

COAL-FREE NEW ENGLAND

CONSERVATION LAW FOUNDATION



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For a thriving New England



The Role of Natural Gas in New England

New England is in the midst of energy transformation, away from old oil and coal plants and towards renewables like wind. Lower cost natural gas is a mixed blessing: hastening the demise of dirty power plants but slowing down the transition to renewable energy. The expansion of highly destructive extraction practices, like hydraulic fracturing, perpetuates our reliance on fossil fuels. Although cleaner than coal, greenhouse gas emissions are nonetheless significant. CLF is working to establish sound policies to ensure that natural gas is supplied and deployed in a way that protects our health, our land and our economy – and that does not displace the investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency truly needed in New England.

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CLF is working to make New England coal-free by 2020. Although widely perceived to be one of the cheapest ways to produce electricity, burning coal exacts a heavy cost on the environment, public health and New England's economy.

The Challenges

Coal is the most carbon-intensive source of electricity. In New England, emissions from coal-fired power plants make up a disproportionate share of the greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. Coal plants are also a major source of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, two elements of an air contaminant known as particulate matter, which is a serious health hazard. The pollutants that rain down from coal-fired power plants cause a panoply of health problems, including heart attacks, asthma attacks, developmental delays in infants and children, hospitalizations, and even premature deaths. Communities that live in the shadow of these power plants are often economically disadvantaged and must bear the additional burden of lost wages due to illness and increased health care costs.

Coal plants drag down New England's economy as well. Every year, we send more than a half-billion dollars out of our region to buy coal from such far-flung places as Colombia and Indonesia. We also spend huge sums to keep our aging fleet of coal plants in operation. Between the need to comply with environmental laws and natural gas prices at historic lows, old coal plants are finding it harder and harder to

remain financially viable. To stay afloat, they will pass along their inflated costs to ratepayers, lay off workers, and contribute less and less to the tax bases of their host communities. To make matters worse, investment in old coal dwarfs the amount we spend on energy efficiency and renewable energy development – investments that create local jobs and new sources of revenue.

The Solutions

In Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut, where coal plants continue to operate, CLF is holding plant owners responsible when they violate environmental regulations that protect public health and the environment. With tenacious legal advocacy and policy expertise, CLF protects ratepayers from footing the bill for extending the life of these old, uneconomic plants that continue to make people sick and stand in the way of progress. To that end, CLF is working with local communities and decision-makers, as well as the regional electric system operator, to pursue clean energy and transmission alternatives that will allow for an expeditious and responsible phase out of coal from New England's energy mix. Creating a coal-free New England by 2020 is an ambitious but achievable goal, one that is vital to protecting the people and the resources of our region.

KEY WORK

JOIN CLF TODAY!

Conservation Law Foundation relies on contributions from its members to do the work of protecting New England's environment: preserving our natural resources, building healthy communities and promoting a vibrant economy. To become a member of CLF today, use the "Donate" button at clf.org, or click "Support CLF" to learn about more ways to give. You can also contact: Devon Parish, dparish@clf.org

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ON OUR WAY TO A COAL-FREE NEW ENGLAND



Somerset Station, Somerset, MA

Status: CLOSED

The 85-year-old coal plant shut down in January 2010, after years of tenacious advocacy by CLF and Somerset residents. CLF and community members fought owner NRG's plans to repower the plant with experimental technology that threatened to put a community already suffering the health effects of air pollution at even greater risk.



Salem Harbor Station, Salem, MA

Status: Units 1&2, SHUT-DOWN. Total Shut-Down by 2014

For over 20 years, Salem residents and neighboring communities have fought to shutter this polluting dinosaur dominating Salem's historic waterfront. In recent years, as the plant was needed less and less, its ability to operate in compliance with the law diminished, resulting in hundreds of Clean Air Act violations over a five year period. In 2012, CLF settled a lawsuit with the plant's owner, securing an enforceable shut down of the entire plant's operations by 2014. Salem is now looking at options for developing the plant's valuable site.



Mt. Tom Station, Holyoke, MA

Status: Hours of Operation Drastically Curtailed in 2012

In one of Massachusetts' most economically-challenged towns, Mt. Tom has been spewing toxic air pollution for more than 50 years, exacerbating asthma rates that are among the highest in the state. In coalition with local and national environmental groups, community stakeholders and local politicians, CLF has led an effort to put the lid on Mt. Tom's smoke stacks while engaging the entire community in developing a workable vision for a cleaner future for Holyoke.



Merrimack Station, Bow, NH;

Schiller Station, Portsmouth, NH

Status: Hours of Operation Drastically Curtailed in 2012

An increasingly unfavorable market for coal power has put PSNH and its two remaining coal plants into an economic "death spiral," as PSNH's customer base shrinks and its costs to run the plants climb. Thanks to CLF's efforts to curb PSNH's practice of recouping its excessive costs from ratepayers, regulators are increasingly requiring PSNH to provide lower cost energy to its customers, not just its own. As a result, the plants are running much less often — and polluting less, too.