

Fall 2019



# Winds of Change

Supporting Organized Voices and Empowered Communities Since 1987

Huntington, WV

OVEC

[www.ohvec.org](http://www.ohvec.org)



Katonya Hart speaks during the Restore the Voting Rights Act event.

## #RestoreTheVote #WVProDemocracy #FairCourts

At noon on Tuesday, August 6, dozens of people gathered outside the federal courthouse in downtown Charleston, WV, to mark the 54th anniversary of the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

We were there to commemorate the landmark voting rights legislation, but we could not celebrate its ongoing achievements, because, in 2013, five justices on the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the VRA in the *Shelby County v. Holder* case. Since that decision, restrictive voting laws have been passed in 20 states. Voter ID laws, gerrymandering, and voter purges are putting up barriers to voting for all people, but especially for young people and people of color.

So, we gathered on the anniversary of the VRA to join with advocates nationwide in demanding

that Congress stop the rise in voter suppression and move to restore the rights the act was supposed to guarantee, by passing HR-4—the Voting Rights Advancement Act.

We must fix the Supreme Court's abysmal ruling. Protecting the right to vote for every citizen is critical to a functioning democracy, which is why we must pass the HR-4.

That was the message delivered by our inspiring, fiery speakers: Rick Martin, NAACP Charleston WV; Katonya Hart, NAACP WV; Jules Kessler, WV Wesleyan student; and Delegate Danielle Walker, D-Monongalia.

We live-streamed the event, and archived it on the @WVCCE Facebook page.

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### Inside This *Winds of Change*

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# Methane Dreams

*by Mary Wildfire*

**Some people are dreaming up dark methane dreams  
Directing the meth into pipelining schemes  
Seeking to bolster their personal wealth,  
They're willing to sacrifice everyone's health.**

**Polluting the rivers, the Earth and the air,  
How can it be that they don't even care  
That their own kids and grandkids will pay the price too?  
With cancers and rashes and a hideous view ...**

**It was bad when we just had to cope with the frackers;  
Now they want storage and smokestacks and crackers,  
Taking land for a pipeline that leads to a port,  
"Public need," they explain with a laugh and a snort.**

**Most of our papers and all of our reps  
Are in need of a program containing Twelve Steps.  
Why else would they think it so peachy and swell  
To take Almost Heaven and make it like Hell?**

*Photos by the late Bill Hughes*



# Another Coal-to-Liquid Scheme Pops Up

It had been years since we'd had to deal with an insane proposal to turn coal into liquid fuels, until another such proposal came to our attention in late June, when we learned that something called Domestic Synthetic (DS) Fuels had asked WV DEP for a "minor source" air permit: *one that doesn't even consider greenhouse gas emissions.*

At a time when every signal the Earth is apparently attempting to send us is along the lines of: "Stop with the greenhouse gases already," the idea of building a coal-to-liquid factory is nuts.

If built, the plant would spew more than 71 tons of carbon monoxide, 80 tons of nitrogen oxides, 132 tons of fine particulate matter, 83 tons of sulfur dioxide, 86 tons of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and more than 16 tons of other unnamed hazardous air pollutants per year. And, this facility would be within three miles of both Point Pleasant middle and high schools.

We read news stories that said DS Fuels, led by Kevin Whited, had a \$2.8 million purchase agreement with the Mason County Economic Development Authority for 200 acres bordering the Ohio River in the Mason County Industrial Park, about five miles north of Point Pleasant.



A TV reporter interviews OVEC staff member Alex Cole outside the Mason County courthouse, prior to the air permit hearing on the proposed coal-to-liquid plant.

Whited was in the news in early July. A different company he headed was nearly a year late in repaying a \$250,000 loan to a Maryland county for a "stalled" waste-to-energy project.

By the time we found out about it, the comment period for the air permit for Whited's latest proposal—this \$1.2 billion coal-to-liquids-fuel plant—was already underway and set to end on Thursday, July 18. We immediately asked the DEP for an extension of the comment period and a public hearing, as did our friends at the West Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club.

The DEP did grant a public hearing on July 30 and gave us a little extra comment time by extending the comment period until the end of that meeting.

Stay tuned. The DEP has not yet said whether it will grant the air permit. The facility would have to apply for other permits, too. DS Fuels told reporters it would hold community open house meetings to "explain" the project, but we so far haven't seen notices of any such meetings.

If you want to help with our efforts around this proposal, please contact Alex Cole at 304-522-0246 or alex@ohvec.org.

***Following are the comments OVEC organizer Alex Cole delivered at the public hearing:***

My name is Alex Cole. I am 29 years old; I live in Mason County; I was born right across the bridge over at Holzer Hospital. My family has lived in Mason County for generations, and I still raise a garden right where my great-grandmother did on our hilltop farm in Pliny.

I do not want this toxic coal to liquids plant here. We have a lot of problems. We have poverty,

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## *Pipeline Proliferation*

# What's New in the Air in Ceredo?

You may remember that, back in 2016, we alerted folks to expansion going on at the Ceredo Columbia Gas/TransCanada compressor station, located on Walker's Branch Road in the Ceredo area (see: [ohvec.org/fercs-less-than-significant](http://ohvec.org/fercs-less-than-significant)).

This station was already a substantially sized compressor station, with at least two older gas lines—the SM-80 and SM-90—feeding into it. According to 2015 EPA data, about 5,000 people in 2,000 households live within two miles of the compressor station.

Back in 2016, two pipelines were being expanded and routed to this compressor station: the Leach Xpress and the Rayne Xpress.

