

The Trailblazer

The Niagara Group of The Sierra Club • <http://newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara/> • Vol. 49 No. 1 Jan 2014

Update on West Valley Nuclear Waste Facility

By Lynda Schneekloth

The Sierra Club Niagara Group is one of the partners in the ongoing public participation of the West Valley Nuclear Waste Facility 30 miles south of Buffalo. We are very fortunate to have partners who have been following the situation for the 'clean-up' of high level nuclear waste in West Valley for many years. Barbara Warren of the Citizen's Environmental Coalition, Diane D'Arrigo, Nuclear Information Resource Service, and Joanne Hameister of the Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Waste are all in the forefront of this effort, and know the science and politics as well. The public goals and concerns have not changed for 30 years and were further identified in the Environmental Impact Statement. We are seeking a complete cleanup at West Valley, because the site cannot support long-term management of highly radioactive waste especially in light of the projected impact of climate change.

At this point, all of us are concerned about the West Valley status and limited agency accountability. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) decided on a phased decision-making process and we are currently in Phase 1. Our analysis has revealed that the

Environmental Impact Statement contained inadequate environmental analysis. Studies are being done to answer key questions about the future cleanup of 98% of the buried untreated radioactive waste. At the same time, the Department of Energy (DOE) has prematurely indicated that the EIS already contains adequate information to make Phase 2 decisions. That makes no sense.

The rationale for a phased process was to facilitate actual site cleanup while the studies were completed. Yet the most pressing cleanup issue -- the Strontium plume that is leaking underground and moving toward a creek -- is now unlikely to even begin until several years after 2020. It is currently unknown as to how long the existing permeable treatment wall designed to capture the strontium will be able to maintain its effectiveness.

The Department of Energy and NYSERDA have been unable to provide a Comprehensive Master Plan or Overview for all Phase 1 activities to the public. They have been unable or perhaps unwilling to document whether they have completed all projects needed to arrive at the Interim End State, the milestone where

Phase I decommissioning was to begin according to the Draft EIS.

If you are interested and/or have some knowledge of nuclear issues and would like to get involved, please contact Lynda Schneekloth, Chair of the Sierra Club Niagara Group, or the Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Waste.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Sierrans, We are currently looking for volunteers to assist us with our environmental goals. Whether you have administrative, research, public speaking, or people skills, WE NEED YOU! We encourage any of our members to contact us at Sierratrailblazer@gmail.com, the Newsletter address, or attend one of our Executive Committee meetings the 4th Tuesday of every month. Please help us build a stronger environmentally conscious world!

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and upcoming events, visit...
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RECYCLING CORNER - Junk Mail

By Ron Missel

"Junk Mail" is easy to recycle. Just throw it in the recycle box and it's gone. Perhaps if it were more difficult to dispose of, we'd pay more attention to it. The real question is: "How much of it do we really want - or need - in the first place?" That's a personal preference, but I think a fair response would be: "A whole lot less than we currently receive." For the record, it's about 6 pieces daily, or 40 lbs of junk mail per person annually in the US. The types of junk mail are varied but include post cards, catalogs, shopping guides, penny savers, circulars, envelopes, telephone books, and so on.

What drives this postal onslaught is advertising produced for the Direct Mail industry. It's an effective way to generate business and works for the small service industries and local "mom & pop" shops, right up to the "big box" stores and major corporations selling insurance and financial services.

So what's the impact? At the very least, receiving as much junk mail as we do is a general nuisance for most of us. More importantly, however, is the impact on the environment. It's estimated that 100 million trees are felled annually to accommodate the Direct Marketing effort in the US. And while there's likely a growing increase in the use of recycled paper within the industry, the recycling process itself consumes considerable energy as does the production of the advertising mailing pieces - whether from recycled or raw materials. (Most energy is produced from

fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas. The carbon by-products of this energy production are leading contributors to greenhouse gases and global warming.)

