



Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. Hotline



Winter 2007

www.gasp-pgh.org

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Year in Review: Highlights from 2006

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director and Jonathan Nadle, GASP President

Another year has come and gone. Let's reflect for a moment on what we've been able to accomplish with your support.

As 2006 began, GASP embarked on a new three-year strategic plan for the organization. Part of this new plan involved developing better functioning committees that would assist the GASP staff and board with all aspects of the organization, from fundraising to policy work. These committees, which include the Advocacy, Public Awareness, and Membership committees, are open to GASP members. If you are looking for a way to get more involved in the work of GASP please consider volunteering on a committee. Contact Rachel Filippini at gasp@gasp-pgh.org for more information.

A sincere thank you to all who have supported us over the past year. Whether you gave a donation, attended an event, or volunteered your time in some way, we very much appreciate it and hope you will continue to support our work this year.



PHOTO: JONATHAN NADLE

GASP volunteers at the annual fall benefit in November 2006

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Introduction of Cleaner-Burning Diesel Fuel Facilitates the Use of Advanced Pollution Controls for On-Road Diesel Vehicles

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

As part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 2007 Highway Diesel Rule, refineries were required to produce ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel (ULSD) nationwide starting October 15th to ensure that the advanced emission controls required on new 2007 diesel engines operate properly. EPA's Clean Air Highway Diesel final rule requires a 97% reduction in the sulfur content of highway diesel fuel, from its previous level of 500 parts per million (ppm) to just 15ppm.

In combination with cleaner-burning diesel engines and vehicles, ULSD fuel will help to improve air quality by significantly reducing emissions. In order for 2007 and later model on-road diesel engines with advanced emissions control systems to operate properly, they must use ULSD fuel. The EPA mandated these advanced emissions controls for new on-road diesel vehicles

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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.

Updates on the PA Clean Vehicles Program and PA Mercury Rule

by Rachel Filippini, GASP Executive Director

The Pennsylvania Legislature concluded its “lame duck” session in November without voting on measures that would have blocked the Pennsylvania Clean Vehicles Program and the Rendell administration’s mercury reduction plan.


A public comment period and three public hearings drew a record number of responses. Nearly 11,000 Pennsylvanians commented on the PA mercury rule and, of those, fewer than three dozen were opposed. Approximately 4,800 Pennsylvanians commented in support of the PA Clean Vehicles Program. Thank you to all GASPers who commented, helping to propel these important programs forward.

The PA Clean Vehicles Program was recently published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin after being approved by the state attorney general—the final regulatory hurdle. The federal Clean Air Act gives individual states the choice of adopting federal emission standards or the tougher rules used in California. A growing number of states, including Pennsylvania, have chosen to follow the more health protective California standards.

The PA Clean Vehicles Program will provide a 6 to 12% reduction of volatile organic compound emissions and a 9% reduction of nitrogen oxide emissions—greater reductions than the federal program would offer. In addition, the Clean Vehicles Program will result in a 5 to 11% greater reduction of six toxic air pollutants, including benzene, a known carcinogen. The California rules also include a

greenhouse gas provision which will apply to new passenger cars and light-duty trucks beginning with the 2009 model year. This provision, which automakers are challenging in federal court, will pertain to cars sold in the commonwealth.

The Rendell Administration Mercury Proposal has successfully passed several important committee hurdles; however, it has met strong opposition from the Pennsylvania Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, chaired by Senator Mary Jo White. The Rendell Mercury Proposal is moving forward, but Senator White and Musto of the committee argue that the administration’s mercury plan has not completed the regulatory review and approval process required by the Pennsylvania Regulatory Review Act. Stay tuned as GASP continues to follow any new developments.

The state’s mercury plan would cut mercury emissions faster and more substantially than the federal plan, achieving at least a 90% mercury reduction by 2015. Mercury is a neurotoxin. The most common way people are exposed to any form of mercury is by eating fish containing methylmercury. Because mercury can cross the blood-brain barrier, and because it can affect brain development, its effects are of special concern to pregnant or lactating women and young children. Pennsylvania is the second highest mercury emitter from electric generating units. 

GASP Legal Update

by Michael Parker, GASP Policy & Outreach Coordinator

The months since the last Hotline Legal Update have seen the conclusion of two of GASP’s recent major legal efforts: our appeal of a proposed Cambria County coke facility and our appeal of a proposed waste-coal power plant in Greene County.


