



# Save the Pine Bush

## June/July Newsletter

Jun/Jul 09 No. 98 • 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, June 17 2009, 6:00 p.m.

## Steve Hoyt of Northeast Biogas

will speak about

### What to do with Organic Solid Waste

Steve will explain the two common, modern methods of disposing of organic solid waste such as food waste and agricultural waste. These methods are composting (aerobic) and anaerobic digestion (in a tank or other enclosed vessel).

In the Albany area, there are a number of colleges, universities, medical centers and other institutions which generate food waste. Steve will argue that if a number of these food waste generators were to develop a cooperative arrangement for supplying their food waste to an anaerobic digester, it would 1) solve part of our region's solid waste disposal problem, 2) reduce the cost of disposal of food waste by these institutions and 3) provide methane gas which could be used for electric power generation. While there is some residual material left from the digestion process, the volume is much reduced from the original volume.

At the First Presbyterian Church, (State and Willett Sts, Albany, please enter from State St.). All-the-vegetarian-and-vegan-lasagna-you-can-eat, garden salad, garlic bread and homemade pies. Only \$10 for adults, \$5 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 Lynne Jackson at 434-1954 or email [pinebush@mac.com](mailto:pinebush@mac.com). Interested people are welcomed to attend the program beginning at 7:00 for which there is no charge

### June Bike Tour to the Pine Bush Discovery Center Saturday, June 20

**Meet:** 9:30 am **At:** the Civil War Monument in Washington Park on State & Henry Johnson

**Or Meet:** 10:00 am. **At:** Uncommon Grounds Coffeshop, 1235 Western Avenue, Albany

**Leader:** Lynne Jackson. **For more info:** Call John Wolcott at 465-8930

Come join Save the Pine Bush for a bike ride! The Pine Bush is an urban preserve and should be easily accessible by urban dwellers, using bicycles and public transit. Join us for a day of not contributing car emissions to global warming, and have fun too! We will have time at the Discovery Center to look at the exhibits, and to take a very short walk in the Pine Bush. Please, for safety's sake, wear a helmet! We will follow all *continued on page 2*

### Ward Stone Speaks

*Rachel Carson Day Speech:*

*"Let the Preserve be a Preserve!"*

*Summarized by Grace Nichols*

ALBANY: At the May Save the Pine Bush lasagna dinner at the First Presbyterian Church, NY State Wildlife Pathologist Ward Stone gave a talk summarizing our recent discoveries of pesticide use in the Pine Bush by both the City of Albany at the Rapp Road Landfill and Pine Bush Police and Fire Station and placing it in the context of his 39 years of work with Rezsins Adams, Lew Oliver and other leaders of the Save the Pine Bush.

"I was 'just the science guy,'" he said. I was never a leader in this one, but I saw all my friends very excited about the Pine Bush and concerned about the land being chewed up. I took a moment away from thinking about raccoon rabies and lyme disease and I looked and saw it was a rare inland pine barrens with these beautiful butterflies.

In those days there was a very bad incinerator in that area which poured out smoke all over the city. I ran out there as black smoke poured out, making black snow. My samples showed what was coming from the incinerator, and we fought it.

Now the landfill creates a similar toxic threat to the Preserve, by taking Preserve land piece by piece. "The Landfill should never have been there in the first place. Let the Preserve be a Preserve!" "They say they will put some sand on top of the mountain of garbage and it will be restored. That will not be the kind of place where Pine Bush plants thrive."

"I told Grace of Save the Pine Bush that where there are dumps, there are rodenticides." I have looked at landfills all over the state and knew this to be the case. It matters because "we care about owls and foxes."

"Meanwhile, the DEC does not do its job very well and lately, it seems it's been doing it worse than usual. They spend 62% of their income in administrative expenses – the DEC is top heavy." They have refused to release

*continued on page 2*

data on pesticides or species counts – I’m not surprised.

“So we found out through FOIL requests that the city was using a rodenticide that has been found to bioaccumulate when an animal such as an owl eats contaminated rats and mice. It disables the clotting mechanism in the animal, so that even if an owl gets just bit by a mouse, instead of forming a scab it will experience exsanguination and die.”

