



Winds of Change

Supporting Organized Voices and Empowered Communities Since 1987

Huntington, WV

OVEC

www.ohvec.org

Ohio River Rising: A Rise for Climate, Jobs and Justice Rally



On the misty morning of September 8, close to the Ohio River's shores, about 50 people gathered at Heritage Station in Huntington, WV, to rally and march through downtown to cry out for climate action. Our rally that day was one of thousands held worldwide to make a grassroots push for clean energy and sustainable communities.

Our speakers included Bob McCollister, a recently retired teacher and football coach, who is also a trained spokesperson for Climate Reality. He shared hope-filled news: We are winning the struggle to move ourselves to a more sustainable future. Citing the incredible potential of the solar and wind industries to create jobs, while also creating power for a more livable planet, Bob urged us to remain hopeful and continue to do what we can to work for the just and sustainable future we want for our children. He encouraged everyone present to start dialogues with neighbors, family members, and friends on why they believe climate change is the most urgent issue facing our species.

Mark Connelly, of Fourpole Creek Watershed Association, spoke of his concerns about state politicians' increased emphasis on petrochemicals. OVEC's Dustin White continued the theme, highlighting the water and climate concerns we'd face if the proposed massive Appalachian Storage Hub petrochemical complex were to become a reality.

Lynn Goodman, an aquatic biologist, avid ocean diver, and author, informed those gathered of some grave problems that aquatic life, especially her beloved coral reefs, face as ocean temperatures rise and plastics pollution proliferates. She gave an urgent plea for everyone to get involved on whatever level possible to help resolve pollution and ocean warming/acidification.

Solar Holler's Leah Cunningham amped up the crowd by letting us know that solar installations in the Tri-State area are proliferating. Her group offers free home evaluations and estimates available to anyone who wants to consider getting solar installed on their

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Inside This *Winds of Change*

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Elizabeth Catte: *Petrochem Wrong for Appalachia's Future*

Here's an excerpt from the speech that Dr. Elizabeth Catte, author of What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia, was to deliver at OVEC's Treehuggers' Ball on September 15. Hurricane Florence prevented Dr. Catte from joining us. Please take the time to read the full talk on OVEC's blog, ohvec.org.

Some of you might know me as a writer, but what you probably don't know is that I'm also a time traveler. I've seen Appalachia's future, and OVEC asked me to tell you about it.

In 2016, my partner Josh and I moved to the Beaumont/Port Arthur area of Texas, on the Gulf Coast. A university made Josh a job offer and off we went, because we're both historians and it's hard to find work.

Now, we both knew about the Gulf Coast petrochemical industry in the abstract, and we weighed what we thought we knew against what we'd experienced here, in Appalachia. Both of our families are from southwestern Virginia, which is the state's coal country. And I think we both thought, "Well, how can anything be worse than coal?"

Living in Appalachia, I think, our vantage point to environmental destruction is hard earned. We see things that are impossible to unsee and undo. It's hard to imagine ruin that doesn't look like what is all around us, because there's so much. Larry Gibson said, "This is what the end of the world looks like to me," and I believed him.

And so it can be jarring when you encounter the end of the world somewhere else, too.

I want to tell you about encountering that in Port Arthur, Texas. Because I believe the future that West Virginia's state officials, investors, and engineers want—an Appalachian fracked gas and petrochemical hub—is already there.

Port Arthur is located 90 miles east of Houston. Texas, of course, is the leading crude-oil and natural gas producer in the nation. Port Arthur is home to four major oil refineries, owned by Valero, Motiva, and Exxon. The Motiva refinery is likely the largest in the

"If you have been fighting this fight for decades, as OVEC has, thank you. You have saved land and people. You have created a healthier region. You have defied some of the most powerful corporations in the world. I read something very beautiful that Aaron Bady wrote for his mother Dianne, your founder. He said: 'Her accomplishments can be measured in what is absent. There is no pulp mill in Apple Grove. There is no BASF refinery in a low-income community near Huntington. There are mountaintop mines that never happened. And whether they know it or not, the people of the region breathe easier and drink clean water because of the life my mother lived and the work she did. There are cancers whose absence no one will know to thank her for.'

"And if you are new to the movement, that is okay, too. Martin Luther King said, 'In the unfolding conundrum of life and history there is no such thing as being too late.' Being a little late is always better than not knowing that there are no jobs on a dead planet, and that all the corporate growth in the world won't make a difference without clean water and air."

nation. It produces 600,000 barrels of crude oil per day, which clocks up to almost a million if we count the other refineries.

In addition to this, there are five petrochemical plants, one petroleum coke plant, and an international chemical waste incineration facility. When Hilton Kelley, an environmental activist and lifelong resident of Port Arthur, drew attention to the fact that two million gallons of VX hydrolysate, a byproduct created during nerve-gas processing, had been incinerated without any means to measure emissions of the chemical, his own mayor called him "a clown and a loser." Hilton Kelley won the Goldman Prize three years later.

Many communities in Port Arthur—which has a population of around 55 thousand and is predominately African American—are what are known as "fence line" communities. This means they're directly in the path of contamination from nearby refineries, often from invisible emissions.

One in five household members suffers from a

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Meet Alex Cole

An excerpt from *River Rat Roots*,
Alex's introductory blog post at
ohvec.org.

I'm from Fraziers Bottom,
WV, and I'm proud to say it.

I come from an interesting
place, where the Midwest and Appalachia meet.
Where the French and Shawnee helped start the
Revolutionary War, where the Germans from the
north met the Scotch-Irish from the south, and where
the power that runs the country is made.

From my favorite hilltop on the county line, I can
see the smokestacks of five of AEP's largest coal-fired
power plants. I can trace the peaks and troughs of the
giant hanging extension cords that electrify the far-
away cities of the eastern seaboard.

But my home is not in the stereotypical coalfields
everyone has in their mind when they hear the name
West Virginia. I tell people that the coal was mined
out here 100 years ago to power the sternwheelers,
and we haven't missed it.

I come from the land of *tu-endie-wei*, which refers
to the Wyandot phrase meaning "the point between
two waters": the great Kanawha and the mighty
Ohio. This is a land I associate with farming, George
Washington's dream capitol of Vandalia, deep fertile



Our ED is Moving On

When Janet Keating retired as OVEC's longtime
executive director in 2016, Natalie Thompson was
hired for the position. Natalie had been a member
of OVEC's staff, working on clean elections,
renewable energy, and energy efficiency issues.

Natalie will be moving out-of-state and so
has resigned from her executive-director position.
She helped keep us on track during her two years
at the helm of OVEC. You can see one physical
manifestation of her work if you come visit us in
our enlarged and beautifully remodeled office space
in West Huntington.

As we wish Natalie well in her new endeavors,
we will also undertake a search for a new ED.
Longtime OVEC staff member Vivian Stockman,
currently serving as vice director, will fulfill the role
of Interim ED in the meantime.

farmland cut through with broad meandering rivers,
lined on both sides by terraced hills and networked by
a maze of hollows and ridge roads.

When in my more nostalgic moods, I still see it
that way, neat and orderly in the flats, beautiful and
wild in the surrounding hills. Sitting in the old church
I grew up in, I look out over generations of familiar
names on the leaning headstones in the old graveyard,
then inside at people with the same names singing the
hymns, then back out at the cattle grazing in the fields
in the middle distance, then all the way out to the
October red hills beyond.

