2022 NYS legislative session yields some important environmental initiatives but fails to keep pace with the climate catastrophe

The Legislature and Governor enacted historic funding levels for environmental programs - but opportunities to advance critical climate policy on building electrification, green transportation, pollinator protection and extended producer responsibility fell short in final agreements.

The 2022 New York State Legislative Session wrapped up in early June with something of a whimper as State Legislators chose to leave many important environmental policies on the table, in anticipation of potentially chaotic primaries and fall elections. With unprecedented lobbying from fossil fuel companies, real estate developers, chemical manufacturers and cryptocurrency moguls, there was concern that a bold defense of our environment and climate goals against these powerful interests would translate into even deeper losses than what is anticipated from the “red wave” alone. Earlier in the year the State Legislature and Governor Hochul came to an agreement on a $220 billion state budget that included historic funding for critical environmental programs and some of the strongest environmental agreements of the session, including:

- Historic Wetlands Reforms that will protect over 1 million acres of critically important freshwater wetlands that are currently unmapped and tens of thousands of smaller wetlands that are of ‘unusual importance’ and provide valuable ecological services. These long awaited regulatory reforms will protect drinking water and biodiversity, and make communities more resilient to floods, droughts, and ecological disruption brought on by the climate crisis.
- A $4.2 billion ‘Clean Water, Clean Air, Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act’ that will go before the voters in November for approval. This historic proposal will finance projects that protect critical habitats, restore wetlands, prevent floods, and safeguard our drinking water.
- A $400 million Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), the highest level of funding in the program’s history, will ensure that NY’s primary funding source for critical programs such as land acquisition, farmland and open space protection, drinking water infrastructure, and waste reduction will continue to support the health and prosperity of all NY’s communities.
- Increased funding and staffing for environmental agencies including 94 new DEC staff to implement the Climate Leadership Community Protection Act (CLCPA) and other environmental needs.
- $500 million for offshore wind manufacturing and supply chain development.
- Green transportation initiatives including the adoption of a 2035 zero-emissions school bus fleet mandate, supported by $500 million in the Environmental Bond Act for electric vehicle procurement.
- $500 Million for Clean Water Infrastructure Projects, a continuation of the $4 billion Water Infrastructure Improvement Act, to repair failing sewage and drinking water infrastructure, upgrade septic systems, remediate contaminated drinking water, confront harmful algal blooms, address water pollution caused by agricultural run-off, replace lead drinking water service lines, and more.
- Geothermal Tax Credits for geothermal heating and cooling units up to $5000. Additionally at least $400 million in Environmental Bond Act funding was earmarked for “renewable heating and cooling” in public buildings and schools. Phasing out fossil fuels in favor of geothermal and air source heat pumps is an effective step in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Many of these budget items have a direct connection to the implementation of the CLCPA, and they should be carefully considered in tandem with the initiatives in the Climate Action Council Scoping Plan. But even as the billions of dollars in this year’s budget dedicated to the environment eclipses any previous environmental budget expenditure in history, the appropriations fall short of the funding and policy steps that are essential in order to stave off the worst impacts of the impending climate catastrophe. After the budget agreement was reached advocates still pushed the legislature to adopt issues that fell out of the budget process - like the adoption of...
From the Conservation Chair: Let’s Put out the Fires
by Ellen Cardone Banks

At the NYS Climate Action Council scoping hearing in Buffalo, April 27, 2022, I started my comment with this: We have fires in our homes. It’s time to start putting them out.

Paleontologists suggest that taming fire is what changed our early ancestors into modern humans. Being able to cook led to changes in metabolism that preserved energy for a wider range of activities adaptive to the African savannah environment. Fire kept us warm, scared predators away, and let us stay up late talking about the questions we still ask: Why are we here? Where are we going? A million years may have passed before these speaking, symbolizing, sometimes-cooperating early humans evolved into the modern humans we presume to call homo sapiens (“wise people”).

