



# Sanctuary

*Our Mission:* To protect and restore the health of the natural environment, including human communities, by empowering the membership and citizenry through education, advocacy, action and outdoor adventures.

## The Deepwater Horizon, the Tar Sands and our desperate dependence on oil

Kristina Jackson

**I'm no Luddite—I have a car, a computer, a cell phone. But as a fellow Sierran, I suspect you'll agree with me: We need to demand cleaner energy than what we are being served up by the industry and politicians.**

In the past 6 years I was an organizer for the Sierra Club US Gulf of Mexico fisheries campaign and later a biologist with the state of Florida's Fish & Wildlife Service. With Sierra Club, I conducted outreach and events, and lobbied decision makers for changes in our use of the Gulf of Mexico. Our fisheries committee had three core issues: ending overfishing, halting insane coastal development, and stopping the expansion of oil drilling in the Gulf waters. For a terrestrial-focused bunch of hikers and enviros, it was a holistic approach to some key problems plaguing that marine ecosystem.

I was a biologist with the state when the Deepwater platform exploded—on Earth Day of all days! When oil, gas and other chemicals started blasting into the water, everyone in our agency received daily e-mail tallies of the damage to wildlife. It was a gruesome way to start the day: “x dead pelicans found, x pelicans in rehab, x pelicans die in rehab” and then on to the next species, “x dead sea turtles found,” etc...

Floridians don't have oil drilling in their coastal waters. This is a conscious choice that has been battled for in countless legislative sessions. But their state legislation does-

n't stop oil from the Gulf from landing on their beaches, and it can't protect their sea turtles and dolphins and their wild coastal mangrove forests from the unfortunate choice of the other Gulf states.

While the oil was still gushing from the Deepwater Horizon holes, Floridians were organizing to make a state constitutional amendment to prohibit drilling in their waters. In contrast, when President Obama showed up in Louisiana, legislators begged him not to put even a 6-month moratorium on the deepwater drilling that had resulted

in this disaster. Their rationale: With the visible end in sight to their shrimping and fishing industries, oil drilling may be all that they have left.

Unfortunately, there seems to be no end in sight to humans' demand for oil however it is generated. Kurt Vonnegut describes us as “addicts of fossil fuels in a state of denial. And like so many addicts ... our leaders are now committing violent crimes to get what little is left of what we're hooked on.” As long as there is another fix out there, American addicts don't

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**Bubbling oil seeps past booms onto Louisiana coastal islands in August 2010 (photo of Timbalier Island's dying marsh plants).** Photo: Gulf Restoration Network

**HOW TO REACH US** Mail: Sierra Club Ontario, 24 Mercer St., Toronto, ON M5V 1H3; Telephone: 416-960-9606; Fax: 416-960-0020; E-mail: ontariochapter@sierraclub.ca; Web: <http://ontario.sierraclub.ca>; Membership: membership@sierraclub.ca; National Office: 412-1 Nicholas St., Ottawa, ON K1N 7B7; Telephone: 613-241-4611

# Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

The summer wrap-up edition of *Sanctuary* leads off with a piece by Sierra Club Ontario's new Chapter Coordinator Kristina Jackson on the timely subject of clean energy.

Other pressing topics featured include commentary on the 2010 G-20 Toronto Summit (page 3), issues surrounding the implementation of a gas-fired generator in the Township of King (page 4), and a piece discussing the importance of forging green alliances (page 6).

Please also take time to read the Chair's column (page 3) on the value of connecting to nature, and note that the deadline for nominations to the Chapter Executive Committee election is October 15 (page 5).

Many thanks to our steadfast Editorial Assistants Jean Coburn-White, David Kempton, Theo Selles and Kat Tancock.

