

Green with Energy

In September, Congress will decide whether or not to include green energy requirements in the deeply flawed energy bill it plans to pass. Known as a renewable portfolio standard (RPS), the proposed measure – which is already in the Senate version and will be negotiated with the House – would improve the bill by increasing the percentage of the nation's energy produced from renewable sources. The increase would continue until 2020 when 10 percent of the nation's electricity would come from sources such as wind, solar, hydro and biomass.

While environmentalists have concerns about the energy bill as a whole, many agree that a renewables requirement would be a move in the right direction. As renewable energy displaces fossil fuels, carbon dioxide emissions, the primary greenhouse gas responsible for global warming, would decrease along with emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide, responsible for acid rain and smog. Using renewable energy would help reduce foreign oil dependence and allow new technologies to take hold. Green energy requirements would help New York take advantage of its abundant wind, biomass, solar and hydro resources.

New York is already developing some renewable projects, which would grow if the federal requirement is passed. Three wind farms now operate in the state producing 48 megawatts of clean electricity, enough to power about 13,000 homes. New York's systems benefit charge fund will provide \$17 million in additional grants to develop five more wind farms, enough to power 50,000 homes.

The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that ultimately, about half the state's residential energy needs could be met using wind power and 31 percent could be produced from biomass. Between 1998 and 2000, over 500 acres of fast-growing willow trees were planted in western and central New York, part of a pilot project researching biomass commercialization for electric generation. Both the private sector and state agencies are working on photovoltaic technology. Some landfills and farms are burning methane, a by-product of waste decomposition, to produce electricity.

Environmentalists will be watching Congress develop energy policy this fall, paying close attention to issues of nuclear power, drilling in the Arctic and green power requirements. For more information on the green power aspects of the energy bill, or to send a fax to legislators expressing your opinion on renewable energy requirements, visit www.eany.org. *

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The Green Sheet
353 Hamilton Street
Albany, NY 12210
Phone: 518.462.5526
Fax: 518.427.0381
Email submissions to:
gsheet@eany.org

Managing Editor • Jeff Jones
Editor • Laura DiBetta

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to oppose threats to the
environment, to preserve natural
resources and human health, and
to fight for high drinking water
and air quality standards.

To Contact Elected Officials:

Governor George E. Pataki
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
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Albany, NY 12247
518.455.2800
www.senate.state.ny.us
New York State Assembly

Albany, NY 12248
518.455.4100
www.assembly.state.ny.us

On the Alert

■ **Island Dreams:** The Westchester County Board of Legislators is about to act on the future of Davids Island. Located just offshore from New Rochelle, the 78-acre island could soon become a public park, offering valuable open space, recreational opportunities, waterfront access and scenic views. The island lies just north of the Bronx in a populated area that is already over-developed and congested. Davids Island Park would also help protect water quality and wildlife in Long Island Sound. County Executive Andrew Spano has announced an agreement with Mayor Timothy Itoni of New Rochelle to acquire the island for \$6.5 million. The funds are to be bonded and repaid over 20 years. Visit www.eany.org to send a fax to Westchester County legislators urging their support for the preservation of Davids Island. Contact Edna Sussman, Federated Conservationists of Westchester County, at 914-422-4053 or email fcwc@law.pace.edu for more information.

■ **Promises to Keep:** In June 2001, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) decided to allow emergency electric generators, previously reserved for blackouts only, to operate without a permit during times of high electricity demand. As emergency generators, they are not required to meet emissions standards. Most are powered by diesel fuel oil and emit more than 100 times the nitrogen oxide (NOx) pollution produced by modern natural gas plants on a pounds per kilowatt-hour basis, and about 10 times the carbon monoxide and particulate pollution. Even worse, these generators are used on hot smoggy days when the air is already unhealthy. More than a year ago, DEC Commissioner Erin Crotty promised to establish emission standards for these generators (see <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/press/pressrel/2001-69.html>), but standards have yet to be even drafted. Contact Commissioner Crotty (625 Bdwy., Albany, NY 12233-1011; call 518 402-8540; fax 518-402-9016; email ecrotty@gw.dec.state.ny.us) to remind her that DEC must issue draft regulations. Contact Anne Reynolds, Environmental

Advocates of NY, at 518-462-5526 ext. 238
or areynolds@eany.org for more information.

