

Combat Climate Change

Human-induced climate change has been called the most pressing environmental issue of our time. Tackling this global problem requires new policies to reduce emissions and changes to the way we think, operate and fund environmental protection efforts. Climate change must be considered in our approach to natural-resource stewardship and efforts to ensure adequate environmental infrastructure for New York State's future. It requires new partnerships to share knowledge and develop effective policies to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and adapt to unavoidable effects. In short, DEC needs to apply a climate-change lens to a full range of activities, such as planning, permitting, rule-making, grant-making, wildlife management, enforcement and public outreach and education. This priority involves initiatives to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions from important source categories; to encourage low-carbon design technologies; to elevate climate change awareness, research and adaptation ability; to foster carbon sequestration and sustainable forestry, and to lead other state agencies in our collective efforts to reduce emissions and adapt to changes in the climate.

There is ample evidence of our leadership in the climate-change arena. DEC is developing regulations for the nation's first power-plant carbon cap with an allowance auction; has adopted California's greenhouse-gas standards for new motor vehicles; has joined the Climate Registry; is a steering- committee member of the International Carbon Action Partnership; is active in the Governor's Renewable Energy Task Force, and has formed an interagency workgroup on carbon capture and sequestration. We also are exploring policies to incorporate greenhouse-gas assessments into environmental reviews and to address the various sources of significant greenhouse-gas emissions.

*Studying the Effects of Wind-Energy Development on Birds and Bats - On January 23, 2008, the much-anticipated draft *Guidelines for Conducting Bird and Bat Studies at Commercial Wind Energy Projects* was released. This document is intended to standardize the methodologies used during pre- and post-construction bird and bat surveys at wind-energy development sites and to provide a way for meaningful comparisons of data to be made across sites and years. Wind energy is non-polluting with no gas emissions but can adversely affect birds and bats. The guidelines can be accessed at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/40899.html>.*



Establishment of the New York State Office of Climate Change - This office was created to lead the development, in concert with other DEC programs and New York State agencies, of climate change-related programs and policies. The Office's Bureau of Climate Science and Technology uses sound science, engineering and economic principles to design solutions that will help stabilize atmospheric greenhouse-gas concentrations at acceptable levels. The Climate Programs and Partnerships Bureau works to inform, assist and empower state agencies, local governments, NGOs, institutions, businesses and individuals to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to unavoidable effects. The Office of Climate Change aims to ensure that New York State develops the full suite of responses needed for significant emission reductions and for successful adaptation to changing temperatures, sea levels, precipitation and other climate factors.

Climate Registry - The department has joined the Carbon Registry as a founding reporter in New York State. The Division of Operations is working with the DEC Office of Climate Change to benchmark our carbon footprint and report to the registry. We will be using this data to analyze our carbon contributions, to identify additional reduction opportunities and to reduce our carbon footprint further.

Forests and the Environment - The Division of Lands and Forests has created a series of web pages which describe the importance of trees and forests in our environment. Topics include “Carbon Sequestration and Forests” and “How Plants Run the Carbon Cycle.” Additional topics will be added at www.dec.ny.gov/lands/41769.html.

Reduce Carbon Footprint - The Division of Operations is taking action to reduce carbon and greenhouse-gas emissions of our infrastructure. We are performing comprehensive energy audits of our facilities and performing capital improvement projects to reduce both energy consumption and emissions.

Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) - New York State’s first mitigation program specifically focused on carbon dioxide (CO₂, the principal greenhouse gas) is the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a ten-state program under which power-sector CO₂ emissions are reduced through cap and trade with allowances purchased in an auction. The Office of Climate Change is deeply involved in making this unprecedented program a reality--working on power plant CO₂ controls, reviewing applications for offsets, developing auctions for CO₂ allowances and assisting with the establishment of RGGI, Inc., a non-profit organization developed by the states to support RGGI programs. The first CO₂ allowance auction under RGGI is scheduled for September 25, 2008, with approximately 12.5 million in allowances available for purchase, offered by the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Rhode Island and Vermont. The rules establishing New York’s CO₂ Budget Trading Program have been approved by the Environmental Board and are expected to go into effect in October 2008. With these rules in effect, New York will make CO₂ allowances available for the second RGGI auction, which is expected to be held on December 17, 2008.

The Climate Registry - The Office of Climate Change is promoting voluntary emissions reporting by New York State facilities through a national non-profit group, The Climate Registry. New York serves on the board of directors of The Climate Registry, which will provide accurate and consistent emissions inventory data to ensure that emissions reductions are equitably shared. DEC has committed to inventory and report its own emissions under The Climate Registry protocol. The Office of Climate Change is coordinating this reporting program.

Sea Level Rise Task Force - Because New York is a coastal state, preparing for the rise in sea levels that is predicted to result from global warming is critical. The Climate Change Office represents DEC on the New York State Sea Level Rise Task Force, which is assessing effects on the state's coastlines from rising seas and recommending protective and adaptive measures. The

task force held its first meeting on June 27, 2008; its report is due to the NYS Legislature by December 31, 2009.

Hudson River Communities Adaptation Programs. Much of the work of developing adaptation programs will be done by local communities and regional organizations. The DEC Hudson River Estuary Program and Climate Change Office are partnering with the Nature Conservancy's Eastern NY Chapter, the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies; the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve; Cornell University, and Sustainable Hudson Valley on the Nature Conservancy's Rising Waters Project. Rising Waters uses a series of stakeholder-driven scenarios of the future to explore the expected effects of climate change on communities and the environment and to identify realistic protection strategies.