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Beaver cracker plant Talk

May 25, 2017 – Fenceline Screening Panel Talk – Terrie Baumgardner

Introductory Note: The original version of this talk was delivered May25, 2017, at Calvary Episcopal Church in Shadyside, in a panel organized by the Diocesan Social Justice and Outreach Committee to follow a screening of the 2002 documentary Fenceline: A Company Town Divided. The documentary depicts the struggle of an African-American community in Louisiana’s “cancer alley” to relocate from under the shadow of a Shell chemical plant.

I want to thank each of you here tonight, and the organizers of this event, for making this program happen. For a long time I’ve been discouraged by the silence of the church on the issue before us tonight. Pope Francis has warned us the environment is being devastated by man’s predatory relationship with Nature. He taught us that at stake in that devastation is the gift of God, of which we are noble stewards – not masters.¹

We are called, as people of faith, to both honor God’s creation and

minister to His creatures. From this perspective, I want to talk about how the Royal Dutch Shell ethane cracker plant proposed for Beaver County confronts us with three crucial moral issues: the sacrifice of peoples’ health, the survival of human beings, and dishonest communication about both.

Public Health

According to the first annual State of Global Air Report, 4.2 million people died from air pollution in 2015.² And, according to the World Health Organization, one

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The Sierra Club is now the nation’s largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization - with more than two million members and supporters. *The Allegheny Group of the Sierra Club* was organized in the early 1970s. It is one of 10 groups comprising the Pennsylvania Chapter.

Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

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in four children younger than five are among those most at risk.³ Air pollution is the leading environmental cause of death in the world.

The American Lung Association ranks Allegheny County as having the eighth worst air in the country.⁴ The county ranks third worst in nation from point-source pollution.⁵ Pittsburgh is one of the top 10 worst cities in the nation for small particle pollution, or PM2.5.⁶

Beaver County, meanwhile, already has an F in air quality for ozone/smog⁷ – a failing grade even before the concrete for the cracker was poured. There is no doubt that emissions from Shell’s petrochemical facility will make that air even more unhealthy.

Among the ethane cracker’s emissions will be 159 tons per year of fine particulate matter, a.k.a. PM2.5⁸ PM2.5 consists of particles so small they pass straight through the lung’s alveoli and into the bloodstream. As the leading environmental risk factor in those 4.2 million deaths worldwide from air pollution, PM2.5 ranks 5th among all risks, including smoking, diet, and high blood pressure. Each year, it costs human beings on this planet 103 million healthy years of life.⁹

PM2.5 has been linked to the increased prevalence of asthma – which already strikes Allegheny County children at a rate of up to 50 percent above the national average.¹⁰ Breathing in fine particulate matter for many years increases the risk of developing cardiovascular disease – and dying from it – while short-term exposures can trigger heart attacks, strokes, and abnormal heart

rhythms. At the same time, PM2.5 increases our risk of cancer – with Allegheny County’s rate both for overall cancer and bladder cancer running 40 percent higher than the national average.¹¹ There is also growing concern that fine particulate matter is linked to adverse birth outcomes.¹²

In addition to PM2.5, Shell’s petrochemical plant will emit 522 tons per year of Volatile Organic Compounds, or VOCs.¹³ That’s nearly triple the output of the Clairton Coke Works,¹⁴ which has created one of the deadliest cancer clusters in Allegheny county.¹⁵ VOCs also include formaldehyde – the #2 cancer driver in Southwestern Pennsylvania – to be emitted from Shell’s petro plant at over twice the rate of the Clairton Coke Works.¹⁶

Cancer is not the only threat. When VOCs combine with sunlight and nitrogen oxides in a reactive process that can transpire over a distance of up to 20 miles, the result is ozone. And ozone has been linked by studies cited on the EPA’s website to “rapid effects” on the cardiovascular system¹⁶ and to “mechanical function effects in the heart.”¹⁷

Worse, the biggest impact on heart function occurs when PM2.5 and ozone are combined,¹⁸ as will be the case with the petrochemical plant emissions. In fact, a new Harvard study links this PM2.5¹⁹ and ozone combination to premature risk of death *even at levels considered safe by the EPA.*²⁰

Collectively, emissions from fracking infrastructure that will feed the cracker, and from the petro plant itself, have been linked through hundreds of peer-reviewed

studies to increased risks for asthma,²¹ cardiovascular disease, cancer (for which Allegheny County is already in the top 2 percent of counties nationally²²), endocrine disruption (think thyroid and male reproductive disorders), and birth defects. Most recently, these emissions have been linked to pregnancy/birth complications and possibly to autism, dementia or Alzheimers, and Parkinson’s.²³

Add to this the health risks that will be generated by the proposed industry build-out of *four to seven more petro plants*²⁴ in our region – each with its own giant web of well pads, compressor stations (which emit benzene and formaldehyde up to a half-mile away), cryogenic facilities, pipelines, pigging operations, truck and rail transport, and more.

The madness doesn’t stop there: Just as plans for the petro plants have served to justify existing fracking infrastructure to Wall Street, so will the already-ramping-up expansion of frack-based plastics manufacturing serve to justify the petro plants. Coming soon to your TV, desktop, or handheld device will be ads marketing more unnecessary, ocean-clogging plastics: Plastic sneakers, anyone?

Climate Change

At the *Post Gazette’s* May 25, 2017, Energy Evolution Panel, when RAND Corporation senior physical scientist Aimee Curtright was asked, “How much time do we have?,” her answer was simply, “We are out of time.”

Panelist Michael Mann, Distinguished Professor of Atmospheric Science and Director
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of Penn State’s Earth System Science Center, then pointed out that we have already passed a “tipping point” in terms of damage to the West Antarctica ice shelf – damage likely to engender a 14-20 ft. global rise in sea level.²⁵ True to Mann’s prediction, a Delaware-sized chunk of that shelf did indeed break free on July 12.

The damages wrought by climate change will be as irreversible as this one, and they will be exponential – facts that many Americans don’t realize and that, sadly, even fewer connect to the petrochemical hub as the epitome of fossil-fuel extraction folly.

Pope Francis put the problem this way: “If I may use a strong word, I would say that we are at the limits of suicide.”²⁶

The Pope’s encyclical, which we all heard about a two years ago but which has since been largely ignored from the pulpit, was, as one blogger put it, “primarily about social justice in a world deteriorating from human greed, a world dying from our excessive and selfish emissions of greenhouse gases.”²⁷ According to a study published June 29, 2017 in the journal *Science*, the poorest counties in this country will be the ones hit hardest by global warming.²⁸

Beaver County’s petro plant alone will spew out 2.25 million tons per year of those greenhouse gas equivalents.

Dishonest Communication

One of the Energy Evolution panelists called climate change denial the “most elaborate disinformation campaign in

history.”²⁹

In Beaver County, Shell’s PR campaigners constantly spin out a narrative that the petro plant is the ONLY path to jobs.

The people believe this narrative in part because they are desperate for jobs.

But they also believe it because Shell is silent not only about health, but also about what our continued reliance on fossil fuels means for climate change. Shell’s silence reigns despite the fact that its corporate masters understand quite well the consequences they are contributing to: Twenty-six years ago, in 1991, Shell produced a public documentary on climate change – but then quietly withdrew the film internally.³⁰

As for our elected officials, last year, the industry contributed heavily to at least three of the sponsors of what is now SB175³¹ – a blatant legislative attempt to gut state methane controls in an era when the Trump administration will probably do everything in its power to render the EPA comatose.³² My pro-fracking senator, with whom I met earlier this year, has had three Marcellus Shale wells drilled on his property³³ but has yet to be called out for any conflict of interest. It’s no wonder that his aide did most of the talking during our meeting.

