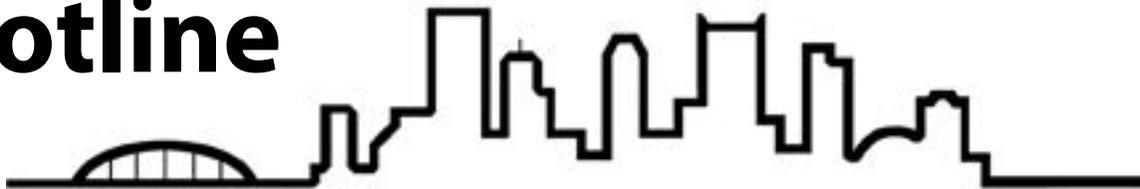




# Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. Hotline



Winter 2013

www.gasp-pgh.org

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## Air Toxics Guidelines Updated in Allegheny County

by Jamin Bogi, GASP Education and Outreach Coordinator

On Wednesday, January 9, the Allegheny County Board of Health passed what should be the final version of updated Air Toxics Guidelines. Quoting from the Guidelines, "This document establishes the policy... for evaluating the human health impacts of new or significantly modified sources emitting toxic air emissions.... '[A]ir toxics' are... defined as 'air-borne pollutants that are known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious

health effects[.]'" This new policy adds certainty and flexibility to any industry looking to locate new or expand existing facilities in the county, and it incorporates novel tools for reducing pollution in the county. When approved by County Council and the County Executive, these Guidelines will take effect. Kudos to all involved in passing this updated policy. GASP will work hard to make sure they are properly implemented and that they protect public health.



GASP's Jamin Bogi spoke at the January 9th Allegheny County Board of Health meeting to show support for stronger Air Toxics Guidelines. Photos by Maren Cooke.



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.

# Poetry Review: Once I Was Told the Air Was Not for Breathing

by Jamin Bogi, GASP Education and Outreach Coordinator

Paola Corso, a Pittsburgh-area native and author of several works of poetry and fiction, recently had her chapbook "Once I Was Told the Air Was Not for Breathing" published by Parallel Press. The 18 poems in this collection put the reader back in a dirtier, darker time, when workers lived, sweated, and died in steel mills, coke plants, and garment houses, in conditions which it's hard to believe ever existed. The poems are taken from real events and real people, however, and contain some of their actual words—faces leaning out of history's darkness to speak for a brief moment, only to be quickly shrouded back by swirling coke grit, clouds of cigarette smoke, and asbestos dust.

Smoke permeates the collection, giving the poems a similar shade and smell. Another theme is light: light that cuts through the smoke, light that creates as many shadows as the darkness it dispels, light from a teapot lamp, a candle, and white hot ingots. Many poems act like flashlights, searching through the dark of the past, looking for

an image, a report, or any bit of testimony that will help Corso make sense of the pain and loss experienced in the present. "Was it the mercury from the power plant / that fell on his head when he stood in line / at the nearby custard stand to order our root beer floats" (25)?

The writing smells like sulfur, flares like a match, and glows like fiery ash. Thankfully, the author has agreed to occasionally write book reviews for this newsletter. Get the chapbook and check back here for more soon.

<http://www.paolacorso.com/once.htm>



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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.

# GASP's Annual Event Features Bike Air Monitor, Mobile Air Quality Lab and More

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

Thank you to all who attended GASP's annual event on November 10th. This year we decided to take a more low-key approach than past events, but it was no less educational and enjoyable. GASP board member Maren Cooke and CMU atmospheric chemist Neil Donahue graciously opened their wonderfully creative Squirrel Hill home to us for the event, which coincided with Maren's monthly Putting Down Roots Sustainability Salon (<http://marenslist.blogspot.com/2012/10/nov-10-sustainability-salon-on-air.html>).

GASP staff provided updates on our various projects and campaigns, including a close look at the Google-funded Bicycle Air Monitoring Program, an update on our efforts to implement clean construction legislation in Pittsburgh, an overview of our work to minimize air emissions from natural gas compressor stations, and a summary of our new Athletes United for Healthy Air campaign.

In addition to the presentations by GASP staff, we had talks by two Carnegie Mellon faculty members. Attendees had the opportunity to tour CMU's new Mobile Air Quality Laboratory with Albert Presto (see page 4 for more info), who also shared some of its preliminary findings from the Marcellus region surrounding Pittsburgh. Then Neil Donahue, director of the Center for Atmospheric Particle Studies, spoke about fine particles: where they come from, how they evolve, and how they affect our health.



