



Alternative Energy Coalition Records

1960-1981 (*Bulk: 1976-1980*)

8 boxes (12 linear ft.)

Call no.: MS 586

Collection overview

A product of the vibrant, progressive political culture of western Massachusetts during the early 1970s, the Alternative Energy Coalition played a key role in the growth of antinuclear activism. In 1974, the AEC helped mobilize support for Sam Lovejoy after he sabotaged a weather tower erected by Northeast Utilities in Montague, Mass., in preparation for a proposed nuclear power plant, and they helped organize the drive for a referendum opposing not only the proposed plant in Montague, but existing plants in Rowe, Mass., and Vernon, Vt. Forming extensive connections with other antinuclear organizations, the AEC also became one of the organizations that united in 1976 to form the Clamshell Alliance, which made an art of mass civil disobedience.

The AEC Records provide insight into grassroots activism of the 1970s and 1980s, galvanized by the seemingly unrestrained growth of the nuclear power industry. The records, emanating from the Hampshire County branch, contain both research materials used by the AEC and organizational and promotional materials produced by them, including publications, minutes of meetings, correspondence, and materials used during protests. Of particular interest are a thick suite of organizational and other information pertaining to the occupation of the Seabrook (N.H.) nuclear power plant in 1979 and minutes, notes, and other materials relating to the founding and early days of the Clamshell Alliance. The collection is closely related to the Antinuclear Collection (MS 547).

See similar SCUA collections:

[Alternative energy](#) [Antinuclear](#) [Famous Long Ago](#) [Massachusetts \(West\)](#)

[Peace](#)

[Political activism](#)

Background on Alternative Energy Coalition

On Washington's Birthday in 1974, a local organic farmer and member of the Montague Farm commune, Sam Lovejoy, committed an act of civil disobedience. In the early morning hours he used hand tools to fell a weather-monitoring tower erected by Northeast Utilities, the corporation that was planning to build a massive nuclear power plant in town. Leaving the wreckage behind, Lovejoy flagged down a passing patrol car and turned himself in to face the consequences, hoping to spur a public debate about the use of nuclear energy. In that he succeeded. During the weeks that followed, Lovejoy's trial garnered national attention and catalyzed the formation of antinuclear organizations such as the Alternative Energy Coalition (AEC).

Founded in Montague, the AEC offered support for Lovejoy during the trial as well as for the larger aim of building broad-based opposition to nuclear power in the wake of Richard Nixon's "Project Independence," which included a plan to build 1,000 nuclear power plants by the year 2000. From the outset, the AEC used a range of tactics to achieve their goals, from political engagement, to petitions, public awareness campaigns, and direct action. The activist Harvey Wasserman, a co-organizer of the AEC, and several of his associates created a political party to influence local elections, supporting Lovejoy as he ran for representative to town meeting, and Anna Gyorgy (another AEC founder), Marc Sills, Nina Simon, and Janice Frey for other spots under the antinuclear "No Party" ticket.

By the early spring, the AEC began collecting signatures to place a dual referendum on the ballot for the state senatorial district, the first instructing the senator to oppose the proposed plant at Montague, the second instructing him or her to "sponsor and support a resolution aimed at closing and dismantling" the region's two active nuclear power plants at Rowe, Massachusetts, and Vernon, Vermont. They were successful, gathering over 3,800 supporters.

In 1976, the AEC chose to affiliate with several antinuclear organizations to form the Clamshell Alliance, a New England-based coalition of antinuclear activists. Through acts of non-violent civil disobedience, most notably the 1976 and 1977 occupations of the Seabrook Nuclear Power plant in New Hampshire, the Clamshell galvanized the antinuclear movement and became one of the major factors in radically slowing the growth of the nuclear industry in the United States. The AEC continued as a separate organization with chapters in both Hampshire and Franklin Counties, until disbanding in about 1981. By that time, dozens of other groups were active in opposition to nuclear power, aligned with the AEC's principles of non-violent direct action.

