



**Genesee Finger Lakes Region
Comprehensive Climate Action Plan**

Community Engagement Plan

January 2025

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Overview

Building off the Priority Climate Action Plan (CAP), which was developed in early 2024 and focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in three sectors (Municipal Operations, Transportation, and Buildings), the Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Planning Commission (GFLRPC) is undertaking the development of a Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) for the nine-County Genesee-Finger Lakes region (Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates). This CCAP will collaboratively define goals and strategies to reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions and climate pollution across all sectors.

1.1 Project Background

The Genesee-Finger Lakes Region is already experiencing impacts from climate change — such as more intense and frequent rain events, flooding, drought, and extreme heat — all of which pose a threat to public health, infrastructure, and the region's economy. The development of a CCAP will help the Genesee-Finger Lakes region:

- Tackle damaging climate pollution while supporting the creation of good jobs and lowering energy costs for families;
- Accelerate work to address environmental injustice and empowering community-driven solutions in neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by the impacts of climate change and climate pollution; and
- Deliver cleaner air by reducing harmful air pollution in places where people live, work, play, and go to school.

1.2 Role of Community Engagement in the CCAP

GFLRPC is seeking broad community feedback to inform the goals and strategies that will reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions and climate pollution in the region. GFLRPC is particularly seeking input from environmental justice populations, which include low-income communities and communities of color, which have and will continue to be disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change.



Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the Community Engagement Plan

The goal of this engagement plan is to build and sustain two-way communication with residents, community leaders, and other stakeholders. The Community Engagement Plan will identify target audiences (including low-income residents, limited English proficient communities, disadvantaged communities, and communities of color), preliminary issues and opportunities, an outreach framework, engagement goals and objectives, and methods for promoting the project and ensuring meaningful participation across the diverse region.

The plan is designed to be a living document with purposeful flexibility. It may evolve over the course of the project as the effectiveness of tools and techniques is evaluated. If necessary, the plan will be modified to better suit the project and broader community.

2.2 Engagement Principles

Accessibility: An accessible process will ensure that a diverse group of stakeholders are engaged. Accessibility will be prioritized by collaborating with stakeholders like service providers, nonprofits, and activists to connect with the public. We will aim to hold events in transit and ADA accessible locations, make digital engagement ADA compliant, and provide ASL interpretation. Translation and interpretation services will also be provided in Spanish.

Education: People who are educated about climate action will be better able to participate in the process. All engagement will include clear communication of the context, advantages, disadvantages, and tradeoffs of decisions. Technical language will be avoided where possible and explained where necessary.

Transparency: Transparency honors the public and reduces risk to the project. We will articulate the scope of the public's influence in the project and the results of their input, and we will communicate with the public throughout the process.



Introduction [contd.]

2.3 Evaluation of Outreach Activities

Establishing measurable outcomes provides insights on how public engagement efforts can be improved, where new strategies need to be implemented to reach environmental justice populations, and in determining where outreach strategies are succeeding. Measurable outcomes will be monitored by the Engagement Project Team throughout the planning process and will include survey response rates that are representative of the population in the region; the number of participants at in-person and virtual engagement events; number of visitors to the project website; and the level of the public's satisfaction that their input is reflected in the Plan.

2.4 Pre-Engagement Interviews

In order to gain agency and stakeholder perspectives, Highland Planning conducted interviews with stakeholders to inform the creation of this Plan.

Pre-engagement interviews were conducted in October and November 2024 with a handful of key stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the current key challenges and opportunities related to the Climate Action Plan.

Here were the questions asked:

- What are the current issues and opportunities associated with climate action planning?
- As we are beginning the public outreach for this project, with whom should we be sure to talk?
- Based on your knowledge of the local community, what are the best ways to engage people?
- Where should we hold meetings (general areas)?
- Are there any hot button issues that we should be aware of before engaging the community?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share/discuss?

