

Sept. 2007

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>

"The news you need, not what you crave"

Opening Salvo

As I watched the film "[The 11th Hour](#)" (which only ran a week) at the [Little Theatre](#), several thoughts ran through my mind. One notion was that we all should help support the Little Theatre as a member and make sure that this unique film house in Rochester can sustain itself. No other theater in Rochester played "[The 11th Hour](#)" and that says volumes about getting one of the most important messages in this century out to the public, that the relatively small portion of the entire environment that is fit for mankind is in trouble. Another thought was that according to three recent major studies -- [Vital Signs 2007 - 2008](#) by the [Worldwatch Institute](#); the [Red List](#) by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and "[America's Report Card on the Environment](#)" a New Annual Survey by The Woods Institute for the Environment at Stanford University in collaboration with ABC News and Time Magazine –there is continuing evidence that we must, despite all else that is going on, turn our attention to the state of our environment. I suspect that this movie will be a DVD soon, so you'll be able to order it and watch it at home—and maybe invite friends. Getting people together to watch a film that doesn't get much play on the normal movie circuit is becoming the way to get news in this day and age. Considering how irresponsible our corporate media is about reporting on our environment, that's important.

Last month, many Rochestarians and local organizations helped with the [International Coastal](#)

[Clean Up Events](#) in Monroe County, NY that cleaned up a lot of debris. (Check <http://coastalcleanup-monroecounty.tripod.com/> for the statistics.) One article quoted a teacher explaining that it was important for students to understand that waste goes somewhere. This quote hits the nail on the head: Everything we throw away does not simply disappear into thin air, as many people and most economists seem to believe; it goes into our environment in some way and makes changes. Littering, the most obvious and avoidable form of waste into our environment



(because it involves individual choice) should dwindle to the point where all these groups having no debris to find each year. The [City of Rochester](#), under Mayor Duffy, has an extraordinary program [Clean Sweep Program](#) that has proven highly successful in getting our citizens to help clean up our neighborhoods. My hope is that Mayor Duffy's efforts also encourage people to stop littering in the first place.

Finally, there's an article about our schools becoming more 'green' in construction, operation and in effect teaching our children the importance of a healthy environment. – go to page 2.

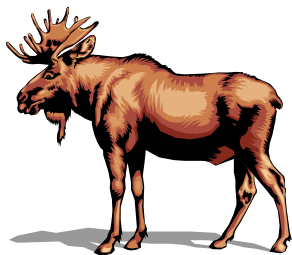


It is well known that children often teach their parents about environmental issues (like recycling and conservation and good energy use) when taught at school. I remember a friend of mine being constantly lectured by her son who was being taught the importance living green from his classes at school. I imagine that a good environmentally focused science teacher in the grade schools has a far more reaching affect on changing people's behavior towards our environment than many environmentalists—including myself. 🚗

Hottest Issues of September 2007

[Downtown Rochester](#)

Hold the Presses! Just as I was completing this newsletter, the major environmental story of the month came in. [Russell Station plans change](#) — “Rochester Gas and Electric Corp. has withdrawn its application to convert Russell Station to a clean coal power plant and will instead go with the option of rebuilding the Greece site as a natural gas power plant.” (September 29, 2007) [Democrat & Chronicle](#). This statement by RG&E is a fundamental move towards a better environment, as coal is a very polluting and greenhouse gas energy source. The article hints that [Senator Schumer's](#) recent visit to the Russell Station, where he “demand the company switch to natural gas” influenced this major decision, but I'm not going to get into that. Natural gas is not as good as a renewable energy source for the environment, but it's far better than coal and we should all be breathing easier--literally.



[Moose in our region?](#)

As I have been promoting that [RG&E](#) take coal off the table for most of the spring and summer, I am very happy about this report. Because we get so much of our energy from Russell Station, it is important that this site be as clean energy as possible. Our own individual efforts to conserve and use energy more efficiently should get a positive boost now that we know behind our own efforts, our major sources of energy are working towards the same goal of a clean, non-polluting energy source are going there too.

