

CONSERVATION MATTERS

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SYSTEM
CHANGE



NOT
CLIMATE
CHANGE!

2019

2020

YEAR IN REVIEW

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Amid change, there is room for hope.

THIS IS A HARD LETTER TO WRITE. TRADITIONALLY, AN ANNUAL REPORT IS A TIME TO CELEBRATE – to look back on all that we have accomplished together over the past year and to look ahead to the work still to come.

We always knew that 2020 would be the start of a pivotal decade, as we have barely 10 years to make significant progress in cutting climate-damaging emissions worldwide. Yet we could not have predicted in January that, barely six months into the year, our country would be embroiled in a long-overdue reckoning with our history of racial injustice and white supremacy.

I am acutely aware of the many people in our region and in our country who are hurting right now. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the protests against police violence have highlighted the deep, damaging inequities in our society that disproportionately impact Black and brown communities.

These events are also a stark reminder of the importance of our work in addressing the environmental injustices perpetrated against these same communities – the air pollution that has made them more vulnerable to COVID-19 infection; the climate disruption that puts them, unwillingly, on the front lines of risk; and the broken regulatory systems that give more power to a corporate polluter than to those who must suffer the fallout from another dirty power plant, incinerator, oil terminal, or other industrial blight in their neighborhood.

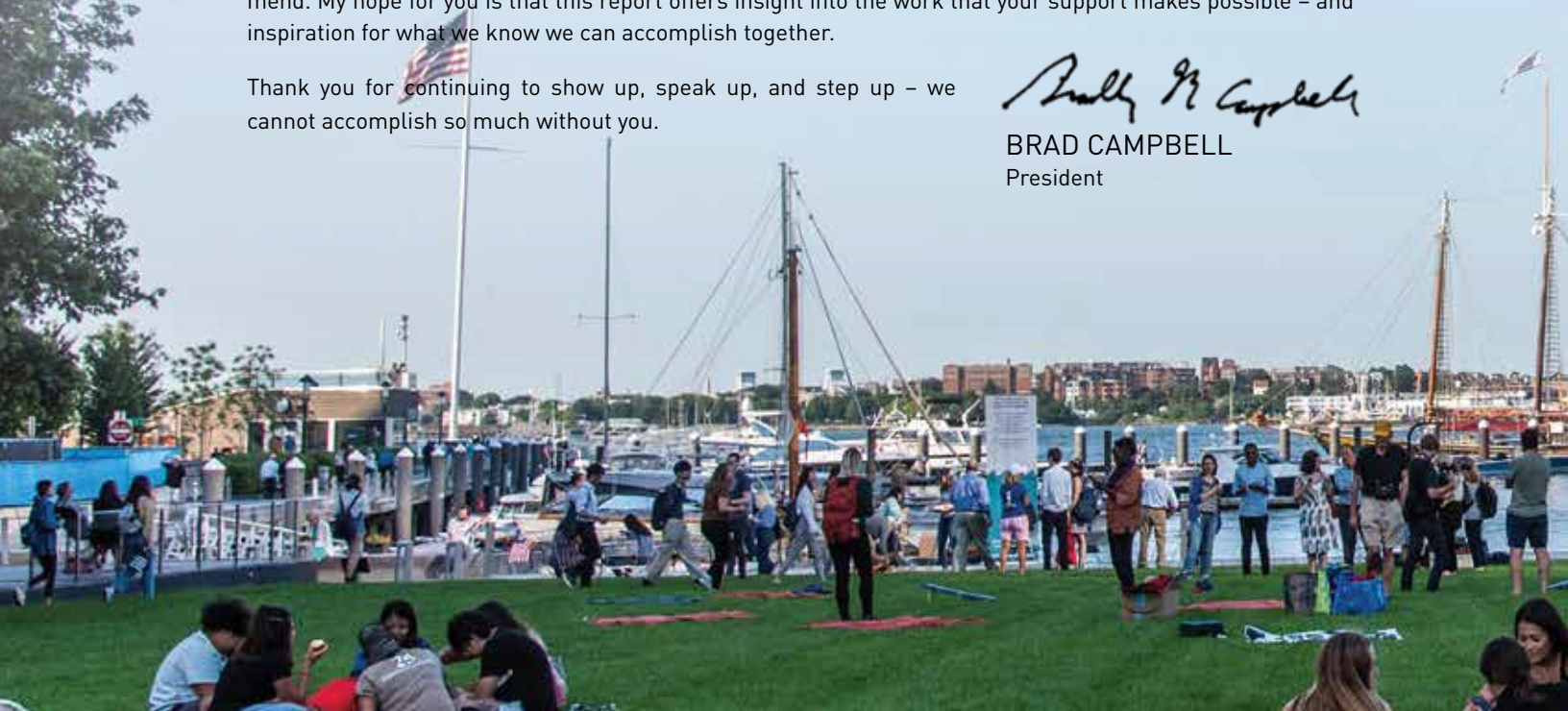
This all must change. Our role – together – is to ensure that the fights we take on are fought not only *for* communities but *with* communities. That the solutions to our biggest environmental challenges do not perpetuate existing inequalities. And that we never consider our mission complete until we have achieved a healthy and thriving New England – *for all*.

That brings me back to our purpose in this annual report. In times of change and upheaval, there is also room for hope and inspiration. While we collectively have much hard work ahead of us, we also have much to commend. My hope for you is that this report offers insight into the work that your support makes possible – and inspiration for what we know we can accomplish together.

Thank you for continuing to show up, speak up, and step up – we cannot accomplish so much without you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brad Campbell". The signature is fluid and cursive.

