

PROMOTING RESIDENTIAL ENERGY

CONSERVATION:

EFFORTS BY MUNICIPAL

GOVERNMENTS AND UTILITIES

By Margo B. Wald

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts  
in Environmental Studies at Brown University

October, 1982

## INTRODUCTION

This paper is about residential energy conservation (REC)\* and two institutions which promote REC: municipal governments and utilities. Each institution allocates different resources to the task of promoting REC and uses different methods to accomplish this goal. For example, utility conservation programs surveyed tended to be more technically sophisticated than municipal programs, while municipal governments offer more assistance with financing conservation than do utilities. Thus, two institutions handle the same policy issue with different results.

The differences between these REC programs can be traced back to each institution's "mandate". Both local governments and utilities have mandates (or agendas) which pre-date the emergence of energy conservation as an issue. (For example, utilities are expected to supply energy, and municipal governments are expected to promote economic development.) The way in which residential conservation is integrated (or not integrated) into an organization's mandate directly influences the type of conservation program that organization will create. Thus, municipal governments and utilities each begin with different agendas and end up handling REC in different ways. This paper will detail how REC fits into the mandates of both municipal governments and utilities and how this, in turn, affects the conservation programs they sponsor.

I will deal with a composite of the local governments, as well as of the utilities, which I have studied, citing specific

\* As a convenience, I will occasionally use the initials "REC" rather than writing out the entire phrase.

organizations to support my claims. It should be noted that most of my research was conducted in Massachusetts. I have made an attempt to include out-of-state examples in my analysis and to cite them as such.

The remainder of this introduction will be devoted to an overview of current residential conservation techniques.

### Residential Conservation Techniques

Table 1 summarizes common residential conservation measures used today.<sup>1</sup> They are grouped into four categories according to the part of the house at which they are directed: the hot water system, the heating system, the building shell and the air conditioning system. This list is only a survey; for any of the techniques mentioned there are a variety of products and procedures available to do the job. For example, there are over half a dozen types of caulking materials, each designed for particular uses, and all at a variety of prices. Detailed descriptions of these options can be found in literature such as Common Sense Conservation, a guide published by the Massachusetts Office of Communities and Development (see Bibliography).

In addition to the above, there are no cost/lifestyle conservation measures. Examples of these include reducing thermostat settings, sealing off unused rooms in the winter, and washing clothes in cold water. Even these simple measures can have a noticeable impact on a household's energy consumption. For example, one local energy organization reports that people have