

Susquehanna *Sierran*

December 2017



Founded 1892

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- Candidates' Statements
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- Outing: Grey Towers
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EXPLORE, ENJOY, PROTECT THE PLANET

TAKE HEED — The *Susquehanna Sierran* will publish 3-4 times per year. Printing and mailing for over 1000 local members draws heavily on financial reserves. Therefore the *Sierran*, except for December issues, will be delivered by email (also allowing color & web links). So! For email delivery please take a moment and send your email address to helen.support@sierraclub.org



Editorial by Chris Rounds

2017 hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, and so far 50 California wildfires including Tubbs (22 human fatalities), Atlas (6), Redwood Complex (8). These are, in a way, the cymbal crashes of climate change. Less publicized, but no less ominous is the pattern highlighted by Cheryl Katz in "Small Pests, Big Problems: The Global Spread of Bark Beetles," published online by Yale Environment 360. She describes a study that catalogs forest losses across the northern hemisphere. Various beetles, permitted by warmer winter temperatures, are spreading northward in the U.S., Canada, Europe and Russia. In just the U.S west and British Columbia 150,000 square miles of forest have been devastated. There is little to prevent the spread of these beetles into the U.S. northeast, and across both Canadian and Siberian boreal forests.

Climate change's direct impacts on humans generally make the news. But its equally devastating impacts in the natural world seldom do. And those impacts seem bound

to escalate as tundra thaws and oceans warm. These outcomes are, as they say, 'baked in' by current atmospheric greenhouse gases.

This could lead us to despair. Yet there is much we can do, and much that needs doing. The *Susquehanna Sierran* intends to connect the larger realities of our evolving world to local opportunities and activities in our home region. We'll include book reviews, reflective pieces, and reports from both ongoing and emerging projects. We'll also summarize the activities of the Sierra Club's Atlantic Chapter in which the *Susquehanna* is one of eleven Groups. We welcome contributions from members, and encourage suggestions that can add to the value of the *Susquehanna Sierran*.

The *Susquehanna Sierran* will include the three themes of the Sierra Club motto: "Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet." We encourage members to submit articles describing experience in any of these three realms.

Local Microgrid Proposals by Jim Taft

Microgrids will help achieve NYS's ambitious greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Electrical Grid: the national interconnected system of electricity generating facilities and distribution systems that allows us to turn on lamps, watch TV, and so much more.

Microgrid: a small, local system of generating facilities and electricity users which can operate independently or as a part of the larger grid.

Advantages of microgrids:

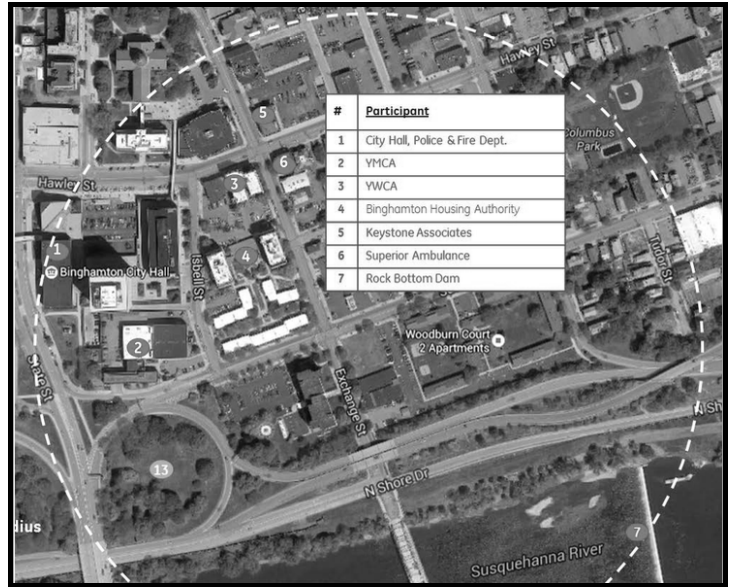
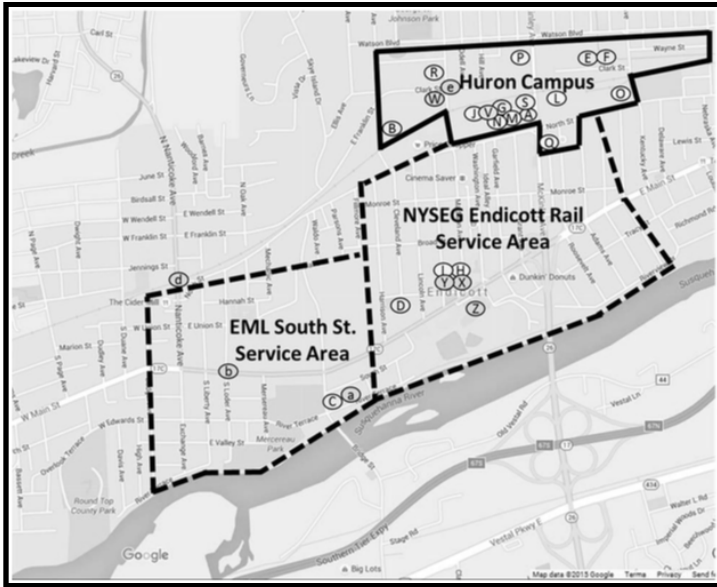
- can operate if the main grid goes down or becomes too expensive
- can provide power during emergencies (e.g. to hospitals, government operations)
- can integrate local and emerging renewable energy sources.