Stakeholders interviewed were:

- Haylee Ferington, EDF
- Karel Titus, STEPS
- Yasmin Guevara, Monroe County
- Tish Williams, GCC
- Maura Slocum, Genese Valley Conservancy
- Amanda Grisa, Genesee Land Trust



Introduction [contd.]

The following themes arose from the interviews:

Current issues:

- Lack of political will
- People don't think climate change is real
- Climate change is a big issue and people aren't aware of the impact they can have as individuals
- Hard for municipalities to take advantage of grants due to match requirements
- Climate action can appear to be government overreach (concerns about more regulations, increase in cost of living)
- Need for more education, use of less technical language

Current opportunities:

- Green energy jobs/businesses

Others to talk to:

- Climate Solutions Accelerator
- Soil & Water/NRCS
- County Environmental Management Councils
- DEC Region 8
- GLOW
- County legislators
- County planning departments
- Local municipalities
- Citizens groups like Lima Green Team and Friends of Horseshoe Solar
- County Agricultural Protection Boards

Best engagement techniques:

- Frame around economic resiliency
- Be at community events
- Engage residents directly
- Mailings
- Liaisons/ambassadors that are trusted individuals for different stakeholder groups
- County FSA offices/Farm Bureau meetings

Where to hold meetings:

- Penn Yan
- Batavia (Livingston/Wyoming)
- Rochester
- Canandaigua (close to I-90)
- Seneca Falls
- Waterloo
- Geneva



Introduction [contd.]

- Victor
- Henrietta (Genesee, Monroe, and northern Ontario)
- GCC (central or satellite campuses)
- SUNY Geneseo (off 390)
- Libraries
- Gun clubs

Hot button issues:

- Solar/renewable energy taking agricultural land out of production
- SMI landfill
- HABS in Seneca Lake
- Flooding

Summaries of their interviews are included in Appendix A. The key themes from these pre-engagement interviews were used to inform the creation of this Community Engagement Plan.

2.5 Engagement Strategies

This Engagement Plan proposes several different strategies to engage the community, including:

- Steering Committee (see Section 4 for more details)
- Industry and LIDAC Community Focus Groups (see Section 5 for more details)
- Community and Municipal Surveys (see Section 6 for more details)
- Public Workshops (see Section 7 for more details)
- Pop-Up Events (see Section 8 for more details)

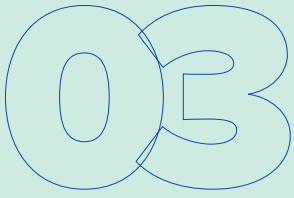


Introduction [contd.]

2.6 Engagement Schedule

Engagement is scheduled to take place over approximately a one-year period from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025. Engagement activities in Fall 2024/Spring 2025 will focus on raising awareness of the project, sharing the results of the greenhouse gas inventory, and gathering feedback on proposed emissions reduction strategies. Engagement activities in Spring/Summer 2025 will focus on presenting and receiving additional feedback on the refined emissions reduction strategies. The detailed engagement schedule is below.





Engagement Project Team

The Engagement Project Team is responsible for organizing, leading, and documenting all public outreach activities associated with this project. The Engagement Project Team also works closely with community partners to identify and implement outreach activities.

3.1 Participation

The Engagement Project Team is comprised of staff from GFLRPC and Highland Planning LLC. The names, titles, responsibilities and contact information for each Engagement Project Team member are summarized in the table to the right.

Jenny Loewenstein, GFLRPC

Role: Oversees the CCAP and all public engagement
Email: jloewenstein@gflrpc.org

Rachel Scudder, GFLRPC

Role: Oversees the CCAP and all public engagement
Email: rscudder@gflrpc.org

Heike Jacob, Highland Planning

Role: Plans, coordinates, and executes public engagement
Email: heike@highland-planning.com

Liz Podowski King, Highland Planning

Role: Oversees and directs public engagement
Email: liz@highland-planning.com

Stephanie Hyde, Highland Planning

Role: Assists with public engagement
Email: stephanie@highland-planning.com

3.2 Meeting Format

The Engagement Project Team will meet on a regular basis to review the status of the project, discuss feedback received from the public, plan the logistics of upcoming public events, and respond to any issues or opportunities as they arise. All meetings will be held virtually.



Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will meet with GFLRPC monthly, and other members of the Engagement Project Team as needed, to provide insight and guidance on the development of the CCAP and public outreach. The Steering Committee is comprised of representatives from the City of Rochester, Genesee Transportation Council, RTS, Climate Solutions Accelerator of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region, and County governments. The Steering Committee members are listed below.

- Anne Spaulding, City of Rochester
- Ben Levine, Wayne County
- Brittany Czworka, Yates County
- Cory Winters, Orleans County
- Emily End, Yates County
- Eric Farr, RTS
- Felipe Oltramari, Genesee County
- Jae Darling, Seneca County
- James Bragg, Wyoming County
- Jeff Ayers, Yates County
- Jill Henry, Seneca County
- Jim Stack, Genesee Transportation Council
- Kristen VanHooreweghe, Climate Solutions Accelerator of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region
- Madison Quinn, Monroe County
- Mary Underhill, Livingston County
- Omar Aponte, Climate Solutions Accelerator of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region
- Rusty Korth, RTS
- Shalini Beath, City of Rochester
- Thomas Lyon, Ontario County



Industry and LIDAC Community Focus Groups

Highland Planning will organize eight focus groups to discuss review draft strategies for each sector. Each focus group will meet three times. At the first meeting, the focus groups will review the sector-specific results of the greenhouse gas inventory, the preliminary draft strategies for their sector, and discuss the importance of climate action in their sector. At the second meeting, the focus groups will review the draft CCAP, including the revised draft strategies for their sector. At the third meeting, the focus groups will review the final draft CCAP.

5.1 Participation

Stakeholders to participate in focus groups will be identified by the Engagement Project Team. The Engagement Project Team will be responsible for sending invitations to stakeholders to participate in the focus groups. Focus groups will not be open to the general public. A list of the members of each focus group can be found in Appendix B.

5.2 Meeting Format and Schedule

The focus groups will be held virtually using Zoom in January, March, and June 2025.



Community and Municipal Surveys

Two rounds of community and municipal surveys will be used to gather broad input on climate action priorities from residents across the nine-county region. The feedback gathered from the surveys will be used to shape strategies for the Climate Action Plan.

6.1 Participation

The community survey will be open to the public. A separate survey will be open to municipal officials/staff.

6.2 Promotion

The Engagement Project Team will work to broadly advertise and disseminate the surveys. Highland Planning will create postcards, flyers, and social media posts with QR codes advertising the surveys in English and Spanish that can easily be distributed by project partners. The surveys will also be promoted at the pop-up events as well as by the strategies described in Section 10.

6.3 Survey Format

The community surveys will be available online on the project's website (see Section 10) as well as in hard copy form. Hard copies of the survey will be made available at least one of the pop-up events. Online and hard-copy versions of the community survey will be available in both English and Spanish.

6.4 Schedule

The first round of the surveys will launch in October 2024 and will remain open through January 2025. The second round of surveys will launch in late Spring 2025, to gather feedback on the draft strategies, and will close in Summer 2025. Highland Planning will analyze the results of the surveys within two weeks of when they close.



Public Workshops

Four (4) workshops will be used to educate the community about the Climate Action Plan process and gather input on greenhouse gas reduction strategies. All workshops will be distributed across the nine-county region.

7.1 Participation

All public workshops will be open to the public. For in-person workshops, we'll secure ADA-compliant venues in convenient locations. Virtual options will be offered to expand reach. Language services will be provided as needed.

7.2 Promotion

The Engagement Project Team will work to broadly advertise the public workshops. Highland Planning will create press releases, postcards, flyers, and social media posts in English and Spanish that can easily be distributed by project partners.

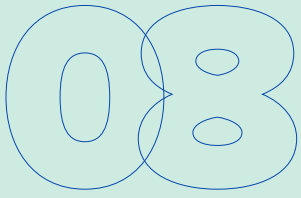
7.3 Meeting Format, Schedule, and Locations

The meeting format of all workshops will offer interactive formats that encourage broad participation.

