



Energize Acton News

January 2026

What is in this issue?

- **Upcoming Events**
- **Quick Action of the Month**
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January Events

Tues., Jan. 13th, First of six Tuesday sessions, 7-8pm, zoom -- **Heat Pump Coaching Basics**

Course. Sponsored by the Heat Smart Alliance. Trains local volunteers, municipal sustainability officials, and others who want to help homeowners electrify. Best for folks outside of Acton without clean energy coaches. More info and sign-up [HERE](#).

Thurs., Jan. 15th, noon-1pm, zoom – **Panel: Organizing Older Climate Voters.** Sponsored by Elders Climate Action. Find out how “Grey is the new Green” as Americans 65+ are the biggest percentage of climate-first advocates. Info and registration [HERE](#).

Tues., Jan. 20th, noon, zoom -- **How to Save Money on an Electric Car in Massachusetts.** Sponsored by the Green Energy Consumers Alliance. Learn about the state rebates for EV cars, trucks, and special deals for income eligible households. For more info and registration, click [HERE](#).

Tues., Jan. 20th, 7:00-8:00pm, zoom -- **Energy Costs and Strategies to Reduce Your Bills.** Sponsored by EnergizeActon.org and MassEnergize. Better understand your utility bills and learn 1) about potentially cost saving rates; 2) energy efficiency actions/appliances and state rebates; and 3) future trends in energy costs. Info/registration [HERE](#).

Wed., Jan. 28, 6:30-7:30pm, zoom – **The Biosphere Book Club.** Sponsored by Energize Acton.org. Join us for this text-based experiment beginning with the acclaimed book, *Is a River Alive?* All welcome whether you have read the book or not. Info/Sign-Up [HERE](#).

ENERGY COSTS

& STRATEGIES TO REDUCE YOUR BILLS

January 20, 2026
7:00-8:00pm Zoom



with Carrie Katan, Green Energy Consumers Alliance



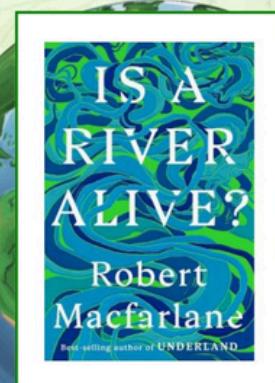
BIOSPHERE BOOK CLUB

for reflections on climate & environment

Wed., Jan. 28, 2026

7:15-8:15pm, Zoom

January Title: *Is a River Alive?*



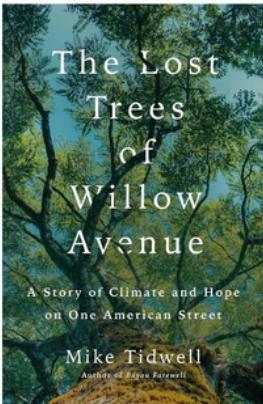
For info/sign-up, go to EnergizeActon.org.
All welcome, whether you have read the book or not.

Why not set a climate goal for 2026?

This is the quick and easy part! To give your goal more of a chance, create a timeline to accomplish your task. E.g., are you thinking of an air source heat pump? Here is a sample timeline (but you can do it much faster!).

- Jan-Feb: Research;
- Mar-Apr: Talk with a free Acton Clean Energy Coach & visit home tours ;
- May-Jun: Get at least three quotes from HVAC installers;
- Jul-Aug: Consult with your free Clean Energy Coach and decide on quote.
- Sept-Oct: Schedule the installation;
- Nov-Dec: Make sure you get the heat pump winter discount rate!

BOOK of the MONTH



[The Lost Trees of Willow Avenue](#), by Mike Tidwell. Literally tells the story of a warming climate in one's own backyard. Leaves "readers with a cautious optimism." Also, it shows neighbors in touch with each other.

WEBSITE of the MONTH



[Yale Climate Connections](#) has been featured before, but please check them out again. E.g., here is a posting about [climate misinformation](#) and what can counter the anti-science rhetoric.

A Climate Thought: How Do We Make Renewable Energy Happen?

For Boston, 2025 was the windiest year on record. Even here in Acton, away from the coast, many of us can tell stories about the past year's gusts! A really great time to promote wind energy, yes? Well, not if you work in the federal government. First, the administration paused wind projects because they said the industry had to be assessed for environmental impacts. Then, in early December, a judge threw out the executive orders against wind power. Within days the White House issued a new set of executive orders shutting down five major wind projects, claiming that wind power is a national security threat because they say turbines interfere with radar.

