

The Go-Back Club

Newspaper of the Simple-Living Brigade

February 2014

Forty-two members in eight states, the District of Columbia and three countries.

PA Supreme Court's Landmark Ruling on Gas Drilling Sets Constitutional Precedent

Mistake by Gov. Corbett's legal team helped court render its decision.

By Steve Esack, *excerpt*

ALLENTOWN MORNING CALL: JANUARY 5, 2014

HARRISBURG, Pennsylvania — Environmentalists and municipal officials have been celebrating a Pennsylvania state Supreme Court decision striking down key elements of a 2012 law that eliminated local zoning laws in favor of statewide regulations that allowed energy companies to dig gas wells anywhere they wished.

But the court's December 19th decision invalidating most of Act 13 — a signature piece of Governor Tom Corbett's jobs and economic policy — was no ordinary zoning ruling to settle a run-of-the-mill lawsuit.

The court's 4 to 2 majority decision set a landmark constitutional precedent for Pennsylvania.

That precedent — which the Corbett administration now wants the court to reconsider — could have far-reaching legal, policy and political ramifications beyond where wells and drilling equipment can be located.

A misstep by the state's legal defense team opened the door for the Supreme Court to set the precedent, which was based on a literal reading of the Pennsylvania Constitution's guarantee that citizens have a right to natural resources, court records show.

Writing for the majority, Chief Justice Ron Castille said Commonwealth Court was correct when it ruled the state could not supersede local zoning laws related to natural gas drilling. But Castille also said Commonwealth Court was wrong to reject a claim by the plaintiffs that Act 13 violated the state Constitution's Vietnam-era amendment guaranteeing Pennsylvanians the right "to clean air, pure water and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the environment."



Photo Abrahm Lustgarten/ProPublica

Abrahm Lustgarten has been relentlessly following the problems with gas drilling since 2008 for a public-interest news organization, ProPublica. This photo of a gas drilling site accompanied his first article. To read his series, go to <http://www.propublica.org/about/>.

The amendment (Article 1 Section 27) says the Commonwealth must guarantee people's environmental rights, Castille wrote. So the Governor and Legislature did not have the right to adopt statewide regulations that abolished local drilling-related zoning laws municipalities had created to ensure all property owners can leisurely and financially enjoy their land, Castille wrote.

"The type of constitutional challenge presented today is as unprecedented in Pennsylvania as is the legislation that engendered it," Castille wrote. "The Commonwealth's efforts to minimize the import of this litigation by suggesting it is simply a dispute over public policy voiced by a disappointed minority requires a blindness to the reality here and to Pennsylvania history, including Pennsylvania constitutional history; and the position ignores the reality that Act 13 has the potential to affect the reserved rights of every citizen of this Commonwealth now and in the future."

That decision has been criticized as too

liberal, Duquesne University law professor Bruce Ledewitz said. But the ruling, issued by Republican Castille and three Democratic justices, was the type of literal constitutional interpretation advanced by conservatives like U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, Ledewitz said.

"It was a Scalia original," said Ledewitz, a constitutional scholar. "Castille made the claim — the people who wrote and adopted this amendment really meant what they said."

That literal interpretation could affect other aspects of environmental law, Ledewitz said, making passage more difficult for one such bill to loosen the state's decades-old endangered species laws as energy companies and developers want. The decision also could open the state to legal claims it is not doing enough to limit industrial greenhouse gas emissions, he said. ...

Last week, the Corbett administration asked the court to reconsider its ruling. In a news release, the administration's top

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Tracking Fracking

Citizens Counteract Gas Company's Lies

Submitted by Angel Smith
Clearville, Pennsylvania
(a Spectra "stakeholder")

From: Mike Benard, *excerpt*
Sent: December 16, 2013
To: ADGrover@spectraenergy.com
Cc: Subject: Spectra Energy

Those of us property owners who are already Spectra Energy "stakeholders" (the company's term), want Spectra Energy to be the best it can be, consistent with its publicly-stated commitment to Stakeholder Engagement, Integrity, Transparency and Accountability.

To that end, and regarding your activities as a "Director of Stakeholder Outreach" on behalf of Spectra Energy's proposed Sabal Trail pipeline, property owners in Georgia report that you are asserting the following at public meetings:

► Property owners at Spectra Energy's Steckman Ridge compressor facility in Bedford County, Pennsylvania are "happy" despite ongoing problems there and a consistent lack of response from Spectra

Energy to its "stakeholders."

FACT: I speak for more than a dozen families who live next to or near the problematic compressor facility and your statement is incorrect and misleading. What facts do you have to support such a disingenuous allegation?

