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Sierra Club on the Paris Climate Agreement: “A Turning Point for Humanity”

Saturday, December 12, 2015

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PARIS, FRANCE -- Today at Le Bourget in Paris, the final text of the COP21 negotiations was released. It is expected to be approved by the full negotiating body today.

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

“The Paris agreement is a turning point for humanity. For the first time in history, the global community agreed to action that sets the foundation to help prevent the worst consequences of the climate crisis while embracing the opportunity to

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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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exponentially grow our clean energy economy.

“Decisive leadership and action from President Obama and other world leaders, an increasingly powerful climate movement, and strong progress in the U.S. and globally to move off coal cleared the way for every nation to come to the table. The global community has now agreed to do its part to protect the millions of people already confronting the climate crisis’ extreme droughts, storms, and flooding and to better safeguard the planet we turn over to our children and grandchildren.

“Paris marks the beginning and not the end of the work that must be done. In a dramatic step forward, countries have agreed to pursue efforts to limit warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius, and are now compelled to develop increasingly ambitious plans to stay within that boundary. Additionally, we now have strong transparency and accountability mechanisms, as well as robust climate financing for developing countries, that builds undeniable momentum towards a just society that is powered by clean energy.

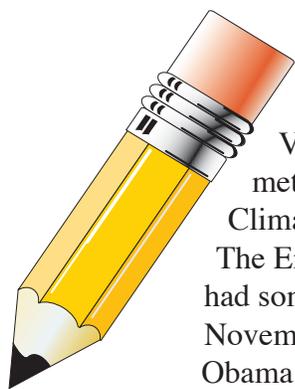
“Anyone in Washington or in the board rooms of fossil fuel companies around the world who attempts to stand in the way will have the full weight of the international community, global markets, scientific consensus, the climate movement, and public opinion firmly pushing back against them. This historic international agreement is what the American people demanded, what future generations deserve, and what the world needs.”

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NOTE: For more information on climate change, see
“Just Transitions – Beyond Green Jobs,” by Patty DeMarco.

Notes from the Chair

Making a Difference:



A belated Happy New Year! 2016 will certainly be as exciting and active as 2015! The Allegheny Group (ALG) will continue to support local and state officials who promote environmental, economic, and social justice policies. As we all know, these issues are inexorably intertwined.

Articles in this newsletter articulate those concerns: the Clean Rivers Campaign - advocating for Green solutions for storm water control; the Fight for 15 - promoting a \$15 /hr minimum wage and the right to unionize; preventing destruction of valleys in Greene

and Washington Counties; Environmental Justice issues in the Mon Valley; EPA regulations on methane gas emissions; and Climate Change, COP21 in Paris. The Environmental movement had some victories in 2015. On November 6, 2015, President Obama denied TransCanada’s Phase 4 proposal to build a pipeline from Morgan, Montana to Steele City, Nebraska. Serious concerns about risks of oil spills, pollution of critical water supplies (Ogallala Aquifer), damage to a wetland ecosystem in Nebraska, and increases in greenhouse gasses were the major environmental issues. The Environmental Protection Agency established first time methane gas regulations. ALCOSAN and Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority are including Green solutions in their plans to control storm water. The Shenango Coke works, which has been harming the health of our residents, especially those living near it, is closing. Three PA Su-

preme Court Justices and local officials who strongly support Article 1 Section 27 of our PA Constitution were elected. The right of citizens to clean air, clean water, and the protection of public lands has been secured.

In 2016, in addition to continuing our partnerships with many like-minded organizations (e.g., Pittsburgh350.org, Allegheny Clean Air Now, the Thomas Merton Center, the Center for Coalfield Justice, Pittsburgh United) here in southwestern Pennsylvania, ALG will be reaching out to minority communities whose health and well-being are disproportionately impacted by toxic pollution and economic inequality. We will be working to help transition/retrain fossil fuel industry workers to sustainable energy jobs that are safer and pay equally good wages. We will support and work with Mayor Peduto’s administration to achieve the goals of his Climate Action Plan

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(pittsburghpa.gov/mayor/release?id=5430).

And then, of course, there’s politics. All of us will be electing a President, a United States Senator from Pennsylvania, all of our PA state House of Representative members, and some of our PA state Senators. I urge you to check the Allegheny Group website (<http://alleghenysc.org/>) and Facebook pages in April to learn about Sierra Club endorsements of candidates.

Thank you to all who took the time to review the Executive Committee candidates for the 2016 through 2017 term and VOTED! Election results are reported elsewhere in this newsletter.

Once again, I encourage you to review the articles in this newsletter for more details on our activities and go to our website, alleghenysc.org, for the latest news and events. There are many challenges in 2016 and many opportunities for YOU to be involved. Come Join Us, and know that ‘YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE’!

You can contact me at 412-521-9526 or barbgrover1@gmail.com with your questions or concerns.

