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

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May 14, 2010

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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With the internet, blogs, Twitter, forums - people are talking about EPA 24/7
Here's a sampling of what was said on May 12, 2010:

NOTE: To read the entire blog entry, click on underlined URL. To learn more about the blogger, click on the name/link in first line. Notes and headings are from OPA.

Lisa Jackson

EPA Administrator Meets with Gulf Region Scientists on BP Oil Spill / Photos from Administrator Jackson's recent v...
Posted by: thehealthgyro 7:20 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/actIw1

Asked about effects of #oilspill dispersants on seafood, EPA's @LisaPJackson says, "I ate seafood yesterday in New Orleans."
Posted by: craigtimes 5:10 pm Full post:
(Note: St. Petersburg Times)

EPA's @LisaPJackson: Some of #oilspill dispersant contents are trade secrets, but EPA knows what's in them & approved use.
Posted by: craigtimes 5:15 pm Full post:

On dispersants conf call with #oil EPA's Jackson: "We know that on surface dispersants break up more rapidly than oil"
Posted by: elikint 4:15 pm Full post:

Gulf Oil Spill & EPA Response

EPA Administrator Meets with Gulf Region Scientists on BP Oil Spill / Photos ... - U.S. EPA.gov
Posted by: blackgoldnews 6:20 pm Full post: http://url4.eu/3MctQ

AP: EPA: Better air monitoring needed after Gulf spill Associated Press –
Posted by: Howlettwdhzo 6:17 pm Full post: http://tinyurl.com/24o62bv
(Note: The head of EPA says regulators need to do a better job monitoring health hazards in the air over waters where shrimpers and fishermen are helping to contain a massive oil spill.)

Science Now: EPA, BP Eyeing Mega-Dispersant Operation
Posted by: blackgoldnews 6:20 pm Full post: http://url4.eu/3MbXq
AP: So much for dismissing #oilspill as freak accident - AP on "cascade of deep-sea equipment failures & procedural problems"
Posted by: MilesGrant 6:10 pm Full post: http://ow.ly/1KjS0

HuffPost: Whistleblower Claims That #BP Was Aware Of Cheating On Blowout Preventer Tests
Posted by: GreenIsTweet 6:00 pm Full post: http://huff.to/curHs6

Environmental News Bits: EPA Updates BP Spill Website with Information on Dispersants
Posted by: poloX 4:34 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/cUfcWP

Add EPA's BP Spill widget to your pages & blogs to help keep people updated as work continues in the Gulf
Posted by: tonyrockwell 2:49 pm Full post: http://budurl.com/k5x5

Chesapeake Bay Settlement

Business Week: EPA unveils Chesapeake Bay restoration strategy
Posted by: DMVdirectory 7:06 pm Full post: http://ping.fm/rHK2w

EPA puts Chesapeake Bay on 'pollution diet': ... a tool of the federal Clean Water Act, that sets a strict "pollution...
Posted by: TweetFitnessTip 6:06 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/d8ioQk

ROUND-UP OF MAJOR BLOGS

AIR

May 13, 2010

Gina Solomon
Senior Scientist, NRDC
Posted: May 13, 2010 10:19 AM

What's in the Air Along the Louisiana Coast? (Huffington Post)

"You shoulda been out here last evening" said Carey, the shrimp boat captain who took me out to South Pass today. He saw that I was taking air samples with a hand-held monitoring device, and recounted the strong smell and choking fumes he had suffered through yesterday when he went out to rescue a stranded boat in the Main Pass channel. "Those guys on that boat had it worse than me" he added. "They were pretty sick - headaches and sick to their stomachs - but they had been sitting out there stranded in that stuff for two hours."

At noon on a sunny day with a light wind from the southeast, I only found traces of volatile organic compounds in the air and noticed only a hint of a petroleum smell. But I could imagine how it had been the night before.

Captain Carey is making a little money taking reporters and environmentalists out to look for oil along the Louisiana coastline near Venice. Many of his friends have taken a different job. They are out there cleaning up the oil.

I talked with some of them this weekend, the night before they headed out to start dragging boom. They described the safety training they got from BP, and showed off the containment boom, absorbant boom, and large absorbant pads they were supposed to drag behind their boats.

