



RIVERTOWNCOALITION
FOR CLEAN AIR AND CLEAN WATER

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Dear Members of the Board and Staff Leaders of SEDA-COG,

Our comments so far have concerned local needs and impacts. However, while we have been looking only at local effects of the extreme gas extraction industry, over 100 countries have been in Paris considering the world-wide impact that fossil fuels are making on our environment and the President has included the subject of climate change in his State of the Union Address. These latest actions are a few of the results of the establishment in 1988 of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to provide an internationally accepted authority on climate change, to produce reports that have the agreement of leading climate scientists and the consensus of participating governments¹. The IPCC has prepared a summary report for policy makers that is available at https://ipcc-wg2.gov/AR5/images/uploads/WG2AR5_SPM_FINAL.pdf.

The people meeting in Paris accepted what 97% of climate scientists have been saying about the destructive man made activities affecting our environment and they have asked for world-wide cooperation to lower emissions that affect global warming. We are enclosing a previous Rivertown newsletter that addresses the climate change issue. The first page article helps describe misinformation that has clouded the issue in the United States. The Weather Channel article on page 2 provides a valuable link to two-minute interviews with 25 influential people who work daily with the effects of climate change. <http://weather.climate25.com/voices/>

The State of Pennsylvania has also prepared a report² on how climate change will affect us. The general warming trend will, among other things, have a major impact on winter sports, will affect dairy farmers, change the growing cycle and therefore, crop choices, and affect forest management. Some people will find this warmer weather a plus. However a serious negative effect we will likely experience is increased storm damage and flooding. There is a consensus among scientists that climate change will not necessarily increase the number of tropical storms, but that it will increase the probability that individual storms will be stronger and with heavier rainfall.³ We saw this storm power on the news during the holidays. These new powerful storms are becoming the norm. As one person on TV said when their home was destroyed by a tornado "We went from happy to homeless in one minute." These storms are predicted effects of global warming. Pennsylvania farmers were concerned enough with these existing and increasing climate impacts to present a letter to Governor Wolf at the farm show requesting his help.

Those of us in Pennsylvania have strong forces encouraging us to look away from the consequences of our choices. We can all focus on the benefits of the gas boom and climb on that wagon without even considering options. We can look away from the effects on people near the wells and those around the world whose lives are at risk: people whose land is disappearing underwater⁴, people who are poor, and people who have no insurance to rebuild after a mudslide destroys their home⁵. We can easily be the people Pope Francis implored not to commit the "sin of indifference" when he laid out his compassionate, scientifically accurate and clearly presented encyclical on the environment, *Laudatio Si*⁶. He makes it very clear that this is a moral issue and is a tipping point in our sense of being human and in a "just" relationship with other human beings and with creation. Francis I is just the most recent in a line of moral voices starting with Aldo Leopold, who died in 1948, who first defined an ecological conscience. The earth and our unseen neighbors cannot afford for us to continue to ignore these voices.

We realize what we are asking. We are suggesting that Central Pennsylvania swim against the tide and do something new. We are suggesting that there are global and human impact considerations to be considered that are more important than quick and easy gas availability. We do not believe that this is a purely altruist request. There are Pennsylvania and world health impacts that are current and real. There are economic development opportunities in renewables that are current and real. And there are moral decisions that are integral to these choices. This is too serious to look away from. We want our area to reflect the decisions and actions of our best possible selves and we think this is a perfect opportunity for all of us to do just that.

Respectfully,

Carol Parowski, President
Shirley Rowe
Mark Heuer, PhD
Peg Lauver

Lana Gulden
Rev. Mary Peterhaensel

The Board of the Rivertown Coalition for Clean Air and Clean Water

¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intergovernmental_Panel_on_Climate_Change

²<http://www.eibrary.dep.state.pa.us/dsweb/Get/Document-108470/2700-BK-DEP4494.pdf>

³<http://www.eibrary.dep.state.pa.us/dsweb/Get/Document-108470/2700-BK-DEP4494.pdf> P.11

⁴ (The Marshall Islands) http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/12/02/world/The-Marshall-Islands-Are-Disappearing.html?_r=0; (The Island of Tuvalu) <http://www.teatime-mag.com/magazines/wp-content/themes/tt/print/teatime14/print.pdf>

⁵<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/18/colombia-mudslide-death-toll>

⁶http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html