

March 2008

# RENewsLetter



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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

### Not So Easy To Be Green.

The media's recent green frenzy, where even [PC Magazine](#) (The Green Issue) and [Reader Digest](#) (Going Green) have jumped on the bandwagon, seems ubiquitous. Green cars, books on living green, greening your houses in local magazines, several articles in the *Messenger Post* and the *Democrat and Chronicle* on going green, and you-name-it mainstream media and the advertizing industry are hot on going green. With so much attention now adverted (from whatever craze was hot before) to adopting a 'green' lifestyle, it seems as though the environmentalist's dream has come true—we are moving towards a sustainable future. "It's easy to be green" is being promoted everywhere. All you have to do is read the label. Or, is it?

Heretical though it may sound coming from an environmentalist, I believe it is not--regardless of the plethora of green tips in every magazine and newspaper imaginable recently--particularly easy to be green. It may seem easy for some to conserve, with a change of attitude, or buying just the right product, but that doesn't necessarily mean we are moving quickly enough towards making our way of life sustainable.

The conundrum about the present rage on living green is this: Will the kind of present advice on voluntary and market-driven changes in a relatively small proportion of the population's actions really make a difference? Check out the immediacy and scale of the problem from one of first and most respected names in the Climate Change revolution: NASA's James Hansen: [The Threat to the Planet: How Can We Avoid Dangerous Human-Made Climate Change?](#)

Basically, unless wholesale changes are made in the way 6.5 billion people on this planet live their lives, much of what we do will be too little, too uncoordinated, and too late.



Living Green is not just a way to make a buck, making oneself feel good, or simply doing you own thing in an ad hoc way. Foremost is the problem of uniformity. There is little in the way of synchronized green activity going on. In other words, it is not easy to be green because there is no uniform decision on what living a green lifestyle is, nor any agreement on how effective each innovation is having towards a coherent, world-wide environmental policy, no reason to believe that enough people are adopting green practices to do any real good, and no level playing field where everyone, everywhere is playing by the same rules. It is as if there were a large meteor about to hit Earth and our species responds by having a few hundred thousand throwing whatever is lying in their backyard up at it.



### 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.

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

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

What seems to escape most people and especially our media is that there is nothing new about environmental degradation from humanity. ‘Going Green’ isn’t a craze, a media phenomenon that is going to go away when the media gets bored with it. Mankind has been destroying the balance of Nature for a good ten thousand years, since the rise of agriculture. Long about the Industrial Revolution, where you can see dramatic changes in the increase of carbon dioxide in ice core samples, we really began changing things at a very quick rate.

As a matter of fact, I suggest that one of the most profound changes human insights (on the level of Darwin’s theory of Evolution by way of Natural Selection) is the realization that mankind has radically transformed the environment on this planet. Before 1945 (the dropping of the Atomic bomb) it did not even occur to humanity, or any of the great philosophers of the past, or scientists that humankind was even capable of affecting our environment on a planetary scale. Though, now most countries (with a relatively few holdouts) have got it on how man is altering this planet.

This realization that we need to change our way did not happen overnight, though it seems as though it has in the mind of the media. So, ‘going green’ becomes a craze. And, as crazes go, people soon tired of them. As soon as Ronald Reagan convinced Americans that Jimmy Carter had gone over the top on Carter’s fears about energy consumption, the gas crises of the seventies was over, and the present rise in SUV and other gas guzzlers ballooned into the state we’re in today—the American automobile industry in crisis because it cannot compete with foreign gas-saving cars.

Instead of a rush to a politically correct green lifestyle, what we need is a deep understanding of our environmental plight. We need to understand the latency problem in global warming (our large and complicated weather system takes a while to respond) and the other problems we are incurring on the planet by our way of life. Our economies must include environmental factors, not simply as an externality, but as a critical aspect of how we buy and produce goods.

