



As people across the country protest in defense of Black lives, the Sierra Club recognizes the need to dismantle systemic racism in the United States and within our own organization. We must reckon with how white supremacy -- both past and present -- has shaped our institutions and do the critical anti-racism work necessary to repair the harm done. The environmental movement does not exist in a vacuum, and it is our responsibility to use our power to help abolish systemic racism, which is destroying lives, communities, and the planet.

2020

CLIMATE LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER

NOTES FROM MASSACHUSETTS CITIES AND TOWNS

Dear Friend,

The Climate Leadership Newsletter features stories of environmental and climate action in Massachusetts. It provides a platform to highlight work being done by municipalities, climate leaders, and local groups in communities across the Commonwealth. To share local climate actions in your community, email [Emma Brown](mailto:emma.brown@sierraclub.org).

Clean Energy and Climate

More solar options coming to Franklin and Marlborough



Residents of Franklin and Marlborough have already begun seeing more options for solar energy in their communities. In Franklin, a new 6-megawatt farm operated by Nexamp is under construction and expected to go live in the summer of 2021. The new farm will have capacity to power 800 homes, and town officials estimate that residents could see an average savings of \$180 annually, based on individual household usage. The new solar farm construction will also feature a parking lot for residents to access the nearby Franklin State Forest.

In Marlborough, city officials are considering adding a solar farm on top of a 35-acre closed and capped landfill. While a portion of the landfill is currently under the care of the city's Recreation Department, the remaining portion could be used as a solar farm. The city would pursue a grant up to \$10 million through the [Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target \(SMART\)](#) program.

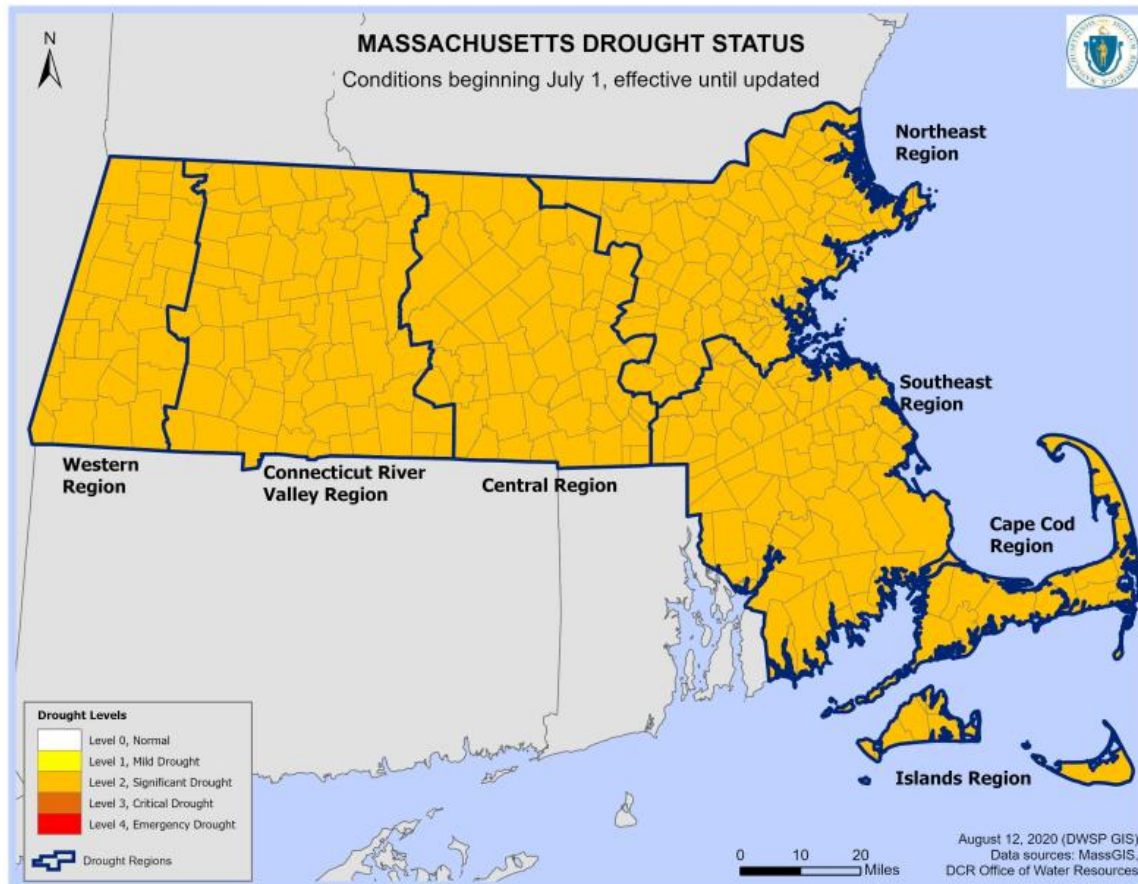
Baker-Polito Administration Awards \$13 Million in Green Communities Grants