Scope of collection

The Alternative Energy Coalition Records document the organizational life of the Massachusetts-based antinuclear activist group from approximately 1974 to 1981, centered on the Hampshire County Branch. Reflecting the AEC's dual commitment to promoting the use of renewable energy resources and opposing nuclear power, the records provide an indication both of the high degree of decentralization characteristic of the early antinuclear movement and the impressive coordination maintained between like-minded organizations.

In addition to administrative records of the Hampshire County chapter of the AEC, the collection contains fliers, newsletters, leaflets, and other promotional materials, information on alternative energy, correspondence with allied organizations, and some realia used in protesting nuclear power. Of particular interest is a thick sheaf of notes, memoranda, and minutes of meetings from the organization and early years of the Clamshell Alliance, including minutes of the Coordinating Committee and a variety of materials relating to the occupations at the Seabrook (N.H.) Nuclear Power Plant between 1977 and 1979.

The collection is organized into three series:

- **Series 1: Organizational Materials**
- **Series 2: Research**

- **Series 3: Affiliated Groups**

Series descriptions

Series 1. Organizational Materials	1973-1981	66 folders (3 linear feet)
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Series 1 contains documents produced by the AEC for its own use and day-to-day operations, including flyers, meeting announcements, project proposals, handbooks, training session materials, meeting minutes, and member contact information. The organization also created extensive planning materials, including reconnaissance maps of New England nuclear sites for non-violent protest actions and outgoing petitions to the President against nuclear power. This series contains some artifacts, including black armbands worn by AEC members during site occupations as well as handmade hitch-hiking placards. Of special note in this series are three office logbooks that AEC members annotated and used to communicate with one another during direct action engagements, and a pad of paper used by AEC and affiliated members to document--in real time--the actions of the October 6, 1979 Seabrook occupation. (This pad is in the folder entitled, "Clamshell - Seabrook Occupation, October 6th, 1979.")

Series 2. Research	1960-1980	132 folders (7.5 linear feet)
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Series 2 contains materials collected by the AEC on a wide range of alternative energy sources. Enclosed are magazine articles, newspaper clippings, and pamphlets elaborating on nuclear issues, including nuclear weapons use and the environmental impacts of nuclear energy. The AEC was committed to gathering information about non-nuclear energy sources like solar, wind, electric power, and fossil fuels. In addition, the AEC maintained a small library of books, brochures, fact sheets, catalogues, and product listings exploring practical energy conservation methods, this last intended for use of private citizens. Brochures in this series investigate topics ranging from improved house construction to composting toilets, from hot water heaters to energy-efficient fireplaces. The AEC also received weekly reports from the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (from 1976-1979) and the Department of Energy (from 1978-1979). A few representative reports are preserved in this series. The AEC also collected legislative materials denoting Massachusetts alternative energy policies.

Series 3. Affiliated Groups	1977-1980	109 folders (3 linear feet)
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Series 3 contains material relating to the AEC's extensive connections to other environmental and antinuclear activist groups, both local and national. The AEC collected newsletters, news articles, and correspondence from groups with similar objectives. The AEC's strongest link was to the Clamshell Alliance; this organization's mission, membership, planning, and operations overlapped with those of the AEC after Clamshell's founding in 1976. As such, most material in this series is devoted to the Clamshell Alliance. Other selected affiliated organizations include the Abalone Alliance (California), Crabshell Alliance, Palmetto Alliance, Potomac Alliance, Tennessee Valley Energy Alliance, Vermont Yankee Decommissioning Alliance, and the Rocky Flats Truth Force. The AEC also kept documents relating to other ideologically aligned social issues, such as the Red Power, Women's Rights, Mohawk Sovereignty, and Peace Movements.

