

Volume 5 Issue 1
January 2023

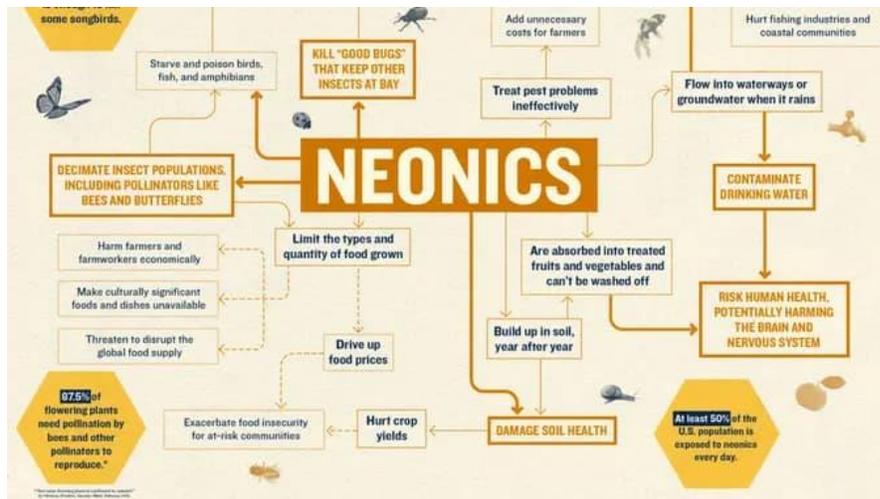


Climate Smart
Communities
Certified Bronze

New Paltz Climate Smart Newsletter

January Climate Smart *Meetup*

Toxic Neonics and How New York Can Protect Its Bees, Birds, and Public Health



Tuesday
January 3, 2023

6:00 to 7:30 PM

Online event
[Click here](#)

This webinar will explain the science behind the threats posed by neonicotinoid pesticides ("neonics") to

pollinators, biodiversity, and our own health as well as neonics' surprising prevalence in our environment. The popular pesticides contaminate New York soil, water, and plant life on a nearly unprecedented scale, driving mass losses of birds and bees, and raising alarm bells for a whole host of wildlife, clean water, and the health of all New Yorkers. Widespread neonic pollution also stands as a barrier to critical climate solutions such as regenerative agriculture and may also impair microbial life critical to carbon sequestration in soils. The webinar will provide information on legislation we can impact—the [New York Birds & Bees Protection Act](#)—a bill that would eliminate the vast majority of neonics entering New York's environment by prohibiting wasteful and unnecessary neonic uses.

You might be wondering "What is the climate connection?" Neonics are a considerable impediment to a much-needed climate solution: regenerative agriculture. A growing body of research shows neonics' harms to a broad array of beneficial insects that are key to regenerative agriculture (e.g., pollinators, pest predators, and soil decomposers). In a more direct connection, there is some research showing that neonics interfere with the soil microbial life critical to nutrient cycling and carbon sequestration—though this research is still nascent. If we want regenerative agriculture to work as a climate solution (and we really do), we are going to have to

do something about the widespread and unnecessary poisoning of our landscapes by neonic pollution.



Presenters:

Lena Faustel is a Contract Organizer with the NRDC focusing on outreach surrounding the Birds and the Bees Protection Act. Faustel was formerly a program coordinator of the Squash Hunger Program at the healthy food access non-profit Capital Roots, working to coordinate the re-distribution of donated and purchased local food to food assistance programs across the Capital Region and Mohawk Valley.

Dan Raichel is Acting Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council's Pollinator initiative, which focuses on protecting our nation's bee populations from the ever-growing threats to their health and existence—in particular, the use of bee-toxic pesticides. Raichel was formerly co-director of NRDC's Community Fracking Defense Project and an advocate for the cleanup of industrial pollution in the New York region.