I want to thank the folks at the [Democrat & Chronicle](#), Senator Schumer, the people at RG&E (who seem to be getting it that the public wants clean energy) and those environmentalists who have been working quietly beneath the scene for this monumental change towards a better energy source. I hope all who read this keep following this story to make sure we don't default to coal because of economic reasons and, if possible, push for an even better, more renewable source of energy for our area.

The other hot topic for the month is the Victor contamination issue: “Six months later, for better or worse, the Victor plume stands as an example of what happens when a community focuses on an environmental concern.” This is a significant quote from “[Victor cleanup on the horizon](#)” (September 30, 2007) [Democrat & Chronicle](#) because, if extrapolated for most environmental concerns, it points to one of the most pernicious aspects of environmental problems in general: the public doesn't really notice our environment until something goes wrong. And, by then it's usually too late. We are reminded in a story this month by the cleanup at Diaz in Holly that cleaning up [brownfields](#) is difficult, takes a long time, and causes major disruptions to the lives of those who live near these sites.

I believe that it is hard for most people to continually focus on environmental matters for a variety of reasons, but one of the main reasons is that humans evolved competing against the environment for life, not as caretakers for their environment. But, caretakers are what we must become if we are to survive. Because of Global Warming, invasive species, pollution and a world of six billion people (in the recent film [The 11th Hour](#), we learned that there were three billion people on Earth the day JFK was inaugurated, now we're creeping up on seven) there's inevitably going to be more environmental issues before the public, certainly many like the Victor contamination issue. At the heart of the environmental movement must be the realization that mankind has so profoundly altered our environment that we

Continued on next page

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

cannot depend on it to ‘right’ itself. Nature will always achieve a balance, say producing a hurricane when conditions are ripe for one, but we may not like the consequences.

Staying on top of these issues, instead of avoiding them, which could be described as a natural urge, is probably the best way to approach them. The more we know, the less likely we’ll repeat the environmental mistakes of the past.

Other Hot Environmental Issues

There are several articles this month about our [Great Lakes](#), always a concern, with a disturbing report out of Canada that all five Great Lakes are shrinking. The culprit could be Global Warming: [The Great Lakes disappearing act](#) (September 24, 07) [globeandmail.com](#). That probably disturbs many who think environmentalists are associating all changes in our environment to Global Warming. That’s going to be the focus of scientists, environmentalists and even the media for the future, there’s no doubt about it—and teasing out if there really is a direct (or indirect link) is going to be the job of everyone.

Another story suggests that Great Lakes fish are being stressed by the spread of the fish disease [Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia \(VHS\)](#). and (again) Global Warming. And yet another story [Symptoms of trouble seen along coastline](#). (September 20, 2007) [Democrat & Chronicle](#) reports that some think all our New York State coastlines, including those we share on the Great lakes, are in trouble. All this seems dreary, maybe to the point of what some are calling ‘environmental porn’ because it seems that some do nothing but obsess about the bad aspects of our environment and offer no solution. That’s a convenient slur against those trying to point out that since the Industrial Revolution manmade interference with Nature has caused catastrophic changes, but it change the facts. Killing the messenger won’t keep our environment healthy.

[Air quality](#) comes up in several articles, leading with “[DEC Using More Stringent Measurement for Air Quality Forecasts - NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation](#)”. This decision highlights what I believe will be a future trend in monitoring our environment: The bars we use to measure environmental degradation will be moving in two directions, the first will be the discovery of more and more contaminants and the other is a continual raising of the ‘bar’ itself on what constitutes pollution. Though disturbing as this notion is, as we learn more about how our bodies are reacting to the toxins we release into our environment, the more we are going to want to know exactly how much of these toxins are out there. According to a recent article, “Toxic Inaction: Why poisonous, unregulated chemicals end up on our blood” from [Harpers Magazine](#) (October 2007), we should be alarmed by the amount of manmade toxins in our body, called the [body burden](#). Not surprising, we are finding (when we actually test this hypothesis) that many of the manmade toxic substances like pesticides not only do not break down and go away, we are taking them into our bodies. Along with this, Governor Spitzer signed two pieces of legislation on preventing asthma. And, there was an ozone alert for Rochester in September, something that is going to occur more often as Global Warming forces temperature higher producing more days of extreme heat.



