COMMUNITY ACTION WORKS

Confront polluters. Seed solutions.

2021 ANNUAL REPORT
2021 HIGHLIGHTS

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WHERE WE PROVED THAT COMMUNITY ACTION WORKS IN 2021

CONNECTICUT
Canterbury
Hartford
Killingly
Meriden
New Canaan
New Haven
Rocky Hill
Windsor

MAINE
Albion
Benton
Blue Hill
Bowdoinham
BrooksBrooks
Charleston
Chelsea
Corinna
Fairfield
Hallowell
Hartland
Jackson
Kennebunk
Knox
Monroe
Norridgewock
Old Town
Palermo
Pembroke
Sidney
South Portland
Trenton
Waterville

MASSACHUSETTS
Acushnet
Boston
Bourne
Brighton
Cape Cod
Dorchester
Duxbury
Easton
Fall River
Groveland
Holbrook
Lawrence
Longmeadow
Martha’s Vineyard
Nantucket
New Bedford
Peabody
Pittsfield
Princeton
Randolph
Salem
Somerset
Springfield
Taunton
Wayland
West Barnstable

NEW HAMPSHIRE
Bow
Concord
Hanover
Claremont
Bethlehem
Dalton
Littleton
Merrimack
Portsmouth
Londonderry
Manchester
Hampton

RHODE ISLAND
Charlestown
Providence

VERMONT
Bennington
Bridport
Burlington
Castleton
Coventry
Franklin
Hinesburg
Middlebury
Middlesex
Montpelier
Newbury
Salisbury
Shaftsbury
South Burlington
Vernon

Cover: Community Action Works staff

COMMUNITY ACTION WORKS | 2021 ANNUAL REPORT
**SUSAN SMOLLER, BREATHE CLEAN NORTH SHORE**
Susan describes herself as an old hippie from the ’70’s. She’s lived in Peabody, Massachusetts for 38 years, raising her kids there and working for the local paper and later as a librarian, retiring shortly before the pandemic hit. But this year, she learned about something that made her angry: A fossil fuel power plant was proposed to be built in Peabody, and no one knew about it. Susan saw an article that Mireille, a community organizer with our team, posted in a local paper about the proposal and got connected. She and her neighbors formed a group called Breathe Clean North Shore to fight back. Now, they’re showing up at all the town meetings on this fossil fuel power plant and taking action to keep this plant from ever getting built.

**ROCHELLE LEE, NATIVE GREEN**
With more than 20 years of organizing credentials, Rochelle is no newcomer to grassroots organizing. She describes her experience as starting with her ‘civil rights gene’ then branching out to education, affordable housing, public transit, and environmental justice. She eventually co-founded Native Green, of which she is now a Board Member. She is a firm believer that change starts from the bottom up and understands the work being done on the grassroots level is all interconnected. Her work with Native Green is aimed at bringing folks together to understand the shared struggle between the descendants of Native Americans and the descents of enslaved people. Rochelle and Native Green bring a much-needed presence to environmental organizing spaces in Rhode Island and throughout the Northeast.

**LAWRENCE HIGGINS, FAIRFIELD WATER CONCERNED CITIZENS**
Lawrence Higgins and his wife Penny bought the old farmhouse they’d always wanted 28 years ago in Fairfield, Maine. They raised their children and grandchildren on that farm, along with many animals. But then, Maine’s Department of Environmental Protection called and told them not to drink the water, cook with it, or give it to their animals because it was contaminated with “forever” chemicals known as PFAS, which can cause cancer, kidney disease and other serious health concerns. Lawrence was shocked and upset, and he decided to do something about it. He started the Fairfield Water Concerned Citizens with just a few neighbors. Now, the group has more than 400 members, and they’re calling on Maine to test every well in Fairfield.

