



# Save the Pine Bush

## October/November Newsletter

Oct/Nov No. 148 • 33 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210 • email [pinebush@mac.com](mailto:pinebush@mac.com) • phone 518-366-7324 • web [www.savethepinebush.org](http://www.savethepinebush.org) • Circ. 625

## Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner

Wednesday, October 16, 2019, 6:00 p.m.

## Merton Simpson

will speak about

## Fighting Environmental Racial Injustice

Merton is a street activist and community organizer. He is also an Albany County legislator. He is best known for his work with SHARE, the Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy that he co-chairs with Ruth Foster. SHARE's hard work has borne tangible fruit, but there is still a long way to go. Merton is also a Prime Sponsor of a bill to ban the sale of flavors, including menthol, from e-cigarettes and cigarettes. Menthol is a racial justice issue.

**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 email [pinebush@mac.com](mailto:pinebush@mac.com).

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

## Rapp Road Wildlife and History Stroll Saturday October 19, 2019 at 9:00 AM

Meet at: Macy's West Entrance, Crossgates Mall

Leader: Andy Arthur • For More Information: (518) 281-9873 • [andy@andyarthur.org](mailto:andy@andyarthur.org)

For the October Save the Pine Bush hike we are going to go for a stroll along Rapp Road from Crossgates Mall to Springsteen Drive. We will view the Rapp Road Historic District, along with the Butterfly Corridor and lands proposed by Crossgates to be developed. This area is full of wildlife and history and is key to protecting the Pine Bush.

Please wear bright colors and comfortable shoes for road walking, as this hike will entirely be on a busy asphalt road. There should be good colors for this hike so you may want to bring a camera.

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

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

## Lou Ismay and the Environmental Forum

by Tom Ellis

ALBANY, NY: On August 21, Lou Ismay completed the lecture he began in April about his experiences teaching and leading the Environmental Forum course at the University at Albany beginning fifty years ago.

Lynne Jackson introduced Lou saying Lou's office was in the Arts building. Lou hung strings from the ceiling connected to manila folders with the names of the many Forum guest speakers. Lynne happily recalled the cookie jar in Lou's office that held large cookies. The jar had a giant lid that allowed Lynne to reach in and lift cookies from the jar without breaking them. Lynne said many founding Save the Pine Bush members met at the Environmental Forum.

Lynne recalled the Waterways Project of 1973-1974 when a dozen students surveyed the  
*continued on page 2*

## Meeting with DEC Officials

*The Dunn Dump is Untenable*

by Tom Ellis

RENSELAER, NY: Five residents of Rensselaer and one each from East Greenbush, Menands, and Albany (me) met on September 18 with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) about the Dunn dump in Rensselaer. The DEC official included an assistant commissioner, chief counsel, chief of staff, and regional director. The meeting, held at DEC state headquarters in Albany, was a follow up to a similar meeting in mid-January.

We made it clear that we continue to favor an immediate or quick closure of the dump for many reasons including immense and intense truck traffic every weekday in the downtown en-route and departing the dump, and continuing operational problems at the dump including frequent loud noises and horrible odors that permeate Rensselaer and East Greenbush neighborhoods, a cemetery, and ball-fields and interior rooms of the Rensselaer public school, located immediately adjacent to the dump. Rensselaer residents unleashed a controlled fury on DEC attendees in an effort to convince them

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### *Lou Ismay continued from page 1*

Mohawk River. They visited Moss Island with its fascinating “pot hole” rock formations. Lynne and Paul Stewart (now with the Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region) made a film about the formations. Moss Island was saved when a NYS Thruway exit ramp originally proposed to be built on the island, was instead built across the river near Little Falls.

Lou said he spoke so fast in April that he could not decipher from the recording what he said. He said the Environmental Forum began with the help of Ed Carey in the Arts Department, the forum had no textbooks or pre-organized materials, and when appointed to lead the Forum, he was on the verge of taking a position in the mid-West.

Lou said the first Protect Your Environment (PYE) club at the university was soon formed. Academic and student programs shared the same office, frustrated NYS government employees provided many of the tips the students acted on, and projects could involve one, several or many people and continue for a semester or several years. (PYE was student led and funded from student fees. PYE ran Earth Week.)

