



# Save the Pine Bush

## August/September Newsletter

Aug/Sep 12 No. 112 • 33 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210 • email [pinebush@mac.com](mailto:pinebush@mac.com) • phone 434-1954 • fax 434-6659 • web <http://www.savethepinebush.org> • Circ. 1000

### Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner Wednesday, August 29, 6:00 p.m.

**Professor Holly Ahern**

*will speak about*

### Lyme Disease: A Growing Epidemic

Ms. Ahern will share the most up to date findings on Lyme disease with us at the dinner lecture, and will welcome any questions, and expressions of concern. Save the Pine Bush urges all those who use the outdoors of the North East to attend this lecture.

Ms. Ahern is an award winning professor of microbiology and a science writer who has authored textbooks on laboratory science and published numerous articles in scientific and trade journals. Ms. Ahern has a B.S. degree and national board certification (American Society of Clinical Pathologists - ASCP) in medical technology, and an M.S. degree in Molecular Biology from the University at Albany. Named an NSF/ASM Biology Scholar in 2008, Ms. Ahern has become an outspoken advocate for truth in science and medicine particularly as it relates to Lyme disease. As head of a groundbreaking undergraduate research program at SUNY Adirondack in Queensbury NY, Ahern and her group are currently researching the complex biology of the Lyme disease spirochete and investigating enhanced ways to destroy the Lyme disease-causing organisms. .

**New Location: At the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street** (people with cars can park in the lot near the door). All-the-vegetarian-and-vegan-lasagna-you-can-eat, garden salad, garlic bread and homemade pies. 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). **Please note the dinner is the 5th Wednesday of August**

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

### Save the Pine Bush August Flower Walk Saturday, August 18, 2012 9:00 AM

**Meet at:** Pine Bush Discovery Center Parking Lot, East side of New Karner Rd. (Route 155) opposite "T" with Old State Rd., Albany, NY

**Destination:** Western Pine Bush at and near the expanded "Study Area" boundaries.

**Leader:** Amy Riley • For more info: call John Wolcott at 465-8930

Join us for what is always a nice hike in the scenic Pine Bush, and learn or share information over wildflowers there. This month's wildflower walk will have some degree of emphasis on the nectar plants that the Second Brood of Karner Blues feed on in order to survive. Yes! The Karner Blue absolutely depends upon the Wild Blue Lupine to survive; but it also depends upon nectar plants of diverse species for the First and Second Broods to survive. Some of the nectar plants that feed the Second Brood will still be in bloom.

*continued on page 2*

### Coeymans Debates Importing Garbage

*by Tom Ellis*

In 2005, SPB joined forces with the Citizens Environmental Coalition (CEC) and Selkirk-Ravena-Coeymans Against Pollution (SCRAP) to successfully block the siting of a large regional landfill by the city of Albany on a 363-acre parcel Albany now owns in the town of Coeymans (ten miles south of Albany). Now a new struggle is unfolding.

Coeymans has a law that bans solid waste imports into the town; it was enacted in 1995 after it became clear the city of Albany was serious in its intent to site a large regional landfill on the 363-acre parcel. An area man operates scrap metal and construction and demolition debris sorting businesses at the Port of Coeymans that he owns. Some town residents believe both businesses are in violation of town law banning waste imports. He wants town law changed so he can run an unspecified solid waste business. No application has been filed so details of what

*continued on page 2*

### Waste-to-Energy Plant for Bethlehem?

*by Tim Truscott*

On April 25, the Bethlehem Town Board heard a proposal by a Kentucky-based firm called RST Technologies to develop a trash disposal facility in Glenmont on the tract of land along Route 144 between the Normans Kill and the PSEG electric generating facility. This site was formerly a dump for coal ash from the Niagara Mohawk generating station.

Though the waste disposal technology is called "gasification", the process nevertheless burns garbage, as does incineration. The process is billed as being "green" and renewable because the heat generated by the process is used to heat water and produce steam which, in turn, generates electricity. Therefore, trash facilities of this nature are referred to as "waste-to-energy", or WTE, facilities.

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## *Coeymans, continued from page 1*

he wants to do are unclear.