Inventory

Series 1. Organizational Materials	1973-1981	66 folders
Artifacts: Logbooks (1976-1979) and songbook, "Songs of Seabrook"	1979	Box 1: 1
Artifacts: Four (4) Black Arm Bands	1979	Box 1: 2
Artifacts: Hitchhiking Signs	ca.1979	Box 1: 3
May 6th Coalition March on Washington	ca.1979	Box 1: 4
June 24th Occupation (1978)	1978	Box 1: 5
July 21st-22nd, 1979: Legal Seabrook	1979	Box 1: 6
October 7th Occupation Tactics and Site Access	ca.1979	Box 1: 7
November 11, 1978, Car Caravan and Demonstration	1978	Box 1: 8
AEC: 1 June 1979 Recycling Memo	1979	Box 1: 9
AEC: Finances	1978-1979	Box 1: 10
AEC: Mailing Lists	1979	Box 1: 11
AEC: Meeting Minutes	1976-1977	Box 1: 12
AEC: Meeting Minutes	1979-1980	Box 1: 13
AEC: "Nuclear Power and Alternative Energy Info Book," Office Copy	1973-1977	Box 1: 14
AEC: People Lists	ca.1979	Box 1: 15
AEC: Press Releases and Newspaper Articles	1979-1981	Box 1: 16
Alternative Energy Fair	ca.1979	Box 1: 17
Canvassing Information	ca.1979	Box 1: 18
Conferences, Speakers, Public meetings	1978	Box 1: 19
Correspondence	1977-1981	Box 1: 20
Congress File (Temporary)	1979	Box 1: 21
Danbury Federal Prison Bibliographies, etc.	ca.1979	Box 1: 22
Evaluations: No Nukes	ca.1979	Box 1: 23
Facilitating	ca.1979	Box 1: 24
Finances	1977	Box 1: 25
Hampshire County AEC News Release	1977-1978	Box 1: 26
Hampshire County Petition Forms	1979	Box 1: 27
Inventory	ca.1979	Box 1: 28
Journals and Newsletters	ca.1979	Box 1: 29
Leaflets - External	ca.1979	Box 1: 30
Mailing Lists	1979	Box 1: 31
Maps: Misc.	ca.1979	Box 1: 32
Media Contacts	1978-1979	Box 1: 33

Montague Intervention	1977-1979	Box 1: 34
Montague LPV Task Force	1977	Box 1: 35
Neutron Bomb Petitions	ca.1979	Box 1: 36
Newsletters: AEC and Other	1978-1980	Box 1: 37
Non-Violent Training Committee (Western Mass)	1978-1979	Box 1: 38
Nuke Moratorium Petitions	ca.1979	Box 1: 39
Occupation/Restoration Task Force	1977-1978	Box 2: 1
Office Business	1977-1979	Box 2: 2
People's Alliance	1977	Box 2: 3
Plymouth	1978	Box 2: 4
Poems, Songs	ca.1979	Box 2: 5
Public Education Task Force (NUKES)	1979	Box 2: 6
Railway Express Agency and Co. (Building Lease) - 1948/1958	ca.1979	Box 2: 7
RATE Hikes	1979-1980	Box 2: 8
Seabrook 1978: A Handbook	1978	Box 2: 9
Seabrook Nuke Plant	1978	Box 2: 10
Seabrook Occupation: Chronological Press Folio	ca.1978	Box 2: 11
Seabrook Petitions	ca.1978	Box 2: 12
Subscription Requests to Periodicals, etc.	1978-1979	Box 2: 13
Sun Day	1978	Box 2: 14
Survival Summer - Info	ca.1979	Box 2: 15
Three Mile Island - President Carter Petitions	ca.1979	Box 2: 16
Trident Teach-In Materials (AEC)	1977-1978	Box 2: 17
Unity Committee, April 26, 1980	1980	Box 2: 18
Valley Advocate (Newspaper)	ca.1979	Box 2: 19
Vermont Yankee Nuclear Plant	1979-1980	Box 2: 20
VYDA - March 30th 1980 - News Clippings	1980	Box 2: 21
VYDA - Proposals and Meeting Info	ca.1979	Box 2: 22
Xerox Masters - Originals for Leaflets	ca.1979	Box 2: 23
Western Mass Trainers	1979	Box 2: 24
Yankee Power Plant Petitions	1979	Box 2: 25
Year of the Child - Info	ca.1979	Box 2: 26