In the face of Shell’s Juggernaut invasion of western Pennsylvania, the media should be the peoples’ Paul Revere. But newspapers and radio have been slow to report the risks to our health and nearly silent on the risks to our survival as a species. TV never mentions either.

Meanwhile, Shell has minimized

dissent by expertly managing the rollout of information about the petro plant.

No one asked me if I wanted the epicenter of a vast petrochemical hub to be located six miles from my home in Beaver County. No one asked my neighbors, either. While Shell spent years teasing job-hungry Beaver Countians with the *possible* prospect of its arrival, those of us who knew enough to oppose that prospect embraced denial, hoping Shell would locate elsewhere. During this time, the company held “community” meetings at which it claims it honored local feedback; but because these early meetings were scheduled – quite safely – before anyone really knew whether Beaver County would be the cracker’s home, few attendees even knew what questions to ask. Since then, Shell has subtly controlled public dialogue at meetings by cleverly structuring the agenda, accepting only written questions that can be screened, or directing dissenters to save questions for one-on-one answers at meeting’s end from its most disarming and personable employees stationed at niche-topic (jobs, environment, safety, etc.) tables around the room.

At recent so-called “community” meetings, Shell has displaced any potentially meaningful public discourse about health impacts or climate change with glitzy, self-congratulatory presentations on the playground slides it has painted for local communities, the tire-washing program it has designed for plant vehicles, or the cute Osprey nest it has built to evidence

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concern for the environment.

Honest communication has been lacking at both the macro- and micro-levels. At no point before or after making its commitment official little more than a year ago has Shell shared with Beaver Countians the industry’s vision of a vast petrochemical hub served by an underground ethane-gas storage hub extending down to Kentucky and designed to spur a plastics industry expansion – a vision that, if realized, could turn Southwestern Pennsylvania into a “cancer alley” like the one in Louisiana. As for the Beaver County cracker, once the permitting process began, Shell has diffused dissent by engaging in “piecemeal permitting” – the practice of dribbling out requests for a lighting permit here, a noise permit there, so that the big picture of the plant’s impact is obscured for average citizens.

In exchange for such shameless practices and the promise of 600 permanent jobs, Shell has been given a 1.65 billion dollar tax break (over 25 years) – the biggest in Pennsylvania history. The contrast with New York, where fracking has been banned and Governor Cuomo has promised the people 40,000 jobs in exchange for a 1.5 billion dollar investment in renewables, could not be more stark.

I say, “Let the people decide.” But let them be informed people – people who, before they cast their vote, are respected enough to be given all sides of the story, as well as the complete story – and given it long before the eleventh hour. People need and deserve time – maybe even years –to discuss and weigh new and complex information that will profoundly impact their lives and those of their children. They need time to realize the ramifications of allowing the fourth richest corporation in the world to reap profit from the hearts and lungs of people in this region via products and processes that will choke our rising oceans and accelerate the threat posed by climate change to the very survival of our species.

St. Augustine believed “Hope” to be the greatest of spiritual gifts. And, said Augustine, Hope has two lovely daughters – Anger and Courage: Anger so that what must not be may not be; Courage so that what should be can be.

We will need both anger and courage to resist the complicity of silence created by the corporate state we live in.

We will need both anger and courage in our struggle to defeat an industry that, in its mad rush to woo Wall Street, will not hesitate to lay waste to half of Pennsylvania, threaten the air and water quality of millions, undermine public health, and destroy our children’s sacred future on this sacred planet.

But most of all, we will need both anger and courage because what is at stake in the current spectacle of man’s predatory relationship with Nature is indeed the gift of God – and that is why we are all here tonight.

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A native of Pittsburgh, with Sierra Club roots, and a climate justice organizer by trade and by heart, I started officially working with the Sierra Club in April as the community organizer on the “Ready for 100” campaign.

The goal? To get the city of Pittsburgh to commit to 100% renewable energy community-wide by 2035.

It’s only been a few months, but boy has it been one crazy and inspiring ride. We launched the campaign here in May to a mostly brand new Sierra Club volunteer team. There was an outpouring of brand new activists looking to get

involved after the People’s Climate March or to work on something positive after the devastating election. We started with humble beginnings: a smaller team gathering petitions and writing Letters to the Editors (LTE’s) with little to no access to the politicians and movers and shakers to whom we needed to share and advocate for our vision of 100% renewables.

So, we canvassed neighborhoods going door-to-door, putting dozens of “Ready for 100” yard signs up across Pittsburgh. A volunteer accidentally knocked on Mayor Peduto’s door as we were collecting petitions addressed to him, and to our surprise, he

was home. His answer? I love the concept but I need to build a coalition of companies and tech leaders that want to work on it before considering an endorsement. He needed to gather the movers and shakers to share our vision.

So, listening to his concerns, our volunteer team worked to get over 30 businesses, non-profits, and church sign-ons in less than two weeks leading up to meeting with the city’s Sustainability Coordinator. We made connections with clean energy companies like a local wind developer who agreed to come to the meeting with the city with us and argue that 100% was in fact doable.

On Tuesday May 30, just 2 days before Trump pulled out of the Paris Climate Accord, we got to present to the city the community support we had built: we’d gotten nearly 1,000 petitions, 30 sign-ons, had multiple LTE’s published

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in the Post Gazette and Tribune Review as well as an article in The Incline highlighting our campaign. And the best part? We had engaged dozens and dozens of volunteers in the process.

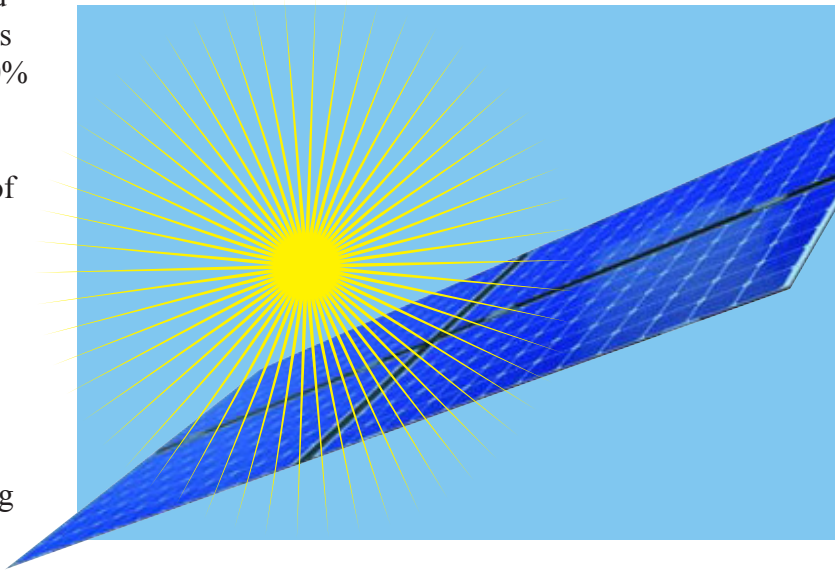
And on Tuesday, May 30th the city agreed to sign Mayors for Clean Energy. On Wednesday, we celebrated and discussed how we could make the announcement big enough to build momentum towards action to reach 100% renewables. On Thursday, June 1, Trump pulled out of the Paris Climate Agreement and used Pittsburgh as the flagship city he was representing. Our mayor was not having it. Our City was not having it. Sierra Club Ready for 100 was not having it. As our mayor got into a tweet war with the Trump administration, Sierra Club seized the moment.

