

green news

NEWSLETTER OF THE GREEN DECADE COALITION / NEWTON



VOL.15 - NO. 6

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2005

Purchasing renewable energy in Massachusetts

Sitting on the tarmac at Logan International Airport, one might get the impression that we generate a good portion of our energy from renewable sources. In one view from my airplane window (I'm about to take off and concerned about contributing CO₂ to the atmosphere), I see both the Deer Island anaerobic digesters and the wind turbine in Hull. However, the reality is that although they are visible signs of progress in our state, we need to do more.

The Deer Island anaerobic digesters have about a 3MW generation capacity and the Hull wind turbine has about a .66 MW generation capacity. This meets just a small fraction of our total energy needs in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts is one of the more progressive states. It has a renewable portfolio standard, which, in 2003, required utilities to have at least one percent of the electricity they supply come from renewable resources. That percentage increases by one half percent (0.5%) each year through 2009, when the obligation will be four percent (4%). After 2009, the obligation rises by one percent each year until the Massachusetts Division of Energy Resources, DOER, sets a date for freezing the minimum percentage. If the utility doesn't meet the standard required in its energy portfolio, it pays a "compliance fee," which goes into a fund to stimulate the development of more renewable energy.

So, how does this affect your life? If you are interested in lightening your footprint on the planet, it is good to know about how you can purchase renewable energy. By purchasing it as a home owner, you are creating a demand for more investments in renewable energy. If you purchase renewable energy which is sometimes called a "renewable energy certificate," or REC, because that is how the purchases are accounted for in the system, you are taking it out of the pool for the utilities to purchase, and you are keeping the demand high, thus stimulating the growth of more supply.

The Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust (MRET), which we all pay into (see your electricity bill and look for the renewable energy line item), has a program called Clean Energy Choice. In this program, there are renewable energy products that you can purchase. Some are tax deductible, and some aren't, and they are all matched by MRET. So, for example, if you decide you want to donate to a tax-deductible product, such as New England Wind, you can pay \$100 to NE Wind, and MRET will match it twice: once to your community and once to a statewide low-income fund.

In the City of Newton, the mayor has committed to putting the money from MRET towards the Solar on Schools program that was initiated by Newton's Renewable Re-

sources Committee. So, your \$100 in Newton would go once to stimulate the growth of wind energy (if you're purchasing New England Wind) and once to stimulate growth of local solar installations on schools. And, if you know of a low-income project where you think renewable energy could be used, you could help figure out how to get a project going there as well.

To find out more about how you can purchase renewable energy through the Clean Energy Choice matching program, go to www.cleanenergychoice.com and follow the links. You can also go to New England Wind directly at www.newenglandwind.com if you know that you'd like your contribution to be tax deductible and to stimulate the growth of wind energy.

by Katherine Gekas



Compact fluorescents: handle with care

Compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) provide significant energy savings when they are used in place of incandescent lamps, but as GDC Member Diana Korzenik reminds us, CFLs are really fluorescent lamps. And that means that they contain small quantities of mercury, cadmium and antimony. The National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) estimated in 1991 that over 600 million fluorescent lamps are disposed of in the United States each year. This puts over 30,000 metric tons of mercury-contaminated waste into the nation's landfills.

In Newton, all mercury-containing items should be brought to the Rumford Avenue Resource Recovery Center for special disposal handling. **Do NOT** put these in the regular trash! Do contact City Hall if you need help disposing of these hazardous lamps or other mercury items. As the official Newton recycling flyer states: "Pack lamps in original or replacement packaging. Broken lamps must be in a sealed plastic bag. (DO NOT handle broken lamps with bare hands.)" But don't let these factors discourage you from using CFLs—the amount of mercury in a CFL is small—about 1 percent as much as that in a household thermometer. By reducing energy use, CFLs reduce the amount of mercury put into the environment by coal-fired generating stations, and the amount of mercury prevented is far greater than the amount used, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Mayor sponsors strong regional policy on global warming

Mayor David Cohen was one of the lead sponsors of a letter sent to governors in the Northeast urging them to develop a rigorous model rule for the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a program to cut global warming pollution from electricity generating plants in the region. The letter was signed by more than 40 mayors and chief local officials from eight northeast states.



The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, or RGGI, is a cooperative effort by several northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, the major pollutant that causes global warming, from the electric power sector. Central to this initiative is a cap on emissions with a market-based system for buying and selling emissions permits. The state governments are expected to release proposed rules for the program in October 2005.

