



Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. Hotline



Summer 2008

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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.

Pittsburgh #1 Worst Air Ranking Shows Need for Action

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

Pittsburgh has many great attributes: wonderful parks and open spaces, world class universities and hospitals, lots of green buildings, many cultural amenities, unique neighborhoods, and an awesome hockey team – but air quality isn't one of them.

This year we topped the American Lung Association's State of the Air Report for worst air quality. The New Castle metropolitan statistical area and Allegheny County ranked worst for short-term (24 hours) particle pollution. The data on air quality throughout the United States were obtained from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Air Quality System. Allegheny County's monitoring data is submitted into this system. The ALA analyzed data recorded during the 2004–2006 monitoring period for this year's report.

While we recognize that the #1 ranking is primarily driven by the fine particle monitor in Liberty Borough, downwind of U.S. Steel's Clairton Coke Works, as well as other industry, the rest of the region does *not* have healthy air and is not meeting federal health based standards for fine particulate matter. It is important to note that the poor air quality in the Liberty/Clairton area affects a population of about 25,000, and of course that air is moving into other areas.

Some local politicians have criticized the American Lung Association for their methodology, claiming that the region shouldn't be condemned for one really bad monitor. Even without the data from the Liberty Borough monitor, Pittsburgh's air

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Fine particulate pollution includes both solid particles and liquid droplets that may be generated by combustion sources or created through chemical reactions taking place in the air. Burning fossil fuels in factories, power plants, coke-making facilities, steel mills, smelters, diesel- and gasoline-powered motor vehicles and equipment are all sources of fine particles. These fine particles have been linked to such health problems as asthma attacks and possible asthma onset, coughing and difficulty breathing, chronic bronchitis, decreased lung function, heart attacks, stroke, cancer, and premature death. Children, the elderly and people with existing respiratory or cardiovascular ailments are especially sensitive to fine particulate matter.

Comparison of particle sizes

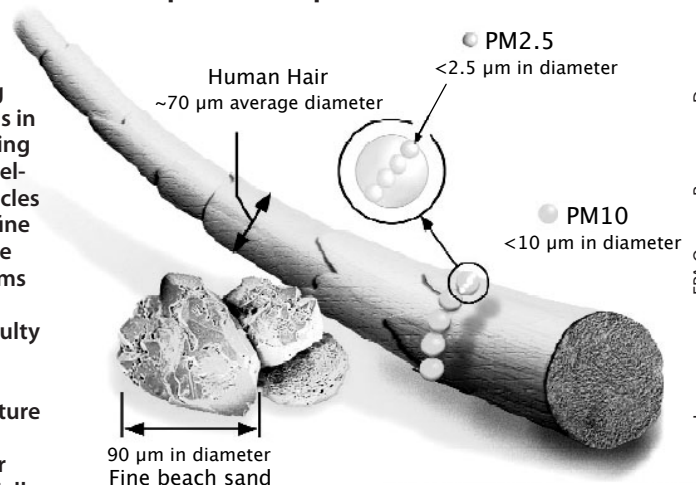


IMAGE COURTESY OF EPA OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Ten City Waste Haulers Go Green

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

A dynamic collaboration between the Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution (led by GASP and Clean Water Action), the City of Pittsburgh, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Air Management Association has resulted in the greening of ten City of Pittsburgh waste haulers.

Through a project funded by the EPA, ten city waste haulers are having diesel particulate filters applied to them, which will reduce the toxic particulate matter coming from those vehicles by more than 85%. This project represents approximately 15% of the city's fleet of waste haulers. Retrofitting even a small number of waste haulers will have a positive impact on the health of people who live and work along those municipal garbage routes, the truck operators themselves, and residents in the greater Pittsburgh area.

At a press conference held on April 25th to announce the project, Mayor Luke Ravenstahl asserted that "with these cutting-edge green technologies, we are improving the quality of life for the people of Pittsburgh."

Diesel exhaust is an unhealthy combination of gases and toxic particles that we breathe every day on our way to work, school, and play. Unlike pollution from smokestacks, diesel pollution is spewed out at

ground level, where it is most toxic – and where we breathe. Particles from diesel pollution are carbon at their core with toxics and carcinogenic substances attached to their surfaces. Diesel exhaust is linked to such health problems as asthma attacks and possible asthma onset, coughing and difficulty breathing, chronic bronchitis, decreased lung function, heart attacks, strokes, cancer and premature death.

Diesel particulate filters are the best emission reduction technology available. When installed in place of a conventional muffler, they employ a catalyst and physical filtration to remove nearly 90% of the soot, or unburned carbon, from the exhaust. New on-road diesel vehicles with engine model years of 2007 and newer already employ this technology.

