

green news

NEWSLETTER OF GREEN DECADE / NEWTON
Over 20 Years of Environmental Leadership 1990 - 2011



VOL.22 - NO. 1

JAN/FEB 2012

Greening our community series

Co-sponsored with the Newton Free Library at the library Mondays

Monday, January 30 - 7pm:

BU Professor Nathan Phillips

Mapping Gas Leaks: Newton & Beyond



Dr. Phillips will share results of preliminary mapping of gas leaks in Newton, following on a recently completed comprehensive mapping of thousands of leaks in the City of Boston, the first study of its kind. He uses a special meter that is sensitive to trace amounts of methane and is able to

record gas leaks that the gas company's equipment cannot detect. These leaks are damaging and sometimes fatal to trees. They also have economic, ecological, environmental, and human health implications. Dr. Phillips is the Director of the Center for Energy and Environmental Studies, and Associate Professor at BU in the Dept. of Geography and Environment & VP of Bike Newton. Co-sponsored by Bike Newton & Newton Tree Conservancy.

Monday, February 27 - 7pm:

Barton Seaver, sustainable seafood chef, author

For Cod & Country



Mr. Seaver will describe his mission to restore our relationships with the ocean, the land and each other through dinner. He sees food as a way to connect with the ecosystems, people and cultures of our world and he provides healthful, planet-friendly recipes in his book, *For Cod & Country*, and as host of the National

Geographic web series "Cook-Wise" and Ovation TV series "In Search of Food." He also works on ocean issues with National Geographic's Mission Blue to inspire action and collaborates with D.C. Central Kitchen, the School Nutrition Association, and the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School. Copies of *For Cod and Country* will be for sale and inscription. Local chef, Jeff Fournier of 51 Lincoln will speak about his restaurant's commitment to sustainable seafood.

On January 30, we will provide energy-saving outlet insulators. *Come every month for more Greening our community speakers: Mar 26, Apr 30, May 21, June 18*

Shovel more, salt less

In my family, perhaps in every family, there are stories so apocryphal that a simple phrase becomes a stand-in for the whole tale. One of ours is "salting the plants." That refers to the time my mother, a high-school student prone to merry pranks, snuck in to her school dining hall at night and, well, salted the plants. Needless to say, the plants did not respond well to said prank; nor did my mother's teachers, and her punishment was swift.

If there's one lesson I took from that story, it's this: Man, the '50s were a different time, weren't they? Oh no, sorry, it's this: salt and vegetation do not mix. Which is why it seems a no-brainer that the huge amounts of salt spread on U.S. roadways each winter -- an average of 8 to 12 million tons, according to the National Research Council -- is not so eco-friendly.

If you must use ice-melt, **avoid sodium chloride**. As awareness grows about the drawbacks of salt spreading—including not only damage to roadside vegetation but pollution of water supplies and corrosion of cars and bridges—consumers are beginning to search for alternatives. While municipalities study the best approach (and test creative alternatives), homeowners are left to their own devices. To help, I investigated the options and learned three useful lessons:

Read the ingredients, not the claims. As is the case with food and beauty products, the ice-melt industry knows that people want green, so read ingredient lists. If there's no ingredient list on the package, don't buy it. And avoid sodium chloride; that common concoction is the worst of all the salts (and also, of course, the cheapest). "Pet-friendly" means eco-friendly. Some brands may be more focused on safety to dogs, cats, and horses than safety to the landscape or water supply, but it's a good bet that if they advertise as pet-friendly, they're better for your plants, your kids, and you.

Sometimes traction is enough. Do you really need to melt the ice or just make it walkable? Everyday products like sand, sawdust, kitty litter (non-clumping), and ashes are proven ways to add traction to a slippery surface. They're better for you, comparatively better for your immediate environment, and often cheaper too.

This is an edited version of a piece published by Grist. For details on alternative products visit www.grist.org/article/De-salt-of-the-Earth by Katharine Wroth (reprinted from Grist)

Need help shoveling snow?

Students from Newton North's Science Team are available to hire for shoveling snow. Contact: colekerr@gmail.com, or danielshy@danielshy.com or call 857-389-3441.

Take action corner: Bills pass environment com

The Environment Committee of the Massachusetts legislature has approved two important bills.

The Safer Alternatives Bill will reduce exposure to toxic chemicals in our workplaces, consumer products, homes and communities. The Bill will call for a program to assess the availability of safer alternatives to toxic chemicals and require companies to replace toxic chemicals with safer alternatives when feasible.

The Electronic Waste Producer Responsibility Bill will make manufacturers responsible for establishing and funding a collection system for recycling or reusing computers, televisions and other electronics when the products expire. Both bills cleared an important hurdle on their way to becoming law in the 2011-2012 legislative session...one step in a long process towards passage. Take Action: Contact your State Legislators and ask them to make it a priority to pass these two bills when the legislative session resumes in January. *by Elizabeth Saunders, Clean Water Action*

Aldermen pass EPR resolution

More good news! In December the Board of Aldermen honored requests submitted by Green Decade and other local organizations by unanimously passing a resolution to support statewide Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework legislation. EPR laws require producers to have a plan for the costs of recycling their products. Passage would reduce municipal costs of recycling and disposal, increase the volume of recycled products and create an incentive for businesses to improve package and product design. EPR framework legislation would allow the addition of new product categories after review by a designated agency. This would eliminate the time, money and energy involved in writing/passing legislation to cover individual products. The E-Waste bill is an example of legislation developed for an individual product.

Twenty-three states have EPR laws. Until Massachusetts passes EPR legislation, municipalities and consumers are left with the cost of proper e-waste disposal. According to Elaine Gentile, Newton's Director of Environmental Affairs, "until this past October, the City of Newton was paying almost \$90,000 annually to properly dispose of e-waste. Currently, Newton residents must pay to dispose of their e-waste. If the Massachusetts legislature passes the current e-waste take-back Senate Bill (S2078), which will require producers to cover the cost for recycling e-waste, neither the residents nor the City will have to bear the cost."

Thanks ! and next newsletter deadline

For the next newsletter, please send submissions by e-mail to Ira Krepchin, irapk@alum.mit.edu, by Mon, Jan. 23, 2012.

Thanks for making this newsletter possible to Managing Editor Ira Krepchin, Editor Peter Smith, Copy Editor Susan Tornheim and article authors. Many thanks to our newsletter mailing chairs Marcia Cooper and Frank Propp, and their team for the last issue: Arlene Bandes, Polly Kalman and Lisa Wilson.

Students for a Greener World celebrate 4th year anniversary



Students for a Greener World celebrated 4 years as Green Decade's first student committee at their December 2011 meeting. Watch for them in their distinctive SGW "Wild Boar" shirts at more outreach and education events in 2012! L-R: Jay Feinstein, Roz Aronow, Isabel Snyder, Adela Miller (on table), Margaret Ford, Maxwell Hamilton, Taylor Yeracaris, Melissa Sullivan, Irene Wu and Hilary Brumberg.

EcoTeams at New Art Center

A **FREE** class taught by a facilitator to help make your household more environmentally friendly and less costly to run. You'll learn about energy rebates, no-interest loans, and free home assessments. For more information, visit: www.newartcenter.org/art/detail.aspx?id=AR124234&sem=25 or www.newtoncoteams.org **There are two free options:**
3 Wednesdays: Meets on 1/4, 2/1, 2/29 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
3 Fridays: Meets on 1/13, 2/10, 3/9 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

We appreciate all of our 2011 volunteers

For a complete list of volunteers for the following programs and events visit www.greendecade.org

Special thanks to a handful of Green Decade's outstanding 2011 volunteers, who gave so much of their time mostly behind the scenes!

