

Susquehanna *SIERRAN* December 2023



Founded 1892

– *Election Edition* –

EXPLORE, ENJOY, PROTECT THE PLANET

November Election—Our Endorsement – Scott Lauffer

The Susquehanna Group, with Atlantic Chapter approval, endorsed Hadassah Mativetsky for Binghamton City Council. Hadassah has permaculture design certification and graduate certification in evolutionary studies. She hosted Sustainable Binghamton Radio, and organized community discussions and educational programs. Her priorities are housing, public safety (including stormwater management and flood readiness), and green infrastructure. She was elected and will join a majority Democratic city council which can move Binghamton forward on climate resilience, clean energy, and environmental preservation.



Executive Committee Annual Election

Group bylaws require annual elections to the Executive Committee, which has 9 members serving 2-year terms. This year we elect 5. Statements by candidates appear below. **Complete the ballot on page 3 and mail it by January 15, 2024 to:**

Susquehanna Group, PO Box 572, Endicott, NY 13760

Candidate Statements

Moira Ashleigh

Nature is extremely important to me, the natural world and finding ways for humans to live more gently on the Earth alongside wildlife, plants and mycelium. I come from Massachusetts to Owego, where I have bought my home and plant my gardens. After a year and a half I've fallen in love with the area, especially the local Brick Pond. In Massachusetts I was a water sampling citizen scientist for the Mystic River Watershed Association for 10 years. I spent 2 years as a board member for The Wildlife Rehabilitators Association of Massachusetts where I produced the newsletter and helped with the annual conference and other events. I am on the board of the EarthSpirit Community <http://www.earthspirit.com/>. I maintain the website for EarthSpirit among other committee responsibilities. My degree is an MA in Theater from Emerson College, Boston, MA. I am extremely interested in helping New York state accelerate its renewable energy accessibility for everyone.

Mary Cronk

I have resided in the town of Chenango since 1977. I began attending Broome County Environmental Management Council meetings, and later became a member for several years. I am a retiree of Cornell University where I worked in the central IT department. I joined the Cayuga Bird Club and the Northern NY Audubon Bird Club, attending some of their bird watching trips. I have been a member of the Sierra Club for many years, and a member of the executive committee for the last 4 years. I would like another term on the exec committee to continue working on environmental concerns in the susquehanna region.

Christina Fuller

I began working with Sierra Club in 2021 when they got involved with Binghamton Move Out Project (MOP), an initiative I founded while in college to reduce waste and give back to the community during student move out. Soon after MOP was formally adopted by the Executive Committee, I became a member of the Committee myself, and am now seeking a second term. Informed by my work with VINES while in college, my ongoing work with MOP, and my current position working in state government, my passion really lies in sustainable community development, or finding ways to function and thrive as a community in a sustainable way, where everyone has their basic needs met and resources are not depleted for generations to come. I hope to continue in my role on the ExCom to further expand MOP, stay apprised of local environmental issues, and continue connection with like-minded environmentalists.

Doug Gausman

I have been a member of the Sierra Club since 1981 and a member of the Susquehanna Group since 2014. I have always been interested in protecting the environment and have actively opposed natural gas horizontal fracking in NY. I currently serve on the SGSC Executive Committee. I believe global warming is a very real concern and have supported a number of demonstrations concerning same. My family minimizes our environmental impact by driving a hybrid car and we are invested in a solar farm near Ithaca. In the past year, we have had an air heat pump system installed in our home. My wife and I have long supported recycling and have worked to support positive environmental candidates in the local elections. I have also been actively involved in the Move Out Project that provides a reuse program for BU student materials when they leave the area.

Jim Taft

We have a beautiful planet we're in danger of trashing. A retiree, I'm a Broome County native who after 27 years away returned in 1996 with family and an MA in Social Ecology. Experience: private sector (cabinetmaking); environmental nonprofits (nuclear waste, forestry); government (criminal justice). I host, with my partner, international students (16 so far). Since 2016 I have served on the Susquehanna Group ExCom. I am the Group's Delegate to Atlantic Chapter, and edit the Group's newsletter. Considerable grant writing experience helps me assess, characterize, plan and raise funds for organizational efforts.