Series 2. Research	1960-1980	132 folders
Alternative Energy	1967-1979	Box 2: 27
Alternative Energy Clippings	1976-1977	Box 2: 28
Alternative Energy Stores and Suppliers	ca.1979	Box 2: 29
Antinuclear Groups Nationwide List	1979	Box 2: 30
Black Fox Plant (Okla.)	1979	Box 2: 31
Breeder Reactors	1973	Box 2: 32
Catalogs and Resources	1979-1980	Box 2: 33
Coal	1976	Box 2: 34
Composting Toilets	1976-1977	Box 2: 35
Conservation (General Info)	1973-1977	Box 2: 36
Consumer Publication	1976	Box 2: 37
County Voice	1979	Box 2: 38
Criminal Code Reform Act - H.R. 689, S. 1437	1978	Box 2: 39
Construction Work in Progress Public Service Co. (N.H.)	1978-1981	Box 2: 40
Department of Energy and Nuclear Regulatory Commission	1976-1980	Box 2: 41
Diablo Canyon	1977	Box 2: 42
Economics / Nuclear	1977-1979	Box 3: 1
Effects of Nuclear Power	1973-1978	Box 3: 2
Effects of Nuclear Power - Environmental	1978-1979	Box 3: 3
Electric Energy	ca.1979	Box 3: 4
Energy	1979	Box 3: 5
Energy Analyses	1979	Box 3: 6
Energy Efficient Architecture	1974-1977	Box 3: 7

Energy (General Info)	1977	Box 3: 8
Energy House	1975	Box 3: 9
Energy Task Force Alternative Currents / A.T.A.C	1979	Box 3: 10
Environmental Action / Energy Research and development Administration	1976	Box 3: 11
Environmental Hazards	1976-1978	Box 3: 12
Environmental Policy Center	1978	Box 3: 13
Environmental Protection Agency	1975-1977	Box 3: 14
Fireplaces and Hardware	ca.1979	Box 3: 15
Gas	1976-1977	Box 3: 16
G.E. Boycott	1979	Box 3: 17
Graphics		Box 3: 18
Guardian - Newsletters	1979-1980	Box 3: 19
Health and Occupational Safety	1976-1977	Box 3: 20
Hudson River	1977-1979	Box 3: 21
Hydro Electricity Dam Inventory W. Mass	1979	Box 3: 22
Hydropower	1978-1979	Box 3: 23
Insulation	1976-1977	Box 3: 24
International	1976-1977	Box 3: 25
J. P. Stevens (Corporation)	1977	Box 3: 26
Jamesport Generating Station	1976-1979	Box 3: 27
Labor Law Reform	1977-1978	Box 3: 28
Legislation	1977-1979	Box 3: 29
Legislation - Mass.	1979	Box 3: 30
Legislature - Congress	1976-1978	Box 3: 31
Literature - Antinuclear Organizations	1978-1979	Box 3: 32
Literature - Periodicals	1978	Box 3: 33
Maine Yankee	1979	Box 3: 34
The Manhattan Project - Wall Street Action, Oct. 29th	1979	Box 3: 35
Master Plan for Energy	1978	Box 3: 36
National Center for Appropriate Technology	1979-1980	Box 3: 37
Newspapers	1978-1979	Box 3: 38
Non-Energy Articles	1978	Box 3: 39
Nonviolence	1976-1977	Box 3: 40
Northampton Daycare	ca.1979	Box 3: 41
Nuclear Accidents	1976	Box 3: 42
Nuclear Accidents - Evacuation	1975-1979	Box 3: 43
Nuclear - Breeder Reactor (LMFBR Program)	1974-1978	Box 3: 44
Nuclear - Clinch River	1976-1977	Box 3: 45
Nuclear Energy - Pro Articles, Trident Launch	1979	Box 3: 46
NIRS- Nuclear Information Resource Serv.	1979-1980	Box 3: 47
Nuclear Material, Misc.	1971-1979	Box 3: 48
Nuclear Power I	1972-1976	Box 4: 1
Nuclear Power II	1974-1979	Box 4: 2
Nuclear Power III	1973-1979	Box 4: 3
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	1976-1981	Box 4: 4
Nuclear Safety	1978-1979	Box 4: 5
Nuclear Waste I	1975-1978	Box 4: 6
Nuclear Waste II	1974-1976	Box 4: 7
Nuclear Waste Disposal	1976-1977	Box 4: 8
Nuclear Waste Management	1960-1979	Box 4: 9
Oil	1976-1977	Box 4: 10
People and Energy	1979	Box 4: 11
Politics and Education, Middletown (Conn.)	1978-1979	Box 4: 12
Pollution	1975-1977	Box 4: 13
Power Plant Licensing	1975	Box 4: 14
Power Plant Safety	1978	Box 4: 15
Price-Anderson Act	1977	Box 4: 16
Promoting Enduring Peace	1979	Box 4: 17

