

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jennifer Marrapese
Executive Director
Northeast Sustainable Energy Association
jmarrapese@nesea.org
413-774-6051 x23

Energy Use Increases Dramatically in States Legalizing Marijuana: Energy Experts to Publicly Discuss Implications for First Time in Northeast

February 25, 2017, Boston and Greenfield, MA - The law of unintended consequences is in full force, as increasing numbers of states legalize cannabis for medical and recreational use. Cultivating cannabis in greenhouses requires such large amounts of energy that the ability of the electric grid to respond to climate change may be threatened.

Approximately 2,000 professionals from every field related to energy efficiency and renewables will gather at the [BuildingEnergy Boston Conference + Trade Show](#), March 7-9 to share best practices relating to energy efficiency and to bring their decades-long expertise to bear to resolve this cannabis cultivation conundrum. This is one of many topics that will be addressed at the conference, all relating to energy conservation, renewable energy, and the security of our power grid.

“Marijuana’s relatively tentative legal status and the cultural taboos surrounding it have stifled efforts to reduce the impact on the grid of cannabis cultivation,” said Conference Co-Chair Stephan Wollenburg, an independent energy consultant in Worcester, MA. “But we’ve never been shy about tackling cutting-edge subjects like this at the BuildingEnergy Boston Conference. This session will explore some of the main barriers to ensuring energy efficient cannabis cultivation.”

Fred Davis, of [Fred Davis Corp.](#), shared what inspired him to submit the [Cannabis Cultivation Conundrum](#) session, which will take place at 10:30am on Wednesday, March 8th. “Alarm bells started going off for me in July 2014 when I met solar leader Johnny Weiss at the Oregon Country Fair. He had recently heard that legal marijuana production in California, then medicinal only, was responsible for two percent of all of that state’s electricity consumption. I was incredulous; that’s an unbelievable amount of power! A 2012 study by my old colleague Evan Mills calculated the California number as three percent. And as states, including Massachusetts, legalize the use of recreational cannabis, these numbers will surely climb.”

While increases like two- and three-percent may not seem high, Davis shared that the top ranked states in terms of energy efficiency, Massachusetts included, have been decreasing their electricity use by two-to-three percent per year, and even that is not widely thought to be enough to mitigate climate change. So an increase of two-to-three percent, in this environment, is significant.

“This brand-new, high-energy-consuming industry has the potential to overwhelm these reductions, setting states back years in their energy efficiency efforts.” said Davis.

Davis believes that BuildingEnergy Boston is the ideal place to have a discussion that questions conventional wisdom. In his words, “Most conferences would see this as a technical problem: can’t we just install LEDs? What about greenhouses? Certainly, this session will get into those details that discussion. But we’ll also be asking the bigger question. I have no expertise in agronomy, but I do think it’s nuts that a crop like marijuana is grown indoors at all. It is called weed. The sun is a 100 percent efficient source, providing high levels of light. Ultimately, normalization should mean that outdoor growing could be both ecologically and financially sustainable.”

BuildingEnergy Boston 2017 features industry experts from the Northeast and beyond, including: Stephanie Horowitz of Zero Energy Design, Katrin Klingenberg of Passive House Institute US (PHIUS), Ty Newell of University of Illinois, Karl Rabago of Pace Law Center, Paul Torcellini of National Renewable Energy Laboratory, solar pioneer Steven Strong of Solar Design Associates, who installed photovoltaics on the White House, and many more.

----- 30 -----

To register for the conference, click [here](#).

For a list of conference sessions, click [here](#).

For a list of conference speakers, and their biographies, click [here](#).

About BuildingEnergy Boston

The BuildingEnergy Boston Conference + Trade Show is the region's leading event for professionals and practitioners working to build a more sustainable world. It brings more than 2,500 industry leaders and emerging professionals together for three days to learn from and share ideas with each other. Hosted by the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA), this year's event is March 7-9, 2017 at the Seaport World Trade Center. Register at nesea.org/be17.

About NESEA

Formed in 1974, the mission of the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (www.NESEA.org) is to advance the adoption of sustainable energy practices in the built environment. NESEA does this by connecting professionals to each other and to information. This organization facilitates collective learning between all of the professional disciplines that contribute to the built environment. NESEA serves architects, planners, engineers, manufacturers, builders and policy analysts in public and private companies in the 10 Northeastern states.