Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York Summary Update March 17, 2024 to March 31, 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.

New York Climate Plan Needs Publicly Funded Spin Doctor

This article describes Ken Girardin story about New York's latest attempt to shore up public support for the Climate Act In brief, the New York State Energy Research and Development Agency (NYSERDA) are hiring a public relations outfit, using $500,000 per year of public money, to "maintain a positive narrative" and "respond to negative viewpoints" about the state's Climate Act.

The request for the proposal lists topics they should be able to "immediately address emerging unforeseen events that draw media scrutiny". Those topics include concerns about affordability; "Concerns related to the cost and practicality of supporting building decarbonization, the implementation of codes for same and a phase out of fossil fuels in new construction;" "Concerns related to transitioning cars, trucks, and SUVs sold in New York to zero emissions, and requiring all school buses in operation in the state to be zero-emission by 2035;" "Challenges with the lithium-ion batteries and the scale up of stationary battery storage systems, as well as related fires, safety issues, and the work of the associated working groups;" and "[A]ddressing the headwinds" related to the state's large-scale renewable energy projects (and presumably NYSERDA's decision to let offshore wind developers extort an extra $8 billion or so out of state electricity customers last month).

I think this is troubling because NYSERDA has not provided sufficient information on these topics to describe the potential Climate Act effects on New Yorkers. One of my biggest problems with the state's implementation plan is the failure to acknowledge the misleading cost-benefit descriptions. Girardin shares my concern:

> NYSERDA deserves extra skepticism because the state has gone to great lengths to keep people in the dark about the Climate Act. Legally required cost estimates for Climate Act programs were never released and the revised State Energy Plan, which would show where costs are headed, is several years overdue. NYSERDA spent a year in court fighting to block the release of a Cuomo-era study which appeared to raise doubts about the costs and feasibility of the state's climate agenda.

In my opinion, all the highlighted topics are important. Instead of providing the public with sufficient information it now appears that they want to hide the potential impacts. You can only hide the impacts to the state of a complete transformation of the energy system for so long. Girardin points out that NYSERDA posted the RFP two weeks after a report from the Empire Center showed "how state officials had violated the law, misrepresented Climate Act costs and made fanciful assumptions about how the

electric grid would function in 2030." From the beginning this law has more about politics than the environment. This action suggests that now we are faced with a political coverup to hide reality.

NYSERDA Solar Quiz Misinformation

Shortly after the news that the state thinks they need to spin stories rather than report facts an example surfaced of the likely result of that effort – NYSERDA's Think You Know Solar – Take the Solar Quiz. This article went through the questions in the quiz and pointed out that the answers were misleading and biased towards the political narrative.

For example, consider the first quiz question:

> Q: Do solar panels work on cloudy days?
> A: Yes!
> Because the panels collect light, they still function on cloudy days even though efficiency is somewhat reduced.

"Somewhat reduced"? A negligible amount or a lot? I used information from the NYS Mesonet Buffalo meteorological station to estimate solar variability during worst case condition s– cloudy and snow covered . This site is notable because it is surrounded by solar panels.

On March 23, 2024 14:15:28 UTC or 10:15:28 EDT I have to believe that these solar panels are not working well. The solar insolation data from the meteorological system did show that solar insolation did not go to zero, it appeared to be cut in half. Of course, with snow on the panels it has to be worse.

I guess the point they tried to make in the quiz is that even on a cloudy day there is some solar power available. However, when evaluating the viability of solar in New York "Somewhat reduced" is

insufficient information. The unfortunate reality is that NYSERDA has never provided documentation that demonstrates the feasibility of solar providing electric energy on the days we need it most. Instead, NYSERDA wants to hide issues with a public relations campaign.

Which Power Source is Best March 27, 2024
Bud's Offshore Energy blog highlighted a new national energy report card that illustrates what power sources would be best when environmental impacts are not the only selection criteria. According to the Mackinac Center press release the report ranks energy sources by ranking eight key energy resource types "based on their ability to meet growing demand for affordable, reliable, and clean energy generation". The report concludes that "natural gas and nuclear power lead the rest of the class in generating clean and affordable energy".

The report card, ranked by the final grades, puts natural gas and nuclear at the top of the class.

Report Card Ranked by Grades						
Energy Source	**Capacity Reliability**	**Environmental/ Human Impact**	**Cost**	**Technology/ Innovation**	**Market Feasibility**	**Final Grade**
Natural gas	9	9	10	10	9	A
Nuclear	10	10	7	10	7	B+
Coal	8	7	9	9	7	B-
Hydroelectric	10	8	8	8	6	B-
Geothermal	6	9	5	8	5	D+
Petroleum	6	7	8	8	6	C-
Wind	5	6	5	6	6	F
Solar	5	5	5	8	6	F

Natural gas tops the energy sectors because it not only provides electric energy but also provides the ancillary support services necessary for the transmission system at a relatively low cost. There are environmental impacts but when the selection criteria do not require zero emissions then this source was ranked highest. Nuclear provides the same reliability services and would undoubtedly be the highest rated were it not for high development costs and market feasibility issues.

