



Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. Hotline



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Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. (GASP) is a nonprofit citizens group in southwestern Pennsylvania working for a healthy, sustainable environment. Founded in 1969, GASP has been a diligent watchdog, educator, litigator, and policy maker on many environmental issues, with a focus on air quality in the Pittsburgh region.

GASP Calls on the County Executive and Board of Health to Support and Strengthen the Local Air Quality Program

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

Representatives from GASP, Clean Water Action, Sierra Club, and Sustainable Pittsburgh held a press conference on February 20th to call upon the County Chief Executive and the Board of Health to make a public commitment to keep the Air Quality Program local and to provide the program with the staff and resources necessary to ensure healthy air quality for Allegheny County residents.

For many months now the local Air Quality Program has been threatened by a dismantling. The County Chief Executive has said he is analyzing whether or not he should send the program to the state. GASP feels strongly that an active, local air quality program that works with the community and industry to promulgate, implement and enforce regulations is the ideal situation. We believe there are many benefits to keeping the program local including; local access for regulated entities, local government, and the community; a local program is specifically focused on problems unique to Allegheny County's urban airshed and river valley topography; flexibility in regulation, implementation and enforcement to meet the needs of the local community while continuing to be in compliance with all state and federal requirements; and local control affords the County opportunity to be proactive, to go beyond regulation in working cooperatively with all sectors to innovate best practices for achieving mutual goals of economic growth, environmental quality, and social equity.



Rachel Filippini speaks at the press event

PHOTO: MAREN COOKE

Many of the weaknesses of the local Air Quality Program stem from a reduction in workforce and resources over the years. The threat of turning the Air Quality program over to the state, the lack of competitive salaries throughout the health department, and the overall mediocre working conditions are not conducive to an effective program. The staff is being asked to do more with less, all with the overarching threat of a potential dismantling of the local air quality program looming overhead. The Chief Executive and the Board of Health should address the current deficits in the Air Quality Program's salary structure and expedite

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GASP Files Suit Against Greene County Waste Coal Power Plant

by Michael Parker, GASP Legal Director

On February 27, 2008, GASP stepped up its fight against dirty, waste coal-fired power plants by filing a lawsuit in federal court against the Greene Energy Resource Recovery Project (“GERRP”), which is proposed by Wellington Development - WVDT, LLC (“Wellington”). In conjunction with the lawsuit, a petition requesting the revocation of GERRP’s permit was sent to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP). In taking these actions, GASP collaborated with the National Parks Conservation Association, the Sierra Club, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and we are being represented by Public Justice (formerly “Trial Lawyers for Public Justice”) and local attorney Robert Jennings, Jr.

In the complaint that initiated the lawsuit, we assert that Wellington failed to commence construction of the plant within the timeframe allowed by law, and, therefore, Wellington’s construction permit has expired. Under the federal Clean Air Act, companies must obtain a permit to construct sources of air pollution. Those permits are issued with expiration dates set 18 months after issuance, unless the company commences a continuous program of construction. The reason for this requirement is to ensure that the pollution control technology required in the construction permit does not become stale and outdated before the company actually constructs the air pollution source.

The GERRP permit’s expiration date was December 21, 2006. Prior to that date, Wellington poured a small concrete pad and claimed that as commencement of construction. In a December 2006 letter, the PA DEP agreed that Wellington had commenced construction, but urged them to ensure that such construction was continuous. As aerial

photographs confirm, since that time Wellington has conducted no additional construction. Pouring a small concrete pad without additional construction after nearly 17 months does not satisfy the Clean Air Act. Furthermore, the pollution controls selected for the GERRP facility were chosen approximately four years ago and they are now substantially outdated.

The controls for mercury emissions are of particular concern here not only because they are outdated, but also because a recent D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals Decision now requires more stringent mercury controls than what was originally required for GERRP. The court ruled that the Bush administration’s Clean Air Mercury Rule (“CAMR”) violates the Clean Air Act. CAMR allowed much more mercury pollution than the original regulation, phased controls in over a longer period of time, and would have led to mercury hotspots due to the permissibility of mercury emissions trading. With the appeals court decision, the more stringent Maximum Achievable Control Technology (“MACT”) standard must now be applied. Therefore, GASP and our collaborators petitioned the PA DEP to revoke Wellington’s permit so that MACT can be applied to the power plant before it is constructed.

With these actions GASP hopes to ensure that our region is spared from excessive pollution, including mercury. For more information regarding our lawsuit and our petition, please refer to Public Justice’s website:

http://www.publicjustice.net/pr/wellington_022708.htm



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GASP
Wightman School Community Building
5604 Solway Street, Room 204
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

phone 412.325.7382
fax 412.325.7390

www.gasp-pgh.org
gasp@gasp-pgh.org



GASP Mission Statement

GASP will act to obtain for the residents of southwestern Pennsylvania clean air, water, and land in order to create the healthy, sustainable environment and quality of life to which we are entitled.

