Despite a projected $15 billion historic budget deficit brought on by the pandemic, the NYS Legislature and Governor Cuomo struck a deal for a balanced FY 2021-22 budget that leveraged federal bailout money and increased taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers and corporations to close the fiscal gap. Instead of austerity spending, NY lawmakers provided relief for those hit hardest by the coronavirus pandemic, including renters, small businesses and undocumented immigrants.

This budget was good for the environment too, as funding levels remained at historic highs:

- The Environmental Protection Fund, NYS’s primary funding source for critical programs like open space acquisition, farmland and habitat protection, drinking water infrastructure and waste reduction, is fully funded at $300 million.

- NY State parks received $110 million in capital funding to maintain beaches, trails, playgrounds, and rest areas that were “over loved” by record crowds looking for refuge from quarantine life.

- $500 million was appropriated to continue repairs to the state’s failing sewage and drinking water infrastructure, upgrades to septic systems, remediation of contaminated drinking water, source water protection through land acquisition projects, confronting harmful algal blooms in our waterways, addressing water pollution caused by agricultural run-off, replacing lead drinking water service lines, and more.

- The legislature also voted to put a $3 billion bond act before the voters in fall 2022. Projects funded through the act will protect critical habitats, restore wetlands, prevent floods, safeguard our drinking water, and ultimately support public health. It will also provide thousands of New Yorkers with good climate resiliency jobs when the COVID-19 emergency finally passes.

While there is great relief (and gratitude) that NY’s critical environmental programs will maintain sustaining funding levels – there remains great anticipation for what the legislature will do to address the host of environmental problems still facing the state.

At the time of this writing, the Senate and Assembly have combined efforts to ban tiny shampoo bottles from hotel bathrooms, set zero emissions standards for cars and trucks (as long as California sets the same standards), ban the spreading of frack waste on our roads, and put before the voters a constitutional amendment that would give New Yorkers the right to a “clean and healthy environment” (even as the courts continue to stifle citizen enforcement of such rights). What is anticipated from the two super majorities in the Senate and Assembly is great. Even as the State grapples with the complicated implementation of the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Investment Act, there are many critical follow up actions that the legislature cannot ignore. Despite the climate law requiring a zero emissions electrical grid by 2040, NYS continues to permit new gas-fired power plants. Despite having a state mandate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors, new cryptocurrency facilities are manufacturing virtual money behind the meters of dirty fossil fuel plants at great cost to the planet. Despite the promise of the $3 billion dollar bond Act to restore wetlands and support climate resiliency, the state is losing wetlands at an alarming rate due to regressive laws that limit their protection. And the list goes on: harmful pesticides that perpetuate pollinator extinction, a tidal wave of plastic that is drowning the state in own packaging waste, and pervasive environmental injustices that linger in communities where we have long ignored inequity and systemic racism.

There are only a few weeks left in the legislative session. We are counting on the legislature to make the most of it. To track the progress of environmental bills in New York, visit the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter’s legislative page.
From the Conservation Chair

Ellen Cardone Banks

After several years of working to get the Climate Leadership and Community Protection act (CLCPA) signed into law in 2019, we are beginning to witness its implementation through the Climate Action Council and its various working groups, especially the Power Generation Group. The Sierra Club has been represented on the Power Generation group by Lisa Dix, Senior New York Manager of the Beyond Coal Campaign, who has been sharing reports of the working group’s process with chapter volunteer leaders.

The working groups delivered their reports at the end of April, with an overall scoping document to be prepared by the Climate Action Council in late 2021. Meetings at both levels are online and open to the public at https://climate.ny.gov.

We knew that the NY fracking ban was only the beginning of the end of fracked gas in our state. The gas industry will not give up easily and is finding new and creative ways to stay in business. It proposes to start new gas-fired power plants on the sites of existing plants, claiming that these are just upgrades, including Danskammer in the Hudson Valley and others in Queens and Brooklyn, all in heavily polluted environmental justice zones.

In effect, these plants would become stranded assets as the CLCPA will prohibit gas-fired power generation by 2040; meanwhile, Danskammer Energy proposes to convert to hydrogen some time before the 2040 deadline for carbon-emission-free electricity. The Sierra Club and other local and statewide groups in the Stop Danskammer Coalition object that there is neither a technological nor a realistic economic path to implementation of that plan.

