

Network News



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Toward a Sustainable Energy Future in the Finger Lakes Region

by Hilary Lambert, Steward

The “new normal”

Over the past several years, we in the Finger Lakes have had to deal with extreme weather events and their consequences to our daily lives. These include unseasonal or extreme cold or heat, “too much” or “too little” rainfall or snow, previously rare events such as tornados, and “100 year floods” that seem to have become annual events. Invasive species originating in warmer climates are moving north, exemplified by the sudden threat of Hydrilla to Cayuga Lake (and potentially across the Great Lakes Basin), and the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid to our steep-banked, cool-water creeks.

Readers with more than a few years behind them will recall growing up in a stable, dependable climate when the seasons stayed where they belonged. Welcome to the “new normal”: The scientific consensus is that these extreme weather events and invasive species are our everyday, local indicators of the global warming trend now underway.



The hemlocks at Upper Treman State Park are showing signs of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid infestation. They anchor steep slopes and keep creeks cool. Will a warming climate lead to their demise? What can we do?

New York State’s climate in 2100 will resemble Georgia’s today

These recent heating effects are greatest at the poles: the Arctic and Antarctic are losing ice more rapidly than predicted, leading to loss of cold climate species habitat and economic impacts to human residents due to permafrost melting, shifting seasons, and new sea lanes opening as the ice melts. Here in the Finger Lakes, the weather extremes we have been experiencing are the creaks and groans in the system as the region shifts long-term toward a warmer climate.

Research carried out by the Union of Concerned Scientists and others indicates that, by the year 2100, New York State’s climate will closely resemble that of Georgia’s today. Between 2011 and 2100, we will see big changes in human and natural habitats that will affect us all profoundly. Southern species will shift northward, and some of our best-loved

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Invasive Species and Climate Change

Volunteers sought to form an Invasives Alert team!

Held on October 19 at Ithaca's Unitarian Church Annex, our autumn community conference, "Invasive Species and Climate Change," was well attended, providing somber information about climate change already underway, as indicated by aquatic and terrestrial invasive species moving north into Cayuga Lake and adjacent watersheds.

This free community conference focused on intertwined issues already impacting our lives, with information about invasive species in the news locally as indicators of global warming-

induced looming changes to land use, water use, and energy choices – changes that require rapid advance planning and adaptation by communities and individuals.

Presentations and expert speakers were, "Hydrilla and Other Invasive Aquatic Plants," by Roxanna Johnston, Watershed

Coordinator, Lab Director, City of Ithaca Water Treatment Plant; "Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is Here, Emerald Ash Borer is Coming: What's Next for Our Forests?" by Mark C. Whitmore, Forest Entomologist, Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University; and "Invasive Species & Climate Change: What can we expect? How can we adapt?" by Holly L. Menninger, Coordinator & Senior Extension Associate, NY Invasive Species Research Institute, Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University.



Damage to the bark of an ash tree killed by the Emerald Ash Borer. Includes two clear examples of the classic D-shaped exit hole.

Volunteer opportunity!

The Network is forming a team of volunteers interested in being trained to help locate emerging invasive pests in the woods, along the creeks and in the lake; to help mitigate invasive impacts where possible; and to educate ourselves and others how we can – *must* – get involved NOW in adaptations to climate change locally. We'll get started in early 2012.

Contact Hilary Lambert at steward@cayugalake.org if interested! 🐦

The community conference was co-sponsored by the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, CL Intermunicipal Organization, City of Ithaca, Sustainable Tompkins Inc., and the Finger Lakes Institute. Thanks to the IO for ravishing refreshments! This event was funded in part by a grant from Freshwater Future, Inc.

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The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network thanks Westhill Graphics of Ithaca and Pioneer Printing of Lodi for their support and excellence.

Local Environmental Group Receives Award at Cayuga Lake Celebration

During '68-'71, CCSCCL prevented a nuclear power plant from being built on Cayuga Lake in Lansing

On Saturday October 8, the after-dinner crowd at the “Sunset on Cayuga” celebration at Wells College’s Sommer Center cheered when Doris Brown said, “We deserve this!”

She was referring to the David Morehouse Award, bestowed on her group, Citizens Committee to Save Cayuga Lake (CCSCL), for their work from 1968-'71 in preventing the proposed Bell Station nuclear power plant from being built on Cayuga Lake in Lansing.

The David Morehouse Award is presented by the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network to individuals and groups who have shown leadership and commitment in protecting the health and beauty of the Cayuga Lake watershed. The Morehouse Award was created in honor of the late David Morehouse, a Town of Ledyard resident, who dedicated many years of his life to improving water quality in the Cayuga Lake watershed. Morehouse was a founding member of the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network and the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization.

