



Save the Pine Bush

March/April Newsletter

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

Doug Melnick

*Director, Albany City Department of Economic Development & Planning
will speak about*

Albany 2030

Doug Melnick will speak about: Albany 2030: Your City, Your Future, a process to create the City's first Comprehensive Plan. The Albany Comprehensive Plan will include the City's collective vision for the future, as well as maps, policies, and guidelines that describe how to achieve that vision. Join in and share your ideas of what Albany's future should be.

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 Rezsine Adams at 462-0891 or Lynne Jackson at 434-1954 or email pinebush@mac.com. Interested people are welcomed to attend the program beginning at 7:00 for which there is no charge.

March Vernal Equinox Lecture Hike Saturday, March 20 at 9:00 AM

The Pine Bush and Former Lake Albany From the Hellen Bergh - Helderbergh Escarpment
Glacial Geology and Post Glacial Geo-morphology Milieu Preservation Issues; Views and Viewpoints
Meet At: SUNYA Campus Center Bus Stop, Collins Circle, 1400 Washington Ave. Albany
Leaders: Andy Arthur & John Wolcott; **Duration:** About. 2 1/2 hours; **For info call:** 465-8930
Bring: Trail lunch, canteen or drinks, binoculars, camera, guide books, topo maps (if you have them)

Storm Over the Mountains

by John Wolcott

This will be but the latest of several Overview Hikes SPB has sponsored over the years, to points around the rim of the Albany Inner Lowland Basin. We will view the Pine Bush from various points in and near Thacher Park. *The hike is free and the public is cordially invited*

Most of them have been to High Point, Thacher Park and Pinnacle Mountain. We see no reason to discontinue these events now in spite of State policy, uncertainties, concerning the Park and the newly established Bird Preserve. Neither we, nor others have ever needed much if anything by way of "services" and staff for these events. This is especially true of the "Wild Side" i.e. the area north of the recent boundary limits of Park. Besides this area is mostly looked after by volunteers of "Path North" which courses through the park here. Personally I've been using this area, off and on, for hiking with friends since about 1950. Those days were much like the do it yourself eco-aesthete tourism

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Composting on a Large Scale *Is large-scale composting better for humans and the environment than incineration for disposing of organics?*

by Tim Truscott

On Friday, February 5, Save the Pine Bush hosted a presentation by Peninsula Compost Group's representative, Ken Sauter. Within the past few months Peninsula opened a new food and yard waste composting facility in Wilmington, Delaware with a capacity of 500 tons per day.

The Wilmington Organic Recycling Center (WORC), located at the Port of Wilmington, is described by Peninsula as being the largest state-of-the-art food and yard waste composting facility on the East Coast. WORC "provides economic benefits to businesses in Delaware and the region by lowering waste disposal costs compared to landfills and provides significant

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Zero Waste or Waste Authority?

*Update on the City of Albany's
Solid Waste Management Plan*

by Tom Ellis, Citizens' Environmental Coalition

Save the Pine Bush and friends won a partial victory in late February when Clough Harbour & Associates (CHA) revised the preliminary draft solid waste management plan it had issued in mid-December on behalf of a "steering committee" appointed by Albany Mayor Gerald Jennings. CHA faced considerable pressure from two steering committee members, SPB, Citizens' Environmental Coalition, and many others.

During the past fifteen months, the city of Albany has been developing a long-range solid waste plan for the thirteen municipalities it partners with on solid waste and who use Albany's Rapp Road landfill. Two months ago, Albany's solid waste consultant, Clough Harbour & Associates released a draft plan in which it advocated for vastly enlarging the existing planning unit (220,000 people) to a multi-county grouping

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Zero Waste, from page 1

(all counties in the region were mentioned) that would serve the needs of 700,000 persons. Clough Harbour recommended the state legislature create a regional solid waste authority and the authority then have constructed a large treatment (disposal) facility. The type of disposal facility was not specified but a 1500 tons per day waste-to-energy station was mentioned in the report and discussed several times at meetings I attended last year.

