

Land of Opportunity

# The American Response To Climate Change

The Adirondack Model: Using Climate Change Solutions to  
Restore a Rural American Economy

## Conference Co-Chairs

Jamie Rogers, Mayor, Lake Placid  
Ross Whaley, President Emeritus, SUNY ESF

## Host

The Wild Center/Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks  
45 Museum Drive Tupper Lake, NY  
518.359.7800

November 18 & 19, 2008

Produced by [USCLIMATEACTION.ORG](http://USCLIMATEACTION.ORG)

## ADVISORY COUNCIL (IN PROGRESS)

Tom Both	Chairperson	Adirondack Harvest
Cali Brooks	Executive Director	Adirondack Community Trust
Mike Carr	Director	Adirondack Nature Conservancy
Michael C. DeWein	Technical Director	Building Codes Alliance Project; Alliance to Save Energy; Energy \$mart Park Initiative
Roger A. Dziengeleski	Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer	Finch Paper LLC
Dan Fitts	Executive Director	Adirondack Research Consortium
Jeff Forward	President	Richmond Energy Associates
Peter Frumhoff	Director of Science and Policy; Chair of the Northeast Climate Impacts Assessment	Union of Concerned Scientists
David Gibson	Executive Director	Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks
Ann Heidenreich	Executive Director	Community Energy Services
Jennifer Holdereid	Owner and Manager	Golden Arrow Resort
Brian Houseal	Executive Director	Adirondack Council
Peter Iwanowicz	Director of Climate Change Office	NYS DEC
Mark Lichtenstein	Director of Operations & Outreach	Syracuse Center for Excellence in Energy and Environmental Systems / EPA Region 2 Environmental Finance Center
Betsy Lowe	Region 5 Chief	NYS DEC
James McKenna	President	Lake Placid & Essex County Visitor's Bureau
Bill McKibben	Author	
Terry Martino	Executive Director	Adirondack North Country Association

Larry Master	Chief Zoologist (retired)	NatureServe and The Nature Conservancy
John Mills	President	Paul Smith's College
Sue Montgomery	President	Community Power Network
Corey		
Ed Murphy	Executive Director	Workforce Development Institute
William Porter	Professor and Director	Adirondack Ecological Center SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry
Stephanie Ratcliffe	Executive Director	Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks (The Wild Center)
Gail Rogers Rice	President	North Country Community College
Todd Smith	Chairman	Adirondack Sustainable Communities
Peter Stein	General Partner	Lyme Timber
Tim Stout	VP, Energy Efficiency	National Grid
Curtis F. Stiles	Chairman	Adirondack Park Agency
Neil Woodworth	Executive Director	Adirondack Mountain Club

*Council in formation.*

This outline is a working document describing a conference that will address how a region of the United States can galvanize communities, small and medium-sized businesses, government and citizenry to take action on climate change. The Conference will give participants an opportunity to create a replicable action plan that will address how a region can respond to climate change while promoting economic development ("green jobs"), energy efficiency, use of alternative fuels and renewable energy sources, and carbon sequestration through the regions forests. A common element underscoring all of these topics will be to develop creative and innovative ways to change habits and behavior to deal with climate change as an urgent problem.

## **BACKGROUND**

Agreement is growing that human-caused climate change is having and will have profound effects on life on Earth. As time passes without significant action to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the opportunity to manage the risks diminishes rapidly. Higher concentrations of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases increase the likelihood of climate change that will alter the capacity of the natural world to absorb and rebound from those disruptions and reduce the quality of life for most of the world's population.

## **THE ADIRONDACK OPPORTUNITY**

The Adirondack region can provide a meaningful and compelling case for how the people, communities and businesses in a large area can turn the effort to limit the effects of climate change into an economic opportunity. The actions that need to be taken to address climate change - from designing more livable communities, with jobs, housing, and recreational opportunities all within easy reach, to improving the efficiency of buildings, creating local green collar jobs, improving self reliance in energy, building regional renewable energy capacity, investing in local fuel sources and local food sources, and improving the capacity of regional lands and forests to sequester carbon – are all actions that can build resiliency into the economy of the Adirondacks. There are examples elsewhere in the world where this transition has already begun.

