PICS/NYLPI SUMMER 2020

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I began this summer by conducting research to supplement NYLPI’s Extreme Heat/Air Conditioning Fact Sheet by looking into charitable organizations in NYC that might offer financial assistance for utility payments or might donate air conditioning units.

I found that many organizations, like the Salvation Army, and some electricity companies may be in positions to provide air conditioning units or utility payment assistance, especially as more of the city’s cooling stations are closed due to COVID-19.
Air Pollution EPA Testimony

- I also conducted research on studies exploring the connection between COVID-19 and PM2.5 air pollution/respiratory diseases.
- This research was used to supplement NYLPI's Legal Director's testimony to the EPA on the danger involved in weakening air pollution control restrictions.
Environmental Podcasts & Blogs

- I looked at and compiled a list of podcasts and blogs focused on current environmental justice news, especially news out of NYC.
- This was done to find those podcasts/blogs that might be interested in hosting NYLPI employees so that they might talk about their recent work on the PEAK Coalition’s (which NYLPI is a member of) recent report on polluting peaker plants in NYC.
Climate Action Council/Coalition Meetings

- I attended a meeting of the Climate Action Council (CAC), which would be especially relevant as I later researched the history of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), the law that established the CAC.
  - I also attended meetings hosted by NY Renews designed to review the CAC’s decisions and to hold the Council accountable.
School Ventilation Systems

- I also spent time looking at the NY Education Department’s databases to find and compile information on the status/condition of air conditioning and/or ventilation systems in schools located in the 9th school district of the Bronx.
- The issue of adequate ventilation in schools is especially important as schools craft reopening plans during the pandemic.
Brownfields Cleanup

- I also researched how a community can hold a group in charge of managing the cleaning of a brownfield site accountable after NYLPI received an intake request from a community member concerned a site was not being adequately managed.
- I used my research to make a guide of sorts that might be helpful for community members looking for brownfields resources.
Legislative History of the CLCPA

- I also made a timeline detailing the legislative history of the CLCPA, which was passed in 2018 after several previous versions of the bill had already failed.
  - I examined the law itself, along with voting records, hearing transcripts, and statements from representatives to construct a detailed timeline.
  - I also used design software to make an infographic-like version of the timeline, and I was happy to also be able to share the timeline with NY Renews.
Toxocariasis in NYC

- I was able to lead research into toxocariasis (an understudied parasitic illness that disproportionately affects poorer communities) to find scientific publications on its impact and prevalence in NYC.
  - I reached out to the authors of some of those studies (pictured) and was happy to have the opportunity to talk to them about insights they have for NYLPI, should it undertake future efforts to reduce toxocariasis in NYC.
  - I also outlined strategies for how NYLPI might pursue this issue as a future campaign and constructed a background guide on the issue as a whole, as well as a summary of NYLPI’s actions on this issue to date.
Social Media Accessibility

• I also took the initiative to design and make several sample social media posts and a social media accessibility guide to demonstrate the differences between accessible and inaccessible media.
  • This was part of NYLPI’s desire to make its online presence more accessible, especially its virtual presence has increased in light of COVID-19.
One of my larger projects at NYLPI this summer has been to expand the scope of the PEAK Coalition’s report on peaker plants by researching the political contributions made to representatives and political organizations by peaker plant companies and their executives. Some of the data I have compiled is modeled in the graph below.

I have also been looking into lobbyists hired by peaker plant companies and the issues those lobbyists focused on and/or continue to work on.
Conclusions

- I've had a fantastic experience this summer, and I want to thank the staff at PICS and NYLPI for allowing me to engage in this incredible opportunity. While the remote situation presented difficulties for everyone, I still absolutely feel like I have learned a lot and that I have had a hand in truly making a difference. Thank you!