

the greenlife *seasonally*

MEMBERS' QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER • VOLUME 1, NO. 2 • WINTER 2005

On the Green Side

For the past four years, environmental regulations have been steadily rolled back by the corporate-driven machinations of federal government. In light of November's election results, it is likely that policy makers will attempt more of the same in the years to come, leaving it up to conscientious citizens and state-level legislators to protect our bedrock environmental laws.

In light of the challenges ahead, why are many environmental advocates, including we at The Green Life, optimistic about the future of the planet? It's because we have looked outside the political sphere into the marketplace at important environmental proceedings of the recent past, and at current green trends that will continue to change the world.

Sales of environmentally friendly products are growing spectacularly. In 2003, Americans spent over \$10 billion on organic foods; the organic market is expected to top \$30 billion by 2009. In the auto industry, despite inexcusable five-figure waiting lists, more drivers than ever are taking the wheel of hybrid vehicles. Last year, mainstay models rolled off the assembly line in record numbers, while new additions, including the Ford Escape Hybrid, began production. 2004 was indeed the year of the hybrid, as the second-generation Toyota Prius earned *Motor Trend's* coveted Car of the Year award. Green power, which began commercially in the early 1990s with a spark of interest among a few scattered utilities, has touched down in electricity markets across the country. Green-e, the principal certifier of green power, reports that sales of renewable energy certificates multiplied 12-fold between 2002 and 2003.

Many consumers and investors, moving past the traditional buyer-seller relationship with companies, are serving as activists in the momentum-building victories of market campaigns.

In 2004 alone, several major corporations responded to advocacy pressure by making voluntary environmental pledges. The No Dirty Gold campaign, endorsed by The Green Life, pushed Tiffany's to add a green polish to its jewelry. Royal Caribbean, targeted in our *Don't Be Fooled* report for its unacceptable pollution controls, agreed to advocacy group Oceana's request to install advanced wastewater treatment systems on all its ships. Other success stories included a promise from Dell and Hewlett-Packard to assume greater responsibility for e-waste, and Bank of America's and Citigroup's adoption of sweeping environmental policies.

Shareholder resolutions supported by the socially responsible investing community swayed Southern Company, Cinergy, American Electric Power and TXU to publicly report on climate change issues. It's likely that many more corporations will soon follow suit, thanks to a study by the General Accounting Office and a joint report from United Nations, Standard & Poor's and SustainAbility both emphasizing the significance of environmental liabilities.

Even without scouring statistics and pouring over press releases, as we so enjoy doing, one can't help but see signs of a strengthening consumer commitment to sustainability: Whole Foods Markets on street corners coast-to-coast; a substantial proportion of advertisements – not just in niche magazines, but on network TV – carrying environmental themes; and though we haven't all had a chance to drive the egg-shaped Honda Insight that gets over 60 miles per gallon, we've at least taken a gander at one.

For the next four years and beyond, we, the nation's consumers, investors and citizens, can ensure that these signs foreshadow a steady flow of good green news coming down the pike.

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The Green Life helps the growing number of environmentally aware, health conscious Americans make informed lifestyle decisions. Through education, outreach and advocacy, we support a demand-driven movement toward sustainable consumption, while guarding against supply-side greenwash.

Formerly known as Earthday Resources for Living Green, The Green Life houses the program of Earth Day 2000.

All membership contributions to The Green Life, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, are tax-deductible as charitable contributions.

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Stop Waiting, Start Sustaining

We are the ones we've been waiting for," cried author and activist David Korten from the main stage of San Francisco's Concourse Exhibition Center, site of the 2004 Green Festival held November 6th and 7th. Professorial in an oxford shirt and with a gray beard and sweaty brow, he rallied an audience possessed of mixed appearance but common environmental values.

In his speech entitled *Renewing the American Experiment*, Korten compared today's legion of environmentally aware, health-conscious citizens to 18th-century revolutionaries, battling the modern corporate empire and the British Royal Empire, respectively, "armed only by the moral power of an idea."

The contemporary idea is sustainability, supplied by green businesses, de-

manded by green consumers, an alternative to what Korten called "the global suicide economy," which, in a blind push to maximize profit, destroys the social and environmental systems that enable its existence.

