

Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York Summary Update May 11– May 31, 2026

This is a summary update of posts at [Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York](#) for the last three 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. I acknowledge the use of

I lost track of time and did not publish this summary last weekend, so this summary covers three weeks instead of the usual two. Because of the volume I used [Perplexity](#) AI to generate draft summaries of the descriptions in this document. I asked [Perplexity to provide](#) a 200-word summary of the following posts, edited the output for consistency and accuracy, but shamelessly plagiarized the text provided.

[Budget Bill Revisions to the CLCPA](#)

During the rainy Memorial Day weekend, I got wind of the revisions to the Climate Act buried in the budget bill by the Hochul Administration. This post describes [Part VV](#) of the 2026 budget bill that tweaks Climate Act metrics and timelines without addressing core feasibility or reliability concerns.

The bill changes make it easier to hit the Climate Act reduction targets. It shifts statewide greenhouse-gas accounting from 20-year to 100-year Global Warming Potential, excludes most biogenic emissions from the cap, and stops counting out-of-state fossil extraction and transport, thereby aligning New York more closely with IPCC practice and other jurisdictions. However, it still counts emissions associated with imported electricity in the NY inventory.

It reframes the Climate Action Council's transition plan from mandates to recommendations. It pushes the next plan to 2028 with six-year updates thereafter, and instructs DEC to adopt by December 31, 2028 rules aimed at a 60% reduction from 1990 levels by 2040 instead of the current 40% by 2030 interim target. It does not address the electricity-sector mandates (70% renewable by 2030, 100% carbon-free by 2040). Given the repeated warnings from the New York Independent System Operator about looming reliability issues associated with those mandates this is a major flaw.

DEC is told to consider an economy-wide cap-and-invest system and not necessarily require one. DEC must now explicitly weigh impacts on utility bills, affordability for residents and businesses, job growth, economic competitiveness, feasibility, available funding, and the commercialization of low- and zero-emission technologies. The share of "overall benefits" flowing to disadvantaged communities is increased from 35–40% to 40–45%. The law does not include quantitative hard safety valves tied to reliability or rate impacts.

In my opinion, these changes fix some accounting issues but the primary purpose is to defer incumbent Democrat accountability for Climate Act impacts past the November elections.

[New York State Renewable Permitting Scandal](#)

This article was also [posted](#) at Watts Up With That

One of the reasons that I say that the Climate Act will do more harm than good is the environmental impacts of utility-scale wind and solar development. New York's expedited siting regime for large renewables is an environmental and Democratic party scandal, where the Office of Renewable Energy Siting, created by the Accelerated Renewable Energy Growth and Community Benefit Act, fast-tracks wind and solar projects with minimal constraints on siting, farmland loss, habitat fragmentation, or local input.

A recent New York Post [article](#) describes the [Fort Edward Solar Project](#) describes a 100 MW solar facility that is being permitted inside the Fort Edward Grasslands Important Bird Area. The project surrounds a DEC Grassland Wildlife Management Area on three sides threatening endangered short-eared owls and other sensitive species. It is being permitted despite near-unanimous local opposition. Alexandra Fasulo's role as an [influencer](#) has helped elevate the issue to statewide media. After she discovered the project near her homestead, she founded the American Land Rescue Fund and commissioned independent ecological reviews. The Post article also notes other massive projects—such as 500 MW Cider Solar and several thousand acres of solar in Montgomery County are often led by foreign developer. Locals face long construction periods, landscape transformation, and higher rates while losing tax base. The Climate Act siting process has sidelined DEC, Ag & Markets, and local governments, allowing industrial-scale build-out. Before the Climate Act agencies likely would have rejected impacts that routinely get approved today. The only way to change this is for legislative reforms to restore environmental protections and community voice.

[Compliance Impacts of Virginia Joining RGGI – When will the Allowances Run Out](#)

This article analyzes how Virginia's return to RGGI interacts with an already aggressive cap trajectory and a finite allowance bank. I showed that historical RGGI emission reductions were driven mainly by fuel switching to natural gas and have stalled since 2019. RGGI-funded investments account for only a small fraction of reductions despite more than \$7 billion in proceed which suggests significant future reductions are unlikely. The new allowance cap trajectory cuts allowances by over 10% of the 2025 budget per year from 2027–2033. I predict that allowances could run out as soon as the third quarter of 2033 if emission reductions remain stalled. The only options for affected generators are to shut down or go out of compliance.

There will be significant impacts before then. Uncertainty is already driving prices higher and scarcity will drive prices them even higher. This will exacerbate high electric prices because the added cost of RGGI allowances is embedded in the cost of electricity. RGGI states, especially those concerned about affordability, need to either overhaul the program design or exit before costs and reliability risks escalate to unacceptable levels.

