



Groundswell News

Newspaper of The Go-Back Club, a Simple-Living/Action Brigade

These are OUR stories: www.gobackclub.org

Our Motto: Use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without.

Issue No. 40: July 2018

Iona's Column:

Why I Love My
Newspaper So
Much & Thanks!



Dear Reader,
I suddenly realized that the reason I love creating *Groundswell News* so much is that all the great articles we find of people around

the globe fighting to protect the planet nourish my soul.

Sometimes I admit to feeling tired and discouraged after 52 years in this movement as I know in my heart that the planet and all life are suffering so much and the evil ones in control now are so powerful, but when I see millions of people rising up in peaceful protests and succeeding, I'm renewed.

I hope you feel the same way as you read the stories which interest you. Now that I've expanded to a larger paper, I know you won't be reading every word as I do, but my wish for you is that you at least find a glimmer of hope and optimism amidst the gloomy, bloody, hateful, violent news streams you may be exposed to in other media.

What I want for all of us is love, peace and happiness in our hearts as we live from day to day, each of us doing our best in our own unique way as our circumstances allow.

Also, this issue is special because so many of our readers submitted great articles as I requested in last month's column. I have a big smile because I feel the strength of our team helping me gather information for our paper.

THANK YOU, ALL!

For the Earth,

Iona




Photo: Pedro Alvarez for the Observer

The Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Project, 190 miles outside Las Vegas.

Some Rare Good Climate News: The Fossil Fuel Industry is Weaker Than Ever

Submitted by John Conner,
Shade Gap, PA

By Bill McKibben 
The Guardian: June 21, 2018

From Wall Street to the pope, many increasingly see fossil fuels as anything but a sure bet. That gives us reason to hope.

If you're looking for good news on the climate front, don't look to the Antarctic. Last week's spate of studies documenting that its melt rates had tripled is precisely the kind of data that underscores the almost impossible urgency of the moment.

And don't look to Washington, DC, where the unlikely

survival of the EPA administrator, Scott Pruitt, continues to prove the political power of the fossil fuel industry. It's as if he's on a reality show where the premise is to see how much petty corruption one man can get away with.

But from somewhat less likely quarters, there's been reason this month for hope – reason, at least, to think that the basic trajectory of the world away from coal and gas and oil is firmly under way.

At the Vatican, the pope faced down a conference full of oil industry executives – the basic argument that fossil fuel reserves must be kept underground has apparently percolated to the top of the world's biggest organization.

And from Wall Street came welcome word that market perceptions haven't really changed: even in the age of Trump, the fossil fuel indus-

try has gone from the world's surest bet to an increasingly challenged enterprise.

Researchers at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) minced no words: "In the past several years, oil industry financial statements have revealed significant signs of strain: profits have dropped, cash flow is down, balance sheets are deteriorating and capital spending is falling.

"The stock market has recognized the sector's overall weakness, punishing oil and gas shares over the past five years even as the market as a whole has soared."

The IEEFA report labeled the industry "weaker than it has been in decades" and laid out its basic frailties, the first of which is paradoxical. Fracking has produced a sudden surge of gas and oil

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What on Earth is The Go-Back Club?

A Simple-Living/Action Brigade

Our Motto: *Use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without.*

Founder/Editor: Iona Conner

Wire Editor: Allen Hengst

Established: September 2013

Web site: www.gobackclub.org

Published several times a year: \$10 a year via email; please send check to address below

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Contributors: Rabbit, Tom Stapleford

What is The Go-Back Club all about?

We want to change people's hearts. Our members live simply (or try to) so that our collective carbon footprint grows smaller and smaller every day. We are working toward a common goal of reducing our individual impacts on climate change to protect future generations and all life.

Who are we trying to attract?

We hope to reach people who are concerned about global warming and realize that they are part of the problem but don't know what to

do. We invite them to join our Club. Please tell your family and friends about us. They can go to www.gobackclub.org to learn more.

What are we trying to achieve?

Our members are part of the global movement of people who know that global warming is an immediate threat and who want to prevent further harm and even reverse the situation.

We look to others for inspiration.

People are "like a blind man walking randomly toward a cliff. The only thing that will save him is to go backwards." Michael Mann (GBC board member, climate scientist, member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), told us a couple of years ago referring to tipping points on a visit to Penn State, where Mann is director of the Earth Systems Science Center

"Our life is frittered away by detail. Simplify, simplify, simplify! Simplicity of life and elevation of purpose." Henry David Thoreau

Please send me your stories and photos. I rely on our members' contributions.

I'm not looking for ugly.

I'm not looking for dark.

I'm not looking for hatred.

I'm looking for the opposites

to help raise our readers' spirits. There is enough ugly

and dark and hateful in

the world. This newspaper

provides an antidote—

BEAUTY, LIGHT, LOVE.

Thank you for sending

me your material for

consideration.

