



**MASS.
SIERRA
CLUB**

March 2015

Volunteer Opportunities:
There are many ways you can get involved with the Sierra Club's activities. [Click here.](#)

TOP STORIES

What You Can Do About Public Transit, Gas Leaks, Protecting Public Lands, and More

Letter from our Chapter Chair

Dear Fellow Member,

We are very excited that [Emily Norton](#) has agreed to be our new Director, jumping into a whirlwind of issues, joining Aileen Kelley, our dedicated Chapter Coordinator, and our many enthusiastic volunteers.

Legislators have filed over 5000 bills in the Massachusetts General Court this year. We are following those that pertain to Energy, Conservation, Transportation and Pollution. Please see below for more details on some of these bills, and what you can do.

All of the critical work we do would not be possible without you. Thank you for your continued support. **Please renew your membership if it has lapsed.** And please invite friends, relatives, colleagues and neighbors to join you and [become Sierra Club members.](#)

Cathy Ann Buckley
Chair, Massachusetts Sierra Club

Public Transit



[Report](#) after [report](#) has been written about the financial fragility of the MBTA, and this winter has demonstrated the dire [impacts on thousands](#) from lack of any resulting action from those reports. Now Governor Baker is establishing yet [another commission](#) to review the system's "governance, finances, and capital planning."

We will be reaching out to you in the coming weeks and months to provide pressure on the governor and state legislators to finally invest in a 21st century public transit system our residents deserve and can depend on.

Trans-Pacific Partnership: What it is, and Why it's a Bad Idea



The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is a free trade agreement being negotiated by the United States with eleven other countries along the Pacific Rim.

Sierra Club has two major concerns with the TPP:

The ultimate content of the agreement, and the 'Fast Track' method by which it might become law.

In essence, the TPP could **supersede U.S. law** in the name of free trade. For example, the TPP may allow for **significantly increased exports of liquefied natural gas**, leading to **increased fracking**. Increased exports, in turn, likely would cause **increased prices in natural gas and electricity** here.

The TPP would also **allow corporations to sue governments over laws or policies that might reduce profits**. Under other free trade agreements, corporations including Exxon Mobil, Chevron, and Dow Chemical have initiated about 600 cases against almost 100 governments, some over the effect of environmental laws. These lawsuits, being tried at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and similar venues, are based on trade law, rather than environmental considerations.

Corporate advisors are writing this agreement **in secrecy**. Not even our representatives in Washington are allowed to see it. If the Fast Track law is passed, the president would be allowed to send already signed trade pacts, including the TPP and the upcoming Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, to Congress for a yes-or-no vote, limiting debate to 20 hours and allowing no amendments.

A vote on Fast Track legislation is expected in March so **time is short**.

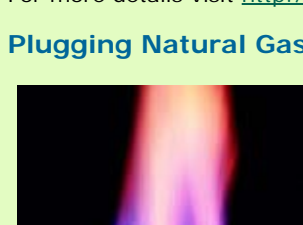
Action

- At this time the entire MA delegation, except Rep. Richard E. Neal (1st District), have indicated that they oppose Fast Track legislation. We need you to [thank them and hold them to those positions](#). They will be under tremendous pressure to change their vote.

- Residents of the Mass 1st Congressional District should [contact Rep. Neal](#) and urge him to oppose Fast Track as well: All of Berkshire County, Hampden County (except for Precinct 1A in Palmer), and the following towns: (Franklin County) Ashfield, Bernardston, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Hawley, Heath, Leyden, Monroe, Rowe, and Shelburne; (Hampshire County) Chesterfield, Cummington, Easthampton, Goshen, Granby, Huntington, Middlefield, Plainfield, South Hadley, Southampton, Westhampton, Williamsburg, and Worthington; (Worcester County) Brookfield, Charlton, Dudley, East Brookfield, Southbridge, Sturbridge, and Warren.

For more details visit <http://www.sierraclub.org/Trade>.

Plugging Natural Gas Leaks



A bill introduced by Rep. Lori Ehrlich and Sen. Jamie Eldridge would prevent utilities from passing the cost of unaccounted-for natural gas onto gas consumers.

A recent [study](#) by Harvard University found that natural gas leaks in the Greater Boston area are more expensive (\$90 million per year) and damaging to the climate (~8% of all of our greenhouse gas emissions) than previously thought. This bill would offer gas utilities an economic incentive to plug leaks rather than continue to pass along the cost of the leaked gas to consumers. For more information [click here](#).

