



The Trailblazer

The Niagara Group of The Sierra Club • sierraclub.org/atlantic/niagara • Vol. 60 No.4 March 2026

Sierra Club and the Tonawanda Seneca Nation (TSN) Need Your Help!

We filed a lawsuit to stop the development of a huge data center in Genesee County. The lawsuit was successful in stopping that particular project. There are now plans for a much larger data center at the Science Technology and Advanced Manufacturing Park (STAMP). Massive industrial development that increase noise, air and water pollution in this part of Genesee County is simply unacceptable!

We need to continue the fight for this pristine 30,000 acres of natural land supporting the Tonawanda Seneca Nation, the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, and several state wildlife areas which contain clean air, abundant water, and uniquely connected wildlife habitat.

We require funds to pay for environmental experts and legal expenses in order to stop this new plan for a massive data center at STAMP. One of our Sierra Club members has volunteered to match all donations of \$25 or more (up to \$5000 total).

Please open your hearts and your purse to help us stop this awful plan that will destroy the quiet life of the TSN and ruin the natural environment that contains several wildlife refuges located near the STAMP site.

To make a non-tax-deductible donation by mail, make a check out to "Sierra Club Niagara Group" and write "STAMP" on the memo line. Please include your phone and email address so that we can contact you for any questions.

To make a tax-deductible donation by mail, make a check out to "Sierra Club Foundation" and write "Sierra Club Niagara Group" in the memo line. Please include your phone and email address so that we can contact you for any questions.

To donate, please send your check to the address below. You can also donate with a credit card using the link or QR code.



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act.sierraclub.org/donate/rc_connect_campaign_designform

Energy in NYS and the US

Robert Ciesielski, Chapter Energy Committee Chair

NYS released its State Energy Plan (SEP) in December, 2025. The document opens up NYS to an "all of the above" approach to energy, although the SEP is still promoting "zero-emissions" and continues acknowledging the threat of greenhouse gas emissions to the global climate. The SEP is thus far superior to the Federal Administration's denial of climate change, destruction of renewable energy and electric vehicles markets, and blatant imposition of maximum use of oil and gas in the U.S and abroad to protect it political funders. In this difficult situation the Sierra Club is working to show the economic and climate advantages of renewable energy, battery storage and electrification of New York State to the maximum extent possible.

Like countries without gas and oil, New York State's businesses and residents annually import \$50 billion in gas and oil to operate the economy, power vehicles and heat homes. According to energy investor Ron Carlton, continuing to burn fossil fuels is a "self-imposed financial penalty". Solar and wind linked to battery storage are less expensive for generating electricity than gas, oil or coal. Utility-scale solar costs between 4 and 8 cents per kilowatt-hour, even without subsidies; with batteries solar costs between 5 and 13 cents per kilowatt-hour. By comparison, generating electricity from fracked gas costs 13.8 to 26 cents per

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Update on STAMP Data Center

Diane Ciurczak, Executive Committee Vice-Chair

In late December 2025 STREAM U.S. DATA CENTERS applied for NY State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) environmental impact approval of a massive 500 megawatt, 2.2 million square foot, 100+ foot tall data center complex for the STAMP site run by the Genesee County Development Center (GCEDC). STREAM is now majority owned by Apollo Funds, a multibillion-dollar investment company. GCEDC appears poised to approve the project called Project Double Reed without additional adequate environmental review.

On February 4, GCEDC announced that STREAM was requesting an incentive package that would give STREAM \$801 million in tax incentives. The completed data center will create only 125 permanent jobs, mostly maintenance and security. That works out to \$6.4 million per job and the largest tax incentive ever given in NYS. The communities nearby, including the Tonawanda Seneca Nation, would be forced to sacrifice their community's tranquility and environmental quality to host the billionaires' multibillion-dollar project. Neither STREAM nor Apollo would run the data center, and officials at GCEDC will not disclose the prospective tenant because they have signed a non-disclosure agreement to keep it secret.

Although the information provided by STREAM has been vague and inconsistent, in general the 90-acre development would include three massive buildings

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Greetings from the Chair

Janet Lenicsek, Executive Committee Chair

I hope this message finds you well. It's been a frigid, snowy winter in WNY and I've been reminded of the winters I experienced as a child 60 years ago in Wisconsin - single digit temperatures for weeks on end! I used to go ice skating and sledding in those temperatures (for about 20 minutes at a time to avoid frostbite). Back then we had a "warming hut" near the ice rink and I could buy a cup of instant hot cocoa for a mere 15 cents!

Okay, enough reminiscing. Let's talk about what's happening with Sierra Club Niagara in 2026. First, this issue of our newsletter has two articles that will bring you up to speed on the planned Genesee County data center, as well as new information about the US and NYS energy policies. (We have also posted these articles as blogs on the homepage of our website. www.sierraclub.org/atlantic/niagara)

Finally, we could use volunteers to help us with all kinds of activities. Below is a short list.

