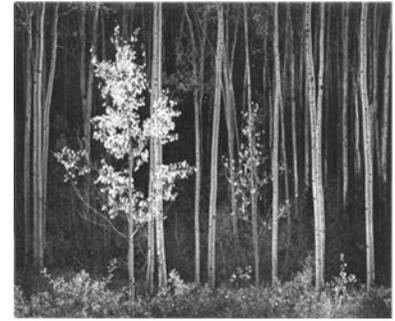




## Hudson-Mohawk Group Spring , Early Summer 2022

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“This is the American Earth”,  
photograph by Ansel Adams.  
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### **Give the Bees, Butterflies and Other Insects a Break—Sierra Club Starts NO MOW MAY**

*by Steve Davis, Pete Sheehan*

For many insects including bees, butterflies and many others, the month of May is a time of rejuvenation and hatching as the temperature warms and snow is a thing of the past. It is during this time that insects require their own habitat to survive and thrive. Delaying raking and mowing can be tremendously beneficial for these insects and other creatures who need leaves and old plant stalks for warmth and housing during early spring and then as their “home” thereafter.

With these facts in mind, the Sierra Club Hudson Mohawk Group is starting its *NoMow May* initiative. In its simplest terms, *No Mow May* is exactly that -delaying any lawn clean and mowing until after the month of May is over. Suburban lawns provide really poor habitat for our pollinators, especially bees. However, if the lawns are allowed to flower naturally, with dandelions, clover, and violets and native plants, this will give all our pollinators the chance to survive. Nearly one in four bee species is in peril of extinction and about half have shown decline according to the Center for Biological Diversity: Without overstating the severity of the situation, without bees, there is no food on a long term sustainable basis. [https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/native\\_pollinators/pdfs/Pollinators\\_in\\_Peril.pdf](https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/native_pollinators/pdfs/Pollinators_in_Peril.pdf) Lawns typically provide poor habitat for bees and other insects/creature. However, if allowed to flower, lawn weeds and clover, among other plants can provide rare spring food for bees emerging from hibernation.

The idea of not mowing lawns during May comes



A yard of a home in Appleton, WI where No Mow May was formally adopted and then made permanent.

initially from the state of Wisconsin. Two assistant professors at a local liberal arts college near Appleton, 200 miles north of Chicago, had studied how No Mow May was popular in Britain and decided to adopt it to their community. As a result of that work, Appleton became the first city in the U.S. to adopt No Mow May with 435 homes registering to take part. The good news is that the Rusty Patched Bumblebee, a federally endangered species whose range has dropped precipitously since 1990, was spotted for the first time at a downtown Appleton home last year. As one of the researchers, pointed out however, “*What you did for one month, that’s cool, that helps, but what are you going to do the rest of the summer?*”

Not surprisingly, there was resistance by neighbors when their lawns were not mowed during May and one resident, Allison Roberts relayed that one of her neighbors mowed her lawn without her per-

mission when she participated in No Mow before the City Council had adopted it. As the homeowner explained, “I’m not doing it to make anybody mad, I’m doing it because I have the right to and because it’s the right thing to do. Although it is too late for this May to get regulations passed in Capital District (and beyond—we cover 14 counties) we will begin planning in the fall of this year to get this adopted and get residents signed up to actively participate.

### **Update on Northern Watersheds Committee**

The Hudson Mohawk group established a Northern Watersheds committee to extend Sierra Club activities to the five far Northern counties of Franklin, St. Lawrence, Essex, Clinton and Hamilton. They are involved with clean water issues and are representing the club on several state watershed revitalization committees. The committee is looking for volunteers to help with a variety of activities including social media, monitoring of local planning efforts, clean water monitoring, accounting and PFOS testing. Also, they are seeking people who can help with membership, outreach and organizing outings.

The state has organized a network of Watershed Revitalization plans for all the major state watersheds, and each has a local organization to oversees it. These local organizations become very involved with a wide variety of projects that involve all aspects of water and soil health from replacing culverts to proposing new wastewater plants. Presently there is little to no formal Sierra Club representation on these organizations. We currently seek volunteers to be involved in the Lake Champlain, Upper Hudson and St Lawrence watershed organizations.