BRAD CAMPBELL
President



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

WITH SO MUCH TURMOIL AROUND US, I KNOW IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO STOP AND REFLECT ON THE WORK that CLF accomplished over the past year. However, even during these challenging times, we cannot lose sight of the ground that we have gained when it comes to creating healthier, more thriving communities across New England.

There is much more to do, of course – and with such a monumental threat like climate change urgently requiring the world’s attention, no one would blame us if we put all of our energy into averting that looming catastrophe. But doing so would mean allowing imminent threats to our air and water – and to our neighbors and communities – to go unaddressed.

CLF has always taken the long view. Some of our most impactful work has taken decades to see through to victory. That’s what has made us so ready to take action on climate change. We know what must get done today if we are going to have a healthy climate tomorrow.

That same expertise also makes us fierce and effective fighters against the immediate threats to our health and well-being, from nitrogen pollution to toxic landfills to chemicals in our drinking water.

So we work with one foot in the future, pushing New England to make the necessary choices now to ensure we reach net zero emissions by 2050. And we work with the other foot firmly in the present, recognizing that the global pandemic and the fight for long-overdue racial and economic justice spurs on our imperative to succeed in tackling pollution, tainted water, and other critical issues today.

Inside, you’ll find stories of people living and working on the front lines of these challenges:

- Ania Wright, a young activist pushing for climate justice;
- Paula Peters, whose local waters have been choked by nitrogen pollution;
- Jackie Mercurio, who is carrying on her mother’s fight against a toxic waste incinerator; and
- Michele Cubelli Harris, who found a new home with help from our Healthy Neighborhoods Equity Fund.

We do our work for them and with them. For you and with you. Together, we are driving forward a future that is equitable and healthy for all and confronting the most urgent threats in the here and now. We are grateful to have you by our side.



**We do our
work for you
and with you.**

Sara Molyneux

SARA MOLYNEUX
Chair, Board of Trustees



PHOTO: TIM BRIGGS



Fighting for Her Future

BY BETHANY KWOKA

IF SHE WEREN'T A CLIMATE ACTIVIST, 22-YEAR-OLD ANIA WRIGHT WOULD BE STUDYING AGRICULTURE AND TRYING TO START HER OWN FARM. “Maybe I’ll do it in the future,” she says. “But for now, I have other things.”

Those “other things” include planning climate actions in her Maine college town and sitting on Governor Janet Mills’ Climate Council to help decide the future of climate policy in the state. She’s also attended two United Nations climate conferences, most recently last fall in Madrid. In fact, she’s between events at the conference when we first connect to talk about her work helping her home state establish a strong climate law – only the third of its kind in New England.

Every state in the region has a goal to reduce its carbon pollution, but only Massachusetts, Connecticut, and now Maine have binding laws that mandate these cuts. These laws, which CLF is working to pass in every New England state, take a holistic approach to decarbonization – the process of getting dirty fuels like oil and gas out of our lives and our economy.

“Binding laws drive a process to figure out how to achieve the emissions cuts we need,” says CLF Senior Attorney Emily Green. She helped lead the push to pass Maine’s law last year and now sits on a working group for the Climate Council. “But that process must also be inclusive. We want to make sure that we’re hearing from different people in Maine and not just the usual suspects.”

That’s where Wright comes in. By the time she was 20, Wright had already seen the fate of future generations ignored when politicians debated climate solutions. When Maine lawmakers were preparing their landmark climate bill last year, Wright

seized the opportunity to address them. She asked that they include a youth voice in their planning process. Her aim hadn’t been to join the Climate Council, though that was the end result.

“My role is to provide a youth perspective,” she says, “so bringing the next generation and future generations into the conversation.”

While Wright herself works on the front lines of the climate crisis, she stresses that it’s important to get involved in any way that you can. Local action – be it organizing, attending a climate rally, or contacting lawmakers – is crucial.

In Maine and elsewhere, legislators won’t act on climate unless people demand it. Fossil fuel companies have a lot to lose if states mandate lower emissions. These businesses understand that if people focus on their personal carbon footprints, they are less likely to campaign for more impactful measures.

“That’s a really important point – that difference between individual action and systemic change,” says Wright. “When you look at who’s responsible for the biggest climate impacts, it’s big corporations and big governments. We need to address the system issues and not the individuals.”

Those systemic issues include environmental racism. “Too often, marginalized communities are left out of decisions that directly impact their health and well-being,” says Green. Polluting power plants are built more frequently in low-income and immigrant communities, as well as communities of color, whose residents often lack the resources to fight back. And after decades of discriminatory housing policies, these same communities are disproportionately burdened by climate impacts such as heat stresses and flooding.



“When you look at who’s responsible for the biggest climate impacts, it’s big corporations. We need to address the system issues.”

ANIA WRIGHT

“The climate crisis is intertwined with so many other systemic issues in our society – racism and sexism and colonialism and even capitalism,” says Wright. “In solving the climate crisis, we have this opportunity to solve some of these other issues.”

That is where those binding statewide climate laws play a critical role. Laws that set limits on climate-damaging emissions force a state to work towards economy-wide solutions like capping pollution from power plants and cutting emissions from cars and trucks.

“This comprehensive perspective better enables states to address overarching historic inequities created by environmental racism,” says Green. “In this way, climate laws can effectively advance actions for tackling climate change and systemic racism at the same time.”

None of this is to say that you should stop taking individual action, whether switching to an electric car or making your home more energy efficient. But it does mean thinking about how you can push for systemic change, too.

“One of the most important things is to vote for leaders who have solid climate plans and put their money where their mouth is,” says Green. “We should demand from our leaders that the climate crisis be one of their foremost focuses.”

With more New England states enacting binding limits on carbon pollution, we’re making progress in tackling the climate crisis here at home. And, even globally, there are reasons for hope.