Other people know where I live as Chemical
Valley, and I see it that way, too. Many of the people
in that cemetery ended up there with cancer after
years of working for Carbide, DOW, FMC, Monsanto,
Ambrosia, DuPont, Bayer, ClearOn, or Chemours...
pick your poison, any one of the ever-changing names
upriver in Charleston is likely to kill you.

Those names poisoned the river and no one alive
remembers a time when it was clean. We can't eat the
fish, the poison has seeped into the groundwater in the
bottoms, and now city water is piped in 40 miles, all
the way from the Elk—if you can even trust that.

I come from a place with deep roots. I have
spent my short 30 years studying our history and our
ecology in an attempt to understand myself and my
people. In my role as community organizer, I hope to

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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.

You Slowed 'Em Down; Now Stop 'Em!

ORSANCO Pollution Control Standards



Perhaps you saw the headlines in early October:
**ORSANCO Punts on Decision to Eliminate
Water Quality Standards for the Ohio River**

**Groups Applaud Progress on Ohio River
Protections**

From earlier Winds of Change newsletters, you may remember that back in June, the Ohio River Valley Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) issued a formal statement.

In plain language, the statement indicated that ORSANCO decided it could abdicate its roles of monitoring and setting Pollution Control Standards (PCS) for the Ohio River, which have been in place since the 1940s; many of these standards exceed or are unique from state and federal water quality standards.

A multi-state network of grassroots groups—the Watershed Organizations' Advisory Committee (WOAC) to ORSANCO—sounded the alarm, urging their members and the broader public across the region to comment to ORSANCO on this proposal. (OVEC's Robin Blakeman serves on WOAC.)

With phone calls, one-on-one conversations, e-mail action alerts, letters to the editors, op-eds, and outreach to journalists, word about ORSANCO's intention spread throughout the Ohio River region. By the comment period deadline near the end of summer, ORSANCO had received about 6,000 comments from individuals, grassroots groups, and local city and community officials. About 95 people attended the one public comment meeting ORSANCO hosted on July 26 near Cincinnati, OH. At least three OVEC members and one staff member spoke at that meeting, where the overwhelming majority of people speaking were opposed to the ORSANCO's proposed action.

At an early October meeting held by ORSANCO in Lansing, WV, grassroots groups, including OVEC, were present, alongside representatives from source water provider groups. **The outcome of that meeting was that the commission listened to the public comments and decided to delay their vote on PCS changes. So, thanks to all of you who may have submitted comments. You really made a difference!**

But, we can't call this a victory just yet. We believe that the PCS issue will be on the docket for the commission's February meeting. We must continue with our efforts to influence the ORSANCO to maintain their current pollution control standards!

Please speak with your local elected officials and/or source water providers about this issue, and let them know you are very concerned. The tap water for five million people could be at stake! If you want more information, tips on speaking with others on the issue, guidance in writing a letter to the editor, etc.,

please reach out to Robin Blakeman at 304-522-0246 or robin@ohvec.org. 🍂



Present at ORSANCO's Lansing meeting were, left to right, Jason Flickner with Ohio River Waterkeeper, OVEC's Robin Blakeman, Heather Davis with the National Wildlife Federation, and WV Rivers Coalition's Angie Rosser. Courtesy photo.

Why ORSANCO Should Maintain Its PCS Role

1. Several states rely on ORSANCO's standards and adopt them as their own. If ORSANCO no longer sets these standards, those states will have to expend the financial resources to develop the requisite standards.
2. ORSANCO should be setting uniform standards with the collective input of all basin states.
3. If all Ohio River states have to develop their own standards, then the situation can lead to interstate conflicts when an upriver state has weaker standards that lead to increased pollution treatment costs for a downriver state. This would, inevitably, lead to litigation among the states. States united, with common standards, can do a much better job of protecting the river than states divided.

You Gotta Have Faith

OVEC Project Coordinator Robin Blakeman works on multiple aspects of our oil- and gas- related work. As an ordained minister (Presbyterian Church USA), Robin works with our faith-based partners to raise awareness about critical environmental justice issues. Robin is an active member of several faith-based coalitions, including WV Interfaith Power & Light, WV Presbytery Stewardship of Creation Ministry Team, and Presbyterians for Earth Care.

Some of that recent coalition work includes:

On October 12, OVEC and WV Interfaith Power and Light co-sponsored the WV premier of the film UNFRACTURED, featuring Sandra Steingraber, at the Charleston Unitarian Universalist facility.

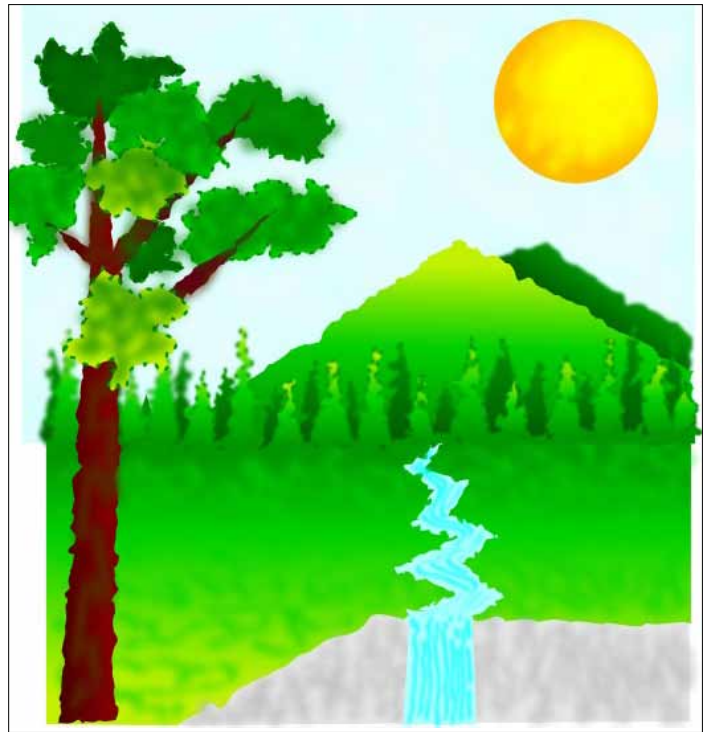
Although attendance was light, those present agreed that this film is incredibly powerful. It chronicles some of the struggles that people in NY and other parts of the world have encountered in their efforts to keep their communities safe from the effects of unconventional oil and gas development, more commonly called fracking.

As we went to print, Robin was working with a couple of groups in the Huntington area to set up another screening. Please be certain you are subscribed to OVEC's action alert email list, so we can inform you about events like this in a timely fashion. Go to ohvec.org to subscribe to the list.

The collaboration between OVEC and WV IPL on bringing important documentaries to the public continued into November, this time at the Underground Theater's Monday Movies that Matter series. We co-hosted screenings of the Ohio River/C8 pollution documentary, The Devil We Know.

On October 17, the WV Council of Churches hosted its annual Public Policy Forum, which was moderated by Reverend Jeff Allen, WVCC director and OVEC's Board of Directors' current chairperson. Robin attended this event and shared information on the Appalachian Storage Hub (see related story page 8) and concerns related to pollution from plastics. She also spoke about statewide watershed preservation issues, especially related to ORSANCO's pollution control standards issues (see page 4).

Robin drew a connection between the pressure from industry to weaken Ohio River watershed pollution control standards and the Appalachian Storage Hub, which, if built, could mean more fracking-related pollution for our region and pollution



from plastic production.

