Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York Summary Update April 29, 2024 to May 12, 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.

Separating NRDC "Facts" From Fiction Reality Check

I have been through articles on complicated topics and have not been responding to many items that I see but the lead to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) blog post Separating Fact from Fiction: Setting the Record Straight on New York's Climate Law states "Don't be fooled by the fossil-fueled campaigns to delay climate progress piqued my interest.. It is a great example of the drivel used to support the existential threat narrative and I could have address any of the arguments that refute four claims allegedly pushed by fossil fuel industry, but I settled on one.

The blog post refuted the claim that the Climate Act "will reduce the reliability of energy delivered to homes and businesses." The response to that claim states:

> The framework outlined by the CLCPA-mandated Scoping Plan provides pathways for a planned and orderly transition to a clean, resilient energy future. The idea of a regenerative rather than an extractive economy strikes fear in the fossil fuel industry, which has been making record profits from recent price fluctuations and market volatility; in reality, reliability failures are often due to fossil-fueled superstorms and the historical lack of investment in our nation's aging infrastructure. By contrast, homegrown renewable energy can and will be more resilient, more plentiful, and more cost-effective than finite oil and gas resources.

I noted that the narrative that claims there are no issues for a planned and orderly transition depends on the idea that no new technology is needed. Given that the Public Service Commission held a technical conference last December to address the need for a new resource that can be dispatched when needed, is firmly available, and has no emissions to address the gap during periods of extended low wind and solar resource availability. Given the myriad technical issues that must be overcome to provide electricity from wind and solar when it is needed most, I think the most prudent course of action would be a demonstration project because the transition to the energy system mandated by the Climate Act would be unprecedented.

The final sentence got my attention: "By contrast, homegrown renewable energy can and will be more resilient, more plentiful, and more cost-effective than finite oil and gas resources." I wondered how the author managed to claim that extreme weather will have more of an effect on today's generators in weather-proof generation buildings than the exposed wind turbines and solar panels. The reference provided claimed that Babcock Ranch, a Florida "solar town", came out of Hurricane Ian "almost unscathed and notes that one resident says they survived 'by design.

The reality is that there are two resiliency features that matter: Babcock Ranch was built 30 feet above sea level and all power lines are buried underground to keep them safe from strong winds. New York's

net zero transition does not include buried power lines. The Babcock Ranch website refutes the claim that "homegrown renewable energy can and will be more resilient":

> Electric power always flows from the nearest generation, so during the day the town will use energy from the FPL Babcock Ranch Solar Energy Center. When the sun goes down and the solar plant is not generating energy, Babcock Ranch will pull electricity off the grid from the closest FPL natural-gas power plant.

This fact check cherry picked one anecdotal reference to resiliency by design that is incompatible with the Climate Act plan. As is typical, whenever someone is screaming about misinformation it usually means that they are guilty of that charge. I only wish that they could be held accountable when reality slaps their aspirational net-zero transition dreams back to earth.

"Powerless in the storm" Climate Industry Misdirection
A version of this post appeared at Watts Up With That

I came across a paper that concludes "The US power grid is proven to be highly reliable in general; however, the resilient and reliable grid operation is increasingly challenged by severe weather events–events that are increasing in frequency and magnitude due to climate change." This paper is a sad example of the current state of the supposed high standards of peer review.

The focus of the paper was on the statement that extreme weather events are "increasing in frequency and magnitude due to climate change." The only reference provided to support increasing frequency of storms, wildfires, heatwaves, and floods was to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) summary report. The CO2 Coalition published a paper prepared by Richard Lindzen, William Happer, Steven Koonin on April 16, 2024 titled Fossil Fuels and Greenhouse Gases Climate Science**.** Those authors documented what the IPCC technical reports actually said about those examples. In every instance there is no support for increasing frequency.

Apparently, it is sufficient to just note that any weather-related effect is threatened by climate change and peer review will accept the claim. The paper is worse because if I had time, I would have compared their results to analysis using different data. My impression is the authors had pre-conceived conclusions in mind and tortured their data to get the results they wanted.

EVs: The Reckoning Begins – This post was published at Watts Up With That only
Irina Slav on energy Substack published a recent article, "Post Ridiculous", that argues that fuel taxes are the primary source of revenue to maintain roads and that will go away when EVs predominate. Solving that means higher EV costs will have to be increased.

She points out that the only way to get people to buy electric vehicles is to subsidize them but subsidizing them leads to tax losses elsewhere. Slav concludes:

> *For the umpteenth time, then, we have our dear Western governments try to have their transition cake and eat it, too, and not gain a single ounce of extra weight. They wanted combustion engine cars out but forgot that these cars bring in billions in tax income. They wanted a fully electrified transport but forgot it wouldn't bring in money unless they make it more expensive. They wanted a revolution but forgot rule #1 for revolutions: the successful ones never start from the top. They start from the bottom.*

In my opinion that characterizes just about all the net-zero energy transition initiatives.

Facebook Post that Gets It

Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York Principle 6 is Roger Pielke Jr's: Iron Law of Climate: "While people are often willing to pay some price for achieving climate objectives, that willingness has its limits." A recent Facebook comment to a National Grid Facebook social media campaign post provides a perfect example related to New York's Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act (Climate Act). The Facebook post said:

[redacted]

I'm all for being environmentally conscious, and we do our best here in our old house. However, I will be replacing my 40 year old gas boiler with another this week good old cast iron, solid as a rock technology. I thought about going to a high efficiency unit, but guess what....NG no longer offers incentives to do so. They are committing to geo and heat pump. I investigated those. Even talked to the owner of a company innovating ground source heat pumps for older homes. Unfortunately none could provide the capacity nor respect the historic house without costing tens of thousands even after incentives. I'm willing to be environmentally thoughtful, but my wallet has limits.