Methods of Achieving Mission

GASP is a citizens group based in Southwestern PA which focuses on Allegheny County environmental issues. When pertinent to these concerns, we participate in state and national environmental decisions.

We believe in the public’s right to receive accurate and thorough information on these issues and to actively participate in the decision making process.

To achieve our environmental goals on behalf of our membership, GASP will advocate, educate, serve as an environmental watchdog, mobilize action, and litigate when necessary.

We will work both independently and in cooperation with like-minded individuals and groups as determined by the Board of Directors.

We will uphold GASP’s reputation for scientific integrity, honesty, and responsible involvement.



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Air Pollution from a Coke Plant: a Billion Dollar Problem

by Walter Goldberg, GASP Board Member

They don't make much steel around here anymore, but we sure turn out a lot of coke. On the Mon River sits the biggest coke plant in the United States. Coke is essential in converting iron to steel, but can one make it safely? The United States Steel Clairton Coke Works pours out toxic chemicals and fine dust as it converts coal into coke. Dealing with this dust pollution, which is regulated by federal and local laws, is a major dilemma for the region. The finest particles released in the process are inhaled not just into the lungs but cross directly into the blood stream. The result? Premature death of the elderly, asthma amongst the young, and heart attack rates that go up. The adverse effects of fine particulates are exceedingly well studied; there is no guesswork here.

In most places this fine-particle pollution is widely dispersed by the wind. But here the Clairton Coke Works generates such high concentrations of fine dust that we are ranked among the worst counties in the U.S. for this type of pollution. Thus it has been for decades.

But we are hopeful that things are about to change.

In January, United States Steel (USS), the owner of the Clairton Coke Works and two steel plants nearby, decided that enough is enough. They announced the construction of much-improved coke batteries at Clairton. The cost will be high. Taking some of the old batteries out of service, they will build a very large new one, followed by a second. The estimated price for the cleanup is a billion dollars. This is a major commitment by USS to the region's economic—and our physical—health as well.

Unlike the old ones, the new batteries will make coke under negative pressure, so the pollution won't spill out through the leaking doors. The new ovens will be much taller than the present ones, so the number of doors will be reduced. The coke tonnage will remain



PHOTO: MAREN COOKE



PHOTO: MAREN COOKE

roughly the same. Will the new design do the job? Though strapped for resources and technical personnel, and hobbled by the low county pay scales, the Allegheny County Health Department is valiantly trying to find out.

USS could have left GASP and other environmental groups out of the planning process, but they have not. As oven design plans evolve, GASP, Clean Water Action, and the Sierra Club were brought in from the start. We meet with the company regularly, and our ideas and criticisms are given a respectful hearing.

If the pollution levels from the Clairton plant are sufficiently reduced in the coming years by USS's billion dollar commitment to clean air, GASP and its supporters will deserve some of the credit. If we fail, the blame must likewise be shared. The review of the permit applications is an opportunity for interested groups and individuals to weigh in



PHOTO: MAREN COOKE

on this important project. Their success or failure will play a huge role in whether or not our region, and especially the Liberty/Clairton area, will be able to reach attainment of the EPA's fine particulate standard. 🚲

Heart Health & Air Quality

What's the Connection?

by Lee Szymkiewicz, GASP Education Coordinator/Administrative Assistant

On Wednesday, February 27, GASP held an educational event featuring Dr. Don Grandis, who spoke about the connection between air quality and cardiovascular disease. Dr. Grandis is a cardiologist at Jefferson Regional Medical Center in the South Hills of Pittsburgh. He is fairly familiar with air pollution, due in part to the fact that his office is located in Clairton, home to the Clairton Coke Works, the largest coke manufacturing facility in the country. As a result, Clairton-Liberty Borough has some of the worst air quality in the country.

Dr. Grandis began his talk by providing some basic definitions such as what exactly constitutes a heart attack and stroke. Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death in the U.S. Most of us know what the conventional risk factors are: smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, age and male gender. But 50% of patients who have heart attacks have “normal” cholesterol and 20% have no known risk factors. So what accounts for the cardiovascular problems in this segment of the population?



PHOTO: MAREN COOKE

Dr. Don Grandis speaking about the connection between air quality and cardiovascular disease

The presentation continued with statistics from various studies examining the link between air pollution and cardiovascular disease. For instance, when Dublin, Ireland banned coal sales in 1990, reducing black smoke by $35.6\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ they saw an associated 10.3% annual reduction in cardiovascular mortality.

A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in February 2007 looked at the level of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and the risk of death from cardiovascular causes in women. The results suggest a pretty definitive relationship between exposure and risk. According to the study, as the levels of fine particulate matter increase, the relative risk of death from cardiovascular disease rises linearly as well.

