



Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. Hotline



Winter 2009

www.gasp-pgh.org

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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.

PA Diesel Idling Act Signed into Law

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

On October 9, 2008, Gov. Rendell signed the Diesel-Powered Motor Vehicle Idling Act into law (Act 124). The law is scheduled to take effect on February 6, 2009.

The law will restrict most diesel-powered motor vehicles over 10,000 pounds from idling more than five minutes in any consecutive 60-minute period. There are a number of exemptions, including one for trucks with sleeper berths. An occupied vehicle with a sleeper berth is exempt from the idling law during rest or sleep periods, provided that: the outside temperature is less than 40 or more than 75 degrees Fahrenheit at any time during the rest period, that the vehicle is legally parked, and that stationary idle reduction technology is not available for use at the start of the rest period. This exemption expires May 1, 2010. In addition, buses and school buses are allowed to idle 15 minutes in a 60-minute period.


Drivers, owners of diesel-powered motor vehicles, and the owners or operators of locations where vehicles load, unload, and park are all responsible for compliance with this law. The law will be enforceable by municipal and state police and by the PA DEP.

Presently, Allegheny County has a School Bus Idling Regulation and a Diesel-Powered Motor Vehicle Idling Regulation. Between the two regulations, almost every on-road diesel vehicle is restricted to five minutes of idling in comfortable weather in Allegheny County. The new state law will preempt any local ordinance or rule unless it was in effect as of January 2007. Both of our local regulations were in effect at that time. The off-road construction regulation that was passed by the Allegheny County Board of Health

in November 2007 will not be enacted due to this preemption language. Air Quality Program staff at the Allegheny County Health Department are reviewing how our local existing idling regulations compare to the state's new law.

To learn more about Pennsylvania's Diesel-Powered Motor Vehicle Idling law and information on technology that can reduce unnecessary idling visit: www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/DEPUTATE/airwaste/aq/cars/idling.htm

Education of the general public and diesel vehicle drivers will be essential to the effectiveness of this new law. People need to be aware that unnecessary idling is not only extremely wasteful—consuming as much as one gallon of fuel per idling hour—but also hazardous to health. Exposure to diesel exhaust can cause lung damage, respiratory problems and can exacerbate asthma and existing allergies.

GASP is thankful to the Clean Air Board of Central Pennsylvania who petitioned the PA DEP to adopt a statewide regulation to restrict the idling of diesel vehicles more than two years ago. You can learn more about CAB at www.cleanairboard.org. 

Going Greener

To help GASP save expenses and become more environmentally responsible, we encourage our readers to sign up for an electronic version of this newsletter. To sign up, simply send your request to hotline@gasp-pgh.org with your name, mailing address and e-mail address.

Money Available to Retrofit School Buses in Allegheny County—Take Advantage of it!

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

Did you know that there is nearly a million dollars available locally to clean up school buses in Allegheny County, reducing diesel emissions by as much as 90% on each bus retrofit?

The money is available through two programs:

1. Pittsburgh Healthy School Bus Retrofit Fund

Funding provided by the Heinz Endowments and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to clean up school buses serving Pittsburgh Public Schools. Full funding is available for diesel school bus retrofits. More information can be found at www.diesel-retrofitrebate.org. This project is coordinated locally by the Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution at <http://pghdieselcleanup.wordpress.com/>



2. Allegheny County Diesel School Bus Retrofit Program

Funding provided by the Allegheny County Clean Air Fund to improve the healthfulness of school buses in the county. Funding is available for school districts which own their buses or contract out for school bus service. The grants are open to any Allegheny County public school district. More information can be found at www.achd.net/air/pubs/pdf/School%20Bus%20Retrofit%20Program.pdf

Unfortunately, these programs are not being taken advantage of as much as they could be by local school districts or school bus companies. We need your help! Contact your school district's superintendent or school board to urge them to take advantage of this funding. Let us know about opportunities to speak to your school board. In some cases

school districts own their buses, in other cases they contract out for school bus service - in either case they are eligible for funding. The following school districts have done some degree of retrofitting already: Penn Hills, Plum, North Allegheny, Deer Lakes, and Pittsburgh.

Diesel pollution has a profound impact on children's health. Exposure to diesel exhaust is known to trigger asthma attacks and cause chronic bronchitis, and is linked to reduced lung function,

heart attacks, and lung cancer in the long term. The emission control devices that these projects could potentially fund are proven effective through years of testing, and are installed on all 2007 and newer diesel vehicles at the factory.

