**Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York Summary Update – March 24 to April 6, 2025**

This is a summary update of posts at Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York over the last two weeks. 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 and 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. A pdf copy of the following information and previous summaries are also available. The opinions expressed in these articles do not reflect the position of any of my previous employers or any other organization I have been associated with, these comments are mine alone.

I added a couple of more links in my Reasons to Pause the Climate Act page.

JP Morgan Energy Study and the Climate Act

Energy Bad Boys Isaac Orr and Mitch Rolling describe nine takeaways in the JP Morgan Chase 15th Annual Energy Paper that provide more reasons why the New York net-zero transition should be paused. Those reasons include: wind and solar prices continue to rise, even though battery prices are dropping they still are much too expensive, transmission development is slower than needed, it is increasingly obvious that wind and solar do not replace reliable energy, nearby regional transmission operator MISO is in a high risk reliability crisis, data center developers are turning to fossil fuels, nuclear and hydro instead of renewables, electrification targets are impeded by higher prices, the European test case shows that green energy leads to deindustrialization, and the reality of green hydrogen has derailed that aspirational technology.

There is No Existential Threat from Climate Change

Anthony Watts has summed up my problems with claims that climate change is an existential threat in a post entitled "Is Climate Change Real? Short Answer: Yes — But It's Complicated." My post reproduced his article with annotations relevant to New York. It is an excellent summary of the reasons why there is no existential climate threat from human GHG emissions. There is no reason not to pause the Climate Act because of an imminent threat.

Watts explains that there is no controversy whether climate change is real but that: "The **debate** isn't about whether it changes, but **why**, **how fast**, and **how much humans are influencing it today"** (his highlights). He describes the consensus narrative and the weaknesses that are ignored. He makes the important point that we do not understand natural variability which is demonstrably on the same order of magnitude of the alleged warming caused by humans. He explains why the popular description of CO2 impacts is incorrect. I fully agree with his conclusions:

> Yes, the climate is changing. It always has. The idea that global climate must be unchanging is simply wrongheaded. The real issue is **how much of today's change is due to human activity, how reliable our predictions are, and whether proposed policy responses are justified** — or likely to do more harm than good.

> At Watts Up With That, we've been pointing out for years that this issue is riddled with **confirmation bias, model overconfidence, and selective reporting**. There is no justification for shutting down economies or reshaping civilization based on the **incomplete science of climate change**.

Throw in the fact that New York emissions are less than half a percent of global emissions and that global emissions have been increasing by more than half a percent for decades, then there is no reason we should not pause Climate Act implementation to make sure we are not doing more harm than good.

Upstate New York Air Source Heat Pump Experience

"Green energy" advocates continue to lobby for the NY HEAT Act that would end "New York's gas mandate and forced ratepayer subsidies for gas expansion". Constantine Kontogiannis has calculated the costs of heat pumps Upstate that complements an earlier analysis by Richard Ellenbogen for Downstate. Like Ellenbogen, Kontogiannis has the ability to use his natural gas furnace instead of his new ducted heat pumps. He found that if had used his heat pumps with the current winter electric rate of $0.214/kWh his seasonal heating bill would have been $1,749. That's more than double his $817 natural gas bill this winter, 114% more to be exact.

The five-year estimate (2017-2021) of space heating totals of occupied housing units in New York shows that there are 7,530,150 housing units and 59.6% or 4,489,695 of them use utility gas for space heating. The two analyses that compared heat pump costs show that natural gas heating is cheaper. Kontogiannis estimates that at least 30,000 heat pumps installed through this NYSERDA program have replaced natural gas. He notes that according to the 2022 summary report, "very few of the installations include the decommissioning of the previous heating system". As a result, we are skeptical of any carbon savings claims. The bottom line is that the Climate Act will make home heat more costly for more than half of the state, but I have not seen any advocate admitting that fact.

Assemblyman Stirpe and New York Cap and Invest

In a recent letter to the editor of the Syracuse Post Standard, Cicero Assemblyman Al Stirpe Jr. and Ethan Gormley from Citizen Action of New York, argued that Governor Hochul should "get moving on cap and invest." I have written about many articles about the New York Cap and Invest (NYCI) Program and other similar proposals. This article quotes the letter, includes a response letter that was not published, and explains why I think that NYCI is a magical solution that is no more than a regressive tax on energy that will do more harm than good.