There are serious and urgent problems facing this region including aging and inefficient buildings, escalating fuel costs for heating homes, out-migration of youth and skilled residents, limited employment opportunities and struggling local economies that often depend on tourism as a primary economic driver. Climate change that turns winter snows into winter rains will also have a serious impact. Growing numbers of the region's residents are working to address these problems. The urgent need to take action on climate change could be the force that helps them succeed.

The six-million acre Adirondack Park is home to 130,000 people who live year-round in the 103 towns & villages scattered throughout the Park. Eight million visitors travel to the area each year. The Adirondack region has the potential to be a model in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for taking action to avoid a crisis and in the process building a better economy. It can also be a high profile showcase and an example of how climate mitigation and economic advancement can go hand in hand. And it can serve as a powerful educational experience for the millions of visitors each year, amplifying the changes that Adirondackers have made in their own lives and communities.

The Adirondacks may have special advantages that allow it to succeed. Their people and communities have a history of independence and self reliance that can encourage community-based energy and food production systems. The people of the Adirondacks are also not traditionally profligate users of energy. The similarity between the economies and the respective challenges of most of the region's towns and villages allows solutions to be replicated across many communities. There is also a history in the region of conservation and respect for nature.

This conference is designed to launch the actions that will create an economically driven response to climate change mitigation that would make the Adirondacks a model for rural America.

## CONFERENCE OBJECTIVE

### Design a Climate Action Plan for the Adirondacks

This may include:

- Specific action recommendations for individuals, communities & enterprises
- Detailed climate change-driven economic opportunities & benefits for the region
- Concrete time-bound goals for efficiency improvements in buildings & transportation
- Alternative fuels and small scale power generation options
- The role of Adirondack forests and natural systems in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions
- Adaptation measures for local governments and economies in a changing climate
- Role of local governments
- Policy recommendations for the region and the state
- **Identification of priority messages and strategies for broad communication efforts**
- Creation of an ongoing structure to forward action after the Conference

## CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

The Conference will bring together more than 150 leaders from businesses, local and state government, academia, Adirondack non-profits, and experts in climate mitigation in the areas of building efficiency, alternative fuel sources, small-scale power generation technologies, transportation, natural systems and resources, and economic development.

An invitation to participate in the Conference will be extended to New York Governor David Paterson and selected local, regional, and state government officials.

## TIMING

The Conference will take place on November 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008, following a national Conference addressing climate change held at The Wild Center in June of 2008. The research, findings and recommendations from this national conference will help inform the work and the outcomes of the Adirondack Conference.

The Conference will be held after the national presidential election and during a political transition that will likely determine whether New Yorkers will ambitiously tackle climate change as an urgent national and global issue, and

whether we will translate the response into a powerful economic engine and, ultimately, possible energy independence for the nation.

## **CONFERENCE FOCUS AREAS**

To focus the conversations within the conference, four Sector Working Groups have been developed to work on defined topic areas. There is necessarily some overlap between some of the topic areas, and these groups will work with each other, prior to and throughout the conference, to ensure that effective and workable recommendations come out of each group. Each Sector Group will develop a working memorandum that will include analysis of current facts, options and constraints, communication strategies for the public, suggested actions, and government & policy recommendations prior to the conference.

Each group will identify the policy and legislative changes that need to be implemented in order to incentivize and support their recommendations. Each group will also include the adaptation measures that may need to be implemented in a changing Adirondack climate (e.g. less snow in the winter months). Each group will address the specific challenges that face rural populations in a transition to a lower carbon economy.

The topics are:

- Energy Efficient Buildings and Contractor Preparedness
- Alternative Fuels (including cellulosic biofuels) and Small-Scale Renewable Power Generation Opportunities
- Local ‘Green’ Economic Development and the Role of Local Governments
- The Role of Natural Ecosystems and Resources: Current and Future Impacts, Mitigation Potential, and Gaps in our Knowledge.

## **ADVANCE INFORMATION**

The working memoranda from each Sector Working Group will be circulated in advance to participants in order to suggest a structure for the discussions at the conference.

