

# 41 Years of Earth Day



By Dr. Patrick Moore

There is no question that environmental progress has been made in the 41 years since the first Earth Day, but we still have a long way to go. With challenges including our over-reliance on fossil fuels and the impact of poor air quality, it is crucial that we balance environmental concerns with the need to foster a sound economy.

Since the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami in Japan caused a serious event at the Fukushima nuclear plant, workers supported by experts around the world have fought heroically and effectively to bring the situation under control there. Meanwhile, there have been calls by extremists to abandon nuclear power globally - and locally to close down Indian Point. As an ecologist who has worked on sustainability issues for four decades, I can assure you that closing Indian Point would be a serious environmental and economic disaster.

Nuclear energy has proven to be an important technology for balancing both of these sometimes conflicting interests. For New York, Indian Point has been a safe, affordable and reliable source of electricity for decades. It provides 12 percent of New York State's electricity and up to one third of New York City's power, and is virtually emissions-free.

Westchester, Rockland and Orange Counties have been designated by the U.S. EPA as non-attainment areas for fine particulate matter. That means the air quality of much of the New York area are in violation of federal standards.

The American Lung Association's 2010 State of the Air Report also notes that Queens and Manhattan are tied for the second dirtiest air for particulate pollution. The Bronx is number one. Suffolk had the dirtiest air when measured for ozone. All of this is unacceptable.

The loss of Indian Point from New York's power infrastructure would lead to higher carbon and toxic emissions in an area that can ill afford it. Indian Point reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 14 million tons annually. Replacing Indian Point with four to five big natural gas plants would only add to the region's toxic pollution and airborne particulates—both linked to asthma and respiratory illnesses.

Recent events in Japan have rightly placed the safety of nuclear energy in the spotlight, but the comparisons to New York are disingenuous. There will be no tsunami on the Hudson River. In terms of safety, Indian Point is arguably the most scrutinized nuclear power plant in the country, and is vital to maintaining New York's environment and economy.

*Dr. Patrick Moore is the co-founder and former leader of the environmental advocacy organization Greenpeace and is Chair and Chief Scientist of Greenspirit Strategies, based in Vancouver, British Columbia. He is an advisor to the New York Affordable Reliable Electricity Alliance (New York AREA).*

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