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FROM THE CHAIR, RHEA JEZER



I have been trying to remain positive despite an overwhelming feeling of despair after the elections. Many of you, I know, feel the same way. Every hour, however, is bringing new astoundingly troubling news. We were blessed in the past four years because our country had the most ambitious climate, conservation, clean energy, and environmental justice agenda in history. We took advantage of the “Investing in America” agenda, which included securing the largest ever investment in climate and clean energy.

The Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law unleashed a clean energy manufacturing and deployment boom that has attracted hundreds of billions of dollars in private sector investment, created hundreds of thousands of new clean energy jobs, and lowered energy costs for families while delivering cleaner air and water for communities across the country. During Trump’s first term, the Sierra Club played a critical role in defending against his administration’s attacks on climate progress and clean air and water. We fought like hell, holding off the worst of his attempts to gut bedrock environmental protections. Now we have to defend our progress again, and fight each fight as it comes up. We are fortunate to be in New York State which has announced its resolve to protect the state from future threats to our climate, and we must remain focused on advancing the commitments the state has made for environmental protection. We will fight to make sure those commitments are upheld.

On the brighter side, the CNY Group has had a very successful year addressing our local issues. One of our projects was to educate about the importance of replacing the abhorrent diesel buses, which spew forth carcinogens that sicken our children and drivers, with electric buses. Each year there is a vote in each school district to replace old buses and it is our goal to have on every school budget an inclusion of electric school buses. Right now there are financial incentives to make these buses reasonably priced. This has to be taken advantage now before the new administration cuts all environmental funding. The Group as well has been studying and a committee is working on studying and commenting on large scale renewable projects. Since it is imperative that we replace fossil fuels with renewable energy, large scale solar and wind farms must be considered. But...we must make sure that these farms adhere to our stringent environmental standards.

The construction and operation of the proposed Micron facility, with its many environmental challenges, has taken up much of our energy and time. We are in coalitions who with us are working on issues such as the large consumption of water, massive use of energy, destruction of wetlands, use of hazardous chemicals, etc. Central New York needs a major industry, but we have to be a force to make it as environmentally sound as we can. We now are at a point where we must continue our work, despite the despair of what is going on in the country. Our group needs your help – our membership is our army to defend our priorities.

Please consider joining one of our committees, or start your own! This is your club and we want you to participate. We have eleven outstanding members of our Executive Committee but the challenge is greater than we can handle on our own. I am asking you, as a member, what would be your priorities be? Would you be willing to join a committee to work on accomplishing your priorities?

These are some issues our Sierra Club group can work on – perhaps you would like to add to that list. **I am reaching out to you requesting that you send me (rjezer@gmail.com) what you prioritize. Please send me your top three selections:**

- Clean transportation
- Large Scale Renewables
- Keeping our water and lakes clean and safe
- Protecting our inner city from pollution
- Working on the political and legislative issues
- Nuclear energy
- Endangered species
- Forests
- Other

Continued on Page 2.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, CONTINUED

The only way we are going to get through the next four years is if everyone pitches in. I hope working with our Sierra Club Group will be a priority for you. We would appreciate hearing from you and your interests.

On another matter, each year you are given the opportunity to elect members to serve both on our statewide executive committee as well as our CNNY group executive committee - **there is more information in the Sierra Club Election Statements article.**

PLEASE VOTE. You will be receiving a newsletter from the Atlantic Chapter which includes a ballot for the statewide election as well as a drop down to vote electronically for our group election. Although there is not much choice for our group election, we really want to have our members participate in voting.

I would like to thank our very hard working Executive Committee members for all their work this past year. They all join me wishing you good holidays holding your friends and family close. We hope to see you and hear from you in the near future. Just remember, we will overcome the viciousness and ugliness we are now seeing only by resolving to fight together to protect our world and its inhabitants.

