

#### Massachusetts Sierra Club

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#### SIERRA CLUB

Letter from the desk of James McCaffrey, Chapter Director

#### The Slippery Slope

Council Caves on Middlesex Fells

A citizen oversight body created to help protect parklands in Massachusetts recently approved a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the *Middlesex Fells Reservation*. Many believe the RMP will place the iconic property at great risk due to increased access for recreational user groups. The approval by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Stewardship Council represents a fundamental shift in the management of parklands as DCR moves further away from the precautionary principle and more towards a clearly recreational bias, even at highly sensitive properties. The vote represented a turning point for the agency, the planning process, and our state parks system.

The Fells RMP was demonstrated by multiple constituencies to be a technically flawed document with foregone conclusions drawn from non-applicable studies, wholesale dismissal of public concerns, and failure to identify resources or commitments to implement major components of the plan. Every major environmental group, parks friends group, and legislator that represents the Fells districts called upon DCR to provide additional protections and less recreational expansion in the Middlesex Fells RMP before approving it.

Despite this unanimous call from the environmental community to withhold approval of the flawed plan, DCR then pledged to "work with partners, stakeholders, users and volunteers to protect, promote and enhance the natural, cultural and recreational resources at this special place." It remains unclear how this will be achieved when DCR dismissed so many stakeholder concerns raised throughout the process itself. Mike

(continued on page 13)

ON THE COVER: Resting, Eyes Open Photo © Deborah A. Venuti

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# Bookends: Remembering Alexandra Dawson

by James Bryan McCaffrey

"The whole of America is seen as a stockpile of resources, like feathers and lead and bombs. Very occasionally the stockpile concept is extended to the use and enjoyment of future generations who should not be denied their key to the stockroom to get at all those raw materials. Yet I submit this is not how we now live."

Alexandra's first writings for the Sierra Club, December 1970



In the waning moments of 2011, the earth lost a fearless friend and advocate when Alexandra Dawson, 80, passed away peacefully at her home in Hadley, Massachusetts. I first met Alexandra when I volunteered for the Sierra Club in 1988, the impressionable beginnings of my advocacy journey. I remember vividly those earliest introductions to this veritable force of nature: Alexandra's gift for language, including her deft grasp of environmental law and the ability to explain its intricacies (and implications) to others (read 'non-lawyers'); her razor-sharp wit and warm smile; and most importantly, her uncompromising defense of the earth.

Alexandra loved the land, the law, and paddling

Alexandra would often sit intensely and silently quilting away in public hearings, community gatherings, or local living rooms while conspiring with friends and colleagues how best to uphold what she called "the law of the land." Occasionally, this quiet posture was punctuated by an obscure or original (often mildly colorful) metaphor accompanied by some sound table thumping or the formidable (always harmless) projectile. Be it a tedious environmental review document detailing the latest affront, or in a pinch, a flung purse, Alexandra would use whatever means necessary to garner the full attention of the room and anyone clearly "up to no good" before rendering her finding.

What became clear to me over the years was that Alexandra's gift of speaking truth to power came with a twist, for it was power that often wanted to speak to Alexandra. In many ways, Alexandra was the pulse of environmental activism in Massachusetts, and many within the "corporate machinery of the government" understood this and respected her views. Those behind the latest "repugnant idea" to gut a regulation or law (that Alexandra in many cases had authored) were always well advised to first get a reality check. The fact is, no matter whose side you may be on, there was no better way to discern where the entire environmental community was likely to stand on any given proposal than to first gauge Alexandra's reaction. I have often wondered how many bad ideas to despoil our planet never even made it past an initial phone call to Alexandra.

Alexandra's work with the Sierra Club began in 1970, as best our records reflect. The fledgling New England Sierra Club was just taking flight, with Alexandra serving as newsletter editor. Describing herself at the time as a "would-be environmental attorney," Alexandra noted that she had been "digging about in the field". Indeed, what digging Alexandra would do throughout her legal and advocacy career, not to mention decades of successfully *blocking* no small amount of *actual digging* by "the bad guys" hankering to bulldoze wetlands, widen highways, clear the forests, or otherwise float some "harebrained scheme" that might bring harm to the "critters" Alexandra so loved.

Alexandra always saw right to the core of the good, bad, and ugly buried within the latest "lamentable proposal." We fought – and won – many a battle together, led by her wisdom and guidance. We attended countless meetings, and once had the distinguished honor of being unceremoniously tossed out of a curmudgeonly congressman's office when he had heard quite enough pleas from us to cease his support of 58 acres of wetlands filling to land a mere 2 planes per day carrying frozen fish. I learned from Alexandra to be brave, tenacious, and tireless, and ultimately came to view her as mentor, friend, and a guiding light in the environmental movement. The EPA concurred, awarding Alexandra a *Lifetime Achievement* award in 2006 (just one of her so many awards).

Alexandra left behind a prolific legacy of writings, including as author or co-author of many of the Commonwealth's environmental laws and regulations that stand to this day. She worked closely with family, friends, communities and organizations to help secure protection for thousands of acres of open space in the Pioneer Valley and beyond. In the past, whenever I faced a new environmental challenge, my first thought was often "Call Alexandra," who was always generous with her time, patient with her analysis, and ingenious in her counsel. A consultative phone-call to Alexandra may no longer be an option for us earth-bound critters, but I'm certain we will all be "digging about" for years to come amongst Alexandra's archives which form a rich quilt of remembrance – and guidance – for us in our continued defense of the "law of the land."

"The important thing is, to see our individual arguments and actions in a broader context and to understand that we are all engaged in a great experiment for which we have little experience and even less preparation."

