

#### LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



# We can reinvent the way we live.

THE MOST RECENT UNITED NATIONS REPORTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE MAKE IT CLEAR: We have no time to lose, and we're already behind. The progress we make before 2030 could make or break our chances for a livable New England for ourselves today and our children and grandchildren tomorrow.

It is not enough just to cut our carbon pollution, however. We also must learn to live with the climate impacts we can no longer avoid. And we must ensure that both combating and living with climate change does not make existing inequities in our communities even worse.

That is why CLF confronts the climate crisis from every angle – from the way we power and heat our homes to how we package and dispose of products, from the way we construct buildings to how we transport people and goods, from the way we design our streets to where we get our food.

Humanity has never faced a crisis like this one. But we have the power to slow climate change and adapt to its impacts. And we, here in New England, have the ability to show the nation – and the world – how to do it.

This is a daunting challenge. But it also presents us with an unprecedented opportunity. We can reinvent the way we power our lives on a scale not seen since the Industrial Revolution. We can begin to redress the harms that were deliberately inflicted on people of color through centuries of environmental racism. We can reimagine a world where air and water

pollution are the exception and not the norm.

I am proud and humbled to lead CLF through these extraordinary times. For 56 years, CLF's advocates, partners, and supporters like you have refused to accept the status quo. We have forged practical yet transformative solutions to the environmental challenges others had deemed too big and simply impossible to solve.

Today is no exception. The work ahead is complex, and the odds won't always be in our favor.

But the bottom line is that we can – we must – succeed. Your support, your actions, and your commitment have never been more critical. Thank you for all that you do.



#### LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

IT CAN BE EASY TO FEEL OVERWHELMED, STRESSED, AND ANXIOUS BY THE ONSLAUGHT OF CLIMATE NEWS TODAY – especially since that news rarely seems to be good. Climate grief is a very real phenomenon that can affect us in many ways. We mourn when we suffer from or witness a natural disaster. We lament the loss of homes, lives, and livelihoods. We worry for the plants, animals, and natural spaces we love. And we fear for the safety and security of our homes, our communities, and our families.

But there is also so much room for hope. Because we can – we are – fighting climate change.

Over the last 10 years, CLF shut down coal in New England. We stopped massive gas pipelines from tearing through our landscapes. We helped to launch the nation's first offshore wind farm in Rhode Island. We pushed successfully for binding climate laws in almost every state in our region – setting an example for other states to follow.

None of this could have happened without your dedicated support. In fact, such collective action frightens our foes, from the fossil fuel industry to Big Plastic. They want to us to feel anxious, sad, and overwhelmed. They spend millions trying to silence our voices or distract us from our purpose.

But as part of the CLF community, you are combining your voice with thousands of others across our region to push for a healthier and more thriving New England for all. You are directly supporting meaningful change for your state, your community, and your neighborhood – change that you'll read about in the pages of this special annual report edition of *Conservation Matters*.

Whether it is ensuring that state leaders fulfill the promises of our landmark climate laws, supporting innovative new technologies to save North Atlantic right whales, deflecting Big Plastic's latest ploys to expand markets for their polluting products, or helping a neighborhood prepare for the impacts of climate change, together we are finding solutions to the biggest environmental challenges of our time.

I hope you will find inspiration in these pages – because CLF's accomplishments are *your* accomplishments, and together we are powerful.



Our successes are *your* successes.





We have a chance to stop climate change from getting worse. We deserve clean air, decongested highways, and a chance to protect the people we love and the world we live in.

HERE IN NEW ENGLAND, WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED THE UNPRECEDENTED: CLF, our partners, and our supporters have passed binding climate laws in five out of six states. These laws mandate cuts to the polluting emissions at the root of our climate crisis, targeting culpable sectors like transportation, buildings, and electricity.

Few other states have taken such aggressive action. However, passing these laws is only the first step toward reaching net zero carbon pollution by 2050. The real test of these laws – and CLF's advocacy – is in their implementation.

#### **MAKING CLIMATE LAWS A REALITY**

Laws by themselves are just words on paper, not action.

Each of these climate laws requires a planning process for the state to chart its path toward implementing its legal mandate. And many of our New England states have created this plan. Vermont, for example, just released its Climate Action Plan in December 2021. Maine finished its own in 2020. Massachusetts and Connecticut also have completed plans, while Rhode Island is creating its plan this year.

CLF advocates have been at the table for the creation of each of these plans, pushing for aggressive, equitable, and concrete actions. But the reality, admits Greg Cunningham, CLF's vice president for clean energy and climate change, is that these plans are not very specific.

"We've found that the plans tend to be fairly high level," he says. "They provide for categories of action rather than explicit policies that direct concrete steps to lower emissions."

We also must contend with any plan that does not provide a timetable other than the 10-year milestone of its respective state climate law. That includes plans that lack required deadlines for action other than 2030, 2040, and 2050. Additionally, policy, regulations, and law proposals are coming from various agencies and decision-makers, presenting the risk of a highly uncoordinated effort, says Cunningham. That can all add up to a messy and procrastinated process in implementing these critical laws.

