

June 2008

RENewsLetter



This Month's Articles:

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* Read about this project's history

[A Decade of RochesterEnvironment.com](#)

"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

Rochester Environmental News

I'm beginning a new feature on RochesterEnvironment.com called **[ROCHESTER ENVIRONMENTAL DISCUSSION](#)** – where each week, beginning on Thursday's, I'll pose a new environmental question pertaining to our Rochester area. Responses to my questions can be made on my blog: [Environmental Thoughts, Rochester, NY](#) by clicking on the specific question or going to my blog in general - <http://rochesterenvironmentny.blogspot.com/> This is an effort to get Rochesterians engaged in our environmental concerns as they relate to our specific environmental issues and the environment as a whole, connecting the dots. I hope you'll check it out and join in.

http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/Rochester_Environmental_Discussions.htm

Realistically, I don't expect much response, but I'm hoping that will change over time. There's no end of chatter on entertainment, politics, and sports online, but (except for the New York's Times' science blog <http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/>, which is a raging success) there is little

thoughtful discourse on the most important issue of our times-- locally: How, with 6.4 billion people and growing quickly, will we establish a sustainable future if the media doesn't start serious (non-political) coverage and people everywhere understand our environmental plight?

Yet, from reading June's environmental news you do get the feeling that much is changing in our area on green practices. I have also begun a new page on [Green Business](#) that attempts to track online news links and locate resources for making our area's business greener. It is happening. Our new governor (a powerful new leader on the

scene fighting for our environment) announced that there is an "agreement with legislature on law to help businesses produce their own renewable energy", a [net-metering](#) bill got passed, a green building bill was passed, [RochesterHomepage.net](#) has a [Go Green](#) program, a report that Rochesterians are number "six in the country when it comes to green drivers," the state government is cutting their energy needs, school buses are being retrofitted to reduce air pollution, more planting tree efforts are occurring, and several stories about creating green homes makes one think that there's real movement towards living responsibly towards our environment.





[Downtown Rochester](#)

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.

[Help Promote](#) If you believe in the concept of [RochesterEnvironment.com](#), we invite you to help promote this unique and useful website.

[Print our Brochure](#)

[Environmentalists](#) can help promote this site also by listing [RochesterEnvironment.com](#) on their sites.

Listing on [RochesterEnvironment.com](#) on your site is promoting your site.

All this bodes well for our future if everyone gets on board. A sustainable environment isn't simply a greenie heaven of sorts, it's physics 101—your species either adapts to environmental change or they don't. It is the responsibility of all media, governments, and each an every citizen on the planet to move towards sustainability, not simply to assuage their particular beliefs or morality.

Hottest Issues This Month

New legislation in New York State on cleaning up brownfields comes to fruition. There was much ado about cleaning up brownfields in June, especially from the governor's office: [GOVERNOR PATERSON AND LEGISLATIVE LEADERS ANNOUNCE AGREEMENT ON BROWNFIELD REFORM](#). This is good since, as the DEC Commissioner Pete Grannis has said, "Fallow brownfields properties spoil the environment, threaten public health, feed urban decay and accelerate sprawl, said state Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis. The problems in some upstate cites, such as Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse and Utica, are "staggering," he said." (from [Advocates push for revamped brownfields law in New York state | democratandchronicle.com | Democrat and Chronicle](#))

"Brownfields are abandoned or under-used industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contaminations." (from [Brownfield land - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)) This definition does not quite cover it. Let's call a spade a spade: Brownfields are local toxic waste dumps that industry has left behind for the public to deal with, meaning environmentally degradation, possible health problems and horrific economic problems because no one, especially new industries, wants to clean these messes up.

I don't know the number of brownfields in Monroe County and good luck nailing down the figure—for even if you did, that would be only the 'known' or reported or discovered brownfields. And, good luck blaming any of your health symptoms on any specific brownfield contamination. Your lawyer is going to have to be really, really good to take on corporate lawyer who get top dollar.

