The Buffalo News article regarding the Erie County parks system was inspiring. Our Erie County government maintains 40 sites throughout the county. There are waterfalls, biking and hiking trails and lawns for sitting. Something it seems, for just about anyone.

Once every 15 years a new master plan for the park system is developed. This is the responsibility of the Department of Environment and Planning (DEP) and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry.

What is also wonderful about this process is that the county invites us all to participate – there are open houses and public comment periods (erie.gov).
The parks article got me wondering what other responsibilities DEP has. Part of their mission is to protect the environment and conserve energy. Recently the county finished a project. They had a 2.46-megawatt solar array installed in an unused tract of land they own in Alden. A 2.46-megawatt solar array produces the equivalent of powering 249 homes. The array will save county funds, decrease pollution and improve our air quality.

In 2017 Erie County decided to sign onto the Paris Climate Agreement. The Alden solar array project will ensure that Erie County will surpass its clean energy goal. The goal is to procure 100 percent of the electric power used for county operations from renewable sources by 2030.

Another part of the county mission is to administer pollution prevention programs. In keeping with this mission, they work with Western New York Stormwater Coalition in reaching out to inform and involve the public in assisting their municipalities to protect and improving water quality in our water bodies. Then there are programs in LED transition (improving conservation), reducing single use plastic bag education and ... by “we,” the public, collectively putting our taxes together we get a wonderful deal for our buck. “This is what democracy looks like.”

Richard Steinberg
Sierra Club Niagara Chapter

Buffalo

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