



Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. Hotline



Spring 2006

www.gasp-pgh.org

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Progress Continues in Cheswick

by Jonathan Nadle, GASP President

February 2006 marked the start of the third and final year of GASP's settlement agreement with Reliant (Orion Power Midwest, L.P.). As regular Hotline readers know, GASP entered into this agreement to get the Cheswick Power Station cleaned up. The agreement aims to improve the performance of the plant's main particulate pollution control device, its electrostatic precipitator (ESP). GASP had long received complaints from area residents of excessive emissions and soot coming from the Cheswick plant. We are happy to report that precipitator repairs and maintenance carried out during the agreement have contributed to significantly less particulate emissions than previously, especially as measured by average opacity.

Other pollution control devices at the plant need attention too, though. For in-

stance, in the second quarter 2005 the Selective Catalytic Reduction technology that controls nitrogen oxide emissions became clogged, causing pollution spikes. A several day shutdown was necessary to partially remedy the problem. Cheswick's managers plan to shut down the plant for a period in late April to make additional facility improvements, including to the ESP. We look forward to even better performance.

One serious omission of pollution control equipment at the Cheswick plant is the lack of a "scrubber" that would greatly reduce sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and other emissions. SO₂ emissions react in the atmosphere to form sulfate particles and also contribute to the formation of acid rain.

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County Considers Continuous Opacity Monitors

by Walter Goldberg, GASP Board Member

John Nance Gardner, who held the job under Franklin Roosevelt, famously said that the Vice Presidency "wasn't worth a warm bucket of spit." Environmental regulations that go unenforced fall in the same category.

It comes as no surprise that power plants, incinerators, and coke ovens sometimes send dark smoke into the air when they are not supposed to. We see it, we breathe it. But who's to say that smoke is black enough and lasts long enough that a law is actually being broken?

Until recent times, the "enforcers" of our air quality regulations (Article XXI of ACHD Regulations) have been Allegheny County inspectors who are trained in smoke reading. They may see the excess emissions as they drive to work, but usually they are recorded when the inspector is on the job and is working outside the plant gates. Viewing the stack from a proper observation point, the inspector follows

continued on page 6

Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. (GASP) is a non-profit citizens' group in Southwestern Pennsylvania working for a healthy, sustainable environment. Founded in 1969, GASP has been a diligent watchdog, educator, litigator, and policy-maker on many environmental issues, with a focus on air quality in the Pittsburgh region.

GASP Members Speak at Public Hearing on Proposed Changes to PM Standards

by Carla J. Burkett, GASP Intern

On December 20, 2005, the EPA proposed fine particulate matter (PM2.5) standards that will not sufficiently protect the health of millions of Americans—an act categorized by a Harlem resident at the recent EPA public comment period as an infliction of “air violence” against the community.

You cannot choose what air you breathe. You cannot hold your breath. Particulate matter contributes to Pittsburgh being listed as one of the cities with the “unhealthiest hearts,” as rated by Self magazine in their Sixth Annual America’s Healthiest Places study conducted last year. Along with heart problems such as cardiovascular disease, PM causes respiratory complications, increased asthma attacks and even premature death.

The new proposed standards fail to protect the public from health risks such as these. Moreover, the EPA chose to go against their own scientists’ recommendations, as well as those from a plethora of leading medical societies, regarding levels which would protect the public. Instead, the EPA proposes to set a standard which will satisfy industry, while failing to fully safeguard public health.

GASP has addressed this issue head on by urging citizens to demand more stringent standards from the EPA. This culminated with our CODE RED Valentine’s Day campaign, where we took to the streets to hand out “valentines” asking Pittsburgh residents to support PM standards stringent enough to protect health. These “valentines” were then hand-delivered by our Executive Director, Rachel Filippini, at the EPA open comment period held March 8, 2006.

Held in Philadelphia, the public hearing drew concerned citizens, doctors, scientists, and environmental groups from all over the east coast. The session was held from 9 AM to



Photo: Bridget Yurcavage

GASP intern Carla Burkett speaks with a Pittsburgh resident about the CODE RED PM2.5 campaign.

