



## THE ENGAGED SIERRAN

### GOTTEN THE MESSAGE?

This has been a very long, cold winter so far, coupled with increased energy bills in New Hampshire. You are in the minority if you did **not** see a major jump in your last electric bill, or **didn't** see the oil/gas delivery truck pulling up sooner than you'd hoped. We in New England rely on some form of heat in the winter months, and the dark nights mean more hours of lighting and other indoor electrical consumption.

There are some things that can be done to offset these expenses, long term, thanks to a variety of programs supported by funds collected through the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Each of the major NH utilities have a provision for conducting an energy audit of your home, and recommended homeowner improvements can be matched by the RGGI funds.



In keeping with NH Sierra Club's support of RGGI and other moves toward sustainable energy sources, our Chapter Director, Catherine Corkery, arranged an energy audit for her older home in 2013. The audit revealed a number of areas where improvements could be made, particularly by adding insulation in the attic and the exterior walls. She then worked with her utility to avail herself of the [NHSaves](#) financing (50% match). This winter so far Cathy has saved approximately 50% on her heating bills!

The Chapter is now looking for other individuals who have had an energy audit and are willing to share their experience with the membership. Whether you had one in recent years, or just this year, and whether you have realized the savings projected by your utility – we want to pass these experiences on, so that the rest of us are encouraged to look into these programs. Please email Cathy Corkery at [catherine.corkery@sierraclub.org](mailto:catherine.corkery@sierraclub.org) to tell us your energy audit story!

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

Quick and comprehensive information about Energy Audits and Weatherization can be found at [NHSaves.com](#), including calculating the efficiency of your home, the cost of an audit and the financing available to qualifying homeowners. Even if you don't need to upgrade your heating efficiency, this site has timely tips about saving other energy costs. Give it a try - it may be that there are some significant savings available to you!

To request an Energy Audit of your home, contact your electric supplier: [Eversource](#), [Unitil](#), [Liberty](#), [NH Electrical Cooperative](#).

NH Sierra Club urges all members to stay abreast of the current legislative attempt ([HB208](#)) to unravel New Hampshire's RGGI programs. Without funding from this source, it will be more expensive for homeowners, towns, low income and businesses to realize those energy efficient upgrades to their homes, saving both money and fuel over time.

### STATE HOUSE UPDATE

*This is a quick summary from Chapter Director, Catherine Corkery.*

**HB208:** THANK you for sending over 500 emails to the state representatives before the vote on HB208 - the bill defunding energy efficiency programs for low income, residential and commercial buildings. Specifically, the bill would take away over \$4 million of funding from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) for these energy saving programs. Of the nine Republicans who voted to against it, six of them were new supporters of RGGI who heard from their Sierra Club constituents! Thank you - and please thank them for their support of RGGI and funding for energy efficiency. They are:

- James Belanger of Hollis
- David Danielson of Bedford
- Susan Emerson of Rindge
- David Kidder of New London
- Carolyn Gargasz of Hollis
- James Grenier of Lempster
- Mark Proulx of Manchester
- Lisa Scontsas of Nashua
- Terry Wolf of Bedford

**To send a thank you for supporting RGGI and energy efficiency programs**, you can find their contact information at the [State House website](#). Please do and let me know how it goes! As expected, HB208 did pass, 201 to 154. It may have a stop at the House Finance Committee and then another floor vote before the end of March. Stay tuned!

#### OTHER UPDATES -

There are a number of bills focused on the Renewable Portfolio Standard - bad ones that would unravel the program. The good news is that the House Committee on Science, Technology and Energy has motioned to kill two of them ([HB234](#) and [HB543](#)) and retained the other one ([HB143](#)). This means two of the bills will come to the floor for a vote, and the question will be to kill them - good news! HB143 will stay in the committee and they will study it until the end of the year.

The Senate is working on [SB117](#) to help expand the solar program and make group net metering easier. This a completely opposite perspective than what the House saw, and it is a relief!



