U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
Blog Round-up
Prepared by the Office of Public Affairs

Friday, February 15, 2013

Table of Contents

Blog Round-up
July 6, 2010

ROUND-UP OF MAJOR BLOGS 2
ASBESTOS 2
Mont. delegation pushes EPA on asbestos cleanup (*Huffington Post*) 2
BP SPILL 3
A Whale', World's Largest Oil Skimmer, Being Tested In Gulf Oil Spill (*Huffington Post*). 3
U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service Said Risk From Gulf Drilling Projects Was 'Low'(*Huffington Post*) 5
BROWNFIELD 7
Philly's Greensgrow farm: An unconventional hybrid that works (*Grist*) 7
CLIMATE CHANGE 9
Daniel Patrick Moynihan Warned Nixon To Act On Global Warming, New Documents Show (*Huffington Post*) 9
ENERGY 11
Energy Star: Churches Now Receive EPA Label For Efficiency (*Huffington Post*) 11
Five Denier Myths about the Climate & Energy Bill (*Huffington Post*) 13
GENERAL 16
What You Missed at the LOHAS Forum (*Treehugger*) 16
RECYCLING 18
Wearable Collections May Snag Clothes Recycling Contract In NYC (*Huffington Post*)... 18
TOXICS 20
Why We Need Federal Safeguards for Coal Ash (*Treehugger*) 20

ROUND-UP OF MAJOR BLOGS

ASBESTOS

Mont. delegation pushes EPA on asbestos cleanup (*Huffington Post*)

MATTHEW BROWN | July 5, 2010 06:58 PM EST
BILLINGS, Mont. — Montana's congressional delegation is seeking assurances from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that the government will not leave the asbestos-contaminated town of Libby before its cleanup is complete.

Health workers say at least 400 people have died in rural Libby from contamination caused by a now-closed W.R. Grace vermiculite mine.

The EPA in May finalized its cleanup strategy for the first two of eight contaminated areas, including a town park. Some Libby residents and local elected leaders fear the EPA is rushing to finish its work, leaving the town at risk.

U.S. Sens. Max Baucus and Jon Tester and Rep. Denny Rehberg have asked the EPA to clarify its plans for the 3,000-person town. In separate letters sent in recent weeks, the lawmakers prodded the EPA to complete a long-delayed study of Libby asbestos.

They also wanted the EPA's pledge to return to areas already cleaned if the study shows the health danger is worse than previously thought.

More than a decade after the EPA arrived in Libby on the heels of news reports about widespread health problems, regulators still are uncertain just how toxic the asbestos is to humans. A risk assessment meant to answer that question is not expected to be finalized for another five years, according to correspondence between the agency and Baucus.

"In some ways we're in the same spot we've been for years," Baucus told EPA officials during a recent hearing before a subcommittee of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

A June report by the Government Accountability Office listed Libby as one of 75 Superfund sites across the United States with health risks that are considered unacceptable. For Libby, that public danger is expected to last through at least 2015.

EPA officials acknowledge the health crisis in Libby has at times overwhelmed the government as the scope of contamination and number of victims has grown.

Last year, it became the first Superfund site ever declared as a public health emergency.

Agency spokesman Ted Linnert said the cleanup method proposed for the town park – placing a soil "cap" over what was once a processing site for Grace vermiculite – should be effective no matter the results of the risk assessment.

The cap is meant to keep people from inhaling or ingesting asbestos, which can cause cancer, lung scarring and other health problems.

For residential areas, Linnert said the agency will hold off on issuing a final cleanup document, known as a record of decision, until the risk assessment is completed.

"That's where the risk assessment is most critical," he said.

Linnert added that the first two areas slated for cleanup would be reviewed after no more than five years to make sure the agency's actions were effective.

Asbestos-laced vermiculite was used as insulation in hundreds of Libby houses and businesses and tilled into backyard gardens. Decades of activity at the Grace mine produced so much dust that hazardous asbestos is now embedded in the barks of trees that cover the surrounding mountains.

The EPA has said it will be impossible to remove it all.

(This version CORRECTS town's population)

BP SPILL

A Whale', World's Largest Oil Skimmer, Being Tested In Gulf Oil Spill (*Huffington Post*)

NEW ORLEANS (Associated Press) - Gulf of Mexico cleanup crews working to block millions of gallons of oil from reaching land may soon have a giant on their side, if a weekend test of a new skimmer goes well.

The Taiwanese vessel dubbed "A Whale," which its owners describe as the largest oil skimmer in the world, began showing its capabilities on Saturday just north of the Macondo Deepwater well site. An April 20 explosion on the Deepwater Horizon rig there killed 11 workers and began what is now the largest oil spill in Gulf history.

The vessel will cruise a 25-square-mile test site through Sunday, according to TMT Shipping, the company that created A Whale by retrofitting an oil tanker after the explosion sent millions of gallons of crude spilling into the Gulf.

The U.S. Coast Guard, along with BP, are waiting to see if the vessel, which is 10 stories high and as long as 3 1/2 football fields, can live up to its makers' promise of being able to process up to 21 million gallons of oil-fouled water a day.

The ship works by taking in water through 12 vents, separating the oil and pumping the cleaned seawater back into the Gulf.

"In many ways, the ship collects water like an actual whale and pumps internally like a human heart," TMT spokesman Bob Grantham said in an e-mail.

