

Feb. 2008

RENewsLetter



This Month's Articles:

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"I am convinced that ecology cannot be kept secret. Environmental openness is an inalienable human right. Any attempt to conceal any information about harmful impact on people and the environment is a crime against humanity." -- Alexandr Nikitin, Russian environmentalist.

The Free environmental newsletter from RochesterEnvironment.com

<http://rochesterenvironment.com>

"Our Environment is changing: Keep up with the Change."

Opening Salvo

Are Environmentalists overdoing it? Ten years ago, all over the then existing Internet was the big web event, the [1998 International Year of the Oceans](#). Web newbie's like me and large environmental organizations were warning of major breakdowns in the world's oceans. Some, albeit little, attention was giving to this most amazing of circumstances, where mankind has so ravaged and polluted Earth's oceans (comprising 70% of our planet's surface volume), that world attention on the problems of overfishing, pollution, and even Global Warming was needed.

Since then the media has not given much attention to the state of our oceans. You'd think, given the importance of our oceans, that in the last decade a state of alarm would have existed and major changes in human behavior towards our oceans would have begun for the positive. But, it didn't. Now, scientists have mapped the oceans and this map shows massive decline. So, is that what we do? Watch impotently as our ship of life sinks?

This new report by the Nature Conservancy and talk by Science Friday ([Science Friday Archives: State of the Oceans](#)) "Around the world, the oceans are in trouble, with declining fish stocks, disappearing coral reefs, and changing water chemistry. This week, researchers published a new map highlighting the human impact on oceans worldwide from 17 different

activities, such as fishing, climate change, and pollution. "Our results show that when these and other individual impacts are summed up, the big picture looks much worse than I imagine most people expected," said Ben Halpern, lead author of the paper published this week in the journal Science." highlights a very troubling human problem towards our environment:

Even though there is clear evidence that mankind is destroying a major component of our environment we continue to do it. The problem



maybe either a flaw in our mental makeup or with our present economic systems that treat Nature as an externality--perhaps best described by the [tragedy of the commons](#) "The metaphor illustrates how free access and unrestricted demand for a finite resource ultimately structurally dooms the resource through over-exploitation."

If you think that all of a sudden that environmentalists have jumped on a new environmental topic and blown it way out of proportion, why not read "[A New Green History of the World: The Environment and the Collapse of Great Civilizations](#)," by Clive Ponting? The truth is that



[Downtown Rochester](#)

humans have been destroying and greatly compromising ecologies for a very long time and our mechanical and population prowess has vastly increased this aspect of our species. Every conscious being on this planet should read this book because it is a history of how our species has radically changed the environment on this planet—including our oceans. If the accumulative facts on how humans have and continue to alter the environment we need to survive doesn't rise to the top of your priority list, then... what?

Check out: [Mapping the Other 70 Percent - The New York Times](#) [Mapping the Other 70 Percent - The New York Times](#): "Mapping the Other 70 Percent Scientists are building the first worldwide portrait of human impact on the world's oceans." Or this: [Marine Conservation - New Study Finds Heavy Human Impacts on World's Oceans](#) First-ever global study of human influences on marine areas finds significant effects; few "wild waters" still exist. Damage to oceans is ubiquitous and threatens the long-term health of marine areas, according to a new study co-authored by Nature Conservancy marine scientist Mark Spalding. --[Nature Conservancy News Room - Environmental Issues Articles on Conservation Nature Conservancy News Room Press](#)

Be Proactive:

If your local media is not being preemptive (meaning investigative reporting) in providing you with all the environmental information you need to make informed decisions about our Rochester-area environment, contact them and let them know you think this information is vital.

And/or, come to this site often.

Hottest Issues This Month

Environmental Cover-up? Has our government suppressed a major environmental study by the Center of Disease Control (CDC) on the health of our Great Lakes? Read: [Great Lakes Danger Zones?](#) *For more than seven months, the nation's top public health agency has blocked the publication of an exhaustive federal study of environmental hazards in the eight Great Lakes states, reportedly because it contains such potentially "alarming information" as evidence of elevated infant mortality and cancer rates.* -from [The Center of Public Integrity](#)

This story highlights the importance of our environment, the role the Internet now plays in environmental media, and why we need critical information to assess the state of our environment. If it takes a whistle blower and a citizen public watch group leaking documents to the web for us to find out what damage our way of life is having on our support system, then we need to take charge of the information we need to have a sustainable society.

We don't need cover-ups, special interests, and the suppression of critical health information. We need to know, freely and without cost, all that pertains to our getting enough information to make wise decisions about our environment.

This story makes one wonder how many other studies have been suppressed for some reason or another; and it also suggests that we should have a government and media constantly looking out for possible perils in our environment, not how characterize, obfuscate, suppress, or spin that which has already been studied, or might need to be studied for us to know whether there are dangerous toxins building up in our environment, or whether an ecology is breaking down.