Pittsburgh Ready for 100 and the national team scrambled to have Michael Brune, Sierra Club Executive Director, call Mayor Peduto. So that by Friday, June 2nd, Peduto was in the national news saying not ONLY will Pittsburgh uphold the Paris Climate Agreement, but we’ll support a goal of 100% clean energy by 2035. And by the weekend, with the incredible work of our national communications team, Mayor Peduto was in the New York Times with the mayor of Paris saying that Pittsburgh *would run* on 100% renewables by 2035: (https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/07/opinion/the-mayors-of-pittsburgh-and-paris-we-have-our-own-climate-deal.html?_r=1).

nytimes.com/2017/06/07/opinion/the-mayors-of-pittsburgh-and-paris-we-have-our-own-climate-deal.html?_r=1).

How’s that for public accountability?

In a few short months, we propelled Pittsburgh into the national news as the first post-industrial city to aim to power itself by 100% clean



energy. Pittsburgh inspired the rest of the country to take bold action: if the old steel and coal town can do it, why can’t we?

A few weeks later, the members of the U.S. Conference of Mayors unanimously approved a landmark resolution that establishes as a national policy priority the goal of 100% renewable energy in U.S. cities. These mayors alone could shift 42% of U.S. electricity to renewable, and significantly contribute to cutting the country’s emissions.

So where has this gotten us in Pittsburgh? The 100% community-wide goal will be added to the city’s Climate Action Plan 3.0 that’s coming out around labor day. City Council will introduce

a Will of Council for 100% renewable energy in September.

But the most exciting news to me is that we created a moment in which clean energy companies are calling Sierra Club and local organizations saying, “We’re coming to Pittsburgh because there seems to be a market: who should we talk to?” Senator Merkley chose to come to Pittsburgh of all places for a roundtable with Mayor Peduto on his national legislation to move the U.S. to 100% clean energy by 2050. Vice President Al Gore chose Pittsburgh for his first Climate Leadership Training Program after his movie “*The Inconvenient Sequel*” premiered because we have and will show what a true energy transition looks like.

We are using the energy to hopefully build a new wind farm to bring more clean energy online, and we’re poised to engage Pittsburgh businesses, city leaders, and our citizens to drive real transformative action towards 100%.

Interested in helping to build equitable clean energy projects? Interested in helping to shape our city’s climate action plan and passing a binding resolution? Interested in learning environmental justice organizing skills?

We have a lot of work to do, and we can use all of the help we can get. The road to 100% clean energy in Pittsburgh will not be easy.

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It will involve a lot of dedicated and hard work from community members to ensure that our path to 100% is first and foremost benefitting those most impacted by extraction and pollution.

Want to get involved?

Email: Eva.Resnick-Day@sierraclub.org to get plugged in!

Onwards,

Eva Resnick-Day

Sierra Club, Pennsylvania Chapter

Here’s a list of only some of the media coverage:

Business Insider—<http://www.businessinsider.com/pittsburgh-paris-agreement-trump-renewable-energy-2017-6>

Bloomberg - <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-06-02/pittsburgh-the-city-trump-prefers-to-paris-plans-to-go-green>

Los Angeles Times, A California-led alliance of cities and states vows to keep the Paris climate accord intact - <http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-paris-states-20170602-story.htm>

Vice Impact—https://impact.vice.com/en_us/article/newbv8/pittsburgh-mayor-bucks-trump-commits-to-100-percent-clean-energy

Pittsburgh Tribune Review - *‘Pittsburgh not Paris’ becomes call to action for Democrats and Republicans*

Mother Nature Network - *American cities, states and citizens rally against climate cowardice*

Business Insider - *Pittsburgh and Paris mayors to Trump: ‘We have our own climate deal’*

TIME - *Mayors of Pittsburgh and Paris Say They Have Their Own Climate Deal*

New York Times - *The Mayors of Pittsburgh and Paris: We Have Our Own Climate Deal*

WTAE-TV - *Pittsburgh businesses build green path for the city’s future*

Pacific Standard - *IT’S NOT JUST TRUMP’S PARIS DECISION THAT’S BAD FOR PITTSBURGH*

Climate Action - *Pittsburgh to aim for 100% renewable energy by 2035*

Washington Post - *Rip Van Winkle Republicans*

CNS News - *Pittsburgh Mayor: Trump’s ‘Misguided Decision’ to Withdraw from Paris Agreement ‘Does Not Reflect the Values of Our City’*

Yahoo News - *Pittsburgh plans to power itself with 100% renewable energy*

AJ+ - *Pittsburgh announced they intend to be powered by 100% renewable energy by 2035*

Mashable - *U.S. mayors and governors defy Trump, will stick to Paris agreement anyway*

Climate Action Programme - *Over a thousand US business leaders and mayors commit to the Paris Agreement*

The American Prospect - *Factory Towns to Trump: Don’t Defend Yourself by Invoking Us!*

WTAE-TV - *News story*

Vice Impact: *These mayors are leading the charge on national climate change action*



**SIERRA
CLUB**

Sierra Club on Paris Agreement withdrawal: “A Historic Mistake”

Wednesday, May 31, 2017

Contact: Trey Pollard 202-904-9187 (trey.pollard@sierraclub.org)

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Today, it was widely reported that Donald Trump intends to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement. According to the terms of the Agreement, no country can begin the withdrawal process until three years after the Agreement enters into force. The Agreement, which entered into force on November 4, 2016, has been formally joined by over 145 nations and dozens of countries – including India, China, and the EU -- have reaffirmed their commitment.

A recent “Yale Program on Climate Change Communications poll (<http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/>) found that nearly 70 percent of Americans, including a majority in all 50 states, support the U.S. participating in the Paris Agreement.

In response, Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune released the following statement:

“Donald Trump has made a historic mistake which our grandchildren will look back on with stunned dismay at how a world leader could be so divorced from reality and morality. Trump has abandoned the standard of American leadership, turned his back on the what the public and the market demand, and shamelessly disregarded the safety of our families just to let the fossil fuel industry eke out a few more dollars in profits. This is a decision that will cede America’s role internationally to nations like China and India, which will benefit handsomely from embracing the booming clean energy economy while Trump seeks to drive our country back into the 19th century.

“But the world should know that state and local action in the United States is moving strongly forward even in the face of Trump’s historic mistake. For every terrible decision Trump makes, grassroots activists, frontline communities, local governments, and concerned people across the country are fighting to make sure clean energy continues to grow by leaps and bounds. With our allies, Sierra Club members and supporters have helped retire more than 250 polluting coal plants and ensured more than 25 American cities have already committed to getting 100 percent of their energy from clean, renewable sources by 2030.

“Our resistance is sustainable and we will serve as a counterpoint to Trump’s dangerous policies every step of the way. Like leaders across the world, we aren’t going to wait around for our climate denier-in-chief to play catch up. As we win locally, countries across the world are already moving forward on meeting and surpassing their climate commitments. Make no mistake: the Paris Agreement was adopted after decades of climate advocacy by concerned citizens across America and around the world, and it certainly will not be derailed by the ignorance of one man.”



