



# Riverlovers Currents

Volume 29, Number 2, February 2016

## Message from the President

Last month, I asked "When is it going to get cold?" As I am writing this, our area got its first big snow storm. Talk about climate change!

We are excited about Teatown's annual Hudson River EagleFest. This year it will be held on Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup> (inclement weather date Sunday, February 7<sup>th</sup>). Riverlovers will once more be serving home-made and donated soups and baked breads at the Croton Point Nature Center for volunteers and vendors from 11am to 2 pm.

We need volunteers to bring soups, breads and butter, and to help serve. We also need volunteers for the Outreach Table from 9am to 4pm. Riverlovers will get plenty of exposure, since large crowds are expected at the big tent. Call Gunnar at 914- 432-3112 if you can help with soups at the Nature Center or call Warren at 914-739-9028 if you can help out at the Outreach Table. If you are, or even if you are not, volunteering at the EagleFest, please come and see the various activities.

For the January Potluck meeting we screened "Burning the Future—Coal in America." The film focused on mountain top removal coal mining in West Virginia. What huge damage, with a thousand feet removed from the mountain-top, the destruction of the forests, the filling up of the valleys (which the local residents call "the hollows"), and the worst is the unlined earthen dams to hold the mine waste. This caused the residents' drinking water to become poisoned with various toxins. There have been at least 2 earthen dam failures which ripped through a town and killed 129 people, more than twice as many as at Chernobyl! Shut down Coal? At least the Sierra Club, and now others, are protesting mountain-top removal.

For the Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup> Potluck meeting (oops, not February 15<sup>th</sup> as in the January *Currents*), at 6:30 pm, we will screen short comments relating to some of the environmental DVD's that were shown in the past.

For the Friday, March 18<sup>th</sup> Potluck at 6:30 pm, we will screen "Here Comes the Sun," a top documentary describing the future of solar power. There could be gigawatts of solar power coming on line in the near future.

For the spring Potlucks we are planning more environmental short films such as Momenta, and Down Wind. We will have outreach tables for Earth day celebrations, we will help out with RiverSweep, and we will

resume walks in Brinton Brook Sanctuary, Turkey Mountain and possibly Wildfire Island in the springtime.

Come on out to our meetings, and participate in our activities. Members and non-members are welcome. Together we can educate ourselves and others to protect the Hudson River, and save the Earth and its climate for ourselves and future generations to enjoy!

## Is Your Bottle Safe?—I

by Bill Flank

It seems everyone is asking about plastic water bottles lately. For the most part, people are concerned about the safety of drinking out of plastic bottles. Some of my clients, friends, family and even colleagues have certain beliefs that simply aren't true. Here are a few of the *beliefs* people have about plastic water bottles.

- If you don't heat plastic water bottles, then it is OK to drink out of them.
- If it says it's microwaveable, it's safe.
- Freezing plastic bottles is what makes them bad.
- The problem is only with water bottles, not plastic soda or juice bottles.
- Plastic water bottles are only harmful to children and babies.
- You need to avoid numbers 3, 6, and 7
- You need to avoid numbers 1 and 5

Confused? Well, you are not alone. None of these things are entirely—or even mostly—true.

There has been a lot in the news in the recent past about the safety of water bottles, and there is a lot of very questionable information on the internet. It's time to set the record straight, so you can make an informed and educated decision as a consumer.

When talking about plastic water bottles, we need to talk in general about all types of plastic bottles. It doesn't matter if it is water or soda or juice that is inside. Some types of plastic bottles, i.e., those made with PVC, are made with additive chemicals known as plasticizers. Their purpose is to make plastic strong and flexible. There are two worrisome types of plastic that have been used in plastic water bottles: polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and polycarbonate. PVC contains the most commonly-used commercial plasticizers known as phthalates. Polycarbonate plastics contain the chemical called bisphenol-A (commonly known as BPA).

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## The Fracking Disclosure Debate

In the absence of federal regulations, states have been creating their own rules for fracking fluid chemical disclosures. However, uneven state requirements and trade secret protections have hindered the release of data on the toxic chemicals contained in fracking fluids.

