Clean Up on ALL Aisles!
Mind the Store Campaign’s Mounting Victories

Clean Water Action and *Mind the Store* campaign partners are celebrating some big victories made possible in part by Clean Water Action members — thank you!

The campaign was launched to secure commitments from the nation’s largest retailers to replace toxic chemicals with safer alternatives in every day products such as couch cushions, cosmetics and children’s toys. The targets include the top 10 largest retailers in the country like Walmart, CVS, Home Depot, Target and Walgreens — all companies whose decisions can lead product manufacturers and the chemical industry to shift to safer chemicals.

Throughout New England, Clean Water Action hosted events with local volunteers, delivered letters to store managers, organized call-in days, and conducted in-store research on toxic chemicals in products on store shelves.

Clean Water Action members spoke out. Ava Lee, a nine year old member from Winthrop, urged her local Target to carry safer products because she lost her grandmother to cancer. Local partners such as Cheryl Durr Patry from Medfield brought a van full of sixth graders to her local Walgreens to present them with a sparkly Safer Products poster and urge the company to lead the way to safer chemicals in products. In Connecticut, Olivia Carnegie organized grandparents and young people to speak with a Hartford Walgreens manager; Hacah, a nurse and mom of two, brought a group of moms and their kids to a Southington store to do the same — they got some some ice cream on the way home too! These Clean Water Action members met great, responsive local store managers who agreed to share their customers’ messages with regional and national store decision-makers.

In the last year, this hard work and one-on-one outreach to stores in New England has begun to pay off:

- In March, *Ashley Furniture*, the nation’s largest furniture retailer agreed to phase out toxic flame retardants in their products.
- In early April, after nearly two years of campaigning, *Walgreens* finally committed to developing a chemicals policy, which they will announce in the coming months.
- The world’s largest home improvement retailer, *Home Depot*, announced plans in April to phase out added phthalates in flooring by year’s end.

*continued on page 2*
• In April, Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund helped release a report by www.HealthyStuff.org on how Lowe’s and other big retailers were lagging behind Home Depot, selling vinyl flooring laden with phthalates. The Mind the Store team called on both Lowe’s (the #2 home improvement chain) and Menards (#3) to ban phthalates in flooring as well. By July, both retailers committed to do just that, by the end of 2015.

• Walmart and Target have both made solid progress with their safer chemical policies. Clean Water Action is still fighting for common-sense reforms to chemical safety laws in New England and in Washington, because all communities deserve safer chemicals and stronger health protections. On the road to updating these laws, victories at the nation’s largest retailers will help bring a healthier tomorrow to communities throughout the region.


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**Float Down the Mystic**

MA CWA’s Campaigns Director, Becky Smith, and family joined a group of artists and scientists in handmade wooden boats (created by a project of the organization Mare Liberum) for a “flotilla” down the Mystic River in September, and spoke to the group about CWA’s Clean Water Act Citizen Enforcement Project. In this photo, paddlers pass the Mystic Generating Station, an eight unit, 2,002 megawatt (MW) fossil power plant located in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

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**Please join us for**

**CLEAN WATER ACTION MASSACHUSETTS 21st ANNUAL CELEBRATION**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24TH, 2015 • 3:30–6:00 PM**

Congregational Church of Weston
130 Newton Street, Weston, MA 02493

Featuring an hors d’oeuvres reception, an awards ceremony, silent auction and celebration of victories and progress towards a healthy and sustainable world!

*For more information and tickets visit: [www.cleanwateraction.org/ma/2015benefit](http://www.cleanwateraction.org/ma/2015benefit)*
Elizabeth Saunders, Clean Water Action’s Massachusetts Director, started her environmental career early. By the 8th grade, she had already informed her friends that she was going to be an environmentalist.

If she’d been told back then that her environmental protection career would lead her to speak in front of a room full of 500 firefighters, Elizabeth would probably not have believed it.