That's why the next few years are critical for CLF's climate advocacy. Just as we helped to lead the passing of these

#### CLIMATE ACTION CAN'T WAIT

With your help, we now have climate laws in almost every New England state. Now we need to push regulators to implement them.

PHOTOS: LEFT: ECOPHOTOGRAPHY; RIGHT: CLF



landmark laws – ensuring they matched the best interests of our families and communities – we must now watchdog their implementation. Because the consequences if these laws languish are too dire to be ignored.

#### **DELAYS HURT PEOPLE AND OUR CLIMATE**

Implementing meaningful policies to meet 2030, and eventually 2050, emissions goals is critical to ensure success in the region and inspire success across the nation. Delaying implementation only means subjecting New England's residents to worsening climate impacts.

The reality is, while climate change affects us all, it burdens some communities especially heavily, like people of color or communities with low socioeconomic status. This is what Staci Rubin, CLF's vice president for environmental justice, focuses on in her role: addressing environmental threats in a way that supports and uplifts those often-marginalized communities.

"Government decisions have historically not put communities first or not considered impacts to communities," says Rubin. "So we generally see lobbying from corporate entities to achieve *their* best interests, not the public's."

We have a chance to make up for these injustices through our individual state climate laws if we center people in their strategies and actions.

"If implemented well, then climate laws will help us address a myriad of problems," says Rubin. "And what does that mean? It means better access to public transit, cleaner air quality, improved conditions for workers. We have talked to workers who have histories of their friends and family members suffering early deaths because of their jobs servicing diesel buses, for example."

But these benefits can only happen when we urgently implement cohesive, well-planned climate laws.

"Their implementation is not delayed everywhere and in everything," emphasizes Rubin. "In Massachusetts, there are some really exciting components of the 2020 roadmap law underway." However, she points to the need for continued vigilance by CLF and others. "Even despite this progress, we had to fight just to include public transportation in the

# climate change highlights

- ► Earlier this year, New Hampshire officials attempted to gut funding for popular energy efficiency programs that decrease energy use and climate pollution, as well as help lessen the impacts of rising energy prices. The decision was irresponsible and would have set the state back years in combating the climate crisis. CLF took the case to the New Hampshire Supreme Court, and the State has decided to pause the rollback and keep funding levels even for now. We will continue to push them to dedicate even more funding to these critical efforts.
- ▶ As more renewable energy sources like wind and solar come online, fossil fuel companies are attempting to save their outdated business model. Nowhere is this clearer than the companies that provide gas to our homes and businesses and that are attempting to push the myth of "climate-friendly gas." CLF has been active in Massachusetts and Connecticut in shaping policies that phase out fossil gas. We are now also fighting the industry's exaggerated claims of a role for biogas and other alternative fuels in our climate future.
- ▶ After pressure from CLF, Vermont's Public
  Utilities Commission denied a request
  from GlobalFoundries to become its own
  self-managed electric utility. The large
  manufacturing company which is also
  the state's largest energy consumer had
  sought an exemption from the state's most
  important climate change laws, which would
  impede Vermont's efforts to reach pollution
  reduction goals.

#### **CLIMATE LAWS** IN NEW ENGLAND

CLIMATE NAME LAW PASSED

2050 MANDATE

Massachusetts INTERIM TARGET 50%

BY 2030

UPDATED

CONNECTICUT

LAW PASSED

2008

2050 MANDATE

Maine

CUT IN EMISSIONS (below 1990 levels) cut emissions BY 2030

VERMONT 2050 MANDATE LAW PASSED 2020

40% BY 2030 3

LAW PASSED/ UPDATED 4 Rhode Island

INTERIM TARGET 45% below 1990 levels by 2030

**New Hampshire** 

CLIMATE ΙΔW

BY 2050

Massachusetts climate plan. The first draft didn't mention it once."

#### WHEN DELAYS OCCUR, CLF WILL KEEP FIGHTING

That begs the question: How do we overcome these roadblocks to implementation?

"CLF's role is to first be loud and vocal about what's not working," says Rubin. "We have existing relationships with the state agencies. So we contact them, we make suggestions, we try to work with them. We help residents get involved when public engagement is inaccessible."

Cunningham agrees. "We deploy a lot of different approaches. They can range from collaborative conversations to petitions that compel decision-makers to move, to lawsuits when they don't," he says.

CLF has been here before. When Massachusetts failed to meet deadlines laid out in its 2008 Global Warming Solutions Act, CLF sued the State to force action. Our legal advocates fought the high-profile case all the way to the Massachusetts Supreme Court - and won.

"In doing all of this – in deciding the right path to take – we're interacting with people. What solutions do they see? What works in their lives? What do they find affordable? And more and more so, we're trying to elevate the voices that historically haven't been heard by our policymakers," says Cunningham.

CLF's unique role as one of the only environmental organizations with technical expertise and local connections in every New England state is also critical to moving these laws forward. It allows our legal advocates to bring a regional perspective to the table - and to bring the voices of those who are most impacted into normally inaccessible spaces.

We cannot meet our climate laws' mandates if we don't begin implementing them, now. And clearly, it's not just about meeting goals. It's about safeguarding an equitable, livable world for our families and children. Where there are delays, CLF is ready to step up to the plate to push action or, when necessary, force it. •

TRACK **PROGRESS**  Stay up-to-date on CLF's work to hold states accountable to the law at

www.clf.org/climatelaws

# Helping Justice Take Root

In Manchester, New Hampshire, trees serve as a stark symbol of environmental and climate injustice.

