U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
Blog Round-up

Prepared by the Office of Public Affairs

Friday, February 15, 2013

Table of Contents
(BNA articles can be viewed online **http://Intranet.epa.gov/desktop/news.htm**

Tuesday, September 22, 2009

BIODIESEL – RFS2

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10 Days left to tell EPA to include biodiesel in the Renewable Fuels Standard (*Biodiesel Voice*)

Honorable Lisa Jackson
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

RE: Docket No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2005-0161

Dear Administrator Jackson:

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed rule for the Renewable Fuels Standard, or "RFS-2." I agree generally with the positions taken by the National Biodiesel Board including the following key points:

1. EPA must act now with an interim final rule to ensure that 2009 and 2010 volumes are met as required by law.

2. EPA should grandfather existing plants by deeming these facilities to be in compliance with the 50 percent reduction requirement.

3. The lifecycle greenhouse gas methodology for biodiesel is flawed.
- Nitrogen fixing in soil was incorrectly included.
- The energy balance data is out of date, co-product allocations for glycerine were not incorporated, and global market drivers for feedstocks, are not considered.
- EPA should analyze indirect emissions for all fuels or for none, and should compare biofuels to the more expensive and higher carbon sources of crude they will be replacing such as tar sands and heavy crude.
- EPA's production baseline does not properly account for increasing crop yields and production efficiencies.
- EPA should use the proposed 100 year timeline vs. a 30 year timeline as some have suggested.
- EPA should eliminate the arbitrary 2 percent discount rate.
- EPA should correct the false statement included in the proposal that "the impact of any land-use change tends to be magnified with soybean biodiesel."

4. EPA should adjust the 50 percent reduction requirement for biomass-based diesel to 40 percent.

5. Registration, certification, and reporting requirements that are impractical and burdensome should be eliminated.

Sincerely,

CLIMATE CHANGE / GLOBAL WARMING

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Think Progress: Sen. Lisa Murkowski proposes amendment to cripple EPA power to curb global warming (*Blogger Central*)

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) "wants to put the brakes on the Environmental Protection Agency's efforts to curb climate change" by barring the EPA from "spending any funds on regulating carbon dioxide pollution from power plants, manufacturers, and other major emissions sources." Murkowski has proposed an amendment to the Interior appropriations bill (H.R. 2996) under consideration this week by the U.S. Senate to prevent the EPA from regulating global warming pollution from stationary sources: Effective during the 1-year period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act, none of the funds made available for the Environmental Protection Agency under this Act may be expended to regulate or control carbon dioxide from any sources other than a mobile source as described in section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act or to treat carbon dioxide as a pollutant subject to regulation under the Clean Air Act except for purposes of section 10 202(a) of that Act.

As international leaders meet in New York City to discuss a global climate deal, the EPA is moving forward with regulatory proposals. “Murkowski’s amendment would thwart the 2007 Supreme Court ruling that said EPA does have authority under the Clean Air Act to deal with climate pollution,” writes Frank O’Donnell in the Wonk Room. “By trying to block the agency through such a sneaky, back-door approach, Murkowski is bidding to become a climate outlaw.”

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 21, 2009
3:17 PM

CONTACT: Friends of the Earth
Kate McMahon, 202-222-0715, kmcmahon@foe.org

Coalition Asks EPA to Regulate Greenhouse Gases and Other Toxic Air Pollutants From Factory Farms (*Planet Resource*)

WASHINGTON - September 21 - The Humane Society of the United States and a coalition of environmental and public health organizations filed a legal petition with the Environmental Protection Agency seeking to regulate air pollution from factory farms.

The petitioners joining The HSUS include Association of Irritated Residents; Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment; Clean Air Task Force; Dairy Education Alliance; El Comité para el Bienestar de Earlimart; Environmental Integrity Project; Friends of the Earth; and Waterkeeper Alliance.

"Unregulated air pollution from massive factory farms has a devastating impact on human health and the environment," says Jonathan Lovvorn, vice president and chief counsel for Animal Protection Litigation and Research at The HSUS. "The EPA should hold these big agribusiness corporations accountable for the enormous harm they are inflicting on local communities, independent family farmers, and the environment."

The 69-page petition provides detailed scientific and legal information about the significant emissions of methane and nitrous oxide-two greenhouse gases-as well as hydrogen sulfide and ammonia from factory farms, and how all of these pollutants have been shown to have negative effects on human health and welfare, including adverse effects on climate and the environment in the United States.

