



December 2007

# Massachusetts Climate Action Network Newsletter

## Executive Director's Update

A big thanks to all of you who attended our Annual Conference last month. Over 400 people came to the Stata Center at MIT and joined in a day-long program of training, learning, and connecting. MCAN's mission is to support the grassroots of climate activism, and the Conference is one of our best tools we have to support the development of our chapters and members. We're already thinking about next year's conference (our seventh!), so please share any suggestions you may have for topics or speakers.

You can see a selection of photos from the conference at:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/family.lowe/MCAN2007Conference>

And now-an opportunity to use those advocacy skills you brushed up on at the Conference. The State Senate is currently working on the energy bill passed by the House right before the end of session. Check out the Beacon Hill Spotlight below for an Action Alert about an important issue still very much in play. Action now will help the Senate create a stronger, more environmentally friendly energy bill that will not compromise the Commonwealth's climate goals. Also; check out our new Beacon Hill page on the MCAN website ([www.massclimateaction.net/legislation](http://www.massclimateaction.net/legislation)).

Finally, it's annual appeal time again. With climate change pressing ever deeper into the consciousness of public leaders, we have an opportunity to make great progress in changing attitudes and getting government to accept its responsibility to lead on climate issues. To do this we need to expand MCAN: to help develop chapters in new communities, to expand the LoCaL (Low Carbon Living) program so more residents can get to work shrinking their carbon footprints, and to remain a vital player in shaping statewide policy. This takes resources, as well as support from folks across the state. Anything you can give is welcome and important, and will be put to good use. You can set up an automatic monthly giving program or give a single electronic donation through our website ([www.massclimateaction.net/contribute](http://www.massclimateaction.net/contribute)). We also are sending appeal letters now. However you choose to give, please be as generous as you can.

Until next time, I hope you all have a happy and healthy holiday season, and wish you the best until we meet again in 2008.

**Rob Garrity**  
Executive Director

## Beacon Hill Spotlight



### Massachusetts Energy Bill

The long-awaited energy bill (H. 3965, H. 4373 as passed by the House), "The

Green Communities Act," made it through Committee and was passed by the House just before Thanksgiving. It's now over in the Senate for their action. MCAN believes there are certain provisions in the House version that need to be addressed. First, it must be said that this bill does many good things to reduce energy consumption and thus the emission of greenhouse gasses from electricity plants, as well as boosting the generation of clean, renewable energy. Positive features include these:

- Energy efficiency would be prioritized and treated as a "resource" that electric companies (NStar, National Grid, etc.) must purchase when it costs less than generating energy.
- The state building code would be aligned with the International Energy Conservation Code, which is used by over 30 other states and is automatically updated every three years. (The Massachusetts residential building code has gone as many as seven years between revisions, and many energy-saving construction techniques have been ignored.)
- The Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) would be extended and strengthened, and a new category would give some form of incentive to the many renewable electricity generating units that existed before the RPS was passed in 1996 and that may need help to remain productive.

This being said, other provisions in the House bill are of concern and should be addressed by the Senate. Most importantly, the House bill creates an "Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard" which, much like the RPS, provides an added financial benefit to certain types of energy production. The House bill mentions two specific technologies and gives the Department of Clean Energy (the proposed new name for the current Division of Energy Resources) the ability to add others after a hearing. The two technologies highlighted in the legislation are (1) combined-heat-and-power facilities and (2) coal gasification. The support for coal gasification is troubling, particularly since it has only weak language requiring that the department develop carbon emission guidelines that are "consistent with the state's environmental goals." A much better approach would be to specify that these technologies should be, on a megawatt-to-megawatt basis, at least as clean as the new combined-cycle natural gas plants. We've worked hard to address the dirty power plants in Massachusetts, now is not the time to let up and provide a public benefit to a technology which is not as clean as the average power plant in New England - and is far less clean than the newest combined-cycle natural gas plants.

#### Action Alert:

Now is the time to contact your state senator to say that you do not support what amounts to a public subsidy for a technology that does not advance our greenhouse gas reduction goals. The language requiring emission performance standards must be strengthened to reject technologies that are not as clean as new plants now coming on line, and ideally are as clean as other technologies that we support (renewables, combined heat and power).

Go to MCAN's new legislative page, [www.massclimateaction/legislation](http://www.massclimateaction/legislation) to learn how you can let your opinions be known by your legislator.

