Dear Friends,

2008 was quite a year! A community organizer who prioritizes the environment was elected to the office of President, the environment is once again a “hot” issue across the country, and for the first time, Toxics Action Center expanded our work, piloting efforts to assist communities suffering from pollution threats beyond toxics, including sprawl and water protection issues.

Today, we view toxics as much more than what is found in barrels. They’re poor indoor air quality in our children’s schools, hazardous phthalates in our Tupperware, particulate pollution from power plants, the runoff of gasoline from sprawling parking lots, and the unnecessary use and disposal of plastic water bottles. Our work has expanded with this view.

Partnerships that we have launched in 2008 have made our expansion possible. We have launched a partnership with TERC, an educational non-profit focused on math and science, to help communities better understand the technical aspects of pollution problems and cleanup throughout the region. We’ve also established a partnership with the Vermont Law School, who will provide legal research and assistance to some of the communities where Toxics Action Center works. These partnerships better help communities understand the technical and legal aspects of the pollution problems they’re facing, and the solutions to those problems.

As you know, at Toxics Action Center, we believe that all people have the right to breathe clean air, drink clean water, and live in healthy, vibrant communities. That’s why, since 1987, we’ve worked side-by-side with more than 575 communities to clean up and prevent pollution. Looking ahead, I will keep you updated on decisions surrounding the breadth of our scope.

Thank you so much for your support. It makes our work possible.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Schuren
Executive Director
Preventing Incinerators In Disguise

Incinerators New and Old Create Pollution and Toxic Waste

For two decades, Toxics Action Center has been working with communities to prevent pollution from waste disposal facilities such as landfills, incinerators and trash transfer stations. From Franklin, Connecticut and Williston, Vermont to Northampton, Massachusetts, landfill proposals threaten to contaminate drinking water supplies, endangering public health and polluting our environment. The Environmental Protection Agency states that all landfills will eventually leak, and landfill toxins have been linked to human health disorders like learning disabilities and cancer.

Incinerators pose additional threats to human health. Burning trash results in poisonous air emissions like lead, mercury and dioxin, and every incinerator leads to a landfill – up to thirty percent of the volume of garbage burned in incinerators ends up as toxic ash that must be landfilled. Incinerator emissions controls have improved somewhat over the years, but this means the resulting ash is even more concentrated and toxic. Fortunately, public support for incineration has waned, and some states like Massachusetts have passed moratoriums on building new trash burners.

Unfortunately, a new type of incinerator is being proposed all across New England. From established waste giants like Covanta to brand-new, fly-by-night businesses looking to make a quick profit, corporations across the country are trumpeting emerging technologies called gasification.

Gasification, plasma arc and pyrolysis are all technologies that heat garbage until it turns into a gas, then burn the gas to create energy. Essentially incinerators in disguise, these technologies release many of the same toxic byproducts as traditional incinerators—dioxins, furans, mercury, carbon monoxide and other contaminants—and right now, industry representatives across the country are pushing gasification for medical and municipal waste streams as well as coal energy production.

Besides polluting, these plants waste money and energy. Some use more energy than they produce. For example, one garbage gasifier in Germany shut down after only a few years of operation, with losses of $500 million. Furthermore, incinerators emit more carbon dioxide per megawatt-hour than coal, natural gas or oil-fired power plants.

Stopping “Clean Coal” in Somerset, Massachusetts

Residents in Somerset, Massachusetts have been working for the past year to stop a gasification proposal in their community. In a town whose primary industry is energy, Somerset residents are used to fighting for clean air. Somerset is home to Brayton Point, a coal-burning power plant that is the largest polluter in the state and a smaller coal plant called Somerset Station. Somerset Station is aging, and the plant owner, NRG Energy, promised in its contract to clean up or shut down the facility by 2010.

Instead, NRG Energy is interested in converting the coal plant to gasification and may choose to burn waste wood like contaminated construction debris in addition to coal which will only increase their pollution production.

