

Clean Energy Action

Citizens working to accelerate the transition to a post-fossil fuel world.



Biennial Report 2013-2014

A Decade of Speaking Truth to Power

When a group of concerned citizens met in Boulder in 2005 to oppose the construction of Colorado's last coal-fired power plant, a common vision compelled them to take a stand. It was a vision of communities, cities and states energized by empowered citizens to respect the planet, repower with clean energy, and progress beyond dirty fossil fuels. Thanks to your support, that same vision guides Clean Energy Action's efforts to this day.

While the focus has widened from stopping one coal plant to phasing out all fossil fueled power plants across the state and the nation, we have never waived in two important ways: we speak honestly and unflinchingly, backed by solid research – about climate change, about the collapse of the coal industry, about the promise of renewable energy – and we present actionable solutions that activate communities.

Data-driven, courageous and persistent, we are willing to confront the largest utilities and assist the smallest rural towns.

While we have maintained a long-term strategy, the urgency of the climate crisis has spurred us to seize opportunities as soon as we spot them, from creating space for municipalization dialogue in climate-conscious Boulder to encouraging fossil-dominated Wyoming to rein in self-bonding programs for mine reclamation that benefited coal giants.

The climate crisis looms larger than ever. It demands that we think more critically, engage more broadly, and act more boldly. With forthright advocacy, practical solutions, and your support, we stand ready, as we have for the past decade, to meet this challenge. In the next decade, great pivotal work must be done: we hope you will join us through action and financial support as we continue to shape our once-nascent vision into a lasting reality.





From the Co-Founders

The fall of 2015 represents an important milestone for Clean Energy Action. Founded in 2005 to oppose the construction of Colorado's last coal-fired power plant, Comanche 3, we are proud of the organization that has evolved over a decade of powerful action and catalytic research on behalf of our climate.

Initially operating under the fiscal sponsorship of Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, vigorous volunteer involvement and generous giving from supporters soon allowed for an independent organization and paid staff. Throughout, CEA's core belief in Citizen Power – utilizing the skills and enthusiasm of interested community members – has allowed us to remain lean and to focus on advocacy that consistently advanced the clean energy conversation. Similarly, our aim of reducing the nation's reliance on fossil fuels has never waived.

As we celebrate a decade of speaking truth to power, this report focuses on CEA's most significant achievements with an emphasis on the last two years. Even as we pause to reflect on these accomplishments, we cannot ignore the growing urgency of the climate crisis nor can we forget the widespread damage our changing climate has already inflicted. While we have been able to accomplish a great deal with very little thus far, even greater change is needed. We need to continue to grow our revenue and expand our appeal in order to hire new staff, deepen our research and multiply our impact. We look to you for continued and generous support – together we can accelerate the pace of change in this next, most pivotal decade.

ALISON BURCHELL
LESLIE GLUSTROM

DAN FRIEDLANDER (1945-2012)



“Climate change
is unbelievably
serious. We must
move as fast
as we can.”

- Dan Friedlander



From the Operations Director **Steven Winter**



Climate realism and real solutions. This unique combination drew me from the world of social enterprise to Clean Energy Action. These are defining characteristics of CEA and, let's face it – they're needed now more than ever. We must continue to push our communities and our state to honestly confront the climate crisis and to respond with meaningful action. When we are unafraid to take risks for what we know to be right and when we refuse to back down from what we know will work well, real change is attainable. We have done it before and we will do it again.

To accomplish our goal of shutting down all of Colorado's coal plants by 2030 or sooner, we must look to the defiant display of citizen power that demanded the early retirement of the Valmont coal plant. To succeed in convincing Colorado leaders to invest in energy storage and renewables, we must value persistence like the tenacity we displayed in our successful campaign to persuade Wyoming officials to scrutinize coal companies' self-bonding qualifications. To inspire local communities to repower, we must remember the data-driven dialogue that has ushered the Boulder community forward as it begins its municipalization process.

