

Coal-fired Electric Power—On the Way Out in New York State.

By Ellen Cardone Banks

After years of organizing and strategizing by the National Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign, local Sierra Club volunteers and coalition allies, Governor Cuomo announced on May 9, 2019 that new Department of Environmental Conservation emission regulations on coal-fired coal plants will be phased in by 2020.

The regulations do not directly ban coal-fired power plants; instead, the new air quality regulations would permit coal plants only with a level of emission capture technology that would be overwhelmingly expensive for coal plants already operating at very low capacity. These regulations could be a model for other states, such as Ohio, that still get much of their power from coal. Their emissions add to climate change, and are carried to Western New York on the wind, bearing soot, as well as mercury and other toxins, harming our land, water and health.

Nationally, the Beyond Coal Campaign reports that 281 dirty coal plants have been retired in the USA since the campaign began, with 249 still operating. In Buffalo, our skies are cleaner and asthma rates have declined after the Huntley plant in Tonawanda closed in 2016. The Somerset plant on the Lake Ontario shore and the Cayuga coal plant in Lansing, near Ithaca, are nearly dormant; operating at about 15% capacity. Plans were considered to refire both plants with fracked gas, but in May the Somerset plant owner announced that its site will be transformed into a 250-megawatt data center powered by solar energy, and the

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Northern Access Pipeline Update

By Diana Strablow

On June 2, 2019 the No Northern Access Pipeline Coalition teamed up with Sane Energy Project, 350.org and The Peace Poets to host the first stop of SIT-STAND-SING, a statewide tour focused on frontline communities working to protect our precious waterways, health, land, life and climate as we oppose

fracked gas infrastructure. We experienced an amazing day of learning the many roles of direct action and building community as we sat, stood and sang together. Many thanks to our incredible team of trainers who traveled from NYC to be with us in Springville, NY and to all who participated including those who joined in from the fracking region of PA, the long stretch of impacted WNY and all the way northward to Pendleton. TOGETHER we will continue resistance.

Update:

On May 30, 2019 the NY State Attorney General's Office and the Sierra Club each filed Petition for Review in the U.S. Court of Appeals, seeking review of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's decision that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation waived its authority to deny National Fuel's Water Quality Certification under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. The Attorney General's petition uses strong language to state: "The Waiver Order and the Rehearing Denial (FERC's) should be set aside in whole as illegal, unreasonable, arbitrary and capricious."



Erik Mc Gregor - 2019

Still pending are U.S. Army Corps of Engineer 404 permits. We continue to request of Army Corps that protocol be followed by not issuing these permits without a NYSDEC 401 permit in place.

Correction: It was mistakenly stated in the last issue of The Trailblazer that a court case in

Pendleton regarding the zoning of the proposed compressor station had been lost by the town. That statement was incorrect, the case is still undecided and pending.

Amherst Parks Forum with Brian Kulpa

Join a presentation by Amherst Town Supervisor, Brian Kulpa. He will speak about his vision for a greener Amherst that incorporates sustainability and conservation. There will be time for questions and discussion. This meeting takes place on Wednesday, July 31st, 6:30 pm at Eggertsville-Snyder Branch Library, 4552-4622 Main Street, Buffalo.

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Letter from Sierra Club Niagara Group Chair

Dear Members,

While many of you joined us on April 8th for our Annual Awards Dinner, I wish ALL of you could have celebrated with us. There was a real sense of community as we gathered to honor two of our members for their lifelong dedication to the natural world and to recognize a new conservation leader in our community. We promised to commit ourselves to a more planet-friendly menu - a huge success! Just ask the newly 'initiated' into the treasures of a plant-based meal. Hats off to the catering team of Edible Crush. They really nailed it from appetizers to dessert.

In memory of a WNY naturalist and environmental educator, the Bruce Kershner Award for Conservation was given to Susan Campbell. Neely Kelly, a fellow activist, had this to say, "Susan Campbell spent the last 4 years advocating for the proposed Lighthouse Wind project to be approved and built in her community. This has all been in the face of fierce, disingenuous and well-funded opposition. Her message has consistently been that the Lighthouse Wind turbines will ensure a strong local economy, provide good paying jobs, give us tax relief, increase funding for our schools, support our farmers, all the while ensuring a livable planet for all future generations. She is a mother of 4 and grandmother of 13, and is the family breadwinner. The countless hours she has spent to ensure economic growth and prosperity in her hometown is laudable and worthy of recognition. It is Susan Campbell's tireless and fearless grassroots volunteer leadership that is changing the world. She is showing her community, and the world, how we can fight with dignity, grace, compassion and courage for environmental and economic justice and a 100% clean and renewable energy future." Susan is a real climate hero in our community. Congratulations to her and all of those she is working with for a sustainable future.