We have fires in our homes. Most are in metal boxes so we don’t think about them that way until something explodes. Furnaces, boilers, water heaters, clothes dryers, and stoves. When I was very young, our house was heated with coal. It was a big event to watch it roll from a truck down a chute to the basement. My father shoveled it into the furnace every day and then shoveled out the ashes--that’s why my parents called garbage cans “ash cans.” Later we had an oil furnace, which was smelly and a financial burden, as a season’s worth, like coal, had to be purchased at once. Parts of our state still rely on oil heat. Finally, gas heat became more widely available, and it has been promoted as an improvement, with less visible pollution, but it’s still combustion, releasing climate-damaging and toxic products of combustion. Many of our rural neighbors still have the burden of propane with prices as volatile as the gas itself.

It’s time to move on. Our climate crisis is increasingly dire. Western states are burning. A third of the greenhouse gas emissions in our state are from fire in buildings. Fire is making our planet and our people sick: New York State leads the nation in respiratory disease traced to fossil fuel emissions. Childhood asthma robs children of school days and outdoor play and creates work/child care stress for parents. Adult respiratory conditions increase the risk of serious illness and death from COVID-19. We have solutions—the technology is here.

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The cost of implementing the Climate Leadership and Community Protection is billions less than the cost of business as usual. The scoping plan proposes three pathways, a concession to the presence of fossil fuel executives and other representatives of the status quo on the Climate Action Council. Of the three, the third pathway in the scoping plan is the one the Sierra Club and our allies in New York Renews prefer, and it would go a long way toward the goals New York State law requires, but we can do better. For example, it stops short of ending gas infrastructure in new buildings or phasing out gas-burning heating systems and appliances. The period...
The New York State Legislature and Governor Pass Sweeping Freshwater Wetlands Protection Reforms, Safeguarding more than 1 Million Additional Acres Statewide

by Roger Downs, Chapter Conservation Director & Elizabeth Ahearn, Chapter Conservation Staff

On April 8, 2022 Governor Hochul and the State Legislature came to an agreement on a $220 billion state Budget which included historic wetlands protection reform, the same reforms that the Sierra Club and partner organizations have been fighting to enact for almost two decades. This victory came at a pivotal time when existing wetlands both are becoming the centerpiece of the state’s climate resiliency plans and in the cross hairs of increasing development and degradation. The crisis for New York wetlands, which have diminished by 60% over the last two centuries, stems from unchecked development, regressive court decisions, federal regulatory rollbacks, insufficient DEC permitting capacity, and political pressure to stifle an already broken wetlands mapping program.

This new law will remove cumbersome red tape that has stymied wetlands protection and give the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) new tools to better identify and protect wetlands as they become threatened. Before the new law was passed a wetland could only receive protection in New York if it was delineated on an existing freshwater wetlands map prepared by DEC after lengthy public comment. But most of the State’s official wetlands maps have not been updated in over 20 years, making them woefully outdated, and the amendment process could be time-consuming and overly burdened with administrative costs. As a result there were hundreds of thousands of acres of wetlands in high development areas of New York State that were not on official maps and did not receive desperately required protection. All that is about to change.

The State Legislature’s session ended without passing the All Electric Buildings bill that would stop gas infrastructure in new buildings and eventually, over 20 years, phase out gas in existing buildings, replacing gas-burning devices as they age out with electric equipment. No one will be coming to confiscate your furnace! The corporations that mine, transport and supply gas have been flooding the public with misinformation about the costs of transition to electrification, but actual cost analyses show that construction of gas-free homes is less expensive and the operating costs of geothermal and heat pumps are lower than for fuel-burning heat.

New York Public Interest Group (NYPIRG) reported a study by the New Buildings Institute and National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) that found new all-electric single-family homes in New York State will be $7,500 to $8,200 less expensive to construct than fossil-heated homes. Also, all-electric new homes reduce total energy consumption by 34%. Avoiding the cost of installing fossil fuel infrastructure such as gas and oil lines provides substantial savings and avoids the instability of gas prices. The study was based on upstate New York’s climate and real estate market. Buildings with geothermal heating and cooling have long-term benefits of low operating costs, as do cold-climate heat pumps. Both have the advantage of providing air conditioning as well as heating, more efficiently than conventional air conditioning, an important feature as our summers become warmer. Some of the scare tactics used by the gas industry compare the cost of gas heat with antiquated electric resistance space heaters, instead of the correct comparison with contemporary heat pump technology, which is widely used in cold-climate countries such as Norway, where 60% of households have heat pumps. New York City has already enacted Local Law 97, requiring phased-in 40% to 80% emissions reduction by 2030 in large buildings that will apply to 60% of the city’s buildings. urbangreencouncil.org.