Barbara Grover, Chair



Now that all of the hoopla surrounding the COP21 climate conference has died away, the most crucial question to be asked is what, if anything, of significance was accomplished in Paris. Was it a success, or was it another Copenhagen fiasco, but with better public relations? Was it truly a “turning point for humanity,” as Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune stated, or was it, in the words of James Hansen, climate scientist and former director of the Goddard Space Flight Center at NASA, “bulls**t”?

According to 350.org founder Bill McKibben, writing in the December 13 edition of the New York Times about the agreement reached in Paris: “Under its provisions, nations have made voluntary pledges to begin reducing their carbon emissions...[t]hese are modest -- the United States,

for instance, pledged to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 2025 by 12 to 19 percent from their levels in 1990.” McKibben reports that Climate Action Tracker, a nongovernmental organization, calls that a medium goal “at the least ambitious end of what would be a fair contribution,” and McKibben calls that “par for the course.”

Finally, McKibben tells us that “if all parties kept their promises, the planet would warm by an estimated 6.3 degrees Fahrenheit or 3.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels,” which he calls “way, way too much.” And that’s a big “if.” We know, for example, that the Republican Congress will do everything it can to thwart implementation of even the meager promises made by the United States.

James Hansen is even more blunt as quoted in the December 13 Truthdig saying: “It’s a fraud... [i]t’s a fake...[i]t’s just bulls**t...[i]t’s just worthless words...[t]here’s no action, just promises.” And the promises are not even binding.

On the other hand, Michael Brune’s optimism is based upon his conviction that “[f]or the first time in history, the global community has agreed to action that sets

the foundation to help prevent the worst consequences of the climate crisis.” Again, none of it is binding. It all seems pretty thin gruel to me. I am inclined to agree with Bill McKibben and James Hansen. Michael Brune, I fear, is putting the proverbial lipstick on the proverbial pig.

But that doesn’t mean we ought to give up. Far from it. In fact, the big shot politicians and the big shot corporate poobahs would likely have never staged their extravaganza in Paris if they hadn’t felt the “heat” from the groundswell of environmental activism all over the earth. And the only way we are going to get them to actually do something about the climate crisis except slinging around pretty words is to keep the pressure up.

Here in the United States, we have a presidential election coming up in 2016. And here in Pennsylvania, we have environmentally unfriendly Senator Pat Toomey coming up for re-election. We need not only to vote, but also to make sure that climate change is a top issue in all campaigns. I have already mentioned the Republicans who are for the most part climate

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deniers and anti-environmental obstructionists. But a word of warning: don't put too much faith in the Democrats either.

In 2009, Congress was considering so-called “cap and trade” legislation as a way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, because such legislation had proven somewhat successful in reducing acid rain. “Cap and trade” legislation is the most mainstream, moderate, business-friendly environmental approach imaginable. At the time, both houses of Congress were controlled by the Democrats and the White House was occupied by a new, popular Democratic president Barack Obama. And the Congress failed to pass even this modest proposal. As the late Kurt Vonnegut might have said: “So it goes.”

So, my advice to all committed environmentalists is to get a good, rugged pair of marching boots. Because we are going to have to take it to the streets. We are going to have to “shake their windows and rattle their walls,” in the words of Bob Dylan. We are going to have to make the powers that be do the right thing for the earth and for the wretched of the earth “by all means necessary” in the words of Malcolm X.

Peace. And all power to the people.

Michael Pastorkovich

Report on Environmental Justice Activities in the Mid Mon Valley

It's been about a year and a half since I joined the Mon Valley Branch of the NAACP, and about two months shy of that when I was asked, by the Branch President, to start up and chair an Environmental Justice committee. After doing some research, and relying on my own experience growing up and living in the Valley, I wrote the first plan of action.

The first thing to recognize is that, in addition to the formal rules defining an EJ situation based on racial or economic impact disparities, the Valley EJ impacts are primarily affected by legacy issues. The brown-fields, waste dumps, abandoned industrial sites, and declining communities are the results of deindustrialization. Big industry came, went, and left their garbage behind.

And the failure of regional, state and national political leadership to address these problems does make them EJ issues. Basically, the old working class neighborhoods, with rising unemployment, declining population and eroding tax bases, were ignored in favor of the wealthier newer suburbs.

Having written my plan I needed to get out into the various communities to find out what they thought. I decided to start by sitting down individually with some Pastors from the small churches (mostly African-American congregations but not solely) in the Valley and get their input. Almost uniformly the concerns voiced were: No good jobs. No solid economic foundation for family life. Families and communities are eroded. Drugs. And as one Pastor added, “Why can't we move on in the Valley? Why can't we tear down these old dilapidated industrial structures and return that property to productive use?”

I also met with other community members and leaders to get a broader understanding. Sat through Chamber of Commerce luncheon meetings for opportunities to hear from and meet with local and county, business and political leaders. Attended ‘Town Halls’ in various communities to do the same thing. Followed up those activities with further contact and follow-up questions for the political leaders. Had discussions with and attended meetings of regional economic development groups like the Mon Valley Progress Council. Even attended meetings of the Urban Green Growth Collaborative at Kingsley Association in the Larimer neighborhood of Pittsburgh, to see how they dealt with similar problems.

