

The Trailblazer

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The People's Climate March



Sierra Club and local unions provided broad support of The People's Climate March in New York City on September 21, 2014. Over 400,000 people attended! Locally, several unions contributed to the cause including SEIU 1199, Buffalo Teachers Federation and PEF. A special thanks to the United Healthcare Workers East, SEIU 1199, for their generous contribution of \$2500 to provide bus transportation and scholarships to students for the round trip between Buffalo and NYC. Above, SEIU Vice President Todd Hobler (center) is presenting the check to Larry Snider, Treasurer of the Sierra Club Niagara Group with Chair Lynda Schneekloth. THANK YOU 1199!!

New York Bans High Volume Horizontal Drilling For Gas

By Robert Ciesielski

On Wednesday, December 17, 2014 the Administration of Governor Andrew Cuomo agreed to ban the practice of high volume horizontal fracking (HVHF) for gas in New York State. The basis of the decision was the Governor's acceptance of the Department of Health's two-year study of HVHF that was released by acting Commission of Health Howard Zucker at a Cabinet meeting where the ban was announced.

The history of the banning of high volume horizontal fracking in New York State is a long one. Good luck, a solid regulatory environmental review process in New York, the efforts of thousands of State residents, technological advances, and the Blessings of Providence have marked its course.

The high volume horizontal drilling fracking industry was ready to descend upon New York in 2008. HVHF drilling had already begun in Pennsylvania. The fracking industry claimed that their new industrial practice was safe, utilizing only water, sand, and some benign lubricants to extract methane from shale gas lying deep in the Marcellus shale.

At that time several private citizens reminded Governor Paterson that before a new industry could

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Executive Committee 2015 Election Results

We would like to officially welcome our newly elected excom members:

John Rath
David Kowalski
Robert Ciesielski

Angela Knisley
Edward McGreevy
Laurence Beahan

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RECYCLING CORNER - METALS:

From scrap metal to washing machines...and everything in between!

By Ron Missel

Let's begin with the obvious. Common food cans go into your weekly recycle bin – soup, beans, tomato products, etc. And if you're willing to forego the 5-cent deposit, aluminum beer and soda cans may be placed there as well. Other cans, like oil-based paints, solvents, cleaners, and aerosols are considered *Hazardous Waste* and need to be disposed of accordingly. Some municipal recyclers will take the cans if they're completely devoid of the original liquid and thoroughly dry, but its best to check first. Otherwise, look for town, city and county *Hazardous Waste* "drop off" days generally scheduled a few times annually.

Recycling of many other common items is a little less obvious. Coat hangers? Many municipal recycle programs accept them, but some don't as the odd hanger shape can jam the recycle sorting equipment. Check your municipal website RECYCLE RULES & REGULATIONS. Better yet, many dry cleaners will take the hangers back and reuse them, and charitable organizations that accept and sell used clothing will take hangers to display the clothes on racks. (Reusing is always preferred to recycling.)

How about scrap metal? By definition, it's "discarded metal for reprocessing", but, unlike waste, it has value - always to the recycler and

sometimes to the consumer. Scrap metal has larger construction and industrial implications, but the average consumer frequently accumulates unwanted metal such as old gutters and trim, plumbing pipes, cords and cables, and aging pots & pans.

Scrap metal can be broken into two categories – ferrous and non-ferrous. Ferrous metals, typically iron and steel, can easily be identified by their attraction to a magnet. However, they have little or no value to the homeowner as scrap yards typically only pay on quantities exceeding 1000 lbs. They will, however, accept these materials in smaller quantities from homeowners. Conversely, non-ferrous metal like copper, stainless steel, lead and brass have some value. Aluminum does as well, but only in very large quantities.

Copper is the most valuable and can bring \$2.50+/lb. for tubing and bare wire, and \$1.50+/lb. if wire is still encased in the sheath. Sheathed copper wire includes computer cables, patch cords and data, telephone and electric wiring. Soft lead is closer to \$.50/lb. (Making and using lead fishing sinkers is now outlawed in New York. There's a lot of it around!) Check with the scrap yards for their prevailing rates on all non-ferrous metals.

Obviously, you will need to separate metal if it's going to be weighed for cash. A friend who runs estate

sales (and occasionally rummages through curb-side garbage), collects, separates and stores scrap metal; then cashes in a few times a year. There are numerous places in WNY to recycle metal. Type in "**scrap metal, your county**" in your internet browser, check the telephone book, or go to www.earth911.com (upper left corner, click on Recycle Search, type in "**scrap metal**" and your zip code.

Large appliances like washers and dryers are another matter. If they're still working, consider selling them or donating to a charity for free distribution or resale. If you are buying a new item, the retailer you purchased from may haul away the old appliance for a small fee. Most municipal trash haulers will pick them up as well, but call first as you may have to schedule a date and time. Lastly, most scrap metal places will take appliances, but you have to find a way get them there. Be sure to ask how the company manages appliances to ensure it's handled responsibly.