The Atlantic Chapter will continue, along with our 200+ Renewable Heat Now partner organizations, to push for the All Electric Buildings bill in the next legislative session. It’s up to us all to correct the false narratives of the fossil fuel and construction industry and to inform the public of the health and climate benefits of building electrification. For our health and the health of the planet, it’s time to put out the fires!

for written comments on the scoping plan has been extended to July 1, 2022. scopingplan@nyserda.ny.gov.

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Specifically, the wetlands reforms passed in the SFY 2022-23 Budget will:

- Forgo the jurisdictional nature of NY’s existing state freshwater wetlands maps (starting in 2025 after new rules and regulations are promulgated.)
- Allow the DEC to protect ANY wetland that is 12.4 acres or greater in size or smaller wetlands of “unusual importance” that meet the scientific requirements of wetlands, based upon criteria plants and hydric soils.
- Lower the threshold for mandatory permitting for freshwater wetlands from 12.4 to 7.4 acres (in 2028).
- Identify criteria for permitting smaller wetlands of ‘unusual importance,’ such as wetlands that attenuate significant flooding, filter drinking water, provide habitat for rare species, or are located in an urban area.
- For the first time add protection to vernal pools - some of NY’s smallest but most ecologically significant wetlands for breeding amphibians and invertebrates.
- Add language creating a rebuttable presumption that freshwater wetlands are subject to regulation and permitting until proven otherwise.
- Increase fees and fines that hadn’t been updated since the 1980s.
- Remove red tape and agency costs related to wetlands protection.
- Provide funding for wetlands management and local mapping of freshwater wetlands through the Climate Smart Communities Program in the NYS Environmental Protection Fund.
- Direct the DEC to create educational resources for landowners and local governments on how to identify freshwater wetlands.
- Require the DEC to consult with the federal government, colleges and universities, environmental organizations, and other entities to increase the accuracy of the freshwater wetlands maps.
- Require the DEC to keep and maintain the freshwater wetlands maps as an online informational resource.

The need for these new reforms also became more urgent because of the ongoing uncertainty of wetlands protection at the federal level, including the new supreme court, which is poised to overturn key provisions of the Clean Water Act by the end of 2022.

In addition, New York’s new wetlands law aligns with the newly codified goal of preserving 30% of New York State’s open space by 2030 and the $4.2 billion ‘Clean Water, Clean Air, Green Jobs, Environmental Bond Act,’ which is slated to go before voters in the fall. The aims of the Bond Act to restore habitat, protect drinking water and prevent catastrophic flooding, combine powerfully with a wetlands regulatory reform agenda. But spending billions on restoring degraded wetlands without doing all we can to prevent existing wetlands from becoming degraded would be a poor return on our investment.

This vision of a climate-resilient and adaptive New York State is not possible without the type of groundbreaking wetland reforms included in the Budget.

Sierra Club applauds and thanks Governor Hochul, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Senator Kaminsky, Senator Harckham, Assembly Speaker Heastie, and Assemblyman Englebright for expanding protections for New York’s freshwater wetlands in this year’s state Budget agreement. These reforms are an enormous victory for New York’s freshwater wetlands, which will at last benefit from the proper stewardship and protective safeguards they deserve.
Legislative session wrap-up continued from p.1

All Electric Building standards by 2024, enhanced producer responsibility for packaging waste, rules to establish 100% all electric transit bus procurement and banning bee-killing neonicotinoids. But despite coming up short on these bills - a string of smaller bills passed both houses, later in session, that can not be ignored collectively as insignificant:

Bills that Passed the Legislature in 2022

Including Environmental Justice in SEQRA Reviews: S.8830 (Stewart-Cousins)/A.2103-D (Pretlow). For the past 45 years, the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) has been administered without a direct mandate to protect disadvantaged communities or communities of color, who already bear the burden of disproportionate environmental degradation and pollution. This bill now places environmental justice at the core of SEQRA and makes provisions to require environmental impact statements to state whether the siting of a facility will cause or increase a disproportionate burden on disadvantaged communities.