Meanwhile, there are positive developments in power generation. Offshore wind in the Atlantic has already begun. On land, the Office of Renewable Energy Siting appears to be living up to its intention of reducing the delays in permitting that have caused wind and solar projects to be delayed for years. For example, the first utility-scale renewable energy project endorsed by the Atlantic Chapter, Heritage Wind, about 30 miles south of Lake Ontario in Orleans County, has received preliminary approval and is in a final public comment stage.

Before the Atlantic Chapter decides to support — or deny support to — a utility-scale renewable energy project, a process for evidence-based decisions must be followed. It will start with evidence gathered by local groups, with assistance from chapter and locally based national Sierra Club staff. It will then move to a chapter committee on utility-scale renewable energy, then to a chapter’s executive committee for a vote. There are many proposals for wind and solar projects in planning stages that will need to be reviewed.

While polls show that public approval for renewable energy is increasing, pockets of opposition and a national anti-renewable fear-mongering campaign remain, so we need to continue with fact-and science-based public education. The Atlantic Chapter and allied supporters of clean,
renewable energy expect that local support will grow when neighbor communities see the benefits of utility-scale wind and solar projects, including negotiated PILOT (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) agreements and other community benefits, as well as training and hiring for jobs with family-supporting wages, as well as when they see that the fears being promoted do not materialize.

While small solutions to clean energy to combat the climate crisis are important, such as rooftop solar, and while there is a massive need for energy conservation, storage and upgrades in transmission (all of which are included in the CLCPA), many scientific and economic studies conclude that the energy needs of the future cannot be met by small solutions alone and that utility-scale clean, carbon-free power generation is a necessary part of the mix. This can be accomplished on a small fraction of available land.

For example, a study in Maryland by Manhikjani (2021) reports that 4% of farmland in Maryland used for solar generation would meet the electricity needs of the entire state while much of this land can be simultaneously used for agricultural purposes. Like Maryland, New York State has a great deal of unused farmland. Solar energy not only helps farmers to stay in business by supplementing their income, but is also a far better alternative for farmers than selling land for non-reversible industrial development, such as warehouses and housing developments that contribute to sprawl and increase fossil fuel use for transportation.

Solar installations do no harm to soil and can be removed and restored if new forms of safe, renewable energy are discovered. Similarly, wind turbines occupy about one-fourth of an acre and are fully compatible with grazing and crops. We can meet our energy needs, mitigate climate change and have a healthier population while preserving land for growing food and for rural vistas.

A “Forever Wild” Adirondack Park Victory!

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter amicus brief supported Protect the Adirondacks lawsuit

By Roger T. Gray, Adirondack Committee

The New York State Constitution’s Article 14, known as the “forever wild” clause, passed by the voters in 1894, is widely considered to be one of the strongest and most effective forest protection laws in the world, protecting the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserves for more than 100 years.

However, to paraphrase Patrick Henry, the price of forever wild is eternal vigilance. Exercising that vigilance, the not-for-profit organization, Protect the Adirondacks, in 2013 filed a lawsuit against the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) to challenge the legality of plans to construct what the DEC termed “Class II Community Connector” snowmobile trails, covering hundreds of miles in the Adirondack Forest Preserve.

Protect the Adirondacks filed after the first 27 miles of this new kind of trail were under construction, or planned and laid out in the field. Through meticulous on-the-ground research, Protect determined that construction of the first group of these trails would result in the destruction of 25,000 trees, a clear violation of the Constitutional mandate: “nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed.” Subsequent court testimony in the case established that these community connector trails, while defined by the DEC as between 9 and 12 feet wide, in fact, were often up to 20 feet wide where hillside turns require excavation and banking, and frequently required heavy construction machinery, such as backhoes and bulldozers, to remove rocks and stumps to allow for straight, high-speed travel, over a graded, flat surface. Once built, these community connector trails require daily maintenance with large mechanized groomers to maintain the snow surface.

In the summer of 2016, Protect the Adirondacks won injunctions that stopped trail construction, injunctions that prevail to this day. In early 2017, a 17-day trial was held in Albany that involved expert testimony on both sides. In December 2017, the Supreme Court found in favor of the state.

