



Toxics Action Center 2000 Annual Report



“Toxics Action Center brings to Maine a wealth of knowledge on how to address community toxic pollution problems effectively. We’re proud to be funders of this new program in Maine.”

Deborah Felder, Executive Director, Maine Initiatives

The assistance Toxics Action Center provided this year to more than 60 neighborhood groups across New England was made possible in part by our more than 2,500 individual contributors. We thank the following members for their generous contributions of \$100 or more in 2000.

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June 1, 2001

It has been 15 years since 14 children died of leukemia in Woburn, Massachusetts. Although the best-selling book and movie *A Civil Action* made it the most well-known example of toxic pollution in New England, it is only one example of the destructive impacts toxic chemicals have had on our communities.

Over the past year, Toxics Action Center staff have assisted residents in 60 communities across New England in their battles to clean up toxic pollution.

Through our work we are guided by three lessons that the families in Woburn taught us.

Woburn's first tragic lesson is that toxic chemicals in our environment can poison and even kill us. In 1995, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health confirmed the link between Woburn's contaminated drinking water and the neighborhood's high leukemia rates. Today, the evidence linking toxic pollution with high levels of asthma, cancer and reproductive disorders is growing.

The second lesson is that too many companies will go to extraordinary lengths to avoid their responsibilities for cleaning up their toxic messes. W. R. Grace is clearly not the only company to spend millions of dollars on legal fees and public relations to escape liability. Today, corporations continue to exercise their wealth and power to shape public policy and influence decision-makers.

Third and most important, Woburn has taught us that residents must join together to have their concerns heard, to make polluters accountable and to ensure that the government take action. Twenty years ago, it was the families of Woburn who forced the state to close the contaminated wells and pressured the EPA to have the site cleaned. And it was the families of Woburn who were a driving force behind the creation of the nation's Superfund law, passed in response to the situations in Woburn, MA; Love Canal, NY; and Times Beach, MO.

This year at Toxics Action Center, we continued to take the lessons of Woburn to heart. Our staff's work continued our strong tradition of building the capacity of neighborhoods to fight toxic pollution across New England from Bridgeport, Connecticut to Houlton, Maine.

Sincerely,



Matthew Wilson



Residents Win Superfund Status For Toxic Dump

For the past decade Judy Fittery's health has deteriorated bit by bit. After a hysterectomy and two mastectomies, she started to get rashes all over her body that made her skin raw and sore. Judy believes her problems are linked to toxic chemicals that have leached onto her Tewksbury property from the neighboring Rocco's Landfill. The landfill was used as an illegal hazardous waste dump during the 1960s and 1970s.

Despite her illnesses, Judy has worked tirelessly, forming Townspeople Organized Against Illness and Contamination (TOXIC), and demanding that government officials clean up the abandoned landfill.

With the help of Toxics Action Center, Judy's efforts have paid off. After nearly 15 years of government inaction and indifference, federal officials have agreed to declare Rocco's a Federal Superfund site to finally address toxic contamination at the site.

This summer, EPA identified and removed more than 700 filled and partially filled 55-gallon drums from the site. Superfund status will bring the funds necessary to adequately assess and remediate the site. The previous owners of the site are now bankrupt and government officials believe the cleanup of the site will cost in the tens of millions of dollars.

"I can't be more pleased. The EPA is aggressively pursuing this case and I am really heartened. I am confident that this is finally going to get done," said Fittery.

"With Toxics Action Center's help, we were able to ensure that the Central School would be safe for our kids. Protecting children is what Toxics Action Center is all about."

*Cheryl Walsh
Stoneham Parents for Healthy Schools
Stoneham, MA*



February
Stoneham, MA
residents force
cleanup of
contaminated
school.



March
Waterboro, ME residents
pass quarrying restrictions.



April
350 activists
attend Toxics
Action 2000
Conference
in Boston.

ENSURING SAFE AND HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Bowing to heavy pressure from the Stoneham Parents for Healthy Schools, the Stoneham Board of Selectmen agreed to clean up soil contaminated with high levels of arsenic and volatile organic chemicals on and adjacent to a proposed 400-student elementary school.

"We wanted to make sure our children were going to be safe when we dropped them off for school in the morning," said Cheryl Walsh, chair of the Stoneham Parents for Healthy Schools. "If we had not raised concerns, this building would have been built right on top of some very dangerous poisons."

The school in Stoneham, MA is just one of a number of schools across the state, such as ones in Quincy, Fairhaven and Leominster, which are proposed for, or built on or near hazardous sites and landfills.