Fair Use Law: <http://copyright.gov/fair-use/more-info.html>

Fair use is a legal doctrine that promotes freedom of expression by permitting the unlicensed use of copyright-protected works in certain circumstances. Section 107 of the Copyright Act provides the statutory framework for determining whether something is a fair use and identifies certain types of uses—such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research—as examples of activities that may qualify as fair use. Section 107 calls for consideration of the following four factors in evaluating a question of fair use:

(1) Purpose and character of the use, including whether the use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes: Courts look at how the party claiming fair use is using the copyrighted work and are more likely to find that nonprofit educational and noncommercial uses are fair. This does not mean, however, that all nonprofit educational and noncommercial uses are fair and all

commercial uses are not fair; instead, courts will balance the purpose and character of the use against the other factors below. Additionally, "transformative" uses are more likely to be considered fair. Transformative uses are those that add something new, with a further purpose or different character, and do not substitute for the original use of the work.

(2) Nature of the copyrighted work: This factor analyzes the degree to which the work that was used relates to copyright's purpose of encouraging creative expression. . . .

(3) Amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole: Under this factor, courts look at both the quantity and quality of the copyrighted material that was used. If the use includes a large portion of the copyrighted work, fair use is less likely to be found; if the use employs only a small amount of copyrighted material, fair use is more likely. . . .

(4) Effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work: Here, courts review whether, and to what extent, the unlicensed use harms the existing or future market for the copyright owner's original work. In assessing this factor, courts consider whether the use is hurting the current market for the original work (for example, by displacing sales of the original) and/or whether the use could cause substantial harm if it were to become widespread. . . .

Please note that the Copyright Office is unable to provide specific legal advice to individual members of the public about questions of fair use. See 37 C.F.R. 201.2(a)(3). For further information, see <https://www.copyright.gov/fair-use/more-info.html>.



Fair Use Logo

Maryland Announces First State-Led Climate Leadership Academy

Maryland Department of Natural Resources, *excerpt*
Press Release: May 22, 2018

Maryland launched the nation's first state-sponsored Climate Leadership Academy in May to help local governments, critical infrastructure organizations and state agencies effectively plan, prepare and implement climate change initiatives.

At a launch event on the first day of Maryland's inaugural State of the Coast conference, senior state and local officials and decision-makers developed a vision for the Academy, which will be an important resource to help public and private sectors incorporate the impacts of climate change into their decision-making and planning.

"Under Governor Larry Hogan's strong and independent leadership, Maryland is well-equipped to lead the country in driving creative, innovative and successful strategies aimed at addressing anticipated climate change-related impacts on our businesses, citizens and communities," Maryland Natural Resources Secretary Mark Belton said. "Through the Climate Leadership Academy, we will support locally-designed and led efforts and initiatives by providing a forum for community leaders to build their own capacity, convene with their peers and partners, and share best practices and results."

Joining Secretary Belton and Maryland Environment Secretary Ben Grumbles, organizations represented in the initial planning session include the Association of Climate Change Officers, Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Emergency Management Agency, Maryland Energy Administration, Maryland Sea Grant, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Maryland.

"Ensuring secure, healthy and prosperous communities in the face of a changing climate will require us to deploy a force of leaders across organizations and occupations that have the capacity to successfully address climate related risks

Source: <http://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2018/05/22/maryland-announces-first-state-led-climate-leadership-academy/>



Photo: Alamy Stock Photo

'The basic trajectory of the world away from coal and gas and oil is firmly underway.'

Good News *continued from page 1*

into the market, lowering prices – which means many older investments (Canada's tar sands, for instance) no longer make economic sense. Fossil fuel has been transformed into a pure commodity business, and since the margins on fracking are narrow at best, its financial performance has been woeful. The IEEFA describes investors as "shell-shocked" by poor returns.

The second weakness is more obvious: the sudden rise of a competitor that seems able to deliver the same product – energy – with cheaper, cleaner, better technologies. Tesla, sure – but Volkswagen, having come clean about the dirtiness of diesel – is going to spend \$84bn on electric drivetrains. China seems bent on converting its entire bus fleet to electric power. Every week seems to bring a new record-low price for clean energy: the most recent being a Nevada solar plant clocking in at 2.3 cents per kilowatt hour, even with Trump's tariffs on Chinese panels.

And the third problem for the fossil fuel industry? According to IEEFA, that would be the climate movement – a material financial risk to oil and gas companies. "In addition to traditional lobbying and direct-action campaigns, climate activists have joined with an increasingly diverse set of allies – particularly the indigenous-rights movement – to put financial pressure on oil and gas companies through divestment campaigns, corporate accountability efforts and targeting of banks and financial institutions. These campaigns threaten not only to undercut financing for particular projects, but also to raise financing costs for oil and gas companies across the board."

Hey, the movement against Kinder Morgan's pipeline got so big the Canadian government

had to literally buy the thing in order to try and ram it through. Protesters will die, a former Bank of Canada governor predicted this week – though he added the country will have to muster the "fortitude" to kill them and get the pipeline built.

For activists, the best part of the IEEFA report is a series of recommendations for precisely how to hurt the industry the most, from creating delays that, "turn a marginal project into a cancelled one" to "strategic litigation" to "changing the narrative."