Since then, major renovation and expansion of the old SM-80 pipeline (construction phase from last year pictured above) has been done to construct the Mountaineer Xpress pipeline (MXP). This 36-inch-diameter pipeline originates in Marshall County, WV, and supposedly “terminates” in Milton—but it doesn't... a smaller compressor station there routes the gas to the Ceredo compressor station via the much older and mostly smaller diameter SM-80 and SM-90 lines—through suburban and rural areas south and west of the Huntington city area.

We have recently submitted comments of opposition to another Columbia/TransCanada pipeline in our region: the proposed Buckeye Xpress. If built, this pipeline would transverse the Wayne National Forest area of southeastern Ohio, run near schools and small communities in Lawrence County, OH, and, we believe, cross under the Ohio River near the Leach Xpress crossing, connecting to the Ceredo compressor station. We have signed on to an effort to intervene in the approval process of this newest Columbia/TransCanada pipeline project.

All of this pipeline construction has been

of great concern to us. Over the past two years, we've deployed volunteer stream-testing teams in five WV counties to monitor the water quality near construction sites for the MXP. Our staff and stream-testing teams have made numerous reports to WVDEP about erosion control problems, and, in one instance, what appeared to be an illegal stream crossing.

We hope this has helped to make the pipeline construction as well monitored and safe as possible in our area, but the jury is still out. MXP has recently been put into operation, but WVDEP has not yet released Columbia/TransCanada from their construction permit obligations, due to ongoing hillside erosion and stream sedimentation issues. This is a huge concern, because the MXP's companion line, the Leach Xpress, exploded near Moundsville, WV, soon after being put online, due to an erosion issue that was not effectively dealt with during construction. These pipelines have their extreme risks, for sure, which is why we've tried to do everything possible to oppose and/or monitor their construction in our area.

We have lately turned our attention to the Ceredo compressor station air emissions, knowing that a much greater quantity and higher pressure of gas is flowing through this recently expanded facility. In cooperation with the SW Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project (EHP), we have initiated a pilot air testing and health study project this summer. Three key volunteers participated in a training session to do outreach for this project, and a total of four households within a two-mile radius of the compressor station are taking part in the project.

These four homeowners agreed to install indoor and outdoor air monitoring equipment for about a month. All the households, plus some other residents





Above: Left, Kara Cole, and right, Connie Sayles, deploying an air monitoring device (circled) outside a home in Ceredo. Thanks to four homeowners in the area, and other volunteers including Ruth Smith, Mark Connelly, and Kati Holland, for their participation in this program. Each participating family also has an air monitor inside their home. The monitors will be in place for about a month. The collected data will be analyzed and shared with the community. Photo by Robin Blakeman.

## Coal-to-Liquid is Nuts

*continued from page 3*

we have addiction, and we have unemployment. But you know what the biggest problem we have is? Our young people are leaving.

And it could be the poverty and the addiction, but I think those are the symptoms of the problem. Do you know why our young people are leaving?

The disease is in the despair of being tied to dying industry, especially if that industry is as inherently toxic as coal and chemicals.

These industries are literally killing the planet, killing communities, and leaving nothing but toxic trash in their wake... Most young people don't want to take part in that: They don't want to live near that and they don't want to see that out their classroom windows all day.

I mean, literally, just look across the river at Cheshire, Ohio... the town that AEP poisoned, then fought, then bought, then tore down... how was that good for the community?

Now, if you're walking up the riverfront in Point Pleasant and you look to where Cheshire used to be, what do you see? A mountain of fly ash, no lie: a mountain of toxic waste that will be there forever.

Now, add to the same view a chemical plant spewing toxins and burning off flares day and night... That should do wonders for tourism! Might make the Mothman Festival creepier, but we are going to have to live with it!

I could go up and down this river and the Kanawha and point out all the superfund sites and brownfields left uninhabitable by industries like these. Look right here at TNT... I used to work in Institute—you don't want to know what's in the ground up there!

These industries always come promising prosperity and leave us with the rare cancers and billion dollar toxic brownfields that will never be cleaned up; meanwhile they take the prosperity and run.

Who's going to want to live next to this thing? And who's going to want their kids going to school just three miles from this thing? Who's going to want to live here when that's just another toxic site leaching into the river? No one!

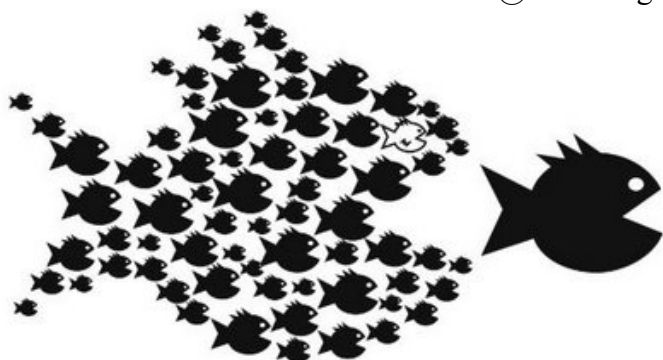
We won't be fooled again. 🍌



*Alex speaks.*

who live within a two-mile radius of the compressor station, will be asked to complete health surveys. At the conclusion of the project, after the air quality monitoring equipment data has been analyzed, we will schedule a community meeting to discuss the results. So, stay tuned for more on air quality in the Ceredo area.