A Whale is being tested close to the wellhead because officials believe it will be most effective where the oil is thickest rather than closer to shore.

Story continues below

The ship arrived in the Gulf on Wednesday, but officials have wanted to test its capability as well as have the federal Environmental Protection Agency sign off on the water it will pump back into the gulf. Although the ship cleans most of the oil from seawater, trace amounts of crude remain.

The wait has frustrated some local officials, who say the mammoth skimmer would be a game-changer in preventing drifting streams of oil from washing ashore on vulnerable coastlines.

During a Thursday tour of the inlet to Barataria Bay, Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal said it was exasperating to have A Whale anchored offshore instead of being put to immediate use.

"They've used the war rhetoric," Jindal said aboard a Louisiana state wildlife boat floating in oil-slicked waters near Grand Isle. "If this is really a war, they need to be using every resource that makes sense to fight this oil before it comes to our coast."

A smaller flotilla of oil skimmers was back at work along the Gulf coast Saturday, after being forced to stand down for several days because of nasty weather whipped up by distant Hurricane Alex.

The bad weather also delayed the hookup of a vessel called the Helix Producer at the wellhead. The ship can collect up to 25,000 barrels of oil a day, which would virtually double the amount now being captured at the site by two other vessels and then burned or transfered to other tankers.

Retired Coast Guard Adm. Thad Allen, the Obama administration's point person in the oil spill response, said Friday crews will resume getting the Helix Producer in place over the weekend, with production starting around July 7.

Elswhere on the Gulf coast, environmental Protection Agency administrator Lisa Jackson visited Pensacola Beach on Saturday, her first trip to Florida since the explosion and her sixth trip to the Gulf.

Jackson watched as workers in yellow and orange vests flicked penny-sized gobs of tar into nets, sifting them to filter out the sand and smaller pieces of tar. Officials overseeing the cleanup showed her how the oil had been buried by successive waves of sand, and how more layers with tar were under the top layer of sand.

Jackson said that despite the level of contamination on the beaches, it should be up to local officials to decide whether they should be closed. Officials in Escambia County have posted oil warnings at beaches but not closed them.

"From a commonsense perspective there is nothing that I am going to be able to tell you in chemical lab that you can't learn about the safety of the water from a bathing purpose by looking at it and smelling it," she said.

Reporters pressed Jackson on whether she would wade into the water Saturday based on what she had seen.

July 6, 2010

U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service Said Risk From Gulf Drilling Projects Was 'Low'(*Huffington Post*)

MICHAEL KUNZELMAN | 07/ 5/10 06:38 PM |

BP Oil Spill, Green News, Gulf Oil Spill, Oil, Oil Spill, U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service, U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service Memo, U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service Oil, U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service Oil Spill, Usfw, Green News
NEW ORLEANS — Less than three years before the Gulf oil spill erupted, federal regulators concluded several offshore drilling projects posed a low risk to endangered wildlife – a determination that contrasts sharply with recent scenes of birds struggling to survive the slick.

A September 2007 memo from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said large oil spills from the proposed Gulf drilling projects under review were "low-probability events" that weren't likely to affect brown pelicans, sea turtles and other animals with Gulf Coast habitats.

The memo suggests that the former Mineral Management Service wasn't the only federal agency that failed to identify and attempt to minimize the risks of deepwater drilling.

The memo, first reported by The New York Times, concluded that the chance of oil from an offshore spill of at least 1,000 barrels reaching endangered species or their habitats was no greater than 26 percent.

The agency didn't challenge the MMS's assessment of potential danger from 11 Gulf oil and gas lease sales, which included the well that the Deepwater Horizon rig was drilling when an April 20 blowout killed 11 workers and started leaking millions of gallons of oil.

MMS was renamed the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement last month amid criticism that the agency was lax in its oversight of the companies it regulates.

Stacy Small, a wildlife ecologist for the Environmental Defense Fund, said the Fish and Wildlife Service could have demanded a stricter review of the projects' safety risks.

"I don't think they seized that opportunity," Small said. "This really points out the need for independent, third-party peer review, especially when the consequences are so severe."

The Interior Department has said it will review the process for how offshore oil and gas operations are evaluated under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

"Where those processes can be improved, we will strengthen them. Where there are loopholes, we will close them," Interior Department spokeswoman Kendra Barkoff said in a May 14 statement.

Chris Tollefson, a spokesman for the wildlife service, said the Interior Department "is looking at a wide ranges of questions the oil spill raises," including MMS' environmental review processes. He wouldn't elaborate Monday.

Dan Rohlf, a Lewis & Clark Law School professor who teaches wildlife law, said the documents show the Fish and Wildlife Service had a policy of discounting risks to endangered species, in violation of the Endangered Species Act.

"If you have a lot of relatively small risks, over time those small risks add up until it's a virtual certainty those events will occur," he said.

Less than three months before the Fish and Wildlife Service issued its memo, the National Marine Fisheries Service also used a MMS biological assessment to help it conclude that the same Gulf leases, including BP's for Deepwater Horizon, were "not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of threatened or endangered species."

However, that assessment did allow for the possibility of a major spill – described as one exceeding 420,000 gallons – and detailed its potential to harm different turtle, whale and sturgeon populations.

Rohlf said both the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service "are generally very reluctant to be a significant barrier to the everyday operations of (other) federal agencies," like MMS.