Notes from the Chair:

Making a Difference



Notes from the Chair

On November 12, 1998, then-Vice President Al Gore signed the Kyoto Protocol on behalf of the United States. The Kyoto Protocol is an international treaty which commits the nations party to it to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by specific amounts within the context of a set time-table. As such, and in order to become binding in the US, Senate ratification was required; but President Clinton never sent it to the Senate to even begin the process. The reason? Clinton could not count on a single vote in favor, not even from his fellow Democrats.

Fast-forward to December 12, 2015, when the United States and 194 other nations signed onto the COP21 Paris Climate Accords in which, according to the New York Times, “while every country is required to put forward a plan, there is no legal requirement dictating how much countries should cut emissions” (NYT December 12, 2015). Because each country’s emission benchmarks are voluntary, ratification of the agreement by the US Senate was unnecessary.

Which brings us to June 1, 2017, when President Donald Trump announced his intent to withdraw the United States from the Paris Accords. The announcement was, in many respects, anti-climactic. Given Trump’s campaign rhetoric and his actions and the actions of the Republican Congress during the first weeks of his presidency, it was clear that his intent and the intent of the Congress was to roll back and repeal as many environmental rules and regulations as possible. And with his appointment of Scott Pruitt to head the US Environmental Protection Agency, it is clear that Trump intends to gut and perhaps destroy entirely that institution. Had Trump not chosen to withdraw from the Paris Accords, it is certain that his administration would have done nothing to meet our voluntary commitments and, indeed, would have done everything the undermine them. Withdrawing from Paris was a rare instance of honesty from the pathological liar in the White House.

Furthermore, inasmuch as Trump has said that he will follow the formal procedure for withdrawal, the US will not be officially out until November 5, 2020, which happens to fall the day after the next US presidential election. So, should the American people elect a more climate friendly president on November 4, 2020, it is conceivable that US absence from Paris might be as brief as the interregnum span between that date and shortly after Inauguration Day January 20, 2020. Even so, that still leaves at least a long four

years of an environmentally hostile president whose goal appears to be to Make American A Toxic Waste Dump Again.

All of which begs the question: what now? Is US withdrawal from Paris a “turn out the lights, the party’s over” moment? Does it mean the the fight against climate disruption is inexorably doomed. Or is US absence from Paris largely irrelevant? Nobody can know with certainty what the future will bring, but I would argue that Trump’s withdrawal from Paris is largely irrelevant and that if, indeed, the fight against climate change is doomed it is not because of US withdrawal from the Paris Accords, but because those Accords themselves are gravely and, perhaps, fatally flawed.

To those who (understandably given the hype) are under the impression that the Paris Accords Agreement with US participation provides the key to achieving the aim of keeping atmospheric temperatures under 2 degrees Celsius, it is necessary to point out that if every country (including the US) meets its voluntary greenhouse gas emissions commitments (and that’s a big “if”), the result would be about half enough as needed to accomplish that goal. That is the reason James Hansen, emeritus head of NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center and a man sometimes dubbed “the father of climate change awareness,” called the Paris Accords “a fraud” and “bulls**t”.

Clearly, what is needed are binding commitments adequate to do the task of keeping global

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temperatures below the 2 degrees C mark with clearly defined penalties for those nations which fail to meet their targeted goals. And yet the main reason the Paris Accords were crafted with voluntary instead of legally binding commitments was so that President Obama could sign on in behalf of the United States while bypassing the US Senate where ratification would have been impossible. In truth, even before Trump, the United States has been an obstacle to the rest of the world doing what needs to be done to effectively combat climate change. Now, with the US, for all intents and purposes, out of the game for at least the next four years, the rest of the world, under the leadership of serious nations like Germany and China, might be motivated to revisit the Paris Accords and replace the toothless voluntary commitments with the mandatory obligations needed to get the job done.

Of course, the Trump regime’s apparent intent to foster the burning of fossil fuels as if it were 1817 instead of 2017 could induce the United State’s main rivals among the industrial nations to go and do likewise. But I am inclined to think otherwise because I am hopefully confident that the leadership of these other nations, unlike the current “leadership” in the US, consists of intelligent, informed, stable, mature adults who understand the dire consequence of climate change and the need to stay the course. Furthermore, the Trump Administration’s dedication to fossil fuels and its denigration of renewables enhances China’s chances of becoming the world’s leading manufacturer and supplier

of green technology and, so, gives that nation an economic as well as environmental motive for stepping into the climate leadership vacuum created by the departure of the United States.

For it is the growth of green technology and the drive for renewable energy both in the US and world-wide that, in my opinion, provides the real basis for hope that the fight against catastrophic climate change can still be won. The coal industry in the United States is done for, no matter what Donald Trump promises. Consol Energy recently announced that it is getting out of the coal business entirely. The original name of Consol Energy was Consolidation Coal.

Already the solar power industry employs twice as many people as the coal industry. In June, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto joined over 60 other mayors in pledging to lead his city government to 100% renewable energy by 2035, and he was joined shortly afterward by the mayor of Philadelphia. And even many “red” Republican states, especially those in the US west blessed with abundant sunshine and/or wind, are getting on the renewables bandwagon for economic reasons, if nothing else.

These trends, along with the fact that states such as California and many cities have pledged to abide by the Paris Accords with or without President Trump’s approval, are solid evidence that the campaign against climate change is moving forward and that fossil fuels, as the name indicates, are a thing of the past. Donald Trump

is like an embittered blacksmith standing in the doorway of one of Henry Ford’s factories and bellowing that he will make us great again by taking us back to horse and buggy days. As Mr. Trump himself so often tweets: “So Sad.”

*Mike Pastorkovich
Chair, Sierra Club Allegheny Group*



Green Infrastructure for Four Mile Run



There was a standing-room-only crowd on September 12, 2017, at the “Our Green Infrastructure Can’t Wait” event at Sixth Presbyterian Church in Squirrel Hill. The event was sponsored by the Pittsburgh Clean Rivers Campaign, the Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN), and the Allegheny Group of the Sierra Club. Heather Sage of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy outlined the plans for a large-scale science-based green infrastructure project in the Four Mile Run area of Schenley Park. Of all the large-scale green projects in our region, this one is the closest to being built. For a modest \$30 million dollar investment, we get over \$300 million in stormwater reduction benefits (a 10-1 return on investment).

As many of us are very aware, Allegheny County (that is, the Allegheny County Sanitary Authority, ALCOSAN) is under a Consent Decree to clean up our rivers: “the United States, PADEP (Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection), and ACHD (Allegheny County Health Department) allege that ALCOSAN discharged and/or continues to discharge pollutants, including sewage, into navigable waters of the United States, and that puts Allegheny County into violation of the Clean Waters Act.”

(<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/documents/alcosan-cp.pdf>).

This proposed project in Pittsburgh’s Four Mile Run is part of a scientifically designed “green first” approach developed by the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority to solve multiple problems by attacking the root cause. The reason we have sewage in the rivers is because there is too much stormwater. The reason we have flooding in basements is – too much stormwater. A green-first approach solves both problems with one solution AND gives us multiple community benefits like parks, jobs, and higher property values. We desperately need to move this project forward so that we can prove to federal regulators that our region is ready for, and is committed to, a green-first approach to fixing our sewers – and to all the extra community benefits that will bring. We need to be ready in about 3-4 years to make that case to the regulators, so we need to start NOW.

