

**DRAFT** 1/22/16

# Creating a Local Climate Change Group-A Resource Guide

From Eastern CT Green Action

## **What is the purpose of Eastern CT Green Action?**

Eastern CT Green Action (ECGA) is a network of local groups devoted to slowing climate change through actions at the local and state level. Our purpose is to create new groups in Connecticut towns that will encourage their own town councils and state legislators to enact substantive measures aimed at countering climate change. We are also glad to work together with existing groups.

## **Why local groups?**

Towns, cities, and the state itself have important roles to play in the fight against climate change. Not the least among them is to organize the many people who are concerned about climate change, but don't know what to do about it. By concentrating on local climate change measures, we can achieve important goals and harness the energy of many uninvolved people.

Action at the town level can accomplish a lot. Getting a town to pass an ordinance, for example, that bans fracking waste will strongly influence its state legislators. Having a town improve the energy efficiency of its buildings and use more clean energy is something that concerned local citizens are in the best position to accomplish. The same group of involved townspeople can influence legislators at the state-level on an issue such as shared solar. The face-to-face relationships between neighbors as they discuss local impacts and solutions can be a powerful force for action. A town council and state legislators will give special weight to the views of their own voters, when voters are informed, vocal and persistent. Towns matter especially in Connecticut, with its weak county system and relative lack of regionalization.

Individual towns and the state need to continue making the transition to the new clean energy future required by the threat of climate change. We need to move from fossil fuel-based energy to solar, wind, and other clean energy solutions. In some cases the town is the best scale at which to work, with town councils, individuals and businesses. For other issues, the state is the best scale, working through state legislators representing a town or part of a town.

## **What are some specific ECGA objectives at this time?**

- Ban fracking wastes from coming into the state and individual towns.
- Create a robust legal framework for shared solar in Connecticut.

- Encourage town governments, residents, businesses and non-profits to increase the use of energy efficiency measures and clean energy in the buildings they work, learn and live in. The Connecticut Green Bank can play an important role in accomplishing this objective.
- Impede the expansion of natural (methane) gas lines.

You can find links to information on these issues at the end of this guide.

### **How do you form a local group?**

Start by finding a small group of people who are concerned enough about climate change that they are willing to advocate to their town councils and state legislators. A core group of as few as three to five people should be enough. This core group will bring together like-minded town residents to promote specific, substantive and practical solutions to climate change.

In every town and city in Connecticut, there are people who are deeply concerned about the impending threat of climate change. A very small number are actually doing something about this. Many more would if they knew what to do and how. The job of a town group is to find the many who would like to do something and involve them in the process of getting something done. This can be at the town level or, through lobbying state legislators, at the state level.

The first step for most of us will be to educate ourselves. One way that ECGA can help is to provide you links to some of the information on the web about clean energy, climate change, and local advocacy. The amount of information out there is overwhelming. You do not need to become an expert, just have a basic idea of the issues involved. Over time, you will become more and more knowledgeable. At the end of this document are links to resources for the issues we are working on, as well as guides to advocacy and organizing.

Here are some suggestions for how to find people who may want to join your group:

- Start with friends and family. Even if they do not live in your town, they may know concerned people who do. Send out an email or call people on the phone to discuss your plans. Offer to have coffee with them. Early on, this will be a matter of finding one person at a time.
- Join a local conservation group, such as Joshua's Trust and/or a statewide organization such as the Sierra Club, the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, or Environment Connecticut and then ask for the names of members in your town. You can also attend local meetings of these groups, start conversations with individuals, or make a presentation.
- The League of Women Voters, members of a town sustainability, open space or similar committees, and other civic organizations may be another source of recruits. Attend meetings and talk to people afterwards. Make a statement during the public comment period to one of these groups. We are not trying to replace these groups, but rather augment their efforts at a more local level.

- Drive around looking for homes and businesses with solar panels and if you're comfortable enough, knock on doors.
- Start a Facebook page and work to have members and other interested town residents Like and Share posts on the page. Perhaps use your own Facebook page at first as the 'official' page for the group.

### **How can Eastern Connecticut Green Action help form and assist groups?**

If you are thinking of starting a group in your town or are in the process of forming one, we would like to help. If you have an existing group, we would like to discuss coordinating our agenda with yours, so we can expand the reach of your group and ours. We would first want to hear what help, if any, you need. Some resources we can provide include: 1) facilitators who can assist in getting your group off the ground, 2) expertise in matters such as how to get an ordinance, resolution or referendum passed in your town (and which would be best), 3) speakers for a public gathering, and 4) miscellaneous help, like with starting a Facebook page.

ECGA can provide an agenda and action plan to new groups. It's not likely that every town group will have exactly the same priorities, but we can magnify our influence by concentrating on a few specific issues, such as shared solar legislation and the banning of fracking wastes.

Perhaps most importantly, ECGA can also serve as a clearinghouse for what works best in growing a group and accomplishing objectives. We are a growing organization and as groups form in various towns, each town will have important lessons to share. ECGA has some materials available online that may be useful as groups learn to be effective advocates [Note: hopefully we will sometime soon]. We are also available to meet in person with individuals and groups. Also, members of all groups can meet on a regular basis to share experiences and lessons learned.

**Online Resources**-Here are some articles, reports and guides that we have found useful in educating ourselves about the issues we are focusing on.

### **Banning Fracking Wastes**

- [No fracking in Connecticut, but what about its waste?](#)
- [Coventry Is Connecticut' Second Town to Ban Fracking Waste](#)
- [Connecticut Fracking Waste-Free](#)
- [will add more with Gary's help and others]

### **Shared Solar**

Articles:

- [Connecticut's timid approach to clean energy penalizes consumers, costs state jobs](#)
- [CT creeps toward electric grid 2.0](#)
- [Session tally: Energy and environment hits, misses and almosts](#)
- [Shared solar tries again to light up Connecticut](#)

- [Op-ed: 'Virtual net metering' is key to 'shared solar on homes'](#)

Reports:

- The [CT Academy of Science and Engineering report](#) on Shared Clean Energy Facilities. Executive Summary (very helpful) and full report. Was submitted to the legislature.
- The [Shared Community Solar report](#) and recommendations for Massachusetts.

**Organizing and Advocacy**

- [Grassroots Organizing](#). An excellent guide to organizing from the Center for Health, Environment and Justice.
- [Advocacy: Turning the Gears of Democracy](#). This four part video series from Connecticut Network (CT-N) is a short guide to advocacy at the state legislature.
- [Tools for Action](#). This advocacy toolkit was developed by CT Parent Power, but it can apply to climate change advocacy, too.

**The Expansion of Natural Gas Pipelines in CT**

- [will add more with Gary's help and others]
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***For more information, contact:***

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- Others?