



**SIERRA CLUB**  
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# TERRA FIRMA

JANUARY - APRIL 2019

PUBLISHED BY VOLUNTEERS FROM THE LOWER HUDSON GROUP SIERRA CLUB

## NEW YORK STATE ATTACKS CLIMATE CHANGE WITH COMMUNITY SOLAR

*By Gary Flaum & George Klein*

In the Fourth National Climate Assessment, released in November 2018, thirteen Federal agencies concluded "...it is extremely likely that human activities, especially emissions of greenhouse gases, are the dominant cause of the observed warming..."\* It goes on to describe the devastating human and economic effects that can follow.

In New York state, Sierra Club and many other groups and businesses and government entities are working hard to move us to 100% clean and renewable energy, such as solar power, as soon as possible.

The vast majority of structures are inappropriate for siting a solar energy installation, usually because of orientation vis-à-vis the sun, or from shading by trees, or from the condition of the roof. So it's not practical for most residential and commercial property owners to install solar on-site.

But in our state, Community Solar is a great new way to rapidly deploy solar energy so that every consumer can take part. It's being promoted by NYSERDA, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority.

### How Community Solar Works

Typically, a business with large flat roof or ample open acreage finances and hosts a solar in-

*continued on page 2*

## Membership Meeting Schedule

For up-to-date meeting info, visit  
[SierraLowerHudson.org](http://SierraLowerHudson.org)  
[RocklandSierraClub.org](http://RocklandSierraClub.org)

**NON-MEMBERS WELCOME!**  
**MEETING DAYS AND PLACES VARY, PLEASE  
CHECK CAREFULLY BELOW**

*Light refreshments are served.  
Meetings are free and open to the public.*

**Wednesday, January 9, 2019 at 7:00pm**  
**Dobbs Ferry Library, 55 Main St, Dobbs Ferry**  
**This is a handicapped-accessible location**

### The Environment of Local Breweries

Justin DiNino, owner of Tarrytown-based nanobrewery Duncan's Abbey, will discuss sustainable hop growing, locally sourced ingredients, grain composting and more. Learn about their commitment to sustainable process and the local environment. This program is in partnership with Greenburgh Nature Center and will be held at the Dobbs Ferry Public Library.



**Saturday, January 26, 2019 10:00am - 2:00pm**  
**Grace Lutheran Church, 3830 Gomer Street, Yorktown Heights**  
**This is a handicapped-accessible location**

### Yorktown Repair Cafe!

Bring your beloved but broken item, and together with our "repair coaches" get it fixed...for free! Sponsored by Repair Cafe Hudson Valley.



*continued on page 3*

## Join us to work on environmental issues in Rockland County!

Rockland Sierra Club was one of the groups leading the successful effort to defeat plans to desalinate Hudson River water for Rockland's drinking water. We are now helping the County craft a sustainable water management policy. We are also working to limit new fossil fuel infrastructure such as Pilgrim crude oil pipelines, and have partnered with 350.org on efforts to address climate change through divestment and through promoting Climate Smart/Clean Energy Communities programs for towns and villages.

Rockland Sierra Club usually meets during the first week of each month. Check [RocklandSierraClub.org](http://RocklandSierraClub.org) for dates and locations. For more information: [pkurtz9@gmail.com](mailto:pkurtz9@gmail.com) or [deby1012@gmail.com](mailto:deby1012@gmail.com). Or call 845-358-3386.

*Community Solar...continued from page 1*

stallation with scores or even hundreds of solar panels. The electricity produced is fed into the grid. Then, consumers subscribe to the installation, each taking a share of the electricity. This arrangement is a win for the consumer, who gets renewable energy at a discount, a win for the host, whose investment gets a good return, and a win for the environment, from serious greenhouse gas reductions.

To see a 2-minute video showing how Community Solar works in NY state, please visit: [https://youtu.be/vmV\\_3trbsQo](https://youtu.be/vmV_3trbsQo)

### February Presentation on Community Solar

On Tuesday, February 5, 2019 at 6:30pm there will be a presentation on Community Solar at the Greenburgh Public Library. See the event announcement on the next page of this Terra Firma.

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\* Google "Fourth National Climate Assessment Vol I + II" for the complete report issued by the US Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Health & Human Services, Interior, State, Transportation. Other agencies included in the issuance are the EPA, NASA, NSF, Smithsonian Institution, and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

### Directions to Greenburgh Nature Center

99 Dromore Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583

In bad weather, confirm meeting by calling (914) 723-3470

**From Rye & Southeast Westchester** Take I-287 West to Exit 5 (Route 100). Go left at the end of the ramp, go to traffic light and turn left again, and continue 0.5 miles to Central Avenue (Route 100). Turn right onto Central Avenue/Route 100 and go 2.5 miles. Pass a Getty station on the left, go about 100 yards and see on the right Tile Shop, then Scarsdale Plaza (3-story dark green glassed building) on the right, and Dromore Road is directly across the street on the left. (If you pass Burger King on left, you went too far.)