We are asking folks to write letters to their local papers and webpages supporting the RGGI program and the renewables too. Laura Magzis, a volunteer and member from Concord, recently [had her letter printed in the Concord Monitor](#). It is terrific! You can do this too! Contact us at [nhsc603@gmail.com](mailto:nhsc603@gmail.com) or come to the Volunteer Night on March 17 (see below for more information).

Comments, questions or suggestions? Contact me at [catherine.corkery@sierraclub.org](mailto:catherine.corkery@sierraclub.org).

#### SPRING VOLUNTEER NIGHT

Please come to help with some office work and act on climate too!

##### **Tuesday, March 17**

5:30pm-7:30pm

40 North Main Street, Second Floor - Concord

Come Volunteer with NHSC! For the office work, we have some data entry and a mailing to organize. Great volunteers like you will write a note, place stamps and seal the envelopes or help enter data in the computer. It's amazing how quickly it gets done when many hands are there to help.

Plus, Chapter Director Catherine Corkery will be on hand with a legislative update and action items to make a difference in protecting our environment.

Please [RSVP online](#) so we know you're coming.

#### PANCAKE BREAKFAST AND CLIMATE CONVERSATION

##### **Wednesday, March 25**

7:30am-12pm

Durham, NH

You are invited to celebrate and defend maple



syrup! NH Sierra Club and our partners, including the UNH Student Environmental Action Coalition, scheduled a panel of speakers to highlight our maple syrup industry, the climate impacts we see now and ways we can address climate changes in New Hampshire.



Free of charge. [Sign up now](#) -- space is limited.

## EXTENDING RAIL IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

The NH Capitol Corridor project made headlines when it released its report in early February. The report is one of the first steps taken to evaluate opportunities to improve inter-city transit service between Boston and Concord.

Public transit has long been viewed by the Sierra Club as a positive, environmentally-friendly alternative to sprawl-inducing highways, traffic jams, and air pollution. In fact, in 1994 the Sierra Club published its Transportation Policy (<http://www.sierraclub.org/policy/transportation>), supporting public transit such as commuter rail systems.

Therefore, the report's conclusions didn't surprise us. As noted by a [Concord Monitor](#) editorial, the report found that "The return of rail will spark residential and economic growth, result in 5,600 new jobs, have an annual weekday ridership of 668,000, and help the state retain and attract a young, well-educated labor pool. The study's authors predict the creation of 3,600 new residences and the addition of 2 million square feet of commercial space."

This newsletter's co-editor, Alice Pearman, indicated her personal interest in the issue. Three and a half years ago, her grant-funded position in Manchester ran out, and she accepted a new job in Boston. After three weeks of sitting in traffic on the commuter bus, she moved to Lowell in order to take advantage of the commuter rail. "Had there been commuter rail in Manchester, I would have stayed put," Alice said. (Happily for all of us, she moved back to Manchester a year or so later, employed once again in New Hampshire).



Personally and professionally, we're super excited to see the possibilities for transit in New Hampshire in print. But, we also know it will take a great deal of support to make such a large capital project happen. Will there be support from the top? We asked Governor Maggie Hassan for her take on the rail study. She responded:

"A solid, modern transportation infrastructure is critical to the success of our people and businesses, and bringing commuter rail from Boston to Nashua and Manchester is another important step in strengthening our transportation infrastructure. Rail will improve access to the entire region, provide types of new transportation and housing opportunities that 21st century workers and families desire, help keep more of our young people right here in the Granite State and spark economic growth for decades to come.

"I look forward to working with legislators from both parties, with local communities and with our business and nonprofit sectors in order to continue to improve our transportation infrastructure, to protect our air quality and reduce harmful greenhouse emissions, and to bring commuter rail to New Hampshire."

We can't help but agree. We're looking forward to watching the progression of this important project. Keep informed on the NH Capitol Corridor project by visiting their website, <http://www.nhcapitolcorridor.com>.

**SAVE THE PLANET & SOME GREEN.**  
JOIN AND ENJOY NEW MEMBER BENEFITS



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