- Updating our social media pages (e.g. Facebook and Instagram)
- Grant writing
- Developing a Membership Committee
- Tabling at local events with other members and staff
- Working with one or more of our existing committees

If you are bored or would like more human connection in your life, please contact us. We can help you find a volunteer position that you will enjoy with Sierra Club Niagara Group. niagarasierra@gmail.com



Bridge over Ellicott Creek



View from Glen Park

Please update your annual membership with Sierra Club!

Those who forget to update their memberships are missing out on critical ways to participate in the Sierra Club Niagara and the NYS Atlantic Chapter. Here's the link to update with a credit card online.

sierraclub.org/ways-to-give#renew-maintab

Presentation Describes Microplastic Pollution in Great Lakes

Diane Ciurczak, Executive Committee Vice-Chair

Although many people are aware of the island of plastic and microplastic pollution swirling around in the oceans, it is little known that the Great Lakes are also polluted with microplastics and that these pollutants are present in much higher concentrations in the lakes than those that have been found in the ocean. On February 27, attendees of a presentation at Tiff Nature Preserve hosted by WNY Environmental Alliance watched a documentary titled, Ripples of Plastic, and heard a presentation on the topic by Dr. Sherri Mason, Director of Project NEPTWNE/ Gannon University. Dr. Mason's award winning and seminal research first brought the country's attention to plastic pollution in fresh waters and especially in and around the Great Lakes. Lake Erie has been found to have the greatest concentrations. Her work has been credited with forming the foundation for the Microbeads-Free Water Act signed by Pres. Obama in 2015.

Dr. Mason's research is presented in Ripples of Plastic which takes the viewer on a tour of the Great Lakes and its tributaries and shows us the residue of our plastic-rich lifestyle as volunteers and government employees try to collect bottles, tires, styrofoam waste, plastic bags, and every imaginable kind of plastic material out of the bushes, trees, and beaches that line the waterways. These plastic materials degrade into micro and nano particles that get into the waters that we drink. They also are eaten by fish and are concentrated more

and more as they move up the food chain.

Plastics are being found in the food supply since they are taken up by plants and animals that we eat. We are also exposed to plastic pollution when it is used to package and store food; 40% of plastic pollution comes from packaging. Plastics are being found throughout the human body and since plastics have endocrine impacts and mimic hormones they have a negative impact on reproduction as well.

Dr. Mason identified some sources of plastic pollution in freshwater including inadvertent littering that happens when improperly disposed of plastics are swept into streams through storm sewer overflows during storms and careless transportation and manufacturing practices in the plastic industry that allow nurdles, tiny plastic pellets, to leak into the environment.

Dr. Mason pointed out that water filters are not capable of removing nanoplastics and the smaller microplastics. She added that only about 8% of recycled plastics are actually reused and most of that plastic is only used one more time, so neither filters nor recycling are solutions to the problem. She argues that the necessary solution is to reduce our use of plastic in the first place and one way to do that is to make the manufacturers of plastic materials responsible for their life-cycle.

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kilowatt-hour according to the energy research firm Lazar, PV magazine and Yale Climate Connection.

In his effort to maximize the burning of fossil fuels in the U.S., President Trump has promoted the unfettered and unregulated development of two questionable industries—data centers and cryptocurrency. Last year the U.S. tripled its planned gas-fired capacity. A third of the newly planned 252 gigawatts of gas capacity is to be situated on site at data centers. The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter supports a State bill (Senate version S9144 and Assembly version A10141) which would impose a 3-year moratorium on data centers larger than 20 megawatts in size, pending a review of energy usage and other environmental factors. Last year the Chinese AI start-up, DeepSeek, demonstrated that much less energy could be used to power its AI project than current U.S. technology.

Besides its enormous energy usage, AI's social value is questionable. Already thousands of employees at various companies have been replaced by AI. The technology has allowed questionable and distorted findings using stilted algorithms and produced deep fakes and results based on ideology.

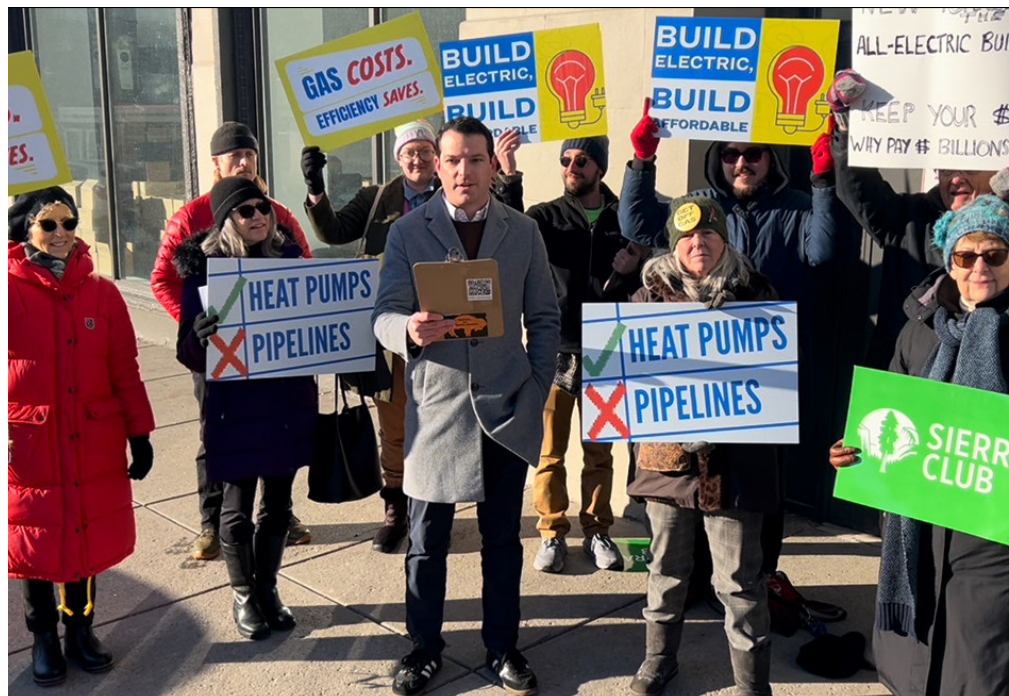
Some Proof of Work Cryptocurrency "mines" use as much electricity as cities. This massive use of electricity is already increasing utility rates throughout the US and NYS. New York's moratorium would also include new cryptocurrency