Next we took a look at our area.

In Allegheny County, data from the Allegheny County Health Department for just the 2nd quarter of 2007 alone shows that the Liberty area had 18 days where the short-term federal standards for PM_{2.5} were exceeded. And during that quarter, their maximum reading had been $56.5\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which is much higher than the $35\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ standard. North Braddock also had 2 days where they exceeded the standard and their maximum was $50\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

So in turn, if we look at the *New England Journal of Medicine's* study and then the PM_{2.5} numbers that we are getting in our own area, it seems safe to say that an examination of the relationship between air quality and cardiovascular disease in Pittsburgh is needed.

In conclusion, as levels of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} increase, the risk of death or hospitalization from cardiovascular disease increases as well. The relative risk of cardiovascular disease due to poor air quality is less than that of conventional risk factors overall for the general population. However, the levels of PM_{2.5} that are seen in Allegheny County may generate risks similar to those of conventional risk factors. And, unlike conventional risk factors which affect 10 to 20% of the population, air pollution affects everyone.

You can download Dr. Grandis' presentation at: <http://www.gasp-pgh.org/GrandisPresentation.ppt>



PHOTO: MAREN COOKE

Audience members at GASP's event seek answers from Dr. Grandis

Energy: Lots of Players, Lots of Plans, But Is There a Clear Goal?

by Suzanne Seppi, GASP Project Manager

Recent Pittsburgh Post Gazette headlines noted “Big price increase behind Duquesne Light’s decision to leave PJM”. If this piqued your interest and led you to further research on just what “PJM” is, you also encountered terms like FERC, capacity charges, the Public Utility Commission, Pennsylvania Renewable Energy Portfolio, and mushrooming related information. (See below for descriptions of PJM, FERC and the PUC). These are some of the important players in developing our state’s energy utilization.

Back to Duquesne Light’s exit from PJM and its big price increase. The big price increase comes from a PJM strategy to incorporate a “capacity charge” into its pricing structure in order to pay the residential electricity generators in the “hope” that this will stimulate development of additional generation to cover times of future peak demand. Auctions were held for utilities to purchase reserved energy for each year through the June 1, 2010 - May 31, 2011 year. This last year’s purchase price per megawatt was 300%, or \$174 per megawatt more than what Duquesne Light is paying now. Duquesne Light may not even use these reserved megawatts if demand is not needed, but would pay for them anyway as a contractual obligation. Further, the highest price offered on the last bit of megawatts projected as needed in an area for a given year becomes the price for all the offered capacity, even though some of the megawatts may have been offered at an earlier lower price, providing another profit for the lower bidders. John Hancock, business columnist for the Baltimore Sun newspaper, calls this “the rigging of the electricity marketplace to enrich power companies and executives” in his blog at the baltimoresun.com. Duquesne Light spokesman Joseph Vallarian points out that the capacity auctions are not causing any new generation construction. PJM counters that the auctions are voluntary and providing the reserve megawatts could be done by individual long term contracts with generators.

Nevertheless, Duquesne Light, being on the border of another grid system, the Midwest Independent System Operator (ISO), felt the capacity charges were too much for its wholesale customers and filed a request with FERC to withdraw from PJM and join the Midwest system, which has no forward capacity charges.

On January 17, 2008, FERC gave conditional approval for Duquesne Light’s exit from PJM, but held Duquesne Light responsible for its commitments in the PJM forward capacity market. FERC also requests information on how Duquesne Light will be integrated into the Midwest ISO

market and what other obligations they may have for costs to PJM. Mr. Vallarian says that local residential customers will not note any difference in service.

Some concerning questions come to mind about the above scenario:

1. How accurate are the predictions of the need for forward capacity?
2. While helping reliability, are these charges also a money grab paid for by consumers?
3. Rather than encouraging reserved capacity alone, could PJM also selectively encourage the need for conservation?
4. There seems to be no guarantee that any forward reserve capacity money to support reliability will be used for new generation. If it is, though, what type of generation—coal, hydro, wind? Could PJM require some commitment, especially to cleaner megawatts?

On a related electricity grid note, the US Department of Energy (DOE) has designated a “National Interest Electricity Transmission Corridor” that covers areas in much of the mid-Atlantic region, including 52 of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties, leaving a large footprint affecting numerous property owners and preservation spaces. The DOE seems to have primacy in this area even if the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission opposes the new power lines as proposed. This corridor will likely encourage older coal fired power plants in the Midwest and southwestern Pennsylvania to continue operating despite large emissions of global warming pollutants as increased demand for power comes from the east. Eleven regional and national environmental organizations have filed suit against the DOE over its final designation of a mid-Atlantic National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor.

