

May 2008

# RENewsLetter



## This Month's Articles:

Click on links below—if you're online

[Opening Salvo](#)  
[Hottest Issue](#)  
[Other Hot Issues](#)  
[On The Positive](#)  
[The Silent Stories](#)  
[Ongoing Concerns](#)  
[News](#)  
[UPDATES](#)  
[Events](#)  
[Action](#)  
[Site of the Month](#)

\* 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

### Global Warming and Ranking Rochester

Rochester got an ego boost in May ranking 14<sup>th</sup> for the least amount of carbon emissions for major US cities. While it's good to note that our fair Eastern city (Western cities on the whole ranked lower than Eastern cities) did well for less carbon emissions) it's also important to note that this study was not comprehensive. It "used data from 2005 that measured only power-plant emissions related to residential energy use and emissions from cars and trucks" (-from [Rochester ranks 14th best in national study of cities' carbon emissions](#)) and left a lot of other factors out. Some of the things we despair about (like higher prices for energy here in our upstate city and our short summer air conditioning use) actually accounts for some of our good numbers.

This report, the [Shrinking the Carbon Footprint of Metropolitan America - Brookings Institution](#), would be dizzyingly optimistic if it were not for a sense of history and the wider issue of assessing environmental sustainability. We have had over the years many other reports that indicate troubling issues with [Rochester's air quality](#) however you slice up the figures—carbon emission, smog, industrial pollutants, asthma data, or ground level ozone. And, because of the

nature of environmental factors, Rochester's air quality cannot be isolated from the rest of the world's environmental indicators—climate, industrial pollution from Western power plants, lake effect weather, dust, other debris from faraway events (like volcanoes) and jet emissions—even if you can do so on paper. In the real world, trying to measure all the factors that influence our air quality is just about impossible.

One of the reasons I created RochesterEnvironment.com was to counteract the inclination of science and the media to compartmentalize environmental news and information so that a clearer picture of how our



community's environmental profile fits into the mosaic of the world's environment. Of course I understand that in order to measure what is actually going on in our environment producing measurable data and real-time reporting is crucial. But, studies and new reports that trump previous reports does not give an accurate picture of our environment-nor anyone else's. In other words, Rochester is part of the whole. Earth's environment is One and we cannot really isolate Rochester's climate gas releases or anything else from our neighbors and beyond.

So, how do we reconcile this optimistic report by the Brookings Institution with some past stories on our air, including May's environmental news that the New York State Attorney



### [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.*

---

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

#### [Print our Brochure](#)

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

*Listing on [RochesterEnvironment.com](#) on your site is promoting your site.*

General is suing the EPA for adopting lax smog standards?

- Rochester, NY is 75th Worst of 100 U.S. Cities For Asthma. Get the report: [http://www.asthmacapitals.com/asthma\\_capitals2006.pdf](http://www.asthmacapitals.com/asthma_capitals2006.pdf) - Sources: Asthma and Allergy Foundation, "2006 Asthma Capitals -- The Most Challenging Places to Live with Asthma."
- [The Rochester area leads the state](#) when it comes to the most neighborhoods with the highest health-risk measures from industrial pollutants. That's according to an analysis of federal pollution, health and census data analyzed by The Associated Press. -- [WGRZ-TV -- 2 On Your Side in Western New York Home Page](#)
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says the Rochester region is failing to meet new health standards for ground level ozone pollution. As a result, motorists in the Rochester area may be forced to buy reformulated gasoline which costs more per gallon. (April 17, 2004) [Public NewsRoom](#)
- [Rochester is No. 1 in the nation for releases](#) of cancer-causing industrial chemicals, according to a new analysis of 13 years of data on such materials. - (1/23/03)- [DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE](#) - Get the Report [Toxics Release and Health Report](#) (.pdf file) -from [New York Public Interest Research Group \(NYPIRG\)](#)
- [Democrat & Chronicle: Local air gets an F for ozone](#) Monroe and Wayne counties cited in Lung Association survey Almost half of U.S. residents live in areas with unhealthy amounts of ozone, the ground-hugging pollutant that contributes to respiratory disease. That's according to a new American Lung Association report, "State of the Air: 2003." The report, a state-by-state look (available online at [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)), comes on the eve of White House provisions that would weaken the Clean Air Act, the group said. "State of the Air" also ranks U.S. counties where ozone pollution -- measured by "high ozone days" -- is significant. Monroe County was one of 18 New York counties to receive a grade of "F" -- worse than last year, when the county received a "D." (May 1, 2003) [Democrat and Chronicle](#)
- According to the [View the State of the Air 2002 Report for New York](#) by [American Lung Association of Western New York](#) Monroe County does not fair well. Check the chart [ALA State of the Air 2002 -New York](#). Monroe County with a total population of 712, 419 has 9, 443 cases of pediatric asthma, 40,549 cases of adult asthma, 23, 1701 cases of chronic bronchitis, and 7, 721 cases of emphysema.
- [Ozone levels remain unsafe](#) Report finds Rochester had unhealthy smog concentrations seven days over the summer --10/06/99 [DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE](#). Also, read from CNN.com: [Smog sends 53,000 to hospital each summer](#).
- [Rochester on pollution list](#). Study says coal power plants kill 30,000 in U.S. each year -- Pollution from U.S. coal-fired power plants causes 30,000 avoidable deaths a year, a Boston research group says. (October 18, 2000) [DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE](#)