Brownfields are our problem. We will suffer the consequences of them. We will pay to clean them up because no one else will. So, it's good that the New York State Department of Conservation and the governor's office and the New State Congress have sort of hammered out a deal to clean up some of these sites in a limited sort of way. I'd feel good about it, except this law, or any law in the near future, won't even begin to address the "staggering" amount of damage these innumerable toxic waste dumps all around us are wreaking. Industry, corporations, mankind making stuff all around the globe throughout history has never cleaned up after themselves (read [A Green History of the World](#), by Clive Ponting) and they won't until we create an economic and political environment that won't let them do it.

Or, we will simply perish.



Rochester Issues

[Animals](#) [Commuting](#)
[Wetlands](#) [Food](#)
[Air Quality](#) [Energy](#)
[West Nile Virus](#)
[Urban Sprawl](#)
[Brownfields](#)
[Rabies](#) [Lead](#)
[Poisoning](#)
[Lyme Disease](#)
[Recycling](#)
[Plants](#) [Finger Lakes](#)
[Invasive Species](#)
[Deer Problem](#)
[Geese Problem](#)
[Pesticides](#) [Parks](#)
[Water Quality](#)
[Genesee River](#)
[Zebra Mussels](#)
[Great Lakes](#) [Wind](#)
[Power](#)
[Environmental Health](#)

Other Hot Environmental Issues

There are a couple of news items this month, as usual, about public reaction to placing wind turbines in our state. You either love or hate wind turbines going up around you. As gas prices go up, some are willing to hear a little more about renewable energy, however, here's an interesting sidebar to the energy issue. Scientists have long known that the southern tier of New York State has lots of natural gas in the Marcellus Gas Formation (check out "The Next "Super Giant" Gas Field in the U.S." – from <http://www.energyandcapital.com/articles/marcellus-gas-formation/679>) As I understand it, New York State gas drilling laws preempt a lot of local governments' laws on protecting private property, so like it or not we're going to be seeing many private lands used for gas drilling. And, many of the problems associated with wind turbines—new roads carrying heavy equipment, untainted land forked over for energy production, a loss of aesthetics—will arise with gas production too. However, the difference between wind turbines and gas production is that there is going to be a lot more political weight applied to the installation of gas drilling than wind turbines. Though more environmentally friendlier, safer, and economically sound, wind turbines might not fare as well as gas production because gas has a lot more money and political clout behind it. If you think it's terrible that your neighbor just installed a wind turbine, wait until your other neighbor leases his or her land for gas drilling.

Lots of local news on this: Finding consensus on a new water level for Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River is proving difficult. Micromanaging Nature, now that we can, doesn't necessarily mean that we know what we are doing. As with many environmental decisions, short-term interests are colliding with long-term environmental consequences. When the final decision by the International Joint Commission settles on a particular plan (plan 2007 or B Plus or whatever) we'll know a couple of things: whether we can indeed compromise with Nature, what the short-term consequences of anyone plan will be, and how the public will react to those changes. But we won't really know long-term how any human plan will fit into the changes coming with Global Warming. I myself am uncomfortable with the public arguing about where to set the lake levels because too many people are only considering their specific interests—as if our lakes were mere bathtubs.

Also, because it's summer, we need to remind ourselves about [Lyme disease](#) and [West Nile Virus](#). Both these diseases are due to environmental factors. Lyme disease proliferates because we are developing into sylvan settings, thus more contact with bacteria-laden ticks that jump aboard our skin intent on mischief. And, of course, West Nile Virus probably came from Africa in, need I say?, the west Nile—probably by plane or ship and struck our state hard a decade ago. Both, diseases are preventable with a yearly reminder.