This project is one of just several initiatives the Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution is undertaking. The "Diesel Partnership" is a comprehensive campaign


to reduce toxic diesel emissions from all of its sources—school buses, transit buses, waste haulers, construction equipment, locomotives, and marine vessels. The "Diesel Partnership" plans to team up with the City of Pittsburgh again to pursue funding to retrofit additional waste haulers. Wish us luck!! 



PHOTO: ASHLEIGH DEEMER

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

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



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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.

Allegheny County Air Quality Program Remains Local

by Michael Parker, GASP Legal Director

In November of 2007, Allegheny County Executive Dan Onorato announced that his office was conducting a major review of the Allegheny County Health Department's Air Quality Program. Representatives from Mr. Onorato's office stated that the goal of the review was, "To strike a balance between air quality and economic development, with an eye toward not hindering economic development in the county."¹ One of the options Mr. Onorato considered for achieving that goal was to transfer the county's air quality program to the state's Department of Environmental Protection.

Admittedly, over the years GASP has had numerous disagreements with the ACHD Air Quality Program. Despite those differences, we felt that keeping air quality regulation a local function was extremely important to regional air quality and to public participation in air quality regulation. Thus, after Mr. Onorato's announcement, GASP launched a lobbying and advocacy campaign to save the local air quality program.

Representatives of GASP testified before the Allegheny County Board of Health on numerous occasions. Our message to the Board of Health was that the benefits of local control of air quality regulation outweighed the flaws in the program. The benefits, we explained, were an outstanding citizen participation program, years of institutional knowledge of our airshed, regulations customized to our river valley topography and to our unique mix of industrial sources, and flexibility in addressing local air quality problems. We urged that the solution was to strengthen the program, not abandon it. Strengthening the program required increasing staff levels, adjusting compensation to competitive levels, better organization of advisory committees, and increased and appropriate use of the Clean Air Fund. Joining GASP in presenting this message were Clean Water Action, the Sierra Club, Sustainable Pittsburgh, the Consumer Health Coalition, PennFuture, and City Councilman Bill Peduto.

That same message of retaining a strengthened local air quality program was taken to Mr. Onorato. GASP and her partners met with Mr. Onorato and his staff on several occasions and we also submitted a policy paper outlining the reforms we felt were necessary to a strong local program. Similarly, we also pushed for a strong local program while lobbying members of Allegheny County Council. GASP and her partners also held press conferences in order to take our message to the public.

Our months of lobbying and advocacy culminated in Chief Executive Onorato's decision to retain and strengthen the Air Quality Program. This decision was announced on April 11, 2008 when his office completed their review

of the Air Quality Program. That review resulted in a report outlining the current structure and function of the Air Quality Program and recommending seven steps to strengthen the Air Quality Program. Those seven recommendations are:

1. Eliminating the minor source operating permit backlog;
2. Making staff compensation comparable to other air quality agencies;
3. Expanding staff and filling vacancies;
4. Improving the technological capabilities of the program;
5. Revising Article XXI, the county's air quality regulations, to be identical to the state's regulations;
6. Retaining a public relations firm to develop and distribute information to stakeholders; and
7. Forming an Environmental Air Quality Task Force composed of representatives of environmental and public health groups, business and industry, a Board of Health member, academia, and state and county government officials.²

GASP and our coalition partners applauded the decision to retain and strengthen our local air quality program. However, as is often the case, the devil is in the details. Upon closer review of the seven recommendations, we identified several problematic proposals. First, the funding source for eliminating the minor source permit backlog, the planned increase in staff compensation, technology improvements, and for public relations efforts were in part the Allegheny County Clean Air Fund. The Clean Air Fund is a fund dedicated by county ordinance to initiatives aimed, "[T]o the improvement of air quality within Allegheny County and to support activities which will increase or improve knowledge concerning air pollution, its causes, its effects, and the control thereof."³ Article XXI also sets forth that, "Disbursements of monies from the Clean Air Fund shall not be used to replace the normal operating funds of the County's air pollution control program."⁴ On top of these restrictions, the Clean Air Fund is not substantial and would be quickly expended if accessed for salaries. Due

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¹ Don Hopey, "Last gasp for Allegheny County's air pollution program?" PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE, Nov. 4, 2007, available at <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/07308/831053-113.stm> (last visited June 23, 2008).

² Allegheny County, Review of the Air Quality Program (April 11, 2008), at p. 9.

³ Article XXI § 2109.09.a.

⁴ Article XXI § 2109.09.c.2.

GASP Explores the Burning Issue of Waste Coal

by Lee Szymkiewicz, GASP Education Coordinator/Administrative Assistant

Waste coal, the low-quality material left over from coal mining, accumulated in great heaps around traditional coal mines for much of the last century. In western Pennsylvania, it's called "gob" or "boney." Because it has lower energy content than the pure coal that was already carried away, more must be burned to generate a given amount of electricity -- and thus more toxic emissions have to be dealt with. The piles can also be hazardous when they remain in place, by leaching toxins into groundwater.

