

SAVE THE DATE: OUR ANNUAL MEMBER PARTY IS MARCH 23rd.

Chair's Corner by Bob Heinemann

This is my first report as your new Mid-Hudson Group Chair. I want to thank the members of the ExCom for trusting me with this privilege. I promise to do my best throughout 2018. This is also the start of a new three year term on the ExCom; and as your Chapter delegate and Legislative Chair. I am grateful for the votes of our members.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the efforts of our former Chair, Joanne Steele for her years of service. Joanne remains our Conservation Chair for 2018. David Friedman continues as our Vice Chair, and Ralph Pollard is our steadfast Treasurer.

Please welcome our new ExCom members: Nivo Rovedo, our Energy Chair; and Karol Wojnar who recently became active on our board after being a member for many years.

Our other ExCom members continue their important volunteer efforts in the following areas: Andy Moss, Outings Chair, newsletter editor, and webmaster; JoyAnn Savino, Programs Chair and now also Publicity Chair; and Alison White, our Political Chair.

There are many significant environmental issues which need our coordinated efforts in the Mid Hudson region and within New York State. Here is my list of some of the most pressing issues that need your attention as one of the more than 2,800 members in the Mid-Hudson Group:

- No oil barge anchorages on the Hudson River. Let's keep the excess oil that is sold for profit internationally in the ground.
- No fracking waste water imported into New York State. Fracking is banned in NYS. Let's keep the waste product out of our State, too.
- Let's finally make real progress in clean energy and promote energy efficiency. Make electric vehicles easier to use by significantly increasing universal charging stations, increase consumer awareness and support price rebates for EV vehicles.
- Let's lobby our elected NYS officials for an effective plastic bag policy. See the [NYS Plastic Bag Task Force Report: An Analysis of the Impact of Single Use Plastic Bags](#).

As the Report points out, by 2050 there will be more plastic by weight in our oceans than there are fish by weight. The plastic does not degrade and the carcinogens works their way into our food chain.

- Let's also make efforts to reduce consumer food waste significantly to reduce methane and to provide the wasted excess food to charitable food banks.
- Finally, let's make our political voices heard in 2018 by actively supporting candidates who support the environmental goals of the Sierra Club.

Conservation Corner by Joanne Steele

The water that comes through our faucets is cleaned by filtering through the earth which is home to zillions of microorganisms that have not been killed off by those antibiotic soaps (Oops). Luckily for us, those microorganisms adapt, when they must, to their environment, or they die. (One organism "eats" grease: it was found in the well of an automobile lift pillar in an auto repair garage.) However, I wouldn't count on microorganisms eating ALL the pollution in waterways in the earth. Then there's all those snow and rain generated waterways that flow through karst, i.e. limestone (dissolvable rock). What filters that water?

What but our lungs filters the air we breathe? What filters the food that we and corporations grow on the (polluted) earth? Or in (polluted) water? What's in those corporate-organic fruits and veggies? And, if they're approved, why do they have no taste? And who approves the organic label? Don't you wonder who's looking after all this?

In the matter of the Organic label, it's the Department of Agriculture that tells us, "The best way to find out if your farm or product is eligible for USDA organic certification is to contact a *reputable* (italics are mine) organic certifying agent who is accredited by the National Organic Program (NOP). The agent helps the planning process, inspects the product and in the end, licenses the use of the term organic." [How to get USDA Organic Certification](#). (Sonny Perdue that Trump appointed Secretary of Agriculture is not related to the family associated with "Perdue Chicken")

In the matter of the earth, air and water, we rely on the Environmental Protection Agency. It has now become nearly useless due to its President-appointed leader Scott Pruitt whose claim to fame is suing the watchdog agency he now leads on behalf of fossil-fuel interests! He has fired scientists and replaced them with industry lobbyists; undone critical regulations that protect our air and water; and favored industry interests over public health. For the gory details read the following article: [The Ten Worst Things Scott Pruitt's EPA Has Already Done](#).

So, it's up to us to reduce our consumption, reuse all we can, recycle what we can't reuse, and in these ways, restore our environment.

I agree with Elgie Holstein, senior director for strategic planning at the Environmental Defense Fund: "What I say to people who want to give up is: Don't do it," he said. "We have built over the last 40 to 50 years a bipartisan national legacy of bedrock environmental protections and safeguards and we should fight for them. The fact that President Trump and Administrator Pruitt would like to help polluters avoid responsibility doesn't change one bit the fact that we have nearly a half century of national and public commitment to a cleaner environment and healthier communities... we have a great deal at stake." Resist! Fight!

