

Clean Energy and
Sustainability
Analytics Center

MONTCLAIR
STATE UNIVERSITY

Clean and Sustainable Energy Summit 2026

Hosted by the Clean Energy and Sustainability Analytics Center
(CESAC) of Montclair State University



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University Hall, 7th Floor
Montclair State University
Montclair, New Jersey, 07043
May 21, 2026

Clean & Sustainable Energy Summit 2026

Agenda

The Clean Energy and Sustainability Analytics Center (CESAC) at Montclair State University is excited to organize its 7th Annual Clean and Sustainable Energy Summit to accelerate actionable solutions in the field of clean energy. This summit presents an invaluable opportunity to advance discussions around the evolving clean energy economy throughout the State of New Jersey and beyond.

Theme of this year's summit is "**Energy Affordability, Surging Demand and Market Uncertainty.**" The energy sector is currently facing a "perfect storm" defined by a rapid, unprecedented surge in electricity demand, severe affordability constraints for consumers, and significant market uncertainty regarding future infrastructure and regulatory landscapes. These issues have become tightly intertwined challenges, shaping energy policy, regulatory strategy, and investment decisions across the country. We are entering a new era where electricity becomes the dominant energy carrier, and meeting that demand will require faster grid expansion, more storage, flexible clean resources, and streamlined permitting and interconnection.

Several converging forces are driving the fastest load growth the grid has seen in decades. AI workloads are far more energy-intensive than traditional cloud computing, with hyperscale data center campuses drawing as much power as small cities. EV adoption is accelerating, with fleets, buses, and logistics hubs adding concentrated load pockets. Building electrification via heat pumps and electric appliances is shifting winter peaks upward across many regions. Industrial reshoring of semiconductor fabs, battery plants, and clean-tech manufacturing is driving multi-gigawatt regional demand spikes. Affordability is becoming increasingly urgent as the cost of meeting rising demand is growing faster than household incomes. Key pressures include massive capital investment needs across transmission, distribution, generation, and storage; higher interest rates raising the cost of utility borrowing; aging infrastructure requiring full replacement; extreme weather driving reliability and insurance costs; and decarbonization mandates accelerating the retirement of legacy assets. The summit discussions will center around the following topics:

- i. Powering Progress: Aligning Demand Growth with Grid Capacity
- ii. The Affordability Challenge: Balancing Energy Goals and Reliability in a High-Cost Era
- iii. The New Age of Electricity: Understanding the Demand Surge
- iv. Breaking the Bottleneck: Modernizing the Grid for a Clean Energy Surge

The summit will bring industry experts, policymakers, academia, investors, technology startups, environmental groups, and a wide range of stakeholders for informed, participant-driven discussions on clean energy technology, policy and acceptance. The goal is to address uncertainty by encouraging collaboration and project development to support state and local governments in meeting their clean energy, environmental goals, and resilience. Further, to support K-12 education, the summit is hosting the K-12 Keep Our Planet Green artwork contest that showcases artwork from New Jersey students and teachers for a chance to win prizes in elementary, middle school, and high school categories.

Since the founding of CESAC in June 2018, the Center has continued efforts to advance the sustainable clean energy economy by providing research, analysis, education, and outreach on policies, technologies, and practices. The Center's approach is rooted in objective analysis, using science-based environmental and economic techniques for energy and environmental planning. CESAC's work provides real-world insights to regulators, businesses, and the public. While the Center fosters faculty and student research in clean energy and sustainability analytics, one of our key efforts has been to facilitate collaborative discussion between energy stakeholders and policy makers. We hope that this year's annual summit will be an invaluable opportunity to address the evolving clean energy transition in New Jersey and beyond, and that together we can move toward a cleaner and more resilient energy future.

Sponsored by



8:00 AM – 9:0 AM **Check in, Breakfast, and Networking**

9:00 AM – 9:20 AM **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Pankaj Lal, Founding Director, CESAC
Lora Billings, Dean, College of Science and Mathematics

9:20 AM – 9:30 AM **Address by MSU President**

Jonathan Koppell, President, Montclair State University

9:30 AM – 9:50 AM **Keynote Address**

Kathleen Coviello, Chief Economic Transformation Officer, NJ EDA

9:50 AM – 10:50 AM **Panel 1: Powering progress: Aligning Demand Growth with Grid Capacity**

Moderator:

Upendra Chivukula, Senior Advisor, CESAC and Commissioner Emeritus, NJ BPU

Presenters:

Stuart Nachmias, President and CEO, Con Edison Transmission
Steven Goldenberg, Chair, Energy, Climate Change & Public Utilities Practice, Group. Giordano, Halleran & Ciesla, PC
Adam Zellner, President, Greener by Design
Erick Ford, President, NJ Energy Policy Coalition
Jeffrey E. Grant, Owner, Energy Plus Solutions
Michael Egenton, Executive Vice President, Government Relations, NJ Chamber of Commerce

As massive new loads from data centers and advanced manufacturing facilities come online, the facility faces an urgent challenge: matching rapid industrial growth with existing grid readiness. This panel explores the strategic alignment of economic development and infrastructure planning to prevent grid strain. Experts will discuss how locational marginal pricing can incentivize smarter facility siting, the role of utility-customer partnerships in leveraging behind-the-meter generation and storage, and the necessity of deep coordination between development agencies and utilities. Join us to discover how integrated planning can ensure that the next wave of industrial expansion strengthens, rather than stress, the power grid.

