

Spring 2018



Winds of Change

Supporting Organized Voices and Empowered Communities Since 1987

Huntington, WV

OVEC

www.ohvec.org

Is This Government's Best Vision for the Future of WV?



Above, an aerial shot, and below, a ground view of Blue Racer Midstream, LLC's Natrium Complex, along the Ohio River in Marshall County, WV. Blue Racer processes and fractionates NGLs (fracked gas liquids). The proposed Appalachian Storage Hub/Petrochemical Complex would mean many more facilities like this lining the Ohio River from Monaca, Pa, along the entire Ohio River border of West Virginia, to Catlettsburg, KY. West Virginia politicians and their corporate funders think this is a great vision for our future. Other water drinkers and air breathers disagree. See inside for details.



Inside This *Winds of Change*

App Storage Hub Petrochem Complex - 3 - 6 / OVEC in Action - 8 / VISTA Farewell - 10



2018 Global Earth Exchange: Coming This Summer

Radical Joy for Hard Times (RadJoy) is working with organizations across the globe to plan and execute their 9th Annual Global Earth Exchange. The 2018 GEEx will kick off a year of calling attention to places under threat and hopefully shine light on these places for a whole year. The theme of RadJoy's initiative this year is People Binding the Earth. Each person who signs up for the GEEx will receive 10 feet of purple yarn, hand-dyed with plant-based dye, to use any way in making a gift to a wounded place. As the promo materials say, "Weave, tie, bind, shape, trail, tie, cut for a challenged place you notice, whether it's a tree in your own backyard or a behemoth methane plant."

From RadJoy's website we learn that, "Radical Joy for Hard Times is a global network of people who believe that making beauty is an act of resistance to the prevailing domination of the Earth. We recognize that what hurts the places and creatures we love hurts us humans as well. We are willing to carry in our hearts the burden of these enormous wounds to the Earth."

In 2017, Janet Keating, OVEC's retired executive director, helped organize a Global Earth Exchange with assistance from OVEC and Marshall University Native American Student Organization at the Harris Riverfront Park in Huntington. The Ohio River, which serves the needs of about five million people, is the most polluted river in the United States, and is worthy of our love and acts of beauty to

demonstrate our appreciation for all that the river has provided for many generations. Sadly, because of the uptick in the oil and gas industry in our region, including the proposed Appalachian Storage Hub and Petrochemical Complex, this river is under dire threat and needs our help and attention.

Although our gestures appear symbolic, the hearts of individuals and groups that love and want to see the Ohio River protected and restored are strong and full of hope and courage.

RadJoy's website continues: "We go to these places because we love them as we love a dear friend who is ill, and we spend time with them, listening to the land and to one another. We celebrate the sense of belonging and community that results when we turn something ugly into something beautiful through our collective creative gifts for these places. Our stories bear testimony to the power of our work. As we

share this experience of finding and making beauty in wounded places, we discover how we are connected in the deep common ground beneath our hearts."

We will go back to the Ohio River this summer to spend time with the river, share stories, mourn the threats, and celebrate the gifts of the river. Watch our website for details.

Janet is looking for a few people who can help with planning this year's GEEx. If you want to be on this planning team, please contact her at keatingjanet49@gmail.com. 🍷



Photo at top of page by Carsten Dolcini, courtesy Radical Joy for Hard Times. Above: Some of the 2017 participants at the Ohio River. Photo by Janet Keating.

A Petrochemical Mountain State?

A Former ‘Cancer Alley’ Resident Says: WV Can Do Better!

Kirby Reed grew up in Louisiana and is now a resident of West Virginia. After hearing about the proposed Appalachian Storage Hub Petrochemical Complex, Kirby shared her experience of growing up in a similar petrochemical hub, in order to offer us a warning:

I grew up in Ascension Parish, about 20 miles from Baton Rouge and 40 miles from New Orleans. Ours was one of the river parishes along the mighty Mississippi dominated by the petrochemical industry. This meant that pollution was a very serious health issue for many residents. When I was growing up, everyone worked for the chemical plants. My parents met while working for Shell Chemical.

Plant jobs are similar to working in a coal mine. The pay rate is high, but so are the health risks and consequences. Cancer rates in this area of Louisiana are some of the worst in the nation. Oil companies



Communities dependent on the Ohio River deserve better than more pollution! Thanks to SouthWings for the flyover.

have had to buy out entire communities surrounding the processing and manufacturing plants. Oil platforms litter the Gulf of Mexico and that oil has to be refined into petroleum gas, heating oil, asphalt, and plastics. The process of refining petrochemicals often leads to spills. These chemicals can cause asthma and COPD—just two of the illnesses that my family suffered in the community.

Kirby goes on to talk about what is happening here:

Lobbyists are being paid hundreds of thousands of dollars by these oil and gas tycoons writing laws for Exxon Mobil and other companies to push a petrochemical agenda on the state of West Virginia.

Unlike them, consider me a lobbyist for love of West Virginia. Maybe you were like me, sick of our uncertain economy and ready for an industry that will put this state back on the map. But are you really ready to destroy the ecosystem for a hazardous job?