A ring of health, water and operational complaints surrounds this facility that began operations in 2009. Based on unofficial record keeping by neighbors, there have been nearly 60 shutdowns, blow-downs and related incidents at the Steckman Ridge compressor station and underground natural gas storage facility between August 2009 and the present. And there is much more, as you know.

► You assert that uncontrolled releases of methane and other hydrocarbons that happen too frequently at the Steckman Ridge compressor facility are "normal." Let's hope not. Your assertion is uninformed and misleading.

FACT: Recall the March 9th to 10th incident at Spectra Energy's Steckman Ridge facility in which you were involved. This was yet another uncontrolled release that

resulted in 431.5 thousand cubic feet of methane and other hydrocarbons vented to the atmosphere over a two-day period.

Before property owners discovered on their own the size of the leak — because you and Spectra Energy refused to publicly disclose the facts — you asserted to the Associate Editor of the *Bedford Gazette* that only a "small volume" escaped.

During that same incident, your colleague, Marylee Hanley, also a Director of Stakeholder Outreach, dismissed property owner's initial concerns that prompted them to call 911 when they heard snapping and popping sounds like fire crackers coming from the facility, then saw what looked like smoke from the compressor station.

Hanley's dismissive response to the *Bedford Gazette* was: "Nothing was released. There was no smoke. No incident." Big Oops! Hanley, of course, had no idea what she was talking about sitting 500 miles away in Boston.

Are Spectra Energy's Directors of Stakeholder Outreach purposeful in deception or are they clueless? ...

Precedent *continued from page 1*

lawyer said the high court had overstepped its authority.

"In announcing a never-before-employed balancing test against which the constitutional validity of the law is to be judged, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court made its own sweeping factual findings regarding the impact of Act 13, none of which finds any support in the sparse and uneven factual record that was made before Commonwealth Court," Corbett's General Counsel James D. Schultz said in a statement.

The court's decision did not strike down the entire law — for now. It kept intact the impact fee industry pays the state for extracting gas. It also left in the mandate [that] industry disclose the chemicals it uses in the "fracking" process as it bores through deep underground rock to reach

gas deposits. But those issues could be decided by Commonwealth Court, which the Supreme Court tasked with determining if the remaining portions of Act 13 were valid if the law's overriding zoning provisions are not.

In its legal brief, the administration asked the Supreme Court to also allow Commonwealth Court to take more testimony to determine the environmental rights issue, too. The administration claims it was never given the chance to refute environmental rights claims in Commonwealth Court.

John C. Dernbach, a Widener University law professor and environmental law expert, said the administration appears to be basing its reconsideration request on statements the court made in explaining its decision. The administration's reconsideration request has merit, he said, only if those statements are

based on [the] judge's opinion or omission, and not from direct testimony or evidence.

The majority opinion cited testimony from industry officials who touted the economic benefits of drilling for the state and nation. The opinion also cited testimony from a municipal official's tales of explosions, truck crashes and road damage related to drilling and of a homeowner whose well water was contaminated with drilling by-products.

The Commonwealth Court record also was replete with environmental and scientific studies submitted by both sides, said Jordan Yeager, solicitor for plaintiff Nockamixon Township, Bucks County. The administration is just angry the Supreme Court put more stock in the plaintiffs' evidence, he said.

"They are asking for a second bite of the apple," Yeager said.

What on Earth is The Go-Back Club?

We are a group of people who are willing to use our lives to purposefully go backwards to using less energy, living more simply, etc. When new people sign up, I'll print their comments and publish our new membership numbers. No further demands, no money, — just a monthly, online newsletter. If

you want to share your new and creative tips, I'll be happy to publish them. You can reach me at gobackclub@pa.net, www.gobackclub.com or 21431 Marlin Circle, Shade Gap, Pennsylvania 17255. Hard copy subscriptions are \$30 a year payable to Iona Conner. Thanks!

Carbon Emissions Most Important Number in Human History

By Stephen Leahy
IPS: December 17, 2012

[**Editor's Note:** When I confirmed that this story was published in 2012 although I had just received it, Mr. Leahy replied, "Yes, it was from December 2012. If I wrote it today it would be the exact same story..."]

UXBRIDGE, Canada — The most important number in history is now the annual measure of carbon emissions. That number reveals humanity's steady billion-ton by billion-ton march to the edge of the carbon cliff, beyond which scientists warn lies a fateful fall to catastrophic climate change.

With the global total of climate-disrupting emissions likely to come in at around 52 gigatons (billion metric tons) this year, we're already at the edge, according to new research.