A greenhouse gas emissions audit of the Park has been commissioned as Phase 1 of an Adirondack Carbon Offset Project. The findings from that research will be circulated in advance and presented in the conference during Plenary session #3, “The Adirondack Opportunity.”

## **PROGRAM**

*DAY ONE: FROM GLOBAL TO LOCAL*

8:30 Breakfast at The Wild Center

The Conference will begin with a number of plenary presentations by recognized experts on climate change. The first session will present the latest science on climate change, and focus on current information on projected ecological and economic impacts on the planet, scaling down to projected impacts on the US and the Northeast. The second session will present advanced information behind projected impacts of climate change on the Adirondack region, including ecological and economic impacts. The third session will briefly present the national opportunities for green houses gas reduction. The last will present an overview of the opportunities, including an “abatement curve” specific to the Adirondack region, illustrating improvement across the buildings sector; regional renewable power generation options as well the job creation requirements to drive the changes that will be necessary for the region. It will also review existing and likely policy responses to climate change in New York with a focus on policy relevant to non-urban areas.

9:15 Opening Remarks

Ross Whaley, Conference Co-Chair

9:25 Plenary Presentation 1: Confronting Climate Change in the Northeast and the Adirondacks: From Global to Local

*Peter C. Frumhoff*, Director of Science and Policy, Union of Concerned Scientists; Chair, Northeast Climate Impacts Study

10:15 Plenary Presentation 2: Projected Economic and Ecological Impacts on the Adirondacks and New York's North Country – "The Adirondack Climate Change Atlas"

*Jerry Jenkins*, Forest Issues Coordinator, Wildlife Conservation Society Adirondack Communities and Conservation Program [invited]

11:15 Break

11:30 Carter Bales, Co-Chair of National Conference; A national approach to Green House Gas Reduction (invited)

12:30 Lunch in the Great Hall for Conference Participants  
[Concurrent Lunch Presentation in the Boreal Forest - Tools for Adirondack Leaders in Energy Efficiency (NYSERDA and Green Community Technologies speakers): Focus on what works for Small communities]

#### *Afternoon Concurrent Workshops*

The Conference will shift focus to options for mitigating and adapting to climate change, including specific options in critical carbon impact areas as well as specific options for rural communities. The working groups will come together at the Conference with a well developed working memorandum already established through prior meetings of the group leaders. The workshop will produce a priority list of regionally actionable steps vital to reducing carbon emissions as part of a replicable regional strategy, including the implications on the Adirondack Park management. The workshops will pay special attention to ways that the action steps provide economic opportunity. The working group sessions will generate a list of recommendations based upon the working memorandums. The recommendations from these working groups will be presented in the Conference's final session and reported in the Conference's proceedings document. The workshops will include leaders in each field. These sessions will be documented but not recorded (to promote open and productive discussion).

- ***1:45 Concurrent Workshop: Energy Efficient Buildings & Contractor Preparedness***

The workshop will produce a prioritized list of actions to dramatically improve the energy efficiency of Adirondack homes, businesses, and government buildings. It will focus on incentives and training for builders and contractors. It will focus in particular on ways that the action steps provide economic opportunity for the area and its residents. The action plan will include training opportunities for local builders and contractors, including LEED certification. This group is also exploring the opportunity to do an initial pilot project in one Adirondack community to provide a demonstration of the economic and climate mitigation benefits of these changes. .

- ***1:45 Concurrent Workshop: Alternative Fuels & Biofuels; Small-Scale Power Generation***

A workshop addressing the impacts and benefits of alternative fuels and renewable energy with a focus on the specific application to rural areas as well as the potential for small-scale power generation technologies such as hydro, wind and solar in rural areas. Specifics will be identified, including the potential for small scale wind, hydro, and solar electricity generation in the Adirondacks; appropriate locations and applications; funding challenges; incentive programs and available grants; legislative barriers; and the potential for cellulosic biofuels, wood pellets, other local fuel sources and the infrastructure needed to develop and support them. The economic benefits will be defined as well.