In her acceptance remarks, Ithaca and Caroline resident Doris Brown stated that this dedicated group of local residents and scientific experts worked endless hours to keep Cayuga Lake safe from the proposed siting of a nuclear power plant on the lakeshore by attending meetings, researching and writing scholarly papers, publishing newsletters, holding public events and communicating with elected and appointed officials.



Doris Brown is pictured here with son Creighton, after receiving the 2011 David Morehouse Award on behalf of the Citizens Committee to Save Cayuga Lake.

Ms Brown pointed out the similarities of the CCSCL's fight against a nuclear threat to the lake and today's efforts to prevent gas drilling and hydraulic hydrofracturing from impacting our region. She said that then, there was no good answer to the question, “Where do you store depleted nuclear fuel rods?”; and today there is no good answer to the question, “Where will the polluted water go?” from gas drilling activities.

Another founding member of CCSCL in the “Sunset on Cayuga” audience was Dooley Kiefer, Ithaca resident and Tompkins County legislator. She had dug through her records to locate copies of CCSCL's original newsletters and pamphlets, which were displayed at the dinner along with a number of other documents that describe the group's efforts and place in environmental

history (partial list provided on request).

Ms Kiefer pointed out that, “This all took place at the dawn of the environmental movement (which is often said to have started with the battle over pumped storage at Storm King Mountain in the Hudson Valley); but we were happening at the same time!”

It is amazing and impressive that CCSCL was able to stop this project, proposed by NY State Electric & Gas (NYSEG). There were few avenues of appeal for citizens at that time – no environmental review processes, and few hearings for public input beyond those required by the federal Atomic Regulatory Commission and the state Board of Health. Much skilled politicking and backbreaking behind-the-scenes efforts were needed to stop

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Toward a Sustainable Energy Future in the Finger Lakes Region *continued from cover*

species (such as sugar maple) will be much more restricted. Only the northerly parts of New York State will have extended periods of snow cover (graphs, maps, data: www.ucusa.org/global_warming/).

Farming, gardening, energy use and water use for recreational, domestic, municipal and industrial uses will have to adapt to an emerging climate characterized by less frequent, more intense rain and snow events, and drier, warmer summers. Growing seasons are already shifting by a few days, and reliable water sources are becoming less so.

Until recently, it was hoped by many people in the USA and world-wide that the extremes of climate change might be ameliorated if we could slow our use of fossil fuels (principally coal, oil and natural gas) as we shifted toward an array of renewable energy sources. When combusted, fossil fuels release gases – carbon dioxide and methane among others – which rise and concentrate in the upper atmosphere, preventing heat from radiating out into space, leading to a rise in temperature around our one and only planet Earth.

However, due to political and economic complications, from the US Congress to the United Nations, along with rising fossil fuel demands by emerging nations, the many efforts to regulate, legislate and lessen fossil fuel emissions – and thus slow global warming and climate change – have nearly ground to a halt.

Even with bitter political stalemates at national and global levels, we must do what we can, at local and regional levels, to lessen the use of fossil fuels and to put a brake on the speed and intensity of the climate changes coming our way. What are our alternatives? What different energy sources and strategies can we bring into use that will lessen our fossil fuel impacts, are sustainable over the long term, and are economically, environmentally and climatically feasible in the Finger Lakes region of New York State?

STOP: Wrong way!

Clean, renewable sources of energy as advocated by regional and statewide organizations are discussed below, with links to sources for more information. It is necessary to state up front, however, that the proposed widespread drilling and fracking for natural gas is *not* a wise move toward a sustainable future for the Finger Lakes, our country, or the globe.

An alliance of natural gas companies and top environmental organizations maintain that, before we can arrive at a post-coal energy future based on renewable energy sources around 2040, we must first go through an intense exploitation of the natural gas embedded in shale,

now retrievable via new, “miracle” technological breakthroughs.

The unlikely bedfellows in this loose alliance state that, to move beyond coal, we must embrace natural gas as the “cleaner” fossil fuel, and that residents of shale gas regions must be willing to permanently sacrifice their land, air and water for the greater good of reduced fossil fuel use over the long term. Around 2040, they argue, thanks to natural gas, our nation and the world will have “transitioned” to renewable energy sources and will be able to say goodbye forever to all fossil fuels, leading eventually to a stable global climate.

To say that this argument is self-serving and specious would be to widen discussion well beyond the scope of this brief report, so I’ll leave it at that tantalizing phrase, while pointing out that emerging research by Howarth, Ingraffea and Santoro at Cornell University indicates that methane, the greenhouse gas emitted by natural gas, may be a worse pollutant than those produced by coal combustion (more information at www.psehealthyenergy.org).

