



# Save the Pine Bush

November/December Newsletter

Nov/Dec 16 No. 133 • 33 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210 • email [pinebush@mac.com](mailto:pinebush@mac.com) • phone 518-462-0891 • web <http://www.savethepinebush.org> • Circ. 600

**Vegetarian/Vegan Dinner**  
**Wednesday, November 16, 2016, 6:00 p.m.**

**Mark  
Lowery**

*of the*

**NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Office of Climate Change**  
*will speak about*

**Hell and High Water:  
New York responds to climate change**

Climate change has already had effects on New York State's natural resources and infrastructure. Mark Lowery will describe anticipated future effects, the level of greenhouse gas emissions reductions needed to avoid catastrophic effects, and New York State programs to reduce emissions and adapt to unavoidable effects of climate change. Mark is a climate policy analyst in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Office of Climate Change. His principal areas of responsibility have included leading public outreach efforts for the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, Sea Level Rise Task Force and climate action planning. He oversees the Climate Smart Communities program and coordinates implementation of the Community Risk and Resiliency Act.

**At the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street** (people with cars can park in the lot near the door). All-you-can-eat dinner, with vegetarian and vegan options, We will be trying out some new menus - email if you have questions. Only \$12 for adults, \$6 for students, and \$2 for children. People who make reservations are served first. For reservations, please leave a message for Rezsins Adams at 462-0891 or email [pinebush@mac.com](mailto:pinebush@mac.com).

Interested people are welcome to attend the program beginning at 7:00 for which there is no charge.

**No hike in November due to hunting season**

[www.savethepinebush.org](http://www.savethepinebush.org)

## Climate Change and Arthropod-borne Diseases

*by Tom Ellis*

ALBANY, NY: Bryon Backenson of the NYS Health Department (DOH) spoke at the October 19 SPB dinner about climate change and arthropod-borne diseases. Mr. Backenson is a research scientist and Director of Investigations and Vector Surveillance Control in the DOH Bureau of Communicable Diseases Control (BCDC). He is also an assistant professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University at Albany's School of Public Health.

Mr. Backenson is also chair of the Clifton Park open space committee. I heard him speak at the August 15 Climate, Weather, Data: Protecting Our Crops and Landscapes conference in Voorheesville and was pleased he agreed to speak with SPB.

He began saying about seventy communi-

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## Overview of Climate Crisis and NY Renews

*by Tom Ellis*

ALBANY, NY Mark Schaeffer of 350.org and Conor Bambrick of Environmental Advocates (EA) spoke at the September 21 SPB dinner about the climate crises and the need for a political climate change. Mark led off saying pre-industrial age atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations were 280 part per million (ppm) and today are 400+ ppm, in part the result of years of inaction resulting from decades of disinformation by the fossil fuel industry, including Exxon. He said we endure "a smog of disinformation" from some of the same scientists who lied about tobacco safety.

Mark, also a long-time SPB member, said getting into a hot car in summer proves that solar energy works and that it can be captured. About ninety percent of the planetary warming is in the ocean which captures heat better than land. The accumulated growth so far is about

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## *Bryon Backenson, continued from page 1*

cable diseases are reported to DOH, the BCDC investigates them and tries to limit their spread, and he detects pathogens and helps prevent their spread. The BCDC conducts surveillance and receives reports, educates the public and health providers, does research in laboratories and searches data for trends, and vector control -- knocking out mosquitoes.

Mr. Backenson spoke about the importance of correct tick removal. He said the more you annoy a tick the more it salivates and infects you. He urged people to remove ticks pulling them straight out with fine point tweezers.

Mr. Backenson said there are many vector-borne diseases in New York. These include six or seven tick-borne diseases including Lyme Disease; many mosquito-borne diseases including West Nile Virus, Eastern Encephalitis, Dengue Fever, Yellow Fever; and many louse- and flea-borne diseases. He said Yellow Fever is now raging in Africa and Zika has little health impact on the already-born but can have considerable impacts on the unborn.