Now, I remember when Save the Pine Bush fought and won court cases the resulted in the establishment of the Pine Bush Commission and I went there just the other day and saw beautiful displays and lots of interactive computers. “But why wasn’t there a sign by the statute of the Karner Blue Butterfly informing us that their populations are in serious decline? They are almost wiped out at the breeding sites by the Crossgates Mall and the government is shipping in pupa to boost their populations.”

“After 40 years of action on the Pine Bush, we thought the Karner Blue would be doing better by now; that was the hope at that time. They have lived here for thousands of years and the Albany Pine Bush Commission is entrusted to make sure they are still here.” t

We are aware that the Albany Pine Bush Commission is using three herbicides in the Pine Bush Preserve, in order to eliminate invasive species like the Black Locust tree. But it seems to me that “high school students and college students could be cutting out the roots of these trees during the summer as green jobs with stimulus money – but instead they use herbicides.”

“They [the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission] are spreading the pesticides themselves which is the reason they’ve been so quiet about doing pesticide education programs.” To prove there is a problem with insecticides, they told me I must find buckmoths or elfins found dead and diagnosed with pesticide poisoning; while this is possible, it is very rare to diagnose dead insects this way. “They use a lot of excuses for why we can’t get the data on insect populations; I think they don’t want anybody to know how poorly these species are doing after this much management.”

“The Commission and DEC are using herbicides themselves, and that is why they don’t want to take care of pesticides being used at Crossgates and other businesses. We need the Commission to be lively and aggressive defenders of the habitat.”

Ward Stone said he has a long history of fighting pesticides but is currently funded for only a handful of analyses a year which isn’t enough to explore what is happening in the Pine Bush. But the dump needs to be shut down and Page 2

the DEC should not okay it.

With John Wolcott, Ward has been documenting the pollution from the dump, and the lies and deceptions about the pesticides and pollutants coming from the dump that are impacting the ecology of Lake Rensselaer.

“The landfill must be stopped; it’s still full of toxics and releasing gases that are contributing to global warming.”

In addressing the solid waste problems that lead to this landfill, Ward cited numerous possible solutions including the careful, new style incineration used in Europe. I once was opposed to all incineration but sometimes it can be done well if necessary. However, he said, here in New York State we’ve been unwilling to do the serious recycling and source reduction that must precede and accompany any solid waste plan; Europe is far ahead of us. And if New York State is not willing to fund the right kind of incineration, it will be a bad step to use incineration at all.

“The Landfill will be a problem for a long time to come. Longer than anyone here will still be here (he said, looking a small child in the audience) – that’s how long this pollution will be with us.”

Ward shared some alarming details in the effects of global climate change, such as the disappearance of the tundra and the likelihood of a land bridge from Russia to the Pacific Islands. He notes that all these new diseases including the white nose syndrome in bats are arising, while the remains of woolly mammoths are rising in the thawing soil of northern Russia. All these are signs of massive changes to come.

In the face of all those changes, “the right thing to do is to save our own area and to keep a preserve a preserve, except to maintain trails so that the public and our school groups can enjoy it.”

“We need to intensify our efforts to close the dump. Because the City withheld information about what was going on with a bunch of toxic substances is a good reason to shut it down.”

“We need also to continue to study the effect of contaminants on other urban space such as the urban lake in the Tivoli Preserve (in Arbor Hill) and Buckingham Lake, places where poor folks like to fish.” Contamination inevitably gets into the mouths of our children, weather they are gardening and putting their hands in their mouths or fishing.

When Ward Stone has pursued testing for heavy metals on his own time and with his own money, he broke a scandal of the contamination of children’s toys with lead. His boss said “Don’t ever do that again, You are a wildlife pathologist and that’s not part of it.” So he said “I’m done with lead, I’m moving on with mercury.” He

has been fundraising in Raven-Coeymans to test wildlife for traces of mercury from the cement plant there.