The energy issues are complicated and the details abundant, but it is a vital subject!! Go to the websites below for more information and check out details on legislation concerning new energy proposals in congress or Pennsylvania. Be in touch with your representatives to make comments. Legislative contact information can be found under related links on the GASP website (<http://www.gasp-pgh.org>).

PJM is an organization operating an interconnected electricity grid (power lines and substations) that ensures

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Mercury and Reproductive Health, Part III

by John Jones

The GASP Hotline welcomes articles from guest authors in our column, "A Breath of Fresh Air." This column features GASP members and friends sharing stories from their personal or professional environmental work, as well as their thoughts on topical environmental issues. To submit a piece, please contact the editors at hotline@gasp-pgh.org. Note: The opinions of the author do not necessarily reflect the views of GASP.

Chronic mercury exposure can seriously impair fertility and outcomes of pregnancy. Mercury exposure can also result in menstrual cycle disorders, arising from interference with the part of the brain which controls reproduction (hypothalamo-pituitary-gonadal axis). During pregnancy, mercury passes readily through the placenta; the concentration in cord blood is elevated above the level of the maternal blood. There is therefore a risk to the fetus in chronically exposed pregnant women, although case studies to date are not conclusive. The World Health Organization stated in 1991 that the exposure of women in child-bearing age should be as low as possible.

"In men, organic forms of mercury were found to cause hypospermia, a reduction in libido and impotence in some subjects. Evidence of minor genetic damage (aneuploidy) was found, thought to be caused by interference of the metal with thiol groups in the spindle apparatus of dividing cells. More recently, an adverse effect of mercury on sperm motility was reported and another report describes an increased rate of spontaneous abortion in women whose partners were occupationally exposed to mercury vapour."¹

The Scope of the Problem

Americans want the federal government to protect the health and safety of our communities. But in March 2005, the EPA finalized a plan that lets power plants spew three times the amount of mercury pollution into our air for decades longer than strong enforcement of the Clean Air Act allows. The plan yields a reduction of only 43% by 2026, falling far short of the EPA's previously stated goal and includes a cap-and-trade² program that allows some power plants to buy or sell mercury pollution credits. Allowing individual power plants to acquire pollution credits rather than reduce emissions would have the effect of creating "hot spots" that expose residents to unsafe levels

of mercury. Coal-fired power plants reap the benefits of this trading scheme while the residents living in the areas near the plants lose out as they are exposed to even more hazardous air pollution.

The idea of "credits" has some merit to offset carbon dioxide emissions but does nothing to reduce mercury contamination. The CO₂ credits' principle proponent is TerraPass, an organization which allows customers to purchase credits which are then used to plant trees and invest in other technologies which counter carbon dioxide pollution. There is, however, no known counterweight to environmental methylmercury poisoning, so the idea doesn't fit but rather allows coal-fired power plants to continue with a meaningless "credit" slap on the wrist.

There Are Solutions

According to the EPA's own estimates, there are commercially available technologies in use today that achieve more than 90 percent mercury emissions reductions. The technology is affordable. The cost of installing the technology would amount to a one to three percent increase in monthly electric bills. This cost translates to the cost of a cup of coffee per month for residential users—\$1 to \$3 in the worst case scenario, depending on the state.

If we could just control our own air this might seem like a good idea. The problem is that we can't (control our own air). Re-enter the China issue and Professor Dan Jaffe. According to Worldwatch Institute³ China's carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from fossil fuel combustion more than doubled between 1980 and 2003, from 394 million tons to 966 million tons, showing an average growth of nearly 4 percent a year. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), China accounted for nearly 18 percent of global CO₂ emissions in 2004, up from only 5.7 percent in 1990. Recent national estimates on China's economic



growth and greenhouse gas emissions have underestimated the nation's future energy needs. A 2003 projection, for example, predicted that China's total primary energy consumption in 2020 will require some 3.1 billion tons of standard coal equivalent, up from 1.37 billion tons in 1998. And it predicts that China's CO₂ emissions will reach roughly 1.9 billion tons of standard coal equivalent in 2020. In 2006 alone, however, the nation consumed nearly 2.46 billion tons of standard coal equivalent in total primary energy, or nearly 0.56 billion tons more than it is projected to use in 2010.

The Chinese government has set an energy-saving goal of reducing the country's energy intensity by 20 percent between 2005 and 2010, but the nation's total primary energy consumption in 2010 is likely to be close to or even greater than the 2020 projection. The June issue of Chemical Engineering Progress points out some impressive facts. China is currently constructing the equivalent of two coal-fired plants per week at a capacity comparable to the entire U.K. power grid each year. By 2011, China will have more coal-fired capacity than the United States and Europe combined. Scientists predict that by 2025, China will emit more carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide and mercury than the United States, Japan and Canada combined and it is coming our way.