To have a good chance of staying below two degrees C of warming, global emissions should be between 41 and 47 gigatons (Gt) by 2020, said Joeri Rogelj, a climate scientist at Switzerland's Institute for Atmospheric and Climate Science in Zurich.

"Only when we see the annual global emissions total decline will we know we're making the shift to climate protection," Rogelj told IPS.

Making the shift to a future climate with less than two degrees C of warming is doable and not that expensive if total emissions peak in the next few years and fall into the 41 to 47 Gt "sweet spot" by 2020, Rogelj and colleagues show in their detailed analysis published in the journal *Nature Climate Change*.

The study is the first to comprehensively quantify the costs and risks of emissions surpassing critical thresholds by 2020.

This shift means 65 percent of existing coal power plants will have to be shut down in the next decade or two.

"There are enormous benefits if global emissions decline before 2020. Failure to do so will mean we will need to use more nuclear, massive amounts of bio-energy, large-scale carbon capture and storage," he said. The costs and social implications from deploying all this will be "huge," he said.

"Delay is by far the riskier option," Rogelj said, noting that failure to act now means



STAYING BELOW TWO DEGREES IS NOT A MATTER OF SCIENCE OR TECHNOLOGY. IT WILL BE DETERMINED BY POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DECISIONS TO TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO SHIFT TO LOW-CARBON LIVING.

David McCollum, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Austria.

those additional risks, costs and social disruption will land on the heads of the next generation.

"We're deciding that the next generation will have to pay significantly higher costs because we're not doing anything now."

These climate-disrupting emissions are primarily carbon dioxide (CO₂) from burning fossil fuels and deforestation. The global total also includes other greenhouse gases that are warming the planet such as methane, nitrous oxide and a few other chemicals.

In 1990, global emissions were 38.2 Gt and, in recent years, they have been growing at a rate of three percent per year. This growth is despite commitments by industrialized countries to reduce their emissions.

In 2009, all industrialized countries, including the United States, made emission reduction pledges under the Copenhagen Accord. However, even if countries reach their Copenhagen targets, global emissions

will be about 55 Gt in 2020, the study estimates. Staying below two degrees C is still feasible but it will be far more expensive and difficult, imposing an additional cost burden amounting to trillions of dollars over 2020 to 2050.

Earlier this month, during the annual U.N. climate conference in Doha, Qatar, governments declined to increase their emission cut targets. Citing economic difficulties, countries like the U.S. and those in the European Union looked to a new global climate treaty that would not make additional emission reductions until 2020.

Despite the urgent need to reduce emissions, the fossil fuel industry received a record \$523 billion in public subsidies in 2011, 30 percent more than the previous year, according to the International Energy Agency.

"Lots of actions at the local and national level are needed to bring emissions down over the next few years," said energy researcher David McCollum of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, in Laxenburg, Austria.

Waiting until 2020 before emissions decline means millions of hectares of land (one hectare equals 2.471 acres) will be needed to produce biofuel, billions of dollars invested in new nuclear power plants and new technologies like carbon capture and storage must not only work but be effective on a large scale, McCollum told IPS.

"At 44Gt (in 2020) we can choose the most cost-effective reduction options. Above 55Gt, we need everything and they'd all better work," he said.

The authors of the study acknowledge these numbers might be too optimistic because current climate models cannot incorporate emissions from melting permafrost and other natural sources of greenhouse gases that might result from increasing temperatures.

Staying below two degrees is not a matter of science or technology. It will be determined by political and social decisions to take the necessary steps to shift to low-carbon living, said McCollum. And, in that regard, the choices made before 2020 are critical, both he and Rogelj conclude.

*First published by IPS
as "At the Edge of the Carbon Cliff"*

Education is the instruction of the intellect in the Laws of Nature, under which name I include not merely things and their forces but men and their ways, and the fashioning of the affections and the will, into an earnest and loving desire to move in harmony with these laws.

- T. H. Huxley -

One Rolex Short of Contentment

Materialism promises satisfaction. It delivers despair.

Submitted by John Conner

By George Monbiot
The Guardian: December 10, 2013

That they are crass, brash and trashy goes without saying. But there is something in the pictures posted on Rich Kids of Instagram (and highlighted by *The Guardian* last week) that inspires more than the usual revulsion towards crude displays of opulence. There is a shadow in these photos — photos of a young man wearing all four of his Rolex watches, a youth posing in front of his helicopter, endless pictures of cars, yachts, shoes, mansions, swimming pools, spoilt whiteboys throwing gangster poses in private jets — of something worse; something that, after you have seen a few dozen, becomes disorienting, even distressing.