[NYISO Resource Outlook Concerns](#)

I filed comments on the NYISO's 2025–2044 System & Resource Outlook and related PSC cases, arguing that the analysis must explicitly grapple with RGGI allowance scarcity and extreme-weather performance if it is to inform realistic Climate Act implementation. Drawing on my [prior RGGI work](#), I emphasized that emissions have been flat since 2019 while the cap declines steeply, so the allowance-bank model indicates shortages emerging as early as the third quarter of 2032, potentially forcing generator shutdowns well within the study horizon. I also highlighted another overlooked cost: NYISO's market-clearing mechanism passes RGGI allowance costs through not only to compliance units but also to non-RGGI generators and imports whenever a RGGI unit sets the price, creating large windfall profits and making the real consumer burden roughly triple direct auction expenditures.

I also noted that last winter's January–February 2026 cold event was similar to 1961. I showed that the renewable energy production during the event was so low that it was four times less than the energy provided by oil-fired peaking units. This difference indicates that to keep the lights on battery storage would need to be very large for a rate event. This underscores the importance of the need for dispatchable emissions-free resources and the need to keep existing peaking units operational until suitable replacements are developed.

I recommended that NYISO should quantify RGGI cost adders, incorporate last winter's extreme event explicitly, and be more forthright with New York State that current policy trajectories jeopardize affordability and reliability, absent major rule changes.

[New York Grid Inertia Past and Present](#)

I contrasted Niagara Mohawk's legacy system, built around large synchronous generators and hydro units that naturally supplied inertia, with today's NYISO-run market where inertia is an implicit, weakly-priced byproduct of remaining synchronous machines. Grid inertia is the kinetic energy in rotating machines that enables operators to match generation to load. It is being eroded as Climate Act policies accelerate retirements of coal, oil, and older gas units faster than replacements for their reliability services are procured. National Grid's decision to build new synchronous condensers at Coffeen and Taylorville is evidence of market failure: ratepayers are now paying to recreate services historically provided by existing hydro plants whose inertia is uncompensated under current market rules.

In future rate cases I think that regulators should first examine whether legacy hydro units could be contracted to provide voltage and inertia support at lower cost before approving new condenser projects. The broader lesson is that Climate Act implementation is imposing a second layer of hidden costs on customers—paying once for intermittent renewables and again for the ancillary services they do not supply. One more reason to pause the Renewable Energy Program to reassess reliability and affordability impacts.

[Public Power New York on NYPA Renewables Plans](#)

This post critiques Public Power New York's (PPNY) [celebratory messaging](#) about NYPA "reviewing 5 GW of new public renewables" under the Build Public Renewables Act. The notice spins preliminary planning into a political victory narrative disconnected from practical constraints. PPNY is aligned with the Democrat Socialists o America and claim public utility ownership is cheaper, more responsive, and more democratic, while glossing over issues like interconnection queues, labor and procurement constraints, and NYPA's limited experience as a large-scale greenfield renewables developer.

I relied on others to refute a couple of claims in the PPNY announcement. Keith Schue argued that PPNY's dismissal of nuclear as "expensive," is naïve because the system-level costs for a predominantly wind-and-solar grid—including storage, transmission, grid-stabilizing equipment, and frequent component replacement—can exceed those of a nuclear-inclusive mix. Matthew Huber found that unionized utility workers often favor nuclear expansion. I concluded that PPNY rhetoric overpromise on timeline and cost, understate reliability challenges, and mischaracterize NYPA's planning as concrete, transformative build-out when it remains contingent and constrained.

[Guest Post – Heat Pump Rate Carveouts](#)

I published Scott Endler's critique of a [coalition](#) of environmental groups [petition](#) urging the PSC to create special, lower delivery rates for heat-pump customers. It was based on a Switchbox report claiming they overpay under current tariffs. Endler argues that the coalition's proposal is built on a static view of a still summer-peaking grid and ignores Climate Act driven electrification that will likely make New York a winter-peaking system, with heat pumps and EVs becoming primary drivers of local peaks and distribution upgrades.

A permanent "boutique" heat-pump rate, he contends, fails fairness and durability tests by asking non-adopters—often lower-income customers—to subsidize relatively affluent early adopters, and by locking in discounts for the very loads that will later cause the highest marginal costs. Instead, the study proposes a horizontally equitable, dynamic capacity-based delivery tariff where distribution prices vary with localized remaining capacity, falling toward zero when the system is unconstrained and spiking during stressed hours, with the same signal applied to all end uses. This approach preserves incentives for efficiency and peak-shaving, guides targeted grid investments, and avoids the regressive cross-subsidies and weak conservation signals associated with straight fixed-variable designs or technology-specific carve-outs, while still making electrification economical in off-peak periods.