#### Other Issues

We are also closely watching the progress of legislation to encourage the use of biofuels in Massachusetts, codify the requirement that all allowances under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) are auctioned (not given away), with the proceeds going to efficiency and a small amount to renewables development, and set economy-wide carbon reduction targets. Information on these bills is available at the new website.

## MCAN Highlights



The environmental radio magazine "Living on Earth" is working on a segment about Massachusetts' efforts to reduce carbon emissions. Producer Helen Palmer has been making the rounds of MCAN chapters and LoCaL team meetings for the past few months. The story is expected to air early in 2008. Meanwhile, you can visit the Living on Earth website to listen to other stories about climate change.

<http://www.livingonearth.org/>

#### Join MCAN's Discussion Group!

Talk with other climate change activists, post and discuss interesting information, and ask and answer questions. Anyone is welcome to join, and participating does not make you an MCAN member. To subscribe, send a blank email to:

[mcan-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:mcan-subscribe@yahoo.com)

## Climate Change Action News from Around the State and Elsewhere



### SUV Federal Fuel Standards Rejected

A federal appeals court has thrown out federal fuel economy standards for many sport-utility vehicles, minivans and pickup trucks. The 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that the standards, which were to go into effect next year, didn't properly assess the risk to the environment and failed to include heavier SUVs and trucks, among several other deficiencies. The decision resulted from a lawsuit filed by 11 states and environmental groups that argued federal regulators ignored the effects of carbon dioxide emissions when calculating fuel economy standards for light trucks. The case is called Center for Biological Diversity v. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Read the decision at:

[http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/ca9/newopinions.nsf/775202DBA504085C88257393007B9729/\\$file/0671891.pdf?openelement](http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/ca9/newopinions.nsf/775202DBA504085C88257393007B9729/$file/0671891.pdf?openelement)

### Cape Wind Developer Pulls Plans for Oil-Powered Plant

After months of denunciation by many of the same environmentalists who have cheered his Cape Wind project, Boston energy entrepreneur Jim Gordon has abandoned his plan for an oil-fueled power plant in Chelsea. In a notice filed with the state Energy Facilities Siting Board, lawyers for Chelsea Energy LLC, a subsidiary of Gordon's Energy Management Inc., said the company "no longer intends to develop the project at the proposed site in Chelsea" and withdrew its application. The move followed months of often harsh criticism of Gordon for proposing a 250-megawatt plant, large enough to serve about 180,000 average homes, just 1,000 feet from the main elementary school in economically struggling, predominantly minority Chelsea.

From an article by Peter Howe in The Boston Globe, November 15:

[http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/11/15/cape\\_wind\\_developer\\_pulls\\_plans\\_for\\_oil\\_powered\\_plant/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/11/15/cape_wind_developer_pulls_plans_for_oil_powered_plant/)

### Cambridge Boasts LEED Platinum Certification for Two Houses

Two houses in Cambridge, MA, have received "LEED for Homes" Platinum Certification, the highest possible rating. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, provides a suite of standards for environmentally sustainable construction. The homes were developed by Sustainable Living LLC, with PowerHouse Enterprises serving as the green enabler/consultant. For more info:

<http://www.sustainliving.com/>

### "Please, get out of the way!"

Of course, you know about the thorough dressing-down given to the United States by other countries' representatives at the Bali conference on climate change, and the U.S.' subsequent change of stance. But if you haven't had your fill, you can read or listen to a summary at:

<http://www.livingonearth.org/shows/segments.htm?programID=07-P13-00050&segmentID=1>

### Climate Change and the Nobel Peace Prize

Al Gore and the International Panel on Climate Change have received the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize "for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change." Listen to the announcements of the prize and related interviews at:

[http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2007/announcement.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2007/announcement.html)

## Events and Opportunities



*This section includes items that we hope will interest a broad spectrum of readers around Massachusetts.*

### Northeast State Electronics Challenge

State, regional, and local governments in the Northeast are invited to participate in an innovative new program targeting computers and other electronic devices that will lead to significant savings in energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and solid waste generation. The State Electronics Challenge (SEC) - Northeast Pilot challenges organizations to change the way they purchase, use, and manage electronics at the end of their useful lives. The SEC will provide with the tools and resources necessary to make these changes. The end result will be owning electronic devices that contain fewer toxins; energy and cost savings; and recycling equipment in an environmentally sound manner. For more information,

visit:

<http://www.stateelectronicschallenge.net/>

#### **Massachusetts Climate Coalition Summit**

When: Sunday, January 20, 2008, 1:00-5:00 pm (lunch and snacks provided)

Where: Garden in the Woods, Framingham, MA

Sponsor: New England Wildflower Society

MCAN is a member of the Mass. Climate Coalition, and MCAN member chapters are welcome to send a representative to this summit to discuss the latest in Massachusetts climate advocacy. This is an excellent opportunity for Chapter representatives to learn more about hot issues in the upcoming legislative year and help plan strategy. Seating is limited, so please contact Rob Garrity at (617) 515-0600 if you'd like to go.