Cambria County

The Cambria County facility was proposed by Cambria Coke Company (CCC), a subsidiary of Sun Coke Inc., and was designed as the state’s first “recovery” coke facility. A heat recovery coke facility reroutes excess heat from the coking process for the purpose of generating electricity. Overall, the Cambria facility’s 240 heat recovery coke ovens were designed to annually produce 1.7 million tons of metallurgical coke while generating up to 165-megawatts of electricity. By emitting thousands of tons of pollutants into the atmosphere each year, the Cambria facility would have been a major source of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter. The facility would have been located in an area failing to meet federal health-based standards for ozone and fine particulate matter. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) intentionally expedited the review process to avoid the requirements of the new fine particulate standard, did not follow the proper public participation procedures, and failed to require the state-of-the-art pollution control devices necessary to adequately protect human health and the environment. For these reasons and with the aim of ensuring that the public health and welfare was properly protected, GASP, teaming with PennFuture, appealed the DEP’s issuance of a construction permit to CCC. After months of pre-trial legal wrangling, the appeal was dismissed because the permit expired by operation of law 18-months following its issuance. We can only speculate why the company failed to vigorously defend its permit, thereby allowing it to lapse. Some have theorized that a steep decline in the international price for coke drove the company’s ebbing enthusiasm for the project. So, GASP can claim a de facto victory! With the project abandoned, at least for the time being, the emission of thousands of tons of hazardous pollution will be avoided.

Greene County

Unfortunately, we are not able to claim victory regarding the Greene County waste-coal power plant that we appealed, alongside the National Parks Conservation Association, GASP member Dennis Groce, and local resident Phil Coleman, starting in June 2005. That facility, dubbed the Greene Energy Resource Recovery Project (please note that it is “Greene”, as in the county, not “green”, as in environmentally beneficial), is proposed as a 525-megawatt garbage of bituminous (“gob”, or the waste remaining after processing bituminous coal) burning, circulating fluidized bed power plant; as such, and if actually constructed, the Greene facility will be the largest of its type in the United States. Like any other coal-fired power plant of this size, the Greene facility will be a major source of sulfur dioxide, particulate matter, and nitrogen oxides. Those pollutants will not only harm the health of the surrounding communities, but will also create visibility issues and damage the ecosystems of pristine wilderness lands in West Virginia and Virginia. In our appeal we asserted that the DEP could better protect health and the environment by requiring better pollution control measures. Also, as with the Cambria facility, we contended that the DEP failed to properly follow its public participation procedures. Unlike in the Cambria case, Wellington Development - WVDI, LLC., the developer of the project, vigorously defended its permit at every step of the process. After over a year of grueling litigation and a month-long trial, the Pennsylvania Environmental Hearing Board ruled in favor of the DEP and Wellington by upholding the permit and dismissing our appeal. Obviously, we do not agree with the Board’s conclusions and we are appealing the decision to the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court.

Links to the Environmental Hearing Board’s order and other filings in each case can be found at <http://www.gasp-pgh.org/action>

As always, please feel free to contact Michael Parker, GASP’s Policy & Outreach Coordinator and in-house counsel, with questions regarding our legal work. He can be reached at (412) 325-7382, or via e-mail at michael@gasp-pgh.org. 

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

GASP
Wightman School Community Building
5604 Solway Street, Room 204
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

phone 412.325.7382
fax 412.325.7390

www.gasp-pgh.org
gasp@gasp-pgh.org



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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.

Update: Reliant Cheswick Power Station

by Suzanne Seppi, GASP Project Manager

Residents in the vicinity of the Cheswick Power Station are almost as energized as the plant itself. They have come together recently, tired and irate, to loudly voice their complaints about the noise levels originating at the power station, particularly over this last summer. Some neighborhood members described the noise as similar to that of a plane overhead, although the sound levels have not violated the local noise ordinance. Springdale Borough restricts noise beyond many lot boundaries to below 85 decibels except for an allowable time of 3 hours in a 24-hour period. (A typical alarm clock is 80 decibels and a subway platform 100 decibels.)¹ Citizens complained that the noise levels vary sometimes, rising to unacceptable levels in certain areas.

After several resident meetings, on October 21st the newly formed Reliant Energy Citizens' Action Group planted themselves on Pittsburgh Street, across from the power plant, complete with signs protesting against the noise, pointing out pollution issues as well.

