



# Save the Pine Bush

## May Newsletter

May 24 No. 166 • 223 S. Swan St., Albany, NY 12202 • email [contact@savethepinebush.org](mailto:contact@savethepinebush.org) • phone 518-366-7324 • web [www.savethepinebush.org](http://www.savethepinebush.org) • Circ. 600

### *Save the Pine Bush Zoom Meeting* **Wednesday, May 15, at 6:30 p.m.**

## Neil Gifford

Conservation Director for the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission

## Restoring Pine Bush Ecosystem Health through Management

Neil will speak about how managing native scrub oak trees can restore the health of the Pine Bush ecosystem. Neil will discuss the Commission's research on habitat restoration that includes such techniques as mechanical, chemical and prescribed fire treatments. Even fungus plays a role. Habitat management is helping advance the conservation of numerous rare species and a fire regime reminiscent of what we know of pre-colonial Indigenous fire stewardship in the USA.

### How to Join the Zoom Meeting

A link to the Zoom meeting will be posted on the Save the Pine Bush website at [savethepinebush.org/zoom.html](http://savethepinebush.org/zoom.html). Or click <http://savethepinebush.org/z> for a direct link to Zoom. Or call into the meeting at (929) 205 6099, meeting #812 2765 8615, passcode 364991. **The Zoom meeting will open at 6:00 PM for anyone who wishes to socialize prior to the presentation.** Also, you may call or text (518)366-7324 for assistance.

**See you online at 6:30! • Everyone is welcome!**

### May Evening Hike

#### Thursday May 16, 2024 at 6:45 PM to 9 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:** 518-281-9873 or [andy@andyarthur.org](mailto:andy@andyarthur.org)

Join us as we go for an evening walk in the fields of lupines, listening to the spring peepers and watching the sun set from overlook dune. Ticks are out, please take necessary precautions.

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

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

### Proposed Developments in the Pine Bush in the Town of Colonie

*by Lynne Jackson*

COLONIE: There are many development proposals currently being considered in the Town of Colonie. These include:

**136 Morris Road**, 3.2 acres located in the recommended full protection area and the Town of Colonie Conservation Overlay District proposed for a warehouse.

**71 Morris Road**, 13.8 acres located in the recommended partial protection area and the Town of Colonie Conservation Overlay District proposed for a housing subdivision.

**74 Morris Road**, .92 acres located adjacent to a recommended for full protection area and in the Town of Colonie Conservation Overlay District proposed for a warehouse.

**1093 Kings Rd**, 27.5 acres located in the recommended for full protection area and in the Town of Colonie Conservation Overlay District proposed for a warehouse.

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### Environmental News

*by Tom Ellis*

Since the prior SPB News last year, much has occurred locally and regionally.

Despite many enviro-activists working separately, climate activists are increasingly well organized and effective in their lobbying the state legislature. Nevertheless, a widely supported Renewable Capitol Act has not been enacted as of Earth Day. The RCA would invest \$50 million this year to make the Capitol Building, Empire State Plaza, and nearby buildings served by the Sheridan Avenue Steam Plant, "100% renewable -- heating, cooling, and power," according to a March 11 commentary in the Times Union by Bob Cohen of Citizen Action.

Construction of the Champlain Hudson Power Express (CHPE) transmission lines that would bring up to 1.25 billion watts of electricity, much of it originating from dams, power stations, and giant, stagnant, greenhouse gas emitting reservoirs (some larger than Albany County) on destroyed rivers and flooded river valleys in Quebec and Labrador, has begun in several places in eastern New York. CHPE is falsely promoted

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## *Environmental News continued from page 1*

as a climate friendly, clean, alternative to fossil fuel generated electricity. More than 100 miles of CHPE would be shallowly buried under the Hudson River. NYS government policy makers ignore that Hydro-Quebec has flooded millions of acres of habitat in Quebec during the last sixty years, wreaking enormous damage to plant and wildlife, and water quality.

Basil Seggos stepped down as DEC commissioner in April and Sean Mahar is now interim commissioner. Assemblyman John McDonald's brother, James, a physician, is now NYS Health Department commissioner. Albany County Health commissioner, Elizabeth Whalen, recently departed her position to move to the state health department, and was replaced, on an interim basis, by Maribeth Miller.

Residents in several parts of the state including Cohoes, are trying to force the state courts and state agencies to enforce the "Green Amendment" to the NYS Constitution overwhelmingly passed by voters in 2021. The amendment reads: "Each person shall have the right to clean air and water, and to a healthful environment." In court filings, NY Attorney General Letitia James has asserted the Green Amendment does not empower courts to require state agencies to take action against large polluters. Many wonder what is the purpose of the Green Amendment if it cannot be used to protect public health and the environment. Is it just more greenwashing?

