

CLEANER AIR IN THE BERKSHIRES

There have been two major developments making the air cleaner in the Berkshires!



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NO MORE TRASH INCINERATION

BEAT was pressuring the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to force Community Eco Power, the Pittsfield trash incinerator, to comply with their permit and stop emitting an incredible amount of pollution into our air. Well, it turned out that the facility was in such disrepair that it could not be rehabilitated and instead had to be shut down. We see this as a massive victory for clean air.

PUT PEAKERS IN THE PAST

It was an exciting year for the Put Peakers in the Past campaign. As you may remember, we have been challenging the owners of the three Berkshire County fossil-fueled peaking power plants to transition to clean energy and storage or shut down. Peaking power plants are electricity generators that only run when demand for electricity is very high – usually on the hottest set of days in the summer. They contribute a disproportionate amount of pollution for the small amount of electricity they generate and usually run when electricity prices are exceptionally high – plus, they get paid a huge amount to be on standby for over 90% of the year.

Our coalition of 27 community groups reached out to the owners of all the peakers in the Berkshires. Cogentrix, owner of Berkshire County's Doreen Street and Woodland Road peakers in Pittsfield and Lee, has shut down both facilities and has added their West Springfield peaker to the shut-down and transition list. The West Springfield generating station is a large brownfield site, and the plant will be converted, in stages, to house solar generation and large, grid-scale battery storage. We're also now working with Massachusetts Climate Action Network (MCAN), Slingshot, and Clean Energy Group to develop a campaign to take on all 30 peaker plants across the state!

Now we need to decrease the amount of trash we all create!

Many items are banned from being "thrown away" and must be reused or recycled – but this law is not well enforced. While we are pressuring DEP to step up enforcement, we are also trying to find ways for people to easily and inexpensively get rid of what they do not want. At BEAT, we have two bins for textiles like clothes, sheets and blankets, curtains, stuffed animals, bags – just to name a few! All items must be clean and dry, but they can be ripped or stained. You may also drop off clean pairs of shoes in these bins. Inside BEAT, we accept batteries for recycling – AA and 9-volt batteries (alkaline or rechargeable), button cell batteries, power tool batteries, sealed lead acid batteries, but NOT vehicle batteries.

FROM OUR DIRECTOR



As I sit in my office, looking out at our amazing pollinator/rain garden, I am so grateful to all of you who helped get us here! I looked at last year's newsletter with photos of planting the garden – just as it started raining. And it never stopped all last year! We couldn't even hold our usual cleanups because the river was so high.

This year is totally different. The state has been in a drought almost all year long. But our garden is huge! With blue vervain and other native plants over nine feet tall! All summer, it was filled with pollinators, and we still have lots of bees taking advantage of the goldenrod, but now the birds are feasting as well.

The next step is to begin renovations of our Environmental Leadership & Education Center to make it fully accessible and fossil fuel free. If you want to take a look around and give us your thoughts, contact Jane (jane@thebeatnew.org).

Jane

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WATER QUALITY IN THE BERKSHIRES

This year, BEAT partnered with Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) and Hoosic River Watershed Association (HoorWA) to install temperature loggers in coldwater streams throughout

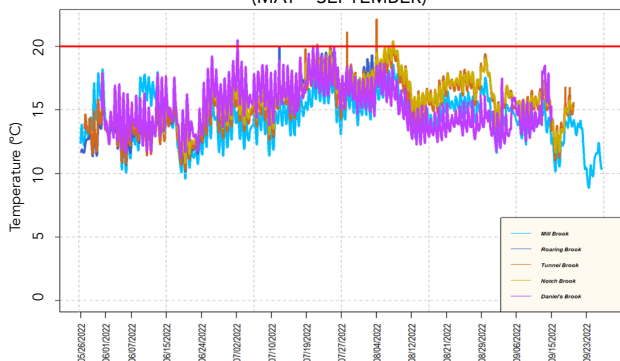


Berkshire County. We will also start monitoring these streams for road salt starting this winter. Coldwater streams are an essential natural resource because certain species of fish, such as brook trout, need waters that remain under 20°C throughout the year. Our preliminary results, which are portrayed in the graph, suggest that most of our streams remain under 20°C. While this is good news, we should remain cautious and implement best management practices for coldwater streams by restoring riparian plants to help shade coldwater streams, removing old dams that are not being used, and replacing undersized culverts with bridges.

A TALE OF TWO STREAMS

Two streams of particular interest to us are Roaring Brook and Mill Brook in Lenox, MA. We wanted to monitor these streams because Roaring Brook has very few anthropogenic obstacles, while Mill Brook has several dams and undersized old road culverts that need replacement. Our results suggest that both streams remain under 20°C throughout the year, and if anthropogenic disturbances were removed from Mill Brook, it could be an even better habitat for brook trout.

LOGGED TEMPERATURES OF FIVE BERKSHIRE BROOKS
(MAY – SEPTEMBER)



You can also find an interactive map of the most current stormwater quality results on the stewardship page of BEAT's website.

THE FIGHT AGAINST FOSSIL FUELS

No Fracked Gas in Mass is coming up on nine years, working to oppose new fossil fuel projects being proposed around the area. We've expanded to start taking on existing fossil fuel infrastructure that is no longer needed to meet our energy needs. These are just some of the campaigns we're focusing on!



FIGHTING NEW FOSSIL FUEL INFRASTRUCTURE

We continue to oppose new fossil fuel infrastructure on multiple fronts.