From Alexandra's last column for the Daily Hampshire Gazette, December 2011

A selected archive of Alexandra's writings for Sierra Club can be found at www.sierraclubmass.org/adawson

# The Foxes of Salisbury Beach

by Deborah A. Venuti

If first heard of Red Fox sightings at Salisbury Beach State Reservation in the spring of 2011. Two young kits were observed lazing in the sun on top of a dune at the far end of the reservation. These habitats are protected against human intrusion to preserve the fragile ecosystem of wild plants, flowers, and nesting birds, so the foxes were always observed and photographed from a distance.



Salisbury Beach is a complex barrier beach system, comprised of coastal beach, coastal dunes and salt marsh. The Salisbury Beach State Reservation, which is managed b y t h e

Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), is concentrated at the southern end of Salisbury Beach adjacent to the Merrimack River, and extends in a northerly direction along 3.8 miles of the Atlantic Ocean to the New Hampshire border. This extensive barrier beach system plays a critical role in the protection of the Merrimack River estuary, along with associated salt marsh habitat, dune preservation, and habitat for threatened and endangered species and other wildlife.

In 2008, the Massachusetts Legislature established the Salisbury Beach Preservation Trust to ensure long-term preservation and maintenance of the Beach. The 521-acre park offers camping, swimming, boating, fishing, and new bathhouses and playgrounds. Many areas were replanted with American beach grass (Ammophila breviligulata) after storms such as the "No Name" storm of 1991 ravaged the coastline. The combination of natural resources and public facilities and amenities at Salisbury Beach makes it one of the most attractive and popular recreational areas in Massachusetts.

My first extended contact with this fox family was on a May evening. There was no sign of them during the day, though I had found tracks along one of their trails. I had pinpointed a meadow where they might hunt, so I waited on the boardwalk over-

looking the meadow. It was almost completely dark when I became aware of a young fox at the edge of the bushes. The first fox was followed closely by her sister. They moved silently into the meadow, listening, tilting their heads and poking their noses into the grass. Suddenly a third fox was there, slightly larger and stockier, probably the mom. The three of them hunted, pouncing on things I couldn't see. There were other evenings when we saw as many as seven foxes in the meadow - obviously two or more families.

Adult Red Foxes (Vulpes vulpes) are wary of humans, and they often hunt in the early morning and in the evening. The females (vixens) are small, weighing about 15 pounds, while the males (dog foxes) are larger, with a slim body and long legs. They can have golden, red, grey, or even silver fur, with black "leggings" and a long dark tail tipped with white. The kits are brownish-grey when born, and later develop their signature red coloring. Foxes are omnivorous, preferring small rodents: mice, shrews, rabbits and squirrels, but also eating sea birds, eggs, plants and berries. Because they are so adaptable, they are listed as a species of "Least Concern" on the International Endangered List.

Several more times during the summer I went to the reservation and watched the two young foxes. As the kits grew up and got bolder, they were more active outside the den. They would hunt, play tag and wrestle in the grass. One foggy day I watched as they chased each other all around the den, running and leaping through the grass.

Another day, one kit was sleeping on top of the den, when I saw her shift, get up, and move over to sit in the grass. A little face appeared in the ground. The second kit emerged from the den, shook the dirt off, stretched and yawned before joining her sister in the grass.

To see these young wild animals in their natural surroundings, taking as little notice of me as if I had been a seagull, was an unequaled experience. When the foxes got older, they left the den and hunted alone, roaming more widely across the reservation. It's very possible that the mother will return to the den this winter to have another litter, and I'll visit them again. �

Deborah A. Venuti is a Sierra Club member and professional photographer. All photos by the author, used by permission. Sources: DCR Salisbury Beach State Reservation, Barrier Beach Management Plan, September 2008.

## **Endangered Species Act Under Attack**

Endangered species need our help! An effort to gut the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) has gained support in the legislature. Many phone calls are needed to our elected officials, especially to Senator Marc Pacheco and Representative Anne Gobi, co-chairs of the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture. Please ask them to be sure MESA is not weakened.

The forces that are attempting to gut MESA are making highly misleading claims, including what has become a favorite ploy: claiming that environmental regulations cause a loss of jobs. Your help to defeat this unjustified attack is urgently needed! We urge you to contact Chairman Pacheco and Chairwoman Gobi today – by phone, email or mail – to ask them to protect endangered species and table "SB1854". Be sure to let your representative and senator know where you stand. Senator Pacheco's number is 617-722-1551; Representative Gobi's is 617-722-2210. The urgency is such that we are also asking our members to call Governor Patrick's office at 617-725-4005. *Please visit the Chapter web site to learn more*.



Salisbury Beach wildlife photos © Deborah A. Venuti, used by permission. You can find more of Deborah's photo's at www.facebook.com/debphotog

# **Celebrating 50 Years of Wilderness Preservation**

The Wilderness Act was signed into law in 1964. The Sierra Club, other wilderness groups, and the four federal wilderness managing agencies are getting ready to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act in 2014. We invite you to get involved and be part of this big national celebration to applaud what a major achievement the National Wilderness Preservation System is for our country. Help make our celebrations in Massachusetts a memorable part of 2014. To make this happen, we need to start planning now.

Nationwide there are over 100 million acres Congress has added to the Wilderness Preservation system so far -- with more to come over the years. Wilderness designation is the strongest and most permanent protection that can be extended to our Federal public lands. Wilderness areas include wild places in National Parks, National Forests, wildlife refuges, and western lands of the Bureau of Land Management.

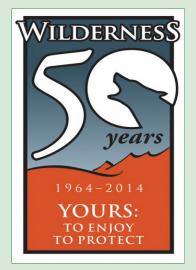
Although we don't have any federally-designated Wilderness areas in Massachusetts, there are some in

neighboring states Vermont and New Hampshire. Our state equivalent lands are the Reserves that the Department of Conservation and Recreation is currently in the process of designating.