Best wishes,  
Debbie Komlos

## THE CHAPTER LEADERSHIP

### The Executive Committee

#### OFFICERS

**Chair – Robert Ouellette**, Toronto,  
ON: robert@forumbureau.com

**Vice Chair – Brooke Erickson**,  
Toronto, ON:  
brooke.erickson.sco@gmail.com

**Treasurer (interim) – Michael Noble**,  
Toronto, ON: carfreemike@gmail.com

#### MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

**Christine Elwell**, Toronto, ON:  
christine.elwell@sympatico.ca

**Michael Noble**, Toronto, ON:  
carfreemike@gmail.com

#### VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

**Leah Sumnauth MacIntosh**,  
Toronto, ON:  
leahsumnauth@yahoo.com

#### LOCAL GROUP REPRESENTATIVES

**Ottawa Group Chair – Carol Gudz**,  
Ottawa, ON: sumac.carol@gmail.com

**Peel Region Group Chair –  
Peter Orphanos**, Mississauga, ON:  
porphanos@rogers.com;

**Bill Papoutsis (Alternate Rep)**,  
Brampton, ON:  
vasilios.papoutsis@sympatico.ca

**Toronto Group Contact – Rod Muir**,  
torontogroup@sierraclub.ca

#### GROUPS IN FORMATION

**Niagara Region Section-in Formation**  
Larry-Alan Caldwell, Conservation  
Leader, sccniagara@yahoo.ca,  
905-227-3189

**Parry Sound Group-in-Formation**  
Paivi Abernethy, paivi@abernethys.com

### Campaign Leaders

#### CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE CHAIR

**Janet Pelley**, pelley@nasw.org  
(sabbatical)

#### CHALLENGE TO SPRAWL

**Janet Pelley**, pelley@nasw.org  
(sabbatical)

**Bernadette Zubrisky**,  
Bernadette\_Zubrisky@edu.yorku.ca  
(Stop the Pickering Airport/Save Duffins  
Creek)

#### CAR FREE DAY

**Emma Cane**, emmac@sierraclub.ca

#### FOREST CONSERVATION

**Emma Cane**, emmac@sierraclub.ca

#### GREAT LAKES / WATER

**Dr. Lino Grima**, Advisor on Water  
Issues, lino.grima@utoronto.ca

#### WASTE DIVERSION

**Rod Muir**, rmuir@sierraclub.ca

### Operations Leaders

#### FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE CHAIR

**Steven Rivers**, srivers@cogeco.ca

#### SIERRA CLUB ONTARIO WEBMASTER

**Lucy Cole**, lucy.cole@sympatico.ca

#### SANCTUARY NEWSLETTER EDITOR

**Debbie Komlos**, dakomlos@yahoo.com

## How to Submit to *Sanctuary*

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#### DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS

All materials for publication in the **FALL 2010** issue must be received by the following deadline: **NOVEMBER 5, 2010**

#### SUBMISSIONS FORMAT

Please limit articles to 800 words. All submissions may be edited for clarity and length. Submit via e-mail and save files as "text."

#### WHERE TO SEND SUBMISSIONS

*Sanctuary* Editor, Debbie Komlos: dakomlos@yahoo.com

#### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Send changes to: Sierra Club Canada, Membership Services; 412 – 1 Nicholas St.; Ottawa, ON K1N 7B7; 1-888-810-4204; membership@sierraclub.ca

### Local Sierra Club Canada Groups

#### OTTAWA GROUP

**Carol Gudz, Chair** – sumac.carol@gmail.com

#### PEEL REGION GROUP

**Peter Orphanos, Chair** – porphanos@rogers.com

#### TORONTO GROUP

**Rod Muir** – torontogroup@sierraclub.ca

#### SIERRA YOUTH COALITION

1 Nicholas Street, Suite 406

Ottawa ON, K1N 7B7

Tel: 1-888-790-7393 or 613-241-1615

E-mail: info@syc-cjs.org

### Regional Representatives

#### GUELPH

**Judy Martin** – judyxmartin@gmail.com

#### KAWARTHAS

**Nancy Eaton** – neaton@nexicom.net

#### NIAGARA REGION

**Steven Rivers** – srivers@cogeco.ca

#### PARRY SOUND/MUSKOKA

**Paivi Abernethy** – paivi@abernethys.com

#### YORK REGION

**Mark Viitala** – djskip@rogers.com

### Chapter Staff

#### CHAPTER DIRECTOR

**Dan McDermott**

Tel: 416-960-6075

E-mail: dmcd@sierraclub.ca

#### CHAPTER COORDINATOR

**Kristina Jackson**

Tel: 416-960-9606

E-mail: ontariochapter@sierraclub.ca

**CHAPTER & GROUP MEETINGS:** All Chapter Executive Committee teleconference meetings are open to all members. Contact our Chapter office to find out how to attend. If you are interested in attending any other Chapter committee or local Group meeting, please contact the appropriate leader or call the Chapter office for more information.