The report's authors write, "The financial world is just beginning to understand the fundamental weakness of the fossil fuel sector, and barely acknowledges the global climate movement's growing power and reach. This has created a powerful opportunity to develop and foster a new storyline on Wall Street: that the oil and gas industry is an unstable financial partner just as it faces its greatest test."

That's work we're capable of. If a few years of campaigning is enough to convince the pope we need to keep fossil fuels in the ground, a few more quarters might finally persuade the suits that there's more money to be made elsewhere. But speed is clearly of the essence. If massive losses of money loom over Wall Street, massive losses of polar ice loom over us all.

Bill McKibben is the Schumann Distinguished Scholar at Middlebury College and the founder of the climate campaign 350.org. This article originally appeared in The Grist.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/21/climate-change-fossil-fuel-industry-never-been-weaker>



Photo: Ketchum/NRDC

If Pebble Mine were built, this view would be an industrialized hole in the ground over two miles across and 2,000 feet deep.

4th Major Investor Pulls Funding from Pebble Mine

Submitted by Allen Hengst
Washington, DC

Expert Blog
NRDC: May 25, 2015

The Canadian mining company First Quantum Minerals, the latest investor in the proposed Pebble Mine in Bristol Bay, Alaska, announced today that it will end its agreement with the mine's owner, Northern Dynasty Minerals, and pull funding ...

This is a significant move forward for the conservationists, local businesses, fishing communities and indigenous groups who have fought construction of the controversial gold and copper mine for almost a decade.

The fourth major investor to pull out from the massive open-pit mine – which would cause irreparable damage to Alaska's ecologically sensitive Bristol Bay watershed – First Quantum made its decision just weeks after a delegation of community leaders from the Bristol Bay region, alongside environmental groups like NRDC, attended First Quantum's annual shareholders' meeting, arguing strongly against pursuing the project. "It's the wrong project in the wrong place," [NRDC senior attorney Joel] Reynolds says, "and today's announcement is the latest proof that it's a bad investment – financially, environmentally and socially."

Not only is Bristol Bay one of our most pristine wild places, it also provides half

the world's supply of sockeye salmon and is home to sensitive species like bears, eagles and wolves. The region also supports 14,000 jobs and generates \$1.5 billion in economic activity each year. "There is no more widely condemned project anywhere in the world today, and now it's time for Northern Dynasty to walk away," Reynolds says. "Bristol Bay is a national treasure whose invaluable fisheries resources must be protected and sustained forever."


Source: <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/nrdc/first-quantum-minerals-makes-right-call-backs-away-pebble-mine>

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE

1. VOTE WITH YOUR DOLLARS, CONSIDER THE ETHICS BEHIND YOUR PURCHASES.
2. SPEAK YOUR MIND. LET COMPANIES KNOW HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT ISSUES.

Arctic Refuge Oil Exploration? Interior Department Rejects Seismic Testing Application as Inadequate

Submitted by Allen Hengst, Wire Editor
Washington, DC

By Steven Mufson and Juliet Eilperin, *excerpt* 
Washington Post: June 1, 2018

Two Alaska Native corporations and a small oil services firm together have applied to do extensive seismic work next winter in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the first move toward development there since Congress voted late last year to open up the pristine wilderness to oil and gas drilling.

But while President Trump, congressional Republicans, the oil industry and Alaskan leaders have been pushing hard to develop the refuge that had been off-limits to petroleum exploration for more than three decades, the Interior Department's initial response to the consortium's permit application was scathing. "This plan is not adequate," Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service said in a reply to the seismic application, adding that it showed "a lack of applicable details for proper agency review" ...

The oil services firm and project operator SAExploration said that, "This partnership is dedicated to minimizing the effect of our operations on the environment." It said it would deploy sleds, smaller vehicles and biodegradable lubricants, and would construct ice roads. But the proposal for seismic work included two 150-strong teams of workers, airstrips, giant sleds and explosives to search for and map underground oil or natural gas reserves. The Fish and Wildlife Service complained that the permit application – the only one filed so far – failed to provide studies about the effects of the seismic work and equipment on wildlife, the tundra and the aquatic conditions in the refuge.

After reviewing the permit application, Peter Nelson, director of federal lands at the advocacy group Defenders of Wildlife, said, "One thing is pretty notable: how many inaccuracies and missing pieces of information there are. It really provides more evidence that industry and the Trump administration are being pretty reckless with this process."

Oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge – a vast wilderness in northeastern Alaska whose coastal plain is home to polar bears in winter and porcupine caribou and hundreds of migratory bird species in summer – has sparked a fierce debate for four decades. No drilling has been done there since it became a refuge in 1980 and no seismic work has been done since the mid-1980s.



Photo: Reuters 

A polar bear keeps close to her young along the Beaufort Sea in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska on March 6, 2007.

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), an ardent supporter of drilling in the refuge, managed to tack an amendment onto the budget resolution that opened up a portion of the refuge known as the 1002 Area for exploration. It directed Interior to conduct two lease sales over the next decade, each covering 400,000 acres. The entire refuge covers roughly 19 million acres. ...

