



Hitchcock Center
EDUCATION FOR A HEALTHY PLANET



FOURTH ANNUAL WESTERN MASS YOUTH CLIMATE SUMMIT
Thursday & Friday, October 15 & 16, 2020, 9am – 12:00pm
Press Release

Amherst & Easthampton, MA – The Hitchcock Center for the Environment and Mass Audubon’s Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary are co-hosting the Fourth Annual Western Mass Youth Climate Summit held virtually this year for 8th-12th grade teams focusing on youth empowerment in the face of the global climate crisis. **This year’s focus is on the intersections of race, climate change and activism.**

Given the urgency of predictions by scientists and the global youth climate strikes, many young people are feeling powerless to the future they will inherit. The Western Mass Youth Climate Summit provides a critical opportunity for students to develop language about how to talk about climate change as a social issue and as a science, but to also develop solutions and pathways – through a Climate Action Plan – for action toward empowerment and community-based change.

The Summit keynote address focusing on climate change, COVID-19 and social justice will be given by **Dr. Michelle Staudinger**. Dr. Staudinger is an Ecologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, the Science Coordinator of the Department of the Interior Northeast Climate Adaptation Science Center, and Adjunct Faculty in the Department of Environmental Conservation at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Participating schools will join from the Berkshire and Pioneer Valley Regional School districts and may bring an unlimited number of interested students. Each school brings their student team to participate in two transformational days of cooperative learning, meeting inspiring speakers, exploring solutions, brainstorming school-wide climate solutions through drafting a Climate Action Plan, and opportunities to meet other students with shared goals in the Valley.

Participants will hear from a peer-to-peer team from Frontier Regional who successfully implemented a Climate Action Plan at their school. ([More here.](#)) To help inspire and empower students, and to provide a grounding in the process of climate work in the context of racial justice, Summit workshops will be lead by:

- **Jason Davis** is a musician and environmental educator based in Boston, Massachusetts. He is the founder and director of Climate Stories Project, an interactive forum for sharing stories about the effects of climate change on our lives and in our communities.

- **Emmalie Dropkin** is a fiction writer, teacher, and activist. Her writing blends speculative and literary traditions to explore human responses to the climate emergency and has appeared in *The Massachusetts Review*, *Electric Lit*, and elsewhere. She teaches creative writing and composition through the lens of the environmental humanities, and she serves as a coordinator for Extinction Rebellion Western Massachusetts.
- **Ashley-Rose** is a Haitian-American educator, organizer, actress and award-winning poet from Boston who attended Northeastern University. In 2014 Ashley-Rose was named one of the most influential people under age 35 in Boston and was awarded the ONEin3 Positive Impact Award for her work with within arts, education and youth development. Her work has been featured in numerous collections and anthologies including *The Anthology of Liberation Poetry*. Currently Ashley-Rose is the Lead Boston Organizer and Facilitator for the first youth Participatory Budgeting process in the USA.

The Summit planning team was led by five youth participants, from Frontier Regional, Hampden Charter School of Science, Amherst Regional High School, and one homeschooled student under the guidance of Colleen Kelley, Hitchcock Center's Education Director and Brittany Gutermuth, Mass Audubon's Climate Education Coordinator for Connecticut River Sanctuaries.

Business Support for the summit is provided by River Valley Coop.

CONTACTS

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ABOUT

The Hitchcock Center for the Environment's mission is to educate and to inspire action for a healthy planet. We envision a world where people, communities and ecosystems thrive.

www.Hitchcockcenter.org

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary is a sanctuary of Mass Audubon providing outdoor learning, access, and opportunities at its location in Easthampton, MA. Mass Audubon's mission is to protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wildlife. www.massaudubon.org