At the Green Festival the idea was in full force. Four hundred environmentally screened businesses exhibited their individual expressions of sustainability to a two-day crowd of 25,000.

Vendors including Annie's Homegrown, the Endangered Species Chocolate Company, Food For Life and Bumble Bar served sundry snacks, all vegetarian or vegan, many locally grown. Live animals, like animal-based foods, weren't permitted inside the festival, but their owners could bring them back a bite from Pet Promise Inc. ("Let byproducts be bygones.") Thanks to Thanksgiving Coffee, EcoTeas, Helios Nutri-

tion, Equal Exchange and other beverage makers on hand, diners had plenty of ways to wash down the delicious food.

Clothing and personal care companies catered to those seeking style as well as sustenance. Indigenous Designs, Blue Canoe, Evergreen Hemp and Kate Scott were among the exhibitors contributing wardrobe options. There were specialized selections for babies

(Speesees), brides (Conscious Clothing) and bikers (Byketrash). Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps, Lotus Moon Skin Care, Trillium Herbal, Dropwise Essentials and others displayed chemical-free products for cultivating a natural glow.

Food and clothing are the staple goods of any society, sustainable or not. Humans also need shelter, preferably equipped with electricity. The Green Festival featured more than a dozen companies from the sectors of green building, natural homes and renewable energy, such as: Gaia Productions, which outfits residences to run on solar and wind power; Greener Lifestyles, an eco-friendly furnishings store; CCenergy, a community cooperative; Sky Chairs, home of the hanging chair for indoors or out; and Flooring Alternatives, supplying bamboo, cork and sustainable wood floors.

Anyone familiar with Maslow's hierarchy of needs knows that financial security, like housing, helps one feel at ease in the world. Mortgage lenders (Mortgagegreen), money managers (Girton Capital Management), banks (ShoreBank) and business schools

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Suggesting Room for Improvement

The socially responsible investing (SRI) community is abuzz in response to a report by Paul Hawken entitled “Socially Responsible Investing: How the SRI Industry Has Failed to Respond to People Who Want to Invest With Conscience and What Can Be Done to Change It.” As its exhaustive title suggests, the report, released in October, features a set of conclusions and recommendations that cast a harsh light on the industry.

Today, SRI is a \$2.16 trillion sector of the U.S. financial market, accounting for \$1 out of every \$9 under professional management. According to the Social Investment Forum, America’s SRI trade group, “As owners of companies, SRI shareholder advocates played a key role in important corporate social and environmental responsibility advances.” SRI’s victories include convincing Home Depot and Staples to preserve old-growth forests, ending the use of mercury in thermometers produced by Cardinal Health and other manufacturers, and eliciting documents related to climate change from a host of energy companies. In cases where SRI is not designed to reform corporations from within, at the least, through screening, it enables individuals to determine the types of businesses their investments support.

While Hawken does not dismiss SRI as a tool for change, he believes it can be sharpened. The report’s major findings include:

- Barely 20 percent of screened investments (either *negatively screened* to keep out irresponsible companies or *positively screened* to seek out responsible ones) are in portfolios that engage in or are willing to engage in shareholder advocacy, a strategy through which shareholders reform corporations from within. Though shareholder advocacy is often cited as a reason to invest in SRI funds, and as justification for their holdings in dubious companies, this statistic calls into question the depth of the industry’s commitment to social and environmental change. A mere handful of companies, among them Green Century and Trillium Asset Management, are responsible for filing the bulk of shareholder resolutions related to the environment. If SRI funds are serious about leveraging their power as shareholders, they should engage in more shareholder advocacy.
- The SRI industry has no standards, definitions or regu-

lations. Since any mutual fund can be labeled “SRI,” it is difficult and in some cases impossible for prospective investors to make informed investment decisions based on social and environmental criteria. SRI funds should make their criteria more transparent, specific and understandable to investors.