Noting the work of Rachel Carson, who was written off by the academics of her time as a “little old lady in tennis sneakers without a Ph.D.,” Ward spoke of being inspired by her example. He served on the board of the Rachel Carson Council which has declared May 27 (today) to be “Rachel Carson Day” – a day for municipalities to adopt resolutions to reduce pesticide use.

Even today, “It is great to be involved with environmental warriors (like Save the Pine Bush); it keeps you young.”

---

### *Bike Ride, continued from page 1*

traffic laws. This will not be a fast ride, rather and urban ride, and we will all stay together. The event is free and open to the public - bring your friends!

*(Please note, all CDTA buses are equipped with bike racks, in case you want to use a bus for part of your trip to and from the Washington Park, where the ride begins and ends.)*

---

## **Sally’s Recycling Corner**

*by Sally Cummings*

### ***Idea from Honest Weight Food Co op flier:***

The biggest factor influencing what goes into landfills is what we choose to buy and how we dispose of it. You can immediately reduce your carbon footprint by choosing to take these simple steps:

Engage in “pre-cycling” (I really like that word!) by buying reusable, refillable and returnable items, and avoiding highly packaged items.

Reuse or repair what you can whenever possible, keeping things out of the waste stream.

Compost and recycle and make it priority to purchase items that can be sorted this way.



*The following two articles are reprinted from Earth911.com:*

## **The Pizza Box Mystery**

*by Lori Brown, a staff member of Earth911.com.*

Many people assume that pizza boxes are recyclable. In fact, most boxes have recycling symbols on them and are traditionally made from corrugated cardboard. They are, in and of themselves, recyclable.

However, what makes parts of them non-recyclable is the hot, tasty treat that comes inside them, specifically, the grease and cheese from pizza that soil the cardboard.

So there you have it, pizza boxes that are tarnished with food, or any paper product that is stained with grease or food, are not recyclable - unless you remove the tainted portions.

But why is this? And what are the implications for the general, pizza-loving public? Mmm, pizza.

### How it Gets Recycled

Food is one of the worst contaminants in the paper recycling process. Grease and oil are not as big of a problem for plastic, metal and glass, as those materials are recycled using a heat process. But when paper products, like cardboard, are recycled, they are mixed with water and turned into a slurry. Since we all know water and oil don't mix, the issue is clear.

Grease from pizza boxes causes oil to form at the top of the slurry, and paper fibers cannot separate from oils during the pulping process. Essentially, this contaminant causes the entire batch to be ruined. This is the reason that other food related items are non-recyclable (used paper plates, used napkins, used paper towels, etc).

"The oil gets in when you're doing your process of making paper," said Terry Gellenbeck, a solid waste administrative analyst for the City of Phoenix, Ariz. "The oil causes great problems for the quality of the paper, especially the binding of the fibers. It puts in contaminants, so when they do squeeze the water out, it has spots and holes." But what about other things regularly found on paper products, like ink? "Most inks are not petroleum-based so they break down fast. Food is a big problem," he said.

Also, be mindful of adhesives that may be on the pizza box (coupons, stickers, etc.) as those are contaminants. Known as "pressure sensitive adhesives (PSAs)" these can ruin the recycling process just as much as oil or food remains.

### Sneaks

Many people admit trying to "sneak" their pizza boxes in with cardboard boxes and such. In reality, this does more harm than good as the contaminated cardboard could ruin the whole recycling batch.

In fact, contamination in the recycling business is a big problem. Some estimates put the costs of irresponsible contamination in the neighborhood of \$700 million per year industry-wide. Gellenbeck estimates that for the City of Phoenix, contamination costs them around \$1 million annually, because of damage to machinery, disposal costs for the non-recyclable material and wasted time, materials and efficiency. With the City processing 129,000 tons of materials in 2008 (around 7 percent of this is cardboard), money is an important factor as to why residents should know what their municipalities do and do not accept.

### So, What Do I Do?

The easiest remedy for this problem is to cut or tear out the soiled portions of your pizza boxes and trash them. For example, you can tear the top of the box off, recycle that and throw away the bottom part containing the grease. If the entire box is grease-free, the whole box can be recycled with a guilt-free conscience.