9 PM and was administered by a panel of five EPA staff members. In addition to GASP members, several other local groups were represented, including Clean Water Action, The Collaborative for Health and the Environment in Pennsylvania, Steel City BioFuels and the Learning Disabilities Association of America Healthy Children’s Project. After the event, Rachel Filippini stated that she was glad GASP could attend and that it was “important for the EPA to hear southwestern Pennsylvania’s point of view on the matter of PM, because of our region’s considerably worse and quite unique air quality problems.”

The EPA is due to issue finalized standards in September 2006.

The Hotline is the quarterly newsletter of the Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc.

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GASP Mission Statement

GASP will act to obtain for the residents of southwestern Pennsylvania clean air, water, and land in order to create the healthy, sustainable environment and quality of life to which we are entitled.

Methods of Achieving Mission

GASP is a citizens’ group based in Southwestern PA which focuses on Allegheny County environmental issues. When pertinent to these concerns, we participate in state and national environmental decisions.

We believe in the public’s right to receive accurate and thorough information on these issues and to actively participate in the decision making process.

To achieve our environmental goals on behalf of our membership, GASP will advocate, educate, serve as an environmental watchdog, mobilize action, and litigate when necessary.

We will work both independently and in cooperation with like-minded individuals and groups as determined by the Board of Directors.

We will uphold GASP’s reputation for scientific integrity, honesty, and responsible involvement.

GASP Legal Update

Federal Court Unanimously Rejects Rollback of Clean Air Protections

In a unanimous decision handed down on March 17, 2006, the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit struck down the Bush Administration’s attempt to dramatically weaken a critical component of the Clean Air Act. The ruling—which came in a lawsuit brought by states, local governments, and a coalition of environmental groups primarily represented by the Clean Air Task Force, Earthjustice, and the Natural Resources Defense Council—prevents industrial polluters from taking advantage of a regulatory loophole that the Environmental Protection Agency opened in late 2003.

The loophole at issue would have exempted 20,000 power plants, refineries, and other industrial sources of air pollution from the statutory requirement to update their pollution controls whenever they make equipment replacements that result in increased air pollution. If the exemption had been upheld, outdated facilities across the country would not have to install pollution controls when they replace equipment—even if the upgrade increases pollution—as long as the cost of the replacement did not exceed twenty percent of the cost of the entire unit.

The court found that such an exemption clearly violated

Congress’s intent, as expressed in the Clean Air Act’s New Source Review (NSR) provisions. Specifically, the three judge panel ruled that the equipment replacement projects fit within the statutory category of “physical changes,” and therefore are subject to regulation under NSR.

Air pollution from power plants and other industrial sources is responsible for asthma attacks, respiratory disease, heart attacks, and premature death suffered by hundreds of thousand of Americans every year. The NSR program is essential to controlling these dangerous emissions. If EPA fully enforced New Source Review at coal-fired power plants, at least 5,500 premature deaths and 80,000 asthma attacks would be avoided annually. The US Department of Justice is currently prosecuting power plants for violating the same NSR provisions that the court blocked EPA’s attempt to gut.

Group Against Smog and Pollution was represented by the Clean Air Task Force, a member of the Clear the Air Coalition. Also represented were the Alabama Environmental Council, Clean Air Council, Michigan Environmental Council, Ohio Environmental Council, Scenic Hudson, and the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy.

Clean Air Fund Victory

As discussed in the Fall 2005 Hotline, on November 2, 2005, the Allegheny County Board of Health voted to spend \$1.3 million of the Allegheny County Clean Air Fund (CAF) to be used for a demolition project at the former US Steel Duquesne Works. This is part of a plan to redevelop that site. Although a laudable project, CAF monies are supposed to be used for air quality improvement—not development. In fact, Article XXI of the ACHD Regulations legally limits the funds’ use. GASP believes this proposed project was not within the limits of Article XXI and decided to file a motion for a Preliminary and Permanent Injunction in the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas.

Working with other local environmental groups, GASP developed a list of other projects the fund can be used for—ones that improve the local environment such as the CAPS study discussed on page 4.

At the end of January 2006, a hearing before the Motions Judge resulted in a special order being issued which prevented the disbursement of the monies from the fund for the Duquesne Works project. The next week, on February 1, GASP argued its case and won a Preliminary Injunction.

The County and other named defendants did not appeal this order and therefore, as of April 2006, it is still in effect.