The first recipient of our Lifetime Achievement Awards was Art (Hap) Klein. Art spent 28 years in the

Army Corps of Engineers. As a child and a teenager, Art was deeply affected by sewage and chemical waste he witnessed in our waterways. His passion to protect water, wetlands and habitat led him to both his career and his commitment to volunteer work with the Sierra Club. In his words, "In 1957, I worked for the Buffalo District Corps of Engineers for 17 years in each of the Great Lakes. I was a direct witness to the horrors of pollution. The water surfaces on urban rivers were especially menacing with oily rainbow sheens and floating aprons of soot that extended two to four feet wide along each bank. After passage of the Clean Water Act (CWA), I became a Waterways Investigator to ensure that the construction in the Great Lake Watersheds met the new standards for the Wetland Regulation. Coordination with the NYSDEC, EPA and most often the US Fish and Wildlife Service nearly daily was part of my duty."

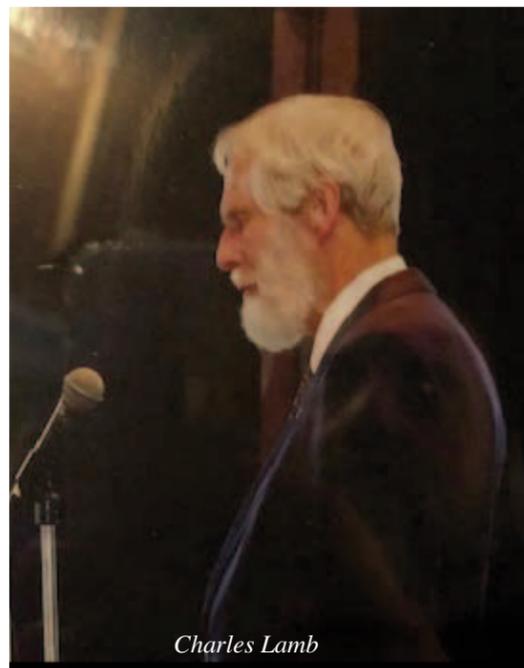
Always humble and in good humor, Art has continually shared his expertise with us - always a team player. He has volunteered hundreds of hours advocating for our waterways and wetlands. He is also a keen internet eco-warrior defending the planet on a daily basis with his insightful and educative writing. Art continues to advise and support us in our campaigns to protect and preserve. Congratulations Art, we are so lucky to have you!

Our second Lifetime Achievement recipient, the late Reverend Charles Lamb, once wrote, "Many Scriptures emphasize that humans have a responsibility to care for the creation...A pure mountain stream, a sunset in a clear sky, or a healthy forest all speak to our souls of the importance of preserving our earthly home." Those were not just words from Charles, but the true spirit with which he lived. Charles was very active in our Niagara Group and in Residents for Responsible Government in Youngstown. RRG were strong activists in the fight against CWM Waste Management expansion. At that time, it was a difficult battle to thwart more toxic waste

from coming into the residential communities of Niagara County. Charles had a knack and savviness for communicating the importance of protecting our environment, skillfully and respectfully reframing those values with global warming skeptics. To Charles' family and all that loved him...May his memory bring lasting inspiration to us all.

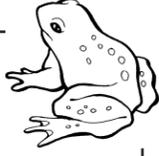
Please look for our invitation in the Spring of 2020 and join us for a MOST inspirational evening. Best wishes to all our members! May you enjoy what Mother Nature has to offer and have a summer filled with moments out in the woods, by a lake or on a mountaintop.

- Sara Schultz, Chair



Charles Lamb

HABITAT CORNER — Time for Toads



By Nicole Gerber

Gardeners take note: having toads around your vegetable and flower gardens is the best natural biological insect control!