"Our biggest fear is that this is going to be rubber-stamped because there is so much top-down pressure from the Trump administration to approve exploration and drilling as soon as possible," said Lois Epstein, Arctic program director for the Wilderness Society.

The 18-page Fish and Wildlife Service response, however, showed no sign of approval. It said that the proposal to conduct operations as late as May 31, "impinges on the beginning of the calving and nesting season of wildlife using this area." The agency said that the oil service firm SAExploration proposed using equipment on packed snow, but that it was common for large areas to have little to no snow even in winter. At one point, it laments that, "There is no documentation of environmental effects, whether positive or adverse."

Jenny Keatinge, a senior federal lands policy analyst at Defenders of Wildlife, said in an interview that conducting seismic testing when polar bears have retreated to dens could imperil the federally-threatened Southern Beaufort Sea population, of which there are roughly 900 polar bears left. She noted that 77 percent of the coastal plain is designated as critical habitat for polar bears...

Keatinge questioned why the firm's proposal did not include detailed maps of areas to be excluded from testing, or how it would address the harm that could stem from the disturbance that could result from the operation. Some caribou winter on the plain, and additional caribou come in during the spring, she said, when the seismic exploration may still be underway. "They don't identify sensitive wetland areas or sensitive wildlife areas," she said of the firm ...

The seismic permit application has been filed by Kuukpik Corp., a joint venture of SAExploration, the Arctic Slope Regional Corp. and the Kaktovik Inupiat Corp. ... SAExploration is an oil services firm that has fallen on hard times. Its fiscal 2017 revenue was a third of the 2014 level. It has lost money four years in a row. Its stock closed Thursday at \$1.40 a share, less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the \$1,375.65-a-share level less than five years ago. Experts say that the seismic work in the remote Alaska refuge could cost about \$250 million. The funds would probably come from the Alaska Native corporations. At the end of last year, SAExploration, whose recent investors include hedge funds, had \$3.6 million in cash, \$121.9 million of debt and total stockholders' equity of negative \$0.2 million, Brian Beatty, chief operating officer, said.

Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/companies-take-first-steps-to-drill-for-oil-in-arctic-national-wildlife-refuge/2018/05/31/8f133464-643a-11e8-a768-ed043e33f1dc_story.html



Photo: Navajo Tribal Utility Authority

In the desert near Arizona's border with Utah on the Navajo Nation, a massive solar array built in 2017 now provides power for around 18,000 Navajo homes.

Solar is Starting to Replace the Largest Coal Plant in the Western U.S.

By Adele Peters, excerpt 
FastCompany via The Daily Climate: May 30, 2018

On Navajo land in Arizona, a coal plant and coal mine that have devastated the environment are being replaced by solar – with both enormous benefits and local drawbacks that can serve as a lesson for how the rest of the country will need to manage the transition to renewables.

In the desert near Arizona's border with Utah on the Navajo Nation, a massive solar array built in 2017 now provides power for around 18,000 Navajo homes. Nearby, construction will begin later this year on a second solar plant and on another corner of Navajo land, the largest coal plant west of the Mississippi River is preparing to close 25 years ahead of schedule, despite some last-minute attempts to save it.

“Those two [solar] plants really are the beginning of an economic transition,” says Amanda Ormond, managing director of the Western Grid Group, an organization that promotes clean energy.

The coal plant, called the Navajo Generat-

ing Station, was built in the 1970s to provide power to growing populations in southern California, Arizona and Nevada. A nearby coal mine supplies the power plant with coal. As recently as 2014, the coal plant wasn't expected to close until 2044 – a date negotiated with the EPA to reduce air pollution. But reduced demand for coal, driven both by economics and climate action, means that the plant is scheduled to close in 2019 instead. The coal mine, run by Peabody Energy, will be forced to follow.

In 2016, Los Angeles, which owned a 21% share in the plant, completed a sale of its share to reduce city emissions. In 2017, the remaining owners announced that they would close the plant because coal power is no longer economically competitive. The plant's largest customer, the Central Arizona Project, calculated that if it had purchased electricity from other sources in 2016, it could have saved \$38.5 million.

Though customers no longer want the coal, there's some resistance to the early closure. Both the coal plant and the coal mine provide tribal revenue and jobs in

an area where nearly half the population is unemployed. The coal plant owners are helping employees find new work, but some mine workers – along with Peabody Energy, which runs the coal mine on land that straddles the Navajo and Hopi reservations – are fighting to keep the plant open. The electric plant is the sole customer of the coal mine, so if the plant goes, so will the mine.

A lawsuit, filed by Peabody, coal miners and the Hopi tribe, argues that the Central Arizona Project has to keep buying the coal under the terms of its contract as long as the plant is open – and efforts are being made to find a new buyer. (So far, the owners have shared information with some potential buyers but haven't received any offers.) An Arizona congressman drafted a bill that would exempt a new owner of the coal plant from some environmental regulations and force the Central Arizona Project to keep buying the power.