10:50 AM – 11:05 AM **Networking Break**

11:05 AM – 11:25 AM **Keynote Address**

Elizabeth Noll, Senior Strategist for Energy for Governor Mikie Sherrill

11:25 AM - 12:25 PM

Panel 2: The Affordability Challenge: Balancing Energy Goals and Reliability in a High-Cost Era

Moderator: Bob Gordon, Former Senator, Commissioner Emeritus NJ BPU, CESAC Advisory Board Member

Presenters:

Linda Greenstein, NJ Senator (D-14), Assistant Majority Leader, Vice Chair Environment and Energy

David Wand, Assistant Rate Counsel, NJ Division of Rate Counsel

Monica J. Hlinka, Senior Principal Analyst, S&P Global Energy

Ravi Bhalla, NJ Assemblyman (D-32), Environment and Solid Waste

Dan Fatton, Director of Clean Energy, NJ EDA

With electricity supply prices projected to surge by up to 35 %, the energy industry has reached a critical inflection point where energy goals must be reconciled with the financial reality of ratepayers. This panel will dissect the complex drivers behind these rising costs, from aging infrastructure overhaul to the rapid electrification of the economy and explore the regulatory tightrope of maintaining a reliable grid while ensuring no consumer is left behind. Panelists will discuss “boots on the ground” strategies for mitigating price spikes, including modernizing rate structures, deploying grid-enhancing tech to optimize existing assets, and scaling targeted protections for low-income households. The discussion aims to provide a roadmap for an equitable energy transition that keeps the lights on and the bills manageable for homes and businesses alike.

12:25 PM – 1:40 PM

Lunch

Luncheon Keynotes

Ambassador Binay Srikanta Pradhan, India Consul General:

An international perspective on energy.

Judith Sheft, Executive Director, New Jersey Commission of Science, Innovation and Technology

“Keep our Planet Green” K-12 Artwork Contest

We’ve invited K-12 teachers across NJ schools to submit their students’ artwork based on a future based on clean and sustainable energy.

1:45 PM – 2:00 PM

Keynote Address:

Ed Potosnak, NJ DEP Commissioner

2:00 PM – 2:15 PM

Keynote Address:

Vin Gopal, NJ Senator (D- 11), Majority Whip and Chair Education

2:15 PM – 3:15 PM

Panel 3: The New Age of Electricity: Understanding the Demand Surge

Moderator: Zenon Christodoulou, Commissioner, NJ BPU

Presenters:

Wayne DeAngelo, NJ Assemblyman (D-14), Chair, Assembly Telecommunications and Utilities Committee

Richard Henning, President and CEO, NJ Utilities Association

Raj Barua, Senior Research Fellow, CESAC

Jason Lemme, Managing Partner, Hartree Partners

Glen Thomas, President, GT Power Group

After decades of stability, U.S. electricity demand is skyrocketing at its fastest rate since 1995. Driven by AI revolution, data center expansion, and widespread electrification, the grid is reaching a critical inflection point. With NERC projecting a 200 GW peak-demand increase over the next decade, our panel explores a vital question: How can the grid scale fast enough to stay reliable while still hitting aggressive clean energy targets?

3:15 PM - 3:30 PM

Networking Break

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Panel 4: Breaking the Bottleneck: Modernizing the Grid for a Clean Energy surge

Moderator:

Marian Abdou, Commissioner Emeritus, NJ BPU

Panelists:

Andrew J. McNally, Senior Director, Government & Regulatory Affairs, South Jersey Industries

Benjie E. Wimberly, NJ Senator (D-35), Community and Urban Affairs

Upendra Chivukula, Senior Advisor, CESAC & Commissioner Emeritus, NJ BPU

Christine Bator, Commissioner Emeritus, NJ BPU & Professor, Of Counsel

Pearlman Miranda

As clean energy demand reaches new heights, our aging energy system is struggling to keep pace. From long interconnection queues to outdated permitting processes, the path to a reliable, carbon-free future is hitting significant roadblocks. This panel explores the critical strategies needed to accelerate grid expansion, including the role of solar-plus-storage and the federal reforms required to turn ambitious climate goals into reality.

4:30 PM – 4:50 PM

Keynote Address

Mark McDonough, President, New Jersey American Water

4:50 PM – 5:00 PM

K-12 Keep Our Planet Green Competition Winners Announcement & Remarks

Pankaj Lal, Founding Director, CESAC

5:00 PM

Networking Cocktail Reception

Joe Fiordaliso Award Presentation

Agenda at a glance

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|---------------------|---|
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| 12:25 PM – 1:45 PM | Lunch & Luncheon Keynote Speakers: Consul General India: Binoy Pradhan & NJ CSIT Executive Director: Judith Sheft |
| 1:45 PM – 2:00 PM | Keynote Address: Ed Potosnak, NJ DEP Commissioner |
| 2:00 – 2:15 PM | Keynote Address: Vin Gopal, NJ Senator (D-11), Majority Whip and Chair Education |
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| 3: 30 PM - 4: 30 PM | Panel 4: Breaking the Bottleneck: Modernizing the Grid for a Clean Energy Surge |
| 4:30 PM- 4: 50 PM | Keynote Address: Mark McDonough, President, NJ American Water |
| 4:50 PM- 5: 00 PM | Keep our Plant Green Awards, Closing Remarks |
| 5:00 PM- 7: 30 PM | Networking & Reception; Joe Fiordaliso Award Presentation |