Community Choice Aggregation

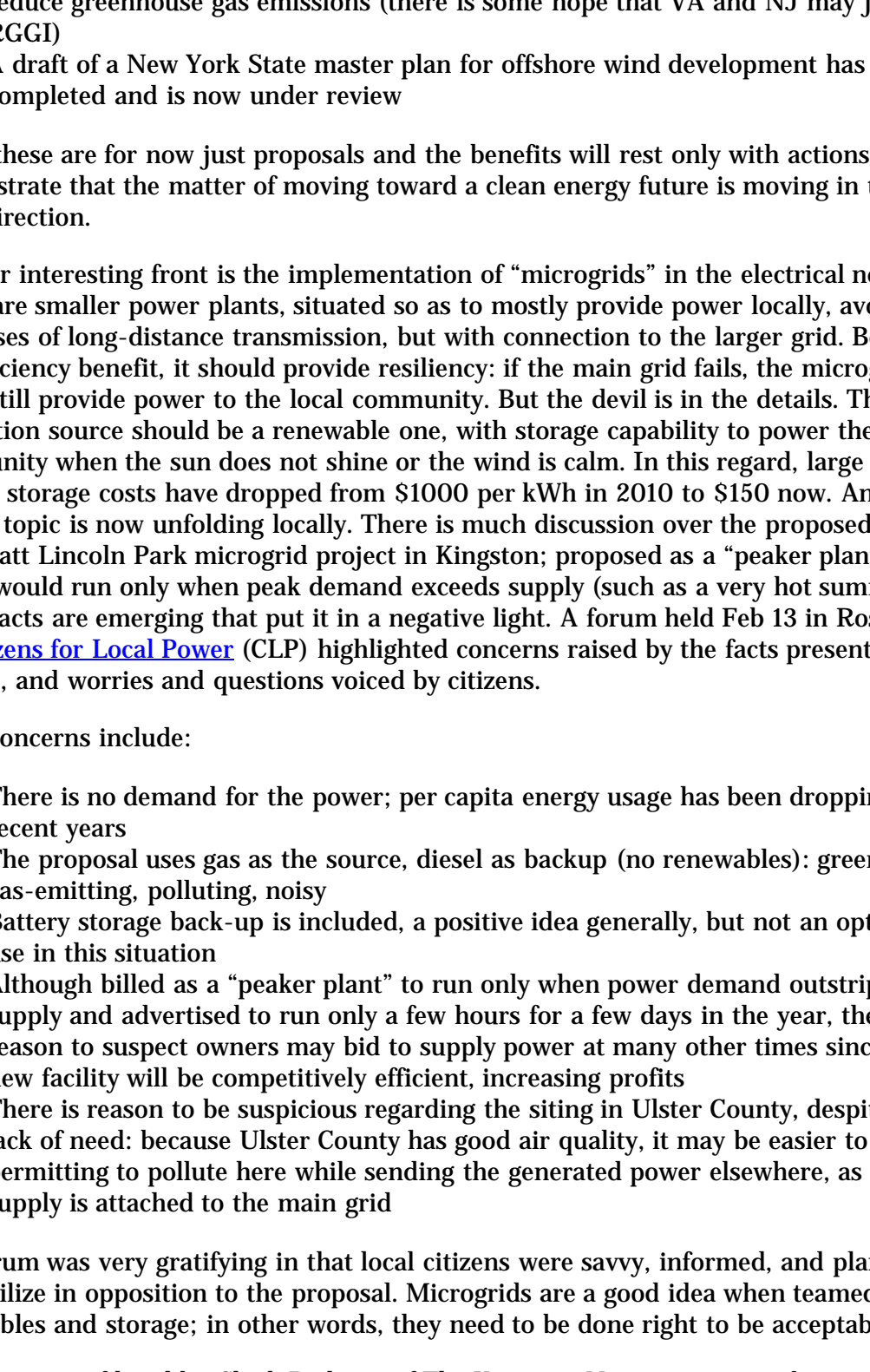
To help our planet cool down, NY needs to conserve our energy use and to control our energy output and sources. One plan for NY is to transition to a clean energy economy through a Public Service Commission (PSC) enabled "Community Choice Aggregation" (CCA). CCA offers communities (a group of towns and cities, counties, an individual city, or any combination) a viable path to a locally-based, clean energy model. One that encourages local investment in energy resource development, that creates local jobs, reduces greenhouse gas output, secures more stable electricity rates, and provides the impetus to modernize the electricity grid that supports a sustainable and resilient decentralized energy system. An Ulster County group, Citizens for Local Power, is currently working with several municipalities to form a CCA program in the Mid-Hudson Valley. [Read about their efforts](#). See also [Reforming the Energy Vision](#).