Mining, fracking, and drilling for fossil fuels are proven to impact the climate. If we must dig deeper, let it be within ourselves, to improve our quality of life, not to give it away to the lowest bidder. This is my journey—to use my voice to help the people of West Virginia and the Ohio River Valley to find their voices. Protect and use that powerful voice within you to demand a different option, and say no to the proposed Cancer Alley of the Ohio River Valley.

Go to ohvec.org and search “Kirby” to find and read her full post. 🍌

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OVEC is a coalition member of the WV Environmental Council and the Alliance for Appalachia, and is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization registered with the IRS and the West Virginia Secretary of State.



Appalachian Storage Hub: A Petrochem Horror

by Dustin White

According to recent reports, the Appalachian Storage Hub (ASH) has cleared its first hurdle. The U.S. Department of Energy has granted the first part of a two-part application loan of \$1.9 *billion* for the Appalachian Storage and Trading Hub initiative. Heading this project is the Appalachian Development Group (ADG), owned by Mid-Atlantic Technology, Research and Innovation Center (MATRIC) and the WVU Innovation Corp.

This hub has already been called a number of different names, such as the Appalachian Ethane Storage Hub and ADG's Storage and Trading Hub. Each name sounds benign. What this really should be called is the Appalachian Petrochemical Hub.

If it is developed, this hub would bring a massive build-up of the petrochemical industry stretching along the Ohio River from Beaver, PA, beyond Huntington, WV, and into Catlettsburg, KY. It would stretch into surrounding counties, with a spur from the Kanawha River at Point Pleasant, WV to Charleston. It could potentially make the Chemical Valley in Kanawha County look like an afterthought. Champions of the proposed hub see this as a good thing.

The hub would mean the construction of a slew of petrochemical refineries, pipelines, and more. Hub-related facilities would use the leftover liquid by-products of methane production (called natural gas liquids or NGLs, though there is nothing "natural" about them: Fracked gas liquids is more accurate), so that would mean an increase of fracking-related activity and infrastructure as well. The two would need to feed one another: More fracking for methane leads

to more fracked gas liquids used by the petrochemical companies; the more fracked gas liquids petrochemical companies use, the more fracking will happen.

What that means is our region would face the *combined* threats of more fracking and the petrochemical industries.

Of course, those with vested interests are praising this as the latest great jobs-savior news for our region. The American Chemistry Council is touting its own report that imagines the hub attracting up to \$36 billion in new chemical and plastics industry investment and 100,000 new area jobs. The accuracy of the report is yet to be determined. The long-term viability of those jobs is another question, too. One wonders what kind of other job prospects we'd have in the region if a massive petrochemical complex further destroys our air and water. Would most of the much-touted jobs go to locals, or will most of the potential jobs go to out-of-state workers, as we already see in the oil and gas industry here?

Haven't we learned any lessons from what the coal industry has done, where the majority of what is produced here is exported elsewhere, and companies from other regions reap the profits? Not to mention the fact that it's all a boom-and-bust mono-economy.

When you peel back the "jobs" arguments, more hazards than benefits are revealed. This petrochemical hub would mirror the one already in existence in Louisiana along the Mississippi River, known as "Cancer Alley." We have been listening to folks there, and they have experienced troubles from higher cancer rates and illnesses to sinking property values to actual

We are working to defend our water, land, air, and communities from this proposed petrochemical buildout. Help out! Contact us at 304-522-0246 or info@ohvec.org.

sinking property, thanks to massive sinkholes. Do we really want all of that in our backyards?

All one has to do is pick up a copy of the book *Petrochemical America* to see the impact this industry has had on folks in Louisiana. These companies expect people to ignore the hazards as long as there are dollar signs involved.

Once again, the people of Appalachia are being told that we “need” to put health and safety on the line for industry profit. Who is going to protect us when something goes wrong? The current EPA is very pro-industry, and our own WV Department of Environmental Protection has proven time and time again it can’t protect the people of West Virginia.

We already have a long history of industry disasters in the state. It’s only a matter of time before something goes drastically wrong with this hub. Remember when methylcyclohexane methanol (MCHM) was difficult to say? Imagine what words come with the petrochemical industry!

Understand that the products these facilities will make are toxic to people. Keep in mind, too, that this hub will not only affect people in West Virginia, but

The idea of the Hub is nuts! Climate change will shift from severe to catastrophic if we keep adding more fossil fuel projects!



also in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and part of Kentucky. The Ohio River is the source of drinking water for about five million people, and almost 10 percent of the U.S. population (more than 25 million people) lives in the Ohio River Basin.

This hub of horrors is a nightmare waiting to happen. We Appalachians need to defend ourselves from this monstrosity and support folks in Louisiana already living the nightmare. The people deserve better than false economic hope and toxic neighbors. 🌰

Game Changer?