The petition further explains how reducing emissions of major pollutants from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), which are massive industrial facilities confining thousands or even millions of animals in warehouse-like conditions, will improve human health, reduce suffering of farm animals, protect habitat for wildlife, and

reduce the effects of climate change and other environmental problems. Regulating air pollution from CAFOs will also create a strong incentive for new CAFOs to employ production methods that reduce emissions.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has deemed the livestock sector "one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global." This same report found that animal agriculture was responsible for contributing 18 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions-more than even the transport sector.

In the United States, confined farm animals produce 500 million tons of waste every year, more than 3.3 times the amount of waste created by humans. Nevertheless, the EPA does not currently require these animal factories to meet any testing, performance or emission standards under the Clean Air Act.

CAFOs economically harm small family farms engaging in practices that are better for animal welfare and more environmentally sustainable. These independent farmers cannot financially compete with large factory farms, which cut corners and jeopardize environmental and public health. Forcing factory farms to comply with environmental and health standards would level the playing field and help small farmers become more competitive.

"Our lungs and the future of our planet are not animal factory subsidies," said Tom Fratz, president of the Association of Irritated Residents and a resident of the San Joaquin Valley, an air basin in California with more than 2.6 million dairy cows. "President Obama promised us during the election that he would protect rural residents from this pollution and we expect EPA to keep that promise."

"Hog lots and other factory farms aren't just stinky, they're also destabilizing our climate," said Kate McMahon of Friends of the Earth. "The EPA has a legal obligation to protect the public by cracking down on this economic and public health threat - a threat that has yet to be addressed by climate legislation pending in Congress."

"The people who live in the communities devastated by unregulated air pollution from animal factories deserve protection" said Charlie Tebbutt of the Western Environmental Law Center and co-chair of the Dairy Education Alliance. "Implementing this petition will get animal factories into the Clean Air Act process and give communities better opportunities to protect themselves."

"Through global warming and deposition, the toxic emissions from industrial animal operations have profoundly impacted our water resources" said Hannah Connor of Waterkeeper Alliance. "By actively regulating the emissions from this industry, EPA will be taking a positive step towards protecting and enhancing not only the quality of our Nation's air resources, but also the quality of our Nation's water resources, and the public health and welfare of our communities."

FACTS:

- Over the last several decades, increasing numbers of animals are being warehoused in fewer, but larger, operations, in which many of them are intensively confined in small spaces such as battery cages, veal crates and gestation crates.
- The increased waste and emissions associated with factory farming result in air pollution that contributes to climate change, causes serious public health concerns, and harms the environment.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) deemed the animal agriculture sector "one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global." This same report, *Livestock's Long Shadow*, found that global meat, egg and milk production generate more greenhouse gas emissions than even the transport sector.
- Pollution from farm animal production is only continuing to increase, making emissions from CAFOs some of the nation's largest sources of pollution.
- Despite clear evidence that CAFOs significantly contribute to emissions of methane, nitrous oxide, hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, volatile organic compounds, and particulate matter, the EPA does not require CAFOs to meet any testing, performance or emission standards under the Clean Air Act.
- Numerous scientific surveys, including the U.S. Inventory Report adopted by the EPA, establish that CAFOs meet the standards for regulation under section 111 of the Clean Air Act as a source that causes or contributes significantly to air pollution which endangers public health and welfare.

To download the petition, click
http://www.foe.org/sites/default/files/HSUS_et_al_v_EPA_CAFO_CAA_Petition.pdf

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Friends of the Earth is the U.S. voice of the world's largest grassroots environmental network, with member groups in 77 countries. Since 1969, Friends of the Earth has fought to create a more healthy, just world.

Some Rays of Hope for Global Efforts (*Grist*)

Important week for global warming 0
Posted 10:16 AM on 21 Sep 2009
by Jake Schmidt
Today begins a week dubbed because of all the high-level climate discussions that are occurring. And they just all happen to be occurring in the U.S. at an important time for the domestic debate to pass a clean energy and climate bill in the Senate.

The high-level events begin on Tuesday (Sept. 22) with the U.N. Secretary General hosting an all day session on global warming for Heads of Government from around the world, it continues with a session on deforestation for Heads of Government on Wednesday (Sept. 23), and ends with the G20 Summit in Pittsburg—with a lot in between.