For more information about the pipeline proliferation in our area or about the Ceredo air quality monitoring project, and/or if you live within a two-mile radius around the compressor station and would be interested in completing a health survey, contact Robin at 304-522-0246 or robin@ohvec.org. 🍌



# ORGANIZE!

# *Thanks to Pols Not Beholden To Fossil Fuels*

## **A Victory in Our House**

### **Background—What is ASH**

The “Appalachian Storage Hub” may sound like a place where nice closets are built, but it is actually a massive petrochemical buildout proposed for the Ohio and Kanawha river valleys that would dwarf Louisiana’s “Cancer Alley.”

The *infracstructure* related to the hub would stretch along more than 400 miles of the two rivers, reach into up to 50 counties in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky, and would include unlined underground storage caverns for volatile natural gas liquids, six major pipelines, thousands of miles of feeder pipelines, and huge polluting factories, such as ethane cracker plants. The end products of the hub would be plastics; its feedstock would come from a jaw-dropping increase in regional fracking.

Much of the \$80-plus billion needed (and, you just know this figure will rise) to build the hub-monstrosity as envisioned would come from foreign investment.

Back in 2017, WV Governor Jim Justice and the state and federal Departments of Commerce announced a memorandum of understanding (MOU) stating that China Energy would invest \$83.7 billion in “shale gas, power and chemical projects” in West Virginia over 20 years. Our state’s annual budget is around \$4 billion.

Soon after the announcement, we contacted Appalachian Mountain Advocates about the MOU. Since 2017, the attorneys there have been filing Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and taking other actions to try to have the MOU made public. It is secret to this day.

Other foreign investors in various components of the hub include Royal Dutch Shell and a Thai company. Saudi Arabia may or may not be involved. Construction will also apparently require tax “incentives” and government loans (that is, your tax dollars). One component of the hub already under construction, the Shell Cracker plant near Pittsburgh, PA, is receiving at least \$1.65 billion in tax credits.

Besides the Shell factory, the hub would include several more other factories along the Ohio and Kanawha rivers, spewing toxic chemicals into the air. Our mountainous terrain makes our river valleys prone to air inversions that trap health-harming toxins near ground level. Experts predict it would require 1,000 new fracked-gas wells per year to feed each cracker plant associated with this project.

All this fracking and cracking and piping and storing would further endanger the Ohio River, already the nation’s most polluted interior river. The Ohio is the drinking water source for about five million people!

For decades, people living near chemical plants—right here in Institute and nearby communities, as well as those living near the fence lines of petrochemical plants in Louisiana, Houston, and elsewhere—have been struggling with high rates of cancer and other illnesses in their families and communities, a constant threat of catastrophic accidents, and indifferent (at

“I have no idea why our government would issue loan guarantees to facilitate foreign investments for a product that is intended to prop up the faltering fracking industry, as well as to be shipped overseas.”

- Leatra Harper,  
FreshWater Accountability Project

best!) politicians and regulatory agencies.

Should ASH become a reality, our region would face a dramatic increase in these problems, plus the threat of pipeline leaks and explosions would be a rising concern. Last year, a massive explosion occurred near Moundsville, WV, in the six-month-old Leach Xpress fracked-gas pipeline. Last September, heavy rains triggered a landslide that caused another pipeline explosion in the week-old Revolution Pipeline in Beaver County, PA. A pipeline explosion in Noble County, OH, in January injured two people and damaged three homes. An August 1 pipeline explosion in Lincoln County, KY, killed one woman and incinerated 30 acres of land.

The petrochemical build-out, the increased fracking to feed what would be created by the build-out, and the end-product plastics would all mean our region would see increased greenhouse gas emissions, which in and of itself should be reason enough for government to say, “No thanks, no way,” to ASH,





*This drone shot of Belle, WV, helps to illustrate the topography in our region and why the area is prone to air inversions that can trap pollution in our river valleys.*

since we are already facing a dramatic rise in deadly and extremely costly climate-related disasters.

## **But Instead of Saying No, Gov Says Yes, With Your Tax Dollars**

One corporation promoting ASH is seeking a \$1.9 billion U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) loan guarantee to help build one part of the hub-monstrosity.

Appalachia Development Group (ADG), LLC, wants the loan from the DOE's Title XVII program, which is meant to support projects that "avoid, reduce, or sequester" air pollutants or greenhouse gas emissions and feature "new or significantly improved technologies."

But ADG wants the loan to help build one key component of ASH—the first of who knows how many underground storage facilities. This one would store more than ten billion barrels of natural gas liquids, such as ethane, which can be used to make plastics.

The Title XVII program mainly has been used to back wind power, solar, and other types of cleaner energy development, and has never been used to finance a fossil fuel storage project, but regional politicians and the Trump administration want to change that.

In 2017, WV Senators Shelley Moore Capito and Joe Manchin and OH Senator Sherrod Brown, introduced a bill that would allow facilities like the hub to be financed under the Title XVII program.

In 2018, while the bill was still pending (it did not pass), Trump's DOE invited ADG to submit the second phase of the loan application; DOE had

already approved the first part of the application.

## **A Victory in Our House**

In early May this year, our national allies at Earthjustice and Food and Water Watch alerted us to a chance to do something about DOE's maneuvering—the House was considering House Resolution (H.R.) 2740, a major appropriations bill. We partnered with these two groups and our regional friends at Ohio Sierra Club and the Center for Coalfield Justice to draft a letter to the House Appropriations Committee, asking

them to make it clear that petrochemical projects do not qualify for Title XVII loan guarantees. We asked allies nationwide to sign on to the letter; a total of 143 groups signed on.