One project involved documenting ambulance visits from GE in Selkirk. “You can’t just go on rumors,” Lou insisted. A student project resulted from cement dust landing on cars at a car dealership in Ravena.

The *Times Union* and *Knickerbocker News* sent reporters to Lou’s office at least weekly. *Times Union* columnist Barney Fowler, who, Lou said never wrote anything good about the university, liked the idea of three trails (one to be used, one recovering from past use, and a third on standby) in the Adirondacks.

The Sierra Club wanted to know what the Environmental Forum was doing, and details of Lou’s program were included in the club’s first Earth Day publication, leading to considerable publicity and calls from all over the world. Lou also moderated a three-hour environmental radio program. Lou said the initial one-semester and experimental Environmental Forum program was quickly extended and nearly became a cult.

Lou hoped others would learn from and avoid errors he made. Among the major mistakes Lou recalled were not having any historian document the work of the Environmental Forum, filing was not kept up, and not having enough on-campus publicity about what the forum was doing. Another mistake was not having students present during a recycling hearing at the state legislature when a faculty member wanted them there. Lou also forgot to tell a faculty member how tall trees planted on the uptown campus podium would grow.

Among the many benefits of the four hours per evening course format (a guest speaker the first hour, a sit-down dinner the second hour, and a two-hour give and take between students and the guest speaker) is that some students learned table manners, and how to set a table for a formal meal. During the first year of the forum, the university paid for the dinner food but not thereafter. Lou said he tried to have a meal with each student and each student was expected to peruse a double major such as geography and science.

Lou said he hoped to study all the waterways in New York, a grant financed the program for three years, and another grant for \$90,000 was appropriated by the state legislature but never received. The program was canceled even after Arthur Godfrey [American radio and television broadcaster and entertainer, 1903-1983] promised he would support it financially if maintained. Another wealthy man was also interested in financing the program.

In perhaps his most important insight, Lou said the way for faculty and students to work together successfully is via trust, respect, a sense of community, creativity, and serendipity.

The existence of PCBs in the upper Hudson River (between Troy and Fort Edward) was a tightly kept secret until students found an inter-agency memo they were able to make public in *Sports Illustrated* magazine. Lou said the forum exposed how the route of I-88 (between Binghamton and Schenectady) was known to some people who bought land along it and later profited from selling it, before hearings were held to discuss and finalize the route.

Lou showed a copy of the book [*Pine Bush: Albany’s Last Frontier*] Don Rittner [author and historian] wrote while a junior in college. Lou said copies of student reports were sent to funders but he is not sure if they were sent to libraries. He hopes to investigate some day.

Lou said his office was not tidy; soup, cookies, and cakes were often in abundance, and his office was always open. Considerable work was done at night, some files are in the university archives, but no university library expressed any interest in storing files. Lou said all fellow faculty were great save one, and, at one point, he was the third highest paid lecturer in the State University of New York system. Lou said no one ever evaluated his work, and one dean cut his salary by 1/3 in each of three consecutive semesters. Lou believes the animosity came from that “we did not fit the mold.”

Russell Ziembra said many projects are now located in the M.E. Grenander Archives, located at the University of Albany.

Lou said the Environmental Forum lasted eight years, he spoke often with parents about

their students’ projects, and he remains disappointed at the “somewhat unfair treatment” he endured. He said the forum assisted with the first Stockholm international environmental conference.

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that allowing a large dump to operate next to a school is insane.

The regional director told us that DEC desires as open a process as possible but he and the three central office leaders deflected requests from us to hold public hearings on the dump expansion soon to occur even closer to the school, or in 2022 if and when dump owners seek a permit renewal. DEC made no commitment to hold public hearings now or ever.

Several times during the two-hour meeting, DEC told us they are collecting data about many things. (This is part of DEC’s continuing pretense that their decision (2012) to site a dump next to an already existing large public school, to renew the permit (2017), and allow it to continue despite unsolvable problems, is somehow scientifically based.) We provided DEC some of our data. We handed DEC 19-pages from ItStinks.org documenting more than 400 comments, many saying dump odors are literally making them ill.

Several times the DEC officials told us that they are devoting considerable resources almost on a daily basis trying to improve dump operations. One of our group, a Rensselaer mom, responded, asking whether the fact that the dump needs so much attention from top DEC administrators raises any red flags.

