



# New Paltz Climate Smart Newsletter

November 2023


Hello everyone! Thank you for your patience as we work through some transitions. We're excited to actively provide you updates not only through our newsletter but through our social media pages. For our social media links please click on the corresponding logo in the bottom of this newsletter.

Our next meeting is Nov 28th @ 7-8:30PM. We often meet through zoom and at the New Paltz Community Center. If you'd like to sit in on a meeting please email [npclimatesmart@gmail.com](mailto:npclimatesmart@gmail.com) to confirm the meeting location.

**THURS, NOV 16 · 6:00 PM EST**

## Welcome Winter!

Free event featuring industry experts who will present valuable insights and answer questions. About the experts:

 Tom Konrad, Chair of the Marbletown Environmental Conservation Commission and Energy Coach for New Yorkers for Clean Power

Bio: Tom Konrad is an expert on clean energy technology and financial analysis. He works as the portfolio manager of a hedge fund that invests in green stocks and as an energy coach for New Yorkers for Clean Power. He is the volunteer Chair of the Environmental Conservation Commission for the Town of Marbletown.

# WELCOME WINTER!

## LEARN HOW TO SAVE MONEY, STAY WARM & COZY THIS WINTER AND HELP THE PLANET.

Nov. 16th, 6 to 8 pm  
St. Joseph's RC Church  
34 S. Chestnut Street, New Paltz, NY

- ❄️ New money-saving incentives on purchases of heat pumps, solar panels and electric vehicles
- ❄️ Experts to help you get the best deals
- ❄️ Raffle prizes, kid-friendly activities, lots of snacks
- ❄️ Presentation and panel discussion
- ❄️ Information for home owners, landlords and renters!

Sponsored by:  
New Paltz Climate Action Coalition  
Interfaith Earth Action  
Sustainable Hudson Valley  
Climate Reality Project  
New Paltz Climate Smart  
Climate Smart Gardiner  
New Yorkers for Clean Power



For more information, contact: Jim O'Dowd  
[jimmyodowd@yahoo.com](mailto:jimmyodowd@yahoo.com)

To set up a meeting with a NYS Energy Coach either scan the QR Code or go to this url:

<https://nyforcleanpower.org/cleanenergycoaching/>

⚡ Melissa Everett, Executive Director and Chrisso Babcock, Outreach Coordinator, Sustainable Hudson Valley

SHV is a regional leadership organization that helps communities and agencies overcome barriers to success in climate action. We opened up the market for solar and EVs through the Solarize and Drive Electric Hudson Valley campaigns. We're the mothership for the Repair Cafe regionally. And we facilitated the creation of the Regional Climate Action Road Map and Tool Kit as a common vision of the work to be done.

🌍 Tom Polton, Cochair of Hudson Valley Catskill Chapter of the Climate Reality Project  
Tom was trained as Climate Reality Project Leader in 2020, and now co chairs the Hudson Valley Catskill Chapter for the organization established by Vice President Al Gore. We always welcome new members to help with our outreach, advocacy and direct service activities. In 2019 Tom founded a consulting strategy organization to advise companies, financial institutions, and non-profit organizations to better manage ESG risks and opportunities. Previously, Tom led Pfizer's environmental sustainability and product stewardship programs. He is an adjunct professor teaching "Enterprise Sustainability" to Clarkson University graduate students.

☀️ Paul Kiesler, Co-Chair of The Climate Reality Project

I am a resident of Gardiner who has had fun in my project to electrify our 1880 farmhouse and vehicle and supply all of that electricity with a ground mounted solar system.

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## **Book Club**

**TUE, NOV 21 · 7:00 PM EST**

**Laudate Deum: Apostolic Exhortation  
of Pope Francis**



Free but register in advance:

<https://www.meetup.com/climate-smart-book-club/events/296870984/>

Read it here:

[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20231004-laudate-deum.html)

Most months, the Climate Smart Book Club selects a book on climate change or climate change solutions but this month we decided to do something a little different. We have decided that the new Apostolic Exhortation is very relevant and worth reading to discuss.

The Holy See published this October 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis' new Apostolic Exhortation Laudate Deum on the climate crisis.

The Holy Father addresses the situation of climate change in Laudate Deum ("Praise God") because "a human being who pretends to take the place of God becomes the worst danger to himself" (LD 73) after the Encyclical Letter Laudato si' promulgated on the Solemnity of Pentecost 2015.

The Apostolic Exhortation Laudate Deum, addressed to all people of goodwill, is composed of six Chapters. Read more in the meetup.com link above.



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## Current CSC Activities

### Riparian Buffer

On October 3 Gillian Matthews from Cornell Cooperative Extension led a walking tour of the riparian buffer established several years ago between the Gardens for Nutrition and the Wallkill River. The buffer, three rows of native shrubs and trees, provides protection from flooding and removes pollutants and heavy metals from runoff into the river. Cornell has prepared an assessment of seven locations in New Paltz along the Wallkill River and its tributaries at which a

similar riparian buffer could be installed. Following the walk Gillian gave a presentation at Elting Library, with participation from representatives from the DEC Trees for Tribes program, Wallkill Valley Land Trust, the Ulster County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Mohonk Preserve. The assessment will be the basis for the next step of the project – the choice of a suitable location for the establishment of a riparian border. After the presentation, attendees were asked to vote on four focus areas that they felt provided the best locations for the buffer project. Follow-up meetings will be announced in November.