The revised draft still calls for creation of a regional authority and a disposal facility. However, it contains some improvements. It describes "zero waste" as minimizing the amount of waste that must be disposed of, and says zero waste is "not inconsistent with the waste minimization goals" of the plan. The new draft states the still unspecified type of disposal facility would be for all waste remaining after implementation of "expanded and aggressive" waste reduction and recycling programs. These three words are important.

The new draft contains language stating the plan does not favor waste-to-energy over any other emerging disposal technology, and "a [disposal] facility would need to be sized according to the size of the regional watershed. The first draft's language mentioning a "1500 tons per day" disposal facility to meet the needs of "700,000 persons" have been deleted although the revision asserts "economies of scale would occur with a larger watershed."

Albany and Clough Harbour have several motives for favoring creation of a regional authority and constructing a giant-sized disposal facility. Obviously they hope to dominate the authority and Clough Harbour hopes to make a lot of money. Albany presently generates revenues (the exact amount is unknown with many numbers bandied about) with its landfill and hopes to continue using disposing of trash as a major income stream for the city. Several Albany politicians have also speculated that a regional authority would likely absorb the tens of millions of dollars in debts Albany has incurred expanding its Rapp Road landfill.

Clough Harbour has said that one reason it favors establishment of an authority is because an authority can compel participating municipalities to bring their disposables to the authority's facilities. This would prevent the participating municipalities from shopping around for lower cost options. Municipalities might be forced to pay for disposal they are not using. If a municipality achieved very high reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting rates and had little to be disposed of, the municipality might be forced to pay the authority for what it is not disposing or to pay

exorbitant rates for what it is disposing.

Albany does a poor job of managing discarded items now. The dump has periodic odor problems that have sickened many people in the Village of Colonie, the City of Albany and the Town of Guilderland. Albany has very weak recycling programs, no reuse programs, no waste reduction planning, no education programs on reduction and reuse, pathetic educational efforts on the benefits of and how to do recycling, and weak enforcement of recycling laws. Last year, a survey of post-recyclable materials brought to the landfill showed vast amounts of designated recyclables being disposed of at the dump, especially from commercial sources. Albany has a weak city council and government is usually not conducted in a transparent manner.

Clough Harbour and Mayor Jennings have a poor vision for the future. Even though Clough Harbour was tasked with creating a 20-year plan, both the December and the February drafts provide goals for only the first ten years. CHA asserts that 65 percent is the highest reduction, reuse, composting and recycling rate we can likely ever achieve. Many municipalities and solid waste planning units in the United States are shooting for rates much higher than this. With a higher or much higher rate, the supposed need for a large or giant-sized disposal facility disappears. I am convinced that Clough Harbour and Mayor Jennings do not want highly successful waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting programs because they would prefer to generate lots of money disposing waste.

We can do much better. Twenty years is a long time. My sense is that as climate change impacts become much more apparent in the next few years, vast improvements will be made, perhaps quickly, in reducing the size and toxicity of the waste stream. In many parts of the US, the volume of trash being disposed of dropped by double-digit rates since the onset of the "Great Recession." There is a growing awareness that discarded items do not become "trash" unless the items are mixed together.

NYS or the federal government may pass extended producer responsibility (sometimes called product stewardship) legislation requiring manufacturers and importers to take back their products after their useful life is over; passage of such laws would likely lead to quick and huge reductions in quantities of packaging that accompany new products, better built products that last longer, and giant reductions in the toxicity of products as manufacturers and importers hurry to reduce or eliminate future costs. With discarded materials being much less toxic, combined reduction, reuse, composting and recycling rates could surpass 90 or 95 percent and approach the ultimate goal of zero waste. The CHA-Bill

Bruce-Jerry Jennings vision would create an unaccountable authority, lock us into unneeded disposal capacity, disincentive intensive reuse and recycling, and cost a fortune.

Composting, from page 1

environmental benefits including completing the organics lifecycle and reducing green house gas emissions".

Peninsula's Wilmington facility uses the GORE™ Cover System Technology to convert clean, source-separated food discards and yard wastes into high-value compost and organic soil products. W.L. Gore and Associates of Newark, DE, the suppliers of the system, are better known for their Gore-Tex fabric used in outdoor wear.