# From the Chair

Robert Ouellette

## LET'S GET DIRTY: THE SIERRA CLUB'S ROLE IN A TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY

How much time does your family spend outdoors? Is it enough? Do your children get the opportunity to go outside and engage in self-directed play? Take your time answering. This is important. Sierra Club members probably average more outdoor time than the norm, but that does not mean they are immune from an alarming societal trend: let me explain.

In our technology-driven culture, the environment may well be threatened less by intentional malice than that worst of human traits, general indifference. A society without a direct relationship with nature will not care—until it is too late—that its foundation in nature is eroding.

The problem is endemic. The cascade of technological change thrusts a wedge between North Americans and the natural environment that spawned them. Even more alarming about this break from an eons-long norm, is that the children who represent our future no longer go out to play. This new, lost generation does not identify with parks or forests. Instead, they are willing captives tethered to an indoor world of digital artifice.

Is the peril overstated? Let's look at some facts.

Urban kids recently surveyed about their play habits admit to spending approximately 11% less time outdoors this year than they had the year before (and even that was a

fraction of the time their parents spent outdoors as children). Only 6% of kids in the US between 9 and 13 years of age spent time alone outside. Six percent! That is a statistic worthy of consideration.

Think for a moment: What prosperous society in the history of humankind has allowed its children to avoid playing outdoors? Maybe a few cloistered religious sects or frightened monarchs hid their children inside, but whole cultures? Never.

The outdoors is dirty. It is dusty. It can be beautiful. It can be dangerous. Most of all, it is unpredictable. It challenges us with the unknown. It nurtures our passions and stimulates our curiosity. Experiencing it prepares us for a life that most often comes without a good map, or someone who is always there to hold our hand.

Author Richard Louv gave form to this growing disconnection from nature in his seminal book,

"Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder." In it he describes the price people pay when they are alienated from nature.

Louv argues that the human brain is hard-wired by evolution to a nature-oriented life. When we disassociate the natural world from our lives then some unexpected things happen, especially to kids. *Children who don't play outdoors exhibit:*

- ◆ Deteriorating health
- ◆ Increased rates of obesity and asthma
- ◆ More prevalent rates of ADD
- ◆ Shorter lives
- ◆ More mental health problems into adulthood

*Conversely, when kids learn and play outdoors they have:*

- ◆ Longer attention spans
- ◆ More creativity
- ◆ More self-confidence
- ◆ Improved cognitive development and better language skills

THE OUTDOORS IS DIRTY. IT IS DUSTY. IT CAN BE BEAUTIFUL. IT CAN BE DANGEROUS. MOST OF ALL, IT IS UNPREDICTABLE. IT CHALLENGES US WITH THE UNKNOWN.

## Chapter Director's Column

Dan McDermott

### THE PLANET BURNS WHILE THE G20 FIDDLES

"I read the news today, oh, boy..."—John Lennon

"Signs of Warming Earth 'Unmistakable'" screamed the lead headline of today's (July 29, as I write this) *Globe and Mail*. A report just released by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has established conclusively that each of the past three decades has been the hottest on record. Elsewhere in this same edition of the *Globe* it was noted that three separate investigations have determined that the so-called "climate gate" scandal was nothing of the sort. Climate science and scientists remain credible and so too is the inconvenient truth that they continue to tell.

So once again the climate change deniers have had their little brains forcibly ejected from the sand. You would think that the recent meeting of the world's leaders in Toronto would have focused primarily on this unfolding global crisis. You would think wrong.

In point of fact, no one got the message right in Toronto. Not the world leaders, elected or otherwise; not Prime Minister Stephen Harper (big surprise that); and not the voices of protest from the street.

It is standard practice for the host country of these global get-togethers to have wide latitude in setting the agenda. It came as a disappointment but no surprise when the initially announced agenda contained no mention of the most important issue on earth. Pushback came from countries already experiencing drought and other effects. Mexico, for one, has clearly and publicly insisted that action on climate change cannot wait for the convenience of heavy-emitter nations and is not alone in that position. Climate change was eventually listed on the Toronto agenda but nothing of substance emerged in communiqués at the end of the session.