Local governments, like those whose officials signed the letter to the governors, will need support and policy-making at the state, regional, and national levels to achieve success in addressing the problem of global warming. "Many of these local governments are already taking action to reduce carbon pollution within their own communities. In fact, over 60 municipalities in the RGGI region have committed to reduce their own emissions through our Cities for Climate Protection Campaign™, because they recognize that addressing global warming also means lowering energy costs and improving air quality and public health. Regional policy related to carbon pollution will only benefit their efforts," said Michelle Wyman, Executive Director of ICLEI- Local Governments for Sustainability.

"Communities are most directly impacted by climate change and they are on the front line in developing real solutions to this global problem. Their concerns and support for regional policy represent an important perspective in this policy debate and should be heard by the northeast states," said Adam Markham, Executive Director

of Portsmouth, NH-based Clean Air-Cool Planet.

The Mayors' letter to the northeast governors also pointed to the local impacts of global warming as a reason for taking action now. These impacts include:

- Economic impacts on agriculture, tourism, lobster and ski industries;
- Lake ice-out dates nine days earlier in northern and mountainous regions

- and 16 days in southern parts of the region;
- Sea level rise of 16 inches in New York City since 1856;
- An average advance in spring bloom dates of between four and eight days.

A full report on the observed impacts of global warming in the region, "Northeast Indicators of Climate Change" is available at <http://cleanair-coolplanet.org/information/pdf/indicators.pdf>

Clean Air-Cool Planet, Environmental Advocates of New York, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, and Massachusetts Climate Action Network helped coordinate the mayors' statement. The letter was sent to the governors of Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont, and to their department heads. *by Amelia Ravin*



Our Mission

The Green Decade Coalition/Newton is conducting a campaign to make a significant improvement in resource use by businesses, institutions, and residences in Newton. We establish goals and seek to achieve measurable results in energy and water use, waste disposal practices, and pollution prevention through research, education, and action. Our goal is to make Newton a model of ecological and environmental integrity in a sustainable world community.

JOIN THE GREEN DECADE

Enclosed is: New member Renewal

(\$20.00 suggested annual individual donation)

(additional donation)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

ZIP _____ E-MAIL _____ PHONE: _____

Please send your tax deductible check to:
Green Decade Coalition/Newton,
P.O. Box 590242, Newton, MA 02459

Nov/Dec 2005

Thanks ! and . . next deadline

For the next newsletter, please send submissions or requests by email to Ira Krepchin, irapk@alum.mit.edu by Friday, November 18, 2005.

Thanks for making this newsletter possible to Managing Editor Ira Krepchin, Co-editors Peter Smith/ Louise Bruyn, and those who wrote articles. Many thanks to our Newsletter Collator Chairs Marcia Cooper and Frank Propp, and their team for the last issue: Arlene and Dean Bades, Jacqui Gross, Cris Kjelson, Nancy Lester, Lynn Scheller, Barbara Wong.

Smart growth proposed for Newton Centre

Newton Centre is one of the Gateways to the City and as such is attracting attention as an area for revitalization. The Newton Economic Development Commission has presented a report called the “Newton Centre Renaissance: A Roadmap Forward,” that it hopes will initiate a restructuring and rebuilding of the business area of Newton Centre into a vibrant destination and village center. (Note: the full report is available on the web at ww.ci.newton.ma.us/Planning/edc/EDC%20Report%20Newton%20Centre.pdf.)

According to the report “Poor pedestrian connectivity from the surrounding area and the MBTA, fragmentation of the streets bordering the triangular parking lot, and the inadequate mix of retail combine to discourage people from frequenting the Centre. With minimal attraction for residents and visitors, there is a lack of consistent foot traffic that affects the survivability of small independent

business owners. The commercial activity is clustered in three main areas: Centre Street, Langley Road and Union Street. There are auxiliary retail areas on both ends of Beacon Street, Sumner Street and Pelham Street. Too often, people frequent one area per visit returning to their cars to reach other parts of the village. Effort must be made to successfully bridge these individual areas to make them seem as one. Pedestrian safety is also a concern given the high level of traffic, the haphazard parking pattern, and the busy intersection of Beacon Street and Langley Road, where traffic flows from five directions.

“Many of the stakeholders believed the vision for a more vibrant Newton Centre should also address the need for expanding housing options, including housing above retail stores. This would create a more balanced day/night use with residents frequenting the local restaurants and stores. Newton Centre residents will have easy access to the “T,” creating a viable alternative to driving. The Renaissance Plan can create a walkable neighborhood and encourage cohesiveness among the various stakeholders.”