Workshop dates and locations will be determined by the Engagement Project Team. Potential workshop locations include:

- April 2025 – West Side Workshop (GCC- Batavia)
- July 2025 – Central/North Location Workshop (Monroe County)
- August 2025 – Central/South Location Workshop (Canandaigua, northern Livingston County (Mt. Morris), Naples)
- October 2025 – East Side Workshop (CPRG Local Government Workshop in Newark)





Community and Municipal Surveys

Highland Planning will design and staff up to (4) four pop-up engagement events at high-traffic locations across the region.

8.1 Participation

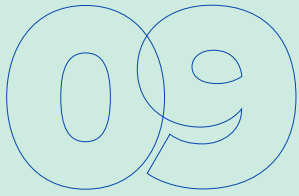
For each pop-up event, Highland Planning will develop the necessary materials (e.g., handouts, brochures, postcards, etc.) that effectively communicate with the public key information and solicit their feedback. Other members of the Engagement Project Team or Steering Committee may also participate.

8.2 Meeting Format, Schedule, and Locations

All events will be open to the public and will be held at times and locations most convenient to the community, as determined by the Engagement Project Team. Potential pop-up locations include:

- Climate Solutions Accelerator Summit, April 4-5
- Geneva Green Committee's annual Earth Day April 26
- County fairs (Summer)
- Rochester Public Market





Communications Plan

Effective promotion of the Climate Action Plan is critical to gathering broad public input and ensuring a transparent planning process. This section describes the ways in which information and opportunities for input will be shared with the public.

9.1 Community and Municipal Partners

Throughout the entire project, the Engagement Project Team will work closely with the Steering Committee, focus group members, and other community and municipal partners to leverage their existing networks and relationships. The Engagement Project Team will maintain a database of these contacts and will share updates and materials via email in advance of public workshops, pop-ups, and other engagement activities.

9.2 Social Media Campaign

Social media posts promoting the community survey and public events will be created by Highland Planning and shared with GFLRPC to share via their social media, website, and eblast. Examples of planned social media posts include weekly spotlights of municipalities taking climate action, as well as sector-specific spotlights.

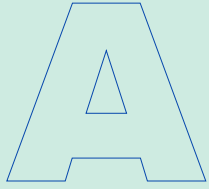
9.3 Webpage

To enhance the reach and transparency of public outreach for this project, Highland Planning will regularly update the Social Pinpoint webpage with links to the survey, workshop materials, and other pertinent information.

9.4 Branded Materials

Highland Planning will work with the Engagement Project Team to develop the below-mentioned communication materials and content to inform the public about the Climate Action Plan and solicit feedback over the course of the project. All public events will be advertised at least two weeks in advance.

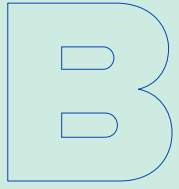




Appendix A: Full Pre-Engagement Interview Responses

To protect the confidentiality of the interviewees, the full pre-engagement interview responses have been redacted.





Appendix B: Focus Group Members

Agriculture and Working Lands

- Allyson Jones-Brimmer, Northeast Dairy Producers Association
- Amanda Grisa, Genesee Land Trust
- Craig Kahlke, Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Danielle Cummins, Genesee County Farm Bureau
- Emmaline Long, Yara North America
- Jack Klapper, Livingston County Farm Bureau
- Janet van Zoeren, Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Jared Elliott, Genesee Soil & Water Conservation District
- Jason Oliver, Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Justin Jackson, New York Wine & Grape Foundation
- Ken Estes, Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Lorna Wright, Genesee Land Trust
- Mary Austerman, NY Sea Grant/Cornell University
- Maura Slocum, Genesee Valley Conservancy
- Nadia Harvieux, Hobart and William Smith Colleges
- Nancy Glazier, Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Rachel Chrostowski, WNY Land Conservancy
- Tim Welch, Genesee Soil & Water Conservation District
- Tonya Van Slyke, Northeast Dairy Producers Association