Heads of Government from these key countries don't meet often to discuss global warming pollution, so every event where this is on the agenda for Heads of Government is an important opportunity to make progress. And as I've discussed, here, bringing in Heads of Government is critical at this stage of the negotiations if we are to have any chance of securing a strong global agreement in Copenhagen. Last time Heads of Government from key countries met at the G8 and Major Economies Forum in Italy, some progress was made on a number of important benchmarks of the global effort (as I discussed here). So there is hope of more to come at these key events.

Time is short before Copenhagen—about 3 months to the day are left—so there is a notable sense that things aren't coming together fast enough—dark clouds appear to be hanging overhead. Accordingly expectations were high that these high-level events could provide a much needed boost to international efforts—start to part the clouds and let some sunshine appear.

What gives me a sense of optimism—besides the fact that regardless of the fluctuations in the political climate the need for clean energy and global warming solutions will remain—are four things about international efforts on global warming that are important to keep in mind.

25th hour (and maybe 26th) is when these negotiations often come together. This is a high stakes negotiation where everything is intimately woven together. Countries are unwilling to move on one piece as they are waiting for a similar move by another country on a related issue. This is especially true on one of the key pieces on the agenda for the G20—finance/investment for developing countries (see my summary of the negotiation texts for an overview of the key issues - part 1, part 2, and part 3). At the Major Economies Forum in July, President Obama tasked Finance Ministers to report back at the G20 on progress on this issue so there is hope that some promising signs will emerge from Pittsburgh (and the Obama Administration has shown some more public support in recent days, as I discussed here).

As a result, the negotiations often "come down to the wire" as no one is willing to move until they feel like they have moved the other side as much as possible—the final showdown. We don't have to look too far back into these negotiations to see an example. The Bali meeting which launched the two year negotiations towards Copenhagen wasn't resolved until Saturday afternoon the day after the meeting was supposed to end. And I bet if you asked negotiators—either before Bali began or at any point during the session—whether we would get an agreement that looked like the actual outcome they would have said no (including yours truly).

Many times these negotiations only look like agreement can be reached minutes after it is actually reached.

The U.S. is making progress domestically to curb global warming pollution. The last time the world was on the cusp of an international agreement to address global warming—in 1997 around the Kyoto Protocol negotiations—domestic efforts to put in place limits on U.S. global warming pollution had made very little progress. In fact, some would argue that the U.S. was on its heels before Kyoto as the Senate had sent a signal with "mixed" domestic support for what would ultimately emerge.

While things haven't changed as far as we need them to in the U.S., let's not forget about a couple of important changes that have occurred that make the U.S. poised for action more than at any time in the past, including the:

- Supreme Court has ruled that CO2 is a pollutant and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has taken steps to control CO2 as required by U.S. law pursuant to this decision (as my colleague David Doniger discusses here);
- U.S. stimulus made a down payment on the necessary investment in clean energy and global warming solutions (as we discussed); and
- House of Representatives passed clean energy and global warming legislation that would require U.S. emissions to decline annually through 2050.

No one wants a repeat of Kyoto where the U.S. couldn't build the domestic support to implement what it committed to internationally. That is why we (and many others) are pushing for the U.S. Senate to take action before Copenhagen—we need to ensure that the U.S. actually lives up to its promises.

Developing countries are taking action to curb emissions and providing hints of more to come. Over the last two years, there has been a sizeable shift in how developing countries came to the international negotiations. Major developing countries used to say: "we only act when the industrialized world takes even deeper action". But now most major emerging economies have taken action to curb their emissions and proposed or hinted at more to come. For example:

- China has made a number of investments to reduce their emissions (as we summarized here), have hinted at what further steps they might undertake (as I've discussed here), and have signaled that President Hu Jintao will announce specific actions this week (as Reuters notes here);
- South Korea has proposed a range of absolute emissions targets they'll take and are developing the domestic laws to implement that target (as I discussed here);
- Mexico is taking serious steps to have a domestic emissions trading system for key sectors of the economy in place before 2012 and signaled a commitment to a deep cut by 2050 (as I discussed here);
- South Africa has signaled that they'll have their emissions "peak and decline" around 2020/2025 and are beginning the national dialogue to firm up the steps they'll take to achieve that aim (as I've discussed here).