Jobs and neighborhood blight were recurring themes. Some might ask: “What does that have to do with Environmentalism?” But, from an

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Environmental Justice perspective, sustainability and transition (from the old, polluting industries) are foundation themes. And you can't do EJ while ignoring the “J” part. Put another way: some of you may know that I'm a Phipps Master Gardener and volunteer there weekly. I've often heard the foreman say to a visitor to the Desert Room, “All Cacti are Succulents (plants that store water), but not all Succulents are Cacti.” In a similar fashion, an act of Environmental Justice is an act of Social Justice but not necessarily the reverse. Now it was time to go to work in the communities:

Environmental Justice:

I started out with a good, old fashioned environmental problem. Like bird-dogging the PA-DEP for over a year to get their air quality sampling data taken around the newly reopened Monessen Coke Works. This data, along with information about the health implications of exposure to coke oven emissions, raised the group's awareness of the potential for harm to their health and to their communities' children. I'll keep coming back to this especially with the potential for a suit by PennEnvironment.

Environmental Justice and Criminal Justice:

State Correctional Institute Fayette was built on top of coal fly ash dumped onto a coal waste pile. Next to this dump site also sits the small town of LaBelle. Both the town and the prison populations are reporting adverse health impacts. Following up further on the Abolitionist Law Center's formal health survey of SCI Fayette's inmates and the Center for Coalfield Justice's health survey of town residents. The results of

the epidemiological analysis of the inmates will be of high interest to the NAACP Criminal Justice Committee.

Working on “Transition” can involve a combination of developing new jobs or improving access to new jobs through e.g. access to training and/or transportation. Trying several tactics.

Jobs:

Using some search sites I receive information on ‘local’ job postings in health care, medical technology, food service, retail, manufacturing, and construction. Focusing on entry level jobs, I send a jobs posting list twice a week to 10 area churches and to our members. Keep working on refining the job searches and adding to the recipients list.

In order to provide information regarding other career opportunities, contacted Jack Shea of the Allegheny County Labor Council, and he put me in touch with the Builders Guild of Western Pennsylvania. They provided information on all their Union Building Trades apprenticeship programs/timing/requirements. Sent all this information to ‘jobs list’ recipients. Positive feedback from recipients.

Volunteered, with other NAACP members, at a job fair to see how they're run. Met personnel from Careerlink Mon Valley Regional, which offers workshops on ‘Resume Writing,’ ‘Successful Interviewing,’ etc. For the first-time job seeker those can be ‘deal making’ skills. Obtained and forwarded details on these workshops to our churches and members lists.

While looking for additional job training opportunities, found that a pa.gov site has a “High Priority Occupation List” that is developed

by input from potential employers. And, that CareerLink will pay for training in these high demand occupations. I'll be exploring this further in 2016.

Access to public transportation can be decisive for low income job seekers. Mon Valley Transit can get you from California, PA, to Pittsburgh but can't get you to the City of Washington, PA. More importantly, it can't get a job seeker to all the jobs potential that lines the important commercial corridor of State Route 19 from Washington to Southpointe. Contacted several regional and state political leaders to urge that such a loop be considered/evaluated. Senator Bartolotta's office advised that they will organize meeting of relevant transit authorities to evaluate proposal.

Under the concept of “Sustainability” we're exploring several areas.

Neighborhood Blight and Stabilization:

The City of Monessen has 52% of the properties on the entire Westmoreland County repository of abandoned/tax delinquent/sheriff's sale properties. Organizing a meeting between community (church) leaders and the Mayor so that their concerns and the Mayor's action plans can be discussed. Potential ‘cast of characters’ now identified.

The Mon Valley is lined with examples of industrial blight such as: New Eagle Coal Prep Plant; idled Elrama/Mitchell/Hatfields Ferry Power Stations. Started several discussions with regional and state political leaders re: who will take the lead to see that companies responsible for these sites (and others) clean them up so they can be returned to productive use.

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The Mon Valley Progress Council has a working group, ‘The Fight Blight Round Table.’ The members are the mayors/managers, etc., of the most seriously affected communities. We’ve been invited to join, representing the NAACP and their communities.

Some attempts to develop “Sustainability” projects just haven’t worked. For example, the utility sponsored energy conservation programs seemed like a way to stimulate some neighborhood improvements, but they’ve gotten little traction in the municipalities so far. Likewise, I brought a speaker on solar to a meeting of the Mon Valley Progress Council but found almost no interest on the part of their municipality members.

However, I’ve recently had discussions with two communities interested in either expanding or starting some community gardens. We’ll have follow-up discussions after the New Year with an eye toward start-up in Spring.