[Air Quality in Rochester, NY](#)



[Recycling in Rochester – Get all the information online.](#)

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.

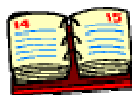
Like it or not the anthropogenic affect of man on Nature is so profound (and continuing to grow) that as you look for man’s footprint in each story, you will understand how our relationship with our environment is forever changing the direction of evolution.

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.

On the Positive Note

Scientists have found a 'marker' for Bee Colony Collapse Disorder, a story I have been following most of this spring and summer. The culprit may be Israeli Acute Paralysis Virus. However, the main news about Bee Colony Collapse Disorder is that there is no simple answer. It is more probable that this disease is just a single straw in the reason for Bee Colony Collapse Disorder. In other words this virus may be present in bee colonies that collapse, but the reason may be that bees overall health is so compromised by other environmental factors that the bees may be especially susceptible to this disease. We tend to live in a world where a problem occurs, like the global decline of bee populations and just figure that scientists will go out and find out the answer and fix it. Well, it's never that simple and this morass defines environmental our problems. According to the article "[Yes, the Bees Could Disappear](#)" by [TruthOut.org](#) a specific disease appears at first glance to be the problem (actually a marker), but the real problem is probably the overall degradation of our environment due to an overload of toxins we have been pouring into our world for quite awhile now.

Also, we might be getting back some of our old friends. Lately, I've noticed in the Rochester-area news that there are increasingly more stories about sightings of coyotes, bears, mountain lions, and now moose. What is one to make of these alleged come-backs—animals previously lost to us, now inching their way back into our environment? Could it be the irrational exuberance of the editorial staff of our newspapers short on things to titillate the public with, or have there really been actual sighting of these animals? (Read the whole essay here: [Now, there's Moose.](#))



[RochesterEnvironment.com calendar](#), updated every day, lists all environmental events, educational programs, activities, seminars, and rallies.



On-Going Concerns

Energy consumption figures in our stories this month and, of course, wind power is growing rapidly in our state. Fifty-five wind towers are proposed for the town of Centerville, twelve near Rushford, sixty-seven near the town of Eagle, and thirteen more are planned for the Steel Winds project at Lackawanna. It seems we are well on the way in this state to replace 25% of our energy needs by renewable energy sources. But, it's not going smoothly.

[Rochester City Newspaper](#) did a great story on the issue of placing wind farms-- [Wind storm - a debate over power and place](#). Many online local newspapers now allow for immediate online responses to articles, and City Newspaper even publishes these responses in their paper editions. This represents a good chance to pipe in and be a part of the environmental dialogue in our community.

My concern, that I have expressed continually, is that Global Warming be a major component of any community's decision to allow [wind farms](#) in their area. After viewing several anti-wind farm group's web pages (or blogs) it seems that when making a laundry list of reason why wind farms are bad (as all of them do), Global Warming is often presented as just one of the items. No special weight is given to the fact that Global Warming deserves. Simply listing wind farms detrimental effects with Global Warming as just one of the negatives (and in some case even disputed) is like saying my car won't run because my tires are bad, my rear-view mirror is cracked, my blinkers don't work, and ... oh, yeah the motor's gone. In Albany, there's a story about the New York State Renewable Energy Task Force whose charge is to attract clean energy industries to New York.

There's several stories about food this month and a lot of talk about the importance of buying local. More and more people are considering the transpiration factor, energy use, involved in transporting many food items to your local store from far away. The argument goes: If you're buying bananas in winter, a lot of fossil fuel should be factored in your choices environmental quotient. Local organic farms got a boost this month with a new website on [New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets](#) called New York State Organic Farming Resource Center at <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/organic/>

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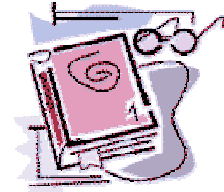
For a quick tour of all that [RochesterEnvironment.com](#), check [Contents](#) or find out all [About RochesterEnvironment.com](#).

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

Speaking of getting environmental information to the public, we should be reminded of the efforts by those environmentalists (certainly after 11th Hour, Leonardo DiCaprio is now a major environmentalist) who step up to plate and endure lots of public strife.