Participants in the various organizations in the Clean Rivers Campaign are signing on to the letter to Pittsburgh’s Mayor Bill Peduto, thanking him for supporting the project and asking him to fund it through the City’s capital budget. Here is the link to the letter to Mayor Peduto (*<https://pittsburghunited.salsalabs.org/fourmilerun/index.html>*).

Sierra Club members who live in municipalities outside Pittsburgh have a stake in getting the Four Mile Run project built. It is true that Four Mile Run is only in the city, but if we are not able to make the case that we can do a green-first solution, then nobody gets a green solution. As we have pointed out above, Four Mile Run is the closest to being built of all the large-scale green projects.

Per website, partners in the Clean Rivers Campaign: Pittsburgh United, Nine Mile Run Watershed, PIIN, the Allegheny Group of the Sierra Club, Clean Water Action, and Action United (*<http://www.cleanriverscampaign.org/about/partners>*).

Tom Hoffman

Developing Environmental Justice Programs in the Mon Valley Region

In 2017, starting about late Spring and continuing into mid-Summer, I started some new initiatives that, fortunately, have gained some traction. The majority of the programs were begun while wearing the 'Mon Valley NAACP Environmental Justice Chair' hat. It is a strong 'pulpit' to speak from and opens discussions that might otherwise be one sided (me only). The programs were focused on understanding conditions affecting individuals and communities in the region and developing some programs to improve shortcomings. These included:

WATER QUALITY IN MID MON VALLEY:

After attending Tom Hoffman's Kingsley Association meeting re' Pittsburgh water issues, I decided to evaluate the situation in the Mid Mon Valley:

Called several school districts and asked if they've had school fountain water tested and results. Respective Superintendents or Maintenance Supervisors reported they'd had testing done in last two years with no results at or above the action level. Good.

After a conversation with, and at the suggestion of, Veronica Coptis, then surveyed major water suppliers in Mid Mon Valley.

Identified them and obtained their annual water testing reports and action reports published on-

line. Again, seemed to be OK, with no 'smoking guns' to follow up on. Moved on.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS:

Using US Census data, determined community demographics (age, median household income, race, poverty statistics, etc.) for Mon Valley communities from New Eagle to Brownsville. General summary: No Mon Valley community is doing as well (e.g. median household income) as the counties they are located in. Reported this out to NAACP Branch and some community groups I work with.

SW PA/PA/USA HEALTH STATISTICS:

At the request of the Mon Valley NAACP Branch President, then researched PA Dept of Health for respective national statistics. Tried to break this down to SW PA county level by age, race where possible. A few findings:

Asthma rates by race/ethnicity in adults and children for USA and PA in 2008 show a clearly higher rate for "Black Adults & Children" as well as "Hispanic & Multirace Children" in PA.

Asthma hospitalization rates by county, 2009-2013, show generally higher than average rates in counties of Southwest Pennsylvania and Delaware County, and very high rates in Philadelphia County.

COPD hospitalization rates are above PA state rates for all races (but highest in "Black Race/Ethnicity") in Washington, Westmoreland, and Fayette Counties.

SW PA diabetes rates are close to PA average, with exception of 'high' rates in Fayette Co. SW PA pre-diabetes rates are in a group with PA state's highest rates (Washington, Greene, and Fayette counties.)

USA "End Stage Renal Disease" incident rates are more than three times higher for African Americans than for Caucasians.

Now we're looking for ways to lay this on the community table for discussion and action ideas.

RIVERFRONT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS:

I was part of forming a coalition which included: the Mon Valley Alliance (economic development group), River Town program (tourism and promotion), and several community groups to focus, at start, on conditions in the riverfront towns. We also had support/participation from PA Senator Bartolotta's and PA Representative Cook's offices. One of the first things we realized was that there was no 'complete' inventory of vacant/abandoned riverfront industrial properties. I volunteered to do this.

Completed a survey starting from Elizabeth/W Elizabeth, on both banks, to Point Marion at the West Virginia border. Going south to California/Belle Vernon areas did this through: direct observation (drive thru); then Google Earth to

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see beyond the tree lines/property lines; and then follow up phone calls to some community resources. From California S to Point Marion did this only by Google Earth and follow up phone calls. This section was too rural, with scattered small towns, for my direct observation. And the primary industrial 'blights' there were coal legacy issues. Reported 1st cut of all completed sections out to our coalition members by early July.

The first meetings with community leaders, re' problems and opportunities, have taken place. There seems to be general agreement that stronger ordinances and enforcement, plus education, will be necessary and desirable. The group is now working with one community (on codes and enforcement) to build a model that might be 'exported' throughout the region. The recognition that blight, codes, and enforcement need to be a regional issue is a relatively new idea but, we believe, a necessary one.

Given the great amount of industrial blighted area in the region, I proposed we also consider non-traditional methods, specifically phytoremediation as well as just straightforward planting of plants and 'tree pioneer species' tolerant of contaminants in disturbed sites. At the very least, we could reclaim our riverfronts and establish 'green corridors' that would improve the area for trail development and recreation. At best, we could reduce wind-blown and rainwater-leached contaminants. This has gotten some attention and, partly therefore perhaps, I was asked to join a group organized by PA Rep Cook to look at 'green stuff and trails,' as it was described. He's been leading a trails development project proposal for the Mid Mon Valley.

Then located some local resources with experience/interest in phytoremediation. Next steps will be to discuss those ideas with the manager of the Washington County Redevelopment Authority Brownfields Program. Also to bring in Allegheny Land Trust to share their experience in green space preservation with our group.

After some conversations with various religious and youth group leaders in the Valley I've decided to look at youth development issues. This summer I'll start a survey of high school age teen youth groups, young adults, and youth group leaders re' attitudes about the region/opportunities/needs, etc. Something like CCJ's "Listening Project." Goals are to see if we're all seeing the same things and if there are youth and community issues we (many diverse groups) can work on together.

Finally, there is general agreement among economic development groups and political leaders that when programs lead to a construction or deconstruction program they should also be used as vehicles for local worker skills training programs.

Ken Yonek

7/24/17



How Obama saved the wind industry in 2009

The great recession of 2008-2009 was devastating to businesses across the United States. The US wind industry was just starting to become an economic force during that time with 5 Gigawatts of wind power installed in 2007 and 8 Gigawatts of wind power installed in 2008. The recession hit the US wind industry particularly hard because a primary part of the financing of wind farms depended on the Federal subsidy known as the Production Tax Credit (PTC). Wind Farms earned tax credits as they generated electricity, but the tax credits were only useful if wind farm developers could find tax equity partners to utilize the tax credits. If no businesses were making a profit then the tax credits became useless. This not only put the kibosh on new wind projects under development but it also threatened wind farms already under construction and wind farms that were recently built.

Barack Obama was inaugurated in January of 2009 and walked into the White House at a time when the American economy was shedding thousands of jobs every month and important banks and financial institutions were teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. In rather rapid fashion Congress put out a stimulus package to revive the American economy and that package included

80 billion dollars for clean energy causes. Obama signed the stimulus package into law.