The DEC attorney said that it is DEC’s belief that DEC’s continuing enforcement actions and permit modifications, are and will bring improvements in dump operations. Several of us responded. Together we said that truck traffic is as bad as it was when we met in January, and dump odors are at least as bad as then. One Rensselaer resident insisted that there is nothing DEC has or can do to improve dump operations, and the only solution is to close the dump.

We asked if the air is safe, why are so many people getting ill from the dump. DEC responded saying they never said the dump is safe.

Rensselaer residents were unanimous that DEC’s 2012 decision to site the dump was a mistake and DEC should admit it. I handed the DEC attorney a copy of the February 2012 transcript of the public hearing DEC held on the then-proposed landfill and said the people who spoke then correctly identified nearly all of the problems now occurring, and DEC ignored these public comments when approving the dump application.

DEC is now in the permanent untenable position of having to defend allowing a large,

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noisy, smelly and growing dump to operate right next to a large school with 1000 pre-K through Grade 12 students. Dump owners desire to keep the dump open well into the 2030's. Rensselaer students have endured more than four years of dump operations, and those currently in pre-K, with their small and rapidly growing bodies, might experience 14 years of dump odors in the school and on its ball-fields, as the dump increasingly encroaches on and eventually towers over the school. DEC already looks foolish, uncaring, and ineffective in its Dunn dump regulatory efforts. It will only get worse.

I urge retired, former, and current employees of DEC, the state health department, and the NY Attorney General's offices, to publicly declare your support for an immediate or quick closure of the dump. It is time for Governor Cuomo and DEC top administrators to admit the dump should never have been sited next to a school, the siting was a political decision, not one based on science or protecting the environment, and order the dump closed.

## **Doug Bullock**

*by Grace Nichols*

ALBANY, NY: As noted at the last dinner, most of our environmental successes at the County level have depended on the sponsorship and support of the hardworking environmental county legislator, Doug Bullock. From fighting for a strong styrofoam and plastic bag ban, to championing waste management alternatives, to his current successful campaign to get the Albany Airport to put up reusable water bottle fill stations -- and countless other environmental and civil rights campaigns -- Doug has been in the trenches with us.

In a newly redistricted district, Doug Bullock is working to let his new constituents know about his environmental and human rights record. His district includes student communities and student housing at downtown SUNY Albany and the College of St. Rose. He notes that much of the community needs to register to vote, and we'll be doing important footwork to register voters.

Doug's supporters will meet at the Albany Public Library at 161 Washington St. on Sunday Oct 6th from 2-4 pm with the Bernie Sanders campaign; his supporters will go out to talk to the residents of his district and register them for the upcoming election in which Doug will be running on the Working Families Party line.

No matter who one supports for president or other office, I've been assured that does not matter; we can go register voters and give them good information about the candidates' record on the environment. Please join us in registering students and others..

## Two Zero Waste Events with National Expert on **Waste Reduction and Recycling: Neil Seldman, PhD.**

Director of Waste to Wealth Initiative at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (Washington, DC).



### **Public Presentation and Workshop on Recycling and Waste Management in the Capitol Region**

Albany Public Library, Washington Avenue Branch: 161 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12210

**Presentation:**

#### **How the Capital District can Transition from Landfills & Incineration to Zero Waste**

October 14th 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

History of US waste and recycling, restructuring of recycling, localization of solid waste management systems and related challenges. What do we do now at state level, local level, and private sector? What about zero waste?

**Workshop:**

#### **Creating a Zero-Waste Plan for Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady Counties**

October 15th 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Relevant to government officials and decision makers, scientists, economic development experts, environmentalists, students and the general public. Neil will review our Solid Waste Management Plans prior to the workshop. He will address key issues in the Albany-Rensselaer-Schenectady County Region.

**Neil Seldman** is a nationally renowned expert on recycling and waste reduction, cofounder of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (Washington, D.C.). Active in the U.S. and international recycling and zero waste movements, he is a founding member of the National Recycling Coalition and the Grass Roots Recycling Network. He has pioneered developments in processing, building deconstruction and small-scale manufacturing from recycled materials.