The notorious Norlite hazardous waste incinerator and aggregate production facility in Cohoes has at least temporarily discontinued "core operations." The Colonie landfill, located atop an unlined hazardous waste dump on the Mohawk River bank, remains in operation, as does the Albany landfill on Washington Avenue Extension in the Pine Bush.

The 33-year-old Wheelabrator trash incinerator in Hudson Falls, also on the Hudson River bank, continues to operate. In nearby South Glens Falls, former Albany resident Tracy Frisch, has led an effective regional campaign that may soon block construction of the proposed Saratoga Bio-char Solutions (SBS) 720-tons-per-day sewage sludge processing facility at the Moreau Industrial Park near the Hudson River.

The Waste Connections (WC) Dunn construction and demolition debris and who-knows-what-else dump in Rensselaer continues operating on an expired permit. DEC repeatedly delays a permit denial or renewal decision and provides virtually no information to residents and elected officials in Rensselaer County who wish to shut down the noisy and often-stinky dump that borders the 1000-student Rensselaer public school campus. WC and DEC are in constant communi-

## **John Wolcott – Historian, Founder of Save the Pine Bush, Dies**

*Editor's Note: John Wolcott died on August 17, 2023. Among his many accomplishments, he was a founder of Save the Pine Bush and led monthly hikes for over 35 years. He will be much missed. The following was a press release sent announcing his passing.*

### ***John Wolcott, historian, preservationist, activist, and fierce advocate for the Pine Bush, dies at 90***

ALBANY, NY: It is with great sadness that Save the Pine Bush learned of the passing of John Wolcott of Albany, NY, Thursday afternoon, August 17. John was a founding member of Save the Pine Bush in 1978. He was a plaintiff on every lawsuit filed by Save the Pine Bush.

Born September 22, 1932, John passed away a few weeks shy of his 91st birthday.

John was an expert map-maker and researcher. He discovered evidence of a forgotten foot path through the Pine Bush that in the 1600's and 1700's ran parallel to the main Albany-Schenectady Road, called the Maquas Padt or Indian Path. His research showed that the common name of the federally and state endangered Karner Blue butterfly was named after a developer (such irony!). His ground-breaking research into historical deeds for a SPB lawsuit over water lines resulted in defending the integrity of the borders of the Pine Bush Preserve. Since this incredible research by John, there has been no significant encroachments on the boundaries of the Preserve. John's meticulous research into property-owner deeds has led over the years to the addition numerous parcels of land to the Pine Bush Preserve. John was instrumental in persuading the City of Albany to purchase the City Preserve.

John's love for the Pine Bush began when he first visited the Pine Bush, at the age of 3. For nearly 40 years, John led (or organized) monthly hikes in the Pine Bush. He knew a wide range of hike leaders who, in addition to taking people to the Pine Bush, showed hikers birds of the Pine Bush, plants, butterflies and many other aspects of this unique ecosystem. Over the years, John attended and spoke at hundreds of public hearings regarding development proposals in the Pine Bush. He spoke always for preserving the land, and opposing any construction.

and WC has floated the idea of having the scores of tractor trailers that traverse downtown Rensselaer streets each weekday begin arriving an hour later (7:30 a.m.) and possibly slightly reducing their number. Nevertheless, dump opponents will not compromise and insist the horribly sited dump must be closed now. The DEC commissioner is probably waiting for the

In addition to his passion for Pine Bush preservation, John was known for his deep love of historical buildings. He was an expert on Dutch colonization of Albany in the 1600s. He could actually read documents in the City of Albany archives that date to the 1600s that were written in a version of old Dutch that was archaic when it was written. He was the first one to date 48 Hudson Avenue, the oldest standing building in Albany. He identified and advocated for the preservation of the "Rum Factory", an impressive 18th century rum factory located on Broadway that was unfortunately destroyed by New York State. Part of the rum factory was excavated prior to the construction of the offices of the Dormitory Authority of New York State.

Not all of his efforts at preservation were successful, for example, his efforts to preserve the original Fort Orange that was built in the 1600s by the Dutch. Elevated Route 787 was built on top of it with a pillar going through the heart of Fort Orange. For several decades, that pillar sported the graffiti "Oranje Boven" (Arise Orange) which John always asserted was scrawled by a drunken sailer.

John cared deeply for people, always there to help friends and strangers. He and wife of nearly 50 years, Linda Becker, would offer their home and support to so many people. We don't know how many; John never talked about it; he just did it.

John was an integral part of the success of Save the Pine Bush. His knowledge of the history, geography and significance of the Pine Bush in Albany and surrounding communities was essential.