We’ve heard news reports that this behemoth petrochemical project would be a “game changer” for our region, but *how* would it change our current “game”? If you follow sports, you know that a game changer is good for one side, but *not* for the other. In this instance, let’s name our “teams” as follows: Water Defenders vs. Corporate Profiteers. Here are some variables impacting this impending matchup:

- Air and water pollution at cracker plants, and other parts of the infrastructure
- Massive water extraction and pollution at cracker/processing plants
- Natural or fracked gas liquids are highly volatile, more so than dry gas (methane)
- Uncertainty about regulations for natural gas liquid pipelines
- Increased fracking in our state and region
- Tax payer dollars are already being tapped for a study of this proposed project
- Leaks from underground storage caverns could lead to sinkholes, water contamination or explosions
- Risk of contamination of water intakes for the approximately five million people who depend upon the Ohio River as their sole source of tap water

The Ohio River is already known as the most polluted inland waterway in the country. This project would lead to increased petrochemical industrialization of the Ohio River Valley. The experience of people in Cancer Alley of the Gulf Coast region informs us that the grave health risks outweigh the economic benefits.

Many communities in the Ohio River Valley region are already economically challenged; many people in these communities can’t afford to move or have poisoned water and increased health problems from air or water contamination.

A real game changer flips the same old, same old fossil fuel story. It’s time for water drinkers and air breathers to win! Team up!

Penn State Extension: The first stop in the processing of plastic from natural gas is the cracker plant.

New York Times: The world is awash in plastic... it’s choking our future in ways that most of us are barely aware... The deleterious consequences of humanity’s “plastic footprint” are many, some known and some yet to be discovered.

Who Stands to Profit from the Appalachian Storage Hub?

Here are some of the people who are positioning themselves to profit from the proposed Appalachian Storage Hub/Petrochemical Complex, at the expense of our health and safety.

The day after introducing the Appalachian Ethane Storage Hub Study Act of 2017 (the first bill in support of this proposed petrochemical hub), WV Senator Joe Manchin received a \$5,000 campaign contribution from the American Chemistry Council. Council members include Shell, ExxonMobil, Chevron, Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), Dow Chemical, Monsanto, and other major petrochemical corporations. Other federal legislation relating to the storage hub is supported by the entire WV Congressional Delegation.

In a blatant conflict of interest, WV Secretary of Commerce Woody Thrasher signed an \$83.7 *billion* MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) regarding financial backing of the storage hub with a Chinese state-owned energy investment vehicle, even as he still owns a 70 percent stake in the Thrasher Group. The group has positioned itself as a contractor for oil and gas companies to cash in on Appalachia becoming a major petrochemical hub.

The MOU signing ceremony, held in China, was overseen and witnessed by Chinese President Xi and President Trump. Both state and federal administrations still refuse to release the details of this MOU to the public. In March, in Wheeling, WV, the Thrasher Group sponsored a conference in support

of the Appalachian Storage Hub. Thrasher Group's CEO gave opening and closing remarks.

The Petrochemical Hub would provide a place for the glut of fracked gas liquids obtained from fracking in the Marcellus, Rogersville, and Utica Shale, and would incentivize a new wave of drilling in the region.

This means more (mostly out-of-state) oil and gas companies will profit from increased fracking and pipeline construction, and more out-of-state workers would flood the region.

A WVU professor named Brian Anderson has lent scholarly and institutional legitimacy to the hub, using his position at WVU to put the university's brand on the studies he's championed. He also just happens to be a principal of a company, Appalachia Development Group, which is the primary LLC that entered into the \$83.7 billion MOU with the China Energy Investment Corp. for financing the hub.

The current president of WVU, E. Gordon Gee, lent his support to work being done by the university relating to the storage hub. Gee was once on the board of Massey Energy, the company overseen by CEO Don Blankenship, and known for the Upper Big Branch coal mine disaster that killed 29 miners.

Most of the information here comes from Steve Horn's DeSmog blog, "China Is Financing a Petrochemical Hub in Appalachia. Meet its Powerful Backers." See: www.desmogblog.com/2018/02/06/fracking-appalachian-storage-hub-china. 🍌



Hey WV: Be Registered & ...

A new voter ID law went into effect on January 1. The WV Secretary of State's office launched a "Be Registered & Be Ready to Vote" campaign to help educate voters on the kinds of photo and non-photo identification now required to vote during the early voting period or on Election Day in any election.

Julie Archer, with the WV Citizens for Clean Elections, was interviewed by the Beckley Register

Herald about the new law. She noted that when the legislature was working on the law, she had some concerns, based on voter ID laws in other states, about how the WV law would affect voter turnout and about potential voter suppression.

She told the paper, "I will say it's true West Virginia law is less strict than what has been passed in other states." Still, concerns remain that people

Find Out How Much Special Interest Money Goes to Elected Officials



adapted from a March 1 Charleston Gazette-Mail op-ed by Julie Archer and Natalie Thompson

It's a rare day when a committee hearing on a bill before the WV Statehouse makes it into the New York Times and Fox News. In what is now a well-known story, Lissa Lucas was escorted from the house chamber after being called out of order for reading a list of donations that each of the committee members had taken from interests that stood to benefit from the bill before the committee.

Lucas is a candidate running for a house seat in this election, but you don't have to be running for office to get access to the information on campaign donors—you can do it, too.

