



SIERRA CLUB

Central-Northern NY Group

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FROM THE CHAIR, RHEA JEZER



Government often gets a bad rap. We refer to our legislators as “politicians”, and I often hear what “they” are doing to us. Wrong! A democratic government is “Of the people, By the people and For the people”. WE elect those in office and they are responsible to US. However, “by the people” means that responsibility does not end when we elect individuals to represent us. Therefore, when we vote for and hopefully elect a person we trust, we must still do due diligence to carefully monitor the work being done and the laws and legislation being passed, so that our will and needs are being represented.

Our input should not stop on election day and those the majority elected do not suddenly become the antagonists or enemies – the “those politicians”. It is our obligation to work with them and educate them. Even those we did not vote for still represent us and are responsible to us. They need our input and reminders that they were elected to represent us – all of us.

We cannot possibly monitor all issues assigned to our legislators, and our elected officials have extensive staff to work on hundreds of issues. Each of us is too busy to follow all legislation in which we are interested. That is why we join organizations specifically representing our ideals such as Sierra Club, who have not only staff but a myriad of dedicated and highly educated volunteers to study and work on individual issues that are coming up for votes, and are constantly giving input to those we have elected.

Of course we do not always get what we want, which is total protection of our environment, but our input is crucial for the legislation to come out as best as we can, considering a myriad of other constraints our legislators have to deal with.

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR, CONTINUED.

Because of our efforts to get the best people elected, this year has produced a great deal of environmental progress. This was partly due to our electing the right people, but also to the very dedicated staff and volunteers who followed the legislation, gave input and pushed our legislators to do the right thing. Listed here is just a snapshot of the federal and state laws enacted in the past two years which will protect us and the environment in which we live. Although we always want more, the past two years have produced great strides in environmental protection and climate change legislation. Please click on individual parts for details.

FEDERAL:

The U.S. Government put in place one of the largest environmental funding laws ever enacted by an American government.

The \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill in 2021 included over \$300 billion for public green investment.

- Inflation Reduction Act, the largest piece of climate legislation in U.S. history. Building on the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) passed in 2021, the Inflation Reduction Act establishes a comprehensive set of clean energy incentives, mostly through decade-long tax credits for everything from electric vehicles to carbon capture and sequestration.
- Economic modeling indicates that the Inflation Reduction Act itself could reduce 2030 emissions by 1 billion tons, leaving a 0.5 billion ton gap to achieving the U.S. 2030 emissions target — a gap that could be closed by complementary federal regulations and state and local action.
- An updated Methane Action Plan, which includes 50 specific measures backed by \$20 billion in funding provided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Inflation Reduction Act and annual appropriations. The Inflation Reduction Act includes a methane emissions fee for certain oil and gas facilities that will kick in in 2024 and increase to \$1,500 per metric ton of methane in 2026. Meanwhile, the EPA has proposed stronger regulations to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas industry.
- The Senate ratified the international Kigali Amendment on reducing HFCs (Hydrofluorocarbon) in September 2022, and EPA has issued regulations to phase down HFCs, as directed by the American Innovation and Manufacturing Act enacted in 2020.
- Strengthened EPA, which has already regulated auto emissions, banned use of DDT, cleaned up toxic waste, protected ozone layer, increased recycling, revitalized inner-city brownfields.
- Global Methane Pledge at the 2021 UN climate summit (COP26). As of January 2023, 150 countries have signed onto the pledge and committed to cut their total methane emissions by at least 30% by 2030.

NEW YORK STATE:

In one of the most extensive climate packages in recent history, the NYS Budget makes transformative investments and includes groundbreaking legislation building on more than \$30 billion committed to climate action.

These are some of the highlights:

- The Budget includes requirements for advancing zero emission construction in new buildings seven stories or lower, except large commercial and industrial buildings, by December 31, 2025, and all other new buildings by December 31, 2028.
- The budget also allocates funding for the addition of 265 positions across multiple environmental agencies
- In addition to investments from the landmark which allots \$4.2 million Clean Water, Clean Air & Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act which we worked to get passed. passed by voters in 2022,
- the FY 2024 Budget includes \$400 million for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), sustaining this historic investment level from the FY 2023 Budget. Language in budget also requires NY Power Authority to produce Clean energy by 2030, phasing out fossil fuels.

Other important investments in environment include \$400 million to provide relief to New Yorkers experiencing high electric bills as well as lower energy burdens through electrifications and retrofits, \$200 million for NYS Parks, \$500 million for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act, which will help communities across the state upgrade their aging water infrastructure. The CWIA's investment in New York's water infrastructure has now reached \$5 billion since the program's inception in 2017.

UPCOMING EVENTS

UPCOMING DATES

- September 16th - World Cleanup Day
- Sept 21 - Zero Emissions Day
- Sept 22 - Car Free Day
- November 24th - Buy Nothing Day
- October 24th - International Day of Climate Action
- January - Veganuary
- March 3 - World Wildlife Day
- March 18 - World Recycling Day

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge Kayak, August 19, 2-4pm.