"They have not seemed willing to risk the political heat that that would entail," he said.

Get HuffPost Green On Twitter, Facebook, and Google Buzz! Know something we don't? E-mail us at Huffpostgreen@huffingtonpost.com

BROWNFIELD

Philly's Greensgrow farm: An unconventional hybrid that works (*Grist*)

by Breaking Through Concrete team
5 Jul 2010 11:00 AM
It's sunny and 94 degrees, and the pavement's steaming after a thunderstorm rolled sideways through north Philly. Mary Seton Corboy wears a full-body, white bee suit. She stands atop a small trailer's grassy roof on a vacant city lot. Smoke puffs from the antique-looking box in her hand, and the bees calm down.

"We put these up here originally just for security," she says. "Figured no one would bother the equipment with a bunch of bees around."

Mary has created a small world, called Greensgrow, here on one block. The trailer under the beehives holds farm tools. Beside the trailer, tanks for the biodiesel conversion operation transform used cooking oil into fuel for Big Yellow, the delivery truck that collects fresh produce and meat and dairy products from farms within 75 miles of this square of green in Philadelphia's Kensington neighborhood. That food goes into the homes of 400 CSA members, some of them low-income, and for sale at the farm's market. That is to say, the Greensgrow farm and nursery is a little bit of everything, and all of it connected, somehow, like any good old city.

Farming in Kensington, now a low-income neighborhood largely populated by Russian and Polish immigrants, is no more new than it is throughout Philadelphia. Community gardens, backyard gardens, and "guerrilla" gardens on vacant lots have been producing thousands of pounds of fresh food annually for over a century. The Vacant Lot Cultivation Association, begun in 1897, helps people access land and start market gardens. War rationing during WWI and II spurred Victory Gardens, as they did in many cities. And the early-to-mid-century exodus of African-American farmers from the sharecropper South brought a new agrarian population to the city.

Then the community vacant-lot gardens took off in the '70s, just as the industrial boom imploded. More than 100,000 people lost their jobs, industries ran screaming, and many people bolted for the hills, or somewhere not-Philly.

At the same time, another wave of southern African-Americans moved north, this time in conjunction with a Puerto Rican migration and Southeast Asians escaping the poisonous aftermath of the Vietnam War. Having grown their own food in their homelands, the newcomers brought that knowledge and ethic with them.[1]

The city, meanwhile, took little interest in its agencies' land holdings, so they barely blinked at signing multi-year leases to neighborhood farmers on empty city lots. The 1970s made inner-city

blightification as American as apple pie. In Philly, pirate farmers built soils, and fed families and communities. The common-sense food production continued into the '90s. There weren't meetings or board members or conference calls. Just a need for food, empty land, and people who knew how to dig in with a shovel and hoe.

Mary calls a shovel "the idiot stick," and she holds it in high regard. She came onto the scene at the tail end of that mini-urban-ag revolution. Plenty of vacant-lot and community farms still exist in Philly, but not on the scale they did 30 years ago. The decline is partly due to older farmers passing away, and partly due to increased real-estate values, the subsequent interest of developers, and city agencies' reluctance to continue signing those multi-year leases on the empty lots. The rogue farmers have had to abandon soils they'd developed over a decade or more.

Mary doesn't like meetings, and she looks far more comfortable in the bee suit and mask than I imagine she would in a pantsuit or dress. She's a gritty farmer with a helluva business sense. When she takes off the bee suit, she reveals a dusty, wrinkled Subaru farm shirt. Two Subaru wagons sit along the curb between the bee and tool lot, and the larger farm and nursery -- the socially progressive Subaru company financially sponsors Greensgrow.

Tom Sereduk, cofounder of Greensgrow, and Mary starting digging into Kensington in 1998. The two had restaurant experience and they saw a market for salad greens. Since they knew hydroponic growing methods (growing in water, rather than soil, with mineral supplements), they could bypass the immediate concerns over the lot's EPA brownfield status. They opened during the growing season and sold to white-table cloth restaurants for a profit.

But Mary and Tom were like energetic hippies rolling in for half the year to grow fancy lettuce for fancy restaurants, and kids threw rocks at them over the fence. Though Tom opted out of the depressing situation, Mary stuck with it and she kept her vision open.

"Over time, we never really invested in any one thing, so when the winds of change moved in -- more and more interest in local foods -- we shifted. We started growing more heirloom tomatoes and micro-greens. Then we built the greenhouse, grew flowers, stayed year-round, and the neighbors got interested," she says. "We saw what people grew in their pots here in the neighborhood and we offered them in the nursery. As we've grown, we've tried to keep one foot in this community and one in the greater city."

At the corner of the farm, the chickens peck at the soil on one side of the chain-link fence, while neighbors cruise on bikes or stroll the sidewalk a foot away. It's an easy symbol of the urban farm, but it actually does what you'd think it would. A few women sit on the steps of their row-houses a block away; their young kids bump Razor scooters over the sidewalk cracks, and they love the chickens.

Janice Teague has lived here for 25 years. She likes the farm. She goes every week to the Thursday market for fruit and vegetables, and she buys tomato plants to grow in her backyard garden, a 6-foot-by-2-foot sliver of soil in the tiny concrete-floor-and-cinder-block-walled back

patio. She doesn’t have a car, so she can’t get to Home Depot to buy potted plants. Greensgrow lets her use the wagon to roll her purchases home, and the nursery prices are no more than Home Depot’s or Lowe’s.