We all know money speaks in the statehouse. Three-quarters of Americans agree that we should do better to put regular people over big-money's influence, and a trove of information on campaign donations is available that you can get access to right now to help inform your vote. Any citizen can access campaign donations to see what interests are helping elect legislators and to help evaluate how that might influence their position on a particular issue or bill.

Tools at websites like **FollowtheMoney.org**, **ProjectVoteSmart**, and **OpenSecrets** (for federal politicians) make accessing this information easy and intuitive. The Secretary of State also has a new system that makes it possible to search contributions to and expenditures by state-level candidates and political action committees (PACs). Try out one of these easy tools and take a look at the wealth of information they have on your legislators' campaign donations. What you find might surprise

you. Either way, you will be a more informed voter during this election year.

Unfortunately, there is a big hole in the information available to the public, and it's called dark money. Wealthy individuals and corporations can give unlimited secret donations to shadowy nonprofit groups to influence elections without the public knowing who is behind it.

Other states have passed good laws that shine light on these shadowy transactions, but right now in WV, these groups are free to spend wildly to influence our elections and politicians, and voters can't possibly know who is behind it all. During the Legislative Session, we worked on Senate Bill 40, which would have closed loopholes in existing law that make it possible for groups that spend money on political ads to hide the identity of their donors. This bill didn't get serious attention from lawmakers this year, but West Virginia can and should do better at disclosing these secret and unaccountable sources of political influence.

We will continue working on these issues, and we could use your help. Contact us at 304-522-0246 to get involved in our Clean Elections work.

Julie Archer and Natalie Thompson are co-coordinators of WV Citizens for Clean Elections, a statewide coalition working to increase transparency and accountability in WV elections. Natalie is OVEC's executive director. 🍌

... Be Ready to Vote

“may not be aware of all the various forms of ID that are accepted. The campaign the secretary is launching with stakeholders today is critically important. Folks more than likely in West Virginia will have something on the list, so check out the list.”

Go to **ohvec.org** and search “Be Registered” to see the list. Note that your county clerk can help you obtain a free photo ID in the unlikely case you don't

have any form of ID on the list.

Please help spread the word and make sure people know about this new requirement. Every vote counts, and we don't want potential voters to be turned away. 🍌



OVEC in Action

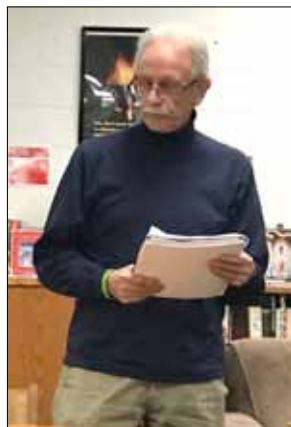


Above: In early December, OVEC's Vivian Stockman visits with Bill Hughes, of Wetzel County, to take an on-the-ground look at the construction of the Rover Pipeline. See more photos on OVEC's blog; search for "Rover" at ohvec.org.



Above: April Keating, with the Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance, addresses attendees of a training group hosted in early December. Training sessions included one on media, led by Vivian. MLPA is one of the organizations we collaborate with as part of Appalachian Gas Working Group. AGWG has regular calls and meetings.

Right: On December 12, Mark Connelly delivers comments to WV DEP on the state's stormwater permit for the **Mountaineer Xpress Pipeline**. He and other OVEC volunteers and staff spoke at the DEP's hearing in Jackson County. **In early January, FERC (the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) issued the certificate of public convenience and necessity for MXP. We have filed a petition for rehearing. Stay tuned for updates.**



Above: In our winter newsletter, we introduced you to a new coalition, the Tri-State Water Defense group. The group continues meeting and holding events; pictured here are some folks who attended a December meeting. The group hosted a public forum at Marshall University on March 6.



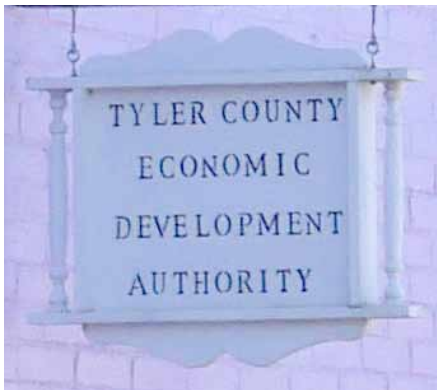
Above: OVEC members turn out in force for one of our decades-long traditions: joining with the Huntington-Cabell NAACP to march through Huntington on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Right: OVEC's Executive Director Natalie Thompson lobbies on progressive issues during the 2018 WV Legislative Session. She met a banana while handing out red



bandanas during one day of the teachers' strike. The teachers were thrilled with the bandanas, as they drew strength for their struggle by invoking West Virginia's proud labor history. Thanks to everyone who joined Natalie in making the rounds at the State Capitol.

Stay up-to-date: subscribe to our e-mail action alerts and our blog digest. Go to ohvec.org, scroll down to "Action Alert" and click on "Subscribe." Even if you are already signed up, please fill in your address, etc., so we can be certain to have your current contact information.