The Bottom Line

So what concrete steps can we take to protect ourselves from this growing menace? Reading this article is the first and critical step: Becoming informed. Knowledge is power. Now come 6 important next steps.

1. Get a copy of the guide—Northeast Seafood Guide 2007—from the Monterey Bay Aquarium at <http://www.seafoodwatch.org> and use this guide when you go shopping for fish.
2. Let your congressional representatives know that you are aware of the problem and you expect them to pass legislation that protects you as much as possible. Testing and labeling of ALL food should be mandatory. We need to know whether or not our food contains known toxins and what the probable impact will be.
3. Become aware of which organizations are working in your behalf and support them with your money, time and voice. Such organizations include GASP, The Sierra Club, The Natural Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense, Rachel Carson Homestead Association,

PennFuture, PennEnvironment and Greenpeace. These organizations work to ensure that our world is as safe as possible.

4. Invest in renewable energy sources such as Renewable Choice Energy (wind energy). At the present time only 5% of Pennsylvania electrical generation comes from renewable sources (hydroelectric and wind). This is an emerging industry and can't become a significant force without support. In an attempt to reduce air pollution, China is committed to build 33 electric generating windmills near Beijing to supply clean energy in time for the 2008 Olympic Games. They have acknowledged the problem and there is no reason why we should not as well.
5. Switch to biodegradable plastic bags which are not oil-based and encourage the stores where you shop to routinely stock them. At the present time you have to engage in an extensive search to find them. A good source is <http://www.biobagusa.com/index.htm> These bags are made from corn and don't pollute our environment.
6. Encourage our national officials to participate in international forums to regulate and minimize airborne pollutants. It is clear now that regulations which only address national interests are dead on arrival. Environmental pollution is everyone's concern and this concern can't be addressed by considering exclusive national interests. It should be clear that mercury toxicity is a significant and growing concern. An educated and motivated public is the best defense against this obvious health issue. All of us must take action if the problem is to be adequately addressed.

Our greatest liability is apathy and the belief that government and industry are acting in our best interest. Government responds to political will and corporate influence. If we don't express our concerns it is unrealistic to expect officials to know what we need.

1 <http://www.mercurysafety.co.uk/hlthinfo.htm>

2 For a revealing insight into this controversial piece of political spin, the reader should check out <http://www.grist.org/news/muck/2004/03/30/griscom-mercury/> and <http://www.grist.org/advice/books/2006/07/14/coal/index.html> which detail the current administrations attempts to justify continuing practices which are wreaking havoc with our environment and health.

3 <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5205>



Wood Smoke is a Severe Health Hazard If You Can Smell it, You are Being Exposed

by Mary Rozenberg, President of Clean Air Revival, Inc.

The GASP Hotline welcomes articles from guest authors in our column, "A Breath of Fresh Air." This column features GASP members and friends sharing stories from their personal or professional environmental work, as well as their thoughts on topical environmental issues. To submit a piece, please contact the editors at hotline@gasp-pgh.org. Note: The opinions of the author do not necessarily reflect the views of GASP.

Many citizens complain of high wood smoke levels invading their homes. Neighborhood time-series monitoring data shows smoke increasing rapidly in the early evening, with concentrations peaking after 11 PM, suggesting non-industrial and non-automotive sources.

According to Dr. Wayne Ott, "One important outdoor source of air pollution remains inadequately addressed in most areas—residential fireplaces and wood stoves. Yet this is the one source of air pollution that produces fine particles and gases containing a multitude of toxic substances and carcinogens, and fine particles are associated with morbidity and mortality in urban areas."

GASP members are well aware of the health danger posed by fine particulate soot (PM_{2.5}), particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter. In the Fall 2007 edition of Hotline, doctors Unligil, and Eibling describe its serious effects on the cardiovascular system.

Emerging air pollution research has linked soot from all sources to increases in many illnesses, infections and premature deaths—perhaps 60,000 every year in the United States, and almost 2 million worldwide. It is accepted science that was established at a major colloquium: "Particulate Air Pollution and Human Mortality and Morbidity" in 1994, with a paper by Dr. Joel Schwartz, et al.

Interviewed for this article, Dr. Schwartz said, "PM_{2.5} is very bad for public health. Large and growing populations can live safely together, with little increased PM_{2.5}, if clean fuel is mandated. It is impossible to burn solid fuel cleanly under home conditions. Wood burning and wood stoves in populated areas are a terrible idea."

There is no safe level of soot, and half of the population is vulnerable. Wood smoke inhaled today can be detected in a urine sample tomorrow. Burning wood causes a focal point of high particulate pollution and gases.

