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

Friday, February 15, 2013

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Friday, June 25, 2010

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ALTRAZINE

June 25, 2010

Andrew WetzlerDirector, NRDC Endangered Species Project
Posted: June 24, 2010 03:05 PM BIO Become a Fan Get Email Alerts Bloggers' Index

Atrazine spikes in Missouri prompt community warning (*Huffington Post*)

It's been a rainy spring here in the Midwest and that mean worries about flooded basements, streets, and towns. Many of our streams and creeks are bloated by runoff from nearby fields. Unfortunately, a lot of those fields have been treated with atrazine, a herbicide applied in the spring to kill weeds before crops (mostly corn) begin to grow. Atrazine is one of the mostly widely used pesticides in the world. In the United States alone, between 60 and 80 million pounds of atrazine are used each year and atrazine is the most commonly detected pesticide in U.S. waters. Today in Missouri we got a taste of the consequences of this widespread use.

From the Kansas City Star:

p>Authorities are warning Drexel, Mo., residents not to drink the water there after routine testing revealed high levels of the herbicide atrazine.

Spikes like this--in this case over 10 times the federal annual exposure limit--are not at all uncommon in the Midwest, as our two reports, Poisoning the Well, discussed. Below is a map of Missouri atrazine spikes from our 2009 report (showing atrazine levels from 2005-2006). Note that only data from watersheds that were actually tested are shown--that is, far more watersheds than illustrated here were probably contaminated:These kinds of exposures are particularly disturbing because atrazine acts as an endocrine disrupter, potentially altering normal hormone functions in a whole range of organism, including people. Want some examples? A recent study reported that 10 percent of male frogs that were born and raised in water contaminated with low doses atrazine grew up with female sex characteristics, had reduced levels of male testosterone hormone, reduced sperm levels, and decreased fertility. Another recent study found that fish exposed to atrazine had impaired egg production and abnormalities in their reproductive organs. As for people, studies indicate that prenatal atrazine exposure may increase risk of poor birth outcomes and birth defects in infants; other studies have linked atrazine urine levels in farm workers and rural men to low sperm count and motility.

EPA is currently conducting a review of atrazine's safety. I'm hoping that next time the spring rains come to the Midwest we'll have one less thing to worry about.

This post originally appeared on NRDC's Switchboard blog.

June 25, 2010

Mindy PennybackerAuthor, 'Do One Green Thing: Saving the Earth Through Simple, Everyday Choices'
Posted: June 24, 2010 04:17 PM BIO Become a Fan Get Email Alerts Bloggers' Index

BP SPILL

A 12-Step program for oil addicts: green grilling, chilling & more (*Huffington Post*)

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Read More: Beach , Birds , BP Gulf Oil Spill , Dawn Dish Soap , Energy Saving , Fish , Green Cleaning , Green Grilling , Green Living , Green Shampoos , Green Soaps , Local Food , Meat , Oceana , Organic-Foods , Surfrider , Green News
At least consumers can cap our oil! This summer, as Americans anguish over the Gulf gusher, watching BP and the government point fingers while things get worse, we're also doing some navel-gazing--and not just at the beach. We're facing our addiction to the petroleum we consume in fuel and daily products.

Guilt, however, only paralyzes, while daily green actions add up to positive change. Here's a 12-step program--without the guilt!--for reducing our dependence on oil.

1: Drive less, walk + bike more. If every American burned our own calories instead of driving for just 30 minutes a day, we'd prevent 64 million tons of global warming carbon dioxide CO2) emissions, conserve 6.5 million tons of gasoline--and lose a collective 3 billion tons of body fat. Source: A 2007 study reported by the AP's Seth Borenstein, who recently wrote "Oil, oil, everywhere."

Reward: You'll look (and feel) better in your swimsuit.

2: Stop "cleaning" with petroleum. Dawn dish soap, positioned as the gentle but thorough cleanser of oiled birds, is itself made of oil, Procter & Gamble told NPR. In a recent study, Dawn was found to form carcinogenic nitrosamines; like most conventional cleaners and cosmetics, Dawn contains "fragrance," a blanket term for synthetic phthalates linked to reproductive deformities in amphibious wildlife and male infants, and asthma and obesity.

Choose botanical-based household cleaners, soaps & shampoos.

3: De-plastify your life. Say no to single-use containers & bottles. During a local Surfrider summer solstice beach cleaning, most of the plastics I picked up came from McDonald's. Tote bottles & picnic ware made to be reused, except for polycarbonate plastic which releases toxic Bisphenol-A.

4: Recycle everything you can, including food and yard waste. Making new stuff consumes oil and trees, and trash gets out to sea. For where to recycle what in your area, see Earth911. For composting, EPA provides basic info.

5: Clean a beach with your family, friends, local parks dept or Surfrider chapter, or join Ocean Conservancy's beach cleanup September 25. Wear least-toxic sunblock.

6: Grill greener
Every July 4th, our 60 million U.S. barbecues emit 225,000 metric tons of CO2 . Propane/gas releases the least CO2 when burned. Electric grills cause the highest CO2 emissions (from power plants) but no air pollution while they cook. Charcoal contributes to deforestation and burns dirtiest, spewing lung-threatening soot. Better to burn solid charcoal from well-managed forests than toxic-glue-bound briquettes (never dump these on a beach!). The EPA advises a chimney or electric starter instead of lighter fluids, which produce 14,500 tons of smog.

7: Q: What to grill (besides BP)? A: Petroleum-free food
Hats off to vegetarians and vegans! If the rest of us skipped red meat & dairy one day a week, we'd save as much petroleum & CO2 as taking 20 million cars off the road a year. Synthetic pesticides and fertilizers are made with fossil fuels, and you don't want to eat the toxic residues, so choose organic, local & in-season affordable at farmers' markets! . Here's more re: sustainable veg, meat & fish.