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Disadvantage:

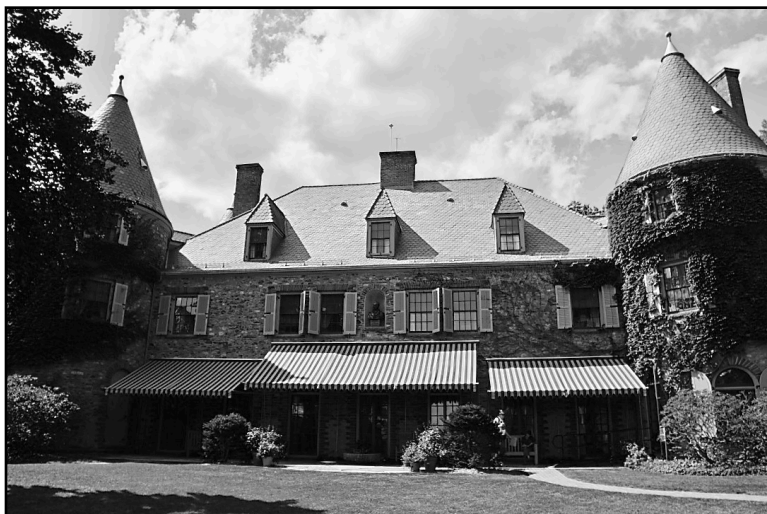
- surmountable engineering challenges are associated with coupling and decoupling the two systems.

NYSERDA, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, in 2015 announced a \$40M, 3-stage contest to spur localities into designing microgrids. In our area Endicott and Binghamton submitted proposals, both of which were funded for stage 1. Binghamton’s was funded for stage 2. Check progress of proposals with an internet search of “NYSERDA Opportunity Zones.”



Endicott	←-----→	Binghamton
Huron Campus, critical facilities, 1800 households, 28 businesses	Users in Microgrid	City Hall, Police & Fire Depts, YMCA, YWCA, Superior Ambulance, Housing Authority, 1 business
Natural Gas 28.7 MW Solar 4.6 MW	Electricity Generation (max.)	Hydro 2 MW, Solar 2 MW Natural Gas 205 KW
\$19 M	Approximate Cost	\$5 M

Grey Towers National Historic Site by Chris Rounds



About 2 hours southeast of Binghamton, in Milford PA, Grey Towers is the family home of Gifford Pinchot, first head of the National Forest Service. Pinchot, a friend of Theodore Roosevelt, was an early advocate for “sustainable” forestry. He debated John Muir who instead advocated preservation.