In the words of Dr. Wayne Ott, Stanford University, creator of the Pollution Standard Index (PSI). "Wood smoke like other combustion sources—cigars, cigarettes, diesel engines, incinerators—generates hundreds of toxic com-

pounds and many carcinogens. A home with a single wood burning source can elevate indoor particle concentrations at hundreds of surrounding homes in the neighborhood. Despite efforts to tighten windows, close doors, and insulate a home, there is no defense—the fine particles from a neighbor's chimney penetrate through the barrier of all surrounding walls of residences, entering the lungs of its residents. For those on the receiving end of a neighbor's fireplace or wood stove, it is often similar to living with a chain smoker. The pollutant exposure is involuntary, repetitive, caused by a tiny minority of burners, and composed of a great array of toxic chemicals and cancer-causing compounds, such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, dioxins, and metals."

"Particulate polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PPAHs) are highly toxic chemicals that coat the surface of very small particles, and these particles are so tiny (less than 1 micrometer) that they can be inhaled deep into the lungs, where they can cause serious health effects. Many of these pollutants are known carcinogens, such as benzo(a)pyrene, and also are found in secondhand smoke."

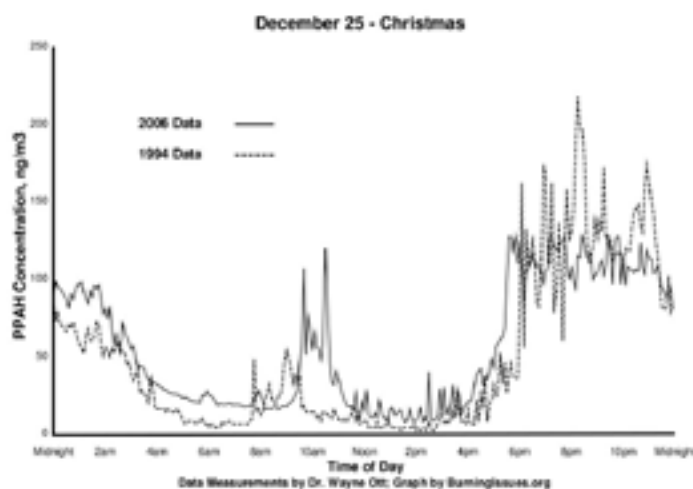


Figure 1 - PPAH Concentrations from Wood Burning 1994 & 2006

Comparing outdoor measurements of particulate polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PPAH) on Christmas Day 1994 and 2006, using real time monitoring in the San Francisco Bay Area, Dr. Wayne Ott found that there was basically no change in PPAH levels (Fig. 1).

This indicates that over a decade of government subsidized “new technology” wood stoves and fire place inserts did not clear the air. Indeed the Bay Area Air Quality Management District announced in March 2008 that it will only subsidize changing to gas or propane fired stoves.

About half the outdoor PPAHs infiltrate indoors, so residential wood smoke caused the equivalent of more than 5 cigarettes smoked indoors on this date.”

Fig. 2, below, is a chart with the same scale, using the same instrument, showing five Marlboro regular filter cigarettes smoked inside a large house at a non-wood burning time of year.

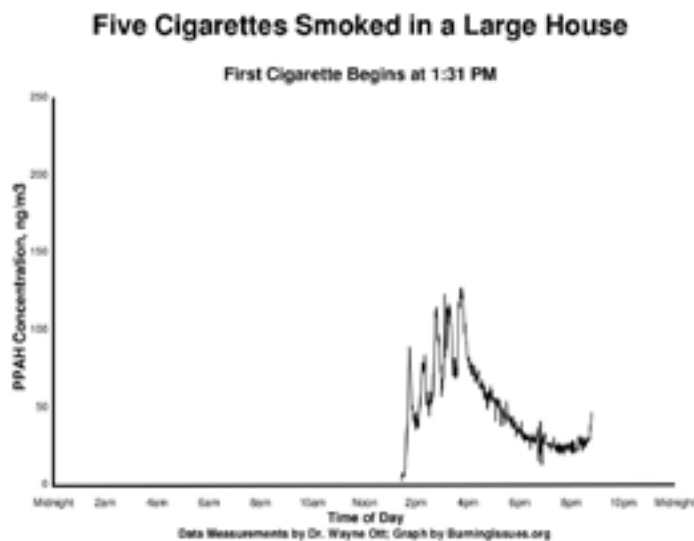


Figure 2: PPAH Concentrations from Secondhand Smoke
Note that the high PPAH concentrations from smoking 5 cigarettes in a home were lower than the PPAH concentrations outdoors on Christmas Day.

Wood burning is the third leading source of dioxins in the United States. The ash in some East coast areas is radioactive. The smallest invisible soot is not picked up by even the best air cleaners, nor can masks fully protect you, and it seeps indoors with alarming ease.

