Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York Summary Update February 2, 2026 – February 15, 2026
This is a summary update of posts at Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York for 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). 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.

There is a fundamental Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act (Climate Act) implementation issue. Clearly there are bounds on what New York State ratepayers can afford and there are limits related to reliability risks for a system reliant on weather-dependent resources. On 1/28/26 the Public Service Commission issued a notice soliciting comments regarding the Coalition for Safe and Reliable Energy petition. Comments on the Coalition petition are due on 3/30/26. I published articles encouraging readers to submit comments.

February 2026 Climate Act Issues
A modified version of this post was published at Watts Up With That which is of interest because of the comments.

I was recently asked to give a briefing about Climate Act issues. The New York's Legislative annual session revolves around enacting the state's April 1 budget. The budget is an executive-budget model which means that the Governor can stick in policy legislation like the Climate Act. This post describes Climate Act issues that the legislature should address this session. The presentation used a power point presentation and included supporting documentation. The summary described five issues.

The schedule and affordability impact of the Climate Act can no longer be ignored. The latest data show that the State is under 30% relative to the 70% renewable electricity by 2030 target and has only reduced GHG emissions by 14% compared to the 40% reduction in economy-wide GHG emissions by 2030 target. If Hochul and Legislature fail to amend the schedules, then the State will face lawsuits. The affordability impacts are exacerbating the energy cost crisis. The Climate Act portion of current electric rate cases ranges from 8.5% and 13.7% and those numbers will certainly go up. The State Energy Plan includes an estimate of household energy costs that claims the use of "new, efficient equipment and electrification can cut energy spending by $100 to $300 every month for many New York households". However, if the levelized cost of the equipment necessary to achieve the Climate Act are included then the monthly costs are $594 a month higher (43%) than for a household that replaces existing equipment with like-kind replacements. If Hochul and the Legislature continue to hide these costs and fail to act the energy affordability crisis will be exacerbated.

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) was sued because they failed to implement the New York Cap-and-Invest (NYCI) economy wide emission reduction initiative requirements on time. They were ordered to get the rules out by 2/6/26 or get the Legislature to amend the schedule. The case is currently under appeal as the state avoids responsibility for following the law. What is not clear

is whether Hochul and the Legislature will amend the schedule for this rule or if DEC will propose the two remaining regulations before the appeal is decided.

Public Service Law (PSL) Section 66-P, tells the Public Service Commission (PSC) it must establish a statewide program that will get us to the required greenhouse gas emissions reductions and the amount of renewable energy that will be necessary to get there. The law gives the PSC the power to temporarily suspend or modify Climate Act obligations if, after conducting an appropriate public hearing, it finds that the Climate Act as written poses risks to safe, adequate, and affordable electric service. Two petitions have been filed calling for such a hearing. On 1/28/26 the Public Service Commission issued a notice soliciting comments regarding the Coalition for Safe and Reliable Energy (Coalition) petition. I believe there is sufficient evidence that the PSC should have called for the hearing. The request for comments just prolongs the process enabling the Hochul controlled PSC to avoid its responsibilities for providing safe, adequate, and affordable energy.

There is another issue in the news that suggest that Hochul may propose revising the unique Climate Act GHG accounting methodology. Revisions would reduce the total GHG emissions and eventually NYCI costs among other benefits. However, this revision was proposed in 2023 and the climate advocates who got us into this mess spontaneously combusted and pressured Hochul into backing down.

The ideologues who fervently supported the promulgation of the Climate Act also zealously reject the possibility that changes are needed despite the overwhelming evidence that the Climate Act aspirations and schedule are incompatible with reality. I doubt that the Legislature or Governor will act on these issues this year as they try to placate those who deny reality and the rest of us. It is time for the rest of us to demand that the PSC conduct a hearing to consider suspending or modifying the obligations of the Climate Act by submitting comments on the Coalition petition.

NYISO Climate Act Concerns

This article is intended to be a resource documenting New York Independent System Operator's (NYISO) concerns with Climate Act implementation. NYISO's concerns are persuasive arguments that there are sufficient observed threats to reliability that a hearing is necessary to ensure safe and adequate service. I used Perplexity AI to generate a review of the NYISO concerns with the Climate Act. This article provides background documentation based on the response to that query.

