

# ALBANY

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# REPORT

## CROSSROADS IN THE WILD

### Deciding the fate of the Adirondack Park

Jeff Jones

**Decisions will be made** in Albany in the next few months that are likely to determine the fate of the Adirondack Park for a generation or more. Gov. George Pataki, just reelected for his third term, has made the preservation of an additional one million acres of land a marker of his legacy. There will be new leadership at the Adirondack Park Agency, however, that may signal domination by local elected officials lacking a commitment to the wilderness values that have defined the

park for more than a century. This type of parochial interest tilts toward unplanned economic development and the next election. Worse, even before these changes, state policy for several years has been allowing, if not encouraging, increased motorized vehicle access to the park, especially for off-road vehicles, all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles.

**The Governor's million-acre vision**, announced as part of his 2001 State of the State address, touched off a wave of excitement and hope among New Yorkers who love the wilderness and the Adirondack Park. Land will be preserved in all parts of the state. Already, more than 45,000 acres have been added in the Tug Hill Plateau, thanks to the help of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and other conservation groups. An additional 500 acres was gained when TNC and National Audubon worked with the state to acquire the last remaining undeveloped piece of Long Island's north shore. Meanwhile, thousands of acres of additional Adirondack land will soon be ready for state acquisition from willing sellers. But the budget crisis, along with the end of available monies from the 1996 environmental bond act, leave the state with only the underfunded Environmental Protection Fund as the financial source to realize Pataki's million-acre goal.

**Who will guide the Adirondack Park Agency** (APA) through these difficult times is an important question. APA Chairman Richard Lefebvre has announced that he will step down at the end of November. He joins five other senior APA staff members who have departed within the past six months. Lefebvre, who served a total of 10

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ENVIRONMENTAL  
ADVOCATES of NY

Working to protect New York's community  
of people, land & wildlife for over 30 years.

## WIND OUR WAY

Christine Vanderlan

*"They hear a voice in every wind  
And snatch a fearful joy."*

*Thomas Gray*

**Like the poet**, Environmental Advocates has a new reason to listen to the wind. In October, EANY became one of the first electricity consumers in the state to purchase 100 percent wind-generated power. For two cents more per kilowatt hour, the organization contracted with Community Energy, Inc., a company that markets electricity from wind projects in Madison County under a new state program. Although the specific electrons that power the lights and computers at EANY's Albany offices won't necessarily be wind generated, money raised through the surcharge will purchase wind power that will then enter the state's power grid. As more such contracts are signed, more money will be invested in this renewable energy source.

**The wind option is available** to Niagara Mohawk customers who, for a small premium, can choose from three green energy choices. Environmental Advocates opted for 100 percent wind because it offers the greatest environmental benefit. The organization expects to pay about \$800 more for electricity annually. New York State Electric and Gas is also giving its customers the wind energy option.

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courtesy: Residents Committee to Protect the Adirondacks



Damage to the Chubb Pond Trail in the Black River Wild Forest caused by illegal ATV use.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATES OF NEW YORK

Through direct advocacy, coalition building, citizen education and policy development, Environmental Advocates of New York works on a comprehensive agenda designed to oppose threats to the environment, to preserve natural resources and human health, and to fight for high drinking water and air quality standards. Its sister organization, EPL-Environmental Advocates, has worked for over 30 years to convince state policy makers to support environmental protections.

ALBANY REPORT is published quarterly by Environmental Advocates of New York and is distributed to individual and organizational members.

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# DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

Val Washington




**Yes, it looks grim** for the environment at the federal level, and there doesn't seem to be much doubt about that. The Bush Administration has a worse than



abysmal record on the environment, and many observers have conjured up images of the President's corporate supporters licking their chops with the Republican party now controlling both houses of Congress and also, therefore, the judiciary. But here in New York, we know that the GOP label is not synonymous with environmental pillaging. My own thoughts are in line with a sentiment recently expressed by our very good friend, Mark Van Putten, the leader of the National Wildlife Federation, in his post-election statement: "Mainstream America will be counting on traditional voices of reason in the Republican Party to remain part of the chorus of champions for our nation's environment."

### Sounds like our Governor.

**As a frequent critic of the Pataki Administration**, Environmental Advocates has also had many occasions to applaud his environmental achievements, among them: land purchases that assure a unique and spectacular natural heritage for generations to come; consistent support of clean car technologies through tax incentives, state purchases of alternative fuel vehicles and adoption of California's aggressive auto emission standards; and \$1.7 billion dollars in bond act spending that helped upgrade the state's sewage treatment plants and otherwise take advantage of clean air and clean water opportunities. We were particularly happy with his successful urging of the federal EPA to take a strong stand on General Electric's duty to clean PCBs from the Hudson River — this may have been the most significant pro-environment decision we have seen from a federal agency in Bush's two years in office, and we do not hesitate to credit Governor Pataki's influence with the achievement.