I bring to CEA an entrepreneur's bent for attacking big problems and taking strategic risks, and a passion for engaging new stakeholders. Prior to focusing on energy and climate, these qualities have helped me build the foundations of a software startup serving progressive organizations, a law firm focused on social enterprise and a campaign to halt police brutality. As we work on your behalf, and on behalf of our planet and its myriad inhabitants, CEA must continue to address climate change in real terms and to provide real, practical responses. That's what has made it great. To meet the next round of challenges, we'll need a strong foundation, built on a broad base.

Thank you for your support,
Steven Winter



A New Coal Narrative

Data-Driven

Stories have great power. The conventional wisdom in the U.S. has been that coal is cheap and abundant. Soon after Clean Energy Action was formed, it began carefully scrutinizing all aspects of U.S. coal, issuing several highly-referenced reports, including 2013's [Warning: Faulty Reporting on U.S. Coal Reserves.](#)

These reports radically shifted the conventional coal paradigm. A careful review of the data revealed that the U.S. is rapidly approaching the end of coal that can be mined profitably. U.S. coal production likely peaked in 2008 as mines were depleted and coal companies began to go bankrupt.





CEA's findings have been reported across the country, from the [front page of the *Wall Street Journal*](#) to the *West Virginia Gazette* and [Green Tech Media](#). Changing the coal narrative has already had real consequences. Activists nationwide now question the reliability of their states' coal supplies. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) has stated that the U.S. has 200 years of coal "reserves." Now the EIA has been forced to note that describing these coal deposits as "reserves" does not mean they are economically recoverable.

Decision makers have been alerted that declining supplies of profitable coal spells serious financial trouble for the coal industry as well as U.S. national security, underscoring the need to accelerate repowering with renewable sources, independent of climate change concerns. As CEA continues challenging conventional wisdom, it will continue to shape a new narrative of what is necessary and a new paradigm of what is possible.

Cleaning Up Their Act

Persistent

Persistence can lead to success, even in unlikely circumstances. In 2012, Clean Energy Action began contacting the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, attempting to convince one of the nation's most fossil-fuel-friendly states that coal companies might soon be unable to pay to reclaim their gargantuan surface mining sites.

When a coal company begins surface mining, the company is required to provide financial assurance upfront – typically a type of insurance called a surety bond – that it will return the area to a usable condition.

In some states, like Wyoming, regulators allow coal companies to “self-bond.” If a company passes financial stress tests, it is allowed to simply promise to complete reclamation without requiring assurance upfront. Combining solid economic analyses of several coal companies facing potential bankruptcy with knowledge that some of Wyoming's biggest coal mines will likely begin playing out in the coming decade, CEA helped to spearhead a coalition that challenged Wyoming's self-bonding decisions.

Years of tenacious effort are now paying off. In spring of 2015, Wyoming denied Alpha Natural Resources, the nation's fourth largest coal producer, self-bonding status.

In August, the company declared bankruptcy, with the [New York Times](#) citing the loss of self-bonding as a significant factor. The Federal government has begun a serious inquiry into self-bonding, with the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement announcing that, “our team will examine all aspects of bonding and self-bonding.”





Formally Intervening for Our Climate


Forthright

In the summer of 2014, when Xcel Energy made a filing with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC) that proposed to decouple its revenues from its customers' energy consumption, Clean Energy Action saw a breakthrough opportunity to shift the incentive structure for Xcel. If Xcel were no longer dependent on higher and higher energy consumption to increase its profits, smart regulations that lower demand and promote efficiency could be truly effective.

In early August of last year, Clean Energy Action filed a motion to intervene in the case in support of decoupling revenues from consumption. To be granted intervention, any motion to intervene must demonstrate an interest at stake that the PUC decision would affect. What was CEA's interest in the PUC case? A stable climate. In intervening, CEA specifically highlighted its mission to mitigate "the large and growing risks associated with anthropogenic climate change."