The Iron Law can be described as wallets have limits. Beyond the simple cost impacts there is another concern. The National Grid Upstate New York Residential Gas Heating program is paused and not accepting rebate applications. National Grid is forgoing efficiencies now to encourage adoption of cold-climate heat pumps. This is disservice to National Grid ratepayers because it does not acknowledge that the State's Scoping Plan to implement the Climate Act notes that not all homes will be able to electrify home heating safely and affordably.

Catering to the Environmental Community

I could not make the following into a blog article because I did not have the link to the article in Politico. The quotation was sent by a colleague and stated:

> POLITICO – HOCHUL DINES ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERS: Gov. Kathy Hochul took the pulse of New York's environmental community on issues ranging from implementation of the state's climate law to efforts to address coastal resiliency in an informal setting last week. Attendees were generally pleased to get a chance to share their priorities with the governor and her staff, and they were complimentary of the effort to bring them together. "It was just a more substantive conversation than you normally get to have," said Adrienne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment. Esposito was among the 30 outside, non-administration attendees as Hochul hosted representatives of key environmental groups along with the heads of several agencies and authorities for dinner on April 29 at the Executive Mansion. Key executive chamber staff John O'Leary, deputy secretary for energy and environment and Ashley Dougherty, assistant secretary for environment, were also present. The heads of seven energy and environmental authorities and agencies, plus the director of the Office of Renewable Energy Siting, were in attendance: NYPA, LIPA, NYSERDA, DEC, PSC, Park and the EFC. "The governor was very present and really spoke with passion about her commitment to the environment, and it was really quite inspirational," said Ned Sullivan, president of Scenic Hudson. "The administration was clear that … adaptation and resilience are part of management of state parks and are living laboratories for implementation of good sound land management practices that will be consistent with climate change." Hochul and her officials solicited input on the rollout of the cap-and-invest program, which is poised to increase fossil fuel costs for consumers with a portion offset by a rebate and proceeds invested in the transition to clean energy. "I think it's important that the governor took the time to bring a number of environmental leaders together," said New York League of Conservation Voters president and CEO Julie Tighe. "We weren't being called in to be yelled at, which was how it would often happen in previous administrations." One suggestion raised by some attendees was for Hochul to designate a "climate czar" to focus on the implementation of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, which is nearing its five-year anniversary. "We have to understand that this isn't just the role of DEC or NYSERDA, that there are elements across all of these agencies," said Peggy Shepard, co-founder and executive director of WE ACT for Environmental Justice. "If there's nobody there to teach old dogs new tricks, who's holding the hands of these agencies to get the implementation right?" — Marie J. French

A couple of thoughts. Obviously the Hochul Administration is catering to New York's environmental community but, in my opinion, they will never be happy if any aspect of their aspirational agenda is not included. The other thought is the arrogance of these activists. The highlighted section made me think that sometimes the old dogs know enough physics to call out the new trick as a magical illusion that will never work.

Articles of Note May 12, 2024

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

Videos

- The Heart of Climate Deception Temperature. Good summary of the issues related to global temperature measurements
- Roger Pielke, Jr. on the best kept secret of climate science

- Mapping Offshore Wind Projects And Critically Endangered Whales Robert Bryce produced a four-minute video that clearly shows:

> The Biden administration has approved a slew of projects that could result in hundreds of offshore wind turbines being placed right in the middle of the North Atlantic Right Whale's habitat. As you likely know, the North Atlantic Right Whale (Eubalaena glacialis) is one of the world's most endangered whales. Only about 360 individuals are left. So why are so few climate NGOs speaking out against the industrialization of our oceans and the danger that offshore wind poses to the whale?

The Climate Industry's Misdirection Campaign

Jessica Weinkle has written a highly recommended description how institutions are being delegitimized in the name of climate catastrophism. She concludes:

> Dark money may or may not be a problem the public wants to address. Concerning however is the extent to which the sprawling empire of the multifaceted climate industry has managed to discredit critique of its methods. Those who do are dubbed obstructionists, and in no insignificant part by the billionaires moving money around in opaque ways.
>
> Policymakers unwilling to acknowledge this dynamic are also turning their back on genuine problems in scientific integrity, misleading policy, courts, public health research, and threatening food security and development. The public is left with a sea of technocratic propaganda and limited ways to engage because the expertise barrier is too high.

Climate Change Reality

The CO2 Coalition published a paper prepared by Richard Lindzen, William Happer, Steven Koonin on April 16, 2024 titled Fossil Fuels and Greenhouse Gases Climate Science that is an excellent summary of reasons why there is no climate crisis.

Judith Curry gave a great presentation Climate Uncertainty and Risk to the Global Warming Policy Foundation. Video of the presentation [here]. Powerpoint slides can be downloaded here [GWPF uncert & risk (2)]. She concludes that:

> Once you separate energy policy from climate policy, the way forward for energy policy is fairly straightforward. A more pragmatic approach to dealing with climate change drops the timelines and emissions targets, in favor of accelerating energy innovation. The goal is abundant, secure, reliable, cheap & clean energy.

Social Cost of Carbon

The Social Cost of Carbon (SCC) is a contrived parameter used to justify policies that are designed to eliminate fossil fuels. It is a difficult parameter to describe and show how it is used. Jonathan Lesser from the National Center for Energy Analytics wrote an excellent article that describes it well.