

2009 Report to the NYS Conservation Council from the Office of Climate Change

Protecting the Climate and Promoting New York's Green Economy



A wind farm with four turbines

Governor Paterson has set a New York State climate protection goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 80 percent, by the year 2050 (“80 by 50”). To reach this goal, DEC is working now 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.

Executive Order 24 – In July 2009, Governor Paterson issued this executive order to establish the goal of reducing statewide emissions of greenhouse gases to 80 percent of their 1990 levels by 2050 (“80 by 50”). The order establishes a Climate Action Council and charges it with developing a draft climate action plan to achieve this goal by September 30, 2010. The Office of Climate Change staff will provide support to the council.

Wildlife Climate Change Alliance – Office of Climate Change staff are participants in the newly-formed Wildlife Climate Change Alliance, a coalition of state agency and non-governmental organizations formed to facilitate integration of climate change adaptation into natural-resource management. In July the coalition sponsored the first of a planned series of workshops for DEC staff and others intended to build capacity for climate change adaptation planning.

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, a ten-state program under which electric-power-sector CO₂ emissions are reduced through cap and trade, with allowances purchased in an auction. DEC has established regulations controlling power plant CO₂ emissions; the rules took effect in January, 2009. The Office of Climate Change is reviewing applications for offsets and assisting with the establishment of RGGI, Inc., a non-profit organization developed by the ten RGGI states to support RGGI programs. Quarterly CO₂ allowance auctions have been held since September, 2008. Auction proceeds will be invested to advance the state's broad energy goal of moving toward a clean-energy economy, reducing GHG emissions and delivering other benefits in the

near-term, while positioning New York to pursue the aggressive carbon reductions needed to ensure a stable climate over the long-term. While most of the auction revenues will be directed at cost-effective near-term reductions, at least 25 percent will be invested in areas with longer horizons. Funds will leverage additional GHG reductions by establishing commitments and capacity to curtail emissions from state, regional, municipal, and other government institutions. Initiatives to help reduce the disproportionate cost burden and harmful environmental impacts of GHG emissions on low-income families and environmental justice communities are included in the portfolio of programs.

New York State Energy Plan – The Office of Climate Change provided a *Climate Change Brief* to the State Energy Planning Board for development of the New York State Energy Plan. The brief discussed energy issues as they relate to climate change and developed a broad scenario for reaching the 80 by 50 goal. Released in August, 2009, the draft plan is currently receiving public comment.

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 is compiling an inventory and report of its own emissions under The Climate Registry protocol. The Office of Climate Change is coordinating this inventory with assistance from the Division of Operations.

Sea Level Rise Task Force – Because New York is a coastal state, preparing for the rise in sea levels that is projected to result from global warming is critical. The Office of Climate Change is providing scientific, public outreach and administrative support to 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 has formed four work groups that held a series of public information and comment meetings in early 2009 and are drafting recommendations. Public review of the task force's draft recommendations is scheduled for August and September 2010. The task force report is due to the NYS Legislature by January 1, 2011.

Climate Smart Communities – The Climate Smart Communities program encourages local governments to adopt a model climate protection pledge and to initiate strategies for reducing GHG emissions and adapting to unavoidable climate change. Information and resources for local climate action are provided through DEC, NYSERDA and ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability. Forty-one local governments have adopted the pledge since the program was announced in February 2009.