

EVERYONE'S BACKYARD

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GULF COAST COMMUNITIES UNITE



BURNING BIOMASS FOR ENERGY



The Journal of the Grassroots Environmental Movement

www.chej.org

Center for Health, Environment & Justice

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On the Cover:

Activists from across the country rally to shut down the Detroit incinerator at the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit, MI.

Photo by: The Teamsters

FIGHTING BACK, AND WINNING

As the daughter of an investigative reporter and a teacher, some say I was born to be an organizer. But 17-year-old-me didn't feel like a natural as I waited to enter (then) Senator Hillary Clinton's office. We had come to ask Congress to take action on human rights abuses in Africa. Waiting in the hallway, I practically sweated through my sweater as my knees shook uncontrollably. It turns out legislative aides don't have two heads. They quickly agreed to sponsor the legislation we requested and I practically ran out of the office, excited and extremely proud of our work. I was hooked.

I heard the same pride and excitement in the voices of people in Tonawanda where I took my first organizing job. I was hired by the Clean Air Coalition of Western New York, who, despite the odds, had taken on one of the big corporate giants – and in Tonawanda, that's saying something, as the town is home to over 50 industrial facilities.

With the help of CHEJ, the community has fought back. Over the last year we've run a direct action campaign to hold one of the community's worst polluters, Tonawanda Coke Corporation, accountable. CHEJ has helped us successfully build strong relationships with elected officials, shame the plant owner, generate press coverage and host educational events for the community.

So far, it's working! Last December the plant was raided by the U.S. Attorney General's office. A week later, the environmental control manager was arrested and charged with violating three federal laws. In January, the EPA issued three Notices of Violation documenting hundreds of air, water and hazardous waste violations and mandated improvements at the plant. Since then, Tonawanda Coke has been cited for violations by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. As a result, the levels of benzene in the community are beginning to drop.

Our community's success speaks to the effectiveness of relentless grassroots organizing. No matter the issue, when people come together, tell their stories and demand change, it happens! Our community isn't slowing down one bit – this fall we will launch a new campaign to further reduce air toxics in Tonawanda. We'll draw on the experience of veteran organizers and some new, nervous folks to push for these important changes, building pride in our community and ourselves as we do it.

By Erin Heaney, Executive Director, Clean Air Coalition of Western New York

As CHEJ prepares to celebrate our 30th year of empowering communities and building grassroots leadership, look for more stories over the coming year by grassroots leaders like Erin of how people have come forward to meet the challenges facing their families and communities.

ABOUT CHEJ

CHEJ mentors a movement building healthier communities by empowering people to prevent harm caused by chemical and toxic threats. We accomplish our work through programs focusing on different types of environmental health threats. CHEJ also works with communities to empower groups by providing the tools, direction, and encouragement they need to advocate for human health, to prevent harm and to work towards environmental integrity. Following her successful effort to prevent further harm for families living in contaminated Love Canal, Lois Gibbs founded CHEJ to continue the journey. To date, CHEJ has assisted over 10,000 groups nationwide. Details on CHEJ's efforts to help families and communities prevent harm can be found at www.chej.org.

BY MICHELLE EREBERG, THE GULF RESTORATION NETWORK

GULF COAST COMMUNITIES UNITE

The BP deepwater oil drilling disaster made it clear that far more must be done to protect and restore the amazing coastal environments and communities of the Gulf of Mexico. Millions of gallons of oil have contaminated these waters, threatening not just the fragile ecosystems along the coast, but also the communities who depend on the Gulf for their very existence. With oil impacting marshes and wildlife, as well as the white sand beaches of the Florida panhandle, it's time for the nation to stand behind a region-wide, community-based response to this crisis.



Photo by the Gulf Restoration Network

On July 1st environmental and public interest groups launched the Gulf Future Campaign to help facilitate the community response to the BP oil drilling disaster. The Gulf Restoration Network (GRN) and the Gulf Coast Fund formed this campaign to increase awareness about the disaster and to build public support for the gulf coast communities most impacted.

Our vision is to mobilize supporters from across the nation to show their solidarity with the people of the Gulf Coast. It is still unclear what the future looks like for these folks. It could take months and even years for the scope of the environmental and economic effects of this disaster to be revealed. In spite of this uncertainty, some things are evident:

- We must hold BP accountable for the full cost of this disaster. This includes cleaning up all the oil still being spewed from the well and restoring the marine and coastal environments;
- We must ensure that coastal and fishing communities have the resources to fight for their future;
- We must prevent future calamities by supporting the use of clean and renewable energy, stopping dangerous deep water drilling, and creating effective regulation of the oil industry.

Organizers reached out to environmental and public interest organizations to build their support for the campaign. Eight organizations have signed on so far (see www.gulffuture.org/supporting-organizations/). We are working with these groups to share information with our constituencies and to coordinate our response to this disaster.

The Gulf Future Campaign is organizing fundraising benefits and awareness-raising events nationwide. The campaign launched with a series of live music events

in cities across the country. Volunteers were enlisted to do outreach at these events and to distribute campaign materials. These events were extremely successful inspiring organizers to continue this outreach.

