

## ISSUE COORDINATOR'S REPORT: CLEANING THE AIR

by Bob Campbell, our Clean Air Issues Coordinator

In April I testified at the Annual Public Hearing of New Jersey's Clean Air Council, as follows:

Last year the US Senate failed to approve an increase in automobile fuel efficiency (CAFE) standards, and thus to reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, and to reduce the massive volumes of nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and small particulates emitted by the cars and light trucks sold between now and 2015. Consequently, New Jersey needs to act now to reduce the emissions of our vehicles, and to protect the health of our 8.5 million residents. Everyone in New Jersey, especially those living or working in urban areas and near major highways and roads, is forced to breathe air containing high levels of toxic chemicals such as benzene, 1,3-butadiene, formaldehyde, the ground level ozone resulting from VOC's, and the small particulates emitted by mobile sources: cars, buses and trucks.

I asked all members of the Council to examine the NJ-DEP website "Air Toxics of Special Concern." In a section titled "The 25 Air Toxics of Greatest Concern In NJ" it says, "...our preliminary analysis of the county average hazardous air pollutant concentrations generated by US-EPA's Cumulative Exposure Project indicates that there were 24 carcinogenic chemicals predicted by EPA to exceed health benchmarks in one or more counties in 1990". The first table that follows lists 10 "Pollutants of

Concern" and indicates they exist statewide. Benzene, 1,3-butadiene and formaldehyde are included in this group and the source of these emissions is listed as either "Mobile" or "Mobile and Area". In fact, 7 of the 10 chemicals listed in this statewide group are produced by mobile sources! Page 2 of this website provides information on the sources and concentrations of 7 Air Toxics which exist globally. As regards benzene and formaldehyde, it states "...they are emitted in such large quantities around the world, especially in cities, that they travel on the wind and are still found in significant quantities in remote and rural areas."

There are several facts worthy of further comment concerning the three chemicals noted above.

**Benzene:** According to NJ-PIRG's report, "INVISIBLE THREATS - How Air Toxics May Affect Public Health in New Jersey," benzene makes up 3 to 5% of exhaust hydrocarbons from gasoline fueled vehicles. An increased incidence of leukemia occurs in people exposed to benzene in the workplace.

**1,3-Butadiene:** is a gaseous hydrocarbon classified as a probable human carcinogen. It occurs as a product of incomplete combustion of motor fuels.

**Formaldehyde:** is a pungent colorless gas also classified as a probable human carcinogen. In New Jersey, 82% of formaldehyde emissions come from motor vehicles and off-road vehicles and equipment. ☺

## Sierra Club offers Inner City Outings

by Anne Dyjak, our Inner City Outings Coordinator

Do you remember the first time you thrilled to see a deer roaming the woods, or were awed by a night sky of twinkling stars, or felt the sense of accomplishment at hiking to the top of a mountain? These are just a few of the experiences of participants in the Club's Inner City Outings (ICO) program. This community outreach program provides wilderness, recreational and learning experiences for inner city youth who would not otherwise experience them. ICO is staffed by dedicated volunteers with an appreciation of the natural world and a desire to introduce youth to nature.

New Jersey is well served by TWO ICO groups; one in the northern/central region of the state, the other around Camden. The groups have sponsored trips for children from Elizabeth, Newark, Jersey City, Hoboken, and Camden. Primarily weekend day trips, the outings have included environmental education and outdoor skill development. Outings have included hiking, white water rafting, canoeing, ice skating, cross country skiing and overnight tent camping. Through a generous donation of used bicycles from ICO leader Ray Terek's local bike shop, North/Central NJ ICO is also able to sponsor bicycling outings. Youth participants from New Jersey's cities have marveled at the beauty of Norvin Green State Forest, Jenny Jump State Forest, Wawayanda State Park, Harriman State Park, Merrill Creek Reservoir and the Watchung Reservation. They have witnessed the magnificence of birds of prey up close — at the Raptor Trust Rehabilitation Center. They have shaken off their inhibitions and romped in the ocean waves at Island Beach State Park. Participants have learned to dissect owl pellets and reassemble the bones to discover what creature served as the owl's meal. The groups have taken advantage of learning opportunities from state and county naturalists, NJ Audubon Society members, Hudson Valley Orienteering

volunteers, as well as benefiting from the myriad of talents and knowledge of ICO volunteers.

In addition to the local trips sponsored by the two ICO groups in New Jersey, some youth participants attended the ICO Regional Outing in Maine, during the summer of 2001. Patti Lynch from North/Central NJ ICO, along with other certified ICO leaders from New York City, Albany NY, New Haven and Hartford CT, and Boston MA, led a group of youth participants from the four-state Northeast region on a five-day adventure which included kayaking, camping and biking in beautiful Acadia National Park. The Northeast region is quite lucky to have been awarded funding for the outing last year and is thrilled to have submitted a successful proposal for this year's Regional Outing. The competition for these Outings is fierce as each region throughout the country must design a trip proposal which provides challenges for youth to develop outdoor skills and opportunities for environmental education and team-building. The ICO National Steering Committee has the difficult task of determining which two regions will be funded. This year New Jersey youth and leaders will be participating with our ICO peers from the Northeast on a five-day adventure in the Adirondack State Park's High Peaks region where they will be hiking, canoeing and camping.