Protect appealed the decision to the Appellate Division, Third Department of the State Supreme Court, in 2018. In July 2019, that court, in a 4-1 decision, found in favor of Protect the Adirondacks, ruling that cutting 926 trees per mile, or 25,000 trees in total, to build the class II community connector snowmobile trails constituted destruction of timber “to a substantial extent” or “to a
material degree” and thus violated Article 14, the forever wild clause, of the Constitution.

Commenting in a magazine article about the case, Pace University law professor Nick Robinson (who is an honorary vice president of the Sierra Club) noted: “Though some people were taken aback by the ruling, they shouldn’t have been. New York’s Constitution is quite clear: the forest preserve is to be kept as forever wild forestland.” The state appealed the decision to New York’s Court of Appeals. Recognizing the potential significant precedent involved in this case in terms of future protection of the Forest Preserve, the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter decided to file an amicus curiae brief in support of Protect the Adirondacks.

We were very fortunate that Professor Robinson put us in touch with an excellent team at the Pace University Environmental Litigation Clinic, Todd Ommen, Managing Attorney, and Gabrielle Dylag, Legal Intern. They worked with us on a pro bono basis with tremendous insight and determination, first, to develop the New Matter Form to obtain approval from the Sierra Club national Litigation Committee, and then to prepare and file our amicus brief. Our brief attempted to highlight the significance of the affirmative duty of New York State to meet the constitutional requirement that the lands “shall be forever kept as wild forest lands.” This is a mandate not only to recognize what Article 14 “prohibits,” but to recognize that it “promotes” a responsibility on the part of the state to actively enhance the Forest Preserve and the natural values that it has embodied for more than a century. Our brief was filed in November 2020. In February 2021, the Adirondack Council and Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve also filed amicus briefs in support of the Protect the Adirondacks case.

Amicus briefs were filed in support of DEC’s position by the Empire State Forest Products Association and, surprisingly, by the Adirondack Mountain Club, the Open Space Institute and The Nature Conservancy.

Peter Bauer, executive director of Protect the Adirondacks, stated that the amicus briefs filed on behalf of the state, which contended that if Protect’s suit were upheld it would mean an end to building and repair of hiking trails, were “specious claims”; he noted that hiking trail repair and building has continued while the case made its way through the courts. In response to the briefs submitted supporting the DEC and APA, John Caffry, attorney for Protect the Adirondacks, wrote to the court: “This Court’s decision herein has the potential to determine the fate of not only the few dozen miles of Class II Community Connector snowmobile trails that are directly at issue herein, but also the hundreds of additional miles of such trails that the Defendants intend to build. Such an action would destroy hundreds of thousands of additional trees. The framers of Article 14 could never have imagined that after they ‘shut the door, and . . . close[d] it tight . . . to protect that great and magnificent forest from further spoliation’ such a level of destruction could be allowed to occur. Previously, any such action on the Forest Preserve has required a constitutional amendment. This Court should not change that now.”

Roger Downs, Atlantic Chapter Conservation Director, put it in the larger context of climate change:

“The Sierra Club was compelled to file our own amicus brief with the Court of Appeals because we are witnessing the erosion of the forever wild clause’s highest purpose and meaning. We are entering a new chapter in our state’s history, where the cataclysmic effects of climate change must be met with bold plans to protect our remaining wilderness for resiliency and adaptation. Our future relies upon our wild forests to sequester carbon, protect drinking water and provide refuge in a rising tide of extinction. Violating this constitutional obligation, with plans to log and bulldoze tens of thousands of trees, miles into the wilderness — just to create highways for snowmobiles — sets an alarming precedent that betrays our understanding of Article 14 and all that must be done to secure New York’s forever wild legacy.”

The Court of Appeals heard oral arguments in the case on March 23. Comments and questions from the justices reflected their clear recognition of the magnitude of the decision they were being asked to make. One justice commented, “. . . the purpose of the constitution [Article 14] was to preserve as much as possible of the forever wild nature of the Adirondack preserve . . . the State made a policy choice, and they’ve preserved it for over 100 years, to say that . . . economic benefits . . . while it may be a rational decision, result in a destruction of this forest and a compromise of the ecological validity, actually the gift we’ve been given by God to
On May 4, the Court of Appeals, in a 4–2 decision issued its ruling: “We now affirm and hold that the planned construction of the Class II community connector trails would violate the constitution.” The court decision is very clear that if such trails are to be constructed, they, like past proposals to widen ski trails at State ski centers, must first be approved by a constitutional amendment, where “the people can express their will accordingly through the democratic process.”