Albert Presto provides a tour of CMU's Mobile Air Quality Laboratory



Above: Christine Rigby demonstrates GASP's bicycle air monitor.

Left: Rachel Filippini shares some of GASP's accomplishments in the past year.



# Mobile Monitoring Part 2: Marcellus Shale Drilling and Your Air

by Albert Presto, Center for Atmospheric Particle Studies, Carnegie Mellon University

There are some truly amazing aspects to the growth of the shale gas industry. One is how fast shale gas has become a major player in the U.S. energy market. The industry has exploded in the last five or so years, and recent estimates suggest that the nation will soon switch to being "gas powered" for the foreseeable future. The Marcellus Shale, which underlies much of the Pittsburgh region, and the deeper Utica Shale, will be major sources of this gas for years to come.

Additionally, little is known about the environmental impacts of shale gas exploration and extraction. Much attention has focused on hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking", and the danger this technique poses to water wells. The effects of fracking on water supplies are largely unknown and highly contentious. So contentious, in fact, that little attention is given to the air pollution side of the equation. All of those giant diesel engines running the drilling rigs and trucks servicing the wells must emit something.

In the last edition of *Hotline*, I outlined our efforts to use mobile air quality monitoring to understand air pollution in and around Pittsburgh. The great advantage of using a mobile sampling platform—in this case a van outfitted with a suite of instruments for assessing air pollutant concentrations—is that we can sample a variety of different locations in a short amount of time. When trying to investigate the impacts of an industry like shale gas drilling, which is dominated by many relatively small operations—a well pad here, a drilling rig there—mobility can be a critical advantage.

In this edition of our series, I will share some preliminary results that I recently presented at the American Geophysical Union's national conference. We conducted mobile sampling of Marcellus Shale regions during June and July of 2012. We approached this sampling as a survey. We sampled in Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Greene, Washington, and Westmoreland counties, and tried to sample a variety of locations: near wells being drilled, active well sites, condensate tanks, compressor stations, as well as areas far removed from Marcellus Shale activity. Some of this sampling was strictly to establish a baseline. For instance, we sampled near the proposed site of the ethane cracker in Beaver County, though there is currently very little in the way of Marcellus development in Beaver.

Our sampling was investigating two hypotheses. First, that Marcellus Shale activities might cause increases in air pollutants typically associated with urban areas, such as par-

ticulate matter and nitrogen oxides, in the largely rural areas where gas exploration is taking place. Second, that wells and other equipment are significant sources of methane and other volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Methane leaks from gas wells are important to quantify. Much of the climactic argument in favor of natural gas production relies on the fact that burning gas (which is 95% methane) produces less CO<sub>2</sub> than burning coal. However, these climate benefits can be negated if there are large leaks of methane, which itself is a greenhouse gas. Leaks of VOCs can cause increases in ozone in these rural areas, which in turn may lead to violations of EPA regulations. Recent ozone events in Colorado and Utah have been definitively linked with gas exploration.

What did we find? Preliminarily, we found that at the countywide level (e.g., comparing Washington County to Allegheny County), Allegheny County has the highest levels of pollutants we would consider typical of urban areas. This is not particularly surprising. Even with intensive Marcellus Shale activities in Washington and Greene counties, Allegheny County has the most people, cars, and industrial activity in the region. There might be hotspots of air pollution near, for instance, active drill pads, and we are currently looking over our data in a rigorous and systematic way to see if we can find any such hotspots.

We also saw methane. In Washington and Greene counties, we saw *lots* of methane. In some cases, we can be fairly sure that the methane is the result of leaks from Marcellus Shale activities. If we park our mobile lab next to a gas well and see methane, it is probably a leak from the well. The complication is that, especially in Greene County, there are hundreds of Marcellus wells and *thousands* of old, abandoned gas wells, not to mention coalbed methane and other sources.

The key is to determine where the methane is coming from. We are using a technique known as isotopic analysis - basically we can distinguish between methane containing carbon-12 (the common isotope of carbon) and less-common carbon-13. The ratio of these two carbon isotopes gives some indication of whether the methane is from underground or from "modern" sources such as agriculture. While useful, isotope analysis cannot get us the full answer—the smoking gun, so to speak—and we are currently working to improve our ability to distinguish Marcellus methane from non-Marcellus methane.



