In This Issue

Chair's Corner | Environmental Success | Energy | Book Review Member Party | Fundraising | Annual Tag Sale is Coming

Because of differences in Email programs, the links above and "back to top" links below may not work. **Chair's Corner** by Bob Heinemann

**Spring Into Action!** We need to remind ourselves that every day, not just April 22nd, is Earth Day. This is more true than ever as the need for alternatives to fossil fuels for our energy needs becomes more urgent every day.

Good efforts are underway in the Mid Hudson region, as you will read in articles about

Community Choice Aggregation and the abandonment of a plan to dump ash in the Catskills. The New York Legislature passed legislation to prevent offshore oil exploration in the

food waste policy; and to expand NYPA's ability to invest in clean energy. The Environmental Protection Fund will continue to receive \$300 million annually and there is a \$500 million fund for water infrastructure improvements. The Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club recently posted a municipal toolkit page which

waters of New York; to ban single use plastic bags state-wide; to adopt a comprehensive

includes communities across New York State that have made the change to renewable energy sources in innovative and cost effective ways. One booklet listed includes the Mid-Hudson community of Red Hook. Supervisor Robert McKeon successfully implemented the change. The toolkit provides a roadmap for all communities in New York to make the change from fossil fuels to renewable green energy. However, much more remains to be done. The Mid-Hudson Group needs the support of

our members to continue to work for green energy initiatives and to push back on plans that will only delay and interfere with a speedy transition away from fossil fuels. Here are just a few of the issues that need your time and political will to support. · We know that pollinators, birds and bees, are absolutely essential to crops and fruit sources in New York State and the world. Without pollinators, feeding the world's population will become impossible and the price of existing food (just

consider the growing price of honey due to the crash of bee colonies) will become exorbitant and limit access to all. Pesticide use must be strictly regulated and certain pesticides banned altogether. A bill introduced by NY State Senator Hoylman, S5816, the birds and bees protection act, needs our urgent support. Call your representatives and call Governor Cuomo to urge passage and signing of this • Danskammer Energy, LLC continues to press ahead with a pre-application

of the proceeding only parties who have previously commented and the staff from the Department of Public Service (DPS), the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and the Department of Health (DOH) will continue to participate in the Stipulations Process in the litigation. DPS, DEC and DOH need to hear from the public that additional and continued fossil fuel efforts are not needed and should be replaced by hydro, wind and solar. The Clean Water Act has been severely weakened by the Trump administration leaving almost 40% of New York's wetlands unprotected. This negatively effects thousands of miles of streams that flow into our lakes and rivers. Fish as a food source also are affected negatively by pollution. The Clean Water/Flood Protection

Act: A.3658 (Englebright) / S.5576 (Mayer) will lower the threshold of wetlands protected from 12.4 acres down to one acre. This bill also removes outdated

- wetland mapping requirements. This bill needs urgent support. Please call and email your NY representatives. Another bill introduced to protect NY streams is A.4666 (Ryan) / S.5612 (Harckham). This bill will grant C & D streams, which receive no current protections from pollutants given to Class A and B streams, permitting and stream bank protections formerly the responsibility of the Army Corps of Engineers. That oversight was removed by Trump's rollback of the Clean Water Rule. This bill also needs strong support by voters who call and write NY legislators. Chemicals used in numerous practice drills at New York airports, not just in emergency landing situations, are continuing to be used excessively. The runoff
- unnecessary pollution at airports under its control. One example in the lower Hudson territory is the Westchester County Airport near the Kensico water source, but this also is true at airports in the Mid-Hudson region and throughout New York. We all need to do more, and do what we can to put a spotlight on environmental pollution; and to work urgently and effectively to push for all green energy alternatives to fossil fuels without delay. Goals by 2030 or 2040 are worthwhile, but making those goals a reality will take constant efforts by individual citizens every day of the year. The Executive Committee of the Mid-Hudson Group hopes to receive your time, efforts and ideas as we work together to improve the environment in the Hudson Valley.

back to top

Hudson River in the Town of Catskill. Their proposal involved trucking about 445,000 tons of toxic ash annually along local roads — through communities such as those along route 9W — from Wheelabrator's trash incinerators in Peekskill, Poughkeepsie and

Incinerator ash contains high levels of heavy metals and dioxins, and the quarry in which Wheelabrator proposed to dump the ash has highly permeable hydrologic characteristics; it typically contains channels and caves eroded by water. These

formations are difficult to monitor and provide paths for toxins from the ash to reach

information on websites explaining the dangers that the project would pose to the community and to the Hudson River. This is another example of large and vigorous grassroots mobilization of environmental and community opposition educating the public and producing an environmentally positive result.