“I’m optimistic because the climate movement is really generating momentum,” says Green. “People are demanding more from government and leaders – and that’s what’s going to drive change.”

That groundswell also buoys Wright’s spirits. “Just continuing to do the work every day is really good,” she says. “Just to keep fighting for what feels important.”

ANIA WRIGHT STANDS ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS

ABOVE LEFT Since starting college, Ania Wright has been involved in climate justice groups and has organized rallies, strikes, and days of action. Now she is helping shape how Maine will implement its landmark climate law.

ABOVE Wright (at far right) attended the 2019 United Nations climate conference in Madrid and marched with a half million people to demand climate justice.

▶ Learn more about CLF’s push to pass binding climate laws at clf.org/zeroby50

HIGHLIGHTS

After helping to pass Maine’s law mandating cuts to the state’s climate-damaging emissions, CLF advocates are now playing a critical role in shaping the law’s implementation. Through their work with the state’s Climate Council, CLF’s attorneys are focused on cleaning up Maine’s transportation sector and pushing for new clean energy projects. The council is advising Governor Mills in developing a plan for the law’s execution that ensures it is equitable for all Mainers.

In November, Invenenergy officially lost its fight to build a polluting fossil fuel power plant in Burrillville, Rhode Island. After years of legal challenges from CLF and residents, state officials denied the permits necessary to build the plant. New England doesn’t need the electricity that would have come from the plant, which would have emitted climate-damaging emissions for decades to come. The fight to leave fossil fuels in the past is far from over, and CLF is continuing to push for clean energy sources like wind and solar throughout New England.

Following CLF’s lead in Maine and Massachusetts, Vermont advocates are working on a Global Warming Solutions Act to slash emissions and prepare the state for the impacts of the climate crisis. Legislators are currently considering the bill, which would direct the state to lower emissions, invest in clean energy, and update critical infrastructure across Vermont. CLF is pushing for the bill to pass this year so we can get to work implementing these important protections right away.

THE FUTURE IS ELECTRIC

Cutting carbon pollution from transportation is pivotal to stemming the climate crisis.

FROM TRUCKS DELIVERING GOODS TO COMMUTERS GETTING TO WORK, TRANSPORTATION ACCOUNTS FOR A WHOPPING 40% OF NEW ENGLAND'S CLIMATE POLLUTION. To achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, the region must reinvent its transportation system – starting now.

That means helping people drive less through investments in transit and smarter development. It also means swapping out gas guzzlers for electric cars, trucks, and buses. Electric vehicles can slash carbon and air pollution – improving public health in the process – while saving money on gas and maintenance.

Through careful management, electric vehicles could revolutionize not only our roads but also our electricity grid. Their batteries could be used to balance electricity supply and demand, so we could rely less on dirty power plants during peak hours of electricity demand and integrate more renewable energy from solar and wind into our grid – all while your car sits charging in the driveway.

This isn't just some far-off vision. Scientists warn that we must make significant progress towards net-zero emissions by 2030 to avert climate catastrophe. But getting us there isn't only about incentivizing people and businesses to buy electric. It's about looking holistically at the many moving parts that need to come together to make our all-electric future possible – from ramping up charging stations regionwide, to upgrading our electricity grid so it's ready for a surge in power usage, to reforming how our utility companies do business.

CLF is uniquely qualified to lead this big picture, behind-the-scenes work. Our expertise isn't just in creating and defending the law, but in understanding the structures and regulations the

law puts in place. That includes knowing which levers to pull and which mechanisms to activate for change. It's not the most visible part of our work, but it's as crucial as a high-profile lawsuit. When it comes to the transition to electric vehicles, CLF is:

- partnering with legislators to craft laws to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles regionwide;
- working at state utility commissions toward utility reforms that anticipate a surge in electric vehicle use powered by clean, renewable energy; and
- pushing power companies to ensure that, as new charging infrastructure is built, it's well planned and accessible to everyone.



REINVENTING TRANSPORTATION

Cutting climate-damaging emissions in New England requires us to rethink how we travel – from our cars and trucks to public transportation. PHOTO: SCHARFSINN/SHUTTERSTOCK

creating a model for other states to follow. As we push Maine to ensure its ambitious Climate Action Plan accounts for an electrified future, we're giving neighboring states a template for their own planning. And as we investigate how to incentivize car charging in New Hampshire when overnight costs are low, we're anticipating how to create similar programs regionwide.

Replacing our cars, trucks, and buses with electric models and preparing our utilities to rise to the challenge – this is key to how we will move New England towards its zero-carbon future.



Burning Waste Poisons People

For this Saugus native, fighting for her community runs in the family.

BY OLIVIA SYNORACKI

JACKIE MERCURIO HAS LIVED IN THE SHADOWS OF A TOXIC WASTE INCINERATOR HER ENTIRE LIFE. From the backyard of her childhood home in Saugus, Massachusetts, you can see the facility's smokestack rising above the trees, spewing smog, pollution, and ash over the quiet residential neighborhood.

The incinerator weighs heavily on Jackie. As a kid, she recalls, "ash and soot showered down on homes every day – coating swimming pools, rooftops, and sidings in a blanket of toxicity. You could literally feel molecules of pollution around you."

But no memories are as heart-wrenching as the many family and friends who have become ill since the facility opened 45 years ago. Almost every member of Jackie's extended family, most of whom lived on her same street, has faced myriad cancer diagnoses – with no trace of family history. "If you knock on any door in this neighborhood, there's at least one household member who has struggled with cancer," she says.

What's more, allergies are more severe, and asthma has become increasingly common. Jackie herself suffers from asthma and has a learning disability. While the area's elevated cancer rates and other health issues cannot be linked definitively to the incinerator, Jackie believes they are all consequences of growing up breathing in the facility's toxic fumes.

