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CREATING A THRIVING
NEW ENGLAND — *For All*

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CREATING A THRIVING NEW ENGLAND – *For All*

Environmental Justice Is the Common Thread through All of CLF's Work

The City of Springfield in Western Massachusetts is known for many things – as the birthplace of both basketball and Dr. Seuss for starters, and as the home of the Big E, the biggest fair in the Northeast. But this historic city along the shores of the Connecticut River also lays claim to less celebrated distinctions, including childhood asthma rates nearly double that of other New England communities.

CLF is in a unique position to be able to marshal our resources, our connections, and our tools and create a scaffolding that community-based groups can stand on to make their claims. — Veronica Eady, VP, Healthy Communities & Environmental Justice

That's just one reason why Michaelann Bewsee and her neighbors are fighting a biomass-fueled power plant that Palmer Renewable Energy (PRE) wants to build here. "With nearly one in five kids in Springfield living with asthma, we've come to the conclusion that burning anything to produce energy is a step in the wrong direction," says Bewsee, who directs Arise for Social Justice, a local community group. "The homeowners in this neighborhood are already in tough shape because industry has been built up around them over the years, and they feel beleaguered by it."

The plant, which recently won a court victory to reinstate a building permit denied by Springfield's Zoning Board, would emit significant air pollution, which makes asthma worse. Adding this plant to the mix of other polluting industrial facilities in the city would further burden a community already suffering from disproportionately high rates of respiratory diseases.

Springfield is just one of many communities in New England – and across the United States – designated an environmental justice (EJ) community. EJ communities often face a confluence of both indoor and outdoor environmental stressors – air pollution, toxic land uses, lead paint, scant green space, limited public transportation, asbestos. Compounding these challenges is local residents' lack of economic, legal, or political clout to hold polluters accountable – or to fight back against well-heeled industries seeking to site polluting facilities in their backyard.

"New Englanders living in low-income and communities of color are more deeply impacted by our current environmental challenges than society at large," says Veronica Eady, Vice President for CLF's Healthy Communities and Environmental Justice program. To that end, in collaboration with community groups and residents in environmental justice communities, CLF



PHOTOS: [COVER] Springfield residents protest the building of a biomass power plant. [CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT] Springfield already suffers from high rates of respiratory disease due to industrial pollution. Rural communities are also vulnerable to issues of environmental justice. CLF has been instrumental in opening commuter rail stations in Dorchester and Mattapan.

RURAL REACH

It's easy to think of environmental justice as confined to low-income urban neighborhoods. But rural communities face many of the same issues, bearing a disproportionate burden of environmental stresses. For example, when a disaster strikes, "a rural community can actually be in a worse position than an urban one," says Vice President for Healthy Communities and Environmental Justice Veronica Eady. "For low-income people who can't afford a car, mobility is an issue in the best of circumstances. But, in a disaster, it becomes paralyzing." When Tropical Storm Irene slammed into Vermont and Western Massachusetts, the lack of transportation options frustrated people's efforts to get to doctors or even the grocery store.

As CLF works to expand its environmental justice work into northern New England, Eady admits that there could be "some challenges, because communities can be so diffuse. It's not the same as trying to do community organizing in a dense urban area." But Eady is committed to extending the organization's reach. "Our mission is to ensure that all New England communities – whether urban, suburban, or rural – enjoy clean air and water, that all families have access to fresh local food, and that all people have tools for making their neighborhoods more resilient in the face of our changing climate."

is working to reduce the environmental hazards that threaten public health and well being across the region.

The roots of CLF's environmental justice work go back decades, from the organization's groundbreaking success stemming childhood lead poisoning in Massachusetts in the 1990s, to its nearly 20-year effort to open much-needed service along Boston's Fairmount commuter line for Dorchester and Mattapan residents. More recently, the closing of Salem Harbor Station and the upcoming closing of Mt. Tom Station, both coal-fired, not only benefit our climate, but the EJ neighborhoods in which they are located. "Environmental justice is a common thread running through everything that CLF does today, whether the issue is lead poisoning in New Hampshire, rising sea levels in Rhode Island, a polluting power plant in Springfield, or increasing energy costs across the region," says Eady.