Lincoln Park Grid Support Center

The proposed Lincoln Park Grid Support Center is a Gas-Fired Power Plant proposed in the Town of Ulster. For a better hour than anything on TV, follow the issue video presentation of the [Town of Ulster meeting on 2/22/18](#).

PLASTIC STRAWS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

REFUSE SINGLE-USE STRAWS! In the U.S. alone, we use 500 million plastic straws per day. That's enough to fill Yankee Stadium over 9 times a year. Plastic straws are among the top 10 items found on International Coastal Cleanup Day. We don't have systems in place to effectively capture and recycle most straws at recycling facilities. They quite literally fall through the cracks. Plastic straws like other plastic products don't biodegrade, meaning they continue to break into smaller pieces that persist in the environment and enter our food chains, specifically in aquatic environments. Soon there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish! [Learn what you can do](#).



Half in U.S. Are Now Concerned Global Warming Believers

Do you think that any of the below had something to do with these changes in global warming attitudes?
 408...current atmospheric CO2 concentration (in ppm) Not the safe 350 ppm!
 16...number of billion-dollar weather disasters in 2017 (thru 10/6/17) Not Normal!!

EPA's Clean Power Plan

In 2015, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized America's Clean Power Plan, setting limits on carbon pollution from US power plants. At the time, over 4 million Americans spoke up to support the plan, calling for bold action on climate change and shifting to clean energy across the country. The Trump Administration has repealed the plan, putting the health and future of Americans and our planet at risk. FIGHT!

Repair Cafe

Don't throw it away, instead fix it. Repair Cafes are free community events where you bring beloved but broken items, and together, with volunteer Repair Coaches, you get them fixed for free. They occur every month or every other month. See the schedule: [RepairCafehv.org](#)

Energy Corner by Nivo Rovedo

As many of you may be aware, the Sierra Club supports the adoption of renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, geothermal heating and cooling, and it is actively fighting the use of polluting fossil fuels and nuclear energy production. Although the number of solar energy installations has slowed this past year, and despite the administration's tariffs on imported solar panels (a hopeful solar economists see as negative for solar power adoption), there are hopeful developments on the transition to renewable energy.

Governor Cuomo proposed several initiatives in his January State of the State address. Among them:

- The governor requested more offshore wind farm proposals, with 400MW capacity
- \$15M earmarked for workforce training for offshore wind jobs, with unions running the training program
- Energy efficiency standards to be set for NYS by Earth Day 2018
- A program to pay for solar installations for 10,000 low income households, possibly with NYSERDA help by implementing community solar projects
- The federal government disbanded its advisory scientific committee on climate change, but New York, Washington state, and California will reconvene the committee
- \$200M toward renewable energy storage to achieve 1500MW of storage capacity by 2025
- 7000 more electric vehicle charging stations by 2021 (bringing the total in NYS to 10,000)
- Some of New York's share of the Volkswagen settlement funds to go purchase of electric buses
- The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, which had been applied only to plants of less than 25MW, is now proposed to be applied to groupings of smaller plants, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (there is some hope that VA and NJ may join the RGGI)
- A Draft of a New York State master plan for offshore wind development has been completed and is now under review

While these are for now just proposals and the benefits will rest only with actions, they demonstrate that the matter of moving toward a clean energy future is moving in the right direction.

Another interesting front is the implementation of "microgrids" in the electrical network. These are smaller power plants, situated so as to mostly provide power locally, avoiding the losses of long-distance transmission, but with connection to the larger grid. Besides the efficiency benefit, it should provide resiliency: if the main grid fails, the microgrid could still provide power to the local community. But the devil is in the details. The generation source should be a renewable one, with storage capability to power the community when the sun does not shine or the wind is calm. In this regard, large scale battery storage costs have dropped from \$1000 per kWh in 2010 to \$150 now. An event on this topic is now unfolding locally. There is much discussion over the proposed 20 Megawatt Lincoln Park microgrid project in Kingston; proposed as a "peaker plant" which would run only when peak demand exceeds supply (such as a very hot summer day). Facts are emerging that put it in a negative light. A forum held Feb 13 in Rosendale by [Citizens for Local Power](#) (CLP) highlighted concerns raised by the facts presented by experts, and worries and questions voiced by citizens.

