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# Another Voice: Renewable energy brings blue skies, economic growth

Another Voice  
Jul 27, 2020

**B**y Bob Ciesielski

During the Covid-19 “pause,” we enjoyed blue skies without haze and breathed refreshing air, a rare experience in the city. How are we able to maintain this wonderful air quality while rebuilding our economy?

The development of renewable energy – solar, wind and small hydropower – is essential to the clean skies and also to counter climate change on a permanent basis.

The electrification of our power grid, transportation and manufacturing systems, as well as heating and cooling systems, can reduce fossil fuel emissions and resulting global warming.

Not only must we reduce carbon dioxide emissions, but also methane emissions, which are 86 times more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide in the first 20 years of their release into the atmosphere.

New York State has recently adopted a plan to increase renewable energy development to provide 70% of our electric power source by 2030. Not only will this clean energy reduce climate change, but also produce many

new jobs which are needed for an economic recovery after the present health emergency.

This is not a dream. In 2016, there were 260,000 U.S. jobs in the solar industry. Solar workers constituted 43% of all energy workers, and there were more solar jobs than those in the gas, oil and coal industries combined.

In the first four and a half months of 2020, America's fleet of wind turbines, solar panels and hydroelectric dams produced more electricity than coal on 90 separate days – shattering last year's record of 38 days.

The financial and job benefits of renewable energy development are numerous. Workers in the state are fully supportive of new wind and solar power facilities. Supplemental income to farmers who lease their land to wind

and solar companies often enables them to afford to keep their land, thus enhancing agriculture.

Renewable energy also brings millions of dollars in taxes to towns, municipalities and school districts, and keeps our dollars local.

New York laws call for an increase in benefits to communities that host renewable energy projects. These sources of clean energy can also promote greater economic equality because New York requires a portion of renewable delivery to benefit low-income communities.

Coupled with increased energy efficiency goals adopted in New York, we will be able to reach our goal of an 85% reduction of greenhouse gases, below 1990 levels, by the year 2050. Renewable energy systems will be a significant means of making our planet

more livable and economically sustainable, and keep the air fresh and the sky blue.

*Bob Ciesielski is energy committee chairman of the Sierra Club, Atlantic Chapter.*

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