

DURING CLIMATE WEEK, DEC ANNOUNCES 26 NEW CERTIFIED CLIMATE SMART COMMUNITIES

Seven Communities Achieve Program's Highest Level of Certification, Complete Actions to Improve Air Quality and Increase Resilience

Amendments Proposed to Climate Smart Communities Project Regulations Available for Public Comment Until Dec. 9, 2025

Photos Available [Here](#)

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Amanda Lefton today announced a total of 26 communities are newly certified under New York State's Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Certification program for helping to save energy, reduce flood risk, address extreme heat, and develop other plans to demonstrate climate leadership. The announcement was held in the City of Kingston, one of seven municipalities achieving the program's highest level -- the most communities certified silver in a single round in the program's history.

“Certified Climate Smart Communities across the state are essential partners in implementing Governor Kathy Hochul’s resiliency and sustainability initiatives and achieving New York’s clean air, clean water, environmental justice, and climate mitigation goals,” **said Commissioner Lefton**. “As New York and other states face more extreme weather and costly damages due to climate change, communities representing more than 92 percent of all New Yorkers recognize the importance of taking smart actions for a stronger, safer, more resilient future.”

Communities certified as part of the [CSC certification program](#) accumulate points for planning and implementing actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve community resilience. The town of Austerlitz, town of Mamaroneck, village of Montour Falls, and village of Rhinebeck all achieved silver certification for the first time. In addition, the city of Beacon, village of Hastings-on-Hudson, and city of Kingston were recertified

silver. A total of 19 communities were certified bronze as part of this round of certification, including nine new communities. They join a total of more than 165 certified Climate Smart Communities across the state.

Silver certified and recertified communities include the following:

- Town of Austerlitz in Columbia County – new silver
- City of Beacon in Dutchess County – recertified silver
- Village of Hastings-on-Hudson in Westchester County – recertified silver
- City of Kingston in Ulster County – recertified silver
- Town of Mamaroneck in Westchester County – new silver
- Village of Montour Falls in Schuyler County - new silver
- Village of Rhinebeck in Dutchess County – new silver

Bronze certified and recertified communities include the following:

- Village of Ardsley in Westchester County – recertified bronze
- Town of Gallatin (Columbia County) – new bronze
- Town of Lake George in Warren County – recertified bronze
- Village of Lake George in Warren County – recertified bronze
- Village of Lima in Livingston County – new bronze
- Village of Marcellus in Onondaga County – new bronze
- Village of Millbrook in Dutchess County – new bronze
- Town of New Paltz in Ulster County – recertified bronze
- Village of New Paltz in Ulster County – recertified bronze
- Town of Niskayuna in Schenectady County – new bronze
- Village of Pittsford in Monroe County – new bronze
- Town of Pound Ridge in Westchester County – recertified bronze
- Town of Richmond in Ontario County – new bronze

- City of Saratoga Springs in Saratoga County – recertified bronze
- Village of Sea Cliff in Nassau County – new bronze
- Village of Sleepy Hollow in Westchester County – recertified bronze
- City of Syracuse in Onondaga County – new bronze
- City of Watervliet in Albany County – recertified bronze
- City of Yonkers in Westchester County – recertified bronze

Local Climate Actions

Climate action at the local level often brings benefits to historically underserved neighborhoods. Disadvantaged communities cover a significant portion of several municipalities certified today. All of the Village of New Paltz is designated as disadvantaged, according to the [criteria](#) established by the New York State Climate Justice Working Group. Approximately 73% of the population of the City of Beacon, 69% of Sleepy Hollow, and 79% of Yonkers live in census tracts designated as disadvantaged communities.

Approximately 65% of Kingston’s population lives in census tracts designated as disadvantaged. The City was awarded several Climate Smart Communities grants for local climate projects including \$1 million for green infrastructure [improvements at Dietz Stadium](#), where today’s announcement was held; \$850,000 for construction of “complete streets” elements on Broadway, with a two-way protected bike lane and improved traffic signals; \$750,000 for design and construction of Franklin Street complete streets features with new sidewalks, bicycle lanes and crosswalks; \$538,000 for an organics diversion program; a citywide refrigerant management program, a pedestrian and bicycle master plan, and organic waste management plan.

Other examples of community actions and projects completed as part of the CSC certification program include a [municipal compost facility](#) in the village of Rhinebeck with support from a DEC program grant, and [urban planning project](#) with local students as part of the village’s comprehensive plan, which resulted in a federal grant to install new crosswalks and sidewalks.

The town of Austerlitz created a documentary titled “[Voices of Austerlitz](#)” with long-time residents sharing first-hand observations of climate impacts and environmental challenges in their neighborhoods, which resulted in engagement and actions around climate issues.

Saratoga Springs converted most of its streetlights to LEDs, added electric vehicles to their fleet and charging stations thanks to funding through New York State Energy Research and Development Authority’s (NYSERDA) Clean Energy Communities program, and published a municipal greenhouse gas inventory supported in part by a DEC grant.

CSC Program

Established in 2009, the interagency CSC program provides guidance and technical support to local governments pursuing climate action. The CSC program is led by DEC with support from NYSERDA, Department of Health (DOH), Department of State (DOS), Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Public Service (DPS), Division of Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), and New York Power Authority (NYPA).