These projects' real potential and benefit to school children, bus drivers, and the communities these buses travel through will never be realized if school districts don't participate. If successful, these projects will help to safeguard children's health and improve our ambient air quality. Contact GASP at 412-325-7382 or gasp@gasp-pgh.org for more information.



The **Hotline** is the quarterly newsletter of the Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc.

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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.

Addressing One Nuisance by Creating Another? Asbestos and Large-Scale Residential Demolitions

by Joe Osborne, GASP Legal Director

Since the 1970s the population of southwestern Pennsylvania has been on the decline, and many remaining residents have relocated from older neighborhoods to newer suburban developments. As a result, many communities in southwestern Pennsylvania have seen their housing vacancy rates increase dramatically. Without proper maintenance, aging, uninhabited homes fall into disrepair. In addition to the aesthetic concerns residents may have about a blighted building down the street, the risk of fire, structural collapse, or pest populations inhabiting abandoned structures presents a legitimate threat to public safety. For those abandoned houses in the worst condition, homeowners and municipalities often look to demolition as the most economical solution.

However, improperly performed demolitions may remove one nuisance at the cost of creating another: human exposure to airborne asbestos fibers. While the link between respiration of asbestos fibers and illnesses such as lung cancer, asbestosis, and mesothelioma is now well known, most homes built in the 1970s or earlier contain significant quantities of asbestos due to the material's value as an insulator and flame retardant. When these houses are demolished, asbestos fibers enter the air, where they may be inhaled by individuals who live, work, or attend school in the area.

Asbestos exposure during demolitions hasn't escaped the attention of the EPA. In 1990 EPA created regulations requiring demolition site owners to inspect structures for asbestos containing material (ACM), and if a sufficient quantity of this material is found, remove it prior to demolition. However, EPA chose to exempt small residential structures from the asbestos requirements, citing a National Academy of Sciences' report finding that amounts of asbestos in such structures tends to be small.

This residential building exemption may make sense when a single home is slated for demolition, but in communities with many abandoned houses, a single demolition project can entail the demolition of dozens of small residential structures in close proximity. For instance, the city of Pittsburgh demolished roughly 300 condemned houses in 2007 and the final number for 2008 may be twice that. In the case of a large project such as this, to get an accurate picture of the asbestos-related health risks, the relatively modest asbestos emissions from any individual house being demolished should be aggregated with the emissions from other nearby demolitions. In March of 2008, precisely these concerns led the Allegheny County Health Department



A house being demolished in a Pittsburgh neighborhood

to require the city of Pittsburgh to take steps to control asbestos as the city demolished 59 homes in the Hazelwood neighborhood.

By 1995 the EPA had recognized the potential abuse of the residential building exemption for large demolition projects, and issued a "clarification" of its interpretation of the asbestos regulation. In typical bureaucratic style, the "clarification" may be more confusing than the regulation it sought to clarify, but in essence, EPA stated that the exemption does not apply in the case of demolition projects involving multiple structures within a one-block radius carried out during the same one-year period.

Despite the 1995 clarification, those overseeing demolition projects involving multiple residential structures often try to avoid their asbestos surveying and removal obligations under the auspices of the residential building exemption. If you believe a demolition project is occurring in violation of asbestos inspection and removal requirements, contact your regional DEP office (contact info below) and tell them about it. For demolitions in Allegheny County, contact the Allegheny County Health Department Division of Air Quality at (412) 578-8103.

- DEP Northeast Region (866) 255-5158
- DEP Northcentral Region (570) 327-3636
- DEP Northwest Region (814) 332-6945
- DEP Southeast Region (484) 250-5900
- DEP Southcentral Region (717) 705-4700
- DEP Southwest Region (412) 442-4000



Diesel Particulates Dominate Air Toxics Cancer Risk, especially in the Downtown Pittsburgh Area

by Sue Seppi, GASP Project Manager

Perhaps because the air mixture around us is intangible and mostly invisible, it is not seen as being an ongoing and complex creation. It is, however, an ever-changing mixture of gases, chemicals and particles significantly influenced by meteorology and human and natural activities. The nearby Pittsburgh tragedy of the Donora smog that killed 20 people in 1948 emphatically revealed the need for serious efforts to assess and deal with air pollutants to ensure healthy air. Here's some history:

The Clean Air Act (CAA) and Amendments have been the primary tool to help achieve healthy air quality by regulating criteria pollutants and toxic pollutants.