December Climate Smart Book Club: **Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right**

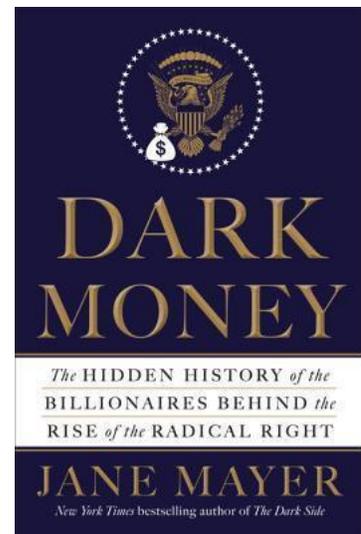
Tuesday, January 17, 2023

7:00 PM to 8:30 PM EST

Online event:

[Click here for link](#)

Why is America living in an age of profound economic inequality? Why, despite the desperate need to address climate change, have even modest environmental efforts been defeated again and again? Why have protections for employees been decimated? Why do hedge-fund billionaires pay a far lower tax rate than middle-class workers? Our book selection this month answers those questions. The full title is *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* by author Jane Mayer.



The conventional answer to the above questions is that it is a popular uprising against “big government” led to the ascendancy of a broad-based conservative movement. But as Jane Mayer shows in this powerful, meticulously reported history, a network of exceedingly wealthy people with extreme libertarian views bankrolled a systematic, step-by-step plan to fundamentally alter the American political system.

The network has brought together some of the richest people on the planet. Their core beliefs—that taxes are a form of tyranny; that government oversight of business is an assault on freedom—are sincerely held. But these beliefs also advance their personal and corporate interests: Many of their companies have run afoul of federal pollution, worker safety, securities, and tax laws.

The chief figures in the network are Charles and David Koch, whose father made his fortune in part by building oil refineries in Stalin’s Russia and Hitler’s Germany. The patriarch later was a founding member of the John Birch Society, whose politics were so radical it believed Dwight Eisenhower was a communist. The brothers were schooled in a political philosophy that asserted the only role of government is to provide security and to enforce property rights.

When libertarian ideas proved decidedly unpopular with voters, the Koch brothers and their allies chose another path. If they pooled their vast resources, they could fund an interlocking array of organizations that could work in tandem to influence and ultimately control academic institutions, think tanks, the courts, statehouses, Congress, and, they hoped, the presidency. Richard Mellon Scaife, the mercurial heir to banking and oil fortunes, had the brilliant insight that most of their political activities could be written off as tax-deductible “philanthropy.”

These organizations were given innocuous names such as Americans for Prosperity. Funding sources were hidden whenever possible. This process reached its apotheosis with the allegedly populist Tea Party movement, abetted mightily by the *Citizens United* decision—a case conceived of by legal advocates funded by the network.

The political operatives the network employs are disciplined, smart, and at times ruthless. Mayer documents instances in which people affiliated with these groups hired private detectives to impugn whistle-blowers, journalists, and even government investigators. And their efforts have been remarkably successful. Libertarian views on taxes and regulation, once far outside the mainstream and still rejected by most Americans, are ascendant in the majority of state governments, the Supreme Court, and Congress. Meaningful environmental, labor, finance, and tax reforms have been stymied.



Jane Mayer spent five years conducting hundreds of interviews—including with several sources within the network and scoured public records, private papers, and court proceedings in reporting this book. In a taut and utterly convincing narrative, she traces the byzantine trail of the billions of dollars spent by the network and provides vivid portraits of the colorful figures behind the new American oligarchy.

Dark Money is a book that must be read by anyone who cares about the future of American democracy.

For those planning ahead, our February Climate Smart Book Club book pick is ***Electrify: An Optimist’s Playbook for Our Clean Energy Future*** by Saul Griffith, David Marantz, et al

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Task Force

The New Paltz Battery Energy Storage Taskforce is working on a draft of the proposed laws that would apply to Tier 1 and Tier 2 Batteries installed in Town of New Paltz zones. Tier 2 is classified as being greater than 600kW/h power level and the principle use model is connected to electric transmission lines which aids in reliability, resilience, stability, and sustainability by avoiding use of fossil fuel generators at times of peak demand. A Tier 2 battery may also be used for backup in a behind the meter use in industrial sites, just as a Tier 1 battery would be used for a residence or commercial install. Once the BESS Taskforce has completed a final draft it will be provided to the Town Building department for additional review and modification and that would become the version that is submitted to the Town Board process for approval.