**From Northern Westchester** Take the Bronx River Parkway to Exit 22 (Westchester County Center), where you turn right. Cross Route 119 to Central Avenue (Route 100). Take Central Avenue for 2.5 miles. Pass a Getty station on the left, go about 100 yards and see on the right Tile Shop, then Scarsdale Plaza (3-story dark green glassed building) on the right, and Dromore Road is directly across the street on the left. (If you pass Burger King on left, you went too far.)

**From Southern Westchester** Take Bronx River Parkway north to Exit 15 (Fenimore Road). Turn left onto Fenimore, cross over parkway and go through the town of Hartsdale to Central Avenue (Route 100), turn left there and go 1.2 miles. Pass a Getty station on the left, go about 100 yards and see on the right Tile Shop, then Scarsdale Plaza (3-story dark green glassed building) on the right, and Dromore Road is directly across the street on the left. (If you pass Burger King on left, you went too far.)

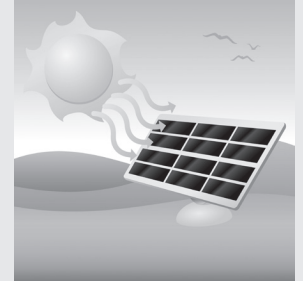
**From Rockland County** Take Tappan Zee Bridge, continue on Route I-287 east, get off at Exit 5. You should be on Route 119 east and Route 100 south, which share the pavement. Turn right onto Central Avenue/Route 100, and go 2.7 miles. Pass a Getty station on the left, go about 100 yards and see on the right Tile Shop, then Scarsdale Plaza (3-story dark green glassed building) on the right, and Dromore Road is directly across the street on the left. (If you pass Burger King on left, you went too far.)

# MEETING SCHEDULE CONTINUED

**Tuesday, February 5, 2019 at 6:30pm**  
**Greenburgh Public Library**  
**This is a handicapped-accessible location**

## Community Solar – A Triple Win Against Climate Change

Community Solar is a great new way in NY state to rapidly deploy solar energy so that every consumer can take part. Typically, a business hosts a solar installation with scores or even hundreds of solar panels, whose electricity is fed into the grid. Then, consumers subscribe to the installation, each taking a share of the electricity. This arrangement is a win for the consumer, who gets renewable energy at a discount, a win for the host, whose investment gets a good return, and a win for our communities that get home grown, sustainable, made in America energy, and for our environment, from serious greenhouse gas reductions. Michael Mollin of Community Power Partners will show consumers how they win, Doug Hertz of Sunrise Solar Solutions will tell potential solar hosts how to unlock property assets they never knew they had, and Nina Orville of Abundant Efficiency will address other aspects of Community Solar. Light refreshments will be served.



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**Wednesday, February 13, 2019 at 7:00pm**  
**Dobbs Ferry Library, 55 Main St, Dobbs Ferry**  
**This is a handicapped-accessible location**

## Native Plants at Home

Native plants can provide your yard with year-round beauty while providing essential habitats and food sources for wildlife. Micah Slavkin, of Symbiotic Ecological Design, will discuss what makes a plant “native,” why you should consider incorporating them into your garden, and which native plants are best suited for the home landscape. This program is in partnership with Greenburgh Nature Center.

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**Wednesday, March 13, 2019 at 7:00pm**  
**Greenburgh Nature Center, 99 Dromore Rd, Scarsdale**  
**This is a handicapped-accessible location**

## Film Screening - “Straws”

Director Linda Booker interviews scientists, activists, and restaurant owners about the effects of plastics on the environment. Leave the program with new ideas about what you can do to make a difference. This program is in partnership with the Greenburgh Nature Center.



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**Wednesday, April 10, 2019 at 7:00pm**  
**Greenburgh Nature Center, 99 Dromore Rd, Scarsdale**  
**This is a handicapped-accessible location**

## Microplastics

Jill S. Schneiderman is Chair of the Department of Earth Science and Geography at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie. She teaches courses in the department as well as in the multidisciplinary programs in women’s studies and science, technology and society. Professor Schneiderman will discuss the problem of microplastic pollution in different environments and detail her own research on the subject as it relates to the dunes of Cape Cod. This program is in partnership with the Greenburgh Nature Center.