The key word is burning. When anything is burned it creates toxic pollution. Since smoke cannot be cleaned up, it makes sense not to create it! Cigarette smoking regulations say a lot about that. They have to ban cigarettes to clear the air. Smoking sections for instance, don't work. Wood burning regulations have not worked either.

For over 20 years the US EPA worked with the hearth industry to create “cleaner burning wood stoves.” A 2000 EPA

study measured long-term performance of EPA-certified Phase 2 woodstoves, which had been in use for a number of years. An important quotation from that study is: “This study shows that the new technology stoves do not achieve the emission reduction expected. Some models were experiencing degraded emission control performance after only a few months use. “The relatively poor showing of the control technologies was very disappointing.”

It would serve public health to place PM2.5 air monitors in neighborhoods. It is where we spend a great deal of our time, and where our most vulnerable populations spend all of their time. To date, very little of this kind of monitoring has been done.

We all dream of a healthy environment with clean air, water, and healthy food. The Pennsylvania legislature passed an “Environmental Bill of Rights”, in 1970, which stated that “the people have a right to clean air, [and] pure water...”

Somehow we see wood as a natural and romantic fuel. While burning and fires can be relaxing, keep in mind that it is the toxics that make it so: carbon monoxide causes blood vessels to constrict and creates a false sense of well-being. Breathing toluene from wood smoke, like sniffing glue, can get you high. What is pleasant to a young healthy person could be causing pain, suffering, infections and even death in an infant.

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Mary Rozenberg began her study of particulate pollution and founded Burning Issues, a project of Clean Air Revival, Inc., in 1987, when she first became aware of the medical implications of particulate pollution. Since 1987, Clean Air Revival's mission has been to clear the air of soot, using education to raise awareness of this problem.



County Air Quality Program continued from page 1


filling the many staff vacancies that exist as a result of low salaries. We are greatly concerned that the staff vacancies are affecting all aspects of the Air Quality Program, including enforcement, inspection, monitoring, permitting, and planning. There are at least eight positions that need to be filled for the Air Quality Program to meet all of its critical missions. The county should ensure that the salary structure at the Air Quality Program is competitive with that of other air quality agencies, such as the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

On the morning of the February 20th press conference, a letter was delivered to the Chief Executive specifying steps the groups believe need to be taken by the County Executive to ensure that a strong, local air quality program remains in Allegheny County. This included calling on the Chief Executive to:

1. Publicly commit to keeping the ACHD Air Quality Program under local control.
2. Ensure that the Air Quality Program has the resources it needs to properly carry out its functions of permitting, enforcement, monitoring, and planning.
3. Address the current deficits in the Air Quality Program's salary structure and expedite filling the many staff vacancies that currently exist as a result of low salaries and low morale.
4. Conduct a search for a new Manager of the Air Quality Program to find a candidate with the qualifications and experience to match outgoing Manager, Roger Westman.
5. Ensure that qualified public health professionals are appointed to the Board of Health.
6. Hold public hearings concerning the future of the Air Quality Program so that residents will have an

opportunity to have input into an issue that directly affects their health and quality of life.

One of the major points of frustration that Chief Executive Onorato, as well as the Allegheny Conference, have continued to raise is the backlog in permits. They had said that the backlog is causing Allegheny County to miss out on economic development opportunities. The truth of the matter is that the vast majority of backlogged permits are minor source operating permits. Prior to receiving an operating permit, permittees must achieve compliance according to the applicable requirements in their installation permit. Once applied for, the facility can continue to operate for however long the Department takes to review the operating permit application. Thus, the perception that the minor source operating permit backlog is hindering economic growth is not supported by the county's regulations. I think we can all agree that the backlog of permits does need to be addressed. At the last Board of Health meeting the board approved a \$500,000 Clean Air Fund expenditure to hire outside contractors to do the review. GASP would prefer to see this work be performed by Air Quality Program staff, but at the moment there just aren't enough staff to conduct this work on top of all the other work that needs to be carried out.


A decision to keep the program local and ensure that it has the resources necessary to operate most effectively must not be delayed any longer. The local air quality program is in the throws of developing the State Implementation Plan (SIP) for the Liberty/Clairton area—a plan to get the region into attainment for the fine particulate standard. In addition, air quality program staff are reviewing the USS Clairton Coke Works permit application for new batteries. They have been instructed to get this out in an expeditious fashion. Now is the time to enhance and improve the Air Quality Program so that they can complete these and other critical projects in a comprehensive, thoughtful and timely way. 

