



Since 1967, Protecting Everyone's Right to Breathe Clean Air

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For four decades, members of Clean Air Council have made a difference in Pennsylvania and Delaware, helping everyone to breathe a little easier. Members receive quarterly issues of Fresh Air, action alerts, invitations to special events and the annual 5K Run. Please send your comments to Joe Minott, Executive Director.

Thinking about a bequest? Consider leaving a gift to Clean Air Council in your will. Learn more by calling 215.567.4004, ext. 108.

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Staff Profile

Erika Reinhard

Erika Reinhard joined the Council in September 2015 and is currently the Sustainable Transportation Outreach Coordinator. She works with the transportation department to reduce pollution by providing information to employers and employees about Philadelphia's wide range of alternative transportation options, commuter benefits, and Clean Air Council services (such as rideshare matching, RideECO, alternative work arrangements, emergency ride home enrollment and parking management). Additionally, Erika helps to promote GoPhillyGo.org, a multimodal mapping tool for the Greater Philadelphia Area.



Prior to Clean Air Council, Erika served as an AmeriCorps VISTA at Habitat for Humanity of Montgomery County, PA where she helped build capacity for ReStore Montco, Habitat's nonprofit home improvement store.

Erika is from Emmaus, Pennsylvania and resides in South Philadelphia. She received a BA in political science from Kutztown University and a masters in city and regional planning from Rutgers. Outside of work, Erika likes to spend her time outdoors cycling or hiking, reading, and volunteering with her civic association.

Erika can be reached at 215-567-4004 ext. 111, or by email at ereinhard@cleanair.org.

HOW I SEE IT: JOE'S CORNER

In August 2015 the EPA finalized the Clean Power Plan (CPP) which placed the first limits on emissions of CO2 from already-existing power plants. One of the CPP's strengths is its flexibility. Each state is allowed to determine the best way for it to achieve the required reductions of CO2 based on its own unique economy and particular mix of fuels supplying its electric grid. The EPA estimates that the CPP will reduce our national CO2 emissions by about one-third, and would provide many billions of dollars in net benefits, including avoided health costs and property damage that would result from climate change.

Despite these clear benefits, the CPP has faced resistance in Pennsylvania. In 2014, the legislature passed Act 175, giving itself the ability to reject any plan Pennsylvania's DEP came up with if the legislature didn't like it. The result could be that the state is unable to develop an effective plan for reducing its emissions. Even worse, Pennsylvania might not submit any plan at all to the EPA. In that case, Pennsylvania would truly miss out because a federal plan would be imposed that would almost certainly be less flexible, less well tailored to Pennsylvania, and less beneficial to our citizens.

Even in the face of these challenges (and the unprecedented decision by the Supreme Court to temporarily stay the CPP), Governor Wolf has pledged to move forward on the CPP and work to develop a plan. This is particularly important because of the role fossil fuels have long played in Pennsylvania's economy. The state is a net-energy exporter, meaning it produces more energy than it uses and sends the extra to other states. As a result, Pennsylvania is a major emitter of greenhouse gases, producing approximately 1% of total global greenhouse gas emissions. It is crucial that Pennsylvania be a leader in implementing the CPP and reducing its emissions. Doing so will encourage other states to adopt their own CPP implementation plans and will help to show the world that the U.S. is serious about meeting the goals recently set out in Paris.

Clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment are human rights, guaranteed to us by the Pennsylvania Constitution. It is also becoming increasingly clear that the energy jobs of the future are not in coal or natural gas, but are instead in zero-emitting sources of energy and in implementation of energy efficiency programs. The CPP's ability to put Pennsylvania at the forefront of these new technologies and reduced CO2 emissions is essential not only for our health and the health of our children, but also for the health of our state's economy. Pennsylvanians must show Governor Wolf and the DEP that residents support his efforts to move forward with implementing the Clean Power Plan.

Joe Minott is the Executive Director of Clean Air Council

News and Information for Members of Clean Air Council

April 2016
Number 23

Run for Clean Air, We've Come a Long Way

Run for Clean Air | Saturday, April 16, 2016 at 7:30 a.m. | Philadelphia Museum of Art

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The Clean Air Council is a member-supported, nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to protecting everyone's right to breathe clean air. The Council works through public education, community advocacy, and government oversight to ensure enforcement of environmental laws.