■ **Square Peg:** The Village of Ossining has asked the NY Department of State (DOS) to approve an amendment to its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). This would quadruple permitted building heights from 2½ stories to 100 feet and triple density to 48 units per acre. It is intended to allow construction of the Harbor Square Project, a nine-story, 400-foot long building on a small 5.6-acre waterfront parcel. Inexplicably, the DOS has determined that these amendments are minor and, as a result, do not require a public hearing. The DOS decision may have far-reaching implications in other Hudson Valley riverfront communities, setting a precedent that allows the amendment of other community plans to suit developers' needs without considering public opinion. Write Sally F. Ball, Chief Bureau of Local and Regional Programs, NYS DOS, 41 State St., Albany, NY 12231-0001 or email coastal@dos.state.ny.us by September 16 indicating that the proposed amendments to the LWRP are not minor and should be subject to a public hearing. For more information, call Jeffrey Anzevino of Scenic Hudson, at 845-473-4440 ext. 221.

The Month Ahead



September

2: Labor Day Picnic & Songfest, sponsored by NYC Labor Chorus (NYCLC) and Hudson River Sloop Clearwater. Celebrate the unity between workers and environmentalists. Waryas Park, Poughkeepsie. 12:00PM-4:00PM. Call NYCLC at 212-595-6600 or 845-454-7673 ext. 102.

8: NYC Century Bike Tour 2002, sponsored by Transportation Alternatives. Features a selection of distances and magnificent views of NY's bridges, neighborhoods, and parks. Register online at www.transalt.org.

8: Tours of Organic, Ecological and Alternative Farms, sponsored by the Troy Waterfront Farmers' Market and the Regional Farm & Food Project. Visit farms in Rensselaer, Saratoga, Washington and Schoharie Counties. Also 9/29. Free. Call 518-427-6537.

10: Public hearing on the Besicorp-Empire Development Co.'s application for \$1.14 billion in tax-exempt bonds to build a recycled newsprint manufacturing facility and 550 MW cogeneration plant on the Hudson River at the Port of Rensselaer. Rensselaer City Hall, 505 Broadway. 7:00PM. Contact Eric Daille, Rensselaer County Greens, at 518-273-8970 or oredaille@nycap.rr.com.

15: *The World Tree*, a Paul Winter Celebration dedicated to the Northern Forest. Breeding Barn at Shelburne Farms, Shelburne, VT. 1:30PM. \$30; \$20 student/senior; \$5 children ages 5-14. Call 802-985-8442 for tickets.

18: *The Heat is On*, global warming lecture for adults and families by Ross Gelbspan, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist. Sponsored by Global Warming Action Network, Kids Against Pollution and the Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. Burnet Park, Rosamond Gifford Zoo, Syracuse. 7:00PM-8:30PM. \$5. Call 315-435-8511 ext. 130.

21: 16th Annual Coastal Cleanup, coordinated by the American Littoral Society. Collect and record the litter around your lake, river, bay, sound or ocean. Call Barbara Cohen at 718-471-2166, or visit: www.alsnyc.org.

21: Sterling Forest Partnership's 15th Annual Sterling Forest Conservation Day. Activities include hikes, naturalist led nature walks, origami for kids, BBQ lunch & live music. Sterling Forest State Park Info Center, 115 Old Forge Rd., Tuxedo, NY. 10:00AM-4:30PM. Rain or shine. \$10 for hikes (kids 16 & under free); \$10 for BBQ (\$5 kids 16 & under). Call Jeffrey Hunter at 845-258-4564.

21-22: Great Hudson Valley Ramble, a weekend trails festival featuring events in 10

counties sponsored by the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and the Hudson River Valley Greenway. Call High Land Flings, 800-453-6665 or 845-334-9574.