facilities. Trump and his family "Trust" have been earning millions of dollars in the cryptocurrency business. Many have noted that cryptocurrency is a speculative business, geared to the rich who can afford high-risk to make more money. Crypto is also vulnerable to fraud, bribery, tax evasion and criminal activity.

Besides the data center moratorium, the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter supports several other energy related bills. The Accelerate Solar for Affordable Power Act (ASAP), S6570/A8758, would increase the goal for distributed solar power from 6 gigawatts to 20 gigawatts by 2035. The State has already attained the installation of 7 gigawatts of distributed power, which includes rooftop solar and community solar, and which is the largest source of solar generated electricity in the State. The bill would also require the State and utilities to work to streamline the installation procedure and reduce costs for hookups. The cost of installing rooftop solar in Australia is 3-4 times less than in NYS largely due to differences in governmental regulations.

We also support the Solar Up Now New York Act (SUNNY), S8512A/A9011, which would permit the use of portable plug-in solar panel generators a/k/a "balcony solar" in New York homes and apartments. These small units produce up to 800 watts of electricity and can power a small refrigerator or computer. They can be installed by the homeowner without the need for a permit. Some 3 million of these units are being used in Germany.

The development of affordable renewable energy protects your pocketbook and future generations. If you would like to become involved in promoting the above bills, please message the Sierra Club Niagara Group at niagarasierra@gmail.com.



WNY activists rally in support of the NYS All Electric Buildings Act.

"Stamp Act" continued from front page

filled with noisy computers/servers and the noisy equipment needed to keep them cool and running 24/7. The required power of 500 megawatts is one fifth of the power that can be generated by the Robert Moses Power plant in Niagara Falls and enough to power all the residences in Erie County. It will likely raise electricity rates and strain the electrical grid across the WNY region, as has been the case in other areas that host data centers.

The project will require 20,000 gallons of freshwater each day via a new pipeline to be built from Monroe County or other parts of Genesee County. Sewage of about 20,000 gallons a day would be temporarily trucked daily from holding tanks to a sewage treatment facility several miles away in Oakfield for treatment and then discharged into a tributary of Oak Orchard Creek. Eventually there would be a sewer line built to pump sanitary sewage up grade to the facility. STREAM says that there will be a closed loop system to cool the facility, which we have learned is the case in most data centers, but that coolant itself needs to be cooled, and the plans are not clear on how that will happen. The coolants contain toxic materials and need to be cleaned periodically. Also, an official of STREAM has admitted to one of our members that the plans contain no redundancy plan to back-up 100% of the power needs of the facility in a power failure, which is generally required by the kind of tenant they plan to locate there. Since the proposed 12 diesel backup generators would be insufficient, and both the substations to be built are necessary to run the facility, the lack of a redundancy plan raises questions

about how that need will be met, and what effect that will have on the environment.

The Sierra Club Niagara Group and the Atlantic Chapter joined the Tonawanda Seneca Nation, the WNY Environmental Alliance and many other organizations, including the editorial board of the Buffalo News, in calling on the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to act as lead agency in the SEQRA review. Although the DEC declined to act as lead agency, it did send a lengthy letter to GCEDC recommending that GCEDC conduct a complete new SEQRA review and highlighted inconsistencies in the plans, such as why so much water would be necessary if the articulated need is only for 125 full-time employees who would use about a tenth of the 20,000 gallons proposed. The agency also recommended that GCEDC comply with the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) and the Environmental Justice Siting Act in its deliberation.

The Niagara Group continues to work with its partners in the fight to stop the building of this data center. We also used the legal services of Citizens Environmental Law, PCC and the expertise of Noise Pollution Clearinghouse to appeal to DEC to act as lead agency. We have also identified an organization that is assisting us to evaluate other technical issues in this hyperscale data center proposal. All these resources are also preparing us to submit expert opinions to GCEDC and to litigate if necessary.

We continue to need your support and financial contributions! Please reach out to help if you can! Contact us at niagarasierra@gmail.com.