



The Trailblazer

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Progress on the Feed-in-Tariff Front

By Robert Ciesielski

In early June 2012, the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA), at the urging of Governor Cuomo in the NY-Sun Initiative, established a solar Feed-in-Tariff. LIPA agreed to purchase solar power at the rate of 22 cent per kilowatt-hour under 20-year contracts. Within six weeks, the top tiers of the demonstration project dealing with large plans were oversubscribed. In late October, LIPA expanded its Feed-in-Tariff project to 170 megawatts, including 20 megawatts from wind, geothermal and other renewable energy sources. A recent study by Synapse found all of Long Island's residential units could be powered by renewable (wind, solar, and water) energy by 2020, and the entire island, including businesses, by 2030. The Niagara Group is attempting to obtain a similar Feed-in-Tariff demonstration project in Western New York.

The international successes of the Feed-in-Tariff project over the last year have been enormous. Since the fall of 2011, Germany's Feed-in-Tariff program has

increased its clean renewable electricity production from 17% to 25% of the country's total output. Japan adopted an aggressive Feed-in-Tariff in July 2011, after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Japan expects solar installations alone to provide at least 3.2 gigawatts (3,200 megawatts of electricity), or the equivalent of approximately 3 nuclear plants. The Ontario Canadian two-year report on its Feed-in-Tariff showed that it had produced contracts for 4,600 megawatts of renewable energy within the first two years of its existence. They are expecting up to 50,000 jobs in renewable energy as a result of the program. Italy recently adopted a Feed-in-Tariff model, after struggling for years with a Renewable Portfolio Standard similar to what we currently have in New York State.

And how about the United States? President Obama's re-election has encouraged suggestions to create a national Feed-in-Tariff Program, developing renewable energy utilizing a system of funding simi-

lar to the National Highway Trust Fund. The President would set a national standard for Feed-in-Tariffs through the authority of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Decisions by FERC last year opened the way for states to establish Feed-in-Tariffs. If a state requires that a certain portion of its electricity have to be produced from renewable energy sources, prices can be established for these renewables to be purchased by utilities. Revenues collected from a Feed-in-Tariff would go into a National Energy Trust Fund; just as a portion of our gasoline taxes go into the National Highway Trust Fund. These funds could be distributed to states that elect to implement Feed-in-Tariffs and meet or exceed federal guidelines. (See Chris Neider's 11/14/12 article *Beyond Carbon Policy Coal and the National Feed-in-Tariff* at www.smartplanet.com.)

Renewable Energy in Niagara County

By Ed McGreevy

Clean renewable energy installations are on the rise in Niagara County territory. On October 13, 2012, WNY Sustainable Energy Association conducted its most recent WNY Solar and Green Building tour and included Lewiston's Niagara Power Vista Solar project. Two other solar sites in Niagara County are located at the Town of Porter Hall and the Youngstown Presbyterian Church. J.B. Spiddall, a member of the Youngstown congregation, credits other members who

have installed solar panels at their homes as catalysts to this most recent action. The church congregation business committee considered the rising cost of electricity as an important factor in the decision to implement this solar energy project, resulting in the installation of 116 solar panels, activated in August 2012. Mr. Spiddall characterizes this development as encouraging and a model for their community.

To Frack or Not to Frack *That is not the question*

By Lynda Schneekloth

I like to take people at their word, especially people who have power over my life and the life of future generations. So Governor Cuomo, I want to believe you when you say you will use science, not politics, to decide whether to frack New York. But today, I have to question my first urge to believe politicians with power because the DEC has just issued proposed regulations in advance of the results of the promised study on the health effects of fracking and rejected media and public requests to make the health review public, December 2012.

The requested 'health study' (a comprehensive formal protocol developed by the UDC and the World Health Organization) has been reduced to a literature review that is due this week. The three experts selected by the DEC have each been contested by an industry group — OK. However, science relies on two basic principles — the validity of the question to be researched and the selection of methods to be deployed. A literature review is a legitimate, albeit compromised, form of inquiry, but which studies will be reviewed? Selected by whom?

The most critical issue: what are these three experts being asked to do? We don't know, as this is not public information. However, a statement by Dr. Lynn Goldman, one of the three experts, in the *Buffalo News* is revealing: ". . . can New York do this in a way that is safe — understanding that safety has to be in the context of 'in comparison to what?'" In comparison to renewables? Obviously not, as earlier in the article this same expert states, "A decision not to frack is a decision to use more coal."