As with all materials and goods you accumulate but no longer need, keep the environment in mind. Reuse when you can, recycle if you can't, and dispose of properly if neither are an option. Strive to keep as much as you can out of the waste stream. You might even earn a little extra cash in the process!

The People Are Stirring . . . *By Lynda Schneekloth, Chair*

Across the globe, the people are stirring, moving, resisting and creating. Whether the issue is climate change or gun violence or civil rights, immigration or gay rights or clean water, food security or nuclear disarmament or war, or reproductive rights – the people are stirring. It is as if humanity has awakened as Isaiah foretold, “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” Only the light has come from within each heart as there is no leader of this uprising. Rather it is the collective rejection of the false promises of an industrialized society based on the belief of human superiority, technological salvation, and an extractive economy that benefits a few at the expense of the many and of the earth itself. It is the deep acknowledgement of what the Occupy Movement articulated – ‘we are the 99%...we are

here...and we are now’. We watch as the mythic structure of modernity caves upon itself and we hear the earth screaming under our assault. The people have had enough. We will not be pawns; we will not stand quietly at the bottom of the ‘trickle’ as we know there is abundance to be shared. We will not let anyone destroy the base of life on Earth or to deny the dignity of each human life. “Black lives Matter!” as do the lives of all humans, as well as our four-legged, winged, green, and invisible kin. And so we take to the streets, to the courtrooms, to chambers of government, to the pulpit, to the coffee shops, to the village centers and urban squares in Ecuador, Mumbai, the Congo, New York, Durban, and all over the world. This is the largest movement in human history, yet it has no name and thousands of leaders. As Paul Hawkins says, “What I see are ordinary and some not-so-ordinary individuals will-

ing to confront despair, power and incalculable odds in an attempt to restore some semblance of grace, justice and beauty to this world.” Systems researcher, Professor Brad Werner of the University of California San Diego, demonstrated it is only through ‘friction’ in the form of a mass social movement against our current system that there is hope for the future. This is a movement *to change everything* as Naomi Klein named it, a movement to reinstitute democracy, to restore a deep connection to the Earth and all our kin; to step down from the imaginary pedestal back to our roots, to the soil from whence we came. Come one, come all. Join us in the Great Turning, from a death-centric to a life regenerating vision for the 21st century. We’ve not much time and we need EVERY one.

“New York Bans High Volume” continued from front page

commence in the State, it was required under New York law to be subject to an environmental review process. Governor Paterson instituted a moratorium pending an environmental review. At the time there were only some 6 studies concerning the process of high volume horizontal fracking, which had only begun in earnest in 2005 after being exempted from portions of the Federal Clean Water Act, Safe Water Drinking Act, Clean Air Act, and numerous other federal laws during the Bush/Cheney administration.

Since 2008, over 400 studies of the process revealed numerous health risks and negative health effects on humans and animals as well as the potential for large-scale destruction of water systems, air and soil quality, and dangers to climate.

Dr. Theo Colburn of The Endocrine Disruption Exchange (TEDX) completed one important study in 2010. Attempting to uncover the chemicals used in the new high volume drilling process, Dr. Colburn was thwarted by the industry, which claimed that chemicals were proprietary rights and trade secrets, and not subject to disclosure. Using information obtained at fracking truck accident sites, through worker health claims, etc., TEDX released a study in 2010 showing hundreds of fracking chemicals used by the industry. TEDX was able to identify 353 of these by Chemical Abstract Service (CAS) numbers, of which some 40% were shown to be carcinogenic and another 40% to be endocrine disruptors which could cause birth defects and organ failures.

Studies by Professor Robert Howarth of Cornell University determined that methane gas is a more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂, and that the release of more than 2% of methane from the drilling and distribution process increases the threat of global climate change, significantly higher than either coal or oil. Studies by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) showed methane leakage of between 2.3% and 17% in the Western United States.

A Duke University study showed that water wells, which existed within one kilometer of HVHF shale gas drilling sites, contained 17 times more thermogenic (deep underground) methane than more distant water wells. Work by Professor Anthony Ingraffea, and the admissions of the gas industry itself, showed a 5-10% failure of initially drilled high volume gas wells that leaked methane gas and other fluids. The industry itself admits that at least 30% of HVHF wells drilled would leak within 30-years.

The massive scale of drilling, calling for tens of thousands of wells, is of great concern. A typical 6-well pad drilled in Pennsylvania uses almost 50 million gallons of water mixed with sand and up to 2% fracking chemicals. These drilling fluids are pumped in deep wells, which extend horizontally into the Marcellus Shale, using 10,000 lbs. of pressure per square inch. Much of the hazardous waste, along with heavy metals and radioactive materials from the shale, is released back from the drilled well pad and must be disposed of. Lack of storage or treatment for these billions of gallons of hazardous waste is an unsolved

problem with the industry. Moreover, much of the fracking fluid remains underground as a threat in the Marcellus Shale, which is not only naturally cracked horizontally, but also vertically towards the surface.

