



Save the Pine Bush

October/November Newsletter

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Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner Wednesday, October 17, 2018, 6:00 p.m.

Mark Dunlea

will speak about

Climate Change

Mark Dunlea, local activist and current Green candidate for New York State Comptroller, will speak about the effects of Climate Change and what needs to be done to save humanity. He will speak about the campaign to divest public pension funds from fossil fuels as a way to spur more action on climate change and actions we can take to reverse Climate Change.

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, vegan and gluten-free options, salad, garlic bread and delicious desserts. 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 Rezsina Adams at 462-0891 or email pinebush@mac.com.

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

Fall Back High with Hugh Johnson at the Madison Highland Portion of the Pine Bush Saturday, October 20, 2018 at 9:30 AM

Meet at: End of Route 155 •

For GPS - 98 Madison Avenue Extension, Albany, NY 12203 (Lat/Long - 42.716563, -73.878508)

Leader: Hugh Johnson • **For More Information:** (518) 588-6708

Hugh Johnson will lead this Pine Bush Hike starting at the Madison Highlands (end of Rte. 155). While we likely not see any Blue Karner Butterflies, we should see some nice fall foliage dotted throughout our three mile hike of the Yellow and Red Trails. We will then head to Yonder Farms for lunch and some fresh cider donuts!

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

Community Advocates for Sustainable Energy is sponsoring Renewable Energy and Sustainable Living Fair Saturday, October 20, 2018 at 10 AM to 4 PM

Doane Stuart School, 199 Washington Ave, Rensselaer, NY 12144

There will be information and products about renewable energy and living a more sustainable life, food and children's activities in addition to displays and information on renewable energy and sustainable living. Workshops on a variety of topics will also be offered. **This event is free and open to the public with free parking.**

The Islands of Radix Center

by Tom Ellis

ALBANY, NY: Scott Kellogg and Justina Thompson spoke at the September 19th SPB dinner. Scott is the executive director of the Radix Center at 153 Grand Street in the South End of Albany. Justina is a 19-year-old student at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute majoring in sustainability studies. Both are highly enthusiastic about their work and are accomplished experts in environmental education.

Before they began, Grace Nichols spoke briefly saying insect populations are rapidly declining for multiple reasons. These die-offs are leading to declines in bird and bat populations that feed on insects.

Scott began describing the mission of the Radix Center. One purpose is to bring in school children to familiarize them with the center's programs and get them involved. High school

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Destroying History at The Pine Bush Preserve

by Steve Rider

On its website it states that the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission "assure(s) the protection, restoration and management of the natural and cultural resources of the Albany Pine Bush." However, in reality preservation of cultural resources is given little priority compared to the ecological goals. Original, unspoiled remnants of four historic roads can be found within the Preserve, some as part of the trail system, and nothing has been done to protect them nor to educate the public as to their existence. These roads are the c1661 King's Highway, c1712 Palatine Road, 1792 State Road, and c1800 Schoharie Road.

This reality is clear in the APBPC Resource Protection and Visitor Experience Vision, adopted in 2010 and updated in 2017. It's hard to find any mention of historic resource protection within the 60 odd pages of this document, with no mention at all among the guiding principles cited in formulating the plan, which among other things involves a reconfiguration of the trail system to minimize "fragmentation" of the preserve.

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students participate; they perform bookkeeping and environmental activities. Among its many activities, the Radix Ctr. runs a farmers' market, and does advocacy in the South End on the "bomb trains" [that bring crude oil to the port of Albany] and the heavy truck traffic. The Radix Ctr. also has a greenhouse. He said that during the past summer, Radix Ctr. staff and volunteers build a floating island and placed it in the Hudson River.

He spoke about storm-water discharges that send vast quantities of debris into the river. This is due in part to the vast amount of concrete, asphalt, roofs, and structures that cover much of the ground in urban areas, making it difficult or impossible for heavy rains to enter the soils as is much more easily done in rural areas where nearly all the land is still in its natural state.

Combined sewer overflows are an urban fact. He asked: "What do we do?" The city of Albany, he said, is under increasing pressure to reduce the sewage outflows into the Hudson.

