



# Riverlovers Currents

Volume 27, Number 10, October 2014

## Message From The President

The fall colors of the trees are upon us. This is a beautiful time of the year. We are reminded of the natural cycles of life in the natural world, of birth and death in nature. The leaves on the trees are dying while the trees are preparing to sleep through the winter. I'm reminded of the interconnectedness of life as brought up in Rachel Carson's landmark book, *Silent Spring*.

We screened an American Experience program describing *Silent Spring* at the September meeting. The program describes how her book changed the way people realize how important the environment is, and the damage the chemical industry was doing to the natural world.

This summer the Riverlovers sailed the Hudson River on the *Solar Wind*, canoed both the Constitution Marsh and Iona Island, and kayaked the Croton River to the rapids.

We would like to hike this October in the Oscawana Island Park in Cortlandt or the Croton River Trail near Silver Lake in Croton. We would also like to bicycle the North County Trailway near Yorktown. One can rent bicycles from the nearby Yorktown Cycles at 1899 Commerce Street, or bring your own bike. We will not peddle fast and will stay together as a group. Tentative dates are October 4th or 5th and 18th or 19th. Let me know if you are interested in these activities. My phone is at the back of this issue, or call my cell, 914-319-3379.

For the Friday, October 17th Potluck at 6:30 pm, we will screen another PBS special, "Global Warming—What's Up With the Weather." The weather is becoming different now—but why?

For the November 21st Potluck, we will screen the award-winning "The Antarctica Challenge—Global Warming." It's a remarkable documentary of our times.

And for the December 19th Potluck, we will screen a PBS Nova special "Solar Energy—Saved by the Sun." Can solar power help save the Earth from the ravages of global warming?

In closing, several Riverlovers including myself went to the People's Climate March. It was gratifying to see such an upwelling support for concern about Global Warming.

This will be an interesting Autumn and Winter season. Be prepared to hike and pedal, and to be amazed at the sights outdoors, and the DVDs indoors at the Potlucks! Be part of Riverlovers, and bring your friends and family to our activities. Thank you for your kind support.

## Coal On Way Out, Renewables On Way In

The reports keep coming in, even as the industry desperately tries to divert attention from them. One-third of U.S. coal plants—683!—are now retired or slated to retire. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) recently reported that all the electricity added to the U.S. grid this past summer was renewable, mostly wind and solar projects. Sign of the times!

Here's part of the swelling stream of closings and phase-outs:

- In Mississippi, the Kemper coal plant, after a six-year battle, will start replacing coal with wind and solar energy.
- A downtown coal plant in Indianapolis, after a two-year campaign, will stop burning coal.
- Oregon turned down a permit for a coal export terminal along the Columbia River. This is the fourth coal export terminal in the Pacific Northwest that has been abandoned, in a campaign that generated over 400,000 public comments.
- In Missouri, a public utility announced that it will phase out a 932 megawatt 61-year-old coal plant by 2022.
- In Tennessee, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) has announced it will retire the Allen coal plant in Memphis and replace it with a smaller natural gas plant, while leaving room for clean energy options to meet future demand.
- In Illinois, NRG Corporation announced it will stop burning coal at its coal facilities in Joliet and Romeoville.
- And in Los Angeles, the city has committed to ending coal use by 2025.

Coal is definitely decreasing in importance to the U.S. power grid, as renewable energy contributions become more cost-effective and environmentally desirable. Recent studies show that greening our energy is also going to spur growth and give a net boost to our economy. Go renewables!

## Quote Without Comment

According to a recent story in *Chemical and Engineering News*, about 40%—that's one billion cubic feet per day—of the natural gas co-generated during oil production fracking operations in the Bakken shale formation of North Dakota is not sold or used. Most of it is flared—burned—as waste.

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

It cost \$9.30 a year to mail the *Riverlovers Currents*. Please consider adding at least that much to your annual dues.

## 2014-15 Walkabout Coffeehouse Schedule

by Robin Fox

Thank you all for helping to make the Walkabout Clearwater Coffeehouse's 26th season a smashing success. We hope we'll see you back with us this October as another great season of acoustic music gets underway. Our 2014-15 schedule is included below:

October 11: The Kennedys  
November 8: Garnet Rogers  
December 13: Josh White, Jr.  
January 10: Tom Chapin  
February 14: The Boxcar Lilies  
March 14: Joe Jencks/Natalia Zukerman  
April 11: Joe Crookston/Mustard's Retreat  
May 9: Kim & Reggie Harris

Tickets for individual concerts, as well as half-season and whole-season advance sale options, went on sale July 1 at [www.BrownPaperTickets.com](http://www.BrownPaperTickets.com). To keep up to date, check out [www.walkaboutclearwater.org](http://www.walkaboutclearwater.org), or better yet, use the url to sign up and join the e-mail list. Bring your friends!