Valdi Weiderpass

I have dedicated my love of nature, aided by education including a B.S. in Chemical Engineering and A.S. in Industrial Technology with Electrical Emphasis, along with my experience, to help inform people about the natural world, to influence policies in order to improve environmental protection and try to Save a Habitable Climate. I testified in hearings and/or submitted comments against; renewable natural gas being used to prolong gas distribution; privatization of Joint Sewage Treatment Plant; cryptocurrency 'mining' via fossil fuels; and other fossil fuel projects. I have testified and supported: a wind farm including advocating protecting eagles with automated vision system; a community solar farm; and a grid-scale energy storage project. I serve on Senator Lea Webb's Environmental Issue Council and as Chair of Susquehanna Group. My house gets electricity from a community solar farm. I gave a presentation on Climate Change. If elected, I will continue for a 5th ExCom term.

Last 2023 tending of the pollinator garden at Confluence Park (joint project of Susquehanna Group and Binghamton Parks & Recreation). To join us in 2024 contact Sarah Hodder shaddow@stny.rr.com



Susquehanna Group

Broome and Sullivan, & most of Chenango,
Delaware, Otsego, and Tioga Counties

Chair	*Valdi Weiderpass
Vice Chair	*Scott Lauffer
Secretary	*Karen Boba
Treasurer	*Joann Lettis
Political Chair	*Scott Lauffer
Chapter Delegate	*Jim Taft
Newsletter Editor	*Jim Taft
Webmaster	Chris Harasta
Conservation Co-Chairs	*Doug Gausman, *Mary Cronk
Alt. Chapter Delegate	*Joann Lettis
	*Christina Fuller
	* Member Executive Committee

<https://www.sierraclub.org/atlantic/susquehanna>

To become a candidate for the
Susquehanna Group's Executive
Committee, mail by November 1, 2024
a candidate statement of 150 words or
less to:

Susquehanna Group
PO Box 572
Endicott NY 13760

The Nominating Committee will create
a slate of candidates, and ballots will be
mailed with the December *Sierran*.

COMING EVENTS

Susquehanna Group resumes post-pandemic, in-person general meetings, at the **Vestal Public Library, 320 Vestal Parkway East**, Vestal. These will be **hybrid** meetings also allowing online attendance/participation—useful for members in Susquehanna Group's 6-county geography.

December 19, 7:00pm General Membership Meeting, Vestal Library and Zoom app 364 466 5286.

Chris Burger: "Getting to Zero Waste" The experience of a family of four which reduced its waste to nearly zero by 1992 and has maintained that level ever since. Strategies on creating a zero-waste community are also discussed. Chris has degrees in Chemical Engineering, Sociology, and Economics. He is a small business owner, consultant, and college instructor. Previously a Broome County legislator, he is active in the Sierra Club at the Chapter and National levels. He has been featured in Seventeen Magazine, among many other periodicals.

January 16, 7:00pm, General Membership Meeting, Vestal Library and Zoom app 364 466 5286.

George Homsy: "Sprawl" Dr. Homsy is Director of the Environmental Studies Program and Associate Professor in the Department of Public Administration at Binghamton University. He will discuss the consequences of the disorganized expansion of urban/industrial land use into adjoining countryside.

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BALLOT for ExCom Members

Indicate your **5** votes and mail this ballot to Susquehanna Group, PO Box 572, Endicott NY 13760
by 1/15/2024

<input type="checkbox"/> Moira Ashleigh	<input type="checkbox"/> Mary Conk	<input type="checkbox"/> Christina Fuller	<input type="checkbox"/> Doug Gausman
<input type="checkbox"/> Jim Taft	<input type="checkbox"/> Valdi Weiderpass		

Free Home Energy Assessment

– Gerri Wiley, Energy Navigator gerriwiley@yahoo.com

In the September *Sierran*, I walked readers through a **FOUR-STEP** process of decarbonizing their homes. This month, let's take a closer look at **STEP #1**, the Home Energy Assessment (Audit)—the ticket to learning more about your homes.

What is the root cause of those drafts you're feeling? What equipment is using the most energy? How can you reduce high energy bills? Does your home have hazards such as areas with high humidity or poor ventilation? Are your air ducts leaky?