**Sponsors**

Troy Industrial Development Authority and Zero Waste Capital District member organizations:

PAUSE/350.org (People of Albany United for Safe Energy),

League of Women Voters of Albany Co, Sierra Club Hudson-Mohawk Group;

Save the Pine Bush; Capital Region Interfaith Creation Care Coalition

## Migratory Bird Watch Hike

by Chris Kielb

On Saturday, September 21, Andy Arthur, Hugh Johnson, Chris Kielb and two others joined experienced birder Neil Reilly for a fall birding excursion near the Pine Bush Discovery Center. In early fall, as they migrate south for the winter, many different species of warblers mingle with chickadees and other non-migrating birds to feed on the remaining insects. These fall warblers look very similar to each other because they no longer have their distinctive summer plumage, so they are easy to confuse. They also move quickly and frequently in the still-green foliage, which adds to the challenge of identifying them. The weather was sunny and a bit cool at 8 AM, becoming warm and balmy as the morning progressed. We began the walk in a heavily wooded area east of the Center. The first birds we encountered were chickadees, accompanied by blue jays calling in the background. Neil then pointed out various warbler species flitting around among the chickadees, including northern parulas, common yellowthroats, Tennessee warblers, black throated green warblers and a relatively rare Wilson's warbler. We also saw a mourning dove and a pair of sapsuckers (a type of woodpecker) on a tall dead tree. As we emerged into the classic pitch pine/scrub oak Pine Bush habitat we spied a cardinal, some tufted titmice and unexpectedly, a juvenile prairie warbler. Afterwards, Neil brought out a bird guide to show us the birds we had seen.

### Get Involved!

The Pyramid Company has proposed building 222 apartments on Rapp Road in the Pine Bush. People who wish to oppose this development may want to become involved. Email [lynnejackson@mac.com](mailto:lynnejackson@mac.com) to learn more.

## Albany's Pollinator-Friendly Resolution is Spreading....

by Grace Nichols

In May, Albany passed a measure to protect pollinators, written by Grace Nichols and championed by Doug Bullock, Lynne Lekakis, Bill Reinhardt and others. This September, Activist Iris Bloom and Ulster County Legislator Kathleen Nolan won a similar measure in Ulster County. Insect conservation has become a cause supported by bipartisan forces to conserve our ecosystems. We hope to see other counties become similarly inspired.

*From the Daily Freeman, Kingston, NY:*

KINGSTON, N.Y. — The Ulster County Legislature has declared the county “pollinator friendly,” requiring measures to restore and increase pollinator habitats, phase out the use of some pesticides and encourage county residents to follow suit.

Lawmakers adopted the policy unanimously on Tuesday.

It is the latest in a series of measures the Legislature has taken in the past several years to protect the environment and reduce the county's carbon footprint.

As a pollinator-friendly county, Ulster will plant host plants and nectar plant species for bees, butterflies moths and other flying insects, as well as carbon-sequestering grasses and other plants on all county lands, including parks. It also will avoid mowing roadsides except when necessary to preserve sightlines, preserve pavement or protect road safety.

Additionally, the county will inventory all pesticides it uses and make efforts to phase out the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, which some studies have linked to the collapse of honey bee colonies and the disorder and loss of birds due to a reduction in insect populations. Also, the county will use lesser toxic methods as part of an integrated pest management system that promotes pollinator-friendly practices.

The policy also calls for the county to encourage its municipalities to adopt similar practices, for local educators to teach about host and nectar plants, and for residents and gardeners to plant carbon-sequestering ground covers and pollinator host and nectar plants native to the region.

## Save the Pine Bush Dinners Now Available on iTunes!

THE INTERNET: Can't make it to the Save the Pine Bush dinner? Missed the great talks this year? Now, you will be able to listen to the Save the Pine Bush dinner speakers on iTunes! Subscribe to “Dinner with Save the Pine Bush.” Or listen on your computer at:  
[http://www.savethepinebush.org/Podcasts/Podcast\\_Index.html](http://www.savethepinebush.org/Podcasts/Podcast_Index.html)

## Dinner Schedule

at the Westminster Presbyterian Church,  
85 Chestnut Street, Albany, NY  
Wednesday, October 16, 2019  
Wednesday, November 20, 2019  
Wednesday, December 18, 2019

## Volunteers Needed!

We need volunteers to greet people at the Save the Pine Bush monthly dinners. And, we need volunteers to drive people to and from the dinners. Please email [lynnejackson@mac.com](mailto:lynnejackson@mac.com) if you can volunteer!

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A Project of the Social Justice Center  
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