- Brazil has committed to have their deforestation rate decline to more than 80% of today's rate by 2020 (as I discussed here) and has shown some continual progress in reversing their deforestation trend.
- India who in the past as been ardent that they won't take action unless the industrialized world takes even deeper cuts, has actually undertaken some serious efforts domestically and recently has shown that they'll do even more domestically (as my colleague Anjali Jaiswal summarized here).

Almost all developed countries have proposed deeper emissions cuts. The European Union, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, and Japan have all committed to deeper emissions reduction targets (with a signal from the new Japanese government that they'll go even deeper than their predecessor). Two notable exceptions that haven't committed to deeper cuts are Russia (see here for their weak opening offer) and Canada (as noted in this call for greater action from Canada). And while a number of these countries have to firm up their targets and their domestic laws to achieve those targets, these countries have committed in advance of Copenhagen (very different than prior to Kyoto where most hadn't proposed anything or taken steps to implement domestic actions).

It is easy to feel like the world's efforts to address global warming are **under a dark cloud** characterized by not enough progress and big unknowns in key countries, but some **rays of sunshine** are appearing in key countries.

And it is these rays that will have to be pieced together at the 25th hour in Copenhagen.

So will the forecast coming out of climate week improve the outlook for Copenhagen? Let's hope, as a lot is riding on the world's efforts to solve global warming (I'll be in N.Y. and Pittsburgh to see first hand how it's looking).

Monday September 21, 2009

Global Emissions Are Shrinking--And It's Not Just The Recession (*The Vine/New Republic*)

Bradford Plumer
6:49 pm
Over in the Financial Times today, Fiona Harvey gets a sneak peek at a new International Energy Agency report, which finds that worldwide carbon-dioxide emissions have undergone a "significant decline" this year—shrinking 2 percent, the steepest CO2 drop in the last four decades. Steeper even than the drop after the OPEC oil crisis in the late '70s. Okay, well, no kidding, there's a severe recession going on. Industrial output is declining. What'd we expect?

Ah, but wait: What's surprising here is that the IEA argues that one-quarter of the CO2 drop was actually a result of government policies. The report singles out the EU's cap-

and-trade system (which is finally starting to clamp down after some early stumbling); U.S. fuel-economy standards for vehicles; and China's smorgasbord of energy-efficiency policies. In fact, this is the first year that regulations have actually made a significant dent in carbon-dioxide emissions, and the IEA argues they would've had an effect even in the absence of a recession.

So now Fatih Birol, the chief economist of the IEA, is arguing that the current recession might actually make it "much less difficult" to make the carbon cuts many scientists have deemed necessary to avoid drastic climate change. After all, we're already a good chunk of the way there. The Energy Information Administration, for example, recently forecast that the United States would be a whopping 8.5 percent below 2005 emission levels by the end of 2009, which means we'd already be halfway toward the goal in the House climate bill—17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020—long before the thing even gets enacted.

On the flip side, it's also possible that the recession could undermine a cap-and-trade approach if Congress isn't watchful. Here's what I mean: The way the cap works is that Congress sets an overall limit on carbon pollution for each year and then doles out a corresponding number of pollution credits. But if you dole out far more permits than businesses need—because, say, a recession shrunk real emissions far below the cap you set—then the price of carbon permits will plunge to rock-bottom levels, and companies won't have any incentive to make any changes. This is exactly what happened in the early days of the E.U.'s Emissions Trading System. So there's a case to be made for tightening the 2020 targets in the climate bill and setting a floor on carbon prices—something Barbara Boxer appears to be considering right now for the Senate climate bill.

Is A Climate Bill Political Suicide? Maybe Not. (*The Vine/ New Republic*)

- *Bradford Plumer*
- 12:57 pm

The conventional wisdom about the politics of climate-change legislation is that cap-and-trade is grossly, horribly unpopular and that Democrats in conservative districts ought to be blanching with terror over getting behind it. What's more (says the c.w.), those conservative Dems who *did* vote for the Waxman-Markey bill in the House probably signed their own political death warrants. But is this c.wreally true? Well, maybe not, according to a new poll from Garin Hart Yang, a Dem-leaning firm that conducted the survey on behalf of the Environmental Defense Fund.