The pictures are, of course, intended to incite envy. They reek instead of desperation. The young men and women seem lost in their designer clothes, dwarfed and dehumanized by their possessions, as if ownership has gone into reverse. A girl's head barely emerges from the haul of Chanel, Dior and Hermes shopping bags she has piled onto her vast bed. It's captioned "shoppy shoppy" and "gold rush" but a photograph whose purpose is to illustrate plenty seems instead to depict a void. She's alone with her bags and her image in the mirror, in a scene that seems saturated with despair.

Perhaps I am projecting my prejudices. But an impressive body of psychological research appears to support these feelings. It suggests that materialism, a trait that can afflict both rich and poor, which the researchers define as "a value system that is preoccupied with possessions and the social image they project" is both socially destructive and self-destructive. It smashes the happiness and peace of mind of those who succumb to it. It's associated with anxiety, depression and broken relationships.

There has long been a correlation observed between materialism, a lack of empathy and engagement with others, and unhappiness. But research conducted over the past few years appears to show causation.

For example, a series of studies published in June in the journal *Motivation and Emotion* showed that, as people become more materialistic, their well-being (good relationships, autonomy, a sense of purpose and the rest) diminishes. As they become less materialistic, it rises.



This 42 mm. Rolex, white gold, Oyster Perpetual Sky-Dweller watch sells for \$38,495 on eBay.

Photo from Rolex.com

In one study, the researchers tested a group of 18-year-olds, then re-tested them 12 years later. They were asked to rank the importance of different goals: jobs, money and status on one side, self-acceptance, fellow feeling and belonging on the other. They were then given a standard diagnostic test to identify mental health problems. At the ages of both 18 and 30, materialistic people were more susceptible to disorders. But, if in that period they became less materialistic, their happiness improved.

In another study, the psychologists followed Icelanders weathering their country's economic collapse. Some people became more focused on materialism, in the hope of regaining lost ground. Others responded by becoming less interested in money and turning their attention to family and community life. The first group reported lower levels of well-being, the second group higher levels.

These studies, while suggestive, demonstrate only correlation. But the researchers then put a group of adolescents through a church program designed to steer children away from spending and towards sharing and saving. The self-esteem of materialistic children on the program rose significantly, while that of materialistic children in the control group fell. Those who had little interest in materialism before the program experienced no change in self-esteem.

Another paper, published in *Psychological Science*, found that people in a controlled experiment who were repeatedly exposed to images of luxury goods, to messages which cast them as consumers rather than citizens and to words associated with materialism (such as buy, status, asset and expensive), experienced immediate but temporary increases in material aspirations, anxiety and depression. They also became more competitive, more selfish, had a reduced sense of social responsibility and were less inclined to join demanding social activities.

The researchers point out that, as we are repeatedly bombarded with such images

through advertisements and constantly described by the media as consumers, these temporary effects could be triggered more or less continuously.

A third paper, published (ironically) in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, studied 2,500 people for six years. It found a two-way relationship between materialism and loneliness: materialism fosters social isolation; isolation fosters materialism. People who are cut off from others attach themselves to possessions. This attachment in turn crowds out social relationships.

The two varieties of materialism which have this effect — using possessions as a yardstick of success and seeking happiness through acquisition — are the varieties that seem to be on display at Rich Kids of Instagram. It was only after reading this paper that I understood why those photos distressed me: they look like a kind of social self-mutilation.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why an economic model based on perpetual growth continues on its own terms to succeed, though it may leave a trail of unpayable debts, mental illness and smashed relationships. Social atomization may be the best sales strategy ever devised, and continuous marketing looks like an unbeatable program for atomization.

Materialism forces us into comparison with the possessions of others, a race both cruelly illustrated and crudely propelled by that toxic Web site. There is no end to it. If you have four Rolexes while another has five, you are a Rolex short of contentment. The material pursuit of self-esteem reduces your self-esteem.

I should emphasise that this is not about differences between rich and poor: the poor can be as susceptible to materialism as the rich. It is a general social affliction, visited upon us by government policy, corporate strategy, the collapse of communities and civic life and our acquiescence in a system that is eating us from the inside out.

This is the dreadful mistake we are making: allowing ourselves to believe that more money and more stuff enhances our well-being, a belief possessed not only by those poor deluded people in the pictures but by almost every member of almost every government. Worldly ambition, material aspiration, perpetual growth: these are a formula for mass unhappiness.

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Maryland Man Goes Back to the Land -- BIG TIME!

By David Thomas, Rocky Ridge MD
(compiled from two letters)

August 2013

Life is good. The harvest continues. The beans are coming in now and the last planting of corn is almost ripe. My tomatoes succumbed to some kind of wilt fungus and the stink bugs are into everything! I still have sauce from last year and I managed to put up four more quarts so far. They are still producing a few but I won't be able to supply friends and relatives with any this year.