My point here is not to trash the Brookings report or Rochester's efforts at reducing our carbon footprint. I merely want to point out that all studies on our quality of air, including our carbon footprints, have to be seen over a long time in order to get a real sense of what is actually going on. In other words, what does it all mean? Is Rochester's air quality sustainable? Are our policies, our daily practices (which influence the release of methane gas), and all outside influences moving us towards the lessening of Global Warming on this planet?

Or, are we blinding ourselves with the most recent studies that come around? Not seeing the forest because of the trees? Have our studies (which will always be limited in one way or another) merely misleading us because they are only a snapshot at a particular point in time, only a piece in the worldwide puzzle of climatic influences, lulling us into a state of irrational comparisons with other communities with whom we share this planet? Like ink dropped into a glass of water, whatever we do or don't do on climate change will be affected by all other communities' air quality—what they do or don't do. So, how can we really evaluate our carbon footprint if we cannot separate ourselves from every other community, state, or country—or



measure every factor that affects climate?

Of course, we must have such studies and continually monitor our own efforts here in Rochester and try and tease out what things we are doing right in order to not only improve our own efforts but share that information with others. And yet, Global Warming gases are not one-dimensional, they are multidimensional: past, present, and another dimension which is a part of what everyone else does. Environmental studies reported to the public must be archived, and compared with all other studies, in all other communities around the world so that we can actually measure our footprints on our environment.

My point: Like it or not, taking over the machinations of the planet, like controlling our carbon output, is going to be a herculean task. Resting on the positive results of one study, admits the legacy of many not-so-positive studies, is myopic.

## Hottest Issues This Month

I think it's a first that [Recycling](#) (for this newsletter) has become the hottest issue of this month. The [Bigger Better Bottle Bill](#) (BBBB) has the best chance to pass on June 23<sup>rd</sup> than at any other point in its long history. When you realize that over 80% of the New York State public wants this bill, which will help recover more than 25% of the potentially recyclable bottles that are now festering in the ground, you have to ask yourself, who, who purports to care about our environment, would be against such a thing? Yet, there are those against this bill, of course, for various reasons, though I have to say the most spurious is a remark from a citizen that she is tired of taking recyclable items to the curb every week.

Well, in the same flippant disregard for those you don't share his view, remember what Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia who, when told on the CBS program "Sixty Minutes" that many were still angry that the Supreme Court decision over the 2000 presidential elections, said dismissively, "Get over it." (Sorry, I couldn't resist that.) Everyone really should recycle, whether they like it or not.

Yet, the reasonableness of this bill, which would remove so much manmade waste from our environment, and the support from so many people—the Governor of New York, on down to all the state and Rochester-area environmental groups who want this bill, makes one question the motives of those obstructing the Bigger Better Bottle Bill. Those against this sensible bill obviously [Don't Get It!](#).

Besides all the trouble that some say it will be to cart more stuff to the curb, or the grocery stores will have to collect and haul away all these bottles (though they will be compensated for it), here are the reasons for passing this bill: It will include bottled water, iced tea, juice and other non-carbonated beverages, which make up about 25% of beverage sales; cut beverage container litter in half in rural areas and along fields; require the beverage industry to return unclaimed nickel deposits to the state, to be used for important agricultural environmental programs, such as farmland protection and agricultural water quality; redirect beverage containers from disposal to recycling; saving taxpayers' money by keeping these containers out of our municipal waste stream; and save an additional 3.3 million barrels of oil and preventing 281,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year by using recyclable materials to manufacture new products.

