



Finger Lakes Climate Fund Project Overview

About the Fund

Sustainable Finger Lakes (SFLX) launched the [Finger Lakes Climate Fund](#) (FLCF) in 2010 after conducting a feasibility study on the creation of a local carbon offset program. Our goal was to take a systems approach and address both income inequality and climate change by using carbon offset donations to provide grants to low-to-moderate income (LMI) households to make energy improvements to their homes.

Thus far, the FLCF has awarded 79 grants in 10 counties of upstate NY worth \$135,000 that have offset 7,642 tons of CO2 emissions. From 2019-2021, SFLX also distributed over \$120,000 in additional heat pump subsidies to lower-income households through a N YSERDA grant in combination with the FLCF grant awards.

2022-2024 NYSERDA Projects

In the fall of 2022, SFLX will launch a new 2-year pilot program to install heat pumps in 100 lower-income rental units in the City and Town of Ithaca using extra heat pump subsidies from a new NYSERDA grant program in combination with our FLCF carbon offset grants. The target market for this pilot will be 1-4 unit rental buildings converting from natural gas heating and hot water that have tenants earning 80% or less of median income for their household size.

Higher Education Partner Impact

A key aspect of the pilot is the community investment via local carbon offsets. Travel offsets by Cornell, Ithaca College, and others can help fund the transition to clean energy in local LMI rental housing to make sure that lower-income residents are not left behind – but rather put first in the drive to reach the goals of the Ithaca Green New Deal.



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Additional Pilot Project Details

The housing stock in this sector is highly diverse and typically pre-1940 construction, and carbon and energy savings will vary widely from investing in envelope measures and heat pumps. Our research into Ithaca's rental housing found duplexes to be the most common rental housing; thus our estimates for carbon savings average 102 tons CO₂ per unit for a total project impact of over 10,000 tons CO₂ from 100 rental unit upgrades.

Additional impacts would include stable tenant housing costs, better indoor air quality, and improved occupant health and comfort – especially affordable summer cooling for LMI seniors in a warming world.

Typically, LMI rentals tend to use a bit more heating fuel despite smaller homes due to lower quality housing, but they tend to use less electricity than wealthier households because they own fewer electrical devices. NYSERDA energy programs have reached perhaps 6% of low-income tenants in 1-4 rentals, and only negligible numbers of moderate-income tenants. This pilot project is designed to address the split incentive problem between landlords and tenants, prevent the cost of heat pumps from being transferred to LMI tenants, and encourage community understanding and engagement in the electrification process.

For more details:

<https://fingerlakesclimatefund.org/>

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