The letter moved Reps. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota and Pramila Jayapal of Washington to introduce an amendment to H.R. 2740. According to the House Appropriations Committee's amendment tracker, the amendment clarified "that the Department of Energy's Section 1703 Loan Program is providing loans only to clean energy projects that avoid, reduce, or sequester air pollutants or human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases."

Once the amendment passed out of committee to the House floor, we asked you to contact your Representatives to ask them to vote for it. For West Virginians, that certainly felt like an exercise in futility, given how beholden our Congressional delegation is to fossil fuel industries. Fortunately many of the groups that had signed on to the letter asked their members to contact Congress, too.

The amendment passed! That's a pretty big deal, ya'll! It has implications not only for stopping your tax dollars going to build parts of ASH, but also for petrochemical projects proposed elsewhere in the U.S.

Of course, none of WV's House delegation supported the amendment. Nonetheless, it is so important that you called. These politicians must hear from us—more and more of us.

That bill now moves to the Senate, where it will likely get push back from WV Senators Capito and Manchin. Stay tuned. We are going to need you to

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# The Climate Reality Project

by OVEC volunteer Dr. Randi Pokladnik

In July, I was accepted to attend an August 2–5 leadership training program conducted by the Climate Reality Project. I was fortunate to receive a scholarship to offset the costs of travel and lodging for my trip to the conference site in Minneapolis, MN.

I was also pleased to learn that the organization also offsets the carbon dioxide emissions of air travel for its attendees. The conference food was all vegan, and the venue used only sustainable products and supplies: no plastic was available.

This group empowers ordinary citizens to become climate leaders by providing them with the tools needed to network and fight against the climate crisis we face.

The program, started in 2006, was inspired by the Academy-Award-winning movie *An Inconvenient Truth*, narrated by former Vice President and Nobel Laureate Al Gore. I showed this movie countless times to my students, because it presented such a compelling argument for taking action against the powerful fossil fuel industry's misleading narrative on climate change.

The Climate Reality Project was born out of the urgency to act on the compelling scientific evidence that our planet's atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are accelerating from man-made activities.

The session that I attended had more than 1,100 attendees from more than 30 countries. It was a far cry from the first conference, which took place at Al Gore's family's barn. There were about 50 attendees at that session. Today more than 20,000 people from over 150 countries have attended a training session in some part of the world.

It had been a long time since I had visited the Twin Cities area. I was surprised to see how much the region had grown and even more surprised to learn about the many environmental projects and innovations that were now being brought into the region.

Minnesota has felt the effects of climate change along with the rest of the world. Data on the state's weather shows that the average annual temperature has warmed 2.9 degrees Fahrenheit between 1895 and 2017, and the average annual rainfall has increased 3.4 inches. In 2018, Harmony, Minnesota, set the state record of 60.21 inches of rain.

Minnesota has stepped up to address these effects. During the three-day program, Melvin Carter, Mayor of St. Paul, and Jacob Frey, Mayor of Minneapolis, participated in a discussion of issues and solutions.

Both cities won the Bloomberg Philanthropies' American Cities Climate Challenge in 2018 for their climate plans to reduce air pollution and emissions citywide. Minneapolis is one of 19 cities worldwide that have joined the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance, and St. Paul has implemented 476 energy efficiency projects that have saved the city a total of 1.3 million dollars.

The highlight of the weekend for me was being able to see Al Gore deliver his fantastic slideshow presentation about climate change and to shake his hand. It was of

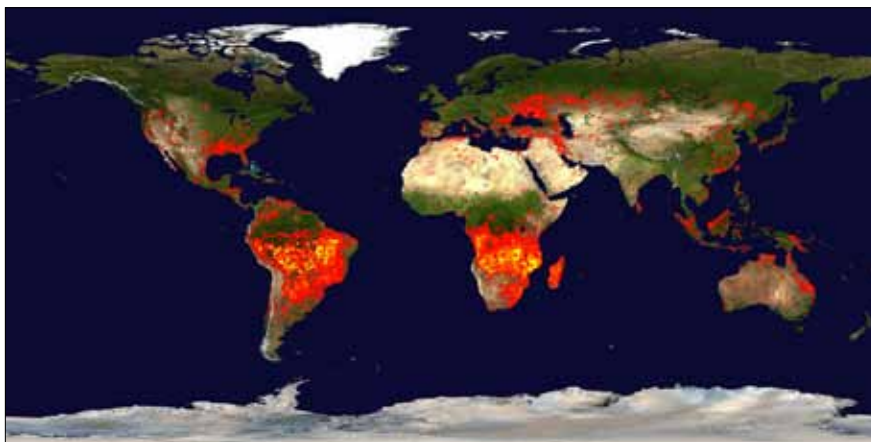
course sobering to hear the scientific data detailing the dramatic weather events and changes in the planet's weather patterns from anthropogenic increases in greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels.

Much about the recent weather events and deaths from these events are not reported in the mainstream media. Therefore, people in the United States often dismiss the seriousness of the climate crisis. In July alone, there were almost 70 forest fires burning in Alaska. Because of climate change, the fire season in the western states has increased by 105 days since 1970.

Scientists have discovered that for every degree Celsius of warming, lightning strikes increase by 10 to 12 percent. In 2018, there were eight wildfires above the Arctic Circle. In 2010, fires killed 55,000 people in Russia. Four months later, Russia halted grain exports and Ukraine restricted grain exports. This caused world food prices to reach record highs.

