Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York Summary Update February 18, 2024 to March 3, 2024

This is my fortnightly summary update of recent posts at Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York. I have been writing about the pragmatic balance of the risks and benefits of environmental initiatives in New York since 2017 with a recent emphasis on New York's Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act (Climate Act). This summary describes each of my recent posts with minimal technical jargon but includes links if you want to read the entire post. If you do not want to be on this mailing list then let me know. Previous updates and a pdf copy of the following information are also available.

PEAK Coalition Peaker Plant Disconnect

The Climate Act includes a strong environmental justice component, and the Hochul Administration is catering to this political constituency as much as possible. Sadly, their demands are not rooted in reality. The PEAK coalition has stated that "Fossil peaker plants in New York City are perhaps the most egregious energy-related example of what environmental injustice means today." I have written extensively about the analyses that the PEAK Coalition are using to claim environmental injustice which drives their pressure on the Administration. This post discusses their latest report: Accelerate Now! The Fossil Fuel End Game 2.0 . While I did not intend to write an exhaustive report, this turned into a very long post because I could not resist commenting on many of the points made.

There are disconnects between the findings of that report and the first webinar of this year's New York Cap-and-Invest (NYCI) Program stakeholder engagement process: The Role of Cap-and-Invest (slides and webinar video) and the material presented at the Department of Public Service Proceeding 15-E-0302 technical conference held on December 11 and 12, 2023 entitled Zero Emissions by 2040. The rationale that peaking power plants are responsible for all the health effects claimed by the Peak Coalition is contradicted by the DEC/NYSERDA analysis reported in the webinar. The reality is that other emission sources (transportation and buildings) are a much more likely source of the alleged air quality health effects. The PEAK report states that all the technology necessary to replace the peaking units is available which contradicts the webinar and PSC proceeding on Dispatchable Emissions-Free Resources (DEFR). Ultimately the problem is that this report does not recognize that until adequate DEFR technologies are available and deployed it would be inappropriate to retire any more of the peaking power plants.

It is very frustrating that the environmental justice advocates do not prioritize prevention of blackouts as much as the organizations responsible for reliability. The effects of an extended blackout are immediate, acute, and, in my opinion, a greater threat to disadvantaged communities than peaking power plants. The increasingly shrill demands that the peaking plants be shut down are based on flawed science and the threats to reliability of their closures are unacknowledged.

Hochul and Energy Affordability

On February 15, 2024 Governor Hochul announced $200 million in utility bill relief for 8 million New Yorkers. The press release quoted her as saying "Energy affordability continues to be a top priority in my clean energy agenda and this utility bill credit is just one of many actions New York is taking to reduce costs for our most vulnerable New Yorkers." I looked at some of the numbers and concluded that affordability is going to be affected going forward despite her promises.

The plan is to rebate $200 million in a one-time credit to 8 million directly metered electric and gas customers. I calculated the rebate as function of the number of households rather than metered customers. Using 7.5 million households as the state total and dividing by the $200 million rebate gives $26.67 per household.

Last year legislation mandated that auction funds from the NYCI program be allocated to the Consumer Climate Action Account (CCAA). Recent NYCI webinars claimed that the expected 2030 auction revenue is "estimated to be between $6 and $12 billion per year" so the CCAA should get between $3.3 and $1.5 billion in 2030. The following table lists expected CCAA rebates for four income categories. In the upper portion, I assumed that the rebates would be assigned for the two NYCI revenue categories ($6 to $12 billion). If the auction revenues are distributed only to low-income households with incomes less than $35K, then each household will get between $774 and $1547 per year. At the other end of the range where every household with incomes less than the 80th percentile gets an equal share then the CCAA rebate will be between $300 and $600. I think it is more equitable to focus benefits on the lower brackets. The lower table apportions the rebates so that the upper bracket gets 20% while the lower two brackets each get 40%. In this example, rebates range from $225 to $619 per year.