Should we be discouraged? Yes! And no. The administration's unprecedented assault on wind energy will go back to the courts. Plus, Gov. Healey and the main Massachusetts utilities have filed financing extensions until June 2026 that help keep the wind projects alive. We can thank the Mass. Dept of Energy Resources (DOER) for approving the extensions. But what more can we do for renewable energy? One glimmer of hope is with solar energy. Portable solar panels, all the rage in Germany, have been approved by the Utah state legislature. Also known as "balcony solar panels," these portable units are as simple as buying a TV set, according to Bright Saver, a U.S. company advocating for portable solar. Although their output is much more modest than solar rooftop panels, they feed energy directly back into the standard electrical outlet where they are plugged in, helping run basic appliances. (Heavy-duty electric loads, such as air conditioning and EV chargers, would be beyond the capacity of balcony solar.) New York and Pennsylvania lawmakers have also filed bills to allow balcony solar to bypass normal utility interconnection rules. Vermont and New Hampshire are expected to follow suit this month.



On the international stage, renewable energy is seeing amazing growth. In a recent interview with Yale Climate Connections, climate expert Bill McKibben noted that "ninety-five percent of new generation here and around the world last year came from clean energy." He went on to say that in May 2025, China was installing "the solar equivalent of a coal-fired power plant every eight hours." In another example, inexpensive solar panels have made a huge difference in Pakistan. Pakistanis, McKibben stated, have "built the equivalent of half the country's electric grid in eight months just using TikTok videos to put together solar panels." A similar expansion of solar is happening in Africa. Obviously, here in the U.S., local building departments would worry about TikTok solar installations. However, there is much we can do to standardize building codes and lower the important "soft costs" of solar in America. For instance, California, Maryland, and New Jersey have signed onto a streamlined permitting process. If you care about our climate, our natural world, our future, please do not feel beaten down. As other states and other countries show us, there are many creative ways forward.

CLEAN ENERGY HOME TOUR



Focus: Solar Shingles

SUN., MARCH 1, 2026

11am and 1pm Acton, MA Tours

Also see

- Heat Pumps
- HP Hot Water
- Induction Cooking
- EV Charging

Sponsored by EnergizeActon.org.



Help Renewable Energy in New England!

Join [The Acton Power Choice Green electricity challenge '26!](#) The goal is to increase subscriptions from 400 to 1000 in support of renewable energy.

Please save the date for our first CLEAN ENERGY HOME TOUR OF 2026! On March 1st, one of Acton's clean energy coaches will give us a tour of his home, complete with new **SOLAR SHINGLES!** This technology is relatively new and exciting to see. This household is totally electrified, with many other interesting features including battery storage and a hydronic (water) heat pump system.



Please do not forget . . .

- [The new Eversource Heat Pump Winter Discount Rate](#)
- [The free Acton Clean Energy Coach Program](#)
- [EnergizeActon.org needs you for jobs small or large.](#)

This recipe is a wonderful hearty winter salad from the Oct. 2014 *Vegetarian Times* magazine, which unfortunately is no longer published. The old magazines are pure gold!



Butternut Squash and Wild Rice Salad

SERVES 4

Finely diced raw butternut squash is stirred into warm wild rice so that it cooks slightly but still stays firm. The resulting salad gets chilled, then topped with a roasted fruit and vegetable medley.

SALAD

- 1 cup low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 cup wild rice
- ½ cup finely diced butternut squash
- 1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar, divided
- 2 Tbs. pure maple syrup
- 2 Tbs. whole-grain mustard
- 1 Tbs. olive oil
- ½ cup raisins
- ¼ cup minced chives, divided
- 1 medium shallot, minced (2 Tbs.)

ROASTED FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

- 2½ cups butternut squash chunks
- 1 cup red seedless grapes
- 1 cup fresh or thawed, frozen pearl onions, peeled
- 2 Tbs. olive oil

1 To make Salad: Bring broth and 1 cup water to a boil in medium saucepan. Stir in wild rice, and reduce heat to medium-low. Cook, covered, 30 to 40 minutes, or until rice is tender. Drain, transfer to shallow dish, and stir in butternut squash and 1½ tsp. balsamic vinegar. Cool, then chill 1 hour, or overnight.

2 Whisk together maple syrup, mustard, oil, and remaining 1½ tsp. vinegar in bowl. Stir into rice mixture with raisins, 2 Tbs. chives, and shallot.

3 To make Roasted Fruit and Vegetables: Preheat oven to 425°F. Line baking sheet with parchment paper. Toss together butternut squash chunks, grapes, pearl onions, and oil on prepared baking sheet; season with salt and pepper, if desired. Roast 25 to 30 minutes, or until squash and onions are tender and brown. Serve Roasted Fruit and Vegetables over Salad, and garnish servings with remaining 2 Tbs. chives.

PER 1½-CUP SERVING 395 cal; 8 g prot; 11 g total fat (2 g sat fat); 70 g carb; 0 mg chol; 143 mg sod; 7 g fiber; 25 g sugars  