



CACC News

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Letter to Our Members, Spring 2010

From Gretchen Michaels, CACC Director

It was more than 20 years ago, when our friend Toby told me about CACC and an upcoming Backyard ECO Conference that they were sponsoring. I'm glad that I went. That is where I first met CACC's grassroots leadership. Many of those same folks I have come to admire and have worked with over the years while supporting various projects.

Gretchen Michaels



Photo Credit: Kay Cumbow

Gretchen Michaels is an artist in her own right, and an advocate of the fine arts. She coordinates the Great Lakes Health Banner Project for CACC, along with Mary Ann Stroup and Families for Environmental Awareness. This fall, she helped facilitate the start of a new CACC Wheatland Youth Group. She has no computer or cell phone, but has a great garden and terrific compost pile!

The diversity of personalities and bioregional scope of the CACC Board of Directors and Advisors continues to be our strength, as I see it. Currently, the leadership is

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HEAL to EPA: Don't Weaken Cement Kilns Emission Rules!

Chapter Report from HEAL - Huron Environmental Activist League, Alpena

On the 16th of June last year, we and a number of environmental groups testified before the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) in Washington DC on what it's like living near a cement plant and its pollution. In my memory, it was the first time in any of our meetings with those whose job it is to protect human health and the environment - federal, state or local - that the good guys outnumbered the bad guys. It went very well for us. It is usually difficult to make those that do not live near such facilities really understand how the pollution from cement plants affects our health and environment.

The EPA held three meetings to hear testimony from people living near cement plants. The first was in California on June 16th. The second was in Dallas, Texas on the 17th, and the third was at EPA headquarters in Arlington, Virginia - just outside of Washington DC. I have to say that I was impressed by many of those who testified, on learning that they were suffering the same health and environmental problems from pollution and very little was being done to solve them. What has happened since then, keeps on surprising us. As a result of the hearing, the EPA proposed new standards for emissions on air pollution from cement plants.

On January 21st, 2010, the EPA had the following

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“Report from HEAL”

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Compliance and Enforcement News Release:

“United States Announces Two Major Clean Air Act Source Review Settlements at 128 Industrial Plants Nationwide.”

Among these facilities was our own Lafarge cement plant, here in Alpena, Michigan. Lafarge owns 13 cement manufacturing facilities in the United States, making it the world’s largest cement manufacturer by mass product shipped. At one time, the Alpena plant was the largest in the world. The consent decree settlement secures injunctive relief from all 13 of Lafarge’s facilities. When all controls required under the consent decree are implemented by 2014, it will reduce emissions of nitrous oxide (NOx) by more than 9,900 tons per year, sulfur dioxide (SO₂) by more than 26,000 tons per year and mercury by more than 80%. Minus the lead, arsenic, hydrochloric acid and God knows what else, it gives you an idea of how much Lafarge has polluted northeast Michigan since 1988.

On the 26th of February, the EPA decided to move on hydrogen sulfide gas emissions (H₂S) for TRI reporting. The Federal Register notice for the move says the EPA now believes that H₂S has chronic and acute health effects and includes some rationale for this. It is believed that the science behind this decision is a step toward listing hydrogen sulfide as a “hazardous air pollutant” under the Clean Air Act.

One last extremely important bit of news is that when the U.S. Federal Court of Appeals ruled that cement plants must be required to meet the same strict emission standards as power plants, the cement industry appealed to the US Supreme Court for a hearing. On March 8, 2010, we received this press Release: “The Supreme Court Refuses to Hear Air Pollution Case.” By refusing to review the Court of Appeals’ decision which closed a gaping air pollution loophole, the US Supreme Court gave a huge victory to clean air advocates.

On the 16th of March, there was a conference call scheduled with the assistant administrator of the EPA in Washington DC. Earthjustice had requested the meeting, as there are concerns that the EPA is wavering on the proposed strict rules, scheduled to be released in April on the cement industry

“Who we do this for - Our children and grandchildren.” - Bill Freese, Director, HEAL



Bill and Rose Mary's Grandson, Trevor
Photo Credit, Melissa Marwede, Trevor's Mom

emissions. We wanted to make the administrator aware of our concerns and that the proposed limits agreed to by Earthjustice, the states, the environmental groups and the U.S. EPA should not be weakened.

Bill Freese, Director
Huron Environmental Activist League
Alpena, Michigan

Pesticide News

Male frogs, subjected to “safe” levels of atrazine have been found to change into females, able to mate and lay eggs. Documentation was released in early March by the National Academy of Sciences. Atrazine is widely used throughout the Midwest. For viable alternatives to the use of atrazine and information about EPA’s comment period on the use of atrazine, (written comments should be sent by April 12), visit: <http://www.panna.org/> which is the website of PANNA, the Pesticide Action Network of North America.

Check out Earth Day events and more!

Visit CACC’s online ECO Calendar at:

<http://www.caccmi.org/calendar/plans.cgi/>

Big Rock Point - Still Radioactive After All These Years!