Robin requested that the council undertake an intensive study of the proposed Appalachian Storage Hub, plastics-related pollution, and watershed regulatory repeal, in order to understand these issues more fully and to formulate a statement on the council's position on the storage hub development as an outcome of that study process. The council's decision on what to do about these issues is still pending as of this writing. 🍓

Alex Cole

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continue that education and share what I have learned with as many people as possible.

It's time to be proud again, and telling stories and teaching the wonders of our mountains are the best ways I know to create fellowship and move forward from here.

I've started telling people I am a farmer by choice and activist by necessity. After my short stint in Ohio, I rushed back home and now live in a small solar-powered cabin on my family's 6th-generation hilltop farm on the border of Putnam and Mason Counties. In debt and broke, like most in my generation, I saw a clear path forward for our communities in a return to our roots in the form of farming and self-sufficiency.

What we have coming at us in the Appalachian Storage Hub is a nightmare, the worst part of our past coming back to haunt us. We must stand up, take root, and fight for our future! 🍓

Outside Groups Spent Big in WV, But Public Filings Don't Show Full Picture

excerpt from a November 22 WV Public Broadcasting article by Dave Mistich.
Read the article: bit.ly/2DV5LLG

When you opened your mailbox, watched television, or listened to commercial radio in the lead-up to the election, you (and other would-be voters) were likely bombarded by political advertisements. Like in elections past, some of those materials were paid for by candidate committees and are easily identified as such. But the sources of the materials from other groups—known as independent expenditures and not authorized by a candidate or a candidate committee—are often more difficult to discern.

Advocates for campaign finance reform say current state law falls short in enabling the public to track who is funding some of these groups in a centralized and uniform manner.

“We have all of these groups that are reporting to the Secretary of State’s office. But I think it is important to note that these reports don’t tell us a whole lot as to who is behind these groups. Some of these groups don’t disclose who is making contributions and those who do use shell corporations or other means to keep things in the dark,” says Julie Archer of WV Citizens for Clean Elections.

Tracking state-level spending by federally registered groups can be difficult. Some of these groups use loopholes in West Virginia’s campaign financing laws to avoid disclosing donors and expenditures to the Secretary of State’s office. In addition, federal campaign finance law does not require these groups to disclose details regarding the candidates or races they targeted in state-level races.

During the 2018 general election cycle, independent expenditure political action committees registered in West Virginia spent more than \$5.4 million to meddle in House of Delegates, Senate, and

Supreme Court races. That figure represents only expenditures filed with the WV Secretary of State’s office.

The detailed article includes these tidbits:

- Shale Energy Alliance spent \$69,759.25 supporting Republicans in a handful of races between the House and Senate in the general election. The Secretary of State’s office cited the group for election

engineering activity during this past election cycle. The group was also issued a cease and desist order for not registering as a state or federal political action committee.

- Coal company Murray Energy contributed \$72,000, and donations to PACs from beer distribution companies around

the state totaled more than \$10,000.

- Donors to WV’s Future PAC leading up to the 2018 midterms include Republican Gov. Jim Justice and Cary Communications, a company owned by media mogul and Justice senior advisor Bray Cary. Each contributed \$50,000 to the committee.

The article concludes:

Election Officials, Campaign Finance Reform Advocates Weigh In

Pushing for more transparency in donor and expenditure disclosures would require action from the Legislature.

Chuck Flannery, the deputy Secretary of State and the office’s general counsel, acknowledged loopholes in state law that prevent independent expenditure disclosures in state-level races from being able to be compiled in a centralized and uniform system.

“The WV Secretary of State’s Office stands prepared to assist the Legislature in addressing campaign finance laws to get disclosure standards

On election day, **this** shouldn't matter more than your vote.





uniform for independent expenditures and advocate for the electronic filing of the reports to allow a quicker and more transparent access to the information to the public,” Flannery says.

WV Citizens for Clean Elections’ Archer says closing loopholes in state campaign finance law are among the group’s priorities.

“We have been and we will continue to push for increased disclosure and transparency in who is spending money in our elections,” she says.

The 2019 WV Legislative Session—during which many lawmakers who benefited from independent expenditures now have the ability to push for campaign financing reforms—begins January 9. 🍌

Clean Elections: Help Out!

As you may recall from our Fall Winds of Change, WV Citizens for Clean Elections is busy promoting the Pro-Democracy, Anti-Corruption Platform.

You can help advance this platform during the upcoming WV Legislative Session. Why? Because:

Everyone Deserves to Know: Strengthen disclosure laws in elections and increase transparency of campaign and lobbying activities to give the public more information on who is impacting our elections and legislative decisions.

Everyone is Held Accountable: Close loopholes in our election and ethics laws, and make sure that state agencies have the tools they need to ensure enforcement and accountability and to combat corruption.

Everyone Can Participate: Give a greater voice to each citizen and lower barriers to participation in political life.

Learn more and show your support at wvoter-owned.org. Contact vivian@ohvec.org to get involved in our clean elections work. 🍌



Way to Go Ken Ward Jr.

OVEC joins with citizen groups and individuals around the state and nation in congratulating Charleston Gazette-Mail journalist Ken Ward Jr. on receiving the “Genius Grant,” the 2018 MacArthur Fellowship. We are so grateful for your work!

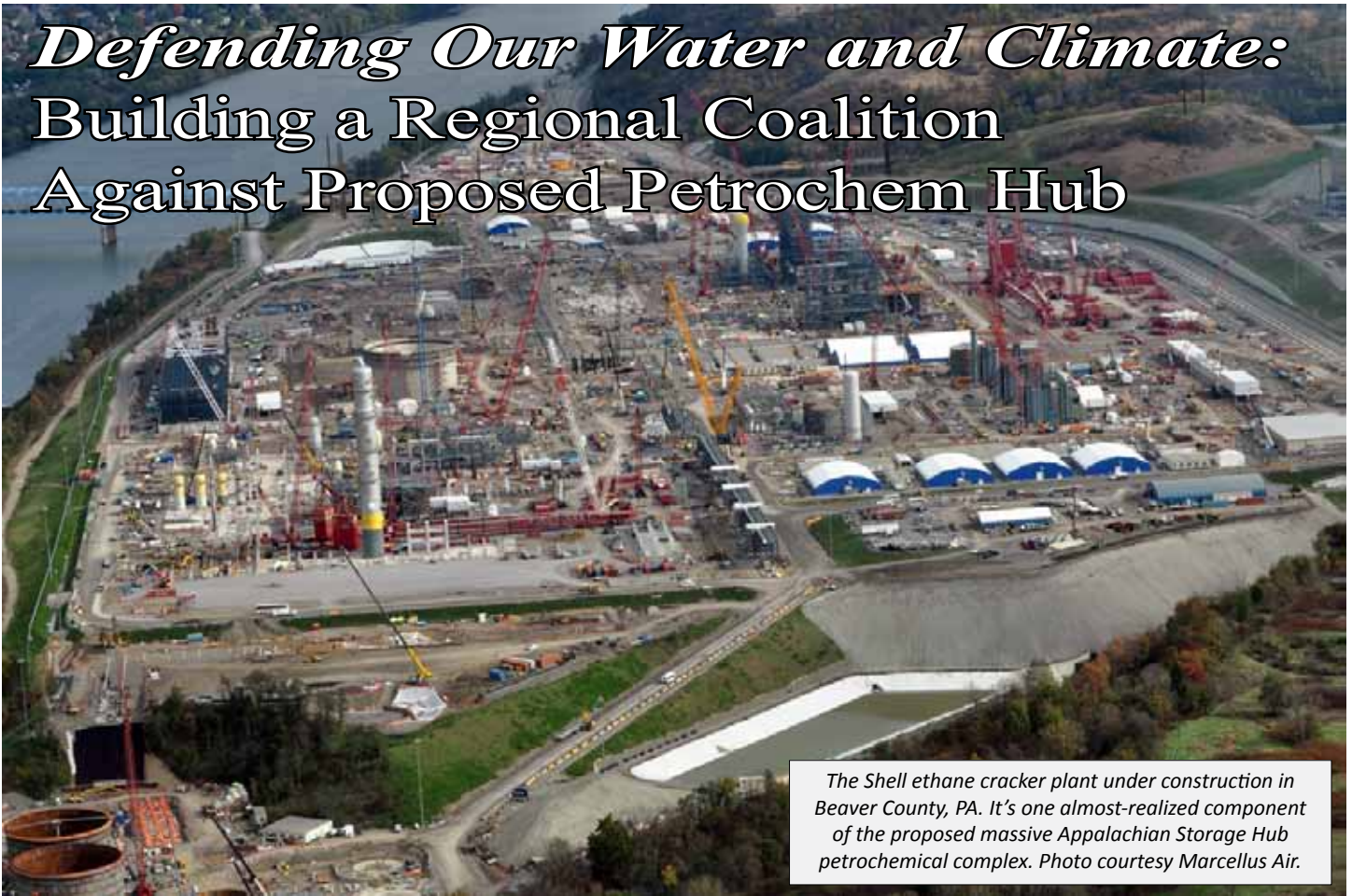
MacArthur states:

Ken Ward Jr. is an investigative journalist whose in-depth coverage of the coal, chemical, and natural gas industries in West Virginia is exposing the true economic, social, and health impacts of industrial abuse on Appalachian residents and communities. As a staff writer for the Charleston Gazette-Mail for more than 25 years, Ward fearlessly reports on worker safety violations, environmental hazards, and corporate malfeasance of regional coal and chemical companies.

He employs familiar tools of the journalistic trade—documentary discovery, Freedom of Information Act filings, one-on-one interviews, and the like—but through a combination of tenacity, curiosity, and compassion for the residents of his home state, his investigations uncover the larger context surrounding specific incidents and inspire empathy for victims and their families. Working jointly with reporters at National Public Radio and the Center for Public Integrity, Ward uncovered decades of government inaction around black lung disease that allowed it to continue to afflict miners even as regulators and politicians assured the public it was no longer a threat. Subsequently, the Mine Safety and Health Administration instituted new regulations. His reporting on a 2014 chemical spill that contaminated the drinking water of 300,000 people included an examination of the widespread lack of emergency planning and accident prevention in the coal and chemical industry. In his current work with ProPublica, he is investigating the growth of the natural gas industry in WV and its impact on communities and the environment.

Through balanced analysis and comprehensive documentation and discovery, Ward is providing much-needed clarity about the overlooked consequences of corporate practice and motivating companies and policymakers to be accountable partners with residents striving for healthy communities. 🍌

Defending Our Water and Climate: Building a Regional Coalition Against Proposed Petrochem Hub



The Shell ethane cracker plant under construction in Beaver County, PA. It's one almost-realized component of the proposed massive Appalachian Storage Hub petrochemical complex. Photo courtesy Marcellus Air.

The proposed Appalachian Petrochemical Complex (aka Appalachian Storage Hub—ASH—with the words Trading or Ethane sometimes thrown into the title) is the greatest threat to the Ohio River Valley we have seen to date. The project would span more than 400 miles of the Ohio and Kanawha Rivers, threatening the drinking water of nearly five million people. It would have dire climate implications, too.

OVEC's founder Dianne Bady was one of the first grassroots people to connect the dots and realize how massive this project would be and how much it could impact our region. Learning about ASH and sharing what she learned consumed much of the last couple of years of Dianne's life. Her blog series "It's Not a Done Deal: Say 'No!' to Appalachian Storage Hub" (just plug that into your search engine to find the series online) helped sound the alarm on what could be heading our way.

The entire proposed infrastructure would encompass more than 50 counties in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. The sheer scale of this toxic petrochemical hub is one that no single group can fight alone. It will take the combined efforts of many

groups and individuals working on all fronts to stop a monster like this; that's why OVEC is heavily involved helping to build a regional coalition of groups coming together to say no to petrochemicals and plastic manufacturing in our region.

To help inform, support ongoing work, and activate resistance, we've been focused on outreach to other organizations and communities within the proposed area of interest for the Hub. We have called on past allies and are finding new ones to work with. Our combined efforts are already bearing fruit.

The networking started with information sharing among groups via meetings or conference calls. OVEC is hosting monthly calls that focus primarily on work going on in West Virginia. Our longtime friends at the Center for Coalfield Justice lead regular calls focused on work going on in a broader region. These calls were one of the outcomes of the People vs. Oil and Gas Summit that took place in Pittsburgh more than a year ago. Some of the groups involved are Marcellus Outreach Butler, The Breathe Project, Ohio Sierra Club, Freshwater Accountability Project, Mountain Watershed Association, plus many more.

In June, many of these allies worked to plan our

first action together: We hosted the Paddle Against Petro “Kay-action” in Pittsburgh. About 50 people joined us on land and in kayaks to protest an industry conference (see page 3 of the Fall Winds of Change). Thanks to everyone’s hard work and trust, we were able to get that action off the ground in just weeks. Since that successful action, we’ve continued working together.

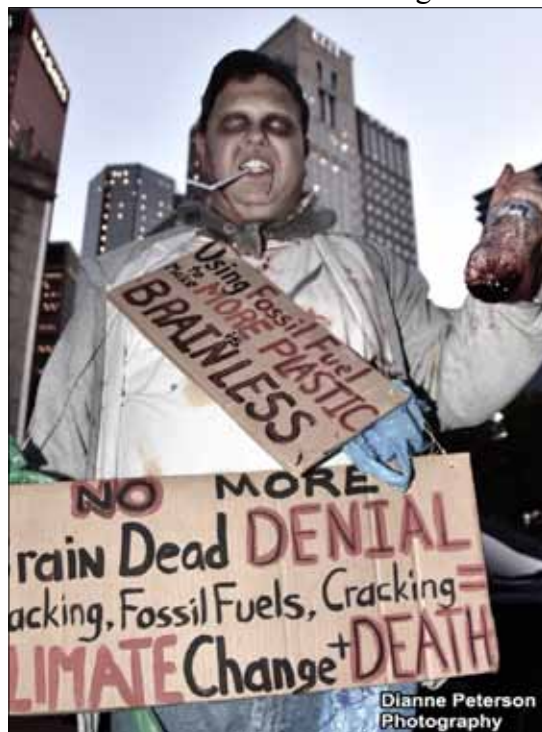
We realize actions and protests alone are not enough to develop solid resistance to the Hub. Our work must also include leadership development and a shared sense of equity. Thus, our next venture as a growing coalition was the Grassroots Organizing Summit, held October 12-14 in Mount Pleasant, PA. The idea was to connect grassroots organizers across WV, PA, VA, OH, and MD who are working on petrochemical, fracking, and fracked gas infrastructure issues. About 75 people attended and participated in sessions focused on skill and knowledge building, organizing strategy, and relationship/trust building.