Grey Towers was built by Pinchot’s parents on land that had been almost totally deforested during the nineteenth century. Constructed of local stone and overlooking the Delaware River, it reveals the power of wealth and position during the Gilded Age, and also offers a fine introduction to Pinchot whose influence over US forestry continues today. The grounds and regrown forest provide terrific opportunities for walking and the observation of nature. An internet search of Grey Towers can help one plan a visit. Susquehanna Group will plan an outing to Grey Towers—stay posted.

Election of Executive Committee Members

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. Using the ballot below mail your vote(s) to Susquehanna Group, PO Box 572, Endicott NY 13760, **or** email up to 5 choices to kcronin55@gmail.com, using the subject "SG Election." Include your member number (can be found on mailing label).

Valdi Weiderpass

I have cared about nature since I was a boy and my parents taught me to love and respect it. I want to help inform the community about the benefits of the natural world and influence policies in order to better protect the environment. My biggest concern is Climate Change and I want to work towards a swift, just transition to renewable energy which will improve health, safety and minimize harm to the environment along with more jobs that are safer and healthier. I support electric vehicles, weatherization and efficiency improvements as well. I am thankful that the Susquehanna Group membership previously approved me to serve on the Executive Committee for my current term, and hope to receive your approval to continue.

Jim Taft

A retiree, I'm a Broome County native who after 27 years in Washington State returned 1996 with wife, 2 boys, and an MA in Social Ecology. Background includes private sector (cabinetmaking), nonprofits (both as staff and director), and government (criminal justice). I host, with my partner, international students. Served 2 years on Susquehanna Group ExCom. Considerable grant-writing experience helps me (1) assess and describe the relevance and feasibility of organizational efforts, and (2) budget and find financial support for them. I like projects, including this newsletter.

Nikki Longaker

A long-time resident of Broome County, I'm an English major, a Social Worker, and a writer. I've worked in human services and have taught college-level courses. Regarding the environment my primary concerns are climate change, and getting young people to understand and help develop solutions for it. I would like to incorporate these interests, and also my research, writing and editing abilities, in serving as a member of the Susquehanna Group Executive Committee.

Allan Hochberg

My parents stressed to me the importance of protecting the environment. I've served on the Group Executive

Committee since 2013. As the Group's Political Chair, and member of the Atlantic Chapter's Political Committee I've enjoyed assessing candidates through questionnaires, surveys and interviews, and have assisted campaigns of Club-endorsed candidates. An academic and professional background has generated in me strong interests in public opinion, health care research, political analysis and strategy. I have participated in a good deal of training in these areas from the Sierra Club and other organizations. If elected to another term, I look forward to being actively involved in assisting environmentally-friendly political candidates and lobbying on key issues such as global climate change.

Michael Frys

Sierra Club member 5 years. Serve on the Susquehanna Group ExCom, served one term as secretary. Active locally participating in SG tabling events, Anti-Fracking demonstrations, campaigning for SG endorsed political candidates (door knocking, phone calling) along with lobbying (Assembly Woman Donna Lupardo, Assemblyman Fred Akshar, U.S. Senator Charles Schumer). Member of the Atlantic Chapter Farm and Food Committee. Helped to organize a local group to fight for GMO Labeling laws and participated in the March Against Monsanto. Leading a SG effort to distribute milkweed seeds for planting to improve the breeding habitat for Monarch Butterflies. Actively working on the Confluence Park pollinator garden project. Restarted the letter writing group on environmental issues prior to general meetings. Deeply concerned about climate change and its effect on future generations.

George Catalano

Distinguished Service Professor, BU Department of Biomedical Engineering, researching environmental and engineering ethics, fluid dynamics of the natural world, turbulence, aerodynamics, liberative pedagogy, predator-prey modeling. "I can't be silent anymore. Lifting the elephant trophy ban and opening up ANWR is more than I can handle."