**JACKIE MERCURIO, ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT**
Jackie has lived in Saugus, Massachusetts her entire life. So has her entire family. More than 100 years ago, Jackie’s great grandparents settled in East Saugus with her grandmother and her eight brothers and sisters. They each built houses right next to each other. Eventually, the whole family was one neighborhood—a big block of houses where Jackie and her cousins all grew up together. That neighborhood is just a quarter mile from a major polluter: the Wheelabrator incinerator and ash landfill. Neighbors like Jackie’s family have paid the price with their health, and they are fighting to stop this polluter from poisoning their families. Jackie is part of a coalition called Alliance for Health and Environment working to stop this incinerator and advance zero waste solutions in Saugus and statewide.
We know that real, lasting change takes root when people get together and take action at the local level. And when community groups know how to make local democracy work, they lead the movement for large-scale transformation. That’s exactly what’s happening now in the campaign to take on our regional energy grid operator ISO-NE.

REGIONWIDE ACTION TO GET THE NORTHEAST OFF FOSSIL FUELS
Our regional energy grid operator—ISO-NE—keeps making the wrong choices on energy. Over and over, ISO-NE chooses fracked gas over clean energy, extends the life of the most polluting power plants, and thwarts state efforts to reach mandated clean energy goals. That’s bad news for all New Englanders, including three communities that are bearing the brunt of the pollution that dirty energy sources spew into our skies and water.

Polluting energy should be a thing of the past. We need an energy grid that runs on clean, local, renewable energy to protect our health and our climate. And we deserve an energy grid that is responsive to the needs of ratepayers and the people living with climate catastrophe and pollution, not fossil fuel executives and utilities.

That’s why we’re bringing community leaders together to build a unified effort to make change. We’re calling on ISO-NE to change those rules so polluting power plants like this one won’t be built in Peabody or anywhere in the Northeast.

And of course, they joined community leaders from across the region to call on ISO-NE to change its outdated rules so polluting power plants like this one won’t be built in Peabody or anywhere in the Northeast.

FIGHTING A FOSSIL FUEL POWER PLANT IN PEABODY, MASS.
Breathe Clean North Shore is made up of neighbors in Peabody, Massachusetts who just last year found out about a proposed fracked gas and oil power plant in their city. This polluting power plant is only being proposed because ISO-NE, the regional grid operator, requires it.

The toxics released from its 90-foot smokestack would pollute the air that neighbors breathe. This would add to the pollution of two existing power plants on the very same site.

But Peabody neighbors like Susan and Ron Smoller, Jerry Halberstadt, and Teddi Kalfopoulos are fighting back. They attended every public meeting on the power plant proposal, collected over 1,000 signatures against the power plant, and held rallies and marches to show that public support is behind them.

ISO-NE keeps plants like the Bow coal plant around as back-up for days when the energy grid needs more energy than usual. But that means that when this coal plant gets fired up, it’s harder for families like Mary’s to breathe.

Two months after Mary’s family moved into their new home, she saw an article in the local paper that made her heart sink. There was a coal plant just 15 minutes away. That coal plant is called Merrimack Station, and it’s the last major coal-fired power plant in the Northeast.

Mary wants a safe, healthy future for her children and all children in her town. So now, she is fighting to stop this coal plant from polluting the air her family breathes. Mary became a member of the No Coal No Gas coalition working to retire the coal plant in Bow and protect our health and our climate from polluters like Merrimack Station.

ISO-NE keeps plants like the Bow coal plant around as back-up for days when the energy grid needs more energy than usual. But that means that when this coal plant gets fired up, it’s harder for families like Mary’s to breathe.

Read on to hear the stories of communities who are fighting to stop fossil fuels locally while working for change region-wide.
We can run our regional energy grid – back-up energy and all – on clean renewable energy. Leaders like Mary are fighting to make that a reality.

STOPPING A SECOND POLLUTING POWER PLANT IN KILLINGLY, CONN.

In the summer of 2016, Ian McDonald faced a board of mainly corporate lawyers who worked for the company that wanted to put a fracked gas power plant in his town.

He asked them how the plant would impact air quality. Killingly has one of the highest asthma rates in Connecticut. Ian’s first son had just been born, and he was concerned.

The board’s answer didn’t make any sense. They said the air would get cleaner. That was a red flag for Ian. He’s been fighting this plant ever since.

Ian is a member of No More Dirty Power in Killingly, a group of neighbors fighting to stop this fracked gas power plant. There’s already a polluting power plant in the community. It’s a largely white town, and working class – which is one reason Ian suspects this power plant is being proposed.