He said there is much less insect control in New York with pesticides than years ago and increased hiking leads to more tick exposures. Lyme Disease, he said, has been moving north and west across New York; thirty years ago, about ninety percent of the reported cases were in Suffolk, Nassau, Putnam, Westchester, and Rockland counties; the total in those counties remains about the same today while their proportion of the state total declines.

"We tend to think of climate change in a vacuum," he said. A one degree temperature increase may lead to a spread of one vector to new regions but a predator may also move with the vector species. "Predicting climate change impacts," he said, "is not easy due to it's complicated impacts."

He insisted that we must have guidelines in place when we count things and there is considerable uncertainty if disease symptoms experienced by a person are caused by Lyme Disease.

New York has the most Zika cases of any United State due to New York City being a major travel hub to and from Central and South America. He said Puerto Rico has 26,000 cases or ninety-eight percent of locally acquired cases in the United States. New York has 838 reported cases with 620 of these in New York City.

Two mosquitoes are associated with Zika transmission; *Aedes aegypti*, which is tied to human exposures, a skittish bug that can infect five or six people before "getting a belly full of blood;" and *Aedes albopictus* (the Asian Tiger Mosquito), which feeds on many species. *Aedes*

*albopictus* is the one we see in New York, and is not as potent a vector as *Aedes aegypti*.

He said all mosquitoes must find some way to survive the winter as larva, eggs, or adults, or they die in sustained cold weather. New York has about seventy-five mosquito species and each has separate characteristics. Climate play a big role in their lives.

Of the approximately seventy-five ways to catch mosquitoes, DOH primarily uses five. He said individual mosquitoes rarely travel more than 200 yards from where they are born.

He said he has worked on and off at DOH

*"Bryon Backenson of DOH said the more you annoy a tick the more it salivates and infects you. Instead, he urged people to remove ticks pulling them straight out with fine point tweezers."*

for sixteen years. The BCDC receives strong financial and political support from the state, his bureau is good at what it does, and must react to disease outbreak when they occur. BCDC works with many other government agencies and the University at Albany School of Public Health.

The big Zika concern today is in Asia, especially China and India. Good sanitation and screens on windows limit Zika incidence in the US. He said he does not expect there will be tens of millions of Zika cases in South and Central America. New bug-borne diseases occur in the world on average about every three to four years.

If Zika infects a person, the body will repel it; if a woman gets pregnant years after a Zika exposure, the baby will not be Zika-impacted.

He said ticks die out in dry conditions; snow cover keeps humidity high underneath allowing tick survival.

Tim Truscott said there are many more mosquitoes in his Albany neighborhood than twenty-fives years ago and far fewer night hawks.

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## *Overview of Climate Crisis and NY Renews, continued from page 1*

one degree Celsius or 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit. The California drought of the last five years is the worst experienced there in 1000 years. A one degree increase in temps creates a four percent increase in water vapor, itself a greenhouse gas — a positive feedback.

He said 2015 was a record hot year, increasing numbers of droughts are occurring worldwide, and Moscow experienced its first 100 degree day. The Red Cross, he said, believes there may be hundreds of millions of climate refugees by mid-century. Sandy-type storms could hit New York City annually by 2100. "This is a global emergency," he said, "gradual on the human time scale, but super fast on the geological time scale." The world temperature record was broken by two-tenths of one degree in 2015 from 2014; in prior years the increase was about one-hundredth of a degree. "It is like fast driving in a fog toward a cliff at some unknown distance... The real danger," Mark said, "is not individual storms but the gradual warming."

Mark said peat, concentrated in northern latitudes, releases CO2 and methane, and could raise global temperatures by fifteen degrees. Mark believes humanity needs the equivalent of a US World War Two mobilization to combat climate change. Much of the western US could experience dust bowl conditions by the end of this century. Renewables are ready and can create millions of new jobs, more than would be lost in the fossil fuel industry. He concluded saying changes are needed at all levels of government.

Conor Bambrick is air and energy director at EA, which is part of the New York Renews (NYR) Coalition. He said with little action likely at the federal level and New York often being an innovator, efforts should be focused at the state. He said eighty-two organizations have signed on to NYR, real action on climate will require a transformation of the economy, power plant closures have broad implications, and a "just transition" is needed for impacted communities.