Rainwater harvesting, he said, is a way to catch rainwater from roofs, store it, and then slowly release it into the ground.

He said constructing and deploying floating islands in rivers is a way to clean sewage from the river. Floating islands act like tiny wetlands; as sewage flows through the roots of the plants on the islands, the roots pick up sewage.

Scott said he has been building floating islands for several years; He uses plastic water bottles, pool tubing, plastic fencing materials, netting, bamboo, and black tubing.

The Hudson, he said, is far cleaner than thirty years ago but still not swim-able or fish-able. He said students help build the islands, the technology is highly scale-able, the islands are anchored to the bottom of the river with concrete blocks, some were deployed in late July and are doing well, and the islands will be hauled in late October before the river freezes. Earlier that day, he said, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) had awarded the Radix Ctr. a \$22,000 justice center educational literacy grant.

This was the perfect lead-in to Justina's comments. Justina said she hopes to eventually obtain a doctorate in science and technology studies at RPI. After taking a college course that introduced her to the Radix Center's floating islands, she taught sustainable education at the center last summer. She is from Long Island.

Justina loves to enhance the environmental literacy of students of any age and said she "is already doing the work I hope to do for the rest of my life." She said Scott bought a large abandoned lot in 2009 and ripped up the artificial ground cover.

"Even the smallest bit of exposure [for someone] to ecological topics," she said, may not have immediate results but asked, "who can now see the five-to-ten year impacts."

She said she and her students took field trips each Friday. One was to Peebles Island [State Park where the Mohawk and Hudson rivers merge] for kayaking. "Take time to connect with students so they know you are interested," she said. Another trip was to Tivoli Lake Preserve and its community garden. She said, "Ask people: How can we do this better? How do we reuse what we already have to improve the Earth?" A third trip was to the Ezra Prentice Homes [within a hundred feet of the parked "bomb trains" at the Port of Albany and on both sides of South Pearl Street through which hundreds of trucks pass through daily] to examine the air quality data. Students walked along the new adjacent rail trail.

Justina is exceptionally excited about her work. She loves to lead by example and said she is sometimes told she inspires others. On the rail trail, when the children did not know what to do, she encouraged them to sit still and observe and experience nature, to "slow down and look around." She said, "If you worry too much, it means you are thinking too much about the past or the future." She said it "is great to see what kids are intrigued by."

The Radix Center, she said, has a cider press. Visitors can pick the apples, put them through the press and soon drink the cider. The three principles of permaculture, she said, are people care, Earth care, and we share. At the Radix Center, she said, we also compost; students pick up the compost from the nearby community. The Radix Center has a community open house at 1:00 p.m. on the final Sunday of each month.

During the questions and comments, Scott said the Radix Center will soon build a classroom on site. Justina said there are four floating islands in the Hudson now. Scott said that at sewage treatment plants, oxygen is blasted into sewage so bacteria can break it down. Sewage treatment, he said, is not high-tech. The Hudson River floating islands are not catching sewage flowing from the large C-pipe but they could be if the C-pipe was encircled with floating islands.

Speaking of pollution in general, Scott said "mopping up the mess doesn't do much until we shut off the tap. Urban sprawl must be curtailed." We need "to look at this from a whole systems perspective." Willow Tree branches can be cut, placed in water, and will root. He said that for all new construction in Albany, dual sewer pipes must be installed even though one of the pipes will not be used until an entire second sets of pipes is completed to separate the storm water and sewers. Scott said "there is no away place." He

recognizes that sewers brought enormous health improvements to millions of people but ideally favors eventually eliminating sewers while recognizing that doing so will be very difficult in urbanized environments.

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(Fragmentation is the assertion that any interruption of a contiguous ecosystem causes ecological damage.) All trails were equally vulnerable in the quest to achieve this goal.