Legal update: Council Wins First Round Against Sunoco

Sunoco has been behind many of the pipelines now crisscrossing Pennsylvania, including the proposed Mariner East pipelines. Now Sunoco is trying to use eminent domain to build pipelines. Eminent domain allows Sunoco to seize landowners' property for construction, regardless of whether the landowner agrees to it or not.

How can Sunoco, a private company, get away with this? Part of the reason lies with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC). The PUC is

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If you've been at the Run in the past decade, you've probably spotted run-regular Mickey Somsanith in his penguin costume. Here he is in 2013 nearing the finish line.

Saturday, April 16, 2016 marks the 35th anniversary of the Council's Run for Clean Air presented by Toyota Hybrids. The Run has grown in leaps and bounds and continues to be one of the region's most popular spring races. The race is Philadelphia's largest Earth Day celebration, bringing together thousands of supporters to celebrate and demonstrate their commitment to Clean Air Council and protecting our environment.

To celebrate this milestone, we thought we'd take a walk down memory lane (pun intended) to look at the high-lights from the past 35 years.

Over the last 3 decades the race has gone from hosting 100 runners running 5 miles through the winding trails of the Wissahickon to over 2,500 participants in a multi-distance race. The run challenges seasoned and new runners alike and even has a Kids' Fun Run for budding environmentalists. New for 2016, all finishers will be receiving a medal. Spoiler alert – in line with the Council's values, the medals will be eco-friendly and useful beyond race day.

To register for the Run for Clean Air or learn more, visit www.runforcleanair.com. In addition, you can always get in touch with our Special Events Coordinator Bobby Szafranski. Just call 215-567-4004 ext. 112 or email rs@cleanair.org.



Recognize anyone? Of course you do, that's Philadelphia Mayor John Street at our run in the early 2000's!



The Alaska Coalition of Pennsylvania joined the run for Clean Air in 2002, dressing up and making a statement against drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Methane regulations NOW!

In Pennsylvania, natural gas is rapidly replacing coal as the dominant energy source. While natural gas can burn cleaner than coal, it also leaks at every stage of the supply chain, causing a host of unique problems. First, natural gas leaks contain numerous air pollutants that can exacerbate asthma and lead to lung and heart disease, even cancer. Natural gas also contains methane, a potent greenhouse gas that causes 86 times more warming than carbon dioxide in the short-term. These leaks are no small matter either; recent studies have shown that official measures of methane leakage rates are vastly underestimated. Despite this clear and pressing problem, Pennsylvania currently has few regulations in place to cut methane pollution.



The Council has been hard at work to change that over the past year. Through research to determine best available technologies and practices, public education, and bringing impacted residents to public meetings and hearings, we made sure the Wolf Administration and US EPA knew that Pennsylvanians want and need these protections.

The Council has been pushing for regulations on methane pollution from both existing and future oil and gas infrastructure. Last fall, the Council organized hundreds of supporters including Council members, scientists, nurses, and impacted people from across the state to attend a public hearing in Pittsburgh and testify in support of the first-ever EPA regulations on methane for future oil and gas infrastructure. The Council also got thousands of our members to send letters to the head of the EPA asking for coverage of existing oil and gas sources.

In addition to working at the federal level, the Council has also advocated that Pennsylvania's DEP enact regulations on methane. The Council delivered 10,000 petition signatures to the Wolf administration

this winter from Pennsylvania residents calling for the strongest measures possible to reduce methane pollution. In January, Governor Wolf announced a suite of proposals to cut methane pollution, including new permitting requirements and best practices for technology and leak monitoring for existing oil and gas facilities. But the work is not yet done, and as these proposals get drafted into regulations and policies, the Council will be working with the public and the DEP to ensure that Pennsylvania adopts best-in-the-nation methane emission regulations.

The Council will also keep pushing the EPA to not just propose but also adopt rules for existing sources of methane pollution to ensure our air is kept clean and our climate goals are met. Even though Governor Wolf is taking action to establish these important methane safeguards in Pennsylvania, other states must be required to do the same in order to level the playing field and protect the air we all breathe, since air pollution knows no state boundaries.