The demonstration resulted in a meeting with Reliant officials that day. At the meeting, Ed Feith, Environmental Director with Reliant Energy, discussed the problem; a variable speed fan installed in 2003 (part of a system to control nitrogen dioxide levels) had been stuck on its highest speed all summer. Mr. Feith explained that Reliant had contacted the German-based vendor Siemens A.G. previously to remediate the problem but there had been delays. A technician from Germany was expected imminently. A meeting was set for November 6 with the community to discuss the results of the Siemens work on the fan.

The November 6 meeting at the Springdale Borough Building was well attended, with residents forcefully questioning Reliant representatives for most of the evening. It was noted that the noise level had dropped since repairs were done but audience members remained skeptical. Reliant explained that the Siemens technician had made a new electronic control system in Germany and brought the parts here to install. Siemens has also now trained local workers at a New Kensington subsidiary to repair the fan if needed.

Members of the Action Group had several other concerns including odors, toxics and soot in the neighborhood, as well as worries about the impact on the neighborhood of the upcoming construction of a scrubber, new smokestack and associated buildings at the Reliant Facility. In response, Reliant said it would like to establish a Citizens' Advisory Panel and would be willing to support a facilitator for the group. The Panel formation, as of early December, appears to be moving forward.

GASP has been attending many of the Action Group meetings, which complement GASP's ongoing work on particulate emissions and upgrading/repairing the Reliant precipi-



PHOTO: MAREN LENTIA COOKE

Citizens meet with Reliant officials on November 6, 2006

tator. In that regard, GASP members expressed concern to Reliant representatives at the November 6th public meeting about a spike in particulate emissions that occurred over the summer. Keith Bastian, Reliant Cheswick Power Station General Manager, explained that the fan problem also affected the precipitator through vibrations which then affected the level of particulate emissions. GASP is working to ensure that this problem is resolved.

It is expected, but not guaranteed, that the completion of the scrubber system projected for 2009 will minimize the noise problem. The scrubber will reduce SO₂ emissions by about 98%, as well as reducing fine particulates. These emissions aggravate many respiratory problems as well as contribute to the formation of acid rain. A 2004 emission inventory report showed the Cheswick Power Plant is responsible for 80% of all sulfur dioxide emissions in Allegheny County. There will be additional significant reductions in larger particle and mercury emissions.

GASP will be participating with the local citizens and the new Citizens' Advisory Panel, as scrubber construction moves forward. A significant next event will be the probable issuance by the Allegheny County Health Department of a Draft Installation Permit for the scrubber. The application for this permit has been submitted by Reliant. There will be a 30-day comment period following issuance of the draft permit. This will be a chance for GASP, the Citizens' Panel and others to weigh in with any comments or concerns about the draft permit requirements. GASP will keep you posted. If you would like a copy of the application, call the GASP office at (412) 325-7382.

1. Claudia Kalb, "Hearing Problems Are Increasing From Noise Pollution", Newsweek, August 25, 1997. <http://www.nonoise.org/news/1997/aug24.htm#Hearing%20Problems%20Are%20Increasing%20From%20Noise%20Pollution>



ULSD Fuel continued from page 1

beginning this year; however, existing diesel vehicles will still be on the road and polluting for another generation unless we act now to clean them up! Having cleaner fuels available means there is no longer a technical obstacle in order to apply advanced retrofit technology, including diesel particulate filters, to existing diesel vehicles. These tailpipe filters can cut pollution by up to 90%. We applaud those fleet managers who have been proactive, applying diesel retrofit technology to their fleet of vehicles before ULSD was widely available. And now we encourage other fleet managers to do the same.

Below is an example of the difference the use of a diesel particulate filter can make on diesel emissions coming from an ordinary school bus.

The full beneficial effects of this rule will not be felt until the nearly 13 million existing trucks and buses are completely replaced, which won't occur until approximately 2030. That is why it is absolutely imperative that, in addition to replacing the older on-road diesel vehicles with 2007 and later models, we retrofit newer existing vehicles with advanced technology. The health benefits from cleaning up

diesel vehicles are enormous, resulting in the prevention of thousands of premature deaths, cases of chronic bronchitis, respiratory symptoms in asthmatic children, lost work and school days, and emergency room visits.

Although ULSD fuel will be the dominant highway diesel fuel produced, EPA does not require fueling stations to sell ULSD fuel until 2010. Thus, it's possible that ULSD will not be available at every service station initially. Federal regulations will require the labeling of all diesel fuel pumps to specify the type of fuel dispensed by each pump.

