

*IN THE NEWS:*

# Action to Phase Out Toxic Flame Retardants

The pressure continues to mount on toxic flame retardants and Clean Water Action, firefighters and health professionals around the country are celebrating good news this fall. For many years, research has found evidence linking flame retardants to health damage like reduced IQ, impaired memory, cancer, and reproductive problems. Common household products like crib mattresses, nursing pillows, couch cushions, mattresses, and rugs as well as electronics often contain these hazardous chemicals which are known to leach out of products and get into our bodies.

At a recent federal hearing, one of the top health voices in the country Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D., Director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, expressed her concern: “We know that all chemicals in this class will escape into the environment and into people. We know that they migrate continuously from everyday household products into the air around us.”

*continued on page 2*



# Flame Retardants *continued from page 1*

Flame retardants present particular health threats for pregnant women, young children and firefighters. Children have higher levels of these chemicals in their bodies than adults, in part because they spend more time on the floor in close contact with household dust where the flame retardants build up.

Firefighters experience over twice the cancer incidence of the general population. They are incredible allies in this effort. They are on the front lines of this battle, breathing in smoke and soot from fires in buildings that contain flame retardants, and making the case for flame retardant phase out at statehouses around the country.

## RHODE ISLAND PASSES FLAME RETARDANT BAN

In response to a major push led by Clean Water Action, health experts and firefighters, the Rhode Island House of Representatives voted to pass H5082 in special session this fall. The Senate had already unanimously passed this bill earlier in the session. Starting in 2019, Rhode Island law will require the phase out of organohalogen flame retardants (a group of chemicals that covers most of those used today) in items like couches, highchairs, electronic toys, car seats, and many more common household products. Rhode Island is the first state in the nation to ban the use of the entire class of chemicals in both furniture and children's products.



▲ *Victory! The vote count as Rhode Island passes H5028, banning Flame Retardants.*

## FEDERAL AGENCY ISSUES FLAME RETARDANT WARNING

In the same week that Rhode Island took action, the national Consumer Product Safety Commission issued a strong warning urging consumers to avoid products containing all organohalogens in products like children's toys, mattresses, furniture and electronics. The agency also voted to take steps toward banning the entire chemical class, a process which will take years to conclude under the most optimistic case.

## SAFER PROCUREMENT IN CONNECTICUT

In Connecticut, Clean Water has worked with Governor Malloy's team to win a "leadership by example" victory that restricts toxic flame retardants and builds demand for safer products. States have a major impact on how markets move forward, so Clean Water Action has collaborated with key agencies to expand the state purchase of products like furniture free of toxic flame retardants. As a result, this year, Connecticut finalized furniture contracts to restrict toxic flame retardants and volatile organic compounds in school furniture. This effort will significantly reduce exposure to toxic chemicals for children and all school employees and prevents these chemicals from getting in to the environment at the end of their use as well. Clean Water Action and members of the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut applaud these actions and look forward to continuing to work with state government leaders to expand the state's leadership in green purchasing.

## ALL EYES ON MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts has the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Maine and Rhode Island! Bills filed in the House and Senate would ban ten toxic flame retardants in children's products, household furniture, bedding, window coverings and carpeting. Clean Water Action is working closely with allies in the Alliance for a *Healthy Tomorrow* coalition and the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts to see that this bill becomes law this legislative session. If you live in Massachusetts, ask your legislators to ban toxic flame retardants today! <http://bit.ly/2i79c1g>

## MASSACHUSETTS

# Celebrating Our Sheroes and Heroes

*Clean Water Action Massachusetts held a 23rd Annual Fall Benefit on Saturday, October 14th at the historic Exchange Hall in Acton, MA to celebrate a year of progress for protections to the environment and public health. Clean Water is honored to work closely with many courageous leaders and celebrated a select few with awards.*

**Rachel Mulroy, Organizer with the Coalition for Social Justice** received the John O'Connor Grassroots Leadership Award. She is a skilled organizer who has worked to build a people's movement for clean energy in Southeastern Massachusetts.

**Eric Dominguez, Providence Canvasser**, received the John O'Connor Grassroots Award for Canvassing for his enthusiastic and effective leadership of Clean Water's Providence canvass team, skillful movement building, and dedication to environmental protection and racial justice.