The public is demanding more information about the chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing, but the oil and gas industry refuses to reveal the additives they use or the overall composition each driller uses. While they claim this information is a trade secret, the classes of additives required for drilling are well known to people familiar with the oil and gas industry, and many of the chemicals in those classes are known to be hazardous to human health.

A typical well requires millions of gallons of water for the fracking operation, and the fluid generally is about 90% water, 10% proppant (sand or other particulates), and about 1% chemical additives of various types. Because of the high volumes used, the actual amounts of dangerous chemicals are significant. To make matters worse, sewage treatment plants are not designed to remove these pollutants in the well wastewater, which also carries hydrocarbons, metals and radioactive substances from the geologic formations to the surface. Much of this water ends up in groundwater and can contaminate drinking water supplies for miles around.

While many states have adopted disclosure rules or are in the process of doing so, the rules generally exempt the industry from having to publicly disclose chemicals it claims are “trade secrets.” Those exemptions are very easily obtained, rendering the disclosure rules largely ineffective for informing the public of the hazards involved. The situation is changing, however, as some states—led by Wyoming and California—are adopting stricter standards.

Two states—New York and Vermont—have already banned fracking after state health department reports raised environmental and public health concerns. What we need now, to protect our water resources from contamination nationally, is to overturn the Halliburton loophole in the law in 2005 shoved in by then-vice president Dick Cheney. It forbids the EPA from regulating fracking fluids, and exempts them from compliance with the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act, as well as the Clean Air Act.

The voluntary industry-backed FracFocus minimal disclosures are inadequate to meaningfully inform the public and researchers seeking to carry out risk assessments and evaluate public concerns. To estimate the real risk these fracking additives pose, we need full disclosure of fracking fluid data in an organized and comprehensive way. That needs to be the law!

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### Where’s The (Better) Beef?

Needed improvements in the way beef is labeled, processed and selected can go a long way toward making beef safer. Consumer Reports is leading a campaign to get the government to do what is badly needed to make our beef less dangerous than it now is. Here are some of the recommendations.

Beef up inspection practices. Meat slaughter and processing plants by law are subject to continuous

inspection, but in practice, budget cuts force one Department of Agriculture inspector to shuttle between a dozen different plants. There are supposed to be random samplings for E. coli and salmonella, but advance notice allows plants to cheat, and that must stop.

Protect the public from salmonella. Bacteria like E. coli O157 and other toxin-producing strains of the bacteria are considered adulterants and prevent the beef from being sold, but salmonella is allowed to pass inspection even if up to 7.5% of the tested beef samples are contaminated.

Prohibit chicken waste in cattle feed. Cattle in feedlots are sometimes fed waste from the floors of chicken coops—a mixture of spilled chicken feed and manure. The reverse is also true—chickens can be fed cattle waste, and the risk is that mad cow disease can be transmitted when the waste is fed back to the cattle. Chicken manure can also carry salmonella and other harmful bacteria.

There needs to be a crackdown on use of the “natural” label. This is very misleading, since surveys show 60% of consumers believe the “natural” label indicates the animal was raised without antibiotics or artificial ingredients in its food, and 68% think artificial growth hormones weren’t used. Unfortunately, none of that is true, and the word “natural” is allowed to be used in cattle raised on feedlots, fed grain that was genetically modified or even grown with pesticides, or given antibiotics or hormones.

Expand humane treatment to earn the “organic” label. More than half of consumers think “organic” means animals can go outdoors and also have adequate indoor space. Many cattle, however, are sent to crowded feedlots to be fattened up before slaughter.

Ban antibiotic use for disease prevention. This practice leads to antibiotic resistance and makes antibiotics less effective for treating infections in humans. Only sick animals should get antibiotics, and factory farms should improve living and sanitary conditions to prevent illness.

You can protect yourself from getting seriously sick by making sure your beef is well-cooked and not even medium-rare. As many as 28% of Americans eat undercooked ground beef, and in the last dozen years 80 outbreaks of E. coli O157 have sickened 1144 people, putting 316 in the hospital and killing 5. It is estimated that for every reported case, another 26 cases actually occur.