Left: On January 18, OVEC's Dustin White meets with some concerned locals during a meeting of the Tyler County Development Authority. Newspaper reports noted

that the authority was learning about salt caverns in the area that could become part of the proposed Appalachian Storage Hub/Petrochemical Complex. OVEC is hosting regular multi-group calls about the Hub.



Above: On February 13, thanks to our long-time partners at SouthWings, OVEC took an aerial tour of fracking-related activity in north-central West Virginia, including the massive Antero "Clearwater" complex. See more shots by searching "Antero" at ohvec.org.



Above: In late January, Bobby Lee Messer and OVEC's Robin Blakeman finish up a YouTube video about pipeline-related-activity going on near the OVEC office. Bobby shot the footage during a Tri-State Water Defense outing. Watch and share the video: bit.ly/2p2m5jR.



Above: On February 21, OVEC takes a ground tour of fracking-related activity in Doddridge County. Among the sights was this Rover Pipeline incident. Search "Rover" on our website to see more photos.



Left: On February 10, Dustin stepped out in Lewisburg to support Headwaters Defense's fantastic efforts to make Governor Jim Justice pay attention to the

PCB contamination of Minden, WV. Follow HD on Facebook to learn more. Courtesy photo.

There's so much more we have been up to! For instance, our stream team volunteers are out monthly monitoring for fossil-fuel impacts. And, we frequently speak with reporters: for a sampling of what those conversations yield, check out these articles (plug the titles into an internet search engine): DeSmog Blog: China Is Financing a Petrochemical Hub in Appalachia. Meet its Powerful Backers; Quartz: The 100-year Capitalist Experiment that Keeps Appalachia Poor, Sick, and Stuck on Coal. Join in our work. It's serious, but we have fun! Contact us at info@ohvec.org or 304-522-0246 to get involved.

My Year as a VISTA

by Nathan Luton

In November of 2016, I attended a Dakota Access pipeline protest, co-hosted by OVEC. It was the first time I'd heard about the organization, and I was impressed. I later called to offer my services as a volunteer. That's when I learned OVEC had a position open for an AmeriCorps VISTA. It was perfect timing; my job with the West Virginia state government felt stagnant, and I wanted to do something more fulfilling. I quit my government job and began my year as a Volunteer in Service to America.

Working with OVEC and the Boys and Girls Club of Huntington, I got a taste of what a community can achieve when people work together. The program got off to a great start at the Earth Day celebration in April, as volunteers from Adopt-A-Block and Starbucks helped me and the kids fill raised beds and prepare them for planting. Throughout spring, summer, and fall, I worked with the kids to plant and collect a bountiful harvest of tomatoes, peas, carrots, strawberries, basil, peppers, kale, and lettuce. Not only did the cook at the Boys and Girls club prepare the fresh vegetables for the kids' meals, but we also collaborated with the WV Extension Office to provide cooking classes, during which young gardeners learned to prepare simple recipes with food they raised themselves.

While the kids were learning gardening skills, they were also learning to enjoy nature. Each day, the young gardeners were outside planting, watering, weeding, harvesting, or just enjoying the flowers we planted to attract beneficial insects. In fact, our partners at the Boys and Girls Club said the gardening project was one of the kids' favorite activities. To encourage a greater love of the outdoors, I led nature hikes and helped Boys and Girls Club staff with field trips to the park, scavenger hunts, and rock climbing. Each week, I also led an interactive workshop focused on nature or environmental subjects.

My time as a VISTA has taught me much about OVEC, the community, and myself. When I started the project, I faced a big learning curve, because I knew little about gardening. Now, I not only enjoy it, but also realize how easy it is and how little space is required to grow fresh food.



Above: Nathan, squatting, with a Boys and Girls Club member and a canine pal, during one of the group's numerous outdoors adventures.

I learned that several groups and organizations are working to promote a healthier food system in the Huntington area. One of the most interesting field trips we organized for the kids was to Refresh Appalachia, a local-food project that is part of the Coalfield Development Corporation. The kids toured the facility, located at an old factory in the west end of Huntington, where young aspiring farmers are growing vegetables and micro-greens in a high tunnel and raised beds.

I also learned that much more action is needed to ensure that people have access to healthy food. Many people living in low-income communities, including the one where the Guyandotte Boys and Girls Club is located, do not have access to affordable fresh vegetables.

I'm quite encouraged to know the Boys and Girls Club will keep the garden going after my year in VISTA ends, and am proud to have been part of this successful project. OVEC has taught me that a community can come together to create something wonderful. I will continue to volunteer for an organization and people I believe in.

We will miss you in the office Nathan, and we look forward to seeing you at our events! 🍌

Spread the Word! When you're finished with this newsletter - PASS IT ON!

Fracked Gas Infrastructure Strategy Meeting in D.C.

Vivian Stockman, OVEC's vice director, and Mary Wildfire, OVEC volunteer, went to Washington, D.C., to participate in a strategy meeting held January 19 and 20, organized primarily by Delaware Riverkeeper Network and Beyond Extreme Energy. The meeting came just one day after the Appalachian Gas Working Group

meeting in Charleston, so few other West Virginians made it to D.C., except for the indefatigable April Keating and Kevin Campbell.