In addition to these direct efforts, environmental justice work often happens on the ground in churches, community halls, and living rooms, led by organizations like Bewsee's Arise for Social Justice. For

these small, grassroots groups, having a partner like CLF with much-needed expertise that complements their local knowledge, relationships, and support is critical to achieving measurable results. "CLF is in a unique position to be able to marshal our resources, our connections, and our tools and create a scaffolding that community-based groups can stand on to make their claims," says Eady.

For Bewsee, that scaffolding has proved invaluable in a fight that stretches back to 2008, when PRE first brought its proposal to build the biomass plant to Springfield's City Council. "CLF was really hands on, which was amazing," she says. "They came to city council hearings, they worked with us to appeal PRE's state air permit both at the agency and court levels, and helped us tap into additional resources to support our fight."

In spite of the latest court loss, Bewsee isn't discouraged. "Bad news can make you want to fight even harder for justice," she says. Even after six years, it's clear that Bewsee doesn't plan to give up the fight – and neither does CLF.



clean water

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THE PROBLEM

When it comes to clean water in New England, two big challenges stand in the way. The first, nutrient pollution, is choking some of our most iconic waterways, from Lake Champlain to Great Bay to Cape Cod. The second, stormwater runoff, is the primary source of pollution for 13 percent of all rivers, 18 percent of all lakes, and 22 percent of all estuaries, according to the National Research Council. The origins of both are easy to trace – in the first case, fertilizer runoff from agriculture and lawns, animal waste from factory farms, and improperly treated sewage; in the second, our glut of paved surfaces, off of which stormwater – along with dirt, heavy metals, chemicals, and other pollutants – gushes into our rivers, lakes, and bays.

CLF IN ACTION

For decades, CLF has worked to answer both challenges by pushing local and state governments and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to enforce clean water laws. CLF has led the way in using a little-known provision of the Clean Water Act, Residual Designation Authority, to hold all polluters accountable for their damage to local waterways – damage for which municipalities and taxpayers currently foot much of the bill. CLF has pushed for enforceable limits to pollution on Lake Champlain and challenged EPA regulators for not requiring Clean Water Act permits for Cape Cod septic systems, which are fouling the Cape's bays with nitrogen pollution. And, the organization has loudly and diligently pushed for EPA to force consideration of climate impacts in pollution control plans for Lake Champlain and Cape Cod – with the goal that this will lead to national policy to address this growing threat.

PROGRESS

Earlier this year, after years of legal battles to force the clean up of Lake Champlain, EPA started the process to set new mandatory pollution control targets for the lake – a critical juncture as the State of Vermont has previously delayed and resisted implementing such targets. CLF's work on Cape Cod also reached a critical milestone this fall with the settlement of a case against EPA for its lax regulation of septic system pollution. The settlement ensures judicial oversight and accountability in the updating and implementation of a regional wastewater management plan. This update – the first in more than 25 years – was spurred by CLF's lawsuits and is a key step towards cleaning up the Cape's ailing waters.

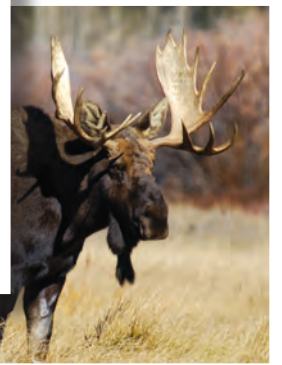
NEXT STEPS

CLF will diligently track the progress of the clean up efforts on Lake Champlain and Cape Cod. At the same time, the organization has now set its sights on two of Rhode Island's most impaired waterbodies: First Beach on Aquidneck Island and Mashapaug Pond in South Providence. Plagued by unchecked stormwater pollution, Mashapaug Pond has been closed to swimming and fishing for years, while First Beach often faces state-imposed closures due to high bacteria levels after heavy rainfall.