Professor Robinson noted, “Two years after the Sierra Club was founded in California, the People of New York in 1894 adopted the world’s first constitutional protection for wilderness. Today New York’s highest state court reaffirmed that the 3 million acres of the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve must indeed be kept ‘forever wild.’ The Club’s Atlantic Chapter celebrates Protect the Adirondacks’ landmark victory, preventing New York from cutting trees and creating ‘popular’ mechanized snow mobile roads across wilderness lands. Each generation picks up the baton anew in the race to save wilderness. As we say in New York, Excelsior!”

This is a tremendous, precedent-setting victory. This court decision will govern State management of the Forest Preserve for decades “Forever wild” means a lot more today, and this will ensure that the Adirondacks are truly protected for the generations to come,” said Chuck Clusen, Chair of Protect the Adirondacks.

Congratulations and thanks to Protect the Adirondacks, and their attorneys, John Caffry and Claudia Braymer, for their dedication and determination to protect the Forest Preserve!

NYSERDA’s Great Lakes Wind Feasibility Study
Bob Ciesielski, Chair, Atlantic Chapter Energy Committee

A Great Lakes Wind Feasibility study is being conducted this year by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA).

Three firms, including the National Renewable Energy Lab, will review information and available technology, the incorporation of the electricity produced into the NYS grid, and federal, state and utility permitting.

Some of the items to be discussed in the study are the effects of wind turbines on water quality, fish and birds. Proposed turbines are secured to the lakebed by gravity weight and apparatus, eliminating the need for outdated blasting, digging and pile driving that would disturb lake sediment. Floating turbine designs are also being examined for deeper portions of the lakes.

As demonstrated in the ocean shallows near Block Island, Rhode Island, aquatic life has significantly increased near the wind turbines. Despite claims of some wind opponents that gas-bladder fish are harmed by turbines, research and experience show that the mere operation of wind turbines in water does not harm gas-bladder fish or other aquatic life. The non-disruptive techniques for installing turbines will ensure fish are not harmed.

Concerning birds, radar and cameras are currently being used by turbine operators to slow or halt turbines in the event bird flocks are detected nearby. Birds migrating across the Great Lakes generally fly at altitudes that are higher than wind turbines.

Wind turbines in the Great Lakes would create an important source of electricity in upstate New York — producing the energy needed to achieve clean home electrification, the buildout of electric vehicles, heating and cooling pumps and manufacturing.

The website for the study is www.nyserda.ny.gov/Great-Lakes-Wind-Feasibility-Study.

Public webinars will be held in May, August and October 2021. The first presentation held March 19, 2021, may be found on the website. You may also sign up for an email list on the website.
We Need 100% Hand Counts of Paper Ballots in our Elections
by Allegra Dengler and George Klein

“The right to vote is preservative of all other rights. It is not just another issue alongside other issues. It is foundational.” - Raphael Warnock (Senator, Georgia)

Hand counts of ballots that we mark ourselves are essential to verify the computerized vote count. New York voters currently vote on hand-marked paper ballots that are then counted by computer. Judges have denied hand counts requested by candidates and voters, even though national cybersecurity experts warn that computerized vote counting is vulnerable to breakdown and hacking.

Two recent races show the urgency of getting 100% hand counts to protect the vote count.

Anthony Brindisi (NY CD 22) was endorsed by Sierra Atlantic. He lost his race by 109 votes. Brindisi requested a hand count of all the ballots in the race, but was denied. The race was so poorly administered, it attracted the interest of the US Department of Justice, which is suing Oneida County, but there will be no new election.

Brindisi was favored to win the district. In polling by FiveThirtyEight, he would win in 73 out of 100 projected outcomes.

Rita Hart (Iowa-CD 2) was endorsed by the Iowa Sierra Club. FiveThirtyEight projected her to win in 88 out of 100. Instead, she lost by six votes.

Judges denied a hand count of 100% of the ballots in both races. We will never know which candidates actually won more votes in those races. Politicians with unpromising environmental records are now seated in Congress. NY CD 22 will be represented by Claudia Tenney, whose environmental record includes supporting legislation removing protection of streams from coal mining companies.

When administrations and legislatures hostile to the environment gain power, the environment suffers.

**Ballots hand marked by the voter are the gold standard**

It is urgent that New York mandate that all ballots be hand marked by the voter and are not printed on after being cast.