On the Positive Note

With a little hesitancy, as I don't usually promote businesses, I'm suggesting that you check out this new [transportation](#) company in Rochester-- [Roch City Rickshaw](#). Our energy future is going to require that we adopt new and sometimes old ideas for getting around. China has been rickshawing for a long time, so why not borrow good ideas from other countries and make some money and help our environment? <http://www.roccityrickshaw.com/>

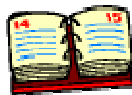
On-Going Concerns

Bee Colony Collapse Syndrome (CCS) Check out: [The Silence of the Bees](#) <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/silence-of-the-bees/full-episode/251/> (You can view the whole program online) One of the interesting quotes from this exceptional PBS program is that in terms of immediate ramifications the Bee Colony Collapse Syndrome (CCS) will be more catastrophic than Global Warming. I cannot vouch for this superlative, but CCS should be on your [radar](#). In June the Democrat and Chronicle did a good story on this issue and there was even a local program by expert to explain the problem to the public. Because of the agricultural impact and the possibility of CCS being a marker for some kind of environmental problem, my hope is that mainstream media keeps doing updates on this issue until we know what's going on with the bees.

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](http://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.



[Subscribe online](#) –

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](#).

I've been keeping my eye (figuratively speaking, of course) on [Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia \(VHS\)](#) and a story out of Wisconsin says that this invasive fish disease has spread into Lake Michigan. Somewhere in my online wanderings, a scientist remarked that often fish diseases infect bodies of water and the usual scenario is that many fish will die, but some will survive and they will produce young and the fish populations will rebound. Evolution 101. That's comforting, except because we are bringing in many invasive diseases by ships and planes and boats going from one body of water to another on a scale never before experienced. (I don't recall cavemen being able to jump continents.) So rather than sit back and let invasive diseases go their way, I'd just as soon we tried to keep invasive species at a minimum. The notion by man anti-environmentalists (which is a really weird position when you think about it) that the best way to solve environmental problems is to let Nature do her thing, is that in many cases (like a force five hurricane) we might not like the cost.



[Air Quality in Rochester, NY](#)

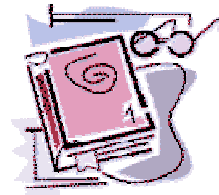
Speaking of [invasive species](#), there's also a story about the emerald ash borer creeping into our state. The [Dutch Elm Disease](#) destroyed many of our elm trees, so paying attention to the threat to our ash trees is a good idea.

An "influenza pandemic" in New York State is not probable but possible and New York State in June practiced a full-scale emergency exercise response. I've included a possible pandemic due to influenza on my [Watch List](#) not because I'm a knee-jerk alarmist, but because there is something we can do when the stars align, that is, when the avian flu virus evolves from infecting bird-to-bird, bird-to-human, and in the worst case (as in the [1918 flu pandemic](#)) scenario human-to-human. Ramping up for a pandemic also hones our health services, mainstream media, and community response systems for quickly acting and diligently monitoring one of the most lethal diseases we know. I'm glad we aren't sitting this one out.

Are you concerned about the apparent lack of interest by our local news media about a possible uranium leak into Lake Ontario that may affect us here in Rochester?

A couple of weeks ago, I posted two news items on a possible uranium leak in Ottawa, Canada that could have possibly leaking into Lake Ontario. I have e-mailed a local newspaper about it and got no response. One visitor to my site mentioned her concern for the Rochester area that this possible leak might create, but nothing else. I find it strange that a possible leak of uranium into a body of water that links Ottawa and us has not been mentioned in our local news. Maybe some local media has and I have not heard about it. Or, maybe the leak did not happen. Anyway, here's my question: Are you concerned about the apparent lack of interest by our local news media about a possible uranium leak into Lake Ontario that may affect us here in Rochester? I have also contacted the media about this alleged incident, just to check it out, but no response. This is eerie, like hearing that someone died outside your house in a car accident while you were asleep, but no signs of it when you awoke—and no one knows any details. If you have not heard about this issue, check out the New York Times link below:

[Uranium Producer Warns of Lake Ontario Pollution - New York Times](#) OTTAWA — Cameco, the world's largest uranium producer, has told the Canadian nuclear regulator that its refinery might have leaked uranium, arsenic and fluorides into Lake Ontario. Cameco A section of the Port Hope, Ontario, plant of Cameco, the world's largest uranium producer. The plant at Port Hope, Ontario, across the lake from Rochester and down the shore from Toronto, first refined uranium for the Manhattan Project during World War II. It has been temporarily closed since July to remove contaminated soil. (May 22, 08) [The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia](#)