This past November, the group got great news when they learned that ISO-NE decided to pull the Killingly power plant proposal from its plans! The news deals a fatal blow to the power plant’s future and is a testament to the success of community groups’ work.

RETIRING FOSSIL FUEL POWER PLANTS IN PITTSFIELD, MASS.

Berkshire County, Massachusetts has three gas power plants called “peakers,” which get powered on during the hottest and coldest days of the year. The largest of the three is the second biggest polluter in the county—despite only running a mere 5% of the time. These power plants are harmful and unnecessary, which is why the Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT) mounted a campaign called “Put Peakers in the Past.”

We supported them in doing corporate research to understand who to target and building public support in the community with door knocking, standouts, petitions and coalition work. They reached out to the relevant companies with letters asking them to act in line with the climate crisis and to protect the health of those living around these polluting facilities.

The company that owns the two smaller plants answered almost immediately and began making plans to transition their facilities to renewable energy and battery storage by the end of 2023. They’re also going to be closing down the other peaker they own in West Springfield. Conversations with the second company are still ongoing, focusing primarily on how to incentivize a clean energy transition. BEAT is now building off the momentum of this work and pushing to take the campaign statewide to close other peakers across Massachusetts.

2021 BY THE NUMBERS

46 calls to our hotline for help
320 community organizing group trainings
3,000 activists trained
278 leadership coaching sessions
258 side-by-side actions with groups
13 victories!
2021 CAMPAIGNS TO PROTECT HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

1 NORTH COUNTRY, N.H.: FIGHTING TO STOP POLLUTING LANDFILLS
Right now, neighbors in the North Country are fighting a new landfill proposed next to a well-loved state park in Dalton. This fall, neighbors took the fight to the Department of Environmental Services, where more than 100 people rallied outside the office to call on it to do the right thing and deny the landfill’s permits. Neighbors have also been rising up for nearly two decades to fight an existing landfill in nearby Bethlehem. We took steps forward when we settled a lawsuit and won a commitment from the landfill owners, Casella Waste Systems, to clean up its pollution.

2 BENNINGTON, VT.: A WIN FOR HEALTH AFTER TOXIC DRINKING WATER
In Bennington, people like Sandy Sumner, Coleen Healey and Andy Beckerman were some of the first in the country to raise the alarm on PFAS contamination. Those neighbors fought to get connected to clean water and helped bring this problem to light statewide and nationwide. This year, they are celebrating another key win: funding for medical monitoring to keep watch on their families’ health after drinking polluted water.

3 OLD TOWN, MAINE: A WIN FOR COMMUNITIES OVER LANDFILLS
Thanks to the activists in Don’t Waste ME and the Penobscot Nation, it’s now harder to site new or expanded state-owned landfills in Maine. Community leaders Ed Spencer, Bill Lippincott, Hillary Lister, John Banks, Cheryl Robertson, Peter Crockett, Chuck Leithiser, Dawn Neptune Adams and Antonio Blasi, who are still fighting one of the state’s biggest landfills, helped win passage of a state law that makes it harder to dump trash facilities on lower-income communities and communities of color.

4 MASSACHUSETTS: NEW LAW PROMISES PROGRESS ON CLIMATE
Community Action Works Campaigns is proud to be part of the Mass Power Forward coalition that helped pass the Climate Roadmap Bill, which sets goals to reduce fossil fuel pollution and make progress towards 100% renewable energy. (A stronger bill that commits the state to 100% renewable failed to pass but is being considered in the new legislative session.) In a victory for our environmental justice partners, the bill also makes it harder for polluting energy companies to site their projects in communities that already bear a disproportionate share of pollution.

5 CONNECTICUT: COALITION FOR ENDING ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM
While Community Action Works helps communities fight to end all forms of pollution, there's no denying the fact that Black communities, Indigenous communities, communities of color and working class communities have long borne a grossly disproportionate share of the pollution that accompanies power plants, landfills and other dangerous facilities. That’s why we support the Coalition for Ending Environmental Racism, a diverse collection of groups and people in Connecticut that has assembled to address the causes and manifestations of environmental injustices. By facilitating active listening and learning workshops with marginalized groups and organizations, they aim to strengthen the connection, political framework and organizing relationship between these movements for justice with the movement for environmental justice.