\*\*\* **Don't forget:** I can only cover a fraction of the environmental issues pertaining to Rochester, NY. Please check out all the [news, updates](#), and my blog [Environmental Thoughts](#).

### 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](#)

---

*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.

## Other Hot Environmental Issues

There are a lot of hot environmental stories for the month of May and I only have space to mention a few. Out of Chicago is a story about how Global Warming could deplete the waters of the Great Lakes. And, one of our local congressmen now thinks drilling in [Arctic National Wildlife Refuge](#) is a good idea because gas prices are up. But, it's no better an idea than it's been for the numerous years

the proponents of this bad idea have been pushing it. The goal I thought was to reduce our dependence on oil, divert the disaster of Global Warming and push for renewable energy sources—but the prices of gas goes up, as it will with a limited resource. It's so easy to just keep digging even though we are in a hole that may make our environment unsustainable. Harder, but more sustainable, would be to change direction and find a better energy source that doesn't tear up a pristine arctic refuge and further increase our Global Warming problem.

There are more stories about [Energy](#) in May, as our rising gas prices will focus our attention on this issue for some time. Wind farms, if



[Air Quality in Rochester, NY](#)

approved, may go up near the town of Geneva, and more coming all over the state. [Wind Power](#) is a renewable energy source that New York State can excel at and despite the innumerable arguments against it we must move in this direction.

As a follow up on the alleged “blocked the publication of an exhaustive federal study of environmental hazards in the eight Great Lakes states” –from [Great Lakes Danger Zones? | The Center For Public Integrity | Investigative Journalism in the Public Interest](#) there's a updated report out of Detroit: [Great Lakes pollution, health link denied](#) “No definitive link can be made between industrial pollution in the Great Lakes region and human health concerns, according to a revised version of a controversial federal study released Wednesday.” I feel better about this issue already, don't you? Keep up with this story on [The Watch List](#)—environmental issues that should be on your radar.

There's another good report (for Rochester at least) about particulate matter and ozone from the American Lung Association in a report called: [NEW YORK AIR QUALITY: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY](#) - Lung Association's 2008 State of the Air Report Chronicles Unhealthy Ozone, Soot Levels.” According to the report, “Elmira, Rochester, and Utica-Rome made the national list of cleanest cities for ozone. Rochester is one of only 2 cities over 1 million in population to make the list.”

## On the Positive Note

Tree planting is on the rise this spring. Over 2, 000 'bare-root evergreens' were planted at Mendon Ponds under the Monroe County Reforestation Program. Each mature tree in the average Northeastern forest can offset 20 to 50 pounds of carbon dioxide according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Thousands of children planted flowers in Ontario Beach Park, and the Community Tree Team from the City of Rochester planted 13 trees.

In spite of all the controversy surrounding the [2008 Farm Bill](#), there are some positive things to look for in our area in the new (expensive) bill—including protecting and preserving our [Great Lakes](#) and some funding for [viral hemorrhagic septicemia \(VHS\)](#).

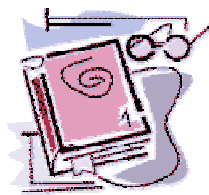
Maybe one of the silver linings in the gas crunch we are feeling presently is the rise in commuters using bikes. There are several articles about biking in the Rochester area, now that the high gas prices make this way of commuting more desirable. But, let's face it commuting to work by bike must be taken on carefully and prudently: Not only must



[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](#).



bicyclists follow the rules of the road, those commuting by bike must hope that vehicular divers also follow the rules of the road—of which bicycles have as much right as gas-powered vehicles. A group in Canandaigua is forming to help make biking to major destinations in their area more safe and as I put away my car and begin to bike, I myself (as Conservation Chair of the Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club) wish to form a like group to make biking in the city more safe and assessable. (More on this program as I have time to pursue it.)

*Essays – by Frank J. Regan*

*Connecting the dots.*

## On-Going Concerns

We have been monitoring the Bee Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) for months now and the scientific community around the world does not seem much closer to finding the cause. That is troubling and tragic because bee pollination is critical to our area's agriculture. Rochesterians Against the Misuse of Pesticides (RAMP) suggests (in their newsletter) that genetically modified foods could be the culprit. However, the take home message from this increased concern about CCD is that there is little funding by the government for studies on CCD. This should be unacceptable. We cannot find out what the cause is of this critical bee disease (or white nose bat disease) until organizations like universities do exhaustive studies. And, they don't have sufficient funds to do the studies. So, regardless of what side of the political isle you sit on, our government should be funding these studies. Call it national security by protecting our agriculture if that is how you have to frame it. But, adopting an attitude that it's not the government's role, or that's just too bad for the bees and bats, is irrational and perilous to our [environmental health](#).