Blower Door Test

A residential energy audit helps answer these questions. It defines how efficiently your home is operating and where it is wasting energy. You'll want a blower door test performed so that airtightness can be measured and air leaks identified. Depending on income level there may be a charge for the blower door test. If a charge, I believe the results from this process are worth the cost.

Whom to call for the assessment? Go to: <https://www.nyscrda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Home-Energy-Efficiency-Upgrades>, indicate your county, the number of people in your household, then "Residential Energy Assessments" and "Find a Contractor" to see the list of Auditors certified by the Building Performance Institute. If your household income is less than the figure stated, your county's Cornell Cooperative Regional Energy Hub advisor will be happy to assist you: <https://www.nyscrda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Regional-Clean-Energy-Hubs/Find-Your-Clean-Energy-Hub-Today>

You'll want to be present for the 1-to-3 hour assessment. Have utility and energy bills ready. If you heat with fuel oil or propane, receipts for the past 1-2 years will be helpful. Be ready to provide access to all parts of the home. If you heat with wood, be sure fires are completely out and ashes removed.

If you've just moved into a house, hold off on the audit and go through one winter so that you'll have that set of heating data to contribute to the analysis.

The customized report you receive will show you where your home is performing well and a list of potential actions to help determine where home improvement dollars would best be spent. **STEP #2**, probably sealing and insulation, can now be based on good information.

Riverbank Cleanup - Scott Lauffer

Seven members joined the Broome County Environmental Management Council's riverbank cleanup on October 21. Hadassah Mativetsky, just-elected Binghamton City Council member, joined us. We collected a lot of trash in Southside and Confluence Parks in Binghamton and left the areas much cleaner. We reported to the County (1) an active and growing homeless encampment under the State Street Bridge, and (2) a tree fallen over the flood wall. In all, 256 volunteers collected 2.4 tons of trash. To join the Spring 2024 cleanup, and to see a map of cleanup sites check: <https://www.gobroomecounty.com/emc/riverbankcleanup>.



Fracking Natural Gas with CO2 Threatens Southern Tier and Climate

— Valdi Weiderpass

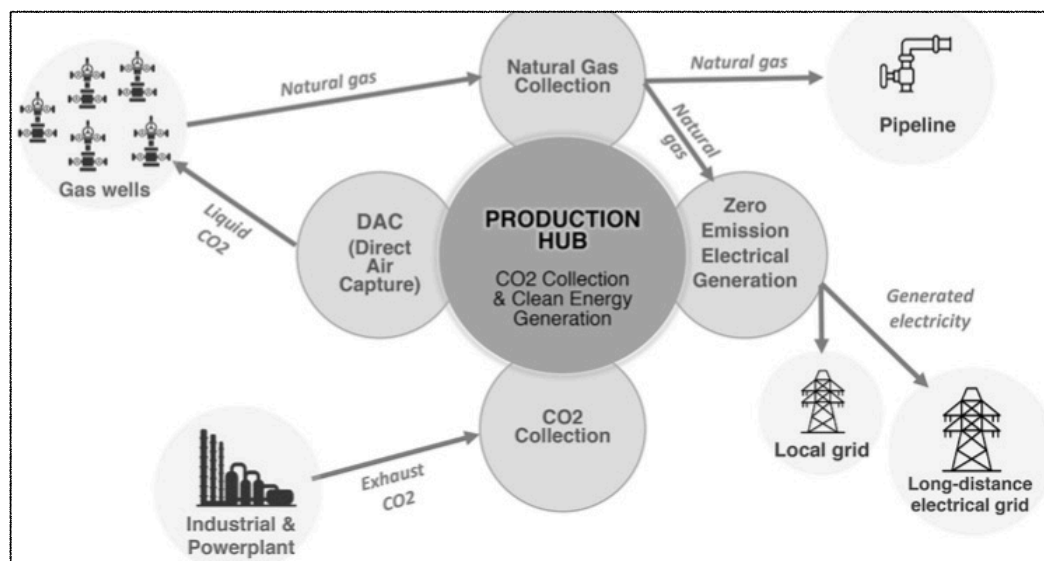
A new threat to fight: Fracking with CO2 to produce more shale gas. The company Southern Tier CO2 to Clean Energy Solutions (or Southern Tier Solutions) proposes to get around NY's ban on high volume hydraulic fracturing by injecting CO2 into deep Marcellus and Utica shales in the Southern Tier. The released natural gas would be burned to produce electricity. New gas wells and new pipelines would be required, further building out fossil fuel infrastructure. The required CO2 would initially be obtained by rail transport from Gulf states, and eventually via pipelines and/or rail and trucks, from gas-fired electricity generating plants, perhaps other industries, and Direct Air Capture (DAC) from the atmosphere. The company has solicited Broome, Chemung, and Tioga County landowners to sign leases and drilling rights. Initially, there was little information available on the proposal. This void has been somewhat filled by Peter Mantius, a competent Finger Lakes area journalist. See his 11/11/23 article: <https://waterfrontonline.blog/2023/11/11/massive-southern-tier-gas-drilling-spree-proposed-6500-land-leases-sought-for-plan-to-extract-methane-and-store-co2/>