"It'll be like sweeping the State of Texas with a broom" one said.

"It's just to make people feel better and to make it look like BP is doing something," another added.

"But at least they're paying us well."

Then they showed me the protective equipment they had received: hard hats, safety glasses, coveralls, and gloves. "These are just for the guys who are pulling in the boom. Not for the boat captains" one captain explained.

"Where are the respirators?" I asked.

"Respirators? They didn't give us any"

"Did they explain why not?"

"They said all the chemicals in the air dissipate within a few hours, and we'll be in areas where the oil has been there for a while, so all the vapors will have gone away. Nothing to worry about."

I checked the BP website, Coast Guard website, NOAA website, and EPA website. No data on air levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) offshore. I guess we're supposed to take it on faith that it's safe out there.

That's why I'm out here today with an air monitor.

I don't expect to find anything; I hope I won't find anything. But it's always best to check.

The problem is that we can't get all the way out to the areas where the fishermen are working -- a lot of those areas are closed off, plus we're in a small boat and the sea is rough in the Gulf today. In addition, I realize that we're still far from the spill, and in the heat of mid-day, the vapors are probably going straight up, not hugging the ocean like they might do in the cool of the evening.

But I still found VOC vapors out there.

Maybe I'll need to go back soon.

This post originally appeared on NRDC's Switchboard blog.

We've got the American Power Act

Introducing the American Power Act: On strategy and substance (*Grist)*

by Senator John Kerry
12 May 2010

Busy day here -- started early with some curtain-raising morning television to kick off the discussion a bit about the American Power Act that Joe Lieberman [I-Conn.] and a unique coalition are talking about later today.

But sometimes those morning-show interviews are a bit of a reminder of how much detailed discussion we lose when we're crammed into a two- or three- or five-minute back-and-forth, which is especially tough on an issue like a comprehensive approach to climate and energy.

Which brings me to why I wanted to come by Grist -- because of the in-depth discussions you've already had here again and again on this issue.

But -- and here's the but -- I don't want to swing by and just sort of preach to the choir. We're true believers -- we already get the imperative of the threat our addiction to carbon-emitting energy poses. You know the science, you know the reality, and so do I.

So, what I do want to talk about is this: We need to take a deep dive together on the Senate strategy, and on the real details of the bill that make it important for the things you and I care about. So, I hope I bring something new to that discussion that we can use as a jumping-off point.

First, the Senate dynamic -- the politics of this place. I want to be candid about this, and I do so with a record on this issue that I think earned me the spurs to say this. We've been at this a long time. Al Gore and I held the Senate's first climate-change hearings in the Commerce Committee way back in 1988. Since then, precious little progress has been made and ground has been lost internationally, all while the science has grown more compelling. I can barely even count any more the number of international summits I've attended, or press conferences we've held after losing climate-change votes in the Senate where our message was, “Next year, we can get this done -- don't give up on the United States or the Senate.” Two Congresses ago, we had 38 votes for a bill. Last Congress, we had 54 votes for cloture out of 60 needed -- and we said then -- me, Joe, Barbara Boxer [D-Calif.] -- that this Congress we could get to 60 and pass a bill.

So what have we done? A lot of meeting and listening -- between me, Joe Lieberman, and Lindsey Graham [R-S.C.], hundreds of meetings one-on-one with our colleagues to find out what they needed to support a bill. And I absolutely believe we're closer than ever to getting across the finish line -- but make no mistake, it remains difficult, even with President Obama in the White House, and even with the House of Representatives having passed their bill by the slimmest of margins last summer. But we're going full-steam ahead because, in my judgment, this may be the last and certainly the best chance for the Senate to act, especially with the fact that I think the next Senate -- given a 2012 presidential campaign added to the dynamic and a lot of new senators -- is going to be less likely than this one to find a path to the 60 votes needed for passage. So we've got to get it done this year.

Hear me out on this one -- you know where I've been and continue to be on all the major environmental fights since even before I became a senator. As a lieutenant governor, I focused on acid rain and we laid the groundwork for the successful fight on the Clean Air Act in 1990, with the support of the first President Bush and bipartisan support from Congress. In stark contrast to that effort to find a bipartisan way forward, I led the successful filibuster -- against the urging of many in our Democratic caucus -- to defeat the second President Bush's plan to drill in and destroy the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I point to these twin examples because I think they're evidence that I know when to dig in and fight, and I also know when and how to find the path to getting something done across the aisle.