The Northern Watersheds Committee also helps other Sierra Club groups statewide learn about their own local watershed organizations and has a list of all the state watershed plans and their oversight groups. Watershed revitalization plans are typically very comprehensive can run over 500 pages and analyze all the myriad

threats to all major rivers and lakes within the watershed along with recommendations for how to deal with them. Industrial agriculture, CAFOs, wastewater and storm-water deficiencies, failing septic, increased erosion, industrial pollution, acid rain, invasives and a dozen other things have impaired perhaps 50% of NY’s lakes and waters. The increased frequency of torrential rains and increased agricultural runoff require the environmental community to increase our involvement with clean water issues at the actual, hands-on working level. The Northern Watershed Committee’s Chair is Jim Britell, and their web site is at <https://www.sierraclubhmnw.org>

### **Deforestation –Free Buying: New York State Legislation Needed**

There is a bill in the New York State Legislature referred to as the New York Deforestation-Free Procurement Act that would direct purchases by New York State away from products that further the deforestation, particularly across tropical and boreal forests. This a very important market force change needed in New York State and across the world to change buying habits that harm these natural critical carbon sinks that help slow global warning. Tropical and boreal forests provide invaluable and irreplaceable ecosystem services including the cooling of the planet, filtering water and are home to countless number of insect and animal species, some of which are dangerously close to extinction. It’s important to point out also that these forests are home to Indigenous people who have been solid stewards of the land for hundreds of years.

The sad truth is that these forests are being destroyed at the rate of approximately 40 football fields every minute. A significant but not well-known example of this is Charmin toilet paper which is responsible for the destruction of Canadian boreal forests at an alarming rate. Read about this at: <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/shelley-vinyard/tragedy-toilet-paper-and-why-charmin-must-change> This and other industrial practices are

what the legislation is designed to stop, insofar as New York state purchases (led by the Office of General Services) and other State agencies. Deforestation occurs to supply many other products Americans use including palm oil, soy, cattle, lumber and other paper products. Included in this mix of harmful outcomes of clearing tropical and boreal forests is the violence that unscrupulous companies use to force their way in to these forests, clear cut and extract lumber and in some cases use forced migration to remove rightful land owners such as those removed as the Southern U.S. border.

The Deforestation-Free Procurement Act is sponsored by NYS Senator Liz Kruger, a Democrat from Manhattan and Democratic Assembly Member Kenneth Zebrowski. Please contact your respective representatives to support this bill and contact Governor Hochul to ask for her support as well.



The remains of a clearcut boreal forest in Canada after extraction for lumber used in paper products.

### CLCPA Updates

In 2019 the New York State Legislature passed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), which requires New York to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030, and by 85% by 2050, from 1990 levels, with the goal of contributing to the global effort to arrest global warming and the destructive climate disruption which we are beginning to witness. The law also created a Climate Action Council which is charged with developing a scoping plan for reaching those climate goals.

The Climate Action Council released the 800-page, very comprehensive Draft Scoping Plan in December 2021, and held 11 public hearings around the State, in April and May, to solicit public comment and input on the Scoping Plan. The Scoping Plan can be found at: <https://climate.ny.gov/Our-Climate-Act/Draft-Scoping-Plan>. The comment deadline is June 10, 2022.

At the April 14 hearing in Albany, the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter submitted brief oral testimony, and will submit extensive written comments before the deadline. There were more than 100 people registered to speak at the Albany hearing, the 4th hearing in the series. The entire Climate Action Council was present at the hearing, listening attentively. About half way through the hearing, one of the Council members, DEC Commissioner Basil Segos, commented that the hearing was the “most civil and polite” of all the hearings so far. There apparently are very heated opinions about the subject (no pun intended). [Highlights of the Sierra Club testimony:](#)

- \* Supports Scenario 3 of the Draft Scoping Plan: Accelerated Electrification + limited combustion of alternative fuels;
- \* Supports complete transition to a clean energy economy by 2050, with a zero-emissions electric grid by 2040 .and a clear, detailed roadmap getting to a fully electrified transportation sector;
- \* The scoping plan must have stricter restrictions on gas use across all sectors, and a clear moratorium on new fossil fuel plants, clear deadlines for phasing out dirty energy, and for procuring renewables, and a 2024 mandate for all-electric new building construction.;
- \* The CAC should also set clear regulations prohibiting the expansion of proof-of-work cryptocurrency mines - especially attached to fossil fuel plants.

Of particular interest, the first speaker at the hearing was [Dr. James Hansen](#), the renowned NASA scientist, now a professor at the Columbia University Department of Earth and Environmental Science, who in the 1980s was one of the first scientists to sound the alarm on the burgeoning calamity of global warming. Hansen, who has long advocated for carbon free renewable energy, stated

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that he was “shocked” that the Draft Scoping Plan did not include nuclear energy as part of the path to achieve a carbon-free energy future. He stated that we have delayed so long getting off a fossil-fuel based energy economy, that we are now “not going to be able to ‘solar panel’ our way out of the problem.” Hansen urged the Climate Action Council to listen to the science, which he says points to a clear need for nuclear power as part of the solution to the climate crisis.

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