Cryptocurrency Mining Center Moratorium: S.6486-D (Parker)/A.7389-C (Kelles). This common sense legislation will give New Yorkers a much needed environmental review of energy-hungry proof of work crypto mining facilities and prevent the resurrection of NY's dirtiest retired plants which are currently being targeted for speculative bitcoin generation.

Utility Thermal Energy Network and Jobs Act: S.9422 (Parker)/A.10493 (Joyner). This bill will allow NY's utilities to build and maintain large scale renewable heating projects for building complexes, campuses or city blocks (as they can with conventional gas and electrical systems) starting with 35 pilot projects. The legislation is especially designed to provide jobs to transitioning utility workers in the building sector new to renewable heat technologies.

Advanced Building Codes, Appliance and Equipment Efficiency Standards Act: S.9405 (Parker)/A.10439 (Fahy). This bill will synchronize our building codes and efficiency standards with our climate law, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve indoor air quality and save New Yorkers billions of dollars in energy costs.

Right to Repair: S.4104-A (Breslin)/A.7006-B (Fahy). This bill requires equipment manufacturers to provide diagnostic and repair information for their products so that they can be fixed by third parties at a reasonable cost. Currently, many companies count on consumers throwing away intentionally unfixable products so that they can profit off of replacements. This legislation will save New Yorkers money and reduce our waste stream.

Toxic Air Contaminants and the Community Benefit Fund: S.4371-D (Biaggi)/A.6150-B (Septimo). This bill directs the Department of Environmental Conservation to promulgate air quality standards for emissions of toxic air contaminants in areas where cumulative emissions disproportionately impact environmental justice communities. It also establishes a community benefit fund to help mitigate impacts from legacy emissions.

30x30: S.6191-A (Kaminsky)/A.5390-B (Fahy). This bill is part of an effort to combat the biodiversity and climate crises in the state's land acquisition policy; sets the goal to conserve at least 30 percent of New York's land by 2030.

Stream Classification: S.4162 (Harckham)/A.6652 (Englebright). This bill would add protection to 41,000 linear miles of currently unprotected headwater streams in NY. (Governor Cuomo Vetoed this bill in 2020 on the basis that DEC did not have the staff to administer expansion of the streams protection program)

Zero Emissions NYS Transportation Fleets: S.9382 (Parker)/A.10450 (Fahy). Requires plan by which New York State owned vehicles are to be 100% all electric by 2040 with incremental goals leading up to the zero emissions mandate.

PFAS in Apparel Ban: S.6291-A (Hoylman)/A.7063-A (Fahy). This first of its kind legislation prohibits the use of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances in common apparel, reducing human exposure to this hazardous ‘forever chemical' and the subsequent release of PFAS into the environment.

Protecting Horseshoe Crabs S.9419 (Kaminsky)/A.7710-A (Englebright). This bill adds new protections to Horseshoe crabs, after decades of overharvesting in NY coastal waters.

Utility Intervenor Reimbursement for the Public S.3034-A (Parker)/A.873-A (Cahill). This bill will provide funding to members of the public engaged in various proceedings before the Public Service Commission (that are not otherwise covered) to give citizen advocates even footing with big energy interested when it comes to enacting policy or evaluating projects.

Expanding "Complete Streets" Applications: S.3897(Kennedy)/A.8936-A (Fahy). “Complete streets” features (such as pedestrian crosswalks, sidewalks, and bike lanes) are only required and federally funded for certain large, intensive new construction projects. Since most of New York’s transportation infrastructure is already “built out” most alternative transportation projects are not eligible for design or funding opportunities. This legislation makes incentives for pedestrian friendly development eligible to NYS municipalities and can be applied to a wider range of road and bridge projects.