Sadly, Jackie's neighborhood is not unique. The Saugus facility, owned by Wheelabrator, is one of 16 waste incinerators in New England. Located primarily in lower-income, working-class

communities, all 16 facilities are limping along well past their 20- to 30-year lifespans.

"There's this idea that if you put something in an incinerator, then you've somehow made it safe or inert," says Kirstie Pecci, Director of CLF's Zero Waste Project. But chemicals released from burning everyday items emerge out of incinerator smokestacks largely unchanged, including dioxins – one of the most dangerous contaminants known to humans. "If you live near an incinerator, you're going to be made sicker by the toxic chemicals you're breathing in. Nowhere is that clearer than in Saugus," she says.

For Jackie, championing the health of her hometown and neighboring communities is a family affair. When her mother, Pam, was just a baby, her aunt strapped her into a stroller and marched her down the street to protest the dirty town dump. When Wheelabrator later built its incinerator on the dump site, Pam, by then a devoted nurse, began to worry about how it could harm the health of the hundreds of thousands of people living close by.

Pam soon began speaking out against the facility and its health impacts, calling for it to shut down. After losing so many family members to cancer, she joined the town's Board of Health, using her position to voice concerns to community members and local leaders – really, anyone who would listen.

While her campaign gained support locally, the ultimate decision maker, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), refused to take meaningful action.

BURNING TRASH CREATES TOXIC POLLUTION

PREVIOUS PAGE Jackie Mercurio grew up in the shadows of the Wheelabrator waste incinerator. Her mother fought to shut down the facility for decades before losing her life to brain cancer.

RIGHT The waste incinerator spews toxic air pollution into neighborhoods from Saugus to Revere. PHOTO: PAUL-W CC BY-NA-SA 2.0



Five years ago, Pam was diagnosed with brain cancer, and she struggled to maintain the vigor that had kept her going for so long. As Pam stepped back from activism, Jackie stepped forward. “One of the last times my mom spoke in public, she shared with MassDEP the issues surrounding Wheelabrator,” says Jackie. “That day, I felt like we did it together. I stood up with her as she spoke. It was the most powerful and impactful moment of advocacy I’ve witnessed by my mom.”

MassDEP staff in the room were visibly moved by the testimony, she says – but not enough to shut down the polluting facility that Jackie feels ultimately cost her mother her life.

Wheelabrator denies its facility causes any adverse health impacts and argues that people who don’t like living near the incinerator should move. But that was never an option for Jackie’s family. Her great-grandfather had settled in Saugus more than a hundred years ago. This was home. “We built this neighborhood,” says Jackie. “Why should we move if we were here first?”

“We can’t continue this cycle,” says Pecci. “No one should have to suffer such tragic consequences because we have a broken waste

system. People think we need incinerators or landfills because otherwise, our garbage is going to pile up in the streets, but that’s just nonsense.” And, while CLF is fighting to shut down toxic landfills and incinerators across New England, the real solution, Pecci says, is to reduce our waste through better recycling, composting, and other zero-waste programs. “We can do this. These solutions are within our grasp.”

That’s why Jackie is carrying on her mom’s fight today – though it’s no longer just about honoring Pam’s memory. It’s also about making sure her one-year-old daughter can grow up in a clean environment. “Forty years ago, I was sitting in this house with my mom, and she was talking about this same issue. It just seems crazy to continue, but you have to.”

Giving up, however, is not an option. “I want my daughter to be able to play outside and not have to worry about ash. We’ve got to keep going.”

► *Learn more about CLF’s work to shut down waste incinerators and advocate for Zero Waste programs regionwide at clf.org/zerowaste*

HIGHLIGHTS

As a result of tireless advocacy from CLF and our community partners, a company planning to build a polluting waste processing facility in Providence, Rhode Island, scrapped its plans. The proposed “garbage depot” would have processed up to 2,500 tons of trash every day, mostly from outside the state. The facility would have contributed even more toxic exhaust to a neighborhood that already suffers high asthma rates and other health

problems, and residents were strongly opposed to the proposal.

After enduring decades of air pollution and related health impacts, many low-income communities of color have now become COVID-19 hotspots. CLF and our partners in the ongoing Healthy Neighborhoods Study released recommendations to help these communities respond to the challenges

they’re facing during the pandemic. Our data suggest that improved access to safe transit, expanded sick leave, more support for front line community organizations, and an improved healthy food system will be critical in helping these areas recover from the COVID-19 crisis and strengthen their resilience in the face of future challenges, including climate change.

CREATING HEALTHY HOMES

WHEN TROPICAL STORM IRENE CRASHED INTO VERMONT IN 2011, IT PUSHED RIVERS TO OVERFLOW THEIR BANKS. RAGING FLOODWATERS DESTROYED MORE THAN A THOUSAND HOMES and damaged thousands more so severely that people were forced to move out of them for months. Mobile homes – which house about 10% of Vermonters – took an especially hard hit, and their renters and owners were the least equipped to recover quickly.

Over the border in New Hampshire, nearly 60% of homes were built before 1978, the year Congress banned lead paint. Even in a repainted home, lead paint can linger on doorframes and windowsills, and its dust can be unwittingly disturbed during renovations. That puts people – especially young children – of all income levels at risk of lead poisoning, a disease with tragic health consequences if left undetected and untreated.

Meanwhile, in Boston, an ongoing housing crisis has seen rents and mortgages skyrocket, pushing working-class families out of rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods and into lower-quality housing. Even then, they may have to shell out more than 50% of their take-home pay for rent. Falling behind on rent or moving multiples times can impact health severely, including much higher rates of maternal depression and child lifetime hospitalizations, according to a study by CLF Healthy Communities Fellow Megan Sandel.