The pollsters took the temperature of three very conservative districts held by Democrats who voted for Waxman-Markey, and the results were surprising: Voters in Heath Shuler's North Carolina district supported a cap on carbon 55 percent to 29 percent; in Barron Hill's Indiana district, support ran 45-30; in freshman Tom Perriello's conservative Virginia district, support ran 42-25. None of these districts feel particularly warm toward Obama—in Shuler's district, for instance, Obama's approvals are actually a net negative—but voters on the whole seem to trust environmental groups, and moderates in those areas upgraded their opinions of their reps after learning they voted for the climate bill.

Now, as noted, this *is* a Democratic pollster, and a different pollster framing the questions in slightly different ways might've gotten conflicting answers. (Indeed, if you look on the last page of this poll, note that, in these districts, the GOP's favored "cap-and-tax" message was only slightly less convincing to voters than the pro-reform "create jobs" message.) Still, it's some evidence that tackling climate change isn't political suicide, after all.

COAL
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MEDIA ADVISORY: Texas Statewide Roll Beyond Coal Coal Plant Tour Starts Monday (*LivingAir*)

Mon Sep 21, 2009 1:55pm EDT
No New Coal Plants until TCEQ Cleans Up Its Act! Say Environmental Groups

EPA Rules that TCEQ's Air Permitting Process Does Not Abide By Federal Law

WHO: Ryan Rittenhouse, Public Citizen, 440-796-9695
Eva Hernandez, Sierra Club, 404-717-3328
Local Spokespersons at each tour stop

WHAT: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently rejected key aspects of the air permitting plan of Texas' regulatory agency -- the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and called for proper enforcement of the Clean Air Act in Texas.

Public Citizen and the Sierra Club announce a TEXAS STATE-WIDE COAL PLANT TOUR

to visit communities that have been negatively impacted by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's -- (TCEQ) failure to enforce the law and control pollution. The groups are collecting postcards from citizens at the tour stops across Texas to deliver the messages to the EPA in support of the EPA's recent announcement.

WHERE:
Week One Tour Stops
Monday, Sept. 21, WACO, 10:00 am, Heritage Park, 3rd Street & Austin Avenue

Tuesday, Sept. 22 , DALLAS, 10:00 am, The 500 Block of Reunion Blvd East, across the street from Dallas Morning News (32.774975,-96.807328 on google maps)

Wednesday, Sept. 23, ABILENE, 10:00 am, 3.3 miles north of interstate 20 on FM-600, Lake Fort Phantom Hill, Sweetwater, Texas

Week Two Tour Stops
Monday, Sept. 28, COLLEGE STATION, 10:00 am, Location TBA

Tuesday, Sept. 29, CORPUS CHRISTI, 10:00 am, Location TBA

Tuesday, Sept. 29, BAY CITY, 4:00 pm, Steps of the Court House (1700 7th Street)

Wednesday, Sept. 30, HOUSTON, 10:00 am, Tranquility Park, 515 Rusk, across from the federal courthouse

VISUALS: Giant inflatable coal plant, a decorated clean energy trailer, signs and posters

Now that the EPA has signaled that it will hold TCEQ accountable to protect Texas health and air quality, Public Citizen and Sierra Club are calling on EPA to place a moratorium on new coal and pet coke plants in Texas until the TCEQ agrees to follow the law of the Federal Clean Air Act. Since EPA has recognized that the TCEQ is not fulfilling its duties, no new air permits should be allowed or coal plants built until the commission adheres to federal environmental air quality standards. Public Citizen and Sierra Club further call for a review of all existing dirty coal plant permits.

CONTACT: Ryan Rittenhouse of Public Citizen, +1-440-796-9695; or Eva Hernandez of Sierra Club, +1-404-717-3328

/PRNewswire-USNewswire -- Sept. 21/

HAZARDOUS WASTE

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E.P.A. Reports Suggests Waste Reduction and Recycling Reduces CO2 Emissions (*Get Green Living*)

September 21, 2009, Posted by admin at 7:11

E.P.A. A new E.P.A. study examines the greenhouse gas impacts of the way Americans obtain, deliver and dispose of goods. The full report, including this chart, can be found here.

A new report from the United States Environmental Protection Agency suggests that way Americans procure, produce, deliver and dispose of goods and services — what the agency refers to as “materials and land management” — accounts for 42 percent of the nation’s greenhouse gas emissions.