"I’m not into the butter and milk and cheese stuff," Janice says. "I get that from the regular grocery store. My daughter gets her soap from the farm. I get fruit and bread, and I get flowers that I plant in my backyard. I get peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes. They’re fresher and they’re a little more money, but I like Jersey tomatoes from the farm market better than the supermarket ones."

Janice doesn’t see many neighbors at the Greensgrow market. The people she sees there are from elsewhere. They’re nice, but she can tell that they’re "uppy."

I see that, I guess, as I look at the Thursday market shoppers: young folks with mustaches on their faces and baskets on their bikes, a double date popping out of a Prius, a mom with a stroller the size of a Peugeot. But there’s also a policeman and the owner of the auto-detail shop across the street.

"When you become an asset to your community or neighborhood then you've done something. I don't do this just to be tan."

Mary has always intended for Greensgrow to be profitable. She wants it to be a model for sustainable profitability, in fact. All 19 staff members are paid by the for-profit side of the business, from nursery and farm sales, which grossed $1 million last year. The Community Supported Agriculture program has 400 members. That’s enormous for a city-block-size farm, but Greensgrow has created a 75-mile web of farms and producers with the Greensgrow CSA as the mothership distribution point. It’s so big that they’ve achieved the holy grail of the CSA model -- a low-income option.

It’s been a dozen years since Mary ducked rocks while hanging plastic over the greenhouse. The bees help, but mainly she and her staff and her chickens and the nursery’s petunias have put a face on the farm and the neighborhood.

"In the short term I see a positive change. I got a Google alert last night. I don't usually check those, but I did this time. It was from a real estate listing. It said, 'Great house, great location right next to Greensgrow Farm!!!' When you become an asset to your community or neighborhood then you've done something. I don't do this just to be tan."

CLIMATE CHANGE

Daniel Patrick Moynihan Warned Nixon To Act On Global Warming, New Documents Show (*Huffington Post*)

YORBA LINDA, Calif. — Documents released Friday by the Nixon Presidential Library show members of President Richard Nixon's inner circle discussing the possibilities of global warming more than 30 years ago.

Adviser Daniel Patrick Moynihan, notable as a Democrat in the administration, urged the administration to initiate a worldwide system of monitoring carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, decades before the issue of global warming came to the public's attention.

There is widespread agreement that carbon dioxide content will rise 25 percent by 2000, Moynihan wrote in a September 1969 memo.

"This could increase the average temperature near the earth's surface by 7 degrees Fahrenheit," he wrote. "This in turn could raise the level of the sea by 10 feet. Goodbye New York. Goodbye Washington, for that matter."

Moynihan was Nixon's counselor for urban affairs from January 1969 – when Nixon began his presidency – to December 1970. He later served as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations before New York voters elected him to the Senate.

Moynihan received a response in a January 26, 1970 memo from Hubert Heffner, deputy director of the administration's Office of Science and Technology. Heffner acknowledged that atmospheric temperature rise was an issue that should be looked at.

"The more I get into this, the more I find two classes of doom-sayers, with, of course, the silent majority in between," he wrote. "One group says we will turn into snow-tripping mastodons because of the atmospheric dust and the other says we will have to grow gills to survive the increased ocean level due to the temperature rise."

Heffner wrote that he would ask the Environmental Science Services Administration to look further into the issue.

Nixon established the Environmental Protection Agency and had an interest in the environment. In one memo, Moynihan noted his approval of the first Earth Day, to be held April 22, 1970.

Story continues below

"Clearly this is an opportunity to get the President usefully and positively involved with a large student movement," he wrote to John Ehrlichman, Nixon's adviser on domestic affairs.

Moynihan's memo was among 100,000 documents released Friday.

The documents also include about 5,000 pages of now unclassified national security records on the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, correspondence between Nixon and then-British Prime Minister Edward Heath and back-channel Soviet-Israeli relations.

The new material is part of the ongoing effort to move Nixon's archives from Washington to Yorba Linda since the library came under federal control in 2007.

Online: http://nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/jul10.php

ENERGY

July 6, 2010

Energy Star: Churches Now Receive EPA Label For Efficiency (*Huffington Post*)

Posted: 07- 5-10 11:44 AM

Church Energy Star, Efficient Church, Efficient Churches, Energy Star Church, Energy Star Churches, Green Church, Green Churches, Green Living, Green News
NEEDHAM, Mass. (AP) -- Old and new intersect at First Parish church in Massachusetts, which holds 18th-century timber in its walls and displays proof of its 21st-century energy efficiency with an "Energy Star" plaque by the door.

"Energy Star" status, more commonly associated with dishwashers and refrigerators, is now available to houses of worship as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency looks to lower energy use at thousands of congregations nationwide.

First Parish in Needham is one of just nine congregations in the nation with the designation, which it won after a recent multimillion-dollar expansion and renovation.

Among its upgrades: temperature controls for each room so energy isn't wasted in areas that aren't being used; a ventilation system that adjusts to the number of people inside by measuring the carbon dioxide being exhaled; new insulation in the meeting house walls, which are partly supported by beams from the church's original 1774 building.

As churches consider new efficiency upgrades, the EPA hopes they tap into the same ancient religious principle - good stewardship of the earth - that drove First Parish.

