

/// VALLEY EXPLORER



Skip Doyle shot this scene on the Hudson River while paddling south in 2011. PHOTO COURTESY OF SKIP DOYLE

By Skip Doyle

Editor's Note: This is the second installment of Skip Doyle's account of a paddling trip he took down the Hudson River in September 2011, to mark the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001.

Day 2: Sept. 12, Castleton to Catskill (25 miles)

Rising at 5 a.m. to the rushing rumble of a tugboat speeding down the dark river on the ebb tide, I exited my tent to a full moon setting in the west.



Skip Doyle

After a bowl of cereal as I loaded my gear into the kayak, one club member was also getting an early start.

"Anything I can help you with?" he asked. "Just making a few final gear adjustments." I answered.

I was on the water by 6 a.m. to enjoy the morning mist and sunrise. The pond-still river greeted me with every manner of creatures: jumping fish, gliding eagles, deer drinking at the shore and every sort of sea bird.

Under the Route 90/Thruway bridge ahead, I heard the massive diesel engine of a tugboat with a cement barge leaving

port down the river. I was grateful for those people willing to make a living in an environment of constant noise, and was grateful that unnatural intrusion would soon be out of sight and earshot to leave me in the peace.

My first stop of the day was Coeyman's Marina for a bathroom break. The greeters could easily have foisted me off to a port-a-potty in the park. Instead, they made the effort to lead me through the various marine buildings to the members' lounge where they entered the combination to the lock for this private facility giving me access. Cox-sackie, Athens, Hudson all looked like attractive villages from the river, though I did not go ashore

to explore.

While I paddled down the channel, I think it would have been more scenic to scoot behind Rattlesnake and Cossackie islands. Approaching Hudson, I did stay out of the channel and instead paddled down the quiet, west side of the Middle Ground Flats. Despite having the invaluable Hudson River Water Trail Guide with me in the cockpit, often the water was too rough to cease paddling and consult it. While the tide had turned against me, I felt that was a minor factor compared to the south wind that had picked up, and the chop along with it.

Lunch I enjoyed on the Athens-Hudson lighthouse. What I found inter-

esting is that as a humongous container ship passed, it left no wake, whereas a passing fishing vessel had the dock bobbing ferociously. From the lighthouse to the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, I would have paddled the more quiet eastern side of Rogers Island, but it was choked with water chestnuts that forced me into the channel and around the western side of the island. Waves were bouncy, but not so severe as to hinder me from photographing Olana in the soft evening light.

I entered Catskill Creek at 6 p.m. and docked at Riverview Marina, where only one sail-

or was on the dock. "Where can I find the dockmaster?" I asked.

"(He)'s gone for the day," the sailor replied, "but just tie up over there."

Which I did, leaving the dockmaster a note that the kayak would be there overnight.

My early arrival gave me ample time for a real Italian dinner. And while the downtown bed and breakfast was closed, the proprietor graciously called a taxi and made a reservation for me at one of the Thruway hotels. Off to a shower, a real bed and a good night's sleep.

Skip Doyle is a member of the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Adirondack Mountain Club. "Valley Explorer" is a regular column in My Valley by hiking enthusiasts.

/// THE DIRT

Local farming has promising future

By Terry Platz

The following is a Q&A by Terry Platz of Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries of Clarkson University with Kathleen Frith, president of Glyn-



Terry Platz

wood, one of the nation's leading sustainable agriculture and food organizations. Frith's work aims to empower communities to support farming, conserve farmland and promote emerging sustainable agriculture techniques. This, and Frith's experience as former director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School and current adviser to the Ocean Foundation, will be called upon in a panel discussion Thursday at Beacon Institute's Center for Environmental Innovation and

Education at Denning's Point in Beacon.

Why is regional and sustainable agriculture so important for the Hudson Valley?

Frith: A thriving, regional food system throughout the Hudson Valley is healthier, not just for human health, but also for the region's economic and environmental health, and for our communities.

For the first time since 1900, the lifespan of the average American is expected to decrease, due largely to obesity and other diet-related factors.