**In his statement, Mark Van Putten noted** correctly that anti-environmental policies are simply out of step with mainstream America. Governor Pataki has shown that he understands this, and deserves credit as a beacon for his party. But with the struggle against rollbacks at the federal level continuing with greater urgency, we need to ask the Governor to redouble his efforts. In 2003 the first order of business is to take care of those issues that have been awaiting action, some for years: working out his differences with the Legislature over brownfield and Superfund site cleanup policies; shaping a global warming policy that includes a cap on carbon emissions from power plants; and fixing the serious flaws in the power plant siting law. With the backlog cleared there will be many opportunities for Governor Pataki to demonstrate that a prominent and popular Republican leader can be a powerful antidote to those who have given his party an environmental black eye. His pledge to protect a million acres of Adirondack wilderness is a strong indication that he is ready to accept that role. 

# NEW YORK CAN'T TAKE WATER FOR GRANTED

David Higby

**M**edia coverage of the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, focused on the squabbling between rich and poor nations and the absence of President Bush among its 100 world leaders and 60,000 other participants. Here in New York, we also should be disappointed by the fact that these distractions drew attention from the summit's top agenda item — the worldwide water shortage.

**By 2025, demand for water will outstrip** supply by more than 50 percent. Some say this will eventually overshadow oil as a threat to international security. Right now, more than a billion people worldwide have no access to clean drinking water and more than 3 billion — half the world's population — lack basic sanitation services.

**As the world's water** needs continue to climb along with the population, the situation will worsen. And it's not just the developing nations that are facing shortages. Americans, who consume water at a rate four times the global average, are also in trouble. In the Western United States, what amounts to the largest public subsidy in history — the water diversion from the Colorado and other rivers that enabled California to become the country's largest state economy — has long ago exceeded its limit for exploitation. And the continent's largest aquifer, the Ogallala, a subterranean reservoir the size of Lake Huron stretching from South Dakota to Texas, is being pumped out eight times faster than nature can resupply it. That will soon leave Great Plains farmers high and dry.

**To find an example closer to home,** look no farther than Saratoga Springs. The Spa City has been defined by water since before the time of George Washington's visit to treat his gout in the baths. Having finally settled a lawsuit with the neighboring town that contains its current drinking water reservoir, the Saratoga Springs City Council is split on where to find additional sources. Half favor joining a county plan to take water from the Hudson River, while half would tap Saratoga Lake.

**The most immediate peril facing** New York as our part of the international water crisis, however, lies in our geographical position as a downstream state in the Great Lakes Basin. The Great Lakes contain over a quarter of the world's available surface fresh water. They are an obvious magnet for the burgeoning private water industry, currently estimated by Fortune maga-

zine to be worth almost a trillion dollars, with profits of about 40 percent those of the oil sector.

**In 1998, a company called the Nova Group** revealed a scheme to ship Great Lakes water to Asia via tankers at the rate of a million gallons a day. An embarrassed provincial government in Ontario, which had issued a permit for this dubious enterprise, pressured the company into withdrawing the proposal. But the reality is still that the Basin states and provinces, not to mention the Canadian and U.S. governments, have little control over the waters in the Great Lakes.

**To correct this, the eight Great Lakes** governors, in partnership with their two Canadian counterparts, have drafted a major amendment to the Great Lakes Charter, the 20-year-old agreement that oversees shipping and pollution issues in the Basin. The amendment, called the Annex, waits only for sign-off by the 10 state and provincial governors. The Annex contains a number of im-

portant water-use protections, including requirements that projects prove they will do no harm, include all reasonable conservation measures and provide a net benefit to the Great Lakes and their tributaries. Gov. George Pataki has supported the Annex and has entered the negotiations at key points to keep the process on track and to make sure the agreement is not weakened.

**Water is not a renewable resource.** The amount of water available for human use is subject to the cycle of evaporation, precipitation, condensation and infiltration. The vast Great Lakes may seem a strange place to begin establishing protective water measures. But the lakes are, in fact, a fragile ecosystem with a very small recharge rate — only about 1 percent of Great Lakes water is naturally replenished annually.

