



Riverlovers Currents

Volume 29, Number 1, January 2016

Message from the President

Whew! When is it going to get cold? I don't want to say "Welcome to Global Warming". Good news, the Climate Accord was agreed with all 200 nations of the planet. This is a great first step to reduce carbon emissions.

2015 was a great year for the Riverlovers. We had many hikes, walks, canoeing, kayaking, and sailing on the Hudson River with the Solar Wind and the Sloop Clearwater.

We screened many documentaries throughout the year, about the environment and global warming. We finished the year with a screening of "Pandora's Promise—at the bottom of the box she found Hope", to mixed audience agreement, which is to be expected with such a controversial claim, that nuclear energy can go a long way toward solving global warming! The film made some points, such as how much energy comes from coal, oil and gas, and a lesser amount from nuclear, still less from hydropower, and how little comes from renewables such as wind and solar [*ed.: although that is changing rapidly!*]

For the December meeting I gave a talk on "Air". I touched on what's in the air, that it is compressible, how much of air is relatively close to the earth's surface, how little is the amount of carbon dioxide in the air, and how much is created from fossil burning power plants.

For the Potluck on January 15, 2016 at 6:30 Friday evening, we will screen "Burning the Future—Coal in America." From the 2008 DVD jacket: "Coal provides half of America's electricity, but at what cost?—36% of U.S. global warming emissions come from our coal-burning plants. . . . Every 11 1/2 days, the explosive equivalent of the Hiroshima atomic bomb is unleashed upon the mountains of southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky—for coal!"

We are excited about Teatown's annual Hudson River EagleFest. This year it will be held on Saturday, February 6th (inclement weather date is Sunday, February 7th).

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 2pm. 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 432-3112 if you can help with soups at the Nature Center or call Warren at 739-9028 if you can help out at the Outreach Table

(both phones are in the 914 area code). If you are not volunteering at the EagleFest, please come and see the various activities.

For the February 15th Potluck at 6:30pm, we will be showing short talks from various speakers exploring both sides of the nuclear debate. We will follow up in the Spring with programs on renewables, conservation and other ways of reducing our reliance on fossil fuels.

So, let me wish everyone a Merry Holiday season. 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.

Does Europe Know Something We Don't?

There are substantial differences in pesticide rules in Europe compared to the U.S. On one side of the Atlantic we see widespread use, and on the other, a ban.

The European approach, in general, incorporates the so-called precautionary principle and requires companies to establish that new chemicals are safe before they are put on the market. The American approach puts the onus on regulators to show some evidence of danger before taking action against new chemicals.

There are scores of chemicals that are banned or tightly restricted in the European Union, but allowed in the United States. A recent study found 82 instances of pesticides allowed in the U.S. but barred or restricted in Europe. Some, like acetochlor and acephate, are classified by our EPA as probable or potential human carcinogens, but are allowed to be used with a cautionary label.

Others, like atrazine, a groundwater contaminant banned in Europe, are very widely used in the U.S., treating more than half of all corn crops, two-thirds of all sorghum and 90% of sugar cane. Studies have shown that it chemically castrates male frogs and causes sex changes, and has been linked to birth defects. It has exceeded pesticide limits in water and has long-term persistence in the environment, yet we continue to allow its use.

Is the U.S. not as smart as the European Union, or do companies like Syngenta and Monsanto simply buy their way past close scrutiny and regulation to protect wildlife and human health? Maybe our politicians are easier to buy?

A Little Arsenic In Your Rice?

Billions of people around the world depend on rice as a major source of nutrition. Half of the world's population eats this grain every day. So alarm spread widely after *Consumer Reports* published data last year indicating that hundreds of rice-based products sold in the U.S. contain inorganic arsenic compounds at levels that put infants and children at risk of getting cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes later in life.

Currently there are no legal limits for arsenic content in food sold in the U.S. and the European Union. Last year, however, the World Health Organization recommended a maximum level of 0.2 mg per kilogram of rice, and the European Commission called for half that level in rice products intended for children. Our FDA is assessing long-term risks, as are several academic research teams who are looking at skin, bladder and lung cancers as well as respiratory diseases and cardiovascular risk factors associated with long-term exposure to arsenic at low levels.

Arsenic levels vary depending on the type of rice and where it is grown. Some arsenic in rice originates from natural sources in soil and groundwater, but some of it also stems from pesticides formerly applied to rice fields.

In the short term, a simple way to remove arsenic from rice may be to change the way it is cooked. Using excess water to cook the rice and then pouring off the extra water decreases the amount of arsenic in cooked rice. Cooking with a water-to-rice ratio of 12 to 1 by volume can remove nearly 60% of the arsenic from the grain. Even more—up to 85%—can be removed from the rice by heating it with water in an ordinary coffee percolator.

In recent years, the FDA has also encouraged drug makers to remove more than 100 arsenic-based veterinary drugs from the market. Such drugs were once routinely given to poultry to prevent disease. They finally announced earlier this year that the last such drug for food animals will be withdrawn from the market.

Consumer Reports' Food Safety and Sustainability Center comments that "Because poultry won't be fed arsenic, a known carcinogen, the spread of arsenic into the food supply will be curtailed. Poultry manure used for fertilizer will contain less arsenic and won't contribute to contamination of crops and the environment." They urge the EPA to phase out the use of arsenic in pesticides as well.

Although trace amounts of arsenic and other micronutrients are needed in the body for growth, reproduction and other life functions, a little more causes long-term problems, and a little more than that causes some well-known and deadly effects rather quickly. As Paracelsus noted long ago, "The dose makes the poison."