On a northeast shore of Lake Michigan, just east of the site of a defunct and allegedly decommissioned nuclear power plant, the following inscription is cast in bronze on a "Michigan Historical Commission" roadside park plaque:

Consumers Power Company (later Consumers Energy) opened the Big Rock Point Nuclear Power Plant just west of here in 1962. It was the world's first high power density boiling water reactor and the fifth commercial nuclear power plant in the U.S. The plant began as a research and development facility, with the first goal being to prove that nuclear power was economical. In addition to generating electricity, the reactor produced Cobalt-60 that was used to treat an estimated 400,000 cancer patients. In 1997 the American Nuclear Society named the plant a Nuclear Historic Landmark. When it closed in 1997, Big Rock was the longest running nuclear plant in the nation. Consumers Energy later restored the site to a natural area.

It took more than a reluctant, private utility company to "open" Big Rock Point Nuclear Power Plant. It took the power, planning and promotion of the fledgling corporatestate nuclear power industry: the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (the economic pretext and legal basis); General Electric Corporation (the new HPDBW nuclear reactor); the National Broadcasting Corporation (promotional sales pitches on "GE THEATRE" television show with Ronald Reagan's weekly inculcation to "Remember...Progress is our most important product!"); the U.S. Congress (taxpayer-funded subsidies and loan guarantees - sound familiar?) and limitations on catastrophic event liability (Price-Anderson Act) etc. - to "git 'er done" at Big Rock Point!

If the first goal of the research and development was "to prove that nuclear power was economical", it took over thirty-five years to finally announce to ratepayers and the public that they were closing the plant because it was NOT economical! (As Homer Simpson likes to say: "D'oh!") If the stated cost of shutting down and getting rid of (most) of this miniature (75 megawatt) nukeplant was \$366 million dollars (ratepayer-funded), what will it be

for a regular (1000+ megawatt) reactor? Add to this the cost of securely and safely storing eight, 8-ton casks full of 441 highly-radioactive plutonium and uranium-laden used fuel rods for an indefinite period of time. (Is the Entergy limited liability company that now owns Palisades and the Big Rock used fuel casks really going to cover this? - or the cost of transport to some future National Nuclear Waste Repository - again, at taxpayers expense? It's easy to see why the industry doesn't want to talk about "decommissioning" and waste storage! It's even easier to see why Wall Street, infamous for taking risks, refuses to invest a plug nickel in this contrived corporatestate enterprise.

Whether or not the experimental reactor at Big Rock Point produced Cobalt-60 to successfully treat 400,000 cancer patients is open to question. The question that isn't "opened" is how many cancers were caused by the routine (intentional) and accidental (unintentional) radioactive releases from the plant over the years? The operators' own documentation of "radiological events" submitted to the NRC, cites over 3,357,000 curies of various fission and activation gases vented into the atmosphere, to disperse throughout the air, land, water and living organisms of North Michigan. When the amounts of radiation emitted, leaked or spilled into the soils and aquifers beneath the plant site or directly into Lake Michigan from the cooling water intake and discharge channel are added to the equation, it's easy to understand why so many folks were concerned about the ramifications of uncontained or unrestricted operational procedures.

Kevin Kamps of Beyond Nuclear



Photo credit: Kay Cumbow

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“Radioactive Big Rock Point”

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The alarming findings in the epidemiological research by Dr. Gerald Drake, (Petoskey, 1971), pointed to much higher cancer death rates, immature infants, infant mortality, and congenital birth defects in the populations nearest the plant. The nuclear industry's response has always been: "Prove It!"

I cannot think of anything less natural than a heavily-armed security force (with guard dogs) patrolling fences surrounding a high-level nuclear waste storage facility (temporary or not!) right next to Lake Michigan! Please, if you're in the area, **don't** attempt to see what an EPA-designated "no significant impact" or a Consumers Energy-labeled "restored to a natural area" site looks like! (Hint: they are not tourist destinations). As to the "greenfield" blanketing the radioactively contaminated soils and aquifers beneath the former plant site...just leave it to your imagination.

When the current occupant of the White House recently announced his plans to resume taxpayer-funded bailouts of the nuclear industry with loan guarantees and subsidies, I wasn't surprised. My biggest misgivings about his candidacy were the ties to Exelon Corporation - a big nuclear operator in Illinois and a frequent and generous donor to his political campaigns. I had held my breath and voted for him, hoping he was as intelligent as he appeared and that he was sincere when he said that our best chances to change energy policy and economics rested in conservation, efficiency, solar power (PV, thermal and hot water), wind power, home modification (thermopanels, greenhouses, weatherization, etc.). As noted in the major newspapers, efforts under his stimulus plan are already yielding results in Michigan - putting laid-off factory workers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, et al. back to work.