- The list of the top equity holdings of American companies by SRI funds is virtually identical to that of the large-cap companies comprising the Dow Jones Industrial Average. The resemblance casts doubt on the difference between SRI funds and ‘conventional’ funds. To clarify their distinction, SRI funds should adopt new screening criteria that promote investment in socially and environmentally beneficial companies above companies considered neutral or “best-in-class” within an inherently destructive industry. In practice, that might mean funneling money out of a relatively responsible oil company, such as BP, and into smaller, more capital-hungry companies in the renewable energy sector. In this way, the SRI industry can hasten the arrival of next-generation technologies.
- The SRI industry misleads investors about the socially and environmental responsibility of their investments. The language used in literature, advertising and even the names of an SRI fund may be poor reflections of the investment strategy employed the fund’s managers. For example, the Global Environment Fund has holdings in Monsanto and other companies of questionable environmental responsibility. SRI funds should ensure that the language they employ to communicate with investors is aligned with their internal operations. Thus they should not make environmental issues the focus of their advertisements when those issues are not equally visible in their portfolios. Likewise, when an SRI fund sings the praises of shareholder advocacy, it should be practicing what it preaches.

Many within the SRI community feel that in proposing tighter boundaries governing the industry, Hawken fails to con-

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Defending the High Ground

Most times professional skiers take to the mountaintop they put their livelihoods at risks—and the danger has nothing to do with their daring runs. For all the energy it takes them to maneuver down the mountain, it takes much more to carry them up on motorized chair lifts, to cushion their ride with machine-made snow, and to groom their trails with diesel-fueled Snowcats. The Aspen Skiing Company (ASC), host of ESPN's Winter X Games held January 29-February 1, estimates that each of its 1.3 million visitors per year accounts for 52 pounds of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere, contributing to a global warming problem that may eventually spell the doom of the ski industry.

But competitors' jobs were kept secure at the "climate neutral" Winter X Games. By purchasing wind power and carbon credits (investments in renewable energy or carbon-capturing forests), ESPN plans to offset the 421,136 pounds of carbon emissions generated at the event.

Despite ESPN's efforts, an Everest-sized predicament still remains. A recent report from the United Nations warned that global warming will raise snowlines and reduce annual snowfall worldwide, while a U.S. Geological Survey hydrologist estimates that snowlines in California may climb from 1000 to 1500 meters this century. By 2070, North American ski resorts may need to nearly triple artificial snowmaking to compensate for the changing climate. Not all will be able to keep pace. Fake snow is not only of poorer quality than natural powder, it is also expensive – costing tens of thousands of dollars per mile – and demands volumes of water, a scarce commodity for alpine residents and their neighbors downriver. Within several decades, many resorts could be forced to ground their gondolas.

Frustratingly, resorts will not be able to decide their own fate. Though the ski industry is one of the top three carbon emitters in the tourism sector, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, the sector in its entirety represents less than one percent of the nation's overall energy use. As emissions at the Winter X Games are being neutralized, tailpipes and smokestacks across the country will yield additions to global warming.

Even so, many resorts are unwilling merely to watch their business melt away. ASC and roughly 25 others use renewable energy to power a portion of their operations. In 2003, ski resorts that endorse Sustainable Slopes, the ski industry's voluntary environmental charter, purchased 47,489 megawatt hours (mwh) of

One of Aspen Skiing Company's biodiesel-fueled snowcats.

renewables and generated 943 mwh on their own, from on-site sources such as ASC's hydroelectricity plant.

Not that many in the ski industry couldn't try harder to save themselves. 175 resorts, representing close to three-quarters of the industry, belong to Sustainable Slopes. Since only a few dozen run partially on renewables, the vast majority operate on fossil fuels only. This, regardless of an official "Climate Change Policy" in the charter by which resorts pledge to pursue "solutions to climate change, including the use of renewable energy technologies."

Reasons for not implementing renewables range from their limited geographic availability to resorts' low profit margins, which restrict paying a premium on green electricity. Unfortunately, the narrow bottom-line argument is the same one used by automakers, oil companies and most other status quo-preservers loath to sacrifice short-earnings for long-term environmental and economic sustainability. As one of the first victims of global warming, the ski industry should use its front-line position to lead by example.