It was a good year for watermelons! I've been giving them away and the chickens are enjoying the bounty. I've just finished with the salting and fermenting of 10 pounds of pickles. I still have about half of what I did last year. I turned those into sweet pickles and sweet relish.

The bugs and groundhogs did in the cantaloupes and pumpkins unfortunately but everything else has done well. I've replenished my dry herb supply and my shelves and freezer are full again. I should be able to survive another winter.

Most of the trees and shrubs I planted are doing well, although I did lose a few. The nurseries will replace the ones that didn't make it, one time. I just have to get around to contacting them about it. I did save the shipping labels this time!

I have the sawmill set up and ready to go. I'll turn the logs into lumber if the weather cooperates and I can find the time and energy to do it. I'm hoping to build a large shop/barn to replace the falling-down garage and sheds. Right now, it is difficult to do anything because all my tools and materials are packed in the various buildings and so unorganized. If I have a project pending, first I have to locate everything and then dig it out from under everything else! It would be a lot easier if I had money. If I want anything, I have to make it myself or improvise. Oh well, the fun is in the challenge.

There is a small smokehouse next to the main house that my father (and us kids) turned into a shop. I still use it as such but it has become my "man cave" where I do my relaxing and writing, etc. I have a small woodstove set up in it with a stovepipe sticking out the side. Every year I have to replace the part that is outside due to corrosion and sometimes wind damage. It is hard to clean out the creosote that builds up periodically. So this year, I dug down and put in a concrete footer and brought it up to ground level. When I can save up



Photo by Megan Thomas

David Thomas (on tractor) and friend (background) with the log cart he rigged up, among his many other projects in living the simple life, although with a great deal of work involved.

enough money, I will build a masonry chimney with a clean-out door. That should make it a little more convenient and less of a fire hazard. So much to do! So little time!

Like I say, "One day at a time!"

(one week later, same letter)

I've been busy helping my brother build a porch and catching up on stuff around here. I just finished putting 12 pints of sweet corn in the freezer and I'm taking a little break before I get the mower out.

The garden is continuing to produce beans, beets, tomatoes, peppers, watermelons, celery and herbs. The spinach and lettuce reseeded the cold frame, so I should have salads this winter. The stink bugs are into everything. I think they have been really prolific this year. I plant twice what I need. That way, I still get enough for me and Mom and I'm able to store the excess.

I haven't given up on the Appalachian Trail idea and it's bringing back memories of my first attempt. I'm saving up money right now so I can take another go at it while I am still able.

"I will walk 500 miles and I will walk 500 more, just to be the man who walked 1,000 miles just to fall down at your door."

November 2013

I bake my own bread from grain that I grind myself. I don't have the capacity to grow, process and store my own grain yet. I'm gradually headed in that direction, though.

It is a whole wheat loaf with one cup of

multi-grain flour per loaf that includes: amaranth, dry beans, corn, oats, rye, rice, kamut, quinoa, spelt, millet, flax, sesame, triticale, buckwheat and barley. I add about half a cup of finely-chopped black walnuts for each loaf. I save the water when I boil potatoes, noodles, etc. and use that for the liquid. I use honey and Real Salt for flavoring. I have to add about one-third cup gluten per loaf to compensate for the multi-grain.

You could actually survive on just this bread and water alone, if you had to. Besides being healthy for you, it is also very delicious. I'm getting better at constantly producing a pleasing loaf. I've eaten many a failure over the years! Talking about it made me hungry and realized that it is lunch time already!

I just finished building and painting some bluebird bird houses for my granddaughter for Christmas. She's into all things natural and wants to work in wildlife rescue when she is done with school. While I was making two for her, I went ahead and cut out enough parts so I could make two for here. She and I had built one together when she was barely able to hold the hammer, years ago. It has since deteriorated but I noticed the family of bluebirds (that it had attracted back then) is still hanging around the area.

I had just finished putting the last coat of paint on them and was coming out of the basement when a bluebird flew past me and settled on the fence to watch me.

I said, "Boy, you're awfully anxious. The
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Radio Disney's Pro-Fracking Elementary School Tour Sparks Outrage

By Peter Moskowitz

Al Jazeera America: January 8, 2014

An educational program funded by Ohio's oil and gas industry and sponsored by Radio Disney has environmental activists — and some parents — up in arms over what they say is a hijacking of public education by hydraulic fracturing interests, in a state sitting on billions of dollars' worth of gas-rich shale.