We have become so used to be lied to, spun, and simply dismissed that we tend to think that having an unrealistic picture of what is actually happening in our environment is the norm. It's status quo as morality: if it's going on all about us with everything else, it's OK.. Well, think about, whose interests are we trying to protect when we frame how environmental studies are conducted? Corporations? Governments? Private property? Or our children's future? For billions of years, life on Earth depended on an accurate model of reality. If a caveman thought the shadow of a lion about to pounce was only shrubbery, he was the lion's meal. If we think our waters are clean to drink and sustain life, when they are not, our children inherit the illusion of a future—but not an actual one.

Hopefully, as these stories suggest, Congress is going to investigate why this study was suppressed:

- [Congressional panel calls for release of CDC report about the Great Lakes -- chicagotribune.com](#) A congressional committee said Thursday that it was investigating why the

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Rochester Issues

[Animals](#) [Commuting](#)
[Wetlands](#) [Food](#)
[Air Quality](#) [Energy](#)
[West Nile Virus](#)
[Urban Sprawl](#)
[Brownfields](#)
[Rabies](#) [Lead](#)
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[Pesticides](#) [Parks](#)
[Water Quality](#)
[Genesee River](#)
[Zebra Mussels](#)
[Great Lakes](#) [Wind](#)
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- Centers for Disease Control has declined to release a report about health problems near contaminated sites around the Great Lakes. Feb 29, 08) [Chicago news, sports, photos, video, blogs, Chicago weather, business, travel, tourism, entertainment and jobs -- chicagotribune.com](#)
- [The Buffalo News: Opinion: Are we at risk?](#) Release Great Lakes pollution report, investigate whether it was suppressed There is a government report that raises the possibility that public health threats from industrial pollution pervade the Great Lakes region. (Feb 27, 08) [Buffalo News](#)
 - [Living on Earth: Toxic Info Withheld](#) The Centers for Disease Control is postponing the release of a report detailing areas of environmental concern and human health problems in the Great Lakes region..[Living on Earth: Sound Journalism for the Whole Planet](#)
 - [Delay Of Report Is Blamed On Politics - washingtonpost.com](#) CHICAGO -- The lead author and peer reviewers of a government report raising the possibility of public health threats from industrial contamination throughout the Great Lakes region are charging that the report is being suppressed because of the questions it raises..(Feb 19, 08) [washingtonpost.com - nation, world, technology and Washington area news and headlines](#)
 - [Leaked Study Says Great Lakes Residents at Greater Health Risk](#) - ROCHESTER, NY (2008-02-19) A study done by the Centers for Disease Control says as many as nine million people living along the U.S. side of the Great Lakes could be at higher risk for health problems because of chemical pollution. More than 300-thousand Rochester-area people fall within that study area. But people living in the Rochester area are better off than most, because the one recognized "Area of Concern" waste site in Monroe County has been cleaned up by the City of Rochester and is no longer leaking pollutants to Lake Ontario. (Feb 2/19/08) [wxxi NewsRoom](#)

* Don't forget, I can only cover a fraction of how environmental issue pertain to Rochester, NY. Please all the [news, updates](#), and my blog [Environmental Thoughts](#) to get it all.

Other Hot Environmental Issues

Besides the story above, the [Great Lakes](#) leads many of the environmental stories this month. Local government officials in both the US and Canada wonder whether the federal government let us down on cleaning up the Great Lakes? A new study "[Local Investment in the Great Lakes and St.](#)

[Lawrence](#)" by the Great Lakes Commission For the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative supported by the Joyce Foundation alleges that promised federal funding for Great Lakes has lagged behind local effort in: "Capital Improvements to Wastewater Systems, Operation and Maintenance of Wastewater Systems, Water Loss, Demand Reduction and Residue Management, Watershed Protection Initiatives, Water Quality Monitoring, Other Water Quality Management Investments, Water Quality Management, Greenspace Protection, Recycling and Reuse Programs, Alternate Transportation (not including mass transit Systems, Energy Conservation and Alternatives, Brownfield Cleanup, Other Ecosystem Protection and Restoration, Investments, and Ecosystem Protection and Restoration."

Another story points out that Lake Superior is being affected by Global Warming because (like many of the Great Lakes) of winter ice loss. This could result in lower lakes levels making shipping difficult and the loss of some sport fish—even after only a small average drop in temperature. Also, there are more stories about the efforts by eight states to thwart Diversion, where other areas would be able to take waters from the Great Lakes basin, and promote water conservation. I have mentioned Diversion many times in this newsletter and list it in my [Watch List](#) as something that should be on all our radars. There is a great need for fresh water in areas of our country far outside of the Great Lakes basin and they want



[Air Quality in Rochester, NY](#)

Overall, you cannot come away from even just one month's encapsulation of just one city's environmental news and not see how humanity now drives Nature.