Radiation - Low-Level Effects	1979	Box 4: 18
Radioactive Waste: New England	1976-1978	Box 4: 19
Reference Boiling Water Reactor Decommissioning	1980	Box 4: 20
Reading List	1978	Box 4: 21
Research - Bibliographies	ca.1979	Box 4: 22
Research - Journals, Newsletters, Newsclippings	1976-1980	Box 4: 23
Research - Reports	ca.1979	Box 4: 24
Rural Education Center	1980	Box 4: 25
SALT and Government Propaganda	1978-1979	Box 4: 26
Scenic Hudson - Clearwater Sunday	1978	Box 4: 27
Science Articles - oil, coal, etc.	1978-1979	Box 4: 28
Shoreham - Long Island (N.Y.)	1980	Box 4: 29
Sierra Atlantic	1978-1979	Box 4: 30
Sierra Club Literature	1978	Box 4: 31
Silkwood, Karen	1977	Box 4: 32
Soft Technology	1979	Box 4: 33
Solar	1970-1978	Box 4: 34
Solar Bulletins	1977-1980	Box 4: 35
Solar Controls	ca.1979	Box 4: 36
Solar Collector Brochures (Air)	1977	Box 5: 1
Solar Collector Brochures (Liquid)	1977	Box 5: 2
Solar Energy - Application in Homes	1976-1978	Box 5: 3
Solar Energy Clippings and Articles	1972-1979	Box 5: 4
Solar Energy - Mass.	1976	Box 5: 5
Solar Greenhouses	1977	Box 5: 6
Solar Heating Brochures	1977	Box 5: 7
Solar Heating - Domestic Hot Water Systems	1977	Box 5: 8
Solar Energy Institutes of America	1977-1980	Box 5: 9
Solar - Legislation, Government	1976-1978	Box 5: 10
Solar Lobby	ca.1979	Box 5: 11
Solar - Photovoltaics	ca.1979	Box 5: 12
Solar Satellites	1979	Box 5: 13
Street Papers	1978	Box 5: 14
Sun Power	1974	Box 5: 15
Solar Pumps		Box 5: 16
Solar Resources	1977-1978	Box 5: 17
Solar Supplies and Info Centers	1976-1977	Box 5: 18
Thermal Curtains and Insulation	1977-1978	Box 5: 19
Three Mile Island	1980	Box 5: 20
Three Mile Island Accident	1977-1981	Box 5: 21
Utilities	1976-1977	Box 5: 22
Waste Storage	1976-1979	Box 5: 23
Water Conservation 1978-1979	ca.1979	Box 5: 24
Weapons	1978-1981	Box 5: 25
Wind	1974-1976	Box 5: 26
Wind - Newspaper Clippings	1976-1979	Box 5: 27
Wood - General	1975-1978	Box 5: 28
Wood Stove Brochures	1977	Box 5: 29
Women	1979	Box 5: 30
Yankee Atomic	1980	Box 5: 31

Series 3. Affiliated Groups	1977-1980	109 folders (3 linear feet)
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Abalone Alliance	1977-1980	Box 5: 32
Affinity Groups	ca.1978	Box 5: 33
Alliance for Survival	ca.1978	Box 5: 34
AFSC - American Friends Service Committee Incorporated	1979	Box 5: 35