This writer became aware of trail changes during a hike a couple of years ago. Starting at the Willow Street "Great Dunes Trailhead" I hiked the trail following the old dirt road that had, on previous hikes, extended uninterrupted to the Thruway. This trail was the last undisturbed section of the c1800 Schoharie Road that originally extended from a point just north of the Thruway to Schoharie County. A barricade had been erected with a "Trail Closed" sign, with a trail leading to the right remaining open. Shortly thereafter I attended a SPB Dinner featuring Neil Gifford (APBPC Conservation Director) and asked him about the closure of the historic road. He denied that it was closed, saying the road went to the right and not straight ahead where the barricade was located!

Though hoping the closure was temporary, on future hikes I nonetheless found the same barricade with the old road beyond slowly reverting to nature. This past spring I became aware of another section of the road being closed. In April I attended a lecture by Steven Campbell, Ph. D. (APBPC Conservation Biologist) on the effectiveness of their habitat restoration projects. Although unrelated to the topic I asked Dr. Campbell why historic roads were being removed from the trail system. He seemed to have no knowledge of the road and stated that they can't save every dirt road in the Preserve, but invited anyone to submit additional information. Another member of the audience, Brian Collins, spoke with me after the lecture, wanting to know more.

Brian and I started communicating regularly and we both wrote letters to Chris Hawver (APBPC Executive Director) expressing our concern. The Guilderland Historical Society also submitted a letter. My letter included several satellite images of the trail system, on which I marked the location of the historic roads, though I found it hard to believe they were ignorant of these roads despite the uninformed responses to my questions. All three letters received virtually the same response, written by Joel Hecht, APBPC Stewardship Director. He explained about the aforementioned 2010 RPVEV plan. He stated that the historical resources were considered, but keeping all sections of the roads open as trails would "conflict with the Commission's other eco-

logical and recreational objectives.” No mention was made of the images I had provided.

Not satisfied with this response, I submitted an admittedly provocative letter to the Altamont Enterprise in which I decried the lack of concern for historic preservation, finishing with this sentence: “We can only conclude that, when history and ecology conflict, history is the loser.” About a week later I received a call from Elizabeth Floyd Mair, Enterprise staff writer, indicating they wanted to run a story based on my letter, and an editorial. We spoke several times and made a field visit to the Preserve where I showed her a closed section of Schoharie Road and some traces of King’s Highway, and shared some photographs and maps from the 1930s documenting these sites. Ms. Mair also spoke with Chris Hawver and Joel Hecht. In the article, Mr. Hawver mentioned the public process by which the RPVEV was developed, claimed the historical resources were considered and balanced with the other goals, and said it was too late to change the new trail system but that they were willing to place signage on the historic roads. He said Mr. Hecht had a hand-drawn map in his office from the 1800s that clearly shows the historic roads, and also said that the historic resources are being preserved even if not used as trail since all land in the Preserve are saved from development that would permanently destroy them. My letter, a full page editorial, and a comprehensive story were published in the May 17, 2018 edition.

Brian Collins and I wanted to take further action. Each of us submitted a FOIL request. My request was for any and all documents relating to the process by which participants in the RPVEV development were selected, the backgrounds of these people, and historic maps and documents used, in particular relating to the redesign of the trail system. Mr. Hawver, as APBPC FOIL Officer, responded to my request by referring me to the 2010 Management Plan (ie RPVEV) and the 2017 update. “No other records pertaining to your request exist.” Brian’s FOIL request was worded more pointedly, resulting in an invitation to personally review all the materials used during the planning process. He invited me to join him.

We made the visit in August, spending several hours examining the records made available to us. Voluminous research publications on ecology, fragmentation and trail planning were provided. The only document relating to historic resources was a 1993 archeological review of historic assets found the much smaller Preserve that existed then. An interesting passage in this document advised that if archeological or historic sites identified by this or future studies were to be impacted by development of the Preserve these resources should be considered for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Pollinator-Friendly County Resolution to be introduced in the face of alarming flying insect declines

by Grace Nichols

Have you noticed in driving through rural New York, that your windshield - which once would have been covered with the remnants of countless insect collisions are now fairly clean? This observation has been made globally and linked to severe declines in insect populations.

Insects are a critical part of the ecosystem as a whole, as they are needed for the full pollination of flower plants, agricultural crops and as a food source for birds, amphibians, reptiles, and bats. As E.O Wilson, Nobel Prize winning biologist commented that whereas global ecology could adapt to the absence of primates, the destruction of insects would lead to “ecological chaos.”