Like it or not the anthropogenic affect of man on Nature is so profound (and continuing to grow) that as you look for man's footprint in each story, you will understand how our relationship with our environment is forever changing the direction of evolution.

We are warming the planet, determining what species thrive and what species fail, what chemicals interact with everything, what bodies of water rise and which one fall—in short we (as a species) are no longer just bystanders in our environment—we are at the helm.



RochesterEnvironment.com calendar, updated every day, lists all environmental events, educational programs, activities, seminars, and rallies.



[Environmental Site of the Month Award](#)

Each month, included in the RENewsletter goes out an environmental award for the best Rochester-area environmental web site or blog that best helps promote the need to protect and offers solutions to our area's environmental issues.

it—regardless of what it could do to this self-contained water system.

On [Energy](#), gas prices are inching towards the highest prices we have ever seen in our parts. But, Rochester slowly seems to be moving towards compensations as auto shows are showing off green cars and our community gets more ethanol pumps (two actually). Also, Senator Schumer, who has zeroed in on Rochester energy use and helped taken coal power off our energy table (by demanding that Russell Station not use coal for the future), is yet again making sure that if there is a takeover at RG&E, it won't result in greater energy costs. Over in Montreal, they're wrangling about wind power, the Bow Lake Wind Farm, which could have lines of wind turbines lining Montreal River.

Here in New York State the Lieutenant Governor David A. Paterson, Chairman of the State's Renewable Energy Task Force has created a "[RoadMap](#)" for increasing wind and solar energy to eventually have 25% of our state's energy needs met by renewable energy. At the same time, there's a major story about the governor's budget which allegedly cuts state funds from the Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportations Authority which could affect bus fares. While we here in Rochester appreciate the help by the state for helping us out by for making way for the Renaissance Square downtown and monies to the University of Rochester for a new building, we should be concerned about getting less funding to increase usage of our public transportation system. Our future of [transportation](#) in Rochester is going to depend on a sound public transportation system and right now that means buses. Only by providing a low cost to public transportation riders is that going to help make this a viable network for our future.

Of course, the biggest news on energy is fine placed on Russell Station for retrofitting the coal power plant without proper pollution devices. This will mean that we will not be using coal for Rochester's energy needs (which will mean cleaner air and less mercury in our water among other benefits). And, the \$500 million fine will be used for clean energy projects for the Rochester area. Read the [Settlement](#). And lastly on energy, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is raising the 2008 renewable fuels standards (RFS) to 7.76%, which means that much less petroleum fuel in your vehicle.

There are several stories concerning [Animals](#) this month. First, crows seem to be redistributing themselves around various communities (this time Geneva) creating problems because of large flocks. And, crows again show up because a reovirus is killing off many of these birds. Despite what one thinks of these particular birds (or birds in general) they are, because of their ubiquitousness and higher metabolism, harbingers of things going on in our environment. A bad day for crows could mean bad days coming for us.

With the present crisis of diseases in bees and fish (because of [VHS](#)) and deer, we should be trying to gain an understanding of what is going on with invasive diseases and other diseases to animals we don't understand. In other stories, Woodpeckers are a problem in Victor. 220, 000 deer were killed in 2007 hunting season, and the white deer in Seneca Army Depot may be in trouble. Finally, there's a story out of Lake Michigan on the large die-offs of loons. The Great Lakes of late have been a troubling arena for animals, as fish and birds have been dying for various reasons at a high rate.



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Our monthly RENewsletter is best when read online because of dynamic links. It encapsulates all the [news](#), [actions](#), and [events](#) and goes right to your e-mail free.

For a quick tour of all that RochesterEnvironment.com, check [Contents](#) or find out all [About RochesterEnvironment.com](#).

On the Positive Note

OK, a breath of fresh air as spring arrives soon. The top good story is that the EPA notes that New York's toxic chemical releases have dropped for various reasons. But, I wonder if the drop in numbers has something to do with the movement last year by the EPA to lower the amounts of releases by various industry groups. It's the drop real or just on paper?

Homes, hotels and other business are greening up. Earth Day is coming. Trout are being restocked in great numbers at Powder Mills Park. Rochester Institute of Technology has been picked for researching pollution prevention for businesses. Kodak and Wal-mart have launched a new recycling program. A [Brownfield](#) cleanup could be in the works for the Corn Hill and Brooks Landing area and



also a revamping of the state's policy on cleaning up Brownfields may be underway. The state will also, under the Agricultural Environmental Management program, help farmers protect waters from agricultural runoff. The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is having their tree seedlings sale. The Nature Conservancy is protecting fifty-five acres in Yates County. And finally, the EPA has a report that it is taking steps to ban a pesticide on crops. Read the [news](#), there's a lot going on.