DEC reported on 11/27, that neither it or the EPA had been contacted by Southern Tier Solutions.

Problems with fracking with CO2 to produce natural gas:

- Pipeline transport of CO2 is dangerous. Initial proposed transport by rail is no better. One pipeline incident is the 2/22/2020 CO2 pipeline rupture in Satartia, Mississippi which severely injured several people, almost killing some and leaving some victims with lasting brain damage. <https://www.npr.org/2023/05/21/1172679786/carbon-capture-carbon-dioxide-pipeline>
- Fugitive emissions of methane would skyrocket in NY. Methane, a greenhouse gas 85 times more potent than CO2 in the first two decades from escaping into the atmosphere, would leak from new natural gas wells, from various joints along the new and existing pipelines, and from associated compressor stations, valves, etc. Methane is the main component of natural gas.
- The proposal would prolong use of natural gas, and result in new gas-fired electricity generating plants, in opposition to the goals of the NY Climate law (CLCPA). Even if NY rejects applications for new gas-fired power plants in NY, they could be built in other jurisdictions.
- It would divert funding otherwise available for proven climate solutions. It would distract with dubious, unproven claims of climate neutrality or even climate benefit. CO2 capture and sequestration has not been proven to be economically feasible at large scales. The concept seems to be mainly a way to extend the life of fossil fuel companies by helping them produce more oil and gas, assisted with about \$5.5 billion from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law of 2021, and about \$10 billion of new incentives from the Inflation Reduction Act passed in summer of 2022. <https://time.com/6205570/inflation-reduction-act-carbon-capture/>

It's obvious that producing more natural gas from new wells or abandoned wells should not be permitted if NY State intends to meet its CLCPA targets.



Graphic from the Southern Tier Solutions website gives a sense of the huge scope of additional infrastructure and involvement with existing infrastructure that the proposal entails. <https://www.southerntiersolutions.com/about>

Beech Leaf Disease (BLD)

– Doug Gausman

We recently learned of another invasive tree-destroying disease arriving in our area: Beech Leaf Disease (BLD). BLD was first detected in Ohio in 2012. It is now seen in Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, West Virginia, and Ontario. It is caused by an invasive nematode (microscopic worm). The nematode spends winters in leaf buds, then enters and affects leaves in the Spring. All species of beech are susceptible. Symptoms of BLD are dark bands between lateral veins of leaves. These are visible soon after Spring leafing. A later effect is thinning of the leaf canopy which over time can lead to tree death.



Treatments are not yet available but much is being done to find some. Common mitigation strategies reduce the incidence of BLD and prevent it from moving to new areas. These include destroying affected plant material (branches, twigs, leaves, soil, and seedlings) and not transporting that material to new areas. If you observe BLD you can contact the USDA forest service at www.fs.usda.gov/r9 On the app www.treehealthapp.cmparks.net you can report BLD observations. Information sources are USDA Forest Service bulletin of January 2021, and University of Maryland Extension.

Leaf banding with BLD.
photo: Tom Macy, Ohio DNR



Susquehanna Group
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Endicott NY 13760

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