"It's a spiritual issue," said The Rev. John Buehrens, pastor of the Unitarian Universalist church. "Stewardship of the planet and a realization of the fragility of the creation and our responsibility of preserving its beauty is absolutely central to our religious values."

The United States has an estimated 370,000 houses of worship, nearly the number of its K-12 school buildings.

Some buildings seem primed for big improvement, such as the stately churches with high ceilings and leaky windows that are common in buildings in New England town squares. But Michael Zatz, EPA Energy Star commercial buildings manager, said older churches aren't necessarily far less efficient than newer buildings. Instead, he said, focusing on churches can have broad impact.

"The people sitting in those congregations are workers in ... other places - teachers in the schools, managers of hotels - and they might learn through the congregation about what can be done in buildings in general and take it into their workplace," he said. "They also may take it back to their home."

The EPA has reached out to congregations since 1999. But it just began awarding the Energy Star label in October. Before then, a periodic federal building survey hadn't reviewed enough houses of worship to allow the EPA to draw up Energy Star scores for that building type, Zatz said.

So far nine congregations from Alabama to Michigan have won the label. Variables such as a building's size, location and energy use over a year are plugged into a formula. The building's actual energy usage is then compared to what the formula predicts it will use. If it's more efficient than 75 percent of similar houses of worship, it's eligible for the Energy Star label. A licensed engineer must also verify the numbers.

Montevallo Presbyterian Church in Montevallo, Ala., earned the label after an assembly hall renovation completed in 2008. The work included such changes as installing energy efficient appliances, switching to better insulated windows and putting the water heater on a timer so that it's on only when needed, said the church's "Green Team" leader, Bill Peters.

Peters said the church is heeding Biblical commands to care for creation, but also wanted to decrease the impact of a nearby coal-burning power plant.

"The more electricity we consume, the more that that power plant has to pollute our air," Peters said.

After its efficiency upgrades, First Parish in Needham saw a significant drop in its utility bill, which fell from $20,000 to $12,000 in a year. Even after such significant savings, it will take years to make a dent in what it paid to make energy efficiency a priority in its $3.3 million renovation. But good environmental stewardship was the point, not cutting bills, Buehrens said.

"You don't spend $3.3 million in order to cut your utility bill in half," he said. "You do it for a much bigger set of reasons."

Zatz said congregations generally don't need a lot of money to get big gains in efficiency. Simple steps often mean a lot, he said.

"The most common one you hear, and it sounds silly but many people don't do it, is: 'Turn off the lights when you leave,'" Zatz said.

Get HuffPost Green On Twitter, Facebook, and Google Buzz! Know something we don't? E-mail us at Huffpostgreen@huffingtonpost.com

July 6, 2010
David YarnoldExecutive Director, responsible for all operations of Environmental Defense Fund
Posted: July 6, 2010 10:36 AM

Five Denier Myths about the Climate & Energy Bill (*Huffington Post*)

diggfacebook Twitter stumble reddit del.ico.us
Read More: Clean Energy , Climate Bill , Climate Change , Climate Change Bill , Energy , Green News
Like the summer weather outside, the fight over a strong climate bill is heating up. The next three weeks will reveal which Senators are serious about fixing the world's biggest crisis, and which are worried about short-term political advantage.

At stake is whether the Senate will consider a strong bill that caps America's carbon pollution and ends our over-dependence on oil and other fossil fuels. Or whether the Senate will pass yet another energy-only bill that won't solve the problem.

Predictably, the "No Can Do" climate action naysayers continue to oppose to setting hard limits on America's climate pollution. And they're trotting out the same worn-out old arguments they've been using to oppose action for the last decade.

As we approach the Senate endgame, we want to use this opportunity to respond forcefully and directly to these scare tactics. Here are five reasons climate action opponents are wrong:

1) They claim a strong cap on America's carbon pollution will wreck our economy.

FALSE: This is the bogeyman of every effort over the last century to protect our environment and defend public health and safety. Power companies said limits on acid rain pollution would wreck the economy. Oil refineries said taking lead out of gasoline would wreck the economy. Car manufacturers said installing seat belts would, you guessed it, wreck the economy. History has shown that in every case, America's economy has not only survived but thrived under tougher environmental and public health and safety standards.

On this one, our opponents aren't just wrong. They're dead wrong. A cap on carbon didn't cause the current economic disaster. A cap on carbon didn't lead to one billion dollars a day going overseas to oil exporters. A cap on carbon didn't raise electricity rates for the average American home 42% or increase the average cost for a gallon of regular gasoline 138% over the last 20 years. A cap on carbon didn't slash American manufacturing jobs over the last half century.

It's the status quo that got us into this mess. The best way out is to jumpstart the new green economy by ending our addiction to oil and other fossil fuels with a strong limit on carbon pollution.

2) They claim a strong cap on America's carbon pollution will undermine our economic recovery.

FALSE: They've got it backwards. Many notable economists, including Nobel Prize-winning New York Times columnist Paul Krugman and White House Economic Council Director Larry Summers, argue that strong climate action is the key for promoting economic recovery. It will encourage economic and entrepreneurial innovation and finally clarify how America will proceed with carbon limits. Without strong legislation, the uncertainty of EPA regulation and the threat of litigation will continue to freeze much-needed investments to modernize our energy infrastructure.