Salmonella is even more of a problem. Each year, it causes an estimated 1.2 million illnesses and 450 deaths in the U.S. There’s also MRSA, which kills about 11,000 people every year, and in recent years there has been increasing contamination with superbugs—those resistant to three or more classes of antibiotics. Everyone needs to be really careful about refrigerating, separate handling, and especially cooking of meats, and beef in particular. And we need to clamor for the government to do a much better job of protecting us from harmful factory farming practices.

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### Pay your dues now—support our river! \$25 Individual & \$35 Family

It cost \$9.30 a year to send you the *Riverlovers Currents*. Please consider adding at least that much to your annual dues. Support your Newsletter and the river, and get your friends to join you.



# What's Happening When

Sundays, 10am-3pm, **Farmers' Market** at the Beacon Sloop Club, at Long Dock Park in Beacon. Local cheeses, eggs, pasta, bread, lamb, fruits and vegetables.

Feb 6, Sat, 9am-4pm, the ever-popular **Teatown EagleFest** is happening again at **Croton Point**. (Snow date Sun, Feb 7) We will need volunteers to serve soups at the Nature Center, and volunteers to promote Riverlovers at the Outreach table in the big tent. Call Gunnar at 914- 432-3112 if you can help with soups at the Nature Center or call Warren at 914-739-9028 if you can help out at the Outreach Table. Sign up! See more details on page 1.

Feb 13, Sat, 7:30pm, **Walkabout Clearwater Coffeehouse featuring Charlie King & The Peace Poets** Musical storytelling via folk music & hip hop, spanning decades of social justice. At Memorial United Methodist Church, 250 Bryant Ave, White Plains. Advance tickets [www.BrownPaperTickets.com/producer/5602](http://www.BrownPaperTickets.com/producer/5602) via credit card (\$20), or \$25 at door. Open seating. Proceeds benefit Walkabout & Clearwater. Refreshments available. Free Parking. Sing with the Walkabout Clearwater Chorus at its informal Teachabout starting at 6:45pm. Info: 914-946-1625 or [www.WalkaboutClearwater.org](http://www.WalkaboutClearwater.org).

Feb 18, Thurs, 7:00pm, Beacon Sloop Club Winter Lecture Series, "Preserving the Hudson Valley's Maritime Heritage," with Russ Lange. At Beacon Sloop Club clubhouse on the waterfront at Beacon rail station. Info: [www.beaconsloopclub.org](http://www.beaconsloopclub.org).

Feb 19, Fri, 6:30pm, **Riverlovers Potluck** at Croton Point Nature Center. Screening of short commentaries on environmental issues. Plans for Spring outdoor activities. Info: [www.Riverlovers.org](http://www.Riverlovers.org).

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Both phthalates and bisphenol-A are known hormone-disrupting chemicals, often referred to as hormone-mimicking compounds. Studies show that both phthalates and BPA have adverse health effects in humans and are linked to infertility, premature puberty, asthma, allergies, menstrual cycle irregularities, and breast cancer and prostate cancer.

But what is in the average plastic beverage bottle. Some bottles are soft and flexible and crunch when you squeeze them when empty. Some are hard, firm and sturdy, and sound hollow when empty. Are they all the same? Do they all have these harmful chemicals? The answer is complicated, but the number on the bottom of the bottle can be used as a general guide as to what is chemically in the bottle.

**Bottom line:** Bottles with #1 (PET or PETE) on the bottom are by far the safest to use for drinkables, followed by #5 (PP). Next month, we'll go into more detail on the different types of plastics, what they're used for, and what's in them.

## Walkabout Clearwater Coffeehouse News

The successful 28<sup>th</sup> season of Walkabout Clearwater Coffeehouse continues on Saturday, February 13 at Memorial United Methodist Church in White Plains.

Charlie King, who has been entertaining and working for peace since the 1960's, shares our stage with The Peace Poets, a collective of Bronx artists which travels widely.

Post a flier and come join us for this special evening.

### *Here's how to join Riverlovers...*

*(the local Clearwater Sloop Club in the Northern Westchester-Putnam County area)*

### **Application for Riverlovers Membership**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Renewal \_\_\_ New \_\_\_ Additional Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please send check (\$25 individual, \$35 family) for 2016 to:  
Riverlovers, P.O. Box 285, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520.

I want to have *Riverlovers Currents* delivered electronically.

