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# Moshannon Group News

Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club

September 2000

## OFF THE CHAIR!

By Dave Coleman, Chair, Moshannon Group

This issue of the Moshannon Group News not only notes the resumption of our General Meetings (after the traditional summer break), it also illustrates many possibilities for member involvement in the Group.

Our fall meetings are a good mix of different facets of conservation. September's meeting will feature the group Citizen Advocates for Rail Service (CARS). They will discuss how passenger train service can **protect** the environment by providing an efficient and less environmentally damaging form of transportation. At the October meeting we will **enjoy** a presentation from Shaver's Creek Environmental Center. In November, a local outdoorsman will aid our ability to **explore** by sharing information on cross-country skiing opportunities in Central Pennsylvania. Co-

incidentally, our fall meetings cover the motto of the Sierra Club - "Exploring, Enjoying, and Protecting the Planet". Well, maybe not in that exact order.

Meetings for January through May are, at this time, unplanned. If you have topics that you would like to have presented at a general meeting, just contact one of the executive committee members (listed on the back page).

Speaking of the executive committee, nominations for the board are being accepted. Be part of the leadership of the Group! Don't want to commit to 10 night meetings a year? Other positions are open in the group not requiring ex-com membership. All require exactly the time and effort that you wish to commit. Serve as long as you want. Nothing in the group is binding in any way.

Join one of the outings advertised in the newsletter. Usually, our outings are related to local issues - this fall to the State Forest Plan. Meet other members, discuss local issues, get a great workout, and above all, enjoy the best that Central Pennsylvania has to offer.

The Sierra Club is the leading conservation organization in the country. Accessing the

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club through the local group can be the most effective way to be an activist in a local issue (e.g.. the recently resurfaced Kepone/Mirex - Spring Creek issue). Explore, Enjoy and Protect. Do it with the Sierra Club. Sometimes we all, if only once in awhile, need to get Off the Chair.

## EVENTS CALENDAR

### General Meetings:

Tuesday, September 19, 7:30 PM Schlow Library. Guest speakers: members of Citizen Advocates for Rail Service (CARS) will speak on trains and the environment.

Tuesday, October 17, 7:30 PM Schlow Library. Guest speaker: Corky Potter, Director Shaver's Creek Environmental Center. Celebrate our 25th year, "just who are we and what do we do?"

Tuesday, November 21, 7:30PM Schlow Library. Guest speaker: Geoff Brugler, local outdoorsman will speak on cross-country skiing in Central Pennsylvania.

### Outings:

Sunday, October 1: Moderate hike of 4-5 miles on the Chuck Keiper Trail, Sproul State Forest. Call Dave Coleman 234-0839.

Sunday, October 15: Hike a section of the new Allegheny Front Trail. This hike can be as short or as long as you want. Call Gary Thornbloom 353-3466.

Sunday, October 22: hike the Moshannon Trail with members of the Otzinachson Group. Contact Paul Shaw 717-692-1198 or shaw@epix.net.

Sunday, November 5: Enjoy the views on a hike along the Allegheny Front Trail now that the leaves are down. Call Gary Thornbloom 353-3466.

### Christmas party:

Plan ahead and mark your calendar now: Saturday, December 16 at Jan's house. You know the way.

## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

An election to choose members of the Executive Committee of the group is held annually at the end of the calendar year. Until October 20, 2000 nominations can be submitted to the Nomination Committee chair, Elisa Beshero-Bondar, c/o Sierra Club Moshannon Group, PO Box 513, State College, PA 16804.

Members of the executive committee meet up to 11 times per year - now on the first Tuesday of the month. The committee manages the affairs and activities of the Group. Terms are two years and staggered. Three of the seven positions on the committee are up for election.

Ballots will be mailed with the November newsletter. Ballots will be opened at the January Ex-Com meeting. New members will be seated and officers selected by the new committee.

Any questions? Contact a current ex-com member.