The program, called Rocking in Ohio, went on a 26-stop tour of elementary schools and science centers across the state last month. It involves interactive demonstrations of how oil and gas pipelines work and is led by three staffers from Radio Disney's Cleveland branch. It is entirely funded by the Ohio Oil and Gas Energy Education Program (OOGEEP), which gets its money from oil and gas companies.

Radio Disney, a nationwide network of radio stations aimed at kids, has said it will take the tour to other states if it deems the program successful. The company could not be reached for comment in time for the publication of this story.

Environmental activists and parents have called the program "propaganda" for promoting a controversial industry. Fracking — a process in which thousands of gallons of water and chemicals are injected into deep wells in order to break up rocks

that contain natural gas or oil — has been a boon to Ohio's economy but has also caused myriad environmental issues in the state.

Some who are concerned over the promotional program have taken to the

NEWS FLASH: On Thursday, Radio Disney announced it would cancel the program, following an 80,000-plus petition organized by Climate Parents and a #DisneyFracked Twitter campaign from the Sierra Club.

Internet to vent their outrage, creating online petitions and social media campaigns urging Disney to back out of its relationship with the oil and gas group. The most popular petition currently has more than 75,000 signatures.

In each of the 26 demonstrations, a Radio Disney DJ named Taylor Bell directed teams of kids as they raced to build pipelines out of plastic straws. The first team to get three pingpong balls through the "pipelines" won the game. The kids were cheered on by Radio Disney employees and teachers as

pop music played in the background.

"Our country cannot survive without oil and gas," OOGEEP's Ron Grosjean told the Wooster, Ohio *Daily Record*. "Kids are the best way (to spread the message). They retain (the information); they remember it."

According to several local media reports, the demonstrations seemed to be a hit. One said kids became "loud, moisy and raucous" in support of their teams.

Environmentalists are less enthusiastic.

"I don't think it's doing the children or the state of Ohio any good," said Robert Shields, chair of the Sierra Club's Ohio chapter. "Kids' ability to reason is not yet quite established, so it feels to me that they're getting some kind of propaganda."

OOGEEP pointed out in local media that the word "fracking" is never used during the demonstrations. This is far from the first education program started by OOGEEP, which was founded in 1998 and has reached 100,000 students with its outreach initiatives, according to the organization's Web site.

But it seems teaming up with a well-known national company like Disney crossed a line for some and created a firestorm.

"It's troubling in the first place that they're going into elementary schools and it's even more troubling that Disney is getting involved," said Alison Auciello, an organizer with Food and Water Watch in Ohio.

REDDIT FORUM BANS CLIMATE CHANGE 'DENIERS'

By Laura Barron-Lopez

TheHill.com: December 18, 2013

The social news site Reddit is banning climate change deniers from its science forum, a moderator for the site said.

Nathan Allen, the moderator for the forum /r/science — which provides a digital space for people to discuss recent, peer-reviewed science publications — wrote about the move to ban skeptics of climate science on Grist. A representative for Reddit confirmed the decision with *The Hill*.

While the science forum is a small section

of Reddit, it has four million subscribers, Allen noted, which is nearly twice the circulation of *The New York Times*.

"After some time interacting with the regular denier posters, it became clear that they could not or would not improve their demeanor," Allen said in his post for Grist.

Allen said that while some commentators did object to the move, given Reddit's claim to preserve free speech at all costs, most users have welcomed the change.

He said the news industry should follow suit. "As moderators responsible for what millions of people see, we felt that to allow a

handful of commentators to so purposefully mislead our audience was simply immoral," Allen wrote.

"So, if a half-dozen volunteers can keep a page with more than four million users from being a microphone for the anti-scientific, is it too much to ask for newspapers to police their own editorial pages as proficiently?" he asked.

The Los Angeles Times received heavy backlash for its decision in October to stop printing letters sent in from "climate change deniers." The outlet did not go so far as to block commentators, however.

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paint isn't even dry yet!"

This happened last Sunday. I didn't know they were still around. I thought they migrated. So, anyway, life goes on and I try to encourage my granddaughter's interest in nature.

While I was in the shop, I also cut out and put together a cutting board/dough board out of apple wood from a tree I

salvaged years ago. It was going to be cut up into firewood. My daughter saw the board I made for myself and asked me to make her one also, so that's her Christmas present.

I'm in the process of polishing an ornate, solid brass, old "treasure chest" (22" long, 11" wide and 10" high) that my grandfather gave to me when I was little. I thought I

could put a few of my old coins in it and give it to my grandson for his present.

The busiest phase of the garden is over but there's always something to do. I started a second batch of sauerkraut and that will be ready to can this weekend.