2024 CNNY GROUP LEADERS

Group Chair and Political Chair - **Rhea Jezer**
Vice Group Chair and Newsletter Editor - **Lara Heberle**

Assistant Political Chair - **Lisa Lehmann**
Secretary and Treasurer - **Robert Waters**
Conservation Chair - **Don Hughes**
Communications, Nominating Committee, and Chapter Delegate - **Tasha Cooper**

Large Solar, Programs and Events - **Peter Plumley**

Climate Change and Electric School Buses - **Peter Wirth**

Programs and Site Visits - **Marcy Waldauer**
Trees, Open Space, Farming, and Environmental Business - **Tom Amidon**

At Large - **Sarah Klee Hood**

Emeritus - **Martha Loew**

Web Administrator - **Dan Shanahan**

2024 GROUP AND CHAPTER ELECTIONS

The CNNY Group values the many contributions of volunteers who help the Group and serve on the Group's Executive Committee for two-year terms. Voting in this year's CNNY Group Executive Committee election will be held online, along with voting for Executive Committee members for the [Atlantic Chapter](#) of the Sierra Club.

Please watch your email for instructions from the Chapter about how to vote for this Executive Committee election. The deadline for voting online is December 31, 2024.

A link to information about this year's [CNNY Group Executive Committee \(ExCom\) candidates](#) (or click on the link here to learn more about them) will also be available in the online ballot. Voters will be able to vote for up to six ExCom candidates in the Group election.

If you have questions about the CNNY Group Executive Committee (ExCom) or Atlantic Chapter election, please contact: CNNY Group ExCom election: cnyy-group@newyork.sierraclub.org

The CNNY Group welcomes hearing from Group members interested in being considered for Executive Committee openings in the future, as well as from those interested in helping with Group initiatives in some way. **Please contact Rhea Jezer (rjezer@gmail.com) if you are interested in volunteering. Be sure to include information about any specific environmental interests you have - see the chair's message above.**

WHY WE NEED TO TRANSITION TO ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUSES

THEA JEZER, CHAIR CNNY GROUP

There is evidence that children are particularly susceptible to the negative health impacts of diesel exhaust [1]. The exhaust from diesel-burning school buses puts students and the bus drivers at risk for lasting serious conditions such as asthma and cancer, as well as negative cognitive development impacts [2]. This affects the 25 million children in our country who travel on school buses over four billion miles each year [3]. Diesel-burning school buses emit high levels of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, directly contributing to climate change that increasingly threatens our children's future. It is important to note that communities of color face higher on road air pollution, and students from Black and Latino households, low-income students, and students with disabilities are all more likely to ride the school bus than their counterparts and are therefore at more risk [4].

Today, over 90% of the school buses on the road are powered by diesel [5]. Each year the public is given the opportunity to vote in their school budgets to replace buses for their districts. We propose that every school district include several electric buses as part of the budget. There are large subsidies now offered to school districts to make electric school buses affordable and we urge all districts to include electric buses as part of their school budget for this year. NYSERDA will help districts research and apply for subsidies [6].

Please take our children's and future generation's health seriously and urge your school boards right away to include replacing foul diesel buses for electric school buses. The CNNY Group and Energy21 has been running zoom Informationals which have been very well attended. If you have missed the past sessions and would like more information, please reach out to rjezer@gmail.com.



1. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5976105/>
2. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5976105/>
3. <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/benefits-clean-school-buses#ESB-Benefits>
4. <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/inequitable-exposure-air-pollution-vehicles>
5. <https://www.wri.org/insights/where-electric-school-buses-us>
6. <https://www.nyserderda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Electric-School-Buses>

LARGE SCALE RENEWABLE ENERGY SITING

THEA JEZER, CHAIR CNNY GROUP

Renewable energy is no longer considered “alternative energy” More and more people are looking for sources like wind and solar to power their homes and businesses. The demand for clean energy is strong and growing. Although the cost for new renewable energy development is currently more than delivering dirty fossil fuel energy, it’s because the fossil fuel industry has an established infrastructure that was created at mass scale many years ago, partially through government subsidies. (1)

Now more and more people are seeking and demanding cost-effective clean energy, partially because we see the devastating effects of climate change and also rising costs. Although we do not know what the new administration will do to try to stop the will of the people as well as the health and well-being of our country, but presently there are still government incentives and programs which are helping subsidize clean energy. We need to take advantage of these incentives now!

We notice large-scale solar and wind farms popping up around our region. Large scale projects are preferred because they offer a significant way to combat climate change by producing clean, renewable energy at a large scale, with the ability to generate substantial electricity without emitting greenhouse gases, while also providing economic benefits like job creation and potential cost reductions for consumers, particularly when implemented in areas with optimal wind and solar conditions; making them a key component in transitioning to a cleaner energy grid.