The campaign is monitoring BP's and the state and federal government responses to the oil drilling disaster. GRN staff have participated in hearings by delivering testimony about the dangers of deep water

drilling, the inadequate response to the cleanup effort, and the need for a comprehensive wetlands and coastal restoration plan. The staff is also submitting comments on policy proposals, filing litigation, and has requested information from state and federal agencies about environmental impacts, including the use of dispersants.

Campaign resources are also supporting the work of the Gulf Coast Fund (GCF) for Community Renewal and Ecological Health, which has worked hand-in-hand with Gulf Coast communities for the past five years. Recognizing the scope and scale of this disaster, GCF is taking action to address the situation and work directly with community leaders and frontline responders. They are providing emergency grants to organizations engaged in community-led responses in the areas most in need. The work of these organizations is critical to the recovery of the Gulf Coast. Here are a few examples:

The **Louisiana Bucket Brigade** has developed an Oil Crisis Map where citizens can report sightings of fishermen out of work, endangered wildlife, oil on shore, oil sheens, health impacts and other problems resulting from the disaster. The reports, submitted via text message, the web or e-mail appear on a web based map of the Gulf Coast, alerting officials and the public alike of the extent of the damage.

Bayou Grace is gathering information regarding the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster in the Gulf and collaborating with their partners and other individuals, community members, and organizations to coordinate the most effective response for Gulf Coast communities. They have registered their services with each of the major volunteer coordination efforts in process and provide updates and volunteer requests as they arise.

Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation has established a monitoring program to provide basic metrics, which will help the public understand the condition of the estuary and to guide other activities to monitor and manage the basin resources that may be affected by the oil disaster.

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BE SAFE Campaign

BE SAFE is a nationwide initiative to build support for the precautionary approach to prevent pollution and environmental destruction before it happens.

Where is PVC Hiding in Your School?

Visit CHEJ's latest resource – *This Vinyl School* – www.chej.org/thisvinylschool. This school is just like yours, where children attend art classes and play on the slide at recess. Like most American schools, *This Vinyl School* is hiding a toxic secret beneath its bright exterior – many things in this school are made of PVC or vinyl, a plastic that is dangerous for our health and environment.

Visit this new web-based interactive school to identify where this dangerous plastic is hiding and find healthier alternative products. Visit *This Vinyl School* today at www.chej.org/thisvinylschool

You Can Help CHEJ Get the Word Out About *This Vinyl School*.

Here's how you can help:

1. Spread the word! E-mail parents, teachers, school administrators, and bloggers you know about *This Vinyl School*. You can e-mail CHEJ to get a sample e-mail announcement to forward: mike@chej.org.
2. Organize a presentation for your local PTA using *This Vinyl School* as a way to tell the story of where PVC is lurking and to identify safer PVC-free solutions!
3. On Facebook or Twitter? Post an update or Tweet about *This Vinyl School* to your friends, fans and followers! Contact CHEJ for sample announcements: mike@chej.org.
4. Pass out postcards - contact CHEJ for full-color postcards you can pass out promoting this unique resource! E-mail us at mike@chej.org or call us at 703-237-2249.
5. Have a website or blog? Post a web banner on your site promoting this great new resource. Download web banners at: www.besafenet.com/pvc/share.htm.



Alabama Activists Ask:

Why Aren't You Worried About Nuclear Power?

Why Aren't You Worried...that Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is about to vote on more radioactive nuclear power when there is no solution for radioactive waste disposal? Why Aren't You Worried...that as a taxpayer you are covering all the loans to pay for TVA's plan to add more nuclear power when cheaper options are available? Why Aren't You Worried...that nuclear plants suck up water we don't have during droughts and TVA is about to vote on building another nuclear plant near Chattanooga? For more information: www.matrr.org.

These are the radio advertisements which the Bellefonte Efficiency & Sustainability Team (BEST) is launching in August right before the TVA's hearing on the proposed Bellefonte nuclear reactor in Scottsboro, Alabama. The radio ad blitz will be complemented by a television advertisement featuring a mother and her son talking about the radiation dangers of nuclear power. BEST and the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League worked with CHEJ to develop a major publicity campaign to help win public and political support for their fight against the dangerous and expensive reactor. If your group is fighting a nuclear power plant and wants to learn about CHEJ's new messaging and publicity workshops, contact anne@chej.org.

BY LOUIS ZELLER, SCIENCE DIRECTOR, BLUE RIDGE ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE LEAGUE

BIOMASS ENERGY: WASTEFUL, DIRTY AND NOT A SOLUTION TO GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE



In communities across the nation, burning biomass is being put forward as an answer to the problems of global climate change. But residents in those places are discovering that the promises do not square with health protection, good economics or clean energy. Energy industry entrepreneurs may claim biomass power is clean, cost-effective economic development. They may say that biomass plants do not add any additional pollutants to the environment and that the carbon dioxide released by combustion would be there anyway. But they are just plain wrong.

The Fiction of Carbon Neutral

Biomass is organic material: plants, trees and, sometimes, garbage and waste products. Promoters claim burning biomass material or creating biomass energy is "carbon neutral." But biomass is not and cannot be neutral in its impact on greenhouse gas emissions. Green plants take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen. Animals breathe in oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. This is a natural carbon cycle: respiration and photosynthesis. Respiration, the process by which animals use glucose and oxygen to release energy, is in balance with photosynthesis, the process by which plants make glucose using energy from the sun. In other words, these biochemical processes are opposites. And they happen within very short time periods.