But while some living in the area want to try to keep coal going, others say that it makes more sense to shift to renewables.

Navaho Solar continued on next page



Photo: Navajo Tribal Utility Authority

The first Kayenta solar farm, which started operating in April 2017, has 120,000 panels mounted on trackers that follow the sun to generate as much power as possible. It generates 27.3 megawatts of electricity, which is sold to Salt River Project, which also runs the coal plant. The power is sent across the reservation and to cities in Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and California.

Navaho Solar *continued from page 6*

“There’s all this propaganda that’s been created saying that the Navajo are going to be devastated, the Hopis are going to be devastated,” says Percy Deal, a local activist.

“We’ve already been devastated.” Deal, who is 68 years old, says that he has witnessed the destructive impact of the coal industry over its nearly 50-year history in the area.

The coal industry uses massive amounts of water in an area that has little of the resource. For decades – including a current long drought – the plant and mine have taken water from an aquifer that both the tribe and local wildlife rely on. (Another mine, which closed in 2005, used even more water as it pumped coal through pipes to Nevada.)

“Peabody can afford to drill deep wells... the people can’t afford to drill deep wells,” says Nicole Horseherder, another Navajo activist. “The people have been using springs and seeps for centuries and the amount of water mining that Peabody does has an impact on the springs and seeps and people’s ability to obtain and access water.”

Natural springs have run dry. Windmills that used to pull up water from an aquifer no longer can. Thousands of Navajo families still don’t have running water. Plants that were used in traditional food, medicine and to dye rugs no longer grow in the area.

“Many of our wildlife – for example, deer, elk, antelope – these are all gone,” Deal says.

“They have moved on to other areas simply because they cannot find these plants anymore. We also noticed that the bald eagles and other hawks have moved on. These are sacred animals to the Navajo and Hopi people.” Other animals, including a herd of wild horses discovered dead in early May, have died of dehydration.

The coal plant emits more greenhouse gas pollution than roughly three million cars, contributing to the changing climate that is, in turn, leading to both drought and heat waves in the area. The plant also emits thousands of tons of nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide pollution a year, which can cause lung disease, heart attacks and strokes. Other pollutants from the plant, like lead, mercury and manganese, can cause brain damage.

“When the plant and the mine close, for us that are living in the area, it’s a new beginning toward a healthier life,” Deal says.

Renewable energy can also bring new economic opportunity. When the coal plant owners decided to close in 2019, part of the agreement included turning over a 500-megawatt transmission line to Navajo tribal government. “We can see that having the transmission line is the greatest economic opportunity that the Navajo nation has ever had,” Deal says.

“It’s a great asset for the tribe, because they could either sell the rights of that transmission and make money, or they could

develop their own projects . . . and use the transmission rights to be able to sell pretty much to anybody in the western United States,” says Ormond. In addition to abundant sunshine, the Navajo reservation also has the best wind resources in Arizona, at Gray Mountain.

The first Kayenta solar farm, which started operating in April 2017, has 120,000 panels mounted on trackers that follow the sun to generate as much power as possible. It generates 27.3 megawatts of electricity, which is sold to Salt River Project, which also runs the coal plant. The power is sent across the reservation and to cities in Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and California. At the height of construction, the project employed 284 people, the majority of whom were Navajo. The solar installation skills that workers gained can be used in the next solar plant, which will generate another 27.3 megawatts of power.

Nicole Horseherder argues that if the Navajo Nation wants to stay in the energy business, it should invest in expanding its own solar power. “We’re saying, this way you’re producing it, you own it, you maintain it, you operate it and you have so much more control over the revenue stream and the type of jobs that can be created,” Horseherder says. . . .

Source: <https://www.fastcompany.com/40577931/solar-is-starting-to-replace-the-largest-coal-plant-in-the-western-u-s>



Photo: Iamhao, CC BY-SA 3.0

A French lavender farmer is part of the group suing the EU for more ambitious emissions targets, saying climate change threatens his crop.

10 Families Bring First Ever ‘People’s Climate Case’ Against the EU

Submitted by Bill Boteler,
Washington, DC

By Olivia Rosane
EcoWatch: May 26, 2018

Ten families from Fiji, Kenya and countries across Europe who are already suffering the effects of climate change filed a case against the EU Wednesday in a bid to force the body to increase its commitments under the Paris agreement, AFP reported.

The “People’s Climate Case,” as it is being called, challenges the climate policies of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, saying they will not reduce emissions quickly enough to stop rising temperatures from disrupting the plaintiffs’ lives.

While an increasing number of communities and individuals have taken fossil fuel companies and governments to court over climate change in recent years, this is the first such case to be brought against the EU as a whole.

The case was brought before the Luxembourg-based European Court of Justice by people who “are already being impacted by climate change, already incurring damage ... and they are saying: ‘EU, you have to do what you can to protect us because otherwise our damage will be catastrophic,’” Roda Verheyen, the lawyer arguing the case, told AFP News Agency.