Although for other reasons the PUC ultimately decided against exploring revenue decoupling in 2014, as CEA's intervention was granted, CEA underscored to the Commission that the climate – and the climate alone – is, as it ought to be, justification for changing how our public utilities are run and regulated.





Communities Quitting Carbon

Courageous

The courage to imagine creates a space to explore what is possible. In 2010, the renewal date of Boulder's 20-year electric utility franchise agreement with Xcel, its heavily coal-reliant utility, drew near. Clean Energy Action seized the opportunity to encourage and educate citizens and civic leaders to explore alternate, carbon-reducing strategies to meet their electricity needs. In doing so, CEA helped to galvanize community support for a shift in public policy towards a clean energy economy founded on a renewable-energy-dominated utility.

The power of information can separate what's possible from what's viable. In keeping with its commitment to provide factual grounding for community decision making, CEA brought a diverse collection of renewable energy experts and community leaders from other towns, cities, states and provinces to share successful utility transition strategies. Over the past five years, Boulder voters have determined their own path toward an affordable, reliable and clean electric utility. At each juncture, CEA has provided critical data on the operations of Xcel's system, including data on fuel supplies and fuel costs, to inform decision making and support sound financial analyses. Through collaboration with allied organizations, CEA will continue to keep the Boulder community educated and engaged in the City's exploration of the possibility and viability of municipalizing its electric utility.





Planning Early Coal Retirement

Pioneering

Xcel's Comanche 3 power plant is scheduled to keep burning coal until 2069. To avert the worst consequences of climate change, Coloradans must retire Comanche and other aging coal plants far ahead of schedule, or use them dramatically less. Combined with vast investments in renewables, this will constitute an unprecedented transition. How will Colorado finance this shift? Clean Energy Action, in partnership with the [Climate Policy Initiative](#), is working to answer that question. By modeling the carbon intensity, financial characteristics and operational flexibility of Colorado's coal fleet, CEA is finding the most economical path toward decarbonization.

Still, leaders and policymakers will need financial vehicles to guide Colorado forward. The second phase of CEA's work will be to develop a toolkit of financial options and strategies to efficiently motivate the shift toward a clean grid.



Over the next year, as Xcel submits its long-term plans for Colorado, CEA will leverage this analysis and financial toolkit to provide practical guidance and actionable recommendations. Many other states share Colorado's challenge, making CEA's work widely relevant to other states looking to discard their aging plants and invest in a clean future.

Donor Profiles

Lee Rayburn

Getting to know CEA's staff and working "on the ground" with them gave a deeper dimension to my understanding of what CEA does and the passion, expertise, and just plain authority everyone associated with CEA brings to their work. I am proud to be a monthly contributor to CEA: I know every dollar I contribute gets used to the max, leveraged by the commitment of CEA's staff and board members to address the essential issue of our time.

Joe McDonald

Clean Energy Action is an amazing team of talented, energetic, dedicated, focused and effective individuals. I think that supporting CEA is the best investment available in Colorado for our children's future.





Diane Rosenthal

I am proud to have been a strong supporter of Clean Energy Action since its inception a decade ago. CEA has remained faithful to the values that first attracted me: unrelenting, courageous and effective in their work to address climate change. It has been rewarding to see how CEA has broadened its influence beyond our community and state. I look forward to another decade of good work from CEA.



Meet Our Board Members



A professional geologist, Alison Burchell studies the natural terrestrial processes of carbon sink formation and the efficiency of biogeomimicry approaches to land reclamation. She practices a collaborative approach in facilitating stakeholders and communities to meet their resiliency goals. CEA collaborations include: working with land owners to transition from the “old energy economy” to sustainable land use and property rights decisions, co-founding the Colorado Public Banking Institute and promoting education, local agriculture, energy and environmental policy.