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Reducing New York’s Waste Generation: S.139-A (Thomas)/A.4117 (Englebright). This bill establishes the NYS goal to reduce, reuse, recycle, or compost no less than eighty-five percent of the solid waste generated by the year 2032.

Strengthening NY’s Environmental Standards for Ambient Lead and Lead Contamination: S.8050-A (Cleare)/A.5541-B (Englebright). This bill reduces the threshold for lead contamination levels for indoor environments, especially in the context of protecting children from lead exposure.

Requiring EV Charging Stations in New Parking Construction: A.4386-B (O’Donnell)/S.23-B (Kaplan). This bill requires that all new parking garages and lots in NY install EV charging infrastructure for at least 10% of the spaces, and 20% for lots with a 200 car capacity and larger.

Carpet Collection Program: S.5027-C (Kavanagh)/A.9279-A (Englebright). This bill establishes a NYS carpet collection program for one of the bulkiest and most problematic household items for waste handling facilities to process - making carpet producers responsible for making less toxic and easier to recycle products.

All Electric, Zero Emissions Landscape Equipment Incentives: S.7453-A (Krueger)/A.8327-A (Englebright). This bill will establish an electric landscaping equipment rebate program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality, and reduce noise pollution by promoting the adoption of quieter, zero-emission landscaping equipment and provides for rebates at the point of sale for applicants purchasing or leasing certain equipment.

Renewable Energy Resources at Dormant Electric Generating Sites: S.1829-B (Skoufis)/A.340-B (Zebrowski). This bill directs the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority to study and make recommendations regarding siting renewable energy resources at decommissioned or dormant electric generating sites and to issue a request for proposal in support of a renewable energy project at a dormant electric generating site.

The Sierra Club will be pushing through the summer months for Governor Hochul to sign all these bills into law, and direct our state agencies to swiftly initiate all the regulatory changes required to implement these important policy changes. But as we simultaneously engage in the rulemaking process for the Climate Action Council’s scoping process under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act the legislature cannot lose sight of all that it still must do to make new laws that facilitate and keep pace with our obligation to stay ahead of the climate crisis. In 2023 we must do better.

Chapter Calls for ExCom Nominations (2022 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. During the pandemic, the ExCom has been meeting virtually, via Zoom calls.

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 four at-large seats beginning in January 2023.

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 13. 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.
Tribute to Charlie Morrison
by Roger Gray & Tom Kligerman, Adirondack Committee

On the occasion of his 95th year, and his pending move to Seattle, the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter wishes to recognize the efforts Charlie Morrison has made in protecting the environment in New York State.

When Charlie became active with Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter in the 1970's he brought with him extensive environmental experience:

- In the 1950’s, he was the Assistant to the Director of Exploration and Field Research, American Geographical Society, studying glaciers in Alaska, Canada and the Rockies;

- In 1964, he answered John F. Kennedy’s New Frontier call to serve the nation, and left his home in New Jersey for Washington DC where he worked under Interior Secretary Stewart Udall in the newly formed Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, and with the Recreation Resources Review Commission, chaired by Laurance Rockefeller; where he helped develop a report which led to the creation of the national Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act;

- In 1967, he followed his colleague at the federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Henry Diamond, to New York State, where Charlie became the Director of the newly formed Commission on Natural Beauty, reporting directly to Governor Nelson Rockefeller. During this time, Charlie worked with Governor Rockefeller’s Temporary Study Commission of the Adirondacks, touring mining operations in the Adirondacks;

- In 1970, Henry Diamond became the Commissioner of the newly formed Department of Environmental Conservation, and Charlie transferred to DEC (Charlie noted that his title, Director of the Commission of Natural Beauty, was the only job title specifically mentioned in the legislation creating the Department of Environmental Conservation.)

- In 1984, Charlie became Director of Land Resources Planning at the Department of Environmental Conservation where he was a key player in the State’s Scenic Byways program which brought federal money to improve scenic roads in the State, and in many significant land protection efforts.
Charlie was present at many of the foundational events of the environmental movement in New York State:

- In 1967, he was present at the conference at the Sit’n Bull Ranch Resort in Warrensburg when Laurance Rockefeller released his plan to make the Adirondacks a national park -- a plan which was soundly rejected.