From the outset, it was important that the summit incorporate diverse voices—people identifying with different classes, ethnicities, religions, and more. The Catalyst Project facilitated the event and guided participants in anti-racism training. We were truly humbled to have Native leaders there to call out and guide us when we missed key elements. Although we may not have been able to cover everything we had hoped at the organizing summit, key outcomes include the steps taken toward building trust among groups and the recognition that this is ongoing work.

That trust building and networking would prove valuable just a few days later, when we came together for three days of action during the Shale Insight 2018 Conference. The conference is an annual event where bigwigs from the oil, gas, and petrochemical industries convene to talk about their plans to make money off our region.

On October 23, we kicked off the days of action with a “Petrochemical Zombie” invasion of

Pittsburgh. A small group of folks dressed up as zombies made their way through the streets, meeting up at a local club where the Shale Insight attendees were having a reception. The zombies wore signs and handed out flyers to educate the public—and perhaps cause some discomfort to the industry reps attending the reception. However small, it was a fun action to kick things off and let our presence be known.



*Petrochem plastic zombie
Dustin White invades Pittsburgh.*

The next day was the Defend Our Water Day of Action. We started with a morning gathering at Point Park, where the Monongahela and Allegheny Rivers converge to make the Ohio River. There, we joined Native leaders from the Seneca Nation, Ojibwe, and Standing Rock Sioux tribes, among others, for a powerful water blessing ceremony. After the ceremony, we gathered to march down the streets, led by Native song and drums, stopping at an EQT headquarters and ending at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, where the conference was being held.

Outside the conference, about 200 people rallied. Speakers included the mayor of

Pittsburgh and OVEC’s Dustin White. We were later told that just before we arrived, Andrew Wheeler, the acting head of EPA had just finished telling Shale Insight conference attendees that the Trump administration will continue deregulating their industry. And we will continue to grow our coalition to combat their toxic plans.

OVEC is honored and privileged to work with a number of amazing groups and individuals as we stand in opposition to this proposed petrochemical complex. We have more work to do—and we will always have some fun in doing it—and we look forward to meeting new friends and solidifying the relationships we already have. If you would like to get involved in our work against the Appalachian Petrochemical Hub, email us at info@ohvec.org or call 304-522-0246. 🍌

*We are each other’s harvest; we are each other’s business;
we are each other’s magnitude and bond.*

- Gwendolyn Brooks

Treehuggers' Ball 2018



Treehuggers' Ball is a fun(d)raiser that OVEC has held for 21 of our 31 years of existence. The ball is a chance for members and prospective members to meet OVEC's staff and hear just a bit about our program work. The idea is to kick up your heels and have some fun, while still supporting OVEC's work and mission:

Our mission is to organize and maintain a diverse grassroots organization dedicated to the improvement and preservation of the environment and communities through education, grassroots organizing and coalition building, leadership development, strategic litigation, and media outreach.

Originally, Dr. Elizabeth Catte, author of *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia*, was going to give our keynote speech, but threatened flooding from Hurricane Florence thwarted her travel plans. She did send us her speech (see page 2), which local author Ashley Skeen kindly read.

Thanks to Adventures on the Gorge for providing an adventure package and to Funktafest for providing tickets for us to raffle off as part of the fundraising.

We are grateful to everyone who helped out with this year's event, which was held in Huntington on September 15. Thank you!

Thanks to all the musicians and comedians who donated their time and talent to the 2018 Treehuggers' Ball:

BRATCAMB	Moonshine Crossing
Tonya Adkins	Keyamo Onage
Karen Scalf	Thyrd Wyrl'd
The Jeremy Walters Band	
Honey Soul Caravan	
Ian Nolte and several of his stand-up comedian compatriots	



Above: In advance of the awards ceremony, award winner Bill Hughes practices tree-hugging at his Wetzel County home, which is powered by solar panels. Photo by Marianne Hughes.

Congratulations and Thank You to the Annual Award Winners

This year we gave our annual awards during the ball. It's always tough to single out particular volunteers, because all are so important to us and so crucial to keeping our work moving forward. We did manage to select these folks for awards in 2018:

Volunteer of the Year: Becky Ellis (Mountaineer Xpress Pipeline stream monitoring)

Volunteer of the Year: Tamatha Cheke
(Mountaineer Xpress Pipeline stream monitoring)

Outstanding Ally: Mark Connelly (Fourpole Creek Watershed Association)

Fracktivist of the Year: Dr. Randi Pokladnik

Outstanding Sustainable Community Initiative:
Spencer Presbyterian Church's Solar Project

Laura Forman Passion for Justice Award: Bill Hughes (of Wetzel County frack activist fame) 🍌

*All work and no play makes
for dull Treehuggers. Take time to
enjoy what you work so hard to save!*



Top photo: Dr. Randi and Joel Pokladnik.
Middle: Natalie Thompson addresses the early birds at THB.
Bottom: Can't have a ball without some OVEC merch.

Top photo: Mark Connelly and Karen Hoth. Middle, left to right: Becky Ellis and Tamatha Cheke receive their awards from Robin Blakeman and Tonya Adkins. Bottom: Robin looks on while Maryanne Graham addresses the crowd. Photos here by VS and Kim Wilkerson.

Communities & Crackers

This fall, we've been co-hosting a series of community meetings in communities near the proposed PTT Global ethane cracker plant in Belmont Co., OH. These events have been a series of presentations on the cracker plant and how it fits in with the larger proposed Appalachian Storage Hub/Petrochemical Complex planned for the Ohio and Kanawha river valleys. We have been zig-zagging across the river between WV and OH in the areas that would be impacted by pollution from the cracker plant.

We kicked off our meetings in Martins Ferry, OH, with about 20 people in attendance. We followed up with a gathering at the Moundsville Library that had more than 30 attendees and was standing room only. We held additional meetings in Shadyside, OH, Wheeling, WV, and Moundsville, WV.

Along with these formal events, we've also been educating community members in other ways, including showing up at a Town Hall meeting hosted by the Belmont County Commission in Powhatan Point, OH, and a meeting with the Moundsville Rotary Club. We have worked with Freshwater Accountability Project, OH Sierra Club, Center for Coalfield Justice, and others to co-host these meetings.

We couldn't do this work without the leadership of community members who have stepped up to help canvas and phone bank to speak with their neighbors. As we went to print, the grassroots groups and community leaders were active in building turnout for November 27 and December 12 public hearings on permits for the Belmont County cracker plant.



Photo by Bobby Lee Messer. If you'd like one of these yard signs, contact OVEC at 304-522-0246 or info@ohvec.org.

No matter where you live, we can use your help in our work to expose what the proposed petrochemical projects would do to our air, water, land, and communities. Contact Dustin at 304-522-0246 or dustin@ohvec.org to get involved. 🍌

RAMP It Up On Kayford



Much of Kayford Mountain has been obliterated by mountaintop removal coal mining.

Radical Action for Mountains' and People's Survival (RAMPS) and Appalachians Against Pipelines co-hosted a Fall Summit on Kayford Mountain in October.

RAMPS says it was important to spend time together on Kayford talking about Appalachian history, prevalent issues, and resistance. The summit connected the fight against fracking pipelines here to other struggles and organizing throughout the region.

