



The Trailblazer

The Niagara Group of The Sierra Club • <http://NiagaraSierraClub.com> • Vol. 54 No. 1 Jan 2019

New York Renews Update

by Ellen Cardone Banks, Niagara Group Executive Committee and Climate/Energy Chair

For three years, the Climate and Community Protection Act (CCPA) has been introduced in the New York State legislature, where it has passed in the Assembly but died in the Senate. In the latest legislative session, it had the votes to pass the Senate with most Democratic Senators and some Republican Senators signing on as co-sponsors in 2018, but Republican Majority Leader John Flanagan declined to bring it to the Senate floor for a vote.

Will 2019 be its year? The new Democratic majority in the State Senate makes this more likely; Senator Andrew Stewart Cousins, the anticipated Majority Leader, supports the bill. The CCPA would put into law Governor Cuomo's clean energy policy goals, requiring 50% of electrical power in New York State to come from renewable sources and 40% reduction in Greenhouse gases by 2030. Enacting the CCPA as a law puts it on firmer ground than an executive order, as a future Governor could not cancel it.

The CCPA is sponsored by New York Renews, a coalition of more than 140 organizations statewide, including environmental groups, labor unions, faith communities, human rights and environmental justice groups, with the Sierra Club as one of the leaders. Our local coalition partner PUSH Buffalo (People United for Sustainable Housing) is another NY Renews

leader, and hosted a NY Renews meeting on September 30.

Along with the CCPA, NY Renews and the Sierra Club also support the Climate and Community Protection Act (CCIA) which would require corporate polluters to compensate New York State for the harm they have done to the climate and to our health. Many chronic diseases are traceable to fossil fuel mining, transport, and combustion. These penalties would be used to fund a just transition to clean energy, providing 145,000 new jobs in the clean energy sector each year and providing several forms of remediation to impacted communities.

The clean energy growth provided by the CCPA and CCIA would support homeowner, community-based and large-scale clean energy projects, energy efficiency and storage, and improvements to the grid to bring new power more efficiently to population centers.

As Sierra Club members we can promote these aims by becoming better informed about renewable energy and sharing our knowledge with friends and family, by participating in visits to our Assembly members and Senators, and by confronting the fossil fuel industry's control over energy production and distribution, including opposing new infrastructure for dirty fossil gas. As members we can advance public knowledge by confronting the false assertion, widely

advertised by fuel corporations, that natural gas is a clean fuel. It is not: it is basically methane, a very potent climate-damaging greenhouse gas that is prone to leaks, poisoning of waterways, and explosions during mining and distribution. We need to learn about and spread the word on dangers of nuclear power plants, which are not a clean solution to the energy problem but are being heavily subsidized.

The CCPA/CCIA bills illustrate why it is important for all Sierra Club members to stay informed about the State Legislature. You can find your State Senator and Assembly member on line at: www.nysenate.gov/find-my-senator and www.nyassembly.gov/mem/search/ There are many worthy issues the Legislature will be working on, and renewable energy/ holding back climate change are not usually at the top of their list or voters' lists, so we need to let them know that we, as voters, consider them priorities.

There will be several New York Renews events over the next few months to inform the public about these two bills and to ask our elected officials to support them. We will have petitions, coordinated calls, and visits to our officials to express our support for these bills and other environmental legislation. Watch the niagarasierraclub.com website and the Sierra Club Niagara Group Facebook page for announcements.

Sierra Club Niagara Group
P.O. Box 1127
Williamsville, NY 14221-1127



Explore, Enjoy, and Protect the Planet

For more news, archives,
and upcoming events, visit
NiagaraSierraClub.com

Nicole Gerber & Dave Reilly, Trailblazer Co-Editors

Non-profit org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Buffalo, NY
Permit No. 868

A Note From Our Chairperson

Sierra Club Niagara is gearing up for a very busy 2019. We have campaigns that continue to move in the right direction and new endeavors that create excitement within our active group. With the Intergovernmental Panel Report on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Fourth National Climate Assessment by 16 Federal Agencies we are individually trying to cope with our anxiety and fears about our future on this planet. Hope is essential. Focusing on what can be accomplished keeps us engaged and energized. More profound are the feelings of camaraderie that we have when we are working toward shared goals. It doesn't take much to join this family of dedicated volunteers. You can walk in the door with zero experience but good intentions and there is a place for you within our circle.

