



Save the Pine Bush

January/February Newsletter

Jan/Feb 17 No. 134 • 33 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210 • email pinebush@mac.com • phone 518-462-0891 • web <http://www.savethepinebush.org> • Circ. 600

Vegetarian/Vegan Dinner
Wednesday, January 18, 2017, 6:00 p.m.

Kim Fraczek

Co-Director of Sane Energy Project
will speak about

Gas Infrastructure –
The Big Picture

Kim will walk us through the “You Are Here,” interactive online map of fracked infrastructure in the region. This map was designed by grassroots power from all over the region by people like YOU, who have a story and knowledge to share. The gas industry does not make the comprehensive view of the interconnections of all these pipelines, compressors, power plants, waste and storage etc. simply because seeing the **Big Picture** helps us understand how we are all deeply connected, and how we can organize strategically knowing what it all looks like. Join us on a journey, and get ready to strategize, organize and build the renewable economy that respects our health, safety and democracy we know is possible.

At the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street (people with cars can park in the lot near the door). All-you-can-eat lasagna dinner, with vegetarian and vegan options, salad, garlic bread and delicious desserts. 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 Rezsín Adams at 462-0891 or email pinebush@mac.com.

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

Save the Pine Bush Winter Outing

Sunday Afternoon, January 22, 2017 at 1:00 pm

Meet at: Pine Bush Discovery Center parking lot, east side of Route 155, opposite Old State Road.

For GPS - 195 New Karner Road, Albany NY 12205

Leader: Andy Arthur • For More Information: 518-465-8930

Anybody's Guess • Anything can Happen • Weatherwise or Otherwise In these Vastly Uncertain Times! But what isn't changing is the fun and learning and fellowship of Save The Pine Bush outings.

We will ski or walk depending on conditions. Join us on a winter adventure — if there is snow, bring your cross-country skis or snow shoes — if there is no snow, wear your hiking boots! The Pine Bush is gorgeous in the winter, with its gently rolling hills of sand. Our leader, Andy Arthur, is a highly experienced outdoorsman; he treks, camps, canoes, and kayaks all over the northern Adirondacks Green and White Mountains, and beyond. He is used to leading groups of all kinds of people with diverse preferences of pace, capabilities, and topical interests. For more info: ask Andy at : 518-281-0873 or if not there try John at 518-465-8930. Note: Please wear appropriate protective clothing for the danger of ticks, bring deer or insect repellent to use before beginning the walk.

The ski or hike is free and open to the public. Bring your friends!

**Climate Change and
Hell and High Water**

by Tom Ellis

ALBANY, NY: Hell and High Water: New York Responds to Climate Change was title of the talk given by Mark Lowery at the November 16 SPB dinner.

Mr. Lowery is a climate policy analyst in the state Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Office of Climate Change (OCC). He said OCC helps NYS mitigate and adapt to climate change. Prior to his talk, he told me he could speak for many hours on this topic. Toward the end of his one-hour presentation, he covered many topics quicker than he and we would have liked due to time constraints.

At least 97% of climate scientists, he said, believe human caused climate change is real. Greenhouse gasses are natural at between 240-280 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere, the greenhouse ef-

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**Albany County &
Banning Styrofoam**

by Tom Ellis

ALBANY, NY The Albany County Legislature is considering legislation that would extend the ban on the use of one-time use (take-out) food and beverage polystyrene foam containers from restaurants and eateries with fifteen or more establishments in the US (enacted three years ago) to all restaurants and eateries in the county.

A public hearing was held on November 22 at which the polystyrene industry sent eight or nine representatives who spoke in opposition to the proposed law. Three others spoke in favor, another submitted a letter, and one woman had to depart for work before being called to speak. Fortunately only about ten of the 39 legislators attended the hearing (held on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving) and thus most did not hear the industry's nonsense.

Industry reps said that polystyrene manufacturing jobs in New York will be in jeopardy if the legislation is enacted, no one has ever been made ill from drinking from a polystyrene cup,

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fect was first identified as a potential problem by French scientists in the 1800s, CO₂ is the predominant greenhouse gas, and CO₂ stays in the atmosphere for hundreds of years, perhaps 1000.

CO₂ atmospheric concentrations are now above 400 ppm, and the increase in recent centuries is nearly all human caused. In the past three years, global temperatures have increased at faster rates than earlier. He said there will be “climate surprises” in the future, because not everything can be modeled.

Melted ice (water) can not reflect light as well as ice can and water absorbs more light and heat than ice, thus increasing the rate of melting in a feedback loop. He said methane is about 80 times more potent a greenhouse gas than CO₂, and methane releases also have feedback loops. He mentioned clathrates (“combustible ice”) under the oceans as another potent greenhouse gas.