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

The Bigger Better Bottle Bill that most New Yorkers want and would go far in cleaning up our environment quietly died at the New York State Senate before going to the floor. So it goes (as Kurt Vonnegut used to say). What bothers me, almost as the loss of this long-sought-after bill, is the booming dearth of news from the media on why this bill died. A decision was supposed to be made on June 23rd, and there was much to-do about it, then the date came and the bill vanished into nothingness. Why wouldn't mainstream media do a follow up on a recycling bill that most New Yorkers wanted? Though we are supposed to have a free press and live in a democracy, the quiet death of the Bigger Better Bottle Bill makes one wonder.

Essays – by Frank J. Regan

Connecting the dots.



Recycling -There is something inherently sound in the practice of recycling that insures sustainability.

Environmental Actions you can take for our area

Check on environmental actions for our area everyday at RochesterEnvironment.com:
<http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/action.htm>

News Summary for this month

Get all the Rochester- area environmental news. Go **June 2008** News-links

http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/news%20archive/june_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 **June 2008** Daily Updates

http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/Updates%20Archive/updates_june_2008.htm

Earth Voyager (see the next page for details)



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. Send to [Frank Regan](mailto:Frank.Regan@rochesterenvironment.com).

RochesterEnvironment.com
"It's where you live."

CONTACT - E-MAIL:
FrankRegan@RochesterEnvironment.com



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>



Watch List

(These Rochester-area Environmental Concerns Should be on your Watch List, or on your radar if you are concerned about our area's environment.)

Frank J. Regan.

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For problems or questions regarding this web contact

E-MAIL:

FrankRegan@RochesterEnvironment.com

Thank you webmasters for linking with RochesterEnvironment.com

Environmental Events for this month

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

EARTH VOYAGER - This event is so big, that I have to devote some time to it. I hope ya'll will mark these dates on your calendar and show a big show of support. It's been in the works for a long time and involved a lot of groups: **EARTH Voyager** <http://www.healthylakes.org/tour/> -

Docking In Rochester - September 5-7, 2008 Rochester Port Terminal – Reception Friday, September 5, 2008 12:00 p.m. -- Lake Ontario Fair Sunday, September 7, 2008 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. --Earth Voyager Bon Voyage with Friends Sunday, September 7, 2008 4:400 p.m Healthy Lakes Tour / Earth Voyager Sail Boat Tour to highlight the environmental restoration of the Great Lakes ecosystem

A voyage to Protect and Restore the Great Lakes - This summer Earth Voyager will be the centerpiece of events in a dozen port cities to raise the profile of the Great Lakes and highlight the urgent need and the remarkable economic, social, and environmental benefits of restoring and protecting them. Events in each port are being organized by local groups with assistance from the Healing Our Waters® --Great Lakes Coalition and may include concerts, street fairs, lectures, receptions, film festivals—even photography and art exhibits on Great Lakes themes

Rochester-area Environmental Site of the Month



June's Environmental Site of the Month rocks. Working on something specific, like reducing the amount of plastic bags and helping our community move towards better environmental habits, can't be beat. Dedicated to solving Global Warming as it affects us locally (and it will affect us here in the Rochester area), check this site out and get involved.

Go Green Rochester - Global Warming Awareness -

<http://gogreenrochester.com> Go Green Rochester is committed to raising environmental awareness throughout the Rochester community. Our new site is designed to educate community members on how to get involved while highlighting the individuals, organizations, and businesses in Rochester who are doing their part to help. Go Green Rochester is proposing a Bag Global Warming Day for Rochester and its surrounding communities. Our goal is to give away 500,000 bags to the general public, free of charge, dispersed at different locations throughout Monroe County. Companies sponsoring the Bag Global Warming Day will receive premier placement on these bags.