Locomotive and marine diesel fuel will not be required to meet the ULSD fuel standards of 15ppm sulfur until 2012.

For more information about diesel pollution or to get involved in the Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution, a comprehensive campaign aimed at reducing toxic diesel emissions from all major sources, contact GASP at (412) 325-7382 or gasp@gasp-pgh.org. Trucks, school buses, transit buses, waste haulers, construction equipment, locomotives, and marine vessels all contribute to our region's diesel pollution problem, and it is crucial that they are all included in the solution for cleaning up.



Courtesy Clean Air Task Force

Year in Review
continued from page 1

During 2007, GASP will continue to spearhead efforts to reduce diesel pollution in Allegheny County, concentrating on cleaning up school buses, especially those serving students in the Pittsburgh Public School District, as well as focusing on the city's fleet of diesel vehicles. We will also continue to follow the development of the Liberty/Clairton region's State Implementation Plan, as well as that of the Greater Pittsburgh Beaver Valley area, by the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) and PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). We will maintain efforts to reduce fine particulate pollution from area power plants and coke-making facilities, and educate area schools and communities.

GASP Launches Comprehensive Diesel Campaign

In May, GASP and Clean Water Action launched the Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution, a comprehensive campaign aimed at reducing toxic diesel emissions from all sources—school buses, transit buses, waste haulers, construction equipment, locomotives and marine vessels. Recent efforts have focused on cleaning up school buses in Allegheny County. Several school districts in the county have already taken steps to reduce diesel emissions and create healthy environments for school children, bus drivers, and the communities they travel through.

GASP continues to work with ACHD to develop an off-road idling regulation. We expect the final regulation to go out for public comment in early 2007. In addition, we'd like to see better enforcement of the already existing School Bus Idling Regulation and Heavy Duty Diesel Idling Regulation.



PHOTO: BRIDGET YURCIVAGE

Demonstration of a hand-held monitor at the launch of the Allegheny County Partnership to Reduce Diesel Pollution



PHOTO: BRIDGET YURCIVAGE

Legally speaking...

GASP remained busy this past year appealing several air quality permits issued to proposed facilities by the DEP. These facilities included a proposed coke plant in Cambria County and a 525 MW waste coal-fired power plant in Greene County, as discussed on page 3.

In addition, GASP filed a motion for a Preliminary and Permanent Injunction in the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, in order to prevent the disbursement of Clean Air Fund monies for inappropriate use. GASP won a Preliminary Injunction that has not been appealed by the county.

We're Educating the Community, Teachers, and Students About Air Quality

GASP conducted, in conjunction with the PA Resources Council, Conservation Consultants, and Steel City Biofuels, more than ten **teacher workshops** this past year. These workshops educated teachers about a variety of issues including the ozone standard, fine particulates standard, and diesel emissions.

In addition, middle school, high school, and college students made use of **GASP's hand-held particulate monitor and air quality training** in order to conduct investigations in their classrooms and on school grounds.

We also carried out **air quality demonstrations** in several communities in Allegheny County that showed elevated levels of fine particulates.



PHOTO: MAREN LEVIA COOKE

Greg Boulos of Steel City Biofuels demonstrates how to make biodiesel



PHOTO: BRIDGET YURCIVAGE

Rachel Filippini uses GASP's hand-held particulate monitor near the Edgar Thomson Steel Works in Braddock

In May, GASP held our annual **Drive Cleaner, Drive Greener** event. In its third year, the event once again showcased locally owned hybrid vehicles, as well as some other alternatives, including biodiesel and ethanol vehicles. Attendees were given the opportunity to take test drives, speak with hybrid vehicle owners, and gather materials from GASP's information booth.



PHOTO: ROXANE STEWART

GASP's third annual Drive Cleaner, Drive Greener event featured hybrid cars owned by area residents

This year's annual event, **GASP at the Gallery**, exposed participants to the Society for Contemporary Craft's *Nature/Culture: Artists Respond To Their Environment* exhibit. It was a wonderful opportunity for attendees to view environmental problems through a different lens.

And finally ...