Some concerns include:

- There is no demand for the power: per capita energy usage has been dropping in recent years
- The proposal, using gas as the source, diesel as backup (no renewables): greenhouse gas-emitting, polluting, noisy
- Battery storage back-up is included, a positive idea generally, but not an optimal use in this situation
- Although billed as a "peaker plant" to run only when power demand outstrips supply and advertised to run only a few hours for a few days in the year, there is reason to suspect owners may bid to supply power at many other times since the new facility will be competitively efficient, increasing profits
- There is reason to be suspicious regarding the siting in Ulster County, despite the lack of need: because Ulster County has good air quality, it may be easier to get permitting to pollute here while sending the generated power elsewhere, as the supply is attached to the main grid

The forum was very gratifying in that local citizens were savvy, informed, and planned to mobilize in opposition to the proposal. Microgrids are a good idea when teamed with renewables and storage; in other words, they need to be done right to be acceptable.

The event was filmed by [Clark Richters of The Kingston News](#), courtesy of [KingstonCitizens.org](#). Videos, along with the panelists' presentations, are available for viewing and download:

- [Video: Battery Storage, Climate, and the Grid \(Part 1\)](#)
- [Video: Battery Storage, Climate, and the Grid \(Part 2\)](#)
- [Energy Storage and Grid Modernization: Ready for Lift-Off? - Karl Rabago](#)
- [Emissions Impacts of the Proposed Lincoln Park Project - Evelyn Wright](#)

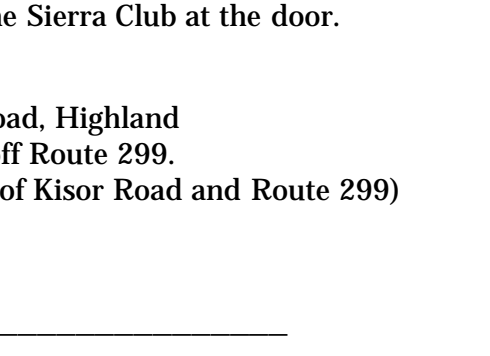
Another hopeful development are community solar projects, which may be the next step in the adoption of solar power beyond panels on individual rooftops. With community solar, the implementation is a small (less than 2 megawatt) solar farm tied in at the local substation. Households become subscribers to the solar farm allowing low income households to participate (no need to buy panels, get income verification for loans, etc.), as well as renters and homeowners with shady roofs. In addition, this localization reduces long distance transmission losses and requires minimal additional wiring, and there would be a substantial discount in the kilowatt-hour price.

The NYS Energy Research and Development Agency (NYSERDA) supports these projects with grants and other help. Any person with the economic wherewithal could be the solar developer. Ask your local municipal government about this idea. You and your neighbors could save some money on your electric bill, as well as help fight climate change.

Save Money and Move Away from Fossil Fuel with Locally Generated Solar Power

Community Solar is now available to Central Hudson and Orange & Rockland (O&R) ratepayers. A community solar farm is a large array of photovoltaic panels that makes solar available to many more people: not only homeowners, but renters, condo dwellers, small businesses, nonprofits, churches and other institutions. By subscribing to a share of the solar project, you will get credits on your electric bill, saving money and supporting clean energy!

The subscription offer Solarize Hudson Valley is representing in this initiative brings a 10% discount off your total electric bill over 12 months. (You generate more solar credits in the summer than in winter, and spend down the summer credits during the winter). This is the best offering we have seen.



To request more information, simply go to the [Solarize Hudson Valley website](#) and submit your contact information. You will receive a thank you email from Solarize Hudson Valley and a follow-up email from Nexamp.

Or call program manager John Wackman (a Mid-Hudson Sierra Club member) at (646) 302-5835

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Legislative Corner by Bob Heinemann

The Trump Administration has slashed State budgets with cuts to federal spending. NYS is especially hard hit with an approximate \$4.4 billion deficit as a result of federal cutbacks. Governor Cuomo has stated that he will not take funds from environmental budget categories to partially restore the federal budget shortfall. This means that there is a clear promise not to use the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), and to keep water infrastructure and Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) funds at their present levels this fiscal year without draining any of those funds away for other general purposes. This is, of course, never a done deal and requires a continued commitment by the Governor and an ever watchful public monitoring what the NYS legislature actually does. The budget priorities of Sierra Club therefore include the following:

- Securing the \$300 Million Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)
- Keeping the annual \$500 Million Clean Water Infrastructure spending

There are many other pressing environmental issues, too. A state wide plastic bag fee and ban policy must be enacted. The complete NYS Plastic Bag Task Force Report is included as a link in the Chair's Report in this issue of Fresh Air. There also is a pressing need for a Food Waste Recycling and Distribution Program. A carbon tax penalty is another progressive reform still waiting for action. In this important off year 2018 election cycle, we must carefully monitor the actions of our elected representatives as they effect environmental issues locally and hold them accountable at the polls if they do not act affirmatively to protect the quality of our air, water and soil.

