



# The Quinnehtukqut Connecticut Chapter

The Monthly Newsletter for Events, Information, and Action

May 2016

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# KAYAK OUTING

## Greater Hartford Sierra Club Kayaking



### Lake McDonough, Barkhamsted, CT

Join us for our first kayak outing of 2016 at the expansive, scenic and unspoiled Lake McDonough, a Metropolitan District, Hartford, Connecticut (MDC) reservoir. We'll spend considerable time exploring coves and beaches with only other paddlers and fishermen around. Those wishing a shorter trip can cut across to the launch when ready.

**Date:** Sunday, May 7th

**Time:** 12 Noon

**Difficulty:** Easy paddling, quiet water, no rapids

**Meet:** Entrance to Lake McDonough where you drive in for boat inspection

**Kayak Leader:** Renee Taylor

**RSVP: YES only** by May 5th to [mchawigirl@yahoo.com](mailto:mchawigirl@yahoo.com)

Be sure your cell phone is good Saturday morning, in case weather or winds require site change or cancellation of outing.

#### **Required:**

- Your boat must be clean to pass inspection on arrival
- Everyone in the kayak must wear a life vest
- You must sign a liability waiver

**Rentals:** Kayak rentals are available at EMS locations in Manchester and Avon as well as local small rental firms.

**Suggested items to bring:** Water and a snack or lunch for break time. We can dine afterwards at the local Log House restaurant, 110 New Hartford Road (Rte. 44).

**Fees:** This is the one site we go with fees, \$6 to park (free to those 61 years and older with Golden Eagle pass obtained at gate) and \$5 to launch.

**Directions:** The Lake McDonough recreation area is located on the west side of Route 219 in Barkhamsted, Connecticut, just over three miles northeast of the Route 44 intersection in New Hartford Center.

**More Information:** <http://themdc.org/recreation-areas/lake-mcdonough>

#### **Kayaking Waiver**

*All participants on Sierra Club outings are required to sign a standard liability waiver. If you would like to read the Liability Waiver before you choose to participate on an outing, please click the following link.*

[https://content.sierraclub.org/outings/sites/content.sierraclub.org/outings/files/forms/local-outings-sign-in\\_waiver.pdf](https://content.sierraclub.org/outings/sites/content.sierraclub.org/outings/files/forms/local-outings-sign-in_waiver.pdf)

***Hope to see you there!***

**RAIN THAT DAY CANCELS**



## ARTICLES

### Test Drive Electric Vehicles

by Mary Lunetta

May is the month for you to test drive an electric vehicle (EV) and let the Sierra Club know what you think.



Charging Station #1

**Rev Up EVs** is a smart Sierra Club campaign to get more electric vehicles on the road across the country. And we need you to be a key element in making this campaign a success. Your mission, if you decide to accept it, is to check out electric cars at locations near you to help us understand what is working well and what could be improved in the EV marketplace. It's easy, and we think you'll have fun doing it.



Charging Station #2

**Why the rush?** To help avoid the worst impacts of climate disruption and protect our communities, it's critical that we see electric vehicles on Connecticut roads in record numbers, starting now. Even factoring in the emissions from the electricity used to charge EVs, they are still significantly lower in emissions than conventional cars and hybrids. And that's today. As we shift to more renewable sources of power, EVs become even cleaner over time.

Connecticut, along with seven other states, has committed to put 3.3 million electric cars on our roads by 2025. In addition, our state has joined several European and North American state and national governments as founding partners of an international alliance to accelerate global adoption of zero emission vehicles (ZEVs).

**How can you help?** We need people to visit dealerships, learn about the EVs they sell, test drive one if possible (maybe you'll decide you want to buy or lease one -- don't forget there's up to \$7,500 federal tax credit, and Connecticut offers a rebate up to \$3,000!) and report back to us about the experience. It's all online and it's easy and quick.

This crucial information will help the Sierra Club and its cohorts, the auto industry, and government agencies to learn what is working well and what can be improved in the EV marketplace.