**Environmental Success Story** 

by Alison White

A Victory for Grassroots Activism

Thanks to the work of communitybased environmental activists in the Hudson Valley, a plan to build a

the wires; you get one bill from the utility, but your utility charges you for the delivery and another company (sometimes referred to as an ESCO, for "electricity supply company") is getting paid to produce the power you used. In general, the utility has little or no incentive to care what the ESCO charges, as the utility company just passes the price along to the consumer. The utility may turn to the electrical spot market in times of short-term high demand when it needs more power, and pay a premium for those kilowatt-hours. So your cost for electricity can vary over time depending on market conditions in the power sector (among other factors).

At its most basic, CCA is a "buyers club" for electrical power. As in other buyers clubs, the principle at work is combining demand into a sufficiently large quantity so as to

endeavor for deregulation of the electric sector launched in the State starting in the 1990s. Part of the deregulation was to separate power delivery from power generation. Your utility may own the wires but a different company is likely putting the power on

uncertainty out of its demand forecast, and it would save the expense of marketing to individual consumers to sell its power. The CCA group asks for bids from interested ESCOs. With respect to the environment and climate change it would be hoped that the ESCO is using clean, renewable power generation such as wind, solar and hydro; but some bidding ESCOs could be generating power from fossil fuel, or they could provide power from a mix of renewable and fossil sources. This information is disclosed in the bid. The municipalities then select the provider and contract to buy the power at the offered price for a set period, say two to three years. CCA is not an untried concept. Massachusetts has had CCAs for several years. A Westchester County CCA has banded together some 21 towns and villages, and is now in

its second contract period. In the first phase, renewably-sourced, clean power came at a premium compared to that from dirty generation, but the majority of the municipalities

still selected a green ESCO. (In the economics of renewable vs. fossil fuel power generation, none of the costs of the negative outcomes of dirty generation such as its pollution with impacts to health, air, water quality and the environment, are taken into account. At the same time, none of the benefits of renewable energy, such as beneficial

Prices for renewable energy are dropping, making them truly competitive with dirty generation. In this new contract, more Westchester municipalities have opted for green power. The savings on energy are typically modest for using renewably sourced power, but clean power helps avoid any future costs associated with destructive climate change

There is no fee or other cost associated with participating in the CCA. Throughout the process, there is no commitment to participate in the CCA; the CCA moves forward only

satisfactory bid and award a supply contract to the new default electricity supplier. At that point all homeowners and small businesses that do not already have a contract with an alternative supplier are automatically enrolled in the program. There will still be one bill arriving each month, and it will still come from the usual utility, only the supplier of

if the proposals meet the cost-saving and other requirements identified in the exploration. Once the bids come in from the ESCOs, municipalities select the

impacts in the above areas, are figured into the cost.)

cost or penalty) needed to be emphasized.

energy could be cheaper than fossil fuel power.

Energy fulfilled this role.

interested?

(which are very real).

the electricity listed in the bill will be the chosen default supplier to the CCA. In our area, a new CCA called Hudson **Hudson Valley Community Power** Let's create change together

To learn more about the Hudson Valley Community Power CCA, go to <u>HudsonValleyCommunityPower.com</u> For facts, guidance, and more information on the CCA program, visit this NYSERDA **website** One other item to be noted in relation to the endeavor to increase energy efficiency (which along with conservation, can make a substantial reduction in the need for more power generation). Outreach has started from HeatSmartNY, a program that aims to help homeowners and small businesses navigate the opportunities that are available to increase energy efficiency in the realm of home heating and cooling, in particular with heat pump technology. There are credits for installing heat pumps for heating and

explored installing solar on their properties ultimately did so. That resulted in six hundred new installations—an impressive number —but over three thousand people were interested in installing solar but were unable to do so. Depending on the model employed, community solar eliminates all or most of the challenges associated with installing solar. At its most basic, community solar involves subscribing to a large solar installation located in a place that's optimal for solar

production, including an open field, on top of a large building or on a capped landfill. The power generated is sent out on the electric grid and subscribers receive a share of the value of that energy that is exported in the form of a credit on their utility bill.