But that’s where her path led this summer: to the 41st Biennial Convention of the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts (www.pffm.org). What the young Elizabeth didn’t yet know — but has since become clear to her during her 14 years at Clean Water Action — is that protecting the environment truly means protecting public health. Protecting public health impacts everybody, and effective environmental and public health advocacy requires partnerships with many kinds of people, not just “environmentalists.”

At the convention, Elizabeth and the firefighters talked about cancer. In Boston, for example, so many firefighters have died “with their boots off” that their “brothers and sisters” and families created a memorial of black and white photos in a larger wall of photos of firefighters who lost their lives in fires.

Chemicals in consumer products and building materials that we are exposed to every day become noxious fumes in fires. Firefighters’ exposure is much more intense than that of the general public. Notably, flame retardants (www.cleanwateraction.org/publication/new-england-currents-summer-2015#MA) in furniture, electronics, nursing pillows, car seats, carpet padding, and other products can cause cancer and many other health problems. On top of that, the way these chemicals have historically been used makes them ineffective at stopping fires. Clean Water Action, working with the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow coalition, is partnering with the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts to support legislation (www.cleanwateraction.org/protect-childrens-firefighters-health) that will phase out toxic flame retardants from children’s products and household furniture in Massachusetts.

As Elizabeth told the 500 assembled firefighters:

“We are committed to passing this legislation so that our children, nieces and nephews can have healthier lives than we have today...so that no worker has to come home from the job more likely to get cancer than when they left in the morning...and so that the black and white section of the wall of photos in the Boston Fire Department stops growing. I am in awe and deep gratitude for the risks that you take every day that put your lives on the line on behalf of others. We owe it to you to phase out these toxic chemicals, so that when you come home safe from a fire, you actually come home safe from a fire.”

What YOU Can Do: Take action and urge your legislator to pass legislation that phases out the most toxic flame retardants: www.cleanwateraction.org/protect-childrens-firefighters-health

Gas Leak 30th Birthday

New pipelines? Why don’t you fix these ones first! In an effort to build momentum for policy reforms, Clean Water Action and allied groups including Boston Climate Action Network, HEET, and others held a 30th birthday party for Boston’s oldest gas leak.
For the past three years, Clean Water Action Field Manager Amber Schmidt has mobilized and engaged Massachusetts community members all across the state to protect the environment and public health. But, one day in late August, her day looked a little different. She accompanied Clean Water Action’s lawyer, a site inspector and program personnel to inspect a manufacturing site where water runoff carries contaminants into a local stream. Amber got firsthand experience in how local communities and Clean Water Action hold polluters accountable for water contamination.

The Clean Water Act’s citizen-suit provision — originally included in the 1972 act at Clean Water Action’s urging — allows community members to sue companies when contamination has already occurred or is suspected. This provision gives communities and individuals the power to fight for their right to protect their clean water.

Amber’s day began with a quick overview and drive to the site. The team was prepared with hard hats and big rainboots, ready to hike around the stream and under bushes. The owner had given permission for them to access the facility freely, something that does not happen as often as it should. Even at first glance, it was obvious the facility sat on higher ground and that any stormwater would run into the stream if not blocked or diverted. The site inspector, an expert at following stormwater runoff’s flow patterns, maneuvered around bushes and machinery to find the point where it entered the brook carrying contaminants. Unfortunately, on this day, he found them: multiple areas that, during rainstorms, washed pollution from the facility into this stream.

After hiking the perimeter, the team discussed what they had seen. Their conclusion: This facility needed to implement a barrier to prevent runoff, file permits under the Clean Water Act under which they will be responsible for monitoring any outflow, and pay penalties for operating without these permits and allowing contaminants into the stream.

“The most heroic of all,” said Amber, “is when all parties agree to donate penalty funds to a third party non-profit working on local water quality. When I heard that, I thought ‘Wow! All of this effort and time to work with communities to better water protections and local water quality! This is really a victory!’”

New England is at an energy crossroads, and Massachusetts — at the center of the region and consuming most of its power — is a key battleground.