Criteria pollutants, some of the most widespread pollutants, include ozone, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, lead and particulate matter of several different diameters. Standards have been created, becoming increasingly stringent over the years to drive down the ambient (outdoor) concentrations of criteria pollutants to lower health-based levels. Several recent Hotline articles have addressed the reduction of fine particles (especially in the Liberty/Clairton area) in order to reach attainment of the annual fine particulate standard.

Toxic chemicals are those which cause or are suspected to cause cancer or other serious health effects, such as reproductive problems or birth defects, or adverse environmental and ecological effects and are not otherwise controlled in the CAA (not criteria pollutants).

The CAA of 1970 required the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set national emission standards for each toxic air pollutant individually (known as the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants or NESHAPs) but this method proved slow moving because it was difficult to establish health risk. EPA identified only eight pollutants as hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) and regulated sources of seven of them between 1970 and 1990. While amending the CAA in 1990, a list of 189 hazardous air pollutants was specified and the regulatory approach was changed to one based on controlling major industry group source categories through "technology-based" and performance-based standards known as Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT). In a general sense, the MACT standards require each industry category source to at least achieve the same emission levels of the list of toxics (as updated) that are already being achieved by the better-controlled and lower-emitting sources in that industry group.

A similar MACT program applies to air pollutants from area sources. Area sources are smaller sources that emit less

than 10 tons annually of a single hazardous air pollutant or less than 25 tons annually of a combination of hazardous air pollutants.

Even given these significant pollution control programs, most toxic chemicals are left with no federal ambient requirements. As a result of other influences such as cumulative impact, sources and chemicals not yet controlled, and mobile source emissions, there is still a melange of pollutants in the air, some at unhealthy levels. Many chemicals have not been adequately tested to indicate a known degree of health risk.

Bringing some insight into this ambient air mixture is a Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) study of Allegheny County air toxics centering on the areas of downtown Pittsburgh, Neville Island, and South Fayette. This study was initiated several years ago with funding from the Allegheny County Health Department's (ACHD) Clean Air Fund and the EPA. (Note that not all areas of the county were monitored.)

Allen Robinson of CMU, one of the investigators, recently presented the preliminary report to the Allegheny County Board of Health. Following are the highlights of the presentation:

- There are modest spatial variations in overall risk.
- The risk profile is similar to other U.S. urban areas.
- High priority air toxics with local emissions include: diesel particulate matter, benzene, trichloroethene, 1,4-dichlorobenzene.
- The high priority regional air toxic is formaldehyde.

The diesel particulate matter, especially in downtown, was reported to greatly dominate the cancer risk. The familiar, larger soot particles that settle on window sills are more likely to get filtered out by nasal passages and do little damage, but a large portion of diesel particles are extremely small and can be inhaled deep into the lungs. These particles are associated with a variety of serious health effects including lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, asthma attacks, allergies and premature death.

Perhaps because diesel exhaust is an unwelcome but familiar part of everyday transportation, it surprises many people to know the serious toxic nature of diesel particulate matter, even ranked against various other toxic stack emissions in Allegheny County. Nationally, diesel exhaust poses a cancer risk that is 7.5 times higher than the combined total cancer risk from all other air toxics, according to a 2005 report, *Diesel and Health in America: The Lingering Threat*, www.catf.us/publications/view/83 from the Clean Air Task Force.

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William W. Mullins Environmental Advocacy Competition

GASP announces this year's competition in environmental advocacy for middle-school and high-school level students (grades 7-12), supported by a fund created in honor of the late GASP Board member, William W. Mullins.

Prizes of \$300 will be awarded to each of the following groups:

1. An approved high or middle school club
2. A single or a pair of high school students.
3. A single or a pair of middle school students.

The students will develop a project that deals with all three of the following aspects:

- Defining and making an inquiry into an environmental problem which may be as local as a school's own grounds or as broad as statewide.
- Defining and recommending a course or courses of action to remedy that problem.
- Making efforts to inform the public, to encourage public action, and address decision-makers. (The public can be considered as small as your school community or as large as Allegheny County.)