He said NYR is urging New York State to end all human-caused climate pollution by 2050 and get fifty percent of electricity from renewables by 2030. The whole economy will have to be electrified which must come from clean energy. Legislation has been drafted that envisions no fossil fuel cars by mid-century. He said the many communities not benefiting from investments in the new energy economy should be assisted first. What are essentially public monies should support career pathways for workers with fair labor standards and prevailing wages.

The proposed legislation would require each state spending decision to consider a climate test. He said that during the prior week, the state environmental conservation department (DEC) told Pilgrim and Global to essentially start over and apply a climate test to their proposals (to build fossil fuel pipelines from Albany to New Jersey

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## Landfill Expansion Proposal in the Town of Colonie – Report from Tom Ellis

The state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) held public hearings that I attended on September 20 and October 25 on the application of the Town of Colonie to greatly enlarge its landfill located along the Mohawk River near Route 9. Dozens spoke against the proposal citing concerns about odors, aesthetics, noise, water and air pollution, regulatory compliance, truck traffic, need, alternatives, and economics. The proposed dump would overlap and expand upon the existing one and an old hazardous waste dump.

Representatives of the Towns of Waterford and Halfmoon, their attorneys, residents, and others -- some from Colonie -- spoke in opposition; they demanded that DEC conduct a formal adjudicatory hearing as part of its review of the application.

Residents who live near the dump were es-

pecially impressive. Many have decades observing the growth of the dump. Some said they were promised years ago that the dump would close in 2018 and they want this promise kept. One said the dump is like a sponge and may have to be cleaned up some day at enormous cost.

Another has lived two miles from the dump for sixty years and driven along side it thousands of times to and from work. She said during one extremely wet spring in the 1990s, the effluent from the dump crossed the river road for three continuous days on its way to the river. She questioned the integrity of the existing landfill and said don't expand it.

An adjudicatory hearing is like a trial at which the applicant and opponents both submit expert testimony and cross-examine each other; these meetings are recorded by a stenographer, the public and the news media can observe, and

witnesses take an oath. Open evidentiary hearings allow opponents to highlight omissions and correct errors in the draft environmental impact statement. Secrecy is vastly reduced.

Equally important, with an adjudicatory hearing process, the DEC would have to more carefully explain its secretive decision making process than without one. The public can carefully observe how DEC operates. DEC would be held to a much higher level of transparency and accountability. If DEC approves the landfill application, opponents can use the evidence from the adjudicatory proceeding as a basis for a lawsuit challenging the decision.

During the early 1990s DEC said it would no longer allow landfills to be sited near rivers. A key question today is will DEC allow a tripling of the size on an existing landfill at a site it would never allow a brand new landfill.

(Pilgrim) and install oil heating machinery at the port of Albany (Global)). He concluded saying successfully dealing with climate change requires a broader strategy than legislation only.

During the Q&A, meteorologist Hugh Johnson said make communities more worker and biker friendly, especially for short trips. Conor agreed saying NYR programs should be community driven. Mark added that Albany (city) is adopting a complete streets plan and the Madison Avenue "road diet" is part of it.

Michael O'Hara, a Hudson city councilman, said he is teaching people how to lobby at the federal level. In support of legislation to collect a federal tax on carbon at the point of generation with all of it rebated to taxpayers. Mark said there are many variations of a proposed carbon tax; one would rebate two-thirds to the poorest people.

In response to a question from Grace Nichols about how much nuclear will we suffer with NYR, Conor said the 2015 state energy plan did not envision the giant nuclear power subsidies recently imposed on New Yorkers by the state Public Service Commission and nuclear is not included in clean energy definition.

To a question from Sue DuBois about how the NYR-backed law would be implemented if enacted, Conor said DEC would have primary responsibility and resources to administer it would have to be included in its budget.

Responding to a question about what would comprise the fifty percent of electricity that is not renewable, Conor said natural gas, nuclear, a little oil and coal, with natural gas gradually replaced by renewables and nuclear power not likely to last past 2030 or 2035.