BY LAURIE O'REILLY



A TRIP DOWN MANCHESTER'S BEECH STREET REVEALS A SAD IRONY ABOUT ITS TREE-INSPIRED NAME: The farther south on Beech you travel, the fewer trees you'll see. The same holds true of Chestnut, Elm, Pine, and Maple streets.

The unofficial dividing line in the city – Bridge Street – is perhaps more aptly named. North of Bridge, you'll find neighborhoods filled with single-family houses. Trees here are not only abundant but also tall, lush, and decades old. South of Bridge, the cityscape changes to one of industrial buildings and multifamily homes. Trees are more sparse and smaller, with fewer leaves filling their canopies.

The problem here isn't just one of aesthetics, says Arnold Mikolo, CLF's environmental justice advocate in New Hampshire. "They help to prevent chronic health issues such as asthma and heart disease, especially during heat waves. They create shade that helps communities save money on energy costs. Trees even have a calming effect on drivers, so they tend not to speed."

In our warming world, trees are critical for dealing with climate impacts. They especially help to alleviate "heat islands" – urbanized areas that endure higher temperatures because their roads, buildings, and other infrastructure absorb, rather than reflect, the sun's heat.

It's no coincidence that the people living with the least tree cover in Manchester (and nationwide) have lower incomes and tend to be people of color and immigrants who speak limited English. "It comes down to wealth. It comes down to money," says Mikolo. "You're a homeowner, so having trees in your yard is a no-brainer, right?"

But those living in Manchester's lower-income neighborhoods – who are more likely to rent than to own a home – tend to view the lack of

LEFT A 2021 Nature Conservancy Study found that some low-income New England neighborhoods have up to 30% less tree cover than more affluent areas. PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK





RIGHT CLF's Arnold Mikolo is working to build a community of advocates for environmental justice.

#### A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

τον North of Bridge Street, trees line both sides of a street, providing abundant shade in a neighborhood made up mostly of single-family homes.

MIDDLE South of Bridge, the landscape changes. It has fewer trees and no bike lane – with more multifamily rental units.

trees as the norm. And the health consequences, too. "These residents carry the environmental impact of that as a burden. And that's what environmental justice – or, really, injustice – is," says Mikolo.

Addressing such injustice lies at the heart of Mikolo's work in Manchester. He joined CLF as a community organizer two years ago to help build an environmental justice movement in the city – one in which change happens from the ground up.

He initially spent his time simply listening so he could learn what issues residents worry about the most and hear their ideas for solutions. "Community neighbors are the experts on the matters affecting them," he says.

Mikolo also reached out to business owners of color and local nonprofits and attended community events. Soon he had a dozen community members eager to serve as an advisory group for his work.

Mikolo and his volunteer advisors then prioritized an interconnected set of issues and created volunteer action teams to tackle them. The lack of tree cover, for example, ties into broader concerns residents raised about air pollution and how the city's streets are designed in the first place.

Remember Beech Street? The same tree-lined neighborhood along its northern stretch also has well-maintained sidewalks and a designated bike lane. It used to be a two-lane, one-way street that drivers sped down like they were on a highway. However, the city redesigned it with measures to slow traffic, reduce car accidents, and increase pedestrian and biker safety.

But Beech Street's bike lane peters out below Bridge Street, just like the tree canopy. There are fewer accessible sidewalks, and traffic speeds up, too, creating dangerous conditions for drivers, walkers, and cyclists.

Everyone from residents to city leaders agrees that the city's "neighborhood highways" – its many other two-lane, one-way streets – are a safety problem. Yet when it came time to pilot a fix for them, it was the more affluent neighborhood that saw its streets redesigned. Then, nothing more happened – for years.

"We have these two sides of town that are both complaining about the same issue," says Mikolo. "The only difference is that the [wealthier neighbors] were heard. This other community, which is low-income and people of color – they're not being heard by anyone. They're being ignored."

These same dynamics play out across New England – and the country – every day. No one should be at higher risk for heat-related disease because they don't own a home or they have a low income. And the dividing line between who gets safely designed roads should not come down to your race or ethnicity. But the reality is that climate impacts, pollution, and other environmental burdens fall harder on low-income communities and communities of color as well as those who speak limited English. These same communities are often silenced or left out of decisions that directly impact their neighborhoods.

That's why CLF advocates work with communities and partners regionwide to change the balance of power and decision-making on the environmental, climate, and public health issues that impact these communities.

"It's critical that decision-makers hear from people who are on the front lines of these issues, who are speaking from firsthand experiences, and who are there because they are passionate about their communities," Mikolo says.

However, cautions Mikolo, this kind of work can't be rushed. "It moves at the speed of trust. Sustainable solutions depend on genuine relationships and buy-in built over time."

Building trust in Manchester has meant meeting community members where they are, including by communicating in several languages and understanding that many residents balance multiple jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic created additional barriers to engaging with residents and elected officials in person.