Current projects and proposals include the new peaker plant currently being constructed in Peabody, MA; Eversource pipeline proposals in Springfield, Longmeadow, Westborough, Ashland and Douglas, MA; the Northeast Energy Center LNG facility in Charlton, MA. Also, as ISO New England sends out alarms over a perceived shortage of gas capacity, the Winter Gas-Electric Forum held by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in September brought enough calls for new gas transmission lines into New England that we're challenging assertions that gas is a viable solution.

EFFICIENCY, IMPROVED NEIGHBORHOODS, AND MORE

We also continue to advocate for energy efficiency, recently talking with municipal housing authorities about maximizing efficiency and lending support to the current Mass Save Community First liaisons. We're working with BRPC's Gray to Green initiative to inform community-led neighborhood development of green spaces and better living conditions for Pittsfield's underserved neighborhoods. And stay tuned for local air quality monitoring initiatives!



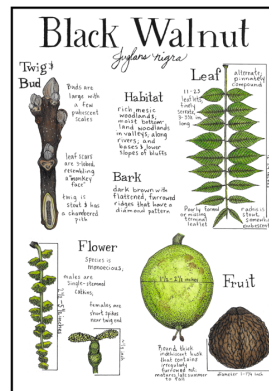
AN ENGAGED & INFORMED PUBLIC IS THE ENVIRONMENT'S BEST DEFENSE

Jake publishes the Weekly News Check-In newsletter for No Fracked Gas in Mass, featuring important news and trends in climate and the clean energy transition. He also remains involved with BEAT's ally organization, Massachusetts Climate Action Network, to improve building energy efficiency policies and promote a fossil fuel-free net-zero stretch code. He particularly advocates for programs to address the needs of Western Massachusetts residents and small businesses, and meet the urgent need for workforce training in all building electrification technologies.



GREEN DRINKS

After a pandemic-induced two-year hiatus from in-person Green Drinks, we were finally able to hold it in person again this year and even hosted our September gathering at BEAT's Environmental Leadership & Education Center! It was wonderful to have so many friends in BEAT's home, connecting over a shared interest in the environment. Some highlights from 2022 include Winter Wildlife Tracking, Conserving Flower-Pollinator Networks, Cliff Swallow Nesting Research, Berkshire Bird Banding, and Pathways to Zero Waste.



Learn about local trees with our Tree of the Month series. You can find them on BEAT's website.

KEEPING AN EYE ON BIG PROJECTS

The Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act was instituted to bring forward all the environmentally relevant information about projects with major impacts proposed in the commonwealth. These can be really important projects to keep an eye on – or stop if we think their impacts are too great. Twice a month, BEAT reviews all the projects listed in the statewide Environmental Monitor and compiles lists on our website and in our e-newsletter of all the proposed projects that could impact the Berkshires, Connecticut River Valley, and statewide projects with an impact in our area. Please take a quick look at the list each week to see if any of these big projects might affect somewhere you know and care about.

THE BEAT NEWS

Did you know that our weekly newsletter has local, state, national, and global news, a jobs board, public notices for regional development, and a community calendar? Subscribe today at THEBEATNEWS.ORG.

SUMMER PROGRAM ASSOCIATES

This summer, BEAT again had two summer program associates: Regina Fink from Williams College and Lucas Forman from Brandeis University. Regina and Lucas helped with everything! Regina is especially good at outreach: going to Pittsfield 3rd Thursdays, tabling at community events, and helping with our tag sale. Lucas excelled at research, especially on peaking power plants, as we take that campaign statewide. We feel so short-handed now that they are back at school!

THANK YOU, REGINA & LUCAS!



BIODIVERSITY

SAVE THE DATE

This winter, we will host Dan Gardoqui – a skilled wildlife tracker, naturalist, and educator – on **Friday, January 20, at Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield.** Dan will show photos and share stories of wildlife from personal experiences. On **Saturday, January 21,** Dan will lead small groups on two back-to-back **wildlife tracking workshops.**

IN THE BERKSHIRES

This year, BEAT collaborated with community partners to host the 13th annual 24-hour biological survey, usually known as 'Berkshire BioBlitz'. With the unprecedented loss of biodiversity taking place globally, we think it's crucial to inform our community of this crisis, which is why we emphasized the importance of biodiversity this year by referring to the program as 'Berkshire Biodiversity Day' instead.

This was the first in-person biodiversity survey since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. We had 21 specialists, 9 volunteers, and countless participants who stopped by to join the fun! The current number of species identified at Brattlebrook Park in Pittsfield is 556, with lists still being sent in. You can keep up with the final tally at berkshirebioblitz.org. Also, a big thank you to Greylock Federal Credit Union for providing funding that made this event possible and successful!

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE

TO CONNECT WILDLIFE HABITAT

BEAT will be working on something new in the near future: surveying culverts and roads to find areas for structures that will allow terrestrial wildlife passage. We have hired Housatonic Valley Association and Scott Jackson from UMass to provide training in the terrestrial passage protocol. Once we are fully trained, we will offer trainings to members of our community. This work will improve wildlife connectivity throughout the county!



SUPPORT BEAT WITH A T-SHIRT

Show your support for BEAT with one of our yellow-spotted salamander shirts, hand-painted and designed by Chelsey, our education & outreach coordinator. There are several shirt options in our online Bonfire store, www.bonfire.com/store/thebeatnews.

UPDATE

BEAT'S RAIN GARDEN



2021

2022



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!

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