**With levels already stressed by climate** change, and quality threatened by pollution, we can ill afford schemes like the bulk export of this precious resource. Those of us monitoring the Annex process have worked hard to see that a genuine chance for public participation has been included. New Yorkers should be among the first to take advantage of this opportunity. It could be this century's biggest test of our natural resource stewardship. ☞

*A version of this article first appeared in the Albany Times Union.*

In New York, our water threats are more subtle but just as real.

# THE 2002 ADVOCATE AWARDS

## Celebrating Community Leadership

**E**nvironmental Advocates' annual Advocate Awards gala was a great success! Master of Ceremonies Dick Cavett and 200 guests joined us in paying tribute to Genie Rice & CIVITAS, Bill Lawyer & Federated Conservationists of Westchester County and Myron Blumenfeld & Residents for a More Beautiful Port Washington.

Each of our honored groups was founded over twenty years ago with little more than a handful of people and a commitment to improve the environment in its corner of the world. In celebrating their many achievements, we also celebrate the efforts of thousands of local grassroots organizations and individual volunteers throughout New York who are waging important — and too often unheralded — battles to conserve New York's natural resources and protect the public health. ☞

The 2002 Advocate Award honorees were (l-r) Genie Rice & CIVITAS, Myron Blumenfeld & Residents for a More Beautiful Port Washington, and Bill Lawyer & Federated Conservationists of Westchester County, standing here with FCWC Executive Director and EANY Board Member Edna Sussman.



New York State Assemblyman and Chair of the Environmental Conservation Committee Tom DiNapoli with EANY Board Member and former NYS Attorney General Hon. Robert Abrams.

Actor Dick Cavett (center, with John and Carolyn Cunningham, an EANY Board Member and member of the Event Committee) hosted the evening's festivities.



New York State Senator Liz Krueger with EANY Board Member Blaikie Worth and Board President Oakes Ames.



Photos by Chris and Jennifer Bowser

## Your Environmental Legacy

Pass on your passion for New York's environment with a bequest to Environmental Advocates of New York. After providing for your loved ones, consider leaving a gift that will continue your commitment to clean air, clean water and New York's natural heritage. Bequests are as simple as including the following language in your will:

"I hereby bequeath to Environmental Advocates of New York, a not-for-profit charitable organization with headquarters at 353 Hamilton Street, Albany, New York, the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_."

Environmental Advocates of New York can also legally receive gifts of stock or other property. Speak with your own financial or legal advisor about other bequests options and the financial benefits of this type of gift.



# ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATES IN SHORT

## Cool at the Summit

**G**lobal warming "is the single most important issue the human species faces," declared author Bill McKibben in his keynote address to more than 100 climate change activists who gathered in Albany Nov. 20th for *Cool New York: A Global Warming Summit*. McKibben, whose landmark 1989 book, *The End of Nature*, was an early warning of the reality of global warming, urged that fighting its effects become "a moral imperative...the civil rights movement of our time."

### The activists,

faith leaders and concerned citizens who gathered at the event in the state Capital, expressed support for a range of actions, including a cap on carbon dioxide emissions from power plants and

measures to increase the use of alternative fuels. Especially popular was a grassroots program being pioneered in Burlington, Vermont called the 10% Challenge. It offers a way for families, congregations, businesses and local governments to get involved in the fight to cut global warming pollution.

**The summit focused on the need** for action and how to get started. McKibben contrasted the urgency and serious-



photo: Joe Putrock

National Wildlife Federation President Mark Van Putten speaks to participants at the *Cool New York* summit in Albany.

ness of the problem with the halting and trivial measures that have been implemented to counteract it. Another featured speaker, Mark Van Putten, emphasized that the best opportunities for significant immediate action are at the state and local levels. Van Putten, who is president of the National Wildlife Federation, pointed to the lack of leadership from Washington. He expressed hope that a report expected from Gov. George Pataki's Greenhouse Gas Task Force would include support for a carbon cap on power plant emissions. Praising

California's recent decision to begin limiting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from motor vehicles, Van Putten observed that if other states followed California and the hoped-for New York initiative, "we would be 80 percent of the way to Kyoto." Although the U.S. helped negotiate the Kyoto protocol to cut greenhouse gases, the U.S. Senate refused to approve the treaty and the administration of President George W. Bush has declared its opposition. Other speakers presented strategies for organizing based on work in New York's faith communities. Coincidentally, the New York summit took place the same day a group of religious leaders met with the head of Ford Motor Company in Detroit as part of their new, What

Would Jesus Drive campaign.

