

Cary Institute on a mission

By **CHRISTINE BATES**
Staff Reporter

MILLBROOK—For more than 25 years, The Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook has been on a mission to not only conduct environmental research on critical issues like air and water pollution and global climate change, but to communicate findings to decision makers, land managers, educators and the interested public. For example, the acid rain research of Cary ecologist Gene Likens led to amendments in the Clean Air Act.

Under the leadership of William Schlesinger, the Cary Institute is reaching out in every way possible—through lectures, newsletters, education programs, seminars, tours, press conferences, the Internet and even conference calls. On Thursday afternoons the public can attend high-level specialized scientific seminars on topics ranging from restoring species diversity to the dynamics of entomopathogens.

This week, on Friday, Feb. 25, at 7 p.m., the Cary will be screening the movie, "Food, Inc.," free to everyone who wants to learn how cheap, industrialized food affects human health and the environment.

The next day, Sunday, Feb. 27, at 2 p.m., is the annual winter walk over the snowy trails of the 2,000-acre institute. There's an adult version and the family-friendly group. Last winter so many people showed up that this year reservations are required. Call 845-677-7600, ext. 121, or e-mail freemanp@caryinstitute.org.

Last week on Wednesday, Feb. 16, Schlesinger joined Cary scientist Charles Canham, Thomas Buchholz of the University of Vermont and Steven Hamburg, the chief scientist of the Environmental Defense Fund, on a conference call to discuss the results of a recently released research report entitled, "Forest Biomass and Bioenergy: Opportunities and Constraints in the Northeastern United States."

The report investigates the availability of forest resources and how sustainable use of biomass can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and foreign oil dependence while promoting rural economies.

The research showed that New York state and the rest of the Northeast have more trees than at any time in the last century. However, even if all of these trees were harvested on a sustainable basis, only 1 to 2 percent of the total fossil fuel energy used in the region would be replaced.

Targeting specific energy sectors such as residential heating is

a better approach. Cary's research estimates that using biomass to produce pellets could reduce the region's fossil fuel use by 16 percent.

"In targeted applications, the heat generated by locally-grown biomass can reduce dependence

on fossil fuels and support local economies," said Canham, a co-author of the report. "But each forested landscape is different, and regional variation in forest conditions and energy infrastructure means there is no one-size-fits-all solution."

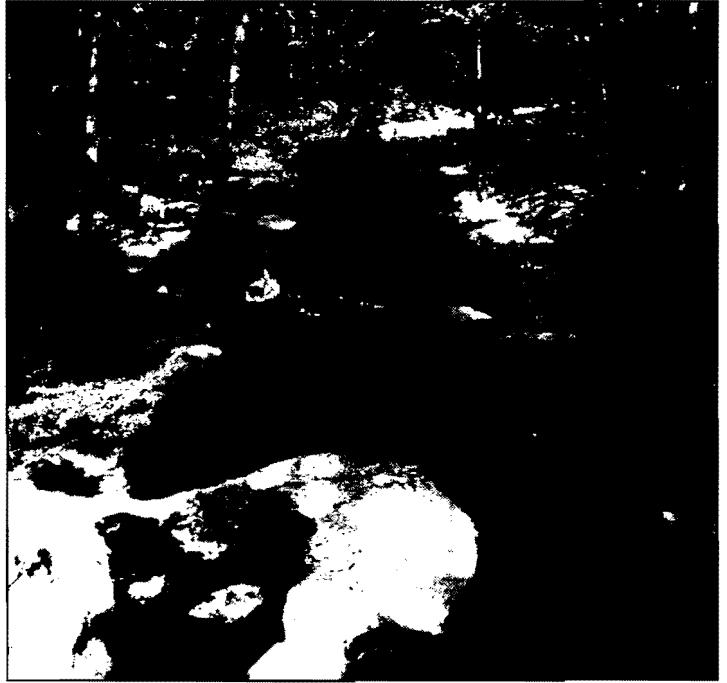


PHOTO BY CHRISTINE BATES.

The Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies' winter walk will stop at Fern Glenn to admire the east branch of Wappinger Creek, which winds through the Cary Institute. Cary educators will lead groups exploring the Cary Institute trails on Sunday, Feb. 27, at 2 p.m.