Coeymans residents are divided with some favoring the jobs and tax revenues the expanded business would provide while others say town residents have gained few jobs that are low-paying and taxes received are too little. They also fear allowing a large industrial operation would be noisy, pollute the air, lower property values, wreck the roads, endanger children, reduce quality of life, and could open the door for a large- or giant-sized trash incinerator on the Albany-owned parcel.

In late 2008, Albany Mayor Jennings appointed a committee to work with the city's solid waste consultants, Clough Harbour and Associates (CHA), to supposedly develop a long range solid waste plan for the city and the other municipalities that dump trash in Albany's Rapp Road Landfill. CEC and Save the Pine Bush, closely monitored the committee's work. The first draft of the CHA report - in December 2009 - called for creation of a large regional solid waste authority and an unspecified type of disposal facility with a 1500 tons per day capacity, large enough to meet the disposal needs of 700,000 people. CEC and SPB strongly oppose creation of a waste authority and urge a massive commitment to reduction, composting, reuse, recycling, education, and enforcement by the city and its solid waste partners. The Albany Common Council adopted the CHA report and forwarded it to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) eighteen months ago. Rumor has it that DEC is too understaffed to analyze the report.

Mayor Jennings has spoken several times in recent years of his desire to site large trash disposal facility. Amending Coeymans town law to allow solid waste imports would be a colossal error that would likely be interpreted by Mayor Jennings and his trash consultants as a welcome gesture for Albany to propose a large- or giant-sized disposal facility. Retaining Coeymans solid waste importation ban helps assure that no regional trash incinerator is sited locally and that Coeymans will not become the trash disposal capital of the Capital Region and beyond.

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## *August Flower Walk, continued from page 1*

These nectar plants have been a key point of debate in both the Tharaldson Hotel Case in the Pine bush and the Wood Road Case in Clifton Park. The expert for hire for Tharaldson kept adducing a list of plants growing on the hotel site and stating that since there were never any Wild Blue Lupine found there it couldn't be Karner Blue habitat, even though Crossgates's

Karner Blue Corral is immediately adjacent. As for Wood Road, there are a couple small lupine patches in the small area which the DCG developers plan to preserve with fifty foot buffers around them. But beyond this mini preserve are some fields with known nectar plants for Karner Blues, which are planned to be built upon. So you can see how significant nectar feeding plants are naturally to Karner Blues. Unfortunately these nectar plants seem still to be in grey legal and regulatory zone.

## **The Walk is free and open to the public!**

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### **The Way We Were**

*by Tom Ellis*

ALBANY, NY: Don Rittner was the guest speaker at the June 20 SPB dinner. Don was introduced by John Wolcott who said Don took Albany by storm in 1973 with his archaeological research of the Isaac Truax Tavern on the King's Highway that George Washington stopped in six times. He said Don also has the distinction of being fired by Albany Mayors Erastus Corning and Tom Whalen.

Don titled his presentation, "The Way We Were." Using a PowerPoint, he described the Pine Bush as a geological island containing plants and animals that got trapped there when the climate changed at the end of the last Ice Age. He showed a map of the dozen or more pine barrens in the Mid-Atlantic and New England states and said New Jersey has the world's largest. He displayed a map of the original regional pine barrens saying a large Lake Albany was once about 600 feet above sea level and dropped three times during the past 15,000 years; each time it dropped additional sand was exposed. The lake stretched from present-day Newburgh to Glens Falls.

Using aerial photos, he said the Washington Avenue Extension "opened" the Pine Bush to development. Point of Ruins, aka Point of Woods, was the first residential development, he said. Mayor Corning hired him as city archaeologist in 1973 and Corning made himself available whenever Don wished to confer.

Corning promised that buildings along Washington Avenue Extension would not be high-rise towers, but only 2-3 stories, a promise the city has kept for the most part. [The Rapp Road Landfill is the highest structure.] The first big test of preservation was when developer Neil Hellman took an option on 350 acres near the intersection of Washington Avenue Extension and Route 155. Don contacted Vladimir Nabokov via phone in the middle of the night in Switzerland and asked him to write a letter

in opposition to the development, which he did. Nabokov, who gave the Karner Blue Butterfly its name, had often visited the Pine Bush. Don and others galvanized a turnout of hundreds at an Albany Common Council meeting. The council, a Corning rubber-stamp, did not know what to do. Don met with Corning, explained the importance of preserving the parcel, and Corning agreed. Corning told Don, "I don't like Hellman." The council voted unanimously to block the development and the city bought the 350 acres for preservation.