And here's what I can tell you: A comprehensive climate bill written purely for you and me -- true believers -- can't pass the Senate no matter how hard or passionately I fight on it. No, it's got to be an effort that makes my colleagues -- and that has to include Republicans so we can get to 60 -- comfortable about the jobs we're going to create and the protection for consumers and the

national security benefits -- and it has to address those pieces on their terms. The good news: I think we got that balance right.

So, the straight scoop on the details, the real down-in-the-weeds details:

First and foremost, this bill creates a major -- mandatory -- pollution-reduction program that sends the needed price signal on carbon, with carbon allowances auctioned in a heavily regulated market that doesn't allow any speculators access. Only corporations that need the pollution allowances can buy them, period. No bank can swoop in and start speculating. These corporations that buy the allowances can trade them among themselves, but again, no outside entities are allowed, with the minor exception of a few heavily regulated “liquidity providers” who are there to make sure there are always buyers and sellers at any one time. The actions of these providers, however, are tightly controlled, and their profits are extremely limited by the law. There's no Wild West of speculation possible here, just a strict market only open to those who need it.

It will also be a stable market. The American Power Act creates a hard price collar for the sale of carbon allowances. This will cut down on the volatility of the market, especially in the early days, and give investors a clear signal on future prices. We don't let this affect the environmental integrity or jeopardize the pollution reductions we're going for, though. Instead, we hold back a strategic reserve of allowances that we release if the market gets too high to bring down the cost without adding new carbon to our pollution targets.

And, look, creating this pollution-reduction market is incredibly important to do. We absolutely have to send a price signal to move to a new energy economy. Every business leader I talk to confirms this -- nothing else will get the job done. Without it, we won't get the certainty we need in our economy that drives the innovation and investment in the clean energy economy. And without that, we won't be able to get a real international agreement, with teeth, to confront the crisis of climate change.

Now, we can't leave American workers exposed, waiting forever for others to join us in the effort to price pollution, because that would force them to compete against countries that have no greenhouse-gas emissions limits. That would just shift pollution abroad rather than reduce it, and in the process, it would cost us jobs. So we've included a robust, WTO-consistent border-adjustment mechanism in the bill. It's pretty simple: Imports from countries that aren't doing what we're doing will need to pay a fee at the border or we will give our producers the resources they would need to keep from having their production shifted overseas to avoid the cost of polluting. This will prevent the “carbon leakage” of companies moving production offshore, and it allows American manufacturers to compete on a level playing field with those overseas. And I guarantee that on a level playing field, nobody beats the American worker.

We also want Americans to share in the benefits of this legislation, so the American Power Act -- inspired in part by the great work of Sens. Maria Cantwell [D-Wash.] and Susan Collins [R-Maine] -- sends the bulk of the proceeds from the sale of the pollution allowances back to the American people directly in the form of rebates. None of it stays with or grows government. Those rebates rise over time until it all goes straight back to Americans.

That's the heart of the bill. I realize there's been a lot of discussion about some other aspects of it, so here are some of the other parts of the bill:

- **Clean Air Act:** This part of the bill has generated a lot of commentary and reporting recently, and some of it has just missed the mark. Here's the deal: This bill does not take the EPA out of the mix on regulating carbon. In fact, it strengthens the Clean Air Act by expanding the authority of the EPA and making that authority permanent. First, the entire pollution-reduction program is under the authority of the EPA. The bill specifically requires the EPA to regulate large sources of carbon pollution, but it does not allow it to issue what in many cases would be duplicative regulation of the same sources. Essentially, what the bill says is that EPA should use the program specifically designed for making the deep reductions in carbon pollution called for in the bill. The bill preserves key Clean Air Act tools for sources not in the program, and it calls on EPA to continue setting tough emission standards to reduce global-warming pollution from cars and trucks. It also continues EPA's ability to set performance standards for old, dirty power plants to make sure they clean up.
- **Offshore drilling:** We're in the middle of a catastrophe in the Gulf, and it's important that we fully understand the implications as we move forward. This bill starts that process by tightening current federal law and implementing two major reforms. First, any state can veto drilling less than 75 miles off its border. Second, any new rig will have to be studied for the environmental impact of any potential spill, and any state that is found to be at risk can veto that drilling.
- **State laws:** The long-standing efforts of states like California to implement innovative programs around vehicle emissions and other programs will not be affected. The bill does make clear that carbon is a national problem, and that the national policy on carbon needs to be the law of the land. But outside of that specific area, states are still free to pursue the policies that they wish. I've talked with [Massachusetts] Gov. Deval Patrick about this -- Massachusetts has been one of the states ahead of the curve and our bill rewards them -- but like with acid rain, these governors know we ultimately need a national solution.

