

# Carbon's Big Foot and You

Here's How We Can Make a Difference



**\*Welcome to the 2021 League of Women Voters NYS Convention\*  
In the Daily News:**

**Climate Change (global warming) represents an undisputed challenge calling us to action.**

Q: What are major contributing factors to climate change? A: Burning fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) deforestation, agriculture and wasting food. The more fossil fuels we extract, the more forests we fell, the more fields we plow under and food we waste, the greater the heat trapping greenhouse gases we unleash into the atmosphere.

Q: How do we identify the culprits? A: Watch *The Culprits Behind Our Changing Climate*, link below.

Q: What are the effects? A: Impacts to human and animal health, the weather, our food supply, safety and national security. See books, websites and videos recommended, below.

Q: What actions can we take to reduce our carbon footprint? How can we engage others to act?

A: Read on and please share.

When it comes to tackling climate change, do your best and go back to basics. Think globally; act locally.

## **Tips to benefit your Pocketbook, your Health and the Earth's Climate**

1. Calculate your carbon footprint: <http://www.nature.org/greenliving/carboncalculator/index.htm>
2. Calculate your water footprint to save water and energy: <https://www.watercalculator.org/>
3. Arrange for a professional energy audit offered by your state or local utility. For example, in NY go to: [www.nyserda.ny.gov](http://www.nyserda.ny.gov)
4. Save energy use at home: <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/energy-saver>  
<http://www.energystar.gov>
5. Temperature: Detect air leaks. Caulk and weather strip. Properly ventilate. Insulate. Inspect and clean heating and cooling equipment. Use ceiling fans. Turn the thermostat down in winter. Minimize use of air conditioning in warmer months. Explore installing a heat pump; or air source heat exchange system.
6. Lighting/Electricity: Review electrical bills for trends and spikes. Depending upon where you live, subscribe to a solar farm. Emphasize use of sunlight; and switch to energy efficient light bulbs (compact fluorescent and light emitting diode (LED)). Purchase *Energy Star* appliances; the

refrigerator, air conditioner, front loading washer/electric dryer, induction cooking and computer(s). Clean coils and adjust temperature on appliances per company directions. Use a power strip for all plug-in equipment and turn it off at the end of the day. Green your computer habits:

<https://www.meridianoutpost.com/resources/articles/green-computing-guide.php>

7. Laundry: Reduce the number of loads per week. Wash with cold or warm water. Use concentrated liquid soap. Avoid chemically scented laundry products. Line dry (at least until clothes are mostly dry) and adjust your clothes dryer to a low or moderate temperature.
8. Limit hot water use. Use the dishwasher and laundry only with a full load. Consider purchasing an energy efficient water heater; and keep the temperature down. Install low flow showerheads.
9. Reduce your Foodprint. <https://foodprint.org/>
10. Reduce Wasted Food. Before you shop, check your fridge, freezer and pantry for what's needed; make a list. Purchase day old produce, bread and cake-still yummy, save money; if you purchase in bulk, vacuum seal, can or freeze the extras to preserve these perishables. Don't toss food just because the "Best By" date has passed, trust your nose and taste buds. Limit meat and dairy-carbon's big foot looms here-and increase or replace with vegetables, fruits and grains. Serve smaller portions and try new spices to enhance leftovers. Grow your own food without using pesticides. Buy local. Swap commercially bottled water for an in-home water filter and re-usable water bottles. Donate your savings to your local food pantry. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/>
11. Transportation: Drive less; carpool, consolidate shopping trips, ride a bicycle, take public transportation and walk more. To maintain your car's efficiency, keep the tires properly inflated; drive at the speed limit (55 mph on highways is optimal); and when it is time for a new car, purchase a hybrid or go electric.
12. Plastic. We hear a lot about the plastic waste found in oceans and elsewhere; less about the large amount of fossil fuel used to produce and transport plastic items. The lesson here is to simply avoid single use plastic items. Learn more: <https://footprintusfoundation.org/>
13. Lawn and garden care. Avoid using synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and weed killers. Use a rake instead of a gas powered leaf blower. Trade a gas powered mower for a cordless electric mower. For a workout, use a manual mower. Build up the soil by using cut grass, autumn leaves and biochar on-site, as mulch. <https://www.healthyyards.org/>
14. For backyard farmers, use regenerative farming methods to sequester carbon. <https://www.onegreenplanet.org/lifestyle/build-regenerative-garden/>
15. Non-farmers: Buy food from your local farmers markets; and otherwise from farms using regenerative farming techniques.
16. Eliminate unnecessary paper: shift to paperless billing; stop receiving junk mail: <https://www.paperkarma.com/> and unwanted catalogs <https://www.catalogchoice.org/>
17. Plant a tree in your yard. <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5303.html>
18. Plan an eco-friendly wedding <https://www.treehugger.com/money-questions-ask-yourself-when-planning-wedding-4856331> <https://junebugweddings.com/wedding-blog/20-small-changes-sustainable-wedding/> and kids birthday party <https://enviromom.com/?s=birthday+party> <https://theeverydayenvironmentalist.com/eco-friendly-birthday-party-ideas/>