Optimism in the face of page 8 —◆

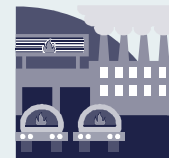
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Toronto Vegetarian Association

# Environment and Democracy Under Threat in King Township



If you believed that residents and businesses in the fastest growing area of Ontario were at risk of being in the dark and cold because of an unreliable, inadequate electricity supply, would your solution be to build a 36% efficient gas-fired generator on a flood plain, on agricultural land prized for its vegetables and protected by Ontario's celebrated Greenbelt Plan, and within the watershed protected by Ontario's Lake Simcoe Protection Plan?

This is exactly what the province of Ontario is doing at the recommendation of its own agency, the Ontario Power Authority (OPA), and enabled by an extraordinary regulation that exempts the project from land-use requirements under the Planning Act.

In July 2008, the OPA issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for approximately 350 megawatts (MW) of peaking generation in northern York Region (NYR). The proposal was awarded in late 2008 to York Energy Centre to construct a 393 MW gas-fired electricity generating facility in the Town-

ship of King, Ontario.

From almost the beginning, the government processes driving the project have been called "faulty" and they have put Ontarians on a very dangerous, slippery slope.

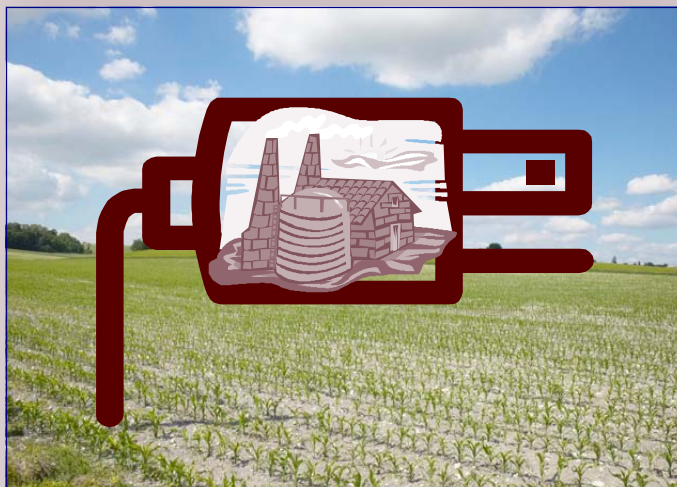
**The OPA's RFP effectively targeted land protected under**

prior to the deadline for qualifying bids, which benefited the winner.

**The Ministry of the Environment (MOE) denied all citizen requests to conduct an Individual Environmental Assessment (EA),** saying that adequate review of environmental issues

**ess to choose the facility location, King Township was repeatedly assured that it would have a voice in the selection through the Official Plan and zoning by-law processes.** Both the OPA and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, then-Minister George Smitherman, offered this assurance. Even prior to the winning bid being announced, the winning proponent expressed its position that the Official Plan process was not applicable, endeavoring to strip the township of any say on land use matters.

**The site is in Protected Countryside.** The Greenbelt Plan allows new infrastructure under one of two conditions: 1) it supports the rural economic activity of the area; or 2) it provides "infrastructure connections among urban growth centres and between these centres." In April 2010, a lengthy hearing took place at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) focusing on issue of conformity to the Greenbelt Plan. A director from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, acting as witness for the proponent, could not



**Ontario's Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act and the Greenbelt Act.** The scoring structure encouraged bids with lower land acquisition costs rather than more appropriate locations within existing industrial areas. The OPA changed the terms of the RFP just five days

would be provided under the Planning Act. Then, 16 months later, the province passed a regulation exempting the project from Planning Act requirements, on the grounds that issues were adequately addressed through the EA process.

**Throughout the OPA-led proc-**

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## JUDY MARTIN RECEIVES OPIRG-GUELPH AWARD

**Judy Martin, Sierra Club Ontario's Guelph Regional Rep, is the 2010 Bonnie McCallum Award Winner.** The OPIRG-Guelph award is bestowed annually on Guelph's Unsung Environmental Leader of the year.

Judy's award citation honours her for her hard work and dedication on many environmental fronts within the Guelph community. Her steadfast opposition to the Hanlon Creek Business Park project has been at the core of her Club work. Judy has knowledgeably and courageously opposed this greenfield sprawl development even as others have urged surrender.