If you don't believe these economists, remember this: even if we pass a strong cap on carbon pollution this year, it won't go into effect for a couple years. That's how long it will take before the regulatory rules are written. This is one of the most compelling reasons for passing a bill now so we can set the regulations and begin cutting emissions in time to meet the 2020 limits.

We should also note that most short-term emission cuts will come from the "low hanging fruit" of promoting energy efficiency and investing in carbon offsets. Indeed, the House-passed climate and energy bill earned the support of a wide range of businesses, including several power companies, because it made environmental and economic sense.

3) They claim that America can transition to a cleaner energy future without limiting carbon pollution simply by passing an energy-only bill.

FALSE: This is the popular, easy-out position for politicians -- just throw money at the problem. But, there are several major flaws with an energy-only bill.

Congress has passed 10 energy bills over the last 40 years, and none of them have even come close to launching the energy revolution we need to end our over-dependence on fossil fuels and transform our energy economy.

The math simply doesn't add up. Unleashing our clean energy future will require trillions of dollars in new investment in our energy infrastructure and technologies over many years. Such a large-scale transition will only be possible when private investors are given a clear market signal that the days of treating our atmosphere like an open sewer for unlimited carbon pollution are over. Without a strong cap on carbon pollution, we will remain addicted to the dirty energy of the past.

Finally, those in favor of promoting clean energy technologies without a carbon cap typically support taxpayer investments in handpicked energy technologies and programs. There are two main problems with this approach:

1) There is no way we can subsidize our way out of this problem -- we are already running huge deficits, but even if we could find billions of dollars in taxpayer funds for clean energy subsidies, it will not come close to transforming our energy economy; and
2) This is a top-down, command-and-control, federal-government-picks-winners-and-losers approach that many legislators object to, and it will fail to achieve the most efficient clean energy investments. A carbon cap will unleash the ingenuity of America's entrepreneurs, and they will find the most cost-effective technologies for reducing global warming pollution.

4) They claim this is nothing but an energy tax that will limit freedom in America.

FALSE: A cap on carbon is a pollution limit, not a tax. It is a proven way to ratchet down pollution in a cost-effective, efficient, sensible way. As pollution levels decline and we begin to end our addiction to fossil fuels, new, cleaner, more efficient technologies will fill the void.

Think of it this way -- let's say you're a smoker. One way to help you end your tobacco addiction would be to tax cigarettes and increase the cost of smoking. If smoking cigarettes gets more expensive, you may smoke less. Then again, you may just pay the extra amount and find other ways to save money. This is how a carbon tax would work, and it's not what we're advocating.

A better way to ensure that you stop smoking would be to set a declining limit on number of cigarettes you can smoke each day so that over time you gradually kick the habit. This is how a cap on carbon would work.

As for limiting freedom in America, this may be a popular claim by Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck, and the Tea Party crowd. But this flips the issue on its head.

Right now, we import nearly 60% of our oil and are beholden to the whims of the petro-dictators. We sit on only about 2% of the world's proven oil reserves, but we consume nearly 20% of the world's oil. Drill Baby Drill won't change the basic math in this equation.

What freedom-loving American would choose to be dependent on Middle Eastern oil or while relying on the finite and dwindling resources of the world's fossil fuels?

5) They claim that the environmental threat from climate change is overstated.

FALSE!: This one needs an exclamation point. The National Academy of Sciences and the science advisors to the last four presidents of both parties have looked at the data and are unequivocal in their warnings that global climate change is a potentially catastrophic environmental threat to the planet.

The next time someone questions the science of global warming, ask whether he denies that carbon dioxide is a heat-trapping gas. Or whether she denies we are emitting billions of tons of it into our atmosphere every year. Or whether atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide are higher today than at any time in at least the last 2.1 million years. Or that we just completed the warmest decade on record and that 2010 is on pace to shatter the record as the warmest year.

Each of these facts are measurable, verifiable, and not in dispute.

As a result of our 100 years of unlimited carbon pollution, we are witnessing the first symptoms of a planet that is transforming before our eyes. And what we have already seen should be enough to demand action. Polar sea ice melting at alarming rates, seasons coming earlier, migration patterns shifting, the oceans acidifying, corals bleaching, glaciers retreating, wildfires raging out of control, mega-floods and severe droughts - these early symptoms are becoming the norm.

And this is merely the opening act. Over the coming decades, the planet will get warmer and warmer and warmer. Without a strong cap on carbon, there is no reversing this devastating trend.

On these and many other claims, the "No Can Do" folks are just plain wrong. The time for a strong climate and energy action is now. Please email your Senators today and urge them to support the strongest possible bill.

Follow David Yarnold on Twitter: www.twitter.com/deewhy2

GENERAL

What You Missed at the LOHAS Forum (*Treehugger*)

Last week a conscious community of business owners and entrepreneurs gathered in Boulder Colorado for three days to attend the LOHAS Conference: Businesses Coming Together To Help Change The World. We're talking conscious triple bottom line business companies and people, gathering to share information and inspire a sustainable future for our species. The result? Inspiration, motivation, and spontaneous divine connections. Like when I went to pick up my complimentary bicycle (smile) at the Outlook, the Zero Waste Hotel where I stayed. I ran into Andy Keller, founder of Chico Bags, (I've always been a huge fan) one of the sponsors for the conference, and ended up sharing a fun bike ride through Colorado University to the conference, held at the eco conscious Julien Hotel.