**The Job:** Join us in the fight for clean transportation today.

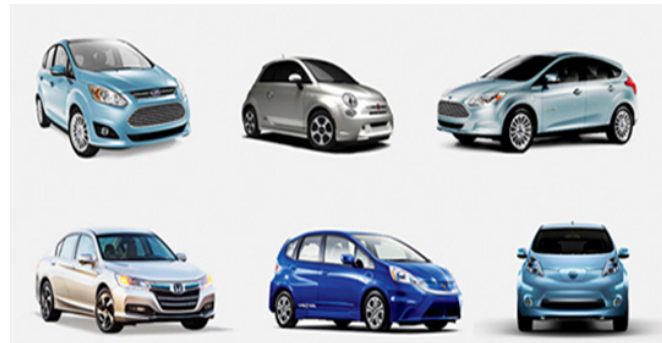
Get started by going to: [www.sierraclub.org/rev-up-evs-signup](http://www.sierraclub.org/rev-up-evs-signup) to access a list of dealerships near you. Next, kick the tires by going to the dealerships. Be sure to ask for a test drive. After your visit(s) and test drives, go back to the website to answer a few simple questions about your car dealership or store experience.

**Questions?** Contact [mary.lunetta@sierraclub.org](mailto:mary.lunetta@sierraclub.org) to learn more or go to: [www.sierraclub.org/evguide](http://www.sierraclub.org/evguide)

Across the country, we're counting on Sierra Club supporters like you to show what's working in the EV marketplace, and where we can do better. Only with your first-hand accounts can we ensure that Connecticut's EV goals are reached and that emissions standards are protected for years to come.

*Mary Lunetta is a Campaign Representative for Electric Vehicles Initiative | Sierra Club*

***We think of ourselves as separated from one another, yet we are connected and what we do affects the whole world. ~ Desmond Tutu***



Choose Your EV

## Interstate Gas Pipeline to Bisect CT

by Martha Klein



A recently approved interstate pipeline will increase gas capacity as it cuts across New England. Entitled the Connecticut Expansion, it is a Kinder Morgan/Tennessee Gas Pipeline project that was recently approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

In Connecticut, the construction consists of digging ditches and clearing forest and vegetation to install about eight miles of 24 inch diameter pipeline in East

Granby and Suffield. In Berkshire county, MA and Albany county, NY, 36 inch diameter pipeline will be installed.

### **For Profits Win Increased Gas Capacity**

Notable about this project is that it was created and designed to satisfy new gas customers in the state rather than to fulfill gas shortages. A ratepayer subsidized advertising campaign was developed by Eversource and UI to create thousands of new gas consumers. The kicker is they used ratepayer money to discount the expensive conversions they advertised. In other words, they fabricated the need for increased gas capacity.

Eversource and UI are the predominant Electric Distribution Companies (EDCs) in Connecticut. Eversource owns Yankee Gas and Iberdrola owns UI, Connecticut Natural Gas and Southern Connecticut Gas. With the exception of a few municipal distributors in the state, our local gas supply is wholly monopolized by two national or multi-national, for profit corporations.

### **Lower Gas Prices Activate Other Revenue Sources**

Monopolized industries don't usually help bring down costs. Many in Connecticut noticed recent jumps in their electric bill. Eversource explained it was due to "regional pipeline limitations and a growing need for natural gas..." The real reason is more complicated. Gas prices are dropping so gas distributors are looking for new customers, in addition to rate hikes to make them more profitable.

Since the price of oil dropped at the same time as gas prices dropped, there is no longer an economic benefit from gas conversions. Therefore, Eversource and UI are seeking more public money to continue with the residential gas conversions they acquire through their on-going advertising campaign. Why do they need more money? Without increased ratepayer subsidies to run persuasive advertising campaigns and provide discounts, people are unlikely to convert to gas.