The entire discussion of fracking is irrelevant since the science is clear: we have to stop using fossil fuels NOW in light of impacts of global climate change. Further, Governor Cuomo, the science also says the world can, right now, move to 100% renewables! A recent study published in *Scientific American* by Mark Jacobson and Mark Delucchi outlines how this can be done worldwide by 2030. They propose, for example, that wind can supply 51% of energy demand by providing 3.8 million large wind turbines. That sounds impossible until we remember that the world manufactures 73 million cars and light trucks every year.

RECYCLING & REUSING TIPS & TIDBITS

By Ron Missel

THE OTHER STUFF – AND WHAT TO DO WITH IT....

We've all been recycling for some time now and we're generally familiar with the items that can be placed in our residential or business recycle receptacles. Newspapers, tin cans, glass jars, food boxes and so on are the obvious. But what about those items that can't be recycled by your local trash hauler – like electronics, batteries, prescription medicines, paints and solvents, food scraps, etc. Can they be recycled elsewhere? Many can, and here's what to do.

First, go to your municipality web-site for guidelines, rules and regulations on trash disposal to determine what will be picked up and recycled. Remember, there are many refuse companies bidding for municipality trash and recycling services, and the items that can be recycled vary from one to the other. **Then**, refer to one of the following two on-line sources to determine what to do with everything else. Adopt the mindset that everything can be recycled until you're proven otherwise. Understand that most of the other items will have to be dropped off (or sometimes mailed), and occasionally come with a small fee. This might be a deviation from the norm for many homeowners, but it's the responsible thing to do.

1) www.earth911.com – It's as simple as keying in the item in question along with

your zip code. The site will advise if the item can be recycled and, if so, where to take it locally or what to do with it if nothing is available in your area. (I found a company that would take old Xmas tree lights but they had to be mailed to the west coast.) Further, the site also features excellent articles on recycling and repurposing.

2) www.ppgbuffalo.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/how-to-recycle-in-buffalo-niagara.pdf is a link to a PPG web-site article entitled How to Recycle in Buffalo-Niagara. The range of items may surprise you. All of the companies are local.

For small items (batteries, medicines, CFBs), I typically put them in a box until I have enough to warrant a trip to the recycle location. I also collect these items from my family and friends to ensure they're disposed of properly.

Lastly, keep the concept of "pre-cycling" in mind. Think about what you're going to do with an item when you're finished with it **before** you acquire it. When you have a choice, buy items that can be recycled, or are at least packaged with recyclable materials. And don't forget to eliminate unnecessary paper waste, as in "junk mail and catalogs". Register with the following web-sites: www.direct-mail.com and www.catalogchoice.org.

Ash Trees and Emerald Ash Borer Beetle: Learning from the Canadians

By Linda Ciesielski, (Former Niagara Group Webmaster now working in urban forestry in Cambridge, MA)

On a walk through Delaware Park two weekends ago, my dad pointed to purple ribbons tied around ash trees. A yellow sign hung from some of them, identifying the trees and their vulnerability to the Emerald Ash

Borer, an invasive insect. In late fall with all the leaves gone, one had to rely on the bark to identify the ash trees. But a few trees with purple ribbons stumped me – instead of seeing the familiar furrowed bark of ash trees,

their bark was smooth and grey, like a red maple.

Back in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where I work with the City Arborist, I told him about the smooth bark and he gave a sobering reply: perhaps the bark had already fallen off. EAB may have rendered some of the trees dead.

EAB is an invasive insect that kills ash trees in two ways: its larvae hatches in the bark of tree, and burrows through the tree's vascular system, destroying the flow of nutrients. The adult beetle then forages off its leaves, eliminating the tree's source of energy. In 3 to 4 years, an ash tree is dead, and the beetle moves on to find more fodder. The metallic green beetle was introduced to North America through packing material in ships over a decade ago, and has since wiped out 30 million ash trees in the US, and threatens over 2 billion in Canada.

To date, EAB has spread across the Midwest, New York State, and southern Ontario. In early September the beetle was detected in western Massachusetts, a region full of ash stands.