Did I say Divine connections? Well, yes I did, and I meant it. I have to really commend LOHAS Executive Director Ted Ning for including the spiritual element at the conference. Several of the workshops like the ones presented by Dr.Larry Dossey and Dr.Elliot Dacher, were based on spiritual principals and indicated just how important a truly holistic approach is to sustainability. I mean, we've got a planet to save ya know, we can't really handle this big of a problem our selves now, can we? Some Divine intervention is going to be required, starting with each one of us being as personally healthy on all levels as possible.

The panel about the oil spill in the gulf was a major highlight, and frankly my main motivation for attending the conference. I wanted to hear first hand from the experts what exactly is going on there, and what we can do about it. EarthEcho International CEO, and grandson of Jacques, Philippe Cousteau skyped in since he was on the ground working on the front lines of the spill. He was joined by The Cove producer Charles Hambleton and the EPA's Director of Public Engagement Stephanie Owens, for a panel moderated by Ten Ning.

Ning opened the panel by acknowledging that there's a feeling of helplessness because the problem is on going. and Owens added that "the solution is not swift or simple." The quotes kept coming:" The oil is toxic to the bottom of the food chain, and we don't know the extent of the damage. "The spill is a symptom of a bigger problem, our reliance on fossil fuels"and,Cousteau pointed out, ""We don't really know what the extent of the damage that is being caused by the dispersants is". Hambleton, noted that the toxic dispersants being used there now are tested to be only 56% effective, and are a bi-product of-gasp-petroleum refining! SO BP is essentially buying and selling themselves their own product?! AND, according to Hambleton there are other dispersants that have been proven 100% effective and are non-toxic. I took the opportunity to ask Stephanie Owens who the decision maker was for allowing the use of Corexit. She explained that she could not confirm whether or not Hambleton's comments are correct, and the Coast Guard decides which ones are used. Hmmmmmmm...and, that the EPA is not, in fact, the lead agency in the matter, but the Coast Guard is, then offered a website for up to date information.

Cousteau received a hearty round of applause for this whopper: "We spend 1,000 times more money every year in our federal budget for space exploration than we do to understand our oceans," "Knowing whether there was ever water on Mars - not critical to surviving on this planet. The oceans are."

The audience was encouraged to submit questions to the panel, and mine was "Is this really the biggest environmental disaster that's ever happened to our oceans, or is commercial fishing actually a larger threat?" Unfortunately they didn't get to my question, but did answer this important one: "What can each one of us do to help the situation?" Supporting NGO's that are working on the ground there was high on the list as way we can all get involved, since more than 5000 volunteers are there with nothing to do because hazmat training is time consuming, and required in order for anyone to get anywhere near the spill itself Cousteau suggested that being an advocate for a clean world and vowing to never buy another plastic bottle, and banning single use plastics overall was a good way to help things improve as well. Ms. Owens suggested that we all continue to engage in "thoughtful conversation "about the subject, and seek out the source of information before sharing it. Everyone on the panel agreed unanimously that boycotting BP was NOT the thing to do, since most stations are run by small business owners that need the income, Doing so would not really impact BP, they said, but would negatively impact our own communities. Larry Dossey closed the panel out with a prayer and moment of silence for all the suffering created by the disaster.

Watch a video recap of some of the highlights.

LOHAS hosted some terrific breakout sessions that I was happy to see included as well. So many in fact that it was difficult to decide which ones to sit in on so as to not miss another. Some of

my faves were the Healthy Homes, which included Christopher Gavigan CEO of Healthy Child Healthy World, that addressed the growing concerns over the toxicity of products in our homes and especially that surround our children. and The Phood and Kids panel, which focused on the shocking amount of processed foods our kids, eat. Speaking of what people eat, one thing I would recommend to improve the conference next year, would be the absence of meat. According to Worldwatch Institute, livestock and their byproducts actually account for at least 32.6 billion tons of carbon dioxide per year, or 51 percent of annual worldwide GHG emissions.So, holding off on the—gasp—roast beef-next year might be a bit more appropriate.

The screening of the film Dirt was really enlightening, and I was truly inspired by the "Igniting Inspiration 101: An Advanced Workshop for Conscious Capitalists" workshop led by John Marshall Roberts.

Then there were the personal connections with like-minded peers that make these events even more fun. Like hanging out with Waylon Lewis at SocialK, Soap Group & CSR Wire's Speakeasy party for Elephant Journal at Bitter Bar,. Then another Divine connection, after searching all day for a ride partner to the airport, a spontaneous ride share and flight home with Mallika Chopra (where I learned all about her amazing website intent.com—think: if twitter and facebook had a baby, and it was born into supreme consciousness), Then last but not least, there's the fat stack of business cards I collected. I'm working my way through them now, to keep in touch with everyone.

"I would not go into the water today," she said.

RECYCLING

Wearable Collections May Snag Clothes Recycling Contract In NYC (*Huffington Post*)

NEW YORK — Here's the truth about fashion: It changes quickly. So what do you do when you're stuck with a closet full of barely worn shirts, dresses and shoes?

Starting in September, New York City will launch one of the largest textile recycling initiatives in the nation. The aim is to make it easy to donate clothing, almost as easy as throwing it away.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Americans pitch almost 10 pounds of socks, jeans, shirts and sheets per year, per person. In New York, where 190,000 tons of textiles entered the city's landfills in 2008 alone, the plan would place 50 collection bins in high-traffic areas.