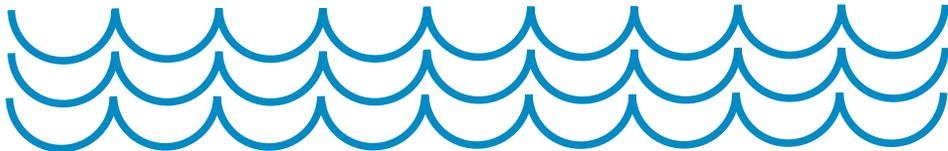
Also, recently had a couple of meetings with members of the Marianna Outdoorsmen Association, who are very interested in promoting youth outdoor groups and such activities in the Mon Valley region. Several members of our NAACP Branch have a strong interest in engaging their youth in outdoor activities. This interest, along with developing the outdoor recreational opportunities of the Mon Valley, fits nicely into “sustainability” and we’ll be exploring this in 2016 also.

All along I’ve been working to try to identify the community leaders necessary to develop the community involvement that will support the sustainability projects I’ve seen working in other areas. And this, really, is the next necessary step. Because, if you’re going to be successful developing Environmental Justice programs in a community, those programs must ultimately be based in, and directed by the community. That’s the ultimate challenge in the attempt to effect lasting change.

Ken Yonek

CLEAN RIVERS CAMPAIGN

“UPS THE ANTE”



On November 19, 2015, the Clean Rivers Campaign held a press conference on Allegheny Landing on the North Shore with an 8500 square foot black tarp covering most of the park to symbolize the devastation that even one of the proposed ALCOSAN drop shafts would wreak on our waterfront developments. If ALCOSAN is allowed to proceed with their all-gray tunnel plan, they will need to build 18 of these drop shafts along our riverfronts. Each shaft is 100 feet in diameter and during con-

struction each will be surrounded by a 2-3 acre construction site (an acre is roughly a football field without the end zones). They will be a long-term proposition while the tunnels under the river are built. In addition, ALCOSAN has proposed 18 drop shafts along our river fronts that will be permanent structures. During construction, they, like the larger access shafts, would each be surrounded by a several-acre construction site. These drop shafts would be 20 feet in diameter and would be perma-

nent structures on our waterfront.

Kevin Acklin, Mayor Peduto’s Chief of Staff and Chief Development Officer, was the main speaker at the event, and he said, “You’re not going to come to our city without public investment and build tunnels to tear up our riverfronts with our money to put it on the ratepayers unless we’re part of the solution here,” Acklin said. “And if that means we have to fight that out in court, that’s where we’ll go.”

The core groups of organizations

“Rivers” Continued on Page 7

in the Clean Rivers Campaign – Sierra Club, Action United, PIIN, Nine Mile Run Watershed Association, Clean Water Action, and Pittsburgh United – were joined at the podium by Riverlife, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, Bike Pittsburgh, and Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group. All the groups pledged to stand together to stop a plan that would destroy our riverfronts and fight on for a green-first solution that would bring multiple benefits to our communities while it ends our sewer overflow problems.

Grant Oliphant, President of the Heinz Endowments, wrote a blog released just before the press conference in which he said, “ALCOSAN’s ‘maddening’ decision is disruptive and expensive.” He wrote of the trip that Heinz sponsored for public officials to visit Kansas City, where they saw the light and have switched from a tunnel plan to a green-first plan. Again, Grant Oliphant, “Green infrastructure creates at least as many jobs as traditional methods but also produces actual community amenities for residents to enjoy in exchange for the rate increases that will come with modernizing our water-and-sewer systems. ALCOSAN, by the way, sent only one engineer on that Kansas City trip, even though the Mayor and the County Executive were leading the charge” (*see <http://www.heinz.org/Interior.aspx?id=480&post=22>*).

The Sierra Club is a founding member of the Clean Rivers Campaign and is also pledging to do what it takes to win a green first plan. I am the Conservation Program Coordinator for the State Chapter leading on the Clean Rivers Campaign outreach to the communities outside the city of Pittsburgh – Sierra Club members who would like to get more involved can send me an email (*tom.hoffman@sierraclub.org*).

Tom Hoffman, Conservation Program Coordinator-Clean Rivers Campaign Pittsburgh

Why the **Sierra Club** Should **Actively Support** the **Fight For 15**

You are probably wondering why an environmental organization should care about the issue of low wages. You may say, that’s not an environmental issue -- not our turf.

But the Sierra Club is part of a huge fight now for the future of our kids’ world. We need the voices of all citizens speaking up to help us move our economy away from one that is heating up our world. What we have found time and time again is that we do not hear enough of the voices from the communities most impacted and endangered by climate change. Communities where low wage workers live face so many challenges – unemployment, lack of services, drugs and

crime. Often focusing on environmental issues – even one as big as climate change – is just not possible. Increasing wages of hospital workers would not only put money in the pockets of people who need it most, reducing people’s need to rely on food stamps and other forms of assistance, it would also increase the ability of people in areas that suffer disproportionately from pollution and environmental degradation to fight for environmentally healthier communities.

Carnegie Mellon recently created a map of our Pittsburgh area that highlights how serious a problem this is for our low income communities. It was prepared by Albert Presto of Carnegie Mellon, and he

mapped where the highest levels of pollution are in our region. Most of the pollution in our region is located in Environmental Justice communities. EJ communities are ones that have either a low average income or a high percentage of minority residents. The only way to repair this inequity is to give those communities the resources to fight for cleaner air. More resources mean higher wages for workers.