Launched in 2014, the CSC Certification program recognizes the leadership and accomplishments of communities advancing climate projects. The first step to becoming a certified Climate Smart Community is to register by pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. To date, 460 local governments representing nearly 17.9 million New Yorkers have adopted the Climate Smart Communities pledge.

To achieve certification, communities must demonstrate an active task force of residents and municipal representatives advancing local climate action. Most certified communities complete greenhouse gas inventories that calculate emissions at the local level and identify actions to help New York State achieve its greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. Prior to this round, 148 communities were certified bronze, and 21 communities were certified silver.

For a full list of actions completed by these and other certified communities, visit the online certification reports found on the [Climate Smart Communities website](#).

NYSERDA and DEC are working together to support towns, cities, villages, and county governments in New York State that play a vital role in achieving the State's clean energy and climate initiatives. Local governments' achievement of Climate Smart Communities certification is supported through NYSERDA's [Clean Energy Communities program](#), which recognizes and rewards community leadership by providing technical resources, tools, and financial support for the completion of clean energy projects. Twenty-five of the Climate Smart Communities recognized today are designated as Clean Energy Communities.

NYSERDA President and CEO Doreen M. Harris said, "Congratulations to these 26 municipalities that are striving to create a healthy and sustainable environment for their residents and businesses by reducing their energy use and investing in future-focused clean energy solutions. DEC's Climate Smart Communities program and NYSERDA's Clean Energy Communities program gives us the opportunity to partner with and support local leaders in implementing high-impact energy actions that help build community-wide resiliency and provide economic opportunity across the state."

New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation President & CEO Maureen A. Coleman said, "EFC applauds the recipients of this distinguished designation and the DEC for their partnership in turning Governor Hochul's bold resiliency agenda into concrete, local action. We're proud to see that many of these Climate Smart Communities have benefitted from EFC's grants for crucial stormwater and resilience projects that paved the way to this recognition, including \$8.5 million in green infrastructure funding for four projects in the City of Kingston in the last six years. Today's announcement is a testament to the power of partnerships, innovation, and the state's commitment to a cleaner, more resilient New York."

City of Kingston Mayor Steve Noble said, "We are honored to be re-certified as a Silver Climate Smart Community. As the first city in New York State to reach the Silver status, we are thrilled to join other communities and be recognized again for our ongoing sustainability work. This program has unlocked grant funding and technical assistance that has helped us pursue many of our climate-related goals. I thank Governor Hochul and Commissioner Lefton for helping us achieve so many vital projects here in Kingston."

DEC Climate Smart Communities Funding Programs

In 2016, DEC launched [the CSC Grant program](#). This funding supports municipalities in completing a subset of certification actions and implementing projects that reduce emissions and build resilience to extreme weather.

In May, [DEC announced \\$22 million available](#) in grants for municipalities. Eligible projects reduce flood risk by relocating or retrofitting critical infrastructure, reduce emissions from food waste, and engineering feasibility studies, among many other actions that target decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and improving health and community resilience.

DEC also manages the [Municipal Zero-Emission Vehicle \(ZEV\) program](#), which offers grants to install electric vehicle charging stations for public use and rebates toward the purchase or lease of electric vehicles for municipal fleets.

New Changes to Climate Smart Communities Proposed

DEC's Office of Climate Change today also announced a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and a 60-day public comment period on proposed amendments to align regulations with statutory changes, expand eligible applicants, and make the program more adaptable to future conditions.

The three main components to the Climate Smart Community Projects include the Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Rebate Program, the ZEV Infrastructure Grant Program, and the Climate Smart Communities Grant Program. The proposed amendments align the program with legislative changes to the State Environmental Conservation Law (ECL) and restructure the rule to simplify and clarify the three separate programs. The revisions also would expand the number of entities eligible to receive grants under Climate Smart Community Projects, consistent with the ECL and the Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act. The public comment period starts on Oct. 1, 2025, and ends on Dec. 9, 2025, at 5 p.m. A public hearing will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 2 at 2 p.m. Visit [DEC's website](#) for more information.

Regional Climate Smart Communities Coordinators

In April, [DEC announced the extension of an initiative](#) to accelerate local climate action by

providing free assistance to municipalities working to reduce harmful emissions, adapt to climate change, and improve health and quality of life for residents. DEC is contracting with three regional partners to serve as regional Climate Smart Communities Coordinators to provide free technical assistance to any local government that seeks to develop and implement successful local climate initiatives across New York State.

These coordinators use the CSC Certification program as a roadmap for local climate mitigation and adaptation. Coordinators provide outreach and support for climate action engagement, as well as capacity building, education, and training. They also help facilitate local planning for climate mitigation and adaptation, support the implementation of local climate projects, convene engagement sessions about state climate policy, and more. Visit the [CSC website](#) for more information.

New York State's Climate Agenda

New York State's climate agenda calls for an affordable and just transition to a clean energy economy that creates family-sustaining jobs, promotes economic growth through green investments, and directs a minimum of 35 percent of the benefits to disadvantaged communities. New York is advancing a suite of efforts to achieve an emissions-free economy by 2050, including in the energy, buildings, transportation, and waste sectors.

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