After two years, those efforts are starting to pay off. Prompted by community outreach, the Manchester Department of Public Works has acknowledged the inequities in the city's street designs and signaled its willingness to engage with neighbors to address them.

Mikolo hopes that someday soon he will be able to bike the entire length of Beech Street in a dedicated bike lane, shaded from the sun by ample leafy trees – trees that, by extension, cool the neighborhood and clean the air. But, he says, in environmental justice work, it's not just about the outcomes. It's also about the process.

"We are building a grassroots movement of neighbors and community members. As they see results on one issue, that creates excitement and engagement. Once it's a movement, then they can go on to tackle other issues they care about."

### DIG DEEPER

Justice carries through all of CLF's work. Our advocates contribute skills and strategy to support initiatives identified by and with

community members. Learn more about our work to support people and justice at clf.org/people-justice

# community highlights

- ▶ In March, Massachusetts officials cut the ribbon on the Union Square first branch of the Green Line extension, moving the Commonwealth one step closer to finally realizing a threedecades-long plan to provide transit service to Somerville and Medford. That plan began with a groundbreaking 1990 CLF settlement that saw Massachusetts agencies commit to public transit projects to benefit residents and offset pollution caused by the Big Dig. The Medford second
- branch of the long-delayed project will open late this year.
- ▶ CLF and our partners celebrated the enactment of Vermont's first environmental justice law this year.

  The law will improve the State's efforts to increase environmental benefits, like climate and transportation investments, while also addressing environmental harms that overburden Vermonters of color and low-income communities, among others. All Vermonters have the right to enjoy a healthy environment
- and the benefits it provides. This law is critical step toward making that a reality.
- ► Last fall, CLF launched our Legal
  Food Hub in New Hampshire, making
  its services available in every New
  England state. The Hub connects
  small farmers, food businesses, and
  food-related organizations with free
  legal services to help start, grow, and
  operate their businesses. By helping to
  provide these services, the Hub aims
  to bring economic stability to the local
  farm and food sector.



# The Road to Ropeless Gear

A critical long-term solution to right whale recovery

BY ADILSON GONZÁLEZ MORALES

HUMANS HAVE LONG POSED A THREAT TO NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALES. But that threat has become more acute as rapidly warming waters have changed where whales can find their primary food sources. Today, right whales forage in places they were not seen 10, 15, or even 20 years ago – both farther north and farther south – as they pursue their prey. Right whales' risks of harm from humans, especially fishing gear and vessel strikes, have increased as a result.

Fewer than 350 North Atlantic right whales remain on the planet today and that makes an encounter with one a rare experience. Yet, sadly, the entanglement scars that about 85% of these precious creatures carry on their bodies are far from rare.

The species is in crisis – earning the status of critically endangered two years ago. As a leader in the fight to save right whales, CLF is using a multipronged approach – including the law, policy, and science – to force the federal government to respond to the crisis with the urgency it deserves. No one wants to see this species go extinct in their lifetime, and public support for their protection is high.

At the same time, some fishermen fear that the measures taken to protect right whales so far – including closing areas to lobstering when whales are present – could undermine their businesses.

But a solution is in the works that could allow whales and lobstermen to coexist: ropeless gear.

#### WHAT IS ROPELESS GEAR?

Currently, the most effective way to reduce the risk of accidental entanglement in gear is to close certain areas to fishing when high numbers of whales are present. But what if fishermen could safely fish, without fixed ropes, in areas where right whales congregate? After all, fewer ropes mean fewer whales of all species getting painfully – and often lethally – entangled.

#### ROPELESS GEAR IS CURRENTLY BEING TESTED IN NEW ENGLAND WATERS

opposite Snow Cone has been entangled in fishing gear since March 2021. Despite the physical stress and pain this has caused, she gave birth to a calf late last year.

PHOTO: FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION, TAKEN

UNDER NOAA PERMIT #20556-01 (cc by-nc-nd 2.0)

RIGHT Ropeless gear allows fishermen to retrieve traps from the ocean floor without using traditional, persistent vertical lines that entangle marine wildlife. PHOTO: EDGETECH



That's where ropeless gear comes in. Ropeless systems (also known as pop-up, buoyless, or on-demand systems) allow lobstermen to retrieve traps from the ocean floor without using the traditional, persistent vertical lines that entangle marine wildlife. CLF advocates have been vocal proponents of ropeless fishing systems because they offer a potential long-term solution to the entanglement crisis. But what does it actually mean to go ropeless?

#### **ROPELESS GEAR CREATES A SAFER OCEAN**

Ropeless fishing gear has been discussed for decades. But over the last few years, a small group of researchers, engineers, lobstermen, and conservationists – including CLF – have come together to help make it a reality.

Through a ropeless pilot project – now in its third year – lobstermen have successfully deployed and hauled thousands of traps from the water. So far, the traps have used a hybrid ropeless system, but this summer, they will be fully ropeless. For CLF Senior Attorney Erica Fuller and her colleagues, it has been exciting to witness this unusual group of people come together to explore solutions.

"In addition to the fishermen, there's an engineer who repeatedly modifies his cages while patiently fielding questions. There's a scientist who tirelessly drives up the coast gathering data. And there are even regulators collaborating," says Fuller. "The goal is to create a safer ocean. And, so far, this study has shown that this technology can make that feasible."

