



We protect the environment for wildlife in support of the natural world that sustains us all.
2021 NEWSLETTER

WELCOME TO OUR NEW HOME!



FROM OUR DIRECTOR

This has been a year of many changes for BEAT. We held our first capital campaign to raise money to purchase our new Environmental Leadership & Education Center! Thank you to all of you who shared our vision and joy, made this such a wonderful experience, and gave so generously! We love our new home.

Now we are working on landscaping with native plants to support wildlife, especially pollinators.

This year, we began our initiative with the installation of a rain garden. Thanks to a grant by The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, we planted over 30 species of native pollinator plants which attract a variety of bees and butterflies.

In 2022, we will make protecting pollinators a major theme of our education and outreach!



We are also working with our designer and architect to come up with plans to make the building fully accessible, net-zero energy, with solar and storage so we can be a recharge center. If there is a blackout, people could visit to get warm or cool while charging their phones or laptops

We would love your input on how you would like to see us use this wonderful space. Hands-on exhibits? Nature-themed art shows? Interactive educational displays?

Please stop by. Take a look around and give us your thoughts! We are generally here Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm, but it's always good to call ahead (413-464-9402) to be sure we won't be out in the field.

As always, thank you for all that you do to protect the environment!

STAFF
Jane Winn
Executive Director
Noah Henkenius
Stewardship Coordinator
Sarit Mizrachi
Education & Outreach Coordinator

Rosemary Wessel
No Fracked Gas in Mass
Program Director
Jake Laughner
No Fracked Gas in Mass
Campaign Associate

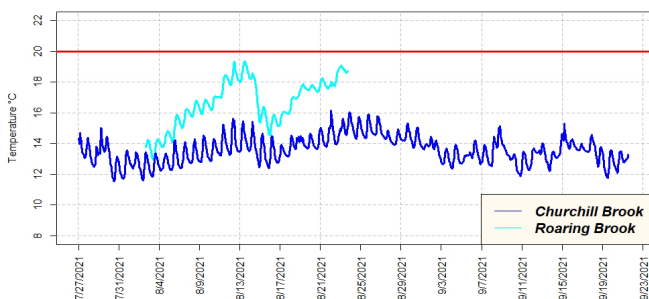
BOARD
Elia Del Molino
Kristen Laney
Scott McGinnis
Logan Malik
Ari Zorn
Tom Irelan
Bruce Winn

HELPING WILDLIFE MOVE TO MEET THEIR DAILY, SEASONAL, AND DISPERSAL NEEDS

Back in 2014, a deer's ribcage laid beside Churchill Street next to Churchill Brook. This was a perfect location to replace a badly undersized culvert that carried the brook under the street. Not only did the culvert prevent fish and other aquatic wildlife from moving upstream, but animals that followed the spent time on the road, and some were hit by vehicles. This past winter (2020-2021) working with Housatonic Valley Association and the City of Pittsfield, the culvert was replaced with a bridge large enough to allow deer and other animals to safely cross under the road, and brook trout and other aquatic creatures can now make their way from Onota Lake all the way to the headwaters of this very cold water stream way up in Pittsfield State Forest.



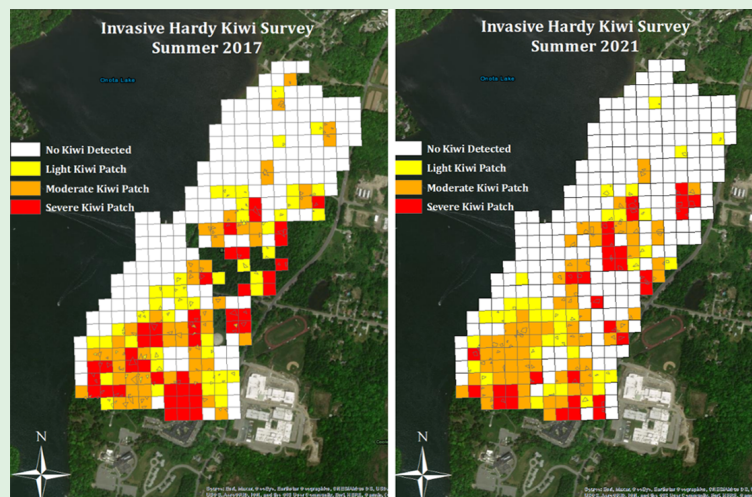
WHAT WILL CLIMATE CHANGE DO TO OUR COLD-WATER STREAMS?