Energy continued from page 5

the reliability of the electric power system serving 51 million people in all or parts of 13 states and the District of Columbia. PJM administers a competitive wholesale electricity market and plans regional transmission expansion improvements to maintain grid reliability and relieve congestion. <http://www.pjm.com/about/about.html>

***FERC**, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, has oversight over PJM and other similar organizations in the United States. FERC is an independent federal agency with jurisdiction over interstate electricity sales and whole-*

sale electric rates. All FERC decisions are reviewable by the federal courts. FERC pays for itself by recovering costs directly from the industries it regulates through annual charges and fees. <http://www.ferc.gov/>

***PUC**, The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, regulates electric distribution rates, ensures service reliability and fosters the development of competitive electricity markets. The PUC also participates in matters that impact the wholesale energy market. <http://www.puc.state.pa.us/>* 

Spotlight on GASP Staff

Michael Parker has been with GASP since April of 2006, initially as the Policy and Outreach Coordinator and now as the Legal Director. Before joining GASP he was a staff attorney at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law's Environmental Law Clinic where he represented GASP in litigation. Michael first heard of GASP during his first year of law school during his




civil procedure class when Prof. William Luneburg used GASP's lawsuit against LTV Steel as a teaching example.

Michael's job with GASP mainly entails managing GASP's involvement in lawsuits through close interaction with retained

counsel and attorneys from collaborating organizations. That interaction often involves legal research and drafting to aid in litigation. Michael also tracks regulatory proposals relevant to our region, such as proposed regulations and permits, and then writes comment letters to agencies advocating for measures that best protect our air quality. One final aspect of Michael's work at GASP is addressing air quality complaints and concerns reported to GASP's office, such as fugitive dust from the Silhol Builders Supply Company cement batch plant in Bridgeville, PA, malodors from the Maxon Towers waste incinerator in Squirrel Hill, and concerns over the proposed dedicated tire-to-energy power plant in Erie, PA. Between litigation, policy work, and addressing citizen complaints, there is never a dull day for Michael at the office, which in his opinion is one of the best parts of working at GASP.

Originally from Johnstown, PA, Michael attended Pitt Johnstown to obtain his BA in History, with minors in geology and political science. From there he moved to Pittsburgh in 2000 to attend law school at Pitt Law, where he concentrated on environmental law. After law school and the bar exam, Michael was mobilized with his Army Reserve unit, the 458th Combat Engineer Battalion, for a year-long tour with the 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad, Iraq. Michael served in Iraq from March 2004 to February

2005, and is now, thankfully, in possession of an honorable discharge certificate. After returning home, he spent several months relaxing with his family before becoming a staff attorney at Pitt's Environmental Law Clinic.

Michael calls Forest Hills Borough on the east side of Pittsburgh his home, and he lives there with his wife, Sarah, his daughter Stella, and his son Isaac. Sarah is currently a "domestic engineer," but previously worked at the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy as a field ecologist. Stella is eight and enjoys the third grade at the Waldorf School of Pittsburgh. Isaac is 15 months old and enjoys eating, smiling, and chasing the cats. Michael's hobbies include organic gardening, mountain biking, downhill skiing, fishing, hunting, hiking, birdwatching, and anything else that occurs outdoors. 

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- \$35 Grassroots Supporters (\$15 low income/student rate)
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Call GASP at (412) 325-7382 to learn about automatic monthly giving, deducted directly from your checking account or charged to your credit card. An easy, hassle-free way to support GASP all year round!

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Support an Environmental Project by Fishing

Come out to the river and catch some fish, have great fun and support a great environmental project by catching the fish sample for the project! Venture Outdoors will be providing kayaks, canoes, rods and reels. There will be an opportunity to purchase a fishing license on line at each site for those who don't have one.

Community Fishing Days

Ford City at old PPG glass plant
May 10, 2008 - 6:00 am - 9:00 pm

Springdale/Cheswick at Reliant Energy Plant Site
May 31, 2008 - 6:00 am - 9:00 pm

Freeport at Buffalo Creek
June 1, 2008 - 6:00 am - 9:00 pm

Upper Allegheny near Bradford
June 14, 2008 - 6:00 am - 9:00 pm

Sign up online: www.chec.pitt.edu

Allegheny River Stewardship Project

The purpose of the Allegheny River Stewardship Project is for leading researchers in environmental and behavioral health sciences to work together with concerned citizens of the Alle-Kiski Valley river communities, volunteers from communities around the Allegheny River watershed and strategic partners to determine the sources and types of river pollutants by monitoring the levels of toxins in fish living in the river and to create long-term community environmental and specific water quality goals so that the footprint of the project widens and deepens with the passage of time.

Reminder: You can read this newsletter online as a PDF file (requires Adobe Acrobat reader), and help us save paper. Email the editors at **hotline@gasp-pgh.org** if you'd prefer to receive a downloadable PDF link via email when the next issue of the Hotline is published.

GASP Office Wishlist

If you can donate any of these items, please contact GASP at (412) 325-7382.

- digital camera
- video camera
- conference call/speaker phone
- vacuum

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