Join us for a leisurely, 2-mile paddle on the Clyde River to explore Montezuma's birds, other wildlife and their unique habitats. The refuge is teeming with birds like the Bald Eagle, Great Blue Heron, Green Heron and Wood Duck. The summer months are a great time to experience these birds as they care for their young and prepare for the autumn migration. Solo kayaks, personal floatation devices, paddles, binoculars and bird guides will be provided. Meet us at Rivers Crossing Campground and Marina, 508 State Route 89, Savannah, NY 13146. **Fee: \$30/person, \$20/person if you bring your own kayak. Email pplumley@syr.edu if you plan to attend.**

RECAP - 2023 EVENTS

ESF's Heiberg Forest, April 23rd

The Sierra club CNNY group held a guided visit to ESF's Heiberg Forest on April 23. The group learned about the local wildlife and history of the region!



Green Lakes State Park, June 24th

Local members of the Sierra Club enjoyed this hike with beautiful views of the eye-catching lake and calcium carbonate reef.



EarthFest 2023 Tabling

This event was held at Canal Landing Park in Fayetteville on April 29. Sierra Club members had materials on climate change, electric busses, and information on joining the group!



CNNY GROUP NEWS

Congratulations to our CNNY group chair, Rhea Jezer, for having been selected to receive the National Sierra Club's 2023 Environmental Alliance Award. This award honors a Club member or entity who has helped further environmental goals through collaboration with other, non-Sierra Club constituencies. The award will be presented at the Sierra Club annual meeting to be held in Chicago on September 9th.

CLIMATE CHANGE IN CENTRAL NEW YORK

BY DEBRA DESOCIO, CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEMBER

Climate change is very real. Our local DEC website states, in New York State the average temperature has increased by 3 degrees Fahrenheit since 1970. It is projected to increase by an additional 3 degrees Fahrenheit by 2080. Yet, in a recent article in syracuse.com, Upstate cities were deemed a place of safety to reside as the entire country becomes hotter.

Central New Yorkers experienced the effect of drifting smoke from Canadian forest fires. This type of pollution affects trees and plants, pets, wildlife and of course, people. This summer, we have all witnessed or been forced to cancel concerts, sporting events, picnics, and barbeques and similar activities. Is this going to be an annual occurrence going forward? It seems possible. Increases in temperature and changes in precipitation are expected to increase forest fires in New York State by 10-20 percent. The Canadian National Resources Minister, Jonathan Wilkinson, predicts that by 2050, land burned by wildfires will double. Health effects from wildfires due to fine particulates (also called PM2.5) include irritation of the eyes, nose and throat; coughing, sneezing; and shortness of breath, and long-term effects such as worsening of conditions such as asthma. Elevated levels of ambient PM2.5 have also been found to contribute to diabetes and negative birth outcomes for pregnant women, as covered in an October 2020 NPR article by Nathan Rott.

As far as the environment, extreme heat will cause evaporation in Lake Ontario and Lake Erie and our many streams. This will cause declining fresh water fish populations of trout and bass. Poor oxygen quality will cause trout embryos to be under developed. (DEC.com). Increases in heavy rain events will also affect runoff from fertilized lawns and septic systems, which will contribute to flooding and drainage into nearby lakes and streams. This runoff may contain phosphorous, a nutrient often present in farms and gardens, and which promotes abundant algae growth. In addition, warmer temperatures, abundant light and stable wind conditions increase toxic algae. Algae blooms are harmful to humans, animals, fish, and shellfish populations, as well as sensitive ecosystems.

WHAT'S GOING ON WITH GAS STOVES IN NEW YORK?

BY LARA HEBERLE

New York is the first state to ban gas stoves. As of 2026, cooking appliances in new buildings less than 7 stories must be electric. By 2029, new buildings greater than 7 stories will join suit.

Does this mean that the government is coming for your beloved gas stove? No, not at all! The requirement only applies to new construction. However, you might want to re-think your love of your gas stove. Gas stoves are major air polluters, and can cause air quality problems in home if there is no hood and vent to the outside. Studies have linked them to 1 in 8 childhood asthma cases [1]. They emit NOx, carbon monoxide, particle matter, and benzene, and similar chemicals which can be carcinogenic - and emissions can occur even when the stoves are turned off. In addition, methane can leak from the stoves, which can cause significant impacts to climate-related emissions.

Induction stoves are a great alternative. The stove heats your pots and pans with magnetic fields, so the stove itself never actually gets hot - a huge safety bonus! They can bring a pot of water to boil in half the time compared to a gas stove. Other common concerns about induction stoves are that their cooktops break easily (myth - old electric stovetops were much more prone to breaking), and that you need all new pots and pans (myth - most pots and pans work with induction stoves - you can test your cookware by seeing if a magnet sticks to it). Happy safe cooking!

[1] <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36612391/>