Toads are a gardener's best friends as they eat hundreds of insects every day! They live in New York year-round and survive the cold and snowy winters by regulating their body temperature with the surrounding environment. That process is called brumation. Toads and other amphibians and reptiles cease their movements during the winter season and adapt their bodies to the cold temperatures. You won't have seen them for a while, because when the weather starts getting colder, toads look for a suitable place to spend the winter – digging into the soil, burrowing under logs, moving into the crevices of rocks or hollow trees – all to find a safe place to hunker down below the frost line. They lower their heartbeat, respiration and metabolism in order to use less energy and to maintain their essential body functions. But soon, as the temperature begins to rise in the spring, so does their metabolic rate and the toads will emerge from their winter homes and begin their feeding and breeding cycles. From April to May, toads will breed in shallow waters of ponds, ditches, wet meadows and lawns. They will even use large puddles and deep tire tracks filled with water. The males will gather in choruses to call out to the females to come to their wetlands.

The most common toad in New York is the Eastern American Toad which can be found here in Western New York and all across the state. They are 2-4 inches in length, brown or gray with tan patches and a spotted belly, and one or two warts per spot on their backs. They are mainly nocturnal and spend most of their life on land, living in lawns and forests. Toad tadpoles eat aquatic vegetation and when they become adults will eat a wide variety of live insects and other invertebrates. They eat all kinds of flying and crawling insects, including slugs, snails, earthworms, ants and beetles.

Some fun facts about toads:

- * Females can lay 2,000-20,000 eggs at once
- * After spending up to 2 months as a tadpole, they become tiny toadlets
- * Toads choose a location to hide during the day and will often return to that same location every day
- * Toads excrete a mild poison from the glands on their head and the poison is stored in their bladder
- * Garter snakes are immune to the poison of the American toad
- * If a toad encounters a snake, they will inflate their body and extend their hind limbs to look bigger and also to make themselves difficult to swallow
- * Toads shed their skins every few weeks and then they eat it! A toad ready to shed will look dark and a toad that just shed its skin will look shiny and light in color.

Toads prefer moist, open habitats like fields and grasslands and require a cool damp place to live. They "drink" by absorbing moisture and water through their skin so you can provide a water source in your yard by burying a shallow dish of water in the ground, with a few flat stones inside.

With the continual loss of meadow and wetlands habitats, the use of chemicals and fertilizers on lawns and plants, and changing weather patterns, consider helping toads and other amphibians by ensuring there are water sources in your yard and neighborhood for their breeding and drinking needs; provide them with areas to shelter such as piles of rocks or logs or grasses and bushes in your yard; and do not place chemicals on your lawn or in your gardens as not only do they harm the toads but they kill the insects that the toads are looking to eat. Toads are wonderful friends to have in your yard, and helpful for your gardens as well, so find ways to enhance your surroundings to create a toad-friendly habitat!

"Coalfire Electric Power" continued from front page

Cayuga site, which is in Lansing, is expected to host a 100-megawatt data center. Both new projects will bring jobs and tax revenue to their communities.

We are relatively fortunate in New York State that coal-fired power will end soon, and that gas hydrofracking is prohibited, but the work is far from done. Besides receiving coal emissions from the west, we still burn fracked gas from Pennsylvania, gas companies are still trying to add new pipelines for export and they are attempting to build more pipelines to bring gas to rural areas that would be better served by clean renewable geothermal heating. Meanwhile, pipelines continue to leak and explode, and fracking waste pollutes our waterways. There are no state lines in the sky and the rivers. We will not be safe from the worst effects of climate change and pollution until dirty fossil fuels are left in the ground everywhere.

2019 Brings New Environmental Legislation in New York State

By Ellen Cardone Banks, Atlantic Chapter Conservation Chair

The highlight of the 2019 New York State Legislative session is the passage of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA, formerly known as CCPA.) The strongest climate protection legislation in the US, it puts New York State on the path to 70% renewable electricity by 2030, and a 100% carbon neutral grid by 2040. The Act also calls for the reduction of all greenhouse gas emissions to 85% of 1990 levels by 2050, with steps to completely eliminate human-caused emissions. This is essential if we are to avoid the worst effects of climate change, and eliminate emissions in all sectors, including transportation and building heating and cooling. The CLCPA will also guarantee that 35-40% of fees collected from polluters would go to communities most impacted by dirty fossil fuels, and it will provide sustainable jobs in the green economy.

An unprecedented number of important environmental bills passed the legislature this session, some of it just before adjournment in the early hours of June 21, and some still awaiting the Governor's signature as of this writing. The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter and groups have been instrumental, along with coalition partners, in moving these bills to law.

In view of Federal rollbacks of environmental protections, some of the bills are intended to preserve New York's standards; for example, with federal waters being opened to gas and oil extraction, New York will now prohibit the drilling of these fossil fuels in, and transport through, through New York waters.

