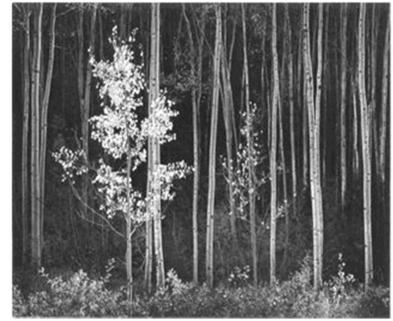




Hudson-Mohawk Group

Late Summer/Fall 2019

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“This is the American Earth”,
photograph by Ansel Adams.
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Contents

- Pg.1 Annual Fundraising Dinner
- Pgs. 1-2 Solarize Albany
- Pgs. 2-3 Plastic's Dirty Secret
- Pg. 4 Five Rivers EEC Picture

ANNUAL FUNDRAISING DINNER AND (SORT OF) GALA

Back by popular demand, we are returning to the site of last year's fundraising dinner and that is at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar on Thursday, October 24th. Social and reacquainting/meet new friends time begins at 5:30 PM with dinner scheduled for around 6:15. **Virginia Boyle Traver will lead an interpretive hike starting at 5:00 sharp for early arrivers.**

We are very proud and gratified to have Roger Downs, the Legislative Director for the Sierra Club Atlantic (Statewide) Chapter as our featured speaker. Roger's focus (but not limited to this) will be the recently passed Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act which is one of the most aggressive state initiatives in the U.S. whose main targets are: **1)** Reduce greenhouse gases to 60% of 1990 levels by 2030 and to 15% of 1990 levels by 2050; **2)** Require that 70% of electricity consumed in New York State by 2030 and 100% by 2040 be from renewable sources; and **3)** Consideration of climate and equity goals in all state government permitting and funding decisions which means that low income and communities of color should not bear the brunt of these statewide goals.

One of the key vehicles being deployed in this global-warming crusade is the establishment of the NYS Climate Action Council which is a 22-member body created to develop a scoping plan and suite of policy and program recommendations to reach the targets set out in the legislation. The Council is led by the DEC and NYSERDA, and is to be advised by the Climate Justice Working Group and Environmental Justice Advisory Group, who will identify disadvantaged communities for the purpose of investments and pollution-reduction programs. Roger was right in the middle of this effort on our behalf and can educate us on how this will impact all of us in New York and some of the concrete actions that will be necessary. Roger will entertain questions on other topics as well. Register NOW (seating is limited) by sending your \$40 check (suggested donation) to: Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group, P.O. Box 8447, Albany, NY 12208. If you have any questions, call 518-210-5294. You may also register on the Group's website at: <http://www.sierraclubhudsonmohawk.org/>

**Subscribe To A Solar Farm Today - Enjoy
Electricity Rates 10% Less Than Your
Utility!**

[Solarize Albany](#) is a non-profit with a mission of helping consumers across the Capital District benefit from solar energy. Solarize Albany, in

cooperation with the Sierra Club Hudson-Mohawk Group, is encouraging residents who don't want to buy rooftop solar or a share in a solar farm, to consider subscribing to a solar farm for a credit on their electricity bill. It's an easy way to reduce carbon emissions and save money, made possible by [NYSERDA's Community Solar Program](#).

Just about anyone who pays a National Grid, NYSEG, or Central Hudson and Gas and Electric (CHGE) electric bill can join a solar farm in less than 5 minutes. Here are the benefits of subscribing:

Pure savings. There is no deposit or upfront payment. You only pay for electricity from the solar farm.

Electricity from the solar farms will always cost 10% less than the utility. No matter if utility rates go up or down, the rate you pay will always be 10% less.

No roof or installation of any kind at your home; the installation at the solar farm will produce the electricity, which the electric utility allocates to you. Single-family homes, apartment renters & condos can subscribe.

You don't need to switch your electricity supplier; whether your supplier is the utility (e.g., National Grid, NYSEG, CHGE or an Energy Service Company (ESCO), you pay less with a guaranteed credit on your bill.

Your payment for clean electricity goes to the solar farm, not the utility.

You can cancel without penalty by giving 90-day advance notice. (But why would you?)

It's easy. It takes about 5 minutes to sign up .