Don said he has known Lou Ismay since he was eight years old. Lou gave Don half his office to use for his initial Pine Bush preservation efforts.

Don said Mayor Corning was a naturalist and a history buff. At their first meeting in 1971, Corning stunned Don by writing him a check for \$500 and told him to return if he needed more funds. Don began the Pine Bush preservation project with this money. During the early and mid- 1970s, Don searched for ways to generate public support for preserving the Pine Bush, then threatened with rapid development after the extension of Washington Avenue. Don latched onto the upcoming 1976 Bicentennial and arranged for local governments to finance the creation of 26 historical markers that he placed along the King's Highway. He visited the Truax Tavern site, build in 1765 and burned down in 1941, found the ruins, and obtained volunteers from Lou Ismay's SUNYA Environmental Forum course to excavate and clean the site. Don said the SUNYA class of 1973 was a great group. "Someone should write a book about Lou's 1973 students.," he said.

To save the pine barrens, he realized preservationists needed a symbol or mascot the public could identify with and rally around. Various species such as the Buck Moth were considered, before settling on the Karner Blue Butterfly. Nabokov's connection proved valuable. A NYS legislator had the DEC declare the Karner Blue Butterfly an endangered species in 1975. There were 100,000 Karner Blue Butterflies in the city preserve then; visitors could see hundreds at a time.

Twice Don said, "Nature knows how to protect itself." Commenting on the work of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission, he said the commission burns too often and at the wrong times of the year, killing wildlife. The best time to burn is at the end of April, said Don. He thinks Karner Blue Butterflies are being poisoned by sulfuric acid, an indirect result of auto emissions; the commission is damaging the Pine Bush by trying to save one species - the Karner Blues - but wrecking many others including the Buck Moths. Don and his friends did the first

## Waste-to-Energy Plant for Bethlehem? — continued from page 1

The proposed facility would bring in municipal solid waste (MSW or garbage) from out of the area by rail, barge and by truck to the site for processing.

Waste incineration plants, including those plants with the most modern state-of-the-art air pollution controls, create and release into the air we breathe types of chemical compounds known as dioxins and furans, as well as countless other toxic chemical compounds in the form of ultra-fine particles (particles measured in thousandths of millimeters). These toxic particles are too small to be filtered and are so small they easily pass through and defeat our body's defense systems including our skin, our blood-brain barrier and placental barriers. Some of these toxic substances form compounds similar to human hormones that our bodily systems cannot recognize as foreign objects. Therefore, they can cause all kinds of bodily dysfunction such as lung diseases, cancers, heart diseases and birth defects in developing fetuses.

The proposed facility and its emissions would impact more than the immediate Glenmont section of the Town of Bethlehem. The site is within a short distance of Albany's South End, which already experiences dirty air from industries at the Port of Albany, as well as a large volume of automobile and diesel truck exhaust traveling through that area on Interstate 787. The steep southbound grade of I-787 causes vehicles to emit even more exhaust than the northbound traffic, as they labor to travel up the hill.

At the same time, the emissions from the proposed garbage disposal facility would impact those communities on the east side of the Hudson River in southern Rensselaer County and northern Columbia County which are down-wind from Glenmont.

Besides the emissions of the facility itself,

the emissions of the MSW during transport must be considered. The presenters mentioned the possibility of 100-car unit garbage trains. If these trains were to enter the site by way of the Delaware & Hudson Railway, they would likely spend time at the D&H Kenwood Yard in Albany's South End, adjacent to low-income residential housing projects.

In addition to the negative environmental impacts of air emissions, WTE facilities negatively impact recycling and re-use efforts. WTE facilities are designed and constructed with a fairly fixed capacity and, therefore, a fixed demand for fuel. Since their fuel is garbage, there is not an opportunity to significantly reduce the amount of garbage that goes into them. In other words, they create a fixed demand for garbage and discourage recycling and re-use. Instead of recycling materials, such as plastic, paper and cardboard, these materials are sent up the smokestack, never to be available for use again. Why would we ever want to do that?