STOPPING DANGEROUS LANDFILLS

Residents of Freetown won a major victory against PG&E, the polluter made infamous in the movie *Erin Brockovich*, when, on October 11th, the Freetown Board of Health voted unanimously to stop the dumping of coal-ash in an unlined gravel pit.

The coal ash, which contains mercury, arsenic and nickel from PG&E's two giant, coal-fired power plants in Salem and Somerset, MA, was being dumped in an old gravel pit that lies directly above an aquifer and up-stream of private drinking water wells.

"What a great victory for the people of Freetown," said Nanci Lown, a member of Concerned Citizens of Freetown. "The Board of Health listened to our concerns and did what was right to protect us."

Toxics Action Center staff helped the Concerned Citizens of Freetown organize other residents and identify experts to provide testimony highlighting the health and environmental impacts of the dump.

May

Rocco's Landfill proposed as Federal Superfund site in Tewksbury, MA.



June

Parsonsfield, ME residents stop toxic sludge spreading in town.



June

Massachusetts Governor Paul Cellucci signs into law strong pesticide restrictions in schools.



Fighting For Clean Air

When Adam Shopis drives down Route 95 from his Bridgeport, CT apartment, the towering smokestacks from the power plants in New Haven, Bridgeport and Norwalk can't help but grab his attention. Shopis has asthma and he knows that the emissions from these plants trigger attacks for him and thousands of other residents like him across the state.

For the past three years, Shopis has been a leader, along with Toxics Action Center, to clean up the "Filthy Five," the state's oldest and dirtiest power plants. Exempt from modern air pollution standards since 1977, these plants are the state's largest source of pollution.

In response to a tumultuous legislative session that ended in May in which a bill to clean up the Filthy Five was narrowly defeated, Governor John Rowland issued an executive order to address pollutants from the five major coal and oil power plants.

While the Governor's reduction goals for the primary pollutants sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides were strong, the proposed regulations will allow Connecticut plants to avoid cleaning up their plants by trading "pollution credits" with plants outside the state. Under this trading scheme, Connecticut's dirtiest power plants will be allowed to continue dumping thousands of tons of pollution onto Connecticut neighborhoods while paying a company as far away as Texas to clean up their stacks instead.

"The bottom line is these proposed regulations get us less than half way toward cleaning up the Filthy Five," said Frank Gorke, Clean Air Organizer with Toxics Action Center. "Pollution credit trading is just another loophole that allows the Filthy Five to trade away public health indefinitely for short-term profit."

July

Starmet radioactive waste site in Concord, MA proposed as Federal Superfund site.



July

Wayland, MA residents celebrate cleanup of Dow Chemical toxic waste site.



July

Yaworski toxic victims win financial compensation in Canterbury, CT.



COMPENSATION IN CANTERBURY FOR TOXICS VICTIMS

After years of battling to clean up the Yaworski Federal Superfund site in Canterbury, CT, members of People's Rights in a Clean Environment (PRICE) reached a settlement in a case that compensates neighbors whose properties were contaminated by toxic pollution from the leaking landfill. For years, the Yaworskis landfill accepted hazardous waste from companies across New England. The Yaworskis have also been permanently prohibited from conducting any further business in solid waste disposal in Connecticut.

ASTHMA EMERGENCY DECLARED IN HARTFORD, CT

Responding to skyrocketing rates of asthma for children in the city of Hartford, the Hartford City Council voted to declare an "asthma emergency" on August 18 and directed city officials to take aggressive measures to reduce pollution and address the asthma epidemic.

The Hartford Environmental Justice Coalition, a network of city groups, doctors and Toxics Action Center, demanded the city take action after a study, conducted by the Connecticut Children's Medical Center, found that 41% of the 7,500 Hartford children they surveyed are suffering from asthma — nearly six times the national average. Shockingly, the study also found that almost 50% of the city's Latino children are asthmatics. Asthma attacks are the number one cause for emergency room visits by children in Hartford.

"We need to address this serious problem that is truly debilitating our youth. How can they learn and flourish when they can hardly breathe?" said Pat Wrice, director of Building Parent Power, one of the groups in the coalition.

"Toxics Action Center taught us how to talk to the public about complicated issues. With their help we got our message across to officials that pesticide spraying was harmful to kids."

Rivka Lieber, Seeking Alternatives for the Environment (SAFE) Fairfield, CT

August

Strong mercury advisory standards upheld in Maine.



August

Residents stop aerial pesticide spraying in Ellington, CT.



August

Hartford City Council declares Asthma Emergency in Connecticut.