# Superfund Report: Centre County Kepone Superfund Site

By Bill Smedley Otzinachson Chapter Sierra Club

Organics? Bread, tomatoes, onions or Chemicals. USEPA officials conducted a public meeting on August 28<sup>th</sup> at the Mount Nittany Middle School to discuss their proposed changes to the record of decision for the "clean-up" of the contaminated ground on the Ruetgers Organic Corp. chemical manufacturing facility on Struble Road in State College by the Nittany Mall. Formally the Neese Chemical plant, the site is still an active chemical plant. Ruetgers Organic Corp is responsible for paying for the "clean-up" of contaminated dirt and groundwater. The original record of decision or ROD was to dig up soils contaminated with mirex and kepone, as well as many volatile organic compounds, and haul them (400 truckloads or 12,000 cubic yards) to a "treatment" facility and then to a hazardous waste landfill at a estimated cost of \$ 13.5 million dollars. Now the EPA and Ruetgers are proposing to change the method of remediation to a less expensive "soil vapor extraction" estimated to treat the soils on-site at a cost of around \$2 million.

USEPA project manager, Frank Klanchar, had told the Centre Daily Times before the meeting that he "does not expect a lot of opposition to the proposal at the public meeting". Mr. Klanchar learned quickly at the public meeting that he was very wrong. About 100 people turned out for the meeting and after a shoddy, nervous presentation by Klanchar, blasted the EPA for proposing such a sham to the community. Even the EPA's Klanchar had to admit that they had not been completely clear with the public that the new method proposed would not remove the primary contaminants, mirex and kepone, from the soil. After intense questioning they finally admitted that the mirex and kepone would need to be removed by the water treatment system that could run for 30 years or longer. That is assuming that all the mirex and kepone will leach into the ground water and that it will be captured by the treatment system. EPA even admitted that this method would not treat all the contamination. The newer method proposed, soil vapor extraction, will remove volatile organic chemicals only. When the EPA looked at soil vapor extraction years ago their estimates said that it would take 15 years and cost around \$ 2.5 million dollars. Now they and Ruetgers estimate that the "clean-up" will only take 1 ½ to 3 ½ years. EPA could not explain why the difference in time estimates. In fact, the EPA could not explain much and obviously failed to gain the trust and confidence of the public (shock to anybody?).

The real purpose of the meeting was obvi-

ously to pull the wool over the public's eyes again. The EPA and Ruetgers not only failed in their task but the truth was pulled from their lips in the process. It seems that the only method that the EPA had ever proposed to be used to "clean-up" the site was incineration. Packaged with fancy names like "thermal treatment" and "oxidation" the truth took shape while the EPA and Ruetgers were dodging questions. The ground water system that is running now is a type of air stripping operation that removes chemicals and then burns them in a "regenerative thermal oxidizer" or RTO. The EPA could not give straight answers as to why no information was in the Administrative Record at the Schlow Memorial Library about this system but promised to get the information to the public. Ruetgers officials present at the meeting admitted that they are using an RTO and that no stack testing had been done to determine what contaminants, like Dioxins, may be coming from the stack. The EPA's original record of decision called for off site "treatment" of the soils. After careful questioning the truth of the matter is that the soil would be hauled to a hazardous waste incinerator somewhere else (East Liverpool Ohio perhaps?), burned and then disposed of in a hazardous waste landfill. Even the newer method proposed, soil vapor extraction, uses incineration with an RTO to "destroy" the chemicals that would be removed from the soil. EPA also admitted that the systems also used carbon filters and that those would be "regenerated". You guessed it, incineration

again! The EPA also admitted that there are no plans for either parameter or community monitors to protect the community from chemical releases or malfunctions but did say that they would "consider" them. You would have thought after the hard lessons the EPA learned over the Drake Superfund Incinerator in Lock Haven that they would have cleaned up their act some regarding honesty to the public.

**A 30-day comment period is now in effect. It began on August 16<sup>th</sup> and comments can be submitted to USEPA's Frank Klanchar (3HS22) at 1650 Arch Street Philadelphia, PA 19103. The EPA needs to hear your comments about the problems with both of their ideas and how they have failed, again, to look at newer closed loop emission-less technologies.**

So, there you have it! Finally the public was able to pull the truth from the EPA spin doctors. Even EPA's section chief for Pennsylvania (and former Drake Project Manager), Gregg Crystall, who also watched and participated in the show, admitted after the meeting that it was "horrible" and poorly conducted. All we can say after our 5 years experience over the Drake fight is: You are right Gregg, the EPA has failed again to come up with an acceptable way to remediate a superfund site, and has failed again to convince the public that they are looking out for our best interest. So Mr. Crystall and Mr. Klanchar, whose interests are you looking out for at the Centre County Kepone Site?

## RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE IN CENTRAL PA

By Roger Downing, CARS

We are CARS (Citizen Advocates for Rail Service). This organization is related to KARP (Keystone Association of Railroad Passengers) and NARP (National Association of Railroad Passengers). We believe passenger railroad can conserve natural resources, protect the environment and reduce sprawl.

Various kinds of trains are available today. How are railroads doing financially? All railroads, as all highways, are dependent on tax money. The question becomes what is best for society? Passenger service with Amtrak (National Railroad Passenger Corp.) is in demand. However, there is limit on Amtrak imposed by congress; it has until 2003 to become self-sufficient. Trains are more efficient than highways. A single railroad track can haul as much as a four lane highway . With computerized Centralized Traffic Control trains would be more efficient and on time more often . Railroads have a role to play in good land-use planning and control of sprawl. The first thing that is necessary is co-operation . One township, city or county cannot implement railway transportation alone. We must work together to make it happen.

Come to the September 19 Moshannon Group general meeting to learn how railroads can help control sprawl and improve the environment.

# CORRIDOR O INTERCHANGE POSES THREAT TO MOSHANNON STATE FOREST LANDS

By Gary Thornbloom

Our State Forest lands offer the best chance to preserve intact ecosystems, watersheds, and links for wildlife and plant dispersal. This is a potential goal of the Bureau of Forestry's draft State Forest Plan. Nonetheless there is relentless pressure to carve up these very limited lands. State Forests amount to only one tenth of Pennsylvania's land area. Public lands too often present the "easiest" route for new highways. This practice is wrong, and it is shortsighted.

It is reassuring to learn that the section of the Corridor O highway with the greatest potential to impact State Game lands and Moshannon State Forest lands is likely to utilize and to follow the westbound lanes of existing U.S. 322. This would inflict the least impact to the integrity of our public lands.

It is the position of the Moshannon Group of the Sierra Club that the detri-

mental impacts of Corridor O will be minimized if it is aligned with the existing U.S. 322.

It is also our position that there should not be an interchange at the State Forest dirt roads Strawband Beaver and Sandy Ridge. This would seem to be a common sense decision. The only reason to put an interchange there is to provide for a future road that would link Corridor O to Mid-State Airport. Preliminary projections indicate that where the highway is likely to crest the mountain north of Port Matilda an eighty foot cut will be needed to maintain the grade the interstate highway will need. It is precisely in the area of this very deep cut that proponents of this interchange want it to be located. This would increase the typical 12 million dollars cost of an interchange to 20 million or more dollars. The acres of land would also increase for an interchange at this location. This is a lot of public money and of public lands to fur-

ther the private dream (maybe scheme) of developing the Mid-State Airport site.

Mid-State Airport survives only due to appropriations provided by obliging politicians. Although there is no commercial aviation service to Mid-State the facilities have been maintained and in some cases upgraded. It remains the goal of development minded organizations to continue to use public money to aid private companies in using Mid-State Airport as a business site. This is a local example of corporate welfare.

The immediate threat to the Moshannon State Forest is that Corridor O will include an interchange that will lead to an additional highway, that will aid the development of Mid-State Airport. Note only this interchange, but the resulting additional highway would occur entirely on Moshannon State Forest Lands. Development of Mid -State Airport is only possible at the expense of State Forest or State Park Land. In fact, to obtain the necessary clearances at the ends of the current runways trees on State Forest and State Park Lands will need to be cut down.

Because Mid-State Airport was created out of public lands a state statute (74 Pa.C.S.A. 5905) exists to protect the surrounding State Forest and State Park lands:

**Because this involves a transfer of State forest and State park lands no future use of Mid-State Airport shall impair in any way the integrity of the adjacent State forest and State park lands and their ecosystems.**

Proposal after proposal for the development of Mid-State Airport has resulted in violating the integrity of the public lands the above statute seeks to protect. It is time to draw the line and the line is here: no interchange at the Strawband Beaver and Sandy Ridge roads.

Help preserve the integrity of these public lands. Attend the upcoming public meetings concerning Corridor O. Let the planners and your elected officials know that you want your State Forest lands to remain intact.

Make checks payable to Sierra Club and mail to Bill Tanner, Rte.1 Box 1265, Mapleton PA 17052.

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**Moshannon Group Directory**

\*members of the Executive Committee

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**Membership**

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