In contrast, combustion, or oxidation, is quite different. Oxidation is a physical chemical reaction in which oxygen combines with another substance. Rusting is slow oxidation and burning is rapid. For example, burning a hydrocarbon such as methane consumes oxygen to produce carbon dioxide (CO₂), water and heat. Likewise, the combustion of wood and paper, which are made mostly of the carbohydrate cellulose, create carbon dioxide, water and heat.

Burning hydrocarbon, wood or paper are one-way processes. Combustion lacks a process akin to photosynthesis which would return the carbon dioxide emissions back to a solid form. In fact, for CO₂ released to the air, only half will be removed in 30 years, another 30 percent will take centuries, and the remaining 20 percent will take thousands of years to remove from the atmosphere.¹ Burning biomass as fuel is not carbon neutral if its impact lasts decades, much less centuries.

Wood Emits More Carbon Dioxide than Coal

Burning wood instead of coal releases approximately 11% more carbon into the air per kilowatt of electric power.² Although the carbon content of coal is greater than that of wood, more wood must be burned to produce an equivalent amount of heat. Despite this fact, carbon dioxide emitted from wood burning is generally not counted as a greenhouse gas because it is considered part of the biosphere.³ This is deceptive. Moreover, nitrogen dioxide, methane and dioxins are also emitted from wood burners.

Waste-to-Energy is Energy Wasted

The problems of global climate change have also spawned a renewed interest in building incinerators that are being promoted as waste-to-energy or energy-from-waste. This effort is driven by the need to find alternatives to using fossil fuels. Some argue that waste-to-energy incinerators are a source of renewable energy and thus carbon neutral. Clearly, this is not so. For example, paper comprises roughly 34% of municipal solid waste. In terms of heat value alone, burning one ton of paper to make power instead of recycled paper creates an energy debt of nearly 8 million BTUs; in other words, burning paper squanders the energy which could be recovered by recycling. Plus, recycling consumes 58% less water and cuts 74% of the air pollution compared to making paper from trees.⁴ In addition, burning petroleum-based materials, such as plastic (12% of household garbage) is similar to burning oil in terms of the greenhouse gas impacts.

Bad Business

The biomass public relations juggernaut has spread its message well. Upon closing a biomass deal, an elected official stated, "This new plant will bring much-needed jobs and tax revenue to our county."⁵ Hearing about a new biomass plant locating in his county, another elected official gushed, "It's historical. It's monumental."⁶

Well, no. The pie-in-the-sky promises about burning biomass made by company representatives and alternative energy advocates are exaggerated. Recycling of paper, aluminum, glass, steel and other materials is now a big business providing jobs in many communities across the nation.

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ACTION LINE

Action Line is the heart of Everyone's Backyard. This is where we tell the stories of grassroots groups that reflect their creative energy and accomplishments. It is also a way to share strategies, actions, and industry trends. Although we do not always mention our role, CHEJ is providing organizing and technical assistance to many of these groups. For other stories, we draw on a large network of contacts and organizations that we have developed during more than 25 years of operation. We welcome and encourage contributions.

Washington D.C.

The **Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)** and **Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families**, a coalition that CHEJ is part of, joined forces in late July to organize the "Race for the Cause," a rally, press conference, and mock road race that brought attention to the need for reform of the Toxics Substances Control Act. Many types of cancers are linked to the increasing number of chemicals used in consumer products, and with 41% of people expected to get cancer at some point in their lifetime, the two groups thought it vital to raise awareness of the cause of cancer and other diseases. Assembling in front of the reflection pool at the National Capitol, the groups hoisted up CHEJ's own huge inflatable ducky and handed out bright yellow T-shirts emblazoned with "Take Out Toxics." Said Andy Igrejas, Director of the Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families coalition, "We need to end the 'anything goes' mentality when it comes to putting toxic chemicals in consumer products."



Photo by Douglas Stewart

Families came to the National Mall on July 29th to support safer use of chemicals.

Idaho

The **Silver Valley Community Resource Center** has filed a complaint with the National Historical Preservation office in an effort to stop the building of a toxic repository near the Old Mission National Landmark outside of Kellogg. The Old Mission is the oldest standing building in Idaho and boasts a strong history as the location where the Coeur D'Alene tribe built a farm village with the help of Jesuits in the late 1800s. The Center, worried that the toxic repository and its constant come-and-go

traffic will damage the visual and tourist appeal of the Historic Landmark, have pointed out that the regional EPA and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, the backers of the repository, failed to consult relevant parties beforehand, as required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Illinois - In Memoriam

It is with great sorrow that we report the death of Tom Edwards in an automobile accident in Peoria. Tom was the driving force behind the group **River Rescue**, and played a key role in organizing opposition to the proposed expansion of the hazardous waste landfill run by Peoria Disposal Company. He had a 40 year history of speaking out for the environment that ranged from stopping the landfill expansion to protecting the Illinois River. This is a tremendous loss and he will be greatly missed. Central Illinois has lost one of its greatest environmental advocates.

