Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York Summary Update April 13 – April 26, 2026

This is a summary update of posts at Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York for the last two weeks. The intent of this report is to simply summarize my reports and include links if you want to get into the details. 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.

Stop Energy Sprawl Call for Action

This post describes a recent distribution to Stop Energy Sprawl members titled "Tell New York State 'It's Time to Pause the CLCPA!' and save our communities". This is timely because there still is time to submit a comment supporting the petition to hold a hearing.

New York Public Service Law (PSL) § 66-p establishes a renewable energy program for the Climate Act. It provides that the Commission "may temporarily suspend or modify the obligations under such program provided that the commission", after conducting a hearing finds that the program "impedes the provision of safe and adequate electric service or that there is a significant increase in arrears or service disconnections that the commission determines is related to the program". This safety valve was included because even the lawmakers realized that it may not be possible to transition the electric system to "zero-emissions" by relying on renewable energy. New York State never did a feasibility study proving that it could be done, never pointed to another jurisdiction that implemented such a system, and has not provided clear and comprehensive cost estimates. Conducting a hearing is a commonsense reality check.

If you have not done so already ,please follow these instructions to submit a comment.

1. There are two cases. Either go to this link at the Department of Public Service website: https://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/Comments/PublicComments.aspx?MatterCaseNo=15-E-0302 or this link https://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/Comments/PublicComments.aspx?MatterCaseNo=22-M-0149 E-0302 is a huge proceeding so going to M-0149 will be faster.
2. Enter your **name**, **address**, and **email address**.
3. Copy and paste the following message into the **comments** field
4. Click the "I understand..." box and the "I'm not a robot" *Captcha* box
5. Wait until the Captcha completes and Click Post Comment
6. That's it. You're done!

There is comment text in the post but here is another suggestion for a comment to paste.

> I support the Coalition for Safe and Reliable Energy's petition requesting that the Commission hold a hearing pursuant to Public Service Law (PSL) Section 66-p(4) to evaluate whether to

> temporarily suspend or modify the targets or provisions under the Renewable Energy Program established as part of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA).
>
> The law includes an explicit safety valve for reliability and affordability, conditioned on a hearing and the Coalition petition correctly invokes this mechanism. There is credible reliability and arrears evidence that triggers the safety valve provisions. Granting the hearing would implement, not undermine, the CLCPA by ensuring that its Renewable Energy Program is administered in a manner consistent with safe, adequate, and affordable electric service**.**

In addition, the distribution asked readers to compile their stories from communities targeted by land-wasting and coast-endangering large-scale wind and solar projects located far from where that energy is needed. They have prepared a survey that seeks to collect information about the impacts experienced by communities throughout New York State targeted be wind, solar and energy storage development. The goal is to bring awareness to these issues and to fight back against ill-considered laws that enable these destructive policies.

New York readers who have experience with these projects are encouraged to respond to the survey "How Did Wind or Solar Harm Your Community?" Whether it was fire, farmland desecration, habitat loss, or setting residents against one another, we want to hear about it. Respond at https://forms.gle/DYxEpmTBFkAAp11M8

I think we are at an inflection point relative to the Climate Act. Many still fail to acknowledge that physics, engineering, and economics all indicate that the renewable-based electric system is impossible, but a hearing will provide a venue for public debate on this question. The failure of the state to establish siting standards has led to unacceptable impacts that very few people know about. I hope that the Stop Energy Sprawl survey will document those issues to publicize the problem.

The Enemy of Good

This post describes a superb summary (Substack post and PDF copy) of the myths of the Climate Act by Kris Martin. Governor Hochul has suggested some changes to the Climate Act but even the suggestion of incorporating any lessons learned in the last six years is anathema to the legislators who foisted the Climate Act on New Yorkers and their cheerleaders in environmental NGO's. Martin's article describes why New York's quest for an electric system that has zero emissions by 2040 is leading the state down an unsustainable path.

Martin summarizes her post:

> The NYS Climate Act calls for "zero by 40": all electricity generation must come from zero-emissions sources by 2040. This post looks at the myths and realities of "zero by 40." What will it take to keep the lights on? Will meeting Climate Act goals delay unwanted effects of climate change? Is it possible to build wind and solar as quickly as we need to? Will it be cheap? Or will perfect be the enemy of good?

> Albany and downstate politicians want it all, and they want it now. Affordable electricity, zero emissions, reliability, and security. Lots of wind and solar, as soon as possible. Unfortunately, you can't power the electric grid with rhetoric and emotion. And good intentions don't necessarily result in the best choices.

I highly recommend that you read the article. She addresses the following myths with a summary description of reality for each one.

