

Seven environmental good things to cheer about in 2017

The Lowell Sun

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Kudos on The Sun's great idea -- an editorial considering good things that happened in 2017, despite the awful stresses we've endured. Here's seven more:

1. Massachusetts received bids for off-shore wind development to meet Legislature-mandated wind targets. I'm hopeful that, because the Supreme Judicial Court ruled the administration must make plans to meet our GWSA targets, and because the Legislature set renewable electricity production targets, and because renewable electricity prices are dropping quickly, our renewable electricity production will expand rapidly.
2. Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) governors (including Gov. Charlie Baker) decided RGGI's cap will drop another 30 percent between 2020 and 2030. Similarly, the conservative, libertarian Niskanen Center blog said in 2017 that further cuts to RGGI caps is the best way to address climate change during the Trump years.
3. Niskanen also suggested expanding RGGI to include other states. Meanwhile, New Jersey and Virginia both elected climate change-aware governors who pledged to join RGGI.
4. Baker's administration has Massachusetts participating in the Transportation & Climate Initiative, with ten other states and the District of Columbia. During 2017, TCI announced that they'll seek public input during 2018 about policies to cut transportation emissions. This news is wonderful because transportation is now Massachusetts' biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions.
- 5.

Prices for renewables continue to plummet. In 2017 in Tucson, a solar contract promised electricity at 3 cents/kWh (meanwhile cheapest U.S. fossil fuel electricity is nearly 5 cents/kWh).

6. In 2017 Baker's administration awarded \$20 million in 26 grants

for developing electricity storage. The administration also committed our utilities to installing 200 megawatts of storage capacity by the end of 2019. This is an excellent way to stabilize our grid, keep electricity prices low, and cut emissions.

7. In Congress, 31 Republicans joined 31 Democrats in the House Climate Solutions Caucus. In 2017, most caucus members voted with Democrats to stop Trump eliminating Obama regulations on methane emissions. The caucus is moving from conversations among members to defeating harmful legislation. The caucus' next phase will include proposing climate change solutions.

More citizens clamoring for climate legislation can only help. Make some noise in 2018!

JUDY WEISS

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