In brief, the Gore method of composting uses the typical windrows of compost material, but they are covered by tarpaulins made of the Gore material. The tarps help to control the moisture and temperature of the compost material as the bacteria act to break down the organic material. The Gore method also helps to avoid production of any odors, a common problem with composting.

The Gore system has the ability to produce high-quality, stable compost in just eight weeks, and has low energy requirements, low operating costs and requires a short construction time. The system has proven to provide a low-risk, low-cost solution which can sustainably process a wide range of organic waste in the most varied climate conditions while controlling odors and emissions.

One of the most unusual features of the Wilmington facility is that it was built and operates without any city or state funding. It operates entirely on the revenue derived from its tipping fees and the sale of its resulting compost product. At present, its compost is sold only in bulk (only the truckload), but Peninsula may get into retail operations at some future date.

What is the relevance of a large-scale compost facility to the Capital Region? Every community generates organic waste, whether it be household food waste (e.g. vegetable peels), supermarket fruit and vegetable spoilage, waste food from institutions (such as colleges and universities, public school systems and health care facilities) and food processors. Organic waste also includes all the yard waste we generate (grass and hedge clippings, weeds, twigs and branches).

When organic waste is placed in a landfill, it undergoes an anaerobic process of decomposition and methane is produced. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas which promotes global warming. It wastes valuable landfill space.

So why don't we just put all this stuff in an incinerator and burn it? We could but,

like landfilling, it wouldn't be the best way to dispose of it. Organics typically have a high water content and a great deal of thermal energy would be consumed just getting rid of the water before the material could burn; in other words, it would be thermally inefficient. Burning also creates materials which end up in the air and are unhealthy for humans and other living creatures. Finally, the carbon and other materials found in organics were derived from the earth and should be returned to the earth. It is unsustainable to continually remove materials from the soil and turn them into energy, a process which will never return them to the soil.

Composting must be done by people who know what they are doing and using the proper technology. Otherwise, a poor product and undesirable odors will result. Poor product quality and odor are two of the main reasons composting facilities go out of business.

There is a constant demand for good-quality compost in our region, and large-scale composting of organic waste could help to meet this demand. A large-scale composting facility such Peninsula's Wilmington facility, could be very beneficial to the Capital Region.

NYS Climate Action Council

by John Wolcott

ALBANY, NY: Here is a brief review of the Summary of the State Climate Action Council's first public meeting on January 25, 2010 at the N.Y. State Museum was held pursuant to Gov. Paterson's Executive Order 24. This was the first State Climate Action Council Public Outreach Meeting pursuant to Gov. Paterson's Executive Order 24 concerning measures to be taken to combat global warming. It's not too bad and compares well with California's unilateral actions and goes past them at some points, at least in stated intent. A major goal spelled out in this order mirrors the current Federal Government's of "80X50". An intention of lowering the level of greenhouse gas emissions to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. Then there's a stated State goal termed "45X15". This calls for 45% of the projected electricity load to be provided by efficiency and renewables by 2015. There are other interesting items and it actually isn't too long.

Why Gov. Paterson hasn't publicly promoted this more is beyond me. I sorely and surely would that he would. It seems to have the support of much if not all of the environmentalist community in New York State. I also consider it to have been Gov. Paterson's best foot forward at a time when he was soon to need one real badly.

The Sunday Times Union headline for February 28 reads: "Can Paterson still govern? Will he be ignored as a lame duck or become a liberated lion?" I hope Gov. Paterson becomes

a roaring lion on just one issue: Executive Order 24. Now is his chance to shine for always, and favorably in the public's remembrance. It's his chance to push anti global warming measures, as best he can, beyond his own present executive order. Time will prove him right in so doing, and I'd say he well knows that. There's nothing at all for Gov. Paterson to lose by now pushing for beyond 80x50 and for the more drastic measures that are needed. Anyway; I was, tentatively, ready to support Paterson in his bid for election unless some other candidate could come up with something better than Executive Order 24, which I'm afraid may be needed. Is this order going to be relegated to the bottom shelf, the back burner or to the round file now?