EPA recognizes that the water quality of both waterways is unacceptable and has even identified the sources of the pollution. But the agency has failed to require those polluters to clean up their contaminated runoff. CLF will work to ensure that these waterbodies – and the people, wildlife, and communities that depend on them – can soon be on the road to recovery.

After years of [CLF-led] legal battles, EPA started the process to set new pollution control targets for Lake Champlain.

WHY WE GIVE



I ♥ NEW ENGLAND

We love New England. We love its lighthouses and its lobsters, its moose and its maple syrup, its city parks and its rural mountains. It's the place where we've chosen to raise our children, to play, to retire, to vacation.

But the reality is, climate change is putting everything we love about New England at risk.

Here at Conservation Law Foundation, we've made a pledge – to do everything we can, using every ounce of expertise we have, to ensure that the things we all love about New England are here for our children – and for future generations – to enjoy.

But the truth is, we can't do it alone. Just as we stand beside people like you, in communities like yours, and fight for a healthy climate and healthy oceans, clean energy, air, and water, we need you to stand beside CLF, now. Because it's going to take all of us, pushing with all the passion, commitment, and tenacity we have, to make a difference for New England tomorrow.

Please give, as generously as you can, to help ensure we have the resources we need in 2015 and beyond to be our most effective, our most innovative, and our most emboldened in safeguarding the way of life we all cherish here in New England.

Contact us today to learn more about giving to CLF.

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Carol Gregory



Vice President for Marketing
& Communications

CLF's chief storyteller on
raising the organization's profile
among audiences old and new.

1 What drew you from Washington, D.C., to New England and CLF?

I think anyone working in the environmental movement is drawn to New England. In my time at Greenpeace, we always looked to this region as a beacon of environmental leadership for the rest of the country, because you've always been ahead of the curve in setting the agenda.

Today, when it comes to effecting policy change, the real work is happening on the regional, state, and community level. And that's where CLF works every day – on the ground, with communities. CLF takes on the region's biggest polluters and wins, but we also take a pragmatic approach that not only protects the planet but ensures that people *and* the economy can thrive. That is groundbreaking in the environmental community and is very impressive to me.

2 What are you most looking forward to in your new role?

We have so much potential to tell our story and to energize and mobilize people around it. That hasn't been a big focus for CLF in the past, because we've been

so busy doing the work. But telling our story is essential to broadening our reach, especially because I don't think that the public realizes that CLF is really a people's organization. It's easy to get caught up in the legal lingo and the complexities of the work, but our advocates are out there working in communities every day, making a real impact for people across New England. That story needs to be told.

3 How did you get involved in the environmental movement?

I grew up in North Carolina. My grandparents were farmers, and my mom made sure we conserved resources to stretch our budget and save money for college. We may not have called ourselves environmentalists, but caring deeply for the land, reducing and reusing – that was part of our everyday life.

Our home was surrounded by fields and forests, which I spent hours exploring. One day, I came home from school and the forest was gone, destroyed for timber. My parents were so angry. I just felt an overwhelming sense of loss for my childhood playground. I was too young to grasp what

had happened or what to do, but that was the beginning of my journey into environmental activism.

4 What's been your favorite New England experience so far?

To be determined! There's so much to see and do here. The New England landscape is just so diverse, with mountains, flatlands, and ocean all within such easy reach. Ask me again a year from now and then I'll tell you my favorite.

5 How do you think environmental groups can attract a more diverse constituency?

So many people out there might not label themselves as environmentalists, but once you talk with them, you learn how much they care about protecting their community, and that's really what environmentalism is today. As a movement, we have to make a conscious decision to get out there and talk with people in communities. We need to meet people where they are and help them understand that we're all working towards the same goal of healthy neighborhoods, healthy communities, and a healthy New England.