In April 2004, 70 resorts attempted to do so by signing a letter of support for the McCain-Lieberman Climate Stewardship Act, which would control emissions through a cap-and-trade mecha-

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The Fabric of The Green Life

I don't see how an article of clothing can be indecent. A person, yes.

– Robert Heinlein

The famous science fiction writer must not have examined apparel from an environmental angle. Clothing *can* be indecent, assuming decency has something to do with protecting the health of humans and wildlife.

Consider cotton, the most common fabric on the planet. Though cotton crops occupy just 3 percent of the world's farmland, cotton growers use nearly 25 percent of the world's insecticides and more than 10 percent of the world's pesticides. Shoveled on top—literally—are synthetic fertilizers that contain heavy metals and other toxins.

Between droplets of poison and mounds of dirty earth, each 100 percent cotton t-shirt accounts for nearly one-third of a pound of chemicals. Add polyester to the blend, and a one-pound t-shirt can contribute one-quarter of its weight in air pollutants and 10 times its weight in carbon dioxide.

Failed Revolutions

Use of agricultural chemicals exploded during the second half of the 20th century. As essential agents of the Green Revolution, they boosted crop yield in many areas of the world. However, their benefits came at a cost: contaminated drinking water, a befouled food supply and harm inflicted on more species than intended.

Today, on farms that underwent the Green Revolution decades ago, some yields are on the decline despite ever-increasing use of chemicals. Bacteria are developing resistances while new insects are moving in to replace those which pesticides have eradicated. The result is a downward spiral of chemical dependency: between 1991 and 1995, for example, pesticide use in California jumped from 4.21 to 14.15 pounds per acre.

Lately, the proliferation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) has been touted as the Second Green Revolution, capable of permanently reversing the diminishing returns of chemical use. Of course, as the redux revolution was just getting off the ground, in order to hasten it, biotechnology companies insisted they could not be bothered with precautionary long-term environmental impact studies. But now that biotechnology has taken power on farms across the globe, scientists and farmers are seeing, even after just a few harvests, GMOs corrupt natural agricultural systems by facilitating quick resistances among crop-killers to the newly introduced, lethal genes. In China, researchers have observed that Bt

cotton, a commonly-used genetically modified strain, may lose its effect on the cotton bollworm, the primary pest it targets, in 6 to 7 years.

Bale to a New King?

Here in America, genetically modified cotton is king, accounting for 75 percent of overall production. Yet there is an upstart challenger to the throne. The popularity of organic cotton is rising, among growers, manufacturers, retailers and consumers, particularly women.

Organic cotton is grown under the same guidelines as organic food's, meaning no synthetic fertilizers, toxic pesticides or genetic engineering. While organic cotton has yet to match the success of the \$10 billion organic food industry, in 2003, organic fiber products grossed \$85 million. In the U.S., 20 million pounds of organic cotton were sold in 2003, up from 6 million pounds in 2001.

Though organic clothing stores have been hawking their wares for years, the recent surge in sales has been driven in large part by bigger conventional companies with new, complementary interests in corporate citizenship and attracting eco-friendly, health-conscious consumers. In 1996, Patagonia decided to make its entire cotton line 100 percent organic. Five years later, Nike pledged to make all of its cotton garments at least 5 percent organic by 2010, while in 2002 the sportswear giant created a 100 percent organic line for women. The organic line at American Apparel, which retail analysts believe could be the next Gap, has consistently doubled in sales each month. Deservingly, the stalwarts are also getting their share the action. Of the Earth has manufactured organic clothing since 1992. On Earth Day, 2004, it opened its first store, located next to its company headquarters in Bend, Oregon.

Despite strong demand at the consumer and corporate levels, organic cotton is still a long way from usurping dominance of the clothing industry from its conventional cousin: less than one percent of the U.S. cotton crop is grown organically. For now, it is enough to keep small victories in mind: purchasing a three-pack of 100 percent organic undershirts eliminates a pound of toxic chemicals.

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Green Festival

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Equal Exchange staff serve up a sustainable brew.

(Bainbridge Graduate Institute) imparted their wisdom of how to do well by doing good.

