

Save the Pine Bush

October/November Newsletter

Oct/Nov 17 No. 139 • 33 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210 • email pinebush@mac.com • phone 518-462-0891 • web <http://www.savethepinebush.org> • Circ. 600

Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner Wednesday, October 18, 2017, 6:00 p.m.

The Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy (SHARE)
will speak about

The Proposed Sheridan Hollow Microgrid Fossil Fuel Plant

Merton Simpson, Albany County Legislator
on environmental justice and climate change.

Keith Schue, Engineer,
on the technical aspects of this proposed fossil fuel plant.

Rita Ogburn-McCall, Environmental Health Advocate,
on the history of the ANSWERS plant in Sheridan Hollow.

Sandy Steubing, Environmental Activist,
on the new coalition, SHARE, and what you can do to help.

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 and vegan options, salad, garlic bread and delicious desserts. Only \$12 for adults, \$6 for students, and \$2 for children. People who make reservations are served first. For reservations, please leave a message for Rezsin Adams at 462-0891 or email pinebush@mac.com.

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

Carbon Tax Forum, Putting Price on Climate Change

Tuesday, October 24, 7-9 PM, 405 Washington Ave., Albany, Judith Enck, moderator
Sponsored by the PAUSE — Everyone is welcome!

Renewable Energy & Sustainable Living Fair

Saturday, October 28 from 10 - 4 pm at Doane Stuart School, 199 Washington Ave. Rensselaer
Judith Enck, former Regional EPA administrator will be the keynote speaker at noon
Sponsored by the PAUSE — Everyone is welcome!

No hike this month — Save The Pine Bush is in need of more hike leaders.

Help others explore the Pine Bush! Volunteer to lead a walk.

To volunteer, please e-mail pinebush@mac.com or call John Wolcott at 518-465-8930.

Judith Enck, former EPA Regional Director of New York State's Region II, spoke at the SPB dinner in June; Part One of her speech was published in the Aug/Sept newsletter; here is Part Two

How Can We Reverse the Tide of Trump's Plan to Eliminate the U.S. EPA? - Part Two

by Hugh Johnson

ALBANY, NY: On Day 68, Trump actually traveled to the EPA Headquarters to announce a reduction in the EPA Clear Acts. Coal miners were invited to attend. Judith stated, "If Trump had any real interest in coal miner's careers, he would advocate for their safety, since it is one of the most hazardous occupations in the world."

The President then signed an Executive Order to roll back EPA's Clean Power Plan, the first federal

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SHARE — Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy Forms

ALBANY, NY — Leaders of local community organizations, backed up by environmental organizations throughout the state, released a letter on September 19, 2017; calling on Governor Cuomo and the Department of Environment Conservation (DEC) to undertake a full environmental review, including an Environmental Impact Statement on a 16-megawatt gas-fired power plant proposed in Sheridan Hollow, a low income, people of color, neighborhood near the State Capitol. The new coalition, Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy (SHARE), is calling on the state to evaluate alternative ways to address the energy needs of state facilities that utilize renewable energy such as wind, solar, and geothermal rather than by fossil fuels. The project is formally called the "Empire State Plaza Microgrid Project/ Sheridan Avenue CHP Project, Albany, NY". The plan calls for oil as a back up to gas.

According to Merton D. Simpson, Albany County Legislator for the 2nd District: "I live less than eight city blocks from the proposed microgrid, we do not want to be poisoned more slowly, we want to eliminate the poison. We don't need a slightly more efficient horse and buggy, we want to join the rest of the major countries in the

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regulation to require the reduction of carbon pollution from all fossil fuel power plants. During that event, he was surrounded by coal miners. Judith asserted, “Rather than photo ops, what coal miners really need is job retraining.” According to Fortune Magazine, there are twice as many solar workers as coal miners in our nation today. The New York Times reported recently that there are more than 2 jobs in solar for every 1 job in coal. Coal miners also need comprehensive health insurance so they get good health care to deal with black lung disease and other respiratory illnesses related to working in coal mines.