**As a framework for action**, Burlington's 10% Challenge initiative emerged as a model for statewide action. Environmental Advocates of New York, which organized and hosted the conference along with many co-sponsors, will help facilitate planning for the campaign to be launched early next year. ☞

## Getting Greener all the Time

**E**very month for the last seven years, Environmental Advocates of New York (EANY) has published a statewide bulletin board of events, information and alerts from around New York State. Over this time, *The Green Sheet* (TGS) has become our most effective tool for building the state's environmental community and networking among various activist and advocacy groups. For the first time, starting January 2003, *The Green Sheet* will go to all EANY members thanks to generous funding by Joan K. Davidson (The J.M. Kaplan Fund), the Evan Frankel Foundation and the Eugene and Emily Grant Family Foundation.

**In addition to the printed version**, *The Green Sheet* is also available via email and on the web at [www.eany.org](http://www.eany.org). To receive a free email subscription (and save some trees!), send a request to [gsheet@eany.org](mailto:gsheet@eany.org). ☞

When you make a bequest to Environmental Advocates of New York, you are creating a permanent legacy for supporting citizen action, public education, and professional advocacy – all on behalf of New York's environmental quality and the natural places that you love.

# ADIRONDACKS

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years as a member of the APA, pointed to the development of a unit management plan (UMP) for the High Peaks Wilderness as the highpoint of his tenure as chairman. It took 25 years to develop that particular UMP. With Lefebvre's exit, the Governor will not only need to pick a new chairman of the park agency, but will also have several seats on the park commission to fill. Pataki's most recent APA appointment, former Bolton town supervisor Deanne Rehm, has been an outspoken critic of the APA and served on the park's Local Government Review Board (LGRB). The Board was a part of the act that created the APA, but it was given only a review function. LGRB members, however, would like it to be an oversight body. Throughout its history, LGRB has supported virtually every development application before the APA, and bitterly complained whenever an unwise proposal was rejected. While a voice from local government is important, the Governor should be careful not to tip the balance in favor of the Agency's most strident detractors. Environmental bond act land acquisition transactions, for instance, were subjected to a local government veto, which was used by one Adirondack town board to deny a local landowner his dying wish. He had provided for his widow to sell his land to the state so it would be available to his neighbors for hunting and fishing, but the review board rejected the state purchase. In a race last month to fill an Adirondack Assembly seat, the major dispute between the two main contenders was not who would abolish the APA, but who could accomplish this quicker.

**An early test of the new direction will come in January**, when the APA is set to vote on the unit management plan for the Bog River Flow Complex. This is a stretch of the Adirondack Park that includes popular campsites and canoe routes in the Horseshoe Lake Wild Forest and Hitchins Pond and Lows Lake Primitive Areas. While a recently released draft of the plan postpones making critical decisions about extending the snowmobile trail from Long Lake, it takes an important step forward in limiting motorized activity, including a five-year phase out of float planes. Park supporters believe that the Bog River UMP could be a positive template for dozens more such plans due as part of the Governor's ambitious commitment to complete more than 30 Adirondack Park UMPs over the next two years. 🐾

# WIND

*continued from page 1*

**The windmills in central New York bear little resemblance** to those of the past. The sleek blades span 231 feet of air, greater than the wingspan of a jumbo jet. They spin slowly atop towers that are only about 13 feet wide at the base, but are 213 feet tall. Each windmill at the newest site, in the town of Fenner, has a capacity to generate 1.5 megawatts (MW) of power. Wind turbines are quiet, emit no pollutants and have minimal environmental impact. At the Madison County sites, the only addition to the view of the rolling hills and farm fields are the turbines and a small substation.

**New York is blessed with abundant wind and other renewable energy resources.** Yet only 1.1 percent of the electricity produced in the state is generated by wind turbines. The good news is, this is already changing: the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) projects that more than 210 megawatts of new wind capacity will be added throughout the state by 2006, up from 48.3 MW in operation today. The wind projects in Madison County were partly supported by funding from NYSERDA. Advances in wind energy technology and the rising demand for clean energy, have made wind the world's fastest growing source of energy production over the past five years, according to Community Energy.



**To assure continued growth of renewable energy sources**, both the demand and supply ends must be addressed. While making green energy available to consumers is essential to building demand, more important is to require energy providers to increase the supply. Fourteen states have established a renewable portfolio standard (RPS), which mandates that a percentage of the state's electricity be generated by renewable sources. In New York, with the ready availability of wind, solar and biomass resources, an RPS makes perfect sense. Environmental Advocates, now a wind customer, will continue to advocate for policies to increase the availability of renewable energy sources. 🐾

# DE VITO TO LEAD NEW REG WATCH PROGRAM

## Canvass Director Leaves to Help Capital Region Youth Group

**E**nvironmental Advocates said goodbye to a valued staff member in October. Ericka Small, who directed EPL/Environmental Advocate's phone canvass for more than two years, accepted a development position with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of the Capital Region. Ericka also played an important role in the planning of EANY's annual November gala. While it is with heavy hearts that we say goodbye, we wish Ericka great success at her new job.