In the subscription model for community solar, subscribers pay the solar developer a

Familiarity with Burrough's writings encourages one to slow down and observe If I were to name the three most precious resources of life, nature in detail. With a visit to Slabsides, it I should say books, friends, and is not difficult to be transported to the nature; and the greatest of these place and time Burroughs describes in his at least the most constant and essays on birds, wildlife and flowers as viewed by Burroughs over the course of lways at hand, is nature. changing seasons. Peek through the windows of the cabin in order to see the furniture made right there and used by Burroughs and his visitors, walk past what was once his celery swamp to the spring described above. Wander the trails to the Black Creek and make your own close observations of nature. Become familiar with where a clump of wake-robin trillium, or a patch of hepatica will reappear each spring. Listen for the calls of the warblers as they return and keep an eye out for a visit from a bald eagle.

of the Beat Street Trio, which is led by our

on Social Media. Thanks to all who made this such a special event, and a particular

Stipulations Process with an Article 10 application proposing to re-power its existing generating facility in the Town of Newburgh, Orange County. At this stage

pollutes streams and negatively effects drinking water in our reservoirs. We may not be able to control federal aviation areas like the air force base that polluted the drinking water for the City of Newburgh, but New York State can control

the groundwater and the Hudson River. Wheelabrator had submitted its application for the project to the DEC in early 2017. In February 2019, a local newspaper ran a story about the proposal, alerting environmental groups. A coalition of more than 50 groups opposed to the ash dump proposal, including Riverkeeper, Sierra Club, Catskill Mountainkeeper, and Clearwater immediately assembled and got to work informing the public. They wrote letters to the editors of local newspapers. They held a news conference in Albany, which was reported by NBC. They created a sign-on letter to the Catskill Town Supervisor, calling on her to oppose the project. They held a public meeting at which geologists presented information about the hydrology of the quarry site, pointing out that it is carbonate rock, which is soluble in ground water and likely to leak. They posted

back to top

That supplier becomes the default ESCO for the town. By presenting a large demand, the municipality may be able to command a better deal for its residents: the ESCO then

Information sessions were held for residents to be made aware of the plans and potential benefits, as well as to answer questions. Residents often were suspicious of these programs as covert rip-offs or government over-reach, so the opt-out clause (with no

A CCA Administrator was chosen to facilitate the pursuit of a CCA (in this case, Joule

Administrator works with the municipalities and solicits proposals from qualified ESCOs on behalf of their residents and small businesses. A "Local Organizer" also helps the process by providing citizen-centered services to support the project; Hudson Valley

The bids came back in early May, with a 100% renewable, NYS-based supplier coming in

at \$0.0638 per kilowatt-hour vs the 12-month Central Hudson weighed average of \$0.0687, saving \$0.0049 per kilowatt-hour. The savings may sound unimpressive, and may make only a modest difference in the electricity bill of the average resident for the year, but it is a savings, it is reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other pollution. It is sourced in NYS for job and economic improvements to the State, and it is encouraging renewable energy development. In this case, the source is mostly upstate hydro-power with some wind generation. A few years ago, it would be unthinkable that renewable

The next steps are notification mailings to town residents which include the opt-out provisions, followed by the new rate implemented in the July Central Hudson bill. A lower and stable bill for two years, a cleaner environment, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and NYS jobs: a pretty good result! Perhaps your municipality may be

Community Power, the same entity that worked on the Westchester CCA). The

Community Solar Arrives in the Hudson Valley by Nina Orville Community Solar offers a new way for New Yorkers to benefit from solar energy while supporting the state's transition to renewable power. This new renewable energy construct makes solar energy—and solar savings—available to most people, typically at no cost. It is also one of the ways that New York State is driving its transition to renewable energy. In the face of very challenging reports about the climate crisis—including the UN's recent

report that one million species are at risk of extinction, and May temperatures of 84