Kentucky

Residents of the Rubbertown section of **Louisville** united this summer to protest the muddled warning system the local Dow Chemical company utilized a week earlier to alert residents of a gas leak. The company had sounded sirens to let the community know to stay inside with windows closed, but they failed to tell the residents beforehand what the sirens meant. About 200 people gathered to voice their worries about the message mishap, tying it to the much needed reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, the primary legislation in place to regulate companies' handling of hazardous chemicals. Better notification protocols is the primary concern of the community, who were frustrated by Dow's failure to harness modern technology such as texting to quickly notify residents of possible danger.

Maine

This spring several male members from the **Environmental Health Strategy Center, Maine People's Alliance, Natural Resource Council of Maine**, and **Planned Parenthood of Northern New England** collaborated to present information regarding the effects of chemicals found in consumer products on male reproductive health to their community. In a creative twist on the usual information session, the young men shared health hazard facts in a short skit that cleverly framed each fact in sports-related jargon. While several of the men pretended to watch a ball game,

a "toxics referee" – Steve Taylor of Environmental Health Strategy Center in Portland – handed out penalties to each chemical, such as a "personal foul on BPA [bisphenol-A] for causing obesity." BPA, PFCs, and phthalates were the ubiquitous chemicals punished for causing health effects like testicular cancer, sperm reduction, and altered genital development. To watch the video, head to www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzCrP_LI4F4.

Maryland

The organization **Waste Not! Carroll** embraces creativity when it comes to drawing attention to the issue of waste management and waste-to-energy (WTE) plants. With a neat layout for their website and posts like "Top Ten Reasons to Oppose WTE in Frederick" incorporated into a David Letterman photo, the organization strives to be modern and harness pop culture to attract interest. Recently, the group unveiled a billboard spouting the words "No Incinerator! Please Vote" on a green backdrop. Such colorful techniques have helped Waste Not! Carroll continue to build support for its efforts to stop neighboring Frederick County's plan to build an incinerator to burn both county's garbage. The group is pushing instead for both counties to aggressively expand its recycling and composting programs.

Michigan

Zero Waste Detroit, an alliance of environmental and social justice groups, organized a spirited march on June 26th against the city's Covanta Energy-owned waste incinerator, the largest garbage burning facility in the world. The rally rounded off the U.S. Social Forum, a four-day event geared towards finding green solutions to ecological crises. Protestors waved huge wooden sunflowers bearing phrases like "clean air" and "climate justice" (see cover photo). Supported by such groups as the **First Nations of Canada** and the **Teamsters**, they called on Detroit's Mayor to spearhead the closure. Citing health concerns such as elevated rates of asthma and arguing that recycling can provide six to ten times more jobs than burning or landfilling, the protesters hope that the city government will finally heed their pleas. "In Detroit, hundreds of local BP-style disasters occur every day," said Rhonda Anderson of the **Sierra Club Environmental Justice Program**. "The impact is immense, and entirely avoidable."

Charges against a local activist with **Save The Wild UP (SWUP)** in Marquette who was arrested for "trespassing" on public land were dismissed pending a six-month probation period, payment of court fees and completion of six hours of community service. The situation remains highly charged as SWUP and other local groups are organizing opposition to plans by global mining giant Rio Tinto to mine nickel and copper from public land leased to the company. Local residents are concerned about the destruction of the

ACTION LINE

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Visit www.chej.org/assistance
or call 703-237-2249

natural landscape caused by the mining as well as surface and groundwater pollution, and air pollution from diesel traffic and ore dust. When the arrested activist got back to her office, she found a note with the message "Our Voices Won't Stop." SWUP, in coalition with others, has invited CHEJ director Lois Gibbs to visit this fall.

New Jersey

Citizens for Clean Pompton Lakes (CCPL) criticized a recent study by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection that found no evidence that vapor mitigation systems installed in homes are polluting the outdoor air. The systems are used to remove volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that had evaporated from contaminated groundwater and seeped into homes. The residents, however, are worried that the toxic vapors are just being transferred to their yards instead. The DuPont company is responsible for the contamination of the groundwater beneath all the houses, which occurred in the 1980s and is currently emitting hazardous vapors including TCE and PCE; cleanup still continues. CCPL is asking for continuous monitoring on a better sample of houses, stating that the eight houses chosen for the study are not "representative of the area," especially since only 185 of the 439 homes in the valley have vapor systems installed so far.

New Mexico

Helena Clean Air and residents in Mesquite are busy building opposition to the Helena Chemical Co.'s appeal of a state decision that requires them to get an air quality permit. The fertilizer corporation owns a plant in the town, and asked the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) to allow them to operate without an air permit, despite numerous air quality violations and other fines that totaled roughly half a million dollars. The NMED denied the request, but the company appealed the decision. Community residents have written letters, attended public meetings, and created an on-line petition to express their frustration and outrage. As State Environment Secretary Ron Curry pointed out, "Managers of Helena cannot decide whether they need a permit. We determine that...this baseless and audacious announcement is a waste of state resources. Helena is a flagrant violator of state and federal air quality laws and must be brought into compliance." To view the petition, visit <<http://pnstate.org/HelenaCleanAir>>.

