

Climate Action Committee – Newsletter Update – October 2024

“Loving the Cape”

Those of us who choose to live here, full or part-time, are here because we love it—the ocean, the bay, the ponds, the woods, the community—and we know that we live in a fragile area, particularly in the face of climate change. Most of us do things to honor and protect this place we love, whether that’s picking up beach trash, not using pesticides, composting, recycling, or turning off lights we aren’t using.

The two major contributors of greenhouse gases (GHG) on Cape Cod are transportation and buildings. There are steps we all can take to lower GHGs, whether we’re here part-time or full-time. We can consider buying electric cars when our vehicles need to be replaced, and we can make changes in our homes. Upgrading insulation, buying “green” electricity, switching to heat-pump hot water heaters, installing mini-splits and electric HVAC systems for heating and cooling, installing solar panels, and replacing old appliances with ones that are energy efficient are all beneficial changes we can consider, but it can be a daunting task to know where to begin.

That’s where Cape Light Compact (CLC) comes in. Cape Light Compact is funded by charges on consumers’ Eversource electric bills. They are operated by all towns on the Cape and Islands and their mission is to provide energy efficiency programs, consumer advocacy, and a renewable competitive electricity supply. If you get an Eversource electric bill, you are entitled to a no-cost energy assessment, whether you are a homeowner or renter and whether you have a private home or a business. CLC will do a comprehensive assessment and guide you through ways to electrify and decarbonize your home, or to simply use less energy. The CLC assessment will identify incentives, rebates and low-cost loan options to help implement the recommendations. You may think you can’t afford to make these improvements on your home, but, depending on your income, there are reduced prices and tax credits available for appliances, repairs, upgrades, etc., which can lower the costs significantly. Heat pump and solar installers are familiar with these money-saving opportunities and will walk you through it.

If you’re a homeowner who is only here part-time, you may think the upgrades aren’t worth it, but if you’re using appliances, heating or air conditioning, you’re producing greenhouse gases, and any reduction in GHGs has a positive impact on our fragile environment. The benefits of decarbonization can also reach beyond your time here. If you install solar panels, for example, and generate more electricity than you use, you can build up “credits,” which you can transfer to someone else or even your other home in Massachusetts.

The upfront cost of installing solar panels is, on average, paid off in ten years, though with federal and state tax credits combined with Massachusetts' SMART solar incentive, it can be as short as five years. My wife and I have had solar panels for 20 years and haven't paid an electric bill in about that same amount of time. It's also a wonderful feeling to know that living in our home doesn't put more pollution into the air.

Remember, we're all in this together...caring for this place we love.

Cape Light Compact can be reached at 800-797-6699 or www.capelightcompact.org. You can search the internet for solar installers or ask neighbors and others which installers they have used.

Georgia Neill, Volunteer with the Truro Climate Action Committee with consultation from Lili Flanders, Chair of the CAC and Maggie Downey, Cape Light Compact Administrator.