The Continuous Opacity Monitor (COM) regulation, which GASP initiated more than two and a half years ago, should become a reality soon, barring unexpected resistance from County Council or the Chief Executive. Up until now, opacity has been measured by individuals trained to visually assess the transmittance of light through smoke plumes. This method, known as smoke reading, has obvious



PHOTO: NEIL M. DONAHUE

Smoke plumes at U.S. Steel's Clairton Coke Works

limitations. The use of COMs enables accurate, around-the-clock measurements of opacity; thus, regulators are able to ensure compliance with opacity regulations for 100% of a facility's operating time. Smoke reading will remain a useful measurement tool at facilities that do not have COMs installed and as a validation method. For this reason, GASP continues for a fifth year our community Smoke Readers Program. For more information on GASP's Smoke Readers Program, please contact GASP Program Manager Sue Seppi at sue@gasp-pgh.org.

Thank you to those who submitted comments in favor of supporting the new COMs Regulation. We are looking forward to the public health benefits that should result from the better enforcement of pollution laws that this regulation will make possible.

Collaborations and Partnerships

GASP continues to work with many other groups and individuals on a variety of issues affecting our region's environment and your health. These include:

- stopping the Mon-Fayette toll road
- supporting the PA Mercury rule
- supporting the PA Clean Vehicles Program
- saving Hays Hilltop from being mined and leveled

Fresh Faces at GASP



PHOTO: MAREN LEVIA COOKE

Mike Parker speaks at the March for Sustainability in October 2006

GASP welcomed a new staff member and a new board member in 2006. Michael Parker joined GASP in April as our Policy and Outreach Coordinator and in-house legal counsel. Prior to coming to work for GASP, Michael worked as a Staff Attorney at the University of Pittsburgh Environmental Law Clinic.

We were also extremely fortunate to gain new board member Janis Johnson.

Janis replaced GASP's long-time treasurer Michael Kaizar, who moved out of state this past summer. Janis has a Masters Degree in Taxation from Robert Morris University and is a Certified Public Accountant. Learn more about Janis in the Spotlight on a Board Member article on page 11. ♻️

GASP at the Gallery: Fine Art, Food, Folks, and Fun

by Jonathan Nadle, GASP President

GASP celebrated thirty-seven years of fighting for clean air and a healthy environment at our 2006 annual benefit, GASP at the Gallery, held at the Society for Contemporary Craft on November 4th. The event highlighted *Nature/Culture: Artists Respond To Their Environment*, an exhibit which compared works by contemporary artists who identify with culture and our urban society's byproducts with artists who respond to nature and the natural environment. In particular, we focused on artist Kim Abeles's Presidential Commemorative Smog Plates. Ms. Abeles explains that the smog plates "are portraits of U.S. Presidents from McKinley to [George H. W.] Bush created from particulate matter in the polluted air. The cut stencils on dinner plates were placed on my rooftop for varying lengths of time depending on the president's environmental record. Upon removal of the stencil, the Presidents' visages in smog are revealed, accompanied by their historical quotes about the environment and business."



PHOTO: MAREN LEVIA COOKE

Presidential Commemorative Smog Plates on exhibit at the Society for Contemporary Craft

She goes on to say that, "McKinley became the appropriate starting point because his presidency occurred when two automotive factories were running full production in Detroit, thus



PHOTO: MAREN LEVIA COOKE

marking a lifestyle and transportation mode, which currently causes 70% of our air pollution. Also appropriate for the format of commemorative plates, McKinley was the first president to be packaged and sold to the American public." All seventeen smog plates, as well as additional information about the artist and her other works of art can be viewed at www.kimabeles.com.

Guests at GASP's event view the Presidential Commemorative Smog Plates

In addition to learning about the fascinating works of art featured in the Nature/Culture exhibit, attendees were treated to live music provided by Jack Knight and the 3KR Band and feasted on a tasty assortment of hors d'oeuvres and desserts donated by local restaurants, farms, bakeries, and individuals. Event guests also bid on a variety of donated silent auction items, with the proceeds benefiting GASP. See next page for a full listing of all the donors who helped make this event possible.


Thank you to all who joined us for GASP at the Gallery. Your support is appreciated and is essential to GASP's continued success in protecting the environment and cleaning up our region's air. 



PHOTO: MAREN LEVIA COOKE

Rachel Filippini speaks to the crowd at the 2006 annual benefit for GASP



PHOTO: MAREN LEVIA COOKE

Jack Knight and the 3KR Band perform live during GASP at the Gallery



PHOTO: MAREN LEVIA COOKE

Guests enjoy food and fellowship at the GASP event

Thank You!