In response, local groups and statewide advocates came together to form the Massachusetts Coalition for Clean Air to stop this dirty plan from moving forward. Toxics Action Center worked with the group to turn out more than one hundred residents to a citizens’ public hearing last spring. Unfortunately, so far the state has ignored our voices and granted tentative approval to NRG’s plans. Toxics Action Center will continue to work with the Coalition to prevent gasification from gaining a foothold in Massachusetts and New England. We also are working for a true solution to our waste problem by encouraging the region to adopt a nationally-recognized zero waste model. You can read more about this effort on page 7.
Decades After Woburn, Still Cleaning

New England Still Facing Contamination
Decades after the tragedy in Woburn, Massachusetts, where a childhood cancer cluster resulted from pregnant mothers drinking contaminated water, New England still has a serious toxic problem. Every year more doctors and scientists raise alarms about human health impacts from chemicals leaching off of toxic sites. Toxics Action Center has been working with citizens for over 20 years to clean up hazardous waste sites that dot the region’s landscape.

White River Junction, Vermont
Parkway Cleaners dumped dry cleaning solvents on their property for years, including PERC. PERC affects the nervous system, causing dizziness, headaches, nausea, and in extreme cases, death. Parkway Cleaners was located in the midst of a residential neighborhood and a stone’s throw from the White River. State regulators had known about the contamination for nearly a decade before residents were informed that their health was at risk. For some residents, the announcement came as a strange relief, as they had been suffering from headaches and physical shaking that doctors had not been able to explain.

Toxics Action Center has worked with the neighbors around the site to ensure their homes were safe to live in. Toxics Action Center’s Vermont Community Organizer went door-to-door with the neighbors from Hazel Street to help form a community group called the White River Toxics Action Committee (WRTAC). Together with WRTAC, Toxics Action Center has helped to keep the issue in the media and to hold state regulators accountable for cleaning up the air in residents’ homes.

This year residents won some relief when the state installed ventilation systems in the affected homes. Construction is now underway to improve the homes’ basements and lessen residents’ exposure to the chemicals, but to date, Parkway Cleaners has not been held responsible. Toxics Action Center continues to work with WRTAC to ensure the state improves the residential air quality and ultimately holds the polluters responsible for a clean up of the contaminated site.

Alton, Rhode Island
Charbert Dye Company has bleached and dyed fabrics since 1962 in the village of Alton. In order to treat its production waste, Charbert built four open-air lagoons on its factory site. The lagoons were constructed with the approval of the state, but have proved disastrous for Alton’s groundwater supply.

In addition to polluting drinking water in town, these lagoons create odors that waft into the air in the community. Over the years, the company has violated air

Toxics Action Center organizers get ready to talk to Rhode Island residents about strengthening pollution laws.
pollution regulations with hydrogen sulfide emissions linked to headaches, nausea and respiratory problems among residents. Then in 2003, twenty drinking water wells in the neighborhood showed high levels of the toxic chemicals MTBE and TCE, elevated bacteria levels and dye chemicals.

Toxics Action Center has been working with Alton Community Action to clean up these unsafe, unlined lagoons. In recent years, we helped convince the state Department of Environmental Management to issue a Notice of Violation to the company. The state and Chardin have signed a consent agreement, but the cleanup has stalled. Alton Community Action continues to work for a full cleanup of the contamination.

**Stratford, Connecticut**

For too long, the Town of Stratford has been haunted by the toxic legacy of Raymark/Raybestos Industries. The company operated for much of the last century manufacturing parts for the auto industry and made the town into a dumping ground for their manufacturing wastes, highly contaminated with asbestos, lead and other toxic chemicals. In 1995, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declared much of the town a federal Superfund site (top tier hazardous site) and began initial cleanup, spending more than $180 million to identify and test for toxic soil and to demolish and clean up Raymark’s former factory site. Today, dozens of toxic waste sites still remain in town, and the EPA’s proposed solution is to dig up the remaining waste and dump it on a contaminated baseball field in the middle of a residential neighborhood. Residents were alarmed at this plan for “cleaning up” their neighborhood, and they formed a group called SaveStratford.org to stop it.

Over the past year, Toxics Action Center worked with Tom Smith, Krista Watson and their neighbors to force the EPA to scrap its dump proposal. The group has gathered thousands of petition signatures and worked with their legislators to demonstrate public support for a full cleanup.

Our hard work paid off. Last summer, Gov. Jodi Rell traveled to Stratford to sign a bill into law banning the consolidation of asbestos-laden toxic waste at sites neighboring homes.

The bill not only will protect Stratford residents, but goes further to require enhanced community notification of toxic cleanups and allows for environmental benefits to be weighed when certain major polluting facilities are proposed or expanded in overburdened communities.

Soon after the passing of the bill, the EPA decided to go back to the drawing board for their cleanup plan and invited SaveStratford.org to have a seat at the negotiating table.