- Database Manager: Don Ward, • Eco-Teams: Jay Walter & Robbie Durschlag, • E-Bulletin Editor: Shawn Fitzgibbons,
- Energy issues: Jim Purdy, • Farmer's Market Organizer: Margaret Ford, • Green News Editors: Ira Krepchin & Peter Smith, • Green Business EXPO: Peter Smith, • Laselle College interns (& Art Contest): Lindsey Kenna & Christina Haskins,
- Library Speaker Series: Barbara Herson & Ken Mallory,
- Mailing hosts: Frank & Edie Propp, • Mail pick-up/Delivery: Lucia Dolan, • Office Volunteer Administrator (& Art Contest): Margaret Ford, • School Outreach: Eric Bobby & Sunwoo Kahng, • Students for a Greener World: Margaret Ford, • Treasurer: Burt Schein, • Transportation: Lois Levin, • Webmaster: Tom Boyd

2012 EnviroArt Contest for Newton students Grades K-5!

It's back -- the Environmental Art Contest, open to Newton students in grades K to 5 who live or attend school in Newton! Last year over 170 Newton students participated and their artwork was exhibited at City Hall and the Newton Cultural Center. This year we are adding an after-school program category for teams with students from different grades. Since 2012 is an election year, the contest theme is: *"If I were president, I would _____ to make America greener."*

The 2012 contest guidelines includes:

- Participants may enter as an individual or in teams of 2, 3 or 4 children.
- Artwork formats:
 - 2-dimensional posters (11"x17" maximum)
 - Sculptures (1 cubic foot -- 12" x 12" x12" max)
 - iMovies (3 minutes maximum length)
- More use of recycled materials
- Correct spelling! (important to judges!)
- All entries will be judged together in the same grade level, whether team or individual. After-school program entries will be judged separately from grades K-5.

Art entries are due February 27 and the awards ceremony will be held April 4 at the Newton Cultural Center.

Green Medalists (first place) for each level will receive a basket of eco-friendly art supplies and all participants will be recognized at the Awards Ceremony. Each student who enters will receive a certificate of participation and the names of all participants will be entered in a raffle to be drawn at the awards ceremony for another basket of art supplies, valued at \$35.

This year's poster is designed by Adela Miller, Bigelow Middle School 7th grade, and Green Medalist in both 4th and 5th grades. The 2012 contest coordinators are Christina Haskins for the Art Contest and Jena Greaser, Operations and Sponsors.

Also joining the committee this year are consultant Diane Jaquith, Art Specialist at Burr Elementary, and Natalie Polonsky and Anson Chan, Green Decade interns. Thanks also to the Schools Outreach Committee / Green Teams, Students for a Greener World, Mayor's Office for Cultural Affairs, the Newton schools and the Newton PTO Council for helping coordinate the EnviroArt Contest again this year. The Newton Cultural Center will also display the contest art in April 2012.

Students must register on-line to participate in this year's contest at www.greendecade.org. Contest details are available on the Green Decade / Newton website, along with the Contest Registration Form.

Art drop-off sites at schools and other locations will also be listed. The contest is co-sponsored by the Green Decade / Newton and other organizations. Questions or information: 617-965-1995 or energycontest@greendecade.org.

by Margaret Ford



Jena Greaser, Christina Haskins and Margaret Ford 2012 EnviroArt Contest supreme commanders prepare in their Green Decade/Newton headquarters

Newton Community Farm classes

Jan. 28, 9-noon - Planning your Garden for a 3 Season Bounty, Join locally renowned gardening expert Ted Chapman for a planning session. **Feb. 5, 1:30-3:30pm - What to do with your Winter CSA?** Join Personal Chef Sharon Shiner for practical tips to make the most out of your winter CSA. **Feb. 11, 9:30-11:30am - Walking in a Winter Wonderland**, Marc Welch, Newton's official arborist will lead a guided winter tree walk. For more information: www.newtoncommunityfarm.org

Thanks for donations:

(contributions received before Dec.15)