As climate change intensifies, he said wet places will become wetter and dry places drier. The US southwest is today as dry as in the 1930s but also much hotter now. Warmer temperatures lead to increased pest outbreaks killing forests that then burn.

He asked when will the Earth look like it has not looked before, or when the coldest year (global temperature average) be hotter than the coldest year of the past. He said based on data collected from 10,000 sites worldwide, under a high emissions track, this will occur about 2047; under a low emissions track, in 2067. He said the future New York will be hotter, wetter, with more extreme precipitation, more flooding, sea level rises, and stronger coastal storms.

Ocean acidification is “global warming’s evil twin sister,” he said. In response to a few questions, he said removing CO₂ from the atmosphere to sequester it would be extremely energy intensive if it could be done at all, and annual CO₂ emissions are 100 times volcanic CO₂ emissions. He said human activities had caused more than 100 percent of the temperature increase in the past 60--70 years because there would have been a slight temperature decrease in the 1900s due to natural activities.

The “energy trap” is that we do not possess enough clean energy to manufacture the clean energy infrastructure.

With climate change, precipitation may increase 25 percent in New York. Since 1958 New York has had a seventy percent increase in its total rain that arrives in the heaviest one percent of rain events. Sea level rise in New York is twelve inches in the past 100 years. He said

the lower half of the Hudson River is not really a river but an estuary; storm surges that hit NYC Battery will hit the Troy Federal Dam.

Global sea level rise by 2100 could be 6.5 feet due to heat already “in the system” even if we halted all climate change emissions today. Regarding hurricane Sandy, the question is not whether it was caused by climate change but whether it was worsened by climate change; the answer is yes due to the existing sea level increase.

Since 1970 the NYS winter mean (average) temperature increase is 4.4 degrees Fahrenheit (F) and the annual mean temperature rise is 2.4 degrees F. NYS may experience an increase from the average of ten ninety degrees days per year today to 14-23 by the 2020s and 27-82 in the 2080s, with more heat waves, and higher human mortality. NYS will also likely see more short term (two month) droughts in the future. Climate change will have many agricultural impacts including delayed plantings due to wetter springs and direct crop damage.

“Maintaining a livable planet is at stake,” he said. By the second half of this century, humans are on track to reach a doubling of CO₂ concentrations (560 ppm) from the 1700s resulting in a 3.5 degree global Celsius (C) temperature increase. [1 degree C = 1.8 degrees F]

He said the Paris 2015 Conference of Parties agreement (COP21) is now in force. The US is supposed to reduce climate change emissions by 26-28 percent from 2005 levels by 2030, which is achievable, he said. The known world fossil fuel reserves are about five times the amount that if released would increase the earth’s temperature by two degrees C.

He said current New York CO₂ equivalent emissions are 34, 32, and 17 percent from the transportation, housing, and electricity sectors, respectively, NYS has the cleanest grid (CO₂ equivalent emissions) in the United States, and NYC is the most energy efficient place in the nation.

Among the steps we should take, he said, are the electrification of cars and space heating, better waste management, and removal of organics from the waste stream. He said the NYS greenhouse gas reduction goal is eighty percent by 2050, NYS has many programs including the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), vehicle emission standards, among others.

Among the NYS climate change adaption programs are a state sea level rise task force, climate smart community (CSC) programs, and others. He said the DEC and state Energy Research and Development Authority (ERDA) have many funding mechanisms for localities interested in the CSC program. He said the City and County

of Albany and the Town of Bethlehem are among the original six CSC communities; today there are nine. DEC provides guidance and technical support. Many rural communities have too few employees to effectively participate without help in CSC programs.

Regarding what we as individuals can do, he said to use the federal Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) greenhouse gas calculator to estimate your personal contribution to climate change, and join the CSC efforts in your communities.

In response to a question, he said National Grid probably owns most of the street lights in the City of Albany and it has no financial incentive to replace existing light bulbs with high efficiency bulbs. Susan Lawrence responded saying Assemblyman Fahy has sponsored legislation to allow communities to buy street lights which Albany is now doing. Former Albany Common Councilman Dominick Calsolaro added that the city owns the new lights on Delaware Avenue but few others. He asked, “Why does National Grid not install LED lights when they tell us to?”

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polystyrene recycling occurs in many places in the United States, and that supporters of the legislation confuse styrene and polystyrene. They said alternatives to polystyrene cost and weigh more, and are not recycled or composted in Albany County.

Two weeks later, at its December 5 monthly meeting, when nearly all legislators were present, no industry representatives showed up, but ten including David Carpenter, MD, Caitlin O’Brien of Environmental Advocates, and Paul Tick, spoke in support of the bill.