# ACTIVISM SLOWS DOWN FAST TRACK OF HUDSON BARRIER PROPOSALS

*Public response to the recent proposals of the Army Corps of Engineers to protect New York City from storm surges has slowed down the process from the fast track it had originally been on, with the ACoE originally planning to narrow down the options to one or two this past fall. Considering that some of the options could cost tens of billions of taxpayer dollars and have serious impacts to surrounding areas, Sierra Club agreed with other environmental groups that careful planning should be done using the best scientific knowledge available. Thank you to all who submitted comments!*

*Below are excerpts of comments submitted on Nov. 5, 2018, by Roger Downs, Conservation Director, on behalf of Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter (NY State). Read the full document at [SierraLowerHudson.org](http://SierraLowerHudson.org), and click on Take Action.*

...The sheer magnitude of some of the proposals, stretching from Sandy Hook, N.J. to Breezy Point, N.Y. with major barriers and gates on interior waterways could have major unintended consequences upon the Hudson River estuary and beyond. We appreciate that the once accelerated pace of decision making has appeared to have slowed down enough for the public to catch up. While we understand that the 6 conceptual plans will not be winnowed down into one "tentatively selected plan" until the spring of 2020, we ask that the ACOE provides much needed information and reports on each option in the interim. In approaching the reports and scoping for the 6 options, the Sierra Club requests that the ACOE adopt a set of core principles to help guide the process:

## **Maintaining that ecosystem services and habitat integrity should be a priority outcome of any proposal.**

The proposed sea walls, gates and barriers ... designed to block storm surges could also alter fish migration and the natural flow of the Hudson River over time, irreversibly compromising an irreplaceable ecosystem and the fisheries, recreation and tourism industries that rely upon the health of that system. Constrained water flow could impede the natural flushing of pollutants from the river system and degrade the quality of the drinking water for more than 100,000 Hudson Valley residents. ... Intact and healthy coastal wetlands themselves provide invaluable storm surge protection in a multidimensional way that monolithic sea barriers cannot. ...

## **Any storm surge / sea level rise mitigation plan should take into account short-term, mid-term and long-term effects of any action.**

...it is also clear that the proposed sea walls, gates and barriers designed to block storm surges will be effective for only a finite amount of time. As global sea levels rise, gates will have to be closed more frequently and flooding from a barricaded Hudson River will eventually nullify the effectiveness of storm surge containment walls as waters rise from within. ...

## **The review of proposals should incorporate sound land use planning**

...special attention must be [paid] to how the Corps delineates existing infrastructure that can and must be saved, areas that must be abandoned for higher ground and most importantly, for the short term, areas that should be restricted from development now due to future flooding potential. ... In addition, proper consideration must be given to areas outside of mitigation barriers. Hardened sea walls and gates deflect the power of storm surges to the edges of its bulwarks – protecting the central metropolitan area but potentially focusing even more dangerous and damaging surf and currents to the Long Island and New Jersey shores, and within the interior of the estuary...

## **Analysis for the feasibility study must be based upon the best and most up to date science and information...**

## **Public Notice and Information should be understandable and accessible to the general public...**

... Strategies such as preserving and enhancing natural infrastructure like dunes and marshlands, returning vulnerable, low-lying development areas to more natural states through property buyouts and ecological restoration, elevating structures, building local on-land pop up flood barriers and planned retreats from flood prone areas represent the most practical long term solutions. The impacts of climate change and sea level rise will continue to increase in severity over the long term. Planned relocation of infrastructure and development away from coastal areas will ultimately be the most effective means of balancing public safety, resources and ecological health...

# RESULTS OF THE 2018 LOWER HUDSON GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTION

By Laura Burkhardt

Votes in the 2018 group Executive Committee ("excom") election were counted on November 20, 2018, by Laura Burkhardt, George Klein, and Emil Bahary. There were 71 online votes and 26 votes by paper ballot.

All voters met the membership requirements for voting, and all votes were received by the deadline date of October 31, 2018.

The excom consists of 9 members, each serving a 2-year term. It meets monthly and reviews all group business, including current environmental issues, finances, communications, lobbying of policy makers, and other matters, and makes formal decisions. The excom terms are staggered so that half of the members are up for re-election each year. For the 2018 election, the 4 top vote-getters were Edward Berry, Peggy Kurtz, Gale Pisha and Jerry Ravnitzky. They begin their 2-year terms in January 2019.