So what should be done with waste coal? That is an especially appropriate question for Pennsylvania. Should we burn it for energy and if so, what will this mean for our health? These were the questions addressed on Saturday, March 29th at GASP's educational event: *Burning Waste Coal in PA: Boon or Bust?* which featured two eminent speakers. Conrad Daniel Volz, DrPH, MPH is the Scientific Director for the Center for Healthy Environments & Communities (CHEC) as well as Co-Director of the Division of Environmental Assessment, Monitoring and Control at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute's Center for Environmentally Oncology. Eric Schaeffer has been the Executive Director of the Environmental Integrity Project since its inception in 2002, following his resignation from the US Environmental Protection Agency to protest White House political interference with efforts to enforce the Clean Air Act.

Dr. Volz began the evening with his presentation, *Identifying coal-fired power plant pollutants through examination of local fish*. Fish are the "canaries in the coal mine" for water quality. Based on this, Volz and his team at the CHEC came up with a hypothesis to study. They postulated that channel catfish caught near the Edgar Thompson Works and at Point State Park would have significantly higher levels of mercury, selenium and arsenic than those from near the Highland Park Dam because of legacy and current iron and steel pollution as well as over 300 combined and sanitary sewer overflows (CSO/SSO) within a 10 mile radius of these points. Catfish caught near the Kittanning Dam, 40 miles upstream of Pittsburgh, would of course contain the lowest levels of these metals since the closest industrial sites are far upstream of this site and only one (CSO/SSO) is within 3 miles.

What they found surprised them all. Mercury, arsenic and selenium concentrations in channel catfish fillet were not significantly different within the Pittsburgh Pool, as originally hypothesized. Channel catfish caught in highly legacy-contaminated areas of the Monongahela River (Edgar Thompson) did not differ in concentrations of mercury, arsenic and selenium from fish caught in the same area, the Pittsburgh pool, but rather in the Allegheny River (Kittanning Dam) portion of the pool.

The original hypothesis that fish from Kittanning would be lower in the monitored contaminants than fish from heavily contaminated legacy areas nearer to Pittsburgh was rejected. Hg and Se levels in catfish fillet tissue did vary significantly between the Pittsburgh Pool and 40 miles upstream at the Kittanning Dam. Fish from the Kittanning area had approximately 3 and 1.5 times the mercury and selenium, respectively, than fish from the Pittsburgh area.

What are the public health implications of this study? High mercury and selenium levels in fish from Kittanning as well as the elevated As levels are thought to occur because of pollution from coal-powered electrical generation facilities. This implies that people living in the affected areas near Kittanning may have high total body burdens of mercury and other heavy metals through inhalation and ingestion of other locally grown food and untested drinking water. Anglers and their families who consume channel catfish from Kittanning are at significantly higher risk of health effects from ingestion of mercury. This risk assessment may actually represent an underestimation of true risk since fish were taken in the fall season and not during the summer

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PHOTO: MARIEN COOKE

Eric Schaeffer (left) and Conrad Daniel Volz (right) spoke at GASP's March 28th educational event.

Waste Coal:
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when bioaccumulation rates are highest. Channel catfish are not the highest trophic level in this riverine system. Walleye and pike, more prized by anglers as table fare, are expected to have even higher levels of mercury in fillet tissue.

These findings led the team to their current project, the Allegheny River Stewardship Project, which was discussed in our last issue of the Hotline.

Eric Schaeffer spoke next with his presentation entitled, *Cleaning up after Coal: What to do about Waste Coal and Coal Waste?*

Waste coal piles are considered a problem because they leach toxic pollutants into waterways and cause acid drainage that harms neighboring streams. Industry and government's answer to this problem is fluidized bed combustion (FBC) boilers. Older coal power plants cannot handle burning low-energy waste coal. There are currently fourteen facilities in PA that burn waste coal, with three more proposed.

Coal ash is a byproduct of burning coal. Pennsylvania generates over 9 million tons per year. Currently, this coal combustion waste

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Thank you!

Special thanks to **Respironics, Inc.** for their financial support for the *Burning Waste Coal in PA* event on March 29.