The EU currently plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030, but the plaintiffs say

that is not enough. They are asking the EU to strengthen its plan’s emissions-trading scheme directive, its land use, land-use change and forestry regulation and its effort-sharing regulation.

The UN calculated that current international commitments under the Paris agreement would still allow for three degrees Celsius of warming above pre-industrial levels, despite the agreement’s goal of limiting warming to “well below” two degrees. Scientists say a three-degree warmer world would lead to even more extreme weather and sea level rise, according to AFP.

“This case is important because it asks the EU to increase its climate ambition to 2030 in order to take a fair share of the burden required to meet the temperature goal of the Paris agreement and to protect the human rights of European citizens,” ClientEarth lawyer Sophie Marjanac told *The Independent*.

According to *The Guardian*, there is precedent for the success of such an argument. In 2015, a judge at The Hague ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in a case brought against the Dutch government asking it to reduce emissions by 25 percent within five years. The Netherlands appealed the case and the appeal will be heard next week.

The plaintiffs in this case are not seeking any financial compensation, only policy change, and their stories put a human face to the sometimes abstract concept of climate change.

They include members of the indigenous Swedish Sami Youth Association Sáminuorra who say that warmer Northern winters are

threatening the reindeer that their way of life depends upon.

“If we lose the reindeers, the Sami culture will be lost. Many of the Sami youth want to stay with their families and be reindeer herders, but they cannot see a future. This is mostly due to the threat of climate change. This must be urgently addressed for the safety of our generation and the next generations.” Sáminuorra Chair Sanna Vannar said, as quoted by *The Guardian*.

Further south, 72-year-old Provencal lavender farmer Maurice Feschet is also concerned with passing on his livelihood. He said that climate change cost him 44 percent of his harvest within six years. “My family has been farming here since the 1800s. I am taking this action for my 38-year-old son who lives on the farm. We want him to continue to be able to farm, but it is not going to be easy. There must be more done,” he told *The Guardian*.

According to AFP, Vannar and Feschet are joined by about 30 other plaintiffs, including a Romanian sheep farmer whose herd is threatened by drought, a Portuguese forester who lost all of his trees to wildfires in 2017, residents of a German island threatened by rising sea levels, owners of a diminishing ice-climbing business in the Italian Alps, Fijians concerned with more intense cyclones and coral bleaching, and a Kenyan family coping with desertification.

Source: <https://www.ecowatch.com/climate-lawsuit-families-europe-2572055045.html>

Sleasbags in Action: Real Residents Locked Out: Paid Actors Spoke in Favor of Power Plant

Submitted by Allen Hengst
Washington, DC

By Emilie Karrick Surrusco
EarthJustice: May 10, 2018

Sleazy actors, sleazy company
deny citizens' right to
public hearing.

Observe and participate. Two very important words to the people of New Orleans East. A news report this week revealed that their constitutional right to observe and participate in public meetings – specifically, meetings where the New Orleans City Council approved the building of a dirty gas-fired power plant in their neighborhood – had been put up for sale. The price? 60 to 200 “dollarydoos.”

A local investigative journalist with *The Lens* New Orleans reported that professional actors were paid \$60 to fill up seats – or \$200 to give a scripted speech – at two recent city council meetings on the controversial plant, while the people of New Orleans East were “literally locked out,” said Reverend Gregory Manning, pastor of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in New Orleans.

It was “easy money,” one prospective hire was told in a Facebook Messenger exchange, only after he signed a nondisclosure agreement. He was directed to pick up a sign. Put on an orange T-shirt. Find a seat and stay in it. There would be free pizza and a round of drinks when it was over. Beyond that, there were only “a few things to keep in mind:

- 1) Tell nobody you're being paid,
- 2) Tell nobody you're being paid,
- 3) Media will be present, do not talk to them,
- 4) Tell nobody you're being paid, and
- 5) If someone approaches you, don't tell them you're being paid.”

With the help of Earthjustice, New Orleans East residents sent a letter to Louisiana Attorney General Buddy Landry asking for an investigation into possible legal and ethical violations – and to ultimately get to the bottom of the question of who actually paid



Photo: Michael Stein/*The Lens* 

Actors supporting proposed power plant wore fluorescent orange shirts reading “Clean Energy. Good Jobs. Reliable Power.”

for the fake participants.

According to *The Lens*, “The two men who recruited and organized the actors, Garrett Wilkerson and Daniel Taylor, appear to be from out of town.” Entergy, the utility company that would profit from the ratepayer-funded plant, initially denied any involvement. After conducting an internal investigation, it reported that a public affairs firm the company contracted with had hired Crowds on Demand, a publicity firm that provides rent-a-crowd services, without Entergy’s knowledge.

The city council, which started a new term on Monday with several new members, has vowed to investigate. “The harmful impact of this nefarious practice is unfortunate, unappreciated and repulsive to true democratic deliberative process,” Council President Jason Williams told the Advocate. On April 19, before news of the paid actors broke, Earthjustice filed a lawsuit on New Orleans East residents’ behalf, claiming that the city council violated both the Louisiana Constitution and the Open Meetings Law when more than 100 residents were locked out of meet-

ings on the plant, which has been approved to be built in an area made up of predominantly Vietnamese, African-American and Latino communities, on a FEMA floodplain within two miles of homes, churches and schools. The plant will bring with it billions of pounds of toxic air pollution, increased flood risk and higher monthly electric bills for the next 30 years.