### **Pipeline Overbuild Heats Up**

Eversource and UI appeared before the state legislature this year asking for more money to meet the target number of gas conversions. The goal of converting hundreds of thousands of new customers to gas for residential heating/cooking use is an explicit component of the state energy plan, or Comprehensive Energy Strategy. Due to the impending budget cuts, however, they may not get the funds they seek. But Connecticut Expansion will be built, without the certainty that the LDC/EDCs have the customers to use all the gas. This is known as pipeline overbuild. If Eversource and UI, who are the only purchasers of gas from the Connecticut Expansion, don't have enough customers to pay for the increased gas capacity, then ratepayers may wind up with the "stranded costs." Ratepayers also pay for the gas which LDCs leak into the atmosphere.

### **Connecticut's Energy Future**

While the state energy strategy has focused beneficially on reducing carbon pollution, there has been insufficient attention paid to climate damage from increased methane emissions. In Connecticut, we haven't closed any of our dirty plants yet, such as the coal or nuclear plant, but new gas plants are coming online, which simply add more greenhouse gases to the pollution.

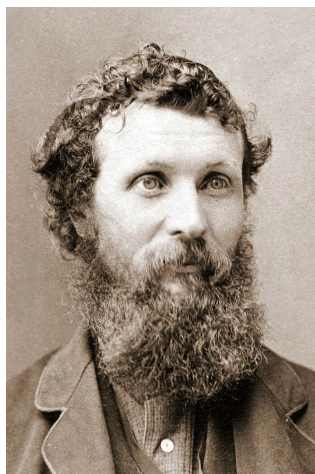
The smart investment is in high efficiency electric heat pumps for residential use, and in solar, wind and tidal powered electricity. The campaign for 100% renewable energy is on, and real solutions are available now. 2016 will be an exciting year in the fight to keep fossil fuels in the ground, and to expand clean, carbon free energy.

*Martha Klein is Communications Chair of the Connecticut Chapter of The Sierra Club.*

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## **The History of John Muir and The Sierra Club**

### ***A Serial in Seven Parts***



John Muir as a young man

### **Part One: The schoolboy's road to mountaineer**

A cadre of early, passionate wilderness explorers traveled the mountains of California in 1868 and shared their reports of the wonders they had seen. John Muir, at 30 was chief among these explorers, because he was also a visionary.

An immigrant from Dunbar, Scotland at age 11, his family raised him on a farm in Wisconsin where he and his younger brother roamed the fields and woods when they were allowed time off from working with a hoe or a plow, dawn to dusk on the farm. During those brief excursions, he began to love the natural world. He also became an inventor by carving unusual wooden devices that had practical applications, clocks that were accurate and a device that tipped him out of bed in the morning that he called an "early rising machine." At the 1860 state fair in Madison, Wisconsin, his work was admired and

praised. He entered the University of Wisconsin that year where he studied geology and botany, paying his own way.

After three years of college, Muir headed east to Southern Ontario where he explored the woods and swamps and collected plants. He hiked along the Niagra Escarpment during the spring, summer and fall. Needing to work over the winter, he and his brother, Daniel worked at a sawmill and rake factory in Ontario. They lived on the Bighead River where John continued his study of botany by exploring the escarpment, bogs and collecting and cataloging plants. Next John Muir went to Indiana where he worked in a wagon wheel factory. He was a valuable employee because he improved the machines and the processes used, but he suffered an accident in which a tool he was using slipped and landed in his eye. Would he ever see again?

When John did regain his sight he determined to head to the Amazon where he intended to study botany. He traveled 1,000 miles by foot studying botany and exploring the natural world and taking jobs to support himself. He walked from Indiana to Florida, sketching the land, sailed to Cuba, New York and Panama and ultimately made his way to San Francisco where he continued his walking explorations.

In California he took a job as a shepherd's assistant in the Yosemite Valley to finance his trip to the Amazon. Ultimately, the rugged grandeur of California's Yosemite Valley changed his life.