Residents Win Gravel Pit Restrictions

The proposal for the 17th gravel pit in Waterboro, ME was the straw that broke the camel's back. Eric Herrle had had enough of the diesel emissions from the 18-wheelers rumbling down Main Street, enough of the dynamite blasting at 7am in the morning and was nervous the drinking water in town would be contaminated from the massive excavations.

Not only did Herrle have to fight the gravel industry, but he also had to fight his town officials, many of whom had direct financial and familial ties to the industry. Herrle and his neighbors formed the Citizens Committee for Responsible Government and went after the industry head on and won.

Citizens bypassed the town officials and took matters into their own hands. With the help of Toxics Action Center, the Committee

drafted their own ordinance and collected enough petition signatures to have it voted on at town meeting.

In March, Waterboro residents passed tough regulations by a 58–42% margin at the Town Meeting to regulate gravel pit mining. The regulation will force the town's 16 gravel pits to limit traffic and noise, create buffer zones between residential housing and pits and protect private drinking water wells from blasting. In addition, any new proposal for a pit will have to go through a rigorous review process.

“People were ready for a change. Most people in Waterboro know their town officials are looking after their personal interests, not the interests of the town,” said Committee member Dean Waterhouse.

September

350 attend Filthy Five public hearings in Connecticut.



October

250 Carver, MA residents turn out to stop third landfill in town.



October

Freetown, MA halts new coal ash dump.



SLUDGE SPREADING HALTED IN PARSONSFIELD, ME

Concerned about contamination from toxic laden sludge, Citizens for Parsonsfield stopped a plan to dump sludge from the city of Portland on a wooded wetland in town.

Sludge is the waste left over from the water treatment process. It contains waste and contamination from large industries, small businesses, hospitals and households. Despite its toxicity, sludge is being spread as fertilizer on farm, wood lots and rural areas in 165 towns in Maine.

Toxics Action Center is building a network of anti-sludge groups across the state. "The only way we're going to win the war against sludge is by sharing ideas and information with each other and by fighting together, town by town," said Will Everitt, Toxics Action Center's Maine Field Director.

MERCURY ADVISORIES UPHELD IN MAINE

Maine Toxics Action Coalition won a major victory by stopping the Maine Bureau of Health from weakening the state's mercury advisory for fish. For the past two years, state officials have advised women of childbearing age and children not to eat fish from Maine's waterways. This summer, the Coalition, of which Toxics Action Center is a member, warned residents and vacationers about the dangers of industrial pollution by posting advisories on hundreds of miles of state waterways.

"Will Everitt [Toxics Action Center staff] was with us every step of the way. He was the one who steered is in the right direction. Without him, we would have been a group of frustrated neighbors not knowing which way to turn."

*Nancy Morris, Citizens Against Toxic Sludge
East Livermore, Maine*

November

100 residents attend first Maine Toxics Action Conference.



November
Massachusetts
and Connecticut
Dirty Dozen
Awards "honor"
worst polluters.



December

Quincy, MA residents force Mayor to abandon proposal to build high school on toxic site.



Toxics Action Center Financial Statements

For The Year Ending June 30, 2000.

BALANCE SHEET

Assets

Total Current Assets	\$	334,299
Net Property & Equipment	\$	4,560
Total Assets	\$	338,859

Liabilities & Group Equity

Total Liabilities	\$	48,789
Total Fund Balance	\$	290,070
Total Liabilities & Fund Balance	\$	338,859

INCOME STATEMENT

Support & Revenue

Grants	\$	277,450
Conference Income	\$	21,499
Interest Income	\$	18,888
Membership	\$	39,151
Total Support & Revenue	\$	356,988

Expenses

Program Services	\$	184,077
Operating	\$	61,804
Special Events	\$	8,074
Fundraising Expense	\$	5,479
Total Expenses	\$	259,434
Net Income FY00	\$	97,554

These figures represent combined financial information from Toxics Action Center, Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization and Toxics Action Center Campaigns, Inc., a 501(c)(4) organization.

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Beldon Fund
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Haymarket People's Fund

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John Merck Fund
Maine Initiatives
New England Grassroots
Environment Fund
Sudbury Foundation
W. Alton Jones
Foundation

“Having accurate data and information is important, yet it only gets you so far. Toxics Action Center is a vital service to residents to help them use the facts effectively to solve local toxic pollution problems.”

*Richard Clapp, D.Sc., MPH
Boston University School of Public Health*



“Toxics Action Center gave us the three things we so desperately needed at a very critical time: hope, expertise and support. This encouraged all of us to believe that we could win this battle. If it weren’t for Toxics Action Center there would be no Residents Against Waste and without RAW there would be a 1,000 ton a day dump built in our town.”

*Donella Maimone, Residents Against Waste
Carver, Massachusetts*



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