Siting of these large-scale projects is extremely important. Siting refers to a series of decision-making processes and actions that determine the location and design of new wind, solar, or other clean energy generating facilities. Environmental advocates are concerned with the protection of, among other things, open space, trees, wetlands and endangered species. Some citizens are concerned that the impact on their properties, views and neighborhoods will be affected. That is why the siting process needs to be extensive but reasonable. (2)

The siting of large-scale land-based renewable energy projects on private property brings together a combination of stakeholders from local, state, federal, and Tribal governments, renewable energy developers, landowners, and other community members to consider how all factors will affect the outcomes of a given project. State and local officials work with stakeholders to consider a facility’s entire lifecycle, from permitting and approval to construction, operation, and eventual decommissioning of the project.

When it comes to siting, no two projects are the same. Locally there are several large-scale renewable projects our group is studying, mainly solar and wind. If you are interested in learning more about large scale renewable projects, Peter Plumley is our committee chair for the group and is presently working on large scale renewable energy projects in our region. He would welcome input from our members.

For further information or to get involved, contact Peter Plumley or rjezer@gmail.com.

1. <https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/corporations-bypass-politics-lead-clean-energy-2017>
2. <https://www.energy.gov/eere/siting-large-scale-renewable-energy-projects>

SIERRA CLUB ELECTION STATEMENTS

NOVEMBER 6, 2024

A Force Of Nature Defending Our Communities and Our Planet From Trump

Donald Trump has been declared the winner of the US presidential election. During Trump's first term, the Sierra Club played a critical role in defending against his administration's attacks on climate progress and clean air and water. The Sierra Club legal team filed more than 300 lawsuits against his administration, holding off the worst of his attempts to gut bedrock environmental protections, as well as watch-dogging Trump's political appointees and bringing to light their ties to polluting industries through FOIA requests and litigation. The Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign also continued to be successful in driving the transition from coal to clean energy in spite of Trump, retiring coal plants at an even faster pace than under the Obama administration.

Sierra Club Executive Director Ben Jealous released the following [statement](#):

"Donald Trump was a disaster for climate progress during his first term, and everything he's said and done since suggests he's eager to do even more damage this time. Trump has put profits over people time and again, prioritizing the bottom line of the Big Oil CEOs who bought and paid for his campaign above communities across the country who face the threat of pollution and the devastating impacts of the climate crisis, and seeking to keep us hooked on fossil fuels rather than investing in a clean energy economy. During Trump's first term, we fought relentlessly to defend against his administration's attacks on climate progress and clean air and water, and we are ready to fight again. We will challenge Trump's dangerous proposals in court, keep the pressure on banks and big corporations to clean up their act, and mobilize our 64 chapters and millions of members and volunteers nationwide to continue to make progress at the state and local levels.

This is a dark day, but despite this election result, momentum is on our side. The transition away from dirty fossil fuels to affordable clean energy is already underway. Trump can't change the reality that an overwhelming majority of Americans want more clean energy, not more fossil fuels. Through investments in the Inflation Reduction Act we are creating millions of new clean energy jobs. Clean energy is already cheaper in most cases than dirty fossil fuels, and wind and solar now generate more power in the US than coal.

When we come together, we are stronger than Donald Trump, and we will not let one climate denier in the White House erase all the progress we have made. Our movement is bigger, bolder, and more diverse than it's ever been. We will be a force of nature and use every tool at our disposal to defend our democracy and critical environmental protections, and continue to build toward the clean energy economy and future we need."

GOV. HOCHUL PUSHES NEW NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS.

CITIZENS SAY NO! BY DON HUGHES, CNNY GROUP CONSERVATION CHAIR

On Sept 5th 2024, NYSERDA, the New York State Energy Research & Development Agency, held a major energy summit in downtown Syracuse. Governor Hochul came to announce that the state was worried about meeting electrical demand while meeting the schedule in the state's Climate law (CLCPA). Her solution? Build new nuclear power plants using new designs. That same day, the state released its draft "Blueprint-for-Consideration-of-Advanced-Nuclear-Technologies," which was more like a term paper discussing the current state of nuclear technology, hardly a blueprint.

Environmental groups, led by Alliance for a Green Economy (AGREE), quickly mobilized in advance of the summit, crafted a letter to the governor requesting that she put aside consideration of nuclear, and instead focus on a rapid buildout of solar, wind and energy storage projects. Over 150 groups, including the Sierra Club, signed on to the letter. The Atlantic Chapter sent in detailed comments on the nuclear "blueprint" on November 8th . I contributed to those comments, posted [here](#).