During 2014, we hope to have our own local celebrations in coordination with the national Sierra Club. Ideas include possible wilderness or nature-related art shows, concerts, and possibly lectures. We're working on organizing some outings, especially hikes in some of the Reserves and in Wilderness areas in our neighboring states.

To make this happen, we need your help. As 50th anniversary coordinator for the Massachusetts Chapter, I am looking for some helpers who are enthusiastic about wilderness and who are interested in helping us celebrate -- and who may have some ideas about ways we can promote and publicize wilderness during 2014. I hope that means you! Please contact me at ecampbell@sierraclubmass.org.

Elisa Campbell, Chapter Wilderness50 coordinator



# What's in Your Basement?

by Launa Zimmaro



Data indicates that in the U.S.,142,000 computers and over 416,000 mobile devices are thrown into the trash or recycled every day.

State of the art electronic products now come to market at a dizzying pace. Purchasing practices reflect this trend as consumers upgrade their devices with increasing speed to stay current or have the "latest and greatest" gadget.

Best available estimates put the average number of consumer electronic devices (CEDs) at 24 per American household (e.g., cellphones, MP3 players, laptop computers, digital cameras, etc.). This number doesn't include older products no longer used and in cold storage within our basements, garages and attics. While the amount of stored electronic devices in households is difficult to determine, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has provided the estimates based on 2007 data. The unit volume of these idled devices is staggering. For example, the number of TV sets alone stored in households in 2007 numbered 99 million units.

EPA: Estimate of CEDs in storage in the U.S. in 2007 (in million units)

Desktop PCs: 65.7 PC Monitors: 42.4 Hard copy peripherals: 25.2 The combination of explosive sales and lower costs as technology advances and new products come to market with increasing speed means more devices – even those that work – end up discarded. While robust sales are good for business, continuing growth in CED purchases also means a growing mountain of discarded electronics.

E-waste is one of the fastest growing waste streams in the world. About 400 million units a year are scrapped in the US alone. While currently representing 1-2% of the municipal solid waste stream in the U.S., discarded CEDs are responsible for roughly 40% of toxic materials such as lead, cadmium and mercury found in U.S. landfills.

How do we deal with all this electronic 'stuff'? Of the 3.19 million tons of e-waste generated in the U.S. in 2009, only 17.7% was recycled. Even with state bans and laws prohibiting the disposal of these products in trash, many end up in incinerators or landfills due to weak enforcement of existing prohibitions.

Responsible recycling can also be a challenge due to a lack of regulatory standards to ensure safe recovery of component parts and materials and disposal. It is estimated that 70-80% of donated electronics end up in developing countries where unsafe, improper handling results in the damaged health of workers and the environment.

Within the Repair, Reuse, Recycle hierarchy of best management practices related to electronics, Reuse provides a double benefit. By donating retired CEDs, the life of products requiring a high level of energy and valuable resources to produce and ship is extended, thereby conserving those resources and also reducing associated emissions and pollution. Donations are also a social good as they provide products for use by non-profit organizations and low-income families unable to afford the purchase price.

Recycling is the next, best environmentally responsible end-of-use life option for electronics. Recycling recaptures rather than squanders valuable, finite materials for reuse, reducing the environmental damage and expenditure of energy and emissions associated with mining for new materials. A growing number of recyclers are applying and qualifying for rigorous, new certifications, such as e-Stewards, designed to ensure safe, legal and responsible business practices and low environmental impact.

Organizations such as *Causes International* provide a convenient, responsible way for consumers to donate their retired CEDs with the assurance that what can't be reused will be responsibly recycled or disposed of. The next time you're in your basement, garage, office or attic look for those replaced and forgotten electronics taking up space and gathering dust and put them to better purpose by donating or recycling them. �

Please see the announcement on the next page to find out how you can recycle your E-waste and help the Sierra Club too!

# **Boston Area Transit Changes**

by Drew Grande, Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign Organizer

The MBTA has announced a round of service cuts and fare increases that will take effect on July 1st. While the ferry and evening and weekend commuter rail service has been saved everyone will be impacted from the loss of bus routes and a 25% fare increase.

The MBTA (the "T") must be credited with doing so much with so little. The agency carries nearly \$6 Billion in debt and is able to move 1.3 million riders every weekday throughout their system. That debt burden represents 30% of the system's operating budget. The hard part to swallow about that debt is that more than half of it came from a highway project that had nothing to do with the MBTA. The William Weld administration took almost \$3 Billion of debt from the Big Dig project and transferred it to the T. The MBTA is now forced to pay for a highway project that puts more sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter and other pollutants into our air.

The other factor hurting the MBTA financially is the cost of fuel and energy to power the subway,



# Recycle your E-Waste and Support the Sierra Club

E-waste has become the fastest growing part of the waste stream. The good news is that there is something we, as individuals, can do to help stem this growing tide of toxic waste: Donate unwanted items for refurbishment and reuse. It isn't waste until it's wasted!

The Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club has partnered with *Causes International* to support our zero-waste policies and raise funds to protect the environment at the same time! Please join us in this effort. You can help us reduce unnecessary landfill and incinerator waste plus keep our air and water clean by donating your used consumer electronics.

Please visit...
http://upcyclingsaveslives.com/sierrama
to support the Sierra Club today.



trains, buses and boats across the system. The T is the largest consumer of electricity in Massachusetts and feels the change in energy prices even more than we do. The MBTA recently signed a \$60 Million three year contract for electricity this summer. While the T has made great strides in energy efficiency and is even investing in wind and solar this is also an area where the MBTA can do more.