Action

- Call or email [your legislator](#) and ask them to support **HD1173 and SD1378** entitled: "An Act relative to protecting consumers of gas and electricity from paying for leaked and unaccounted for gas."

Please use the following or write your own to support this gas consumer leak cost protection act:

Please support "An Act relative to protecting consumers of gas and electricity from paying for leaked and unaccounted for gas," Senate and House Dockets **SD1378** and **HD1173**, to stop the utilities from charging us, our towns and state, for lost and unaccounted for natural gas. This bill will cut the cost of energy for me and my town, as well as the Commonwealth, and the utilities can sell the gas they save. Stopping these gas leaks means that we do not have to import more gas and will also help us meet our greenhouse gas reduction goals.

- Please let us know what response you got by emailing us at office@sierraclubmass.org or calling us at (617) 423-5775.

Stopping Proposed Natural Gas Pipelines



Two major natural gas pipelines are proposed to go through Massachusetts: the Kinder Morgan and the Algonquin, with additional spurs including the West Roxbury Lateral and the Sandisfield Loop. These pipelines are much larger than we need, and it is likely we do not need them at all. We are already excessively dependent on natural gas for upwards of 65% of our energy needs.

There is a reason to believe that these large-capacity pipelines are not being built for Massachusetts' needs but to ultimately connect to international export facilities off our coast and Canada's, leading to higher prices than we now pay for natural gas. These would further lock us into a fossil fuel future, and slow down our investment in transitioning to renewables, energy efficiency, and demand management. Let's plug the gas leaks first before building huge new pipelines. For more information click [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Action

Contact [Governor Baker](#) and [your state legislators](#) and urge them to oppose the Kinder Morgan and Algonquin pipelines. Feel free to use the following message or write your own:

Please oppose the expansion of natural gas pipelines in Massachusetts. Let's meet our future energy needs by expanding clean, renewable energy such as solar and wind, and by plugging the leaks in our existing natural gas infrastructure.

And please let us know what response you got by emailing us at office@sierraclubmass.org or calling us at (617) 423-5775.

Preserving Public Lands



The Public Lands Preservation Act (PLPA), or the "No-Net-Loss Bill," introduced by Rep. Ruth Baker and Sen. Jamie Eldridge, would help protect our parks and forests from further development. Specifically, it would make it the policy of the Commonwealth that there be no net loss of lands or easements protected under Article 97.

Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution requires that lands or easements taken or acquired for natural resource purposes not be used for other purposes or disposed of without a two-thirds vote of each branch of the legislature. However, it has become too routine to get those two-thirds votes. This bill would require replacement land so there is "no net loss." For more information [click here](#).

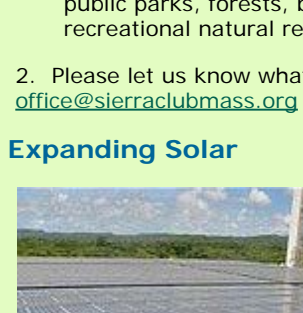
Action

- Call or email [your legislator](#) and urge their support for **SD889 and HD1080** entitled: "Relative to the disposition of public lands with conservation protected status." Feel free to use the following message or write your own to support preserving our public lands:

Please support the Public Lands Preservation Act, Senate Docket **889** and House Docket **1080**, to stop the erosion of our state's heritage of public parks, forests, beaches and watersheds and other historic and recreational natural resources.

- Please let us know what response you got by emailing us at office@sierraclubmass.org or calling us at (617) 423-5775.

Expanding Solar



By 2025, we can get at least 20% of Massachusetts' electricity from the sun. That would be a huge step forward in the fight against climate disruption, and would bring major benefits to our economy, too.

The Sierra Club is calling on our elected leaders to:

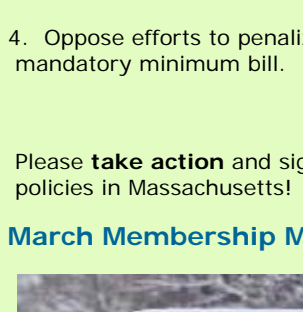
- Support a goal of getting 20% of Massachusetts' electricity from solar energy by 2025;
- Build on Massachusetts' successful solar policies, by removing the cap on net metering and extending the SREC program;

- Ensure that the benefits of solar are available to all consumers, including low-income families and renters, by preserving and expanding virtual net metering; and
- Oppose efforts to penalize solar panel owners with arbitrary fees, like a mandatory minimum bill.