I try to R & R as I go so the stress doesn't build up. After all, I am retired, right? Tired and retired!

Letters and Emails to the Editor



(The first letter is a reply after I sent this message to our members)

Dear Go-Back Club Friends,

Here's a song that goes to my heart. Leo Sayer and his Australian friends send a rock 'n roll message at <http://lafiga.firedoglake.com/2013/12/23/no-fracking-way-aussie-rock-anthem/>

Hi Iona,

Great song — I wish it would catch on — along with public and government support for solar panels on businesses (fast-food franchises) and government buildings and maybe even people's homes!

(second email) Excellent coverage — and thank you for printing the poem. I drove through the Long Range Mountains here for two hours yesterday and shared many thoughts with them, and their snow and dark pines, tamaracks and birches were giving me answers. I think their austere beauty was their answer.

As Emily Dickinson said: "How strange that nature does not knock and yet does not intrude."

Sandy Chilcote, Canada

Dear Friends,

Nineteen years ago, I bought four of the first high-tech, almost-compact-fluorescent light bulbs. They were a single tube encased in a plastic cover that was about seven inches long. They were an exorbitant \$3 or \$4. I brought them with me because they were so expensive. (!) One broke in the move to Pennsylvania in 1999. The second came unsealed when I tried to unscrew it from the ceiling fixture. Today the third burned out with a weak flash in the bathroom. The last one still works in the small bedroom. I have another, bare fluorescent bulb in the sewing room that I bought a year or so after the others.

Maybe I should throw a party next year for the 20-year-old light bulb and invite all my eco-friendly friends.

One reason the incandescent bulbs became less effective was that the manufacturers kept making the little wires inside the bulb thinner and thinner. I read about a light bulb that was installed in a factory in eastern Pennsylvania in 1908 that was still burning in the late 1990's.

Carole Baker, Pennsylvania

Hi Iona,

It is great to hear from you! I am very

happy to be on your mailing list...and thank you for the attachments. I think I will print out the December issue. It is great you can publish a newsletter on the environment and not have all the printing costs! I am sure it will grow at a steady pace.

Sunny War Eagle gave me your email address and Web site...as I had asked her if she was still in touch with you. So, yesterday I took a look at your Web site and then emailed you.

I am not in New York yet but I am moving there no later than next June. I will have enough money saved by then. I am going to start teaching a series of outdoor workshops called Healing with Nature and I'm very excited about it. I'll start those here in the Spring, then will continue doing them in New York.

I like your idea of 'going back' to more simple ways, such as the dress you made for yourself that was completely hand-stitched. Today, people want everything immediately...they don't want to wait. And life can be so complicated and complex. I really like 'simple!' Anyway, thanks so much for getting back to me and putting me on your mailing list.

(second email after January newsletter was emailed to our members)

Thank you so much for the January newsletter. I absolutely LOVE the article on How to Help the Trees!! I will refer to this article and its advice (and your newsletter) when I teach my class on Healing & Being with Trees next spring as part of my Healing with Nature series. I am going to print out the newsletter now...it all looks great!

Doug Davis, Ohio

Dear Iona,

I visited some islands in the southern part of Korea. There are so many islands which are small and pretty in Korea. The residents of the islands are farming fish and at the same time they grow vegetables in their gardens. Of course tourism is one of the pillars for the local economy.

The people living in the islands try to preserve the environment and the historic places. We can go to these islands by car ferries.

I drove along the coast. There are small mountains which have many trees, which I love. One old poet lived in the island in political exile. And he said, "I have five friends. They are water, rocks, bamboo, pine trees and the Moon." He did not include human beings as his friends. He loved

Mother Nature. He was a great scholar but he was not interested in dirty politics. And he refused to be a subject for the king and stayed in the island.

Sometimes I want to live like him.

(second email) It is chilly over here at Daegu. And snow just blanketed the ground. Normally Daegu does not get heavy snow, even in winter. The trees are getting naked and there are leaves piled on the ground.

I found a great trail which is on a small hill. There are many pine trees, which I love. I can hear the whispering of pine tree needles by the wind. And I walk on fallen needles and oak leaves on the ground. It is a dirt trail and I can feel Mother Earth. Magpies and sparrows are flying in flocks. There are no people walking around.

On top of the hill I recite the Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln. My audience? My lovely pine trees, oaks and chestnut trees. I memorized whole text. I practiced more than a thousand times. You may memorize it in few hours. I have been to Gettysburg more than five times to learn American history in Lincoln's era.

As you know I lived in Frederick, Maryland and Horsham, Pennsylvania. I am on the side of the people who love nature and the people underprivileged. You and I have been on the same page even if we are far away from each other. You know what? Today is my first day to put on my long johns because it is really chilly.