If you are interested in sharing your love of the natural world and developing the next generation of stewards for the environment, please contact ICO and volunteer. To spend a day outdoors with a group of energetic, enthusiastic, intelligent youngsters is certainly rewarding. A small donation of time can make a tremendous difference in an inner city child's life. ☺

(See the ICO Section News on page 6 of this Newsletter for contact information.)

## SIERRA STUDENT COALITION REPORT: SSC Environmental Justice Committee Forming

by Dan Rosen, our Sierra Student Coalition liaison

If you are interested in building an exciting environmental justice (EJ) movement,\* read below. If you have worked on anti-racist activism before, or care deeply about the issues of racism, classism, justice and equality, freedom, and the health of our environment, please, please consider applying to be on the newly forming national EJ Committee of the SSC to work with students from across the country.

Last year at the fourth annual Public Lands Action Summit (PLAS), twenty Navajo and Hopi SSCers from the Black Mesa Water Coalition spoke to 200 fellow SSCers about the environmentally racist policies of the Peabody Coal Company that are continuing the genocide brought upon these indigenous peoples 500 years ago. For many, this was a moment that changed their views on environmental activism and their lives.

Students at the PLAS immediately got 200 signatures on letters addressed to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior, Gale Norton, and Peabody Coal Company officials, demanding that they stop their racist energy policies that destroy indigenous sacred cultures, and solve energy problems with clean and renewable energy. After the rally many students marched to Secretary Norton's office, protesting the coal mining on indigenous lands.

Racism and environmental destruction are linked. To look at a drill in an oil field, a power plant in an inner city, a nuclear waste dump on a native land as mere tools for destroying our Earth, is not grasping the depth of the problems that our society faces. It is easy to destroy the Earth and its species (including people) when our society marginalizes groups and individuals. We must consider the human aspect in each of these problems.

Students around the country understand that the natural environment is not some abstract concept, merely places untouched by human influence. Students understand that our natural environment includes the places we eat, sleep, play, work, and pray. Every human being has

the right to clean water, clean air, safe food, and a safe home, workplace, and school. The SSC can help lead such efforts for environmental justice.

To do this, the SSC is in the process of forming an Environmental Justice Committee to educate and train activists to work with affected communities. The Committee will engage in many local EJ campaigns throughout the country.

If you deeply care about justice and wish to make the world a cleaner, healthier, more livable place, consider joining us. Please e-mail me - dan-rosen85@hotmail.com - if you wish to be on the EJ Committee. Please explain why you wish to work on EJ issues, describe experience you may have had in the past with anti-racism or EJ work, and say what role you would hope to play on the Committee. Be as creative, inspiring, and passionate as possible.

Through training, local action, media work, and legislation, the SSC can help strengthen the EJ movement, and realize the dream that, one day, our society will be free of racism and oppression.

Students are leading the fight for environmental justice. With your help, the SSC will be at the forefront of this movement, representing the energy, the compassion, and the determination to make real change. Join with other SSC leaders to plan and make this effort effective; together we can win! ☺

*The Sierra Student Coalition includes Groups at many high schools and colleges throughout the state, and operates semi-autonomously from the Club's New Jersey Chapter. Contact Dan for more information, or visit: [www.ssc.org/nj](http://www.ssc.org/nj).*

\* "Environmental justice affirms the sacredness of our Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction." From the Principles of Environmental Justice, adopted October 27, 1991 at the first People of Color Environmental Leadership.

## New Website Design for Action Network

Dennis Schvejda is pleased to announce the launch of a redesigned online activism community website called **Action Network**: <http://www.actionnetwork.org>

Visit Action Network to take action on the latest online lobby campaigns on environment, health and population issues.

### MORE ABOUT ACTION NETWORK:

While you now receive e-mail action alerts from us, you probably don't know that the Sierra Club's NJ Chapter is part of this larger online activism community, featuring action alerts from us and more than 170 other environment, population and public health organizations and coalitions. With over 800,000 activists and growing, the site is among the largest and oldest online activism hubs on the World Wide Web.

Action Network utilizes the power and speed of the Internet to help people take action for the environment, and gives busy people who are concerned about the environment a way to get involved and feel empowered.

Visit Action Network (<http://www.actionnetwork.org>) and take action on alerts from us and other local and national environment, health and population organizations.

## REPORT ON TRANSPORTATION ISSUES:

### TEA-21 RENEWAL

by Bob Johnson, our Transportation Issues Coordinator

TEA-21 is the federal "Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century." It is a major source of funding for rail transit and bikeways as well as conventional forms of surface transportation. It comes up for reconsideration every six years and the current Act expires Sept 30, 2003. For the latest information about it, see <http://www.tea3.org/>

The renewal wording is important because it will determine whether we will have more alternate transportation or more sprawl-inducing highways.

The Sierra Club is waging a campaign to get the most environmentally friendly

bill possible. We need volunteers to visit our Congressional offices in NJ, specifically those of Congressmen LoBiondo, Menendez and Pascrell, who serve on a key committee. We also plan to meet with Senator Corzine. We need a strong delegation to show that we care. Watch for the announcement on the list-serve below.

If you would like to get involved in this campaign, the chapter's list serve devoted to transportation has changed. To join, go to <http://lists.njsierra.org/listinfo.cgi/nj-sierra-transportation-njsierra.org> ☺

Bob Johnson can be reached at [robert.jobson@comcast.net](mailto:robert.jobson@comcast.net)