There are surely outstanding contradictions over particulars of Executive Order 24, but perhaps that's another reason to promote it in that it can be used to fault and counter those contradictions. For examples: the Bellayre Mt. Fiasco, as well the plans for drilling for gas through the Manilius Shale. Not to mention closing State Parks, raiding the State's Environmental Fund, and my favorite targets: the continuance of the anti environmental policy of applying IDA and Empire State funding to development in rural and suburban locations. Worst of all, as far as Save the Pine Bush is concerned, The Department of Environmental Conservation's colossal sell out in approving the expansion of Albany's Grand City Dump. Also; I won't let it go that Governor Paterson failed to direct an answer to my letter to him recommending keeping the price of gas up artificially by increasing the State sales tax on it.

The presenter statements and audience comments and answers were pretty well accurately reported in this summary. A sympathetic clerk even made sure that my comments were given their due by disguising my real identity as a current plaintiff against NYS DEC.

The best general statement by the presenters, was made by Janet Joseph of NYSERDA simply by starting off with the statement: "Business as usual is not an option." Then: "We need a radical change in how we produce and use energy. We are still using 20th. century energy technology based on 19th. century discoveries. In no other major sector is this the case."

For a useful particular Ms. Joseph showed temperature graphs for diverse time periods, and pointed out that relatively short term lows and highs don't count compared to longer term trends. She noted that "there are some who do not read the graphs this way however." An obvious reference to the global warming deniers.

There were several statements of interest to all environmentalists but, at least, two were of special interest to Save the Pine Bush. Alan

Belenz Director of Climate Change for NY-SDEC, stated that part of the State's effort to reduce carbon emissions is to "revitalize urban areas and drive people back to urban living." Very importantly "The protection of natural forests" was cited coupled with the statement that "there are 16 million acres of privately owned forests in New York State." Well I'm sorry to hear that. There is but little control at all, in actual practice; over cutting down private forests in New York and no proposals here to remedy that. This even though, in addition to all the other reasons for protecting forests, they are all carbon sinks to greater and lesser degrees. Mark Watson, also from NYSERDA, said right out: "Our climate is going to change." He cited "bigger storms, more heat waves, more intense rain and snow, and coastal flooding." Also cited was the increasing appearance here of the Carolina Wren as an indicator of the S.E. warm moist climate beginning to move north already. He showed a 55 year temperature increase for Central Park which indicated a 5 degree increase.

Among those fielding questions and comments were: Jeff Jones from Apollo Alliance cited a long term tendency of NYSDEC to compromise on the environment. He hopes that won't happen with the bold and advanced goals and intents being expressed and laid out here. He urged them and other players in the newly formed Climate Action Council not to back away from 80X50. Karen Sutherland, citizen, said their plans are very ambitious and pointed in the right direction then asked: "What happens after the report goes to the political process? Everyone knows we have the most dysfunctional legislature in the country." Alan Belenz replied, "We don't know the answer to this last question yet . . ." Jon Wilcox, citizen, asked Will 80X50 really be enough?

There are reports that the IPCC calculations are underestimates and that global warming is actually progressing faster than previously thought. Then there are the tipping points which may soon be passed. Furthermore, there is a lag effect whereby if all were to be stopped now, the carbon already accumulated in the atmosphere would continue to trap heat for years to come." Alan Belenz replied, "We have imperfect information so we don't know what an 80X50 reduction will do . . . We are on a long term journey to a zero-carbon economy. We need to achieve equilibrium with our emissions and what plants and crops pull out of the atmosphere." Added remarks from citizen Wilcox, "At least don't retreat from these stated goals. Be flexible and prepared ahead of time to rapidly raise the level and speed of them if natural events and science show that it's necessary to."