Hydraulic fracturing with heavy water inputs and associated land-uses is a classic boom-bust experimental mining technology that is way out in front of human ability to manage, control and anticipate long-term impacts to our land, air, water and communities. Susan Christopherson at Cornell has released an impact study of gas drilling, online at www.greenchoices.cornell.edu.

Which clean, renewable alternative energy sources are available for our area?

In a period of rapid climate change, population growth and global warming, it does not make sense to subject our region’s increasingly valuable clean air and water resources – the Finger Lakes and their tributary creeks and streams – to the widespread permanent degradation and loss that would come with economic prosperity for a few during the brief boom period of gas extraction (and subsequent export to the other side of the globe). Let’s ask: Which alternative energy sources have the potential to become sustainable, renewable energy sources for our area?

Sustainable Tompkins: Energy use reduction and shifting to clean, renewable resources

Sustainable Tompkins executive director Gay Nicholson provides an overview of ST’s programs to reduce our use of fossil fuels and move households and communities to renewable energy sources:

“People face significant barriers to changing their energy

Growing seasons are already shifting by a few days, and reliable water sources are becoming less so.

consumption patterns and Sustainable Tompkins and other groups are helping to lower those barriers so our entire community can make the transition to a clean energy system. Our Finger Lakes Energy Challenge is an online platform that gives homeowners, tenants, and businesses a place to show their commitment to clean energy by pledging to take specific steps to improve their energy footprint. Along the way, they are connected to the information and support resources they need to take those steps.

“Tompkins County is a recognized leader in the push for a clean energy economy, but we need everyone to get involved in dismantling the old fossil economy if we are going to be both effective and morally justified in demanding a fracking ban in NYS.

“Our Energy Challenge and Climate Fund are just some of the tools available to help fracking opponents avoid charges of hypocrisy and NIMBYism. A large coalition of local groups is launching the countywide Get Your Greenback Tompkins campaign in an unparalleled effort to improve our energy security through conservation, efficiency, and renewables. The campaign will be directing resources and providing inspiration into every corner of the county.... Visit us at www.sustainabletompkins.org to learn more and get involved.” You don’t have to live in Tompkins County to benefit from these programs and point of view. More at <http://sustainabletompkins.org/programs/marcellus-challenge/>.

Cornell Cooperative Extension’s energy resources hub

Cornell Cooperative Extension’s comprehensive information hub for New York State energy programs, initiatives and incentives includes clickable information resources about Energy Conservation and Efficiency (sign up for a free professional home energy audit, learn about grants and loans for home renovations); Renewable Energy Resources (focused on solar, hydropower, wind, biomass (biofuel) and geothermal potentials for New York State); Climate Change Resources (information and science of climate change for key audiences: county legislators, municipal officials, farmers and agricultural suppliers, community organizations, and youth). CCE also provides a Natural Gas Resource Center, with information about the pros and cons of natural gas development. More at <http://www.cce.cornell.edu/EnergyClimateChange/Pages>.

Finger Lakes Permaculture Institute: Long-term sustainable resource use in an era of climate change

Founded in 2005, the Finger Lakes Permaculture Institute has moved ahead into the future, providing workshops and methods for farming and design that are renewables-based

and sustainable during this period of rapid climate change and warming.

What is permaculture? From the FLPI’s information page: “Permaculture is a design discipline for productive systems such as gardens, farms, homesteads, and urban sites utilizing ecological principles found in natural systems. These ecological principles combined with a design method help to create sustainable, healthy abundant landscapes while meeting basic human needs.


“The permaculture movement includes organizations all over the world offering demonstration sites, trainings, and technical assistance. Where people have access to land and little else, permaculture’s ideas have spread rapidly. In more affluent parts of the world, permaculture has become a cutting edge design alternative to extractive, industrial systems that erode the wealth of our communities and natural resources.”

Register at the website for their Ecological Training Program, beginning February 4th 2012 in Syracuse: <http://fingerlakespermaculture.org> .

Finger Lakes Institute: Regional leader in energy conservation and renewables use

The FLI is a regional leader in tackling the thorny issues of energy use reduction and shifting toward cleaner, renewable sources. Learn about their award-winning Green Building at 601 S. Main Street on the Hobart and William Smith Colleges’ Seneca Lake-front campus in Geneva. At their website you can learn more about the example being set by the FLI and others in the region on “how wind, solar and geothermal energy mechanisms can be efficient, environmentally-sensitive, comfortable and economical.” More at <http://fli.hws.edu/greenbuilding.asp>.

Times are hard but we can all take small steps forward

I live in a one-story mid-20th century ranch style house powered by electric and gas. I don’t have a lot of money for state-of-the art changes and updates. The first step, for me, is to use less natural gas and electricity and move gradually toward a more renewable energy-based future. To that end, I signed up for a house energy audit, which told me what I dreaded: My house is a sieve of leaks, and I need to insulate my attic and basement crawlspaces. I’ll get it done, as money allows. We can all get started in the right direction with small steps, and take larger ones as opportunity arises – while remaining well informed, thanks to the organizations and efforts listed here. 