Beyond the basic and the bountiful, exhibitors offered a variety of crafts from Africa (Ananse Village), Mexico (Etnia Design), India (Meditation Art) and, indeed, all over the world (Global Exchange).

Despite the vast assortment of products, visitors to the Green Festival weren't only there to buy. Korten, for example, was one of 60 speakers representing a range of interests and expertise. Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich delivered one of his first speeches since Election Day. George Lakoff, a UC-Berkeley linguistics professor whose theories on 'framing' political issues have made him a popular pundit, discussed how changing the rhetorical style of environmental messages can "reclaim green consensus" in America. Janine Benyus, author of *Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature*, fascinated listeners with accounts of scientists studying sea kelp to invent alternatives to antibiotics, airplanes adapting the spiral of the nautilus shell to improve flight efficiency, and doctors developing vaccines that won't spoil (as approximately half of vaccines do) by incorporating the resilient properties of the star cactus.

The main stage where the prominent speakers above held audiences rapt was just one of several lecture, discussion and entertainment venues. Musical acts played at the

Natural Foods Café, while on the Community Stage, experts gave how-to lessons on permaculture, biodiesel, urban composting, living off of the electricity grid and putting surplus solar energy back into it.

In between main stage presentations by Peter Camejo, a founder of the socially responsible investing movement, and Youth Speaks, a group of teenage poets and spoken word performers, Alisa Gravitz, president of Co-op America stepped to the podium to describe her hopes for the future of the Green Festival. On the heels of what was, for many in the audience, a disappointing election, Gravitz said her goal is "to bring the Green Festival to the red states." A joint project of Co-op America and Global Exchange, the Green Festival was first organized in San Francisco in 2002, and has come back every year since. It has also made stops in Austin, Texas, in 2003, and Washington, DC, in 2004. (Austin may be a red-state capital, but it has a blue-state green streak.)

Just as the idea of independence overcame the American colonies more than two hundred years ago, the idea of sustainability is now sweeping across the United States. The dates and sites of the 2005 Green Festival will be announced later this year—events are typically held in the fall. Visit www.greenfestivals.org for more information as it becomes available. ■

SRI Funds

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sider the value of SRI's openness. "SRI funds offer a wide range of options for investors in order to meet diverse ethical and investing criteria," explains Alisa Gravitz, vice president of the Social Investment Forum.

"Every time an SRI firm adds a company to one of its portfolios it's a difficult decision, because we know that our customers often have differing views on the types of companies that belong in these portfolios," says Ethan Berkwits, vice president of marketing at Green Century Capital Management. "The important thing is for firms to be clear about the standards they apply to their investments, and to be consistent in applying them."

Others in the SRI arena attacked the feasibility of implementing Hawken's recommendations. Quaint as it would be for SRI funds to help cultivate only good companies while nursing the bad ones into environmental and social health, "we simply do not have the luxury of waiting for utopia," states one industry representative. "The rest of us are trying to make this work in the real world."

Hawken, author, businessman and executive director of the Natural Capital Institute, is a leading thinker and favorite friend of the environmental movement. He therefore surprised SRI professionals when, without attempting first to engage them in dialogue, he publicly aired grievances that were already being addressed privately within the industry. At a time when SRI funds are still struggling to accumulate a critical amount of constructive capital, negative press is not only bad for business, it may obstruct the positive agendas that the industry is trying to advance.

But what's out is out and, months after the report's release, the question of confidentiality is moot. The issues that will shape the future of the SRI industry are in the open and are being discussed candidly. As yet, it is too soon to tell what substan-

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Sustainable Skiing

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nism. The bill failed in Congress, and though it is implausible that a stronger show of support from the ski industry would have changed the vote, perhaps if the ski industry were to mandate reductions among Sustainable Slopes participants, and enforce them by invalidating the endorsements of noncompliant resorts, then its arguments for national GHG emissions reductions would be more convincing.

In their backing of the concrete targets expressed in the Climate Stewardship Act, resorts demonstrated an understanding that voluntarism alone will not curb climate change. And yet they persist in keeping Sustainable Slopes without fixed standards or meaningful incentives for making environmental progress.