- Myth: "Zero by 40" will keep climate change from getting worse
- Myth: We don't need to be concerned about reliability
- Myth: We can replace 2,000 MW of gas generation with 2,000 MW of wind and solar
- Myth: Batteries will take care of that "intermittency" thing
- Myth: We can build our way out of this by 2040
- Myth: "Renewables" are cheaper than the alternatives
- Myth: Wind and solar have minimal impacts on their surroundings

This should be required reading for all New York lawmakers and recommended reading for all New Yorkers. Sadly, many lawmakers have no desire to hear anything that does not comport with what they think their preferred constituencies believe. That failure to address reality is not going to end well.

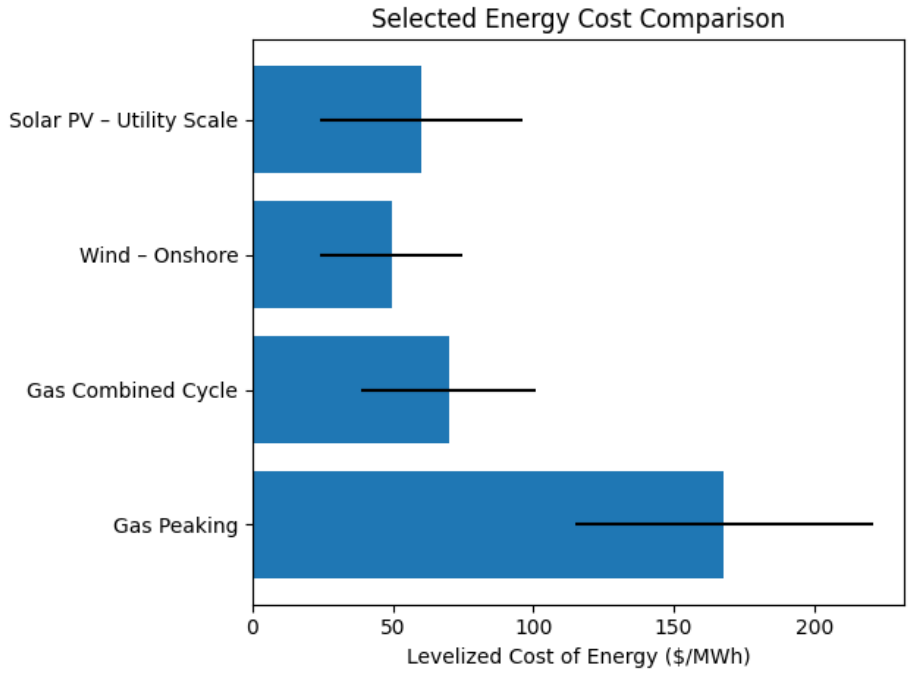
Cheap Renewables

In response to Hochul's suggestion that changes need to be made because of affordability supporters of the Climate Act argue that wind and solar are cheaper than other sources of electricity. I have been trying to refute that argument and wrote two articles that address the cheap renewables myth.

Cheap Renewables Myth

My first post relied on an article by Matt Jacobson at Matt's Substack that I think summarized the cost issues well. Jacobson describes the problem.

> For years now, we've been told that solar and wind are the cheapest sources of electricity. That claim shows up everywhere—in headlines, policy discussions, and investor decks—and it's usually backed by some version of a simple cost comparison like this.



> On its face, the conclusion is obvious. Solar and wind appear to be the lowest-cost options, while gas looks more expensive. The chart isn't wrong—but it's incomplete. And when incomplete math drives policy, the system ends up costing more than advertised. It measures the cost of producing electricity when it's available—not the cost of running a grid. Those are very different things.
>
> A power system doesn't just produce electricity, it has to deliver it reliably, at all times, under all conditions. That means maintaining backup generation for when the sun isn't shining and the wind isn't blowing. It means building storage to shift energy across hours or days. It means expanding transmission to move power from where it's produced to where it's needed. And it means carrying enough redundancy in the system to ensure it doesn't fail under stress. None of that is free, and none of it is optional.

There are far too many analyses of costs that rely on average wind and solar resource availability and expected loads. Jacobson points out that "The grid doesn't run on averages. It runs on the worst day of the year—cold, dark, and still." I would also add that New Yorkers need to recognize the limitations of wind and solar resources in New York that make it even more challenging – for example we must consider snow cover.

Matt Jacobson also points out that if renewables were actually cheaper than fossil fuels evidence from other jurisdictions that are further down the transition to wind and solar should have cheaper electric rates should prove that case. He notes:

> They don't. States like California, which have invested heavily in solar, consistently have some of the highest electricity prices in the country, while many lower-cost regions rely more heavily on

> power plants that can run when needed. At some point you have to decide whether to trust the model or what's actually happening.

He concludes that the simple story that renewables are cheaper isn't wrong. It's just incomplete.