What can we do for these trees? States have tried various strategies to detect EAB, treat, or remove ash trees. Some communities have done nothing, believing ash trees don't stand a chance. Dead trees will be removed, and small trees replanted in their place. Sadly, years of growth cannot be replaced. Others believe the fiscal and environmental costs of treatment are higher than the cost to remove and replace. Caution to treat is justified: some chemical spray and injection options available in the US pose threats to the water resources and wildlife, while others do not appear effective against EAB.

But what if there was a way to keep some ash – particularly mid-to-large ash trees – save money, and protect the environment? This proactive approach is being employed just across the border in Oakville, Ontario. Oakville's plan is to treat 75 percent of its public ash tree canopy on streets and in parks (6,000 trees), with TreeAzin, a biological insecticide based on extract from the Neem tree, a species native to Asia. The formula was developed by the Canadian Forest Service and BioForest Technologies. Ash trees in good condition, measuring 8 to 20 inches in diameter, are injected with TreeAzin in early summer and treatments are repeated every other year. Trees are treated until the beetle moves on from a region. The course of treatment costs less than tree removal and disposal of infested wood. The botanically-based formula shows very low toxicity to mammals and birds and low persistence in the environment.

Early results are promising in Oakville, where they have been treating trees since 2009. An aggressive public outreach campaign is also encouraging residents to treat ash on private property, "adopt" additional public ash trees for treatment, or to save money for removal and replacement.

Early action, information sharing, and support from agencies seems key to protecting ash trees and preserving their value to communities and the environment. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, we're beginning surveys this winter for EAB in the City. While US agencies consider Cambridge distant from western Massachusetts and EAB, the arborist in Oakville thinks we might already have it. It can take up to three years for an infestation to become evident. We're looking into TreeAzin, and learning from our neighbors to the north: <http://www.oakville.ca/residents/emerald-ash-borer.html>. Learn more about what you can do for your ash tree, and spread the word. It may be too late for some ash trees in Delaware Park, but there are more ash trees worth inspecting and protecting in Western New York.

For more news, archives, and upcoming events, visit...
newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara/

"Fracking" Continued

Stop the compromised discussion about fracking!!! Your question should be how to provide for the energy needs of this state. How? Create policies that quickly ramp up renewables and create jobs such as a Feed-In-Tariff; stop direct and indirect support for the fossil fuel and nuclear energy sectors. Governor Cuomo, don't throw us into the morass of extreme energy and weather events; lead us into a clean, healthy future!

Book Review

By Lynda Schneekloth

"Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy"

Authors: Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone

Bit by bit, we are losing our world. We are losing the forests, the fish, the bees; we are wiping out whole species. We are losing the richness of community and most of what makes life meaningful. We are now on the brink of losing the biological support systems we need to survive. (223)

A friend, a colleague who loves the earth and has worked ceaselessly on behalf of all life for many years, recently confessed that he is depressed. Many of us share this feeling. Here we are facing the greatest crisis that humans have ever faced because we have modified the life sustaining system of the planet, and people are out — shopping. Yes, it's Holiday Season in the United States, and how I wish we could give a gift of the earth we grew up in to our children and their children. But we're not even close — we're not even asking the right questions. Those of us making decisions between the years of 1995 and 2020 will be found wanting. No Great Generation here — yes, dedicated, brilliant, knowledgeable, persistent, compassionate and hardworking people, and thanks to all — but no great culture.

But we can't despair — that's actually what the 'forces of evil' want. But we do, occasionally, need help to carry on. I found Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone's book, *ACTIVE HOPE: How to face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy* to be a formidable reminder of why we continue to work in the face of power, and how to take care of ourselves as individuals and communities of intention at the same time.

The premise of the book is that all cultures live in stories, fictions that guide our faith and our actions. They tell three active cultural stories that are competing narratives in our lives today: "Business as Usual," "The Great Unraveling" and "The Great Turning." The first is, of course, the most dominant and it promises endless economic and technological success that will make our lives better. The argument doesn't question whether growth is a good, but rather how to grow the economy so that everybody (or some people) can get ahead, meaning consume more. The second narrative is the opposite, the critique of that story that describes economic decline, resource depletion, climate change, economic injustice and mass extinction. Most of us participate in both of these stories all the time as the first has structured the very environment we live in everyday while the second is evident in the literal unraveling of earth and social/economic systems unfolding before our eyes.