This excerpt from the OPIRG honour cites Judy's contribution

to the environment of her Guelph community. "Judy knows the importance of paying close attention to legislation and is an active voice in local government. She is constantly attending City Council meetings to make delegations and submitting comments on legislation such as the Natural Heritage Strategy or the newest attempt at a Tree Bylaw. Judy teaches us all the importance of doing our homework, reading up on our history, knowing our facts when facing opposition and sticking to what you know in your heart to be right."

SCO adds its congratulations to Judy Martin. She is no longer unsung.

**Dan McDermott**

# Call for Nominations for Sierra Club Ontario Executive Committee Election!

## Dear SCO Member,

The nominations committee of Sierra Club Ontario (SCO) hereby invites nominations for the Chapter Executive Committee (Ex-Com) election this fall. This year, out of the total of four seats, three incumbents are running again for their positions: Christine Elwell, Janet Pelley and Brooke Erickson. However, we are sad to note that Mike Noble, a long-time Ex-Com member, is leaving his post.

If you would like to nominate yourself or another person for a seat at the Ex-Com, please send us your request by e-mail stating the nominee's:

- Name
- Contact information
- A brief bio

- Why the candidate would like to run for the election

Please note that the nominee must be a current member of Sierra Club Canada in good standing. You may e-mail your nominations to Meirav Even-Har at: [meirav.evenhar@gmail.com](mailto:meirav.evenhar@gmail.com) by **October 15, 2010**. Call the SCO office for more information.

*Here are some important dates and deadlines to keep in mind:*

- Submit your nominations by October 15, 2010
- Elections ballots with candidates bios will be mailed out October 22, 2010
- Deadline to mail your vote is November 19, 2010

November 19, 2010

- Ex-Com elections (ballot counting) will take place November 22, 2010

Members will be sent an e-notification about the results. We look forward to having an election and hope you can take the time to vote. The Ex-Com makes strategic decisions about the Chapter's campaigns and overall functioning; it is your opportunity to make your voice heard.

Questions about the upcoming Chapter election? Call the SCO office at:

416-960-9606 or send your questions by e-mail to [deepah@sierraclub.ca](mailto:deepah@sierraclub.ca)



◆ from page 4 (Environment)

even provide evidence that the project would meet either condition. Both King Township and many citizens at the hearing argued that this project is only the first application to introduce heavy industry into the Protected Countryside as there will be, no doubt, other proposals to build in the area. The OMB decision has not been rendered due to the above-mentioned regulation.

**The selected generator site has been traditionally farmed for vegetables.** It is metres away



from the border of the famed Holland Marsh, Ontario's vegetable basket. Ontarians are increasingly embracing the concept of local food sources as a high-quality, environmentally sustainable stimulus to our local economy.

**The OPA has never presented a credible case for the need for a 393 MW peaker generator.** Citizens' arguments are always countered with another set of forecasts and rationale, especially unsubstantiated claims of potential brownouts. Ontario has been a net exporter of electricity since 2006, even prior to the economic downturn. The Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) reported that peak demand and total energy consumption have dropped in the same time frame. Moreover, IESO forecasts to 2018 show an almost 10% drop in total electricity consumption compared to 2005; peak demand is forecasted to have similar decrease. Repeated requests for actual electricity demand in NYR since 2007, to confirm the claimed reliability issue, have been inten-

tionally withheld from public scrutiny.

It is inexcusable of the province to use this regulation to exempt itself from the Planning Act, particularly at this late stage. There are alternative sites, including at least one in an industrial zoned area. There are also alternative solutions to the alleged need.

In response to this heavy-handed action by the province, legal action was launched on July 22 against the Ontario government to force it to stop ignoring democratically expressed concerns related to the peaker plant being developed in King Township. Plaintiffs include local citizens, two groups (Concerned Citizens of King Township and Green Action Priorities), and Mike Schreiner, leader of the Green Party of Ontario. King Township refused to join the action, as the regulation is "legal" and within the province's right to exercise.

The implications of a gas-fired generator being built in Protected Countryside of Ontario are enormous. Any area

allegedly protected by environmental legislation is at risk. Furthermore, the responsibility and accountability for municipalities to effectively manage land use planning in their jurisdictions are seriously undermined.