For more information contact Eva Roben at 215-567-4004 ext. 127 or email eroben@cleanair.org.



Attention Commuters!

The Council's staff helps employers set up tax-free transit payment programs as an incentive to use public transit for their employee's commute, organize carpool and vanpools, even set up alternative work schedules like flex time or telecommuting which lowers congestion at the worst commuting times. Alternative work schedules will be particularly valuable for those who commute on I-95, which will be experiencing consistent delays in the coming years as the highway is rebuilt. Contact Erika Reinhard today (and check out her staff profile on the back!) to learn more about how we can help. Her email is ereinhard@cleanair.org, and her phone number is 215-567-4004 ext. 111.

Legal update: Council Wins First Round Against Sunoco

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able to grant or deny public utility status, which comes with the right of eminent domain. The PUC is supposed to do this by determining what best serves the public needs of Pennsylvanians. Sunoco is saying that its Mariner East pipelines, which would carry chemicals dug up during fracking operations, serve a public need.

The Council recently took Sunoco to court over this claim. While it's sometimes true that pipelines deliver chemicals that serve a public need for Pennsylvanians, it's not true of the Mariner East pipelines specifically. Sunoco will be delivering chemicals to the Marcus Hook Industrial Complex in Philadelphia for export overseas, meaning the residents of Pennsylvania would see little benefit from their construction.

Sunoco tried to quash the Council's argument before it gained steam, asking the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas to throw out our case. But on February 5th, the court ruled against Sunoco and sent the case to the next highest court, the Superior Court of Pennsylvania, to hear and decide on. No date has been set for the next hearing on this case, but the Council will keep its members and supporters updated on the case as it progresses through the courts.

For more information on this case please contact Alex Bomstein at 215-567-4004 ext. 118 or email abomstein@cleanair.org.

Air Pollution from Illegal Dumping

Pennsylvania's most recent Climate Action Plan recognizes that illegal dumping is a significant source of climate-changing pollution. For example, it takes five gallons of oil to form the synthetic rubber most tires are made of, and illegally dumped tires are at risk of catching on fire. Additionally, Pennsylvania's landfills have methods to minimize pollution by preventing methane from escaping into the atmosphere, but when waste is dumped on streets, sidewalks and other open spaces there is no such control as the waste decomposes. The Council is continuing its work in the River Wards region of Philadelphia with Drexel University to report illegal dumping to the various city agencies responsible for addressing these issues. There are a variety of options for residents to report illegal dumping, including calling 311, emailing the agency, using the Philly 311 App, and even posting on social media. The Council is committed to determining the most effective method for neighborhood residents to report illegal dumping and other environmental hazards.

Beginning with the River Wards, the Council is in the process of determining which neighborhoods are most impacted by illegal dumping and burning. The Eastwick region in Southwest Philadelphia has a sizable amount of abandoned roads, in addition to a large closed middle school that makes it easy to dump tires and household waste unnoticed. With the help of community members, the Council is putting pressure on the city to address these important quality-of-life issues.

If you know of any dumping sites in your neighborhood please contact Russell Zerbo at rzerbo@cleanair.org or call 215-567-4004 ext. 130. Russell reports these hazards to the city twice a week and would be happy to talk to you and/or your community group about how to best deal with illegal dumping.



A small sample of the waste the Council has recently documented and reported as illegally dumped in Philadelphia.



Introducing Green Justice Philly

The Council recently joined with over two dozen groups to form Green Justice Philly. Green Justice Philly is a diverse and growing coalition committed to building a healthy, sustainable and economically just region. One of the top priorities for the coalition is to oppose plans to make Philadelphia a fossil fuel "energy hub" by expanding the city's fossil fuel industries. Such development would put our neighborhoods at risk, make our residents sick, and will not contribute to our community's long-term prosperity. The Council serves on Green Justice Philly's steering committee, researching policies to curb air pollution, promote renewable energy, and provide educational resources.

For more information on Green Justice Philly please contact Matt Walker. His phone number is 215-567-4004 ext. 121, and his email is mwalker@cleanair.org.