> During our campaign Toxics Action Center was a critical resource and a constant participant in everything we did—their skills at facilitating meetings and keeping us moving forward were essential and impressive.

—Willy Ritch
President, Back River Alliance in Maine
Cleaning Up And Preventing Pollution

Tackling Our Waste Problems
The true solution to pollution from landfills and incinerators is to reduce the amount of waste that we create through expanded recycling, reclamation, composting and producer responsibility. In 2008, Toxics Action Center greatly expanded our work across the region to push state governments to incorporate more Zero Waste principles in their waste management plans.

1. Boston, MA Boston lags behind the state in recycling rates. Recycling Action, a project of the Toxics Action Center, aims to remedy that problem. Several years ago we launched Recycling-on-the-Go to improve recycling on the subway. Last summer we surveyed subway stops city-wide and found more paper recycling bins placed in visible areas. In addition, Boston recently passed an ordinance requiring waste haulers to provide recycling options for businesses.

2. Northampton and Easthampton, MA The Northampton town council has proposed to expand the city’s already leaking landfill over the Barnes Aquifer, which provides drinking water for 60,000 people. Citizens United for a Healthy Future is working to promote Zero Waste principles instead of the dangerous plan to expand the landfill. This year we connected the group with a Zero Waste expert known for helping west coast cities reduce garbage.

3. Bethlehem, NH Citing ongoing problems with groundwater pollution and faulty design, the New Hampshire Department of Environment Services denied Casella Waste System’s application to expand one of the largest landfills in the state for ten more years. This is a huge victory for the Bethlehem activists who have been working on this campaign for nearly 20 years.

Reducing Exposure to Toxic Chemicals
The tens of thousands of man-made chemicals used in products and services have untold toxic consequences. Toxics Action Center is committed to not only cleaning up toxic spills, but also preventing them in the first place by encouraging states to phase out the most toxic chemicals, replace them safer alternatives and limit families’ exposure.

4. Sheldon, VT Community members in Sheldon are compiling a growing list of recent cancer victims, particularly young mothers diagnosed with breast cancer. The town has a host of toxic threats—several old landfills, heavy pesticide use and a paper mill are all potential sources. A local group has formed and is researching toxic exposure sources. State representatives have also lent support, and a University of Vermont graduate student has signed on to do a public health study of the area.

5. Milton, VT With approximately one million tires piled on site and chemicals leaking into the ground, it’s not surprising that a nearby pond and drinking water wells show contamination of heavy metals from the ABC junkyard. Residents have formed Milton CLEAN and reached out to the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources for action. Both bodies are taking steps to respond, forcing the junkyard to take responsibility for its mess.

Curbing Pollution from Dangerous Facilities
Residents throughout New England face threats from dangerous industrial facilities, such as quarries, asphalt plants and trash transfer stations. Toxics Action Center works with residents to ensure that existing facilities are either managed properly or closed and cleaned up, and new facilities are not built in residential areas.

6. Cranston, RI Residents were successful in fighting off a proposal to build a cement plant in 2008 in Cranston. Toxics Action Center helped Cranston Citizens for Responsible Zoning and Development win the campaign after sending a team of organizers to the town to help gather hundreds of petition signatures against the plant and garner statewide media around the threat. The plant would have been built in downtown Cranston, in an area that is currently being used as green space.

7. Berkley, MA Members of No Quarry in Berkley successfully stopped a proposal to site a rock-blasting and crushing quarry less than 200 feet from families’ homes. Quarries sit close to residential areas pose a triple threat—silica dust in the air from blasted rock can damage lungs, the machinery used to crush the rock can crack home foundations and drinking wells, and chemicals used in the process leak through the soil and contaminate water supplies. The group has stopped the proposal in their community, and is now working to assist their neighbors in Freetown to prevent the same threat.

8. Franklin, CT Last spring, the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority proposed building a massive
Throughout New England

new incinerator ash landfill near homes in Franklin and atop a pristine drinking water aquifer. Members of Voice of the People for Franklin are working with State Sen. Edith Prague and Toxics Action Center to stop the proposal and promote better solutions.

9. **Waterbury, CT** A company proposed to build a gas- and oil-fired power plant in an already overburdened neighborhood where air pollution from industries is trapped by the geography of the valley, causing a sooty haze to linger over the city. Residents formed the Power or Pollution Coalition, and because of their work, the company settled with the community. The plan for the facility will move forward, but with concessions to protect public health in town.