New York

Opponents of "hydro-fracking" (hydraulic fracturing) in the Marcellus Shale deposits, primarily in New York and Pennsylvania, met in Binghamton to develop a strategy to oppose this alarming drilling technique and find greener alternatives. About 150 activists from groups all around the U.S. met to form the **Coalition to Protect New York**. A former EPA engineer, Wes Wilson, spoke out about the dangers of hydro-fracking: "Some components of the hydraulic fracturing fluid that's used to get [natural] gas from tight shales...are toxic. We know they're toxic. But we don't know if the industry's handling them well so we don't release them to the air, water, or soil." The NY Senate has passed a one year moratorium on hydrofracking and the group is waiting on the vote by the NY Assembly.

Long Islanders can breathe a clean sigh of relief: Covanta, a large waste-to-energy company, has withdrawn plans to expand its garbage incinerator in **Hempstead**, citing the poor economic conditions. Residents had been concerned over hazardous air emissions and increased traffic in the area. Even better, New York State has deemed recycling to be a top priority on Long Island and elsewhere due to current low recycling rates, a move that further strengthens the environmental movement in the area.



NYPIRG student leaders standing up for toxic-free toys!

This July, CHEJ, the **Teamsters**, **Clean New York**, and **WE ACT for Environmental Justice** hit the streets of NYC in a spirited rally and news conference outside the Toys "R" Us' flagship store in Times Square. **NYPIRG**, **Greenpeace** and the **Lower East Side Girls Club** also attended the rally. Armed with signs, banners and balloons that read, "Tell Toys R Us: Stop the Toxic Toy Story," the protestors called on the mega retailer to stop selling toxic PVC toys. Several toys were tested at the event using an XRF analyzer, flyers were passed out to concerned parents and children, and a box full of toxic PVC toys were returned to the store (taped in bright yellow "caution" tape). Two years ago, CHEJ declared victory when

Toys "R" Us agreed to phase out the sale of toys containing lead or phthalates, reduce the use of PVC, and offer more PVC-free toys. Unfortunately, it's now clear Toys "R" Us has broken its promises. For more, see www.chej.org/blog/2010/07/26/photos-from-our-rally-at-toys-r-us/.

The **Clean Air Coalition of WNY** in Tonawanda continues to make progress in its efforts to reduce emissions from the Tonawanda Coke plant that has been the target of their efforts. The plant reported a significant drop in benzene emissions and has made major strides to comply with environmental regulations. An air monitor on Grand Island Boulevard found levels of benzene, a carcinogen, to be 19 times higher than recommended guidelines compared to 75 times higher in tests taken a year earlier. CHEJ director Lois Gibbs was the keynote speaker at the group's successful annual fundraising dinner last spring.

North Carolina

Congratulations to the residents of **Scotland County** who successfully opposed the expansion of a landfill in their area. The Scotland County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously in early June to stop plans for the expansion, which had been proposed as a way to bring more revenue into the financially strapped area. Residents opposed the plan because they felt it would turn the county into a dumping ground for trash from all parts of the state. The decision overrode the approval originally given to the project. The board also passed another resolution unanimously that stated that the county would no longer employ any firms related to waste disposal and would alert all waste management companies that the county is now "out of the landfill business."

Ohio

Our Neighborhood Matters hosted a meeting with CHEJ's Lois Gibbs in Wooster to brainstorm ways to address their continuing problems with a hazardous wastewater treatment facility that is causing health problems due to odors. Lois also agreed to meet with the city attorney who wanted to talk about what their options might be. This meeting was part of a larger state tour by both CHEJ and the group **Ohioans for Health, Environment, and Justice**. Lois attended meetings in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Toledo, Hooven, and Columbus.

Residents in Toledo held their first group meeting and formed the **Port Clinton Citizens Action Committee**. Citizens are concerned that a new school is being built on a site where sewage sludge has been disposed. The Ohio Department of Health is also doing a cancer cluster investigation of Port Clinton because a local citizen put out a request on Facebook for all those with cancer to contact her. The health

Photo by The Teamsters

ACTION LINE



department was not prepared for the huge response that was received on Facebook.

Chevron is responsible for a plume of benzene contaminated groundwater in the village of **Hooven**. The US EPA has found that volatile chemicals in the water are evaporating out of the groundwater passing through the soil and entering buildings in the town, including a school, through the process of vapor intrusion. This is a relatively newly acknowledged pathway of exposure.

Pennsylvania

The **Group Against Smog and Pollution**, as well as concerned Cheswick and Springdale residents and students, have reigned victorious in reaching a voluntary agreement with the RRI Energy Cheswick Power Plant to alter its current permit to the Allegheny County Health Department regarding lead emissions. The company had originally sought a permit that would allow them to release up to 1,810 pounds of lead into the air per year; but after hundreds of residents near the plant and students at the nearby Springdale High School signed a petition requesting the level be lowered, RRI agreed to reduce the permit level to 626 pounds per year, as well as increase monitoring and reporting activities.