A vision for Newton Centre is also being developed by Anatol Zukerman, architect and a Green Decade member. For the near-term, his five-year proposed plan envisions a 4-level garage behind the Wallgreens shopping strip; removal of the parking lot from the central triangle so that it can become a Village Green with a meeting house/restaurant in the middle of a public park; demolishing the existing Wallgreens strip and building a new 3-4-story development (with solar photovoltaic roofs) containing retail spaces on the first floor (with all the existing enterprises in the new building), and residential/office above. The residential would be a mix of elderly/affordable/condo housing.

Further down the road, Zukerman’s vision includes a 10-year plan with the replacement of the existing single-story structures along Beacon Street from Centre Street to Langley Road with new three-story mixed-use buildings; building a parking platform for 500 cars sheltered with PV roofs and wind turbines above the MBTA tracks; making Sumner Street a two-way street; and turning Langley Road into a pedestrian mall. His 20-year plan would see the building of an underpass beneath Beacon Street from Centre Street to Chesley Road with a landscaped median above; removal of at-curb parking from Centre Street and the building of a landscaped median; replacing 1-story structures at the west side of Centre Street with new 3-story mixed-use structures similar to Beacon Street.

If you’re interested in the future of Newton Centre, get involved—as the report from the Economic Development Commission notes, Newton Centre’s “central location combined with great proximity to public transportation lends itself for future growth that adheres to smart, sustainable growth principles.” For more information and meeting dates, visit the City’s home page (www.ci.newton.ma.us) and click on the Planning Department. *by Ira Krepchin*



Thanks for donations go to:

PATRON: Anonymous

DONOR: Nancy & Bill Crowley

FRIENDS: Melanie & Chris Abele, Sandra & David Baird, Pete & Cathi Gilmore, Kim & Andy Gluck, Philip Herr, Harriet Kahn, Brenda N. Roberts, Eleanor Rosellini, E. Martin Schotz

Also we are grateful to **Larry Scafidi of Embassy Trophy Co., Waltham** for providing, at cost only, the beautiful bronze plaque now in place on the Newton Community Service Center’s building. The plaque acknowledges the donors to the Solar Shares project that funded the solar array on that building.

In Memoriam

We are saddened to learn that Giles Kelliher, 91, passed away in August. During the mid-1990’s Giles was a faithful Green Decade member, attending many of our activities. For several years he hosted mailing parties at his house. Even before his connection to the Green decade, he and Justine, his wife, had made many aspects of their house environmentally friendly. We are grateful to him for sharing some of his later years in life with us. *by Louise Bruyn*

CALENDAR

Nov 2 Wed 7pm	Green Decade Coalition Board meeting , call for location, 617 965-1995.
Nov 5 Sat 1-4pm	Home energy conservation workshop , Jackson Homestead, call 617 965-1995, see article on special page in this newsletter.
Nov 19 Sat 6:30-11pm	10th Annual Earth Night , Environmental League of Massachusetts, Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, 415 Summer Street, www.earthnight.org
Nov 28 Mon 7pm	Newton's Energy Action Plan , Newton Free Library, see article this issue.

Send environmental events to *Green News*. email to Ira Krepchin by Friday, Nov. 18, 2005 irapk@alum.mit.edu. We will list as space permits.

Run wild in the woods ?

saving our children from "nature deficit disorder"

*"Children born after 1980 seldom hear the words 'go and play outside'. The busy lives of today's overstretched and overstressed parents allow little time for outdoor activities, and even good intentions have unintended consequences. Ordinances designed to protect flora and fauna have eliminated access to wide swaths of seashore, marsh, meadowland and wilderness. No wonder children are driven indoors to the lure of electronic entertainment, iPods, video games and TV. As a result, children are exhibiting . . . symptoms linked to our separation from nature. Fortunately there is an antidote for this—getting children **back to the wild.**"*

"Last Child in the Woods" - Diane Gordon, Pages 8-11, TIMELINE, a bimonthly publication of the Foundation for Global Community, September/October, 2005.



Printed with soy-based ink on 100% post-consumer waste unbleached recycled paper that is made without a chemical separation process.

Board members: new roles for Amelia Ravin & Lucia Dolan

Amelia Ravin and Lucia Dolan have both accepted new roles and responsibilities on the GDC board of directors, effective in October. As a very active At-Large member for several years, Amelia is now the Corporate Relations chair and will be coordinating corporate sponsorships as well as the business education & outreach program.

Lucia joined the board in June as GDC's Liaison to Alliance for A Healthy Tomorrow and has been a steady volunteer this summer at the GDC table at the Newton Farmers Market at Cold Spring Park. As the new Co-Chair for Green CAP, the Committee for Alternatives to Pesticides, she joins long-time Co-Chair Maeve Ward in coordinating GreenCAP's committee's activities in the community and nationwide.