The Bay State is a national leader on energy, making substantial progress in the transition away from polluting sources of power to renewable energy and energy efficiency. But now, as coal and nuclear plants power down, the state is poised to invest billions of dollars to replace retiring power plants with long-lived infrastructure that will shape the future.

Over the coming months, Governor Baker and major leaders in the state legislature will debate some of the most significant energy policy decisions the state has ever seen. These decisions will set the framework for the state’s energy future: Will Massachusetts look within, to local clean energy resources, innovating and excelling while keeping residents healthy, or will it slash clean energy and subsidize the construction of immense gas pipelines?

To confront this challenge, Clean Water Action and allies launched Mass Power Forward, a 100+ organization campaign of environmental groups, faith leaders, clean energy and non-energy business, and frontline communities facing failing coal plants, nuclear safety concerns, expansion of gas pipelines and other serious threats to health, safety and the environment. With critical voices rising up in Fall River, Holyoke, Weymouth, Boston, Peabody and Pittsfield, Power Forward will push policymakers to make smart, clean energy investments that safeguard the future. Read more, http://mapowerforward.com.
A team of five Brown University and Rhode Island School of Design students worked with Clean Water Action this summer researching green infrastructure solutions for stormwater pollution and climate resilience in Providence’s densely developed West End neighborhood. The students collaborated with Rhode Island’s Green Infrastructure Coalition, a group of more than 30 agencies and organizations who have partnered to promote green infrastructure use in urban communities. Clean Water is a lead partner (www.greeninfrastructureRI.org).

Green Infrastructure uses vegetation, soils, and natural processes to manage water, treat stormwater pollution and create healthier urban environments. It includes permeable pavement and surfaces that allow water to pass through and enter the local water table. Other elements include green roofs, bioswales, green street medians, curb cuts and sidewalk installations, tree planting and trenches, bioretention zones, rain gardens, and rain barrels.

Green infrastructure has triple-bottom-line environmental, economic and social benefits, including: improved water management, urban cooling, reduced reliance on gray infrastructure, neighborhood beautification, crime reduction, air pollution reduction, and general enhancement of public health. These tools also help keep water resources local and plentiful.

The interns’ work started through Brown University’s TRI-Lab, a three year-old initiative to bring engaged, community-based research into an academic setting. TRI-Lab 2015 spans spring and fall, with classes focused on climate change and environmental justice in the West End. During the spring semester, students connected city agencies, neighborhood associations, and environmental nonprofits. They researched and built projects to increase climate resiliency in the West End. Janice Gan, Grace Molino, Kai Salem, Andrew Vann and Brandon Wang, the student team working with Clean Water Fund and Clean Water Action dubbed themselves the GI Joes and focused on green infrastructure.

They began their summer efforts by touring some green infrastructure installations in Providence. Led by Groundwater Providence’s Giles MacDonald, the group toured Save the Bay’s Providence building, sustainably designed and built with a green roof, permeable parking lots surrounded by bioswales full of native grasses. The tour also visited green infrastructure installations at Roger Williams Park and in neighborhoods surrounding Mashapaug Pond. They also visited small residential scale projects and curb cut gardens designed and installed by Groundwork Providence.

The team used Geographical Information System (GIS) maps to identify sections of the West End with significant impervious cover (pavement and roofs) and where temperatures were higher than surrounding streets. With training from Clean Water’s outreach team, the students spent many afternoons knocking on doors, talking to neighborhood residents about heat and flooding and exploring interest in green infrastructure.

The students identified several potential project sites in Providence, including one over-paved area at the corner of Dexter and Bucklin Streets, well-suited for pavement removal. The team developed renderings showing the intersection with a grassy median. Clean Water is working with the City of Providence on funding to make this project a reality.
RHODE ISLAND

**Tackling Cesspool Pollution with Grassroots Power**

Rhode Islanders can look forward to a day when beaches and waterways will be free of the threats posed by untreated sewage from cesspools, thanks to Clean Water Action’s organizers and members. After years of fighting for legislation to eliminate cesspools, Clean Water Action and allies helped win a bill that requires cesspools to be replaced with better disposal methods when property is sold.