OVEC and Keeper of the Mountains helped sponsor the event, which included workshops and tours. OVEC's Dustin White was there to talk about the Appalachian Storage Hub. Participants all took time to honor the memory of Larry Gibson, the original Keeper of Kayford Mountain. 🍌

Plants, Plastics: Hemp Versus Toxic

excerpt from a blog post on ohvec.org by Randi Pokladnik

Many of us remember the scene from the comedy *Up in Smoke*, when a van made of marijuana and driven by actors Cheech and Chong catches fire, causing everyone behind it to get high.

However, I am betting most of us have never heard of Henry Ford's industrial hemp car of 1941. Henry Ford built his first Model T car with composite plastic made from hemp. It even ran on hemp bio-fuel.

The building blocks of any plastic, whether it be petroleum-based or plant-based, are high molecular weight polymers made of carbon chains. Oil can supply these chains to make plastics like polyethylene. Plants can also be the source of carbon polymers that can be made into plastics. Such is the case with cellulose-containing hemp.

Hemp is about 70 percent cellulose, and this polymer can be used to create plastics that can be injection molded or blow molded (plastic bottles), in the same process as traditional oil-based plastics. Technical advances in the past decade have allowed plant-based plastics to be used in conventional injection molding equipment.

Unfortunately, hemp suffers from its cousin marijuana's bad reputation. Powerful political and industrial interests pushed back against hemp, and it was made illegal in 1937 via the Marihuana Tax Act. Today, some hemp is grown under a pilot program legalized by the 2014 Farm Bill, but most is imported from other countries, including Canada.

The hemp plastic used by Henry Ford was 10 times stronger than steel. Old photos and movies show Henry Ford smashing the front of his car with a sledge hammer to prove this fact. Hemp-based plastic is also cheaper to produce and is biodegradable because it does not rely on petroleum as its source. Recently, a Canadian research team developed a hemp-based graphene that is stronger and cheaper than carbon fiber, which is 300 times stronger than steel. This same team also developed a

hemp-based supercapacitor that outperforms standard supercapacitors by nearly 200 percent at 1/1000 the price.

European and United States car manufacturers—Ford, GM, Chrysler, Saturn, BMW, Honda, and Mercedes—are using hemp composite materials to make door panels, dashboards, and trunks. In addition to being cheaper, these materials are also lighter in weight than glass and fiberglass and therefore boost fuel efficiency.

Hemp has been shown to be far superior to cotton as a fabric. Industrial hemp, which contains less than .03 percent THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, has an incredible number of applications. Products on the market today that contain hemp include medicines, essential oils, nutritional supplements, food, paper products, body care products, livestock feed, and livestock bedding. One hemp entrepreneur said hemp can be

anything from “Legos to Lamborghinis.”

Hemp is one of the strongest fibers on the planet. Because the long fibers are so strong, hemp is easily a better construction material than wood. It is lighter, holds nails better, and can be used to make hemp particle board and hemcrete, a type of concrete made of the inner woody core of hemp mixed with a lime binder.

Hemp was used in cellophane film and as a compostable styrofoam in pre-1930s, before the hemp ban.

Hemp is also an excellent replacement for wood pulp used to make paper. According to a 2015 journal article in *Forestry and Technology*, an acre of hemp produced four times as much fiber as an acre of trees and can be re-cut in four months rather than 20 to 80 years. It is also much stronger and does not yellow with age. The Declaration of Independence was written on hemp paper.

Unlike trees, hemp is an annual crop and can be grown in most states. It is said to be a great

continued on next page



Hemp V Toxic

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replacement for tobacco fields. In Kentucky, where it is becoming more profitable, it can be grown organically without major inputs of pesticides and herbicides. Kentucky, like many other states, is defying federal laws which prohibit commercial growing. These states are pushing for a reversal of the 1937 laws.

Recently, several studies spoke to the enormous problems that plastics are creating in our lives. Not only are they major pollutants in our oceans, but they are in our bodies as well, playing havoc with our endocrine and immune systems. Although, for the foreseeable future, it would be nearly impossible for us to abandon all uses of petroleum-based plastics, biodegradable hemp plastics can be used in many areas. This is especially true for single-use-only applications such as food packaging, a category that uses up to 40 percent of all plastic manufactured.

Why are we on the verge of spending billions of dollars to build a proposed enormous petrochemical complex in the Ohio Valley to produce more non-biodegradable plastics? Why would we risk the health of our children? Why are our politicians so eager to accept the externalities (such as air and water pollution) of petrochemicals and make our Ohio Valley into a Cancer Valley? Wouldn't it be better to embark on a major hemp production project that could lift local economies out of poverty without destroying the land, air, and water they depend on? 🌱

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 as a beneficiary 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**.

Ohio River Rising

continued from page 1

homes. She also informed us about specific legislative efforts that are necessary to truly promote solar as a growing and viable economic opportunity in our region.

"You can get a sense of hopelessness, but you can vote with your dollars," she said, urging folks to go solar. "Look at the Standing Rock movement and how it caused so many companies and people to divest of fossil fuels. Your dollars matter, and if you are here in West Virginia, Ohio, or Kentucky, you can finance solar and offset peak production on the grid, help the environment, and create a snowball effect. We need your help to do that."

OVEC's Robin Blakeman urged people to contact their governors to ask them to prevent the Ohio River Valley Sanitation Commission from changing its pollution control standards.

Before we began our march downtown, Genenahgehneh Autumn Rose Lee and other members of the MU Native American Student Organization (NASO) shared three Native American songs, two for the water and one offering thanks for the Creator: "We've got to humble ourselves in the eyes of the Creator. We've got to get down low. We can raise each other up higher and higher."

The words and melody seemed to linger in the air as the crowd assembled for the march through downtown. OVEC's Vivian Stockman, who had emceed the rally, led the crowd in chanting: "What do we want? Renewable energy! When do we want it? Now!" She handed off the bullhorn to one of the youths in the crowd; the children definitely want renewable energy now!

Robin was the principal organizer of the event. Afterwards, she reflected on why we must take urgent action to drastically curb greenhouse gas emissions: "We desperately need an awakening of the human race to the realities of climate change! We are in this together." 🌱

We have to get to the point where each individual, each corporation, each community chooses low carbon because it makes fundamental sense.

It should become a no-brainer.

- Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2010-16

OVEC in the News



Here are some of the recent news stories that mention OVEC, our work, our members, and/or our staff. Plug the headlines into a search engine to read the stories.

September

Trump's rollback of pollution rules to hit coal country hard
Natural gas hub developers announce a partner
Rise for Climate Rally to take place in downtown Huntington
Clean Power Plan is abandoned at our peril
Community members march in support during Rise for Climate Rally
Your Guide to the Weekend: Having a ball for Mother Earth
OVEC takes Treehuggers' Ball fundraiser to Bahnhof
Groups to hold informational sessions about environmental risks of potential cracker plant
Public Meetings on Environmental Risks of Ethane Cracker Chemical Plants in Ohio Valley
Group that opposes cracker to hold meetings

October

Huntington Mayor Asks ORSANCO to Maintain Its Ohio River Pollution Control Standards
Environmentalists, residents meet with wariness of potential ethane cracker plant
ORSANCO Punts on Decision to Eliminate Water Quality Standards for the Ohio River
Huntington Museum of Art photography exhibit explores life work of coal mining
Water ceremony kicks off protest against shale gas and petrochemical industries
Protesters march through downtown Pittsburgh on first day of Shale Insight natural gas conference
Commissioners from Belmont, Monroe Counties come to Powhatan Point town hall meeting
Capacity crowd at Powhatan town hall
Donald Trump, sauveur du charbon? L'enjeu du vote des mineurs aux Midterms



November

Ky. Coal Mine That Belonged To W.Va. Governor Causes Damaging Floods Again
Concerned citizens meet in Shadyside over proposed ethane cracker plant 🍂



MTR Tour “Made a Huge Impact”

On October 10, Allen Johnson, with Christians for the Mountains, sent this email to OVEC staff:

Last Friday, Dustin White took Roberta Powers, Rev. Dr. John Chryssvavis, and me on a daylong tour of mountaintop removal. Dustin was superb in all aspects. I myself learned much that was new.