Americans eat 31 percent more packaged food than fresh food, an inadequate diet filled with empty, processed food. They consume more packaged food per person than their counterparts in nearly all other countries.

Increasing access to regional, sustainably produced fruits and vegeta-

IF YOU GO

What: "Watershed & Agriculture: The past, present & future of farming and fresh water" with Continental Organic's Michael C. Finnegan, Glynwood's Kathleen Frith and Clarkson University environmental engineering and agriculture expert Shane Rogers. A talk to explore the effects of industrial agriculture on our freshwater supply, moderated by Fred Osborn III, commissioner, Taconic Region, New York State Parks.

When: 7 p.m. Sept. 19.

Where: Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries, Clarkson University Center for Environmental Innovation and Education, 199 Dennings Ave., Beacon.

Cost: Free. Advance online registration is requested.

Web: View all of Beacon Institute's 2013 events at www.bire.org/events.

bles and advocating for a more balanced diet are needed to reverse these trends.

A main contribution of regional food production is to develop local economies that are currently losing out on dollars that are bypassing our communities and instead, funding large-scale agriculture and big food com-

panies.

Consider the impact of Hunt's Point in New York City, the largest food distribution center in the world, where only 4 percent of the products moved each day are grown or raised in New York.

Imagine the potential for direct sales through community supported ag-



Kathleen Frith.

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riculture (CSAs) or farmers markets where a community's food dollars stay in the region.

Conventional agriculture carries a host of environmental threats.

Not only is the agriculture sector a major user of our global water supply (accounting for an estimated 70 percent of its use), but U.N.-Water estimates the food sector contributes approximately 40 percent of water pollutants in industrialized countries.

The current runoff from agriculture lands draining into the Mississippi River is causing a "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico that has been estimated to be twice the size of Texas.

Building a robust, re-

gional food system can help to reverse all these stark realities and foster human well-being, economic vitality, environmental health and strong communities.

The Hudson Valley is an exemplary region for this important work given its rich, agricultural heritage, extensive history of land conservation efforts, and close proximity to one of the largest food markets in the country — New York City.

The Hudson Valley's foodshed has unparalleled potential that can not only provide immeasurable benefits to our region but also set an important example for others across the nation to follow.

Terry Platz is associate public affairs officer for the Beacon Institute of Rivers and Estuaries in Beacon. "The Dirt" is a regular feature in My Valley.

Malik

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lar access. The results indicated that my roof had 87 percent solar access May through October, 81 percent April through November, an average of 85 percent. I had the numbers I needed to qualify for solar.

I was in seventh heaven. The instrument iden-

tified 11 trees to take down. I was also told that before any paperwork could be submitted to NY-SERDA for approval, a repeat analysis would have to be done, showing the final analysis sans the trees.

I was advised not to wait too long because of limited funds in the state budget and the time it would take for the paperwork to go through the process.

I was so excited, I called the person I always call when I need trees taken down after storms, Rick Consolato from Tree Top Service. I told him what I needed done, why and when. The tree service team is not supposed to cut down healthy trees, but since three trees were leaning toward the house and the others were for solar, they agreed to take them down.

Consolato was leaving for vacation soon, but since I am a longtime customer, agreed to cut my trees before leaving. I did get a few more estimates in the meantime and was satisfied I was getting a good deal.

On a sunny day, a team of people came to take down my trees.

As I watched Consolato go up in the bucket and start sawing the first tree and his partner start on

another tree, I started having panic attacks. What was I doing, cutting down my gorgeous trees? How could I live with myself after this?

I consoled my breaking heart by thinking of the solar panels the trees will replace.

The trees were growing over my house and posed a threat. I will have fewer leaves to rake, less stuff in my gutters, no more green growth on my

deck and outdoor furniture. My roses and lilacs will be happier. The snow should melt on my driveway faster.

And maybe, with shade replaced by sun, I may even build myself a rain garden.

Next: Selecting an installer.

Lalita Malik is a member of the Dutchess County Environmental Management Council.