Another question concerned the need for a broader coalition of decision makers than utility people. Conor said the legislation directs all state agencies to participate in the climate action plan and he hopes for a wider inclusion of people and interests in the planning process.

Another question concerned the NYR plan's impact on local taxes to which Conor said enactment would force school districts to make

healthier choices.

Tina of the Sierra Club said the legislation has passed the Assembly but not the Senate and asked what is the victory strategy. Conor said the NYR legislation is being improved and intensified pressure will be applied to the Senate. Mark said senators who oppose the bill will be subject to targeted political action.



# Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission Releases 2017 Draft Management Plan Update

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission is releasing its Draft Management Plan Update for public review and comment on October 4, 2016.

A public hearing is scheduled for Tuesday, October 25, 2016 from 7:00-9:00pm, at the Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center, 195 New Karner Road, Albany, NY to gather public comment on this document.

People can participate at the hearing and/or provide written comments via email to [managementplan@albanypinebush.org](mailto:managementplan@albanypinebush.org) or standard mail to: Management Plan, Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission, 195 New Karner Road, Albany, NY 12205. The comment period of the Draft Management Plan Update ends at the close of business November 25, 2016. A list of locations where the plan can be viewed is available is below.

The 1988 Legislation (NYS Environmental Conservation Law, Article 46) which established the Albany Pine Bush Preserve and the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission, requires that the Preserve Management Plan be reviewed and, if necessary, updated every five years. The Draft Management Plan Update is a minor revision of the 2010 Management Plan. This document refines education, outreach and communication recommendations; provides an updated five year operating plan and updates the Invasive and Overabundant Species Management Plan. The Draft Plan also updates the Preserve's descriptive statistics (e.g. acres managed) and Preserve Designations (e.g. National Natural Landmark,

*Published in the Times Union, Letters to the Editor, on October 21, 2016 at 2:36 AM*

## Bad air a problem in the South End

The editorial "Question and answer time," Sept. 4, regarding a late August state Senate public hearing on PFOA contamination in Rensselaer County said the central issue is "why a village of 3,500 people was drinking contaminated water for more than a year after officials first knew of the problem" and asked "what could have been done differently, and how might that understanding affect what's done now?"

The same reasoning applies to the South End of Albany, where residents have been inhaling polluted air from a wide variety of sources for many years after government knew of the problem.

At a May 7, 2003, state Department of Environmental Conservation hearing on a proposed but never built asphalt manufacturing factory for South Pearl Street, a Giffen Elementary School nurse spoke strongly against the proposal.

She said the air in the school often smelled of exhaust and chemicals; that she had to completely wipe down all the tables and the computer in her health clinic every three or four days because there was a fine layer covering these objects; that 78 students (13 percent) had asthma; that "we all know that the exhaust, the chemicals, and particles in the air are bad for your health;" and that air pollution triggers asthma attacks.

Did DEC forward her information to the state or county health departments or the federal government, and, if not, why not?

Has DEC or the state health department done any follow-up work? Did DEC consider her testimony when it quietly approved Global Partners first oil train application four years ago?

Tom Ellis

Important Bird Area, National Heritage Site, etc.). As no substantive changes are proposed in the Draft Management Plan Update, the action has been classified as a State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) Type II Action consistent with 6 NYCRR Part 617.

Locations where the Draft Management Plan Update can be viewed:

Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center, 195 New Karner Road, Albany, NY 12205

Albany Public Library – Washington Ave Branch

Guilderland Public Library  
Colonie Town Library

Or online at:  
<https://www.albanypinebush.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/APBPC-Management-Plan-Update-for-Web.pdf>

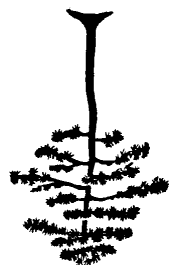
### *Next Dinner Dates*

**November 16**  
**December 21**

Westminster Presbyterian Church,  
85 Chestnut Street, Albany, NY

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Save the Pine Bush  
A Project of the Social Justice Center  
33 Central Avenue  
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