The following day, Day 69, EPA Administrator Pruitt rejected years of work by EPA scientists, and blocked the federal ban on using one of the most widely used pesticides, chlorpyrifos. This pesticide was banned for use in most household settings in 2000 but is still used on about 40,000 farms growing 50 crops, including apples and almonds. It is a neurotoxin and has been shown to harm children and farmworkers. The New York Attorney General’s office has done some great work on this issue. Chlorpyrifos is manufactured by Dow. Pruitt reversed this former ban.

On Day 81, Neil Gorsuch was sworn in as the latest member of the Supreme Court.

Day 95, the EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt met with the National Mining Association, urging them to weigh in with the White House to pull out of the international Paris Climate Change accord. The next day the Mining Association did just that.

Just three days later, the President signed an Executive Order encouraging oil drilling in the Arctic and in the southeastern Atlantic. What got less attention, is that Executive Order also opens up some federally protected marine sanctuaries to oil drilling and commercial fishing. It also rolls back rules that were put in place after the BP Oil Disaster in the Gulf of Mexico that aimed to make offshore oil drilling safer.

On Day 106, EPA Administrator Pruitt was scheduled to be the keynote speaker at the Oklahoma Republican Party fundraising dinner. The invitation stated: “You don’t want to miss Pruitt at this year’s Oklahoma GOP gala as he discusses his plan to slash regulations, bring back jobs to Oklahoma and decrease the size of the EPA.” Mr. Pruitt is a former state Attorney General. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island filed a complaint that Mr. Pruitt would be violating the Hatch Act. The next day Mr. Pruitt backed out of the Republican fundraising event.

On day 140, Trump went to the Rose Garden and announced that the USA would pull out of the Paris Accord. That meant we were one of THREE countries not involved in it, the other two being

Nicaragua and Syria. The US is the country with the second biggest carbon footprint, second only to China. In the Paris Accord, we had committed to reducing our carbon emissions by 26 to 28% over the next TEN years. The US now stands with Syria – rejecting this essential international agreement. A recent poll indicated only about 18% of Americans agree that Trump pulling out of Paris will help the economy.

On Day 143, Pruitt was on “Meet the Press” and FOX News stating that since Trump became President, 50,000 new coal mining positions had been created when only about 400 new positions were! Meanwhile Judith stated that in 2016, there were about 374,000 positions in the new and growing solar energy industry while only 160,000 ones in the coal industry.

While the Trump Administration claims their number one priority is job creation, they ignore the fact that energy efficiency and renewable energy will provide the most new jobs.

It was the 160th day of the Trump presidency when Judith spoke. She clearly stated “Things will probably get worse.” So far, of the 559 White House positions that require Senate nominations, only 117 had been filled. This she stated, “Was a good thing” in that more harm could and would likely be done once POTUS-45 fills more of the vacant positions.

Here is a positive development: In May, Congress voted on a Continuing Resolution to keep the government running until September 30. The Trump Administration had targeted EPA for a \$247 million budget cut, but Congress only went along with a \$81 million cut. The Congress said no staff reductions at EPA and modestly bumped up funding for science and clean energy. Equally important, Congress did not allow 70 anti-environmental policy riders and provided a 3 percent increase for National Parks. Congress pushed back because they heard from their constituents.

Here’s another interesting twist. The day before the President pulled the US out of the Paris Accord, 62 percent of Exxon Mobil shareholders voted in favor of a proposal to require Exxon Mobil, the world’s largest publicly traded oil company to disclose the impact of its business on climate change. Last year a similar proposal got 38% of the shareholders vote and this year 62%. Judith thanked Tom DiNapoli for helping to lead the charge on this. It was a great accomplishment and now sets the stage for him to take a very hard look at divestment. Judith went on to question if NY State workers would want their pensions invested in fossil fuel, given their bleak financial future.

She stated, “On the climate change issue, this is a very serious moment in our nation’s history.”

A recent analysis quantified the effect of these new policies on US greenhouse gas emissions and finds that emissions would have begun to flatten or increase by 2020 if these policies were actually put in place. The Trump policies could lead to an extra half a billion tons of greenhouse gases in the environment by 2025. That number is equal to the annual electricity emissions of 60 percent of US homes. Judith stated, “This, at a time, when we have to be rapidly driving down carbon emissions.”