Part of the stimulus package included a program called the Section 1603 cash grants. Wind farm developers were allowed to switch from the tax credits,

boom for wind power in America. In 2009 the US wind industry installed a record breaking 10 Gigawatts of wind power and this created thousands of new jobs and led to the eventual establishment of wind power manufacturing plants being built in the US by European



which were worthless during the recession, to a Section 1603 cash grant subsidy. This meant that upon completion of construction of a wind farm, the wind farm developer received a cash grant of 30% on the construction cost from the federal government. The cash grants cost the federal government about the same amount of money that the tax credits would have and they not only saved the wind industry from ruin in 2009 but also created a huge turn around

wind turbine manufacturers. Here in Pittsburgh, Jim Spencer CEO of Everpower Wind Holdings knows quite well how valuable the cash grants were. Jim states: "Making the production tax credit into a refundable cash grant was a life saver for the industry. It allowed the wind industry to maintain its footing during the financial crisis

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and evolve into one of the fastest growing sectors in our economy today (<https://thinkprogress.org/generating-clean-energy-jobs-6bf2b73dcf6>).

I should note that not all was smooth sailing for wind power after 2009. As the economy revived and the Section 1603 cash grant program closed, the Production Tax Credit again became the primary subsidy to help build wind farms. In 2012 there was a battle in Congress to extend the Production Tax Credit past the end date of Dec 31, 2012. The effort to extend the PTC was thwarted by the pro fossil fuel crowd. As a result, wind farm developers raced against the clock to build out as many wind farms as possible to beat the expiration of the PTC. In 2012 there were 13 gigawatts of wind power installed in the US, a new record, but in the following year it was as if the wind industry was thrown off a cliff by Congress and there was only 1 gigawatt of wind power installed in the US in 2013. Since 2013 the PTC has been brought back and the wind industry has recovered from that really bad year. As Sierra Club members we know climate change is serious. It's the issue that affects all issues. Obama showed his true motives throughout his 8 years in always supporting the advancement of clean energy. Wind power is an important part of the Sierra Club's vision for a 100% clean energy future in the “Ready for 100” campaign. We have to work to keep pushing our leaders to support clean energy. Find out more about the Sierra Club's push for 100% renewable energy and join us as a volunteer with the “Ready for 100” campaign. <http://www.sierraclub.org/ready-for-100>

By Fred Kraybill (“The Climate Hawk”)



Originally published in “Heartbeat,” the magazine of the Heartwood organization, headquartered in Indiana: “People helping people protect the places they love.”

If there is a “Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution” you can point to the banks of the Monongahela River, where Andrew Carnegie brought an innovative steel-making process from Bessemer, Alabama, in 1859. Over the next 100 years or so, riverside communities like Braddock, Homestead, and

McKeesport became magnets for waves of immigrants, workers fueling the factories, their labor building the wealth of a new nation. When the steel industry collapsed and moved overseas in the early 1980s, these communities were in the same predicament as any industry-dependent town riding a boom-and-bust cycle. Businesses closed down, population plummeted, schools and city services like street repair soon followed as the tax base dwindled.

Pittsburgh has gone through several cycles of reinvention and

revitalization, starting with the “eds and meds” (university and hospital) phase, and the City now is recognized worldwide as a leader in high technology as well as Green technology and design. But there are neighborhoods that have yet to see any meaningful redevelopment, and communities in the outlying region have been left behind by the policies of the so-called Neoliberal global economy. Many of these people voted for Trump as an expression of this long-simmering frustration and anger.

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One of these outlying communities, Potter Township in Beaver County, Pennsylvania, is suddenly at the center of a regional debate, with the first permits issued to Shell to build a “cracker plant” on one such abandoned industrial site. This petrochemical facility would be the first of a wave of industrial development in the region, as fracked gas would be sent via pipelines to this plant to be “cracked” and made into plastic. Opposition to this plant has grown, with hundreds showing up to town meetings and public hearings, voicing concerns ranging from toxic pollution to truck traffic and property values. In January, the Potter Township Trustees voted to approve Shell’s “Conditional Use Permit,” which is the first of several permits they will need to build and operate their plant. Heartwood recently provided comment on their NPDES permit application, adding our voice to groups like Clean Air Council, the Sierra Club, and other organizations urging the DEP to deny this permit.

Meanwhile, on the banks of the Monongahela, Pittsburgh is once again home to the future of industrial innovation, as the city begins to rebuild the former LTV Steel site in Hazelwood with an eye towards the highest standards of sustainability in urban renewal. This vast industrial brownfield is among the largest vacant land areas in any city in the US, and a patchwork of ownership has complicated its repurposing so it has lain vacant since the mills were torn down in the early 1990’s. Over the last few years, the neighborhood and the City have gone through an extensive community planning process and have come up with a Comprehensive Plan for the site that combines residential areas with zones of “light industry” -- LEED-certified buildings that will provide space for Green Tech enterprises, ranging from Carnegie Mellon labs to startup entrepreneurs. The first phase features Uber, which has built a whole layout of mock-streets to test their “driverless cars.” These streets will become the skeleton of the new neighborhood. Emphasis on riverfront access and connection to the nearby Greenway are important connections to Nature, and nearby restoration efforts in the Four Mile Run and Nine Mile Run watersheds are part of this overall “greening” of the city.

Comparing these models of industrial brownfield redevelopment, one essentially rural and one fundamentally urban in character, offers an opportunity to discuss what we want as a society when it comes to quality of life in a clean environment. While far from a perfect eco-utopia, the redevelopment of the riverfront properties at the ALMONO site in Hazelwood set a new standard for urban sustainability. And although Potter Township currently is home to only 500 people, it is right next to the town of Beaver which is a sizeable community, similarly faced with what to do with their abandoned riverside industrial brownfield. This ethane cracker plant would continue that dirty industry legacy and begin a wave of petrochemical development along that stretch of the Ohio River.

It is not as if there is a lack of alternatives. During the comment period on the Conditional Use Permit, suggestions for site redevelopment included a plastics recycling facility and a Tesla Energy plant among the ideas proposed as “clean” alternatives. Pennsylvania recently took a step towards legalizing industrial Hemp, with the passing of a law allowing for limited research-only production this past summer. Plastics can be made in a manner that supports our agricultural sector with a dynamic hemp industry, instead of literally undermining our food security by taking farmland out of production permanently for the sake of a “bridge fuel.”

These two riverside redevelopment models, not 30 miles from one another, illustrate the divide that is taking place in our politics, in our society, in our economy. Even as we build a future bright with opportunity and based on Green principles of sustainability, we cling to our polluted past and prepare to repeat these mistakes by building a whole new “Cancer Alley.” Our fossil fuel addiction is itself a symptom of a deeper ailment, that abusive cycle of corporate dependency which keeps us locked into a cycle of consumption, division, want and envy amid wealth and waste. We break these chains when we unite as a Movement, recognize that what we perceive as “differences” are in fact manufactured illusions to keep us apart from one another and apart from the natural world.

Matt Peters

WILKINSBURG SUMMER PROGRAM

Wilkinsburg hosting summer program
for the first time in 30 years

Scavenger Hunts and Pollinator Gardens in Wilkinsburg!

Our Endangered Species Team is excited about two projects they did this summer in Wilkinsburg – An Environmental Scavenger Hunt and the installation of Pollinator Gardens. The Wilkinsburg Parks and Recreation Committee sponsored a FREE 8 week summer program, Park It!, for Wilkinsburg Youth aged 6-15. We were part of that program by conducting Scavenger Hunts on July 7, July 21, and August 4 at Hunter Park.