What can we do about it? Unfortunately, there is no one-step process to eliminate these unwanted mailings, but with a little effort, you can curtail a high percentage of them. Here are some of the options. (NOTE: It can take up to 3 months for your name to be removed from some of the mailing lists. Be patient!)

On-Line (recommended):

- TRUSTED ID MAIL PREFERENCE SERVICE - CATALOGS & RELATED (www.catalogchoice.org) - You will have to sign up and select the catalogs (and related materials) that you no longer want to receive. It only takes about 10 seconds per catalog once you're logged in.

- DIRECT MARKETING ASSOCIATION - GENERAL MAILINGS (www.dmchoice.org) - This site also requires signing up and establishing some parameters for the mail you prefer to "opt out" on.

- CREDIT CARD & INSURANCE - ENVELOPE MAILINGS (www.optoutprescreen.com) - A good percentage of the mail you receive will be from banks and financial institutions. Cancel through the web-site or call at 1-888-5OPT-OUT (1-888-567-8688).

Telephone or Email Direct Contact (recommended):

- CATALOGS - Since catalogs are often the largest of the mailings, simply call or email the companies directly. Most are extremely accommodating and contact

information is readily available within the catalog.

- TELEPHONE BOOKS - Contact the publishers and advise that you no longer want to receive the books. (You may have to make contact annually.)

- NEWSPRINT WEEKLYS (Penny savers, shopping guides, weekly advertiser, coupon clippers) - I don't think any of the on-line services will catch all of these, but you can call them direct. Keep everything you receive for a couple of weeks and then see what duplicates. Call those publishers first. (You may have to dig a little to find the telephone numbers but they are there.)

- E-MAIL ADVERTISING - While there is no "hard copy" to contend with, e-mail files and databases reside on computer servers in large data centers with expensive, energy-intensive, climate controlled environments (AC, heat, battery back-up). The fewer emails generated and stored, the less energy expended. Most have an UNSUBSCRIBE capability, often on the bottom of the email.

In closing, remember that business advertisers and the Direct Mail industry do not want you to "opt out", and they're not going to make it easy. Even the US Postal Service is now selling a direct mail service called EVERYDOOR to compensate for lost revenues, but that's another story.

And finally, the following site provides additional, helpful information:
<http://www.ecocycle.org/junkmail>.

The Promise of N.Y.S. Renewable Energy

By Robert Ciesielski

The Atlantic Chapter and the Beyond Coal Campaign are calling on Governor Cuomo and NYS to implement a Wind Initiative, to double wind power production in the State in 2014. This would mirror the NY Sun Initiative which has been announced to invest \$150 million in solar power per year over the next 10 years.

The potential of renewable energy is enormous – and a must to control climate change in our industrialized world.

Sierrans can read the article “All In” by our National Executive Director Michael Brune in the January/February 2014 issue of the Sierra magazine. The potential of wind and solar power to produce a 100% carbon-free economy in the U.S. by 2030 is here now. In 2013 national wind turbine production is 60 Gigawatts (60,000 Megawatts), or the equivalent production of 60 nuclear reactors. Rooftop solar panels

currently produce over 7 Gigawatts (some 7,200 Megawatts).

To look further, wind energy’s current promise in our area is outlined in an October 2013 study by PJM, the independent electricity grid operator for all or part of 13 mid-Atlantic and Great Lake states (including Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey). PJM finds that wind energy produces massive reductions in electricity production costs and wholesale prices. Obtaining 30% of PJM’s electricity from wind reduces production costs by \$13 billion (about 35%) each year and reduces wholesale electricity prices by some \$20 billion annually. The 30% production rate also reduces carbon emissions by more than 29%. The study also found that 30% of electricity from wind would cause no reliability problems, and that grid updates necessary for operation would be reasonable.

On the job front, every \$1 million invested in wind power will result in 13 jobs – while the same amount invested in gas nets only 5 jobs. In general, that \$1 million invested in renewable energy creates approximately 5 jobs in component manufacturing alone.