The MBTA can sign long term power purchase agreements with clean renewable energy companies that save money over the course of the contract and allow the T to do proper long term budget planning. The T is currently limited to short three year contracts because neither the T nor the dirty coal, gas, and oil companies know what the price of those fuels will be at the end of the contract. We do, however, know exactly what the cost of wind and solar will be long into the future. Using clean renewable energy has the added benefit of removing dirty and toxic pollution from low income communities (like in Holyoke, MA where the Mt Tom coal plant has been making people sick for more than 50 years). The T has been removing cars from the road and helping air quality since service began, and the Sierra Club is actively working to make sure the T can go further to protect our air by utilizing clean renewable energy sources to power the system. �



# A Sage Investment

by Tim McCann

[Editor's note: This article describes a new website that our members might find helpful. The Chapter is working with EnergySage to provide guidance on information provided on their web site regarding biomass energy systems and the environmental impacts.]

With the increasingly antienvironmental stance of a majority of the U.S. House of Representatives, the prospect of effective nationwide climate legislation appears unlikely. But a growing number of commercial and residential property owners are finding ways toward clean energy and decreasing carbon emissions.

Installations of renewable energy sources in homes and businesses have been on the rise in recent years, as increasing energy prices have driven many to look for new ways to keep their costs down. However, there are a number of barriers that often keep people from following through with plans to invest in renewable energy sources. Among these barriers are a lack of reliable information about the different technologies, unfamiliarity with local contractors, and lack of information about the investment aspects of available options.

Vikram Aggarwal is helping to overcome these barriers. To do so, he founded "EnergySage.com," a website that aims to serve as a comprehensive resource for home and business owners considering clean energy options.

"Most people do not know the suitability, the applications, and the economics of clean energy systems," said Aggarwal. "It's an information barrier that's keeping people from making the right decision. [The renewable energy] industry is lacking a lot of transparency and information for the consumer."

EnergySage contains detailed explanations of multiple types of renewable energy sources, providing informational images and videos about how each works. Installation information and ballpark pricing is also provided. But what makes the service especially useful is the "wizard" that helps you to determine the best renewable system for your property and your budget.

than a financial product.

This is actually one of the *best* financial products around. Most of the industry focuses on the payback period. But when you make a financial investment, you don't ask what the payback period is, you ask what the annual return is. And coming out of the financial services industry, my context was with financial products, like mutual funds and 401K's. [Clean energy] is better than most of those other investments. For one thing, savings are not taxed, whereas most investment income is taxed."

energysage

clean energy. smart investment.

According to Aggarwal, after answering some basic questions, the wizard will show the consumer "the whole spectrum of the technologies, and say, based on what you told us, we think this technology makes the most technical sense. This is what it's likely to cost you, this is what it's likely to save, this is the environmental impact of that technology. And if you want to research more, these are the companies that make it, these are the big brands, these are the local contractors, this is where you can get financing. And best of all, right now we are posting local case studies."

Aggarwal, who has a background as a financial analyst at a leading financial services company, sees an opportunity in combining consumer education with a reframing of the conversation of residential and commercial renewable energy installations. "[Companies] were selling it as an environmental product rather Aggarwal claims that a resource like EnergySage would help to bring down the costs of clean energy installations as well. "In the clean energy industry, the way it works now is that the contractors need to spend one-on-one time with the consumer, educating them. And then, only ten to fifteen percent of the consumers actually end up buying the system. It makes the sales process very expensive."

A resource like EnergySage would theoretically enable those sellers to not have to use so many of their resources marketing and selling their products, and as a result would be able to reduce their prices to a more reasonable level while still maintaining the same profit levels.

One of the main drivers behind the website's "wizard" is the idea of a peer-review system, not unlike the rating systems seen on Amazon.com or Yelp. As people go through the process of installing their clean-energy systems, they can offer critiques of the services they chose, guiding future customers towards trust

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## **Eat Your Oysters Now:** Massachusetts **Finalizes Proposed Biomass Regulations**

by James McCaffrey

assachusetts is a leader on renewables and energy efficien- $\mathbf{M}$  cy, and is poised to be the first in the nation – perhaps the world – to establish standards that will yield higher efficiency and less environmental impacts from burning wood for energy production. The new regulations will create jobs by driving innovation in the renewable energy sector while curbing CO2 emissions, raising efficiency standards, preserving finite forest resources, and protecting water and air quality.

The Massachusetts Sierra Club, in close coordination with national, regional, statewide, grassroots, and community groups has been calling for strengthened standards for biomass energy for more than two years. The Club's preliminary review of the rules indicate that highly inefficient biomass facilities, like several proposed in Massachusetts, will no longer qualify for Renewable Energy Credits (RECs), a ratepayer-funded financial mechanism designed to promote renewable energy.

The new rules are a major step forward for the Massachusetts clean energy agenda. Dr. Mary Booth, Director for the Partnership For Policy Integrity (PFPI) and a scientist working nationwide on biomass and energy issues, noted that the regulations were a major step forward, particularly in the context of the new concerns over acidification of our planet's oceans from increased carbon dioxide emissions. Among other impacts, ocean acidification threatens to destroy marine ecosystems and fisheries, including shellfish. "Any policy that deliberately increases CO2 in the short-term to perhaps decrease it in the long-term is insane," Dr. Booth Said.

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## Honorariums for the **Massachusetts Chapter**

Dear Fellow Sierrans,

We appreciate your enthusiasm for the environment in Massachusetts and your support of the Sierra Club; and we encourage you to share that enthusiasm with your relatives, friends, co-workers, and neighbors.

Father's Day, graduations, weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, remembering loved ones, and other special occasions are a great opportunity for you to share your love of the environment with others. What do you get for mom or dad, or brother or sister or even a co-worker on those special occasions? Why not give them a gift they will enjoy the entire year? Make a donation in their honor to Massachusetts Sierra Club. You can also tell your relatives and friends what you really want for your special occasion is for them to donate, in your name, to Massachusetts Sierra Club.