GASP thanks the many individuals, organizations, and businesses who supported our 2006 benefit event. We sincerely appreciate the commitment you've made to a cleaner, healthier environment for southwestern Pennsylvania. We would like to especially thank our key sponsors, Respironics and Harris Grill, for their generous support!

Event Sponsors



- Dirty Hairy's Dog Grooming
- E House Company
- Frick Art & Historical Center
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- Harris Grill
- Jane Haskell
- Heinz History Center
- Just Ducky Tours
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- Littlearth
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- Mariani's Pleasure Bar
- Mattress Factory
- Mellon Vineyard
- Lori & Jonathan Nadle
- Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens
- Pittsburgh Irish & Classical Theatre
- Pittsburgh Opera
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- Beth Toor
- Whole Foods
- Bridget Yupcavage

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- Breathe Yoga
- Carnegie Science Center
- Center for Creative Play
- Roger Chilton
- The Climbing Wall
- Conservation Consultants, Inc.
- Dance Alloy Theater

Thank You Khalil's!

GASP would like to thank one of Pittsburgh's best Middle Eastern & Mediterranean restaurants, Khalil's II, for organizing October's bicycle fundraiser. Each Tuesday throughout the month of October, anyone who rode their bike to the North Oakland restaurant received a hearty vegetarian meal at a discounted price. A portion of the proceeds was donated to GASP.

Bicyclists enjoyed hummos, fatoush salad, falafel with tahini sauce, grape leaves, freshly made pita and more. While we can't get you the same great deal, you can go there anytime and get the same great food! Khalil's is located at 4757 Baum Blvd. More information can be found at www.khalils.com or by calling 412-683-4757.



Hays Woods Update: Kudos to the DEP

by Fran Harkins, GASP Board Member

"The application the company submitted is not environmentally sound." Such were the judgment and words of Mike Terretti, Director of District Mining Operations for the PA DEP, on December 21, 2006 in denying the surface mining permit application of the Pittsburgh Development Group (PDG) submitted in June, 2003.

Deficiencies cited by the DEP include: inadequate demonstration of the stability of proposed valley fills, inconsistent maps, inadequate justification for adverse impacts on the ecology of waterways, and failure to submit a post-development stormwater management plan.


At risk for blasting and mountaintop mining were 453 acres of a total permit area of 613 acres lying three miles southeast of downtown Pittsburgh. A wooded highlands rising above three miles of the Monongahela River southern shoreline, the site has been called Pittsburgh Palisades Park, Hays Woods, and an oasis within the city.

Members of GASP have joined together with the Sierra Club, PennFuture, the Mountain Watershed Association, the Baldwin Citizens Alliance, Ground Zero Action Network, Clean Water Action, the artistic and academic communities of Pittsburgh, and local residents in testifying at public hearings, in writing public comments to numerous

agencies, in speaking out at public meetings and helping to host them. Paramount concerns included blasting damage to homes, noise, traffic congestion from coal trucks, exacerbated flooding in the already flood-prone area of Hays, dust pollution and its health impacts, and loss of animals and their habitat.

Additionally, the massive September landslide at the Wal-Mart site in Kilbuck Township provides eerie parallels and perhaps a timely warning in assessing the Hays Woods site. Just as the Kilbuck site lay high above and adjacent to a highway, Rt. 65, and the Norfolk Southern Railway's mainline track, so too the proposed Pittsburgh Palisades Park towers hundreds of feet directly above heavily used Rt. 837, two railroad tracks, and a new bike trail.

In November 2006, Representative Thomas Petrone called for legislative committee hearings on the Kilbuck debacle: "We need to know if red flags were missed.... We need to know the roles government may have played in creating the problem and what roles it can play in solving them.... We don't want to see another Kilbuck somewhere else."

In denying the permit to surface mine Hays Woods, the DEP saw the red flags. Stay tuned to this issue as PDG may appeal the DEP decision. 


Mon/Fayette Toll Road: Is The End Near?

by Marilyn Skolnick, GASP Board Member

Governor Rendell, in an effort to avoid ending the proposed Mon/Fayette toll road (which GASP and most other environmental groups feel *should* be ended), has issued a request for proposals to anyone interested in either leasing or purchasing the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Forty-eight companies responded.

This is not a new concept. Other states such as Illinois, Indiana, and Virginia have already done this as a way of raising additional funds. The Macquarie Infrastructure Group has been a leader in making these sorts of investments. The success of the firm has encouraged many other firms to enter the field, such as Goldman Sachs and the Carlyle Group, both of whom have responded to the Governor's call.