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## Climate Change and Nuclear Power

by Marilyn Elie



Lately the nuclear industry has been touting its ability to reduce the carbon emissions that contribute to climate change. Usually a straw man like coal, which can be easily knocked over, is set up as a comparison. Generally the comparison is accompanied by a counting of megawatts and an assertion that we must have "base load" generation that can produce electricity 24/7.

Let's be clear—no one is promoting the burning of coal. It has got to be left in the ground if we are to reduce our impact on global weather patterns. So-called "clean coal" is an oxymoron. Like the nuclear power in Pandora's Promise, it simply does not exist on a commercial scale. Both are but a gleam in the eye of a naïve laboratory technician who has failed to calculate the time scale from idea to implementation. Equally naïve are those folks who promote nuclear generation without considering all of the baggage the construction of nuclear reactors entails.

The number of nuclear reactors required to influence climate change cannot be built in the amount of time we have left. Others like Amory Lovins have done the math and calculated the cost. I will merely point out that every reactor ever built has come in behind schedule and over budget. What is happening with new construction in Georgia and South Carolina is no exception.

The highly touted French reactor which was being built in Finland has stalled for the same reasons and is now in court for "technical difficulties." The approximate cost of a new reactor is 17 billion dollars and rising. So, in addition to huge construction problems, building multiple reactors is also impossibly expensive.

While the nuclear industry has been limping along for the last 40 years, the nature of our infrastructure has changed. The Independent System Operators (ISO) who run our grid now define base load as "the lowest level of power

production needs during a season or year." This is a huge shift from the way the term has been used in the past, which was generation that was available 24/7. That, it seems, is over and done. The ISO really does not care where the electricity comes from or how long the generator operates. In fact, operating 24/7 can be a liability. If the electricity being produced is not needed, the generator can be required to pay a disposal fee to the ISO.

This has actually happened with Indian Point. Running 24/7 with no ability to quickly turn off and on to meet market demands is now a liability, not an asset. You can get a more accurate picture of what is happening if you compare our grid to the internet. Everything is connected and the system is much stronger with many points of production, or distributive generation, rather than mammoth, outdated, expensive projects that require an enormous capital outlay, usually from public funds.

Counting megawatts and trying to replace the exact same number when a generating unit like Indian Point is taken off line is equally a fool's errand. The most efficient megawatt we can have is the one that is never built or used. It has no construction costs, no waste product, and no transmission fees. Not only that, but lowering peak electricity use by paying industrial users to cut their usage at certain critical times counts. This demand response program is already in effect and, according to the ISO, will be expanded. Efficiency and conservation count, even if you don't see them on the industry score card.

Another way to get to base load, the amount of megawatts our grid requires to operate, is through transmission. Upstate New York has a surplus of wind power and bringing it down to NYC provides additional power with no additional generation. Governor Cuomo has encouraged this in his Energy Highway program, and plans are in place to build the infrastructure.

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## Environmental Book Review

*The Once and Future World:  
Nature As It Was, As It Is, As It Could Be*  
by J. B. MacKinnon

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, \$25

Here's a beautifully written meditation on natural history and memory, full of new revelations about familiar landscapes and species. It's a detailed account of how animals have shaped the planet in unexpected ways, like, for example, how elephant and buffalo trails may have paved some of the first roads for humans, and allowed us to migrate so quickly. Many back-country hikers today still benefit by bushwhacking along herd trails in mountainous areas.

The impacts of humans, even if small, have dramatically transformed landscapes across the centuries without us realizing it. But ultimately, the author's focus is on extinction. We live on a planet populated by just a fraction of the animals that, just a few centuries ago, covered its surface. He writes, "Nature is not a temple, but a ruin. A beautiful ruin, but a ruin all the same."

We can go on living in this world, but MacKinnon is blunt about where we're ultimately going. "We may be able to ride the current wave of extinction, but we know we can't ride it all the way down." That's a sobering thought.