You have heard about our major initiatives like our Zero Emission Bus Campaign, our call for a full clean up of West Valley Nuclear Demonstration Project, our relentless pushback on the Northern Access Pipeline and our studied support of land based wind and solar. These campaigns inch forward with baby steps toward reducing greenhouse gases. They lay the foundation for a clean, sustainable energy economy with support for labor and attention to frontline communities who suffer the

most from environmental degradation. With a combination of advocacy and activism we are working with other WNY non-profits such as Citizens for Regional Transit and PUSH Buffalo to not only care for the environment but to care for our community.

You may have read about the rise of young people into the climate justice movement. They are frustrated that the adults have not taken action and so they will. The Sunrise Movement has been pushing the "Green New Deal" the #Thisiszero hour is leading young people's climate justice campaigns across the nation, and here in Buffalo, we have the Youth and Climate Justice campaign sponsored by the Western New York Environmental Alliance. With this as a backdrop we are partnering with the Interfaith Climate Justice Community and Ujima Theater in staging an original play, Juliana vs. Gov. This short play enacts the court case of youth against the federal government, which by not addressing climate change, is depriving them of "life, liberty and property." We will recruit students from diverse communities and neighborhoods to participate in the play that performs the landmark climate lawsuit. We may have caused the climate crisis, but the young people will live it. It is their story to tell, theirs to own, and we hope the play opens a space for them to

have voice. Let their song be heard. I was recently privy to a workshop for teenagers at the Partnership for the Public Good. These young adults are smart and they care about the future and will demand justice for their friends and families. It's our responsibility to help them on their journey, or perhaps to get out of their way.

Another new initiative comes from the frustration with our media and weather reporting. Report after report of devastating weather and fire disasters fail to connect the dots to climate change. Sierra Club Niagara is organizing to call out this sin of omission. The public needs to understand why forests are burning up, migrants are fleeing starvation, hurricanes are moving more slowly, et. You get it. In addition to all this we have lots of talking to do with our local officials. We need to ensure that our leaders join the other 165 plus municipalities who have committed to transitioning to 100% renewable energy.

Please keep checking our Facebook page, our Website and join our Meetup group to stay informed. We need your continued support and would love to meet you. Happy holidays to everyone. My prayer is for a saner, greener 2019.

Love to All, Sara Schultz, SCNG Chair

Ways to keep updated on Sierra Club Niagara Group News:

Group website - niagarasierraclub.com • Facebook - [sierra club niagara group](https://www.facebook.com/sierraclubniagara) • Twitter - [@sierraniagara](https://twitter.com/sierraniagara) • We are on MeetUp

Climate change demands collective action

by Linda Shneekloth, from Another Voice article in the Buffalo News

Who would have thought that Buffalo would rank as one of the “five best places to live in 2100” along with Siberia and Greenland?

The Great Lakes will likely become a destination of choice as the impact of climate change renders some places uninhabitable. We are likely to have an influx of climate refugees. And yet, one has to wonder what life on earth will be like in 2100 if we don't take immediate steps to address climate change.

The release of the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report warns us that we have only 12 years to act before the world as we know it may be uninhabitable for humans and other beings. And the report probably isn't telling us the whole truth because, as Jamie Henn of 350.org says, it is a consensus version, which means that the science is probably even more scary.

The rapid increase of severe weather and increasing temperature is only moving one way, and we are all feeling, personally or empathetically, the

impacts of fierce fires, devastating hurricanes and flooding, sinking homes, rain bombs, killer heat waves, and drastic species extinction. And there is no doubt that the injustice of climate change falls mostly on those who contributed the least to increased carbon and the earth's degradation.

So Buffalo — what do we do here? It helps to change our personal habits of consumption and we should — but we really need collective action. All of us who care about future generations should push New York State for serious reductions of greenhouse gas emissions through legislation like the Community Climate and Protection Act and Pollution Penalty, strong energy efficiency standards, and insist that the state divest from fossil fuel companies. And closer to home, we can stop harming and start healing our own region.

What if we evaluated each act of planning and building in our region by the standard of climate justice and resiliency considering energy, biodiversity and human well-being? What if we refuse to

invest public monies in future harm? What if we calculated cost/benefits with real climate impacts and human costs for different actions?