Please join us in our congratulations and thanks to both!



2005-2006 Board of Directors

Ann Berwick, *at large*
 Marcia Cooper, *Membership*
 Ed Cunningham, *Green CAP*
 Lucia Dolan, *Green CAP*
 Kevin Dutt, *HiPerformc Bldgs*
 Paul Eldrenkamp, *Kyoto Proj.*
 Katherine Gekas, *Energy*
 Ira Krepchin, *Newsletter*
 Francoise LaMonica, *PR-NewTV*
 Lois Levin, *PR-Coord. TAB*
 Brooke Lipsitt, *HiPerformc Bldgs*
 Jean MacRae, *Treasurer*
 Eric Olson, *Energy*
 Amelia Ravin, *Corporate Relations*
 Dan Ruben, *V. Pres.*
 Rohna Shoul, *Sec. & Memb.*
 Peter Smith, *Newsletter*
 Ana Zarina Asuaje Solon, *Energy*

Heather Tausig, *at large*
 Maeve Ward, *Green CAP*

Advisory Board

Louise Bruyn, *Founder*
 Sheila Clawson
 David & Elva Del Porto
 Dianne Dumanoski
 Barney Freiberg-Dale
 Ellie Goldberg
 Fred Gordon
 Barbara Herson, *Past Pres.*
 Elizabeth (Betsy) Leavitt
 Nancy Lopin
 Saraswathy Nochur
 Fran Seasholes
 Annabelle Ship
 Bob Zeeb

green decade
 COALITION/NEWTON



P.O. Box 590242
 Newton, MA 02459

Non-profit
 Organization
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 Newton, MA
 Permit No 58678

address service requested

Red Dot =
 Complimentary Copy
 Please consider subscribing
 TODAY!

Help plan spring fund-raiser

Green Decade board members need your help in planning our first ever spring fundraising event—in April 2006, at a date and venue to be determined. We will be holding a silent auction evening gala to support the “15th Anniversary Fund”. Our goal is to raise \$15,000 to support annual operating expenses. The fundraising committee is meeting once a month to plan all the details – come to our next meeting in November at 7:30pm. We need people to help plan entertainment, food, volunteer staffing and to help gather donations for auction. To get the next meeting date and be a part of this exciting new project please contact Amelia Ravin at 617 259 2011 or aravin@cleanair-coolplanet.org

by Amelia Ravin



Presenting:

The Energy Action Plan

Newton's Energy Action Plan (EAP) will be the subject of a presentation on Monday, November 28, at 7pm at the main library, co-hosted by the League of Women Voters, the Green Decade Coalition, the Newton Free Library, and the Newton Citizens Commission on Energy. The Energy Action Plan is the result of many years of research, advocacy, project development and coalition building within the City, our community and larger environmental and community networks. It was created by the Newton Citizens Commission on Energy in cooperation with the Public Buildings Department and the Planning and Development Department, with the input of countless other boards and committees, community members, city officials and employees, local businesses and institutions.

The vision statement for the plan notes that the “City of Newton continues its environmental leadership in pursuing efficient and wise use of natural resources and clean, sustainable sources of energy that will serve our needs for mobility, housing, education, community building, economic growth, public safety, and other necessities. The goal of the Energy Action Plan is to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions by 7% below 1998 levels by the year 2010. This target is both ambitious and attainable. It will put Newton on a course towards a more sustainable future and improve the quality of life for Newton's residents, workers, businesses and institutions.” The Plan also aims to reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions within the municipal sector alone to 20% below 1998 levels.

The body of the plan describes how those goals can be met. Topics covered include an inventory of current energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, and chapters on energy efficiency, clean energy, transportation, and solid waste. The Plan ends with a chapter on implementation strategies.

The EAP can be downloaded from the web at www.ci.newton.ma.us/sunergy/EAP021005.pdf. by Ira Krepchin

Kyoto Project: Hard numbers on savings

Adding insulation, sealing air leaks, replacing windows—all these measures and more can cut energy use and save a home-owner big bucks—but only if they're done correctly. A big problem today is that many weatherization projects are not done well and homeowners save less than expected and might in rare cases even see their energy bills increase. Enter Green Decade's Kyoto project. The project is embarking on a campaign to encourage before and after audits for energy efficiency projects. The audit would consist of a blower door test to quantify the air leakage in a home, infrared pictures that indicate how much heat leaks from the home, and other statistical ratings.