In 2021, thanks to a grant from the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, we purchased temperature monitors to place in cold water streams throughout the Berkshires to see how our changing climate is affecting these important habitats. We were able to place a couple of these monitors this year and the results were interesting.

ARE WE MAKING PROGRESS CONTAINING INVASIVE HARDY KIWI AT BURBANK PARK?

Another big accomplishment this year was remapping invasive hardy kiwi in Burbank Park along Onota Lake in Pittsfield. We last mapped hardy kiwi in 2017. This year's results suggest overall the kiwi infestation is not as severe as it was 4 years ago, however, we must continue to carefully monitor the forest to ensure that while we are working hard in one area, the kiwi doesn't spread further or climb up new trees in any other areas of the woods.



Jefferson Salamander (common name)

Ambystoma jeffersonianum (scientific name)

The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program just notified us that, while certifying vernal pools, Noah discovered a previously unknown population of Jefferson salamanders, a species of special concern in Massachusetts. This will offer the area around this location a little more protection under the law.

PUT PEAKERS IN THE PAST: SAYING NO MORE TO FOSSIL FUELS

For nearly eight years, our No Fracked Gas in Mass program has been working to oppose new fossil fuel projects being proposed around the area. This year, we've expanded to start taking on existing fossil fuel infrastructure whose time to evolve has come. Through our Put Peakers in the Past initiative, we're challenging the owners of Berkshire County's peaker power plants to shut down fossil fuel operation and transition to grid-scale storage.



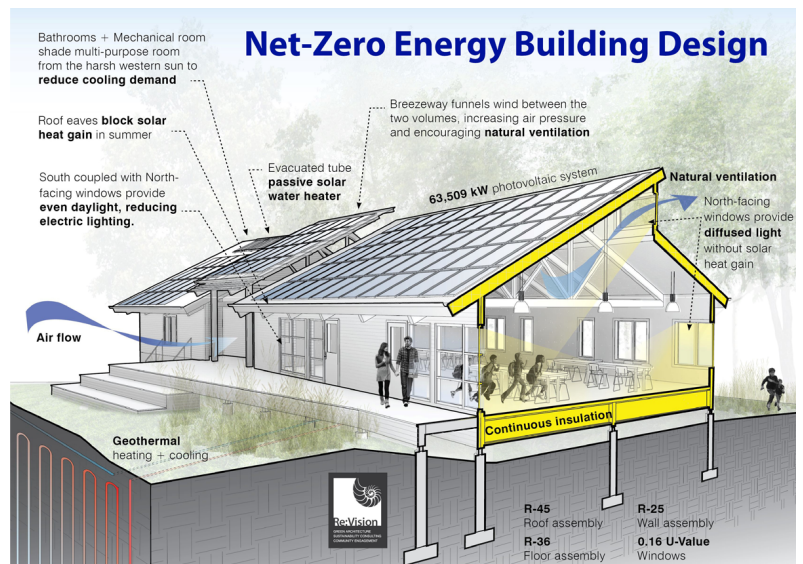
STARTING THE CONVERSATION ABOUT CLEAN ENERGY AND STORAGE

We first reached out to plant owners to talk to them about their plans for the future. It let us tout a transition to clean energy and battery storage, and we've had great results. Cogentrix, owners for Berkshire County's Doreen Street and Woodland Road kerosene-burning plants, is now actively studying plans and thinks they should be operational as clean energy and storage plants by 2023 (if not earlier). We've also met with Hull Street Energy, owners of the large Pittsfield Generating plant in the heart of the city, to start the discussion on alternative business models. Between our coalition of 25 community groups, as well as our state legislators and local elected officials and the plant owners, we're working on identifying and removing obstacles to transitioning, and plan to take those lessons to a state-wide push to close all Peaker plants.