Another option to recycling cardboard is to compost it, although the grease rule still applies here as well. "Even with oils, you shouldn't compost [greased cardboard]. It causes rotting,

## Terracycle Recycles Odds, Ends at Popular Retailers

by Jennifer Berry a staff member at Earth911.com

According to GreenBiz.com, Terracycle, an organization known for its creative recycling of everyday trash, will begin rolling out store-specific collection bins at Home Depot, Petco, OfficeMax and Best Buy to encourage consumers to recycle products typically associated with that store.

For example, when you walk into Petco, you may be in need of a new bag of dog food since your bag at home is empty. Why not bring in the old bag for recycling, while you're out picking up a new one?

Terracycle takes products that aren't generally recycled in community programs and turns them into usable products, such as a messenger bag made from cookie wrappers.

"First, it's what materials are going to make sense for the customer at that retailer," said Albe Zakes, Terracycle's vice president of media relations. "It also has to be something that we either have a use for or are developing a use for and feel confident that we will have a use for by the time we start stockpiling the materials."

If you're into do-it-yourself projects around the house, Home Depot's recycling bins are right up your alley. "Some of the items Home Depot will take include caulking tubes, paint brushes, saw blades, nursery pots and furnace filters. Saw blades will be turned into clocks and flimsy plant pots will be shredded and turned into sturdier pots, something that the company decided to do after hearing complaints from gardeners," according to GreenBiz.com.

The program will initially launch in stores in New York and New Jersey for the next three months, with Terracycle aiming to have collection bins in 10,000 locations during 2010.

Terracycle specializes in "eliminating the idea of waste" by taking end-of-life products and making them into something new. Through its use of "brigades" for various products, the company collects everything from used corks to cookie bags. Recently, Terracycle partnered

with ReCellular to form phone brigades for cell phone recycling. For each item brought in, a small amount (around 2 to 5 cents) is donated to a charity of your choosing.

---

*What Sheree Cammer Learned about Worm Bins at the Sustainable Living/Voluntary Simplicity Vermiculture Talk by Sarah Worden and Gary Feinland*

## Sally's Worm Bin

*Taking care of a worm bin is so simple!*

I use one of those large plastic storage containers. I punched some holes in the bottom and near the top on the sides. I use the lid from another old one to place underneath the bin, so that any drainage will be caught.

I shred newspaper in my shredder (no colored ads) and put it in a bowl. I save egg shells, so I break up some shells very small, and mix them in with the shredded paper. Then I moisten it with water, so that if you squeeze a bunch, you can get a little water out. This is the bedding. I then save my peels and cores and outer leaves, etc., and every few days bury some of them under the paper.

Worms like it dark, so I leave the lid on all the time. No smell, no trouble. I go away for a couple of weeks and they are fine. You can leave them a month and they will still be fine. People keep them in the bathroom, or in a corner of a kitchen. Since they don't smell and are always covered up, no one really knows that they are there. They are the best behaved pets you can possibly have!

Red wigglers are the type of worms you need. You can buy them for about \$20 or get some from a friend with a worm bin. One thousand worms weigh about a pound, and you usually need about twice as much worms as your average vegetative food waste generated per day. So if you crank out 1/2 pound of food waste a day, you would need about 1,000 worms. Generally, you would need about a square foot of surface area for each pound of waste produced per week.

For bedding, you can use partially composted leaves or coir (coconut fiber) as well as newspaper. Fill the bin about 3/4 full of shredded fluffed up bedding before wetting it. It is a good idea to add a handful of compost and soil under the bedding when you start your bin. This provides some microorganisms and grit for the worms' crops. Turns out they are somewhat like chickens, which don't have teeth (scarce as hen's teeth) and grit helps them grind up their food.

Pick up the bedding and put your food scraps on one third of the surface only, and change which third every time you feed your

*continued on page 4*

### *Sally's Worm Bin, continued from page 3*

worms. Do not feed them meat or dairy products, and do not feed them a lot of coffee grounds, as that would be too acidic for them. The worms are stressed by light, so feeding them every three days or so is advisable. About a month before it is time to harvest, you can stop feeding them, so they can work on finishing the food that is there. It takes about 4 to 6 months for the whole process, from start to finished compost.