My argument: Of course it’s important that we change our lives to make our environment sustainable. However, it’s not easy to be green because it’s not a simple problem with easy solutions. Our environmental problems need wholesale political, economic and social solutions working in concert around the world. In order for things to change that will do any real good so that we don’t experience more cascading collapses like Hurricane Katrina we need to make fundamental changes planet wide. Like the Golden Rule, we, meaning all people in all countries, should behave on this planet as if everything we do towards our environment should be the pattern for everyone else. What you do for the planet must be coordinated with all other people’s actions towards actually making major changes in the direction we are going. If you and your network of friends are car-pooling while the rest of the world speeds away down the road on gas-guzzling land cruisers, what message will Earth hear?

## Hottest Issues This Month

Two important issues stand out as the hottest Environmental issues of the month—the approach of Earth Day and the Great Lakes. Since Al Gore’s movie “[An Inconvenient Truth](#)”, his and the [IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) winning of the Nobel Peace Prize, Earth Day has become a major event in every city.

Just as a reminder of who the heck the IPCC is and why their addition to winning the Nobel Peace Prize is so important, I want to post their description of themselves. I don’t think a lot of the Global Warming naysayers get the how pivotal the IPCC’s role is on vetting the Global Warming science and alerting the world to this issue’s primacy. The IPCC is not an obscure bunch of environmental bug-eyed zealots slinking behind Al Gore’s agenda. Here’s a description of the IPCC:



### 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](#)

*“The IPCC was established to provide the decision-makers and others interested in climate change with an objective source of information about climate change. The IPCC does not conduct any research nor does it monitor climate related data or parameters. Its role is to assess on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis the latest scientific, technical and socio-economic literature produced worldwide relevant to the understanding of the risk of human-induced climate change, its observed and projected impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation. IPCC reports should be neutral with respect to policy, although they need to deal objectively with policy relevant scientific, technical and socio economic factors. They should be of high scientific and technical standards, and aim to reflect a range of views, expertise and wide geographical coverage.” --from [IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#)*

There are a lot of environmental events on and around Earth Day in Rochester and I hope everyone will pick at least one event to attend. As I have been mentioning for years, it is important that everyone get out on these Earth Day events to show the media and influential politicians that the public understands and cares about our environmental issues—and celebrating Earth Day in public puts it in the public’s face. Check RochesterEnvironment.com’s Environmental Calendar (<http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/calendar.htm>) and please show up to one of the events (in green.). Let me make special note of Rochester’s Mayor Duffy’s [MAYOR ANNOUNCES EARTH DAY ACTIVITIES](#) & Rochester’s Major Earth Day Event - [SIERRA CLUB TENTH ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM](#).

The other hot issue for the month of March was (and always will be) the Great Lakes. The stories for the month of March run the gambit on the continual problems that are associated with this major feature of our local environment—one that Senator Schumer accuses the Federal Government of dragging their feet on. Trying to find the appropriate water level for the Great Lakes leads the pack. Then, [invasive species](#), which are reeking havoc on the lake. Ask your fishermen friends and see if they have even heard of [Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia \(VHS\)](#)—an invasive disease that is going to seriously impact their sport. Also, there’s some movement on ridding the Great Lakes, or maybe smaller waterways, of the [Zebra Mussel](#), which may have a problem with a specific bacteria. National Public Radio (NPR) has an interesting piece about the beneficial effects of the Zebra Mussel—though that certainly has to be ‘sour grapes’ because one little benefit cannot outweigh a zillion bad effects of this European pest on our waters. Diversion of Great Lakes waters is discussed again this month and our new governor is committed to addressing this issue. The continuing saga over the Center of Disease Control’s (CDC) report: [Public Health Implications of Hazardous Substances in the Twenty-Six U.S. Great Lakes Areas of Concern](#) is still raging in Congress. More congress people are joining the effort to find out why, or if, this study was suppressed.

On this issue of setting the correct lake level: I want focus on one of the Great Lakes issues that grabs public attention and put my particular spin on it: Controlling Great Lakes and the difficulty of coming up with a level suitable to all –lake shoreline owners, environmentalists, boaters, fishers, etc.-- presents humanity with major conundrum. Once it is in our power to control Nature, whose interests come first?

