

# O V E C

Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition

P.O. Box 970

Proctorville, OH 45669

October/November, 1992

## REGIONAL ISSUES

### NEEDING CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

**ASHLAND OIL:** Several years of citizen pressure have resulted in some new pollution control equipment, but problems still remain. Frequent malfunctions (usually when inspectors are off duty) pollute the air. The use of highly lethal hydrofluoric acid, when a safer alternative is available, poses unacceptable risks to workers and downwind neighbors. Massive petroleum leaks into the groundwater apparently flow into the Big Sandy River. Ashland currently pumps petroleum substances out of the groundwater and refines them.

**HUNTINGTON SOLID WASTE:** Mayor Nelson wants to build a dirty Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) to sort out recyclables and hopes to burn paper trash in the city's sludge incinerator. OVEC, and other constituencies such as the League of Women Voters, opposes this incineration because it would add pollutants to our air. We favor curbside recycling over a MRF because this alternative would foster more awareness of the importance of waste reduction, and because cleaner recyclables are more marketable. Some drinking water wells of current landfill neighbors have apparently been polluted, and the city has no plans to provide city water to these people.

**APPLE GROVE PULP MILL:** The largest paper and pulp mill in North America is planned for Mason County, WV, about 30 miles upriver of Huntington. The company (Alabama Pulp and Paper) plans to use chlorine bleaching, an outdated and heavily polluting technology. Safer bleaching methods are available and currently in use elsewhere. Alabama Pulp has been pressuring West Virginia to adopt dioxin water standards which would allow 80 times more highly toxic dioxin in the Ohio River than is recommended by the US-EPA. Pulp mills are also notorious polluters of the air. The company has filed an air pollution permit application with the state, and has an option to buy the property adjacent to Goodyear Rubber Company, but otherwise has been very quiet. Governor Caperton has recently publicly endorsed this pulp mill proposal.

**STRIP MINING IN SOUTHERN OHIO'S WAYNE NATIONAL FOREST:** Thomas Belville wants to strip almost 8,000 acres, most located in the heart of the forest. Lawrence County public officials and Chamber of Commerce are strong supporters of this strip mining plan. Belville is challenging the legality of the 1977 federal strip mining law which sharply limits strip mining in national forests. Belville's challenge has national implications; if he is successful here, this would also open other national forests to extensive strip mining. West Virginia's Monongahela National Forest and Kentucky's Daniel Boone National Forest have extensive strippable coal. The fundamental question is-- Do our national forests exist primarily to enrich private corporations, or do other goals need to be maintained such as: preserving biodiversity, maintaining watersheds and providing recreational opportunities?

**TRI-STATE MULTI-MEDIA STUDY:** This is another regional issue with strong national implications. In response to citizen concerns, the US-EPA has announced a precedent-setting study of Tri-State air, waters, soils and waste. The EPA has said that citizens will be involved in this study, but it will take much effort to insure that this really happens. Some regional industries can be expected to spend a great deal of effort to try to bias this study in their favor, and to stall or prevent needed clean-ups. Organized citizen efforts are essential to ensure a fair study, strong enforcement of current environmental laws and regulations, and responsible cleanups.

**MISSISSIPPI CHEMICAL EXPRESS:** This chemical tank washing facility causes offensive odors in the Kenova neighborhood. Most noticeable are odors apparently from naphthalene, a highly toxic chemical. Several people were hospitalized and the remaining residents of the James Town Apartments had to be evacuated when a naphthalene spill occurred there in March, 1992.

**COOPERATION WITH WEST VIRGINIA ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL AND OHIO ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL:** OVEC is a member of both of these statewide networks which work on issues of state wide significance.

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:** In the last decade, environmental issues have begun to move higher on the political agenda of every industrialized nation. For some, this growing awareness includes the recognition that education must play a major role in reshaping our thinking and attitudes toward the world in which we live. Students at all levels must begin to understand the "environment" as the entire context of our lives. Ecological systems, economics, and cultural systems are each a part of a larger picture but cannot be fully understood without knowing how each affects the other. Our children will be the future stewards of this world (and the Tri-State). Their developing environmental awareness is a key concern. OVEC members will continue to speak to elementary, high school, and college classes within our region on request. Greater active involvement from OVEC membership would increase our ability for educational outreach.

**DECREASED REGIONAL MEDIA COVERAGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:** Citizen efforts are needed to ensure adequate coverage of all of the above issues.

**OVEC ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Organizing focuses on winning improvements in peoples' lives and altering the relations of power. Whenever we deal with an unjust institution, we need to recognize our own power, and use it wisely. Our power is immense if we organize, and nearly non-existent if we don't. Industry's money wields intimidating power. The only way to balance that power is to organize to hold industry and government accountable.

Local OVEC funding needs to increase. Currently, four national foundations fund three modest OVEC staff salaries and some of the organization's expenses. Local funds are needed for many organizational expenses. Also, strong local financial support is a key factor in foundation funding and refunding decisions. More involvement is needed in developing and working on issue committees and organizational development committees, and in recruitment of new members.

YES! I WANT TO HELP IMPROVE THE TRI-STATE ENVIRONMENT

- \$5.00 to \$25.00 MEMBERSHIP DUES  
(Please pay what you can)
- ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION
- I WANT TO BECOME ACTIVE OR LEARN MORE;  
PLEASE CONTACT ME.

I'M ESPECIALLY INTERESTED IN THESE  
ISSUES: -----

NAME -----

ADDRESS -----

PHONE -----

MAIL TO: OVEC, P.O. BOX 970, PROCTORVILLE, OH 45669  
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