Nuclear is anything but "clean." Sure, it doesn't emit planet-warming carbon dioxide once it's built, but construction of reactors has a large carbon footprint. And the nuclear fuel cycle is highly toxic. Uranium mining in the American Southwest has littered the land with piles of tailings (residues of processing the ore) and contaminated the groundwater, exposing local, especially Indigenous, communities to radioactivity and high cancer rates. **Continue on Page 4.**

Article: Gov. Hochul pushes New Nuclear Power Plants. Citizens say No! Continued from Page 3.

Nuclear energy creates highly radioactive waste which must be stored at the reactors since there's no permanent repository to put it in. And how do you ensure safe containment of something that emits deadly radiation for the next 200,000 years?

Proponents of nuclear are pushing a new nuclear design called "Small Modular Reactors" which are supposed to be cheaper and faster to build. Evidence has shown they are anything but. NuScale Power, an Idaho-based company which is promoting SMRs, had to cancel its project last year after costs ballooned from \$3 billion to \$9.3 billion and investors backed out. M.V. Ramana, Professor at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs at the University of British Columbia, predicted the collapse of this project in 2020. Earlier this year he wrote "the financial challenges and cost trends witnessed in [the NuScale project] will afflict any small modular nuclear reactor project. In a rational world, no utility or government would invest another dime on these theoretical reactor concepts."

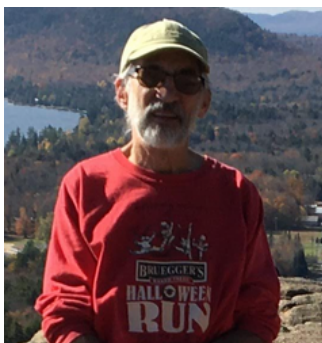
The high cost of nuclear is not just the opinion of a professor in western Canada. In April 2023, Lazard, a financial firm, [estimated](#) that the unsubsidized levelized cost of electricity from new nuclear plants in the U.S. will be between \$141 and \$221 per megawatt hour. In comparison, a newly constructed utility-scale solar facility, with battery storage to provide power after the sun sets, will produce power at an unsubsidized levelized cost of between \$46 and \$102 per megawatt hour. Recent nuclear projects in France (Flamanville 3) and the US (Vogtle units 3 & 4) have experienced both delays and huge cost overruns. The Georgia-based Vogtle reactors, when construction began in 2009, were originally estimated to cost \$14 billion, to be operational in 2017, but ended up costing \$35 billion, and seven years behind schedule.

In contrast, solar panels and batteries [have become cheaper and are expected to decline further](#).

Nuclear power has a history of accidents and near mishaps. The most recent major accident occurred at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, in 2011. Not only did three of the reactors experience meltdowns, but fuel stored on-site overheated leading to explosions and release of additional radioactivity. Daniel Ford described the incident in his 2022 New Yorker [article](#), "How Safe Are Nuclear Power Plants?"

The containment facilities at the Japanese plant, while not leak-tight, reduced the release of radioactive materials and provided enough time for more than a hundred thousand people to escape immediate harm from the fallout. On the other hand, more than a decade later, some thirty-five thousand people are unable to return to their homes, many of which have been contaminated with cesium-137, a long-lived radioactive substance that emits intense gamma radiation and raises the risk for cancer. Perhaps most alarmingly, the accident at Fukushima nearly caused a fire in a spent-fuel storage pool that was outside the [containment structures]. According to recent analyses by von Hippel and others, if that had happened, the release of radioactive material could have multiplied a hundredfold, potentially requiring the relocation of as much as a quarter of the Japanese population, depending on which way the winds were blowing.

Proponents of nuclear energy conjure up a vision of compact power plants that quietly churn out steady electricity while not emitting greenhouse gases. The reality is that it's an unaffordable, slow to build, and highly toxic process that has no place in a clean energy future.



Author of this article:
Don Hughes

JOIN THE CNNY GROUP!

To join the Sierra Club and CNNY Group, go to:
<https://www.sierraclub.org/> and click on Join.

When you join the Sierra Club, you will be a member of the group in your area.

FIND OUT MORE:

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