These issues may seem unrelated, but together, they are part of what goes into a healthy home – one that supports both physical and mental well-being. Resilience to climate change impacts,

safety from toxic hazards like lead and mold, affordable and stable housing – these factors and more affect individual health. Collectively, they can add up to greater burdens community-wide, especially for low-income and communities of color.

CLF's mission has long been to create a healthy and thriving New England for all. Achieving that mission means looking at the "environment" as more than one's natural surroundings. The environment also encompasses the built spaces in which we all live, work, play, and worship. For CLF, the work to help make our homes healthy includes:



HEALTHY HOMES, HEALTHY FAMILIES

A healthy environment is about more than the natural world – it includes all of the places where we live, work, play, learn, and worship. PHOTO: TIM BRIGGS

It's work that builds on CLF's core strengths, from legislative advocacy to legal watchdog. But it also lets the organization flex newer muscles, including our groundbreaking community-based research and innovative investment strategies in equitable, low-carbon housing.

An affordable block of healthy homes can lead to a healthier neighborhood, which in turn can anchor an entire community – and help create a healthier and more thriving New England for all.

- leading efforts to ensure homes and schools are free of such toxins as lead paint and pipes;
- making homes and neighborhoods resilient to climate impacts, such as reinforcing them against flooding and providing tree cover and green space to cool increasingly hot urban areas;
- improving energy efficiency to reduce the burden of high oil and gas bills; and
- investing in developments priced for low-income and working-class families close to open space, healthy food, and public transit.

Cleaning Up Cape Cod

Nitrogen pollution is choking
once-vibrant waters
throughout Cape Cod.

BY LAURIE O'REILLY



PAULA PETERS POINTS TO A PHOTOGRAPH HANGING ON A WALL OF HER HOME IN MASHPEE, MASSACHUSETTS.

"This is Punkhorn Point," she says. The photo shows an expanse of deeply blue water where the Mashpee River

empties into Popponeset Bay. When she was a child, Peters' father took her family shellfishing there. "My brothers would go out into the water to dig up the quahogs and clams, and I would be relegated to the shoreline, where I would grab the mussels."

Her father carried on the family tradition with Peters' son, but now, just a generation later, "we can't do that anymore. The nitrogen loading is so severe that the shellfish are contaminated." Today at Punkhorn Point, a "No Shellfishing" sign serves as both a warning and a stark reminder of what has been lost to Peters' family and her tribe as a whole.

A member of the Mashpee Wampanoag, Peters says tribal members gathered shellfish at Punkhorn Point for generations. "This is our ancestral homeland, and fishing and hunting on these lands were how we sustained ourselves. Our tribal fishermen and hunters are really paying a price, and it's becoming more and more difficult for them to sustain their families."

Mashpee isn't the only Cape Cod town with waters made sick from nitrogen pollution. It's a problem regionwide. The Cape's septic systems, which serve 85% of households and businesses, aren't designed to eliminate nitrogen from waste. As a result, the nitrogen seeps through the region's porous soils and into local waters. From there, it acts like a fertilizer, causing massive algae outbreaks that can sicken people, plants, and animals. It also makes the Cape's bay beaches and freshwater ponds unsafe for swimming, boating, and shellfishing.

The solution to the nitrogen problem is well known, says Heather Govern, Vice President of Clean Air and Water at CLF: "Towns need to devote more money to wastewater management," she says. "This pollution continues to degrade the Cape's treasured waters, and it will only get worse unless residents agree to become better stewards of their environment and agree to these big, systemic changes."

Thanks to a lawsuit filed by CLF against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in 2015, the Cape Cod Commission updated a 30-year-old Areawide Wastewater Management Plan. The updated plan outlines the legally required actions the Cape's 15 towns must take to clean up their act (literally). But five years later, progress has been slow.

A major sticking point for many towns is the price tag for transitioning an entire region off septic systems – up to \$8 billion by some estimates. But, says Govern, the costs of inaction could



HIGHLIGHTS

Critically endangered right whales counted a pair of victories in the courtroom this year. In two separate cases, a judge agreed with CLF's arguments that federal fishery managers violated the Endangered Species Act and put whales in harm's way. The cases relate to oversight of gillnet and lobster fishing, which use vertical lines in the water that can entangle right whales. Entanglement in fishing gear is one of the leading causes of death for this species, and CLF's victories will mean whales will be safer when traveling through New England waters.

Nitrogen pollution is choking the bays, beaches, and ponds on Cape Cod that people flock to each summer. CLF recently settled a lawsuit against the Wequassett Resort and Golf Club to stem this pollution, which fuels toxic algae outbreaks

in Pleasant Bay. As a result of our settlement, Wequassett will upgrade its wastewater treatment system to reduce the pollution spreading to nearby waters. The resort also will finance several clean water efforts on the Cape.

With clean energy and renewables eclipsing fossil fuels, offshore wind is poised to become a major source of our electricity. Frequently buffeted by some of the world's strongest offshore winds, the Gulf of Maine could play an essential role in meeting New England's climate goals. The federal government has convened a regional task force to explore clean energy options in the Gulf, and CLF is participating in these public meetings to push for responsibly sited offshore wind projects that protect critical marine life.

“People continue to build without giving any thought to what it’s doing to the environment. They don’t know about how beautiful the bay could be when it’s clean.” PAULA PETERS

run even higher. “As the nitrogen pollution gets worse, it will only create more problems. If tourists decide to go elsewhere, then real estate values will go down. Retail and hospitality businesses will have a hard time. The entire Cape economy will be affected.”

Meanwhile, “people continue to build around here without giving any thought to what it’s doing to the overall environment,” says Peters in frustration. “They don’t know what I know about how beautiful the bay could be when it’s clean, how much of an asset it is for fishing or just for being out there on the water.”