And, are we really in control, or are we merely fiddling with a complex system we barely understand? Besides, homeowner values and other economic considerations, there are other factors to consider. The Great Lakes are a part of the global ecology and when we tweak lake levels here, what effect does this have in other areas or to the planetary environment as a whole. Also, as Global Warming takes affect in our area, over time the glacial sheets which supply the Great Lakes with water will rise as the ice melts and then fall as the major source for the water in the system dries up. So, over time (which probably cannot be calculated yet) shouldn’t we also be adjusting the lakes levels in anticipation of this major long-term effect on water levels—perhaps trying to shore up as much water as possible before dramatic shortages to the system occur?

Consequently, the problem of lake level controls is one of priorities: short-term gains, economic solutions, or sustainable lake levels? If we are a responsible people to our children and our way of life, shouldn’t our priority be for a sustainable future? Also, on a more deeper level, what is the future going to be like where more and more environmental features of our planet are controlled by mankind?

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*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.



#### [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](#).

## Other Hot Environmental Issues

[Brownfields](#) and [Animals](#) were hot in March. There are articles on a new brownfields in Brighton, one in northeast Rochester, a possible new one in Farmington and a public meeting on cleaning up an old one there. Like many environmental issues of the day—air quality, water quality, and

others—the rise in brownfield locations are probably due to two factors that are not mutually exclusive. There may be an actual increase in brownfields, or our air may be getting worse, or because the rise in standards and our ability to better test our land, water, and air for pollution—it may look as though there are more problems—or both. This is going to be an on-going situation as we become more aware of environmental degradation and the instruments of science of environmental investigations get better.

Reading about the various brownfield cleanups where a plethora of problems confront a community reminds me of Sir Walter Scott's famous quote: "Oh what a tangled web we weave, When first we

practice to deceive" Better to design a program where industries cannot pollute and not financially walk away from their responsibility. There are many brownfields around us that we know and don't know about that are not getting cleaned up because even when we do know about them we don't know who to charge for the cleanup. (And, what does clean up really mean? How can you clean up manmade chemicals that have seeped into to who-knows-where doing who-knows-what? How about a plan, like our landlord/tenant contracts, where a clean-up deposit must be made before an industry can build only to be given back when the site is determined clean when the company folds? I know, there are a many problems (like how can you attract businesses if there is a great fee added to the cost of starting up)

confronting such a preemptive brownfield plan, but something like it must be designed because nothing else really makes any sense. That tangled web of chemicals whose environmental meddling we can only guess at must not be released into our environment the first place—because we really don't know how to solve this problem.

The big story on animals is bat die-off. Though the New York State Department of Conservation (DEC) says that there is no problem [locally](#), with the new bat disease called "white nose syndrome," this issue is troubling because the causes of this wide-spread bat disease is unknown and it follows in wake of several animal diseases in the past year—deer diseases, fish diseases, and bee colony collapse disorder. Animals, besides being a product of evolution are also shapers of evolution and have helped determine our own local environment. As our dominant way of life continues to effect our environment we should be sensitive to the changes in local animal health.

If bats, say, are dying off by the thousands in New York State and nearby states, we need to know why. Not only will the insect population surge (because bats eat a lot of insects) and affect our health (insects are involved in the [West Nile Virus](#) disease) and our local agriculture, but if something major is happening in our animal populations, we could be next. Animals are our eyes, ears, and noses to our environmental health because they are closer and more sensitive to changes to our environment.

Also, on animals stories is the possible introduction of dog parks in Monroe County, a dream for many that has taken a long time to come. Finally, a sighting of a once-common blackbird causes a stir; the DEC provides information on bear populations in the state; and the popular Peregrine Falcons are back in Rochester.

Animals, of which we are one, are our environment.



[Air Quality in Rochester, NY](#)



## On the Positive Note

Of course a big positive in my mind on Rochester's environment is [A Decade of RochesterEnvironment.com](#) "In 1998 I began RochesterEnvironment.com both to inform myself about the Rochester-area environment and to share what I discovered using the new and quickly-growing medium of the Internet. What I was learning from scientific studies, books, public documents, environmental reports, and online articles about the growing plight of our environment did not match what was being reported locally. My observations revealed a looming disaster while the local mainstream media plodded on with business as usual. So, over the last ten years, RochesterEnvironment.com evolved towards the premise that our mainstream media is not doing a good job on informing the public about our environmental priorities. If the public does not have a correct model of reality, we are doomed to serious environmental degradation, maybe even environmental collapse.