While the Sierra Club is fighting to save the planet from the worst effects of climate change, it is clear that we will not be able to escape the effects of climate change that are already locked in. We will all be affected as sea levels

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“Fight” Continued from Page 7

rise and storms become more damaging – what happened a few months ago in South Carolina will become the norm. Communities where low wage workers are concentrated are the least able to be resilient in the face of these changes in our climate. Workers need living wages to be able to survive climate catastrophes. As national Sierra Club Director Michael Brune said at a Fight For 15 Rally in Los Angeles:

“When fossil fuels disrupt our climate, causing killer heat waves, wildfires, and deadly floods, who suffers the most? It’s the people who can’t afford air-conditioning, the people who can’t afford to buy gas to flee from fires and floods, and the people who must raise their kids next door to coal plants, fracking sites, and oil refineries. Because no matter how hard those people work, they can’t earn enough money to save their own lives. That’s why they call it a living wage!”

The system that produces low wage jobs that can’t support families is the same system that produces pollution in our neighborhoods and also climate change. We support higher wages for hospital workers because it is the right thing to do. It’s the fair thing. If there is going to be a transition to this fairer economy, we need to create millions of good paying jobs in health care, education, and clean energy. Otherwise, people will be stuck in the false choice that is so familiar to Pittsburghers - good jobs or clean environment. We have been told over and over again, “You gotta choose, you can’t have both.”

In her excellent book [This Changes Everything](#), Naomi Klein is hopeful that climate change – as scary as it is – can bring together all the many movements that are fighting for a better world. The Sierra Club is supporting the Fight For 15 to make Naomi’s dream a reality!

*Tom Hoffman, Conservation Program Coordinator-Clean Rivers Campaign Pittsburgh
(tom.hoffman@sierraclub.org)*

Not One More Valley Fill

The land in southwestern Pennsylvania is scarred with valley fills as a result of historic and current coal mining in the area. Valley fills, also called coal refuse disposal areas (CRDAs), occur as coal mining companies extract coal, process the coal and then dispose of both liquid and solid, rock waste in surrounding valleys.

These valleys are home to families, communities, places of recreation, headwater streams, and wildlife. In Greene County, Consol Energy has over 2,000 acres of valleys filled with toxic coal waste.



Photo courtesy Center for Coalfield Justice

There are about 30 coal refuse disposal areas across both Washington and Greene counties, many of them obliterating entire communities.

Consol Energy has submitted an application for construction and

operation of two new CRDAs, No. 7 and No. 8. These projects threaten to destroy two more communities and ecological habitats.

The application for CRDAs No. 7
“Valley Fill” Continued on Page 9

& 8 is deficient in a variety of ways that the Center for Coalfield Justice detailed in extensive comments submitted recently.

Including the conveyor belts and access roads necessary for their operation, these two sites would cover approximately 1,780 acres. Two entire valleys would be filled with coal waste, one with coarse coal refuse (No. 8) and one with liquid coal slurry (No. 7). One of these valleys is a known breeding habitat for the Northern Long-Eared Bat which was listed as threatened species in May 2015 under the Endangered Species Act. There are no other comparable habitats for the Northern Long-Eared Bat in the area. This area is also habitat for the Indiana Bat which is classified as endangered. If granted, this permit will allow Consol to impact 83,822 linear feet of stream, which amounts to 16 miles of headwater streams, 1.628 acres of open water, and 23.242 acres of wetland.

The Center for Coalfield Justice and Sierra Club recently delivered over 1,300 comment letters demanding the DEP deny this permit and protect communities and wildlife. At the informal public conference for this application they also showed a drone video of the existing sites and valley that is threatened (check out that video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64rFJgENWhc>).

Help the Center for Coalfield Justice and Sierra Club continue to fight this project and say “not one more valley fill” by signing the comment letter demanding the Department of Environmental Protection deny Consol’s application for CRDAs 7 & 8 (www.bit.ly/CRDAACL).

Veronica Coptis

Just Transitions Beyond “Green Jobs”

Modern civilization has followed the narrative of human domination over the Earth. Extracting resources to create wealth through commerce has dominated our trajectory for over 200 years. The advances of the Industrial Revolution enabled human technologies to extract resources far beyond the capacity for replacement or recovery by natural forces alone. Now, the whole planet reflects the consequences of unrestrained plunder: acidifying oceans; collapse of ecosystems; expanding deserts; and increasing concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. We have been using resources without a thought to replenishing them or preserving the living systems that support life: oxygen-rich air, fresh water, fertile ground, and the biodiversity of

species that constitute the interconnected web of life on earth. The most common and universally recognized metric we use to measure wealth – notably the Gross Domestic Product – inadequately captures these elements of our life support system (*see note #1*). A society dependent on indefinite growth in consumption, without replacing or reconstituting resources, is doomed. As we respond to the goals of the COP21 talks in Paris, we have an opportunity to shift focus toward a more holistic way of living together on earth. People need to hold governments accountable and press for significant and steady action to keep the climate conditions from reaching irreversible thresholds.