On February 21, Mark Nguyen, a leader with the Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans, brought 100 people from the Vietnamese community to voice their concerns about the health, environmental and cost implications of the \$210-million plant. They were locked out and never got a chance to speak. “How could it be a public hearing when the public was kept out?” Nguyen said. “Community voices were not heard – how could that be legitimate?”

Source: <https://earthjustice.org/blog/2018-may/at-power-plant-approval-meeting-paid-actors-spoke-while-residents-were-locked-out>

Use it Up, Wear it Out, Make it Do, Or Do Without!

- Go-Back Club Motto -



Photo: Michael Bryant, Inquirer

Pipes for Sunoco's Mariner East Pipeline project await installation at the border of West Whiteland and Uwchlan townships near Exton.

PUC Judge Halts Sunoco's Mariner East Pipeline, Yet Again

Submitted by Fran Staret
Philadelphia, PA

By Andrew Maykuth
Philadelphia Inquirer: May 24, 2018

Less than a month after the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) allowed Sunoco Pipeline LP to restart its Mariner East 1 pipeline, a PUC hearing examiner on Thursday reversed course and ordered Sunoco to shut down operations again.

Elizabeth Barnes, a PUC administrative law judge sitting in Harrisburg, issued an emergency order Thursday instructing Sunoco to immediately suspend service on the Mariner pipeline in West Whiteland Township, Chester County, where sinkholes appeared earlier this year.

Barnes also ordered Sunoco to halt construction of two new Mariner East pipelines in West Whiteland, an impediment to completion of the expansion project on which Sunoco is spending \$5.1 billion in Pennsylvania. Sunoco says the Mariner East 2, the first of the two new 350-mile pipelines, is 98 percent complete.

The judge acted in response to a complaint from State Senator Andy Dinniman (D., Chester), a vocal opponent of the project,

about the safety of the construction in West Whiteland. The emergency order throws the Mariner East system, which delivers Marcellus Shale gas liquids to a terminal in Marcus Hook, into disarray.

"The order is a resounding affirmation of everything we've been saying – the Mariner East pipeline project has potentially endangered our neighborhoods, schools, environment, property rights, water resources, infrastructure and the health, safety, well-being and very way of life in our communities," Dinniman said in a statement Thursday.

Sunoco's parent company, Energy Transfer Partners LP (ETP), said in a statement Thursday that the judge's order is a "significant departure" from the law and PUC's procedures. Under the commission's rules, it has seven days to request the five-member PUC to review the judge's order. "The entire energy industry should be concerned about today's order and consider this result when making decisions regarding future capital investments in the state as it upends Pennsylvania's entire regulatory environment," ETP said in its statement.

The company says it plans to continue construction work on "all areas along the route except for the 3.5-mile segment that runs through West Whiteland Township."

Joseph Otis Minott, the head of the Clean Air Council, which has led legal opposition to the pipeline, said Thursday's order, "Provides much needed protection for the public from the dangers Sunoco has inflicted upon communities in Chester County and beyond."

The Pennsylvania Energy Infrastructure Alliance, a coalition of labor and industry groups, said the "misguided" decision runs counter to previous rulings, including the PUC's May 3rd unanimous vote to allow Sunoco to resume pumping Marcellus Shale natural gas liquids such as propane through the Mariner East 1 pipeline. The commission had ordered the shutdown in March after sinkholes opened up during construction of the new Mariner East 2 pipeline along the same route.

At the time the PUC allowed service to restart, the PUC's Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement said it was satisfied that the pipeline "can resume operations safely." But the PUC also made clear that its decision was narrowly focused on the immediate threat from the sinkholes and it said that the broader safety concerns of pipeline opponents would be addressed in Dinniman's complaint.