GASP would also like to thank the following businesses for food donations:

- Allegro Hearth Bakery
- Dozen Cupcakes
- East End Food Co-op
- Giant Eagle
- Khalil's II
- Qdoba
- Starbucks
- Big Burrito Restaurant Group

Roger Westman Honored

by Wayne Gerhold, Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition

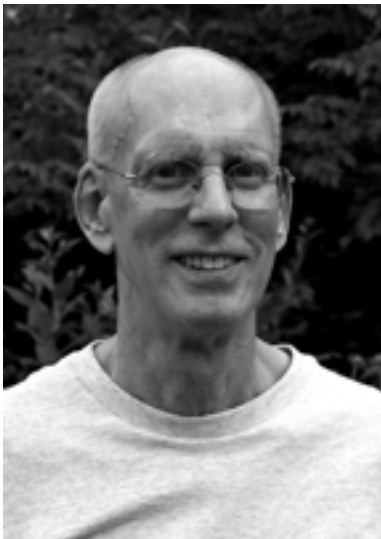


PHOTO: MAREN COOKE

All residents of the East End of our city have benefited by Roger Westman's manifold contributions to their welfare. The Eisman Award is a fitting recognition by this community. But, as GASP knows full well, Roger's imprint on Pittsburgh extends far beyond this locale. For decades he has been a guiding force in Allegheny County's efforts to bring air pollution under control. This visionary leadership extends back to a time when Pittsburgh was enveloped in haze, smoke, stench. A hallmark of Roger's modus operandi has been fairness to all, coupled with a dedication to upholding pollution control regulations and expanding them when necessary. GASP joins with the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition in thanking Roger Westman for his tireless work, day and night, on our behalf. —Walter Goldberg, GASP Board

At the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition's Annual Meeting on June 17, 2008, Roger

Westman, a long time Coalition Board member, was honored as the recipient of the 2008 Marjorie S. Eisman Citizenship Award. This annual award recognizes the service and valuable contribution that individuals have made to the Squirrel Hill/Point Breeze neighborhoods and the region.

For many years Mr. Westman had been chair of the Coalition's Residential Quality Committee. His knowledge, intelligence and sense of fairness have contributed to the well-managed debate concerning the pros and cons of virtually every major development in the Squirrel Hill area.

On a regional level, Mr. Westman was recognized for his contribution to the improvement of the public health of all of the residents of Allegheny County as the Chief of the Air Quality Program of the Allegheny County Health Department. Roger had been with the Health Department's Air Pollution Control Program since the 1970s. He managed the Program planning Section in 1977 and became the manager of the Air Quality Program in 1994. He has recently retired.

Mr. Westman's contribution to the health and welfare of the Squirrel Hill/Point Breeze communities and to the region will never really be completely known or appreciated, but the Coalition, through the recognition given at its Annual Meeting, publicly noted the work of one of our most valuable citizens.



Behind the Rhetoric: Clean Coal Technology

by Michael Parker, GASP Legal Director

In the Winter 2008 edition of the Hotline we published an article titled “Coal and Our Future,” in which we briefly described the extent of our society’s dependence on coal and the massive environmental costs associated with its use. That was the first article in a series addressing the use of coal in our country. This installment will focus on the technology used to generate electricity from coal with the goal of discovering just what those billboards and politicians mean when they refer to “clean coal” technology.

There are three major technologies used to generate electricity from coal: pulverized coal boilers, fluidized bed boilers, and integrated gasification combined cycle plants. The following paragraphs will outline the major characteristics of each system and whether they fall under the concept of “clean coal” technology.

Pulverized coal (PC) boilers are the mainstay of coal-fired electric power generation. PC boilers have been in use since the 1920s, and they vary in efficiency. PC boilers require that coal be pulverized to the consistency of talcum powder, and a standard 500 megawatt facility can have approximately 6 coal pulverizers capable of feeding about 250 tons per hour into the boiler. Pulverized coal is highly flammable and is considered an explosive when airborne, a property that allows more efficient combustion within the boiler. The pulverized coal is air-blown into the boiler, where it ignites into a fireball that, in turn, heats steam to run a turbine for the generation of electricity.

Since PC boilers have been in use for decades, the typical dirty coal-fired power plant is often centered around a PC boiler. The older generation of PC boilers are certainly not “clean coal” technology. However, as mentioned above, the efficiency of PC boilers varies considerably by type. There are three types of PC boilers: subcritical, supercritical, and ultra supercritical, with ultra supercritical being the most efficient. At approximately 50% efficiency, ultra-supercritical PC boilers are contenders for inclusion in “clean coal” technology—especially when they are combined with state-of-the-art, add-on pollution control devices. However, other technologies are better able to control air pollution.

Viewed as a more efficient and lower cost coal combustion method, fluidized bed combustion (FBC) was researched in the 1960s and developed in the 1970s. The first commercial-scale fluidized bed boiler was constructed in 1979 on the campus of Georgetown University. There are two major categories of fluidized bed combustion units: atmospheric and pressurized; pressurized FBCs are the second generation technology. Pressurized FBC units are broken down further into “bubbling” and “circulating” combustors. All FBC units work in a similar way. The fuel is suspended on jets of air during the combustion process, which results in a turbulent mix of fuel and gases providing more efficient chemical reactions and heat transfer.