David Carpenter said there is no possibility of recycling food and polystyrene containers that contain food and beverage residues, plastics should not be microwaved, and one reason the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the NYS Health Department are not proactive in support of banning such containers is that they are very political institutions subject to pressure from corporate interests. I responded to industry comments made November 22 saying I will pay \$100 to the first person who can prove that no person has ever been made sick by drinking from a polystyrene cup.

The legislature met again on December 19. Twelve spoke in favor of the bill, none against. Speakers noted that polystyrene containers are a ubiquitous litter problem on land, and, due to their light weight, are often visible floating in

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People of Albany United for Safe Energy – PAUSE Year in Review

2016 was a fairly busy year for the environment and for PAUSE. We began by joining with the Break Free Coalition in January to plan the nationally covered Break Free From Fossil Fuels march and rally here in Albany in May. More than 2500 people gathered in Lincoln Park from as far away as Wyoming to urge our elected representatives to stop investing in fossil fuels and to highlight the social injustice low income communities are forced to endure because of our addiction to dirty energy.

In recognition of Earth Day, PAUSE co-sponsored the Earth Day Fair and Bike Parade at Washington Park in April. Hundreds of visitors learned about conservation, recycling and alternative energy from a multitude of socially responsible vendors such as solar installers, electric car dealers, and presenters from PAUSE, Solarize Albany and the Mayor's Sustainability Committee, to name just a few.

In July we marked the 4th anniversary of the devastating train derailment in Lac Megantic Quebec, by hosting a solemn vigil at Island Creek Park, followed by a picnic. Simultaneously, a flotilla of 40+ boaters paddled down the Hudson to draw attention to the northern most point at which the Pilgrim Pipelines would cross the river the first of two times, should it be built.

Though both the NED and the Constitution pipelines were canned due to a lot of hard work and tireless campaigning against them by

many environmental groups, we are still facing the devastating completion of the AIM pipeline next to the Indian Point Nuclear facility. Many brave activists have literally put their bodies on the line to stop the project and have been arrested in the process. We continue to support them in their efforts.

The Pilgrim Pipelines, a pair of petroleum pipelines between Albany and Rensselaer on the



north end and Linden, NJ on the south end are also in the planning stages. The southbound pipeline would carry crude oil brought in by train to Albany. Based on the initial proposal, the pipeline would approximately double the oil train traffic compared to what was coming into Albany at its peak a couple years ago. The pipeline is facing extensive opposition from governments and organizations in the Hudson Valley and northern New Jersey.

The NYS DEC and the Thruway Authority are co-lead agencies for managing the State Environmental Quality Review Act process for the pipelines. In September 2016, they issued a positive declaration, stating that the project would need an environmental impact statement (EIS). The first step of the EIS process will be "scoping," which is essentially developing an outline of what

impacts the EIS needs to consider. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the draft scope, once it's available. This comment process is important because it largely determines what will and will not be included in the EIS. Please keep an eye out for news about the Pilgrim Pipeline scoping process, from Riverkeeper, PAUSE or other organizations. The scoping process is important as local considerations that might not be considered or known about such as historical sites, other infrastructure already in place, impacts from prior projects and other potential impacts WILL be included in the scoping process. The more we get in there, the longer it will take and the harder it will be to complete.

Finally, PAUSE has been accepted as a local affiliation of national 350.org. PAUSE will remain true to our mission of stopping the "bomb trains" which now includes the thousands of ethanol cars coming into the port; as well as advocating for the health and safety of our neighbors in the South End; supporting grassroots organizations who are fighting for the passage of environmental legislation, fighting projects which invest in new fossil fuel infrastructure, such as the nuclear "bailout"; while also working with 350.org on both their local and national events and actions.

PAUSE meets the first Thursday of each month at Citizen Action, 94 Central Ave from 5:30 - 7. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. We also meet on the 3rd Wednesday with Save the Pine Bush for their dinner-lecture series each month. Year end donations are greatly appreciated. Mail to PAUSE, c/o Diana Wright, 36 Summit Ave, Albany, NY 12209.

We look forward to the interesting and challenging year ahead and to working with all of you to forge a safe, healthy and peaceful world.

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lakes and rivers. Such containers can leach toxic styrene and benzene into the foods and beverages. Recycling polystyrene (aka Styrofoam) is not practicable due to its being stained and that it easily breaks. Many alternatives exist that are fully and safely biodegradable or compostable, or reusable. Styrofoam containers are not recycled anywhere in the greater capital district. Polystyrene containers never fully biodegrade. One woman said all single-use plastic containers should be banned. A man said the Delmar Farmers Market fully supports the proposed ban and no polystyrene products are used in the Bethlehem school district.

The bill will likely be voted on in January or February. The legislature meets again on January 9 on the second floor of the Albany County Court House on Eagle Street in Albany. A public comment session begins at 6:30 p.m. Supporters of the bill plan to return until we are victorious. Please consider joining us.