The following excom members are starting the second year of their 2-year terms: George Klein, Bill Meyer, Patricia Peckham, Karen Tam and Sarah Wilson. They will be up for re-election in October 2019.

All members of the Lower Hudson Group are encouraged to run for these seats, as new ideas and energy are always appreciated. Please contact group chairman Bill Meyer if you are interested.

## VITAL NUMBERS LOWER HUDSON GROUP SIERRA CLUB

Local Sierra Club website: [SierraLowerHudson.org](http://SierraLowerHudson.org)

Rockland Sierra Club website: [RocklandSierraClub.org](http://RocklandSierraClub.org)

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\*Executive Committee member

# DEMOCRACY IN ACTION – THE NOVEMBER 2018 ELECTIONS

By Ed Berry

Political Chair Lower Hudson Group  
Co-Chair Political Committee Atlantic Chapter

How does it start? Curiosity, anger, hope? Or is it a desire to help out, to leave the world a better place than we found it? Our motivations are probably all over the place. Pretty much like Sierra Club volunteers these last few months.

From the Bronx to the Hudson Valley, up and down both sides of the majestic Hudson, activists worked tirelessly to elect pro-environmental candidates. Many started by meeting and listening to prospective candidates. Some even convinced people to run. Then came distributing questionnaires, and explaining, collecting and analyzing the results. Who are the best candidates? The interviews usually erase any doubts.

Then our various committees vote. Remember, the Sierra Club is a two-level endorsement organization, meaning, for example, that both a group and the chapter have to vote to endorse a given candidate for election. The rules can sometimes drive us nuts, but they also protect the entire process.

For the November 2018 elections, our Get Out The Vote effort was extensive. Canvassing began weeks ahead of the elections for some of our activists. Phone banking hit record numbers, both in folks calling and numbers of voters reached. Attending rallies, and even planning rallies became commonplace. Emails and postcards flew. Forums and press conferences proceeded. Envelopes were stuffed. Prospective voters were convinced. Democracy worked, people came out and voted.

*In New York we flipped our state senate. With 39 out of 63 seats effectively Democratic, more good environmental legislation should get passed. On a local level Sierra Club Lower Hudson went 14 wins for 14 endorsements.*

Right now our elected representatives are mulling over their priorities for the 2019 legislative session. While there are many worthy issues clamoring for their attention, we do not want them to ignore the overriding issue of climate change. As many scientific experts have pointed out, our time to act is limited. Therefore, reducing the amount of carbon we put out and switching to renewable energy becomes our overwhelming priority.

On the national level, the House will go back to being a constitutional check on a headstrong president.

In the year ahead we must hone our message, establish our priorities and pass necessary legislation. Please stay tuned for email blasts and requests to contact your elected representatives on particular bills that come before both the New York legislature and our federal Congress.

Citizenship does not end with voting. The struggle for a healthy planet continues. We are not simply inheritors of the earth but custodians for future generations.



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# SIERRA CLUB 2018 POLITICAL ENDORSEMENTS AND RESULTS

Sierra Club endorsements in the Lower Hudson Group area  
for the November 6, 2018 elections:

<b>Seat</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Endorsed Candidate</b>	<b>Result</b>
NYS Senate	District 35 (SW Westchester)	Andrea Stewart-Cousins	Won
NYS Senate	District 37 (SE Westchester)	Shelley Mayer	Won
NYS Senate	District 39 (N Rockland, parts of Orange and Ulster counties)	James Skoufis	Won
NYS Senate	District 40 (NW Westchester, parts of Putnam and Dutchess counties)	Peter Harckham	Won
NYS Assembly	District 88 (Scarsdale)	Amy Paulin	Won
NYS Assembly	District 89 (Mt Vernon)	J. Gary Pretlow	Won
NYS Assembly	District 91 (Port Chester)	Steven Otis	Won
NYS Assembly	District 92 (Tarrytown)	Thomas Abinanti	Won
NYS Assembly	District 93 (Mt Kisco)	David Buchwald	Won
NYS Assembly	District 95 (Ossining)	Sandy Galef	Won
NYS Assembly	District 96 (Part of Rockland county)	Kenneth Zebrowski	Won
NYS Assembly	District 97 (Part of Rockland county)	Ellen Jaffee	Won
US House	NY District 17 (W Westchester, Rockland, part of Putnam county)	Nita Lowey	Won
US House	NY District 16 (S Westchester, part of the Bronx)	Eliot Engel	Won



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**LOWER HUDSON GROUP**

# **SIERRA CLUB**

**WESTCHESTER, PUTNAM & ROCKLAND COUNTIES**

*"The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard."*  
-- Gaylord Nelson



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