There are three main advantages of FBC over PC combustion. First, the process is fuel flexible, allowing for the use

of lower-quality fuels, such as waste coal and/or municipal waste. Second, the turbulent mixing of the fuel allows the introduction of sulfur-absorbing substances such as limestone or dolomite, greatly reducing the sulfur emissions of the unit. Third, FBC units burn fuels at lower temperatures (1,400 to 1,700 degrees F), well below the threshold where nitrogen oxides form. One disadvantage of FBC boilers is that they are not readily compatible with many of the state-of-the-art pollution control technologies. Thus, while FBC units have some advantages over PC units, in the end they do not represent an improvement over advanced PC units (from an air pollution control perspective).

Integrated gasification combined cycle (IGCC) power generation systems are the holy grail of “clean coal” technology. IGCC plants do not directly combust the fuel. Instead they employ a thermo-chemical process to break down, or gasify, the coal, or other carbon-based fuels, into their basic chemical constituents. The fuel is heated under pressure in a low-oxygen environment, which causes the molecules to separate into hydrogen, carbon monoxide, and other gases. The mixture of gases is termed “syngas.” The solids left over after formation of syngas form a glass-like slag. The syngas is then cleaned and burned in a combustion turbine, in a way similar to natural gas, in order to produce electricity. Exhaust heat from the combustion turbine is used to boil water to run a steam turbine, which is the “combined cycle” portion of the IGCC process. Employing both the combustion turbine and the steam turbine allow IGCC systems to achieve high efficiency rates.

The reason why IGCC is touted as “clean coal technology” is that it is less polluting, more efficient, results in less carbon being emitted, and the process allows for easier separation of other pollutants from the exhaust stream than either PC or FBC. While expensive, IGCC systems do result in less air pollution and less toxic ash.

Ultimately, the technology of coal-based electric power generation has advanced much over the past 80 years, but problems still exist. IGCC, ultra-supercritical PC power plants, and advanced FBC all offer a means to more efficiently and cleanly convert coal into electricity. However, air pollution remains a major problem; so too does ecological and societal damage caused by mining, ground and surface water pollution from ash disposal, and global warming. In the end, coal-based power generation has become cleaner, but is by no means clean.



GASP Has a New GASPer Air Monitor

by Lee Szymkiewicz, Education Coordinator

Thanks to a generous grant from the Grable Foundation, GASP was able to purchase a new air monitor last year. The new monitor has been available for a couple of months now, and a few local schools had the opportunity to use it before the year was over. Central Catholic High School and Garfield Neighborhood Academy both utilized the monitor for student research projects.




The GASPer was also on display at the Earth Force Youth Summit held at the Pittsburgh Zoo and Aquarium in April. If you are interested in using the monitor during the 2008-09 school year, or would like more information about the program, please email Lee at lee@gasp-pgh.org. 



PHOTO: MARGARITA D'ANGELO (EARTH FORCE)

Left: The new GASPer air monitor

Above: Lee Szymkiewicz demonstrates the GASPer at the Earth Force Youth Summit

DCDG Features ZAP Cars and Smart Cars

by Lee Szymkiewicz, Education Coordinator

On Saturday, May 17th GASP held its fifth annual Drive Cleaner, Drive Greener event as part of the Venture Outdoors Festival. The event took place at Washington's Landing and was a great success. Drive Cleaner, Drive Greener (DCDG) is a yearly event that GASP sponsors to raise awareness of environmentally friendly, fuel-efficient vehicles. We were positioned at the front of the festival and attracted a good number of people with some of our more unusual vehicles. We were fortunate to have three ZAP! Xebros on hand.

GASP would like to thank the following individuals and dealerships for participating in our event:

- Ferrante's Motorcars
- Fossil Free Fuel
- Janis Johnson
- Fred Kraybill
- Karen Miyares
- Illah Nourbakhsh
- Martha & Ray Raak
- Segway in Paradise
- Smartcenter Pittsburgh

ZAP cars are compact and affordable electric vehicles. They are quite unique, running on only three wheels! To find out more about ZAP cars in Pittsburgh, check out <http://www.ferrantemotorcars.com>.

We also had a Toyota RAV4 electric vehicle, thanks to Illah Nourbakhsh who purchased it

in California six years ago. Smartcenter Pittsburgh provided us with a Smart Car, one of those cute, little cars that get a fuel rating of 41 mpg on the highway and 31 mpg in the city. Fossil Free Fuel showed up with a massive 2005 Dodge Cummins diesel truck running exclusively on waste vegetable oil. And, as always, we had the support of GASP members with their personal hybrids and electric vehicles.