23: *New York City Shines*, a free seminar about steps to help buildings go solar sponsored by NY Shines. 9:00AM-11:30AM. Greenpoint Manufacturing and Design Center, 115 Manhattan Ave., Brooklyn. Powerlight Corp. Call Linda Anne Burtis at 518-439-3771.

29: *Ochs at the Oaks: Benefit Concert on The Sound*, sponsored by the New Dawn Foundation and the Hudson River Clearwater Foundation, features the music of Phil Ochs with special guests. The Oaks, 590 Davenport Ave., New Rochelle. 1:00PM-6:00PM. Call 914-632-8084. Visit www.theoaks.qpg.com. (See FYI.)

29: *Ecofest*, an environmental festival and conference sponsored by the West Side Cultural Center. Features eco-exhibits, solar and electric cars, workshops, music, food, and more. At the Promenade in Riverside Park from 83rd to 91st Streets, Manhattan. 11:00AM-6:00PM. Call 212-465-7215.

October

4-6: *Quality Communities*, the 2002 Conference on the Environment sponsored by the NYS Association of Environmental Management Councils and the NYS Association of Conservation Commissions. Email Lee Younge for registration information at lhy2@cornell.edu or 607-734-4453.

For Your Information



Hot Topic: Join local activists, environmental groups and faith community leaders for *Cool New York – A Global Warming Summit*, sponsored by Environmental Advocates of NY (EANY) and the National Council of Churches of Christ. Help plan how to reduce our impact on global climate change in local communities and through state policy, and exchange local organizing strategies to stop global warming. *Cool New York* will be held on November 20 in Albany. For more information and to register, contact Christine Vanderlan, EANY, at 518-462-5526 ext. 240 or cvanderlan@eany.org.

Sound of Music: Spend the afternoon of September 29 enjoying a festival of music at The Oaks, on Long Island Sound in New Rochelle. *Ochs at the Oaks: A Benefit Concert on The Sound*, sponsored by the New Dawn Foundation and the Hudson River Clearwater Foundation, will feature the music of Phil Ochs. The benefit will also include *A Taste of The Sound*, a pre-festival tasting provided by local restaurants and caterers. The Oaks is a place of renewal for those working for social change. Proceeds from the concert will benefit The Oaks' youth program and help build a dock for the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater in Long Island Sound. Visit www.theoaks.qpg.com, or call 914-632-8084. (See *Calendar*.)

Food for Thought: Join farmers, chefs, food enthusiasts, activists and educators for *A Growing Concern*, the Baum Forum's weekend of educational and culinary activities designed to inspire action and raise awareness about critical food and farming issues. The event, to be held October 5-6 in NYC, will feature nationally recognized speakers, exhibits, workshops, cooking demos and a tasting marketplace with delicious food and wine from sustainable, artisanal producers and regional family farmers. For more information and to register, contact Hilary Baum at 718-884-5716 or hilarybaum@baumforum.org, or visit: www.baumforum.org.

Knowledge is Power: *School Power...Naturally*, a new program from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, is offering 50 New York schools – public or private, grades 5-12 – the opportunity to receive a \$20,000 2kw solar electric system for just \$1500, and to be a clean energy role model for the rest of the community. Visit www.schoolpowernaturally.com for an application and details. The application deadline is October 11. Call Linda Anne Burtis, NY Shines, at 518-439-3771 for more information.

Activists' Corner

Theater of Action: Several years ago, a proposal in the Putnam County town of Southeast for a 14-screen, 2,650 seat theater complex brought together neighboring residents who objected to the size of the project and its potential impact on traffic, views and drinking water. Those neighbors joined forces to become Concerned Residents of Southeast (CRSE). By 1997, there were more than 500 members of this non-profit organization and CRSE was responding to issues and concerns of residents from all over Southeast.

CRSE continues today as a watchdog group for development in the town. Members are currently mobilized around a project known as The Meadows at Dean's Corners. CRSE is part of two lawsuits over the impacts of the project and the failure of the Planning Board to require proper environmental reviews or to hold a public hearing on the final subdivision plan.

For more information, email CRSE President Rick Feuerman at cgoodnightfound@aol.com.



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