But, admits Fuller, there is still work ahead to get these ropeless systems ready for primetime.

#### ROPELESS GEAR MUST WORK FOR LOBSTERMEN

For ropeless systems to truly work for lobstermen, boat captains and crew must feel confident that they can safely and successfully use the gear. To date, fishermen have piloted ropeless gear safely under most real-world conditions. But additional trials are needed to confirm their safety in all types of weather, currents, and distances from shore.

As efforts to test ropeless gear move forward, direct input from lobstermen will remain invaluable. In a video on ropeless gear created by NOAA, one fisherman, Marc Palombo, shares how he has dedicated countless hours to testing and providing

# conservation highlights

- ➤ After a successful campaign by CLF, our partners, and supporters, President Biden restored full protections to the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine
  National Monument. Former President Trump opened the monument to commercial fishing, which threatened to devastate the fragile marine life that call the area home.
  Biden's action restores the ban on fishing and protects this critically important area for future generations.
- ► CLF has filed successful lawsuits against several bus companies across New England for unlawfully spreading tailpipe pollution into neighborhoods via excessive idling. Such pollution worsens asthma and other
- respiratory diseases and harms children especially. Two cases have resulted in significant settlements: DATTCO in Connecticut has agreed to spend nearly \$2 million to purchase electric school buses; Paul Revere Transportation in Massachusetts committed nearly \$1 million to local nonprofits and the purchase of electric buses.
- ▶ Four dams along the Kennebec River are breaking the law by killing endangered Atlantic salmon and other searun fish. CLF and our partners filed a lawsuit against the owner of the dams in September 2021. We are pushing for the dams' removal so that fish can return to their native spawning habitats and recover their populations.

"The goal is to create a safer ocean. And, so far, this study has shown that this technology can make that feasible."

- Erica Fuller, CLF Senior Attorney

Ropeless fishing gear (also called on-demand fishing) offers a solution to stop right whale injuries and deaths.

GRAPHIC: NOAA EISHERIE



feedback on this technology: "It's exciting to lead the charge on something that could change the face of lobster fishing and to be that person giving the input."

Palombo, a proud third-generation lobsterman, has fished in New England waters for over 40 years. He knows that adapting his gear could make an ocean of difference for right whales.

"Somewhere down the line, it could be that I'm going to be having to fish in a closed area with ropeless gear. And I feel totally confident that if that was the case, I'm good. We are trying to save a species, and how we fished before is not the way we're going to fish in the future," he says in the video.

#### THE ROAD AHEAD

Lobstermen like Palombo who make their living on New England's ocean have deep respect for the creatures that call it home. No one feels good about harming a right whale, especially accidentally. And that's why it's so critical to get this transition to ropeless gear right.

Challenges remain to make this innovative gear widely available, but it is on the right track. Ropeless gear and software need more modifications so fishermen can confidently locate and retrieve their traps. And the costs for the innovative gear must come down. Federal and philanthropic funding will be key to making this gear affordable. The federal government also must grant additional permits so that more lobstermen can test this gear.

CLF and our partners are among those pushing federal agencies and Congress to invest in urgently needed research to advance these technologies – even as we continue to fight for additional protections for right whales through the courts.

Palombo and his fellow gear testers have shown that this technology is feasible – and it's our best option for allowing fishermen and right whales to coexist.

"It's going to take a few more gear modifications. It's going to take more money. It's going to take more time and more sweat equity," says Fuller. "But I know that we can get there." •



Your support has already helped CLF hold federal regulators accountable for failing to protect North Atlantic right whales. But we have much more work to do to save this species. Learn more about the rarest whale on Earth and how your continued commitment makes a difference. **clf.org/rightwhales** 

# Breaking Down Big Plastic

By exposing Big Plastic's playbook, CLF is pushing to change its polluting ways.

BY OLIVIA SYNORACKI

## WHEN SUSAN EASTWOOD FIRST STARTED TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST POLLUTION IN HER COMMUNITY. HER BATTLE WAS PERSONAL.

Her daughter suffers from severe asthma – a condition made worse by the diesel-fueled bus she rode to school every day. To protect her daughter's health, Eastwood banded together with Clean Water Action on a campaign to keep her daughter and other kids safe from toxic bus emissions.

Today, as Chapter Chair of Sierra Club Connecticut and co-leader of the Connecticut Zero Waste Coalition, Eastwood's battles are bigger, and the goal posts are a bit farther away. But she is as determined as ever to protect public health and the environment from toxic pollution. She and her fellow volunteers have the plastic and waste industries clearly in their sights.