Action

Please **take action** and sign this [Sierra Club petition](#) to strengthen solar energy policies in Massachusetts!

March Membership Mailing

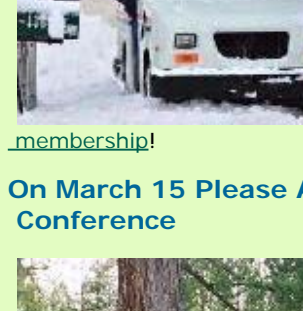


Your donations allow us to be on the ground advocating for laws and regulations to protect our climate, wildlife, land, coastline, and waterways.

In the next few weeks you will receive our annual mailing asking for your [financial support](#), as well as an insert spotlighting the extreme habitat loss of the New England cottontail rabbit in Massachusetts.

Thank you in advance for your continued support! If you are not a member, please [join us](#), and if you are, thanks, and please don't forget to [renew your membership!](#)

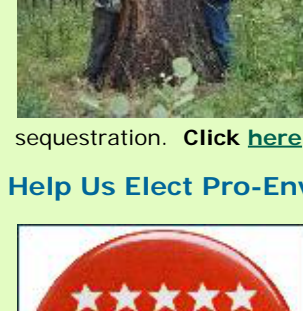
On March 15 Please Attend The 2015 Local Environmental Action Conference



Massachusetts Sierra Club is proud to be a lead sponsor of the [2015 Local Environmental Action Conference](#) which brings community leaders, environmental advocates and activists from across New England together for an exciting day of skills training, networking, and inspiration.

This Year's keynote speaker is Jacqueline Patterson, who directs the [NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program](#). Workshop topics range from effective communication strategies to "Getting Massachusetts to 20% Solar by 2025" to biodiversity and soil sequestration. [Click here](#) to register. **We look forward to seeing you there!**

Help Us Elect Pro-Environment Candidates in Your Community

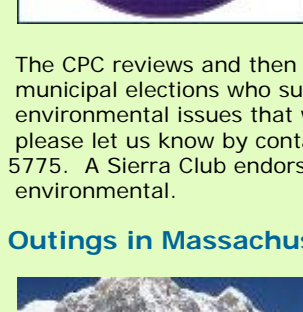


Our Chapter Political Committee (CPC) would like to know if there are any environmental issues in your community that would be affected by any upcoming contested elections.

The Sierra Club actively supports candidates for local or state offices who will promote legislation to address the environmental concerns that are important to us. Particular environmental issues involve adopting laws, ordinances and bylaws that support renewable energy, oppose new pipeline infrastructure, preserve wildlife habitat, and support recycling.

The CPC reviews and then selects candidates for endorsement running in state and municipal elections who support the environment. If your community has environmental issues that will be influenced by the outcome of these contests, please let us know by contacting us at office@sierraclubmass.org or (617) 423-5775. A Sierra Club endorsement may help elect a candidate who values our environment.

Outings in Massachusetts and Beyond



Sierra Club founder John Muir said in 1901, "If people in general could be got into the woods, even for once, to hear the trees speak for themselves, all difficulties in the way of forest preservation would vanish."

To that end Sierra Club offers [environmentally friendly outdoor Adventures](#) from Tahoe to Tibet, including two coming up this spring on **Martha's Vineyard**. Click [here](#) for more details and to sign up! (And send us any photos from your trip we can share on social media!)

National Sierra Club Elections are Underway - VOTE!



A Democratic Sierra Club Demands Grassroots Participation.

The annual election for the Club's Board of Directors is now underway. Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive in early March by mail or by Internet, if you chose the electronic delivery option, your national Sierra Club ballot. This will include information on the candidates and where to find additional information.

Your Participation is Critical for a Strong Sierra Club.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well. Your participation in elections at all Club levels is an important part of your role as a member.

In a typical year fewer than 10% of members vote in the Board elections. A minimum of 5% is required for the elections to be valid. Our grassroots structure is strengthened when our participation is high. Therefore your participation is needed in the voting process.

How can I learn about the candidates? Members frequently state that they don't know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. Each candidate provides a statement about themselves and their views on the issues on the official election ballot. You can learn more by asking questions of your group and chapter leadership and other experienced members you know. You can also visit the [Club's election web site](#) for additional information about candidates: <http://www.sierraclub.org/board/election>.