Rural communities, with their small governments and budgets, are often the most vulnerable to large companies, but the **Buffalo Valley Neighbors Association** (BVNA) proved that they can also be the most tenacious. After Ag-Lime Processing, LLC (ALP) proposed to build and operate a sewage sludge processing facility between Lewisburg and Mifflinburg, the group set forth to gather support and challenge the company on legal terms, stating that the area proposed for the sludge center was meant for agricultural use, not commercial or industrial use. Though ALP's land application was denied by the Department of Environmental Protection, Zoning Officer, and the Buffalo Township Planning Commission, in some cases

multiple times, it is still pushing for the sewage sludge facility. The BVNA remains vigilant, however, and plans to continue thwarting the company's efforts.

Tennessee

Clean Water Expected in East Tennessee, Clean Water for North Carolina, and other groups held a "Rally for the River" in Cocke County in June to demand cleanup of the Pigeon River. A wastewater permit issued by the North Carolina Division of Water Quality for Blue Ridge Paper Products Mill in Canton failed to address the pollution of the river, where the mill's byproducts discolor the water and hot effluent kill the fish. Raft guides, elected officials, and community activists spoke of how the river's pollution weakens an already faltering economy by wounding water-based recreational industries like rafting. The EPA has already objected to the permit. The mayor of Cocke County put it this way: "We feel the permit's terms do not represent meaningful progress under ... the Clean Water Act of 1972. And for us, after 102 years of continuous pollution from this paper mill, that is not acceptable."

Texas

Texans Together is organizing to address dioxin contamination leaking into the San Jacinto River from the San Jacinto River Waste Pits, a federal Superfund site outside of Houston. Sludge waste from paper mill production was dumped in the pits years ago and is leaching into the river which regularly floods the site. Dioxin levels as high as 46,000 parts per trillion (ppt) have been found in the waste pits. 1,000 ppt was the trigger level used to evacuate the entire town of Times Beach, MO in 1983. The community is concerned about dioxin in the river because so many people fish the river even though a fish advisory warning people not to eat the fish has been issued. Fishing is a main source of food for many local residents. Texans Together is trying to get EPA to fence off the river where people fish from the shore and to install signs that warn people about the contamination. CHEJ is providing organizing and technical assistance to Texans Together.

Virginia

Congratulations to the residents of **Bristow** for successfully blocking the construction of an asphalt plant near their neighborhoods and an elementary school. At a public hearing that was packed with green-clad asphalt supporters and blue-clothed dissenters, the Board of Supervisors voted swiftly and unanimously to deny Finley Asphalt & Sealing a Special Use Permit, thus stopping them from building in the disputed location. Those who opposed the plant's location were relieved that the board listened to their concerns of potential health effects and heavy traffic use in the area. This is the second time that the group stopped this proposed asphalt plant. After being defeated the first time, the company came back with

a new application. The location of the proposed plant was what brought people out in opposition.

Wyoming

Patriot Energy Resources, a subsidiary of Luca Technologies, withdrew its Safe Drinking Water Act exemption application submitted to the Wyoming Oil and Gas Commission, thanks in part to the **Powder River Basin Resource Council**, who filed an objection to the application this past spring. The Council called for more information from the gas company on the effects that its methane-farming practice would have on drinking water and livestock wells. The company wanted to inject "nutrients" into coal aquifers to induce microbes in the coal-beds to produce methane. But the company said it needs more time to adequately address the Council's and others' questions regarding the process. Resource Council chairman Bob LeResche responded with caution: "While we applaud Luca's actions and their efforts to work with all the stakeholders, we will continue to keep an eye on this experimental process and work to get answers to the many questions that remain to be addressed."

British Columbia, Canada



The Wilderness Committee continues to raise awareness about toxic chemicals released from incinerators.

In light of Metro Vancouver's consideration of a waste incinerator on Vancouver Island, the **Wilderness Committee** created a short, humorous, and creative video on the flaws of burning garbage and the faults in the logic of the supporters of waste incineration. Entitled "Speak Now or Forever Hold Your Breath," the video has garnered almost 2,500 views. It directs viewers to the campaign website of **Zero Waste BC** and ends with a list of alternatives to burning waste. Said Ben West, Healthy Communities Campaigner for the Wilderness Committee, "Proponents of waste incineration are big corporations that will say almost anything to get these multi-million dollar contracts so we need to get creative to stand up for public health and the environment." See the video at ZeroWasteBC.org. A decision on the Covanta-owned waste incinerator is expected this summer. ◆

Photo from www.wildernesscommittee.org



A CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE THREATS TO CHILDREN'S HEALTH