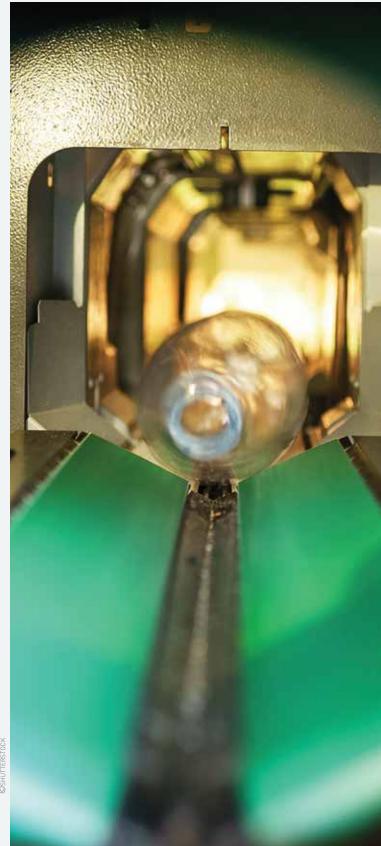
Blocking change, however, are large oil, chemical, and beverage companies who spend big to undermine any legislative proposal aiming to shake up the plastic industry.

"There's just so much money spent [by these industries]," she says, adding that "they play dirty, like with the Bottle Bill."

For decades, industry giants worked to undermine Connecticut's existing Bottle Bill, which was first enacted in 1978. But in last year's legislative session, after realizing that a law to modernize the Bottle Bill would pass despite their efforts, industry leaders suddenly came out in support of it. That "support" was contingent on one stipulation, however: that control of the state's bottle return program be handed over to them, the very polluters who spent years trying to destroy it. And they succeeded.

This last-minute move came as no surprise to CLF's legal advocates, says Staci Rubin, vice president for environmental justice. With public concern over plastic pollution at an all-time high, "we're seeing increasingly strong support for legislation aimed at addressing the plastic crisis."

But the corporate polluter playbook is standing in our way.





#### THE FLOOD OF PLASTIC CHURNS ON

New England cities and towns have seen costs for recycling soar. Yet plastic manufacturers refuse to change their polluting ways.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

That "playbook" is a set of tactics that Big Plastic and its lobbyists have honed for decades. They have deployed it again and again to distract us from the reality of the plastic crisis. All so they can double down on plastic production.

But, as big oil, chemical, and beverage companies worsen the world's plastic crisis for their own benefit, they put the health of people and our climate on the line. CLF and our allies are not willing to let them risk our future without a fight. That's why we set out to expose their playbook in a new report late last year. That report revealed how the industry has scuttled regulation for decades.

The newest addition to the playbook – "play along, then undermine" – was key to Big Plastic's success in taking control of Connecticut's Bottle Bill last year. So, naturally, Big Plastic used the tactic again this year on companion legislation – a producer responsibility for packaging law.

CLF's Zero Waste advocates literally wrote the book on what a successful producer responsibility bill looks like. Working with partners in Maine in 2021, we helped pass the nation's first producer responsibility law, which forces corporations that make and use single-use packaging to reimburse cities and towns for the cost of managing that trash.

With partners like Eastwood's Connecticut Zero Waste Coalition on board, CLF started this year's legislative session with high hopes for replicating Maine's success in the Nutmeg State. But unfortunately, says Rubin, corporate polluters drove the state's producer responsibility bill from the start. They proposed legislation that not only gave the industry control over the program but also included a loophole allowing so-called

#### **DID YOU KNOW**

#### PLASTIC POLLUTES OUR AIR, WATER...

of plastics waste ends up in landfills or incinerators, polluting our air, water, and climate. Only 16% get recycled.
Whatever is left over finds its way to unmanaged dumps.

#### ...AND CLIMATE

The Center for International Environmental Law estimated that plastic production and incineration would add 850 million metric tons of climate-damaging emissions in 2019 – the equivalent of 189 coal-fired power plants. By 2050, that could rise to 615 coal plants' worth of emissions.

#### **GET INVOLVED**

#### **GET THE FACTS**

CLF exposed Big Beverage's five tactics to derail progress on recycling reform. clf.org/plasticplaybook

#### TAKE ACTION

That's all the time you need to take action with our zero waste activist toolkit. clf.org/zerowastetoolkit



"advanced recycling" – a greenwashed term for dangerous highheat plastic-burning technologies – to be used in the state.

Eastwood wasn't surprised by the addition of this loophole. Prior to the bill being introduced in the legislature, she and her fellow community advocates urged state leaders to let them review the bill and provide input. That opportunity never came. Instead, as Eastwood recounts, "we found ourselves in this really weird position this year of working against [several] zero waste bills" – including the producer responsibility for packaging law.

Luckily, that industry-backed bill did not get far. With CLF and our partners opposed to it, the bill did not make it to the House or Senate floor.

"Clearly, while Big Plastic claims to support legislation to address plastic pollution, it does so under false pretenses," says Rubin. "This façade serves one purpose: to make sure plastic legislation works for polluters and their profit margins."

Connecticut is just the start. Big Plastic is not only pushing against producer responsibility legislation in other New England states – they are pushing forward "advanced recycling" bills. While they were successful such a bill in New Hampshire this year, a Rhode Island bill aimed at authorizing this dangerous technology died thanks to the efforts of CLF, our supporters, and other activists.

Despite Big Plastic's efforts, CLF never shies away from a challenge – especially when it comes from big corporations that care more about profits than people. Ultimately, this is the reality of creating systemic change. There's an ebb and flow, a push and pull, to such large-scale transformation. We get a big win in one state, then Big Plastic adjusts its tactics to try to block progress in another.