MAINE

The costs – and risks – of investing taxpayer money in a \$2 billion expansion of natural gas pipeline outweigh the benefits, say the staff of Maine’s Public Utilities Commission. Their conclusion agrees with CLF’s expert testimony and months of advocacy on the issue. CLF is urging the Commission to focus instead on market reforms, private financing of incremental expansion, and energy efficiency. A final vote by the Commission on proposals for ratepayer-subsidized expansions is expected before year’s end.

MASSACHUSETTS

CLF commented extensively on the New England Fishery Management Council’s analysis of the impact of reopening 75% of Cashes Ledge to harmful commercial fishing. With commercial Atlantic cod collapsed and at historic lows – and Cashes Ledge a vital nursery for the species – removing protections there is the wrong course. CLF will continue to push for responsible management

action to safeguard Cashes Ledge and other currently protected areas and to effectively restore New England’s imperiled groundfish.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

CLF is coordinating and growing a stakeholder group focused on solving the troubling problem of childhood lead poisoning in New Hampshire. Two important solutions include adopting approaches that prevent poisonings from occurring in the first place and increasing the number of children screened for elevated lead levels in their blood. New Hampshire currently falls far short in both areas, leaving many children exposed to dangerous conditions and, ultimately, undiagnosed and untreated for lead poisoning. Our efforts aim to reverse this trend.

RHODE ISLAND

CLF’s citizens lawsuit against the owners and operators of the Central

Landfill in Johnston for violations of the Clean Air Act is progressing through its discovery phase. CLF believes the landfill has violated emissions standards by failing to collect landfill gas, which contains pollutants harmful to public health and the environment. Much of the escaping gas is methane, a major driver of climate change.

VERMONT

CLF is fighting a proposal by Vermont Gas to expand a natural gas pipeline in Vermont into New York. The pipeline’s projected lifespan – 50 to 100 years – will extend dependence on fossil fuels long past the time climate change demands we move away from them. With project costs soaring 40% above original projections, CLF is continuing to challenge the need for and economic viability of a project that will cost Vermont customers thousands and undermine the state’s ability to meet its clean energy goals.

FOLLOW CLF ONLINE

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In between quarterly issues of *Conservation Matters*, stay informed about what CLF is doing and how you can get involved. Doing so is easy – just find us at any one of the following websites.

- CLF’s blog: clf.org/blog/
- Twitter: @thecclf
- Facebook: facebook.com/TheCLF
- LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/Conservation-Law-Foundation

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



As we close out December at Conservation Law Foundation, we are celebrating the legacy of our departing president, John Kassel, who led this orga-

nization through six transformative years. While CLF's accomplishments under John's leadership are many, the past year alone has produced an especially impressive record of success.

Our groundbreaking settlement with Footprint Power in Salem is pushing our region closer to a clean energy future. Our fight for a cleaner Lake Champlain is paying off with legal requirements for the State of Vermont to clean up the iconic lake. Our leadership in ocean planning helped achieve landmark protections for North Atlantic right whales in Rhode Island Sound. And our new Legal Services Food Hub is providing free legal help to farmers and food start-ups so their businesses can thrive.

These are achievements to celebrate, but they are not John's alone. CLF's impressive and tenacious group of staff

and volunteers have together led this organization to a remarkable string of trailblazing victories, not just over the last six years, but the last (almost) fifty – victories that have resonated across New England and the country to bring about cleaner air and cleaner water, healthier oceans and healthier communities for all.

I want to thank John for his outstanding leadership, but I also want to thank you. You have stood by CLF's side as we have confronted New England's biggest environmental challenges and answered them, with significant solutions. As we launch our search for our next leader, I have never been more optimistic about CLF's future. We are a strong, vibrant, and capable organization that is succeeding in creating a healthy, thriving New England, today and for future generations.

Thank you for your steadfast and passionate support. I look forward to sharing our continued record of success with you in the year to come.

Sincerely,
Sara Molyneaux *Chair, Board of Trustees*

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