So -- one more time - would I design every piece of this legislation exactly as it is if I only had to get my vote? Of course not. But that's not the way democracy works. The Senate -- and our caucus -- is a very diverse coalition, from coastal states to Midwestern states to states with large coal reserves. Sixty votes is a tough coalition to put together.

But our planet can't wait for the perfect bill. We need to get a really good bill now, one that reduces carbon pollution and puts us on a path to a clean energy future. And if we do this, I know we can get a tough international agreement to deal with this global problem. Those are the two things I remind myself of every day when it comes to this bill. You've got to keep your eye on the prize. Bottom line: We're at a crossroads. On one path is clean energy, a more stable climate, and a more prosperous economy with America back in control of our own energy, generating good clean-energy jobs. On the other is the status quo, which is unsustainable. Keep that in mind when you look at this bill and engage in the debate.

May 12, 2010

Ensuring Coal's Future (to Kill)? Questions for Sen. John Kerry from the Coal Wars Frontlines (*Huffington Post*)

Who can't admire Sen. John Kerry's determination to bring some sort of climate and clean energy legislation to the Senate? (Let's put aside Sen. Joe Lieberman for the moment.) As Kerry reminds us in his HuffPo blog today, the Senator from Massachusetts held hearings on climate change 22 years. And Kerry reminds any naysayers among the Green readers at Grist:

But our planet can't wait for the perfect bill. We need to get a really good bill now, one that reduces carbon pollution and puts us on a path to a clean energy future. And if we do this, I know we can get a tough international agreement to deal with this global problem. Those are the two things I remind myself of every day when it comes to this bill. You've got to keep your eye on the prize. Bottom-line -- we're at a crossroads. On one path is clean energy, a more stable climate, and a more prosperous economy with America back in control of our own energy generating good clean energy jobs. On the other is the status quo which is unsustainable.

Fair enough. But the question will also remain: In the meantime, who is going to pay the immediate price for political compromise?

I wondered about that question today as I read one of the major planks in the legislation summary: **Ensuring Coal's Future**

"Ensuring Coal's Future" is part of our clean energy future?

Not for coalfield residents.

Aware of a slumping and declining market, black lung-afflicted coal miners and the mourning families of betrayed coal miners at Upper Big Branch in West Virginia also must wonder about this question and its lack of answers. Residents in the economically and environmentally devastated coalfields---the national sacrifice zones allowed by Congress--already understand the answer to this question, as do ailing residents surrounded by coal-fired plants and unregulated coal ash dumps.

In a line: Kerry knows that coal kills. So, are we going to phase our deadly old coal-fired plants (and deadly coal mining) by a certain date--or just add more regulations?

The unveiling of his well-meaning and roll-up-your-sleeves American Power Act legislative package today is certainly a step toward reducing our CO2 emissions to 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020, and 80 percent below 2005 levels at 2050--albeit far short of what most scientists deem critical to step from the abyss of irreversible climate destabilization.

Kerry, in his HuffPo blog today, is even candid about the bill's pander to Big Coal-controlled politicians in the Midwest:

There's very tough politics in the Senate, no doubt. But we've made sure that states and Senators that have been uncomfortable with this issue for decades have an unprecedented opportunity to take part in the new, clean energy economy and that's why we make strong investments in clean coal technology.

His legislation pours $2 billion a year down the black hole of the prohibitively expensive and still infeasiblecarbon capture and storage technology that everyone knows will INCREASE coal production in an era of rapidly approaching peak coal.

