



# SIERRA CLUB

Central-Northern NY Group

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## FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to our updated newsletter! You may notice that the name of our group has changed from "Iroquois" to Central-Northern New York Group (CNNY), which is more inclusive of the approximately 3,000 members in the eleven counties we represent, as well as being more politically correct. Our group is one of ten in the Atlantic Chapter (all of New York state), which has approximately 44,000 members.

Sierra Club nationally is the nation's largest and most effective grassroots environmental movement, boasting over three million members. Its mission is dedicated not only to protecting our natural environment but also to exploring and enjoying the beauty of our forests, waters and wild places.

Although our members are actively on the front lines working with communities to keep our air and water clean and safe, curb climate change, fight for environmental justice, and protect those wildlife and wild places, we also endorse candidates and work with elected officials keeping them up to date on important environmental issues and holding them accountable.

We urge you to become involved with our CNNY Group. Perhaps you have a particular issue which interests you, or you would like to join us on one of our hikes, or become involved with the legislative and/or political process. We have new vibrant leadership who are looking to expand participation and diversify our membership. Contact me or the chairs of our committees listed to get involved with not only protecting our environment but also enjoying the outdoors and nature with like-minded old and new friends. We are planning our great events - ask to join our outings list to participate in future hikes and outings, and send us your email if you would like to receive future email editions of this newsletter. We hope to see you soon!

**RHEA JEZER, CHAIR**

**CNNY Group, Atlantic Chapter, Sierra Club**

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## JOIN THE CNNY GROUP!

Sign up for our mailing list by emailing:  
[cnnny-group@newyork.sierraclub.org](mailto:cnnny-group@newyork.sierraclub.org)

To join the group, send your email, name, and address to:  
[group@newyork.sierraclub.org](mailto:group@newyork.sierraclub.org)

If you've already joined, verify your information at:  
<https://myaccount.sierraclub.org/MyAccountContactInfo>

## FIND OUT MORE

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



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

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### 19TH ENERGY SYMPOSIUM - SEE DEDICATED SECTION

#### EARTH DAY

Earth Day is April 22! Celebrate by:

- Picking up trash or joining a local cleanup
- You can find and join a cleanup at:  
<https://www.earthday.org/campaign/cleanup/>
- Planting trees
- Replacing your lightbulbs with LEDs
- Putting in native pollinator plants
- Eating plant-based for a day...or more!

Whatever your activity, don't forget to spend time enjoying nature.



#### SUMMER HIKING SERIES

##### ESF's Heiberg Forest, April 23rd

The Sierra club CNNY group plans a guided visit to ESF's Heiberg Forest on the morning of April 23 - the day after Earth Day! The Heiberg Nature Trail is a 0.7-mi loop trail, located off the first small parking area on the right as you drive south on Maple Ridge Road.

We will meet in the parking lot of the nature trail at the north end of the forest at 9am. Plan to hike the short loop in the forest, and weather providing, go off trail to examine one of the best exposures of Middle Devonian shallow water sedimentary strata in NYS.

##### Green Lakes State Park, June 24th

This park is home to Green Lake and Round Lake. The lakes are miromimetic, which means the layers do not mix, and have an eye-catching color due to their depth and the calcium carbonate from limestone cliffs.

Meet in front of the Green Lakes Environmental Center north west of Green Lake at 9am. The hike is approximately 2.9 miles and will take a bit over 1 hour. Following the hike, we will meet back by the parking lot and beach for refreshments (feel free to bring some to share!). Feel free to stay the afternoon and enjoy the beach or frisbee golf course. Hike will be cancelled in the case of rain.

##### Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, August. Date TBD.

Trip leader will be the Director of the Montezuma Audobon Center, Chris Lajewsky. The trip may include either a hike or boating trip around Howland's Island Wildlife Management Area. Late summer is the perfect time to see many of the 34 shorebird species that inhabit this refuge. To find out more information about this exciting outing, email pplumley@syr.edu or lara.camille@gmail.com or go to the Sierra Club CNNY homepage (QR code on newsletter front page)



Interested in native plants and natural landscapes?

If so, join Wild Ones:  
<https://wildones.org/about/>

You can find more information about the Syracuse chapter at:  
<https://www.hgcn.org/>

Or the Mohawk Valley chapter at:  
<https://mohawkvalley.wildones.org/>

The mission of Wild Ones is to promote environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities.

## NINETEENTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM ON ENERGY IN THE 21ST CENTURY RESILIENCE AND MITIGATION *Preparing for Climate Change with Renewable Energy* April 21, 2023 - Gateway Building, SUNY ESF - Syracuse, New York

*Hear the most cutting edge speakers...*

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|-------------------------|--|
| <b>ELIZA HOTCHKISS</b>  | Senior Analyst Energy Security & Resiliency Center, NREL<br>Bridging Climate Change Resiliency and Mitigation    |
| <b>NATASHA DESCHENE</b> | Vice President National Grid<br>Grid Preparation for Vulnerability, Resiliency with Renewable Energy             |
| <b>DAVID SANDBANK</b>   | Vice President Distributed Energy NYSERDA<br>The Importance & Future of Energy Storage                           |
| <b>LISA GARCIA</b>      | Regional Administrator, EPA District 2<br>Energy Justice Impacts and Need for Resiliency in Minority Communities |
| <b>DAVID WASIURA</b>    | United Steelworkers, Assistant to the Director<br>Expanding Jobs For the New Market in Resiliency                |
| <b>BASIL SEGGOS</b>     | Commissioner, DEC<br>Accessing funding from IRA (Inflation Reduction Act)  |
| <b>KIT KENNEDY</b>      | Senior Director NRDC<br>Panel Discussion with the experts  |
| <b>RHEA JEZER</b>       | Symposium Director   |

To REGISTER or for information and/or sponsorship:  
[www.energy21symposium.org](http://www.energy21symposium.org)

## VIABILITY OF HEAT PUMPS IN COLD CLIMATES

BY MARGARET REILLY

The burning of fossil fuels to power energy use in buildings is responsible for almost a third of New York State’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. To meet the goals of the CLCPA, New York’s Climate Law [1], the electrification of 85% of buildings is recommended by 2050. The All-Electric Building Act prohibits the use of fossil fuels in new buildings. Constructing buildings with heat pumps (air or ground source) eliminates health risks, saves energy and money [2].