BALLOT

Vote for up to 5. Mail this ballot to Susquehanna Group, PO Box 572, Endicott NY 13760 by 12/30/17, or email to kcronin@gmail.com. Include member number (from mailing label).
Member # _____

- George Catalano
- Michael Frys
- Allan Hochberg
- Nikki Longaker
- Jim Taft
- Valdi Weiderpass

To become a candidate for the Susquehanna Group Executive Committee for 2019, submit a candidate statement of 150 words or less to PO Box 572 Endicott, NY 13760 by November 20, 2018 or email to the Nominating Chair. The Chair will be identified by October 16 via a notification to all members with an email address on file. The Nominating Committee will create a slate of candidates by the end of November 2018, and ballots will be mailed with the December 2018 Newsletter.

Fenton Compressor Station, and a Virtual Pipeline by Scott Lauffer

The proposed NG Advantage natural gas compressor station near the Chenango River has aroused residents' anger over Fenton Town Planning Board's approval of the facility. The approval was done without meaningful public input and its 'no impact' finding was rightfully met with scorn. There was also scant consideration given to a 31-page Broome County Planning Department review which had raised several concerns. Much of the opposition is due to the siting, and with good reason as the site is near residential areas, a school, a park, wetlands, a flood plain, and the list goes on.



Fenton Compressor Station Site Preparation

A ruling by State Supreme Justice Ferris Lebus, stemming from a lawsuit by the Chenango Valley School Board and a church, found that the Planning Board didn't take a 'hard look' at the environmental impact. Lebus ordered that the approval process start over and that environmental impacts be evaluated thoroughly. It's evident that NY's State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) process wasn't properly followed, and thus safeguards to residents were neglected. The NY DEC also issued a State Pollutant

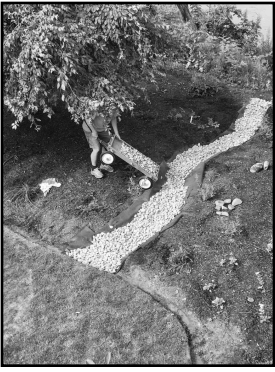
Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit based on the Town's 'no impact' finding. Unfortunately it often takes legal challenges to force implementation of the law, and the current court challenge is so far proving effective.

NG Advantage is not giving up on the project, and the Town is now in the position of doing some tough work to make sure the approval process is followed correctly. But tough work it should be. At this point, the lead agency for the review has not been decided, but the Town could take on that role.

Meanwhile, there are numerous trucks (60 per day reported by Vestal Town) carrying compressed natural gas through Broome County; they originate in Forest Lake, Pa and are delivered in Herkimer County NY. This is a 'virtual pipeline,' initiated by the natural gas industry following the disapproval of the Constitution Pipeline. With both pipelines and trucks bringing gas to market, fracking operations are incentivized to continue just across the border in Pennsylvania. New York is still not a permanently frack-free state and we should be concerned on many levels.

Join our email list and 'like' us on Facebook

Email kcronin55@gmail.com to be added to our email list in order to receive updates about programs and events. You can also 'like' us on Facebook—search for Susquehanna Group of the Sierra Club.



Confluence Park Project by Jim Taft

Susquehanna Group, with the leadership of new member (and Master Gardener) Sarah Hodder, has taken over planting, management, and maintenance of parts of Confluence Park, the historic downtown Binghamton site where Chenango and Susquehanna waters converge. This followed consultations/agreements with park designer Michael Haas, pollinator specialist Colleen Wolpert, and Binghamton Parks & Recreation. Plantings are of native species selected to encourage pollinators. We regularly plan, plant, water, weed, and maintain bed boundaries. The beds have been prepared to over-winter. To volunteer contact: Sarah at shaddow@stny.rr.com

BOOK REVIEW

by Chris Rounds

Climate of Hope Michael Bloomberg and Carl Pope
St. Martin's Press, 2017

Bloomberg, the successful businessman and three-time mayor of New York City, and Pope, environmental activist and long-term executive director of the Sierra Club aver: pessimism doesn't win elections, and that there is every reason to be optimist about the world's future, despite the misguided efforts of the Trump administration.