Many studies of insect abundance point at global declines. For instance, Stanford researcher, Rudolpho Dirzo concluded in a 2014 study that according to global monitoring data for 452 species, there had been a 45 percent decline in invertebrate populations over the past 40 years, (Dirzo, Science, 2014) An alarming study of 63 locations in Germany (in conservation areas) showed a 76 - 82 percent decline in flying insects over the past 27 years. (Hallman, Sorg et al, PLOS, 12, 2017).

Here, in the United States, concern has focused on the decline in bees leading to the listing of 8 bee species, and the decline in butterfly and moth species. However, the declines in other flying insects, data suggests, is even more severe. And the decline of insectivorous birds has followed closely behind.

Please see complete resolution and sources at savethepinebush.org

Already determined eligible by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation were the King’s Highway and Old State Road, among other sites. The much anticipated 1800s hand-drawn map mentioned by Mr. Hawver in the Enterprise article turned out to be a section of the 1767 Bleeker map of Manor Renselaerwick (sic).

The Enterprise article caught the attention of other concerned citizens. That, plus the dozen or so letters written by Brian Collins to a variety of historical societies and government agencies, resulted in more inquiries being made to the APBP Commission. This resulted in the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation arranging a meeting that included two representatives from that office; Chris Hawver, Joel Hecht, and Erin Kinal (APBPC Education Program Director); Brian and me. This meeting was held at the end of August. Brian and I expressed our appreciation for the meeting and explained our concerns and requested actions.

We were told that the closed sections of Schoharie Road would not be re-opened as too extensive a process had been completed,

While much more research must be done-- particularly regarding the aquatic stages of the insects -- we are also well aware of the major causes of these declines. Lack of open space and appropriate nectar and host plant species, and the use of pesticides have all contributed. The successful use of land conservation and reestablishment of native plant species in the Albany Pine Bush demonstrated that addressing these factors can revive insect species. Local research shows upwards of 45 thriving native bee species in the Pine Bush Preserve.

We also know that herbicide-laden agriculture denudes the land of nectar species. We know that neonicotinoid pesticides, which contain longlasting toxins that are found in the nectar and pollen of the plants, is a contributor to the declines. Additionally, the use of seeds treated with pesticides can also poison the insects.

Albany County has been a leader in agriculture, ecosystem protection and conservation. We can enlarge these policies to include our concern for our pollinators and other insects with some pro-active steps to include insect health in our planning.

This fall a group of concerned citizens and County Legislators will introduce a Pollinator-Friendly County Resolution to the Albany County Legislature. We are asking the County protect insects and set a good example for other counties to follow. We ask for your support in passing this important resolution.

including opportunities for public review and comment, for the RPVEV to be changed at this point. (Brian expressed the thought that people were continuing to use the latest closed section, including bicyclists and joggers, and that the trail’s history and heavy usage would make it very difficult to close.) We were told that signs would be designed and erected to educate the public about the historic roads, that the APBPC website would be updated to include additional information about the roads, and that the Willow Street trailhead kiosk will have interpretive information added regarding the historic roads. The OPRHP representatives said they would explore the possibility of the Schoharie Road being eligible for historic place designation.

We acknowledge the process by which the RPVEV was formulated, the ecological goals, and the measures they offered to increase awareness of the historic roads, but we believe a better balance between ecology and history needs to be established. We remain hopeful that further consideration will result in the closed sections being reopened and protected along with all other remaining remnants of historic roads.

Truck Traffic in Rensselaer: Update

by Christine Kielb

Tom Ellis and Christine Kielb of Stop Trucks Assaulting Rensselaer (STAR), a group of Rensselaer residents and their allies, are continuing their work fighting the tractor trailer truck traffic passing through city neighborhoods to and from the Dunn Construction and Demolition (C&D) landfill. This landfill operation, larger than the Colonie and Albany landfills combined, is expected to continue for many years, possibly until 2036, unless successfully challenged. The problem began in 2012 when the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation approved a plan to allow the operation of the landfill to fill in the cavities created by an old gravel mining operation.