- In 1970, working with the commissioner of Environmental Conservation, Henry Diamond, in his role as Director of Community Assistance, Charlie was responsible for creating local conservation commissions in counties and municipalities around the State, which helped to put environmental issues front and center in local government.

- In 1970, Charlie was one of the founders of the Environmental Planning Lobby, now Environmental Advocates, which was one of the first organizations in the nation to advocate for the future of a state's environment.

- In 1989, in his role at the Department of Environmental Conservation, under commissioner Peter Berle, and through his work with other organizations, Charlie was instrumental in getting the Champlain-Adirondack region designated as a UNESCO globally recognized biosphere reserve, the Champlain-Adirondack Biosphere Reserve.

When Charlie began his involvement with Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Conservation Committee and Adirondack Committee in the 1970s, his role in State government necessitated that he act as a 'behind-the-scenes' player -- not an easy role for Charlie; however, he ghost wrote position papers and articles for the Chapter, and even leaked the occasional document. Among many things, his role was crucial in the long-term effort, which was a priority of the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter at the time, to protect and subsequently acquire the lands that in 1998 became the core of Sterling Forest State Park.

In later years Charlie was the quintessential "citizen activist" working with his home town of Saratoga Springs' conservation committee, and with local advocacy groups, to protect wetlands in the area, to add lands to the Saratoga Spa State Park, to address problems with the village's water supply, and its overall development.

Charlie is a keen and thoroughly knowledgeable advocate of the New York Constitution's Article 14 "forever wild" protections for the Adirondack Forest Preserve.

One of his greatest environmental achievements was his years of work, in collaboration with the Pace University Law School, and Sierra Club activists, securing public rights to navigation on waterways in the Adirondacks, which resulted in a December 17, 1998, New York State Court of Appeals ruling that that usefulness of a stream for recreational travel, not just traditional commercial use, must be considered in deciding whether a stream is "navigable-in-fact", and which opened the Moose River in the Adirondacks to paddlers. Charlie worked for years after the 1998 Court decision to get a list of navigable rivers established in regulation so that each river need not be individually tried in the courts.

Charlie was a soft-spoken "behind the scenes" player, and sometimes not so soft-spoken, who had a key role in most of the major land protection efforts in New York State in the last 25 years of the 20th century.

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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, 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.
**Doughnut Economics: A Thriving Economy Within Planetary Boundaries**

by Lisa DiCaprio, Sierra Club NYC Group

Kate Raworth is a British economist, Senior Associate at Oxford University’s Environmental Change Institute, and Professor of Practice at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. She is the author of *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist* (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2017). [1]

Raworth depicts doughnut economics as the outer ring, inner ring, and the space between the two rings of a doughnut, which she explains in her website article, “What on Earth is the Doughnut?...”:

The environmental ceiling consists of nine planetary boundaries, as set out by Rockstrom et al, beyond which lie unacceptable environmental degradation and potential tipping points in Earth systems. The twelve dimensions of the social foundation are derived from internationally agreed minimum social standards, as identified by the world’s governments in the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Between social and planetary boundaries lies an environmentally safe and socially just space in which humanity can thrive.

**THE OUTER RING, the ENVIRONMENTAL CEILING,** represents the nine planetary boundaries identified in 2009 by the Stockholm Resilience Centre. [The Stockholm Resilience Centre subsequently modified three of these original nine boundaries. For the new version, see the Planetary Boundaries website.]

- ocean acidification
- chemical pollution
- nitrogen & phosphorus loading
- freshwater withdrawals
- land conversion
- biodiversity loss
- air pollution
- ozone layer depletion
- climate change.