#### **Seventh Annual Regional Sustainable Development Forum**

When: January 25, 2008

Where: MIT, Cambridge, MA

This forum, hosted by New Ecology, will focus on the importance of motivating a broad constituency to work together to address the consequences of global climate change. With climate change one of the hot topics in mainstream media, how do we make sure that we seize the momentum on this issue and change behaviors to reverse the warming trend and establish a more environmentally friendly future for all? Of equal importance, how do we make sure that at this stage of the environmental movement, we don't repeat mistakes of the past by narrowing the constituency to the "eco-elite"? How do we broaden it to include everyone from big business to community activists? Our task is to get the message out that this is a societal issue where we are all a part of the solution. We need to relay the message in a positive light where we are realistic about the gravity of the situation yet are hopeful about our collective power to turn things around.

Three breakout sessions will focus on what is being done in to reduce environmental footprints in the transportation, industrial, and buildings sectors, and what the future holds for advancing best-practices in efficient resource management and economic sustainability. The fourth session will focus on our how future generations are being introduced to the issue and how they are becoming leaders in environmental stewardship. The Forum will provide a unique opportunity for the private sector, government, academia, and community practitioners to share best practices, explore ideas, and develop new collaborations. Register or get more information at:

<http://www.newecology.org/sustainabilityforum/>

#### **Ross Gelbspan and His Documentary "Everything's Cool"**

When: Friday, January 25, 2008

Where: Unitarian Universalist Parish Hall, 6 Eliot St., First Church, Jamaica Plain (Boston)

Journalist Ross Gelbspan is hosted by the Jamaica Plain Forum for a screening and discussion of a new award-winning climate-change documentary. "Everything's Cool" is a film about America finally "getting" global warming in the wake of the emerging chasm between scientific understanding and political action. While industry funded nay-sayers sing what just might be their swan song of pseudo-scientific deception, a group of global warming messengers are on a high-stakes quest to find the iconic image, the magic language, the points of leverage that will finally create the political will to move the United States from its reliance on fossil fuels to the new clean energy economy-and fast. Youth and families are highly encouraged to attend. After the screening, join the conversation with Gelbspan. Meanwhile, get a preview of his passion by reading a recent piece he wrote for Grist:

<http://gristmill.grist.org/story/2007/12/10/165845/92>

#### **Focus the Nation**

When: January 31, 2008

Focus the Nation is organizing a national teach-in on global warming solutions for America-creating a dialogue at over a thousand colleges, universities, high schools, middle schools, places of worship, civic organizations and businesses, and directly engaging millions of students and citizens with the nation's decision-makers. Focus the Nation will culminate January 31st, 2008 in simultaneous educational symposia held across the country. Our intent is to move America beyond fatalism to a determination to face up to this civilizational challenge, the challenge of our generation. Focus the Nation is an educational initiative, but we also promote civic engagement. Each team will invite local, state and federal political leaders and decision-makers to participate in a non-partisan discussion of global warming solutions. Every institution will also vote on their top five national priorities for global warming action, producing a campus and citizen endorsed policy agenda for 2008. Get more info at:

<http://www.focusthenation.org/>

#### **Funding Available for Onsite Renewable Energy Projects**

Applications due: February 21, 2008

The Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MTC), administrator of the Renewable Energy Trust Fund, seeks applications for the Large Onsite Renewables Initiative (LORI) Feasibility Study and Design and Construction Grants. MTC is accepting grant applications for development of eligible renewable energy projects with greater than 10 kilowatts of nameplate capacity that are located at commercial, industrial, institutional, and public facilities where 25 percent or more of the renewable energy produced by the renewable system will be used behind the meter. The applicant and project site must be a customer of a Massachusetts investor-owned electric distribution utility. The grant awards may be used to facilitate the installation of renewable energy projects on existing buildings (retrofits) or in conjunction with new construction/major renovation projects, including green buildings. Get more info at:

<http://www.masstech.org/largeDG/>

**NESEA's BuildingEnergy08 Conference**

When: March 11-13, 2008

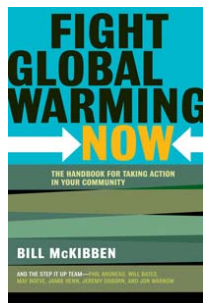
Where: Seaport World Trade Center, Boston

The Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA) conference, "The Practice of Sustainability: Tools, Actions and Solutions," will showcase the leading edge of green building and clean energy in high-performance buildings, retrofit and rehabilitation of existing buildings, and renewable energy. Online registration will be available starting December 21, at:

<http://www.buildingenergy.nesea.org/>

## Resources

*This section features educational materials, funding ideas, and commercial ventures of significance to Massachusetts or the New England region, and that relate to our mission and activities.*

**Fight Global Warming Now: The Handbook for Taking Action in Your Community**

Bill McKibben, the founder of Step It Up and author of the first major book on global warming, *The End of Nature*, has now written a hands-on guidebook to stopping climate change. To read an excerpt, go to:

<http://www.billmckibben.com/fightglobalwarmingnow/fight-global-warming-now-excerpt.html>

The same website also has an exhaustive list of global warming resources. See it at:

<http://www.billmckibben.com/fightglobalwarmingnow/global-warming-resources.html>

**The Story of Stuff**

This 20-minute video explains the origin of the 70 tons of waste produced upstream for every ton of waste disposed, and shows how our consumer-based economy is unsustainable. The video is fun to watch too, according to MCAN members who have recommended it for inclusion in this newsletter.

<http://storyofstuff.com/index.html>

**Newfangler Website Showcases Clean Tech: Videos, Forums, Production Services**

Newfangler works with business, government, and universities to highlight clean technologies that support clean, renewable energy sources, energy-efficient systems, and environmental improvements. A member of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Enterprise Forum's Energy Group, and an official Partner of the Environmental Protection Landfill Methane Outreach Program, Newfangler strives to deliver quality information and to create positive relationships. Forums on the website help increase knowledge and understanding of these new technologies, and support their useful and meaningful implementation in our day-to-day lives. Anyone may upload videos or other products they have created, for distribution to Community Access television stations internationally on the Internet (including the Newfangler website and other websites around the world) via the Brightcove broadcasting network. Note: If you upload your product, you will not necessarily retain control over where it is distributed, printed, or shown. For more info:

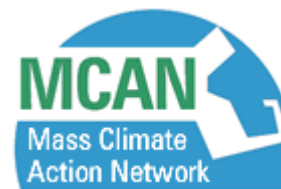
<http://newfangler.com/>

**What Love Can't Do, by Kitty Beers**

A novel set in the 2050s, telling the story of ordinary people dealing with environmental collapse. One reviewer, William Routhier, wrote in "Facets" magazine, "Beer's prophetic look at the future seems . . . entirely possible. Her characters, amid rising environmental havoc and resulting social confusion, still search for things of value, striving to retain their humanity in the face of its opposite." The author lives in Cambridge, MA. Get the book at your favorite bookseller.

## Support MCAN in Your Year-End Giving

Thank you for your dedication to creating and implementing ways to fight climate change. Please take a few minutes now to help MCAN. The LoCaL program, our annual Climate Conference, and our legislative advocacy all depend on the generous help of supporters like you. It is particularly important to join MCAN as a member (\$30 per person or \$50 per household), because membership dues support our ongoing work. No matter how many grants we seek, they do not typically cover regular operating expenses and staff costs. We run a lean organization. If you are already a member, year-end is a great time to make an additional gift. Your gift is tax-deductible. you can donate at: [www.massclimateaction/contribute](http://www.massclimateaction/contribute).



Please keep in mind that **belonging to a community climate group (such as Anytown Climate Action Network) does not mean you are an MCAN member as well.** MCAN helps to coordinate the climate change efforts of local groups, but those local groups operate independently from MCAN, have their own membership

rules, and are considered entirely separate organizations.

**Your support for MCAN's work is deeply appreciated. Thank you!**

## About the Newsletter

MCAN welcomes submissions of substantive and broad interest to the climate change community in Massachusetts. To submit an item, please send email with a short paragraph or two and contact information, including a name and email or phone, to: [massclimateaction@gmail.com](mailto:massclimateaction@gmail.com) (replace <AT> with @).

We reserve the right to edit all submissions, and we may not publish every submission we receive.

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