- ***1:45 Concurrent Workshop : Local 'Green' Economic Development and the Role of Local Governments***

This workshop will distill the economic opportunities identified in each of the other Working Groups. It will define and outline detailed new job creation needs, new business opportunities, training, certification, skill-building, and educational needs. It will lay the groundwork for local governments to take a leadership role in developing more

independent and lower carbon local economies. It will include defining the value to the Park of “greening” the tourism industry and outlining the steps required to become a Green tourism destination. It will include a segment on local food production and the health and economic benefits of producing and buying local food. It will focus on local green job creation, and providing opportunities for young people to remain in the area. .

- **1:45 Concurrent Workshop: *Natural Ecosystems and the role of Adirondack Lands and Forests in Carbon Mitigation***

This workshop will address specific climate change implications, including shifting ecological communities, and adaptation options in the Adirondacks. Current ‘sink’ or sequestration statistics will be developed, and the economic value to the state will be calculated. Land and forest management policies to optimize the carbon sequestration potential of the Adirondack lands and wilderness will be identified.

4:45 Concluding remarks – Jamie Rogers Conferene CoChair

5:00 Reception at The Wild Center

6:00 Dinner at The Wild Center

#### *DAY TWO: IMPLEMENTATION*

8:30 Breakfast at The Wild Center

The fifth plenary will present specific mitigation and adaptation actions that will require additional regionally-based or statewide actions, and those that can be effectively implemented by individual towns and villages. .

9:30 Plenary Presentation 5: Case Studies of success stories, climate action plans and activities from other communities

*Sarah Nilsson, Head of Strategic Environmental Issues, City of Vaxjo, Sweden (invited)*

The city of Vaxjo, in southern Sweden, is considered the world’s greenest city, having reduced its carbon dioxide emissions by 35% since 1996, with a goal of reaching a 50% reduction by 2010, and 70% by 2025. Carbon emissions per person in Vaxjo are only 3.5 tons per year, versus 19 to 20 tons per person annually in the U.S.

The bulk of the city’s energy requirements are met from biomass produced from wood waste.

*Bob Sheppard, Clean Air – Cool Planet, Climate Action on the Part of Communities around the U.S. [invited]*

*Margit Henschel, E&E/ICLEI, Climate Action Planning for the Adirondack Region. [invited]*

10:45 Working Groups reconvene to finalize recommendations from Day 1 Sector Sessions

12:30 Lunch in the Great Hall for Conference Participants

[Concurrent Lunch Presentation in the Boreal Forest - Tools for Adirondack Leaders in Green Community Planning (Dept. of State / DEC speakers on Shared Services/Smart Growth): Focus on what works for Small communities]

1:45 Working Groups continue to finalize recommendations from the morning session

2:45 Break

3:00 Plenary Session 6: Toward the Adirondack Solution: Presentation on Practical Solutions & Recommendations from each of the Working Groups & their conclusions from the sessions on Day 1 and Day 2 morning.

The afternoon session will look at ways the collective potential solutions to climate change can be practically addressed in the Adirondacks in a coherent and systematic way. Leaders from each of the concurrent working group sessions will present the results of their deliberations over the past two days. They will present ways that each sector can move forward, and what policies might advance the speed with which solutions can be brought to reality.

5:00 Concluding remarks

5:00 Departure

## SECTOR ADVISORY TEAMS

Each of the seven tracks of the Conference will have its own Advisory Team. These sector leaders will lead content development and help shape attendance for each sector. (*Sector Sponsors and Advisory Teams in formation – those listed here are committed.*)

### **Energy Efficient Buildings & Contractor Preparedness**

#### Advisory Team

Mike DeWein\*  
Ann Heidenreich\*  
Karen Davidson  
Virginia Carter  
John Eldridge  
Leah Filo  
Robert Hammond  
Greg Hart  
Carol Murphy  
Pam Musk  
Marcy Neville  
Kerri Ziemann

BCAP/Alliance to Save Energy  
Community Energy Services  
Davidson Design, Inc.  
The Nature Conservancy

The Wild Center  
ORDA  
Workforce Development Institute  
Alliance for Clean Energy New York  
Audubon New York  
Keene Town Planning Board  
The Wild Center