The study took stock of the emissions generated by land use, food and product production across the entire life cycle — from resource extraction (think mining, agriculture and forestry) to manufacturing, packaging, transportation and ultimately disposal.

The report breaks from conventional analyses of greenhouse gas emissions, which typically focus on sectors such as transportation or electricity generation, and according to Joshua Stolaroff, a former science and technology policy fellow with E.P.A.’s …

9.21.2009 3:05 PM

Is Your Child's School Flunking the Environment? (*Daily Green*)

Tips on greening up your local school. Also see 10 of the greenest colleges in America and 4 ways to green your kid's lunch box.

By Adria Vasil, author of Ecoholic.

You'd think schools would be role models for good behavior now wouldn't you? Oh sure they might talk a good game about the importance of recycling paper and protecting polar bears, but are they walking the walk?

Not if they're leaving the lights on day and night, spraying the school grounds with toxic pesticides and mopping up with hormone-disrupting chemicals! Here's a subject-by-subject breakdown on how your kid's school might be failing the planet, as well as some pointers for helping them boost those grades.

Subject: Pesticides

* Grassy school yards see a lot of activity, so no matter how old the students (and teachers) are, toxic pesticides shouldn't be sprayed on school grounds. Many are linked to cancer, neurological damage, and developmental problems. Youngest kids are the most vulnerable because their organs can't easily eliminate toxins from their systems and their nervous systems are still developing. After several incidents of chemical pesticides like Roundup wafting into school vents, kids swallowing insecticide granules,

and fumigants making students sick, the federal government was kicking around a bill (the School Environmental Protection Act) that would force schools to notify parents when pesticides were used on school property, but the bill didn't get enough votes to pass.

Room for improvement:
* Ask your school/school board about their pesticide policy. Demand that students and parents be notified before bug-killing chemicals are used.
* Press school leaders to establish an integrated pest management policy that looks at switching to safer options. The Environmental Protection Agency recently asked schools to do so by 2015 (google School IPM 2015 for details), but if you want it to happen sooner, you'll have to push for it.

Subject: Energy
* If your child's school says it's too cash-strapped to bring on earth-friendly changes, remind them that going green can actually save them serious coin. One out of every four dollars that schools spend on electricity is needlessly wasted on inefficient boilers and leaving lights on, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Check if your school has an action plan for cutting back on excess energy use.

Room for improvement:
* Make sure programmable thermostats are set no lower than 75°F in the summer and no higher than 70°F in the winter.
* Be light bright: switch to ultra efficient compact fluorescent, T8 bulbs. Install motion sensors and timers to save even more.
* Post signs above monitors and switches reminding students to switch off computers and lights at lunch and recess. Consider installing motion sensors or timers on lights.
* Get schooled on the benefits of upgrading computers: Energy Star models can save up to $55 a year in energy. For more tips, see the U.S. Department of Energy's Website.

Subject: Waste
* No doubt, kids are messy, but did you know each student churns out about half a pound of garbage per school day? Multiply that by all the students in America and we've got some serious landfill clogging going on.

Room for improvement:
* Are there recycling bins in every class and hallway? The easier they are to find, the more likely they are to be used.
* Are printers and photocopiers loaded with 100% recycled paper high in post-consumer content? Ask about a paper-saving policy for teachers and students.
* Is the school composting? Organize food scrap bins in the cafeteria and build a composter outside. Students can spread all the highly nutritious soil it generates on school grounds. Teachers can even work with their classes to build a composter from scratch, as described at bluegrassgardens.com.
* Is the cafeteria handing out disposable cutlery and plates? Make sure reusable forks

and dishes are promoted and try to ban hard-to-recycle plastics like polystyrene from your cafeteria.

Subject: Food
* If your older child's school has a cafeteria it's probably serving up a bounty of tantalizingly fresh, local ingredients, right? Fat chance. It probably serves more frozen fries and greasy burgers in a day than you can count. You might have trouble convincing your school to spend more cash on organic goodies, but you may be able to persuade the powers that be to cook with local ingredients (especially in prime harvest season!).

Room for improvement:
* Encourage the school to set up a farm-to-school program (it's already in 9,000 schools!).
* Look into the possibility of getting students to plant an organic food garden on school property.
* More and more schools are already serving up certified organic options. Talk to your school about including organics wherever possible.