A large baseball field has a wonderful path circling it and woods beyond that. By just walking the path the kids were able to identify a host of plants (poke weed, poison ivy, honeysuckle, wild strawberries, wild blackberries, Japanese knotweed) and trees (wild cherry, oak, maple, wild apple). Their adult guide helped them take photos of the plants. The photos were then loaded onto a computer for a follow-up discussion. Although the number of participants was disappointing – only 3 children participated – their discussion was lively.

Thanks go to Bett Beeson, Kathleen Smith, and Naomi

Swerdlow for helping to create the list of plants and trees for the hunt and to Mike LaMark for designing the lists given to the participants to use as they searched. Kathleen, Bett, Barb Grover and Mike Pastorkovich led the hunts. We were also very fortunate to have two very ‘plant knowledgeable’ Wilkinsburg residents, Phyllis Wetherbe and Clif McGill, join us on the hunt. We are looking forward to offering these hunts during next year’s summer program.

For our Pollinator garden activity, a wonderful group of Wilkinsburg Residents took on the task of making this happen. Jerry Gaudi had already planned to install a Bird Habitat Garden on a vacant lot site and the Pollinator Garden idea fit perfectly with this effort. A wonderful group of young adults from the Wilkinsburg Youth Project worked long and hard to clear the lot, construct raised beds, paint and install birdhouses, and plant native plants. Deirdre Keller, Jeanne Herbert, Lynette Bloedow, and Gabi Hughes created the plans, designs, and the process that was followed to get from vacant lot space to a garden of plants that bees and butterflies love. Many volunteers helped create the



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transformation by working on several Saturdays. Beechwood Nature Preserves provided over 100 plants at a big discount. You can see the results of the volunteers’ work at 718 North Street, Wilkinsburg.

A second Pollinator Garden is planned for a lot at Glen Street next to the Covenant Church on Swissvale Avenue, where a fruit tree orchard had recently been created. Lynette Bloedow took the lead on this effort and work will be started this fall. An interesting technique, Hugel-culture, may be used to create the flower beds. This method utilizes permaculture and polyculture techniques which provide a low maintenance way of creating excellent beds for growing a diverse variety of plants. One advantage is that the method avoids digging/tilling deep into the soil below which might contain stone foundations or other debris. In addition to flowering plants to attract butterflies and bees, some beds may be planted with medicinal plants and some with herbs. We are not sure how far we will get in installing the gardens here before cold weather sets in.

Volunteers are needed to maintain both these gardens through the winter with the idea of resuming work next spring. All Sierra Club members in the area are encouraged to join in these wonderful projects – wonderful ways to build community, beautify neighborhoods, and provide exceptional educational experiences for all ages. Please contact Jerry Gaudi (jerrygaudi@gmail.com) or Lynette Bloedow (berkfam09@gmail.com) to get involved.

Barb Grover

THE WAR ON REASON

**Presented at the March for
Science, Pittsburgh on
April 22, 2017**

Happy Earth Day Everybody!

It is an honor to speak at this rally in defense of scientists and the work they do, but also in defense of the scientific method and the method of rational inquiry bequeathed to us by thinkers like Aristotle, Galileo, Sir Isaac Newton, Descartes, and the sages of that marvelous period of Western history called The Enlightenment.

For let there be no mistake: it is not just science that is under

attack today. It is rationality itself. And while it is easy to ridicule and point the finger at those with whom we are in social and political disagreement, if we are honest with ourselves we must admit that attacks on rationality sometimes come from the political left as well as from the political right.

For a long time now, many at the progressive end of the political spectrum have been infatuated with a postmodern ideology that maintains that there are no facts and the everything is a narrative: that even something like atomic theory is merely a story told to us by physicists and that hypotheses put forward by scientific cosmologists are on par with myths promulgated by ancient peoples. Postmodern philosopher Richard Rorty tells us that we should “start treating moral and scientific beliefs as tools for achieving greater human happiness, rather than as

representations of the intrinsic nature of reality.” Think about that. Climate denial certainly makes a lot of folks in the fossil fuel industry happy.

The problem with the postmodern denial of fact is that facts have public currency. Facts can be grasped, understood, and communicated by anybody regardless of race, color, religion (or lack thereof), sex, gender, age and physical ability whereas narratives are, by their nature, personal and private. If all discourse is merely narrative, then planet Earth is inhabited by nearly 8 billion solipsists who, through their narratives, can at best hope to evoke some glimmer of recognition and perhaps sympathy from some few others, but can never be confident of doing so. Whereas the fact that any object in free fall toward the Earth accelerates at a rate of 32 feet per second/ per second minus air resistance

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is comprehensible to anyone who understands the terminology employed. And if you should be unfortunate enough to fall from the top of a tall building, you will accelerate Earthward at that speed and will hit the ground with an awful smack which will either kill or severely injure you, even if your personal narrative tells you that you can fly through the air like Superman.

And the difference between myth and scientific hypotheses is that an hypothesis can be tested by controlled experimentation that involves making predictions as to what will occur if the hypothesis is correct. Myths, on the other hand, cannot be tested. They can, perhaps, give us an insight into the subjective beliefs of the peoples who forged them, but other than that can tell us nothing about the real world.

The affirmation of a real, objective, material universe, bound together in a web of cause and effect, is foundational to the enterprise of natural science and the possibility of scientific knowledge. We humans are capable of understanding this real material universe because we are a part of it, our bodies and our brains have evolved from it, and our ability to understand it is proven by the fact that if our species were not capable doing so, it would have gone extinct long ago. Indeed, if our species ever does go extinct, it will be because we have abandoned our reason by abandoning our belief in objective reality.

And, so, the most important way in which we can defend reason, science, and scientists is to affirm the foundations of rational and scientific thinking. Because to do otherwise is to be a part of the problem and not a part of the solution and will do more harm to the cause of science than all of the climate deniers and the climate liars combined. The “alternate facts” of the deniers and the liars can be refuted only by the real facts; therefore, abandoning belief in facts renders us truly defenseless.

Thank you.

Michael Pastorkovich



Climate Steps and the Capitol Steps

Reading news about politics and climate change is often discouraging and it is easy to wonder if what you do matters. Here are some significant recent events in climate change news, some of which have been under-reported.

Mayor Peduto responded to the Republican President's claim to represent "Pittsburgh not Paris" with an even stronger commitment: Peduto promised to work toward 100% renewable energy for the city by 2035. Cities are the sites of 70% of greenhouse gas pollution. This success for the Sierra Club's "Ready for 100" campaign means a growing list of cities are promising to move toward clean energy. Next steps are essential. Having committed the city to this necessary goal is like telling all your friends you are going to go on a diet. It is harder to stay on the diet than it is to announce your good intentions. There are a number of ways you can help including the following: <http://www.sierraclub.org/pennsylvania/pittsburgh-ready-for-100>

Pittsburgh releases the city's climate action plan 3.0 July 13th and you are encouraged to study this plan and add your comments and concerns at: <http://www.pittsburghpa.gov/green/pcap.htm>

Billionaire Michael Bloomberg has agreed to pay \$15 million into the U.N.'s Green Climate Fund. This is to help make up the shortfall created by the President's breaking our promise to the world. It is intended to serve as "seed" money to be matched by other billionaires or corporations. This may

restore our commitment to the Paris Accord with climate action in cities around the country meeting our promised cuts in greenhouse gas pollution.