At the same time, New York recognized that the benefits of traditional roof top solar excluded most residents, including renters, those in multi-family homes, owners of shaded homes or those unable to afford or to finance solar on their homes. As the administrator of the Solarize Our Congregation program we piloted in 2018 a

partnership with the Hudson River Presbytery's volunteer environmental committee. It was notable that only six of the seventy-nine participating churches located throughout the Hudson Valley were able to install solar themselves through that iteration of the

commitments to address the challenge at the state level. Specifically, the State has set its clean energy standard for electricity for 70% renewable energy by 2030, with a 100% renewable target by 2040. Given 28% renewable generation in 2017, the current

degrees near the Arctic Ocean—New York State has continued to step up its

commitments are particularly impressive.

program.

Similarly, in the Solarize

Westchester program (which we ran in partnership with non-profit Sustainable Westchester and twenty-two municipalities) only fifteen percent of those who

discounted amount for the utility credit they receive. Though subscribers don't receive the electricity directly, they are supporting renewable generation as these solar farms cannot be built without subscribers signing up to participate since those discounted subscription payments are the way that solar developers recoup their investments over time. New York has a policy to encourage development of community solar farms. Property owners who host these projects benefit too, often through lease payments from solar developers. Gary Flaum, a member of the Lower Hudson Group of the Sierra Club chose to build the first community solar project in Northern Westchester on the roof of his industrial building to support renewable energy production and also because the

Slabsides and the John Burroughs Nature Sanctuary is preserved through the work of the John Burroughs Association which holds open houses and special events both on site as well as in the community, and recognizes nature writing through annual literary awards. There are beautiful, well-maintained trails there so that it is possible to explore the area thoroughly. For further information on Slabsides visit the web site: johnburroughsassociation.org.

friendship, delicious food, and wonderful music. Our annual membership party was held by Twisted Soul of Poughkeepsie, the music

toxic ash landfill in the Town of Catskill has been abandoned. Wheelabrator Technologies is a New Hampshire-based trash incineration company, owned by a group of Australian investors. The company had proposed to create an incinerator ash dump in a former quarry located near the shore of the Hudson Falls. New York.

**Energy Corner** by *Nivo Rovedo* **Community Choice Aggregation** There has been mention of Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) in past energy sector articles in previous newsletters. Now is a good time for a refresher on this since there has been some very positive and exciting local news in this area of late. It may well affect your town or city. A local CCA is no longer a hypothetical construct but one has been created in our area. CCA was made legal by New York State several years ago. It continues the on-going

extract a discount from a supplier based on the volume of the sale. In the CCA, a municipality (or several municipalities banded together) offers to buy all its electricity from one provider (with a provision for individual residences to opt out from the deal). would have a ready buyer for its product for a set period, taking a great deal of

Valley Community Power will start in July consisting of seven municipalities: Beacon, City of Poughkeepsie, Town of Fishkill, Red Hook, Village of Cold Spring, Phillipstown, and Marbletown. The work was started over a year ago, with each municipality passing an ordinance to allow and comply with NYS CCA laws.

cooling needs, especially in Orange County. For more on this visit **HeatSmartNY.com**.

financial returns were higher than if he used the energy produced at his own facility. At the same time, a church that subscribed to that community solar installation is on track

to save \$1,000 in the first year of its subscription. As a subscriber to the first community solar project in Westchester, built over two years ago in the central part of Westchester

For all these reasons, the proliferation of community solar in the region is cause for celebration. I have transitioned roof-top solar programs to a community solar model to

{Nina Orville is the founder of Abundant Efficiency, runs community solar programs including Our Community Solar and Solarize Our Congregation, as well as a community