Here at Clean Water Action Massachusetts we have been so lucky to work with strong, smart, and savvy women on the front lines pushing for safer products and healthy environments. We awarded five women leading the way for a healthy and just future:

**Representative Mary Keefe** received the Legislative Leadership Award for her work to promote justice in our energy system, build strong communities, fight for fair workplaces and protect and strengthen our natural environment.

**Representative Jen Benson** received the Legislative Leadership Award for her courageous efforts to lead Massachusetts toward a smart clean energy future that reflects our values of equity and fairness as well as our drive to tackle the climate crisis in the most effective ways possible. In particular she is the sponsor of a bill to put a price on carbon.

**Reverend Mariama White-Hammond**, Associate Minister for Ecological Justice, Bethel AME Church, received the Faith Leadership Award for her strong commitment to climate justice and for forging a new path forward that brings community control of local clean energy projects to low income communities and communities of color.

**Kirstie Pecci, Senior Fellow at Conservation Law Foundation**, received the Community Leadership Award for her leadership of a campaign in her hometown that resulted in closure of the Southbridge Landfill and her work across the state to eliminate pollution from incinerators and landfills and move Massachusetts towards a Zero Waste future.

**Dr. Laura Vandenberg, University of Massachusetts Amherst environmental health scientist**, received the Science Leadership Award for her groundbreaking research on bisphenol A (BPA) and other endocrine disrupting chemicals and her work to ensure that her research is put to use in protecting the health of the most vulnerable for generations to come.

As long-time organizer John O'Connor always said, "The Fun is in the Fight!" Clean Water collaborates with a wide variety of allies in order to provide people power and strength in numbers, to win BIG! Congratulations to all of the dedicated heroes and sheroes, and thank you to all of our sponsors and members who attended the benefit and supported our work.



▲ Honorees & staff at Clean Water Action's 23rd Annual Fall Benefit. From Left, Elizabeth Saunders - Clean Water Action MA State Director, Eric Dominguez, Representative Mary Keefe, Representative Jen Benson, Rachel Mulroy, Dr. Laura Vandenberg, Kirstie Pecci, and Cindy Luppi - Clean Water Action Regional Director. (Missing - Rev. Mariama White-Hammond)

## MASSACHUSETTS

### *Boston Launches Zero Waste Planning Process*

At the beginning of summer 2017, after seven years of campaigning for a sustainable vision for Boston's underperforming waste system, the Zero Waste Boston (ZWB) coalition achieved a big victory. Mayor Marty Walsh announced the city would hire a Zero Waste consultant to facilitate a comprehensive community-driven Zero Waste planning process for the city.

By the end of the summer, Boston had chosen a team of accomplished Zero Waste experts who have been advising the Zero Waste campaign for years! Under a \$150,000 contract these experts will engage a full range of stakeholders to inform the development of Boston's first Zero Waste Plan, committing the city to a major overhaul and setting aggressive waste diversion and other targets. ZWB's priorities will now shift accordingly, to ensure that environmental goals do not overshadow the pressing social justice and economic development concerns of our coalition partners regarding the current "waste management" landscape.

A Zero Waste framework offers tremendous new opportunities to improve wages and working conditions, and to develop responsible startups across a broad range of occupations in the waste sector — from reuse and repair to organic waste processing via composting or anaerobic digestion. The coalition will also take a close look at potential statewide legislation to reduce toxics and other undesirable materials upstream in the production or packaging process. Among the coalition's partners is CERO ([www.cero.coop](http://www.cero.coop)), a worker-owned cooperative of low-income people of color collecting commercial organic waste and feeding it into community gardens and small urban farms, demonstrating how we can both close the waste loop and keep dollars local.

ZWB will work closely with the winning consultant team this fall to turn out broad community participation in the planning process, and to ensure that all those affected by these policy decisions finally have a fair say in determining the future of Boston's waste system.