Premier Dalton McGuinty, Minister Rick Bartolucci (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing), Minister John Wilkinson (MOE) and Minister Brad Duguid (Ministry of Energy) must hear from you that the decision processes behind the placement of a gas-fired generator in Protected Countryside are not acceptable and that Ontarians are left with a serious distrust of the elected governments and their agencies. They also need to hear that there must be a full review of the decision to build York Energy Centre.

For details, updates and suggested actions, please visit: [www.kingtoday.ca](http://www.kingtoday.ca).

*Fred Jessop—Board Member Concerned Citizens of King Township  
David Kempton—Sierra Club Ontario; Concerned Citizens of King Township*

# GREEN ALLIANCES



Bernadette Zubrisky

**One of the ways that the Sierra Club functions is by working with other environmental agencies, community groups and activists. Through meet-and-greets, attending meetings and relevant political events and public consultations, we keep the word flowing among the enviro community.**

I've had the honour and pleasure of meeting some environmental heroes, especially related to the campaign to stop the Pickering Airport, and those working to form a measure of protection for these lands whether via a national park or land trust. Whatever measure of protection prevails, it is protection that is needed and that makes sense ecologically—to join the watersheds and forests and give biodiversity in the GTA a fighting chance in a future that will include perils other than development threats, such as global warming and climate change. This land borders both the Rouge Park and the Greenbelt, and it makes ecological and environmental sense to include it in conservation plans and create the largest unfragmented green space left in this part of southern Ontario. Biodiversity cannot be maintained without habitat that works and this would be working habitat for many species already on the brink locally.

One day in July, I met with Lorne Almack, veteran of the fight to protect these lands. He was an integral member of the first group to successfully fight down the first airport proposal, POP (People or Planes). Along with some other long-time activists such as Brian Buckles, Almack formed the Green Door Alliance to continue to lobby for protection. (Green Door has recently merged with Durham Conservation.) Almack has long been a champion of the wild and another claim to fame would be that he is a past president of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, which is now Ontario Nature.

Almack's knowledge and history run through the issues of the expropriation of the original farms, lost communities such as Brougham and Altona, and most of all the under-acknowledgement of the environmental significance of this land in question.

We met at his home, which he built himself and to which he has given eternal protection of its natural attributes through conservation easement. It is an oasis for wildlife near Claremont, Ont., virtually on the doorstep of the expropriated federal airport lands, a natural and important oasis of green magically spared from overdevelopment and urban sprawl by a host of follies and bad decisions made by our very own government agencies such as the federal Ministry of Transportation.

Though the original airport proposal was successfully fought down by POP in the late 1970s, the plans that were shelved and believed dead by many Ontario residents were quietly revived in 1998. The fight has resumed since then and includes many more allies such as the Sierra Club, Earthroots and Land Over Land-

ings. Poll after poll suggests that citizens on the whole do not support an airport built on the green lands of north Durham. People in general are more ecologically aware. They have seen the rampant destruction of farms and forests in the GTA over the past two decades and are fed up with row after row of suburbs and big box malls. People inherently know that as we destroy our natural world we are slowly destroying our own selves.

There is hope, there are allies but what is really needed is people to help keep this work up. Many of the people who have spent their lives on these issues are growing older. Groups such as the Sierra Club are largely run by volunteers. My own work as a vol-



The land expropriated by the federal government to build the proposed Pickering Airport is some of the world's finest farmland. The deep soil is full of nutrients extracted from rocks and boulders crushed long ago by advancing and retreating glaciers that carved the landscape of southern Ontario. Many countries of the world would treat this gift with much more respect than we do. The only value many place on this land is for the short-term monetary gain of paving it over. *Photo: Bernadette Zubrisky*

unteer with the Club began in 2005, but I have volunteered with many groups and campaigns over the past 20 years. Durham Region needs more committed volunteers as there is much work to be done to make the vision of protection, whether a national park or land trust, reality. If you or someone you know might be interested, please don't hesitate to contact the Sierra Club Ontario office.

Meeting Lorne Almack was an awesome experience. His wisdom and knowledge are truly inspirational. You can see Lorne, and learn more about the history of these issues, by watching the film *Last Stand* by Peter Shatalow. My only regret about our morning together was that I forgot to take photos! Star-struck for sure—sometimes the biggest stars are not in Hollywood or magazines but the very people who live and work in your community on your community issues.