Projects, including a poster/story board, should be submitted by April 24, 2009. The winners will be announced and prizes awarded at the annual GASPer Air Congress, held in the spring.

Applications for the competition may be obtained by contacting GASP at 412-325-7382 or lee@gasp-pgh.org. 

Air Toxics continued from page 4

Some good news is that GASP, through our leadership in the Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution, is making headway on reducing toxic diesel emissions locally. The diesel campaign is a collaborative effort committed to reducing the health risks posed by diesel pollution. This comprehensive campaign aims to reduce toxic diesel pollution from a full array of diesel vehicles, including school buses, transit buses, garbage trucks, locomotives, and marine vessels operating in Allegheny County. Within this campaign we currently have three main projects: Pittsburgh Healthy School Bus Fund, City of Pittsburgh Waste Hauler Retrofit Project and the Liberty/Clairton Municipal Vehicle Retrofit Project. More information about all of these projects and the Diesel Partnership can be found at <http://pghdieselcleanup.wordpress.com>.

GASP Recognized for Civic Leadership

In October, GASP was recognized for our civic leadership during the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh's Good Government Award dinner.

GASP's organization of a citizen Smoke Reader's program, our proposal to allow for the use of continuous opacity monitors (COMs) in air pollution enforcement, efforts to involve citizens in commenting on air pollution permits, coordination of a Pollution Patrol Team, and leadership in the Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution are some examples of our community and civic work.




PHOTO: FRANK HARKINS


**GASP Director Rachel Filippini with LWVGP
President Sue Broughton**

Much of what we do involves raising public awareness, working with governmental bodies or school officials to come up with practical solutions, and encouraging strong, yet sensible regulations that will protect public health and the environment.

In addition to GASP, the following individuals and organizations received Good Government Awards this year: Carol R. Brown, The Center for Victims of Violence and Crime, Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative, and Southwestern PA Program for Deliberative Democracy.

Thanks to the League of Women Voters for recognizing GASP's efforts, and thanks to you, our members and supporters, who allow us to do what we do. 

In the last several years, GASP joined efforts with Allegheny County Council and ACHD to develop diesel school bus idling and an on-road diesel vehicle idling regulations in Allegheny County. See the regulations at www.gasp-pgh.org.

Going forward, GASP will be working on ways to reduce emissions from transit buses and other diesel sources in downtown Pittsburgh. 

Could you be smoking out your neighbors?

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

Tis the season for sledding, drinking hot cocoa and sitting by a warm, crackling fire... or is it? While one family might enjoy the ambiance that a fire creates in their home, they should be conscious of the unhealthy conditions it could be creating for their neighbors.

GASP cautions homeowners to think about the implications of burning wood. If you live in a city neighborhood, chances are the homes are relatively close together, and the smoke from your chimney could be entering your neighbor's home. While wood smoke may seem benign compared to air pollution created by vehicles and large stationary sources, it is quite toxic.

Wood smoke is made up of a complex mixture of gases and fine particles produced when wood and other organic matter burn. Carbon monoxide and organic gases such as benzene, dioxin, phenols, aldehydes, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH), nitrogen oxides and sulfur oxides are also released when wood is burned. The biggest health threat from smoke comes from the fine particles. In the short-term, fine particulates have been known to aggravate lung disease, triggering asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, and may also increase susceptibility to respiratory infections. In the long-term, they have been linked to reduced lung function, the development of chronic bronchitis, cancer, heart attacks, and premature death. Children, the elderly, and those with cardiovascular or respiratory disease are especially at risk.

In addition to the deleterious air pollution you may be creating when lighting up the fireplace, be aware that using a fireplace can (and usually does) rob your house of heat because a draft is created which pulls the heated air inside your home up the chimney. Even when a fire isn't going, the "stack effect" causes heated air loss up the chimney as

fireplaces rarely have a good air seal, even when glass doors and chimney dampers are installed and used.

You might think that the air pollution regulations in Allegheny County only affect industrial sources, but, in fact, homeowners are also prohibited from allowing foul odors to leave their property. In addition, smoke emissions aren't permitted to exceed an opacity of 20% for more than three minutes in any sixty-minute period, or exceed an opacity of 60% at any time. If they do, you are in violation of the county's Visible Emissions Regulation.