Clean Water organizers spent weeks mobilizing members and the public in key districts plagued by high numbers of cesspools. The team raised awareness, gathering letters and postcards for legislators. Public support in the areas most affected was crucial in the campaign that put the legislation over the top at the State House.

Perhaps the most effective tactic in the campaign was the postcard (above right) urging the elimination of cesspools that was sent to the Speaker of the House who controls what legislation reaches the floor. Clean Water Action collected hundreds of signed postcards from local residents. More than 50 cards were delivered to the Speaker’s office each day in the week leading up to the bill’s hearing, and Clean Water Action handed another 50 to the Speaker on the floor of the House. The bill’s chief sponsor put a card on every House member’s desk on the day of the final vote, 62-9 in favor.

![Gov. Gina Raimondo signs the cesspool phaseout bill at Save the Bay headquarters as Clean Water Action Rhode Island Director Meg Kerr, front row right, looks on.](image)

CONNECTICUT

**Victory! Reducing Exposure to Toxic Flame Retardants**

Toxic flame retardants have emerged as one of the most controversial of toxic chemicals in the past years. More and more people are choosing products that do not contain harmful chemicals for their homes as manufacturers shift to safer alternatives that better protect our health. Why shouldn’t state governments do the same when purchasing products for public buildings and services? If state contracts required safe products such as certified green cleaners, phthalate-free flooring, and furniture without toxic flame retardants, the impact could be great.

State procurement contacts are often in the millions of dollars. Requiring products and services purchased by state government be safe sends a strong signal to the market that big purchasers want safe products — as do individual consumers. A green purchasing policy would protect state workers and visitors to state owned buildings while reducing toxic chemicals in the environment.

In Connecticut, Clean Water Action and the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut led a “green procurement” campaign to educate state officials about toxic chemicals in products, urging a shift to safer product categories whenever possible.

“The staff at the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) has been great, and eager to learn about the presence of toxic chemicals in products,” says Anne Hulick, Clean Water Action state director. “DAS staff have enormous responsibility but they can’t be experts on the chemicals used in products. We can be a resource for them,” Hulick added.

Clean Water Action hosted a webinar for DAS staff on toxic chemical flame retardants’ health impacts. Soon after, the procurement specialist in charge of all state furniture contracts noted that several contracts included flame retardant-free furniture purchased for state buildings and dormitories at state schools.

The next step is to partner with Governor Malloy to adopt a comprehensive green procurement/green chemistry executive order that would continue Connecticut’s leadership on reducing toxic chemicals in products.
Climate Action 2.0: Everyone’s Issue

As Connecticut refines its energy-efficiency outreach program and reboots its overall climate action efforts, Clean Water Action is making sure the public has a seat at the table.

To accelerate these initiatives, committed partners have pledged funding over the next two years to help Clean Water Fund coordinate grassroots advocacy for local renewable energy efforts. Clean Water will be focusing on ways to make “shared solar” a reality for residents who would otherwise not be able to participate.

Clean Water Action is continuing its partnerships with the network of more than 50 Clean Energy Task Forces from communities across Connecticut.

- Since a summer 2015 meeting in Wallingford with 24 Clean Energy Task Forces, use of the peer support listserv is up dramatically, and there have been hundreds of downloads from Clean Water’s resource library at www.sustainablect.org.
- Clean Water is hosting fall events for local energy teams including webinars on the most effective outreach models and a November Atlantic City field trip for Sustainable Jersey’s annual luncheon.
- In selected communities, Clean Water is helping boost public involvement in developing local energy security and resiliency plans.

Much of this activity will help local Task Forces become more active in closing a key gap in state energy policy. Together with the Connecticut Fund for the Environment and others, Clean Water hopes to extend community solar development and other “shared renewables” beyond the current, limited 2-year pilot program.