Trained as a biochemist, Leslie Glustrom has spent over 30 years working at the interface of science and society in a variety of roles. With Clean Energy Action she works at the local, state and national level to accelerate the transition to clean energy and has spoken around the country on this issue as well as on the faulty reporting of U.S. coal “reserves.”



A speech-language pathologist, youth leader, parent, and outdoor enthusiast, Julie Zahniser joined Clean Energy Action’s board in 2008 in response to deepening concerns about climate change. CEA’s solution-oriented programs inspired her to serve as board president for several years before becoming secretary. Other roles include community outreach, translating energy-related concepts into everyday language, and serving as a liaison to local and state-wide clean energy groups.



A writer with a passion for energy and environmental writing, Anne Butterfield has served on the Editorial Advisory Board of the *Boulder Daily Camera*, writing a monthly column featured in the *Camera*, the *Huffington Post* and *NewEnergyNews*. Her writing is compelled by her view that ordinary people ought to discuss energy issues, a view that led her into social media activism for clean energy and climate action.



A business architect for a leading global provider of environmental, health and safety IT services, Dane Cobble first came into Clean Energy Action's orbit in 2008 as a community leader and treasurer of the campaign to promote the ballot initiative that resulted in Boulder County's ClimateSmart Loan Program. The program quickly became a national model for Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) programs, attracting 612 projects totaling \$9.8 million in value in its first 6 months. Dane joined the board in 2012.



With 7 years of experience working in the solar energy industry, a passion for oil painting and deep care for our planet, Karen Conduff brings many different skills to CEA. Karen was a founding member of PV Pioneers, a group pushing the Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association to utilize clean energy. A desire to work for positive change led her to assist CEA in orchestrating Boulder's inaugural Community Energy Fair this past spring and to recently join CEA's board.



Jordan Mann first started advising Clean Energy Action staff in 2014 and quickly joined the board in January 2015. In his work life, Jordan consults with utilities on energy efficiency programs and analysis of building energy consumption. With a background in engineering, Jordan's strong technical skills compliment staff's policy expertise.

Punching Above our Weight!

Citizen Power

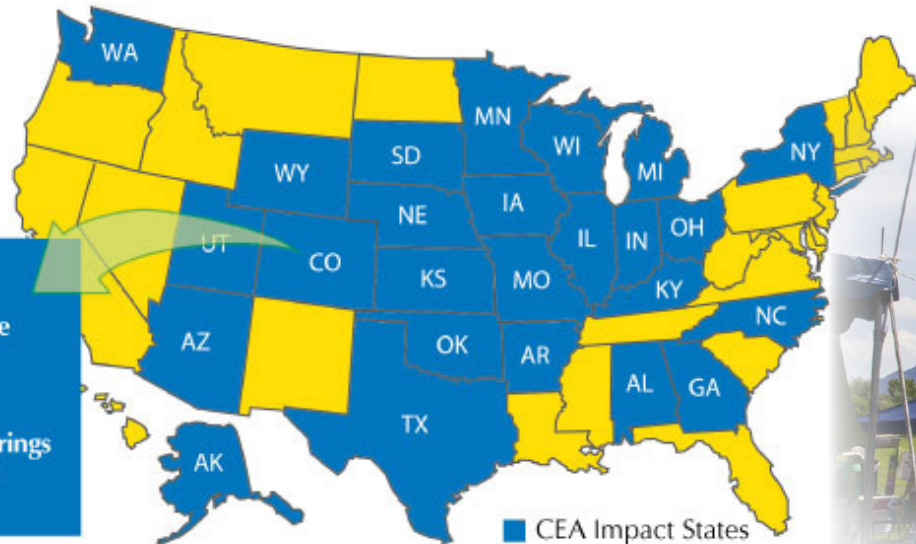
Inspiring citizens to action at the local, state, and national level!