Wind and solar receive failing grades for similar reasons. When they are compared to the capability of the other energy sources to provide sufficient energy to meet demand the need for energy storage and supporting ancillary services, they are appropriately ranked lowest. Even though they are zero-emissions resources there are "numerous other grid reliability, environmental, economic (or cost), and social issues associated with its use that are often overlooked". The Climate Act explicitly mandates that every conceivable impact associated with fossil fuels are considered but does not require consideration of these issues. When human rights impacts are included, they should be rated lower than the other sources. Wind and solar are only relatively cheaper if the costs to provide reliable energy and transmission system ancillary services are ignored. I think this ranking correctly scores this category. The technology/innovation category recognized that there are limited opportunities to improve the energy output. The market feasibility scoring considered "whether the energy source relies on free-market forces to supply energy to the public." I do not believe that wind and solar could survive without massive subsidies so believe this scoring is appropriate.

In reference to wind and solar the conclusions to the report notes that "rushing a systemwide transition to these untested and unreliable energy options puts human lives and the North American economy at risk" is a particular concern for New York. Our electric system has unique features that are incompatible with intermittent sources of power except at extraordinary costs for backup resources during worst case conditions.

Cherry Picking

I recently watched two videos related to climate change. In Climate the Movie: The Cold Truth there is a very good description of historical temperatures and CO2 trends. In a Debate on Climate Alarmism Dr. Jordan Peterson and Steven Bonnell II also addressed the link between temperature and CO2. This article explains why Bonnell's rationale that we must reduce CO2 emissions to avert catastrophe includes an example of cherry picking "when people choose data that supports their position and "ignore evidence that they dislike".

The basic tenet of anthropogenic global warming believers like Beaton is that the correlation between CO2 and global warming evident since 1976 proves that CO2 is the control knob for climate. Simple analysis shows that there is no correlation between 1850 and 1976 and there was a similar period of warming from 1910 to 1944 so that claim cannot be true.

The issue of no consistent scientific theory describes the unfortunate fact that we do not understand natural climate variability. The warming since 1850 has been inconsistent and must include significant natural inputs but there is no agreement about those effects. Until we understand natural drivers, I cannot see any reason to place any faith in projections of climate out for hundreds of years.

Finally, the claim that deniers cherry pick data is ripe (sorry I could not resist the pun) for comment. Bonnell simply repeats the mantra that since 1850 temperatures have gone up and GHG emissions have gone up so there must be a link. I showed that to make that argument he had to cherry pick the data to support the claim.

Articles of Note

This is a summary of articles that I think would be of interest to my readers.

Podcast/Videos

- I highly recommend watching this video "Climate the Movie".
- Reality Check radio interviewed me on the folly of a net-zero transition.
- Heat waves "Dousing The Hot Hype" refutes claims heat waves are getting worse
- Alex Epstein notes that the world faces a serious crisis—a man-made crisis created by climate change policies.

Climate Act

This is a very nice letter to the editor arguing that the Climate Act should not be rushed.

Dennis Higgins comments on the State's proposed public relations campaign asking I"Will the public fall for NYSERDA's efforts to put lipstick on this pig?"

One usually overlooked feature of the Climate Act is the requirement to try to minimize impacts to disadvantaged communities. The Climate Act requires the State "to invest or direct resources in a manner designed to ensure that disadvantaged communities receive at least 35 percent, with the goal of at least 40 percent, of overall benefits of spending." Essentially that means that everybody else will be subsidizing that constituency. Potentially that could lead to something like a California electric rate structure initiative or here to "charge people based on their income rather than what they actually just use."

In New York there is tremendous pressure to shut down existing natural gas fired power plants and the mere suggestion of building a new facility brings howls of outrage. In Europe 72 GW of gas plants are being built as nations realize the cannot power an electric grid on solar and wind alone.

One of the greatest misleading claims for the transition to wind and solar is that it will be more resilient. I don't agree with that because they are relatively fragile sources of power. I feat that when New York becomes reliant on offshore wind that a hurricane will eventually damage those facilities. In Texas theory and reality collided as a hail storm caused major damage at a 3,300 acre 350 MW solar project. There are fears of toxic pollution too.

The failure of New York to acknowledge the problems observed in Europe can only mean that the state will have the same problems. The German energy transition threatens to be an unaffordable, unrealizable disaster, according to the government's own independent auditors

State of the Climate

Although it gets into the weeds an article by Javier Vinós at Climate Etc. notes that "Beginning in June 2023, the last seven months of the year marked the warmest period on record, significantly exceeding previous records." The article describes the natural climate drivers that are likely the reason for the record. The existential threat narrative depends on CO2 being the control knob for climate so this is inconvenient.

A new report published by the Global Warming Policy Foundation challenges the popular but mistaken belief that weather extremes – such as flooding, droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes and wildfires – are more common and more intense today because of climate change.

End Game

Ronald Stein argues that "renewables will destroy America's lifestyle back to the pre-1800s".

At the same time, World Health Organization "Special Envoy for Climate Change & Health" Vanessa Kerry, daughter of multi-millionaire John Kerry, says: "We must accept that there is no other way forward than to phase out our reliance on fossil fuels". My comment to her: you go first and get back to me when your carbon footprint is lower than mine.

Emissions in China

China's energy sector CO2 emissions increased 5.2% in 2023. Based on the following figure I estimate that the average increase in emissions over the 2020 to 2023 time frame was 404.548 million tons from the energy sector. Total New York GHG emissions for all greenhouse gases and all sectors in 2021 was 268.302. Anything we do in New York will be subsumed by Chinese energy sector emission increases in less than a year.