Energy Efficiency on hold in Pennsylvania

Building codes are an important yet mostly invisible part of our society. Codes establish the bare minimum for a building's quality, safety, and energy efficiency. Without building codes, residents would pay higher utility bills, get sick more often, and even be in greater danger of disasters like fires and other emergencies.

As technology and building methods improve, building codes are updated to incorporate these changes. Every three years the International Code Council (ICC) publishes new building code recommendations which are used throughout the entire United States and some global markets. Pennsylvania's "Review and Advisory Council" (RAC) reviews these recommendations and decides whether the state should officially adopt them. Until 2011, Pennsylvania automatically adopted the ICC's updated codes unless the RAC voted to opt out of specific parts. In 2011, Governor Corbett signed legislation to end Pennsylvania's automatic adoption process and instead require the RAC to approve each individual code update.

In the years since, certain members of the RAC have obstructed the adoption of new codes. Late last year, the RAC voted to adopt almost none of the latest code updates for 2015. This is due, in part, to the fact that the RAC contains a large number of builders who want to save a buck by not having to build to higher standards.

In October 2015 the Council sued Pennsylvania's Department of Labor and Industry to challenge the RAC's decision. The Council's lawsuit emphasizes two main points, the first of which is that the RAC's decision to reject the 2015 updates was arbitrary. The RAC has subgroups review each proposed update and, despite the fact that these subgroups recommended that over 98% of the 2015 updates be adopted, the RAC voted to reject almost all of them with no explanation as to why. Second, the Council's lawsuit argues that the law has been intentionally misread to make it as difficult as possible to update building codes. Since filing the lawsuit, Labor and Industry has rescinded the interpretation in question.

This refusal to update the building codes is putting Pennsylvanians in harm's way right now. For example, the Safe Drinking Water Act requires that plumbing products contain, at most, 0.25% lead. The 2015 ICC codes contain the same requirement of 0.25% lead maximum. But Pennsylvania's outdated building codes allow up to 8% lead in plumbing products, putting the health and safety of residents at risk. As the current crisis in Flint shows, this lead can make its way into our water with devastating effects.

For more information on this, please contact Logan Welde at 215-567-4004 ext. 126, or email lwelde@cleanair.org.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Join Clean Air Council, the most active locally-based environmental organization in Pennsylvania and Delaware with 9,000 members committed to the region's clean air future.

Send this form along with your tax-deductible contribution to:

Clean Air Council
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Membership Services may be reached directly at 215.567.4004, ext. 108. Or become a member instantly by going to www.cleanair.org/give

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling 800.732.0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Perfect Storm Clears the Air over the Shenango Coke Works

On December 17, 2015, DTE Energy Corp announced that the Shenango Coke works facility on Neville Island would be shutting down, thus ending a long history of chronic violations of air quality regulations that harmed the health of Allegheny County residents for decades. The facility closed, in large part, because of drastically reduced demand from the domestic steel industry. On January 6, 2016 the Shenango Coke works finally made its last batch of coke.

The Council had long assisted residents with this polluter, facilitating a meeting in Philadelphia with afflicted community members, the EPA Region III

Regional Administrator, Shawn Garvin, and his staff. Neighbors of the plant told their personal stories of near daily hardship living in the vicinity of this plant. In the spring of 2015, the Administrator personally went out to Pittsburgh to visit the plant to see first-hand the burden this facility had placed on the surrounding community.

Despite the increasing scrutiny, violations at Shenango Coke Works persisted. In a number of instances during the summer of 2015, the plant experienced power outages which allowed for fugitive emissions to increase pollution into the area. Members of the community were outraged and called for more accountability in management of the plant. Again, the Council facilitated a meeting between EPA and community residents at a town hall meeting in November 2015 to discuss the situation at the plant which Dave Arnold, Acting Director of the EPA's Region III Air Protection Division, described as "totally unacceptable."

Even though the plant closed, work continues to ensure a healthy and publicly beneficial future use for the property. The Council will play an integral role in evaluating the improved public health of the community after it has been rid of its polluting neighbor.

For more information, call Mollie Simon at 215-567-4004 ext. 128 or email msimon@cleanair.org.