Monitoring for moisture is important. If more than a few drops comes out when you squeeze the bedding on top, it's too moist in there. You can add more dry bedding. Or some people leave the top off for a few hours to dry up the bin a bit. The worms do not want to leave their nice dark worm bin. Fruit fly problems can be thwarted with a fine screening over the air holes, or some people freeze their food scraps to kill the fruit fly larvae. Or bury the fruit two inches below the bedding in the bin, or stop feeding for about three weeks: worms can go a month without new food, but fruit flies can't survive that long.

Red wigglers live on the surface, unlike burrowing earthworms. They can live in 50 - 90 degree temperatures, so they can't survive a winter. When it is time to harvest your worm castings, you need to collect your worms for the next bin. This can be an enjoyable task of an hour or so, especially if done with a worm-loving friend. Or, you can do it more gradually by moving the finished compost to half of the bin and adding your nice new bedding and new food scraps to the the other side. In a few days, the worms will generally wander over to the new section.

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



**Save the Pine Bush**

A Project of the Social Justice Center  
33 Central Avenue  
Albany, NY 12210

**Return Service Requested**

## **The Orange Leachate of Rapp Road**

ALBANY: Bert Schou, Save the Pine Bush volunteer, took some amazing photos of the Rapp Road leachate flowing out of a pipe coming from the landfill into the southern arm of Lake Rensselaer. The photos, taken in early May, show the bright orange color of the stream. One photo shows a frog trying to get by in this surreal-colored water.

Since the SPB newsletter is not printed in color, we can't show you these photos here. Fortunately, Dan Van Riper over at Albany-WebLog.com, posted a good article about the leachate, complete with photos on May 25. See <http://www.albanyweblog.com/2009/05-May/05-25-09.php> or go to [albanyweblog.com](http://albanyweblog.com) and click on the May 25 article.

Bert Schou also made a very impressive display at the Tulipfest of the photos he took and water samples showing the various colors of water from different pipes coming from the landfill. Save the Pine Bush thinks it is time of the City to discover why there are three different colored waters coming from three different pipes.

## **Earth Day at the Village of Colonie**

Village of Colonie: On Earth Day, the Village of Colonie held a public meeting about the proposed landfill expansion. Residents of the Village of Colonie and members of the public were invited to speak about their concerns about the proposed expansion. Save the Pine Bush volunteers attended the hearing.

About 150 people came out to speak and to listen. Mayor Frank Leak opened the hearing saying that he wanted to hear people's concerns about the proposed expansion. He said that no one was listening to the Village of Colonie. To

demonstrate how much the Village cared about the concerns of the people, the Village hired a stenographer to record all of the comments made.

A transcript of the meeting is available by email from the Village of Colonie at [villagehall@colonievillage.org](mailto:villagehall@colonievillage.org)

## **Updates**

### *The Proposed Hotel*

ALBANY: On April 6, during the caucus for the Albany Common Council, the Honorable Dominick Calsolaro brought up the issue that the Common Council has the right to determine the mitigation for the proposed hotel in the Pine Bush. After some discussion, the legislation which would have permitted the hotel was referred back to the Planning, Economic Development and Land Use committee. The committee has yet to take up the issue of mitigation for the hotel, and no approvals have been given.

In other news for the hotel, the Court of Appeals will hear the oral argument in the original court case for the proposed hotel on September 15. Mark your calendars plan to attend! It is not every day one of our cases heard by the highest court in New York State!

Attorney Steve Downs filed the original case for Save the Pine Bush against the Albany Common Council in 2006 over nine issues, including the fact that the hotel site is occupied habitat for the Karner Blue. The City challenged SPB's standing to sue. Both the Supreme Court, and the Appellate Division upheld SPB's right to sue. However, the City has decided to bring the case to the Court of Appeals.

The issue of standing is extremely important. After all, if SPB can't get into court, then our cases cannot be heard on the merits. Everyone who is interested in the rights of citizens to make the government follow the law should come on September 15 to hear this case.

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
US POSTAGE PAID  
ALBANY, NY  
PERMIT #509