Subject: Cleaning Chemicals
* Gone are the days of teachers cleaning mouths out with soap, but kids are still taking in questionable chemicals every time their school gets cleaned. Petrochemicals, bleaches and caustic solvents found in industrial cleaning products have been linked to asthma, hormone disruption and allergies. Back in the '80s, one school janitor collapsed and later died after cleaning a bathroom floor with a product that contained butyl cellosolve (an ingredient still used in professional cleaners today) without any ventilation.

Room for improvement:
* We've got to be realistic here: your school's not about to switch to baking soda and vinegar. Instead, give school officials a list of eco-friendly institutional cleaning products approved by trusted third-party certifiers like Green Seal.

Subject: E-Groups
* Getting your school to go fully green can be about as easy as getting a class full of 5-year-olds to sit still. It's even harder when you're just one person, so join forces with a group of like-principled people. Some school boards already have parent environmental networks -- be sure to ask.

Room for improvement:
* Junior and senior high schoolers can form an environmental club (e-club) with the help of a geography or Earth sciences teacher. They can do stuff like assess their school's impact on the Earth by measuring its ecological footprint (learn how at globalfootprints.org).
* Start a Green PTA. If the local PTA isn't keen on going green, concerned parents can

start their own coalitions with other conscious moms and dads who want "idling-free" zones outside, Energy Star computers in classrooms and organic milk in the cafeteria.

Adria Vasil is the author of Ecoholic: Your Guide to the Most Environmentally Friendly Information, Products & Services*. She is a best-selling author and journalist for Canada's NOW, where she has been writing the "Ecoholic" column for five years. She lives in Toronto. For more information please visit www.ecoholicnation.com.*

The Daily Green's Community News section is a forum for our audience to get the word out about issues that matter to them, enlist support, get help and advice, celebrate successes or share humor. Submissions to The Daily Green are subject to our Privacy and Terms of Use policies.

WATER

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Are You Drinking Unsafe Water? Corporations Have Violated Clean Water Act Over 500,000 Times in Last Five Years (*Democratic Underground.com*)

Forty percent of the nation's community water systems violated the Safe Drinking Water Act at least once, exposing over 23 million people to potential danger.

-snip-

CHARLES DUHIGG: Well, we spent about ten months collecting records from every single state and the EPA, trying to figure out exactly what was going on with the nation's waters. And what we discovered was that the Clean Water Act was passed about almost four decades ago with the intent of giving regulators the power to monitor what goes into our waterways and then punish people who violate their permits. And everyone who dumps something into a waterway has to have a permit. And what we found is that only about three percent of people who violate their permits ever get punished. And so, somewhat unsurprisingly, the rate of violations has gone up significantly, because companies and workplaces know that they can break the Clean Water Act without getting punished for it.

-snip-

And that's what's happening all across the country, is that every single month or every single week or every single quarter, companies send in reports, and they say, this is what I'm dumping into a river, or this is what I'm dumping into a pond. And it shows that they're breaking the law, but in most cases regulators either don't look at the report, or even if they see the report, they're not doing anything to punish them.

AMY GOODMAN: And it's not just coal companies. I mean, the figures you're talking about here are astounding. Chemical companies have violated the Clean Water Act 500,000 times.

-snip-

CHARLES DUHIGG: And it's not just chemical companies; it's facilities of any kind. So a lot of the polluters are, for instance, gas stations, dry cleaning stores, wastewater treatment plants that are run by New York City or any other city. These are all facilities that, under the Clean Water Act, are supposed to limit the toxins and other chemicals and pollutants that they dump into rivers or lakes or ponds. And they measure each week or each month what they're dumping, and they tell regulators, but regulators just aren't acting on that.

-snip-

CHARLES DUHIGG: If you go to nytimes.com/water, you'll see a link that let's you find your own state. And what you can do is, you can put in your own zip code and look up who around you has violated the Clean Water Act, and then you can also download all of this data from the states.

One of the things that we found that was really troubling was that we went to the EPA to try and ask them for this information to figure out what's going on. And the EPA's records weren't great, because when we went to the states, the states would say, "No, the EPA is completely wrong. We have all these other violations that the EPA doesn't know about." And so, we asked every single state, send us all of your data, and then we put it all together, and that's what --
-snip-

we need to be smart about this and stop being stupid. this is a health issue.

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