Whether it is giving or getting a gift, the Sierra Club is here to help you. You can use the enclosed envelope to make your gift. Call us at 617-423-5775 or make a gift online at http://www.sierraclubmass.org/join/join. html. We'll acknowledge you for your gift and let your special person know that a donation has been made. Gift memberships are another great way of celebrating special occasions. Give a gift that keeps on giving all year.

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# **Retire the Pilgrim Nuclear Station**

by Meg Sheehan



t's time to decommission Entergy's 40-year old leaking, unsafe, and troubled nuclear reactor that sits on the shores of Cape Cod Bay in Plymouth. On May 25, 2012, the federal NRC issued the Louisiana-based Entergy a renewed license to keep operating Pilgrim until 2032, twenty years past Pilgrim's design life. Opponents of the reactor say the NRC doesn't have the final say, and the NRC license is only one of the

many approvals Entergy needs. Opponents also insist Entergy should stick to the original deal made in 1972 to run the reactor for 40 years, and then safely decommission it. When the federal NRC relicensed Pilgrim on May 25, even the Governor called it an "irresponsible and misguided" step.

Since it began operating in 1972, Pilgrim has had a troubled safety record. Most recently, in May 2012, it was forced to shut down when the once-through cooling water system malfunctioned, sending toxic heated water into Cape Cod Bay. This aging, outdated cooling water system takes in 510 million gallons a day of seawater that it boils to spin turbines to make electricity at 33% efficiency. The system sucks in and kills tens of thousands of fish a year - and sometime hundreds of thousands in one incident: in 2005, Entergy killed 300,000 menhaden fish in one season. It also sucks in billions of plankton, and millions of fish eggs and larvae. The heated water Pilgrim has been discharging for 40 years has created a permanent four square mile "thermal plume" in Cape Cod Bay, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The Clean Water Act permit for this operation expired in 1996, but the NRC allowed the relicensing even though Entergy does not have a valid permit.

For at least five years, Pilgrim has been leaking radioactive tritium into the groundwater at the site, which is the Plymouth-Carver Sole Source Aquifer. The groundwater flows into Cape Cod Bay. In the 1980s, radioactivity from Pilgrim was found in fish around the station. Entergy's marine ecosystem monitoring does nothing to protect the ecosystem, and consists mainly

of "body counts" to how many fish and other marine life are killed each month. Since 2006, it's been illegal for the public to take a river herring, since they are on the brink of extinction, but Entergy kills tens of thousands a year.

Pilgrim's electricity is not needed to keep the lights on in Massachusetts, according to ISO New England. Pilgrim is storing 3,200 highly radioactive spent fuel rods because the U.S. has no place to store them. This in itself is a dangerous situation. Nuclear power is not carbon free as the industry claims, since mining and enriching uranium for fuel is polluting, creates greenhouse gases and devastates large areas.

Decommissioning Pilgrim is a wise move. It would take at least seven years, and provide jobs for hundreds of workers. The spent fuel rods would be transferred into a safer storage system, and kept on site for decades, requiring workers to maintain the system.

In the spring of 2012, eleven towns on the South Shore and Cape passed citizen initiatives opposing Pilgrim. Three towns called for the permanent closure of the reactor (Dennis, Provincetown, and Brewster) – one calling it a "clear and present danger" to the region. The other towns passing initiatives were Duxbury, Kingston, Scituate, Marshfield, Plymouth, Dennis Mashpee, and Harwich.

Meg Sheehan is an environmental attorney. For more information about why Pilgrim should be decommissioned, please visit the Chapter web site and also www.pilgrimcoalition.org and www.capecodbaywatch.org \*

#### **Member Notice:**

At its **September** meeting, the Chapter Executive Committee will vote on a proposal to dissolve the following Group due to it having been inactive for more than one year:

#### Berkshire Group.

Club members are welcome to comment on this proposal at the meeting, which takes place at the Chapter office, 10 Milk Street, Suite 632 in Boston. Please visit the Chapter web site to confirm the meeting date and time.

# **Adopt Solar – and Divorce Coal**

Can Massachusetts become coal free? Yes - and residential solar systems can do the job.



The Mt. Tom coal-fired power station in Holyoke was built in 1960. When operating at its rated 146 Megawatt capacity, it burns 1200 tons of coal daily. It started as a coal burner, briefly flirted with oil, and since 1980 has burned coal. Mt. Tom is soon to be one of 2 coal-fired plants remaining in Massachusetts, with 1261 Megawatt rated capacity.

A relatively efficient single family home uses about 8,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity annually. Depending on roof orientation, that may require about an 8 kilowatt (kW) solar installation. Of 2,808,254 Massachusetts housing units, 1,637,212 are single-family homes per the United States Census Bureau.

If 1% of those single-family homes, about 16,000 of them, install an 8 kW solar system, Mt. Tom, which has been operating at about 10% capacity, is no longer needed. In fact, that size solar unit on 10% of the state's single family homes is equivalent to the entire coal-fired capacity in Massachusetts. And we are not even counting the 1.2 million multi-unit housing and condo units - or commercial roof-tops – in our state.

Is solar a good financial decision for today's homeowner? Yes! NSTAR's current electricity rate is 16.4¢ per kWh (your supplier's rate may be different). Who know what that rate will be 20 years from now? Conventional supplies fluctuate widely over time, and usually upwards. An investment in a solar system lease, however, can fix your energy price point for 20 years.

What are some basic economics? As one example, an 8 kW residential solar pv system with a 20 year performance warranty can be leased for a one time payment of \$8,000 (i.e., a prepaid lease) with no additional payments or maintenance costs. That works out to an estimated lifetime energy cost of 4.5¢ per kWh (or ¼ of NSTAR's present rate). Alternatively, that same system can be leased with no money down for about \$75 monthly in the first year - which is about 9.8¢ per kWh - compounded annually at about 3.5%.