Last year, researchers at George Washington University and the University of

Colorado studied Sustainable Slopes and found that, on average, endorsers actually performed worse on environmental issues than non-endorsers. Apparently, absent any actual accountability, opportunistic resorts treat the charter as a public relations ploy.

The study is not definitive. It is possible that some unaccounted-for difference between the two sets of subjects – for example, that endorsers tend to be larger or situated in more environmentally sensitive areas – skewed the findings.

Still, the surprising disparity should make the ski industry sensitive to the use of greenwash to mask corporate environmental irresponsibility. After all, greenwash from the oil and auto industries has played a significant role in delaying political action on global warming.

This spring, when the ski industry plans to review Sustainable Slopes for the

charter's 5th anniversary, it will have the chance to take a stand against greenwash. First, it should set concrete goals for endorsers. If they aren't met, endorsers can be put on probation or booted from the Sustainable Slopes, leaving it stronger for those that remain. Secondly, the industry can invite independent compliance-certification to replace the current system in which resorts fill out unmonitored self-assessments.

To help the ski industry carry out these measures, visit www.thegreenlife.org/greenwasheraugust2004.html. To find out how your local resort performs on environmental issues, check out the Ski Areas Citizens' Coalition's Environmental Scorecard at www.skiareacitizens.com. To see what an environmentally responsible ski resort looks like, go to www.aspensnowmass.com/environment/. ■

SRI Funds

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tive reactions, if any, Hawken has catalyzed. In the meantime, it holds true that, as the Social Investment Forum's Joe Keefe contends, SRI is "the best means, indeed the only means for investors to integrate their financial goals with the long-term health of society and the planet."

For an inside look at what's stirring in SRI, visit Dragonfly Media's compilation of responses, and responses to responses, to Hawken's report (www.dragonflymedia.com/portal/featured_stories/200410/hawken_response.html). Also read the Christian Science Monitor's article, "Has social investing lost its way?" (www.csmonitor.com/2004/1115/p13s01-wmgn.html) Material from those sources was used in this article. ■

Organic Cotton

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Resources

Industry representatives all agree that the popularity of organic cotton has at least as much to do with comfort and elegance as with its environmental benefits. And organic clothing companies are doing a good job of making their customers look great. To discover your organic style, visit Co-op America's Green Pages (www.greenpages.org) and search for "organic clothing."

For more information about organic cotton, go to the websites of the Sustainable Cotton Project (www.sustainablecotton.org) and the Organic Consumers Association's Clothes for a Change campaign (www.organicconsumers.org/clothes). ■



Organic apparel comes in all shapes and sizes.



WHAT'S HAPPENING

According to the World Meteorological Organization, last year was the fourth-hottest year on record. But now that we're into 2005, it is *cold* here in Boston!

- ◆ Not that **Katie Storey** minds. Katie, our new Earth Day Organizer, will be spending most of the winter in sunny Austin, Texas, producing a report about the state of Earth Day on its upcoming 35th anniversary. The report, scheduled to be released on April 22nd, will be available on our website. Katie comes to The Green Life from the Grassroots Campaign Institute, where she helped get out in the vote in the November election. Her experience also includes environmental consulting for the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts, serving as Chief Operating Officer of AltWheels, New England's largest alternative transportation festival, and teaching consumers and communities about the environmental and social benefits of Fair Trade coffee.
- ◆ In March, we will publish ***Racing Beyond Rhetoric: A Greenwash Report on the Auto Industry***. The report will compile greenwash rankings of the country's top five automakers—Ford, GM, DaimlerChrysler, Honda and Toyota—by comparing their eco-friendly marketing and public relations to their actual environmental records.
- ◆ We are currently researching the latest installments to our web-based **Guide to The Green Life**. Check www.thegreenlife.org/guide for upcoming chapters on "Clean Air" and "Transportation."
- ◆ Other online projects we're working on include **The Green Life Blog**, featuring links to and opinions on the latest consumer-related environmental news, and the **Consumer Campaign Clearinghouse**, highlighting consumer-related advocacy efforts led by organizations and coalitions from across the country and around the world.

A wintry Boston Common near our main office. Photo courtesy Views of the Northeast, www.ana.typepad.com.



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