It is the third story, The Great Turning, that moves us beyond first two powerful narratives, and it is here where we may find strength and sustenance in an alternative vision of life on earth. Macy and Johnstone identify three dimensions and each of us, no doubt, will see our work in one of these. In the dimension of Holding Actions, we struggle to counter the unraveling of our social and ecological fabric seen locally in our anti-fracking, fair wages, and cleaning up West Valley campaigns. The second dimension is called "Life-Sustaining Systems and Practices" and speaks to the ways we are consciously reinventing our culture — through local food systems, cooperatives, financial reforms, simple living, Feed-in-Tariff energy policies and so on. We can't just be against anti-environmental actions, we have to offer alternatives of what people/societies can do instead.

They call the third dimensions "Shifts in Consciousness." How do we move beyond the individualistic, isolated view of humans to a connected, compassionate community of all beings? This is both an ancient story, and a new one, as the vectors of spirituality and science merge to give an alternative view of the universe and our place in it. Edmund Carpenter once said, "We don't know who discovered water but we can be sure it wasn't a fish." Such is the power of stories and the reinforcing structures and spatial practices built into the environment. Yet, we, as an intelligent species, can see outside these stories and actually choose. "When we find a good story and fully give ourselves to it, that story can act through us, breathing new life into everything we do." (33)

Macy and Johnstone call this book "Active Hope" because it suggests that hope is a practice, not wishful

thinking. They describe the image of a spiral that takes us into the world while maintaining our sense of deepest self. The spiral always returns to *gratitude*; thankfulness and blessedness as the base of our being — not frustration and anger. Gratitude moves us to action on behalf of our world, the earth, and people everywhere; it is the source of our being as is so clear in the Haudensaunee prayer of Thanksgiving. But we also need to honor our deep pain at the violence toward the earth and all its creatures that we see all around us. The author's articulation of this condition frees us to acknowledge that pain. Without the expression of grief, we carry an unhealed wound that enslaves us.

If we recognize and acknowledge our pain with the world, we feel our deepest identity as ecological-selves inter-twined with all life on earth. If we feel this pain, we cannot continue to live the way we do. But so often those of us working in the social and ecological justice movements are afraid to talk about our pain — it feels so negative. But Macy and Johnstone argue that by honoring the pain of loss instead of discounting it, we acknowledge how deeply we care about the earth and all people. Honoring our pain is affirming as long as we move through the pain or spiral in and out of it. To deny grief is paralyzing.

Here are just two illuminating points that might give all of us a different sense of grounding in our individual and collective work. A wider sense of self: We are all aware of the 'hyper-individualism' of industrialized cultures that has caused us to remove ourselves from the larger circle of communities and being. An alternative ecological self is deeper and wider, not just in space and across species, but in time. From this viewpoint, 'act your age' takes on a totally different perspective. If we see ourselves as a part of the flow of life that started 3.5 billion years ago, we can see how we come from a creative life force, a force that now resides within us. I am not only me, but am the result of countless ancestors, and will continue into future generations; both those behind me and those to come move through my being, just as the earth and its life moves me. Therefore, each of us is wide and the actions we take during our time on this planet are part of a larger flow of creative energy. That power, that creative life force, moves through us and motivates us to be centered in our intentionality, in our sense of gratitude and direction.

The gift of uncertainty: Nelson Mandela once said, "It always seems impossible until it is done." (186) Macy and Johnstone write: "Thank goodness for uncertainty. When we know the future isn't yet decided, there is room for us to play a role in influencing what happens." (230) It is this uncertainty that calls our attention, that moves us to gather with others and take action again and again, because we never know where the tipping point may be, where an action might begin a shift that moves mountains and cultures.

The Great Turning, points to the new way of living on this earth, our home. Millions of people across the globe are engaged in this creative practice of active hope to stop the destruction, to provide new ideas about how to live meaningfully, and to shift the consciousness of our extraordinary species away from the suicidal path we seem to have chosen into a cosmology of gratitude and wonder. The book ends with a promise that begins "I vow to myself and each of you . . . To commit myself daily to the healing of our world and the welfare of all beings. . ." I do hope, actively, that many of you choose to read the book. It is an empowering story that lightens our collective work. For me, the practice of active hope both lightens and deepens our work for ecological and social justice; it names our task and for me personally has given me energy and renewed strength. I hope it will move my friend out of despair as well.