Currently available incentives through tax credits, utility rebates and what are called SRECs (solar renewable energy credits) for installing a solar system significantly reduce the cost to the homeowner. That gets us to whether you should rent or lease the system. Although owning may be more expensive upfront and leasing may be better long term, some analyses show a good return on either – in the range of 25%.

A system owner gets a federal tax credit equivalent to 30% of the net system cost and a 15% Massachusetts tax credit for eligible equipment up to \$1,000. Moreover, significant rebates available from certain utilities can further reduce the cost. A lease requires most of these incentives to be assigned to the lessor. But, whether you agree to assign SRECs to the lessor or not can have an impact on your return on investment. One SREC is earned for each 1,000 kWh of solar energy used and can be sold between a \$285 price floor up to as much as \$450. So selling the SREC's using the 8 kW example above can generate cash from \$2,280 to \$3,600 per year.

Solar for your home is worth considering and the sooner you do it, the sooner Massachusetts can become coal free. If you are interested in learning more about residential solar, email us at office@sierraclubmass.org, and please visit sierraclubmass.org/gosolar to get a solar quote today. �

Ed Woll is Chair of the Chapter Energy Committee.

# Turn Your Roof into a Money Saver -- and Go Solar with Sierra Club!



Take advantage of Sierra Club's innovative Home Solar initiative with Sungevity. Sungevity will give a \$750 cash gift card to each homeowners who goes solar with our initiative and donate \$750 to our Massachusetts chapter for

each installed system to support our environmental and other efforts. Sungevity offers a \$0-down lease, a pre-paid lease, and purchase options, free installation with a maintenance and service warranty. Your savings can start immediately and continue year to year. To benefit and get a free custom quote emailed to you, just contact Sungevity through us. For additional information on solar's benefits visit our website.

FOR MORE DETAILS ON SOLAR, FACTS IN THIS ARTICLE, &
THE CHAPTER'S NEW SOLAR HOME PROGRAM, PLEASE VISIT:

www.sierraclubmass.org/gosolar

## **Help Make Massachusetts a Leader on Electric Vehicles**

by Gina Coplon-Newfield

Whith more than a dozen all-electric and plug-in hybrid-electric vehicles coming on the market, the future is finally here! Last year, the Sierra Club launched a new national electric vehicles (EV) campaign because we see a switch from gas-powered to electric vehicles as one important way to reduce emissions and our dependence on oil.

Each year, American passenger cars and trucks spew upwards of three trillion tons of carbon pollution into the air by burning 121 billion gallons of gasoline. These emissions are from both the vehicle



Gina Coplon-Newfield, husband Daniel, and daughters Farah and Dori pose with their new plug-in hybrid.

tailpipes and the "upstream" e m is sions from extracting, refining, and transporting oil on the way to our vehicles. Our dangerous dependence on

oil has resulted in catastrophes like the BP spill in the Gulf of Mexico and, every day, we send more than \$500,000,000 abroad to pay for oil, increasing our national debt and dependence on many nations hostile to US policies.

Of course walking, biking, and taking public transit are the cleanest ways to travel, and we will continue to advocate programs that incentivize these modes. However, we know that millions of Americans will continue to drive, so we need cleaner driving choices too.

But what about the emissions from the electricity used to charge electric vehicles? According to a range of studies, on average nationwide, the electricity used to charge an electric car leads to significantly less CO2 pollution than from the burned gasoline of a conventional car with an internal combustion engine. Here in New England, an EV on average emits almost three times less CO2 than an average gas-powered vehicle (and less than a hybrid too). And that's today. As we retire more coal plants and bring cleaner sources of power online, the emissions from electric vehicle charging drop even further.

Our national campaign has focused primarily on (1) providing chapters and members with information that will help them advocate for EV incentives at the state level; and (2) public education through our EV web section (www.sierraclub.org/ev), blogging, promotion of the film "Revenge of the Electric Car," and our organizing of events such as *National Plug In Day*, which last year took place in 29 cities nationwide with thousands of people, hundreds of vehicles, and dozens of media hits. This year's *Plug In Day* takes place September 23.

In Massachusetts, the Chevy Volt, Nissan Leaf, Toyota Prius plug-in (which I just purchased), and Mitsubishi i-MiEV are currently for sale. While most people will charge their EVs at home at night, Massachusetts is also gearing up with the installation of public charging stations throughout the state. About 75 have already been installed with the help of federal and state grants.

Several EV related bills have been introduced in the MA legislature that would incentivize EVs through tax credits, carpool lane access, etc. It looks like it's going to take some concerted advocacy and organizing if we are to succeed in passing any of these bills.

Are you interested in organizing or taking part in a local Plug In Day event in Massachusetts or would you be able to advocate for EV incentives in the state (where we lag behind many other



Launa Zimmaro discovered that her new Nissan Leaf "changed the way I think about driving."

states in "EV-ready" policies)? If so, please contact us at electric.vehicles@sierraclub.org. �

Gina Coplon-Newfield is the Boston-based Sierra Club Senior Campaign Representative for Electric Vehicles. Emmy Grace, EV campaign Intern, also contributed to this article.

### **Optimism For The Future**

by Andrew Ference

With two kids in school, sports and play-dates, my wife and I use pretty much every Boston



The Ference family's new Fisker Karma

transportation method available; Walk, bike, T, ferry and even the odd splurge on a pedicab. Like most families we also spend our fair share of time stuck in traffic going from one end of the city to the other in our car.

For the last four months though that drive has been a bit more enjoyable since we get to do it in our new car. Four years after putting a deposit down, we took delivery on a *Fisker Karma*, a new electric car from a company out of California. I could go on and on about the technology and design of this car but at the end of the day the thing that really makes me smile about driving it is this... 85 MPG after 1500 miles of driving.