[Essays](#) – by Frank J. Regan

On-Going Concerns

Monroe County still leads in the release of toxins by industry into our air, land and water. This news kind of takes the oomph out of the EPA's study that less toxins are being released in New York State. Hopefully, we are really making an effort in reducing toxic releases in our state and not merely moving the bar around to make it look better. In these days where trust of the media, state-sponsored studies is low, and the shenanigans at various industries about reporting toxic releases, we must be ever vigilant of the reports veracity on our environment. Things aren't matching up: There are more stories about fish and bird deaths, human cancers, stagnant brownfields, and more cheery stories about less pollution, more studies, and more government and industry working towards greener practices. But, is our environment healthier?



[Recycling](#) -There is something inherent in the practice of recycling that insures sustainability.

Finally, there were a lot of cases of flu this year in New York State and the shots that were distributed were not that effective. Several months ago, I made a case for everyone getting their flu shots on my blog—[Environmental Thoughts](#).

The silent stories [important stories we didn't hear much about]:

A story about bats, concerns me, as I have not heard about this story until now. A white ring fungus is killing off thousands of bats in New York and Vermont. Also, there are stories about indoor air quality and radon.



Environmental Actions you can take for our area

[Get all Rochester-area Environmental News-links!](#)

Our news links offer a distinct opportunity for our community to keep abreast of all that is happening with our environment, and because of our [news archives](#) and [Update Archives](#), keeps these stories forever for further research.

News Help

Please consider sending me (verifiable) Rochester-area environmental stories that would be appropriate for RochesterEnvironment.com and this newsletter Sent to [Frank Regan](mailto:Frank.Regan@RochesterEnvironment.com).

Quickly, [provide input on DEC draft on Conducting bird and bat studies for Commercial Wind Energy Projects by March 7](#) The [guidelines](#) (PDF, 135 Kb) are now available for review. Comments will be received until March 7, 2008 via mail to Brianna Gary, NYSDEC Bureau of Habitat, 625 Broadway 5th Floor, Albany, NY 12233-4756 or via email. To provide comments or for further information, contact the Habitat Protection Section [mailbox](#).

Why not bike there? Here's a recent e-mail I have received about a fantastic new idea that would really help our environment. I already use Google maps to map out a route to a place I need to find quickly. But, what if Google man also included the best bike route to that destination? Join in this kindly petition to the great environmentalists at Google. Google Maps 'Bike There' Feature Request Petition <http://www.petitiononline.com/bikether/petition.html>

Got ideas on transportation in New York State for the Next Twenty Years? [NYSDOT | 20 year needs assessment](#) The New York State Department of Transportation's 20-Year Needs Assessment discusses the transportation challenges facing New York State during the next several decades and NYSDOT's recommendations for new capital investment policies and strategies to better meet these challenges. -from [New York State Department of Transportation](#)

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Environmental Thoughts

RochesterEnvironment.com has been blogged:-so now you can discuss Rochester's Environment instantly. Add your comments, be a part of Rochester's environmental discussion. Also get this blog into your favorite reader as a feed:

<http://rochesterenvironmentny.blogspot.com/feeds/posts/default>

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News Summary for this month

Get all the Rochester- area environmental news

Go **February 2008** News-links

http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/news%20archive/february_2008_news.htm

Environmental Updates for this month

Get all the Rochester- area environmental Updates for this month and find out what RochesterEnvironment.com has done.

Go to **February 2008** Daily Updates

http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/Updates%20Archive/updates_february_2008.htm

Environmental Events for this month

Go online for the most up-to-date listings <http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/calendar.htm>

With Earth Day 2008 coming up in April, local environmental groups are gearing up for grabbing the public's attention this year.

There are more environmental events this month than you can shake a stick at, including: Sierra Book Club, Brighton's Climate Change Cafe , RAV's talk on how meat eating affect our environment, NYS Children's Environmental Health Symposium, 8th Annual Anne E. Dyson Child Advocacy Forum, Rochester's Forestry Division to provide a workshop on the Emerald Ash Borer, and Coping with Energy Descent through Relocalization.

More will be posted each day. If you know of an environmental event in our area, send it to me FrankRegan@RochesterEnvironment.com .

Rochester-area Environmental Site of the Month



A big component of solving Global Warming is purchasing food products at the local level to reduce the use of fossil fuels from food transport costs. But, also a program like [Rochester Roots](http://www.rochesterroots.org/) goes far beyond this by helping our local economy, our land, recycling (by composting), educating the public on our environment, and generally making localities like Rochester a more sustainable community.

Rochester Roots <http://www.rochesterroots.org/> "Rochester Roots develops self-reliance by providing the education and tools that help low-income people obtain nutritious, locally grown food, and through the development and marketing of urban produce and products. We strive to achieve this vision through our participation in the local food system and through education and advocacy."