



May 2017 Newsletter

Protect, Preserve & Play

Make plans to attend this environmental fair at Hufnagle Park in Lewisburg on Sunday, June 4th from 1 – 4 pm. Rivertown Coalition and 34 local groups and businesses will have displays, hands-on activities and demonstrations. This is the 3rd CommUnity Zone “Neighbors Helping Neighbors” event and will focus on protecting the environment and health and preserving natural resources in our region.

Rivertown’s booth will feature displays on renewable energy and air quality. We will be joined by a local solar contractor – Sun Directed, and we will showcase “green lawn mowing” (See below) The Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper will demonstrate projects they are doing to protect the River. Other displays include PASA, Rabbit Transit, Responsible Drilling Alliance and Wild Goose Farm.

There will be fun activities for children both at the Park and at the nearby Lewisburg Community Garden. Live music will include Jamcrackers, Runaway Stroller and Swampfoot and DePorterLand. Many of the restaurants will be open before and after the event. Connect with the groups who are making good things happen in our area.

Engage in Local Campaigns

The last six months have brought the greatest threats to our land, air, water and health since the last century. It is hard not to feel overwhelmed, but fortunately a strong network of local groups has stepped up to meet the challenge. You probably have received calls to action from many people on many issues. Kudos to all the local citizens who demonstrated in Washington, DC and locally and have contacted legislators.

Key Pennsylvania issues that are on the radar now include DEP proposals to reduce air pollution, including methane, from natural gas facilities. There is a lot of resistance from the industry to any new regulations. For more details and to submit your comments, use the [Clean Air Council link](#).

Also, DEP will be holding hearings and taking public comments in June on the Atlantic Sunrise Pipeline, which affects both the northeastern counties and southern counties. For more details and to file comments, check [DEP’s notice](#).

We have commented on and shared information on other key issues with our partners and hope to have a quicker way to share with our whole network in the upcoming months. Besides the local groups you are linked to, here are a few statewide groups that you may want to join: [Clean Air Council](#), [Interfaith Power & Light](#), and [Penn Future](#). Many national groups are leading the efforts to stop proposed cutbacks on EPA and other programs, including [Natural Resources Defense Council](#), [Sierra Club](#), and [Union of Concerned Scientists](#). Look for an updated list of local environmental groups on the website in the near future. Keep on speaking out!!

Solar on the Rise in Pennsylvania

Production from solar and other renewable energy reached an all-time high in 2016. The U.S. is now home to more than 1.3 million solar PV installations, with a cumulative capacity of over 40 gigawatts. Even in Pennsylvania, there is almost 300 MW, 37.8 MW of which was installed in 2016. There are 34,000 solar homes in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania now is poised to encourage more solar in the state. Under the [Finding PA’s Solar Future](#) project, DEP and other stakeholders are meeting to determine how to achieve 10% solar production in 30 years. This is a very modest goal but should yield a framework on how reach the goal sooner – and it’s a start. To find out more and how to participate, click on the above link or search for DEP Finding PA’s Solar Future. *Make 2017 the year to go SOLAR!*

The Pennsylvania Chapter of the [Mid-Atlantic Solar Energy Society](#) also held a Solar Summit on May 9th & 10th in Harrisburg. It is very hard to engage our legislators on issues that support solar in the state. One bill under consideration in the Senate is (SB404) that would amend the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards to limit the sale of solar credits to within the state. We lose over a \$1 million per year in SRECs to other states, particularly North Carolina and Virginia, who buy up all the PA credits. This has a real impact on opportunities for Pennsylvania solar companies.

Another bill (SB291) would update the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards, but may be risky to support at this point because there are calls to include nuclear energy in one of the Tiers. Two other bills on tap include one to waive sales taxes on solar systems (SB495) and the PACE bill (SB234) which would allow companies to finance energy improvements, including solar, through property tax assessments. Unfortunately, the PA bill does not apply to residential properties, something that has been adopted in at least 20 other states. We'll let you know if these bills need support.

Transportation Emissions Exceeded Electric Energy Emissions

Electric power CO2 emissions fell to 1,803 million metric tons from October 2015 through September 2016, continuing a 10-year downward trend. But transportation CO2 emissions rose to 1,893 million metric tons during the same time period according to the [EIA](#). Vehicle traffic increased by almost 1% from March 2016 to 2017 and is up almost 4% from the low point in 2011, when gas prices were high.

Did you know that **lawn mowing accounts for five percent of gasoline emissions** in the US? Lawn mowers are very inefficient and we seem to have larger and larger plots to mow. Rivertown will feature some ideas for reducing your lawn emissions at *Protect, Preserve & Play*. Besides curtailing the area, you mow - by letting more grow as a meadow and planting flowers and other plants, consider a battery powered electric mower.

If you've switched to a clean energy provider or have a solar system, you're not increasing coal-fired electricity use. It only takes a few solar panels to charge a mower or other rechargeable devices. We'll post more on this topic on the website. Of course, you can also use a regular push mower if you have a small lawn.

The [Mid-Atlantic Renewable Energy Association](#) (MAREA) will have a workshop on **Alternative Energy Lawn Equipment** in June. I hope to attend and find out more about larger scale equipment. MAREA also has an updated [Directory of Solar Electric Installers](#) online.

Methane Emissions on the Rise

DEP has just released data showing that methane emissions in Pennsylvania rose by 28% each year from 2014 to 2015. This is much higher than the industry reported to EIA and greater than their first figure of 20%. Pennsylvania methane emissions are rising faster than the global average. For more details, see [Penn Future blog](#) on May 4 by Rob Altenburg.

Coal Ash Pits in Shamokin Dam

You may have read about the need to reroute the Susquehanna Valley Thruway (the Bypass) due to two large ash pits that are in the original route. The ash is not solid enough to support the bridge structures. The cost of removal would be at least \$400 million. PennDOT has several proposals to reroute the Bypass, but there is still concern about how construction could affect the pits.

EPA has issued directives to states to develop plans for cleaning up ash pits, but Pennsylvania has not passed any requirements for PPL and other utilities to remove or secure the pits. Other states, such as Virginia and North Carolina have started clean-ups. DEP does monitor the Shamokin Dam pits, which are unlined, but there are also some pits on the Hummel Station power plant site. We will continue to track this issue and confer with other groups on how to remediate this situation.

Climate Action Coaches Needed

Much of my working career was spent in education and training for energy efficiency professionals – now known as Home Performance. One of my colleagues who worked with PA utilities as an educator and trainer changed her title to **Energy Coach** a few years ago. It seemed to work well for her and is another way to think about how we engage people on Climate Change and other environmental issues.

We are fortunate to have a variety of groups who have come together to share ideas on how to protect our region and the people who live here. All these entities can use more “coaches”, so check out the groups at the PPP event or contact us to find what you can do. Rivertown especially needs people with an interest in alternative energy and clean air.

Our theme for PPP and 2017 is “**Your Health and the Health of the Planet is in Your Hands.**” We all know we can’t expect much help from Harrisburg or Washington these days, but we can make a difference in our region if we work together. Have a great summer!

Connect with the Rivertown Coalition

Website: www.rivertowncoalition.org

Email: rivertowncoalition@embarqmail.com

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