A Breath of Fresh Air

Air Pollution Studies at Carnegie Mellon University

by Neil Donahue, Director, Center for Atmospheric Particle Studies

The GASP Hotline welcomes articles from guest authors in our column, "A Breath of Fresh Air." This column will feature GASP members and friends writing about their environmental work, in either their personal or professional life. If you would like to submit your own story, please contact Hotline editor, Marla Ferrency, at hotline@gasp-pgh.org. Note: The opinions of the author do not necessarily reflect the views of GASP.

In the summer of 2005, Carnegie Mellon University formed the Center for Atmospheric Particle Studies (CAPS). CAPS is directed by Neil Donahue (Associate Professor of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering—ChemE) and includes founding members Peter Adams (Assistant Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering—CEE, and Engineering and Public Policy—EPP), Cliff Davidson (Professor of CEE and EPP), Spyros Pandis (Research Professor of ChemE and EPP) and Allen Robinson (Ahrens Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering and EPP).

The CAPS faculty members are highly interdisciplinary and collaborative. From 2001 to 2005, Professors Pandis, Robinson and Davidson directed the highly successful Pittsburgh Air Quality Study (PAQS), funded jointly by the US EPA and US DOE/NETL. PAQS included a continuous, year-long sampling program from an extensively-instrumented site in Schenley Park, as well as intensive source characterization measurements, including fenceline measurements at the Clairton coke plant.

Some essential findings from PAQS include the general conclusion that particulate matter (PM) pollution in the



The Pittsburgh Air Quality Study sampling trailer in Schenley Park.

Pittsburgh area is either a very local issue (i.e., Clairton, bus stops, etc.) or a regional issue (average particle levels and composition in Pittsburgh and Florence near the WV border were only marginally different). Other findings include the conclusion that ammonia controls may be required to prevent nitrate substitution from offsetting sulfate reductions, as well as observation of frequent new-particle formation (nucleation) bursts on one-third of the study days (typically the beautiful ones, as pictured on the CAPS website: <http://caps.web.cmu.edu>).

CAPS research includes field work, laboratory studies, and computer modeling, ranging from very local pollution models to global climate models. Current laboratory studies are focused on the role of atmospheric oxidation chemistry on organic particles, which make up more than one-third of the total fine PM mass in Pittsburgh.

The current CAPS field campaign is an air toxics study led by Allen Robinson. This study is in collaboration with Allegheny County and is funded by the Clean Air Fund and the US EPA. Our objective is to use high time resolution (hourly) data for both gas-phase and particulate toxics to learn how variable the atmospheric levels are and also to "fingerprint" individual sources. To learn more, attend GASP's next Brown Bag Lunch (see sidebar at left).

We just completed a month-long campaign at the Avalon monitoring site operated by the county. While it is far too early to report specific results, it is clear that by making hourly measurements we can develop a much more vivid picture of the "near source" environment, with very specific relationships among different compounds showing distinct patterns for multiple sources.

We are in the process of purchasing a mobile laboratory, which we shall use for the continuation of the air toxics study as well as future field campaigns. We are especially interested in developing a better understanding of those nucleation events and in learning how long-range transport and oxidation influences the properties of organic particulate matter, among many other things.



Hybrid Buses in the Neighborhood

by Marilyn Skolnick, GASP Board Member

With so many buses on the streets, you probably haven't noticed that there are six new diesel-electric buses in the Port Authority fleet, put into service by October 2005. All six buses are housed in the East Liberty Garage, and are in service on routes covered by that garage.



Photo: Tabor Logan/www.transitalk.info

One of Pittsburgh's hybrid buses

Cost

Currently there are three large manufacturers of hybrid drives for transit buses, and most of the major bus manufacturers can provide buses equipped with hybrid drive systems. Pittsburgh's hybrid buses were manufactured by the Gillig Corporation, and the hybrid drives were made by a company called Allison and installed in the buses during production. Each bus costs \$530,000 compared to the \$329,000 price of a conventional diesel.

All costs of the bus operation, except the fuel costs explained below, are in line with those for a diesel bus. Maintenance does not present any problems and just a limited amount of specialized training is required of the mechanics.