RST stated that they would need to have two local ordinances changed in order to develop the project: 1) There would need to be a change in Bethlehem's ordinance prohibiting importation of solid waste into the town. 2) There would need to be a zoning change for the site.

It might take years to develop a project of this nature, much of which would involve getting the necessary permits from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. But once the permitting process for this kind of project gets started, it is a difficult, uphill fight to stop it. Especially in a political environment like Albany County's which is ethically-challenged.

In order to fight a project of this nature in the approval process, project opponents will likely need to hire an attorney and, perhaps, ultimately sue the Town of Bethlehem. This is

expensive, time-consuming and the outcome is not guaranteed.

RST is being represented by a very politically-connected Albany attorney, Peter Lynch. Lynch is so connected, in fact, that he is running for State Supreme Court Justice in Albany County.

The Town of Bethlehem, like most municipalities in New York State, is feeling a budgetary pinch. One rumor is that RST has offered Bethlehem a few dollars a ton of its tipping fee if it will approve the project. That offer could make Bethlehem's budget problems go away temporarily, and it makes it difficult for project opponents to be effective.

The best time to work to defeat this project is now, before the Town of Bethlehem changes its ordinance banning importation of solid waste, and before there is a zoning change. To work to defeat the project at this point, what is needed is strong public pressure on the Bethlehem Town Board Members and the Supervisor.

Pressure can be applied by writing to Supervisor John Clarkson expressing disapproval and concern for the project, by writing to Town Board Members, by writing letters-to-the-editors of Bethlehem's weekly newspaper, *The Spotlight*, as well as the *Altamont Enterprise*. Opposition can also be voiced during public comment periods at the beginning of Town Board meetings (the second and fourth Wednesday of the month beginning at 6:00 PM).

If you are willing to speak at Town Board meetings, I encourage you to prepare written comments beforehand so that your presentation is well organized and is understood by Town Board Members.

If you would like help with preparing comments or letters, please feel free to contact me at: [empirestate@att.net](mailto:empirestate@att.net)

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### *The Way We Were - Continued from Page 2*

prescribed burn in NYS in 1976. He said the fire went "perfect" and six months later the Blue Lupine was growing on what is now the site of the SUNYA nano-tech center.

Don said, "No matter how much land you save, unless it is connected, it does no good. Species must be able to migrate." The biggest problem with the Pine Bush today, he said, is its segmentation.

Mayor Whalen hired Don as conservation officer in 1983 but soon fired him after he opposed the proposed State Employees Federal Credit Union (SEFCU) building on Route 155.

He said Schenectady was the first municipality to preserve the local Pine Bush but the city made no effort to manage the 100 acres it set

aside in 1969. The Woodlawn Preserve, today mostly wetlands and hardwoods and not currently good pine barrens, is now 120 acres, but it could be connected to the larger Pine Bush in Albany County.

During the Q&A, John Wolcott said Don Rittner and John Cryan provided the factual and scientific foundation Save the Pine Bush needed to be successful after SPB was founded in 1978.

Don said he published an anthology of articles in 1976 titled, *The Pine Bush: Albany's Last Frontier*. Mayor Corning wrote the introduction to this book that contains scholarly articles from many disciplines. Sylvia Barnard, a professor of Classical Languages at SUNYA for forty years

before being forced out a few years ago when the state eliminated her major and four others, said the university has changed for the worse; scientists today would never write articles for an anthology edited by a graduate student.

Winding up, Don said he walked the Pine Bush every day for twenty years in the 1970s and 1980s but was never attacked by ticks until one day in 1992 when he was covered with ticks, head to foot. "My clothes were moving," he said.

Prior to Don's presentation, Qinghong Zhang of the Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection, on a three-week tour of the US, spoke for a few minutes about her work at a not-for-profit that does environmental education and awareness.



Reprinted from the Saratogian, 7/19/12

## Public gets say on Wood Road DCG project in Clifton Park:

By Glenn Griffith, [ggriffith@saratogian.com](mailto:ggriffith@saratogian.com)  
CLIFTON PARK —The Planning Board has agreed to hold a public hearing on the second phase of a controversial Wood Road development project.