## Volunteer Opportunities

We are unique amongst national and international environmental organizations in that volunteers are truly us. Our volunteers head committees and campaigns, partake in research, teaching and advocacy, and participate in events. Numerous opportunities exist to make a difference while learning valuable skills through practical experience.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT:**  
<http://ontario.sierraclub.ca/en/volunteer>



◆ from cover (*The Deepwater Horizon*) see a need for rehab.

Canada has its own dirty-not-so-secret source of fossil fuel: the Tar Sands. Canada is the biggest source of petroleum to the US market, and recently began providing double the amount of the second biggest provider: Mexico (US Energy Administration & Information). Previous articles in Sierra Club publications have covered the Tar Sands' worst impacts. I've gleaned from these some similarities between the Gulf drilling and the Tar Sands:

**1) Similar to Gulf pollution, the pollution from the Tar Sands is a burden on poor and indigenous populations.** Whether downstream of toxic tailings fluid or watching your marsh die in Louisiana, the biggest losers are those dependent on natural resources for subsistence and for a way of life—a way of life not as affluent and therefore not as politically influential as many wealthier North Americans.

**2) Greenhouse gas emissions from these industries are disproportionately high.** A first step is CONSERVATION—just consume less. That said, there are ways to power our cars, run our computers and light our homes that generate less greenhouse gases. Extraction and upgrading of tar sands oil produces 30-70% more greenhouse gas emissions than conventional oil production. Extraction from deepwater oil deposits is considered one of the most dangerous ways to drill for oil (another is drilling under ice—something Canada is considering now).

**3) Rare and important wetlands are being sacrificed.** According to the *Edmonton Journal*

(March 8, 2009), the settled area of Alberta has already lost 64% of its wetlands. It's not known how much has been lost in the unsettled area, since this is unregulated. See the Sierra Club Canada's Prairie Chapter website for current wetland discussions and how hard the mining industry is pushing back to prevent meaningful regulation in Alberta ([http://prairie.sierraclub.ca/water\\_wetlands\\_2010.htm](http://prairie.sierraclub.ca/water_wetlands_2010.htm)).



Coastal wetlands are protection against flooding and host high biodiversity and density of wildlife (key to their economic value in the Gulf). According to *National Geographic Daily News* (online May 25, 2010), the petroleum industry has caused great marsh loss and erosion with its 42,520 kilometres of onshore canals and pipelines from Alabama through Texas. Plus, the Gulf coastline has been literally sinking as fossil fuels are pumped out of the earth under them. "If oil kills off-marsh plants, wetlands will turn to

open water, putting the shallowly buried coastal pipelines at risk of ships strikes, storms, and corrosive salt water."

**4) The momentum is strong to keep extracting this dirty oil.** Tar sands permits have been doled out to Petro Canada, Royal Dutch Shell, Total and others. According to a recent Pembina Institute report: The Tar Sands mining carbon output more than doubled between 1990 and 2008 and the number could nearly triple by 2020. Similarly, between April and June of this year, 448 Gulf oil drilling permits were issued—198 of them in deepwater (*Mother Jones* magazine, June 17, 2010). We can count on the fact that additional pollution and more accidents will happen.

But, I can't end on such a sour note. As mentioned, I think conservation is the first step everyone needs to take. There are many good resources on this; the important part is to actually make these lifestyle changes. A next step is to support Sierra Club in our battles for better regulation. In the US, Sierra Club is at the front of the pack pushing for an end to drilling. In my new home, Canada, Sierra Club is trying to clean up our energy future on multiple levels. It will take massive public pressure to stop or significantly slow these industries, let's do our part!

*Kristina Jackson is the new Chapter Coordinator for Sierra Club Ontario. She moved to Toronto with her husband and two daughters (6 and 9 years old) this summer. Compared to Florida, Toronto's public transportation system rocks! She looks forward to selling her car (once Customs says it's legal to do so).*

◆ from page 3 (*Chair's Column*) inside." Nice idea.

To add support to Louv's argument, scientists recently studied a theory that dirt makes people smarter. Really. Researchers studied *Mycobacterium vaccae*, a bacterium found in soil. "When people spend time in nature they ingest or breathe in the bacteria," says researcher Dr. Dorothy Matthews of The Sage Colleges in Troy, New York. Laboratory mice fed the live bacteria performed maze tests twice as quickly as control group mice while also exhibiting less stress.