New York Pipeline Hazards Documented

The environmental organization Toxics Targeting has been receiving extensive media coverage for documenting a total of 114 fires, explosions, spills, ruptures and toxic discharges involving natural gas, crude oil and petroleum product pipelines across New York. According to the New York Department of Environmental Conservation's own data, many of those problems have never been cleaned up to meet state standards.

Opponents of hydrofracking are warning the public about numerous accidents, spills and disasters that have taken place across New York State. Walter Hang of Toxics Targeting recently held a news conference at the Broome County Library to present what he called disturbing findings. According to the press, he discussed a number of fires, explosions, and ruptures related to natural gas, crude oil and petroleum pipeline infrastructure in New York. Because toxic discharges have not been cleaned to state standards, Hang said, hundreds of homes have been evacuated and eventually demolished.

He also pointed out that even the most reliable equipment used in the industry isn't foolproof. "The bottom line is that you can have the best technology, but that doesn't mean that's it's not going to fail. That's exactly what we've seen time and time again in New York, based on the DEC's own data. It's not just one or a little spill, there are literally thousands of these spills."

Governor Cuomo should immediately deny all pending Section 401 Water Quality Certification applications for natural gas, crude oil and petroleum product infrastructure projects, including, but not limited to the proposed Constitution and Northeast Energy Direct pipelines, as well as the proposed New Market Project expansion of the existing Dominion pipeline. These projects are demonstrably high-risk. Preventing accidents you know are going to happen should be a no-brainer!

The Candidates' Sea Rise Challenge

Our coasts are vitally important to our nation's well-being. More than 123 million Americans live in coastal shoreline communities—and even those who live far inshore without any family on the coasts still rely on our nation's ports for the goods we use every day. That's why the whole country is affected, since our coasts are already being impacted by sea level rise and climate change.

It's a national issue that requires national attention—and all the presidential candidates need to address the question of how to help communities prepare for and protect themselves from sea level rise and other coastal climate impacts.

As recent research from the Union of Concerned Scientists shows, much of our coast is vulnerable to rising seas, encroaching tides, and storm surges. And some communities, especially poorer communities and communities of color, are already experiencing some of the worst of the climate impacts. Many places, from Alaska to Florida, are seeing effects such as regular flooding, stronger storms, salt water-contaminated drinking water supplies, and the threat of permanent land loss.

No one should be able to run for president of our country without answering specific questions about how he or she would address the risks that climate change poses to our coastal populations and economies.

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.

Dec 25, Fri, Enjoy Christmas.

Dec 26, Sat, Kwanzaa begins.

Jan 1, Fri, Kwanzaa ends, New Year's Day.

Jan 9, Sat, 7:30pm, **Walkabout Clearwater Coffeehouse featuring Christine Lavin & Don White.** Leave your worries at the doorstep, as they present a night of comedy like no other! At Memorial United Methodist Church, 250 Bryant Ave, White Plains. Advance tickets 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.

Jan 15, Fri, 6:30pm, **Riverlovers Potluck** at Croton Point Nature Center. Screening of "Burning the Future—Coal in America." Plus a celebration of Riverlovers' past year, and charting our upcoming one. Info: www.Riverlovers.org.

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. Sign up! See more details on page 1.

America's Climate Priorities

If you had to pick three things America could do to reduce the threat of greenhouse gases and severe climate change, here are some top candidates.

We need to slash carbon pollution from America's dirtiest power plants. EPA's new standards—called the Clean Power Plan—set the first-ever national limits on carbon pollution from fossil fuel-fired power plants. This is the most significant step the U.S. has taken, prior to the recent Paris agreement, to reduce climate pollution, but it must be defended against vigorous opposition from fossil-fuel industries and the state legislators they have bought. We have reduced the use of highly-polluting coal in power plants from 60% a few decades ago to less than 40% today, but we need to go much further.

We need to limit industrial methane pollution. During the first two decades after release into the atmosphere, methane is 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas, and is responsible for about 25% of the warming we are currently experiencing. Fracked gas wells are incredibly sloppy, in addition to using and polluting enormous quantities of water, and continue to leak methane for just about their entire lives.

Fertilizer, although it supplies a big boost for crop-growing, is converted to nitrous oxide if poorly applied, and releases a powerful greenhouse gas that is 300 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Advanced technology is needed to bring this pollution and waste under control, and it needs to be quickly adopted if we are to prevent millions of tons of greenhouse gases from rapidly bringing about catastrophic climate change.

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:
 Individual \$40 Mariner \$500
 Family \$55 Sailing-Master \$1000
 Contributor \$100 Benefactor \$5000
 Sponsor \$200 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

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

Newsletter Committee: Editor, Bill Flank; Associate Editor, Mel Fitting

January Newsletter Contributors: Walter Hang, Warren Lindholm

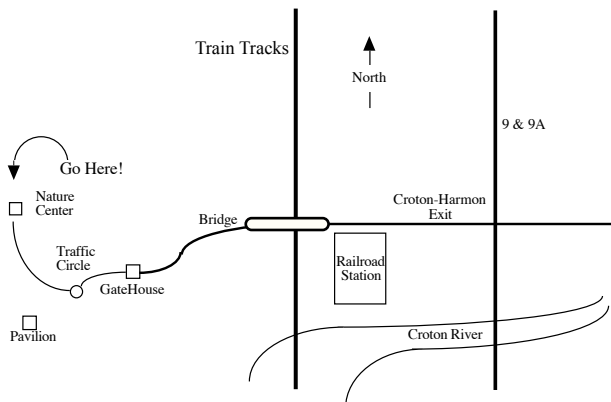
Riverlovers Monthly Potluck and showing of *Burning the Future—Coal in America*



Riverlovers, Inc.

P.O. Box 285

Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520



Friday, January 15, 2016
6:30pm
Croton Point Nature Center