Spring is here and many are cleaning up—like the Mayor's [Clean Sweep](#) program, one of the best programs around. Brighton had its own version of the clean sweep in March and this may be the way of the future. Yet, it would be infinitely better if trash never made it to our communities due to a hyperawareness of this problem and better recycling. What if no human trash ever hit the ground?

Speaking of [recycling](#), there are stories in March about industries doing more recycling and the growing awareness of the dramatic increase in plastic going into the ground by way of water bottles. Of course, if our state adopted the [Bigger Better Bottle Bill](#) (where there was another yearly push to get adopted in our state in March) most actually would recycle them. And, there's an article on recycling printer cartridges. The take home message: Don't even think of trashing these money-makers. Find a place that recycles them and donate.

Also, wouldn't it be nice if Rochester had a web site that gave a complete inventory of all the measurable indicators for a vibrant, sustainable community—including a whole section on our environment? Maybe, something as comprehensive and useful as the one Boston, Mass has-- [The Boston Indicators Project - Environment](#) -from [The Boston Indicators Project](#)....

Well, Rochester is working on its own indicator project and it should begin this fall. The point, as far as environmental indicators go, would be for the public, media, politicians, business to assess the environmental quality on various issues from an objective inventory of indicators and make sound policy based on them. [Rochester Area Community Foundation](#) "The Community Foundation and United Way are jointly launching a program to measure, analyze and disseminate community indicators." I'll let you know when the project is up and running.

## On-Going Concerns

There are a couple of stories on the Ginna Nuclear plant the results of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's annual safety performance assessment. Energy concerns, always a concern, mostly surround fuel prices recently. More fuel costs mean more cost for the basic food products and this is probably going to be an issue for some time to come. We're going to see more attention on local food production because of fuel prices. And, the Emerald Ash Borer is boring down on our region, which could cause major concerns with our ash trees. Speaking of trees, there's an article about protecting old trees from needless destruction from developers.

Also there's movement to cleanup our waterways. Louise Slaughter proposal to clean up brownfields near our waterways before we develop them is so obvious that it almost seems preposterous to mention it. But, there is a fear that those too hasty to revitalize our precious waterways for tourism and development may forget that underlying any sound revitalization project is the health of the environment. Build up an area and leave out cleaning up nearby brownfields the environmental factors for a quick buck is only inserting unplanned obsolescence into revitalization.

[Essays](#) – by Frank J. Regan



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



[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](#).*

**RochesterEnvironment.com**

"It's where you live."

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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>



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

There's a story about 'serious problems' with water dams around the state. That's new for me anyway. I've been aware of our nation's problems with our infrastructure including roads, bridges, and water sewers systems, which may be getting old and in need of major repair, but this is the first time I've read anything about problems with dams in our state. I know there is a movement towards eliminating dams for fish movement in other states, but nothing like that here. So, I'm still in the dark as to why our dams are a 'serous problem.' Stay tuned to this newsletter, I will chase this story down.

## **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 **March 2008** News-links

[http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/news%20archive/march\\_2008\\_news.htm](http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/news%20archive/march_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 **March 2008** Daily Updates

[http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/Updates%20Archive/updates\\_march\\_2008.htm](http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/Updates%20Archive/updates_march_2008.htm)

## **Environmental Events for this month**

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

As I have mentioned, Earth Day is coming up soon and there are many events on and around Earth Day. Those events especially designed for Earth Day are colored in green.

## **Rochester-area Environmental Site of the Month**



You cannot be around Rochester and the environmental movement long without coming across the Center for Environmental Information. CEI sets the standard for responsible environmental education and assessment for our area and establishes a model for working with various public and private groups in making our area a sustainable one. Every community should have its CEI.

**CEI: Center for Environmental Information** "CEI is a private, non-profit organization that has been providing environmental communication, education, and information services to Rochester Region for over 30 years. We advocate informed action that seeks to fix the problem, not fix the blame. In other words, we prefer to shed light, not heat, on environmental issues. Our core belief is that environmental health and economic vitality are mutually interdependent. To this end, CEI acts as a facilitator, educator, and convenor to promote informed environmental decision making."