We met up with people from Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Iowa, both Carolinas, and D.C., all united by concerns about gas *infrack*structure.

By the end of the weekend, our 60 or so people had divided into five groups working on different projects: One is going to develop a set of questions for candidates; another is going to try to get an informal briefing in Congress. One thing this group wants Congress to see is the information contained in the "Dossier of FERC Abuses of Power and Law." See bit.ly/DossierofFERCAbuse.

Another group is looking into the issue of pipes sitting around in staging yards for more than 18 months losing their coating and being subject to corrosion.

One is trying to draw attention to "bomb trucks." Apparently in places where opponents have successfully blocked pipelines, the gas industry is using what they call "virtual pipelines" and opponents call "bomb trucks"—fleets of trucks carrying 12-ton tanks of methane gas, often on back roads to avoid public scrutiny, with over 100 a day making a trip that crosses the PA/NY state line (illegally). There have been at least three rollovers so far, which injured the drivers but didn't result in explosions. But the police won't say how many accidents... did *you* know you can't FOIA the police? These fleets are also beginning operations in Maine, Washington state, and elsewhere...people need to keep an eye out.

There was also discussion about the attack



Mary, center, at the D.C. meeting.

on state's rights, with industry arguing that only FERC has jurisdiction and can overrule state agencies that deny permits.

Both Viv and Mary joined the group focused on an eight-point set of demands to FERC. A group of folks disrupted a FERC meeting on January 18 to deliver this set of demands: "Eight Key Reforms for a Pipeline

Review Process Where People and Our Environment Really Matter!"

Another group will be working on a toolkit to share online—a place for resources we can all use/share, e.g., PowerPoints, handouts, etc.

Is there room for more people to jump into this? Absolutely! If you're fired up about all the ways the gas industry is threatening West Virginia and surrounding states, we need you. This group has a listserv, bi-weekly calls, and plans for more events and meetings. If you'd like to help with OVEC's *infrack*structure work, contact us at 304-522-0246 or e-mail vivian@ohvec.org. 🍌

AGWG Welcomes Eve

Late last year, the Appalachian Gas Working Group hired Eve Marcum-Atkinson as our coordinator. She helps to coordinate planning and communication between each of the AGWG working groups and organizational partners.

AGWG is a consortium of green-minded groups and organizations. Our vision is to support healthy communities, property rights, and a just transition to clean renewable energy, while leading a coordinated effort to end public harm from fracking and gas-related extraction and infrastructure.

AGWG partners are: OVEC, WV Rivers Coalition, WV and VA Sierra Club, WV Highlands Conservancy, Appalachian Voices, Appalachian Mountain Advocates, PA League of Women Voters, Preserving Our Water Heritage and Rights (POWHR), Ohio River Citizens Alliance (ORCA), Friends of the Harmed, Mountain Lakes Preservation Alliance, Wetzel County Citizen Action Group, Headwaters Defense, Greenbrier River Watershed Association, Indian Creek Watershed Association, Eight Rivers Council, Christians for the Mountains, Preserve Monroe, Summers County Residents Against the Pipeline, Doddridge County Watershed Association, SW PA Environmental Health Project, SouthWings, WV Citizens Action Group, and WV Surface Owners Rights Organization.

Thanks to Departing Board Members



Karen and friend;
Courtesy photo.

Rotating off of the OVEC Board of Directors in February were Karen Scalf and Thom Boggs.

Karen is an educator, singer/songwriter, and musician. She and her partner Carla engage in raised-bed organic gardening at their home in downtown Huntington, and they educate others about the benefits of this kind of gardening, as well as of

eating organic and locally raised food. Karen helped produce the introductory video on our website and has written songs related to mountaintop removal and other environmental issues. You may have heard her perform at our 2017 Treehuggers' Ball.

Thom is an attorney and partner at Duffield, Lovejoy, Stemple & Boggs in Huntington. He is a member of the WV Association for Justice Board of Governors and serves on the board of directors for Habitat House/Cabell County Coalition for the Homeless and is president of the Wild Ramp board of directors. He is also a musician, drumming for local bands Moonshine Crossing and Dos-3-Guise.

OVEC's staff and board of directors thank Karen and Thom for their years of dedicated volunteerism and contributions to our work. We will miss you! 🍌



Thom;
Courtesy photo.

Thank You!



Thanks to supporters like you, OVEC raised \$17,511 in our \$30 for 30 Campaign, which took place during the final months of 2017. Your donations for the campaign helped us celebrate our 30th

year and helped us start the next 30 years on solid ground. Be sure to check out our blog series: *OVEC: Highlights of 30 Years of Standing Our Ground*. Head to ohvec.org and search for that title. 🍌

Litigation Update



One year ago, on March 14, 2017, the Chemical

Disaster Rule was supposed to

be in place. Trump's EPA has delayed this rule, which was years in the making. OVEC is part of a lawsuit over this delay.

On March 16, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit was to hear arguments in our case. OVEC, Louisiana Bucket Brigade, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and ten other groups are represented by Earthjustice in this case. The United Steelworkers has jointly filed briefs with us. Some states have filed their own briefs supporting implementation of the rule.