The World People’s Congress on Climate Change held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, on April 22, 2010, adopted a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth. The Preamble sets forth the

rationale for this action, stating in part: “*all forms of depredation, exploitation, abuse and contamination have caused great destruction, degradation and disruption of Mother Earth, putting life as we know it today at risk through phenomena such as climate change; convinced that in an interdependent living community it is not possible to recognize the rights of only human beings without causing an imbalance within Mother Earth . . .*” (*see note #2*).

The Universal Declaration from The Peoples Congress recognizes a path forward based on the value and critical importance of preserving the balance of natural systems. This Universal Declaration speaks to the very heart of the difficulties in addressing climate change. Solutions require a frame of reference and ways to measure progress that encompass the entire system – economic, environmental and cultural.

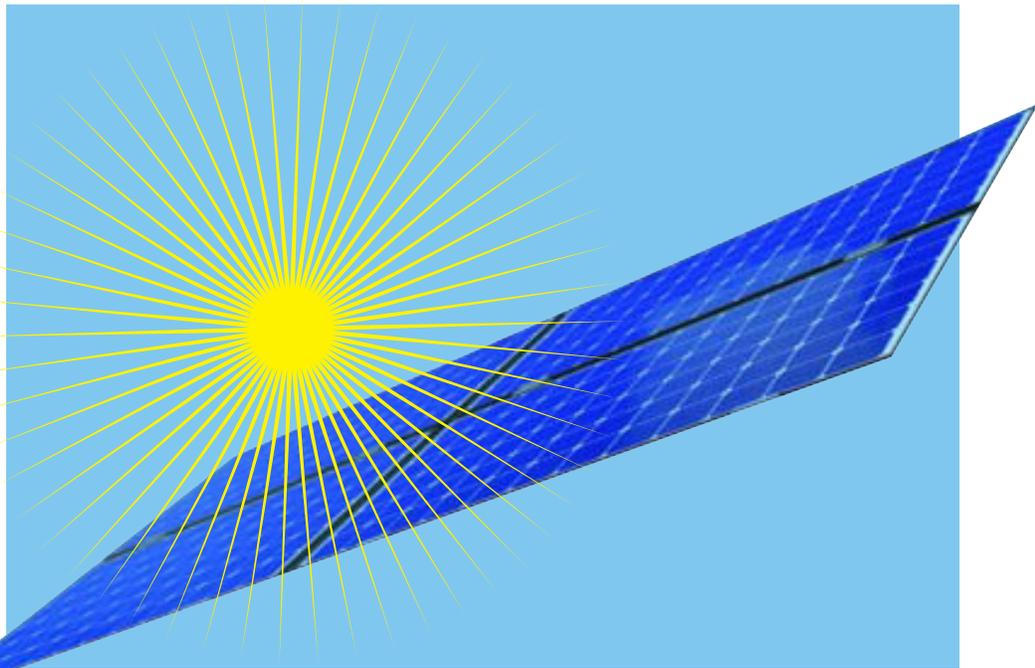
“Green Jobs” Continued on Page 10

“Green Jobs” Continued from Page 9

Using economics as the dominant metric for determining progress forecloses or undervalues other critical components that determine well-being or even prosperity.

The GDP depends on endless growth in consumption, without counting the costs and the consequences. It has no way to capture a species about to become extinct, or a birdsong in a forest at dawn, or a Monarch butterfly. Defining everything in terms of economic value diminishes our spirit, our culture, and our ability to think beyond instant gratification. This is especially important in considering the implications of labor and the role of work in a “no-growth economy.” The economy does not need to stop just because we must stop burning fossil deposits for fuel!

Harnessing renewable resources and capturing the efficiencies of a circular economy that recaptures and regenerates resources will provide ample employment. Sustaining people’s needs without fossil fuels will require adjustments and some changes in how we use and value resources. We must add the preservation and restoration of oxygen-rich air, fresh water, and fertile soil to the equation. Including the dignity of work as well as the critical need to preserve ecosystems and the priceless services they offer may not be possible in the economic models of the past. A world-view that assumes a right to indefinite exploitation of natural resources shackles the imagination and limits the scope of what is attainable. It sets up conflicts over resources and creates disparities between those who have taken control of them and those who are



exploited to develop them.

I think of the wisdom expressed by Chief Tecumseh, who said, “The earth was given to all for the use of each” (*see note #3*). A shared common good cannot be monetized and owned. The priceless life of the earth must be a constant standard – protected, preserved, and honored as we fit our human enterprises within nature’s limits with love and respect. Moving to a world-view based on sharing the gifts of the living system we all depend on can help to harness the human resources necessary to address life-threatening events like climate change.

The concept of “Green Jobs” plays into the existing process, substituting activities thought to be more environmentally friendly for those that are destructive. Many of the same arguments play on sentiment, leading retailers to put products in green containers and stretch the meaning of labels to imply “natural” or green ingredients. But, the basic ethical question remains obscured. Do we really need “air freshener,” green

or otherwise? What about all the resources embedded in disposable items like plastic shopping bags? If the consequences of conveniences we consider essential today compromise the viability of our grandchildren, is it right? Just because we can extract the last drop of oil, or therm of gas, or pound of coal from the ground does not mean that we should.