Consumer Climate Action Account

			Annual Rebate	
			($million)	($million)
			6,000	12,000
	Households	Percent	Rebate	Rebate
No Benefits - Top 20%	7,549,705	20%	$ -	$ -
Upper-Middle $75K to 20%	6,000,000	21.31%	$ 300	$ 600
Mid-Income $35K to $75K	4,401,750	27.67%	$ 409	$ 818
Low-Income $35K	2,326,500	31.02%	$ 774	$ 1,547

Graduated Distribution

			Annual Rebate	
			($million)	($million)
Upper-Middle $75K to 20%		20%	360	720
Mid-Income $35K to $75K		40%	720	1,440
Low-Income $35K		40%	720	1,440
	Households	Percent	Rebate	Rebate
No Benefits - Top 20%	1,549,705	20%	$ -	$ -
Upper-Middle $75K to 20%	1,598,250	21%	$ 225	$ 450
Mid-Income $35K to $75K	2,075,250	28%	$ 347	$ 694
Low-Income $35K	2,326,500	31%	$ 309	$ 619

The Hochul Administration has never admitted how much households can expect to pay to implement the Climate Act net-zero transition plan. The plan is to electrify as much energy use as possible. That means we will be required to electrify home heating, cooking, and hot water as well as moving to electric vehicles. Recent electric rate cases have included double digit increases needed so support some of the infrastructure needed for the Climate Act transition. I have no doubt that the costs of the transition for households will far exceed these rebates. It is time to demand a full, transparent accounting of the costs of the transition.

Response to Propaganda

I published a couple of articles describing responses to Basil Seggos, co-chair of the Climate Act's Climate Action Council, comments supporting the net-zero transition.

Two Views of the Climate Act Energy Plan

Dennis Higgins let me publish his status analysis of the transmission system components of the Climate Act net-zero transition that was published in AllOtsego. I compared that to a puff piece claiming all is well by Basil Seggos that provides the State's story.

Seggos described a few of the latest "sweeping actions" that will save us from the latest extreme weather event. As far as I can tell the only way for the State to meet the Climate Act targets is magical game-changing technology. I do not see anything in the projects he described that makes me think that these programs are game changers. Another component of the narrative is to never discuss the status of the transition and the component programs. The question whether the existing programs are having any sort of an effect are not mentioned and no issues associated with recently proposed programs are ever addressed.

Dennis Higgins's article Flawed Energy Plan Moves Forward in AllOtsego takes a critical look at one new effort associated with transmission development. He explains:

> Legislation proposed in Albany would create "RAPID," a new department in the Office of Renewable Energy Siting to accelerate transmission buildout. Per megawatt-hour—amount of energy moved—those new lines will be very expensive. We must build full nameplate transmission for wind, which has a capacity factor under 25 percent. Solar has a capacity factor of under 14 percent: Although full capacity generation might occur mid-day in summer, much of the rest of the time solar yields little or no energy. Transmission for hundreds of solar and wind resources represents a lot of expensive wire to buy and install and maintain; wire which will need to be run across private land; wire that mostly will move nothing at all.
>
> With each of New York's staggering missteps in decarbonization efforts, we reflect on the mess we're in. ORES itself has stalled out in efforts to site intermittent resources. Solar and wind builders cancelled contracts late last year when the state would not simply award them more money. They are rebidding, and the state will make new, more expensive, awards. Upstate communities are pushing back at the state's efforts to locate solar and wind projects where local laws say "no" to industrial development.

Dennis Higgins goes on to describes numerous issues with the transition and relates them to the fundamentally flawed Jacobsen/Howarth transition plan. The fact is that if New York State is serious about de-carbonizing the electric grid then nuclear power must be part of the solution. Dennis advocates for that position but to little avail. He also noted that his piece was incomplete: "The mess is so big you can't say it all -- fiscally irresponsible/unsound engineering and, already failed where it's been tried." He noted that he did not have the space to make the point that RAPID will give developers authority to use eminent domain for transmission. He suggested that this is something we all need to push back on with local and state elected representatives.