8: Keep insects off without petroleum-based repellents.
Studies find these plant-based formulas repel well, while DEET is losing its effectiveness. Keep synthetic pesticides out of your harm and garden to protect children's development and our drinking water. For nontoxic pest control tips, Bio-Integral Resource Center.

9: Let the grass grow.
Longer grass fights weeds and conserves water. When you trim, use a rotary mower. Although EPA restrictions on oil-fuelled mower emissions take effect this year, they still produce unhealthy noise and smog. Add native shrubs and trees to support birds & beneficial insects and keep water in the ground. More tips here.

10: Travel mindfully.
The Union of Concerned Scientists' green vacation travel tips maximize fuel and carbon savings whether you go by car, bus, rail and plane.

11: Chill without overkill.

Make air conditioning your last resort. Curtain/shade sunny windows. When it's cool outdoors, open up & ventilate. Set a.c. at 78 degrees F. and save 726 lbs. of CO2 a year. Cool by replacing incandescent lights, which waste 90% of their energy as heat, with CFLs (30%) or LEDs (none).

12: Save the hot for your (shorter) shower.
Cutting your daily shower from 8 to 5 minutes saves 513 lbs. of carbon a year. If every U.S. household washed 4 out of 5 loads on cold, we'd stop 50 million tons of CO2 emissions a year; hanging just half our loads dry saves us each 723 lbs/CO2/yr and $50, minimum. Source: EPA.

Extra credit: Take action!
Sign Oceana's petition to stop offshore drilling. Donate $ to Gulf wildlife
http://www.ibrrc.org/adopt_a_bird.html and families who've been hurt.
This Saturday, June 26, demand climate and energy regulation by joining hands across the sand.

ENERGY

June 25, 2010
Dan LashofDirector, NRDC's climate center
Posted: June 24, 2010 02:50 PM

We Need Real Relief, Not a Junk Shot to Solve the Energy Problems that Led to the BP Blowout (*Huffington Post*)

BP couldn’t stop the oil gusher with a junk shot of golf balls and tire shards, and Congress can’t solve the energy problems that are the root cause of the gusher with a junk shot of unenforceable goals and unfunded subsidies. Eventually the gusher will be plugged by drilling a new well that can be used to establish a permanent seal. This will take some time, but fortunately no one suggested that BP should wait to begin working on a permanent solution until after it had tried every half-measure it could think of.

Not so when it comes to ending our dangerous dependence on oil and other fossil fuels, which inevitably leads to more disasters like the one in the Gulf of Mexico, chains our fate to that of dictators in the Gulf of Arabia, and disrupts the stability of the climate on which our civilization was built. Congress has enacted seven major energy bills since 1974, most of which promised to make America energy independent and none of which have delivered. Some in Congress want to repeat this junk shot approach, hoping for a different result.

Others want Congress to focus narrowly on cleaning up the oil spill and reforming drilling regulations. They make two wildly contradictory arguments against a comprehensive response that includes limits on carbon pollution. First they say that an energy and climate bill is not a response to the oil spill because it won’t significantly reduce America’s insatiable oil appetite. Simultaneously they argue that any bill that limits carbon pollution is a giant gasoline tax that will force Americans out of their cars. These arguments can’t both be right. In fact, neither is.

p>The first line of argument suggests that carbon pollution limits won't change the price of gasoline enough to significantly affect consumer behavior so they won't meaningfully reduce oil demand. The premise is right (contradicting the second argument), but the conclusion is wrong. The carbon limits in a bill like the American Power Act hold oil companies, power producers, and heavy industry responsible for their pollution, but these limits tighten gradually to give polluters time to clean up their act. According to the EPA's recent analysis, the oil pollution limits in the American Power Act would change gasoline prices by only ten cents per gallon in 2020, less than normal price fluctuations from month to month.

How then would comprehensive climate and energy legislation end our dependence on dirty and dangerous sources of oil? In the near term, the primary effect of the pollution limits will be to direct investment toward carbon-cutting technologies by making it clear that failing to do so would be an increasingly expensive mistake as the pollution limits ratchet down. Equally important, complementary measures will directly reduce demand for oil by ratcheting up efficiency standards for cars, establishing the first-ever standards for heavy trucks, and investing in the infrastructure to replace petroleum fuels with electricity, natural gas, and sustainable biofuels (see sections 4111-4141 of the APA). Finally, the emission limits in a comprehensive bill will promote the capture of millions of tons of CO2 from power plants and industrial smokestacks. This CO2 can be injected into aging onshore oil fields in the United States to boost recovery of otherwise trapped oil, displacing imports and the need to drill in ever deeper and more dangerous waters.

Let's do the numbers. As I have described in more detail before, EPA has shown that we could cut oil demand by almost 7 million barrels per day by 2030. Meanwhile, CO2 enhanced oil recovery could increase domestic onshore production by 3 million barrels per day. In comparison, current offshore production in the Gulf of Mexico is 1.6 million barrels per day. The net effect would be to increase domestic production by ten times as much as would expanded offshore drilling, cut imports by at least half, and put us on a path to finally end our dependence on oil once and for all.

Passing a comprehensive energy and climate plan is not an instant fix for the mess we are in. But unlike another junk shot, it will provide real relief if we start now.

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GENERAL

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News OCR Text: At least consumers can cap our oil! This summer, as Americans anguish over the Gulf gusher, watching BP and the government point fingers while things get worse, we're also doing some navel-gazing--and not just at the beach. We're facing our addiction to the petroleum we consume in fuel and daily products.

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Follow Mindy Pennybacker on Twitter: www.twitter.com/greenerpenny