We have assumed that people have an unlimited right to “develop” or extract and use whatever natural resources are found in the earth. But the obligation to sustain and preserve the functioning of the earth’s living systems has not grown as a corollary to this assumed right. The obligation to consider the needs of the next generation is not central to our economy.

The transition to a system of meeting human needs with equity and justice worldwide will require an adjustment in fundamental thinking. The role humans play in the living earth’s ecosystems must shift from one of entitled exploiter to one of preserver and restorer. The

“Green Jobs” Continued on Page 11

knowledge gained over the past 200 years must be applied to preserve the earth’s essential life support systems, not to exploit them to destruction. People are more alike in their shared humanity than different in their religions, cultures, or economic interests. Preserving the well-being of children, securing the dignity of meaningful work to provide essential needs, and celebrating cultural and spiritual diversity defines humanity.

The changes already locked in for the future from the accumulated actions of human enterprise over the last century have shaped the fate of our children (*see note #4*). We must take responsibility to preserve natural systems and restore the damage we have caused. It is a global challenge to reach zero fossil combustion by 2050. To set this challenge as a common global aspiration will unleash the creativity and imagination necessary to reach the goal. We can create a new age of enlightenment based on the laws of natural ecosystems, instead of the laws of economic profiteering.

*Patricia M. DeMarco Institute for Green Sciences, Carnegie Mellon University
Visiting Researcher and Writer*

EPA Methane Regulations Should Be Stronger!

**EPA Testimony:
September 29, 2015
Pittsburgh, PA**

My name is Barbara Grover, and as Chair of the Allegheny Group of the Sierra Club, I am speaking this afternoon on behalf of more than 5000 members here in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

As you well know, currently there are no federal limits on the amount of methane pollution that oil and gas operations can emit, and no federal air regulation of existing oil or natural gas infrastructure (*see note #1*). We are extremely pleased and applaud this first initiative by the EPA to control methane emissions from oil and gas sources. Controlling methane emissions will also reduce smog, soot-forming pollutants, and hazardous emissions. An independent analysis conducted by ICF International has determined that the U.S. oil and gas sector can significantly reduce emissions of methane using currently available

technologies and at a low cost. According to this analysis, “by adopting proven emissions-control technologies, industry could cut methane emissions by 40 percent below projected 2018 levels at a cost of less than ONE CENT per thousand cubic feet of produced natural gas. Some of these measures pay for themselves over time through the sale of captured natural gas” (*see note #2*).

Arguments from the industry that your proposal will create economic hardship to the industry are simply not true. In fact, I’m surprised the industry hasn’t embraced capturing methane since it could well be a profitable activity for them rather than wasting it by flaring and polluting the atmosphere.

The health benefits from a reduction in methane emissions are quite astonishing. According to a study reported at the 2011 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA, reducing methane emission by 20% starting in 2010 would prevent 30,000 premature all-cause mortalities globally in 2030, and 370,000 between 2010 and 2030 (*see note #3*). Now it is already 2015, so we’ve already lost the opportunity to prevent some of

those deaths. The study continues that the cost-effectiveness of this 20% reduction in methane emissions is estimated to be \$420,000 per avoided mortality. Think about that for a minute: had we started to reduce methane emissions in 2010, that’s a cost-effectiveness of \$12 billion 600 million (30,000 x \$420,000 = \$12,600,000,000) world-wide.

Thus, the Sierra Club supports your proposal to control methane emissions from the oil and gas industry. Clearly, it provides a unique opportunity to improve air quality, and it can be a cost-effective part of ozone management. It will result in the benefits of better air quality, improve public health, and mitigate climate change.

In addition, we suggest that your final proposal should include some items not currently included in this current version.

First, the new rules must include oil and gas sources NOW IN EXISTENCE, not just the new and modified infrastructure. By 2018, nearly 90% of all methane emissions in the oil and gas sector will come from sources now in existence (*see note #4*). The United

“Stronger” Continued on Page 12

States cannot meet our international greenhouse gas reduction commitments unless we cut methane from oil and gas sources by 40-45% from 2012 levels by 2025 (*see note #5*). To achieve that goal, oil and gas sources now in existence must be included.

Second, equipment such as storage vessels, liquids unloading operations, and compressors at well sites MUST be subject to these regulations.

Third, inspections should occur MONTHLY for ALL well sites and compressor stations for leak detection and repair requirements. The current wording of flexibility of inspections depending on the percentage of leaks in the previous 12-month period is completely inadequate.

And finally, a six-month period to allow source operators to repair leaking equipment is much too long a period of time. This time period MUST be shortened. As was mentioned earlier, the danger to health, air quality, and climate change is far too important to allow leaks to continue for six months.

In closing, I reiterate that the Sierra Club is supportive of the EPA proposing rules to reduce methane emissions for the very first time. The boom in the natural gas industry has resulted in increased methane emissions. That must be halted. We strongly urge you to consider these suggested additions/revisions to the current proposal.

