKibben says, if this is what we get with one degree global increase, we really need to avoid a five degree rise.

Human civilization needs to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by midcentury, especially CO2 and methane. The good news is that we know how to do this without sacrificing comfort or prosperity. Getting much more work out of the energy we use is not only cleaner than business as usual, it is less expensive. Energy input now from unsustainable fossil fuels and inherently dangerous nuclear power can be replaced by renewable supplies. The flows of solar and wind energy Earth receives are orders of magnitude greater than all the energy we use. Wind is already cost effective and is the fastest growing energy source in the world. Renewable energy has no fuel cost, but front end financing of capital costs is needed. Renewable energy can be adapted to specific end uses: solar thermal is excellent for heating and cooling new buildings.

Mr. Schaeffer said cannot afford NOT to make the massive investments in clean energy that we need, but the political and economic

power of the giant corporations profiting from dirty energy is enormous. Exxon Mobil is the most profitable corporation ever, they spend millions on propaganda to reap billions in super profits. The Koch brothers spend even more to pollute the intellectual environment, but the worst offender is the US Chamber of Commerce. The USCOC purports to represent small business, but more than half their budget comes from just 16 mega-corporations. McKibben has launched a campaign for small businesses to withdraw, signing a statement "the US Chamber doesn't speak for me."

Many actions on every scale can contribute to the global turnaround. We can and should reduce our carbon footprint as individuals, but we will all be boiled frogs unless we change laws and corporations. We can participate in Albany 2030, the City of Albany's long range planning process. We can support the NY State Earth Day Lobby Day agenda, including the Solar Jobs bill (A.5713 / S.4178) Global Warming Pollution Cap (A.5346), a bill to restrict fracking (A.7013/ S.4616) and the Complete Streets bill (A.1863/ S.1332) to promote public transit, walking and bicycling. On the federal level, we need to elect a better Congress, with a majority of members like Paul Tonko who support real solutions. We can stay informed and inform our neighbors. Good information sources include current books by Bill McKibben, Lester Brown, Van Jones, Al Gore, and Naomi Klein, and web sites such as McKibben's 350.org, Amory Lovins' RMI.org, Brown's earth-policy.org, and Joe Romm's hard hitting daily blog ClimateProgress.org.

Electronics Recycling a Huge Success

Over 4,000 cars dropped off 250 tons of used electronics at News Channel 13's annual Electronics Recycling Day at the Taft Furniture parking lot. Much of the success of this electronics recycling event can be attributed to New York

State's new Product Stewardship Law, which went into effect on April 1, 2011. Under this law, electronics manufacturers are now required to take back, at no cost to the consumer, any product they manufacture. We look forward to more electronics recycling events in the Capital Region. WNYT NewsChannel 13 said "A constant rain wasn't enough to short-circuit News Channel 13's annual Electronics Recycling Day. It's an event that keeps getting bigger and better every year and it serves several poignant and practical purposes. Cars began arriving at the Taft Furniture parking lot in Colonie just after dawn."

June 15 Dinner Saving the Pine Bush: The Next Generation

Don't miss the special treat we will be having at the June 15 dinner. Guilderland Middle School students will be telling us about the butterfly project they have been working on all year under the guidance of their teacher Alan Fiero. The work of these students is supporting our mission. Let's show our support for them by attending the June 15 dinner. It's sure to be an enjoyable experience for us.

Sally's Recycling corner

Pedals for Progress, which won a Bicycling Magazine's Environmental Award in 1998, works to "rescue bicycles destined for overburdened U.S. landfills and ship them to developing countries where they are sorely needed and highly valued. PFP bikes are put to work not only as basic transportation, but are used as a supplement to school and community programs. The bikes are adapted for use as trash haulers, produce trucks, taxis, and farm machinery." For more information on PFP, check out <http://www.p4p.org/>

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