---

### *Massachusetts Communities Power Forward with Clean Energy*

Move over, climate deniers. Cities and towns in Massachusetts are aggressively pursuing clean energy, cutting greenhouse gas emissions and modeling solutions that can be emulated across the state and region. As part of the Mass Power Forward coalition, Clean Water Action is working with partners like the Mass Climate Action Network, 350 Mass and Environment Massachusetts to support municipalities in making commitments to 100% Renewable Energy and moving forward concrete initiatives to progress toward that goal.

A toolkit released this year from Mass Power Forward (<http://bit.ly/roadto100percent>) gives clean energy case studies, a portfolio of options for local projects, a metric for evaluating local climate pollution, an outline of creating a climate action plan and sample municipal resolutions in support of 100% renewable energy targets. These toolkits are already being put to work: activists across the state have used this

► *Rep. Paul Mark speaking at the Western MA campaign kick-off press conference in Greenfield.*



resource to not only track their own community's efforts, but build relationships with municipal staff and build the community network needed to wage a successful clean energy campaign.

In April, press conferences in Greenfield (Western Mass) and Beverly (North Shore) kicked off the series of local renewable energy campaigns. State Rep. Paul Mark, Greenfield Mayor Martin and two area selectboard members joined the Western Mass event at the John W. Olver Transit Center, a public building that has seen significant investments in efficiency, geothermal heat and photovoltaic (solar) power. In

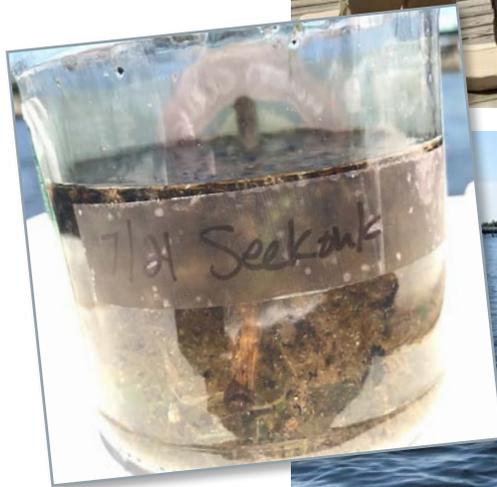
*[continued on next page](#)*

## RHODE ISLAND

# In Our Backyard: Narragansett Bay Plastic Pollution Research Project

This summer, Clean Water Action's Rhode Island team conducted a "trash trawl" to look for microplastics — small, broken down nuggets of plastic pollution like discarded soda bottles and containers — lurking in Narragansett Bay. The project consisted of four consecutive days of skimming the surface of the Bay with a manta trawl and boat team who collected these tiny plastic particles in our waters (*see photos*). The goal of the trawl: to get a snapshot of the seriousness of the microplastics problem in our local waters and to collect samples to use in education and campaign efforts to tackle this critical problem.

Unsurprisingly, the team found microplastic pollution in each of the twelve samples collected. Clean Water will use these samples to demonstrate to elected officials the extent of the problem in Narragansett Bay and the urgency for passing legislation to keep microplastics from entering our waters to begin with. For more information on how you can get involved contact our Providence office at (401) 331-6972.



## **MA Communities Power Forward** *continued from previous page*

Beverly, the manager of Greenergy Solar Field, the oldest continually-operating solar field in the nation, guided advocates and area municipal staff around the site after a brief speaking program.

The work has already begun. The Boston City Council recently approved a bid for more clean energy resources and out in Franklin County small municipalities are banding together to advance a similar proposal. In the Berkshires, a consortium of

local energy committees is gathering to plan for their region's energy future. In Sharon, the town recently approved a series of policies necessary to earn Green Communities status. In Braintree, residents are engaging their Mayor and municipal light plant about powering forward with clean energy. Concord, another public power community, recently changed its rate structure to begin the transition to 100% renewable energy.

► **TAKE ACTION:** *YOU can be part of this effort — visit <http://mapowerforward.com/100re>, download the materials, and get in touch about the next step in your community.*

## CONNECTICUT

### *Working to Protect Connecticut's Waters*

Connecticut is fortunate to have abundant sources of clean water for drinking, recreation and to support wildlife as well as burgeoning wine and craft beer brewing industries. But our waters are under threat. Clean Water Action is raising awareness of these threats and pushing for policies to better manage, protect, and conserve our water.