The article included the Perplexity summary of the NYISO issues. Five areas of concern were included. Climate Act driven retirements and environmental constraints are moving faster than the build-out of firm, deliverable alternatives, tightening margins to what NYISO characterizes as "concerning" levels. Coordination of fossil retirements with new entries is an issue. NYISO is not saying "don't retire fossil," but are arguing "do not retire fossil faster than the system can absorb given actual, not theoretical, replacements." One core concern is that the Climate Act implementation plan implicitly assumes a best-case transmission build-out path; NYISO's studies are essentially saying, "If those assumptions slip, reliability breaks." Operational challenges from reliance on high levels of intermittent renewables forces a fundamental redesign of operating reserve and capacity constructs. NYISO's concern is that policy timelines assume this redesign and the necessary resources will be ready and deliverable in time. NYISO

has identified a need for “firm, zero-emissions” and a long-duration solutions technology and market design gap between what the Climate Act requires in the 2030s–2040s and what is under contract or in queues today.

The Perplexity AI response to my concerns of NYISO about Climate Act goals also generated a spreadsheet table of specific issues. I summarized those issues and provided references for relevant NYISO documents. If I had time, I would have combined the two sections into a single referenced description of NYISO concerns. As it stands it is a reference document.

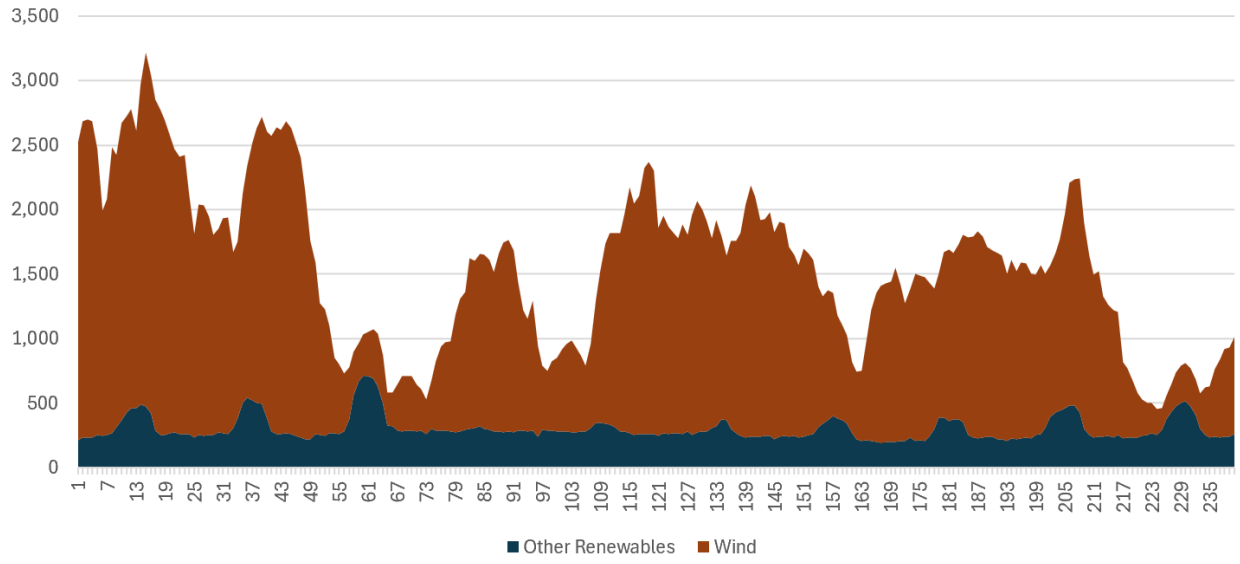
January 23-27 Winter Storm NY Grid Impacts

The recent winter storm stressed electric systems across the country. This article takes an initial look at the impact of such a weather event on the existing New York renewable resources.

I relied on two sources of New York Independent System Operator (NYISO) data for this analysis. New York fuel-mix load data are available at the NYISO Real-Time Dashboard. The second source of data is the Operations Performance Metrics Monthly Report prepared by the NYISO Operating Committee. I looked at data from January 22-31, 2026 to bound conditions before the storm and after.

I plotted the real-time fuel mix Wind and “Other Renewables” that includes solar energy (394 MW of “front-of-the-meter solar”), energy storage resources (63 MW), methane, refuse, or wood. The methane, refuse and wood facilities show up as the relatively constant base in Figure 1. The utility-scale “front-of-the-meter” solar shows up as the daily peaks on the first three days. The snow arrived in New York on the night of 24 January and continued through the next day. Note that utility solar was essentially zero on the 25th and did not return to the level of the 22nd until the 31st.