Between 2006 and 2010, Syria saw fertile land become desert, as it experienced the worst drought in the country's history. This caused the deaths of 80 percent of the cattle and drove 1.5 million rural residents out of the countryside to seek refuge in Syria's already-crowded cities.

The mass immigration from Central America has been fueled in part by climate change. The Central American region has been experiencing droughts that have been especially severe in Honduras. It was ranked number one on the Global Climate Risk Index. Because there have







*Facing page and above: NASA images of wildfires and hurricanes.*

been drastic drops in food production, climate refugees are leaving their homes in search of jobs in the northern regions of the Americas.

But, the news isn't all bad. The slideshow also laid out the framework and possibilities of writing a different narrative for the future of our planet. There are many success stories all over the world, including in the United States. Unfortunately, Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky's political landscapes are making it difficult for these states to move ahead into the green future.

Bloomberg's New Energy Outlook for 2019 stated that "today more than two-thirds of the global population lives in countries where solar and wind are the cheapest sources of new bulk generation." Minnesota, the state where this conference was held and where my husband's parents grew up, is using renewables for 25 percent of its electricity generation.

Texas, a state known for oil production, has the most wind installations, with over 23 thousand megawatts installed by 2018. Kansas uses wind turbines to generate over 36 percent of its electricity. In some cases, wind turbines have saved family farms by providing extra incomes for farmers.

The cost of solar crystalline silicon cell modules has dropped dramatically to 25 cents per watt. Nevada's NV Energy signed an agreement last year to purchase solar electricity at 2.4 cents per kilowatt hour. This is the lowest price paid in the United States.

In Australia, one in five homes now have solar panels on their roofs. In China, more than 53 percent of new energy capacity comes from renewable resources, and China has the largest solar array in the world.

An attendee at the Climate Reality asked Al Gore what actions he would suggest people take to turn this climate crisis around. His reply was: Use your voice, talk about this crisis to everyone, even people who do not agree. Use your choice. Choose green products and green energy. Finally, use your vote; vote for politicians who support efforts to halt climate change. Vote for the planet. 🍌



## Thank You OVEC Board!

In August, a quorum of OVEC's Board of Directors met for their annual "retreat." Everyone gathered for the daylong meeting on the front porch of a country home where retired OVEC Executive Director Janet Keating lives. Thank you, Janet, for hosting us!

The board conducted regular quarterly business, and then took part in exercises and discussions aimed at getting to know each other better and assuring the well-being of the organization.

Pictured here, going clockwise around the circle, starting with Spencer the Corgi dog (not officially on the board at this time) are Mike Forman, Lauren Kemp, Mike Sullivan (sorry Mike, you are hardly in the shot!), Will Edwards, Becky Ellis, Mikael Huffman, Steven Perry, and Pam Nixon. 🍌



On August 24, the WV Interfaith Power & Light (WVIPL) co-hosted a screening of Paris to Pittsburgh in Shepherdstown, WV. About 60 people saw the film, which shows Americans demanding local and national action on climate change and not waiting on politicians to act.

Local WVIPL steering committee member Sue DeVall was the primary organizer. OVEC's Robin Blakeman, also on WVIPL's steering committee, attended the event to inform the crowd about the Appalachian Storage Hub, the hope of the RECLAIM Act, and the need for state-wide networking. 🍌

# ***No Thanks to Pols Beholden To Fossil Fuels***

Despite the decline in property values, a risk of increased poverty levels, and the grave risks to human health and well-being for those living near petrochemical complexes, regional politicians appear adamant about locking us into a petrochemical/plastics future.

They tout the petrochemical nightmare that is the Appalachian Storage Hub (ASH; sometimes also called the Appalachian Storage and Trading Hub) as a savior for our region.

You'd think we would have learned our lessons from the coal industry: promises of prosperity, yet while coal barons got rich, here we are one of the poorest states in the nation, with unemployed coal miners who are dying of black lung unable to get promised health benefits, people sick from mountaintop removal, so many mountaintops destroyed, communities driven to extinction, and water pollution we taxpayers will have to pay to attempt to clean up in perpetuity. Oh wait! The politicians did learn their lesson—get in bed with whichever industry gives you the most campaign contributions.

It's no surprise that at the top of the heap promoting ASH is West Virginia's very own congressional delegation, especially senators Manchin and Capito. Both have been pro-fossil-fuel-industry for decades, despite overwhelming evidence that

## **A Victory in Our House**

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call again, and we are going to need you to help us educate your friends, family, and neighbors about the need to resist the hub and build demand to use that tax money to build a low-carbon economy for our region.

We can help you host a house party, a town meeting, and more. If you want help talking about ASH or would like to get involved in other ways with the work we are doing to stop the Appalachian Storage Hub, contact us at 304-522-0246.

Also, you can support our work by donating and/or becoming an OVEC member! Send in the envelope in this newsletter, or donate online at [ohvec.org](http://ohvec.org).

***Stay up to date on  
the latest events.***

***Check our online calendar  
at [ohvec.org](http://ohvec.org).***



**“The Appalachian Storage Hub, and the expansion of petrochemical production elsewhere, is not a step forward. Given the increasingly severe climate crisis bearing down on us, and the shockingly rapid loss of biodiversity, clinging to a fossil-fueled past is criminally irresponsible.”**

**- Mary Wildfire, OVEC volunteer**

these companies do more harm than good. Now they are working hard to sell the people of WV on the jobs, jobs, jobs, joy, joy, joy of toxic petrochemicals/plastics.