Capital Tonight – Seggos on the Climate Transition

In the second article I commented on a Susan Arbetter February 12 interview with Basil Seggos on the climate transition. I addressed the political slogan "the cost of the doing nothing on climate will far outweigh the cost of a climate transition" that was included and is repeated as often as possible by representatives of the Hochul Administration. It is a deeply flawed argument for multiple reasons that I explained in the article.

Seggos also claimed that people are already paying for the impacts of climate change. He said "We spent $36 billion to recover from Superstorm Sandy" implying that climate change was responsible for those costs. I explained climate is what you expect, weather is what you get, so individual unusual weather events are not related to climate change. I referenced work by Roger Pielke, Jr. that shows that nothing conclusive can be proven regarding disaster loss costs and climate change and another of his reports that explained that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says about Atlantic hurricane activity that should be changing if Seggos claim that Superstorm Sandy was proof of climate change. It says exactly:

> "[T]here is still no consensus on the relative magnitude of human and natural influences on past changes in Atlantic hurricane activity, and particularly on which factor has dominated the observed increase (Ting et al., 2015) and it remains uncertain whether past changes in Atlantic TC activity are outside the range of natural variability."

Seggos claimed that the climate transition will be 'the toughest thing we ever do'. I think it might be the worst thing we ever do. The Climate Act transition plan is poorly documented, results are obfuscated, and there are no transparent cost estimates. Add the risks to reliability and environmental impacts to the cost issues I firmly believe that this is poor policy.

Long Island Power Plans

Mark Sertoff, a science/technology educator, allowed me to publish this comments on the Long Island Power Authority's (LIPA) Integrated Resource Plan "where they want to replace fossil generation with mythical wind, battery and solar power." He points out that:

> LIPA's plunge into wind and solar power replacing reliable, cost-effective, clean fossil generation is the path to energy disaster. Through decades of solid engineering and execution, Long Island has developed the most reliable and economical above ground power distribution system in New York State. The defective initiative to wind and solar generation will leave Long Island with seriously unreliable and costly power.

Articles of Note February 18, 2024

This is a listing of articles that might be of interest to my readers. A video on Temperature Trend Manipulation and a post describe how the temperature records are being manipulated to "prove" there is a relationship between temperature and CO2.

I linked to three articles related to the court decision making Mark Steyn and Rand Simberg "liable for defamatory speech and reckless disregard of provable facts" for their comments about Michael Mann. The first notes:

> The precedent set today, and as alluded to by Justice Alito when the case was petitioned before the U.S. Supreme Court, means that disagreement and/or criticism of a matter of public policy — the founding principle of this country — is now in doubt. And should you choose to give voice to any dissent, you can be brought before a jury, held responsible, and fined.

I recommend Judith Curry's two articles on the science behind the claims and Dr. Mann's behavior towards her. In short, his science deserved ridicule and the man has no ethics.

The net-zero transition is falling apart.

- Electrify Everything Slammed by Court A court ruled against the city of Berkeley's ban on natural gas stoves and other appliances
- Ford Lost $4.7B On EVs Last Year, Or About $64,731 For Every EV It Sold – How is this EV transition supposed to work out?
- EV transition is coming undone Jo Nova note that sales of EVs are slowing down
- Energy Transition Status Francis Menton at the Manhattan Contrarian updates news on how the supposed energy transition is going.

Natural Gas Is the Indispensable Resource Tom Shepstone notes that the American Gas Association has put up a nice web page illustrating the numerous reasons why "natural gas has quickly become the indispensable energy source for America's energy system."

Ontario Generation Costs

Parker Gallant summarizes what each generation source actually cost Ontario ratepayers/taxpayers to see if the claims that wind and solar are cheap are true. He found:

2023 Cost by Generation Source in Ontario

Generation	Energy (GWh)	Cost $ Millions	Cost per kWh (Cents)
Nuclear	78,765	$ 8,070	10.2
Hydro	37,889	$ 2,396	6.3
Natural Gas	20,630	$ 2,041	9.9
Wind	13,810	$ 1,914	13.8
Solar	3,784	$ 1,671	44.1
Biofuel	1,103	$ 213	19.3