She asked, “Can the states and the private sector take care of this?” Then she indicated Governor Cuomo has laid out some good climate change goals and Judith looks forward to seeing his state report on how to shift to 100% renewable energy. “If New York can put that in place, that would be real leadership.” However, she believes that the federal government is strongly needed to oversee cleaning the environment. Also, she does NOT support supplying 8 billion dollars to old nuclear power plants.

Acid rain, which has been cut by 70% largely thanks to strong science and enforcement of the Clean Air Act, may return thanks to tall smokestacks in Ohio and Indiana. Higher concentrations of carbon in our environment will lead to more sea level rise which is not really an issue states can handle on their own. EPA also has a vital oversight role to play in New York. Remember, Congress has not repealed or replaced one environmental law.

So far, we still have the Safe Drinking Water Act, FIFRA, CERCLA, RCRA, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act although Congress does seem to be gunning for the Endangered Species Act.

Judith then offered four distinct ways we the public can help turn the tide on Trump’s desire to eliminate the EPA.

1) Turn to the courts. “Save the Pine Bush” is good at doing that. We have the law on our side. Environmental organizations like Earthjustice and Natural Resources Defense Council are filing lawsuits as quickly as they can. But local and statewide groups need to do the same, because the national groups cannot sustain the work and won’t be able to take on regional and local issues. This is going to be a very long battle. Reversing the damage that has already been done in just the first few months of the Trump Administration is going to be hard and time consuming.

2) Support your Local Media and keep up on timely and accurate information provided by them. We have access to lots of news on the internet. However, Judith insists on subscribing to your local papers and tell them you want to see more environmental coverage. Support NPR and PBS, they do some great environmental reporting

and like EPA, they are on the chopping block.

3) Focus on the specific EPA budget and tell both Senator Schumer, and Gellibrand you will NOT tolerate Trump planning to slash the EPA. Talk to your local representatives as well. A 31% budget cut, as the Trump Administration has proposed for EPA would be a body blow. We need Congress to reject the Trump environmental budget. However, Congress is busy with so many other issues. Judith worries that while Congress is working to block cuts to medicare and Medicaid, immigration, and cuts to education — and so much more — environmental budget cuts won't be top tier issues. She wants us all to put the phone number of your congress member in your phone and call her or him, A LOT. This fight is not going to be won in Washington, It can be won Congressional district by Congressional district. Judith wants us to spend most of the time, working in key House districts where we have to persuade the members to pledge not to cut the EPA budget and don't forget to thank our allies.

4) Mobilize - Judith wants us to participate in local and larger demonstrations. Voice your resistance to slashing the EPA by writing articles to local newspapers "Letters to the Editor," donating money, using Twitter and Facebook.

Judith Enck ended her talk by inviting folks to reach out to Trump supporters and ask them if clean drinking water is important to them and their kids. If so, then how can they justify reducing the EPA so drinking water can no longer be monitored?

She encouraged everyone to donate money to good causes like "Save the Pine Bush," reduce their carbon footprints by carpooling, biking locally, recycling, composting , etc. She concluded "The fight to save the EPA will be a long battle."

Residents Object to Polluting Trucks

by Tom Ellis

Rensselaer City residents began meeting last spring after enduring five years of up to 100 huge trucks per day five days a week traverse downtown streets en-route to a construction and demolition debris (C&D) dump at the east end of Partition Street.

About 30 residents met September 28 at the Rensselaer public library to share information and intensify their campaign to have the trucks removed from downtown.

Whether residents will demand a closure of the dump located adjacent to the new Rensselaer public school building remains to be seen, but those at the late September meeting were unanimous they want the trucks removed from Broadway and Partition Street.

Partition Street contains a steep up hill heading east from the Hudson River; the hill peaks at the Third Street intersection and then has a steep downhill. Up to 100 trucks per day cross the hill in both directions five days a week.

Many Partition Street houses are located close to the street. Residents are outraged at the huge volume of trucks, that they begin coming over the hill at 6:30 a.m., the noise, exhaust, dust, dirt, vibrations, and falling debris, and are concerned about their physical and mental health. To experience this huge volume of truck traffic 250 days a year is extremely stressful. They are furious that both state and city officials seem to not care about them.