At the July 10 meeting, the board voted 5-1 to hold the hearing at a date to be determined. The parcel's owner, DCG Development Company, wants approval for a 16-acre expansion of its Wood Road Light Industrial shovel ready project. The company has already developed 25 acres of the 36.6-acre site under a previous approval.

The Wood Road area between the Northway and Route 9 has been a battleground between environmentalists and developers for two decades.

Both sides of the road are under development with independent warehouse projects. The DCG parcel is the west side of the road, close to the Northway.

The Wood Road area is one of the last in Clifton Park where the once -plentiful Karner blue butterflies are found.

In an early 1990s study of the entire Wood Road area, DCG agreed to protect land that was, at the time, supporting the butterfly, which in on the state's endangered species list. How much land they are required to protect is part of the dispute and one reason the public hearing was requested.

At the most recent Planning Board meeting, environmentalists from Clifton Park and two from the non-profit Save the Pine Bush requested the board hold another public hearing on the project. The first hearing held in 2006 was prior to DCG submitting a required management plan.

Vice Chairman Joel Koval thought the hearing would set a bad precedent. "This town has a process," he said. "It doesn't hold public

## Guess what: Study finds herbicides are bad for amphibians

by Grace Nichols

For the past several years, Save the Pine Bush has warned the Common Council that buying and spreading more glyphosate (the active ingredient of Roundup) in the Pine Bush, either in the Preserve or on the Restoration is hazardous for the rare spadefoot toads and other amphibians. We've asked them to question the herbicide line in the Preserve budget. This spring, the Department of Environmental Conservation Woodland Pool Conservation Program sent around an article describing some further alarming results of Roundup on wildlife. This article was brought to the attention of the Pine Bush Preserve Commission by us; we also foiled their pesticide records from last year and the use of glyphosate by the Commission in the Pine Bush has escalated every year, but most of all in the last two years as the chemical devastation of the Restoration has gotten under way. The Commission reports that it is aware of the this article.

Summary from University of Washington Conservation: "A common herbicide can change the body shape of amphibians, according to a new study in Ecological Applications. When exposed to the herbicide Roundup, some tadpoles shift their tail shape the same way they would in response to predators.

"Roundup is one of the world's most popu-

lar herbicides and is used to kill weeds on farms. To find out how Roundup might affect amphibians, researcher Rick Relyea at the University of Pittsburgh set up artificial wetlands in tanks and added wood frog, northern leopard frog, and American toad tadpoles. Then he outfitted the tanks with cages containing newts or dragonflies, both predators of tadpoles. Finally, he added varying amounts of Roundup.

"Surprisingly, the herbicide was less deadly to the amphibians when predators were present. The tadpoles swam deeper into the water to avoid predators at the surface, and Relyea speculates that the herbicide was less concentrated near the bottom of the tanks.

"The frog tadpoles developed wider tails in response to predators, a trait that may help them dodge attacks. Relyea also saw changes in the frog tadpoles' tail shape when the herbicide was added, which were "nearly identical to the morphological changes induced by the caged dragonflies," he writes. The results suggest that "the world's most widely applied herbicide may have much further-reaching effects on nontarget species" than previously realized. — Roberta Kwok | 3 April 2012"

Link to full article: <http://www.esajournals.org/doi/abs/10.1890/11-0189.1>

hearings on site plans. The process is sufficient. We do get to hear your thoughts."

Board attorney Paul Pelagalli said hearings, though infrequent, have been held on such plans in the past.

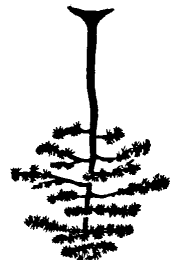
Clifton Park environmental activist William Engleman requested the board hold a hearing if only to compare the company's management plan to the 1991 findings report. He and Lynne Jackson of Save the Pine Bush said DCG's plan

to save a one-acre buffered area on the site for the Karner blue and its blue lupine food source were inadequate.

Planning Board Chairman Rocco "Rocky" Ferraro said holding a public hearing on the application "will satisfy the concerns of some regarding our ability to hear public input."

Koval maintained his opposition: "This has the potential to bog down this board with every neighbor who has an issue with a project."

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