We have major concerns over the misuse of taxpayer dollars to benefit petrochemical companies and the attendant erosion of our democracy.

In July, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee passed a bill introduced by Manchin, called the Appalachian Energy for National Security Act, which would direct the Department of Energy (DOE) to “look into the potential economic and national security benefits the petrochemical hub would have on the region and the country.”

This isn't the first pro-petrochem bill Manchin has introduced. We expect more to come. Why? Money. For example, the day after he co-sponsored the 2017 Appalachian Ethane Storage Hub Study Act, the American Chemistry Council wrote Manchin a \$5,000 campaign contribution check, according to U.S. Federal Elections Commission filings reviewed by DeSmog Blog. The council donated another \$10,000 to Manchin for his 2018 re-election campaign.

**ASH is not an energy project. It's a plastics project.**

So, the Appalachian Energy for National Security Act is just Manchin's latest ASH-loving bill. But, ASH would have nothing to do with energy or national security.



Okay, the hub is about using up fracked-gas (see Mary Wildfire's "Speculations on the Persistence of Shale Drilling" blog at [ohvec.org](http://ohvec.org)), but there would be no energy being generated. The "energy" buzz word is one proponents have been using from day one, and it's a flat-out lie.

The primary purpose of the hub is to manufacture more plastics, not energy.

As for national security, so far most of the companies salivating over putting this toxic mess on our doorstep are foreign investors and companies. We have already seen key players from the Netherlands, Thailand, South Korea, Brazil, Russia, and China, with rumors of involvement of Saudi Arabia and other countries. Whatever profits might be made (again, see Mary's blog) will be going back to the CEOs and shareholders of these foreign and multinational corporations. Should the hub become a reality, you can bet we would get all the "externalized" costs in terms of health and pollution and tax breaks, but our region would see little benefit.

For Manchin to claim that the petrochemical hub is for our national security, when it obviously benefits companies from other countries, is downright harmful to our future. Visit [opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org) and plug in Manchin's name to learn more about his campaign contributors.

Capito has also been rolling out bills to help the petrochemical industry get its claws into us. She and KY Senator Mitch McConnell recently introduced the Appalachian Regional Energy Hub Initiative Act, to authorize the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to spend \$5 million to build an ethane storage hub. ARC funds should be going to help transition and diversify our economy, not to lock us into yet another fossil fuel driven boom-and-bust mono-economy. Capito hopes to add this bill in the federal highway bill reauthorization, claiming building the hub would help our infrastructure. According to [opensecrets.org](http://opensecrets.org), among Capito's contributors in 2018 was EQT Corporation (fracking and pipelines), with its PAC and officials giving \$22,500.

Of course, there are many more examples of how our democracy is being railroaded and our tax dollars misappropriated for this petrochemical farce. Please get involved in our work to expose ASH and our work with WV Citizens for Clean Elections. Contact us at 304-522-0246 or [info@ohvec.org](mailto:info@ohvec.org). And, remember, your donations help support this work! 🍌

## ORSANCO Pollution Control Standards Update

From June 4-6, OVEC volunteer Randi Pokladnik and staff member Robin Blakeman attended the ORSANCO Commission meetings in Covington, KY, to find out what would become of Ohio River Pollution Control Standards.

As you may remember from our blogs and action alerts, it was quite possible last summer that the standards set by ORSANCO for our water quality since the 1940s would be totally removed and decisions about pollution control in the Ohio River left up to permitting agencies in every state that borders the river.

Along with thousands of others, we issued some strong comments in opposition to what was then known as "option 2," and we encouraged many others to do likewise.

As a result of the public outcry, that proposal was never brought up for a vote during ORSANCO Commission meetings.



A revised pollution control standards proposal was on the table at the June 2019 ORSANCO Commission meetings; in a nutshell, it preserves the pollution control standards setting and monitoring processes that ORSANCO has used for decades. It also calls on all state regulators to notify ORSANCO when a permit is being considered, so that ORSANCO can issue comments on any permit it deems to not be protective of the designated "uses" for the Ohio River. State regulators were, however, granted "flexibility" in how they would write their permits.

Some of our allies say this effectively rendered ORSANCO pollution control standards "voluntary." Although we share the concerns of many and will work to try to make the standards and the reporting of permits to ORSANCO staff mandatory requirements, we prefer to focus on the fact that thousands of citizens became engaged in this process and their comments were heard—resulting in a better proposal than was on the table last summer.

Public comments matter! They helped preserve some critical standards that we can rely upon to protect our Ohio River for the foreseeable future. Get involved! Contact Robin at 304-522-0246. 🍌

# Stand up for Voting Rights

*continued from page 1*

News coverage included articles in the Charleston Gazette-Mail, the Beckley Register Herald, on MetroNews and WOWK.

Thanks so much to everyone who came out, thanks to our emcee, Carey Jo Grace, with the WV Healthy Kids and Families Coalition, and thanks to our core planning team!

OVEC and WV Citizens Action Group co-founded the WV Citizens for Clean Elections coalition, which organized the event, along with our co-sponsors—both our member groups and allies—including the NAACP WV, NAACP of Charleston, Call to Action for Racial Equality (CARE) Coalition, Civil Liberties Union of West Virginia, West Virginia Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, WV Healthy Kids and Families Coalition, Rise Up WV, and the WV Association for Justice.

If you haven't done so yet, contact Congress to say you want HR-4 passed. Here's the contact info:

1st District: Congressman David McKinley—(202) 225-4172; 2nd District: Congressman Alex Mooney—(202) 225-2711; 3rd District: Congresswoman Carol Miller—(202) 225-3452.