The Partition Street hill is easily visible from the river-facing windows of the top floors of DEC state headquarters at 625 Broadway in Albany.

One resident wrote: "Bottom Line: The plight of the most heavily impacted residents has been completely ignored. Our neighborhood noise levels are excessive and stressful to the point of presenting serious threats to our quality of life and health."

Rensselaer residents and colleagues took a truck census on Partition Street June 9 from 6:20 a.m. to 4:10 p.m. and counted all the trucks that drove east up Partition Street and through the intersection at Third Street.

Ninety-nine (99) tractor-trailer trucks went east up the Partition Street hill and own the other side. Ninety-six (96) returned in the opposite direction. One 22-wheeled truck carried an earth mover in its trailer on the way in and had an empty trailer on the return trip. Four (4) tractor-trailer tanker trucks made the round trip. Ninety-four (94) other tractor-trailer trucks went over the Partition Street hill toward the dump. With the exception of one or two ten-wheeled vehicles, all the others had 18, 22, 24, or 26 wheels.

The first truck went east up the hill at 6:31 a.m., nineteen (19) trucks went by within ten minutes, and twenty-seven (27) during the first hour. The final east-bound truck went by at 3:53 p.m.; the first returning truck went by at 7:15 a.m. and the final one at 4:10 p.m.

One member of the group examined the 2012 dump permit and determined that the EIS contained no diesel exhaust assessment. The permit also requires trucks to be fully covered both ways. The June 9 truck census determined about ten percent of the trucks going into the dump were not fully covered and at least forty (40) coming from the dump were uncovered.

The residents are still loosely organized and have yet to adopt a group name. Additional meetings are sure to be held in October. For more information or to help out, contact me at tomellis107@gmail.com or 518-453-8874.

The Wild Bees of the Pine Bush--

by Grace Nichols

ALBANY, NY: Bees pollinate over 75 % of the world's plants. The honeybee, *A. mellifera* is an introduced European honeybee and has been declining since the 1950's. As of 2007, 29% of beekeepers reported a 75 % loss in their hives due to Colony Collapse Disorder which is thought to be caused by mites, disease, monoculture farms, and pesticides. A lot of concern about bees and pollination tends to focus on honeybees.

However, there are over 20,000 species of native wild bees, 3500 in the United States and 400 of them in New York State. These wild, native bees are generally solitary rather than social. They are better pollinators for many plants, and they will often pollinate crops in the absence of honeybees. They do not make honey but they are integral to an ancient food web and ecological balance.

The bee/ plant relationship can be specific: tomatoes want to be pollinated by bumblebees and alfalfa prefers other native bees.

Amanda Dillon, entomologist and field biologist, has been working with bees for 10 years. She spoke at the September Save the Pine Bush dinner, describing bees (the study of hymenoptera) and then her specific research in the Albany Pine Bush.

In general pollinators are in decline due to habitat loss and fragmentation, invasive species and pesticide use. Rusty-patched bumblebees were listed this year as federally endangered, even though they were ubiquitous not long ago. Their demise was a national wake-up call regarding the plight of bee species. Because of these declines, all states are required to come up with pollinator protection plans.

Native bees are solitary and do not make hives. The mother lays eggs with her ovipositor and buries them in the ground. She provides all paternal care. Her nest looks like a long tube in the ground with individual cells for each egg. She brings enough pollen into the nest for eggs to develop through their larval stages until they are ready to leave the nest.

The families of bees include Andrenidae (mining bees) -- they are specialists who feed exclusively on one plant. There are the Apidae - which include honeybees, carpenter bees, bumblebees and cuckoo bees, Colletidae - the yellow-faced, plaster bees, the Halictidae - sweat bees, which are much smaller and Megachilidae - the leaf cutter bees, who cut circles of leaves to line their nests and carry pollen on their bellies. Other bees carry pollen in their corbicula, little pollen baskets on their hind legs. These bees are not aggressive. Honeybees, who are social bees, defend their hive and their Queen, and they will

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world and have genuine sustainable energy use and eliminate obsolete fossil fuels. In the wake of mega-storms Harvey and Irma our children deserve nothing less."