The Atlantic Chapter's main Legislative priorities concern three pending bills.

- Climate and Community Protection Act, A.8270-A (Eaglebright)/S.6617-A(Avella);
- Climate and Community Investment Act TBA (Cahill/Parker). This is in support of the CCPA bill and would pay for a transition from dirty fuels to pollution free ones through a carbon tax;
- Clean Water Protection/Flood Prevention Act. A.6282 Eaglebright/S.1789 TBA. This bill expands NY's jurisdiction over the protection of wetlands.

It remains urgently important that the existing and extensive wetland maps, which have been suppressed, finally be released by DEC as a first step.

Many of the Governor's 2018 Policy statements from his State of the State address are hopeful, including:

- Developing 2.4 Gigawatts of Offshore wind to supplant potential gas power plants on Long Island
- Using the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) to shut down dirty peaker power plants;
- A commitment to divest \$200 billion dollars of fossil fuel investments from the state pension fund;
- Investing \$130 million in Volkswagen Settlement Proceeds in clean transportation projects;
- Increasing EV charging stations throughout NYS;
- Stopping bomb train storage in the Adirondack Park.

None of these initiatives are guaranteed. That they are stated goals of Governor Cuomo is a good step forward. New York State like every other state government must now step up without the assistance of the federal government, and often with the active opposition of Washington, DC, to make these laudatory promises actually happen. It won't be easy, and it will require the active participation and support of an informed public staying focused on the quality of our environment. Please stay personally involved by writing and calling your elected NYS senators and legislators; and make your voices heard at your polling place in November, 2018.

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Programs by JoyAnn Savino

This past year featured many very interesting Mid-Hudson Group programs including: electric vehicles, wetlands, Native American trail systems, raptors, and gardening for beneficial insects. We hope to have more exciting programs in 2018. If you have a suggestion for a program topic please [contact me](#). Our next program is our Member Party on Friday, March 23 from 7 to 9 pm at Boughton Place, 150 Kisor Road, Highland, NY.

Outings by Andy Moss

There is still time to plan your 2018 vacation on the [Sierra Club website](#). You will find a wide variety of enjoyable trips that include lodge, backpack, base camp, kayaking, bicycle, canoe and many other types. Don't forget there are also low-cost, all-inclusive service trips that provide opportunities for service work with time for sight-seeing and leisure. Contact the trip leader if you would like further information about your suitability to participate.

Fundraising by David Friedman

Make A Gift - Make A Difference

Our local group depends on the support of volunteers and the generosity of our membership. The work of the group takes Sierra Club volunteer effort, and of course funds. We hope that you will consider making a gift to the Mid-Hudson group of the Sierra Club. In these turbulent times it's vital that we all do what we can to speak out and work for the protection of our environment and the future of our world. We welcome and appreciate your support, and encourage you to consider providing financial support for our efforts. Our mailing address is at the bottom of this newsletter.

To speak about specific opportunities, or with any questions, please contact David Friedman, Friedman_David@msn.com or our Treasurer at ralphpollard@verizon.net.

Member Party

Join us for our annual, free, fun-filled
Member Party
 on Friday, March 23 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm

Please come and party with us, and meet our special guests, the "Parrots for Peace"! Take pictures with these beautiful champions for peace.

- Meet your fellow members as well as members of our Executive Committee.
- Learn about our Mid-Hudson Sierra Club Group, its outings, programs, activism and how you can get involved.
- There will be great door prizes.
- Enjoy gourmet hors d'oeuvres, refreshments and our famous chocolate covered strawberries!

Please RSVP to our Program Chair, JoyAnn Savino at mhsierraprograms@yahoo.com

This party is for Sierra Club members only. If you have a friend who is not already a member they can become a member of the Sierra Club at the door.

Location:

Boughton Place, 150 Kisor Road, Highland
 Turn south onto Kisor Road off Route 299.

(Look for Raizman Automotive on the corner of Kisor Road and Route 299)

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[Visit our Mid-Hudson Group Website](#)

[Visit our Facebook Page](#)

[Visit our Meetup website for Programs and Outings](#)

Contact us:

Email: midhudsonsierra@twc.com

Mail: Mid-Hudson Sierra Club, PO Box 1012, Poughkeepsie, NY 12602

You can find the names of our Executive Committee members on our website:

[Go to our Contact page](#)

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