# What's Happening When

Sundays, 10am–3pm, **Farmers' Market** at the Beacon Sloop Club, Long Dock Park, Beacon. Local cheeses, eggs, pasta, bread, lamb, mushroom spring rolls, fruits, vegetables.

Oct 4 or 5, or Oct 18 or 19, Sat or Sun, 1pm, **Riverlovers biking trip** on North County Trailway. Call Warren at 914-319-3379. See details on page 1.

Oct 11 Sat, 10am, **Herbalist Walk with Beacon Sloop Club's Sarah Elisabeth**. CEIE Center at Denning's Point, 199 Denning's Ave, Beacon.

Oct 11, Sat, 7:30pm, **Walkabout Clearwater Coffeehouse**, featuring the Kennedys. See page 2.

Oct 12, Sun, noon–5pm, **Beacon Sloop Club's Pumpkin Festival** at Pete & Toshi Seeger Riverfront Park, Beacon.

Oct 17, Fri, 6:30pm, **Riverlovers Monthly Potluck** at Croton Point Nature Center. Screening of another PBS special "Global Warming—What's Up With the Weather." More details on page 1. Info: [www.Riverlovers.org](http://www.Riverlovers.org).

Oct 25, Sat, 10am, **Geology Walk with Beacon Sloop Club's Bill Prehoda**. CEIE Center at Denning's Point, 199 Denning's Ave, Beacon.

## Who Is Responsible For Climate Change?

A recent publication by Richard Heede of the Climate Accountability Institute, *Tracing anthropogenic carbon dioxide and methane emissions to fossil fuel and cement producers, 1854–2010*, in the journal *Climatic Change*, provides a scientific basis for motivating fresh thinking and dialogue about responsibility for taking action addressing climate change.

The responsibilities for climate change fall on many shoulders, of course—from individuals through the daily choices we make, to emitting industries, to nations. But some are more responsible than others. Drawing upon several years of painstaking research, Heede shows that nearly two-thirds, 63 percent, of all industrial carbon dioxide and methane released to the atmosphere can be traced to fossil fuel and cement production by just 90 entities—investor-owned companies, such as Chevron, Exxon-Mobil, BP, Shell and Peabody Coal; primarily state-run companies, such as Gazprom and Saudi Aramco; and solely government-run industries, such as in the former Soviet Union, Mexico, and China (for its coal production).

The top 20 emitters, which include investor-owned, state-owned, and government-run entities, are shown here in the order of the size of their contribution. They produced 48 percent of all industrial carbon pollution, with 15 percent produced by another 70 entities.

Major Industrial Carbon Dioxide & Methane Producers  
The former Soviet Union countries

China	Chevron
Exxon-Mobil	Saudi Aramco
BP	Shell
Poland	Gazprom
National Iranian Oil Company	ConocoPhillips

Pemex (Mexican government)	Peabody Coal Company
British Coal Corporation	Petroleas de Venezuela
Russian Federation	Total Petroleum (French)
Coal India	PetroChina
Kuwait Petroleum Corporation	

If you want to know who has contributed most to the climate crisis over the 150 years of the industrial revolution, there's the list. None of them are contributing to the solution to support us folks, so why should we support them?

*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 2014 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, Riverlovers' 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.

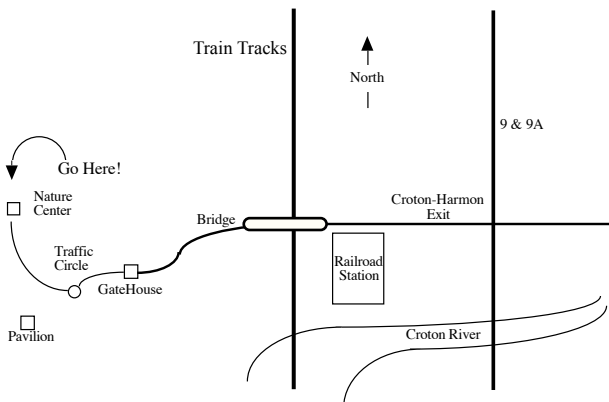
Back issues of *Riverlovers Currents* are available at our web site, [www.riverlovers.org](http://www.riverlovers.org)

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

## Riverlovers Monthly Potluck showing *What's Up With the Weather?*



**Riverlovers, Inc.**  
 P.O. Box 285  
 Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520



**Friday, October 17, 2014**  
**6:30pm**  
**Croton Point Nature Center**