"New York State exhibited global leadership in 2014, when it banned high-volume hydraulic fracturing," said Sandy Steubing of People United For Safe Energy (PAUSE), speaking on behalf of the coalition. "However, this 16 megawatt power plant, as currently proposed, would run on the very fuel that the Governor explicitly banned -- fracked natural gas. In fact, it would make the Empire State Plaza and the City of Albany more dependent on fracked gas for electricity than today. New York can and should do better."

Over 100 organizations and Capital District elected officials have already signed the letter, which has been in circulation for just over a week and more are signing on every day.

"While it recognizes the intent and many benefits of an integrated Micro Grid System, the Arbor Hill Development Corporation requests all actions to construct a micro grid plant in the residential neighborhood of Sheridan Hollow be stopped until the State performs its due diligence to conduct environmental, social and economic impact reviews and has fully engaged the affected communities of Sheridan Hollow, Arbor Hill and downtown businesses. This is a matter of Environmental, Social and Economic Justice," said Arlene Way, Executive Director of the Arbor Hill Development Corporation.

Sheridan Hollow has seen more than its fair share of polluting power plants. The ANSWERS Plant, a trash-burning incinerator, pumped hazardous toxins into the Sheridan Hollow community for twelve years until it was finally closed in 1994. Now families who struggled with asthma

and other health impacts are being asked to shoulder the burden of pollution again.

Gwen Pope, President of Albany NAACP explained: "Sheridan Hollow is an economically disadvantaged community that is still living with the toxic health impacts of the ANSWERS plant. Lower income communities and communities of color have been targeted for sighting the most environmental dangerous projects. This practice must stop. Sheridan Hollow must not be a toxic dumping ground."

The SHARE letter calls on DEC to prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement for the project and urges Governor Cuomo to issue Requests for Proposals for alternatives which could power the Empire State Plaza and other buildings in downtown Albany with renewables and energy inefficiency. The State of Michigan, for example, is planning to heat its capitol building with geothermal.

"If Governor Cuomo wants to be a climate leader, he can start with his own capitol. We need Cuomo's leadership in moving New York from dirty fossil fuels to 100 percent renewable energy, and this project should be a model for the state and the nation," said Laura Shindell, New York Organizer for Food & Water Watch.

"Only four months have been allocated to permitting, including for an Environmental Quality Review this is a very short timeline. Was the state not planning to consult the community?" said Kim Fraczek, Director, Sane Energy Project.

SHARE and its partners emphasized that their goal is to work with Governor Cuomo and the state to meet the state's energy and climate change goals, and are looking for a public process to address their concerns.

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sting if they feel threatened, but the solitary bees are much less likely to do that.

Over the years the Pine Bush researchers have prioritized cataloguing the bee species that thrive out there. Often this requires microscope work to distinguish species. 131 bee species have found in the Pine Bush, establishing the importance of the habitat there in encouraging insect diversity. The Pine Bush Commission staff studied areas of intense conservation management.

The diversity of bees was quite high and over time, they found more sand specialists and pollen specialists in areas they had opened up. These bees thrived with the sunlight, the sand and the pollen bearing plants that grow where the thickets weren't.

We are grateful that this protected wilderness exists to nourish species who are under threat in the industrialized world at large.

Amanda Dillon concluded that bees thrive under conditions of floral diversity, with an emphasis on native perennials whose nectar and pollen are more nutritious for them. 70% of native bees need nesting sites in open ground or in sand piles, so leaving open ground is important for them. 30% need logs or cavities and homeowners can install bee nests to encourage native bees in their yards. These can be wood blocks with holes drilled in them or tubular reeds, bundled together.

It is also important for bee-conscious gardeners to avoid plants and seeds contaminated with neonicotinoid pesticides to protect the diversity of bees and other insects.

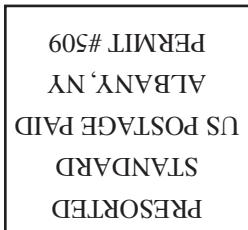
Next Dinner Dates

Wednesday, October 18

Wednesday, November 15

Wednesday, December 20

Return Service Requested



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