More so, Kerry's legislation today raises questions over whether his Senate version of the climate bill will exempt old coal-fired plants or close the loopholes in the Waxman-Markey bill. According to a 21-page summary, Kerry's bill will:

Section 1441. Performance Standards for Coal-fired Power Plants: Amends the Clean Air Act to establish performance standards for new coal-fired power plants permitted in 2009 or thereafter. Describes eligibility criteria, applicable emission standards, and the schedule upon which such standards must be met. Plants permitted in 2020 or thereafter are required to meet specified standards once they begin operations. Plants permitted from 2009-2020 are required to meet the specified standard within four years after certain technology deployment criteria are met but no later than 2020.

Last summer, Sierra Club Beyond Coal director Bruce Nilles wrote an impassioned blog, calling on the Senate to close the loopholes in Waxman-Markey, if we are to have any true climate and clean energy legislation:

While ACES does make some good strides in reducing global warming pollution, Big Coal cannot be allowed to vent billions of tons of pollution without consequence.

To close this huge loophole and level the playing field between coal and clean energy, the Senate must insist that the oldest, dirtiest plants will retire by a date certain or meet the same pollution standards as new plants. And, until they retire or clean up, existing plants must be prohibited from expanding their capacity and increasing carbon pollution. These measures would create an incentive for industry to use cleaner technologies instead of continuing to lean on the dirty dinosaurs that generate too much of our electricity today. Finally, if Congress cannot muster the backbone to clean up the nation's oldest and most dangerous coal plants, it ought to restore the Environmental Protection Agency's authority to do so.

The stakes could not be greater. We cannot let Big Coal get away with another massive loophole to continue polluting at the same level as today for 1-2 more decades. Congress must close the coal loophole and make the coal industry slash its pollution. Our future depends on it.

Has Sen. Kerry closed this loophole?

Fellow, Institute for Policy Studies

Posted: May 13, 2010 11:29 AM

Kerry, Lieberman Promote Offshore Oil, Coal, Nukes, Offsets in New "Climate" Bill (*Huffington Post*)

In introducing the "American Power Act" on May 12, 2010, Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) seemed oblivious to the various public relations disasters the industries favored in their bill had suffered in recent weeks. In short order, we have witnessed: an explosion at a Massey coal mine in West Virginia, in which 29 workers were killed; BP's unfolding oil catastrophe, wherein 11 workers were killed in what is proving to be the worst offshore oil industry disaster in U.S. history in the Gulf of Mexico; and the contamination of the groundwater supply of much of southern New Jersey by a tritium leak from the aging Oyster Creek nuclear power plant.

Unabashed, the two senators took to the podium accompanied by nuclear and coal industry titans (though nary an oil exec in sight) to introduce a bill that subsidizes nuclear power, "clean" coal (an oxymoron, if there ever was one), and incentivizes states' support for offshore oil drilling, while gutting the EPA's authority to regulate carbon dioxide emissions as pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

In addition, despite an Interpol investigation into organized crime's involvement in forest carbon offsets and massive tax fraud in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, Senator Kerry promised the bill would provide "additional carbon offsets". Do we really need *more* than the 2 billion tons of carbon offsets per year already provided under the House-passed Waxman-Markey bill? The U.S. Government Accountability Office studied carbon offsets and found them impossible to verify. This quantity of carbon offsets means the U.S. could make no verifiable emissions reductions until at least 2030, making the 17 percent cuts in greenhouse gas emissions below 2005 levels promised by 2020 meaningless in the short-term-- when it's needed most.

We can and indeed we must do better.
Follow Daphne Wysham on Twitter: www.twitter.com/daphnewysham

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Mules To help In Radiation Survey At LA Area Lab (*Huffington Post*)

| 05/13/10 11:06 AM |

LOS ANGELES — The Environmental Protection Agency has a new weapon in the fight against radioactive contamination at a Los Angeles-area lab: Mules.

The EPA will use four mules to carry high-tech scanning equipment to detect radiation on steep and rocky terrain at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory.

The EPA is conducting a survey of soil and water contamination at the lab near Simi Valley, where rocket engines were tested for years and a partial meltdown of a nuclear reactor took place in 1959.

About 500 acres of the lab will be scanned for gamma radiation.

Results will be turned over to the state, which is overseeing a cleanup.