Mark Your Calendars!

Next Dinner Dates

Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street, Albany, NY

Wednesday, January 18

Wednesday, February 15

Wednesday, March 15

Wednesday, April 19

Wednesday, May 17

Wednesday, June 17

No dinner in July

Wednesday, August 16

Wednesday, September 20

Wednesday, October 18

Wednesday, November 15

Wednesday, December 20

Ecosystem Commonalities and the Albany Pine Bush

by Grace Nichols

Recently visiting the West Coast after nearly two decades away, I was reacquainted with the familiar San Francisco Bay and introduced to the Sierra Nevada habitat. I found amazing correspondences between our ecosystems here and some west coast territory.

For example, our beloved Pine Bush ecosystem is highly fire dependent. Forest fires help open the pitch pine seeds, though they will open on a very hot day as well. The fire is also needed to prepare the ground for new seedlings. It raises the pH of the soil, adds nutrients, clears the ground of brushy growth and encourages scrub oak, the other most defining plant of the Pine Bush; it creates open spaces for the the Karner blue butterfly's larval home, the wild lupine. Lupine needs large open spaces, free from shading, to thrive. Incidentally, the Albany Pine Bush is not our only fire dependent ecosystem in our area. The Shawagunk Ridge with its Minnewaska State Park, and the Long Island Pine Barrens are also fire dependent.

Towering over alpine habitat, in the Sierra Nevadas of middle to western, central California, we have a different fire dependent conifer, the tall, ancient Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*). The most important mechanism of seed dispersal for these giants is forest fire. Interestingly, the Douglas squirrel and the long-horned wood boring beetle also disseminate seeds, but not to the extent that fire can. Fire also clears the ground so the seedlings have a chance. Sequoia groves are lined with soil that is granite-based alluvial soil and the glacial outwash from granite.

Wow, that's another commonality. The Sierra Nevadas were carved by glacial activity, after

uplift along a faultline. The Pine Bush are the dunes left by a glacial lake, a low-lying remnant of glacial activity.

Back towards the Pacific Ocean, in the Bay Area, we find another corresponding species -- a rare, endangered blue butterfly called the Mission Blue Butterfly, of which there are 18,000 left on San Bruno Mountain and another significant population in the Marin Headlands. Guess what? This butterfly is entirely dependent on its host plants -- it needs silver lupine, summer lupine and/or varicolor lupine as both cradles for its larvae and also food plants. The butterflies, which are about the size of a quarter, will lay their eggs singly on the dorsal side of the leaves of the three lupine plants and the larva will feed only on lupine. Adult Mission Blues, much like Karner Blues, will use composite plants -- sunflower-like plants - the Aster species - as nectar plants. They find their mates on the lupine plants, rarely straying from their lupine patches. They were listed as Federally Protected Endangered Species in 1976. Their preservation is due to a small band of dedicated conservationists and citizen scientists. There have been continuing reintroductions of the species in San Francisco.

Not all similarities we find in our travels are significant, however, I think it's fair to say that Nature repeats herself in all her wonders and diversity. Fire seed dispersal works under certain conditions and so Nature has made use of that in ecosystems with some similar features. And lupine loving blue butterflies exist on both coasts of our wide nation -- a fact to marvel at, and continue to protect.

Happy New Year to the over 40 rare species of the Pine Bush and all their kindred.

The following websites have some more information about these marvelous species and their ecosystems:

<http://www.parksconservancy.org/conservation/plants-animals/endangered-species/mission-blue-butterfly.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>
<https://nysparksnaturetimes.com/2016/05/31/fire-dependent-communities/>
https://www.na.fs.fed.us/pubs/silvics_manual/Volume_1/sequoiadendron/giganteum.htm

Call-In Week to Governor Cuomo - Coming Up January 23-27, 2017

CALL 866-846-4075

The Pilgrim Pipelines would carry explosive fracked oil along the New York State Thruway and through six counties, from Albany to New Jersey, and return flammable refined products north.

If constructed, the two pipelines would threaten our drinking water, risk the safety of dozens of communities, and promote fracking and climate change chaos.

Fortunately, Governor Cuomo has the authority to stop this dangerous project by denying Pilgrim's Thruway Right-of-Way permit.

The Coalition Against Pilgrim Pipelines -- NY is asking everyone, including members of nonprofit organizations, community groups, houses of worship, businesses, political clubs, unions, and other institutions to help make this call-in week to Governor Cuomo as successful as possible. Let's keep the pressure on!

For more information, please contact Eric Weltman, Senior Organizer, Food & Water Watch, 347-778-2743, eweltman@fwwatch.org.

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Save the Pine Bush
A Project of the Social Justice Center
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