Mostly, attacks by those not wanting to hear about the dismal state of our environment resort to "killing the messenger." This year we celebrate the great Rachel Carson and her book Silent Spring, which most believe kicked off the modern environmental movement. Bill Moyers, [Bill Moyers Journal . Home | PBS](#), pays a poignant tribute to Rachel Carson online at: <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/09212007/profile.html>

It's really an amazing story and you'll get an idea of how hard getting the message to the public about the state of our environment has been. Rachel Carson was a scientist and that did not stop the attacks on her reputation.



[Essays – by Frank J. Regan](#)

Environmental Actions you can take for our area

* Get all the up-to-date online Rochester- area environmental actions at: <http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/action.htm>

Right up there on my list of things you can do for our local environment is the City of Rochester's Clean Sweep event this weekend "No telling who you might run in to.... Rochester's Clean Sweep is coming to Rochester's west side, Saturday, October 6 from 9 am - 1 pm. Meet at Edgerton Park, 41 Backus St. The east side Clean Sweep will take place Saturday, October 13, 9 am - 1 pm at the Norton NET Office, 500 Norton St. Clean Sweep are rain or shine. Get your Clean Sweep t-shirt, gloves and tools, then come back for a picnic." Get the [Flyer](#)..

Also, this just in from [Environmental Defense](#): "Congress needs to move on comprehensive climate legislation. This year. That's why we're launching Operation Climate Vote: to pressure Congress to act on global warming legislation to cap and reduce America's global warming pollution. Take action today. Send House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and your members of Congress a message today: <http://action.environmentaldefense.org/campaign/climatevote07/>



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

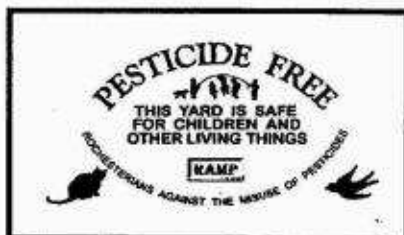
Our news links offer a distinct opportunity for our community to keep abreast of all that is happening with our environment, and because of our [news archives](#) and [Update Archives](#), keeps these stories forever for further research.

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](#).

RAMP Lawn signs

Buy a RAMP yard sign to put in your yard. They cost \$4. Old signs can be replaced by new ones for only \$3. Call Audrey Newcomb, 381-6489 to make the exchange. They are also available at the Abundance Co-op, 62 Marshall Street off Monroe Ave., near downtown, or from Lori's Natural Foods at Jefferson and E. Henrietta Rds. in Henrietta's Regional Market.



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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:

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Frank J. Regan.

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Environmental Events for this month

Go online for the most up-to-date listings:

<http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/calendar.htm>

There are too many environmental events in Rochester this month to count. (OK, that's a bit of hyperbole, but October must be one of the busiest for environmentally minded people.

There's a bicycle defense meeting, a Sierra Club book club meeting, green homes tour, rain house tour, recycling computers event, a couple of environmental films, lecture and pot luck dinner, and much more. Check out environmental events in your community and maybe you'll find your niche in making this a healthier planet for everyone.



Think: West Nile Virus

News Summary for this month

Get all the Rochester- area environmental news links for the month of September 2007

**go September 2007 News-links

http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/news%20archive/september_2007_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.

http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/Updates%20Archive/updates_september_2007.htm

Rochester-area Environmental Site of the Month

This well-thought-out and designed web site shows the importance of trees in our area and how to get involved with helping our urban forests:

Re-TreeWNY.org "Re-Tree WNY was established on November 3, 2006 by a group of about 40 Western New York residents who saw first-hand the devastation done to our beautiful Western New York living resource -- our trees -- and decided to take action to re-forest every public area that was destroyed by the freak October 12-13 snowstorm. Included on our committee is an eclectic group of professionals who have a passion for Greater Buffalo and a background for being "doers" in our committee. We have government leaders, media personalities, attorneys, park personnel, community activists, volunteer organizations, sales executives, promotional people, media people, retirees, and retail managers in our group."