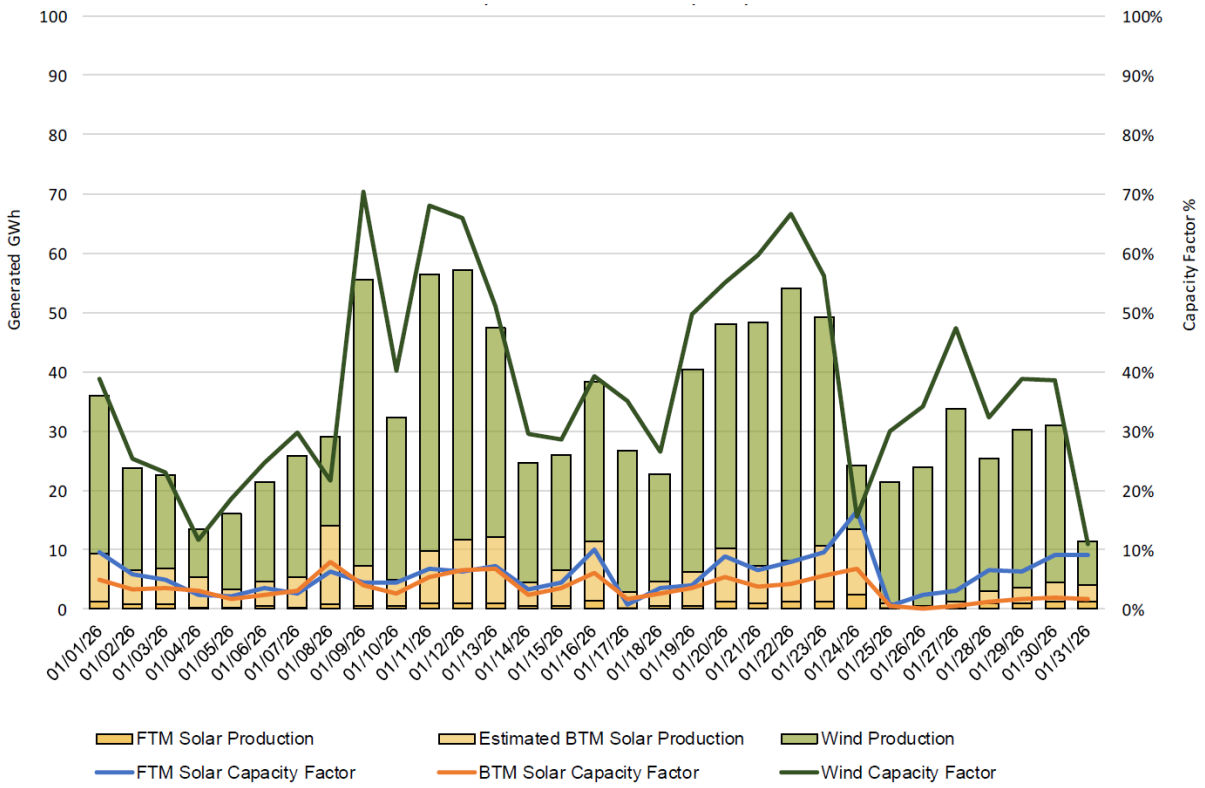
Figure 1: Hourly NYISO Realtime Fuel Mix Other Renewables and Wind January 22 to January 31, 2026



I also used the January Operations Performance Metrics Monthly Report. The following figure breaks out the wind, utility-scale solar, also known as Front of the Meter (FTM) solar, and the rooftop top solar,

also known as Behind the Meter (BTM) solar total daily production and capacity factors. Note that from January 25 on solar resources were very low.

Figure 5: Net Wind and Solar Performance Total Daily Production and Capacity Factors



These data also enabled me to calculate the total availability of both wind and solar. I found that on January 31 the total energy production of all the wind and solar resources in the state were only 2% of the potential production. No amount of additional capacity is going to be able to substantively improve that percentage. Intermittent, diffuse, and correlated electric generating resources are incompatible with electric system reliability when needed most.