By extension, people who play outdoors may well be experiencing the same intelligence-boosting, stress-reducing benefits from dirt.

The final conclusion is not in, but odds are that this is one of a number of little-understood physical and psychological benefits the natural world offers us. Is our society's alarming dependence on antidepressants a function of its disassociation from the natural environment? It is a theory worth considering.

All of which leads me to the core message of this column. It is more and more obvious that the Sierra Club has no end of fights it might engage in to preserve and protect the environment. There are, unfortunately, too many to list.

The result is that we have spread our resources dangerously thin over the past decade in the battle against environmental degradation in its many forms. This applies as much to the entire Sierra Club as

it does to the Ontario Chapter.

The work we have done is exceptional in spite of our limited resources. I wonder, though, if we were to concentrate on our core mission of making the outdoors accessible to as many people as possible would we provide an essential service to humankind few others offer? We cannot be Greenpeace. We cannot be the World Wildlife Fund, nor the Suzuki Foundation, or one of those flavour-of-the-month environmental organizations. We probably don't want to be the Sea Shepherd Society.

What we can do and what we do exceptionally well, based on more than a century of experience, is engage people with the natural world around them. We can reconnect people to the out-of-doors. We can enhance their enjoyment of nature by explaining it in a way that makes visceral sense—by doing, touching, tasting, climbing, hiking . . . We can support large policy initiatives that preserve and protect natural environments so people can enjoy them.

It makes sense to concentrate on a societal tipping point that leverages the Club's core competencies. We can get people outside again. We can celebrate areas of great natural beauty. By doing it we may well help save the next generation from indifference—not to mention a host of health problems.

**IT IS TIME TO GET DIRTY. JOIN IN.**

◆ from page 3 (Chapter Director's)

inaction and delay is difficult to muster. US President Barack Obama has often provided voice to the urgency of the climate crisis and the need for immediate action. His post-Toronto G20 remarks omitted any reference to climate change. It is not encouraging that Obama's efforts at getting the US Congress to pass a meaningful climate change bill have stalled. His willingness to accept a watered-down version is a huge concern given that the president's starting point was not to the standard that most climate experts agree is needed to stop the inexorable climb of the global thermometer. It is unlikely that even a compromise climate bill will be passed by Congress this year.

The post-G20 report card on the climate

change performance of the world's leaders is clearly failing marks all around. No discernible progress was made by the politicians who must lead the way to global action. None of them chose to publicly criticize this collective inaction. The most optimistic view possible from the G20 meeting is that serious discussion was postponed for another day. Meanwhile, the clock continues to tick and the temperature continues to rise.

As stated earlier, my judgment that the Toronto G20 meeting was a climate change failure is not limited to the role of the participating governments. The organized protests also failed to place the climate crisis front and centre in their messaging. The environmentalists who did participate saw their messages dissolve in a cacophonous

soup of cries that were heard and reported by the media as opposing the legitimacy of the G8 and G20 processes. Even this garbled cry of frustration was ultimately overshadowed by the actions of the organized and tactically effective "Black Bloc" anarchists, who emerged from the cover of the organized march, rampaged unchecked through the downtown core and then melted back into the main demonstration in the classic fashion of guerrillas disappearing back into the populace after a raid.

The police overreaction that followed only served to further obliterate any and all messages that the bulk of the demonstrators intended to convey. The tired mantra of "diversity of tactics" has been trotted out before as a cover for movement organizers who seem unable to understand that this sophistry simply results in those who break windows and burn cop cars, obliterating every other message from every other demonstrator. Tired also is the complaint that the real fault lies with the media that only covers these extreme acts. One can complain about the unfairness of the law of gravity to similar effect.

The Toronto G20 weekend was a disaster and a missed opportunity for Planet Earth. The ever-mounting evidence that action to mitigate climate change must come now and must involve huge and immediate changes to our carbon-emitting business-as-usual approach is irrefutable. Stephen Harper and his G20 colleagues carry the weight of the world and their failure is extreme and unfortunate. The sad reality of the Toronto G20 is that no one spoke effectively for the earth and about climate change as the clear and present threat to our planet.

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