As Michael Brune mentions, California has an official goal of producing 33% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020. It appears that the State will be producing 40% of its electricity from renewables by 2020. In New York, we have a Renewable Portfolio Standard goal of 30% renewable energy by 2015. As of December 2013, NYS is producing less than 3% of its electricity from wind and solar sources.

Please support our Wind Initiative and get our State on the road to real renewable energy production.

For more news, archives, and upcoming events, visit - newyork.sierraclub.org/niagara/

Scotland is going 100% Green by 2020; Shame on Dirty America

By Juan Cole | Dec. 20, 2013

Republication from *Informed Comment: Thoughts on the Middle East, History and Religion*
Website: <http://www.juancole.com/2013/12/scotland-green-america.html>

Glasgow is the city of the future, not Phoenix. Scotland has a population of about 5.3 million, a little more than the US state of Arizona. But the resemblance stops there. Arizona’s state government is backward-looking, roiled by racial politics, contemptuous of higher education, and a climate laggard, dirtying up the atmosphere and causing its state’s own increasing desertification.

Last year, Scotland got 40% of its electricity from renewables, up from 24% in 2010. Arizona gets 9 percent of its electricity from renewables, despite vast solar potential that completely dwarfs that of Scotland. Almost all Arizona renewable energy is hydroelectric. About 35% of Arizona electricity is from coal, the dirtiest possible source. A similar proportion comes from natural gas, also a big source of carbon dioxide emissions. Arizona has a pitiful plan to be at 15% renewables by 2025, which is the sort of goal that dooms the earth.

Scotland is planning to get 50% of its electricity from wind, solar, wave and hydro in 2015, and is going for 100% green energy in 2020. Scotland is planning to get 50% of its electricity from wind, solar, wave and hydro in 2015, and is going for 100% green energy in 2020. About 12% of Scottish power is from hydro-electric, just slightly more than Arizona. The share of Scottish electricity produced by nuclear plants has fallen from 50% to 34%, and the Scottish government has no plans to build new nuclear plants. The Scottish public is on board with the government’s plans. Scots

don’t mind dams or solar panels or wind turbines. They deeply dislike nuclear reactors and want nothing to do with hydraulic fracturing.

Scotland is so good at generating electricity that it exports about a quarter of what it generates. This datum suggests that it could just close most of its coal plants tomorrow and still have enough power (which is what it should do), though there may be grid issues with moving quite that quickly. In any case, Scotland, which invented the steam engine in 1780 and kicked off the Anthropocene era of human-caused global warming, won’t have coal plants by 2020.

In contrast, the Conservative government of the UK is committing itself to building nuclear plants and to fracking underground rocks in search of natural gas, a dirty source of CO₂. The fracking process may well release substantial amounts of methane, making fracked gas as dirty as coal.

Nuclear plants are extremely expensive and take a long time to build, and depend on a fuel that can become depleted, not to mention that the waste is impossible to dispose of safely. In contrast, solar panels have fallen 60% in price in just 18 months, and the price per kilowatt hour of wind turbines is also plummeting. By the time the last new renewable electric power installations are being put in in Scotland in 2020, it will be crazy to use any other source.

If the whole world did what Scotland is doing, an enormous climate change cata-

strophe could be averted. Scotland is demonstrating that going completely green rapidly enough to keep global warming to a 2 degrees Centigrade increase is entirely possible. It is a matter of political will, not of technology or expense.

Scotland should sue the polluting countries for going on dumping 32 billion metric tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere annually, as though our air were an elevated sewage drain. Scotland will suffer damages from extreme weather, variable rainfall and fish die-off that comes from climate change, and shouldn’t have to bear that cost since it is among the few virtuous global citizens.

Executive Committee Election Results for 2014

Roger Cook
Pamela Hughes
Richard Lippes
Lynda Schneekloth
Sara Schultz
Larry Snider