By all means, check the status of your voter registration at [ovr.sos.wv.gov/Register/Landing](https://ovr.sos.wv.gov/Register/Landing). In the May 12, 2020, WV primary we will be selecting—that very day, no further voting in November—several WV Supreme Court Justices.

During the November 3, 2020, general elections, we will elect our next governor and other statewide office holders, as well as the next President of the United States.

Many people are fed up and disillusioned with politics and inclined to just not participate: That's what the powers-that-be want! They would *love* it if you don't vote, and they are actively trying to suppress your vote in many states. VOTE! 🍌



## Clean Elections, Fair Courts

No matter what issues people around the state work on—from safeguarding clean drinking water, to curbing climate change, to combatting the opioid crisis, and so many more—everything we work for depends on a strong democracy, and the right to vote is a basic underpinning of a strong democracy.

When legislators listen to regular West Virginians, they can work with us to pass bills that make West Virginia a better place to live. The governor can sign those bills into law, and our courts can uphold those laws.

That's what can happen when democracy is healthy—when the legislative, executive, and judicial branches keep checks and balances on one another and are held accountable by we, the people. Get involved in our work with WV Citizens for Clean Elections; contact [vivian@ohvec.org](mailto:vivian@ohvec.org). 🍌

### 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!**



# ROAR More

Summer blooms and garden goodies were on everyone's mind at OVEC's June 4 seed and plant swap. The event was the second in our ongoing series of workshops as part of the ROAR! (Re-imagine Our Appalachian Region) project. These monthly workshops showcase what OVEC members and supporters are already ROARing about in the Mountain State.

OVEC's Tonya Adkins led a discussion on basic seed-saving techniques and shared a list of online resources for more advanced methods. Folks had the opportunity to go home with an array of vegetable and flower seeds, including some rare heirloom varieties. Participants also took home some lovely plants, including bearded irises, bee balm, spider plants, wild geraniums, and wild ginger. Thanks to all who participated and shared.

In July, ROAR revved its engines, but there was no audible roar. That's because we looked into electric vehicles. Dr. Rick Walker, a member of the WV Electric Auto Association (WVEAA), informed us about the need to switch from the internal combustion engine (ICE), to hybrid vehicles, and, better yet, to totally electric vehicles (EVs).

EVs are an extremely efficient mode of transportation. They can convert 90 to 95 percent of their stored energy into propulsion, as opposed to internal combustion engines that run at only 17 to 22 percent efficiency.

EVs use regenerative braking, so that the car's electric motor becomes a generator when the brakes are engaged; as the car slows, the kinetic energy is used to recharge the battery.

Rick noted that EVs only have about 20 moving parts and have no oil to change, whereas ICE vehicles have more than 2,000 moving parts. Thus,



*Jerie Laishley of Appalachian Forest Herbs discussed hemp at our August ROAR. Above, A USDA hemp research farm in Pocahontas County, WV.*

maintenance for an EV is much less in terms of money and time. Most (85 to 88 percent) of EV charging is done at home (usually while you are sleeping). No need for gasoline. If your electricity is generated from solar panels, you are driving one of the greenest machines currently available.

More than 180 models of EVs, both cars and vans, are available globally. We had two models available for show and tell at the OVEC office that night—a Chevy Bolt and a Tesla Model S. The cars look quite different, but they both operate on only batteries (very large ones, but batteries nonetheless).

EVs emit no exhaust, thus cutting dangerous air pollution in the areas where they are driven. As electric generation overall becomes greener (think solar and wind energy), the cars will be even cleaner. To learn more about EVs, go to WVEAA.org or look up WVEEA on Facebook.

Thanks to Connie Jerie Laishley of Appalachian Forest Herbs, who spoke about hemp and CBD oil at our August ROAR.

Contact OVEC at [info@ohvec.org](mailto:info@ohvec.org) or 304-522-0246 if you have a topic you want us to ROAR about or if you are interested in leading one of the workshops. See the calendar at [ohvec.org](http://ohvec.org) for details on the next workshop. 🍌



## 2019 Huntington Pride Picnic

On June 22, OVEC volunteer Connie Mayle and staff member Robin Blakeman tabled at the 2019 Huntington Pride Picnic, with both

OVEC and Tri-State Water Defender information. More than 100 people attended the picnic! (Connie

took the photo of Robin here.)

We are proud to have been one of the first non-profit groups to join the Open to All campaign in Huntington: Diversity and inclusivity are key to a healthy organization and a healthy democracy!

One excellent outcome of this event is that Robin met a Spring Valley resident who connected her with some of her co-workers and neighbors for their involvement in our pilot air quality monitoring project (see related story page 4). 🍌

# Coal Cos Violate SMCRA and Clean Water Act

If you don't clean up your act, we are going to use the law to compel you to do so. That's what state and federal regulators should be saying to corporate polluters, but we know that is rarely the case. Even though it shouldn't be this way, it seems to be up to groups like ours to try to pick up regulators' slack as much as we possibly can.

That's why, in late May, we sent "notice of intent to sue" (NOI) letters to the parent companies of 15 coal facilities—including some mines, prep plants, a power plant, and a chloride plant. In the notice, we allege that these operations are committing egregious violations of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA).

The WV Highlands Conservancy, the WV Rivers Coalition, Appalachian Voices, and the Sierra Club joined us in filing our NOI. As is so often the case in these types of legal actions, we are ably represented by attorneys with Appalachian Mountain Advocates and Public Justice.