But, as Eastwood reminds us, "there are a lot of really good people working on these issues. And not just the advocates, [but] also in the legislature, in our environment committee." So, although a good producer responsibility law failed to make progress in Connecticut this past legislative session, CLF and our allies are taking what we've learned and coming back stronger next year. And even though Connecticut's bottle bill system now lies in the hands of Big Plastic, we cannot forget that the newly modernized program includes important upgrades that CLF and our allies fought to pass.

On a broader scale, says Rubin, "our work on these bills galvanized new partners and introduced CLF to Connecticut legislators and regulators as an organization that is here to stay." This was especially important as CLF officially opens a Connecticut office later this year.

At the end of the day, we cannot compromise our environmental solutions when it comes to the never-ending cycle of plastic pollution. CLF will continue to fight for what is right. •

# change leadership highlights

- ▶ In a victory for the climate and the community, ExxonMobil will shut down its polluting tank farm in Everett, Massachusetts. The closure comes after CLF sued the oil giant for its failures to fortify the facility against climate impacts, including more frequent and powerful storms. CLF's lawsuit will continue, however, with the goal of holding Exxon accountable for ongoing pollution from oil byproducts and chemicals that have saturated the area and continue to seep into local waters.
- ► CLF is pushing state leaders New
  England-wide to end the use of
  pesticides contaminated with toxic
  forever chemicals. Recent research found
  pesticides containing PFAS have been
  sprayed on land throughout the region.
  We are pushing for new rules that would
  require manufacturers to prove that any
  new pesticides do not contain the harmful
  chemicals before they can be used.
- ► The Healthy Retail and Commerce Fund - operated by CLF and Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation combines investments from hospitals, health systems, and foundations to support businesses that will create jobs, improve food access and affordability, and bring economic vitality to communities. Last year, a loan from the fund allowed Stop and Compare Market, a Latinx, family-owned grocery store with locations in Chelsea and Lynn, to open a third store. The stores sell diverse products at affordable prices and are known for providing a strong cultural connection for their customers.

# Environmental Racism Is Killing Us All

We must fight against a form of systemic and institutional racism that is killing us all – environmental racism.



By Darrèll Brown Vice President, CLF Rhode Island

AS A BLACK MAN WHO GREW UP IN THIS COUNTRY, I KNOW THAT RACISM IS REAL. I know it can be individual. I know it can be institutional and structural, supported by laws, institutions, and culture.

I have experienced the hurtful and harmful sting of racism in most of its modern-day forms. I know that my father, my mother, my brother, my grandparents, my aunts, my uncles, cousins, and friends share those experiences. I know that racism is still all around us. But why?

# People of color have been left out of the conversation deliberately.

I have spent my entire professional life in the service of others. I have been a dedicated public servant. I have worked to satisfy not just my own needs and ambitions but to help others to do the same, regardless of their race or color – or whatever their background.

Some 25 years ago, I fell into the field of economic development. At that time, people of color were few and far between in the field. I wondered why. Over time, I became aware that, contrary to the assumptions of many in my profession, the dearth of people of color did not result from a lack of interest or an unwillingness to participate on their part. My primarily white colleagues did not want people of color involved. They did not want people of color to learn how they could improve their lives, communities, and families.

It was just that simple, and I felt it. But, as I later learned, there was more.

Racist policies have been pervasive in transportation, housing, banking, and more. Indeed, people of color tried for decades to engage and build their communities through economic development practices, only to have those efforts blocked, time and again. The most prominent example is the 1921 Tulsa, Oklahoma, race massacre, in which a white mob literally burned down a vibrant and economically accomplished Black town.

# "We must work as hard to fight against [environmental racism] as we did against slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and against those who think it is all okay today. It is not okay."

Injustice was not always perpetuated through violence, however. When serving as director of economic development in Charles County, Maryland, I watched in real time as gentrification forced Black people out of Anacostia in southeast Washington, D.C., entirely.

These are hardly isolated occurrences. Florida, California, Georgia, Maryland, Louisiana, and other parts of Washington, D.C., are just some of the places that experienced this systematic racism. Despite the best efforts of Black communities, discriminatory policies and practices endemic to transportation, housing, and banking – to name just a few – blocked their economic progress.

I witnessed firsthand how these sectors targeted communities of color for disinvestment through redlining, illegal dumping, and draconian drug policy. Zoning regulations produced a proliferation of liquor stores and strip clubs in these communities. They were also condemned to inadequate-to-no healthcare services, limited access to public transit, and a lack of clean public spaces. All of this, mind you, was coupled with overpolicing and police brutality.

#### Environmental racism has been just as harmful.

I like to think that, in my previous career(s), I was able to address some of these endemic problems. As I learned how the system operated in so many interlocking and insidious ways, I worked with others in those fields to address the inequities.

However, I am almost ashamed to admit that it was not until rather recently that I realized just how harmful environmental policies have been. Among my previous colleagues, there was talk about limiting pollution and not overburdening communities. But the speakers rarely, if ever, meant Black and Brown communities.

Yet, increasingly, the burdens of industry, transportation, waste management, and environmental degradation fell at the property lines of those communities.