FRIENDS: Elizabeth & Eric Bobby, Louise & Sev Bruyn, Deborah Crossley, Shawn & Kate Fitzgibbons, Debra Frankel, Cathi & Maurice Gilmore, Kim & Andy Gluck, Max Goldsmith, Richard & Diana Gomberg, Judy Hersh & Tim Rosa, Ronda & Joshua Jacobson, Gus Kiley, Elsa & Tom Lawrence, Douglas & Priscilla Leith, Lois Levin, Steve & Sonja Loar, Louise & Bernard Lown, Robin & Richard Maltz, Peter & Joan Metz, Rosemarie Mullin, David & Laurie Otten, Norman Richardson, Brenda & Pete Roberts, Virginia & Bill Robinson, Eleanor & Jay Rosellini, Carol & James Rosen, Howard & Sharon Sholkin, Susanne & Herbert Spatz, Don & Ellen Ward, Michael & Suzanne Cuccurullo
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Our mission is to create an environment in better balance with the natural world by making significant, measurable improvements in the way we use resources.

Goals include helping households, businesses and institutions to:

- Increase energy efficiency & seek alternatives to fossil/nuclear fuels;
- Use IPM and organic alternatives to pesticides;
- Promote high performance (green) building measures;
- Prevent pollution through source reduction and reduced consumption;
- Promote reuse and recycling practices;
- Improve waste disposal practices;
- Conserve water and other resources.

Our programs are designed to build awareness, promote opportunities for public dialogue and educate and empower citizens to take personal and civic action.

*Here is an opportunity for your
New Year's Resolution!*

Aldermen to sign up for NO-COST energy assessments

Speaking to the Board of Aldermen in December, Jay Walter, Director of the Newton Eco-project, asked Aldermen to schedule a Mass Save no-cost energy assessment for their homes, thereby encouraging their constituents to do the same. As of this writing, Aldermen Lisle Baker, Ted Hess-Mahan, Scott Lennon, and Steve Linsky have committed to the audits. Jay made the case to send a clear message to the community that city leaders support the initiative to make Newton a more sustainable community and take seriously our city's goal to reduce our energy consumption.

In his presentation, Jay described how the Newton Eco-project is partnering with Next Step Living under a grant from NSTAR's Community Outreach Program to promote the Mass Save residential energy incentive program. That is the "No Cost Home Energy Assessments" (free energy audits). It includes free air sealing, subsidized insulation installation, generous rebates on appliances and equipment, and a 0% loan programs for new equipment and window replacements. He told Aldermen "we do this because we believe taking advantage of the Mass Save program is the least expensive and most effective way to help Newton residents reduce their household energy use. If Newton is to reach its energy reduction goals, we must make the older housing stock throughout the city more sustainable."

The Eco-team project promotes the Mass Save program and helps residents navigate the utility incentive program. The project offers its own data sheets for the incentive programs and refers residents to qualified contractors and local banks approved for the program. Jay noted "our partnership with Next Step Living and NSTAR enables us to intercede on behalf of homeowners to make the process as easy as possible."

You (and your Aldermen) can **sign-up by calling 866-867-8729** or email Lyndsay at lyndsay.rose@nextsteplivinginc.com and mention **Green Decade/Newton**. Home energy assessments take about two hours. Auditors issue a report analyzing what your home needs and provide you free programmable thermostats, shower heads, aerators and CFL bulbs. Questions? Email entasis@rcn.com, call 617-527-8383. *by Jay Walter*

Toxics Action conference

March 3-4, Toxics Action Center 25th Anniversary Environmental Citizen's Conference. Keynote speakers: Lois Gibbs, Executive Director of the Center for Health, Environment & Justice, Jan Schlichtman, attorney who represented families in the 1980's drinking water contamination case in Woburn. Green Decade/Newton is a cosponsor. Participants meet other activists in environmental workshops. To register visit www.toxicsaction.org



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Green Decade is proud of its 21 year history and our organization's efforts to help residences, businesses and public facilities become more sustainable. You may also send a \$25 payment for a basic membership to Green Decade/Newton, P.O. Box 590242, Newton, MA 02459

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