SCS’s work on energy: a timeline of recent events

The Sitka Conservation Society began working on local action on Climate Change and Renewable Energy in 2006. As a small, island community with an isolated electric grid, Sitka is a good “microcosm” test case for figuring out how to build a 100% renewable energy community. As an island community, it is possible for us to figure out our energy inputs and energy outputs. Also, we are small enough as a community that we can all work together to figure out what our options are and how we can work together to move forward. But, we are large enough that our infrastructure and our institutions can offer case studies that can demonstrate solutions for larger cities or communities.

The efforts that SCS has helped catalyze locally have helped Sitka become a vanguard for Alaska communities in looking beyond an oil-dependent economy to a renewable energy future with investments and policy that helps local communities. We have a long ways to go, but we have built a strong foundation and we are showing how small communities are finding solutions for global challenges.

Below is a timeline of some of the benchmarks in our work on renewable energy:

- **1958 Blue Lake Dam Constructed** generating 62,000 Mw of electricity. *Original designers made the dam “expandable” for future community growth*
- **Late 1970’s-- Green Lake dam constructed in response to 1970’s oil crisis** and with the forethought of Sitka leaders that locally produced, renewable energy would best provide long-term energy stability; Green Lake System came online in 1982 and produces 60,000 Mw hours; SCS Founder Alice Johnstone was one of the Sitka Assembly Members who initiated this project.
- **2006-- City of Sitka electrical department plans hydro expansion** in response to *increased energy demand, rising oil prices, and future oil scarcity*; investigates two options; finds that the Blue Lake Expansion “following the foresight of engineers two generations ago” gives amazing returns for a relatively small “hydro-investment”
- **2007-- City of Sitka and Sitka Conservation Society** develop a joint summer intern position to analyze and educate Sitkans on *Energy Conservation* to avoid resorting to costly diesel generation and increased carbon emissions. The intern does extensive research and produces energy conservation brochures with Yale Graduate Student in energy policy; *effects of energy conservation efforts by Sitkans are notable*. Copies of the energy efficiency brochures are available here
- **2007-- Sitka Energy Task Force forms**--- SCS is a founding member of a consortium of Sitka community members who begin to work together to combine public/private sector resources to envision Sitka’s energy future
- **2007—Sitka Mayor Marko Dapovich** signs the US Mayor’s Climate Protection Agreement
- **2007—Sitka begins investigating and studying ways to diversify energy sources using local sources** including wood-to-heat in homes and commercial buildings, fish waste to biodiesel, new hydroelectric expansion at Takatz Lake, expansion of interruptible heating; use of heat pump technology, and expanded use of electric cars
• 2008—First Electric car arrives in Sitka; local demand outstrips commercial supply as American car companies fall behind the curve—Sitkans begin “homemade” electric car conversions. Listen to a Raven Radio story on that effort here: [http://www.kcaw.org/2008/06/06/conversion-class-to-put-more-electric-cars-on-sitka-streets/](http://www.kcaw.org/2008/06/06/conversion-class-to-put-more-electric-cars-on-sitka-streets/)

• 2008—City of Sitka signs Mayor’s Agreement on Climate Change; joins “ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainable community network”

• 2008—City of Sitka Public Works and Sitka Conservation Society work with local Sitka Harvard Student Chandler O’Connell to do an inventory of Sitka’s carbon emissions and total Sitka Energy Budget: See Chandler’s final presentation to the Sitka Assembly Here:
  o Read the full report: here

• 2008—City of Sitka forms a Climate Action Task Force to identify ways that Sitka can reduce carbon emissions. Sitka Conservation Society staff member Paul Olson and SCS board member Steve Ash serve on the task force.

• 2009—Sitka is not awarded a State of Alaska AEA grant to do feasibility work on a Takatz Lake Project but proceeds with planning and field work otherwise; SCS submits scoping documents outlining positive and negative aspects of the Takatz Lake Project. Read our comments: Here

• 2009—Blue Lake Expansion project continues and proposes an expeditious timeline; community pools resources to support efforts

• 2009—SCS invests in two summer positions on energy:
  o Lexi Fish, local Sitkan with a degree in political science, is hired to campaign for the US Congress to qualify Salmon-friendly hydro projects as renewable so that Sitka can get federal support for our renewable energy investment. During her initial three month position, Lexi meets with both Alaskan Senators and delivers the community’s message on the need for investment in renewable energy. Here is a link to an interview Lexi did on Raven Radio on her internship: here
  o Travis Clemens, an Energy Policy and Engineering Student from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, works as part of the Electric Department in a joint position to evaluate what renewable energy technologies could work in Sitka. Here is a link to Travis’s his report: here


• 2010: The Sitka Conservation Society partners with the City of Sitka Public Works department to sponsor a joint position that will help implement the City Climate Action plan as well as help move forward City efforts in Energy Efficiency. Local Sitkan Juliet Agne serves on this position as part of an Americorps Volunteer program. Juliet staffs the Climate Action Task force which releases the Sitka Climate Action Plan in June of 2010: read the plan

• 2010 The Sitka Conservation Society produces the documentary “Rain Power” that tells the story of Sitka’s efforts to take action on climate change and become a renewable energy powered community. The film specifically asks law makers to consider salmon-friendly
hydropower part of the nation’s renewable energy solutions and to support communities like Sitka who are planning salmon-friendly hydro projects. To watch the film, click: http://vimeo.com/16635495

• **2011**: Sitka Conservation Society continues to partner with the City of Sitka Electric Department to create a joint staff position that works to provide outreach materials that educate Sitkans on how they can become more energy efficient, how they can conserve energy, and what state and federal programs are available for resources or financial assistance. This position extends from the Summer of 2011 with Americorps support to a full time, year-long position that extends to 2012

• **2012**: SCS publishes “The Future of Energy in Sitka” report that outlines energy use over the next twenty years and scenarios for meeting energy needs and recommendations of needed efforts. Read the report: here

• **2012**: SCS and many other community groups work to continue to develop and implement actions and initiatives outlined in the Climate Action Plan. These efforts include:
  - Conversion to Energy Efficient Streetlights
  - Energy Efficient Re-model of Pacific High
  - Materials Re-use Center
  - Municipal Composting Effort
  - Serve locally caught fish in Schools
  - Energy Efficient Affordable Housing: http://www.baranofislandhousing.org/Programs/weatherization.asp