## **Welcome Winter**

Jim reviewed the status of Welcome Winter, which is cosponsored by New Paltz Climate Smart, and will take place on November 16, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The annual event began several years ago through the combined efforts of New Paltz Climate Action Coalition and Interfaith Earth Action. This year it will be live, in person, at St. Joseph's Church, following virtual presentations for a couple of years during the Covid pandemic. The focus will be on the latest incentive programs for those who are looking to switch to energy-efficient home appliances and solar panels, buy an electric vehicle, insulate their homes or offices, or subscribe to community solar. Experts from the Climate Reality Project, Sustainable Hudson Valley, and New Yorkers for Clean Power will guide us through the federal, state, and utility-sponsored programs that can save us money and help us reduce our carbon footprint. There will also be snacks, activities for kids, and raffle prizes. And it is all free! Volunteers are needed. Izzy offered to help out with publicity.

Yvonne said that she attended the Ulster County Climate Smart meeting last night and announced our Welcome Winter event. To get it listed on Manna Jo's calendar, information should be sent to her assistant.

## **CSC Schools Initiative and Support for EV School Bus Transition Project**

Joe Londa emailed updates to the task force prior to tonight's meeting. These, along with Joe's comments during the meeting, are reflected in the minutes.

Joe, who serves on the New Paltz Central School District Facilities Committee, reported that adoption of the Sustainability Resolution is still pending but the Facilities Committee is recommending that the School District establish an Environmental Policy. A building condition

survey has been completed. Joe has suggested that a greenhouse gas inventory of the district's buildings should be undertaken (possibly using ICLEI's template).

Students working on the Electric School Bus project have met with Wallkill and Kingston school district leadership on collecting the needed data to use in the ESB Transition Model. Both school districts expressed great concern over the 2035 mandate timeline and range anxieties. The choice of operational models will play a large role in the overall strategy on how a school district will move forward. They could choose to own the electric school buses and the infrastructure to support them, outsource the entire operation, or partner with other districts or an outside vendor. The Onteora School District recently declined an \$8M EPA grant for electric school buses over concerns of the capital gap should it insource the transportation, and appears to be moving to partner with Highland to address this concern. The ESB Transition Model is nearing completion and the students are still targeting December for analysis presentations.

### **Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Law/Code for Town of New Paltz**

The draft Law/Code for BESS is still waiting for the Town Board to advance it and continues to be in the work queue. Key Capture Energy LCC, the developer, recently met with NYS Senator Hinchey to tour the site and describe the project that was some of the motivation for the draft Law/Code. Joe was included in this meeting and described how the draft Law/Code was authored by a Task Force committee but awaits adoption by the Town Board. It can be a model for Ulster County and other counties. Joe also stated that the chosen New Paltz site is ideal for a battery storage facility.

### **Solar at the Landfill**

Janelle has been serving on the solar array committee and has kept us apprised of the process. She reported that the landfill array had been scaled back due to high costs for connection to the nearest transmission line. The project is ongoing. The developer is Sunlight Partners, the contractor is Solar Generation. The Town project manager is Ted Nitza. Other committee members are Marty Irwin, and Cara Lee.

### **Community Composting**

We discussed the possibility of running a community composting campaign. While there are several current drop-off sites in New Paltz, there is no formal policy driving such a campaign. To

benefit from Climate Smart points, the Town/Village boards would have to pass a resolution and participate in a community-wide program.

## **Grant Opportunities**

Mark stated that the application for a decarbonization grant from the Partners for Climate Action is due November 21. The task force won't meet this deadline; we haven't started work on the application. Input from the municipalities would be required as well. There may be another round of grants next year, so we should decide on a prospective project soon, and begin to gather the required information, vendor proposals, engineering studies, etc. Dylan has offered to work on grant applications.

Mark reviewed the requirements for county-wide community campaigns to drive electric vehicle purchases, installation of heat pumps, and subscriptions to community solar. The Hudson Valley Regional Council is promoting this program. A scoping document and letter of support from the municipalities are required for each campaign. So if both the town and the village wanted to participate, we would have to submit to NYSERDA a total of six scoping documents with the accompanying letters of support.

This is the way it works: If the Town of New Paltz were to submit a scoping document for the electric vehicle campaign and NYSERDA approves it, all subsequent purchases of electric vehicles by residents or businesses in New Paltz would count toward a grant opportunity. For purchases of five EVs the municipality would become eligible for a \$5,000 grant to be used for an environmental sustainability project in that community. The scoping document requires appointment of a campaign team and a schedule of outreach activities to inform the public about the financial incentives and environmental benefits of purchasing electrical vehicles. Mark was hoping that the scoping document approval would happen prior to Welcome Winter, so that we could receive credit for an outreach event. But we haven't completed the paperwork. It appears that the Ulster County Campaign won't be getting formally underway until early 2024.

## **Climate Action Plan**

Yvonne stated that she is reviewing the documentation required for a Community Climate Action Plan.

Joe stated that the baseline year for updating the greenhouse gas inventory should be 2023 so it can include several town and village efforts to lower greenhouse gas emissions, such as the

completion of the new fire station and installation of LED streetlights. He said he will contact the municipalities at the end of this year to request the required documentation. He would also like to do a more thorough inventory of the school buildings.

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*If you have any questions about anything in this newsletter, please contact Izzy Defino, Climate Smart Task Force member at [npclimatesmart@gmail.com](mailto:npclimatesmart@gmail.com)*