I'm fighting for diversity and justice – and against systemic racism. The belief that certain classes of people are better, more deserving of nice things, more entitled to freedom from the harmful effects of industrial processes and pollution – it is all rooted in racism and classism of every form. Yet, it continues to be protected by and carried out through our major institutions and industries. It remains systemic.

And that is why I joined CLF.

I joined CLF to fight for all individuals and communities, especially people of color, Indigenous people, and other systemically disadvantaged people. The environment belongs to us all. No one industry or people should have a monopoly on access to it or the benefits it provides. That is what CLF fights for.

I want to help bring the voices of people of color to the table where they belong. Equally important, I want to help build and strengthen multiracial coalitions to fight against the fossil fuel industries that systemically pollute all of our communities and sicken all our families. I especially want to fight against the political proclivities of those who think it is okay to perpetuate such harm.

# Environmental racism affects us all – and we all must fight against it.

I joined CLF because I want to fight against policies that drive systemic and institutional racism. That fight is personal because we all want to belong, compete, and prosper. But for the pervasiveness of race and racism – and I will add sexism, too – we all can achieve our individual strivings, live life to the best of our abilities.

Like you, I know environmental racism affects us all. We must work as hard to fight against it as we did against slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and against those who think it is all okay today. It is not okay.

## I joined CLF and my colleagues to be in this fight. And fight we shall. ◆

#### FINANCIAL REPORT



#### AT THIS TIME LAST YEAR, WE WERE JUST OVER 15 MONTHS

into a global pandemic that had disrupted our lives in profound ways. Yet, even in the midst of such ongoing personal and professional upheaval, our supporters deepened their commitment to CLF – ensuring that we have the resources needed to not only sustain our core work but also to grow that work from a place of strength and stability.

We saw that deepened commitment from individuals, foundations, and corporations alike, with individual contributions alone increasing by 8% compared to fiscal year 2020. This dedicated support enabled us to finish fiscal year 2021 with an operating surplus of nearly \$300,000 - which will be extremely helpful to us in this year and next - and net assets of \$32 million.

With that robust foundation, coupled with several multiyear grants, CLF is ready to play an even stronger role in driving forward a future that is equitable and healthy for all New Englanders.

Your continued commitment to CLF comes at a critical time. With not one but two recent United Nations reports warning us that

the time for climate action is now or never, our work together is increasingly urgent. Together, we will - we must - make meaningful progress toward cutting our region's carbon pollution in the next five years. We will - we must - lead by example in showing the entire nation how to reach net zero emissions by 2050. And we will – we must – ensure that no one gets left behind in the collective endeavor to create a healthier, more livable climate.

These are weighty goals, to be sure. But I am confident that we will succeed - not only because of CLF's deep knowledge and expertise in policy and the law but because we have you standing up, speaking out, and taking action alongside us every step of the wav.

Thank you for your generosity, your dedication, and your support.

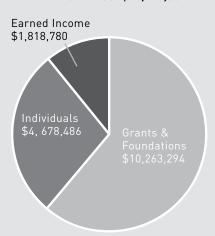
Gratefully,

Andrew J. Falender

Treasurer, Board of Trustees

#### SOURCES OF OPERATING FUNDS

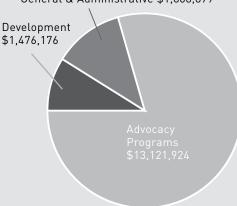
Total Funds: \$16,760,562



#### **USES OF FUNDS**

Total Expenses: \$16,466,979

General & Administrative \$1,868,879



#### **NET RESULTS**

\$293,583

Available for use in FY2022

NET ASSETS [as of July 31, 2021]

**Unrestricted Net Assets:** \$7,680,407

**Donor-Restricted Net Assets:** 

\$24,507,598

**TOTAL NET ASSETS** 

\$32,188,005

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

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The following individuals, foundations, and organizations supported CLF during the 2021 fiscal year (August 1, 2020, through July 31, 2021). Your 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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## WHY I GIVE TO CLF

#### MIKE BOYSON

Charlestown, Massachusetts Donor since 2014 Member, CLF Advocates Society

"Growing up in the Boston area, my parents always told me how disgusting Boston Harbor was and to never to swim in the Charles River. Today, I am thrilled to see people enjoying these and other waters across New England.

My father-in-law, a clean energy entrepreneur and fellow CLF supporter, introduced me to CLF. As I became more connected to the organization, I learned that CLF was the force behind cleaning up Boston Harbor. I am in awe of the hard work from every CLF advocate who played a role in restoring the harbor's health.

I know that today CLF advocates are fighting on every front to combat the effects of climate change, achieve net zero emissions, and protect communities across the region – and I am confident that they can achieve these goals and elevate the quality of life for every New Englander. Their approach to seek reform through the legal system is extremely effective and impactful – I know I can count on CLF to get results.

My hope is that this next generation will be able to have a healthier planet – and be able to swim in the Mystic River and tell the tale of how CLF advocates made it possible!"



Mike Boyson [LEFT] first learned about CLF through his father-in-law, Chris Sauer [RIGHT]. Boyson especially appreciates how CLF uses the law to achieve its goals.

Our donors inspire us to never give up because so much is at stake. Hear more from CLF supporters at clf.org/whywegive.

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