The New York State Assembly passed a special resolution on June 20, 2001 to honor John Wolcott. The resolution said, in part: "That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor John R. Wolcott for his leadership, activism and resolute devotion to the City of Albany, New York."

Save the Pine Bush wishes to extend sincere condolences to John's wife, Linda Becker, and to their family.

governor to tell him what to do.

Parts of north Albany have experienced an odor of unknown origin in recent months.

Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan quietly approved legislation in mid-March passed in February by the city council urging the city water board to begin placing fluorides in the city's

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# New York is Not Disposable • In-Person Rally & Advocacy Day

## Tuesday, May 14, 2024 • 10:30 AM to 4:00 PM

Push NYS's Packaging Reduction Act and Bigger Better Bottle Bill Over the Finish Line!

Please join the New York is NOT Disposable Coalition to meet with your state representatives in Albany to help get two critical bills -- the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act (S4246-b/A5322-b) and the Bigger Better Bottle Bill (S237/A6353) -- to reduce single-use plastics and increase reuse, refill and recycling over the finish line this spring!

At 10:00 AM, we will gather at the 3rd Floor Terrace of the Legislative Office Building at 198 State Street, Albany, 12210 for a short briefing and to get everyone into their groups and distribute meeting schedules and talking points. Groups will then meet with legislators until noon when we'll break for an empowering outdoor rally (weather permitting) in West Capitol Park, just

across the State Street from the Legislative Office Building. After eating a quick lunch on the go, groups will continue to meet with legislators until 4:00 PM.

**Please RSVP by Wednesday, May 8.**

If you live in New York City, please see the website for information on taking a bus to Albany for the event.

We welcome first-time participants! If

you've never participated in an advocacy day or rally before, please don't let that stop you. We'll hold an event briefing via Zoom on Thursday, May 9 at 6pm (we'll email you the link when you register) that will cover both of the bills and explain how to make your meetings with your legislators effective and give you a chance to ask questions. Each meeting will have a team leader and you will be well supported, we promise!

Plastic packaging is made from fossil fuels and chemicals, thousands of which are known to be toxic to humans including BPA, BPS, phthalates, PFAS, heavy metals, perchlorates, vinyl chloride, styrene, and more.

The U.S. is the world's largest plastic polluter.

Plastics are speeding up the climate crisis. If plastic were a country it would be the world's fifth biggest greenhouse gas polluter.

Plastic recycling is a myth; just 5-6% of plastic is recycled in the U.S. each year and it's actually "downcycled" rather than recycled.

Plastic never biodegrades, it just breaks up into smaller pieces called microplastics that have been found in human blood,

hearts, lungs, placentas, and breastmilk.

The Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act reduces plastic at the source and makes packaging far less toxic.

The Bigger Better Bottle Bill modernizes New York's existing container deposit law to help cover more types of bottles and increase the incentive for returning them for recycling and refilling.

# END PLASTIC POLLUTION!

## Join us in Albany on Tues, May 14 for a Rally & Advocacy Day



**NEED A RIDE?** Take our free bus from NYC.



**REGISTER NOW!** Go to: [bit.ly/5-14-24](https://bit.ly/5-14-24) or just scan the QR code →



Why is it important to help pass these two bills this spring?

Massive grassroots advocacy is the firewall against Big Plastic's influence. The American Chemistry Council, fossil fuel companies, and consumer brands are in Albany opposing this bill and talking to legislators - we need YOU to add your voice to pass these two major climate and environmental justice bills!

**For information and to register, please scan the QR code or go to the website: <https://www.beyondplastics.org/events/nys-2024-in-person-advocacy->**

### *Environmental News continued*

water supply as soon as possible – probably next year. The Common Council blocked a similar proposal in 1994. This time the city council was successfully deceived and overwhelmed by several pro-fluoridation physicians and dentists who repeatedly and falsely asserted that water fluoridation has been proven completely safe for everyone by decades of scientific research. Spend a few hours on the internet researching water fluoridation and (1) human IQ, (2) kidney disease, (3) bone fractures, and (4) human health to get a glimpse of the vast worldwide research since World War II showing possible or likely damages to human health resulting from an entire

population drinking, cooking, and bathing with fluoridated water every day, decade after decade. Nearly all of Europe has rejected community water fluoridation for a variety of reasons.

At a December 18 meeting of the city council, Elizabeth Whalen asserted that she is aware of studies that show that children who drink water in fluoridated Schenectady have fewer dental cavities than children in Albany. These studies are not public; thus it is unknown if they exist or how many there are, were they peer reviewed, are they any good? One of my anti-fluoridation colleagues, a retired epidemiologist, requested copies or links to these studies from Dr. Whalen, who did not provide the studies or links.

