

# Landmark Study Set the Stage

## *Power to Spare: Energy Efficiency Policy Playbook*

Client: Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities

From the company's earliest days, leaders at Conservation Service Group recognized that building power plants was not the best plan to address New England's increasing energy consumption. CSG's CEO Steve Cowell, and other regional leaders, correctly predicted that promoting energy efficiency measures would better position the region to manage growth and keep energy affordable. In a 2012 Boston [Globe op-ed](#), CSG is highlighted as part of the team that turned an idea into a regulatory structure.

In 1987, CSG partnered with the New England Energy Policy Council and the Conservation Law Foundation to author and deliver *Power to Spare: A Plan for Increasing New England's Competitiveness Through Energy Efficiency*. The groundbreaking study documented the feasibility of using energy efficiency as an alternative to building new power plants.

### **Conservation Service Group's Role**

CSG provided seed funding to help commission the landmark research in *Power to Spare*, as well as ensuring that the study addressed the fundamental question of whether efficiency improvements could make enough of an impact to render construction of a new power plant unnecessary.

### **COMMUNITY BENEFITS:**

- Mobilized energy efficiency advocates for the public good
- Provided solid data to convince policymakers of energy efficiency's value
- Set a foundation for lasting public benefit and future clean energy initiatives

### **RESULTS:**

- Avoided construction of costly power plants
- Contributed to stabilizing electricity rates
- Reduced reliance on fossil fuels while increasing energy security
- Improved air quality by mitigating harmful effects of conventional energy production

### **Strategy & goals**

*Power to Spare* noted that New England's electric rates were 25 percent higher than other regions of the country. Authors argued that continued investments in large central power stations would only drive rates up. The report concluded that inevitable population growth coupled with

the unpredictable nature of fossil fuel prices and interest rates made reliance on new power plants ill-advised.

The document made the case that a better strategy would be to:

- Design and build more energy efficient buildings
- Promote more efficient lighting
- Lower industry consumption through improved technology
- Improve insulation in residential homes

The report was backed by sound and convincing data, enabling CSG and its affiliates to successfully promote energy efficiency legislation.

## **Impact**

*Power to Spare* had a deep and wide impact on the energy industry in New England and around the country, an impact that continues to be felt today. Lasting affiliations formed as a result of the study enabled further policy gains and passage of key energy legislation.

Armed with *Power to Spare*, the Conservation Law Foundation intervened in utility proceedings and convinced regulators to require utilities to invest in end-use efficiency. This led to a strong coalition of stakeholders who worked out the regulatory and implementation details of the Social Benefit Charge. The small ratepayer fee on a customer's utility bill provides the necessary incentives for utilities to deliver energy efficiency programs and services.

Over the years, *Power to Spare* has been cited in many policy and legislative debates, and it remains a relevant document in demonstrating the economic and social benefits of investment in energy efficiency measures.