# Winners of the Green Workplace Challenge Tell All

by Matt Ferrer, GASP Intern

Businesses fighting to green up? Competition doesn't just take place in sports arenas—businesses also battle for your dollar. This past year, Sustainable Pittsburgh, through their Green Workplace Challenge, organized a league of heavy-hitters that fought, refreshingly, not to produce more waste but to produce savings by incorporating more sustainable initiatives. By participating, companies were rewarded through improved performance, reduced costs, and public recognition. Each company received points for actions that reduced energy or water consumption, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, or increased environmental awareness. After a year of competition the winners were announced.

In addition to exploring how category winners succeeded, I thought it would be interesting to explore the differing approaches taken by both a small business and a large governmental organization. The end result showcases the unique challenges and advantages that each participant faced in their category.

evolveEA, winner of the Small Business category, is a small, private firm with nine employees. Allegheny County, which won the Observer category, is a large, public entity with over 6500 employees. Let's look at how these two winners rose to the challenge.

## evolveEA

I had the privilege of speaking with Steve Hockley, the Sustainable Process Manager at evolveEA. evolveEA consults with businesses in reducing risk, optimizing efficiency, and creating strategic plans. Steve saw the Challenge as an opportunity to evaluate how strongly his company employed the sustainable practices they advise others on.

"If we were going to enter it, we were going to win it," said Hockley, explaining the approach he and his staff used during the competition. The staff was all on board with the Challenge, but employees did have to take time away from other projects. "It didn't hurt business, but we didn't necessarily add more business," Hockley explained. However, by winning the Challenge, their clients are assured that evolveEA brings the leading sustainable practices to bear.

Being experts in the field of sustainability, evolveEA was already incorporating business-wide sustainability. The Challenge did help formalize and centralize policies, though, and had other benefits. "We achieved many accolades, improved our reputation, and strengthened our brand

as a result of winning."

There were limitations that evolveEA, as a small business, faced in competing. For example, they were not able to pursue some large actions such as installing on-site renewable energy, due to the capital investment required. However, their list of accomplishments is still impressive.

## Accomplishments

- The most cost-effective ways to achieve energy reductions turned out to be the easiest as well—decreasing air conditioning and lighting usage. One simple way they lowered their watts was turning off computers, printers, and other devices when they weren't in use. They also switched to an all-renewable electricity provider.
- They conducted a transportation survey which enabled them to quantify the carbon impact of their commutes. Using these results as baselines, employees then held a friendly "co-opetition" to reduce emissions through alternate transportation. They added storage for employee bikes, carpooled in a Toyota Prius, and took transit to meetings.
- They also increased office recycling and composting and greened various events they held.

Being a small business, evolveEA had the advantage of reducing inefficient practices quickly. Since sustainability is essentially their business, they were and are well positioned to implement efficient processes themselves, an advantage they carried with them to win the competition in 2012. When it comes to sustainability, evolveEA has repeatedly stepped up to the challenge. Their expertise and leadership place them among the elites in their field.

## Allegheny County Government

So how did a large organization with almost 6500 employees differ in their approach to the GreenWorkplace Challenge? What was easier or more difficult? To answer this question I interviewed Zachary Ambrose, the Student Conservation Association Green Cities Fellow for the County Executive Office. Over the past year, he was responsible for leading this challenge for Allegheny County. His leadership, along with the hard work of his dedicated staff, resulted in Allegheny County winning the observer category, achieving the highest point total of all categories. I sat down with Zachary to discover some of his interesting methods.



continued on page 6

## Green Workplace Challenge continued from page 5

Allegheny County committed four buildings to the challenge: the KaneCare Center in Ross Township, the Shuman Juvenile Detention Center, the Allegheny County Jail, and the Allegheny County Office Building. Altogether, there were almost 1500 employees working in these facilities. Like evolveEA, the County used a competition amongst its own employees to drive innovation. Each building was pushed to field a voluntary Green Team. The teams were responsible for motivating their co-workers in pursuing the Green Workplace Challenge goals. The building with the most goals achieved at the end of the competition won. Prizes included recognition awards, raffled items, and prize giveaways. The friendly competition increased employee participation in sustainability measures, fostered creativity, and increased environmental awareness.

### Accomplishments

- As part of an ongoing waste reduction and efficiency policy, the county has partnered with NORESKO, an energy service company. The county was able to gain the largest percentage of their total points to water savings from this partnership. They earned points from upgrading their water chillers and faucets, and implementing low-flow flushing.
- To achieve energy reductions, the County de-lamped already well lit areas, unplugged devices not in use, and

- installed high-efficiency lighting.
- More renewable power was purchased, increasing the total to 15%.
- KaneCare Ross Center became certified "bike-friendly" by Bike Pittsburgh.
- After conducting a transportation survey, they increased employee carpooling and they implemented the EZ GOLD BUS PASS, which allows employees to use pre-tax income to purchase the pass, to promote alternative transit for their employees. This helped decrease their carbon footprint related to transportation.
- The County purchased additional hybrid vehicles. The county now has 6 in total.
- They increased the recycling of construction material.