We cannot pay all the people we need to get the job done so we inspire citizen activists to bring their skills to bear on the situation – teachers, engineers, graphic artists, organizers, analysts, and others. We've assisted efforts in Colorado communities that we've inspired and supported with data, analysis, and connections.

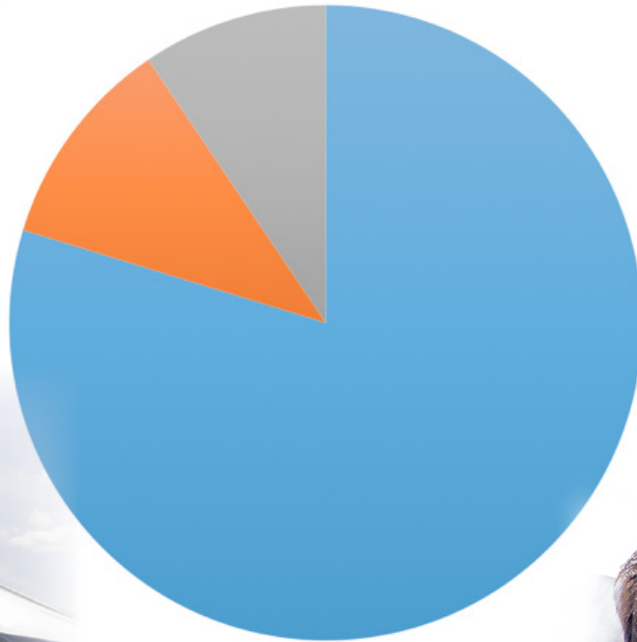


COLORADO

- ★ Steamboat
- ★ Lafayette
- ★ Boulder
- ★ Golden
- ★ Salida
- ★ Lakewood
- ★ Gunnison
- ★ CO Springs
- ★ Durango
- ★ Pueblo
- ★ Pagosa Springs
- ★ Alamosa



Financials



In 2014, CEA relied on individual donors and foundations to fund its efforts. Due to this support, CEA was able to remain focused on its program-related activities and to keep administrative and fundraising expenses low.

- Program Total (\$145,430)
- Administrative Total (\$19,720)
- Fundraising Total (\$17,275)



The First 10 Years

What we have accomplished

- **Opposed** the construction of the Comanche 3 coal plant and helped launch the national Beyond Coal movement.
- **Opposed** the “clean coal” plant proposed for Colorado, highlighting the operational and financial risks of trying to make coal “clean.” The plant did not proceed—helping to break the momentum of “clean coal” advocates.
- **Advocated** tirelessly for the further adoption of wind, solar and other clean energy alternatives.
- **Hosted** the monthly Global Warming Solutions speakers series, spoke at events throughout Colorado and around the country, and conducted a variety of workshops, helping to inspire, train, and support advocates from many states and communities.
- **Recognized** the power of local governments to drive the move to clean energy and laid the foundation for the Boulder municipalization and decarbonization efforts.
- **Challenged** the prevailing paradigm that the U.S. has a “200 year” supply of easily accessible coal that can be mined at a profit, underscoring the need to transition beyond coal independent of concerns about climate change and other environmental degradations.
- **Produced** a wide variety of carefully researched and thoroughly documented reports on key issues facing Colorado and the nation as we move beyond fossil fuels and into the wind and solar era.
- **Collaborated** with other groups to oppose natural gas production through fracking and to defend the gains made in solar and other clean energy policies.

Help Make The Next 10 Years CEA's Strongest Decade Yet!

Can you help us with a one-time or monthly [donation](#) of...

\$1,000?


\$100?

\$50?

\$25?

\$10?

CEA welcomes your gifts of appreciated stock. If you are looking to divest from fossil fuel stocks, donate them to us and turn them into investments in Clean Energy Action!



“The courage to imagine the otherwise
is our greatest resource.”

- Daniel J. Boorstin

Contact us!

720-449-6763

Clean Energy Action
PO Box 1399
Boulder, CO 80302