Govern points to the power of residents in driving change forward more quickly. “They are the ones who can push their town authorities to come up with innovative solutions and to do it now. They’re the ones who need to vote yes on fixing the problem.”

At the same time, she says, CLF is exploring other options for forcing movement on the issue. Successful lawsuits against

two well-known tourist resorts have resulted in significant commitments to clean up their operations. The resorts now have an opportunity to lead in pushing similar businesses to become part of the solution.

Neither Govern nor Peters is ready to let individual residents off the hook, however. “Our waterways are being choked by this pollution, and it’s our fault,” says Peters. “That shouldn’t be the case, and that’s what people don’t understand. We need to have wastewater treatment so that we’re not killing our environment.

“We are running out of time.”

► Stay up-to-date on CLF's fight to clean up nitrogen pollution on Cape Cod at clf.org/capecod

WATERS UNDER SIEGE

Paula Peters worries that untreated wastewater is leaving a permanent mark on the Cape's once-vibrant waterways.

INSET For generations, Peters' family could go shellfishing at Punkhorn Point in Mashpee. But today, it's unsafe because of contamination from untreated wastewater.

RESILIENT WATERS

The health of New England’s ocean is intertwined with that of its fisheries and coastal economies – that’s why we need to protect more of it.

IN EARLY JUNE, DURING A ROUND-TABLE WITH MAINE FISHERMEN, PRESIDENT TRUMP SIGNED A PROCLAMATION OPENING THE NORTHEAST CANYONS AND SEAMOUNTS MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT to commercial fishing.

Designated by President Obama in 2016, the monument may sound large at 4,900 square miles, but that amounts to barely 1.5% of the U.S. Atlantic Ocean. And now, even that tiny amount – and the marine life that depends on it as a refuge – is at risk.

Protected areas are vital in the era of climate change. The Gulf of Maine is warming faster than 99% of the world’s oceans, and our region is already feeling the effects. Scientists and fishermen are witnessing dramatic northward shifts of iconic species, including lobsters and endangered North Atlantic right whales. Warming seas are driving more intense rain and snowstorms. And ocean waters are increasingly lapping at front doors – sometimes literally – with each major storm.

Protecting more ocean areas – worldwide and here at home – can help to both save underwater ecosystems and shore up resiliency for the blue economy in a climate-ready world.

That’s why CLF is joining a growing number of scientists, policymakers, businesses, and conservation organizations calling for the protection of at least 30% of the world’s oceans by 2030.

Currently, about 5.3% of ocean waters worldwide are actively managed marine protected areas. However, only about half of those are highly protected from commercial extractive activities. In the U.S., you’ll find most of our highly protected areas in the

remote Pacific Ocean. Here in New England, the only area with such a high level of protection was the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts – that is, until Trump’s proclamation.

Other parts of New England’s ocean also serve as cautionary tales for protections that fall short. Stellwagen Bank, stretching from Cape Ann to Cape Cod, is the region’s first (and only) National Marine Sanctuary. Though it is closed to such destructive activities as sand and gravel mining, it remains

open to ships, including massive cargo ships, which can strike and injure whales and other marine mammals. Commercial fishing is also allowed, meaning that Stellwagen Bank offers no actual sanctuary at all for vulnerable species like Atlantic cod.

Cashes Ledge, a unique underwater mountain range in the Gulf of Maine, is also a poster child for too little protection. This haven for species both common and rare could be an ideal open-sea laboratory for learning more about the health of New England’s ocean – and how to respond and rebound from climate change. The only official protection afforded the area is a ban on the use

of fishing gear like bottom trawling. That ban is temporary and could be lifted by regional fishery managers at any time. Many other types of commercial fishing gear are still allowed there.

Places like the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts, Stellwagen Bank, and Cashes Ledge are irreplaceable. With the Gulf of Maine warming at such an alarming rate, fully protecting such habitats – to the highest degree – will provide a bulwark for New England’s ocean economy and fragile marine wildlife against the worst effects of the changing climate.



AN UNDERWATER REFUGE
Protecting ocean areas like Cashes Ledge (above) provide a bulwark for marine wildlife and shore up New England’s blue economy. PHOTO: BRIAN SKERRY

WHEN MICHELE CUBELLI HARRIS FIRST WALKED BY THE HOLMES BEVERLY BUILDING, SHE KNEW SHE WANTED TO LIVE THERE. BUT SHE WASN'T SURE IF SHE COULD AFFORD IT.

The six-story apartment complex on Rantoul Street in Beverly, Massachusetts, looks like a lot of new high-end construction: a sleek gray façade interspersed with brick and large windows. A nice restaurant and supermarket on the ground floor round out its appeal.

Cubelli Harris was looking for an apartment closer to her job in Lynn. With her kids grown, she wanted a home that would be hers alone. She took a picture of the Holmes Beverly leasing sign but worried that the building was out of her price range. She started checking apartments on the state affordable housing website instead.

Massachusetts has two categories for housing priced below the market rate. The first, "affordable" housing, is priced so someone earning 30% to 60% of the area median income could afford to live there; the second, "workforce" housing, is in the 60% to 120% range of median income.

While the State has focused on creating affordable units to counter the sky-high market rates in the greater Boston area, workforce-priced housing is sometimes called "the missing middle." This includes people, like Cubelli Harris, who have jobs that pay enough to disqualify them for affordable units but still struggle to find a home that won't force them to compromise the essentials of a balanced life.

Rarely are new developments like Holmes Beverly priced to fit either category. Yet, as Cubelli Harris continued her affordable housing search, she was shocked to see a listing for a Holmes Beverly unit. She emailed the property manager and learned that a single workforce-priced unit was available.