Environment

Compared to a conventional diesel bus, the hybrids show a 41% improvement in fuel economy. They run on ultra low sulphur diesel fuel (ULSD), resulting in an emissions reduction in the 90% range.

Fuel

ULSD fuel is not available in the Pittsburgh area in bulk, so the fuel is trucked in from the Akron, Ohio area and currently costs an additional \$0.48 per gallon. It is expected that the price penalty for the fuel will drop to approximately \$0.10 per gallon by October 2006 when all diesel fuel is required to be ULSD.

Operation

When the bus is in operation, the diesel engine runs continuously, with the electric motor assisting it. While the integration of advanced drive technology provides the benefits of decreased emissions and fuel consumption, it has actually made the bus more driver- and passenger-friendly. Having ridden on one, I can confirm that fact: it rides more smoothly and quietly. Deceleration is much smoother and more intuitive to the operation of the vehicle.

Because of the price differential and the limitation of funds, the Port Authority is still evaluating all aspects of the hybrid buses to determine if the overall benefits of these buses exceeds the increased purchase costs. We can only hope that with increased demand for such buses the price will come down.

Thanks to Rich Snyder of the Port Authority for all the technical information he provided, without which I could not have written this piece.



GASP's Brown Bag Lunch Series

Our next Brown Bag Lunch features Dr. Allen Robinson, Associate Professor at Carnegie Mellon University, who will discuss the Air Toxics Study occurring in the Neville Island area.

Join us on **June 21, 2006 from 12:30 to 1:30 PM**. Bring your own lunch; GASP will provide drinks. We meet in the conference room of the University of Pittsburgh's Law School Legal Clinic at 210 Bouquet Street. The clinic is on the 5th floor of the Sennot Square building (above Panera) in suite 5220. Limited parking is available under the Sennot Square building.

Questions? Contact Bridget at bridget@gasp-pgh.org or (412) 325-7382.

Make a Difference: Volunteer with GASP

- Are you a good writer?
- Do you enjoy learning about environmental issues?
- Are you comfortable with public speaking?
- Do you have a knack for event planning?
- Do budgets, taxes, and finances get you excited?

If you've answered "Yes" to any of these questions, if you care about your environment, and if you have a few hours to donate every month, then we have an opportunity

for you! GASP is currently forming several committees to work on all of these things and more. Please consider joining the Advocacy Committee, Public Awareness Committee, Membership Committee, Programs & Services Committee, or Capacity Committee. It's a great way to meet new people, learn about new issues and *really* make a difference. To learn more about how you can help, contact Rachel at gasp@gasp-pgh.org or (412) 325-7382.

Coal-fired power plants are a main source of these harmful emissions.

In late 2005, GASP collected petition signatures in the Cheswick area urging Reliant to place a scrubber on the Cheswick plant. Because of new federal emission reduction requirements, Reliant told us that the company will be installing scrubbers on a number of their plants to meet the standards. The corporate headquarters in Houston will be deciding this spring which Reliant power plants will receive scrubbers, and we're encouraged that Cheswick has a good chance of being one of them.



PHOTO: MAREN LEVIA COOKE

Members of GASP's Reliant Working Group tour the Cheswick Power Station with plant employees

Below are some highlights from GASP's recent letter to Reliant's Cheswick representatives, announcing our continuing participation in the settlement agreement.

- 1) GASP urges Reliant to add a scrubber to the Cheswick facility.
- 2) In order to reduce opacity violations, we suggest some target reduction numbers for 2006.
- 3) We are pleased with the improving average opacity numbers.
- 4) GASP looks forward to working with Reliant Cheswick in the upcoming year and to see additional improvements to the precipitator as well as other areas of the plant, but we remain concerned about the spiking emissions.
- 5) GASP's future legal options with respect to the Cheswick plant will be influenced by ongoing emission performance and the hoped-for addition of a scrubber.

If anyone from the Cheswick/Springdale area would like to participate in GASP's Reliant Working Group, which meets with Cheswick managers, reviews performance data, etc., please contact the GASP office (412) 325-7382.

procedures aimed at assuring that the "pollutant" is actually smoke rather than harmless steam and that the smoke is black enough to truly constitute a violation of Article XXI.