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

May was [Lyme Disease](#) month and it should remind us of a regional seasonal disease that, along with [West Nile Virus](#), comes around as the good weather comes around. Both, though not usually fatal for people with good immune systems, are diseases now prone to our area and require a modicum of awareness for prevention. [West Nile Virus](#) is going to be with us for a long time and incidents of this invasive disease increase as our weather gets warmer. Get the [Dead Crow Report Form](#) and other WNV info from Monroe County.



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

Stop me if you have heard this story, but out of Canada comes a story and a problem where Cameco, the world's largest uranium producer might have leaked some uranium into the Great Lakes—near the Capitol of Ottawa. That's just north and a little east of us across Lake Ontario. I have not heard much about this story, so I don't know about it. That's because there's not much news about it, which does not mean it's not a problem. (Sorry about all the double-negatives, but the lack of news on such an important subject kinda leaves you out there.) Nuclear power (oh, there was also a story in May about a little problem at Ginna, our nuclear power facility in Webster) which may well be, as many have described, "the safest and cleanest" energy available. But then again, it has to be. When you think about the possible environmental and health damage from nuclear energy and how sophisticated this form of energy is, you realize that there isn't much room for error. We are truly grabbing a tiger by the tail if we latch on to nuclear energy.

**[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. Send to [Frank Regan](#).*

## 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>

## RochesterEnvironment.com

"It's where you live."

CONTACT - E-MAIL:

[FrankRegan@RochesterEnvironment.com](mailto:FrankRegan@RochesterEnvironment.com)



### 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.

Copyright © 1998

[\[RochesterEnvironment.com\]](http://RochesterEnvironment.com)

All rights reserved.

For problems or questions regarding this web contact

E-MAIL:

[FrankRegan@RochesterEnvironment.com](mailto:FrankRegan@RochesterEnvironment.com)

Thank you webmasters for linking with RochesterEnvironment.com

If you caught it, there is another hazardous waste collection coming up. We should be storing these hazardous waste items the best we can and be on the look-out in the news when these events occur. I often get requests from visitors to RochesterEnvironment.com wondering what to do with all kinds of old computers, paints, and other hazardous waste that absolutely should not be carted out to the curb for your trash hauler to toss in the ground. For many items, it's unlawful to have them trashed this way. So, until some enterprising company in this region comes up with a way to reuse some of these hazardous waste products we throw away (this is the overall best solution to this problem because it creates news jobs and keeps all waste from going into the ground), the next best way to dispose of them is to wait until one of these hazardous waste collection events comes up. I will continually post hazardous waste events in my [Environmental Calendar](#).

As discussed above, one of the most important actions you can take this month is to let your state congress know that you want the Bigger Better Bottle Bill passed. Many groups have made it easy for you to do online: The [Rochester Regional Group of the Sierra Club's BBBB](#). Or [NYPIRG's NYPIRG: Bottle Bill](#). Or, [Saving Wildlife Home's Wildlife Conservation Society -- New Yorkers - Protect Your Environment!](#) It's just too easy to do the right thing and get this major legislation passed.

## News Summary for this month

Get all the Rochester- area environmental news Go **May 2008** News-links

[http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/news%20archive/may\\_2008\\_news.htm](http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/news%20archive/may_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 **May 2008** Daily Updates

[http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/Updates%20Archive/update\\_may\\_2008.htm](http://www.rochesterenvironment.com/Updates%20Archive/update_may_2008.htm)

## Environmental Events for this month

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

## Rochester-area Environmental Site of the Month



A great new environmental health blog from the [University of Rochester Health Center](#): Blogs are a ubiquitous entity now around the web and everyone gets their say. But, some blogs because of their expertise and reputation rise above the usual, especially this blog with its distinguished list of blogger. Check this blog out from the University of Rochester often and chime in on our area's environmental health issues.

[Community Health V.O.I.C.E.](#) <http://urmch.wordpress> The Community Health VOICE (Volunteer, Organize, Innovate, Collaborate, Empower) Blog was created to serve as a forum for faculty, staff, students, residents and fellows at the University of Rochester Medical Center and our partners in the Rochester area and beyond who are engaged or have an interest in community-based health services, education, research, and advocacy.