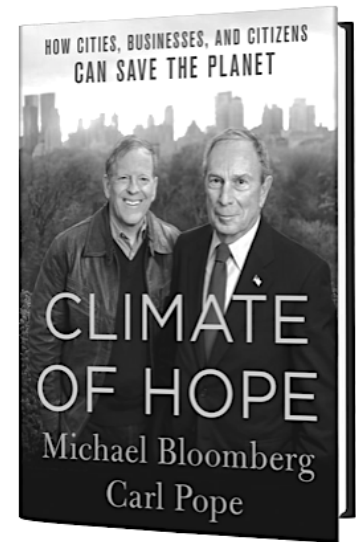
I know many friends in the Sierra Club will find this optimism pretty hard to swallow. I encourage them to take a deep breath and dive in. The authors have a great deal of experience, and share a mass of information in every chapter—far more than can be summarized here.

They urge us to move from the abstract and global to the local and immediate. Instead of talking about parts per billion and 50 year forecasts, they want us to convince more people by focusing on issues of public health and job creation. Instead of gloom and doom and risks to polar bears, they emphasize local projects that have worked to improve people's lives and reduce pollution. Instead of attacking government and calling for a revolution, they want us to improve the quality of government decision-making.

The authors strongly believe in the free market, and in harnessing it in pursuit of environmental goals. Yet they argue that government must play an effective role in addressing market failures, many of which can be directly traced to corporate influence over government policy creation. They point to instances where local and state governments have created incentives for investors who might otherwise have avoided clean energy investments.

You may well, as I did, emerge without being convinced that what Bloomberg and Pope propose will be enough to turn the tide on climate change. Still, their book is full of concrete examples, and I doubt anyone would question the dedication and work ethic of the authors. I am convinced that if we are to win the race against climate change, we must—among other things—win over an electoral majority in this country. To do that, those of us who care about the future of the planet must convince our friends and neighbors that we can both overcome the challenges climate change presents while creating a future society in which all of us, and our children, can lead fulfilling and rewarding lives.

Bloomberg and Pope end with this plea, addressed directly to us:
"It's up to the rest of us to change the tenor and tone of the climate discussion—away from partisanship and toward problem-solving. Away from fear and toward hope. Away from ice caps and toward jobs and health. And away from Congress and toward communities." [pp. 261-2]





Susquehanna Group
PO Box 572
Endicott NY 13760

sierraclub.org/atlantic/susquehanna

Meetings

General meetings are open to all and held at Central United Methodist Church, 17 Nanticoke Ave, Endicott, 7:30 PM on the 3rd Tuesday of the month, with the exception of July and August.

December 19, 2017:

Film " Breaking Ice." Stunning time-lapse photography of the Arctic, showing catastrophic changes due to Climate Change.

January 16, 2018:

6:30 Potluck Dinner. Church will be open at 6:00. Encouraged are vegan, vegetarian and local dishes. Please bring own place setting. Coffee, tea, and other non-alcoholic drinks will be provided.

7:30 the Lynda Spickard Environmental Award (see below).

7:45 Jillian Newby of NYS DOT regarding the Route 434 Greenway Project, a multi-use trail connecting the BU campus with downtown Binghamton. Phase 1 accomplished crossing Rte 434 via the Pennsylvania Ave Bridge. Phase 2 will connect to the University.

Lynda Spickard Award

Dr. Julian Shepherd is Professor of Biology at Binghamton University and has been an active member of the Susquehanna Group, including Chair and Executive Committee Member. Long a champion of environmental stewardship, both at the University and in the community, he's demonstrated environmental commitment by living lightly. He has 'shepherded' many people as a teacher and nature guide. He has steadily done laboratory analysis and scientific advisement with the NY Water Sentinels, was instrumental in establishing the Binghamton University Nature Preserve, did a comprehensive inventory of natural areas in Broome County, received the Supercommuter award from Planet Bike, conducted a county bird census, led many student trips to Costa Rica focusing on tropical ecology, served on the Binghamton Shade Tree Commission, and advanced numerous endeavors that have enriched the community and his students. We are very pleased to honor him with this award, recognizing lifetime achievement.