Besides the scientific studies, several attorneys including Helen Slottje developed the legal tactic of developing zoning restrictions on the heavily industrialized extraction process. Some 80 municipalities and towns in New York eventually adopted the zoning restrictions prior to the State ban. New York’s highest Court of Appeals eventually upheld these zoning restrictions in 2014.

Activists delivered talks and power point presentations concerning their knowledge of the effects of high volume horizontal fracking in other States. Pictures of massive destruction and industrialization of lands awakened many people to the danger of high volume horizontal fracturing. The thousands of diesel truckloads of water, fracking chemicals and frack waste per well pad were made known. In Pennsylvania, a pro-fracking administration and administrative agencies, staffed by many former fracking industry employees, permitted high volume fracking in the State’s forests. The poisoning of the Monongahela River for a period of six months, Pittsburgh’s main source of drinking water, exposed the problems of disposal of frack waste. Residents were strongly advised to drink bottled water during this period. Attempts to have the huge amounts of frack waste treated in Pennsylvania waste treatment plants resulted in the destruction of municipal water purification systems. The addition of chlorine at the plants only added to the problem by creating new carcinogens that entered into public drinking water. Whole communities like Dimock, Pennsylvania were left without fresh drinking water. Citizens were appalled to learn that the drilling companies in the Dimock area refused to accept responsibility, and only brought in fresh water to residents after being required to do so by Pennsylvania authorities, who were themselves lax in responding.

A total of over 260,000 comments were made by activists to the New York State’s Department of Environmental Conservation challenging proposed environmental studies and drilling regulations. Activists held in cities and in Albany rallies. Local anti-fracking groups challenged larger national environmental organizations to join the movement for a fracking ban. Some of the strongest opposition to fracking came from people who viewed the industrial practice as a destruction of any hope for sustainable economies. Organic farmers, wine growers, tourist businesses, and others, especially in the beautiful Finger Lakes region became actively involved.

News that fracking waste was being brought to the Buffalo Sewer Authority for disposal was challenged and resulted in a retraction of contracts. Attempts to have the horizontal frack waste treated at the Niagara Falls Water Authority were challenged. Local groups organized to request their legislators to support ban. In Buffalo, the Common Council unanimously voted to ban hydrofracking in its City limits. In 2013, the County of Erie Legislature voted to ban hydrofracking on its County properties, and also to prohibit the

spreading of fracked waste product on its roads, and to be processed in its water treatment plants.

The shutting of the door on the destructive gas extraction technique opens the door for a sustainable renewable energy based economy in New York State. With the economic cost of wind and solar power being less than fossil fuel and nuclear energy prices in a number of regions, there is every reason to transition to clean renewable energy economy:

Job growth. Germany, which produces some 28% of its electricity from renewable sources, employs approximately 380,000 in the renewable energy, clean energy economy. Based upon population, this is the equivalent of more than 1.5 million jobs in the United States. Canada, spurred by the feed-in-tariff (FIT) in Ontario, now employs more workers in renewable energy than it does in the tar sands. Job in solar and wind are more labor intensive than are fossil fuel extraction industries and provide good paying jobs.

Global Climate Change. The elimination of fossil fuel use is necessary to curtail global climate change, and to keep global temperatures from rising by more than 2°C (3.6°F). The fracking industry touts methane as a “clean fuel”. While methane produces only about 60% of the carbon dioxide that coal does at the point of combustion, it is a much more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide (CO₂). Methane itself is at least 86% times more powerful a greenhouse gas than CO₂ in the first 20-years of its release into the atmosphere. Any leakage in the methane gas from drilling and its pipeline infrastructure system greater than 2% makes methane a more dangerous greenhouse gas than coal or oil. Studies have shown methane leakage at levels of between 2.3% and 17%. The use of all fossil fuels, including methane gas, must be eliminated.

Investment in manufacturing. Growth of a renewable energy economy will not only create jobs, but will boost manufacturing and investment in our country. The proposed Solar City manufacturing plant at Riverbend in Buffalo, projects a \$5 billion private investment and 3,000 jobs. Just 18 months ago, Goldman Sachs invested almost half a Billion dollars in the Japanese solar industry after the country instituted a solar feed-in-tariff. The growth of renewables would provide numerous domestic investment opportunities.

Health and the Environment. Release of the New York State Department of Health report on fracking shows numerous sources of concern for injuries to human health, and damage to the air, water, and soil of the fracking industry.

Economics. Boom-bust of the oil and gas economy is notorious. Promised jobs evaporate, as do drilling companies while leaving environmental destruction in the aftermath. Prices drop and peak to unconscionable levels, such as they did for consumers last winter in New England. Renewable energy smooth’s out this price roller coaster and provides stable prices to encourage businesses and to protect consumers.

New York has made the correct decision in banning high volume horizontal fracking. Our next step must be to eliminate the use of all fossil fuels and to develop a sustainable economy based on renewable energy and energy efficiency.