### **Carbon's Big Foot on your Health:**

Learn about impacts of fossil fuel industries on the environment and human health from Physicians and Scientists for Healthy Energy: "A multidisciplinary research and policy institute focused on the adoption of evidence-based energy policy." This group has performed intensive research on the impacts of methane and the consequences of fracking. <https://www.psehealthyenergy.org>

See also, Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project (EHP) a nonprofit public health organization that assists and supports residents of Southwestern Pennsylvania and beyond who believe their health has been, or could be, impacted by unconventional oil and gas development (or fracking). EHP's work also includes regions in New York where residents experience the adverse health impacts of

off-gassing from natural gas pipelines and compressor stations.

<https://www.environmentalhealthproject.org/>

**To Vanquish Carbon's Big Foot:** in general, reduce, repurpose and reuse what you consume; recycle and donate what you no longer need. Buy local. If you order on-line, select frustration-free packaging from Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/b/?&node=5521637011> Purchase second-hand clothes. Buy products with minimal packaging. Bring your own reusable bags whenever you shop including to take home leftovers when eating out. Make the most of your food: Eat. Share. Compost the Rest. Control waste: Recycle paper, plastic, newspaper, glass and aluminum cans.

### **Take Action in Your Community**

Help others insulate their homes. The Finger Lakes Climate Fund provides a model for helping others insulate by using carbon offsets. <https://www.fingerlakesclimatefund.org>

Learn what a community can do to encourage the use of heat pumps and solar panels, plus information on incentives. <https://www.solartompkins.org>; for another county-based model, see

<https://sustainablewestchester.org/>

Encourage your community to institute a green building code for new construction or renovations; use, at a minimum, the NY Stretch Code as a guide. The NYStretch Energy Code-2020 (NYStretch) is a voluntary, readily adoptable energy code that calls for higher efficiency standards in new and renovated building construction projects. Those energy cost savings will pay back the additional cost of construction in less than 10 years. [file:///C:/Users/Owner/Downloads/codes-general-fact-sheet%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Owner/Downloads/codes-general-fact-sheet%20(2).pdf)

Encourage your community to invest in sustainable transportation

<https://www.ecomasteryproject.com/sustainable-transportation/>

<https://www.energy.gov/eere/slsc/state-local-sustainable-transportation-resources>

See what's happening with electric buses in Westchester county:

<https://www.westchestergov.com/home/all-press-releases/8502-westchester-county-to-expand-its-electric-vehicle-fleet-with-1-5m-grant-from-the-us-department-of-transportation>

Start a municipal food scrap recycling program. For guidance, contact Beth Radow [enradow@gmail.com](mailto:enradow@gmail.com)

Reduce Wasted Food in your community: Learn about the NYS Food Donation and Food Scrap recycling Law, effective January 1, 2022. [https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/materials\\_minerals\\_pdf/foodscrapsleg.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/materials_minerals_pdf/foodscrapsleg.pdf)

Support a local youth farming project; establish a community vegetable garden; and encourage your district schools to install a vegetable garden. For guidance, see:

[https://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/start\\_a\\_garden.html](https://greenthumb.nycgovparks.org/start_a_garden.html) then visit your local elected representative to learn the procedure for approval and funding.