As of last fall, that unit is her home – and its benefits resonate through every aspect of her life. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, her daily commute had dropped to 20 minutes from more than an hour. She could walk to meet friends for dinner nearby. Now working from home, she has created a workspace in the apartment and takes long walks on

Investing in Change

Michele Cubelli Harris gets a new lease on life, thanks in part to CLF's Healthy Neighborhoods Equity Fund.

BY ASHIRA MORRIS



HELPING BUILD HEALTHY
NEIGHBORHOODS

The Healthy Neighborhoods Equity Fund invests in developments like Holmes Beverly – close to green space and public transportation, with units priced for a variety of income levels.



her lunch breaks. She can even walk or ride her bike to a nearby beach to bask in the sun and take in the sound of the waves.

"I felt like I'd won the lottery," Cubelli Harris recalls. "It made moving away from my old home exciting and allowed me to embrace this new stage of my life."

Cubelli Harris's story is an unfortunately common one. Massachusetts is experiencing a housing crisis, with luxury development outpacing the affordable and workforce units being built. Nearly 20% of people in Essex County, where Beverly is located, spend over half their income on rent. That leaves little for food, medical expenses, childcare, and other necessities.

The 16 workforce-priced apartments at Holmes Beverly were made possible with investment from the Healthy Neighborhoods Equity Fund. A partnership between Conservation Law Foundation and the Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation, the Fund invests in developments that will have a "quadruple bottom line," including financial returns and positive impacts on the community, environment, and health.

The Fund operates on the core principle that the "environment" encompasses everywhere people live, work, and play. "And it impacts both individual and community health," says Maggie Super Church, who leads CLF's work on the Fund. "It's not that we protect people or the environment – it's both."

Since 2014, the Fund has invested in nine developments, from Beverly to Boston to Braintree. CLF is currently exploring opportunities to expand the Fund to other New England states. To qualify for funding, developers must meet requirements that contribute to a healthy neighborhood, like access to public transit, green space, and a grocery store.

CHANGE LEADERSHIP

FIXING BROKEN SYSTEMS

When our regulatory systems fail, people pay the price. CLF is working to fill the gaps that put communities at risk.

SINCE PRESIDENT TRUMP'S INAUGURATION, WE HAVE WITNESSED UNPRECEDENTED ROLLBACKS OF BEDROCK ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS. Rather than actually protecting the environment (and all of us whose health depends on it), the Environmental Protection Agency has instead acted in the interests of corporate polluters and fossil fuel companies. It has gutted Obama-era rules to limit climate-damaging emissions from power plants, reversed course on expanded protections for waterways across the country, and undone standards aimed at reducing air pollution from cars and trucks (to name just a few).

Most recently, the administration used the cover of the COVID-19 pandemic to suspend regulations that keep polluters in check.

It also relaxed other rules that ensure the rigorous review of the environmental impacts of infrastructure projects. This is all despite evidence that communities exposed to rampant air pollution – mainly Black and brown neighborhoods – are experiencing the highest rates of infection from the coronavirus.

These actions are dangerous and irresponsible, yes. But we must face an unpopular fact: Our regulatory systems have never adequately protected our communities and natural resources. We cannot simply wait for a friendlier administration to undo the wrongs of this one. Even as we fight the Trump administration's draconian rollbacks, we also must look at exposing the gaps, loopholes, and weak spots in our regulatory structure – and find ways to fix them.

HIGHLIGHTS

Without the Healthy Neighborhoods Equity Fund, Holmes Beverly might not have happened at all. Along with investment from MassHousing, the fund provided the development with a financial bedrock that allowed nearly a quarter of the building's 67 units to be workforce housing, priced for those making 80% to 100% of the median area income. Individually, these apartments allow Cubelli Harris and others to live in the new development; collectively, they show how impact investments like those from the Fund can preserve affordability and prevent buildings like this from being accessible only to the wealthy.

For Cubelli Harris, who grew up in Lawrence and lived most of her life in Methuen, the opportunity to live in Holmes Beverly has been transformative. "Something like this did not seem to be an option to me, in terms of affordability," she says. "It really does give some hope for people like me, who grew up in poor neighborhoods, worked hard, got a college degree, but are still not making enough money to live how they might like to. This is a wonderful chance."

► Find more about CLF's work to support affordable and healthy developments at clf.org/hnef

A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

TOP LEFT Cubelli Harris thought the Holmes Beverly development would be out of her reach, but the Healthy Neighborhoods Equity Fund ensured a number of its apartments were priced affordably.

BOTTOM LEFT A library, gym, and ground-floor restaurant are just some of the amenities to which Cubelli Harris now has access.

The threat posed by a toxic class of chemicals called PFAS is just one example of regulatory failures that must be redressed to protect our health. These chemicals have been used in everyday products for more than 60 years, including stain- and water-resistant fabrics, food packaging, and some fire-fighting foams. But scientific research shows that they can increase the risk of cancer, interfere with human hormones and the immune system, and disrupt liver, thyroid, and pancreatic functions.

Despite these known risks – and the fact that PFAS chemicals have been detected in public water supplies, private wells, and groundwater across New England and nationwide – federal regulators from this and previous administrations have done little to regulate them.

With federal action stalled, CLF has taken the fight to each New England state, pushing for legislators to adopt a stringent drinking water standard that protects residents from exposure to all PFAS compounds. We are also calling for regular monitoring and removal of these chemicals from our water.

Challenging the status quo, focusing on visionary solutions with practical applications, and refusing to accept "good enough" when it comes to protecting New England's people and communities – these commitments are what led CLF to sue to clean up Boston Harbor nearly 40 years ago. And they are what drives us to push to reinvent failing laws, markets, and systems today.