"Many times during the season I have in my solitude a visit from a bald eagle. There is a dead tree near the summit, where he often perches, and

thunderbolt—the bolt of Jove—and now the bird of Jove hovers about it or sits upon it. I have little doubt that what attracted me to this spot attracts him—the seclusion, the savageness, the elemental grandeur. Sometimes, as I look out of my window early in the morning, I see the eagle upon his perch, preening his plumage, or waiting for the rising sun to gild the mountaintops. When the smoke begins to rise from my chimney, or he sees me going to the spring for water, he concludes it is time for him to be off. But he need not fear the crack of the rifle here: nothing more deadly than field-glasses shall be pointed at him while I am about. Often in the course of the day I see him circling above my domain, or winging his way toward the mountains. His home is apparently in the Shawangunk Range, twenty or more miles distant, and I fancy he stops or lingers above me on his way to the river. The days on which I see him are not quite the same as other days. I think my thoughts soar a little higher all the rest of the morning: I have had a visit from a messenger of Jove. The lift or range of those great wings has passed

which we call the "old eagle-tree." It is a pine, killed years ago by a

back to top

help accelerate the adoption of a solar approach that brings benefits to everyone.

County, I have saved over \$500 on my own electricity bills since I joined.

solar program for Sustainable Westchester}.

Book Review by Sarah Kennedy

John Burroughs (1837— 1921) was a naturalist who spent a great deal of time at Slabsides, a cabin he built himself in West Park, New York. He was visited there by people such as John Muir, Henry Ford, Thomas **Edison and Theodore** Roosevelt, as well as by students from Vassar

College. He wrote essays on nature which were published in 27 volumes. Here is an excerpt from *The Birds of* John Burroughs: A Great

into my thought."

Naturalist's Meditations and Essays on Bird Watching:

back to top **Fundraising** by David Friedman

Presented by Marie Caruso and Joanne Steele

The Tag Sale is Coming Volunteers and Donations Needed!

Please save your stuff for our annual tag sale in September (exact date TBA). We are looking for good donations of many kinds: books, CD's, DVD's, toys with all the parts, hiking/camping equipment, sporting goods with some play left in them, tools, antiques, collectibles, small furniture, kitchen items, dinnerware, art,

small electronics and camera equipment in working order, kayaks, canoes, working bicycles, etc. We generally don't sell clothing or shoes, except hiking or

own Andy Moss and a silent auction fund

raiser. Attendees bid on various quality items to help raise funds for the group. Chair Robert Heinemann welcomed guests. Special thanks to Sara Kennedy for making so many of the arrangements for this event. Those in attendance enjoyed the evening and indicated they are ready for the next special event which will be promoted in our newsletters and on our website, as well as

2) pick up donations beforehand; 3) transport larger items in a van or truck; 4) offer a place where donations can be stored. If you can help, or have questions or suggestions, please contact Marie Caruso at mariehvwdk@gmail.com or 845-684-7058. We always have a good time interacting with other Sierrans at the sale, and finding ways to keep good, usable goods from filling our landfills and polluting our air! It's a great feeling to see that others can use those cherished items we no longer need. back to top Mid Hudson Membership Party More than 60 Sierrans and friends joined together for an evening of camaraderie, at the solar powered Vassar Barn on May 2nd. The event included delicious food catered

ski boots in good condition.

1) work at the sale;

We also need volunteers to:

thanks to the Hudson Valley Merchants below for their contributions to our silent Auction. We encourage you to let them know that you appreciate their support! <u>Hidden Haven Yoga of Highland</u> Three Arts Bookstore; 3 Collegeview Avenue, Poughkeepsie Serenity Hair Salon of Highland Newburgh Chamber Music (Newburgh) **Hudson Valley Goldsmith of New Paltz Dutchess Racquet Club of Poughkeepsie Cocoon Gifts of New New Paltz** Kingston Cyclery of Kingston **Barner Books of New Paltz** 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 <u>ralphpollard@verizon.net</u>. back to top

Contact us: **Email:** midhudsonsierra@twc.com Go to our Contact page If you no longer wish to receive our Newsletter by email you can unsubscribe by sending an email request to Dave Thomas at <a href="mailto:dave@davidalexanderthomas.com">dave@davidalexanderthomas.com</a>.

<u>Visit our Mid-Hudson Group Website</u> Visit our Facebook Page

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 Ralph Pollard, Visit our Meetup website for Programs and Outings Mail: Mid-Hudson Sierra Club, PO Box 1012, Poughkeepsie, NY 12602 You can find the names of our Executive Committee members on our website: