

ALLEGHENY SIERRAN

NEWSLETTER OF THE ALLEGHENY GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB

Volume 29, Issue 1

Summer 2010

Pittsburgh United Efforts in City Council

by Tom Hoffman

Air and water; two things that are indisputably essential to our lives. On Tuesday, June 1, legislation intent upon cleaning our air and water was introduced into Pittsburgh City Council by Councilman William Peduto. Through the efforts of Sierra Club working with the Pittsburgh United Coalition, the Clean Water and Clean Air acts were drafted to fit the needs of a developing city that



Group Chair Claudia Kirkpatrick at Clean Water press conference. Photo: T. Hoffman

stands astonishingly lax on environmental issues. The bills are intended to prevent combined sewage overflow, a consistent threat to the cherished three rivers, and retrofit the

Marcellus Shale in PA A Beginners' Guide

by Donald L. Gibbon

To reduce the issue to its simplest form, we're told that there's a lot of natural gas to be had deep under the surface of well over half of Pennsylvania. There's a lot of money to be made by extracting and selling it. Accidents of history have made it so that people who own the surface of the land probably don't own the rights to produce that gas. That right belongs to someone else, usually some out-of-state company that is in business to produce it. But to do that, they have to lease the right to it from the land owner. That means that the land owner can also make more or less money, depending on how canny s(he) is with the leasing process.

To drill a well and extract the gas takes a lot of water, usually between 1 and 8 million gallons per well. When the well is completed some of that water has to be disposed of. During the drilling it has been contaminated with chemicals put there deliberately to enhance the drilling process or by chemicals that come from the geologic formations penetrated by the well.

Three major public issues must be properly dealt with for

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The Sierra Club's members are 700,000 of your friends and neighbors. Inspired by nature, we work together to protect our communities and the planet. The Club is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization.

The Allegheny Group of the Sierra Club was organized in the early 1970s. It is one of 11 groups comprising the Pennsylvania Chapter.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

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See www.alleghenysc.org for info about the Coal Campaign, Endangered Species Team, Global Warming Action Team, and Mt. Lebanon Action Team.

Letters to the editor, photos, stories from outings and any other submissions can be sent to sierran@alleghenysc.org

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All parties are encouraged to respond to the articles we publish and submit any material they feel may be appropriate. Submissions and questions regarding newsletter content should be addressed to the editor, Marla Ferency, at sierran@alleghenysc.org.

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Should Nuclear be Part of our Federal Energy Policy?

The gathering concern about our dependence on fossil fuels for electric power generation causes legislators to re-examine the use of nuclear power. At present there are 104 commercial reactors at 65 nuclear plants in the US. With no new plants for thirty years, in February President Obama announced \$8.33 billion government loan guarantees for the construction and operation of two new nuclear reactors at a power plant in Georgia. In the negotiations for a federal energy bill there have been proposals for twenty new nuclear plants.

Locally, the push for new nuclear plants is of interest to the Pittsburgh region because of the presence of Toshiba-owned Westinghouse Electric Company headquarters in Cranberry.

The following is an explanation of the Sierra Club's position on nuclear energy:

"Although nuclear power produces less CO2 than fossil alternatives, nuclear power is not safe, affordable, or clean with currently available technology and practice. Mining uranium risks workers' health and creates toxic residues. All current plant designs are complex, prone to accidents and have severe security vulnerabilities. Nuclear waste transportation, storage and disposal problems remain unsolved. The industry is heavily subsidized by public payments, incentives and liability shielding everywhere it operates, dependencies that dramatically increased in the 2005 Energy Policy Act. The nuclear fuel cycle increases weapons proliferation and risk among nations and non-state entities.

The Sierra Club will continue to oppose nuclear power unless these deficiencies are eliminated. While it is possible that a different approach to nuclear power might substantially address these issues, the likelihood is remote given the decades of research and investment already made. Clean energy resources are sufficient to address climate change and are cheaper than nuclear power. In addition, the huge investment to bring additional nuclear facilities online would siphon capital from much more cost-effective uses of financial resources, especially investments in efficiency."



Endangered Species Action Team Reaches Out to Youth

Since its inception in March 2009, the Allegheny Group of Sierra Club's Endangered Species Action Team has toiled tirelessly at public outreach, tabling at everything from concerts and special events at the Pittsburgh Zoo to neighborhood street fairs. A special effort has been made to reach out to children and youth who are, of course, the future of our movement, and our tabling events regularly feature games and other activities of interest to the young.

The ESAT has also made several presentations at Pittsburgh area schools, specifically at Taylor-Allerdice High School and the Imagine Environmental Charter School. We have been successful at signing on volunteers of all ages both among folks who are not Sierra Club members or among those who are but do not normally volunteer.

The purpose of the Endangered Species Action Team is to speak and to "lobby" on behalf of the other living creatures with whom we share this planet and who are unable to speak for themselves. Our scope is both national and local. In addition to concerning ourselves with the plights of polar bears, wolves, and whales, we have also successfully testified before the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission to secure listings of either "endangered" or "threatened" for four species of Allegheny River mussels.

Perhaps our most successful and spectacular venture during the current year has been the "Chill the Drills" event featuring Sierra Club arctic expert Kit McGurn and which played before a capacity crowd at the First Floor Gallery at the Pittsburgh Art Institute this past May. We look forward to a future filled with fighting the good fight while having fun. Concerned as we are about how drilling for gas in the Marcellus Shale will effect Pennsylvania fish, wildlife, and plant life, we will struggle to ensure that any such drilling will be done with reverence for all life, both human and non-human. Anybody of any age wishing to join us, please contact the Pittsburgh Sierra Club office at 412-802-6161. We will be more than happy to have you aboard.

Global Warming Action Team Acts Locally

Are you concerned about global warming? Do you want to take action to reduce CO2 emissions? We're the group for you! Since its inception in March 2009, the Global Warming Action Team of the Allegheny Group of the Sierra Club strives to educate and engage the citizens of southwestern Pennsylvania concerning the perils of global

warming. Our three major efforts focused on reduction of global warming pollution, increasing recycling efforts, and encouraging usage of the newly designed Allegheny Group website (www.alleghenysc.org). The team aims to see the reduction of CO2 levels in southwestern PA by 2% per year, keeping with the consensus amount of annual reductions sought by the scientific community and other activists. Our activities include tabling at various events throughout southwestern PA, collecting signatures on petitions, contacting the members of the Allegheny Group and

informing them of the work being done, participating in recycling events and meeting with policy makers and others attempting to stop global warming.

We met with City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County officials who are responsible for recycling and reduction of CO2 emissions, and our volunteers participated in recycling events through the PA Resources Council and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Household Hazardous Waste organization. Although Pittsburgh Mayor Luke Ravenstahl signed onto the Cool Cities Initiative in 2007, we are still attempting to encourage Allegheny County Executive to proclaim the county a Cool County. We collected 1300 signatures and met with county representatives to obtain ratification of the Cool Counties Climate Stabilization Declaration. By signing this Declaration, the county would agree to a good faith effort to reduce CO2 emissions 2% a year till the year 2050.

The Global Warming Action Team enthusiastically welcomes new members with the desire to join the fight against global warming. An overview and contact information for the Team can be found at the Allegheny group website, www.alleghenysc.org or call 412-802-6161.



The Endangered Species Action Team's display at the Pittsburgh Zoo attracted all ages.

Huplits Wildlife Grants Awarded to Four PA Grassroots Campaigns

by Christopher Seymour, Chairperson, Huplits Wildlife Grants Committee

Each year a gift from the Huplits Trust is distributed by the Allegheny Group, Sierra Club, to award worthy grant applicants promising to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat in Pennsylvania. This year the Huplits Wildlife Grants Committee awarded four grants totaling \$50,000.

Huplits Wildlife Grants for 2010

Allegheny Forest and River Watch. Allegheny Defense Project (ADP)

The Allegheny Forest and River Watch project will train volunteers of Sierra Club, ADP and other interested activist groups, including sportsmen and watershed groups, to protect public lands and watersheds through monitoring, formal comment, participation in public meetings, detailed documentation and research, and through administrative appeal and litigation when necessary. ADP will engage and activate members to join in forest protection efforts and to encourage all volunteers to initiate their own efforts on Pennsylvania State Lands and in their communities, which are under imminent threat from oil and gas drilling, including Marcellus Shale gas..... **\$26,600.**

Increasing Wilderness Protection in the Allegheny National Forest. Friends of Allegheny Wilderness (FAW)

To support FAW's efforts to increasing the amount of designated wilderness in the Allegheny National Forest (ANF) through outreach and education efforts. Specifically, FAW wants to address the small amount of land set aside for wilderness areas the ANF Forest Plan. FAW will also continue to build support for permanent protection of the last remaining wild areas in the ANF through the introduction of new legislation by Pennsylvania's Congressional delegation..... **\$9,700.**

Galbraith Gap Land Acquisition Project. ClearWater Conservancy

Funding will assist ClearWater Conservancy in acquiring 152 acres of land located in Galbraith Gap, Harris Township, Centre County and reconvey the land to DCNR Bureau of Forestry, who will then incorporate it into the adjacent Rothrock State Forest. This land acquisition will permanently protect 152 acres of sensitive wildlife habitat including important bird, mammal and coldwater fishery habitat while seeking to increase recreational opportunities by creating trail connections with Rothrock State Forest..... **\$9,000.**

Endangered Species Action Team (ESA Team). Allegheny Group, Sierra Club

To fund a grassroots group of Sierra Club activists called the ESA Team, which helps protect and preserve endangered and threatened species and habitats through action and education. Their primary mission is to expand outreach awareness in Pennsylvania of endangered and threatened wildlife. One of their immediate goals is to increase protection and awareness specifically of Pennsylvania's bat species, which are being threatened by disease.... **\$4,700.**



Minister Creek, Allegheny National Forest.
Photo: Alexvallejo

It's Almost Apple Time!

Don't miss the Fifth Annual Apple Festival and Apple Pie Baking Competition on Saturday, October 23 from 11 am to 2 pm.

What could be better than apples with pork? In addition to the region's best apples and ciders, we'll be having locally-raised pork in some fashion - either barbecue or a pig roast. We'll have a taste-off on ciders, with your votes for the best. We're sponsoring the re-introduction of a "heritage variety" of apples back into the Western Pennsylvania mix: the mostly-forgotten but delicious "Black Amish" apple. We're actually selling the trees for planting (we're having them grafted onto dwarf root stock in North Carolina!). And for your entertainment... a "double-dutch" rope-jumping demonstration and opportunity to learn how to do it yourself! This is going to be a day to remember... not forgetting, of course, Western Pennsylvania's best apple pies for tasting and purchase.



We need volunteers to go to the orchards and pick up apples and cider on the two days before the event, plus helpers during the Festival. Call Don Gibbon, 412-362-8451 or e-mail dongibbon@earthlink.net to find out how you can help. Check the Group website for details closer to the event (www.alleghenysc.org).



Seeking Photographers for "Love Your Mother" Exhibit on Sustainable Agriculture

All photographers, professional and amateur, Sierra Club members and others, are invited to submit images for inclusion in the Fifth Annual "Love Your Mother" exhibit on sustainable agriculture in Pennsylvania in February 2011. We have had participation by over forty photographers, including some seasoned professionals, and have included over 600 images in the four previous years of showing at the Annual conference of the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture. The exhibit has been underwritten by the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club and co-sponsored by Silver Eye Center for Photography, Pennsylvania Agricultural Extension Service and the East End Food Co-op. The program is shown continuously during the three days of the conference and gets seen in a variety of other venues in following months. The images from the last two years are now being used to illustrate the Co-op's web site.

We would like to have photographic responses to the good and the bad sides of sustainable farming, the triumphs and the tragedies. Photographers should submit two or three jpeg images at less than 500Kb file size to Donald Gibbon by November 1. Then in December he will call for submission of a CD with 10-15 images and perhaps a short essay on a given subject. Gibbon will combine the submissions into a projectable Power Point program for viewing at the conference. We are hoping the program will precede the major keynote address and thus be viewed attentively by some 2000 people. Contact Donald Gibbon at dongibbon@earthlink.net.





Outings

August–October 2010

- * Suggested carpool fee: 7 cents/passenger-mile + a share of any tolls. Unless stated, car-miles are one-way from Monroeville. Carpooling is your choice; not part of the trip.
- * All trips begin and end at the trailhead.
- * For more up-to-date listings, visit <http://www.alleghenysc.org>
- * E-mail subscriptions are free. Contact Dianne Ciccarelli at Dianne.ciccarelli@hotmail.com
- * All participants on Sierra Club outings must sign a standard liability waiver. If you wish to read it well before you are asked to sign the form at the trailhead, go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms> or contact the Outings Department at 415-977-5528 for a copy.
- * Allegheny Group's Compliance Number is CST 2087766-40.

Day and Weekend Trips

Sunday, August 29 - This is an 8-mile loop hike exploring Roaring Run. Fight your way up the North Loop to the top of Painter Rock Hill where we saw a rattlesnake last year. This is a moderately-paced hike with frequent one-minute stops. We may bushwack down the ridge on some abandoned logging roads to Roaring Run. Plan to stay together as a group, no hikers left behind. Intermediate difficulty, may be hot - bring 2 quarts of water. We will meet at 9 AM at Gateway Middle School in Monroeville; call Jim for further details at 412.576.0849. More information is available at the Pittsburgh Hiking Meetup Group at Meetup.com.

Saturday, September 4 to Monday, September 6 - Backpacking on Red Creek/Roaring/Flatrock Plains of Monongahela National Forest. This is one of the highest, most rugged, and most scenic parts of the West Va. Highlands. Prior backpacking experience is required because the Plains

are no place for beginners - even for leisurely trips like this one. We will cover only about 16 miles total, because there is so much to see and do. We will start at the upper trailhead of South Prong Trail, then take Hidden Passage Trail to Seneca Meadows where hopefully we can camp at the Rim campsite right on the Eastern Continental Divide. Day 2 will take us up Roaring Plains Trail to the Spruce Campsite on the rim of the deep, wild and steep-walled Long Run. Day 3 will take us down Boar's Nest Trail and across South Fork of Red Creek. Weather (even summer weather) on this high part of the Eastern Continental Divide can be severe. \$25 carpool - 150 miles from Monroeville. Limit: 10. If you want to learn more about this area, read pages 161 to 173 of Edition 8 of Monongahela National Forest Hiking Guide (visit <http://www.wvhighlands.org>). Contact Bruce Sundquist at 724-327-8737 or bsundquist1@windstream.net. Depart Monroeville at 7 AM Saturday; return about 6 or 7 PM Monday.

Sunday, September 19 - Cycle the Ghost Town Trail from Dilltown to Blacklick and return. (About 24 miles round trip). We will see an old iron furnace on that section of trail. Ghost Town Trail is being extended in both directions. \$7.00 carpool + \$2/ bike carried, 50 miles. Meet at Gateway Middle School at 9 AM. Call Donna Allen, 412-372-2993.

Sunday, September 26 - We will be hiking an 8-mile loop in the Mountain Streams area of Laurel Ridge. We will start on the eastern corner of the loop along Tunnel Road and ease our way down the hogback to Indian Creek. This is abandoned trail so you may expect to climb over fallen trees and through high grass. This is a new route discovered on our hike here last year. We'll return by way of rough trail along the edge of a clear cut area looking for the opportunity to bushwack using map and compass back up to a high trail running parallel to our current route. This may involve a damp, if not wet, crossing of Little Run. Call Jim Ritchie at 412.576.0849 for more information, reservations, or directions to the meeting spot. More information is available at the Pittsburgh Hiking Meetup Group at Meetup.com.

Sunday, October 10 - The Quebec Run defacto wild area of Forbes State Forest near the top of Chestnut Ridge

Notes

Ask the leader for names and phone numbers of trippers for you to arrange a car pool. Reserve at least 36 hours in advance. If you leave your phone number on the leader's answering machine, give it slowly and clearly. Notify leader to cancel your reservation. Bring lunch, rain gear, water, first-aid kit, small flashlight and extra clothes for changes in weather. If you have a cell phone, bring it along. Cell phones have saved the day on several trips when accidents have required evacuation of trippers. Sierra Clubbers planning to lead future outings should contact Bruce Sundquist at 724-327-8737 or bsundquist1@alltel.net.

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Monthly Meetings Morph into Conservation Conversations

Holding monthly meetings, as we did for over twenty years, has become an “unsustainable” practice. The Group simply didn’t have the funds to continue supporting this activity at about \$1300 per year. We’d rather spend that money on other important member-related issues, such as publishing newsletters which reach every member. But we realized that we already pay for a space that is ideal for smaller gatherings: the Club office in Oakland which can easily accommodate up to about 40 people. So we have created a new format for monthly meetings: Conservation Conversations. Every month we will have a core topic, some local or regional expert and YOU. If you want to learn more or contribute what you already know to the general pool of knowledge, we’d love to have you there.

There are dozens of areas of interest, some of which we may hit repeatedly. Many of us would like to better understand what is really happening with the Marcellus Shale. We’d like to know what the City and County are intending to do about the possibility of drilling in this area. So in July we shared some excellent videos (one made by a CAPA student from Highland Park, Juliana Stricklen) and got updates on all the current controversy. This is a prime reason to be a member of the Sierra Club: to be informed and to inform others, then to take action to support environmentally sound policies and practices.

The August Conservation Conversation (**Wednesday, August 11, 2010, 7:30-9 PM**) will include a showing of the great new movie, “Fresh,” about the virtues of locally grown foods and costs of NOT having a good local supply (check the website <http://www.cooklocal.com/?p=2952> for more information on the movie).



In September we have for years concentrated on the traditional Sierra Club love of “outings”—getting into the outdoors, usually in remote locations, more or less. If you’d like to share a trip with us, please let me know and we’ll work out a schedule. We have much important conservation work to discuss if the time is not taken by outings.

In October we will not have a regular monthly meeting. Rather we’ll have the Fifth Annual Apple Festival and Apple Pie Baking Competition - see page 5.

Conservation Conversation location: 425 N. Craig St/3875 Bigelow Blvd, Suite 202, Oakland. Office phone: 412-802-6161

Outings — continued from page 6

is one of the most popular areas for hiking and backpacking in southwestern Pa. Its many clean, clear mountain streams, mature forests and excellent trail system are some of the attractions, in addition to the spectacular colors in the fall. On this trip we will cover a loop 9.3 miles long that runs mostly along the streamside trails of the area. The trails offer fairly easy walking, with only two significant hills. We may stop at the remains of an ancient grist mill and its aqueduct. A \$10 carpool fee is recommended for the 65-mile trip each way from Monroeville. Meet at Gateway Middle School in Monroeville at 9 AM or at the west portal parking lot on Skyline Drive at 10:30 PM. Limit: 25. Road directions from Monroeville to the trailhead will be emailed to sign-ups. Topographic trail maps will be handed out at the trailhead. This will be a joint Allegheny Group Sierra Club - Pittsburgh Hiking Meetup Group trip. Contact Bruce Sundquist at bsundquist1@windstream.net or 724-327-8737.

Saturday, October 16 - Come on the third of three DCNR trail maintenance trips of the summer-fall season. On this trip we will be working on the trails of the Laurel Mountain area off US 30. Usually about 20 outdoor groups join these trips. We usually quit around 3 PM. After that we will have a fall picnic (catered).



DCNR has been experiencing severe budget cuts in recent years. So keeping its trail system in good order is a difficult task without the help of trail users in these difficult times. Contact Dave Mottorn 724-327-7582 (dpmottorn@windstream.net). We usually meet at the Duff Park parking lot in Murrysville to form carpools.

Pennsylvania's Dirty Coal-Fired Power Plants

"In 2007 U.S. power plants released 2.56 billion tons of carbon dioxide, equivalent to the amount produced by 449 million of today's cars - that's more than three times the number of passenger cars registered in the United States in the same year."

That is one of the remarkable findings of a new report from Environment America titled "America's Biggest Polluters - Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Power Plants in 2007". This report follows a recent account of the trend of power plant emissions from 1990 to 2007.

Among the findings of the report are the following:

- * Coal-fired power plants are responsible for a disproportionate amount of this pollution - though coal produced two-thirds of U.S. fossil fuel electricity, coal plants emitted over 80 percent of fossil fuel global warming pollution. Coal plants emitted about one-third of the nation's total global warming pollution.
- * With a total CO2 emission of 123,583,904 tons in 2007, Pennsylvania was fifth in the nation, behind Texas, Ohio, Florida, and Indiana.
- * Many of the nation's power plants are decades-old. Twelve of Pennsylvania's twenty-two coal-fired plants are 50 years old or older.
- * Old and dirty tend to go hand-in-hand. Power plants built three decades ago or more produced 73 percent of the total global warming pollution from power plants in 2007.

A significant finding for Pennsylvania is that for the same amount of electricity produced, the amount of CO2 emitted from plants fueled by natural gas is about 65% that of coal-fired plants. This fact lends some support to the drilling of the Marcellus Shale deposits, if natural gas is seen serving as a transition towards a non-fossil energy economy.

Included among the nation's 100 Dirtiest Power Plants are seven of Pennsylvania's own :

- #16 Bruce Mansfield (Beaver County), commissioned in Dec, 1975, 17,387,361 tons of CO2 in 2007.
- #34 Homer City (Indiana) Jun, 1969, 13,576,987 tons.
- #44 Conemaugh (Indiana) May, 1970, 12,124,919 tons.
- #45 Keystone (Indiana) Jun, 1967, 11,898,614 tons.
- #63 Hatfields Ferry (Greene) Jan, 1969, 10,173,499 tons.
- #72 Brunner Island (York) Jun, 1961, 9,380,958 tons.
- #76 Montour (Montour) Nov, 1971, 9,252,615 tons.

A Big Win for Clean Water

Those wishing to place stronger safeguards on Pennsylvania's streams and drinking water saw a significant victory in June. At issue were two new rules drafted by the DEP: the requirement of a 150 foot buffer zone for Exceptional Value and High Quality streams and a regulation requiring treatment of Marcellus shale wastewater. Approval of these new rules was required of the five-member Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC). The IRRC met on June 17 and heard testimony from DEP Secretary Hangar, representatives of the building and gas drilling industries on the one hand, and environmentalists, the Fish & Boat Commission, and a water authority on the other. The final votes were 4-1 in favor of each new rule. The final step in this process will be a review of the rules by the House and Senate Environmental Resources Committees.

A special thanks is due to all who contacted their members in the state legislature.

Groups Form Allegheny Wilderness Coalition

The Pennsylvania Wilderness Coalition was recently formed to work for the addition of more areas Allegheny National Forest ANF). Currently there are only two areas that are in the National Wilderness Preservation System; Hickory Creek Wilderness (8,600 acres) and the Allegheny Islands Wilderness (totaling 400 acres). These two existing areas represent a little less than 2 percent of 513,000-acre ANF.

The six founding member organizations in the Coalition are: Campaign for America's Wilderness; Friends of Allegheny Wilderness; Izaak Walton League; Pennsylvania Trout Unlimited; Sierra Club, Pennsylvania Chapter; and The Wilderness Society.

The Coalition supports the Citizens' Wilderness Proposal as developed by Friends of Allegheny Wilderness. This proposal identifies 54,460 acres of wilderness-quality lands on the ANF. To gain full protection of identified wilderness-quality areas is the main goal of the Coalition, requiring strong action by Congress.

As quoted by Adam Hostetler of Lebanon, vice president of the Pennsylvania Division, Izaak Walton League of America. "The Allegheny is located in the northwest corner of the state, but as Pennsylvania's only National Forest, it belongs to all of us. Wilderness designation for some of the most pristine and wild areas on the Allegheny will leave a permanent natural legacy for future generations, so they can forever hike, hunt, camp and explore here."

Local Citizens Stop Expansion of Coal Ash Pond

Included on the EPA's August 2009 list of thirty coal-ash ponds with High Hazard Potential Ratings was Little Blue Run Dam at the Bruce Mansfield power plant in Ship-pingport, Beaver County. Known as fly ash ponds and more formally as Coal Combustion Residue (CCRs) - Surface Impoundments, coal-ash ponds came to the fore when a TVA coal ash pond dam broke in Kingston, Tennessee in December 2008. Local action has now stalled expansion of a coal-ash pond in Beaver County.

Ranked 16th in the nation in 2007 for its emission of 17,387,361 tons of CO₂, the Bruce Mansfield power plant is a huge source of coal ash, and that toxic coal ash has to be stored somewhere. At present all the coal ash is stored in the Little Blue Run Pond near the plant. But the owners of the 1975 plant, First Energy Generation of Akron, claim that the impoundment is getting full, and they need a new pond.

Responding to citizen outrage, on March 1 the Supervisors of the small community of Greene Township denied First Energy's request to re-zone 1,000 acres in the township for additional coal ash disposal. The Little Blue Ash Pond already occupies 18% of the entire township.

For more on the broader question of what is being done about coal ash impoundments, see a detailed article titled "Coal's Toxic Sludge" in Rolling Stone magazine. The writer is Jeff Goodell, author of the book "Big Coal: The Dirty Secret Behind America's Energy Future".

Let's Have a Coal-Ash Hearing in Pittsburgh!

Communities in the Pittsburgh area are suffering from the effects of toxic coal ash generated from the numerous coal-fired power plants that circle Pittsburgh in the 'Ring of Fire'. Usually the ash is stored in ponds, and the dams of those ponds can fail as in Tennessee. The good news is that EPA is proposing a new rule that would create enforceable federal safeguards, and help to protect us from this hazardous pollution.

Tell the EPA to hold a hearing on the proposed rules in Pittsburgh so that the communities in SW Pennsylvania that are affected by toxic coal ash have a chance to be heard.

Please write to: Mr. Alexander Livnat, US EPA Headquarters, Ariel Rios Bldg., 1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Mail Code 5304P, Washington DC 20460.

Coal ash is the residue that remains after coal is burned. It contains arsenic, boron, cadmium, lead, mercury, sulfur and other heavy metals, many of which can leach into our water cause cancer. As dangerous and dirty as coal ash is, it is not classified as hazardous waste. Thus, at present the federal regulations treat it no more strictly than household garbage.



Aerial view of the cleanup operations at the Tennessee Valley Authority's Kingston Fossil Plant in February 2009. Source: TVA



Ash and water discharge into holding area at the Tennessee Valley Authority's Kingston Fossil Plant during the cleanup phase in March 2009. Source: TVA

city's construction equipment to ensure less disease-causing particulate matter in the air of our city. These legislations mandate that all publicly funded development adhere to more stringent guidelines to protect our water and air. If the bills would be voted into law, developers would have to capture as much storm water as their site would naturally absorb, preventing the overflow of raw sewage in our river system. Diesel machinery would have to filter the majority of air toxins that are responsible for so many respiratory diseases within the city limits.

The legislation drew hundreds to a public hearing on July 1st. At the press conference prior to the hearing, Bill Peduto said, "We shouldn't be using public dollars to pollute our air and pollute our water." Claudia Kirkpatrick, Chair of the Allegheny Group, said the proposed Clear Air and Clean Water bills would set "common-sense, responsible" guidelines for spending taxpayer dollars on public projects. The people called upon other council members to show support for this legislation and join Councilpersons Peduto, Kraus, Rudiak, and Shields in cosponsoring of the bill.

After its introduction, there was a post-agenda hearing concerning the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts in order for the councilmembers to hear from the experts how this bill will impact the city. Among those on the panel, Oday Salim and Emily Collins of The University of Pittsburgh dispelled many points of opposition to the legislation. The main issue of how to finance the requirements brought about by the bills was addressed well, and the post-agenda was undoubtedly successful.

On Wednesday July 21, the Clean Water Act passed a major milestone with a 8 - 0 vote in support of the legislation. Final passage is expected shortly.

The coalition Pittsburgh United has formed with groups such as Clean Water Action, The Sierra Club, Group Against Smog and Pollution, Women for a Healthy Environment, The Mon Valley Unemployed Committee, Nine Mile Run Watershed, Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network, SEIU, UFCW and Workers United and many more who have put together these strong legislations in order to bring Pittsburgh from the dark ages of environmental disregard, to the forefront of clean, sustainable development. With the support of so many, the passing of the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts will help clean up Pittsburgh for a brighter tomorrow.

orderly development of the Marcellus Shale:

1. Water issues, both supply and disposal. How are we going to protect our priceless streams, ground water, estuaries and watersheds?

2. Landscape issues, particularly how the surface of our state is to be managed. What degree of damage and disruption is to be allowed in our forests, agricultural and urban areas?

3. Financial issues, including taxes. How the inevitable costs of damage to our infrastructure from the huge industrialization of the roads, bridges, culvert and roadsides, particularly in our rural areas.

Drilling for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale is different than most other oil and gas drilling because the shale is "tight," that is, the gas doesn't just flow out freely into the well. It has to be "stimulated." The particular stimulation process used nowadays in tight shales is called "hydrofracturing" or "fracking." A technique called horizontal drilling is used to orient the bottom part of the well bore horizontally along the plane of the shale which lies in a relatively horizontal layer about a mile below the surface. After the horizontal hole is drilled, explosives are put along the bore and blasted into the formation, more or less shattering it into small pieces. Then water, sand and chemicals are pumped into the formation, opening it up and holding it open, allowing the now freed-up gas to flow out, into and up the well. Some of that drilling/fracking water comes out with the gas. That's the water that has to be disposed of. The development process described in this paragraph has only recently been developed in Texas in a formation called the Barnett Shale. Many companies are extremely eager to take advantage of that opportunity in Pennsylvania.

Theoretically oil and gas wells are "cemented" and cased with steel pipe in the parts of the well that aren't supposed to be producing oil or gas. That is, the well bore should be sealed in shallow areas known as aquifers which could produce fresh water. This is usually but not always effective in protecting the fresh water supplies.

Since it is difficult to dispose of "used" drilling water, the drillers would like to put it back into the well or re-use it to drill another well. It turns out that a number of horizontal wells can be drilled from one vertical well, radiating out in several directions, reducing the surface impact of the drilling process. However, in many instances the water has to be delivered by truck to the well site and it may take literally hundreds of heavy truck loads in and out to deliver and dispose of the necessary water. Small rural roads, culverts and bridges have not been designed for this level of traffic and will suffer severe over use and damage, requiring mainte-

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nance that has not been paid for in the local budgets.

In addition, it is unclear that “normal” sewage treatment plants are totally incapable of “cleaning up” used drilling water. Most sewage treatment plants are designed to remove suspended solids (tree branches, rocks, plastic bags and settleable soils and muds) and then to employ bacteria to “eat up” the digestible organic matter, leaving the water relatively clean and ready to discharge into a stream without degrading the quality of the stream. Treatment of used drilling water requires totally different chemical processing, processing that is not generally available anywhere in Pennsylvania or anywhere else on a large scale, the scale that is being envisioned for the development of the Marcellus shale. Removing dissolved solids is much more expensive in time, capital and energy than removing suspended organic material. In other words, the state of Pennsylvania does not now have the capacity to do what is being asked of it and will not have it soon. It will take time and a lot of money and tight regulations to force this to happen.

If the production water is not “disposed of” somehow, it will be stored in open ponds at the drilling site. The odds are extremely high that this storage will not permanently contain the water and its dissolved contents. The ponds will leak or overflow or break and the water will then be free to seep into the ground to get involved permanently with the ground water or flow into the local streams to flow down into the larger watershed. This has already happened hundreds of times on hundreds of ponds, either simple farm ponds or water/waste storage for other industries, usually coal mining. It is essentially certain to happen again with these surface storage ponds.

The third problem is the source of the water. If the water is to be taken from small streams in the vicinity of the wells, who is watching out for competing uses? That is, the primary use for the water is the aquatic life: the fish, invertebrates, insects and plants that depend on the stream flow. Furthermore the entire watershed, from the trees on down, also depends on the stream. Of course that also includes the human population. Now a new use presents itself, demanding that its needs be met immediately. Its primary justification is that it is worth a lot of money.

One factor almost totally ignored, particularly by the producers, is the seasonal variability of both the supply and the flow rate of the receiving streams. If the flow rate is reduced by drought, do the drillers have to stop drilling? What happens if they don't? What happens if they ignore the regulations and pour millions of gallons of unsafe water into a high-value trout stream? Don't say it won't happen. The unthinkable just did happen in the Gulf of Mexico.

I would suggest that the citizens of the Commonwealth

(say that word slowly, emphasizing both halves - it's about wealth, our wealth, our state, held in common, by us all) step back and take a deep breath, looking at where their values and their interests lie.

Pennsylvania is a not a big state, being 31st in overall area. Twenty-eight billion acres sounds like a lot, but 70% of it is considered urban already. 17 million acres is forested, 8 million acres agricultural, only 2.5 million state forest. Consider what you like about Pennsylvania. Do you enjoy the rural agricultural and forest landscapes you see? Do you want that remainder developed willy-nilly, as fast as possible? Consider what those landscapes do for us all... acting as watersheds for all our cities, buffering the land against erosion, providing air-cleaning and oxygen supply services, providing our largest . What is the hurry about developing this resource that would stay in place quite nicely until we get the regulatory framework in place to develop it safely?

One hundred to one hundred and fifty years ago, big timber came to Pennsylvania and completely leveled its forests, then moved on to Michigan and other timbered states, having completely wiped out our forests. Huge fires burned across the northern half of the state. Our state forests resulted from having bought this desolated land and allowing it to grow back into a very different types of forest we now think of as “natural.” Are we willing to let this cycle go on again, allowing industry to have its will on the landscape of Pennsylvania? Help us to keep the pressure on the DEP and the natural gas industry to do it right this time, to pay for the damage they do and to compensate the state fairly for the bonanza they have access to in the Marcellus shale.

A last point for emphasis: there are over 5000 applications in DEP right now for permits to drill in the Marcellus Shale in Pennsylvania. Over 1400 permits have already been issued. Hundreds of wells have already been drilled and the waste water already disposed of with virtually no treatment. We are allowing the process to go forward, overwhelming the regulatory system. We don't have trained inspectors in the field monitoring the drilling, controlling disposal of wastes, watching that environmental regulations are obeyed. We are losing the battle and it is only going to get much worse. We will eventually have upwards of 50,000 wells in Pennsylvania. Read that number again: fifty thousand wells! At an average of more than 5 acres apiece, that's more area than our largest state forest destroyed permanently. Someone is going to make a lot of money at your expense, at my expense. We do not owe them anything. On the contrary, they owe us for providing the roads, the water, the entire infrastructure that makes their new found wealth possible. It is up to us to control the system wisely so the majority do not suffer to make the minority very rich.

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Members are Encouraged to Use the Allegheny Group Website www.alleghenysc.org

The Allegheny Group's website is a great source of information about what YOUR organization is doing in Southwestern Pennsylvania and how YOU can participate, from outings, hearings, monthly meetings, and more.

The website is updated weekly, with more than 2,000 visits per month. To join our 'website network', please send your name to pjwray@verizon.net with 'WEBSITE NOTICE' in the Subject line.

Stay Informed—Use Our Website!

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Sierra Club Allegheny Group website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, Events, Meetings, Outings, Publications/Gear, Newsletter, Conservation, Politics, and About Us. The main header features the Sierra Club logo (a tree in a circle) and the text "SIERRA CLUB FOUNDED 1892" on the left, and "Sierra Club Allegheny Group" on the right. Below the header is a large banner image of a forested mountain range. A dark bar below the banner contains the text "Stop Marcellus Drilling in Our State Forests". The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column is titled "What's New" and contains a list of recent news items, each with a date in parentheses. The right column is titled "Search the site" and includes a search input field and a "Search" button. Below the search field are links to "Subscribe with RSS" and "Join the group on facebook". At the bottom of the right column, there are four dark buttons with white text: "Coal Campaign", "Global Warming Action Team", "Endangered Species Team", and "ECAT: Mt. Lebanon Action Team". At the very bottom of the page, there is a dark bar with the text "Join or make a donation" and a small icon.

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SIERRA CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

Sierra Club Allegheny Group

Enjoy, Explore, and Protect the Planet

Sierra Club Allegheny Group, Pennsylvania Chapter

Stop Marcellus Drilling in Our State Forests

What's New

- **DCNR Makes Strong Case for No More Marcellus Drilling in State Forests:** ACTION: Call on the State Senate to pass HB2235. (July 24, 2010)
- **Pittsburgh Clean Water Bill Passes First Hurdle 9-0:** Final vote July 27. (July 24, 2010)
- **Record Turnout for EPA Marcellus Hearing:** Strong support for study of the impact of Marcellus drilling on drinking water. (July 24, 2010)
- **PA and NY Marcellus Moratorium Bills Tied Up in Committees:** Strong public outcry needed if bills are to move for a vote. (July 24, 2010)
- **Notices to Sue Two Local Power Plants Result in One Escape:** Home City plant warned by New York, and Seward plant gets off without penalties. (July 24, 2010)
- **Fund Raising Power of Incumbency:** An update on local Congressional races. (July 24, 2010)
- **Let's Have a Coal-Ash Hearing in Pittsburgh!** ACTION: Write to EPA now. (July 18, 2010)
- **Call to Preserve the Allegheny River Bridge Piers:** ACTION: Write County Executive Onorato to save piers for future trail Harmar-Plum crossing. (July 18, 2010)

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