When New York was forced to give up its lever machines, the Sierra Club fought successfully to keep touchscreens out of NY. Now that victory is threatened.

New “hybrid” voting machines are under consideration. They combine a printer and a scanner in the same machine. On one model, the printer can print on the hand-marked ballot after the voter casts it, changing or disqualifying the vote. On another, the voter votes on a touchscreen that prints out a paper audit trail with a barcode.

**Ballots must be 100% hand counted to verify the computerized vote count**

Sierra and other groups successfully supported a NYS law, effective in 2021, mandating automatic hand counts in close elections. Hopefully we won’t see any repeats of elections like CD 22. However, many questionable races will fall outside the law’s very narrow close vote margin.

Elections must be decided by counting votes as cast by voters, eliminating “black box” processes introduced by voting machines of all types and technology. In elections, technology is not our friend. Technology introduces complexity, openings to hackers, voter mystification and finally, damage to election credibility in the eyes of voters. And voting machines are expensive.

A 100% hand count of all ballots is done in Germany and most other advanced democracies, responding to the threats of computerized counting. When there’s any question about an election result, that race must be 100% hand counted. The current 3% hand count audit is inadequate to detect errors.

**Another problem we can solve**

Each county in New York has a board of elections headed by two commissioners, a Republican and a Democrat. Both commissioners must agree to escalate a hand count audit. The commissioner whose party is in the lead will not agree to escalate.

**What you can do now**

Ask your assemblyperson and senator to co-sponsor and vote for:

1. Assembly A.1115 (Paulin), Senate S.309 (Myrie) bans voting machines that can print on the ballot after the voter has cast it.
2. Assembly A.913 (Paulin), Senate S.332 (Myrie) allows just one county board of elections commissioner to approve a recount.

Call George Klein at 914-772-3916 if you want to join the campaign for these election reforms.
Educating for American Democracy
by Lisa DiCaprio, Sierra Club NYC Group

Educating for American Democracy is a new and innovative initiative to revitalize civics education in the K–12 curriculum. The project overview states: “In recent decades, we as a nation have failed to prepare young Americans for self-government, leaving the world’s oldest constitutional democracy in grave danger, afflicted by both cynicism and nostalgia, as it approaches its 250th anniversary. The time has come to recommit to the education of our young people for informed, authentic, and engaged citizenship.”

The National Endowment for the Humanities and the US Department of Education provided funding for Educating for American Democracy, which “involved a diverse collaboration among over 300 academics, historians, political scientists, K–12 educators, district and state administrators, civics providers, students, and others from across the country.”

The crisis in civics education is revealed in several ways, such as national exams on civics and history and public surveys. According to the most recent, 2020 Annenberg Public Policy Center Civics Knowledge Survey, “over half of Americans (51%) were able to name all three branches of government - the highest level seen in this survey.” (The first survey was in 2006.)

In the US, the K–12 curriculum is developed at the local and state levels of government. For this reason, the interactive Educating for American Democracy Roadmap is not a new curriculum, but “a vision for the integration of history and civic education throughout grades K-12.”

The interactive Roadmap comprises 7 main themes and 5 design challenges related to these themes. For example, the Motivating Agency, Sustaining the Republic challenge corresponds to the Civic Participation theme and consists of these three questions:

- How can we help students understand the full context for their roles as civic participants without creating paralysis or a sense of the insignificance of their own agency in relation to the magnitude of our society, the globe, and shared challenges?

- How can we help students become engaged citizens who also sustain civil disagreement, civic friendship, and thus American constitutional democracy?

- How can we help students pursue civic action that is authentic, responsible, and informed?

We must also advocate for mainstreaming civics education throughout the college curriculum. Although Educating for American Democracy is intended for K–12 instruction, its main themes and design challenges are relevant for college students and the extensive resources can be utilized for the development of college-level teaching materials.

Here are 7 ways that we can promote civics and voter education and protect the right to vote:

Expand student voter education and registration. Undergraduate students represent an important and growing demographic of potential and registered voters. Despite a substantial increase in voting between 2014 and 2018, the student voter participation rate of 40% is still lower than the 53% national average. Student voters have the lowest voter turnout of all demographic groups in the US, as indicated in studies described by the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education. We can promote voter education and registration in high schools and colleges as a crucial aspect of civic education. In NYC, for example, thousands of students have participated since 2015 in an annual Student Voter Registration Day that includes educational events.