Chryssvavis lives in Maine. He is a top theologian in the Eastern Orthodox Church, has written numerous books and articles, and is the top environmental advisor to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who is over all the Eastern Orthodox churches in the world (about 300 million members).

Chryssvavis goes to Istanbul, Turkey, almost every month to meet with Bartholomew, who is somewhat equivalent to the Orthodox as Pope Francis is to Catholics. And Bartholomew is often called

the “Green Pope,” since he is considered to be the most outspoken environmental advocate among top religious leaders in the world. I’m saying this because Chryssvavis will be getting the word out on mountaintop removal. Dustin, especially, really touched his heart as we visited Kayford Mountain, went through Coal River valley, stopped at Coal River Mountain Watch headquarters, and then went up to Cook Mountain, where we saw an active mountaintop removal site and Dustin’s family cemetery.

The essay Rev. Dr. John Chryssvavis wrote after his mountaintop-removal tour is titled “An American Guilt Trip.” Read it here: bit.ly/2BwDGI9. 🍂



Catte: Petrochem Wrong

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serious respiratory illness, the cancer rate is 25 times higher than the state's average. One refinery fire (which occur often) can release as much as 120,000 pounds of volatile compounds.

The unemployment rate is over 15 percent, and those who can or do work only earn half of what the average Texan makes. Port Arthur is also a case study in white flight. Since the 1980s, Port Arthur has experienced the depopulation trifecta of racism, industrial contamination, and natural disasters. Hurricane Ike, in 2008, and last year's Hurricane Harvey hit the area hard. It shouldn't surprise you that state and federal agencies have dragged their heels in helping rebuild a community of mostly poor black residents.

That's Port Arthur at a glance. What this snapshot doesn't and can't capture is the physical reality of living in that space, such as the smell. The major notes are sulfur and methane, with a rot so deep that I would sometimes spontaneously vomit. There was no such thing as fresh air. Even on those magical days when the wind was whipping in the right direction, the smell of dry rot and mold was still overwhelming, from layers of storm damage and neglect.

(Read more about life in Port Arthur in Elizabeth's blog at ohvec.org.)

Appalachia's, and particularly West Virginia's, political and industry leaders want to transform the region into a petrochemical storage hub, much like the Gulf Coast.

Politicians and developers in Appalachia tell us that industry is freedom, that when industry thrives we all do, but we know that isn't true. When industry thrives we are poisoned, plundered, vanished, and separated from our families. That is the opposite of freedom.

In November 2017, Jim Justice signed an \$83 billion dollar memorandum of understanding with Chinese corporations to try to make this petrochemical hub a reality in West Virginia.

And because I know how this could end—I've lived it—I want to encourage each one of you to fight this future with all you have. I will leave the

"how" of the fight to OVEC, which has opposed this reality since it was the twinkle in the eye of a lowlife politician, but don't be like me and assume that things can't get any worse, because they can.

The only chance we have is to fight for each other, which means that I will fight for you but also people who live in places like Port Arthur; I will see how our fates are connected and, instead of letting that terrify me, I will let it expand my definition of what and who my community is, and that is powerful.

Where can we go where our lives have value, where we're allowed dignity, where we might envision a better future?

For now, it isn't a place, but a movement: a movement that fights for the person across the world just as hard as the person next door; a movement that fights for the sick, for the elderly, and for the person not even born, so that their struggles might be fewer than ours; a movement that understands loss, but also resurrection.

If you have been fighting this fight for decades, as OVEC has, thank you. You have saved land and people. You have created a healthier region. You have defied some of the most powerful corporations in the world. I read something very beautiful that Aaron Bady wrote for his mother Dianne, your founder. He said: "Her accomplishments can be measured in what is absent. There is no pulp mill in Apple Grove. There is no BASF refinery in a low-income community near Huntington. There are mountaintop mines that never happened. And whether they know it or not, the people of the region breathe easier and drink clean water because of the life my mother lived and the work she did. There are cancers whose absence no one will know to thank her for."

And if you are new to the movement, that is okay, too. Martin Luther King said "In the unfolding conundrum of life and history there is no such thing as being too late." Being a little late is always better than not knowing that there are no jobs on a dead planet, and that all the corporate growth in the world won't make a difference without clean water and air.

Take good care of each other, and thank you for letting me join you this evening as you start a new season. Hang in there. I believe that we will win. 🍁

"The only chance we have is to fight for each other, which means that I will fight for you but also people who live in places like Port Arthur; I will see how our fates are connected and, instead of letting that terrify me, I will let it expand my definition of what and who my community is, and that is powerful."

About Bill's Award

Vivian Stockman made these comments during the 2018 Treehuggers' Ball

I am honored to have the privilege of presenting the Laura Forman Passion for Justice Award, OVEC's highest award this year.

But, before I reveal the recipient of this award, I'll tell you a bit about it. It is named after a beloved OVEC organizer in the 1990s and early 2000s.

On December 10, 2001, during a protest over the dangers of coal sludge dams, just a few blocks from here outside the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Huntington office building, Laura Forman suddenly collapsed and died. She was 39.

We found out later there was a tear in her heart that caused her death, and that was heartbreaking to so many in so many ways. Laura gave all her heart and passion to making our region better.

More than 400 people showed up for her memorial service, and that many again sent their deep regrets that they were unable to attend. In remembering her, many people referred to her as their best friend.

Laura lived her life and carried out her work with an intense passion for justice.

That's why it is so fitting that this award, which OVEC gives out only occasionally, goes to Bill Hughes.

For almost a decade, Bill has been documenting the activities of shale gas operators in his home county of Wetzel. The influx of huge vehicles, driven by fellows who apparently had little knowledge of local winding country roads, first alerted him to the fracking invasion and moved him to action. Both Bill and his wife Marianne had great concerns for the safety of their grandchildren on those roads, once the fracking trucks started taking over. 🌰

OVEC WORKS!

Thanks to everyone near and far for taking action to end environmental injustice, with an extra special thanks to all the folks fighting extreme fossil fuel extraction. We know it takes courage to speak up! We hope you know how much we appreciate you. OVEC works because of you!

THANKS!



*Marianne and Bill Hughes with the award.
Photo courtesy of the Huntington Herald-Dispatch.*

Bill's documentation of the fracking invasion includes deep research and benefits from his longtime role on the local solid waste authority. He knows that huge volumes of radioactive waste are going into local landfills not designed for this type of waste.

Bill shares his photos and knowledge with impacted local folks, regulators, politicians, journalists, filmmakers, students, scientists, and activists. He's always ready to host a tour of the fracking areas whenever we, or others, ask. It's safe to say he has educated and inspired many thousands of people to action. Read Bill's blogs at ohvec.org.