> It tells you what it costs to produce electricity under ideal conditions, but it leaves out what it takes to run a system that has to perform under real ones. Once you account for reliability, timing, infrastructure, and risk, the picture changes. We haven't built a cheaper system. We've built a larger one—one that layers intermittent resources on top of the infrastructure required to keep the lights on when wind and solar aren't producing. And that cost doesn't disappear. It shows up in higher rates, more complexity, and a system that is harder to operate and more fragile.

Why "Cheap Renewables" Don't Deliver Cheap Electricity

My second article addressing the myth describes a series of articles at the Science of Doom blog by Steve Carson. His analyses are much more detailed and technically oriented but cover the same points as Matt Jacobson.

The primary basis of the myth that wind and solar are now the "cheapest" sources of electricity is Lazard's Levelized cost of energy (LCOE). This parameter claims renewables beat coal, gas, and nuclear on a dollar-per-megawatt-hour basis. This underpins the narrative that renewable energy should translate into lower electricity bills for consumers. However, LCOE project-level costs are junk.

This disconnect between "cheap renewables" and expensive electricity isn't a coincidence or a policy failure in implementation. It reflects that the LCOE narrative obscures the fundamental truth that the cost of a reliable electricity system is not the same as the cost of intermittent generation. Both authors explain that when you need electricity every hour of every day, the system must pay for flexibility, backup capacity, grid stability services, and expanded transmission infrastructure—costs that persist regardless of how low the marginal cost of wind and solar generation falls. Carson goes on to eviscerate the LCOE approach with specific examples.

Carson also considers the results from European jurisdictions. He is Australian and explains that South Australia "offers the clearest real-world experiment in high-renewable electricity systems." This small state (1.8 million population) transformed its grid faster and more completely than almost any comparable jurisdiction. It also has much higher solar resource availability than New York but it also consistently ranks among the highest power bills in the developed world.

He explains why this is the case in detail. Because there is so much rooftop solar there is extreme daily price volatility that creates a counterintuitive result: even though wholesale prices are "free" or negative for many hours, retail bills remain very high. He explains the economic drivers that contribute to this result. Because South Australia is much further along the transition to renewables, I believe that his observations of how battery energy storage is used, how transmission must be developed to support renewables, and the impacts of the most extreme wind and solar lulls are portents of what will happen in New York as more wind and solar are brought online.

Steve Carson's series of articles demonstrates a fundamental point that policy discussions too often overlook: "**cheap intermittent megawatt-hours are not the same as cheap electricity systems**." LCOE measures the former, but consumers pay for the latter. Proponents who rely on LCOE cost estimates to claim renewables are cheaper ignore electric system costs.

Senator Harkham Climate Act Mal-Information

New York State Sen. Peter Harckham argues that the Climate Act will reduce high utility rates "if we let it." He blames today's affordability crisis entirely on fossil fuel volatility, dismisses nuclear as a "fantasy," and claims that if we just double down on renewables and distributed solar, families will see "real, predictable savings." He is wrong on all three counts.

Since the promulgation of the Climate Act results show we now know we must address what we have learned. New York's affordability crisis is being exacerbated by Climate Act-driven costs, not just fossil volatility. NYSERDA and the State Energy Plan show large household cost increases once capital is included, not bill reductions. NYISO's reliability warnings reveal that a high-renewables system without firm backup is neither cheap nor risk-free. Claims that renewables are "the cheapest power" ignore system-wide costs, rate-base effects, and reliability needs. Finally, PSL §66-p(4) exists as a safety valve and should be used now to review and, if necessary, modify Climate Act obligations.

No to an "All of the Above" Energy Policy

Both New York Democrats and Republicans are embracing an all-of-the-above Climate Act energy strategy that includes a role for wind and solar because it provides a "diversity of generation sources". I believe that wind is useless and solar should only be used on-site to reduce a structure's energy use. Richard Lyon has written a series of posts describing the core arguments of his forthcoming book *The Energy Trap: Why the Renewable Energy Transition Can't Work — And What Can* that encapsulates the impossibility of an energy policy that relies on renewables.

Lyons' work makes it clear that an "all of the above" energy policy is not prudent policy but a way to avoid addressing hard physical and economic limits. His articles show that modern society depends on high-quality, high-density energy sources that deliver large surplus energy after the system feeds itself. He shows that utility-scale wind and solar move us away from that path because wind and solar require storage, backup, and grid costs. At the same time, fossil fuels remain indispensable chemical feedstocks for steel, cement, ammonia, plastics, and broader societal needs. They cannot simply be swapped out by electricity or slogans like "electrify everything." In that light, "all of the above" becomes a dangerously vague invitation to waste our finite fossil fuels on low-return projects, under build nuclear, and pretend that efficiency, hydrogen, and using less energy while still growing the economy will magically close the gap. I think New York must commit to physically credible options with nuclear power at the center and stop making believe that wind and solar should be included.