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 power plants will be phased in by 2020.

The regulations would ban coal power plants; instead, the new air quality regulations would permit coal power 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 toxic elements, 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 campaign began, with 249 still operating. In Buffalo, our skies are cleaner and asthma rates have declined after the campaign began. 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 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 June 2, 2019 the No Northern Access Pipeline Coalition team 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 fracking, gas pipelines and fossil fuel infrastructure. We experienced a 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.

Southern Access Pipeline Update

By Diana Straubow

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

Correction: It was mistakenly stated in the last issue of The Trailblazer that a court case in the normal course would set aside the Army Corps of Engineers’ decision to approve a 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.

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 that developed as a result of our hard work, and we look forward to continuing that work in coming months.

In memory of a WNY naturalist and environmental educator, the Bruce Kerschner 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 areas of impact are huge and the need for renewable energy is urgent.”

Our two Lifetime Achievement recipients, the late Reverend Charles Lamb, once wrote, “Many Scriptures emphasize that humans have a responsibility to care for the environment, for example, ‘Let the Earth bring forth the living and the trees from the earth, and the beasts of the field, and everything that crawls, and the birds of the air.’”

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Charles Lamb

Sara Schultz, Chair
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 regrouping in dark places such as logs or crevices of rocks or hollow trees – all to find a safe hibernation spot. 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 regrouping in dark places such as logs or crevices of rocks or hollow trees – all to find a safe hibernation spot. Toads prefer moist, open habitats like fields and wetlands, the use of pesticides and aerial spraying with toxic insecticides. Toads eat slugs, snails, earthworms, ants and beetles.

The highlight of the 2019 New York State Legislative session was the passage of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). The Act was introduced to reduce carbon emissions in New York State by 2025, and to provide jobs in the clean energy sector.

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. The Act also prohibits the sale of new waste incineration facilities in New York State. The Act also prohibits the sale of new waste incineration facilities in New York State.

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The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter and Niagra 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 Estimates”, pegged the United States subsidies for fossil fuels in 2015 at $469 billion, greater than the year’s military budget of $599 billion. Of that amount, global warming costs are 24%, while the underpricing of local air pollution is the largest source (48% in 2015). The study includes 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 commissioned in conjunction with the Paris Agreement for 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 the Sierra Club Member David Kowalski’s Re-ENERGIZE Buffalo blog. Email David at dsk2008@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 this enhanced grid.

The “Coalfree Electric Power” continued from front page

"Coalfree Electric Power continues 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.

To illustrate the surrounding environment 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 federal funds to support clean energy, the state continues to push fracked gas from Pennsylvania, gas companies are still trying to add new pipelines for export and they are attempting to use pipelines to bring dirt and debris that would be better served by clean renewable geothermal heating. Meanwhile, pipelines continue to leak and explode, and frack 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.

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 411.36 ppm. 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 411.36 ppm. 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 411.36 ppm. 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 411.36 ppm.