Protect the right to vote and the integrity of the electoral process. The Brennan Center for Justice’s State Voting Bills Tracker 2021 provides an overview of new state legislation on voting, which is updated on a regular basis. As of March 24, 2021, legislators have introduced 361 bills in 47 states since the 2020 elections, five of which have been signed into law, that are intended to suppress the vote and politicize how elections are certified at the county and state levels of government.

Support initiatives to prevent the gerrymandering of state and congressional district maps that are redrawn every ten years based on the results of the US census. President Barack Obama and Eric H. Holder, Jr., the Attorney General in the Obama Administration and current chair of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, are collaborating to call public attention to the political consequences of gerrymandering. In a recent newsletter of the National Democratic Redistricting PAC, Holder provided this example of how gerrymandering has disenfranchised Democratic voters: “In 2012, when President Obama won a second term, Democrats received 1.37
“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

- The Preamble to the United States Constitution
There has been a recent increase in the promotion of hydrogen as a “clean” fuel. While hydrogen fuel cells can be used strategically in difficult situations to provide clean power, the gas industry both in Europe and the United States is hyping the large-scale use of hydrogen to maintain the current reliance on methane gas and gas pipelines to produce electricity. In New York, the fossil fuel industry’s public relations juggernaut has integrated the discussion of “green” hydrogen into an attempt to justify proposed gas-fired power plants in Danskammer and Astoria in New York City.

The gas industry is claiming that it will begin burning a mixture of “clean” hydrogen and fracked gas at proposed power plants. The industry also holds forth the theoretical concept of retrofitting and transforming these plants to become completely powered by “green” hydrogen power by 2040, New York State’s deadline for a zero-emissions electric sector. There are many serious problems with this concept.

Of the three major types of hydrogen production, “green” hydrogen uses renewable energy, such as hydro, solar or wind power, to operate an electrolysis system that separates hydrogen from oxygen in water molecules (H2O). This process is extremely energy intensive and would require large amounts of renewable electricity to operate on a large-scale basis.

Presently, some 95% of hydrogen comes from “gray” hydrogen produced by breaking down methane (CH4) molecules. Besides deriving “gray” hydrogen from fracked methane, fossil fuels are also burned in the steam process to break down the methane molecules. Much of this “gray” hydrogen is now utilized by the chemical industry and in refining oil. A third method of extracting so-called “blue” hydrogen is similar to “gray” hydrogen, except that it depends on its greenhouse gas emissions being controlled through carbon capture and sequestration.

At the recent NYS Public Service Commission’s hearings for the Danskammer gas-power plant, a supporter of hydrogen fuel claimed that Europe will be producing “green” hydrogen in massive quantities, and that this type of hydrogen for combustion will be readily available in the future. However, research into hydrogen use in Europe reveals that even its strongest proponents believe that some 80% of methane produced would have to come from the “blue” methane process, dependent on carbon capture and sequestration of fossil fuels to make large-scale clean hydrogen economically feasible. A massive transformation to hydrogen fuel at current gas-field power plants would still use an enormous amount of methane and fossil fuels in 2040.

Another serious problem with the hydrogen theory is that gas-powered turbines cannot now be operated by hydrogen. Most gas plant generators today are designed to emit low levels of nitrogen oxide (NOx) and cannot handle high concentrations of hydrogen. Besides, the pipelines that transport gas to generators cannot safely contain high concentrations of hydrogen as the gas weakens pipelines and generators significantly by making the metal brittle. To operate safely, the gas industry is currently only able to transport some 5% to 10% of hydrogen in a fracked gas/hydrogen mix in pipelines.

Moreover, the operation of power generators with hydrogen releases a high level of nitrogen oxide (NOx) during combustion. European studies have found that burning hydrogen as a fuel in an industrial setting can lead to emissions up to six times that of methane. The health dangers of NOx emissions are significant. Our Atlantic Chapter and other organizers in New York State have been attempting to shut down gas and combined gas-oil peaker plants downstate because of their high releases of NOx emissions that contribute to smog and respiratory illnesses.

Nationwide, the attempt by the fossil fuel industry to blend methane with fracked gas nationwide is significant. A current proposal is to attempt to blend 30% hydrogen with 70% fracked gas for use in Los Angeles, which would significantly increase both carbon dioxide (CO2) and NOx emissions.