Before I had time to get too despondent over the President's move, word came that the State Legislature in Vermont had voted, 26-4, to deny the license extension for Entergy to continue operating their Yankee Rowe nuclear power plant. It seems the operators lied about tritium leaking beneath the plant that was making its way to the Connecticut River. I immediately thought about Big Rock Point and the 20,000 gallons of tritiated water migrating

toward Lake Michigan. Would Entergy and their limited liability companies lie to the Michigan Legislature were they to ask about it? What about the situation at Palisades, the reactor at South Haven - the aging, dangerous, most brittle reactor? (Radiation weakens metal over time.) Would they be covering anything up there, too? What about the huge Indian Point nuclear facility on the Hudson River - the one that the Seegers and the Sloop, Clearwater have been trying to shut for years? There's a big tritium leak there, too - with Entergy in charge. I hope you see where this is going.

I propose that, instead of giving back to Consumers Energy ratepayers the \$86,000,000 dollars designated for "restoring" Big Rock Point (that somehow ended up in Consumers Energy's general operating fund), the Michigan Public Service Commission should direct them to give it to Entergy's limited liability companies, to clean up the Big Rock Point site! In that way, attention would come to bear on a corporate industry that, for too long, has hidden behind indoctrination, manipulation, litigation and obfuscation to keep their mythical "too cheap to meter" lie going.

Caught with tongues and purse strings tied behind the old, failing, dangerous infrastructures called nuclear power plants, the nuclear industry wants to pretend that just because we can't see, taste, or smell their carcinogenic, mutagenic poisons entering our ecosystems, they are clean, safe, and "green" and onboard the sustainable, renewable energy ship. All I can say prudently at this juncture is: "Repel boarders!"

Victor McManemy, CACC Chair

What you can do! Become Informed, then Act!

Read: "Backgrounder on Big Rock Point Nuclear Power Plant" by Kevin Kamps, et al., for references and documentation of facts in this article at:

<http://www.nirs.org/reactorwatch/decommissioning/bigrockbackgrounder272007.pdf>

Also: Great Lakes United's resolution on clean up and transfers of former nuclear power plant sites:

<http://www.glu.org/en/node/334>

Contact Michigan state and federal legislators. Urge them to immediately call for an independent investigation of the Big Rock Point site. For more information, see: <http://www.cacmi.org/>

“Letter to Our Members”

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coming from Lake Station, Traverse City, the Thumb, Bay City, the U.P., Detroit Metro, Alpena, the Lansing area, Pinconning and more. Each person and location adds a unique perspective and protective connection to our Bioregion.

Common goals: alternatives to chemical contamination, promoting better conservation practices and clean, renewable energy sources in a peaceful world, continue to bind us as an organization. It was in 1978 when CACC founders Annie and Phill Hunt stood strong against aerial spraying of their farm for gypsy moths. Mother Earth News carried an article about them telling of their battle and victory, and rightly so! CACC still “stands up to be counted” and supports others who attempt to aid the environment as well. A call for green justice and common sense preservation has always been “on our front burner.” So has seeing ways to empower our youth. We continue to recognize that if we listen to our children, we listen to the future.

Each of CACC’s Directors seems to be multi-talented and multi-tasking by lifestyle choice. Take a glimpse on any given day and you may find the current Board being updated by Kay (past Chair) on nuclear issues, so that we’ll say current in our strategies for curtailment. You would probably find Victor (new Chair) keeping us historically informed and musically energized from Old Mission Point - while representing the waters, indigenous peoples and sound building practices. Bill could be found consistently teaching us more about Lafarge and its horrific mercury releases or other devastating nonsense going on around Alpena and Lake Huron. The Hunts always provide a continuing legacy with pragmatic business sense, lots of maple syrup and some contemporary lumbering thrown into the mix. Lucia and Connie inspire interest in organic food and growing practices, and like the rest of us demand accountability from industries and corporations, who take much more than they give back to society. John, in Bay City, would be keeping his eye on DOW’s dioxin and the welfare of our young people. Stas could be seen most likely sharing his knowledge and lore of the sun’s energy potential with all who will listen.

I’m still impressed by CACC’s integration and promotion of the Fine Arts at their events as well as in their educational approach. When I look at a globe, the Great Lakes Bioregion stands out to me. I don’t think it’s just because I’m a visual artist or that this is where I live. I know mostly that our Bioregion stands out because of its global value. Twenty per cent of the world’s fresh water supply, fertile soil and fragile wildlife inspire, keep me going and remind me of why CACC’s work is important.

We are quite an eclectic Board of Directors. Hopefully, this is a good thing. As we seek help and advice from membership, committees and youth, we ask you, as an individual, to share your time and creativity. To say that “actions speak louder than words” is of course true, but it is also a critical style of behavior in 2010.

With Respect and Gratitude, Gretchen Michaels

Be a CACC Wheatland Volunteer!

Have fun and help CACC protect our watersheds, too! Save the date to volunteer at the CACC Kitchen at the Wheatland Music Festival, September 10 - 12, 2010. More details to be posted soon at CACC’s website: <http://www.caccmi.org/>

Blast from the past! Snack Bar Volunteers on Break, Wheatland 2007



Photo Credit: Kay Cumbow

In the Next Issue of the CACC News:
New Wheatland youth group takes wing!
CACC’s 2010 General Membership Meeting!

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