### **Alternative Fuels & Small Scale Renewable Power Generation Opportunities**

#### Advisory Team

Amanda Lavigne\*  
Alan Hipps\*  
Jim Connolly  
Jim Coutant  
Thomas Hall  
Greg Hill  
Norm Howard  
Richard Morse  
Keith Wells

St. Lawrence University  
Housing Assistance Program of Essex County  
Adirondack Park Agency  
NYS DEC  
NYS DEC  
Adirondack North Country Association  
RCPA  
Ecology & Environment Inc  
Saranac Lake Chamber of Commerce

### **Green Economic Development and the role of Local Governments**

#### Team is in Development

Jeanne Ashworth\*  
Maureen Sayles\*  
Tom Both  
Gail Brill  
Peter Brinkley  
Michael Conway  
Sue Montgomery Corey  
Graham Cox  
Steve Erman  
Jenn Holdereid  
Brian Houseal  
Nancy Howard  
Jen Kretser  
Terry Martino  
Kara Page  
Dave Perkins  
Stephanie Ratcliffe  
Zoe Smith

Town of Wilmington  
North Country Community College  
Adirondack Harvest  
The Green Circle  
Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks  
Adirondack Economic Development  
Community Power Network  
Audubon New York  
Adirondack Park Agency  
Golden Arrow Lakeside Resort  
Adirondack Council  
The Wild Center  
The Wild Center  
Adirondack North Country Association  
The Wild Center / ESPI  
New York State Snowmobile Association  
The Wild Center  
Wildlife Conservation Society

### **Natural Resources**

Colin Beier\*  
Dan Spada\*  
Susan Arnold

SUNY-ESF  
Adirondack Park Agency  
The Wild Center

Tom Berry  
Dirk Bryant  
Ray Curran  
John Davis  
Mike DiNunzio  
Roger Dziegeleski  
Dave Gibson  
Michale Glennon  
Wendy Hall  
Jerry Jenkins

Leslie Karasin  
Dan Kelting  
Craig Milewski  
Dan Plumley  
Curt Stager  
David Winchell

The Nature Conservancy  
The Nature Conservancy

Adirondack Council  
Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks  
Finch Paper  
Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks  
Wildlife Conservation Society  
Adirondack Wildlife.org  
WCS, Adirondack Communities and  
Conservation Program  
Wildlife Conservation Society  
Adirondack Watershed Institute  
Paul Smith's College  
Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks  
Paul Smith's College  
Department of Conservation (DEC)

\*denotes Sector Advisory Team Lead

## POST CONFERENCE INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION

### *Conference proceedings:*

Document detailing Conference proceedings will be distributed.

### *Public relations:*

A complete package detailing the Conference's plans to bring climate change action to ground over an extensive part of New York will be distributed to national and international media in advance of the Conference. It is expected that the story, and follow up on progress will generate media coverage.

### *Website:*

Conference staff will develop a website detailing the Conference findings. The website will be updated by the professional staff set up to manage the ongoing monitoring of progress on each of the Conference's recommendations.

## ABOUT THE HOST

The Wild Center is a natural history museum set on a 31-acre campus in New York's Adirondack Park. The Museum was designed by Hellmuth Obata + Kassabaum, one of the world's foremost architectural firms. The Wild Center facility includes a range of indoor spaces and the technological infrastructure ideal for conference use.

## THE ADIRONDACK LOCATION

The Adirondack Park is the largest park in the lower 48 states. It provides a natural backdrop and positive precedent for New York leadership in environmental issues. It is appropriate to use the Adirondacks as an example of how climate change can be slowed. The Adirondacks are famously a place that was once stressed by human activity, and then allowed to recover before the wilderness and its ecosystem services were severely diminished.

The first policies protecting American forests came from botanists working in the Adirondacks. The voters of New York created the setting for the largest effort in American history to manage lands when they voted to make nearly one fifth of their land a park after extractive industries threatened the Adirondack ecosystem. The legislation that created the first cap-and-trade policies was spawned when acid rain threatened Adirondack lakes and forests.

It is appropriate that the Adirondacks, the largest intact natural system in the Eastern United States, should be an important part of a plan to put New York ahead of the curve in addressing climate change.