For example, right now we are considering the future of Buffalo's Outer Harbor, our newly reclaimed public Lake Erie waterfront. This area is rich in biodiversity, beautiful sunsets and recreational opportunities. It also functions as a “barrier island,” protecting the city from the damages of lake effect storms and flooding. How do we promote the clean-up and environmental healing of the land and water that is already occurring and ensure that this place exemplifies the sustainable and generative economy we want for all people of our region?

If you are interested in participating in this conversation, join the Our Outer Harbor coalition on Oct. 29 at Riverworks, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. (). Lynda Schneekloth is on the board of the Sierra Club Niagara Group and the Western New York Environmental Alliance.

“State Sierra Club Endorsed Somerset/Yates Wind Project After Apex Clean Energy Presentation”

by Bob Ciesielski & Charley Bowman

The NYS Sierra Club's Atlantic Chapter Executive Committee unanimously endorsed the Apex Clean Energy, Inc. Lighthouse wind project in the towns of Somerset and Yates as environmentally sound. A majority of the Niagara Group ExCom attended a 2 ½ hour presentation by Apex on October 2 in Lyndonville. Apex's October 2 presentation outlined issues of property values, siting, environmental questions, jobs, tax benefits to localities, and the lengthy approval process itself. The studies and Q and A session are available on the Apex website.

Some 47 Vestas 4.2 megawatt turbines are proposed for a capacity of 197 megawatts. Farmers and landowners will be paid substantial royalties for turbine leases which will help keep farming profitable and maintain the agricultural nature of the region. The agrarian productivity will be maintained up to the turbine towers. Apex must maintain a bond to cover the unlikely event that the turbines would need to be removed.

There have been over 10 major studies in the United States and Canada of property values near wind turbines, including a review of 122,000 home sales in densely populated Massachusetts. Wind farms are without effect, or a slightly increased home values. Wind farms expand the local economic pie driven by their tax and community benefit payments.

Setback distances of homes and businesses of non-participating landowners will be at least 1/3 mile, and their property lines will be more than 650 feet from a turbine. The Barker

School would be located more than a mile from the turbines.

Non-participating landowners will experience — at most — a sound level equivalent to that emitted by an air conditioning system in a large school hall, or a babbling brook.

Apex is regulated by NYS requirements of Articles 10 and 11, the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and the Endangered Species Act. Apex is using the results of over 250 studies — including their own 2 year study — of avian migration and habitat, to minimize impacts. These include reducing or halting operations during migratory periods, and continuous avian monitoring. The US Fish and Wildlife Service and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation are coordinating with Apex's studies. The National Audubon Society reports that climate change is by far the greatest threat to birds. Independent studies find that fossil fuel production causes many more bird losses than wind turbines per generated megawatt of electricity.

The Sierra Club sees the development of sustainable, renewable energy as necessary to curb a fossil fuel infrastructure and nuclear power plants on Lake Ontario. With the threat of climate change highlighted by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as well as the lengthy 1524 page National Climate Assessment — the latter written by 13 governmental agencies including the Department of Defense — Apex's wind project is one of many important pieces to the solution.

2019 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Sara Schultz

Chairperson, Atlantic Chapter

Robert Ciesielski

*Atlantic Chapter Delegate,
Atlantic Chapter Vice Chair,
Atlantic Chapter Energy Chair*

Larry Beahan

*Conservation Chairperson, Habitat Chair,
Atlantic Chapter Group Alternate Delegate*

Roger Cook

Political Chairperson

Janet Lenichek

John Szalasny

Ellen Banks

*Niagara Group Climate
and Energy Committee Chair,
Atlantic Chapter at Large Delegate,
Atlantic Chapter Conservation Chair,
Atlantic Chapter Secretary*

Diana Strablow

Vice-Chair, Webmaster

Charley Bowman

*Atlantic Chapter
Council of Club Leaders Delegate,
Atlantic Chapter at Large Delegate*

Richard Lippes

Legal Consultant

Lynda Schneekloth

A Message from Michael Brune Executive Director of the Sierra Club

"According to the UN's scientific experts, the world must cut climate-polluting emissions to 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030—and by 2050 it must reduce them to zero. To do that, we'll need to, among other things, stop burning coal and natural gas, leave fossil fuel reserves in the ground, protect our forests and our soil, aggressively develop renewable energy sources, and electrify our transportation sector. It's a daunting list, but not impossible. The Sierra Club has been working overtime on almost all these things and plans to do even more."