Other states and industry groups have joined with the EPA in arguing for a continued delay of the rule. These entities are putting corporate profits over people's health and safety.

As OVEC board member Pam Nixon noted in an op-ed, "Trump must not block efforts to prevent chemical disasters," that ran in *The Hill* on May 31, 2017:

The EPA's rule that is now being delayed and reconsidered is known as either the Risk Management Program rule or the Chemical Disaster Rule. The rule requires oil, gas and chemical facilities to analyze potential hazards and consider whether there are safer alternatives that could be feasibly implemented. It will also result in better community planning and preparedness, increase information sharing with emergency planning committees like the one I am a member of, and improve coordination with local first responders so they can more safely and effectively respond to disasters.

This delay particularly threatens communities of color. African-Americans are 75 percent more likely to live near industrial chemical facilities than the national average. The percentage of Latinos living in proximity to dangerous chemical plants is also disproportionately high, at 60 percent more than the national average.

We need the Chemical Disaster Rule in place before the next hurricane season threatens workers at and communities near refineries in Louisiana and Texas—and before the next chemical disaster hits WV. Stay tuned for updates. 🍌

Clean Power Plan Hearings

On November 28 and 29 last year, at the State Capitol in Charleston, WV, the U.S. EPA held a public hearing on its proposed repeal of the Clean Power Plan. OVEC members, board members and staff were among those who commented.

Just before the hearing, the Charleston Gazette-Mail ran an op-ed by Members of WV Interfaith Power and Light, which OVEC helped to found. WVIPL wrote:

Besides our faith traditions, we have what is known as the Lofoten Declaration to draw from as a basis for hearing one another as we talk about our differences. The Lofoten Declaration realistically calls for managed decline of fossil fuels so they taper off by the 2030s. Because the fossil fuel industries have wealth, the declaration holds that they are responsible and morally obligated to lead in putting an end to fossil fuel development and to manage the decline of existing production.

We believe it is absolutely necessary to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy. Even if there were no concerns about climate change, the transition would be necessary for public health reasons to stop people from dying too young of the diseases that accompany polluted air and water.

As people of faith, we call for “just transitions” that involve a wide swath of those affected by changes to work together for solutions. Many of us are willing to open our congregational meeting places to the community, because we believe in Creation care and in leaving a healthy, happy world to those who come after us.

Have you thought about your legacy?

Are you looking for a long-term way to make a meaningful difference in the movement to build a cleaner energy future?

Please consider making a planned gift to OVEC today. Planned giving options include:

- Gifts of stocks and bonds.
- Including OVEC as a beneficiary in your life insurance policy.
- Including OVEC in your will.

Tax benefits apply to each of these options. Please contact your attorney or a financial advisor for more info, or go to **lalwv.org**.



Above: OVEC's Reverend Robin Blakeman, left, and Reverend Rose Edington with the WVIPL logo.

To preserve the sanctity of Creation, we call on all concerned to practice the idea of “first, do no harm” in the mining and drilling processes, in our dealings with one another, in our love for the earth. Our state is blessed with natural resources, and it is our responsibility to use them wisely and to maintain the purity of our air, water, and land.

Visit ohvec.org and search “Clean Power Plan” to read some of the comments OVEC folks made at the hearing and to find information about how you can comment. The comment period originally was to end in January, but has been extended to April 26. Speak up! 🗣️

OVEC extends deepest sympathy to the family and friends of these exceptional gentlemen:

Pete Hill died on June 13, 2017, with his wife Marty Zinn by his side. Pete taught hundreds about the power of non-violent direct action. At **ohvec.org** search “Pete Hill” to read our tribute to him.

Dr. Paul Nyden died January 6. He was a brilliant investigative journalist at The Charleston Gazette-Mail. His work on behalf of the people of West Virginia was outstanding.

Reverend Dennis Sparks died on January 22. He served several years as the director of the WV Council of Churches and was a great ally in much of our work, especially our Clean Elections work.

Private Money May Pay for MTR Mining Study Trump Stopped

excerpt from a December 21, 2017 Ohio Valley ReSource article by Jeff Young

The prestigious National Academy of Sciences (NAS) is pursuing private funding to complete a study of the health effects of mountaintop removal coal mining, after the Trump administration ordered a halt to the scientific work.

The panel of scientists assembled by the NAS was months into a study of the health effects of surface mining when the Trump administration's Interior Department told them to stop work.

NAS spokesperson Riya Anandwala said private donors have expressed interest in paying to complete the study. She offered no further details on the source of funding or a timeline for resuming the study.

Coal community residents have for decades expressed concerns about illnesses near the large-scale mining operations known as mountaintop removal. A series of scientific studies linked that type of strip mining to a variety of health issues for those living nearby, including increased rates of



cancer, lung disease, and birth defects. Several scientists had called for a moratorium on mountaintop removal mining.

In addition to the mining study, the Interior Department (in December) ordered a halt to a study on the safety of offshore oil and gas drilling.

Marine scientist

Andrew Rosenberg said he finds the cancellation of a second study “pretty shocking.” He said it is extremely rare for a sponsoring government agency to stop work on a study that the agency had requested. And he noted that both cancelled studies dealt with energy extraction.