**THE INNER RING, the SOCIAL FOUNDATION** is derived from the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which were adopted in 2015. These 12 “essentials of life” are:

- water
- food
- health
- education
- income & work
- peace & justice
- political voice
- social equity
- gender equality
- housing
- networks
- energy

**THE SPACE BETWEEN THE TWO RINGS.** As Raworth explains in, “What on Earth is the Doughnut?...”:

“Between social and planetary boundaries lies an environmentally safe and socially just space in which humanity can thrive.”

**THE EMPTY CENTER OF THE DOUGHNUT** is described by Raworth as “a place where people are left falling short on the essentials of life.”

Doughnut economics is informed by the concept of a circular economy, which challenges the conventional linear model of production, consumption, and waste. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation, “What is the Circular Economy?” website explains: “A circular economy is based on the principles of designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems.” The circular economy is a form of biomimicry – the imitation of nature, as it imitates the circularity of nature in which everything that dies and decomposes becomes the basis of new life.

Advocates for doughnut economics challenge the growth imperative of traditional economics, which is based on increasing the G.D.P. (Gross Domestic Product), and envision a thriving economy that meets people’s basic needs within our planetary boundaries.
In “What on Earth is the Doughnut?...,” Raworth writes:

Humanity’s 21st century challenge is to meet the needs of all within the means of the planet. In other words, to ensure that no one falls short on life’s essentials (from food and housing to healthcare and political voice), while ensuring that collectively we do not overshoot our pressure on Earth’s life-supporting systems, on which we fundamentally depend – such as a stable climate, fertile soils, and a protective ozone layer. The Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries is a playfully serious approach to framing that challenge, and it acts as a compass for human progress this century.

Amsterdam: a Circular and Doughnut City
On April 8, 2020, Amsterdam became the first city to officially adopt doughnut economics, which was viewed as a guide for a social and economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

Amsterdam’s designation as a doughnut city was preceded by its decision to become a circular city. In 2019 Amsterdam city officials participated in workshops organized by Circle Economy, a locally based Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) partner. The Amsterdam Circular Strategy 2020-2025 commits Amsterdam to a 50% reduction in the use of new raw materials by 2030 and to becoming a fully circular city by 2050. These goals are to be achieved by focusing on three areas: food and organic waste streams, consumer goods, and the built environment.

Subsequently, as related in the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) article, “Amsterdam City Doughnut,” Amsterdam “joined the Thriving Cities Initiative – a collaboration between Biomimicry 3.8, C40 Cities, Circle Economy, and DEAL – to create the Amsterdam City Doughnut portrait,” which was published in March 2020.

This “downscaling” i.e., application of the doughnut economy to a geographical entity, such as a neighborhood, city, region, or nation, began as a collaboration between Kate Raworth and Janine Benyus, the pioneer of biomimicry. As Benyus emphasizes in Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature (William Morrow, 1997): “The biomimics are discovering what works in the natural world and, more important, what lasts. After 3.8 billion years of research and development, failures are fossils, and what surrounds us is the secret to survival. The more our world looks and functions like the natural world, the more likely we are to be accepted on this home that is ours, but not ours alone.” [2]

As Raworth explains in her April 8, 2020 website article, “Introducing the Amsterdam City Doughnut,” “These four questions turn into the four ‘lenses’ of the City Doughnut, producing a new ‘portrait’ of the city from four inter-connected perspectives.”

Highlighting Amsterdam’s significance as the first doughnut city, the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) article, “Amsterdam City Doughnut,” states: “By introducing Doughnut-thinking into policymaking, coupled with the self-organising and dynamic uptake of the Doughnut by the city’s civil society through the Amsterdam Doughnut Coalition, Amsterdam has provided an inspirational and pioneering starting point for turning Doughnut Economics into 21st century transformative action.”

The Amsterdam Doughnut Coalition, a network of 40 organizations that was formed in 2019, is facilitating the implementation of the Amsterdam City Doughnut.