10. **Shapleigh, ME** Towns in Maine are facing threats to have their water sources bought up and sucked dry. Nestle Poland Springs reported that it drained 700 million gallons of groundwater last year in the state. Members of Protect Our Water and Wildlife Resources (POWWR) quickly responded to Nestlé’s aggressive bid for water contracts in the pristine rural town of Shapleigh. This year the residents of Shapleigh voted down the proposal with the City Council following suit.

11. **Biddeford, ME** The MERC incinerator has been burning trash in the middle of Biddeford for 20 years. In 2008, Toxics Action Center teamed up with Mayor Joanne Twomey and several community groups to expose evidence piling up that the incinerator (owned by Casella) is a habitual polluter. After generating lots of media attention, and lining up speakers at public hearings, the state acknowledged in writing the need to shut down the incinerator.
Expanding Zero Waste Programs

Bringing Communities Together To Reduce Waste
Two years ago, Toxics Action Center launched our Zero Waste Campaign, which aims to protect our communities from the dangerous health effects caused by polluting incinerators and leaking landfills by addressing the source of the problem: waste.

Zero Waste goes beyond recycling by taking a systemwide approach that looks at the entire lifespan of the materials we use every day, and works to implement creative ways to design and use products again and again. By reprocessing and reusing as much as possible, we minimize the amount of waste created, and reduce our demand for dirty waste disposal facilities.

Massachusetts Sets Solid Waste Plan for the Next Decade
In Massachusetts, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is currently revising its Solid Waste Master Plan, which will guide the state’s practices for waste for the next decade. In 2008, we brought technical experts to meet with the DEP and advocate for a zero waste goal. We also turned out hundreds of citizen activists from across the state to testify at stakeholder meetings about the dangers of landfills and/or incinerators in their communities. The DEP appears to be listening; they have already committed to including several zero waste solutions in the plan.

Work in Central Vermont Expanded to the State
The Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District, composed of 22 towns, is currently the largest conglomeration of communities working towards a zero waste goal in the country. Toxics Action Center and the district have recommended a set of policies to help Vermont move toward zero waste. Our top four policies were all unanimously supported by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources waste study committee. These recommendations were also written into the full report to the Vermont Legislature. Toxics Action Center and other members of the legislative study committee presented our report recommendations to the House Natural Resources Committee in January.

Zero Waste Work Launched in New Hampshire
In New Hampshire, Toxics Action Center’s 2007 victory banning the incineration of construction and demolition debris created momentum that drove our zero waste work in 2008. The state Legislature appointed Toxics Action Center to the Safe and Secure Landfills Study Commission, a group of professional organizations, industry representatives and affected citizens that are working together to explore alternatives to landfills. We have used this body as a platform to promote zero waste as the best solution. In 2008, we also released the report “Toxics in New Hampshire,” which profiled the toxic impact of waste disposal facilities town by town throughout the state.

“Without the good and strategic work of Toxics Action Center staff raising awareness of the realities of Zero Waste . . . the climate in our state for considering and accepting this innovative and environmentally sound approach to ‘waste’ management, would not exist.”

—Donna Barlow Casey, Executive Director
Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District
Safer Products And Safer Production

Industry has left a toxic legacy across New England. The real solution to curbing our toxic exposure and cleanup is to stop manufacturing and putting into use toxic chemicals in the first place. Unfortunately, for over 30 years the federal government has not effectively regulated known toxic chemicals. The Toxic Substance Control Act (ToSCA) was originally passed with the intention of regulating chemicals that presented an unreasonable risk to people’s health or the environment. However, the law is written with so many hurdles and loopholes that it is virtually impossible to take any action to regulate the majority of chemicals, even when they are known to be dangerous. Before the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can ban a dangerous chemical, it must conduct a full risk analysis of the costs and benefits of all alternatives, and every decision must pass an economic analysis that balances consideration of the national economy, small businesses, technology, the environment and public health. Consequently, the EPA has only restricted the use of some classes of chemicals.

Toxics Action Center is working throughout New England to see reforms adopted that will provide a model for ToSCA reform in the new federal administration. This year we celebrated a huge victory in giving Maine’s Department of Environmental Protection a toxins law with teeth. Working with coalition partners in the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine, Toxics Action Center took a leading role to help pass the Kid-Safe Products Act. This act is the strongest chemical reform policy in the country, flipping ToSCA’s model of risk assessment—where chemicals are regulated only after a certain amount of harm has already been caused—on its head. It will curb the exposure of Maine families to known unsafe chemicals by empowering the state government to phase the worst chemicals out of all products sold in Maine, and requires the substitution of safer alternatives when they are available.