Every night I plug the car into a standard 110v outlet and it gives me a charge that provides 40-45 miles range in pure electric travel. On most days this gets me to practice and back or around town to the kid's events. On days when I need to go further there is a gas engine in the car that provides a charge to the battery and it runs more like a normal hybrid.

In every sense of the word, it is a gorgeous car and the only negative is having to explain what it is to people in parking lots when you are in a hurry. I can live with that though after the predictable expression of "Awesome!" when I tell people it is an electric vehicle.

It is not just environmentalists that love this technology – it is across the cultural spectrum from what I have encountered, and for one simple reason; it makes common sense. Whether it is LED lights, wind power or electric cars, the future is here and it needs our support. People want products that make sense and don't waste our resources and their money.

My hope is that enough people, companies and municipalities support these advances to bring the cost to a point where it makes no financial sense to stick with the old, energy wasting products. Like most people that actively care about our kid's futures, there are many negative stories that can really bring our moods down, but companies, entrepreneurs and students that are pushing technology and providing us with solutions should give us optimism for the future. ❖

Andrew Ference is a staunch defender of the Earth, a defenseman for the Boston Bruins, enjoys worm-composting, and helped create a carbon-neutral program for the NHL.

#### **Slippery Slope**

(continued from page 2)

Ryan, Executive Director of the Friends of the Middlesex Fells, noted after the RMP approval that "Instead of promoting resource protection and enhancing visitor experiences and safety, the DCR Fells RMP represents a systematic plan to overrule majority visitor concerns, and diminish the extent of sensitive natural resources in the Fells."

At the core of the debate was whether to allow significant new expansion for mountain bikes, with the agency relying on controversial studies claiming that bikers have "similar", and in some cases, even less impacts than hikers. Many groups believe DCR entered the review process with foregone conclusions and at the behest of a user group, and it appears, in the end, that could be the case.

The approval of the plan raised another concern. After a two-year long 'Forest Futures Visioning Process' DCR significantly altered the way all properties will be designated, dividing parcels into "Parklands", "Woodlands", or "Reserves." The statewide designations themselves represent major progress in protecting our public lands, including a significant increase in areas placed off-limits from timber harvesting. Unfortunately, despite this promise of "broad brush" state-level designations and protections, many decisions ultimately come down to how they are applied at the property-specific level, the mechanism for which is... the Resource Management Plan. With the approval of the Fells RMP over the objections of the environmental community, it seems clear that special interest groups may indeed still be able to override the broader protections of the Forest Futures Visioning Process.

The DCR Stewardship Council statute was authored by environmental groups and concerned legislators in part to prevent the abuse of properties by any recreational or user group seeking to expand access that adversely impacts public parklands. The Council's enabling statute was a response to DCR's approval of a private ski area developer's request to obliterate a 140-year old Northern Red Oak Forest on Mt. Wachusett for a "snowboard park" that, in the end, was never even built after the massive clear-cutting occurred.

In helping to establish the Stewardship Council, the Sierra Club had envisioned an independent volunteer body that would be immune from the coercive influence of well-funded recreational groups and/or questionable DCR initiatives. We saw a courageous collective of knowledgeable and critical thinkers who would speak for nature and those in our forests and parks that have no voice... a backstop against the slide down the slippery slope. It remains unclear if the Stewardship Council can in fact fulfill that vision and achieve a paradigm shift that favors conservation over recreation in our state parks system. \$\displace\$

# Lorax Story Revisited at the Belmont Conservation Commission

by Ellen Mass, President, Friends of the Alewife Reservation

 $B^{
m rian~O'Neill,~multi-billion-}$ aire and owner of the silver maple forest, core of the Alewife Reservation in Cambridge and Belmont, flew to Belmont on May 1 to assure the Belmont Conservation Commission (BCC) that he would prevail against the Commission's law suit, still pending, and he will remove the trees. The Plaintiffs who live around the pond and the Friends of Alewife Reservation have appealed another time to the Superior Court, citing the likely failure of the developer's designed storm water system in a flood zone, and failure of due process of the DEP Hearing Decision that did not include evidence of professional witnesses.

The BCC has asked for a reconsideration in regards to a conflict of interest charge with the same Judge who presided over the 2009, four-day adjudicatory hearing. An injunction is in process, with affidavits from the professional witnesses and Chair of the BCC stating irreparable harm if the trees are brought down.

The highly popular film of Dr. Seuss' "The Lorax" features the "Once-ler", who finds an idyllic paradise of "Tuffula" trees for birds and animals. However, he is unable to enjoy nature, and begins to calculate personal benefits from future destruction and production of trees for "Sneeds" (scarves). Hence, he chops the trees down, devastates the land and wildlife, and creates the need for a bubble over the city for clean air.

O'Neill implied his clear -cutting of the silver maple forest will happen with or without permits, as he has begun marking the trees with the tree warden of the town. He offered substantial money

to the Commission for scholarships and for other trees, once they agree to drop the charges. Civility reigned on the surface at the Commission meeting, with myself and a town meeting member also present.



In New Jersey, O'Neill offered each environmental plaintiff at Edison Wetlands and Water Keepers Alliance an environmental 'gift' three times that offered to the Belmont Commission to drop its suit of environmental infractions. Just as the "Onceler" of Dr. Seuss was pitiless over the fate of the forest, so was O'Neill at the town session and who has not attempted to meet with plaintiffs about Belmont's Winn Brook neighborhood or downstream communities in Cambridge and Arlington that already suffer regularly.

"Spite" and a "vendetta", O'Neill said at the Commission, are the motives for the suit against him, rather than the Wetlands Protection Act. Commissioners were unsuccessful in convincing him otherwise.

The 40B record on the developer's behalf, he says, proves he will prevail, and in turn he'll give the good citizens of Belmont remuneration to help their school children and plant more trees after he clear-cuts the forest.