The Albany *Times Union* printed three "news" articles since the fall promoting community water fluoridation but as of Earth Day had not reported that Mayor Sheehan had signed the legislation. Maybe the *Times Union* and mayor hope city residents remain poorly informed that hydrofluorosilicic acid will soon be flowing through our water pipes and down our throats.

*Editor's note: this article reflects the view of the author regarding fluoridation of the City of Albany's water and does not necessarily reflect the views of Save the Pine Bush.*



## Good News Sources

by Tom Ellis

If you are seeking another news source, consider tuning into WOOC 105.3 FM radio. Based at the Sanctuary for Independent Media in Troy, WOOC has a one-hour Hudson Mohawk Magazine (HMM) radio show each weekday at 6 p.m. that is replayed the following weekday morning at 7 and 9 a.m. Each edition of the Hudson Mohawk Magazine is produced by volunteers and contains a welcome, a few minutes of headlines, and five, ten-minute news and information segments. The segments concern local, state, national and international news, weather and climate, interviews with writers and artists, poetry, book reviews, reports on local library events, political candidate interviews, and much more. Each episode is archived and can be found at the station's website.

WOOC also carries Democracy Now live each weekday at 8 a.m. The excellent source of national and international news is repeated later in the day at 3 and 5 p.m. WOOC has many other news and information shows including one by Raphy Nader each Monday at 6 a.m. WOOC is one of the best news and information sources in the United States.

If you seek good print news about issues in Albany County, consider the *Altamont Enterprise*, certainly one of the ten best weekly newspapers in the country. Published every Thursday, the Enterprise focuses on Guilderland, Altamont, and Albany County hilltowns but also regular columnists, letters to the editor, local history, geology, photos, and news about New York State government.

## City of Albany Landfill to Close in January, 2027

by Lynne Jackson

ALBANY: The City of Albany has announced the closure of the Albany Landfill and is asking for proposals to build a transfer station.

The deadline for public comment on the City's RFP — Request for Proposal — is July 12., 2024. See: <https://dec.ny.gov/news/environmental-notice-bulletin/2024-04-17/public-notice/city-of-albany-request-for-public-comments-to-draft-request-for-proposal>

In the draft RFP itself, there is not a single mention of the Pine Bush. The RFP indicates that a transfer station may be sited next to the landfill in the Pine Bush on Rapp Rd. People can send comments about the draft RFP to Joe Giebelhaus by email to [jgiebelhaus@albany.gov](mailto:jgiebelhaus@albany.gov)

The City of Albany needs a good, sustainable method to dispose of municipal solid waste. Composting food scraps and re-using un-wanted items are not emphasized in the draft RFP.

People throw out good, usable items. There is a great volunteer FaceBook group in Albany called Buy Nothing. The Buy Nothing group allows members to freely give and receive unwanted items, saving many things from the landfill. A program like this, where good, useful items are saved from the landfill would benefit everyone. In addition, everyone in the City should be able to have their food scraps composted.

So much can be done to make disposal of municipal waste more sustainable, I hope people will get involved with the issue of closing the City of Albany's landfill.

*Colonie developments continued from pg 1*  
ommended full protection area and the Town of Colonie Conservation Overlay District proposed for a warehouse.

**7 Cavanaugh Drive**, 14 acres located in the recommended full protection area and the Town of Colonie Conservation Overlay District proposed for an expanded parking lot.

**2871 Curry Rd**, 1.3 acres located in the recommended full protection area and the Town of Colonie Conservation Overlay District proposed for a warehouse.

**2772 & 2792 Curry Rd**, 75 acres located in the recommended full protection area and the Town of Colonie Conservation Overlay District proposed for a solar farm. The Environmental Impact Statement for this project has been posted on the Town of Colonie website.

People can find out more about these projects by going to the Town of Colonie website at [colonie.org](http://colonie.org), clicking the "Government" menu item, selecting "Planning Board." From there, click the small button that says "Projects and Cases."

Also, the County of Albany is doing a complete redesign of Route 155. (See county website)

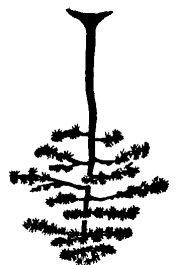
In addition, please use the new "Save the Pine Bush Mapper" by going to [savethepinebush.org](http://savethepinebush.org) and then clicking the menu item "Planning Board Agendas." The Mapper will show a list proposed developments, their recommended preservation status, the size and the owner. Clicking on the tax map number shows the property in relation to the Pine Bush. Clicking on the address will display any SPB articles written about the project.

**Save the Pine Bush Mapper:**

<https://savethepinebush.org/agenda/>

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A Project of the Social Justice Center  
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