Now Toxics Action Center is working to use the Maine victory to win similar policies in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont. In Maine, the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine is continuing to work together to ensure that Maine’s congressional delegation will incorporate the same forward-thinking policy in the renewal of ToSCA this year at the federal level.

"Toxics Action Center not only brought a much-needed structured focus to our group of residents, but a sense of empowerment for the core organizers."

—Suzanne E. Arena
PR Chair, Secretary and Organizer
Cranston Citizens for Responsible Zoning & Development in Rhode Island
Archaic Nuclear Plant Threatened Continued Operation

Entergy Vermont Yankee is one of the oldest operating nuclear power plants in the country, and when a nuclear plant gets old, it gets even more dangerous. Both of Vermont Yankee’s cooling towers have structural problems, and one surprised plant managers last year by collapsing (it has since been rebuilt, but is considered structurally unsound). This year, radiation levels emitted by the plant reached levels that surpassed the state of Vermont’s health standards. The plant’s original storage facilities for radioactive waste have been exhausted, so nuclear waste is now being stored in concrete casks on the banks of the Connecticut River within easy reach of flooding.

Despite the clear threat of Vermont Yankee to human health and the environment, the plant continues to operate at 120 percent capacity. Furthermore, the plant’s owners are seeking a 20-year extension to the plant’s operating permit.

The good news is that Vermont doesn’t need the power generated by Vermont Yankee. The Green Mountain State offers plenty of windswept ridges, small mountain streams, and dairy farms ideal for producing local, renewable energy: wind turbines, small hydro turbines, and cow power.

Several years ago, Toxics Action Center began working with Nuclear Free Vermont, a community group from Brattleboro, and Vermont Public Interest Research Group, a statewide advocacy organization, to explore strategies to shut down Vermont Yankee. Today, Toxics Action Center, these organizations, and a number of other environmental and health organizations have banded together to form Safe Power Vermont. This coalition is working to ensure that Vermont Yankee is closed on time in 2012 and replaced with renewable energy sources.

A poll of Vermonter’s last year showed clear support for renewable energy and against the continued operation of Vermont Yankee. That poll has helped our efforts this year, as we’ve played a major role in coordinating the coalition’s statewide grassroots effort to ensure Vermont’s legislators are responsive to their constituents. Together with Safe Power Vermont, in 2008 Toxics Action Center launched Town Meeting Day petition drives, held briefings and trainings for concerned citizens across the state, hosted workshops at our annual conference, organized meetings between legislators and their constituents, and raised the issue in the media.

The grassroots effort has gotten legislators to take notice. Representative Ernie Shand of Cavendish remarked that he had never heard so much from constituents on any other issue during his tenure. We anticipate a vote on the issue within the coming year.

“Last summer, one of Vermont Yankee's towers collapsed, exposing its dangerously aging infrastructure.

For more than 22 years, the people of Biddeford and Saco have attempted to call attention to a solid waste incinerator’s continued abuses and its inherent dangers to the surrounding neighborhoods. I have been in touch with many environmental groups, and Toxics Action Center has been the only organization that has been willing to help.”

—Mark Robinson, President, Group leader of Twin Cities Renaissance in Maine
Thank You!

All our supporters’ gifts are greatly appreciated. We would like to especially thank the following organizations and individual citizen contributors. Names that appear in italics were monthly donors, who provide financial stability for the organization throughout the year.

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Toxics Action Center is an invaluable and always professional resource, providing help to communities that are up against great odds, working to protect health and the environment.

—Susan Allen, Voice of the People for Franklin

Our Staff (partial list)

Sylvia Broude
Lead Organizer

Megan Stokes
Development Director

Alison Carney
Community Organizer
Western Mass.

Jessica Edgerly,
Community Organizer
Vermont

Sam Levor
Administrator, Event Planner

Simone Mellor
Community Organizer
Connecticut

Meredith Lee
Community Organizer

Meredith Small
Organizing Director

Alyssa Schuren
Executive Director

www.toxicsaction.org

Toxics Action Center
44 Winter Street, 4th Fl.
Boston, MA 02108

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