A DEC and NYSERDA analysis estimated revenue NYCI would have been between $3 and $5.1 billion in 2025 if it had not been delayed. That would have increased gasoline between $0.13 and $0.22 a gallon, natural gas between $0.12 and $0.19 per thousand cubic feet, home heating oil between $0.62 and $1.02, and propane between $1.10 and $1.81. This disguised tax includes built-in increases that will more than double the tax by 2030 for all fuels. The claims that these costs will provide cost savings, the rebates promised by Governor Hochul will reduce impacts to those least able to afford the increases, and the claim that investments will be spent wisely all fly in the face of common sense.

The issues described have been ignored. It is long past due for proponents of NYCI and the Climate Act like Assemblyman Stirpe to acknowledge that the transition to zero emissions has irreconcilable challenges that risk affordability and reliability. All this is purely political so when the inevitable negative consequences occur, supporters should be held accountable.

Temperature Trend Measurement Uncertainty

Late last year I published an article that described the problems of measuring global temperature trends. This article describes Stephen Connolly's analysis that shows how temperature measurement techniques affect trend interpretation.

I highly recommend Connolly's article because he does a very good job explaining how sampling affects averages. When a weather station reports a daily average temperature based on a manual observation of a temperature recorded using a maximum and minimum thermometer, the daily average is the average of the daily observed high and low values. Confidence that an average represents the data increases when there are more observations in the calculation. He found a weather observatory in Ireland that had observed the temperature hourly from January 1944 and April 2012 and calculated the daily average from all the hourly values. This enabled him to compare the daily averages using both techniques.

It is fascinating how many differences there were between the daily averages calculated using the two techniques. For example, the differences were not constant. There was considerable inter-annual variation. The conclusion of the analysis is that if we only know daily average temperature based on the average of the maximum and the minimum temperature then compared to the average measured using a data acquisition system that we know is more accurate he found that the two methodologies could be anywhere between ±1°C different.

According to an ongoing temperature analysis led by scientists at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS), the average global temperature on Earth has increased by at least 1.1° Celsius since 1880. That estimate mixes early temperature averages calculated based on daily observations and recent more frequent observations. This analysis shows that we cannot have much confidence in how much of the 1.1° Celsius increase ascribed to humans is real as opposed to observational uncertainty.

Commentary on Recent Articles March 29, 2025

David Catalfamo on the New York fracking ban folly; Jim Willis argues that combining natural gas and nuclear in new ways could solve the need for new generation; Matt Ridley explains How the Green Energy Transition Makes You Poorer; Chris Bond analyzed California battery energy storage requirements and found Mark Jacobson gets it wrong; Robert Bryce documents that 52 communities from California to Australia have rejected battery projects; Ed Reid explains why the NY Climate Change Superfund bill is lawfare; and Robert Roper description of the Vermont transition shows why it is worse than New York.

Commentary on Recent Articles - April 8, 2025

New York has a new interactive renewables map; solar net-metering has hidden costs, Bjorn Lomborg explains that adding more solar and wind to the energy supply pushes up the price of electricity for consumers and businesses; and the cost of California climate policies should be a warning to NY.

**A Mystery Solved**

An article about the Michael Mann lawsuite also mentioned the 2009 Obama "stimulus" bill – the so-called American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The article explains:

> The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was passed on February 17, 2009, in the first month of the Obama presidency, and had a total budget of $831 billion – about the same, allowing for inflation, as the $893 billion budget of Biden's so-called Inflation Reduction Act in 2022. Approximately $3.1 billion of ARRA funding was allocated to the National Science Foundation (NSF).
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> In an interesting recent Jon Stewart podcast (link at 44 minutes), Ezra Klein noted the total failure of the ARRA program to deliver anything on its signature promises: high-speed rail, "smart" grid or interoperable electronic health care records.

That certainly does not portend well for the Inflation Reduction Act. But then the article explained one mystery that has bothered me for years. Have you noticed the ADA compliant crosswalks that do not connect to anything when new traffic signals are installed? It turns out that ARRA (link) did succeed in building thousands of "ADA corner crosswalk things that didn't actually connect to anything".