6 LONDONDERRY, N.H.: STEPS FORWARD FOR CLEAN WATER
When neighbors in Londonderry discovered that their water was contaminated with “forever” chemicals known as PFAS, they formed the group Concerned Citizens for Clean Water and started taking action. This year, they won a big victory when the town secured funding to reimburse residents for the cost of water filters they had to install in their homes. Now, the group is keeping up the fight to get free water testing for all wells, remediation of contaminated water, and reforms to the way town water is managed.

7 PEMBROKE, MAINE: PROTECTING OUR WATER AND THE BAY FROM MINING
Pembroke, Maine is a small rural town with a long, beautiful coastline on Cobscook Bay. That coastline is one reason why neighbors raised the alarm when an international company came to town to explore setting up a metallic mineral mining operation. Mining is a polluting business, with toxic wastewater from mines often leaking into groundwater and drinking water. We supported Cathy Aldeman, Jen Eger, Jason Barrett and Katherine Swann in creating the community group Friends of Cobscook Bay. Together, we’re working to bring the town together around protecting the water and the bay from silver mining.
SALISBURY VT.: TURNING THE TIDE ON PESTICIDES
For years, neighbors in Brandon, Leicester, Salisbury, Goshen, Pittsford and Proctor have been leading a fight to replace chemical pesticides with safe alternatives. It’s been an uphill battle against the insect control district, which sprays two toxic pesticides to kill mosquitoes. This year, the group celebrated when Salisbury residents voted to pull town funding from pesticide spraying, marking a turning point in public opinion on pesticides.

HALLOWELL, MAINE: TOWN BY TOWN, TAKING PESTICIDES DOWN
When Molly Jennings heard about other towns in Maine going pesticide-free, she knew she wanted to take action in Hallowell. Hallowell is a historic village that runs along the Kennebec River, and it is also home to Molly’s grandchildren. Molly got together with movers and shakers in Hallowell, and together they formed Grow Green and Healthy Hallowell. The group tabled at weekly farmers markets to educate the community, and now they are working on putting together an ordinance for a pesticide-free community.

SAUGUS, MASS.: FIGHTING THE NATION’S OLDEST TRASH INCINERATOR
In Saugus, Massachusetts, community leaders Deb Panetta, Elle Baker, RoseLee Vincent and Jackie Mercurio, along with State Rep. Jessica Giannino of Alliance for Health and Environment, are fighting to close the nation’s oldest and most dangerous incinerator and ash landfill, located near a saltwater marsh. This year, community leaders secured a commitment from the Department of Environmental Protection that the agency will not approve a permit to expand the landfill into the wetlands—a significant victory in this years-long campaign. Community Action Works continues to support zero-waste solutions that will make all trash incinerators obsolete.
From the local level to the national level, community leaders impacted by toxic “forever” chemicals called PFAS—known to cause cancer, kidney disease, and other serious health problems—are fighting to stop contamination and win justice for people who have been poisoned.

**THE FIGHT FOR CLEAN WATER IN FAIRFIELD, MAINE**

When Ashley Gooldrup and her fiancé Troy moved into their first house a year ago, they thought this could be their forever home. But that spring, a dairy farm down the road in Fairfield, Maine had their milk tested and found high levels of the toxic “forever” chemicals known as PFAS.

The state started testing wells, first next to the dairy and then farther down the road until they got to Ashley and Troy’s home. Experts believe that a safe standard for PFAS in drinking water is 1 part per trillion. Ashley and Troy’s drinking water came back with PFAS at 16,000 parts per trillion.

Ashley connected with neighbors and joined the community group Fairfield Water Concerned Citizens to take action. Now, the group has grown in size and has been taking action. The group is calling on Maine to test every well in Fairfield, get clean water to every household, ban the use of the contaminated sludge as fertilizer, and make polluters pay for the mess they created.

**NATIONAL VICTORY ON PFAS “FOREVER” CHEMICAL CRISIS**

We co-facilitate the National PFAS Contamination Coalition, made up of community leaders across the country who are directly impacted by PFAS contamination. Early last year, these leaders called on the Biden administration to take this contamination crisis seriously from day one in office, submitting a list of demands to clean up pollution, win justice for victims of PFAS exposure and make sure nothing like this ever happens again.