Once established, encourage the local youth farming project, community and school gardens and local residents farming their backyard to grow produce and donate a portion of the bounty to your local food pantry. <https://www.grangelarchmont.com/victory-farms>

Replace fallen trees: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4957.html>; create a tree sanctuary to honor others and memorialize loved ones who have passed away: <https://www.fs.fed.us/nrs/livingmemorialsproject/links/>

### **Books**

Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming, edited by Paul Hawken

Teacher-Friendly Guide to Climate Change, produced by the Paleontological Research Institution in Ithaca, New York

How to Talk to Your Kids About Climate Change :Turning Angst to Action by Harriet Shugarman

Grass, Soil, Hope: A Journey through Carbon Country, Courtney White

Kiss the Ground: How the Food You Eat Can Reverse Climate Change, Heal Your Body & Ultimately Save Our World, by Josh Tickell – now also a film

Paradise Lot: Two Plant Geeks, One-tenth of an Acre and The Making of an Edible Garden Oasis in the City, by Eric Toensmeier and Jonathan Bates

Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An Introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing, by Doug McKenzie-Mohr

### Websites and Videos

The Paleontological Research Institute (PRI) and its associated Museum of the Earth in Ithaca, New York has produced videos and a teacher's guide to climate change.

<https://www.priweb.org/science-education-programs-and-resources/climate-change-and-energy-videos>

A particularly good video produced by PRI is called "The Culprits Behind Our Changing Climate". It includes a discussion of the fingerprints left in the atmosphere by fossil fuel emissions and deforestation. It explains how the weight of the different CO2 molecules (due to the C12, C13 and C14 isotopes in them) give us answers to this question. Locate directly at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hb0JYdbQUTQ>

The Finger Lakes Climate Fund, organized by Sustainable Tompkins, provides a useful model for calculating your carbon offsets when travelling and then donating the money to help low income residents insulate their homes. <https://www.fingerlakesclimatefund.org>

Learn more about reducing wasted food at **Love Your Food. Eat. Share. Compost the Rest.** Links to recipes, tips, storage, food sharing and composting, plus stories about how the Larchmont/Mamaroneck, NY community (recipient of a NY DEC grant) is making the most of its food

[www.LoveYourFoodNY.org](http://www.LoveYourFoodNY.org)

For at-home gardening/farming tips, visit Cornell Cooperative Extension: <https://cals.cornell.edu/cornell-cooperative-extension/our-work/agriculture-food-systems>; <https://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/>

Learn about the NYS Food Donation and Food Scrap recycling Law, effective January 1, 2022.

[https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/materials\\_minerals\\_pdf/foodscrapsleg.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/materials_minerals_pdf/foodscrapsleg.pdf)

### Climate Emergency Declaration

Support the NYS League's Resolution on the Climate Emergency Declaration. Pass a Climate Emergency Declaration where you live—Goal: spur action, awareness and engagement and unlock potential access to emergency funds to make a difference. <https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/climate-emergency/>

Read the text, and follow progress, of H.R. 794, the proposed Climate Emergency Act of 2021

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/794/text>

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/794/all-info>



If you want to share news with sister Leagues about a local climate friendly project, have questions or want more information, contact Elisabeth (Beth) Radow, Chair -New York State League of Women Voters' Committee on Energy, Agriculture and the Environment and board member of the Larchmont/Mamaroneck League at [enradow@gmail.com](mailto:enradow@gmail.com) and Catherine Mary (Kay) Wagner, Committee member, co-president of the Tompkins County League and longtime advocate for carbon-free practices at [cmw18@cornell.edu](mailto:cmw18@cornell.edu)