Climate Smart Schools Task Force

Janelle spoke at a recent New Paltz School Board meeting on the climate impacts as well as the exposure to diesel fumes from school buses on students' health, learning and school attendance. She recommended passage of the proposed electric school bus assessment on the agenda. The assessment was unanimously approved by the board. No meeting of the Climate Smart Schools Task Force was held in December. The January meeting date has not yet been determined.

Clean Heating and Cooling Campaign

Eleanor Peck, the Mid-Hudson Clean Energy Communities Manager & CEC Coordinator, presented information at the December New Paltz Climate Smart Task Force meeting on the *Clean Heating and Cooling Campaign*. We learned that there is an Action Grant of \$5,000 currently available to communities that promote installation of residential and commercial heat pump systems and other energy-efficient equipment and insulation. Each community's campaign must generate five energy efficiency projects including at least three heat pump installations. Both the Town and Village can have its own campaign. The Village and Town must submit a scoping document for approval to NYSERDA. Only projects initiated and completed after NYSERDA approval will meet the grant requirements. There is a limited number of grants still available, so we have to move quickly. We are in the process of completing the scoping documents and submitting them to NYSERDA.

Sustainable Hudson Group Purchasing Program

Ben Eckstein from Sustainable Hudson Valley presented information to the New Paltz Climate Smart Task Force regarding the Group Purchasing Plan which is featured on the next page of this newsletter. The coaching, as well as the discounts, offered through the program should make the purchase of heat pumps and other energy efficient equipment even more attractive. We have been told that we can combine the above described Clean Heating and Cooling Campaign with the Group Purchasing Program.



ROUP PURCHASE PROGRAM

Kick the Fossil Fuel Habit

This program supports the New Paltz 2030 Climate Action Plan in providing communities with discounts on renewable energy products and services. By signing up, you can start saving money on your energy bill with clean and efficient technologies.



Discounts of 5-6% to help you get off fossil fuels with:

- Home Energy Audit
- EV Charging Stations
- Insulation
- Heat Pumps

GET OFF FOSSIL FUELS AND START SAVING TODAY!

Sign up and learn more information at sustainhv.org



New Paltz 2030:
Our Climate Action Plan



New Paltz Climate Smart November Calendar

Tuesday January 3rd at 6:00 – 7:30 pm Climate Solutions Meetup – Toxic Neonics and How New York Can Protect Its Bees, Birds, and Public Health Online event

[Click here](#)

Tuesday January 10th at 10:00 am BESS Task Force. Contact Joe Londa at londajm@gmail.com if you want to participate & need the link

Tuesday January 17th at 7:00 – 8:30 pm Climate Smart Book Club: *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* Go to our Meetup page for the link!

Thursday January 19th
5:30 to 8:00 pm 2023
Clean Power Guide Launch
Event, 5 Pine Grove
Avenue, Kingston NY

Tuesday January 24th at
7:00 – 8:30 pm (date not
confirmed) monthly Climate Smart Task Force meeting



2023 Clean Power Guide Launch Event
January 19th, 5:30 - 8:00 pm
5 Pine Grove Avenue, Kingston, NY

5:30 - 6:00
Vendor Expo, networking and refreshments

6:00 - 7:00
Panel conversation, Q/A with Energy Coaches Samrat Pathania and Tom Konrad from New Yorkers for Clean Power.

7:00 - 7:30
Informal Q/A, expo, conversations continue

CLEAN POWER GUIDE 2023

The poster features a photograph of a person in overalls and a hat, holding a rolled-up document, standing on a grassy area in front of a house with a chimney. The text is arranged in a clean, modern font with a color palette of green, blue, and black.

If you have any questions about anything in this newsletter, please contact Janelle Peotter, Climate Smart Coordinator at newpaltzclimatesmart@gmail.com



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Reduce your use of single use!

Bring your own container, such as this tiffin, to restaurants for take out or left overs. We have tiffins for sale through New Paltz Climate Smart or the Climate Action Coalition at the wholesale cost of only \$15

BYOC:
Bring Your Own Container!

The image shows a silver, three-tiered tiffin container with a handle on top. The text is in a mix of red, green, and black fonts, with a clear call to action.