This fall we celebrated a major victory when President Biden announced $10 billion of the Infrastructure Bill would go to addressing PFAS issues, including testing and remediation for rural and disadvantaged communities’ drinking water.

While we know more steps will need to be taken to address the contamination crisis, we’re looking forward to continuing to hold the administration accountable and fight for our vision of a truly PFAS-free world.

“We are a much more effective, influential group thanks to assistance from Community Action Works.”

– Bill Lippincott

Don’t Waste ME
When local health and safety are threatened by pollution, it is often up to everyday people to make change. And when communities have everything they need to make change, they can claim their power and own it for a lifetime. These two victory stories show that community groups are doing just that.

**VICTORY FOR CLEAN AIR, NOT SMOKESTACKS, IN SPRINGFIELD, MASS.**

Clean, renewable energy is as much about the air we breathe as it is about our climate. No one knows this better than the people of Springfield, Mass., recently named the #1 asthma capital of the U.S., who have been fighting a proposed biomass incinerator for over a decade.

Biomass incinerators—which burn wood for energy—release toxins into the air while taking us backwards on clean energy. This year, Springfield residents won a major victory when the permit for a polluting biomass incinerator planned for a residential neighborhood was revoked!

Springfield neighbors came together and delayed the project at every turn, leading to the expiration of the construction permit and a decision by the Department of Environmental Protection to revoke it. This historic victory comes after a 12-year fight led by community leaders in the Springfield Climate Justice Coalition, Neighbor to Neighbor and Arise for Social Justice, who never gave up.

**TWIN VICTORIES AGAINST FOSSIL FUELS IN SOUTH PORTLAND, MAINE**

Leaders in the community group Protect South Portland won two big victories this year, showing once again that fossil fuel giants are no match for neighbors who come together to fight for their community.

This summer, community leaders passed a bill that requires the companies that own petroleum terminal storage tanks in Maine to do actual testing for tank emissions and continuous fenceline monitoring for air quality. Until now, the oil companies self-reported, using an unreliable formula created by the American Petroleum Institute. South Portland neighbors came together to pass this bill when they realized their air was being polluted by dozens of oil tanks that had been polluting above and beyond the legal limit for years—right near homes, schools and daycares.

And secondly, after six years, the company seeking to bring tar sands through South Portland has given up the fight! The local subsidiary of ExxonMobil, Portland Pipe Line Corporation, dismissed its appeal of the federal court judgment that upheld the city’s Clear Skies Ordinance, effectively ending their lawsuit against the city. This victory comes after years and years of community action and is the final end to a plan that would have included two 70-foot smokestacks spewing toxic chemicals in the city.

“Community Action Works is the best friend a community besieged with toxic threats can have.”

– Jackie Elliott
Community Action Works board member and member of Don’t Waste ME
We especially would like to thank the following individual contributors to Community Action Works and/or Community Action Works Campaigns (formerly Toxics Action Center).

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**SIDE BY SIDE WITH COMMUNITIES FOR YEARS TO COME**

When you include Community Action Works in your will, trust or retirement accounts, your gift helps everyday people build the power to transform our world far into the future.

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**ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT**

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- The Anne Slade Frey Charitable Trust
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- Clean Water Fund
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- Participant Media
- Patagonia
- Rights and Democracy Project
- Safer States
- Silent Spring Initiative
- The Windham Foundation, Inc.

At Community Action Works, we maximize our impact by focusing on building community power and developing local leaders for the long run. Your contribution makes that possible—together, we can confront polluters and seed solutions for a just and healthy future. These charts reflect the final FY20 financial information for Community Action Works, Inc. and Community Action Works Campaigns, Inc.

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**FY20 EXPENSES**

- Program.......................... 82%
- Fundraising.......................9%
- Administration....................9%
- Grants..............................57%
- Member Donations..............41%
- Other...............................2%

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**FY20 INCOME**

- Program.......................... 82%
- Fundraising.......................9%
- Administration....................9%
- Grants..............................57%
- Member Donations..............41%
- Other...............................2%
Residents spoke out at an action in Springfield, Mass., to stop the biomass plant. Read more about their story on page 8.