If you are interested in being involved next year, please contact Lee at lee@gasp-pgh.org. 



PHOTO: MARLA FERRENCY

Pittsburgh #1 continued from page 1

quality would still be ranked in the nation's top 20 on the most-polluted list. Second quarter data from 2007 shows four of the County's PM_{2.5} monitors exceeding the short-term federal standard for PM_{2.5} of 35µg/m³. This includes the Liberty monitor on 18 days, and the North Braddock, Lawrenceville and Harrison monitors on two days each.

The ALA report should be viewed as a serious call to action for our region, underscoring the necessity for aggressive clean up of stationary and mobile sources of pollution which are contributing to our fine particulate problem. We certainly recognize that efforts are being made locally by the Allegheny County Health Department Air Quality Program and some industry to improve air quality. Some of the proposed activities, like upgrades to the Clairton Coke Works batteries will take years to see the benefits from; in the meantime more immediate steps to improve air quality must be undertaken. One of these immediate steps should include retrofitting diesel vehicles with diesel particulate filters that reduce toxic diesel emissions, including fine particulates, by as much as 90%.

In a joint press statement, GASP and Clean Water Action recommended the following actions:

- The Allegheny County Health Department's (ACHD) Air Quality Program should continue to aggressively work on the Liberty/Clairton State Implementation Plan (SIP), which is now overdue, a plan that details

that region's strategy for reaching attainment of the fine particulate standard. In order to adequately carry out this activity the Air Quality Program should be staffed properly.

- The SIP should meet required deadlines and not further delay clean-up. All major local industries that emit significant quantities of fine particulates should commit to reductions needed to protect Mon Valley residents.
- Citizens should learn about and comment on the draft permits for battery projects that will take place at U.S. Steel's Clairton Coke Works.
- The ACHD, County, and City officials should develop plans to retrofit and/or replace older, polluting diesel vehicles with advanced diesel emission reduction technology.
- School bus owners in Allegheny County should take advantage of available funding to retrofit older school buses.
- Citizens should not idle their personal vehicles and should report any excessive idling of diesel vehicles to the Allegheny County Health Department (412-687-2243) or their municipal police.
- Violations of the Continuous Opacity Monitoring regulation should be strictly enforced by the county.
- Citizens should refrain from the unnecessary use of wood stoves, and make sure their stoves meet EPA standards.



Air Quality Program Remains Local continued from page 3

to its importance for local air quality projects, GASP has long fought to protect the integrity of the Clean Air Fund. We therefore found the extensive use of Clean Air Funds for salaries and public relations firms to be objectionable. The use of Clean Air Funds for retaining an engineering firm to eliminate the permit backlog and for technology improvements were not objectionable either because their exceptional nature or their acceptability under Article XXI, respectively. However, due to the limited funds available, we questioned the over-reliance on the Clean Air Fund.

We also found the proposed abandonment of Article XXI very objectionable. As alluded to above, Article XXI has been specifically tailored to our mix of industrial sources and to our river valley topography and those unique provisions were incorporated into the State Implementation Plans for our region. Required under the federal Clean Air Act, State Implementation Plans are designed to either bring an area into compliance with health-based air quality standards or to maintain compliance with those same

standards. Since our regulations are part of federal law, then changing them could result in degraded air quality, federal sanctions, or lawsuits.

GASP took these objections, along with our own recommendations for membership on the Environmental Air Quality Task Force, to County Manager Jim Flynn, Board of Health Chairman Paul King, and ACHD Director Bruce Dixon. Our recommendations and objections were well received. We were assured that the Clean Air Fund would not be used for normal operating funds without revision to Article XXI and that mechanisms would be put into place to protect the fund from being exhausted. We were also told that Article XXI would not be substantively changed in violation of federal law. Changes to Article XXI would be limited to reorganizational ones and that future regulations would only be identical to the state regulations if the issues facing our airshed permitted such a step.

In general, we feel that GASP's efforts to keep and strengthen the Air Quality Program were successful. However, due to our questions concerning Mr. Onorato's seven recommendations, we plan to keep a very close eye on the situation.



Transportation Update

by Marilyn Skolnick, GASP Board Member

Oh, what a tangled web we weave... Act 44, passed in 2007, was supposed to provide predictable funding for public transit as well as for the rehabilitation of bridges and roads. The legislature, however, did not provide enough money for everything that was needed. Much of the funding was to come from the tolling of I-80. It was to be the duty of the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) to control this new toll road and float bonds based on the income that was to be derived from the tolls. In order to be able to toll I-80, permission to do so would have to be obtained from the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA). The Turnpike Commission applied for permission. Instead of saying "yes," the FTA asked for more information. Thus far, the PTC has not replied. Under the best of circumstances, it would take a minimum of three years for the tolling to go into effect. In the meantime, the PTC has been floating bonds in order to fulfill the requirements of Act 44.