If you smell malodors or see excessive smoke you should call the Allegheny County Health Department at 412-687-2243 each and every time.

In addition, you may want to think twice before installing an outdoor wood-fired boiler on your property. While

these boilers may save you money eventually by lowering natural gas consumption, they can easily create a major nuisance for the entire neighborhood. According to the Allegheny County Health Department, "one boiler emits the same amount of particulate matter that 3,000-8,000 homes heated by natural gas would."

The Pennsylvania Department of Envi-

ronmental Protection has developed a "Model Ordinance for Outdoor Wood-Fired Boilers" to assist municipalities in enacting local ordinances to regulate outdoor wood-fired boilers. The model ordinance can be found at: www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/airwaste/aq/openburn/docs/ModelBoilOrd.pdf. The PA DEP recommends that municipalities seek legal advice before enacting any ordinance.

GASP recommends that you consider alternatives to wood burning, such as weatherization and insulation to improve home comfort and reduce household heating costs. 🚲



PHOTO: ROBBIE SPROULE

Decline or Extinction: How Pennsylvania is Changing the World

by Kate St. John, GASP Board Member

Adapted from Kate's bird blog at www.wqed.org/birdblog

Will birds like this snow bunting exist 100 years from now? Right now their future looks bleak. Like canaries in coal mines, birds are early indicators of the effects of climate change. Two recent reports have underscored again that many birds are heading toward extinction. This is not only true of birds on remote islands but of common species that breed or, like the snow bunting, spend the winter in Pennsylvania. There's a very real danger that "our" birds won't be here for our grandchildren to see. It will happen that fast.

Last September BirdLife's World Conservation Conference met to discuss the worldwide prognosis for birds.¹ The grim news is that one in eight bird species is in danger of extinction and common birds around the world are in decline. This comes one year after Audubon published *The State of North American Birds*, a report that highlighted the alarming decline since 1967 of our own common species: Northern Bobwhite down 82%, Eastern Meadowlark -77%, Snow Bunting -64%, Common Grackle -61%.²

Then in October the Union of Concerned Scientists reported on how climate change will affect Pennsylvania in the next 100 years.³

If the process can't be slowed, climate change will be bad for both humans and birds. Pennsylvania's climate could become like Alabama's with 90-degree days all summer, the loss of cool-climate forest, and a subsequent decline in the wildlife and agriculture that depend on cooler temperatures. Dairy farming will decline as much as 20%. Our cities and towns will suffer from extreme heat and degraded air quality from increased ozone and PM2.5. Heavy rain episodes will exacerbate our sewer overflow problems. Waterborne disease will increase.

The good and bad news is that our state is a large part of the problem. Pennsylvania is the 22nd largest producer of carbon dioxide in the world. Because we burn so much coal—and don't capture the greenhouse gases—our state outranks most countries. This puts the problem in manageable terms. If Pennsylvania makes a change for the better, it will really change the world.

There are many ways we as GASP and as individuals can reduce Pennsylvania's contribution to climate change. GASP is already working on many of them. You can do your part at home:

- Work to control Pennsylvania's coal-fired power plant emissions. Encourage a shift to clean, renewable energy sources, and in the meantime require carbon sequestration

until the dirty coal-fired dinosaurs go extinct. This will reduce the nation's carbon contribution as one-third of our power production is exported to other states.

- Enact laws requiring carbon sequestration on all new coal-fired plants.
- Endorse green energy, but be careful of "green wash" marketing. Waste product combustion (incinerators and waste coal) is sometimes called "renewable" but contributes to climate change if it doesn't sequester greenhouse gases.
- Encourage energy efficiency in buildings and industry.
- In the transportation sector, push for higher gas mileage and better public transportation.
- Buy electricity that is generated with fewer greenhouse gas emissions.⁴
- Did you know that Duquesne Light only transmits coal-fired power? Push them to buy green energy and offer it to their customers.
- Use less electricity. Retire your old refrigerator or extra freezer and save on your electric bill. Models more than 12 years old are often energy hogs.⁵
- Drive less. Walk, bicycle, carpool, take the bus.
- Drive a hybrid car. Save money on gas, too.
- Fly less. Air travel generates high amounts of greenhouse gases. The four airplane trips I take each year create more greenhouse gas than our home's annual energy consumption.
- Calculate your own contribution to climate change and buy a carbon offset. Carbon offsets don't undo your carbon contribution but they support activities that mitigate what you've done. For examples, see The Climate Trust.⁶



Snow Bunting

PHOTO: CHUCK TAGUE

Let's change Pennsylvania—and the world—for the better. It took generations to get where we are today, it will take generations to undo it. Bird by bird we can make sure their fate will be only decline, not extinction.