Mark Schaeffer, long standing environmental activist said, "What we need is a change more radical than the industrial revolution but in less time. We need a margin of error - we don't want to bet our future on a rosy scenario. There is thinking that the 450 ppm level may not be sufficient to protect against a runaway negative feedback loop (e.g. melting of arctic icecaps leading to release of high intensity methane from melting perma-frost). Some think we need a 90-% per cent reduction" This from the published summary, but Mark's concluding remark, not published, was, "Laws of physics are not subject to negotiation." (No reply published)

I recommend support of the New York State Climate Action Council even though there is not yet much if anything in State law to support it's aims. Even though the State and it's agencies by and large have not, hitherto, had the best environmental record. Even not enough has been said yet over changing life styles, and nothing over halting unlimited exponential economic growth. Not the requisite level dire emergency neither, as yet. Never the less, this new council and the people in it seem pretty good and they want our input and seem willing to listen, and to exchange information and ideas. We shouldn't pass up such an opportunity. Especially while the Climate Action Plan is in it's formative stage. The Governor's directive in this is to create a draft Climate Action Plan by September 30 2010. The make up of the Council by including a variety of State agencies is a positive sign. It reflects the concept that we shouldn't pigeon hole or relegate environment off on the side to just one Department or Bureau. Environment is much too all encompassing and needs be taken much more seriously than it, generally is. It is, in fact, our "milieu" in which we are all totally enveloped. Milieu conveys a more serious meaning, and is the formal word for environment in Dutch, German, Danish, and French, which it comes fro,

There are 5 more Public Outreach meetings scheduled this year by the New York State Climate Action Council: March 30 Environmental Justice Meeting #1, June 29 Environmental Justice Meeting # 2, October Public Meeting on the Draft Report and November Public Meeting on the Draft Report. Meeting places haven't been decided upon yet, nor precise dates for the October and November meetings but here is the Climate Action Council's web site : www.nycli-

Hike, from page 1

of the 19th century in the same area. There was superior public transportation to the Helderberghs in the 1940's and 50's We would sometimes take the Altamont Bus which ran in both mornings and evenings, to Altamont then hike up an old user path to High Point in the 1960's. This was before local governments forgot that user rights applied to this foot path and the to the Old Mine Road further south along the escarpment. Our other favorite route was to take the West Berne Bus to Thacher Park in the morning. Then we would walk into the Wild Side from there along the cliff up to High Point and back to Albany in the evening by the bus. The lands, hunting and hiking paths weren't posted then.

When Save the Pine Bush started our occasional hikes, decades later, to this area we would always get permission from a succession of owners through SPB member Heather Linnendoll, and her parents, from Altamont. Former owners. Ah yes! Now that's a good question and perhaps even a legal one. I don't know, for sure, how Jeff Thomas, or Bill Boyce who sold for the Bird Preserve addition, feel about this close down. However, for the whole park, for all time, it was spelled out, signed and sealed in advance by Mrs.Emma Treadwell Thacher and her lawyers in 1914. Mrs. Thacher in cooperation with the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, gave the land to start Thacher Park to

the State of New York in 1914. She did this out of a sincere desire to preserve nature, to promote science and to benefit the public and as a memorial to her late husband.

Emma was the widow of John Boyd Thacher, a former Mayor of Albany, State Senator, historian and author of works on the history of the Hudson Valley and North America focusing on early explorations. Mr. Thacher was also a very successful business man and philanthropist who shared his wealth for the public good and with the less fortunate. To quote from Governor Martin Glynn's 1914 Memorandum to the Legislature concerning this gift of land, "the true worth of the late John Boyd Thacher would be misunderstood, were it tested merely by his success in business, literature and statesmanship. The true measure of him as a man was known to the exceedingly large number of those of his fellows less fortunately situated than himself, who partook of his philanthropy. Modest and unassuming and even secretive in his many charities, the great aim and philosophy of his life was to uplift and give assistance to those around him. His widow imbued with the same kindly spirit, is permitting the State to devote this property to the benefit and uplift of the people."

I will conclude with the following from a statement by the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society in their Nineteenth Annual Report 1914,"This magnificent park ... was given to the State in March 1914 by Mrs. John Boyd Thacher of Albany in memory of her husband, and placed in the custody of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society. It is given upon condition that it "shall be forever dedicated to and used exclusively for the purpose of a public park and atural scenic reservation and for no other purpose."

www.savethepinebush.org



Save the Pine Bush
A Project of the Social Justice Center
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