The many obligations of the PTC have used much of their money, and as a result their bond rating has been downgraded. Because of this delay in approval from the FTA, Governor Rendell has asked for a request for proposals that would lease the PTC toll roads for 75 years. The thought being that the money coming from the lease would be banked or invested and the income would provide enough money for transit, bridges, and roads. The current recession has made money a little less available than before. So far, the Governor has received only two responses, but had hoped for better offers.

The Chair of the House Transportation Committee is

opposed to the leasing of the Turnpike, The Senate Chair of the Transportation Committee has not said what his position is, but he has held hearings on the possibility of public private partnerships in Pennsylvania. Special legislation is needed to be able to lease the Turnpike.

In Allegheny County, the Port Authority, depending on Act 44 for the promised (and much-needed) funds, will be nearly out of money by June 30, the end of their fiscal year. They are in the process of a union contract, and because by law, the County has to match any state funds, Chief Executive Dan Onorato, has said more than once, that if the Union members do not pay more into its health benefits and reduce the benefits for its retirees, as well as a few other items, he will not put up the local match for funds.

The Authority cannot wait until the completion of the union agreement because there are many obligations it must meet. As a result, the Port Authority has floated bonds that would cover the local match. The County was given permission to levy a special tax on drinks and rental cars to make the local match. This was done after extensive lobby by the county to the State Legislature in order to avoid increasing its property tax, the only other way the county can raise money. All the bar owners and entertainment businesses serving drinks have taken the county to court to prevent the county from collecting the tax. The case is currently awaiting a hearing.

If one were trying to create a mess on purpose, one could not do a better job. We can only hope that it all comes out right in the end.



Waste Coal: continued from page 5

is being disposed of in active and abandoned mines. According to the PA Department of Environmental Protection, coal ash is safe to use in mine reclamation pits. But the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences says that "comparatively little is known about the potential for minefilling to degrade the quality of groundwater and/or surface waters, particularly over long periods."

The PA DEP states that even when coal ash does come into contact with water that the alkalinity of the coal ash prevents the development of acid, which would promote the leaching of metals. But again, the National Research Council has concluded that acid neutralization does not reduce the mobility of all contaminants of concern from coal combustion residue.

So who is right? Here is what was found in The Pennsylvania Minefill Report from the Clean Air Task Force when

they measured runoff at various minefills. At Ernest Mine they found lead at 9.7 times the drinking water standard; McDermott Mine had cadmium 76 times the standard; and Swamp Poodle had arsenic 389 times the standard. You decide for yourself.

So what is a good alternative for these waste coal piles? One cheap and viable alternative is to plant beach grass. It has been found to thrive on waste coal piles, and can cover these piles for only 6-10% of the cost of conventional methods. Within a few years, native plants take over, forming a plant layer that stops erosion, holds in water, cools the surface and improves the environment.

In the long term, we need to reduce our reliance on coal-fired power plants, promoting both energy efficiency and new technologies for the long haul. We also need to have better monitoring and stricter standards for coal combustion waste. It's essential for the health of our planet as well as our own well-being.



Spotlight on a Board Member

Dr. David Eibling is one of GASP's newer board members, having joined us in 2007. He received his MD from Ohio State University and works as an "Ear-nose-throat Physician-educator" at the University of Pittsburgh, with primary clinical activities at the Veteran's Administration Hospital. When asked why he decided to become involved, he discussed the importance of educating the public, including other health care professionals, on pollution's harmful health effects.

Dr. Eibling said that health is an elusive goal for all humans, and that as we age it becomes even more elusive: "Eventually deficits in our health (which we term disease) impair our ability to participate in life activities, and eventually, life itself. As a physician, and particularly as a Head and Neck Surgeon, I am reminded on a daily basis how many factors affect our health and, ultimately, life itself." Dave goes on to say that some of these factors, like our genetic make-up, we have no control over, while with other factors, like smoking, we have personal choice and control. But there are factors over which we have minimal control as individuals, but do have the ability to control as a society—if we have the will. "GASP is a critical organization in this final category—and I decided that I would invest some of my energy in helping GASP achieve its goals."

In addition to helping GASP, Dave busies himself serving as Secretary of the newly formed American Society of Geriatric Otolaryngology. He's been involved with a number of professional organizations over the years, most notably the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, where he served as chair of the Core Education Committee for 6 years. He also served for 3 years on the Council (board) of the Triological Society.