PHOTO: BENEDEKTIBOR/SHUTTERSTOCK

Small businesses are the backbones of thriving communities, but they often struggle to grow a sustainable brick-and-mortar location. CLF has launched the Healthy Retail and Commerce Fund to help change that. In partnership with the Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation, the new fund will provide low-cost financing to businesses that positively impact health in low- and moderate-income communities, such as fresh food stores, cafes, and cultural centers. When these businesses thrive, it leads to better health, more community pride, and more jobs.

Toxic PFAS chemicals are threatening water supplies across New England. As a result of our advocacy, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont all passed new rules that require testing and treatment for at least four common PFAS substances in drinking water. These "forever chemicals" are used to make nonstick pans, food packaging, and many other household products, and they can cause serious illnesses like cancer and liver disease when they enter our bodies. We're pushing for even stronger rules throughout New England to make sure no one has to worry about being sickened by the water coming out of their taps.



FINANCIAL REPORT



Ensuring Conservation Law Foundation’s financial health means managing our resources not just for our immediate needs but also for the future – both for anticipated work and for unprecedented events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

CLF’s firm financial footing at the end of Fiscal Year 2019 – with both an operating surplus and strong net assets of more than \$23 million – laid the foundation for our rapid response to the pandemic. We were able to shift our attention to support our communities hit hardest by the outbreak while still moving forward our longer-term advocacy campaigns.

Several of those campaigns are supported by multi-year grants received in Fiscal Year 2018, including our advocacy to stem climate change throughout the region, create a more resilient Boston waterfront, and invest in building healthier neighborhoods across New England.

The growth in our individual giving in Fiscal Year 2019 – which increased 29% over Fiscal Year 2018 – reflects the generosity, commitment, and confidence of all of you in our path forward.

We could not be more grateful. As donors, you not only provide critical financial support; you also strengthen our standing when filing litigation and amplify our voice when reaching out to policy-makers on key issues.

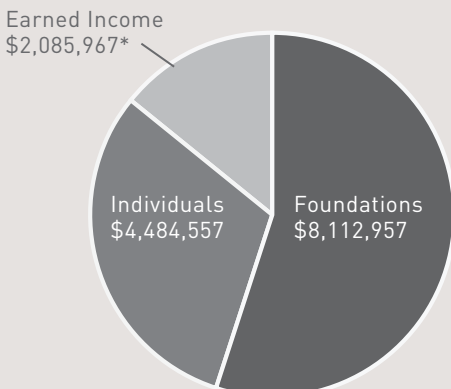
While we cannot predict how the pandemic will continue to impact our daily lives, I am heartened by the unwavering support of our funders and donors. You have placed CLF in a strong position to weather these uncertain times and play an active role in shaping a healthier, more equitable, and more resilient New England in our post-pandemic world. Thank you for all that you do and your ongoing commitment to CLF.

Gratefully,

Andrew J. Falender
Treasurer, Board of Trustees

SOURCES OF OPERATING FUNDS

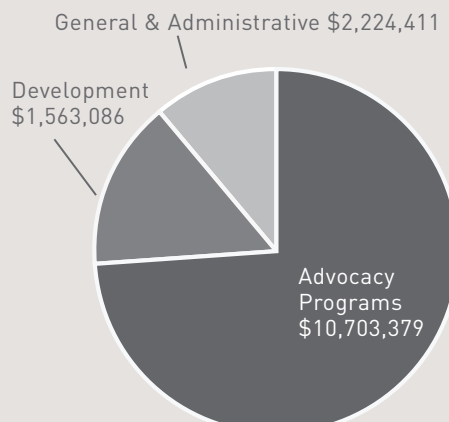
Total Funds: \$14,683,481



*Net of \$350,000 transferred to Board-Designated Operating Reserve for use in future years

USES OF FUNDS

Total Expenses: \$14,490,876



NET RESULTS

\$192,605

NET ASSETS [as of July 31, 2019]

Unrestricted Net Assets:
\$5,874,871

Donor-Restricted Net Assets:
\$17,241,786

TOTAL NET ASSETS \$23,116,657

Complete audited financial statements presented in GAAP format are available at www.clf.org.

SUPPORTERS AND FRIENDS OF CLF

ECOPHOTOGRAPHY



The following individuals, foundations, and organizations supported CLF during the 2019 Fiscal Year (August 1, 2018, through July 31, 2019). Their generosity and shared vision – of a healthy, thriving New England for all – have made CLF’s work possible. We thank our invaluable members, whose continuing support helps protect New England’s environment for all. **THANK YOU.**

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2019 FISCAL YEAR SUPPORT



TIM BRIGGS



ESOPHOTOGRAPHY



ESOPHOTOGRAPHY

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WHY WE GIVE TO CLF



ALISON & DANIEL HILDRETH

Falmouth, ME

Donors since 1970

Surrounded by the natural beauty of Maine's woods and sea, Alison Hildreth and her late husband Horace ("Hoddy") worried that someday it could all disappear because of development and industrialization. It was this concern that first prompted them to support CLF in 1970. Together,

they watched the organization grow from humble beginnings to a regionwide leader addressing issues using a legal framework, which was a new concept for environmental organizations at the time.

That support now spans multiple generations. Growing up, Daniel and his brothers learned from their parents' example what it meant to be good stewards of the environment and the importance of giving back for the greater good. Today, Daniel remains passionate about caring for the environment – he is especially concerned about climate change and has a particular interest in CLF's clean energy work.

The expertise of CLF's staff and its overall strategic vision are critical to the family's long-time support of the organization. The legal approach is especially important to them now, when our federal government has shown how easily it can dismantle environmental protections. "The law is a potent defense in the face of such threats," says Daniel.

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