Anti-Draft Material Ad-Hoc Committee	1979	Box 5: 36
Arizona Mobilization for Survival	1979	Box 5: 37
Berkshire AEC	1977	Box 5: 38
Berkshire Alliance for Safe Energy	1979	Box 5: 39
Black Hills Alliance	ca.1979	Box 5: 40
Che Lumumba School	1979	Box 5: 41
Citizen's Energy Project of Washington DC	1979	Box 5: 42
Citizens for Safe Energy Dorset (Vt.)	1979-1980	Box 5: 43
Citizens for Safe Power Transmission (Red Hook, NY)	1978	Box 5: 44
Citizen's Party (Citizens Committee)	ca.1979	Box 5: 45
Clamshell: 1978-1979 Fall River Reactor Blockade	ca.1979	Box 5: 46
Clamshell: Additional Resources	ca.1979	Box 5: 47
Clamshell: Affinity Groups Membership	ca.1979	Box 5: 48
Clamshell: Internal Committees	1978	Box 5: 49
Clamshell: Clamshell Alliance Newsletters	1977-1979	Box 5: 50
Clamshell: Clamshell Alliance News Releases	1976-1977	Box 5: 51
Clamshell: Blockade Handbook	1978	Box 5: 52
Clamshell: Boston Chapter	1977-1980	Box 5: 53
Clamshell: Brainstorms	1977	Box 5: 54
Clamshell: "Clams for Democracy"	ca.1979	Box 6: 1
Clamshell: Conferences, Western Mass.	1978	Box 6: 2
Clamshell: Clamshell Congress	1979-1980	Box 6: 3
Clamshell: Clamshell Congress Proposals	1978-1979	Box 6: 4
Clamshell: Contacts	1974-1979	Box 6: 5
Clamshell: Coordinating Committee, Part 1	1978	Box 6: 6
Clamshell: Coordinating Committee, Part 2	1978	Box 6: 7
Clamshell: Coordinating Committee	1979	Box 6: 8
Clamshell: Coordinating Committee Reports	ca.1979	Box 6: 9
Clamshell: Legal Info	1977-1979	Box 6: 10
Clamshell: Non-Violent Training Sessions	1978	Box 6: 11
Clamshell: Occupation I and II	1976	Box 6: 12
Clamshell: Organizational Materials I	1977	Box 6: 13
Clamshell: Organizational Materials II	1979-1980	Box 6: 14
Clamshell: Rally, October 23	ca.	Box 6: 15
Clamshell: Resources: Reading Lists, films, magazines	ca.1979	Box 6: 16
Clamshell: Seabrook Action	1978	Box 6: 17
Clamshell: Seabrook Action, May 24	1980	Box 6: 18
Clamshell: Seabrook Occupation, May 30	1977	Box 6: 19
Clamshell: Seabrook Occupation, Memos	ca.1977	Box 6: 20
Clamshell: Seabrook Occupation, Oct. 6	1979	Box 6: 21
Clamshell: Seabrook Occupation Oct. 6th Newspaper Clippings	1979	Box 6: 22
Clamshell: Training Information	1976-1978	Box 6: 23
Clamshell: Training for Trainers	ca.1977	Box 6: 24
Clean Energy Petition PIDC Correspondence	1978	Box 6: 25
Coalition for Direct Action at Seabrook	1979-1980	Box 6: 26
Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy	1979-1980	Box 6: 27
Community for Creative Nonviolence	ca.1979	Box 6: 28
Concerned Citizens of Rhode Island: Clippings to be Filed	1978	Box 6: 29
Concerned Citizens for Safe Energy (Stuyvesant, N.Y.)	ca.1979	Box 6: 30
Connecticut Citizen Action Group	1977	Box 6: 31
Crabshell Alliance	1978	Box 6: 32
Critical Mass (Citizens' Movement for Safe and Efficient Energy)	1976-1978	Box 6: 33
Dorothy Day Community	1980	Box 6: 34
Eastern Federation of Nuclear Opponents and Safe Energy Proponents	1978	Box 6: 35
Energy News of Hampshire AEC	1978	Box 6: 36
Food for Thought	1979	Box 6: 37