"I moved three times in the last five years, and each time I ended up throwing away clothes," says 25-year-old Tracy Feldman. "It is just too hard to haul it all over the city. If there was a bin on my block, I wouldn't hesitate to recycle them."

The city is taking bids for a 10- to 15-year contract with a nonprofit company that will be responsible for the bins. Goodwill Industries International is one of the companies bidding on the contract.

"There has not been another program like this that we know of," said Goodwill spokesman Alfred Vanderbilt. "We think they are being very creative and we hope this sets a new standard."

A Goodwill Industries survey of 600 adults in the United States and Canada found that more than half of people who donate clothing say they wouldn't go more than 10 minutes out of their way to make a donation.

Robert Lange, the director of the Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling in New York, said his department discovered the same problem.

"You can open a black bag at the landfill and see what looks like new clothing," he said. "It is easier to throw it out than recycle."

Not all used clothing can be recycled into usable clothing – take those old, stinky sneakers and torn clothing. But that doesn't mean those items can't be donated. While Goodwill is mostly looking for clothing that can be resold, there are ways to recycle even the old tattered pieces.

At Wearable Collections, a New Jersey-based textile recycling company, almost half of donations are good for resale, according to the owner. The other half is split nearly evenly between being used for rags for businesses like the automotive industry and being broken down for insulation. Less than 5 percent of the total is unusable and goes to the landfill.

Officials say that if New York's campaign is successful, it could lead to a nationwide movement to recycle clothing.

Not only would that clear up some room in the nation's landfills, it could also create jobs, said Brenda Platt, co-director of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance based in Washington, D.C. She profiled 20 textile recycling companies and estimates that the industry creates 85 times more jobs than landfills.

Wearable Collections has been offering free bins to apartment buildings and dorm rooms throughout the East Coast for the last few years. The company's employees collect the bins as often as once a week, and tenants never have to go farther than their lobby to get rid of old clothing.

Adam Baruchowitz, the owner of Wearable Collections, is enthusiastic about city governments and charities working together. "I think it is going to raise the consciousness of textile recycling, which is a good thing for us," Baruchowitz said.

And if all goes as planned, New York may be just the beginning.

"If this is as effective as it can be, it will influence other locations," Lange said. "We will be leading by example."

TOXICS

Why We Need Federal Safeguards for Coal Ash (*Treehugger*)

News OCR Text: One of the homes destroyed by the December 2008 Tennessee Valley Authority coal ash disaster in Harriman, Tenn. Photo by Lyndsay Moseley.

How would you like to live near a pile of toxic waste that, every time the wind blew, spread its particles into your neighborhood? Or thishow would you like to live near a pond full of toxic waste that had no liner and could be seeping into the groundwater and nearby waterways with no penalty?

This is happening to thousands of Americans right nowand the toxic waste is coal ash, the by-product of burning coal for energy.

Coal-fired power plants produce approximately 131 million tons of waste per year, making coal combustion waste the second largest industrial waste stream in the U.S. Coal ash contains numerous hazardous chemicals, including arsenic, selenium, lead, mercury, cadmium, chromium, boron, thallium, and aluminum. [1]

When coal ash comes into contact with water, these hazardous materials leach out of the waste and contaminate groundwater and surface water. [2]

A Google Maps Satellite photo of the Little Blue Run Coal Ash Pond - with its bizarre and unnatural blue color - that sprawls across the border of West Virginia and Pennsylvania near the Ohio River.

Sierra Club activists have worked with many communities affected by coal ash waste sites - many of these affected residents started their own community organizations to fight the hazards, and came to us for help. (). Here is one example from our : Bill Zak says the site is already home to two piles of coal ash and the facility is now applying for a permit to create a third pile.

"The difference is that for this third pile, there are more safety precautions," explained Zak. "There's a liner and a mechanical system directing run-off to a storage facility for reuse in the plant. This is opposed to before, in both the other sites, the two piles are just open exposure to the elements, the wind and rain, and they have no liners."

Bill, his wife, and many others in his community formed Citizens for Clean Power and have worked long hours protesting the permitting for the new coal ash pile based on the fact that the facility was not doing anything to fix the old piles.

"If it's required for this new pile, if that's the condition for granting the permit, why won't they remediate the old ones?" he asked.

Another example comes from the town of Oakwood, Illinois:

The neighborhood is a rural subdivision of 30 homes that all draw their drinking water from ground water. The disposal was allowed without safeguards under state law as a "beneficial fill operation." According to EPA, state testing of the waste dumped at the site found lead levels three to four times higher than the Illinois standard allowed.

In fact, testing of groundwater at 11 sites near the Bunge dumping area showed levels exceeding Groundwater Quality Standards of arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, chromium, iron, lead, manganese, nickel, sulfate, and thallium. - not to mention the stories of disasters near coal ash ponds, such the one in Pennsylvania in 2005 and the devastating Tennessee Valley Authority coal ash disaster in December 2008.

All those dangers and disasters, and still no federal safeguards for coal ash disposal. There is a patchwork of some state regulations, but in most places coal ash, despite its toxic contents, is regulated much like household garbage.

Thankfully EPA has just released its draft coal ash safeguards and they're accepting comments right now. 1 - US EPA, Human and Ecological Risk Assessment of Coal Combustion Wastes, August 6 2007 (draft).