*"I have run wild," he wrote in describing his vision. "As long as I live, I'll hear waterfalls and birds and winds sing. I'll interpret the rocks, learn the language of myself with the glaciers and wild gardens, and get as near the heart of the world as I can."*

*And so he drifted from "rock to rock, from stream to stream, from grove to grove. Where night found me, there I camped. When I discovered a new plant, I sat down beside it for a minute or a day, to make its acquaintance and hear what it had to tell...I asked the boulders I met, whence they came and whither they were going."*

Watch a video about John Muir entitled "Coming Home" in the following link:

<http://click.emails.sierraclub.org/?qs=1cabe4a723e86ed7b7c9a5e87b54bd5298301eaf4abdf45c3f500aec57674e75ca74ad112480056b>

Sources: Cohen, Michael P, *The History of the Sierra Club, 1892-1970*; [biography.com](http://biography.com), John Muir; Wikipedia, John Muir; [vault.sierraclub.org](http://vault.sierraclub.org); *Encyclopedia of World Biography*

**Look for chapter 2 in the June issue of the Quinnehtukqut. You'll read about Yosemite Valley, the Sierra and a visit from the poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson**

## Legislation Issues

### 2016 State Legislation Update Energy Challenge

by Helen R Applebaum

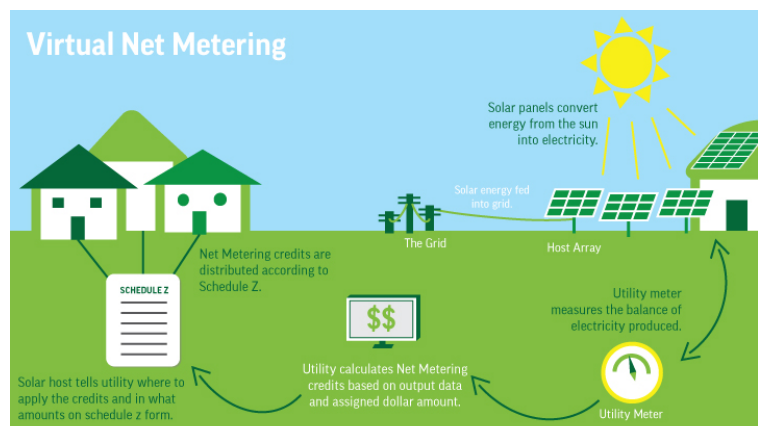
As reported in the April issue of this newsletter, the CT Chapter of the Sierra Club typically files testimony on about 30 bills a year.

This year we are challenged by energy issues. Residents of the state clearly understand that we must move to renewable energy sources as fast as possible to meet our promises and goals to address climate change. Residents should also know that renewable energy is an effective tool to reduce energy costs because the cost of renewable energy installations has plummeted in recent years.

#### Virtual Net Metering (VNM)

To move to renewable energy sources requires the passage of bills in the legislature. One such bill is SB 394 from the Committee on Energy and Technology, entitled "Virtual Net Metering and Certain Zero or Low Emission Generation Projects" which generated an argument about virtual net metering (VNM) in the General Assembly.

VNM is a significant tool that addresses using renewable energy projects to improve the financial condition of Connecticut towns. It does the job by unifying the energy performance of all energy consumption in all town buildings. It also allows towns to offset the cost of grid energy with energy generated by the installation of renewable energy. Maximizing VNM is a win all around because lowering costs to a town is good for all electric ratepayers in the town. Lowered costs also provide an incentive to towns to install renewable energy projects that would participate in VNM rate setting.



#### Artificial Cap Holds Back VNM

Unfortunately, Connecticut towns have not been able to take advantage of renewable energy projects through virtual net metering because of an artificial cap on the number of these projects. Many towns, ready to proceed, have been prevented from going forward because of the cap. The cap serves no public purpose. It does, however, protect those focused entirely on "cost shifting" and allows them to ignore the benefits to all residents by maximizing renewable energy.

The cap must be removed. The state should establish a cost/value of solar and reserve the right to amend it over time. What the legislature should not do is use the cap as an excuse to delay the program.

VNM can also be used for agricultural operations by enhancing the financial bottom line of agriculture in the state and leading to generation of additional renewable energy production. As both outcomes are wholly desirable, the Sierra Club supports VNM for agriculture.

### **We Are Struggling**

Here is where we are on renewables in Connecticut. If it were a poem, it might be called, "We are struggling."