“I don’t think it’s any secret that the various fossil fuel industries have close relationships with this administration and a very high level of influence with this administration,” Rosenberg said. “So, again, Department of Interior is saying, ‘we don’t want to study these problems because we don’t want to know the answer’.” 🍷

We Hope the Sign-on Letter Helped...

Thanks to the 863 individuals who signed on to the letter initiated by OVEC and addressed to officers of The Charleston Gazette-Mail, the CEO of United Bank, and to U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Frank Volk regarding the bankruptcy and auction of the newspaper. Read the letter and find links to all our blogs on this issue at: [bit.ly/2Fxajol](#).

Judge Volk entered the petition-letter into the record in the bankruptcy case, so we know he at least saw it. At the hearing where he approved the sale of the newspaper to HD Media, the judge asked loads of questions about how the papers’ employees will be treated under the new owners. So maybe the judge did read our letter!

So far, we are relieved. Compared with Ogden Newspapers (which at first looked to be the likely highest bidder for the paper), HD Media will be far *less* likely to make big staff cuts, will be far *more* likely to publish op-

eds from diverse points of view, and its editorial stances are *not* far right-wing.

Background

You may recall that in the last issue of *Winds of Change* we urged you to, “Support the free press and investigative journalism! Subscribe for print or online versions of newspapers, especially the Charleston Gazette-Mail, one of the few remaining independently owned newspapers in this country.”

We did this because the free press serves as a check on political corruption. Louis Brandies wrote, “Publicity is justly commended as a remedy for social and industrial diseases. Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.”

We did this, too, because newspapers around the country are facing troubling financial times. Right-leaning, if not right-wing, media holding groups are buying up formerly independent papers.



Two Fola Coal MTR Mines Added to Pending Lawsuit

Late last year, OVEC, WV Highlands Conservancy, WV Rivers Coalition, and Sierra Club amended a pending lawsuit against Fola Coal Company, a subsidiary of the Southeastern Land Group. We are represented by attorneys with Appalachian Mountain Advocates.

The lawsuit adds the Peachorchard and Ike Fork mines to the mines that are being sued for violating key state and federal water quality protections. The Peachorchard and Ike Fork mines are located in Clay and Nicholas Counties. They dump mine waste into tributaries of the Elk River.

We filed the lawsuit to try to hold Fola accountable for its pollution. WV taxpayers should not be made to pay for attempting to repair the environmental degradation left behind by mountaintop removal coal mining.

These are not the first mines to be under fire for their contamination of local waterways. In May of 2017, the U.S. District Court ruled that Fola Coal violated state and federal environmental protections



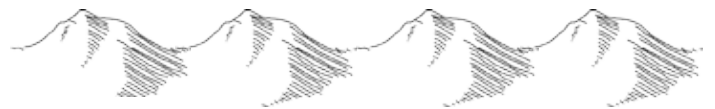
A meter placed in a stream below a mountaintop removal valley fill reveals the stream's high conductivity levels.

at their Monoc #2 Surface Mine by discharging pollutants that contaminated local streams. The next phase of the case will determine the remediation necessary to restore those streams.

The ionic pollutants at issue at Ike Fork and Peachorchard Surface Mines—measured through the electrical conductivity of water samples—are discharged by virtually every mine in Appalachia that utilizes valley fills. These pollutants are extremely harmful to aquatic life in streams and also serve as indicators of other possible

pollution problems.

As scientists use electrical conductivity measurements to identify waterway contamination, community members understand that these ionic pollutants are just one more reason, on an already too-long list, that these mines endanger the land, water, and Appalachian people. 🍌



... Re: Future of Charleston Gazette-Mail

But our urging was too little, too late. In January, we learned that the Gazette-Mail was facing bankruptcy and was up for auction. And the right-leaning Wheeling (Ogden) Newspapers were the lead bidders.

Not good news at all! Ogden has a reputation for laying off reporters and piling more work onto the remaining ones, so that their ability to do their jobs well is compromised. A well-staffed newsroom is critical for robust coverage of public affairs.

Equally alarming, Ogden-owned papers tend to extol the virtues of polluting industries and the politicians who garner campaign contributions from these industries, while ignoring the voices of those who suffer from the practices of those corporations and politicians. For instance, Ogden's Wheeling paper tends to publish the viewpoints of those who are overjoyed about the coal and fracking-related industries, while giving scant

voice to those who may have issues with the pollution or workplace conditions associated with these industries.

It would have been really troubling to exchange the Gazette-Mail's investigative journalism for the typical Ogden fare. That's why we wrote the letter and asked for sign-ons. We are so far relieved and thankful Ogden did not end up as the owners.

It's too early to tell if HD Media, which ended up as the new owners, will allow the newspaper to continue its work, so aptly described by The New York Times: "For decades, The Charleston Gazette-Mail in West Virginia has exposed corruption, greed and incompetence with a tenacity that was rewarded last year with journalism's highest honor, a Pulitzer Prize." Stay tuned.

*If you don't have a seat at the table,
you're probably on the menu.*
- Senator Elizabeth Warren

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