Final New York State 2026 RGGI Operating Plan Amendment

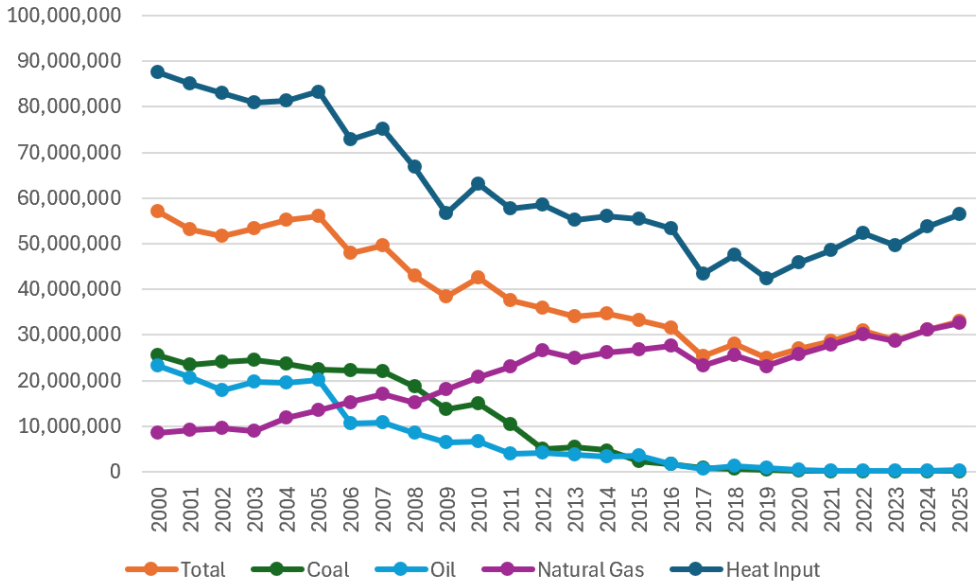
In early January I described my comments on the 2026 Operating Plan Amendment ("Amendment") for the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). This post summarizes the responses to comments. I also included a description of CO2 emissions through 2025 because last year's data just became available.

It was encouraging that NYSERDA finally provided a summary of comments received which is something I have asked for repeatedly. I am not going to re-hash my other comments because NYSERDA ignored all my concerns about the poor performance of this cap-and-invest program for the electric utility companies. As mentioned above environmental organizations sued DEC to develop a similar program that covers the whole economy because they believe that this will ensure compliance and raise money for a wide range of preferred programs. If that sounds too good to be true, it is. My evaluation of RGGI shows that emissions have decreased primarily because of fuel-switching from coal and oil to natural gas and that the investments made with RGGI proceeds have been responsible for only 4% of the observed

reductions. My comments argued that funding priorities should change to address this observation. This comment was ignored and not discussed in the summary of comments received.

The 2025 emissions data showed another increase in CO2 emissions both in New York (Figure 1)

Figure 1: NY Electric Generating Unit CO2 Emissions and Heat Input



In addition to the emissions data I included the "heat input" parameter in Figure 1 which is the hourly thermal energy input expressed in million British thermal units (mmBtu) and represents the rate at which fuel energy is supplied to the combustion unit over an operating hour. I included the heat input to make the point that CO2 emissions and the amount of fuel used are closely linked. Note how closely heat input tracks total CO2 emissions. This means that future CO2 reductions will necessarily require reductions in fuel use and that limiting CO2 rations energy use.

The compliance implications of the 2025 CO2 emissions are significant. I showed that compliance was only possible because of banked allowances. Eventually the bank will be used up and the most recent model rule calls for a further annual reduction of 8.5 million tons per year. Something must change regarding these emission trajectories or there will be issues. The RGGI cap on emissions essentially rations energy use because if there are insufficient permits to emit (aka allowances) affected generating units have no other options to reduce emissions. Therefore, they can only shut down to comply with the law. That will create an artificial energy shortage.

Based on these findings I believe that the failure of NYSERDA to prioritize programs that directly or indirectly reduce emissions in the RGGI Operating Plan eventually will cause compliance problems.

Recommended Resource: Kris Martin's Solar Divide Blog

Since November 2023 Kris Martin has been producing great articles at the Solar Divide blog documenting issues associated with the buildout of solar in New York associated with the Climate Act.

Her website archive is a great resource about issues associated with the irresponsible buildout of solar in New York. If you are interested in any of these topics then I suggest signing up for alerts her articles are published by subscribing to her Substack.

My article highlighted some of her publications. One of my favorite articles explained solar subsidies because I wanted to know how this works. I highly recommend Martin's look at the land requirements for solar buildout in upstate NY between now and 2050 as described in this post. The original analysis was described in a white paper called Enough Land that was documented in her first post. In August 2025 she updated the white paper. My post also highlighted articles describing solar retirement concerns and her overview descriptions of community solar and battery energy storage systems.