Send to this e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### **Yes! I Also Want To Join Clearwater**

Please sign me up in the following membership category:

<input type="radio"/> Individual \$40	<input type="radio"/> Mariner \$500
<input type="radio"/> Family \$55	<input type="radio"/> Sailing-Master \$1000
<input type="radio"/> Contributor \$100	<input type="radio"/> Benefactor \$5000
<input type="radio"/> Sponsor \$200	<input type="radio"/> Student \$10

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please include check payable to Clearwater, or charge by credit card

Visa       MC       Discover       Amex

Account No. \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Mail To: Clearwater, Inc.  
724 Wolcott Avenue  
Beacon, NY 12508

Your Clearwater membership gets you the *Navigator* and other benefits, along with being part of Riverlovers' "parent" organization representing individuals and Sloop Clubs up and down the Hudson Valley "working for the River."

## Riverlovers - Who We Are

Riverlovers, Inc. is a chartered Sloop Club of the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc., an environmental non-profit membership organization whose most visible symbol is its member-owned and operated 106-ft. sloop "Clearwater." As a local affiliate, River-lovers' purposes are:

- Maintaining an active Sloop Club in the Northern Westchester-Putnam County area;
- Meeting the needs and interests of individuals through a variety of interest groups, including monthly Potluck dinner meetings with varied programs, environmental education and awareness, boats and sailing, concerts and festivals;
- Organizing trips and recreational activities, seminars and workshops, learn-to-sail programs and Clearwater visits;
- Research, education and action to protect our rivers and our environment;
- Working for access and effective land use along the Hudson River and its tributaries;
- Boating projects on the Hudson River, to reach out to the surrounding community for educational and recreational purposes.

We invite you to join us. Contact our interest group coordinators, or write to Riverlovers, Inc., P.O. Box 285, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520. Together we can do a lot!



## Interest Group Coordinators

Interest Group	Coordinator	Phone
Envir. Education	Bill Flank	238-8240
Membership	Gunnar Andersen	432-3112
Newsletter	Bill Flank	238-8240
Newsletter Distribution	Cynthia Andersen	432-3112
Outreach		
Photographer/Archivist	Beverly Dyckman	739-5057
Potluck	Warren Lindholm	739-9028
Publicity		

Web Page: [www.riverlovers.org](http://www.riverlovers.org)

### Riverlovers Officers

President:	Warren Lindholm	739-9028
Vice Pres. (programs):	Robin Fox	271-6088
Secretary:	Cynthia Andersen	432-3112
Treasurer:	Daria Gregg	944-8396
President-Emeriti	Eric Marshall	827-3696
	Gunnar Andersen	432-3112

### Newsletter Submissions

Please send news articles and other items of interest to Riverlovers Currents, P.O. Box 285, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520. Include your name, address, and phone number. Names can be omitted on request.

Back issues of *Riverlovers Currents* are available at our web site, [www.riverlovers.org](http://www.riverlovers.org)

Newsletter Committee: Editor, Bill Flank; Associate Editor, Mel Fitting  
February Newsletter Contributors: Bill Flank, Robin Fox, Warren Lindholm

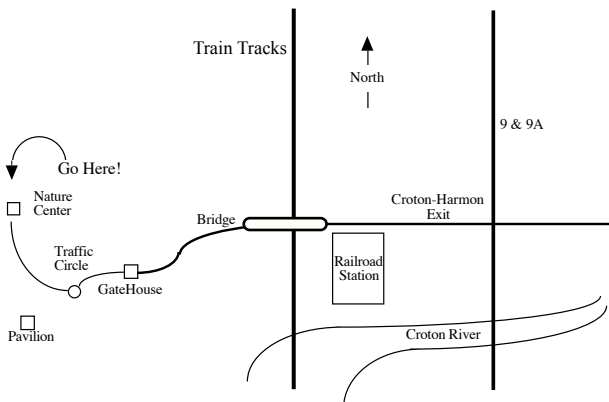
## Riverlovers Monthly Potluck with environmental short films



**Riverlovers, Inc.**

P.O. Box 285

Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520



**Friday, February 19, 2016**  
**6:30pm**  
**Croton Point Nature Center**