



## **Net Zero 2020 Conference Sparks Widespread Interest in Addressing Climate Change While Building a Green Regional Economy**

*By Richard F. Delaney*

The Cape Cod Climate Change Collaborative's [Net Zero 2020: REIMAGINE REBUILD RENEW](https://NetZeroCapeCod.org) ([NetZeroCapeCod.org](https://NetZeroCapeCod.org)) conference, held Oct. 23, assembled a powerful group of presenters who delivered a timely and useful program to an audience of more than 650 participants from across the nation. The conference was the Climate Collaborative's third annual, and first virtual, conference.

As our team began to plan our conference back in March, the COVID-10 pandemic was just beginning to take hold, presenting two significant challenges for conference planners: 1) how to conduct an annual conference under strictures imposed by COVID-19; and 2) how to be relevant, useful, and inspirational in the face of economic setbacks and hardships experienced by organizations and individuals regionwide. The [Net Zero 2020 REIMAGINE REBUILD RENEW](https://NetZeroCapeCod.org) conference, by all measures, met both challenges.

First, by pivoting to a virtual event, we were able to secure presenters from far and wide—in fact, from California to Cotuit! Our 44 panelists included net zero builders from the northwest, indigenous and faith leaders from New England, business leaders from the region, public policy makers throughout the Commonwealth, and young and seasoned activists on the local and national stages. Our keynote speaker, Mindy Lubber, CEO of Ceres, Inc.—a world renowned leader on business, sustainability, and the climate crisis—kicked off the conference by describing the intersection of profitable businesses and climate-friendly business practices. Heather Goldstone of the Woodwell Climate Research Center closed the conference by describing the inevitability of climate change and the need for organizational and individual action.

Second, by “going virtual,” we were able to offer 30+ presentations along three tracks loosely defined as Jobs, Public Policy & Economic Development, Green Toolkits for Businesses & Nonprofits, and Social Responsibility & Climate Activism. Panelists offered insight and inspiration on a wide range of climate change topics including energy, equity, and economic development, ranging from macro-level discussions about the future of wind energy and jobs to green business incentives for businesses and individuals, to local fishers' pivots to haddock chowder.

Finally, and most importantly, we were able to open the conference to a wider public, hosting nearly 650 attendees from across the region, state, and country, bringing the number of participants to four times those hosted by prior in-person events. And, thanks to the generosity of our 45 sponsors and patrons, the Climate Collaborative was able to offer this event at no cost to participants!

Net Zero 2020 resulted in a significant coming together of many sectors who learned about and shared strategies to support an inclusive economy and sustainable environment in our region.

So, with the conference behind us, how do we build on the great energy, ideas and connections generated by NetZero 2020?

- Watch the conference...again and again, or for the very first time. Recordings of the entire conference are available at our event website [NetZeroCapeCod.org](https://NetZeroCapeCod.org) for you to view and share with your friends, colleagues, and constituents.
- Continue to learn and connect. Our [virtual conferencing platform](#) will remain active for the next 6+ months, so interested individuals may continue to ask questions, download resources, meet up with sponsors, network, and share ideas for months to come.
- The Climate Collaborative will “evergreen” Net Zero 2020’s work by presenting periodic webinars on topics covered by the conference, providing ongoing opportunity for conversation, education, collaboration, and action....so stay tuned.

The Cape Cod Climate Change Collaborative is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to reach carbon neutrality—or net zero—on Cape Cod and the Islands of Massachusetts by enhancing communication, collaboration, and activism among organizations, programs and individuals committed to mitigating the climate crisis. We welcome the intelligence, contributions, and financial support of volunteers and members from across the region. Sign up for our newsletter, volunteer or donate to advance the collaborative's mission. For more information, visit <https://capecodclimate.org/>.

Together, we can all help to move our region to net zero, while rebuilding an economy that is clean, green, and equitable for all.

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