Thank you for your time.

Barbara Grover

Chair, Allegheny Group of the Sierra Club

[Additional note: On January 19, 2016, Governor Tom Wolf announced a plan to reduce methane leaks and emissions at new and existing well sites and pipelines. Per the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (<http://powersource.post-gazette.com/powersource/policy-powersource/2016/01/20/Wolf-announces-plan-to-reduce-methane-emissions-at-gas-wells/stories/201601200068>), “The plan includes developing a new permit for new shale gas well sites, a more stringent permit for new compressor stations and gas processing facilities, a regulation for limiting leaks at existing oil and gas facilities and best practices for detecting and fixing leaks along pipelines.” There is continuing information in the news about this plan.]

References: Beyond Green Jobs

NOTE #1: GDP formula is: The Gross Domestic Product is the sum of Consumption, Government Spending, Investment, and Exports minus Imports. For a discussion of GDP computation for National Income Accounting see: <http://www.econport.org/content/handbook/NatIncAccount>.

NOTE #2: World People’s Conference on Climate Change and The rights of Mother Earth. “Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth.” Cochabamba, Bolivia, April 22, 2010. <http://therightsofnature.org>

NOTE #3: Kevin Hillstrom. 2010. U.S. Environmental Policy and Politics: A Documentary History. “Tecumseh Decries Land Cessions” C.Q. Press. Washington DC. Page 57.

NOTE #4: Our Children’s Trust Lawsuit. August 15, 2015. SUMMARY OF CONSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE LAWSUIT AGAINST THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT <http://ourchildrenstrust.org>

References: Statement at EPA Hearing on Methane Pollution Standards:

NOTE #1: Cost-effective methane emissions reductions from U.S. oil and gas. March 3, 2014, Environmental Defense Fund <https://www.edf.org>.

NOTE #2: Ibid.

NOTE #3: West, J. Jason, Flore, Arlene M., Horowitz, Larry W., and Maurzeerall, Denise L. Global health benefits of mitigating ozone pollution with methane emission controls. 2011 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA, from the abstract.

NOTE #4: ICF International, Economic Analysis of Methane Emission Reduction Opportunities in the U.S. Onshore Oil and Natural Gas Industries (March 2014), at 3-4 – 3-5, available at <https://www.edf.org>

NOTE #5: The White House, Fact Sheet: Administration Takes Steps Forward on Climate Action Plan by Announcing Actions to Cut Methane Emission (January 14, 2015), available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room>

Executive Committee Election Results

Congratulations to Barbara Grover, Mike Pastorkovich, Naomi Swerdlow, and Eva Westheimer, who were elected to our Executive Committee via our Fall 2015 balloting. They were officially approved for a two-year term (January 2016-December 31, 2017) at our January 11, 2016, Executive Committee meeting.

THANK YOU to all who took the time to vote for our Executive Committee candidates. Although the number of voters in the last two years is a significant improvement over prior years when the ballot was printed in a paper newsletter, it is still only a small percentage of our total membership which is over 5000. We appreciate your thoughts on how to improve the response rate. Please go to our Website, alleghenysc.org, and click "Contact Us" tab and type in your thoughts.

If you received a yellow postcard about the election, have an email address and are willing to share that with us for yearly Executive Committee elections, *please send your email address to: Bob Lang, excomvote@rdlang.com*. You will then receive the notice about voting via email in the fall of 2016. Not only will electronic voting be easier and quicker for you, it will save us the cost of informing you via the postal service. Please help us do that.

Thank you again for your support of the Sierra Club.

Claudia Kirkpatrick (Chair, Nominations Committee)



Sierran

Winter/Spring Newsletter, 2016

Upcoming Events

Activist Nights: . . . Every Tuesday evening, 6:30-8:30pm, Sierra Club Office, 425 N. Craig Street, Pittsburgh 15213. Pizza and drinks provided. Come join like-minded environmental activists!

Executive Committee

meetings: Second Monday of the month, 7:00-9:00pm, Sierra Club Office, 425 N. Craig Street, Pittsburgh 15213. All are welcome to attend.

March 10: Deadline for articles for the Allegheny Sierran. We welcome submissions to our Spring/Summer newsletter. Please send to our editor, Claudia Kirkpatrick (kirkclaudia@gmail.com).

April 22: Earth Day. Check our website (<http://alleghenysc.org>) for events occurring around this date.

June 12: Gay Pride Parade. We'll be marching in this parade – come join us for planning sessions and marching. Check our website (<http://alleghenysc.org>) for details as we set dates and times to prepare.

June 24-26: Sierra Club-Pennsylvania Chapter's annual Membership Outing weekend; Raccoon Creek State Park, 3000 State Route 18, Hookstown, PA 15050. Free fun-filled weekend of outdoor activities, good conversations, good food. Meet old and new friends who care about the environment. See details on our website (<http://alleghenysc.org>) closer to the date.

Allegheny Sierran

Allegheny Sierran Winter-Spring 2016

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.

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