The Trump administration's effort to rollback protections for streams, wetlands, and drinking water is a significant threat. The rollback will limit protections for the streams and headwaters that supply larger sources of drinking water. If the Trump administration succeeds in repealing the Clean Water Rule, at least 52% of Connecticut's stream miles will again be at risk from pollution. Rollback of this rule will affect 62% of Connecticut residents who get their drinking water from sources that rely on small streams. Thousands of acres of wetlands that provide flood protection, recharge groundwater supplies, filter pollution and provide essential wildlife habitat will be at risk. Thanks to the amazing work of Clean Water's canvass team, hundreds of Connecticut resident joined tens of thousands from across the country in signing postcards opposing any rollback to the Clean Water Rule.

Climate change is also a serious threat to Connecticut's water. Changes in weather patterns,

precipitation and more extreme heat days are already impacting the quantity and quality of water. Connecticut suffered an unprecedented seven month long statewide drought from October 2016 to May 2017 and this fall is also unseasonably warm and dry. Drought and changes in water temperature can encourage harmful algae outbreaks and bacteria in our water, leading to beach closures and health impacts. Stormwater runoff from intense rain events washes pollutants, toxic metals, and other chemicals, fertilizer, and pesticides into waterways adding further pollution into rivers and Long Island Sound.

The impacts of climate change on our water will continue. This year, Clean Water Action is working with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the Department of Public Health, the State Water Planning Council and other advocacy groups to assure that the state's draft water plan, currently out for comment, adequately protects our water, now and into the future.

*Want to learn more and see what you can do in your home, workplace and community? Get in touch! Clean Water is conducting community briefings on threats to our water and ways to protect water in local communities. Our team would love to come to your community and work with you to protect our water!*



## CONNECTICUT

# *Our Clean Energy Future in Connecticut*

In Connecticut, Clean Water has been working over time to make sure our clean energy future isn't hijacked under the guise of the state budget debate. As negotiations to close the historic budget deficit continue, the major focus has been stopping the legislature from diverting clean energy funds, including the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, Clean Energy Fund and CT Green Bank to other uses. Bipartisan budget proposals in September would have raided these vital funds, leading Clean Water Action and coalition partners to call for the Governor's veto. The Governor vetoed the bills, identifying the need to protect these funds as one of a handful of reasons. And as new budget proposals come to light, Clean Water and allies are as vigilant as ever.

At the same time, our staff and volunteers are also working proactively to move the needle forward on boosting clean energy in Connecticut. This means ensuring that revisions to the state's 3-year Comprehensive Energy Strategy include an increased Renewable Portfolio Standard — the amount of our power that must come from renewable sources — to at least 40% by 2030 when the revisions are finalized in late 2017. To prepare for a big campaign through the 2018 legislative session, Clean Water staff are creating a high-energy team of volunteers, affectionately known as the Energy Action Faction. The vision is to deploy skilled volunteers in every legislative district, keeping on top of their legislators' views while producing events and media outreach to inform and empower constituents. To get involved, contact [meverett@cleanwater.org](mailto:meverett@cleanwater.org).

Funded by the Tremaine and Hampshire Foundations, staff and volunteers are also partnering with local Clean Energy Task Forces throughout the state. This year Clean Water Action is organizing a peer support series, the Clean Energy Accelerator — designed to provide technical and strategic support for local government staff and volunteers. This will support towns that want to scale up clean energy, advance energy security, integrate energy into local plans, and/or take energy actions that are recommended by the exciting new program, SustainableCT. Apply to participate by contacting [meverett@cleanwater.org](mailto:meverett@cleanwater.org) before November 1, 2017.



---

## NEW ENGLAND CURRENTS

Fall 2017

1444 Eye Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005

Phone 202.895.0420 | Fax 202.895.0438 | [cwa@cleanwater.org](mailto:cwa@cleanwater.org)

[@cleanH2Oaction](https://twitter.com/cleanH2Oaction) [Facebook.com/CleanWaterAction](https://www.facebook.com/CleanWaterAction)

CURRENTS is published by Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund.

Reproduction in whole or part is permitted with proper credit. © 2017 All rights reserved.