Franklin County AEC	1977-1979	Box 6: 38
Franklin County Energy Project	1979	Box 6: 39
Green Mountain Post Films	1978	Box 6: 40
Greenpeace	ca.1979	Box 6: 41
Hampshire County AEC	1977-1979	Box 6: 42
Haymarket News	1979-1980	Box 6: 43
John Brown Anti-Klan Committee	1980	Box 6: 44
International Nuclear Protest Groups	1978-1979	Box 6: 45
Labor Party Literature	1977	Box 6: 46
Long River Project	1980	Box 6: 47
Lower Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Committee	1980	Box 6: 48
Mass. Alliance for a Safe Energy Future	1979	Box 6: 49
Mass PIRG	1974-1980	Box 7: 1
Michigan PIRGIN	1979	Box 7: 2
Mobilization for Survival	1978-1979	Box 7: 3
Mobilization in Pioneer Valley	1979	Box 7: 4
Mohawk Nation	1979	Box 7: 5
Municipal Power Advocacy Coalition	1979	Box 7: 6
MUSE - Musicians United for Safe Energy	1979	Box 7: 7
Natural Guard	ca.1979	Box 7: 8
NECNP - New England Coalition on Nuclear Pollution	1975-1977	Box 7: 9
Nuclear Power Resources (New York PIRG, etc.)	1977-1978	Box 7: 10
NYS Alliance to Save Energy	1973-1978	Box 7: 11
Pacific Alliance		Box 7: 12
Palmetto Alliance	1978-1979	Box 7: 13
Pennsylvania		Box 7: 14
Pioneer Valley War Tax Resistance	1979	Box 7: 15
PIRG New Jersey	1975-1976	Box 7: 16
Potomac Alliance	1979	Box 7: 17
RADS - Radiation Alert Development Signpost, New Hampshire Local	1980	Box 7: 18
Rath Proposal	ca.1979	Box 7: 19
Regional Environmental Council - Worcester, Mass.	1977-1978	Box 7: 20
Rocky Flats Truth Force	1979	Box 7: 21
SANE - Citizens' Organization for a Sane World (D.C.)	1979-1980	Box 7: 22
SCANN - Student Coalition Against Nukes Nationwide	1979	Box 7: 23
Shad Material (NYC Shad Alliance)	1978-1979	Box 7: 24
SNDF - Stuyvesant Nuclear Discussion Forum	1978	Box 7: 25
Solar Rollers	1978	Box 7: 26
Solar Strollers	ca.1979	Box 7: 27
Tennessee Valley Energy Alliance	1979	Box 7: 28
Texas	1979	Box 7: 29
Traprock	ca.1979	Box 7: 30
Trojan Decommissioning Alliance	1977	Box 7: 31
UMass Energy	1978-1979	Box 7: 32
Union of Concerned Scientists	1978	Box 7: 33
Vermont Yankee Decommissioning Alliance	1979-1980	Box 7: 34
Women and Life on Earth	ca.1979	Box 7: 35
Workers Alliance	1977-1978	Box 7: 36

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Gary Tartakov, December 2008 (Accession number 2008-295).

Processing Information

Processed by Katherine Barrett, Cameron Brown, Rebecca Guernsey, and Morgan Hubbard, December 2010.

Related Material

Among several other collections in SCUA relating to the antinuclear movement, see:

- Antinuclear Collection (MS 547): includes materials stemming from the Franklin County chapter to the AEC.
- Citizens Awareness Network Records

See also the **Clamshell Alliance Papers** (MC 77) at the University of New Hampshire Library, Milne Special Collections.

Language:

English

Copyright and Use (More information

Cite as: Alternative Energy Coalition Records (MS 586). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

Search terms

Subjects

- Antinuclear movement--Massachusetts.
- Hampshire County (Mass.)--History.
- Nonviolence--Massachusetts.
- Nuclear Energy--Massachusetts.
- Pacifists--Massachusetts.
- Political activists--Massachusetts.
- Renewable energy sources.
- Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant (N.H.).
- Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station.

Contributors

- Alternative Energy Coalition. **[main entry]**
- Clamshell Alliance.

Genres and formats

- Realia.

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[Political activism](#)