To sign up, visit solarizealbany.org/community-solar and click "Sign Up Here." You'll be directed to the sign up page managed by Solarize Albany's partner, Common Energy. When you click the "sign up" button and fill in the form, the system will send a text message to your mobile phone to confirm your number. It will also ask you for your utility account number and a method of payment -- you can provide payments using a checking account or a credit card. If you have any questions about signing up, [Common Energy](#) will

be more than happy to assist you. You can call them on 844-899-9763 or contact Malcolm Bliss at: malcolm@commonenergy.us.

Plastic's Dirty Secret by Tina Lieberman

Did you know plastic is made from fossil fuels and contributes directly to climate change? I didn't until about four years ago, when I helped the polystyrene ban in Albany County become law. Fending off the plastic lobbyists forced me to do some deep research. These days, a lot of plastics are being made from a fracked gas by-product called ethane. The fracking process produces both methane, which is used for heating and cooking, as well as ethane which has even more BTUs than methane. Since ethane is more volatile, it must be stripped from the methane for safety reasons. It is then used to make the chemical *polyethylene* used for many plastic products. This includes the thin film which lines your paper plates and cups (not wax, like most people think).

Because gas prices are so low right now, oil companies must sell the ethane for plastics production in order to keep their fracked gas wells open. That's why our plastic habit is ruthlessly intertwined with the fossil fuel industry. You may drive a hybrid or electric vehicle, but when you use throw-away plastic, you are thoroughly supporting the fossil fuel industry. [Business magazines](#) report that oil companies like ExxonMobil BP, Royal Dutch Shell and Saudi Aramco are ramping up their investments in plastics production and counting on it to become a growing percentage of their revenue. On 8/13/19 Trump visited the site of a new Shell plastics plant outside of Pittsburgh to laud the industry's boom. According to a recent [Sierra magazine](#) article, ExxonMobil predicts a 30% increase in plastic chemical demand by 2025. A recent investor article released by Bank of America Merrill Lynch was titled "Oil's Future Paved With Plastic". Giant oil corporations are using our appetite for throw-

away plastics to hedge against low gas prices and declining gas consumption as cars become more efficient or go electric.

As if that weren't cause enough to religiously cut back on plastics, scientists are now finding microplastics everywhere: in fish and shellfish, beer, honey, salt, bottled water (a lot) and tap water (a little). It is being swallowed by the ocean creatures that encounter it, who often die from it collecting in their bellies. We are eating it, breathing it, wearing it, being rained on by it. It has even become part of the earth's crust.

Oil companies and plastics manufacturers defend their products with one word: *recycling*. But as per a sweeping new research study referenced in [The Atlantic](#), only 9% of plastics get recycled. And many communities are having a hard time finding buyers for certain kinds of plastics. Here are the astounding numbers: 8,300 million metric tons of plastic have been produced since 1950. Of this, 6,400 million metric tons has outlived its usefulness and become waste; 79 percent of that waste is sitting in landfills or the natural environment, 12 percent has been incinerated, and just 9 percent has been recycled. And the plastics industry is just getting started.

Since the promise of recycling has turned out to be a disappointing mirage and since few people are able to curb their plastic use voluntarily, the most effective tool to stem the hemorrhage of plastics are laws that restrict their use. On Earth Day 2019, NY became the third state (after California and Hawaii) to ban plastic bags. The NYS law will go into effect in March 2020. But the law needs work. The [2018 report](#) issued by the Governor's NYS Plastic Bag Task Force, provided a lot of good information on what kinds of bag bans work, but offered no conclusive recommendations. Therefore, the NYS law only mandated a ban on plastic bags and left it up to individual communities to decide if they would impose a five cent fee on paper bags. This is called a "hybrid" bag ban and it's been proven to be the most effective way to change consumer behavior.

Instead of simply switching from consumption of plastic bags to paper bags, which carry their own heavy environmental price, consumers are encouraged by the small fee to bypass the paper and bring their own reusable bags instead.

[NYC](#) and Ulster County have passed "hybrid" plastic bag ban laws. Similar laws are now pending in Albany County and the City of Troy. These proposed bans are worthy of your time, effort and support. Just showing up at a public hearing or comment period can have a huge impact. In the war we're waging for a habitable planet, plastic bans are an effective way to reduce our fossil fuel use, and impact the power and profitability of the US oil industry. The insidious connection between throwaway plastics and fossil fuels is one dirty secret that everyone needs to know about.

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Our Annual Dinner is going to be at the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar, shown above with its solar electric and solar hot water panels, situated on a “Green Roof”. The Center is surrounded by beautiful trails and vistas. It is accessible with plenty of parking. Learn more about this most energy-efficient building and the surrounding nature/trails at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/education/1835.html>