Many plants that are known to be problematic are observed regularly. For other plants those official inspections are rare, maybe only twice a year. But what about the other 363 days, not to mention all those nights? If we can send a man to the moon, shouldn't we be smart enough to make a device that can electronically record violations 24/7?

Indeed, such continuous opacity monitors (COMs) are available, and federal law requires their installation on large electrical power plants. Yet, in this county, no enforcement action has ever been taken on the basis of an excess COM reading. How can this be? Because the Allegheny County Health Department has, until now, utilized the only officially approved means, i.e. Method 9, which requires the use of human observers. It has also held to the philosophy that using COMs for enforcement of opacity standards is so stringent as to be unfair to the polluter. With that philosophy, there would be no catching of speedsters with radar.

That's the bad news, but things are looking up! Acting on a proposal initiated by GASP, and with the support of the County's Air Quality Program, its Air Pollution Advisory Committee has unanimously voted to recommend to the Board of Health COM enforcement of Article XXI. More precisely, it says that visible emissions measurements can also be performed by COMS if such a device is "required by regulation, permit, consent agreement, consent decree, or enforcement order."

If this revised wording gets Board of Health approval, it will mean that the ACHD will have a legal mechanism to view opacity exceedances in a more complete manner. Will enforcement be rigorous enough to drive down excessive emissions? We expect that it will, but GASP will be carefully monitoring this hoped-for outcome.

Notecards for Sale

Pittsburgh artist Shawn Quinlan has donated the image of his thought-provoking quilted piece *What Would Jesus Drive?* for GASP's use. Beginning with the notecards available here, purchases made of items carrying the image of this environmental statement will support GASP's mission.

These notecard display a full-color image of the artwork on the front and they're blank inside. They measure 5 1/2" x 4 1/4". Set of 8 cards and envelopes for \$10.



This quilt by Shawn Quinlan is displayed on exclusive GASP notecards



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Your membership dues renewal date is listed on your mailing label. You can **renew your membership, become a new member, or make an extra donation** at any time by mailing in the form on this page or calling the GASP office at (412) 325-7382.

	Quantity	Total
Set of 8 notecards and envelopes	_____	x \$10 = _____
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Phone _____		
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Make checks payable to GASP or call the GASP office at 412-325-7382 to pay by Visa, Mastercard, or American Express.		

4/06

Join GASP Today!

- \$35 Grassroots Supporters (\$15 low income/student rate)
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- Call GASP at (412) 325-7382 to learn about automatic monthly giving, deducted directly from your checking account or charged to your credit card. An easy, hassle-free way to support GASP all year round!*

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All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The official registration and financial information of GASP may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Drive cleaner Drive GREENER



GASP's 3rd annual hybrid vehicle display and test-drive event

Saturday, May 20, 2006 11 AM–5 PM

at the Venture Outdoors Festival at Pittsburgh's North Shore, near Heinz Field

Test drive some of the latest **hybrid electric cars** to be introduced to the market. Talk to hybrid car owners about their experiences owning and driving this new technology. Find out what financial incentives you can get when buying a hybrid vehicle. Dealers will be on hand if you have questions about purchasing a new hybrid. Information about upcoming hybrid vehicles will be available.

FREE!

Don't miss the free Venture Outdoors Festival with hands-on outdoor activities like kayaking, fishing and biking—fun for the whole family!

There will be plenty of parking available at a special \$5 event rate. (Parking is free for hybrid owners who display their cars!)

Attention Hybrid Car Owners: We are looking for volunteers to display their hybrid cars at the event. If you'd like to display your vehicle at this educational event, please **contact GASP at 412-325-7382 or bridget@gasp-pgh.org**. (Individuals' vehicles will be *on display only*, not available for test-drives).

For more information, go to:
www.gasp-pgh.org/events

We are looking for volunteers:

- to help publicize the event by posting flyers and sending e-mail messages to friends
- to display their hybrid cars (see description at left)
- to find hybrid car owners who will display their cars
- to put GASP in touch with dealerships who may be interested in participating in the event
- to make wooden free-standing sign frames
- to help at the event: setting up, handing out information, signing up test drivers, taking pictures, cleaning up

If you can help with any of these, please contact GASP at 412-325-7382 or bridget@gasp-pgh.org.

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