Pyong Roh, Korea

**The following submitted
by Allen Hengst on January 2, 2014**

Mercury wafting out of oil-sands operations is impacting an area — or "bull's-eye" — that extends for about 11,800 miles in northeast Alberta, according to federal scientists. Levels of the potent neurotoxin found near the massive industrial operation have been found to be up to 16 times higher than "background" levels for the region, says Environment Canada researcher Jane Kirk, who recently reported the findings at an international toxicology conference. Mercury can bioaccumulate in living creatures and chronic exposure can cause brain damage.

Margaret Munro

The Vancouver Sun: December 29, 2013
<http://www.vancouversun.com/business/Mercury+levels+rising+expanse+around+Alberta+oilsands/9332186/story.html>

Iona's Column: Respect Little Things

Let's start a campaign against stupid little things like restaurant silverware and napkin wrappers or individually-wrapped, bite-size candy (except for Halloween). That's enough to start with.

One could also include those obnoxious little packets of butter or margarine that are so hard to open or likewise, maple syrup and jelly in tiny plastic holders one sees routinely in restaurants.

I'm thinking about this sort of thing since I have a fine collection of them now that the holiday festivities are over. I brought home as many as I could as souvenirs knowing I'd be writing about them. Admittedly, I enjoy eating out when we can and the candy was yummy BUT....

Generally, I'm going to try harder not to use anything that is individually packaged when I can buy a larger container and dole it out as needed. Finer restaurants put balls of butter in little cups or syrup in pitchers; this type of thinking reduces waste. The cooperative health-food store that I belong to has many bulk bins, where you can bring in your own containers, get a tare, and fill them up with really tasty and nutritious items.

But waste is not all I'm talking about here. Just imagine for a minute the birth of the packaging. If it's plastic, it comes from a chemical company and I did many inspections of those horrid places when I was an air pollution inspector back in New Jersey. I was aghast at the stench and worker exposures in the factories I inspected.

If it's a paper product, poor tree! What a waste to cut down trees for silly papers to pull together silverware and (usually paper) napkins. These items never used to exist — somehow they snuck into our culture unannounced and, as I see it, unevaluated for their overall impact on Earth.

Sticking to the utensil wrappers for a minute, they have some sort of glue to hold them together. Again, glue comes from chemical factories. Now, you might raise an objection here that if we boycott too

many things, there won't be enough work. But remember this — if we replace paper napkins with cloth ones, people will be sewing them and washing them — over and over and over and over.

OK, back to my original train of thought. The tree has been sacrificed, the glue has been applied, now what about color? Dye factories — awful places in general. Take my word for it — I've been inside some of them.

Packaging and transportation of these worthless items add to the burden of air and water pollution and global warming, as some sort of fuel goes into every step of these processes.

Disposal? Since I've saved the utensil wrappers pictured above from the busboy's busy hands, I can at least recycle them (unlike the aluminum foil) but my best choice is to not use them at all.

Let's switch to the foil candy wrappers now. If the companies which make these are not buying foil made from recycled aluminum cans (like we get from GreenLine Paper, a small business in Pennsylvania), then the Earth must be dug into. I realize there is a powerful paranoia pervading our society about germs but, if you're just buying candy for your family or friends, there is no need to wrap every piece separately. And at least the M&M company is still located in New Jersey, thereby lowering the transportation's environmental impacts. (Hershey's, by contrast, has pulled out of the U.S.)

When we respect our Earth and trees, we try to observe our habits and our



Photo by Iona

This is part of a collection of useless products Iona gathered over the holidays.

actions when we are out of the house or on the road. I confess that this can get complicated at times and our culture is not up to speed on disposables. Well, that came out backwards — it is too speeded up on disposables.

You would not believe how many times I bring my coffee mug into places like Dunkin Donuts and the uneducated, unaware, underpaid employees insist on pouring coffee *first* into a disposable cup and then expect me to transfer it over.

That drives me nuts; plus, many of these cups are lined with harmful chemicals or made of a Styrofoam replacement (which is also destroys the ozone layer, just more slowly) or else their cups are made from trees. It's crazy. But I persist as long as I have the time and energy to discuss these issues with the workers.

Having made the case in what I hope is an intelligent and convincing manner,

I HEREBY PROPOSE THAT: Any members of The Go-Back Club who agree with me about said issue will boycott frivolous items such as the above mentioned and seek to find better substitutes, thereby joining me in protecting our planet Earth.



Snow Bunting

photos by

Paul Cyr

(<http://www.crownofmaine.com/paulcyr/>

Submitted

by Doug Davis