The WV DEP (perhaps hoping to get him off its case) awarded Bill the agency's Spirit of Environmental Protection Award.

DEP said, "Mr. Hughes exemplifies what it means to be an engaged citizen, and his commitment to environmental protection is an inspiration to many. He dedicates countless hours at great personal expense each year to public education and community involvement."

For once, I have the same opinion as the DEP!

I think Bill would agree that his wife Marianne is a co-recipient of this award. So, a little shout out, too, to Marianne, for all the support she gives Bill.

Join me in thanking Bill for his Passion for Justice! 🌰

*Stay up to date on
the latest events.
Check our online calendar
at ohvec.org.*



Check out this YouTube video: OVEC's Work and Our Treehuggers' Ball at bit.ly/2QtuHje.

Grim Climate News Screams: Act Now!

Need for Action, Support of One Another

In times of crisis, we often see people put aside their differences and work together to alleviate the problem at hand. That's good; we are going to be dealing with crises.

As 2018 drew to a close, a series of climate studies and reports, such as the latest National Climate Assessment (NCA), made it all devastatingly clear: We are in a time of dire, human-caused climate crisis. Scientists warn we have only 12 years to stave off the worst impacts of climate change and to really amp up our work to learn how to adapt to the changing climate.

"Earth's climate is now changing faster than at any point in the history of modern civilization, primarily as a result of human activities," NCA researchers write in their most recent report.

News stories summarize what the scientists are telling us:

- Chaos by the end of the 21st century if we don't drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions now. Tens of thousands of people will die prematurely each year.

- Disastrous effects on global trade, national security, clean water availability, infrastructure such as roads and bridges, personal health, and ecological diversity.

- Hundreds of billions of dollars will be wiped from the economy. Billions of hours in productivity will be lost.

News stories detail the impacts we feel already: Rising sea levels, disruptions in food production, the spread of wildfires, eroding coastlines, stronger hurricanes, billions of dollars in damages from each compounding catastrophe, the spread of pest-borne diseases, more intense droughts and floods, and rising mental-health problems. Many of these issues disproportionately affect those who already suffer from societal inequality.

As we absorb this dire news, it is tempting to feel overwhelmed. But the tsunami of scary news need not drown us, for that wave meets a solid mountain of

sage, hopeful, and compassionate humanity in action.

"The impacts of global climate change are already being felt in the United States and are projected to intensify in the future—but the severity of future impacts will depend largely on actions taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the changes that will occur. Americans increasingly recognize the risks climate change poses to their everyday lives and livelihoods and are beginning to respond," NCA researchers tell us.

There's much we can do, and there's still time

to do it. Key to staving off the worst of climate change is focusing on the solutions. Solutions are

everywhere. OVEC is lucky to count among our members several folks who are already living off the grid (some having had solar energy systems in place for decades), who garden extensively to help supply their own food, and who have outfitted their homes to be energy efficient. We can follow their examples.

A group called Project Drawdown recently issued a report highlighting 30 behavioral solutions ordinary people can take to combat climate change. These include wasting less food, eating less factory-farmed meat, using less energy and water, talking with your neighbors and trying to find common ground (for instance, everybody likes saving money; saving energy saves money), and calling and meeting with your elected officials (often).

Project Drawdown also says, "A big way to be a part of the solution is to join a nonprofit organization where you live that focuses on helping the environment." We concur! By stopping the proposed Apple Grove Pulp and Paper Mill (it would have consumed 10,000 trees a day; reforestation is mentioned frequently as a way to combat climate change), by campaigning for an end to mountaintop removal, and by organizing to stop the proposed massive petrochemical build-out that politicians want to bring to our region (the Appalachian Storage and Trading Hub), OVEC is certainly a group on the front lines of combatting climate change.

The science is clear. Without rapid cuts in CO2 and other greenhouse gases, climate change will have increasingly destructive and irreversible impacts on life on Earth. The window of opportunity for action is almost closed.
- World Meteorological Organization Secretary-General Petteri Taalas

In an essay titled, “Stopping Climate Change Is Hopeless. Let’s Do It,” Auden Schendler and Andrew P. Jones write:

We’d need to spread the world’s best climate practices globally—like electric cars in Norway, energy efficiency in California, land protection in Costa Rica, solar and wind power in China, vegetarianism in India, bicycle use in the Netherlands.

So how do we engage in a possibly—but not probably—winnable struggle within a rigged system against great odds, the ultimate results of which we’ll never see? Forget success, how do we even get out of bed in the morning?

We could order in Chinese and lock ourselves in the closet, but we shouldn’t. Because there’s good news: We’re perfect for the job. If the human species specializes in one thing, it’s taking on the impossible.

We are constitutionally equipped to understand this situation. We are, after all, mortal, and so our very existence is a fight against inevitable demise. We also have experience: The wicked challenges we’ve faced through the ages have often been seemingly insurmountable. The Black Death killed off at least a third of Europe in its time. World War II claimed 50 million lives. We won those battles—sort of. We’ve spent our time as Homo sapiens fighting what J.R.R. Tolkien called “the long defeat.”

We must realize that real progress comes from voting, running for office, marching in protest, writing letters, and uncomfortable but respectful conversations with fathers-in-law. This work must

be habitual. Every day some learning and conversation. Every week a call to Congress. Every year a donation to a nonprofit advancing the cause. In other words, a practice.

There should be no shortage of motivation.

Solving climate change presents humanity with the opportunity to save civilization from collapse and create aspects of what the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called “the beloved community.”

Climate action offers a compelling path to transform our world for the better. Governments and investors need to bet on the green economy, not the grey.
- UN Secretary General
António Guterres

The work would endow our lives with some of the oldest and most numinous aspirations of humankind: leading a good life; treating our neighbors well; imbuing our short existence with timeless ideas like grace, dignity, respect, tolerance and love. The climate struggle

embodies the essence of what it means to be human, which is that we strive for the divine.

Perhaps the rewards of solving climate change are so compelling, so nurturing and so natural a piece of the human soul that we can’t help but do it.

We must face the grim news head on, and then we must remain hopeful, optimistic that the best in humanity emerges when our world seems to be crashing down around us. Let’s check in on one another often, and support one another as we continue to amp up our practice of finding the local solutions that make a global difference. 🍷



Is your OVEC membership up to date? Your membership dues and donations help keep OVEC at work for our future. You can update your membership, join for the first time, and donate online at ohvec.org. Also, check out ohvec.org/kroger/ and remember to relink your card annually. Need help? Call the office at 304-522-0246.

Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
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Huntington WV 25773-6753

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As we mark another passing of our exquisite, fragile planet around the sun, we are filled with gratitude for all OVEC's members and supporters. Here's to supporting one another as this coming year unfolds!

Gratitude: This may seem like a very tall order, as one sees modern life unraveling and the attendant suffering that comes with it. Gratitude is not denial of suffering and loss, which need to be acknowledged and felt. The world may be going to hell in a handbasket, but you can still experience gratitude for your partner, children, friends, community, and/or the astounding beauty of nature. Maybe you can even manage gratitude for this difficult time when nothing can be taken for granted... Finding even small things to be grateful about can be a tremendous source of strength in the face of adversity.

– Lawrence Messerman, in “Feeling Resilient in Tumultuous Times,” published on **Resilience.org**.