The Child Safe Products Act will require listing of toxic substances in products for children, such as toys and drinking cups, a phase out of products containing these substances. Lead, for example, has been found in inexpensive toys, crayons and jewelry. A ban on chlorpyrifos, a pesti-

cide toxic to children's developing brains, was also passed.

After years of advocacy, single-use thin-film plastic bags will be banned for most carry-out retailing and counties may put fees on paper bags. Plastic bags are made from petroleum, and Americans use and discard an estimated 100 billion of them every year, harming and littering streets and beaches.

A ban on new waste incineration facilities in the Finger Lakes was enacted; some existing facilities there accept fracking waste from Pennsylvania. While some of these facilities generate electricity, it's at the cost of toxic ash, truck traffic, localized odor problems, and harmful air and greenhouse gas emissions and even radioactive waste from fracking.

A food waste reduction act will require large-scale food service operations to donate usable excess food and to send other food waste to compost facilities, reducing the burden on landfills, feeding needy people and increasing awareness of wise use of food.

Some bills passed one house but not the other and will be re-introduced in the next session, including bans on other pesticides such as neonicotinoids (toxic to bees) and on PFOS chemicals used in firefighting and polluting streams. Wildlife contests and hunts of captive animals are still pending for next session, but a sea turtle protection act passed last-minute.

The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter staff in Albany, Roger Downs and Caitlin Pixley Ferrante, along with our Atlantic Chapter and Niagara Group volunteers, have been very active calling and meeting with legislators to support environmental legislation. The Chapter website < <https://atlantic2.sierraclub.org> >, lists past and pending bills with support memos to explain the Sierra Club's positions.

Fossil Fuel Subsidies: Americans Want Renewable Energy

By Robert Ciesielski

A May 2019 working paper from the International Monetary Fund entitled "Global Fossil Fuel Subsidies Remain Large: An Update Based on Country-Local Estimates", pegged the United States subsidies for fossil fuels in 2015 at \$649 billion, greater than the year's military budget of \$599 billion. Of that amount, global warming costs are 24%, while the underpricing for local air pollution is the largest source (48% in 2015). The study, which encompasses 191 countries, found global subsidies of \$4.7 trillion in 2015, and it projected these appropriations to increase to \$5.2 trillion by 2017. The report was completed in conjunction with the greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

In the meantime, a survey report of the Yale program on climate change communication entitled "Energy On The American Mind" (December 2018), found strong bipartisan support for requiring electric utilities to use 100% clean, renewable energy, and a majority consensus that transitioning to renewable energy will benefit the economy. (Both of these studies are available through Sierra Club Member David Kowalski's Re-ENERGIZE Buffalo blog. Email David at dfk2008@gmail.com with the word "subscribe" in the heading if you are interested.)

The "Energy" article also mentions that 82% of Americans do not believe they can afford clean, renewable electricity directly, and that only 5% of Americans have signed up for renewably-sourced electricity

through their utilities. Western New Yorkers are able to order 100% renewable electricity through both National Grid and NYSEG via Energy Service Companies (ESCOs).

For NYSEG customers to sign up for 100% wind power, go to the website <http://www.communityenergy-inc.com/products/new-wind-energy>; or you may google NYSEG Community Energy.

I live in the City of Buffalo and have National Grid as my electric company, and receive 100% wind power electricity from their supplier Clean Choice Energy, Inc. National Grid refers you to the New York State Public Service Commission's (PSC) website www.newyorkpowertochoose.com or www.askpsc.com for a list of certified green energy options. In my personal opinion, some of the best choices in Western New York on the ASKPSC website under National Grid are included in the following list. Please consider switching your power source to renewable energy.

Energy Cooperative of New York

(\$0.0436/kWh; hydroelectric, wind)

Clean Choice Energy, Ethical Electric,

Clean Energy Option

(\$0.052/kWh; 100% solar and wind)

(\$0.063/kWh; 100% solar and wind) (variable rate)

Green Mountain Energy

(\$0.06/kWh; 100% wind)

(\$0.07/kWh; 90% wind, 10% solar)

(\$0.08/kWh; 100% local wind)

Climate Change Update:

According to NOAA's Earth System Research Laboratory, Global Monitoring Division, preliminary measures of atmospheric CO2 as of June 16, 2019 is 414.03 ppm (parts per million). Compare to weekly values one year ago at 410.38 ppm, and 10 years ago at 389.20 ppm. Conclusion: Atmospheric CO2 ppm are accelerating and permanent."

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