



Department of
Environmental
Conservation



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DEC ANNOUNCES 14 NEW CERTIFIED CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES

Actions Support State Mandate to Obtain 70 Percent of Electricity from Renewable Sources by 2030 and Nation-Leading Goals of Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act

Governor's Proposed \$3 Billion Restore Mother Nature Bond Act and \$33 Billion, Five-Year Commitment to Fight Climate Change Can Help Communities Address Climate Challenges

Certified Communities Are Models for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Building Local Climate Resilience

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos today announced the latest round of certified Climate Smart Communities across New York State that are taking bold steps to mitigate and adapt to climate change. With more than 600 action submissions received from 23 communities, 14 local governments successfully met criteria to be recognized as climate leaders. Thirteen communities achieved bronze level certification and Suffolk County attained the silver level, demonstrating the increasing local interest in following New York State's nation-leading efforts to address the impacts of climate change through existing initiatives like the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act and Climate Smart Communities Program, as well as through new proposals like Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's \$3 billion Restore Mother Nature Environmental Bond Act.

DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos said, "Despite endless attempts by the federal government to ignore the climate crisis, Governor Cuomo remains steadfast in his commitment to ensure that New York is prepared for unprecedented weather events that threaten our communities. These Climate Smart Communities understand the urgency to reverse climate change and build a more resilient New York for generations to come. As we continue to seek innovative ways to integrate climate change into daily decision making, it's thrilling to see these communities demonstrate how their bold actions lead to success."

At Governor Cuomo's direction, DEC and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) recently held the first-ever meeting of the Climate Action Council, created after Governor Cuomo signed the nation-leading Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) into law 2019. The CLCPA establishes aggressive and necessary greenhouse gas reduction requirements that will put New York on a path to carbon neutrality by mid-century. In addition, the CLCPA includes commitments to disadvantaged communities to ensure the State's transition to cleaner energy resources benefits all New Yorkers.

New York's newest certified Climate Smart Communities are:

Capital District

Town of Lake George (bronze)

Village of Lake George (bronze)

City of Saratoga (bronze)

City of Watervliet (bronze)

Central New York

Town of Cazenovia (bronze)

Long Island

Town of Hempstead (bronze)

Suffolk County (silver), and one of only three silver-certified communities in the state

Hudson Valley

City of Beacon (bronze)

Village of Hastings on the Hudson (bronze)

Town of Marbletown (bronze)

Town of New Paltz (bronze)

Village of New Paltz (bronze)

Village of Rhinebeck (bronze)

Town of Saugerties (bronze)

Demonstrating an admirable commitment to ongoing action on climate change, the town of Saugerties and city of Watervliet renewed their existing 2019 certifications to increase their number of points.

The specific actions that each certified Climate Smart Community took to achieve certification are available at the [Climate Smart Communities website](#).

In order to be certified, every community must show that it has an active climate action task force that includes municipal and citizen representatives. Many certified communities get points for installing electric vehicle charging stations and putting solar on municipal buildings. Suffolk County, for example, has nine solar energy installations totaling more than 270 kilowatts of capacity. Most certified communities also complete greenhouse gas inventories that calculate emissions at the local level and help them identify how best to help New York State meet the aggressive greenhouse gas limits laid out in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

Started in 2009, the Climate Smart Communities program provides guidance and technical support to local governments to take locally driven climate action. The first step communities take is to register by passing a pledge to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. Currently there are 294 local governments that have passed the Climate Smart Communities pledge, representing more than 8.7 million New Yorkers. The certification program was launched in 2014 to document and celebrate the accomplishments of leading communities. Since 2014, New York State has designed 50 certified Climate Smart Communities.

The Climate Smart Communities program is jointly sponsored by the following seven state

agencies: DEC, NYSERDA, New York Power Authority, Department of State, Department of Health, Department of Transportation, and Department of Public Service. For more information, visit the [Climate Smart Community website](#).

In January, Governor Cuomo announced the new [\\$33 billion five-year plan to combat climate change](#), which includes the proposed \$3 billion Restore Mother Nature Bond Act. Projects supported by the Bond Act would help address impacts communities across the state will experience as climate change advances by improving water quality, reducing the potential for harmful algal blooms, protecting drinking water across the state, and enhancing habitat which acts as carbon storage powerhouses. These major investments continue New York's national environmental leadership, advance essential projects to protect the state's water, air and natural resources, prevent damages from flooding, and help communities capitalize on the economic returns of environmental funding.

Governor Cuomo is advancing the nation's most aggressive climate and clean energy initiatives, putting the state on a path to being entirely carbon-neutral across all sectors of the economy and establishing a goal to achieve a zero-carbon emissions electricity sector by 2040, faster than any other state. It builds on New York's unprecedented ramp-up of clean energy including a \$2.9 billion investment in 46 large-scale renewable projects across the state, the creation of more than 150,000 jobs in New York's clean energy sector, a commitment to develop nearly 1,700 megawatts of offshore wind by 2024, and 1,700 percent growth in the distributed solar sector since 2012.

The CLCPA mandates nation-leading clean energy targets: nine gigawatts of offshore wind by 2035, six gigawatts of distributed solar by 2025, and three gigawatts of energy storage by 2030, while calling for an orderly and just transition to clean energy that creates jobs and continues fostering a green economy. The CLCPA also directs New York State agencies and authorities to collaborate with stakeholders to develop a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 85 percent from 1990 levels by 2050 and aim to invest 40 percent of clean energy and energy efficiency program resources to benefit disadvantaged communities, achieving 70 percent renewable energy by 2030.

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