One facility receiving our NOI, the Harrison County Coal Mine, operated by Murray Energy, is discharging 220 times its permitted limit of aluminum into tributaries of the West Fork and Ohio Rivers. Another facility, the Red Fox Mine in McDowell County, is discharging twice as much selenium and 10 times as much aluminum as it is permitted into the Tug Fork River. That mine is owned by a subsidiary of the Justice Group, which is controlled by the family of West Virginia Governor Jim Justice.

These data were provided to state and federal regulators by the facilities themselves. We also sent the NOI to the WV Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. As we go to press, we are nearing the end of the 60 days the companies have to come into compliance with the CWA and SMCRA. Our next step will be to seek relief in federal court to hold the companies accountable for their violations and to clean up the streams that receive the pollution.

This is just another example of why our Clean Elections/Fair Courts work is so important! 🍌

# In Case You Missed It



*In June, OVEC organizer Dustin White led some staff members of the House Natural Resources Committee on a tour of mountaintop removal. They conducted interviews and obtained video footage for a series of short videos, released via Twitter, one of which features Dustin.*



# No Rockwool Comes South

On June 19, OVEC staff members Robin Blakeman and Alex Cole and summer intern Evan Gilland came to the State Capitol to support a busload of anti-Rockwool activists, in from the eastern panhandle.

Robin spoke at their press conference, while Alex did a lot of networking and Evan took photos. We shared info on the Appalachian Storage Hub in the western part of the state.

Alex will attend a community meeting in the eastern panhandle in November to speak about this in more detail, and Robin will expand connections with the anti-Rockwool folks via her role in the WV Interfaith Power and Light steering committee. 🍌





# That's Kinda Kosmic

*In May, Vivian Stockman, OVEC's Executive Director, received an invite from Kosmos Quarterly to feature her "unspeakably tragic" photos of mountaintop removal coal mining in the magazine. The editor said the photos, along with a brief bio, would help "many people understand the devastating impacts of our extractive economy." Here's the text, and some of the photos, that ran in the Summer issue.*

## Documenting Land Trauma

by Vivian Stockman

I took one photojournalism class for my BS in Environmental Communications from the Ohio State University, so that's been put to good use. The truth is, I am not a great photographer by any means; it's just that I was one of the earliest people out there documenting this insane method of coal mining called mountaintop removal, and I also had a public platform to get the images out, that platform being the website of the group I work for, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC).

Since the mid-1990s, when I first learned about it, a fervent desire of mine has been for this type of coal mining to be halted and forever banned. If my photos have helped build a movement calling for the abolition of mountaintop removal, then I have accomplished something in my life. But, to be clear, that accomplishment is sorely lacking until mountaintop removal is banned, and on that day, the accomplishment will belong to every person who joined the movement.

The rise of unconventional oil and gas drilling, the infrastructure it demands (such as processing plants and high-pressure, large-diameter pipelines), and its associated water usage and pollution issues have given rise to a whole new fossil-fuel crisis. We also now face a proposed massive petrochemical-plastic build-out in our region.

Most of our politicians are handmaids to the fossil fuel corporations that want to have their way with our region. Most of them deny that climate chaos is already wreaking havoc here. Clearly, there's much work to be done to reimagine a better future for our region. I can't take a photograph of our future, but, thanks to OVEC, I am part of a dedicated group of folks who work on the local level to bring about the global change we need. Please join and/or support our work! 🍌

If the wider world outside Appalachia understands what blowing up our mountains and burying streams looks like, the photography of Vivian Stockman should get a huge share of the credit.

- Ken Ward Jr., MacArthur Fellow and reporter with the Charleston Gazette-Mail, quoted in Kosmos



*Photos can help tell the terrible story.  
Mountaintop removal in Lincoln County, WV.  
Thanks, as ever and always, to SouthWings for the flyovers!*



Thanks so much to everyone who contributed to our summer fundraiser. Our goal was to raise \$30,000 from folks like you. We will let you know the final total in the Winter issue of Winds of Change. If you missed donating in the summer, please donate today, at [ohvec.org/join/](http://ohvec.org/join/). Thank you.

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As we sent this newsletter to the printer, our summer intern Evan Gilland was finishing up and posting to YouTube five super videos about the Appalachian Storage Hub (see story starting on page 6). To watch the videos, search "OVEC WV" on YouTube to find (and subscribe to!) our channel.

Thank you so much, Evan, for all the hard work this summer! Thanks to Ohio University for their internship program. Big thanks, too, go to Cindy Ellis for narrating the videos and to Alex Cole for supervising Evan's internship.



**30th Anniversary Annual Meeting**  
**October 12, 2019**  
**Gorman Shelter, Coonskin Park**  
**Charleston, WV**

**\$10/adults; \$5/students**

**Hamburgers/hot dogs**  
**(vegetarian and not)**  
**and drinks provided**  
**Please bring a dish to share**

#### **Agenda**

**Noon – 1:00 p.m. Lunch**  
**1:00 – 1:30 p.m. Welcome/**  
**2020 Legislative Overview**  
**1:30 – 2:30 p.m. Meet the Candidates**  
**2:30 – 4:00 p.m. Mingle/Games/**  
**Enjoy the park**

We've been up to so much more! Go to [ohvec.org](http://ohvec.org) to read our blog and subscribe to our action alerts. Contact one of our organizers via [info@ohvec.org](mailto:info@ohvec.org) or 304-522-0246 to become more active with OVEC.