Buildings

- Bret Garwood, Home Leasing
- Carol Wheeler, City of Rochester
- Christina McPike, WinnCompanies
- Patti LaVigne, Livingston County Environmental Management Council
- Shawn Burr, Rochester Housing Authority

Electric Power

- Carly Norton, NYSEG
- Christina Ficichia, AVANGRID
- Haylee Ferington, EDF
- Joseph Sayre, RG&E
- Leslie Vishwanath, National Grid
- Michael Jachles, AVANGRID



B

Appendix B: Focus Group Members [contd.]

Industry and Economic Development

- Andreas Finken, Arkema
- Bill Bacon, Livingston County Economic Development
- Chris Suozzi, Genesee County Economic Development Center
- Dave Hewitt, Seneca County IDA
- Greg Albert, Empire State Development
- Jean Lucas, Eco Waste Solutions
- Laura Fox O'Sullivan, Empire State Development
- Leah George VanScott, Greater Rochester Enterprise
- Matt Hurlbutt, Greater Rochester Enterprise
- Melody Warner, Carestream
- Michael Dobel, Orleans Economic Development Agency
- Mike Lipar, Finger Lakes Economic Development Center of Yates County
- Nate Salpter, Sweet Farm
- Philip Bove, Sunnking
- Robyn Brookhart, Liberty Pumps
- Ryan Davis, Ontario County Office of Economic Development
- Suzanne Hunt, Hunt Country Vineyards

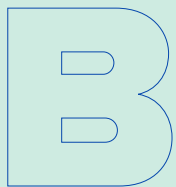
Low-Income and Disadvantaged Communities (LIDAC)

- Holly Sienkiewicz, Common Ground Health
- Janielle Crocker, Connected Communities
- Karel Titus, STEPS
- Patti LaVigne, Livingston County Environmental Management Council
- Peter Varquez, Keuka Housing Council
- Tammy Westbrook, Connected Communities

Materials Management

- Alex Pierce, Livingston County Environmental Management Council
- Carla Jordan, Ontario County Department of Sustainability and Solid Waste Management
- Caroline Berkemeier, Genesee County
- Caroline Ding, New York State Pollution Prevention Institute at RIT
- David Pannucci, Waste Connections
- Jackie Ebner, Resource Recycling Systems
- Kali Smith, Sunnking Sustainable Solutions
- Karen Nozik, Goodwill Finger Lakes
- Kyle Black, Waste Connections
- Madison Quinn, Monroe County Department of Environmental Services
- Robert Putney, Impact Earth
- Ryan Staychock, Cornell Cooperative Extension
- Yasmin Guevara, Monroe County Department of Environmental Services





Appendix B: Focus Group Members [contd.]

Transportation

- Cody Donahue, Reconnect Rochester
- Dave Belaskas, RTS
- Devin Blue, Wyoming County Highway Department
- Edward Campany, Livingston County
- Jim Stack, Genesee Transportation Council
- Jodi Binnix, Genesee Transportation Council
- Kevin Rooney, Wayne County Highway Department
- Krist Mooney Graves, Greater Rochester Clean Cities
- Laura Wadhams, Genesee County Highway Department
- Mary Staropoli, Reconnect Rochester
- Olivia Arnone, Causewave Community Partners
- Rusty Korth, RTS
- Tim Hens, Genesee County Highway Department

Workforce Development

- Darlene Necaster, SUNY Geneseo
- Darren Burdick, NYS Department of Labor
- Dave Seeley, Rochester Works
- Jay Lazorony, GLOW Workforce Development Board
- Jen Geiger, NYS Department of Education
- Julia Murphy, NYS Department of Labor
- Kerry O'Connor, Greenspark Solar
- Lee Koslow, Rochester Works
- Maria Velaquez, Genesee Community College
- Mike Woloson, Finger Lakes Works
- Nick Brown, Greenspark Solar
- Samantha Adikson
- Tish Williams, Genesee Community College