Recently at the Joint Legislative Environmental Conservation Hearing on the Executive Budget, I testified to the efficacy of air source heat pumps (ASHP) in New York State’s cold climate areas explaining how my husband and I transitioned our large Central New York home off fossil fuels. Our grassroot effort to mitigate the effects of climate change makes a difference and we want to help others do the same. So, we made a video explaining our process with a home tour: <https://bit.ly/ReillyHeatPumps>

Our all-electric solution includes rooftop solar, driving electric vehicles and using electric outdoor/indoor appliances. We replaced a gas boiler/hot water heater with cold climate air source heat pumps and a heat pump water heater. Our home went from producing an estimated 15 Tons to 1.5 Tons of CO2 /year. If we get 1.5 million homes to do the same...that would be over 20 MILLION TONS of carbon NOT going into the air.

Many people question the use of air source heat pumps in cold climates. During a recent cold snap of -18 degrees, we were able to keep our home at a comfortable temperature without backup heat. In 2022 we experienced 14 overnight lows of below zero with the lowest being -14. Again, maintaining a comfortable, consistent room temperature. [3]

All New Yorkers deserve clean, safe, and affordable energy. Incentives and financing opportunities are available to assist with the initial cost of this major investment. NYSERDA has created Regional Clean Energy Hubs [4] to assist New Yorkers' transition to clean energy. If our ancestors could transition from coal to oil and then to natural gas, we can transition to cleaner alternatives such as heat pumps. The time to act is now!!

1. <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S6843>

2. <https://heatsmartny.org/heat-pumps/>

3. <https://ashp.neep.org>

4. <https://www.nyserdera.ny.gov/All-Programs/Regional-Clean-Energy-Hubs>

# THE CASE FOR ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUSES IN 2023

BY DEBRA DESOCIO

A recent proposal by Governor Kathy Hochul for the year 2027: All replacement diesel buses will be replaced with electric school buses. The entire fleet of NY school buses will be 100% electric by 2035. Expanding renewable energy will yield savings that cover the incremental costs of conversion to electric school buses. For example, compared to diesel-fueled buses, electric school buses reduce waste and maintenance related to air and oil filters, transmission, and cooling changes. They also eliminate emission test requirements. All of this leads to long-term savings. Furthermore, there are grants to cover the cost of upgrading electrical facilities and installing charging stations. Charging stations can also store electric power during down times, which can be used in emergencies or sold back to National Grid.

The air will be cleaner for all children and staff in and around electric school buses. Students and staff affected by asthma, covid, respiratory virus and flu will miss fewer days of school, and have better health and learning. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommends that diesel exhaust be regarded as a potential occupational carcinogen in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Cancer Policy. The toxic chemicals in DE (diesel exhaust) include carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, aldehydes, benzene, and PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons). Short-term exposure to DE can irritate upper respiratory which triggers allergies and asthma attacks. Refer to [mountsinai.org](http://mountsinai.org) for a complete list of related health concerns.

In December of 2022, the Fayetteville-Manlius Central School District held an informational forum with four other school district leaders regarding the proposal to move forward with electric school buses. The F-M school district is working with engineers to determine infrastructure requirements and is analyzing routes, staff training needs, and mileage considerations.



*Image: Fayetteville-Manlius school district officials get a close-up view of an electric school bus*

I recently spoke with the Head of Transportation, who clearly implied the district will continue to purchase diesel buses in 2023. This is very unfortunate, because they should make an effort to buy one electric school bus or enter a leasing program. As of now, it does not appear that the wealthier school district would qualify for existing funding or grants, which have been prioritized for economically stressed localities and rural areas. Options are being explored that will be available in the future.

Overall, clean air initiatives will have a positive impact on the natural world and health of children and adults. We should encourage being open to new possibilities. The future is now. Now is the time to be proactive and encourage your school district to vote NO on the upcoming budget vote on the 2023 ballot, if it doesn't include electric school bus initiatives and actions. Please realize the school board can take advantage of existing incentives, when the money is there.

## PFAS ARE EVERYWHERE

BY LARA HEBERLE

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of manufactured chemicals which do not naturally degrade. According to the EPA, PFA exposure has been linked to reproductive challenges, developmental delays in children, increased risk of cancers, interference with natural bodily hormones, and a reduced immune system. In everyday life, these chemicals can be found in contaminated water, livestock and fish exposed to PFAS, personal care products, food packaging (food containers, pizza boxes, popcorn bags, candy wrappers), non-stick cookware, cleaning products, and water-repellant materials.

What can you do?

1. Read the December Sierra Club article on PFAs: <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/4-november-december/material-world/pfas-are-everywhere-we-need-systems-change-fix>
2. Be an informed consumer
3. Sign the Sierra Club's petition to the EPA: <http://sc.org/sc-pfas> or the Toxic-Free Food Chemical Alliance Petition: <http://bit.ly/stop-pfas>