1 www.biodiversityinfo.org/sowb/section.php?r=state

2 stateofthebirds.audubon.org/CBID/

3 www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/science_and_impacts/impacts/climate-change-pa.html

4 www.puc.state.pa.us/utilitychoice/whatis.aspx?ut=ec

5 www.eei.org/industry_issues/retail_services_and_delivery/wise_energy_use/how_to_save_electricity_in_your_home

6 climatetrust.org/



Donora Plus 60

by Fran Harkins, GASP Community Outreach

On the bright and chilly morning of October 10, 2008, one hundred enthusiastic souls welcomed the formal opening of the Donora Smog Museum, organized both to pay tribute to those who suffered and died sixty years earlier and also to stand witness to the lethal effects of air pollution.

Nestled in a horseshoe curve of the steep-walled Monongahela River Valley just about 25 miles south of the Pittsburgh Point, Donora became the site of the worst air tragedy incident in U.S. history. When a four-day inversion trapped the gases emitted by the Donora Zinc Works, a brew of sulfur oxides, nitrous oxides and fluorine, a highly toxic poison akin to nerve gases used in World War I, killed 20 in four days and hospitalized thousands.

Were it not for the raspy-voiced Walter Winchell whose radio show at the time spotlighted the Donora deaths of October 1948, the role that air pollution played in Donora's sufferings might have escaped national notice. Keynote speaker at the October 10, 2008 symposium ceremonies, Dr. Devra Davis stressed the toxic effects she believes fluorine played in the deaths. A Donora native and Director of the Center for Environmental Oncology at Pitt's Cancer Institute, Dr. Davis' award winning 2002 title, *When Smoke Ran Like Water: Tales of Environmental Deception and the Battle Against Pollution*, focuses on Donora's "death smog" and makes absorbing reading.

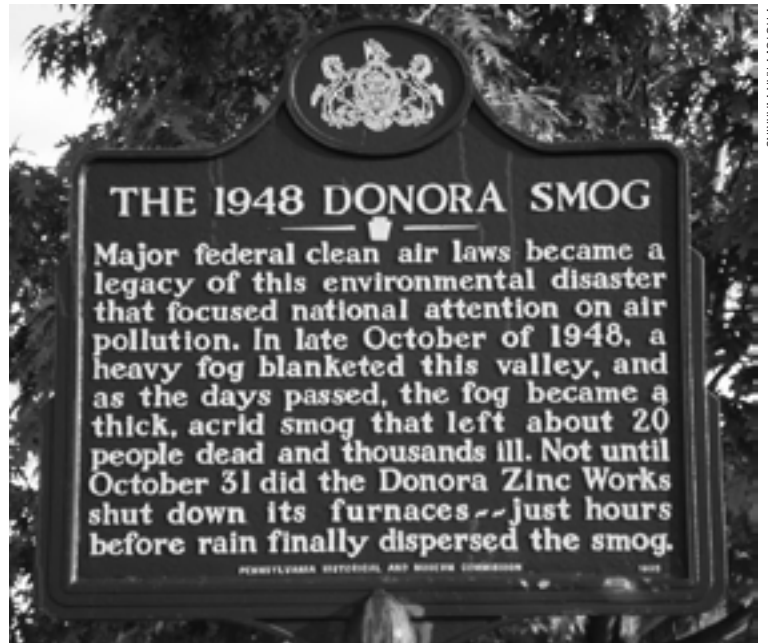


PHOTO: FRAN HARKINS

A sign outdoors at the new Donora Museum summarizes the disaster

Now, townspeople and the nearby University of California are working to provide resources to increase our environmental awareness of this historic town whose tragedy spurred government to respond with the creation of the EPA and the eventual passage of the Clean Air Act. Displayed in a former Chinese restaurant at 595 McKean Avenue, primary source documents make the times come alive through newspaper accounts. Archivist Brian Charlton is collecting oral histories and first-hand accounts. Photographs, maps, high school yearbooks, and artifacts of townspeople's life are plentiful. T-shirts and sweatshirts emblazoned with the motto "Clean Air Started Here" are for sale. A website (www.donorasmog.com) has been created. Open Wednesdays from 1 to 3 pm and Saturdays from 11 am to 3 pm, and by appointment, visitors can check with Diane Martin @ 724-379-7387 or via webmaster@donorasmog.com for further details.