WORKING TOWARD BETTER EFFICIENCY AND BUILDING CODE STANDARDS

Our focus on energy efficiency has shifted to helping municipalities and green commissions in reaching out to their communities. We're also involved in pushing for change to the state's Energy Efficiency programs. We've been participating in the Energy Efficiency Advisory Council's Equity Working Group and other meetings that are informing the next Mass Save 3-Year Energy Efficiency Plan. We're continuing to advise communities fighting new fuel-based infrastructure proposals, and commenting to help guide state regulations and legislation to a fuel-free, clean energy future as quickly as we possibly can!



Working with BEAT's ally organization Massachusetts Climate Action Network, Jake is involved with ongoing efforts to improve building energy efficiency and promote a new, net-zero stretch code. BEAT's involvement in this area ensures that western Massachusetts' interests and priorities are included in policies that will ultimately be written in Boston.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY



Elizabeth Orenstein was BEAT's Education & Outreach Coordinator from 2017 to 2021, but she fell in love with teaching and now teaches life science and art at Berkshire Waldorf High School in Stockbridge, MA. Berkshire Waldorf High School provides an education for adolescents that seeks truth, develops imagination, nurtures growth, fosters responsibility, and honors inner freedom in an atmosphere of academic excellence, artistic fulfillment, openness, and mutual respect.

Elia Del Molino was BEAT's first Stewardship Manager from 2012 to 2020. Now, Elia is Conservation Manager with Greenagers in Egremont, MA. Greenagers, through its paid employment programs, internships and apprenticeships, engages teens and young adults in meaningful work in environmental conservation, sustainable farming, natural resource management, and vocational skills building. Elia serves as the Chairperson of BEAT's Board of Directors.



Weyessa (Ace) McAlister first came to BEAT as a summer Program Associate in 2019 and returned during the pandemic in 2020. Weyessa was involved with everything BEAT was doing from surveying pipes emptying into the river to doing outreach at community events throughout the Berkshires. When Elia left, Weyessa became Stewardship Manager, but a trip to the Washington, DC area introduced him to a tight-knit Ethiopian community that he wanted to be a part of. Now he is the Community Conservation Manager with the Potomac Conservancy fighting to ensure the Potomac River boasts clean drinking water, healthy lands, and vibrant communities. Weyessa also continues his work bringing clean water to villages in Ethiopia with H2Ope, an organization he founded while at Trinity College.

Isabelle Morley first came to BEAT courtesy of Columbia University as a summer Program Associate in 2019 and returned during the pandemic in 2020. Isabelle was involved in everything but specialized in highly technical research and writing for our detailed comment letters and grant writing. Isabelle is now in graduate school learning-while-doing to become a history teacher here in the Berkshires!



Logan Malik joined BEAT first as a summer Program Associate in 2018 and returned after a graduate year at Cambridge in England to become our No Fracked Gas in Mass, Deputy Director and Advocacy Coordinator through 2020. Logan is now working for Massachusetts Climate Action Network (MCAN). BEAT is actually the Berkshire Chapter of MCAN and we partner on many initiatives including Putting Peakers in the Past - so we still work closely with Logan. And Logan serves as the Treasurer of BEAT's Board of Directors.

Mary Stucklen started the Berkshire Zero Waste Initiative. Mary has worked with BEAT since 2018 demonstrating how individuals, schools, government offices, and businesses can all reduce their waste. For the last year, Mary focused on WasteLess Restaurants to have restaurants pledge to reduce their waste. Mary is going back to teaching and starting her own compost service business, Tommy's Compost.



BEAT is so grateful to all our community partners and generous donors who give their time, talent, and money to make this work possible. Thank you!

20 Chapel St. Pittsfield, MA | (413) 464-9402 | team@thebeatnews.org | THEBEATNEWS.ORG