

Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York Summary Update October 2, 2023 to October 15, 2023

This is the latest summary update of my recent posts at [Pragmatic Environmentalist of New York](#). This another light posting couple of weeks. I have been working on several things that have taken a lot of time but will yield some interesting posts in the future.

I have been writing about the pragmatic balance of the risks and benefits of environmental initiatives in New York since 2017 with a [recent emphasis](#) on New York's [Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act](#) (Climate Act). This summary describes each of my recent posts with minimal technical jargon but includes links if you want to read the entire post. If you do not want to be on this mailing, list then let me know. Previous updates and a pdf copy of the following information are also [available](#).

[The Solution to Extreme Weather Issues is not to Reduce GHG Emissions](#) (Also [published at Watts Up With That](#))

As a meteorologist I find it frustrating that every extreme weather event is considered a reflection of “a ["new normal" due to the effects of climate change](#)”. As a pragmatic environmentalist, it is even more frustrating when a report comes out criticizing New York's infrastructure resiliency to minimize the effects of extreme weather but fails to pick up the tradeoffs between resiliency infrastructure investments versus reducing greenhouse gas emissions that will supposedly prevent extreme weather. This article describes an example of this dynamic: the New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) extreme weather resiliency plan.

The disconnect between MTA, the media, and even Fauss in this example is frustrating. For example, Rachael Fauss, with the good government group Reinvent Albany, [noted](#) that the investments are necessary “in this era of climate change” but misses the [point that](#) climate is what you expect and weather is what you get. Climate change had very little effect on this event and certainly not enough to cause the storm or materially change its impacts. Ultimately, throwing away money on a pointless virtue-signaling net-zero transition will likely forestall the investments needed to maintain and strengthen the resiliency of the subway system. Reducing New York GHG emissions in a quest to minimize extreme weather issues in New York is not going to work and will be counter-productive for real solutions.

One of my [pragmatic principles](#) is Russel Schussler's observation that “[We can do almost anything we want, but we can't do everything](#)”. In this instance the costs of the Climate Act's net-zero transition should be considered relative to the MTA plan. The upgrades necessary to prevent extreme rainfall events and storm surge from flooding New York's subway system will be enormous but at the end of the day those investments would have a measurable effect. In order to get to net-zero, the costs will be an order of magnitude greater than “enormous” with no hope for a measurable effect on severe weather. I agree with Rachel Fauss: “it is essential that we prioritize capital projects based on objective measures of need, not politics”.

[Offshore Wind Lulls and Energy Storage Conundrum](#) October 5, 2023

A recent [article](#) by Ed Reid prompted me to put together this post. Reid compared different Offshore Wind (OSW) developer estimates of the capacity factor of a couple of projects and found inconsistencies. This article compares his results with [Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act](#) (Climate Act) OSW projections. I also address energy storage implications associated with OSW.

Renewable energy developers describe the output of their projects in terms of the number of homes served. However, the developers ignore the support needed to provide electricity to the homes served when the wind isn't blowing.

Supporters of OSW tout the higher availability of offshore wind as a big benefit. This article explains that the problem becomes more acute when shorter-term extended renewable resource lulls are considered. OSW will perform better than other renewable resources during periods when the energy is not critically needed, the key point is that when it is needed most, OSW will fail at the same time New York's onshore wind resources fail. All indications are that this problem extends into the adjoining control areas so they cannot be counted on. Addressing this issue is a critical reliability consideration. If not addressed correctly then the grid will fail when needed most and people will freeze to death in the dark.

[Articles of Note October 15 2023](#)

I also published a list of links to relevant articles and included the link to one video. This [interview of Judith Curry](#) by John Stossel is a good overview of the climate science hype.

The big renewable energy development news this past week was the decision by the Public Service Commission to turn down a [request](#) by New York renewable energy developers. Times Union writer [Rick Karlin](#) summarizes:

At issue was a request in June by ACE NY, as well as Empire Offshore Wind LLC, Beacon Wind LLC, and Sunrise Wind LLC, which are putting up the offshore wind tower farms.

All told, the request, which was in the form of a filing before the PSC, represented four offshore wind projects totaling 4.2 gigawatts of power, five land-based wind farms worth 7.5 gigawatts and 81 large solar arrays.

All of these projects are underway but not completed. They have already been selected and are under contract with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, or NYSERDA, to help New York transition to a clean power grid, as called for in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, approved by the state Legislature and signed into law in 2019.

Developer response suggests that "a number of planned projects will now be canceled, and their developers will try to rebid for a higher price at a later date — which will lead to delays in ushering in an era of green energy in New York". Karlin also quotes Fred Zalcman, director of the

New York Offshore Wind Alliance: “Today’s PSC decision denying relief to the portfolio of contracted offshore wind projects puts these projects in serious jeopardy,”

When things calm down I am going to address this topic because it has implications to other Climate Act implementation components.

Finally, the September [edition](#) of Climate Fact Check debunks ten bogus climate claims from last month. There is a description of the analysis [here](#).