Overall, there is a real danger of our state and country investing heavily in the “clean” hydrogen fuel path, which would provide little, if any, increase in air quality. We must avoid another misplaced effort at developing clean burning fuels as has happened with ethanol gasoline and burning toxic waste and tires.

An over-development of “green” hydrogen could be devastating due to the energy intensive nature of its production. The amount of renewable electricity required for the process would misdirect the use of renewable electricity from proven and necessary technologies, such as electric vehicles and electric heat pumps.

Sources:
Carl Arnold, Long-time Environmental Activist and Organizer Passes Away Unexpectedly May 8, 2021

Carl was a very dedicated environmental activist/leader in the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, New York City Group and the National Club. He served as the chair, and a member of the executive committees at both the Chapter and Group levels, working very hard to stop the fracking of natural gas and advocating for renewable energy use, as well as striving to reimagine land use and agriculture for long-term planetary sustainability.

Carl emphasized the importance of volunteer work and volunteerism. The Atlantic Chapter plans to share more news about Carl’s contributions in a later edition of the Sierra Atlantic.

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You may be receiving our print newsletters and the Sierra magazine, but to be sure you’re getting all of our communications and to learn about getting involved in our work, our website offers a variety of options.

By visiting [www.newyork.sierraclub.org](http://www.newyork.sierraclub.org), you’ll find email signups for:

- Atlantic Chapter Updates, including general Chapter updates as well as any take-action items
- *Sierra Atlantic* Newsletter, the electronic version of the quarterly newsletter
- Volunteer opportunities! Fill out our new volunteer form and also visit Volunteer Connection. You can sign up for one of our available volunteer positions and get more involved with the Atlantic Chapter and your local Groups.

All of these sign-up forms are in the right column on the homepage of the Atlantic Chapter website.
We need your help to maintain the Chapter's critical conservation efforts in NY and continue print publication of the *Sierra Atlantic*. Your membership dues primarily support the Club's national priorities. Your additional support is needed to strengthen the Chapter's work in the Empire State. Please use the coupon below to send a donation. Contributions and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible. Thank you for your generosity. To learn more about a 501c3 tax deductible donation, call our office at 518-426-9144.

**Yes, I want to help the Atlantic Chapter preserve and protect the environment of New York State. I am enclosing my gift of:**

- $500
- $250
- $100
- $60
- $35
- Other $___

- Check made payable to Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter is enclosed
- I'd like to make a single payment by credit card
- I'd like to become a sustainer with $___ monthly or $____ quarterly credit card donation.

Acct no:__________________________________________ Exp. Date: ____________
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Name: _________________________________________________________________________________
Sierra Club Membership number: _________________________________________________________
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City: ___________________________________________ State: ___________ Zip: ________________

Mail this completed form with your check or credit card information to:
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, PO Box 38225, Albany, NY 12203
A copy of our latest financial report can be obtained by writing to Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, PO Box 38225, Albany, NY 12203, or the NYS Attorney General.
CHAPTER CALLS FOR EXCOM NOMINATIONS (2021 ELECTION)

The Atlantic Chapter Executive Committee (ExCom) sets Sierra Club conservation policy in New York State and administers the Chapter. The Chapter ExCom meets in person four times a year and meets by conference call several times a year.

Some ExCom members are chosen by their local Groups. Others, the nine at-large delegates, are elected by the Chapter membership statewide for two-year terms. This fall's election will fill five at-large seats beginning in January 2022.

Every member of the Chapter is eligible. If you are interested in running for one of these seats, please let the Nominating Committee (NomCom) know by July 6. Send your name, address, and membership number to the Nominating Committee, Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, 744 Broadway, Albany, NY 12207 or by e-mail to atlantic.chapter@sierraclub.org. Please include a statement about your qualifications and reasons for running to help the NomCom decide whether to nominate you. The NomCom will notify you by July 31, if they are nominating you as a candidate for at-large delegate. If you need help finding your membership number, email atlantic.chapter@sierraclub.org for assistance.

If you are not nominated by the NomCom, you can become a candidate by filing a petition signed by at least 50 members of the Chapter. The deadline for filing petitions to be a candidate is August 30. The NomCom has the option until September 8 to nominate more candidates. The deadline for all candidates to submit the final version of their ballot statements is September 15.