This article is being shared with the Finger Lakes Institute’s online newsletter, Happenings (11/11 issue).

Sunset 2011 Donors

To Our Member Wineries For donating table wines:

Six Mile Creek Vineyard
Hosmer Winery
Swedish Hill Winery
Sawmill Creek Vineyards
Goose Watch Winery
Lucas Vineyards
King Ferry Winery
Sheldrake Point Winery



To Our Donors For donating Raffle and Silent Auction items

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DA's Liquor, Seneca Falls
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Wolffy's Grill and Marina

*Thank
you!*

2012

Seeking a Few Good Volunteers for CLWN Committees!

Are you caring about and committed to protecting our lake and watershed, and good at committee teamwork? The Network's Board of Directors is seeking a few good volunteers to join our Issues Committee and Program Committee. Start the new year right – give a few hours of your time, talent and expertise! Please contact steward@cayugalake.org for more information. 🐦

Please Renew Your Membership, Join or Donate to the Network



Your active participation in volunteer efforts such as fracking meetings and hearings, stream clean ups, and aquatic weed threats to the Cayuga Lake means that the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network has had a lively, effective year in 2011 with more on the way in 2012.

Our lake and watershed are facing historic changes from proposed gas drilling and associated land-use impacts. We have been in the forefront of the fight to prevent gas drilling from having adverse impacts, here in our watershed and across the Finger Lakes region. Other challenges, such as the invasive Hydrilla crisis that engulfed the southern end of the lake in August, have kept us – your Steward, Interns and Board – very busy and in the forefront of action to protect your lake and creeks.

Help!

During 2011 we have seen a sudden drop in donations and member renewals.

These are tough times, but that is all the more reason to support a strong, effective organization working to protect your lake, creeks, streams, wetlands, surrounding landscapes and communities that we all enjoy in this incomparable region. Without clean water, everything else loses value.

Facing big challenges in the Cayuga Lake watershed, we need to respond effectively. Your membership adds strength. Joining or donating is easy to do!

MAIL: Fill out the information below, select a donation level, and mail the form with your check to Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, P.O. Box 348, Aurora, NY 13026

PAYPAL: Join or donate via your PayPal/credit card online at www.cayugalake.org.

AS A MEMBER, YOU'LL RECEIVE four issues of *Network News*, information about upcoming events, trainings and volunteer opportunities, and the satisfaction of knowing that you are supporting a local organization that is making a real difference.

- I am joining the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network with the enclosed contribution.
- I am renewing my membership with the enclosed contribution.
- Please accept the enclosed donation to support lake and watershed protection.

Name _____

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Email _____ May we add you to our listserv? Yes No

Please Select the Support Level You Prefer:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Watershed Benefactor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Lake Sponsor |
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Your Contributions to the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network are Tax Deductible.

Local Environmental Group Receives Award at Cayuga Lake Celebration *continued from page 3*

this project. In fact, site preparations were well under way and the foundation for the plant was excavated before the project ground to a halt in 1970-71.

Many Ithaca residents, past and present, recall this significant effort – among all the other things going on in Ithaca and nationwide at that time – and today need to give themselves a pat on the back for their work then in putting up posters, attending meetings, writing letters, and making phone calls. Today many of these same people, joined by others, are working to prevent gas drilling from negatively affecting our lake, creeks, watershed and wider region.

Sunset on Cayuga and the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network

The scintillating social setting for this award, Sunset on Cayuga, is a dinner-dance fundraiser established in 2009 to benefit our organization and celebrate our lake.

At this year's October 8 event, the nearly 150 attendees enjoyed a ballroom atmosphere at Wells College's Sommer Center in the village of Aurora. Excellent food was catered by Wells College and the Aurora Inn, local wines were provided



Good company, food and wine: Sunset on Cayuga 2011

by CLWN member wineries, and a wonderful array of donated silent auction and raffle items were snapped up during the evening. The Creek Coalition's slide show of "A Year in the Life of Six Mile Creek" was on view; CLWN founding member Jim White's 95th birthday was celebrated with extreme cupcakes – and the band Backtalk provided a rocking two hours of highly danceable music. 🐦

Thanks to everyone – to our donors, our hardworking Board members, our #1 ticket-seller Marianne Krasny, and to Judy Pipher, Sunset Committee Chair – for this great success!

The Mission... *The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network identifies key threats to Cayuga Lake and its watershed, and it advocates for solutions that support a healthy environment and vibrant communities.*



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