The ninth round of Green Communities competitive grants were awarded last week, totaling over \$13 million to 103 municipalities across Massachusetts to fund clean energy projects. To date, 271 Massachusetts cities and towns have reached Green Community status by meeting five criteria, which accounts for 84 percent of the Commonwealth's population. This round of grants was awarded to existing Green Communities that have successfully invested their initial designation grants and previous competitive grant awards. Money is capped at \$200,000 per community and can be used to further their [energy efficiency and renewable energy goals](#). Funding for the grants is available through proceeds from carbon allowance auctions under the [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative](#) (RGGI).

All Green Communities commit to reducing municipal energy consumption by 20 percent over five years. These commitments amount to collective savings of 2,534,787 MMBtu, energy use equivalent to heating and powering nearly 20,000 homes and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 233,640 tons. [Learn more about Green Communities here.](#)

Statewide Drought Conditions Persist



Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Kathleen Theoharides declared this month that all seven regions of the Commonwealth are under Level 2 - Significant Drought conditions. The declaration came after above normal temperatures throughout July and early August and more than three months of below normal rainfall. At a Level 2 – Significant Drought, as outlined in the [Massachusetts Drought Management Plan](#), conditions are becoming significantly dry and warrant detailed monitoring of drought conditions, close coordination among state and federal agencies, emphasis on water conservation, more stringent watering restrictions, and technical outreach and assistance for the affected municipalities.

Residents and communities are encouraged to reduce their outdoor water usage as much as possible, and to avoid planting any new ornamental vegetation or landscaping that will require extra water consumption. Meanwhile, the risk for wildfires has increased statewide, particularly due to dry soil conditions. Limiting or reducing indoor and outdoor use of water can help ensure that there are enough resources to combat wildfire as the need arises.

EPA Weakens Methane Rule



Earlier this month, the Trump administration formally weakened a major Obama-era climate change regulation that targeted methane leaks from oil and gas wells, effectively freeing oil and gas companies from the need to detect and repair methane leaks. The EPA justified the rollback by claiming that leaks have remained steady over the last decade, relying on self-reported data from companies and on-site testing. Meanwhile, independent research over the last few years has indicated that methane leaks are far more widespread, and may be two to three times higher than the EPA's estimates.. As scientists detect higher amounts of methane in the atmosphere, which is estimated to be [25 times more potent](#) than CO₂, the need to combat methane pollution from fossil fuel wells has become more urgent.

Councilor Wu pitches a Green New Deal for Boston



Last week, City Councilor Michelle Wu unveiled a comprehensive Green New Deal and Just Recovery plan for Boston, which outlines dozens of policies and case studies from other cities to suggest ways in which Boston could reduce greenhouse gas emissions while also addressing racial inequities, supporting workforce development, and improving public health. Specifically, the plan calls for ideas such as eliminating MBTA fares, growing the city's tree canopy, auditing city policies for inequities, and accelerating the deadline to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions.