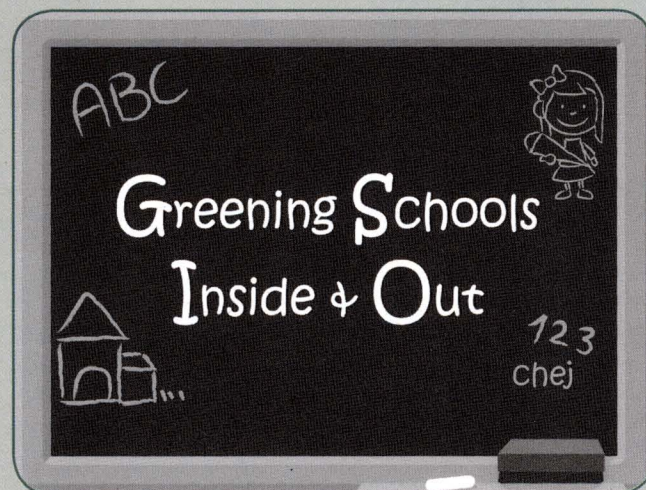
Child Proofing Our Communities

Greening Schools Inside & Out

CHEJ is continuing our work for healthy and green schools in New York State, and have been developing endorsement platforms for our safe school siting and PVC-Free Schools campaigns. We are working to make sure that schools in New York are not built on or near polluted land or polluting facilities, and that schools move away from and phase out PVC, the poison plastic, in building materials and school supplies. We are continuing to build a base of support for the campaign: we have been talking to individuals who have dealt with toxics issues in schools in their communities or have worked on similar issues in the past, as well as meeting with many statewide and local environmental, health, and labor organizations across the state. We welcome involvement in the fight for safe schools in New York. Please contact Reed Dunlea at rdunlea@chej.org if you would like to get involved.

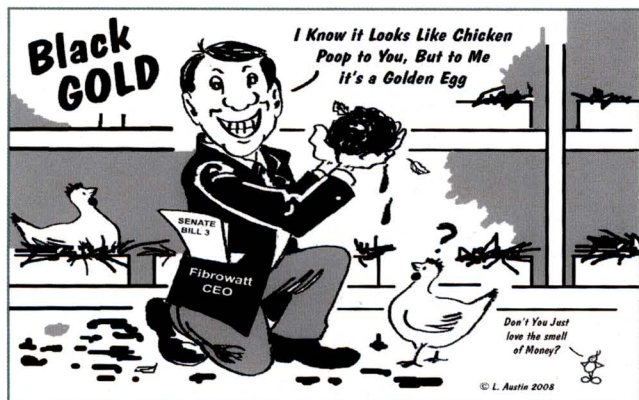
Groups Ask First Lady to Support Safe Schools

CHEJ and over fifty organizations sent First Lady Michelle Obama a letter urging her to expand the focus of her *Let's Move!* Task Force on Childhood Obesity to include toxic hazards in schools and playgrounds. The groups strongly supported the recommendations of the Task Force calling for better nutrition, increased activity and safe environments, but they urged her to consider strengthening the recommendation on safe environments to ensure America is creating healthy environments for children's activities. Specifically, they asked her to expand the recommendations to include requiring schools to clean up toxic contamination that may be present at a site selected for a new school and to avoid siting schools near sources of air pollution and toxic waste sites. By including these recommendations, *Let's Move!* can help ensure that children have a healthy and safe environment.



100 Organizations Call on EPA to Promote Safe Siting of Schools

One hundred organizations joined with CHEJ to send a letter to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson in support of a strong, child health-protective Safe School Siting policy. EPA has been working on a voluntary guidance document for over a year and will be releasing a draft for public comment this fall. The letter thanked EPA for their commitment to developing national guidelines for the Siting of School Facilities and urged the agency to make the guidelines comprehensive and protective of children's health. The groups recommended that the guidelines include a critically important operating principle to "promote siting of schools on uncontaminated sites." They also recommended that when polluted sites are proposed for school use, that the guidelines provide child health-protective cleanup requirements along with rigorous public participation in both the site selection process and in the development of a remediation plan. The group also urged the agency not to overlook existing schools that may be located within exclusion zones or near pollution sources or contaminated sites that the guidelines seek to avoid. For more information on EPA's proposed guidelines, contact anne@chej.org.



Two Communities Fight Fire with Fire

In Surry County, North Carolina residents waged a victorious two-year campaign against a proposed 55 megawatt electric power plant fueled by chicken manure, a source of biomass. A company called Fibrowatt would have benefited from a provision written into the state's renewable energy standard which set a goal of generating 900,000 megawatt-hours of poultry manure-fueled power annually (See cartoon above). Research by the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL) revealed that poultry waste would emit far more pollution per megawatt than coal: double the nitrogen oxide and significantly more carbon monoxide, particulates and acid gas. These findings were shared with state officials and they agreed.

Nevertheless, Surry County approved the project and rode roughshod over its own citizens in the process. The chairman of the Board of Commissioners said, "Because these groups have intentional (sic) disseminated false information and resorted to scare tactic activism to further their anti-growth and anti-business agendas, none of these groups or their supporters have any credibility with me or the board of commissioners. We will always listen to facts and listen to our citizens, but once groups like BREDL and Yadkin Riverkeepers resort to the disrespectful behaviors they have displayed and continue to spew lies and half truths, their agendas will fall on deaf ear (sic)."⁷⁷

Looking back on their campaign, Sam Tesh, a leader of Citizens for a Clean Healthy Economy (CACHE), said, "Every time the county commissioners were mad at us and said something spiteful, that made us more determined that they weren't gonna beat us." Ultimately, it was farmers

The burning of biomass for fuel—including chicken manure, wood or household trash—will not reduce greenhouse gas emissions. If the term "green energy" means anything, it should signify clean, healthy and sustainable energy. Plainly, continuing to make garbage is not sustainable; burning chicken manure is not clean; and trees are better left standing for the health of the planet and its inhabitants. ♦

Louis Zeller is the Science Director for the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League based out of Glendale Springs, NC. Lou has been with BREDL for over 20 years and has helped numerous local groups understand scientific and technical information and how to use this information in their local campaigns.

and small business owners of rural Surry County who became disenchanted with the project. CACHE organized public forums featuring experts on air pollution and public health. They generated news and held press conferences to get the word out to everyone that poultry power is dirty energy. In May the newspaper headlines read: "County severs ties with Fibrowatt." Not resting on their laurels, CACHE members are assisting farmers and homeowners in rural Lavonia, Georgia who oppose Fibrowatt's carbon copy proposal there, sharing the information and experience gained during their grassroots campaign.