The data from the audits will go into a database and serve two purposes—it will enable homeowners who are considering remodeling projects to compare their proposed projects with similar projects to see how much savings they might expect. It would also tell them which contractors have done a good job in the past. The Kyoto project staff is also trying to educate homeowners to perform an energy audit anytime that they do any sort of remodeling project, which is often the best time to perform thorough energy upgrades. As project chair Paul Eldrenkamp notes, if you've got carpenters, plasterers and painters coming in anyway, there's no better time to add insulation as well. To learn about insulating your home, attend the Kyoto Projects audit workshop November 5, 2005 from 1 to 4 pm at the Jackson Homestead. For more information, contact the Green Decade at 617-965-1995. by Ira Krepchin



Business outreach

The Green Decade is planning a campaign to educate Newton businesses about the benefits of environmental management, and the incentives and tools available in Newton. We are looking to gain input and support from local businesses for ongoing programs through membership dues, and exploring a large corporate sponsorship to kick off this program, with the hope that after one year it would be self-sustaining. Possible activities in the coming year include a membership mailing to all Newton/Needham Chamber of Commerce companies; a Spring business forum; articles for Green News and the Tab; and recruiting a business member for the board. If you'd like to participate, contact Amelia Ravin at 617 259 2011 or aravin@cleanair-coolplanet.org by Amelia Ravin

Newton's Sister City Project, San Juan del Sur, supports "appropriate technology"

In San Juan del Sur, Newton's Sister City in southeastern Nicaragua, many women cook over open fires (they and their children breathe the smoke all day), and they're often forced to drink contaminated water, sometimes the result of using old-fashioned latrines, that can send pathogens into the water table. Here are their new initiatives to tackle these stubborn problems in an integrated way.

People familiar with Newton's Sister City program will recall the "Eco-Stoves" we began to make a couple of years ago: raised cooking boxes with custom-made holes for favorite pots and a chimney to carry off smoke. The result: a radical reduction in emphysema and asthma among women and children;

firewood consumption cut in half, meaning reduced pressure on hillside trees and thus reduced erosion when it rains, and thus less likelihood of dried-out wells. We have installed almost 30 of them around the region.

We've now begun a new project to fuse Eco-Stoves with two other cheap, simple solutions to perennial problems in our sister-region: "BioSand Filters" to purify contaminated water without the use of chemicals or electricity, and "Composting Toilets" as an alternative to the traditional latrine.

The BioSand Filter (BSF) is a tall concrete box filled with sand and gravel. Contaminated water is introduced into the top and makes its way down through the mass, where naturally occurring organisms eliminate bacteria, viruses and parasites. In February, we sent our intrepid colleague Fidel Pavon to a three-day workshop in Honduras where he learned about the theory and construction of the BSF.

We have now purchased an iron mold for casting the filters, and construction of the first copies began in September in Fidel's front yard. We want to install a BSF in every school we've built in the past 18 years.

A BSF produces 60 liters of purified water an hour,

which means students can both drink it at school and take clean water home. Schools, churches and other groups (or individuals) in Newton can sponsor BioSand Filters for \$35 each, by earmarking checks to the Newton/San Juan Sister City Project via Fiora Houghteling, 15 Bullough Park, Newton MA 02460. To read more about the BSF see: www.cawst.org/technology/watertreatment/filtration-biosand.php.

The Composting Toilet we installed next to the new school in Cebadilla is an elegant substitute for the latrines most people (and schools) use in Nicaragua. While a

latrine is just a stinking outhouse over a deep hole lined with bricks (the e-coli bacteria can contaminate nearby wells and sometimes the walls collapse during rainy season), the Composting Toilet is a water-tight box that sits on the ground with seats up above.

Human waste falls into a "hammock" of sturdy nylon fishing net where a mass of leaves and woodchips acts on it just like in your own backyard compost heap. Air intake tubes on the sides supply oxygen for the aerobic decomposition and a tall stack carries off the natural gases.

You can see photos of Julio Pizarro and Newton North and Newton South High School teenagers working along side

villagers to build the Cebadilla Composting Toilet at www.newtonsanjuan.org. A two-seater of this type costs about \$200—roughly what you'd pay to put in a latrine. We want to replace all the latrines at the schools with these ecologically-sound (and sweet-smelling) alternative human waste disposal systems, easily constructed using locally available materials—which is what "Appropriate Technology" means.

by David Gullette

David Gullette is a volunteer leader with San Juan del Sur, Newton's Sister City Project



"...many women cook over open fires (they and their children breathe the smoke all day), and they're often forced to drink contaminated water, sometimes the result of using old-fashioned latrines, that can send pathogens into the water table. Here are their new initiatives to tackle these stubborn problems in an integrated way".