Amsterdam inspired several cities to officially adopt the doughnut city model, such as Copenhagen in June 2020; Brussels in September 2020; Dunedin, New Zealand in October 2020; and Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada in December 2020. The Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) and its local partners are currently discussing the process for becoming a doughnut city with activists and policymakers in cities and regions throughout the world, including Portland and Philadelphia.
The “Amsterdam Becoming a Thriving City” section of the Amsterdam City Doughnut emphasizes:

Cities have a unique role and opportunity to shape humanity’s chances of thriving in balance with the living planet this century. As home to 55% of the world’s population, cities account for over 60% of global energy use, and more than 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions, due to the global footprint of the products they import and consume. Without transformative action, cities’ annual demand for Earth’s material resources is set to rise from 40 billion tonnes in 2010 to nearly 90 billion tonnes by 2050. At the same time, cities have immense potential to drive the transformations needed to tackle climate breakdown and ecological collapse, and to do so in ways that are socially just.

Doughnut city initiatives to meet people’s needs within our planetary boundaries are especially important given the conclusions and recommendations of two U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports: Working Group II Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, “Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability,” February 2022 [3]; and Working Group III Mitigation of Climate Change, “Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change,” April 2022. [4]

In accelerating the transition to a new, green economy, we must reconceptualize the overall purpose of the global economy. As Kate Raworth wrote in her August 12, 2012 Humans and Nature website article, “Doughnut Economics”: “The focus on GDP growth is clearly long past its due date. The global crisis of environmental degradation and extreme human deprivation urgently demands a better starting point for economy theory and policymaking.” [5]

See the electronic version of this article for additional references and information on doughnut economics.


NOTES:
[1] A new edition of Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist, which was published in 2022 by Penguin Random House UK, includes Kate Raworth’s “Afterword: Doughnut Economics in Action.” To access a PDF file of the afterward, see the May 22, 2022 Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) posting, Read a new chapter in Doughnut Economics!
[5] For previous critiques of the G.D.P. see, for example, the writings of Hazel Henderson (1933 – 2022), which include The Politics of the Solar Age: Alternatives to Economics (Doubleday/Anchor, 1981) and Ethical Markets: Growing the Green Economy (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2007).
Ramapo-Catskill Group Members to Join Neighboring Groups

Readers of Sierra Atlantic already know that Sierra Club members belong to the national organization, a state Chapter, and a local Group. Atlantic Chapter (all of NYS) has had eleven Groups. One of them, Ramapo-Catskill Group (Sullivan and Orange Counties), gradually lost most of its leadership and active members. In 2018 the Group asked to be dissolved and transferred its financial assets to the Chapter.

Atlantic Chapter’s Executive Committee (ExCom) had hoped instead to revitalize the Ramapo-Catskill Group and asked leaders in adjacent Groups to attempt the task. We in Lower Hudson Group (Gale Pisha), Mid-Hudson Group (Bob Heinemann), and Susquehanna Group (Jim Taft) contacted all 1100 affected members by regular mail and emails. We then set up virtual (due to the pandemic) meetings. Three Ramapo-Catskill members attended, an insufficient number for an active Group. This may be partly due to the fact that, unlike most Groups, Ramapo-Catskill lacked a dominant urban center, thereby inhibiting meetings and relationships.

Our revitalization committee, supported by our Groups’ ExComs, suggested to the Chapter that Ramapo-Catskill members be reassigned as follows:

- **Sullivan County Members reassigned to Susquehanna Group.**
- **Orange County members in these zip codes reassigned to Mid-Hudson Group:**
  - 10915, 10919, 10932, 10940, 10941, 10963, 10985, 12518, 12520, 12543, 12549, 12550, 12551, 12552, 12553, 12555, 12566, 12575, 12577, 12584, 12586.
- **Orange County members in these zip codes reassigned to Lower Hudson Group:**
  - 10910, 10911, 10912, 10914, 10916, 10917, 10918, 10921, 10922, 10924, 10925, 10926, 10928, 10930, 10933, 10949, 10950, 10953, 10958, 10959, 10969, 10973, 10975, 10979, 10981, 10987, 10988, 10990, 10992, 10996, 10997, 10998, 12729, 12746, 12771, 12780.

The Atlantic Chapter and national Club approved this plan. Former Ramapo-Catskill members will be contacted by their new groups and welcomed to future meetings and events. Our three groups are very active, and we hope the reassigned members find many opportunities to get involved with us.