In June, over 1000 volunteer Citizens' Climate Lobbyists (CCL) met with the offices of nearly every Member of Congress to press for a national climate policy. In cooperation with the Friends Committee for National Legislation (FCNL / Quakers) there are now four new GOP House Representatives who have agreed to join the Climate Solutions Caucus. This brings the bipartisan caucus total membership up to 24 Republicans and 24 Democrats: over 10% of the entire House are now members of this caucus.

The first test of this Climate Solutions Caucus happened on Thursday July 14th when a climate denial amendment to a military funding bill was defeated. The Caucus provided safe passage for Republicans, including many who are not yet caucus members, to vote against this science-denying amendment. Read more about how the caucus faced and passed this test at <https://citizensclimatelobby.org/thursdays-vote-climate-finds-bipartisan-majority-support-congress/>

You can take action to help support these efforts at: <https://citizensclimatelobby.org/tweet-congress-about-climate-change/#/10/>

Investors in ExxonMobile have passed a resolution requiring that the company assess impacts of international climate policies and technology on their bottom line. This passed with support from financial giants Vanguard and BlackRock, indicating that other publicly traded fossil fuel companies will likely be forced to do the same.

The international divestment movement has passed a milestone of over five trillion dollars moved out of fossil fuels. That is \$5,420,000,000,000. Every person can look into their own investments and reinvest out of fossil fuels and into clean energy. Members with state or employee pensions can quickly and easily contact their fund managers to ask them to get all money out of fossil fuel companies. And you can support the effort to get the city of Pittsburgh to divest at <http://divestpittsburgh.com/>

If you have not yet personally divested your savings and investments from fossil fuels, take time to do so. The start of this year saw the creation of publicly traded, green bond, indexed funds open up to small investors. So it has never been easier to make your money work for yourself as well as do good for the planet.

Rex "Wayne Tracker" Tillerson not only had a secret Exxon e-mail account, but it now appears that

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seven years of those e-mails have been deleted. These suspicious actions were revealed by the investigation by New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman into possible fraud and conspiracy by company executives. Additional details related to this fraud have revealed that Exxon kept two different sets of “books” accounting for their internal carbon pricing: one for their actual work and another more optimistic number for reporting to investors.

In other climate news, the legal case brought by children suing the federal government for violating their right to a habitable future world moves forward. The “Our Children’s Trust” case has now advanced past the Republican President’s attempts to block it and has a court date of February 5th, 2018. Major corporate oil lobbyists have withdrawn from participating in the case against the children. Their stated reason is they trust that the President will litigate it aggressively but they also are likely afraid that discovery motions would reveal their role in funding climate deniers. Go to www.OurChildrensTrust.org to learn more and support their legal cases.

China will begin a national, limited form of cap-and-trade carbon pricing this July. This news is important because the sheer scale of what happens in China is hard for us to fathom. As China implements and expands carbon pricing it will have gigantic effects in reducing carbon pollution, with the biggest changes set to take effect in 2020.

Whether or not you find hope from the encouraging local news, national legislative progress, or the various legal fronts: what you choose to do matters. Arguably, it matters more now than ever before.

L. Ray Roberts

Pennsylvania State Co-Coordinator for Citizens’ Climate Lobby

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412-439-3484

ALG Executive Committee Nominations Request

Sierran – Summer/Fall Issue 2017

Call for Nominations!

In the fall of each year, Sierra Club members have the opportunity to vote for candidates to our Allegheny Group Executive Committee. YOU, our members, have the opportunity to submit names for consideration by our Nominating Committee. You can nominate yourself. The ExCom is a wonderful opportunity for you to make a difference here in southwestern Pennsylvania. You can help prioritize our campaigns, how we organize our work, and have a good time joining others who care about the world in which we live and its future. Monthly meetings occur the second Monday of each month at our office in Oakland from 7-9pm.

The nine member Executive Committee assures that the activities and services provided by the Group are consistent with our Group Bylaws as well as the policies and directives of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Sierra Club and the National Sierra Club. These responsibilities include financial management, membership services, publication of The Sierran (our newsletter), conservation issues, outings and political programs. Each elected Executive Committee member serves a two year term and can run for re-election as often as he/she wishes.

Candidates for the ExCom provide a brief statement about their interest in environmental issues and why they wish to serve on the Executive Committee. These statements are included with the ballot. Voting by the membership for 4 or 5 of the 9 seats occurs in the fall via email or US Postal service. Results of the election will be announced in January 2018

Please complete the form below no later than September 10, 2017 and mail to Eva Westheimer, c/o the Sierra Club, 425 N. Craig St., Suite 202, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, or email the information to Eva at *eva.westheimer@gmail.com*. Please let us hear from you. Your voice needs to be heard!

Nominee for the Executive Committee of the
Allegheny Group of the Sierra Club (2018-2020 term)

DEADLINE September 10, 2017

(PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Name of Nominee: _____

Phone number: _____ email address: _____

Postal Address: _____

Name of person submitting Nominee's name: _____

Phone _____ email address: _____

If this is not a self-nomination, please sign your assent to the statement below:

I have spoken to the nominee and he/she has agreed to be considered as a candidate for the Executive Committee of the Allegheny Group of The Sierra Club.

Signed: _____

Sierran

Allegheny Sierran Spring 2017



The Allegheny Sierran is the newsletter of the Allegheny Group and is intended to keep the membership posted on the activities of the Group. Opinions expressed in the Allegheny Sierran are those of the authors, and should not be taken as Sierra Club policy unless specifically so stated.

All parties are encouraged to respond to any of 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, Claudia Kirkpatrick (kirkclaudia@gmail.com).

Founded by legendary conservationist John Muir in 1892, the Sierra Club is now the nation's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization -- with more than two million members and supporters. Our successes range from protecting millions of acres of wilderness to helping pass the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and Endangered Species Act. More recently, we've made history by leading the charge to move away from the dirty fossil fuels that cause climate disruption and toward a clean energy economy.

The Allegheny Group of the Sierra Club was organized in the early 1970s. It is one of 10 groups comprising the Pennsylvania Chapter.

Contact Information:

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www.alleghenysc.org

Executive Committee:

Mike Pastorkovich, Chair
(Also Equity, Inclusion, and Justice
Chair; Transportation Chair)
(treesnrivers@yahoo.com)

L. Ray Roberts, Vice Chair
(l.ray.roberts@gmail.com)

Naomi Swerdlow, Secretary
(Also Social Media co-chair)
(nswerdlow@gmail.com)

Chris Shepherd, Treasurer
(Also Climate Change Issues Chair
and Treasurer for Huplits Grants)
(shepherd999@gmail.com)

Aviva Diamond
Air Quality/Ethane Cracker Plant
Co-Chair
(aviva@radunzel.com)

Barbara Grover
(Also Political Co-Chair)
(barbgrover1@gmail.com)

Lisa Mekovsky
Political Co-Chair,
Fundraising Co-Chair
(lisamekovsky@gmail.com)

Talia O'Brien
Student Environmental Organiza-
tions Chair
(taliasunshine97@gmail.com)

Eva Westheimer
(Also Conservation Chair and
Mining Chair)
(eva.westheimer@gmail.com)

Additional Issue Chairs:

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Beaver: Co-Chairs – **Peri Unligil**
(unligil@hotmail.com) and **Aviva
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Naomi Swerdlow (nswerdlow@gmail.com) and **Tom Wolper**
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Huplits Wildlife Grants Commit-
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