"What a waste of good money on lawyers", said O'Neill.

He did not reveal, however, that he had just settled an \$8 billion lawsuit against Citizen's Bank where many more millions of his legal fees were spent. While O'Neill says he cares about the "nurses, firemen and policemen" in Belmont who would not have a place to live without some of his affordable housing, he did not reveal that a major part of his developments are vintage luxury and some of the most expensive on the East Coast. Let's hope that the good citizens of Belmont are not duped as were the good citizens of Dr. Seuss' "Thneedsville".

Just as the "Once-ler" had no heart for the inhabitants of the forest and the benefits of the trees, neither does the large Pennsylvania developer who calls himself a "home owner", rather than a developer. O'Neill, according to the Commission and interveners, has violated the Wetlands Protection Act and miscalculated the severe harm of a faulty stormwater design.

"Lorax" wisdom is needed in Belmont and Cambridge. A hearing has been requested before the Cambridge Environmental Committee of the City Council, and Arlington Selectmen wrote a letter to Belmont Selectmen stating their deep opposition to the forest clear-cutting, as well.

Belmont Selectmen have individually voiced their opposition to the forest cutting. Cities and towns across the Commonwealth must speak out as the Wetlands Protection Act is in jeopardy, and the diminishing of the state's woodlands and wetlands will take another huge leap forward if the Boston area's largest urban wild core forest buffer, which holds the Alewife Reservation greater ecosystem, is torn down. •

#### **Biomass** (continued from page 9)

"The new Massachusetts regulations require that net CO2 emissions from forest and wood bio-power be lower than emissions from fossil fuels over a 20 year period, which is obviously desirable if bio-power is to be incentivized as "renewable" energy," Dr Booth added.

Shellfish are particularly susceptible to ocean acidification. Any water below pH 7.7 is considered corrosive to shell-forming animals, so eat those oysters now, as they may not be here in 75 years or so unless we can stem the course of climate change through more sound pubic policy initiatives – like those now proposed for biomass energy in Massachusetts. ❖

#### EnergySage (continued from page 8)

worthy, reputable contractors. At the moment, the wizard lists the services either in alphabetical order or by proximity to the user's location, but as a customer review base is developed, Aggarwal says the listings will be sorted on merit. In addition to offering reviews, those who have had projects installed on their properties can also choose to make themselves available for questions from other EnergySage users about their experiences.

Currently, most of EnergySage's projects are within Massachusetts, but Aggarwal says that the website is set up for a national implementation. However, at the moment their in-person advising is limited to the Massachusetts area.

"We can answer anybody's question, by email or by phone," said Aggarwal. "We are basically suggesting that if people start the purchase process through our website, they can contact us, and we'll be there to answer questions. We'll point them to the right research, we'll point them to the right information. If they have quotes in their hands from contractors, we can help analyze them and help them make a decision. It's a great financial decision, there's great financial rationale, and now, there's no reason for us not to do it." •



# SUPPORT THE MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER THROUGH EARTHSHARE NEW ENGLAND

The Massachusetts Chapter recently became a member of EarthShare New England. Representing the spirit of caring and sharing at the workplace Earthshare provides a simple, convenient way for you to support the Chapter by giving through a workplace charitable giving campaign.

Workplace giving is a means by which employees donate primarily through payroll pledges. With EarthShare there are three ways to give.

**One Gift** - Make a payroll contribution through your workplace giving program that will be shared among EarthShare New England's member charities.

**Give to your favorite** – You can give specifically to one charity whose cause is most important to you.

**Give to many** – If you have several charities you wish to support you can give to any combination.

For twenty years EarthShare and its affiliates have worked with National and local environmental nonprofits to focus attention and funding on those issues that are so important to all of us. Regardless of your budget, even two dollars a pay period, will make a difference.

If EarthShare is not available to you at your workplace, ask your employer about adding it as an additional choice. It can run side-by-side with United Way and many other federations in hundreds of campaigns across the country.

For any further questions about supporting the Massachusetts Chapter Sierra Club through Earthshare, please contact EarthShare New England directly (info@earthsharenewengland.org).

## **Massachusetts Chapter Meetings & Events**

Due to the long lead time of the Sierran publication schedule, all events, meetings, and outings are now listed on the Chapter web site and in the *E-Sierran*.

Please sign up for the *E-Sierran* (see page 16) and/or visit www.sierraclubmass.org and click on "Meetings and Events" to access the latest listings, or call the office at 617-423-5775.



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# SIGN UP FOR THE E-SIERRAN

# Be In the Know -- Sign up for our Monthly Email Newsletter!

Want an easy way to become more active and stay informed about Massachusetts' environmental issues? Subscribe to the E-Sierran monthly email newsletter and you'll receive:

- Environmental news from around the state
- Alerts on import legislation, and when to contact your state legislators
- Events, film showings, and gatherings
- Announcements regarding critical environmental issues
- Information about important items in the news

- Green living tips and interesting facts about our environment
- Club meetings, and lots of great ways to get involved in protecting our environment

To help save the chapter's resources as well as trees, the Massachusetts chapter is now publishing the *Massachusetts Sierran* twice per year, instead of quarterly. Our new *E-Sierran* comes out monthly and provides an easy way to be informed and get involved. We're urging all our members to sign up for the E-Sierran today! It's free and it only takes a minute to subscribe.

Just visit www.sierraclubmass. org and click on "E-Sierran".

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equests have played a key role in the Sierra Club's environmental successes over the years.

Planning now may make your gift more meaningful and reduce taxes on your estate. We have many gift options available. We can even help you plan a gift for your local Chapter. For more information and confidential assistance, contact:

John Calaway Director, Gift Planning 85 Second Street, 2nd Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105 (415) 977-5639 or e-mail: planned.giving@sierraclub.org