Former EPL/EA Canvass Director Ericka Small

**Environmental Advocates** was created to assure that the environment had a voice in the New York State Legislature. But with the important and growing role of the executive branch in state government, the organization's mission has broadened to include environmental policy development both in and outside of the legislative process. In recent years it has become more and more apparent that a great deal of environmental decision-making is taking place within the regulatory agencies, often without the kind of public attention, involve-


ment and oversight that attends the legislative process. In response, EANY has created a new regulatory watch program with the goal of shedding more light on the agencies that help shape environmental policies – mainly the Department of Environmental Conservation, but also the Health, Transportation and Parks Departments and the Adirondack Park Agency. Karen De Vito, who joined the EANY staff in November, will be spearheading this effort.

Karen recently completed a Masters of Science in Environmental Policy and Management at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. President of her class, Karen graduated from Union College in 2000 with a degree



photo: Joe Putrock

Regulatory Watch Project Director Karen De Vito

in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Economics. While an undergraduate, Karen interned with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Sterling Environmental Management and Engineering. Karen also studied abroad for a semester in Cuernavaca, Mexico. 

## Become an Environmental Advocate Today



We need your support to continue fighting for New York's environment.

Whether you're renewing your support, joining as a new member or making an extra contribution, please make your tax-deductible donation today.

- \$30 Individual
  - \$75 Sponsor
  - \$250 Advocate
  - \$1000 Advocates Circle
  - \$50 Family
  - \$100 Supporter
  - \$500 Champion
  - \$15 Student/Limited Income
- Sign up as an Environmental Advocates' email activist — [make a difference!](#) email: \_\_\_\_\_

Make your tax-deductible check payable to Environmental Advocates, or use your VISA, MasterCard, American Express or Discover Card, & mail to 353 Hamilton Street, Albany, NY 12210. For more information call 518.462.5526 or email questions to info@eany.org.

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# A NEW GENERATION OF WASTE

David Higby

**T**he steady march of the Information Age has many costs beyond the erosion of privacy and the seemingly perpetual white noise of modern life. The environment also suffers: Landfills are stuffed with a staggering tonnage of electronic waste (e-waste) that is generated by Americans as they toss out old computers, cellular phones, televisions, fax machines, printers and other obsolete or broken electronic goods. Not only does this represent a significant squandering of resources, but some very toxic materials, including mercury, lead, cadmium and PCBs, eventually find their way into our soil, water and air in the process of e-waste dumping.

**The irresponsible disposal** of electronic waste has also created a major international environmental justice scandal. As much as 80 percent of the e-waste collected in the U.S. for recycling ends up being shipped to developing countries, where disadvantaged populations are exposed to hazardous materials and horrific conditions as they scavenge our scrapped electronic goods. In Guiyu, China, for instance, as many as 100,000 people try to eke out a living (most at less than \$1.50 a day) pulling copper and other material from American e-waste. The preferred extraction technique is setting the equipment on fire, which means the community is perpetually in a toxic, dioxin-laden cloud from smoldering PVC; water from the aquifer that once served Guiyu is now undrinkable.

**As a major e-waste producer and shipping** point of departure, New York needs to take stock of its role in this avoidable horror; but state policy has not kept pace with the problem. In last year's legislative session, two modest e-waste bills failed. One, a recycling industry-backed measure that would set up standards for handling electronic waste only made it through the Assembly; the other, a more comprehensive measure stalled in both houses despite the removal of a sensible, but controversial, deposit on computer monitors and televisions.



**In the upcoming legislative** session Environmental Advocates will be promoting the concept of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) — an idea that has caught on in much of the rest of the industrialized world. EPR requires producers (usually brand-owners) to take full physical or financial responsibility for the life-cycle impacts of their products — which would end the de facto subsidy when taxpayers pick up disposal costs — and provide a meaningful incentive to stop the export of e-waste. The effort will start with a simple computer take-back program. State policy should also ban landfilling and incineration of certain hazardous components, require labeling and consumer education, set firm recycling and recovery goals, establish state procurement requirements and set up a comprehensive tracking system. ♻️

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