There have been many articles written as a result of these private purchases of public property. Individuals have been raising many questions about the propriety of selling or leasing infrastructure paid for with public money.

In the meantime, realizing that there isn't enough money to build the remaining portions of the Mon/Fayette, Mr. Brimmeier, the Turnpike's executive director, has stated that there will be no more property acquisitions until there is enough money to complete the tollroad. Please continue to put pressure on your legislators to end the tollroad and consider other alternatives. 

Spotlight on a Board Member

We welcome Janis Johnson as GASP's newest board member. Although she's only been with GASP for several months, she's already made a positive impact. Janis is serving as our new Treasurer, and she and her husband Jonas helped out greatly at GASP's 37th Annual Event in November.

Janis joined GASP because she was interested in getting involved with an environmental advocacy group. When she learned that GASP was looking for a Treasurer, she thought she just might be "a good fit." Happily, her hunch was right. As a CPA who specializes in public accounting taxes, she ably assists the staff with important financial record-keeping and tax preparation. She also serves on the Capacity/Membership Committee.

In addition to volunteering with GASP, Janis belongs to League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women, and is a Pittsburgh Center for the Arts Ambassador. She earned her BA at the College of Wooster and her MS in Taxation from Robert Morris University.


Outside of her professional talents, Janis and her husband enjoy participating in all types of outdoor activities, in particular biking, cross country skiing and kayaking. The Johnsons have three grown sons, all married, and three grandsons, whom they enjoy visiting during weekends. 



PHOTO: EMILY LISOWSKI

Join GASP Today!

- \$35 Grassroots Supporters (\$15 low income/student rate)
- \$60 Grassroots Contributors
- \$100 Grassroots Patrons
- \$250 Clean Air Defenders
- \$500 Clean Air Protectors
- \$___ Other

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!

Name _____

Address _____

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I would like to receive a 100% recycled tote bag for my donation of \$60 or more.

Check Visa Mastercard American Express

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Exp. Date _____ Amount \$ _____

Signature _____

All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit 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.

Port Authority Bus Service Slashed Your Chance to Comment is Now!

On January 3, 2007, County Chief Executive Dan Onorato and Port Authority CEO Steve Bland announced that in an effort to live within their means there will be 25% cut in service of the transit system. The Post-Gazette ran a complete listing of all the routes to be eliminated in its January 4th edition. Please look it over carefully and prepare yourself, as well as your friends and relatives, to comment on the proposed changes. You can do so in several ways:

1. There are public meetings scheduled. Pre-register by calling 412-566-5437 weekdays from 9AM to 3:30PM.
 - Monday, January 22, 10AM to 2PM, Pittsburgh Hilton Hotel, 600 Commonwealth Place, Pittsburgh
 - Monday, January 22, 4 to 8PM, University of Pittsburgh's Alumni Hall, 4227 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh
 - Tuesday, January 23, 10AM to 2PM, Achieva, 711 Bingham Street, Pittsburgh
 - Tuesday, January 23, 4 to 8PM, Monroeville Radisson, 101 Mall Boulevard, Monroeville
 - Thursday, January 25, 4 to 8PM, Palisades, 501 Water Street, McKeesport
 - Friday, January 26, 4 to 8PM, Moon Doubletree Hotel, 8402 University Boulevard, Moon Township
 - Thursday, February 1, 4 to 8PM, West View Fire Hall, 398 Perry Highway, West View
 - Wednesday, February 7, 5 to 9PM, Memorial Hall, Route 88 & Sleepy Hollow Road, Castle Shannon
2. Written comments will be accepted through February 9, via the Port Authority's web site: www.portauthority.org or by mail at 345 Sixth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15222-2527.
3. You can also leave comments on the Port Authority's telephone hotline at (412) 566-5335.

In offering comments, you might want to consider any or all of the following:

- We are in a non-attainment area for PM2.5, and vehicle exhaust contributes to this problem. Has anyone examined the effect additional cars on the road will have on air quality?
- Are union leaders prepared to increase the amount that union members contribute to health care benefits? This is one of the big ticket items causing the deficit.
- Is the Port Authority working closely with the Southwestern Pennsylvania Planning Commission's ridesharing program to compensate for commuters in neighborhoods where routes have been eliminated?
- If the county is not able to contribute its full share of matching funds, should the state legislate increased funding? Would you lobby for authorization of a local transit tax to make up the difference?