Wu's plan is not a specific policy but is intentionally broad and aspirational, in hopes

of igniting larger conversations to tackle interlocking crises of climate, health, and public housing. While introducing the initiative in a [virtual council meeting](#), Wu said, “this is most fundamentally about the fact that no particular policy program or office or individual can do this. It’s really about a mass public conversation and community mobilization and prioritization of what projects should happen, where, when, what the details are.” [Read the entire report here.](#)

Clean Transportation

Sierra Club releases policy toolkit to transition to electric vehicles



The Sierra Club joined our partners Plug In America, Forth, and the Electrification Coalition to release Version 4.0 of the [AchiEVe: Model Policies to Accelerate Electric Vehicle Adoption](#), the most comprehensive and current toolkit for transportation electrification in the nation. The toolkit is structured so that various stakeholders including cities/local governments, businesses, state agencies, legislators, and transit agencies can easily access topics most relevant to them. The toolkit compiles guidance on how to approach EV policies, and provides over 50 policies across a range of categories currently enacted at the state, local, and utility levels.

MBTA and Boston-area cities to add 14 miles of bus-only travel lanes



The MBTA recently [announced a plan](#) to build 14 new corridor miles of bus-only transit lanes in coordination with the [Better Bus Project](#) and Boston-area cities including Somerville, Chelsea, and Everett. The goal of the project is to improve service reliability and reduce crowded conditions amid the COVID-19 pandemic, mitigating the risk of virus transmission. New lanes are expected to cost the T around \$20 million and to be completed over the course of the fall and spring. The project includes lanes that have been long earmarked for redesign, as well as new lanes identified based on ridership trends since March.

Some lanes, including Columbus Avenue in Boston between Walnut Avenue and Jackson Square Station, will be built in the center of the road—rather than along the curb—drawing criticism from cyclists and bicycle safety advocates. Shared center bus/bike lanes provide fewer opportunities for cyclists to move out of the way of oncoming buses, putting their safety at risk. Advocates note that the T moved forward with a plan in the name of expediency, without considering plans that prioritized other modes alongside rapid bus lanes.

MBTA extends discounted commuter rail pilot



The MBTA announced this month that discounted MBTA Commuter Rail rates between Boston and Lynn will continue through the end of the year. Lynn and Riverworks were previously classified as [Zone 2](#) stops —costing travelers \$7 per trip — but a pilot that began in May due to the pandemic reduced those fares to \$2.40 per trip. Officials hope that the reduced fares incentivize folks to use the commuter rail over buses to reduce crowding. Lynn officials and community leaders, meanwhile, are encouraging travelers to use the commuter rail option to reduce roadway congestion.

Cambridge implementing traffic calming measures in Harvard Square



Registration is now open for the Levels I and II Building Operator Certification trainings. Trainings will begin on September 15 and are open to Massachusetts and Rhode Island residents with two or more years of experience in building operations and maintenance who wish to broaden their knowledge of total building systems. The course series provides building operators with knowledge and skill enhancement in the key activities associated with energy efficient building operations. All courses will be held online and discounts are available. [Click here for more information and to register](#).

Resources and Reading List

- [Extreme heat is worse in redlined neighborhoods](#), Rachel Ramirez & Daniel Penner, Grist
- [Entrepreneurial Reflections: Blackness, Privilege, Bikes & Red Tape](#), Shabazz Stuart, Medium
- [Fighting the Great Depression From Below](#), Jeremy Brecher, Labor Network for Sustainability, Research and Policy Director
- [These people of color transformed U.S. national parks](#), James Edward Mills, National Geographic
- [How to drive fossil fuels out of the US economy, quickly](#), David Roberts, VOX
- [A Daily Ray of Hope](#). The Sierra Club has been offering a “Daily Ray of Hope” email for years, and we could all use a bit of that right now. Subscribers get a beautiful picture from the natural world along with some words of wisdom every morning. [Sign up today and bring some joy to your inbox](#).

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The [COVID-19 crisis](#) has not passed and continues to [disproportionately harm](#) Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people and other communities of color. The pandemic has revealed how the communities hardest hit are often the same communities that suffer from high levels of pollution and poor access to healthcare. The fight for environmental justice cannot be separated from the fight for racial justice.

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