Each weekday, from 6:30 am to 4:00 pm, up to 100 large tractor trailer trucks arrive off the Dunn Memorial Bridge onto Broadway Street in the City of Rensselaer. These trucks, coming from all over the Northeast, run through the middle of the city to the landfill situated at the top of the hill to the east. The noise, diesel exhaust, dust and vibration from these trucks ruin the quality of life for the residents on Broadway and Partition Streets. They are also a public safety threat, causing traffic congestion for residents and train commuters and passing by schoolchildren waiting for the bus. Two rollovers have already occurred: one on the approach to the Dunn Memorial Bridge, and one on the approach to 1787 from US 90 westbound. This constant truck traffic is also out of character with the future vision for the city as stated in its Comprehensive Plan.

A number of encouraging developments have occurred since this problem was described in the April and June SPB newsletters. Our alliance with the Hudson Mohawk Chapter of the Sierra Club is bearing fruit. The Sierra Club has

retained environmental lawyer John Barone to review the DEC permit and other documents and we expect to meet with him soon. Affected residents and their allies were also invited to the annual Sierra Club fundraising dinner in September educate the membership about the problem, and were invited by a dinner attendee to post announcements in News from the Neighborhood, a local weekly grassroots newsletter.

The Dunn Landfill and associated trucks continue to receive negative press. Both the landfill operator and numerous trucks were recently cited for violations. In late August, DEC cited the Dunn Landfill for violations related to truck routes, massive dirt dumping, dust clouds and runoff. They were ordered to pay \$50,000 in fines and spend \$225,000 on projects to help the nearby public school and community. On September 13 and 14, NYS police pulled over 36 trucks and cited them for over 170 violations, including 29 violations for being overweight. Overweight trucks are a public safety hazard as they cause undue wear and tear on the braking system and excess damage to the roadways. Brian Nearing of the Times Union and CBS 6 News covered these and other related events.

STAR is continuing to collect data on the trucks and landfill. A second day-long truck census was completed on May 31, and we met with a noise assessment expert to assess the possibility of conducting a survey in residential areas on the truck route. Most recently, because of the many reports of noxious odors in Rensselaer neighborhoods near the landfill, an odor survey has been distributed to interested residents.

The Facebook page Stop Trucks Assaulting Rensselaer (STAR) contains the many newspaper articles and TV news programs covering the landfill, as well as photos, videos and commentary. Please consider joining.

PAUSE/Zero Waste

by Diana Wright

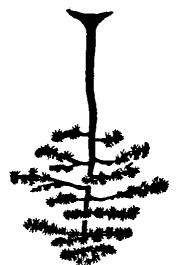
PAUSE/Zero Waste partnered with the City of Albany on Saturday September 8 for the first (hopefully) annual Zero Waste Jazz Fest. Thank you to all those who volunteered to be ambassadors and work at the registration table. It was a great success. Attendees were very appreciative of our efforts to reduce waste and educate them on the importance of this issue. We have had several requests from other organizations to assist with their events to make them Zero Waste and we are glad to help. That being said, in order to grow this educational opportunity, we need some volunteers to be ambassadors at these events. Please contact Diana Wright at comphomellc@gmail.com to volunteer.

Climate change is one of the greatest threats facing humanity. (Other than our current POTUS - go see Michael Moore's movie Fahrenheit 11/9) With action stalled at the federal level, it is important that our state government provides climate leadership on this critical issue.

PAUSE; the Green Sanctuary Committee of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Albany; Save Colonie - a Partnership for Planning; and Save the Pine Bush are co sponsoring candidates to participate in a climate change forum on Tuesday October 9th, from 7 to 8:30 PM at the First Unitarian Church in Albany (405 Washington Ave.) to discuss what the candidates for state office propose to do to deal with this problem. We are inviting candidates for state legislature in the Capital District and the State Comptroller (divestment and pension fund) to join us for the event. This is not a debate.

Questions related to divestment of pension funds, carbon tax, promotion of renewable energy and stopping fossil fuels will be asked of the candidates. .

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