### Conclusion

Steve from evolveEA and Zachary from Allegheny County proved that being green does require some sacrifices and hard work, but knowing your organizations' unique characteristics can make achieving sustainable objectives more prudent and feasible.

GASP applauds their continuing contributions to making Pittsburgh a healthier, more breathable city. The willingness of evolveEA and Allegheny County to become leaders in their fields and champions for the successful integration of business and environment highlight a growing trend in cities around the world. Environmental stewardship and business growth can work hand-in-hand and should be pursued everywhere. 



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# Spotlight on a GASP Staff Member

This past fall, we welcomed Sam Thomas as the newest GASP staffer. Sam graduated from Pitt with a degree in Urban Studies in 2011 with a concentration in Public Policy and was hired to work as our Athletes United for Healthy Air (AU) campaign coordinator. He will also be continuing some of the responsibilities of Christine, our departing SCA Green Cities Fellow, such as distributing the AU Toolkit, an interactive learning device full of fun activities designed to help local athletes be active and healthy.



Sam explained that it's his job to recruit and work with Pittsburgh area athletes to champion clean air in the region. He'll be doing that in a number of ways, including coordinating an AU 5K race in the fall of 2013 (runners/walkers—watch for details online or in a future newsletter). The AU campaign is dedicated to increasing the overall understanding of air quality related challenges associated with being an athlete in the Pittsburgh area. Sam plans on taking the AU campaign to the streets, so you can look for him at a variety of local athletic events. He says, "Come say hi and be sure to ask me about our cool bike monitoring program and how you can help. You don't have to be an iron-woman/man to be an athlete! If you walk your dog or like going on a leisurely jog once in a while, you're an athlete. If you enjoy playing pick-up basketball or skateboarding, you're an athlete. We all breathe the same air, and Athletes United is all about bringing active people together to champion for the healthy air we all deserve!"

Outside of GASP, Sam works part time as a Project Manager with Friends of the Riverfront, where he manages the development of new segments of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail in Allegheny County. We currently have 24 miles of dedicated biking and walking trails, and Sam works to expand them.

For fun, Sam says he's "a huge fan of stand-up comedy, breakfast foods, and Pittsburgh." So you might see him

sitting in a favorite Pittsburgh diner, with his headphones on, "laughing, and going to town on a plate of eggs." In addition to his appetites for humor and food, Sam is an avid cyclist.

When asked if he has received any awards, Sam opined, "When I graduated from Linden Elementary in Point Breeze, I was given a golden dictionary for being the most gifted writer in the entire fifth grade. I'm still riding the acclaim from that prestigious honor."

Sam comes from a "huge, Brady Bunch-esque family" that includes a brother, two stepsisters, and a half sister, all of whom reside locally. He says that his immediate family includes "myself, my partner, an outrageously affordable house in Lawrenceville and our recently deceased fish, Larkin." 🚲

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# Delay in Clean Construction Law Continues

What is the hold up? Pittsburgh's clean construction legislation (formally known as the Clean Air Act of 2010) passed back in July of 2011, yet there still is no regulation implementing the law. The law requires projects receiving at least \$250,000 in public subsidies to spend a prorated percentage on cleaner construction equipment, ensuring that construction in Pittsburgh will get progressively cleaner.

This regulation was supposed to be written within six months of passage of the legislation. Beginning January 1, 2013, the legislation became effective for off-road diesel equipment operating on the project site. How are contractors to comply effectively when the regulations that implement the law haven't yet been written?

Contact the Mayor's office and urge swift creation and enforcement of the clean construction regulation. You can contact the Mayor through the online form here: <http://www.pittsburghpa.gov/mayor/feedback/?f=19>

Learn more at [www.gasp-pgh.org](http://www.gasp-pgh.org).

## GASP 5K in the Works

GASP is planning a 5K race for this fall. Want to volunteer to help out? Just email our new Athletes United for Healthy Air Coordinator, Sam Thomas at [sam@gasp-pgh.org](mailto:sam@gasp-pgh.org).

Athletes United for Healthy Air is a campaign aimed at educating athletes of all kinds about our region's air quality, how they can minimize their own exposure and champion healthy air.



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