- We are struggling to get shared solar. A 2015 bill allowing a small pilot has not yet been implemented. It may be by this fall.
- We are struggling to get virtual net metering authorized for agriculture.
- We are struggling to enlarge a small cap allowing only a few municipal virtual net metering authorizations, with at least a dozen towns with projects fully designed and waiting to go.
- We are struggling with legislative deniers who focus only on "cost shifting" if solar expands.- We are struggling to get any kind of a study for Connecticut on the value of solar to help set rates.
- We are struggling to get a fast and inexpensive track for municipal permitting for residential solar.
- We are struggling to find ways for electric distribution companies (UI and Eversource) (EDCs) to make money from solar so they will stop blocking expansion.
- We are trying to get equal treatment for all solar installers so the large national scope companies don't grab all the work at the expense of the local companies.
- We are struggling to make Connecticut attractive to national capital markets for renewables.

But as the great Winston Churchill once said, "**Never, never, never give up!**" **We face great struggles with renewables in CT, but with your help with shall overcome.**

*Based on legislative testimony by Martin Mador, Legislative Chair, CT Chapter Sierra Club*

*Helen R Applebaum is the editor of the Quinnehtukqut*



## POEM

### Planetship

Planetship. Bestowed by interacting cosmic forces;  
By similar interacting earthly forces we call evolution.  
There is no god who has caused it or directed it  
Only the synchrony of forces that are self-propelled  
And cannot be halted. The field of forces is specific  
To every medium whether Earth or Humanity but  
They also overlap, same but different, as Plotinus said.  
Poets know Creation. Yeats pointing out that you can't  
Tell the difference between the dance and the dancer.  
Whitman acknowledging that every atom belonging to  
Me belongs to you. Where did they get such wisdom?  
But we are in an eternal race. The Earth, as long as it is here  
With humans at the helm of this starship, idling in Space.  
We are the Movers as Aristotle always knew so our  
Evolution will take us from the earthly realm beyond  
To another spinning sphere awaiting our arrival.  
We'll have no choice as we are destroyers more than  
Creators given one place. Our home now is being  
Compromised, eaten alive by noxious molecules  
Which we launched in error and have no will to stop.  
I fear not all of us will move beyond the Earth for in  
This giant step for mankind the educated, the healthy,  
And probably the most economically sound will depart  
Leaving the ill and poor begotten to their extinction  
On this stalled and smoldering planet with death in its sights  
*Abby Ripley, New Milford, CT*



*Scorched by the Sun, Abby Ripley*

## The Q is brought to you by:

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*Comments, letters to the editor and written and graphic contributions may be sent to [ctsierraq3@gmail.com](mailto:ctsierraq3@gmail.com) for future newsletter inclusion. All decisions regarding use are made by the communications committee.*

## SOLAR POWER

### *Have you ever considered going solar?*

If so, **now is the time** because it's cheaper and easier than ever. Here's the proof: A new study just found that in 42 out of 50 of the largest U.S. cities, a typically-sized, \$0-down home solar system costs less than the energy purchased from a residential customer's local utility.\*

**Join more than 1,100 Sierra Club supporters in making the switch to clean energy.**

With flexible financing through different Sungevity Energy Plans, you can get an efficient solar system without emptying your pockets. Plus you'll lock in your electricity rate for years to come! It sounds too good to be true, but it's not!

Now is the time to go solar.

**Join the clean-energy movement today!**

**Check it out at:** [www.sierraclub.org/solarhomes](http://www.sierraclub.org/solarhomes)



Solar energy lifts life on earth



GIFT PLANNING

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

## Create a Lasting Legacy

By creating a charitable bequest to benefit Sierra Club or your favorite Sierra Club Chapter, you remain in control of your assets during your lifetime and help protect the environment in years to come.

For confidential assistance, contact:  
**Sierra Club**  
**Gift Planning Program**  
85 Second Street, Second Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
[gift.planning@sierraclub.org](mailto:gift.planning@sierraclub.org)  
(800) 932-4270



... Your lasting legacy...

## CREATE YOUR LEGACY

To create your legacy go to: [sierraclubfoundation.org](http://sierraclubfoundation.org)  
or email: [gift.planning@sierraclub.org](mailto:gift.planning@sierraclub.org)