Dave has received three awards of which he's particularly proud: The Excalibur Award of the Air Force Clinical Surgeons, for which he was selected because he "was working very hard and apparently having a great time doing it"; a Presidential citation from the American Academy of Otolaryngology-HNS, for his work as chair of Core Education Committee; and the Kenneth E Shuit Dean's Master Educator Award, received for his work setting up a multispecialty skills course.

Outside of work Dave is an avid bicyclist and also enjoys hiking, camping, woodworking, and "general puttering." His wife, Carol, volunteers at the Ten Thousand Villages store in Squirrel Hill, which features fair-trade gifts from around the world. Their daughter works for a computer software firm in Columbus, Ohio, and their son works in



the video game industry in the SF Bay area. Dave and Carol are also proud new grandparents.

When asked if he had any interesting stories to share, Dave said that he has "10,000 stories" and that in almost all the stories he has "been incredibly lucky." One he uses in a talk he gives periodically on happiness—and why we are all so incredibly lucky:

Some years ago I was bicycling with Janis Johnson (GASP treasurer and board member) and her husband Jonas in an Amish area in western New York. We were climbing a hill, dodging organic exhaust ("trail apples") in the road. Just as we reached the top of the hill an automobile pulled over in front of us, a woman got out, and held up a small brown object and said "Are one of you doctor Eibling?" With some reservation (this whole thing was a bit strange, you understand) I acknowledged that I was, in fact, Doctor Eibling, to which she responded, "I found your billfold lying in the road among the horse [apples]." After I expressed my deepest appreciation (as until that moment I hadn't even recognized that I had lost it) she responded by describing the conversation that occurred in the automobile prior to her stopping to pick it up. Although I forget the exact wording, it was something like "That [apple] was square—no, it's not a horse [apple]—it's someone's billfold." She stopped the car, picked it up, and then searched for a potential owner of the billfold, which was free of trail apple odor. What is the chance of this happening? Not only did she see it among the camouflage, but saw it before it was thoroughly mixed with applesauce, then took the time to stop the car, possibly back up, pick it up, and then search for the owner. I bet that if we think about it, most of us have had this kind of luck in our lives.



Get Involved: Join GASP's Pollution Patrol Team

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

With funding provided by the Three Rivers Community Foundation*, GASP is launching a Pollution Patrol Team in Allegheny County.

The Pollution Patrol is a team of 10 citizen volunteers interested in learning about and monitoring the air quality in their communities. Members of the Pollution Patrol Team will be educated about air quality issues and provided with the tools necessary to conduct air quality monitoring and research. Members of the team will be trained and have access to several types of air pollution monitoring equipment, as well as being provided an opportunity to become a certified smoke reader. In addition, team members will assist GASP in giving verbal and written testimony and will help to educate their communities about important air quality issues.

If you are interested in becoming an advocate for healthy air in your community, contact Lee Szymkiewicz at lee@gasp-pgh.org or 412-325-7382. Our first workshop will be held in September.

** The Three Rivers Community Foundation (TRCF) promotes change, not charity, by funding and encouraging activism among community-based organizations in underserved areas of Southwestern Pennsylvania. We support groups challenging attitudes, policies or institutions as they work to promote social, economic or racial justice.*



Environmental Charter School Now Enrolling

The Environmental Charter School at Frick Park is an independently run public school, opening in September 2008. The school will begin with grades K-3 and ultimately grow by one grade a year to grade 8. The mission of the Environmental Charter School is to educate each student to high academic learning standards using a themed curriculum that will foster knowledge, love of, and respect for the environment and the will to preserve it for future generations.

As a partner with the school, GASP has the opportunity to contribute to the curriculum and provide air quality programs for the students. We look forward to being a part of this unique partnership.

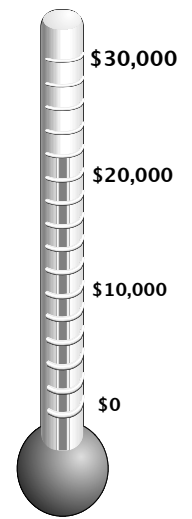
To download an enrollment form, find upcoming open houses or for more information, visit www.environmentalcharterschool.org



Help Us Meet Our Goal!

GASP has set a goal to raise \$30,000 from our membership and donations by October 31st, the end of our fiscal year. To date we've raised \$22,000.

Please help us to meet our goal which allows us to qualify for government and private foundation grants. Thank you for helping to make a future for our region that is healthier and more sustainable.



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 _____

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City/State/Zip _____

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

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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.

Save the Date for GASP's Fall Party: GASP and Good Friends

Mark your calendars! GASP will be holding our annual fall fundraising event this year on **Saturday, September 27th**. It will be held in the newly renovated **Riverview Park Chapel Shelter on the North Side**. Invitations should be arriving in early August. Hope to see you there!



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PITTSBURGH PARKS CONSERVANCY

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.

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