Thanks to the efforts of Don and DeAnne Pavelko, Dave Lonich, Dr. Charles Stacey, Anthony Massafra, Casey Perrotta, Diane Martin and others, this collection of documents is now available for local viewing. To make these primary source documents available to a wider audience, the University of California of Pennsylvania has embarked on a digitization project. Funding has been obtained from the Library of Congress and a DVD, teaching unit and study guides are under development.



PHOTO: FRAN HARKINS

A newspaper headline from 1948, on display at the new museum, outlines the severity of the Donora disaster

Spotlight on a Board Member

Peri Unligil was happy to accept an invitation to join the GASP board in 2007 because she thought her medical perspective would be helpful to the educational mission of GASP. Participating in board meetings over the past 2 years, she says she has learned much about the air quality issues GASP is working on and has “gained great respect for its comprehensive approach to improving air quality” in this region.

Originally from Ottawa, Canada, Peri studied at McGill University in Montreal where she first completed a B.Sc. in biochemistry and then her M.D. degree. Peri is now a physician specializing in internal medicine, and she especially enjoys helping her patients make lifestyle changes that will improve their health and quality of life.

She and her husband have two energetic young sons who keep their days “lively.” On weekends, they take them outside to enjoy and learn about nature.

She would like to share a fish story with a message:

“One of my most treasured memories is of a fishing trip I went on with the Inuit family I was boarding with during a medical elective in Puvirnituk, Quebec, in the Canadian Arctic. It was April and still bitterly cold by my standards, but there was plenty of daylight and that meant it was the perfect time for a fishing trip. After bundling up we set out, taking turns either on the back of a skidoo or in a plywood box on one of the kamutiqs (sleds) being pulled along behind, over the surprisingly bumpy snow which stretched from horizon to horizon. I could not tell where land ended and water began. We stopped to snack on tea and bannock; boiling water we obtained by drilling a hole through the ice. We piled back on the sleds and skidoos and finally arrived at our destination, which to me looked no different from any spot on our trip there. I will never forget



how much I savoured our lunch that day, chunks of the lake trout we had just caught, boiled on our Coleman stove. Yet it is the regular consumption of this delicious fish, in this seemingly most pristine and remote of environments, that is responsible for

concerning body burdens of PCBs and other industrial pollutants in the Inuit of Canada's north. These volatile organic chemicals are transported to the Arctic from the south by atmospheric currents, travel up the food chain there and have been shown to end up in the breast milk taken by their children.¹

“That night, we slept in the igloo the family made together, and my fish, well, I forgot it outside the igloo when we turned in, and in the morning only a few arctic fox tracks leading to the horizon remained to tell the story of what happened to my catch... more than that, I was left with an emotional bond to the people who had generously shared their world and their way of life with me that month.”

Peri explains that the story of the contaminated arctic fish is but one example of the global impact of the choices we make as a society, and is grateful that GASP is here to help Pittsburghers take up the challenge to clean our air, not only for ourselves, but for our friends camping in that igloo so far away across the snow.

¹ Assessment of Pre- and Postnatal Exposure to Polychlorinated Biphenyls: Lessons from the Inuit Cohort Study. Ayotte et al. Environmental Health Perspectives Volume 111, Number 9, July 2003



PHOTO: MAREN COOKE

Pesticides—Best Food Choices

Buying organic produce is a growing trend that many studies show is healthier for us, farmland and the environment. The downside to eating organic is the extra cost. There are several ways around this problem. One, of course, is to grow your own produce organically. Another is to concentrate on buying organic fruits and vegetables that, under conventional growing methods, retain the most pesticide while buying conventional products that tend to measure low in retained pesticide residue. Here is such a list from the Environmental Working Group (EWG) starting with those fruits and vegetables that contain the most residual pesticides to those with the least. Other information concerning this list can be found at EWG: www.foodnews.org.