Rural Chester County, South Carolina is currently threatened with a proposed 1600 megawatt municipal solid waste-to-energy plant proposed by Covanta Energy. Annually, Covanta's incinerator would emit 2.8 million pounds of pollution and 575 thousand tons of carbon dioxide. Serious Chester Residents Against Pollution (SCRAP) held public events and press conferences which alerted the public to the danger, but county officials pressed forward with rezoning of the proposed site regardless. Undaunted, SCRAP focused on an existing state law which caps the amount of garbage that can be incinerated in South Carolina at 600 tons per day. Jimmy Bruce, founder of SCRAP, said, "If South Carolina lawmakers were to allow the waste industry to raise or eliminate the cap on incineration limits, I fear incinerators could pop up all over the state like mushrooms after a rainstorm." To refute industry claims of renewable green energy, they re-branded the proposal with a slogan: "Say no lifting the lid for green garbage." The legislature has adjourned for the year, and SCRAP, working in coalition with other groups, has so far kept the cap in place.

⁷⁴Fed Reg.18886, page 18899, April 24, 2009, *Proposed Endangerment and Cause or Contribute Findings for Greenhouse Gases Under Section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act.*

⁷⁵United States Environmental Protection Agency AP-42 Emission factors, Wood Residue Combustion in Boilers, page 1.6-2.

⁷⁶Environmental Protection Agency AP-42 Emission Factors, page 1.6-2.

⁷⁷Source: *The Solid Waste Handbook: A Practical Guide*, William D. Robinson, Editor, ISBN: 978-0-471-87711-0, March 1986.

⁷⁸"Fibrowatt Announces Sampson County Site for First Power Plant Fueled by Poultry Litter," County Chairman Jeff Wilson quoted in *Space Daily*, April 18, 2008.

⁷⁹"Fibrowatt picks site in Surry," quoting County Commission Chairman Craig Hunter, *Winston-Salem Journal*, June 6, 2008.

⁸⁰"Group launches campaign against Fibrowatt," *Mt. Airy News*, June 10, 2009.

With Special Thanks

CHEJ would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations that made critically important donations to support our work between May 1, 2010 to July 31, 2010. We wish we had the space to acknowledge each and every one of CHEJ's donors in these pages because all gifts, regardless of size, are very much appreciated. Thank you for your support!

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GULF COAST COMMUNITIES UNITE, continued from page 3

Waterkeeper Alliance is a global environmental movement uniting more than 190 Waterkeeper organizations around the world and focusing citizen advocacy on issues that affect waterways, from pollution to climate change. In response to the oil disaster, the Alliance is working to connect and support Gulf Waterkeeper organizations to provide a voice for waterways and affected communities.

Mary Queen of Vietnam (MQVN) advocates for and provides social services to the Vietnamese community in the Gulf. Nearly one-third of Gulf fishermen are of Vietnamese descent and this disaster has threatened their livelihood. MQVN is calling for transparency and accountability in the disaster response, financial assistance to impacted communities, and healthcare coverage for cleanup workers.

The Steps Coalition is working to build a democratic movement to create a healthy, just and equitable Mississippi Gulf Coast by developing local leadership, supporting communities to advocate for their needs and by facilitating communication, coordination, and collaboration among their membership

GulfFuture.org was created to serve as a hub for information regarding this disaster. On this site, you can

access the latest news, events, videos, photos, and blogs about the oil disaster. You can also link to our supporting organizations to keep up on how they are involved in this effort.

Through the website, social networking outlets, and outreach activities the campaign urges people to get involved by making a financial contribution to our effort and in return each person will receive a petroleum-free wristband and a petition postcard to send to President Obama calling for a response to the campaign's platform. The wristband demonstrates solidarity with the people of the Gulf, as well as increases the visibility of this disaster and the work of our supporting organizations.

Organizers are using this campaign as a forum for discussing how best to support coastal communities, and to create regulation and policy that will protect these communities from future disasters. It is critical that we do not squander the opportunity this disaster gives us to have a meaningful conversation about the future of our energy and coastal restoration policies. Gulf Future supporters will continue to advocate for sensible policy solutions to address this disaster and prevent future calamities.

The time to get people involved is now when these Gulf Coast communities need our support. We must build the resources and structure to engage in the long-term recovery efforts this disaster will require. ♦

Michelle Erenberg is the Campaign Organizer for the Gulf Restoration Network and a resident of New Orleans, Louisiana. She is enrolled in the Master of Public Administration program at the University of New Orleans.

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