RANK	FRUIT OR VEGGIE	SCORE
1 (worst)	Peaches	100 <i>(highest pesticide load)</i>
2	Apples	96
3	Sweet Bell Peppers	86
4	Celery	85
5	Nectarines	84
6	Strawberries	83
7	Cherries	75
8	Lettuce	69
9	Grapes - Imported	68
10	Pears	65
11	Spinach	60
12	Potatoes	58
13	Carrots	57
14	Green Beans	55
15	Hot Peppers	53
16	Cucumbers	52
17	Raspberries	47
18	Plums	46
19	Oranges	46
20	Grapes-Domestic	46
21	Cauliflower	39
22	Tangerine	38

23	Mushrooms	37
24	Cantaloupe	34
25	Lemon	31
26	Honeydew Melon	31
27	Grapefruit	31
28	Winter Squash	31
29	Tomatoes	30
30	Sweet Potatoes	30
31	Watermelon	25
32	Blueberries	24
33	Papaya	21
34	Eggplant	19
35	Broccoli	18
36	Cabbage	17
37	Bananas	16
38	Kiwi	14
39	Asparagus	11
40	Sweet Peas-Frozen	11
41	Mango	9
42	Pineapples	7
43	Sweet Corn-Frozen	2
44	Avocado	1
45 (best)	Onions	1 <i>(lowest pesticide load)</i>



Become a Trained Smoke Reader



Learning to read smoke opacity on a smoke machine during "Smoke School"

- ★ Join GASP's Smoke Reading Team and receive professional training at no cost to you. This is the same training that Allegheny County Air Quality Inspectors receive.
- ★ You will learn how to correctly read the opacity of smoke from a stack in a large industrial facility or the chimney stack next door. This information reflects on the proper operation of the source.
- ★ Reporting problematic emissions quickly to the Allegheny County Health Department alerts inspectors to the problem. The facility will also be alerted to the emission problem.
- ★ Help keep our air clean, increase your knowledge and meet the team—call GASP for more information at (412) 325-7382.



The GASPer Air Monitor is still available for use by schools for the 2008-09 school year. For more information, please contact Lee at lee@gasp-pgh.org.



Join GASP Today!

- \$35 Grassroots Supporters (\$15 low income/student rate)
- \$60 Grassroots Contributors (includes recycled tote)
- \$100 Grassroots Patrons (includes recycled tote and umbrella)
- \$250 Clean Air Defenders (includes recycled tote and umbrella)
- \$500 Clean Air Protectors (includes recycled tote and umbrella)
- \$ ____ Other

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!

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

I want my entire donation to go to GASP. Please don't send the tote and/or umbrella

Check Visa Mastercard American Express

Card # _____

Exp. Date _____ Amount \$ _____

Signature _____

All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The official registration and financial information of GASP may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Nominate YOUR Environmental Hero

This year GASP will be celebrating its 40th year of working to clean up the air in southwestern Pennsylvania! We'd like to celebrate by recognizing 40 "Environmental Heroes" for the good work they've done for the environment in the greater Pittsburgh area.

To nominate an individual, send an email message to hero@gasp-pgh.org with:

1. Nominee's name, mailing address, and phone number/email.
2. A one-page summary of the nominee's contribution to improving southwestern Pennsylvania's environment.
3. The nominator's name, phone number and email address.

Self-nominations are permitted. Deadline for submissions: August 31, 2009.

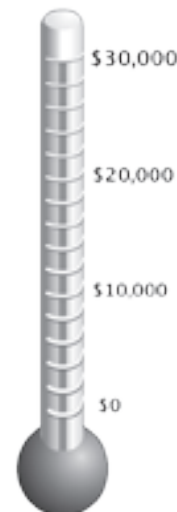
Winners will be announced at our 40th Anniversary celebration event in the fall.

Seeking Event Planning Volunteers

We are also looking for volunteers to join our 40th Anniversary Events Committee. We have a number of unique, fun events planned and would love some help so our hard-working staff can focus on GASP's day-to-day advocacy work. If you can help in any way, please contact Lee at 412-325-7382 or lee@gasp-pgh.org. Thank you!

GASP's Goal

Thanks for helping us meet our membership fundraising goal of \$30,000 in 2008!



We're kicking off our 2009 fundraising campaign with a **goal of \$35,000 for this year.** Give us a jumpstart by renewing your membership or giving an additional donation with the form on page 11.

2008 Goal Reached!