Pipeline continued on next page

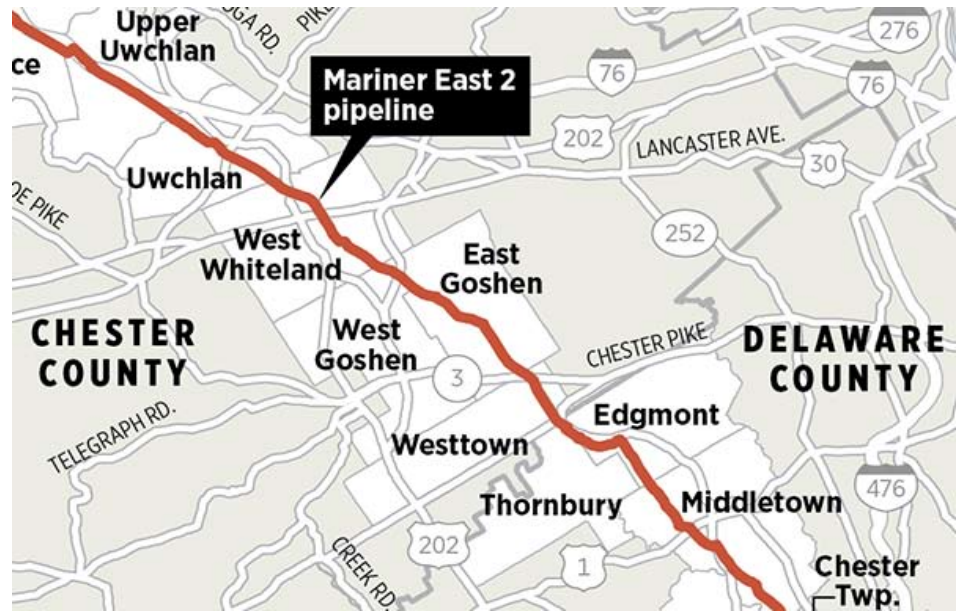
Pipeline *continued from previous page*

Barnes has previously ruled against the contentious Mariner East project. In 2014, she coauthored a recommended decision that determined the project was not a public utility. The PUC later rejected that position, granting the Mariner project the public utility status that allowed Sunoco to acquire vital rights of way using eminent domain power.

The judge's order requires Sunoco to conduct a broad array of assessments for its old and new Mariner East pipelines, including the integrity of Mariner East 1 pipeline, which was built in 1931 to deliver refined products, such as gasoline and heating oil before Sunoco repaired and repurposed it in 2014 to carry gas liquids from the booming Marcellus Shale fields.

The judge also granted Dinniman's request to force Sunoco to create a public risk analysis "and other information required to warn and protect the public from danger and to reduce the hazards to which the public may be subjected." The issue has been central for pipeline opponents, who say the company has not been forthright about the risks of delivering highly volatile liquids underground in densely developed areas.

Barnes said she also weighed Sunoco's re-



cord of mishaps in ordering a halt to operations and construction in West Whiteland. "Sunoco has made deliberate managerial decisions to proceed in what appears to be a rushed manner in an apparent prioritization of profit over the best engineering practices available in our time that might best ensure public safety," she said.

Source: <http://www.philly.com/philly/business/energy/puc-halts-sunoco-mariner-east-me2-pipeline-dinniman-20180524.html>; map is a cropped version of "Inquirer staff" graphic posted at <http://www.philly.com/philly/infographics/384326701.html>

Anti-Capitalists Sabotage Mariner East 2 Pipeline

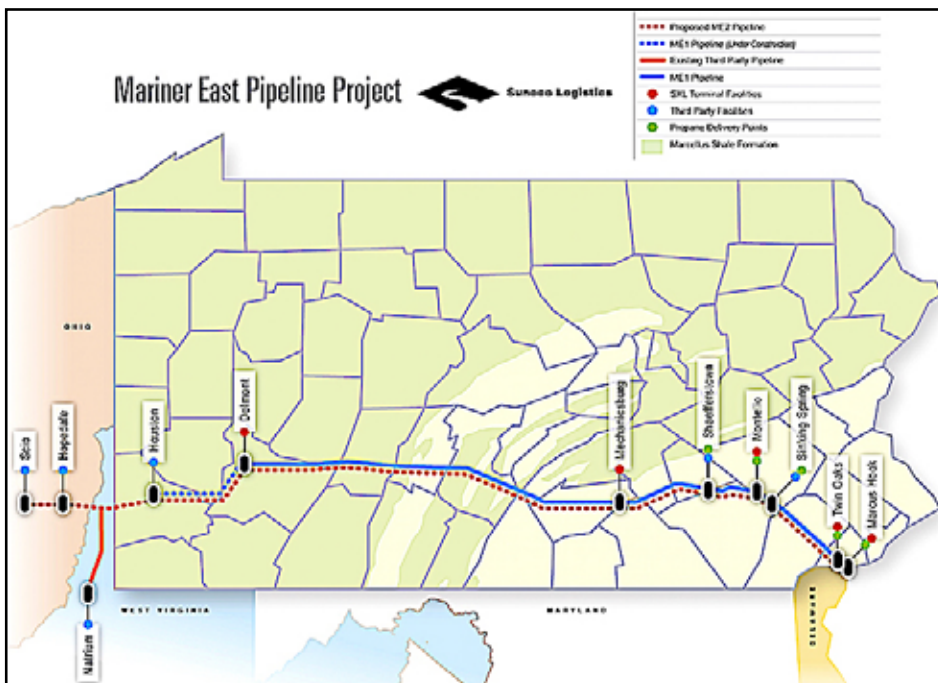


Photo: Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

Mariner East II expands the existing pipeline system and will traverse 17 counties in southern PA.

Submitted by Allen Hengst
Washington, DC

Philly Anti-Capitalist: April 10, 2018

Early last week, we made the two tractors that Energy Transfer Partners (ETP) was using to construct the Mariner East 2 pipeline near Exton, Pennsylvania, inoperative

by cutting their hoses and electrical wires, cutting off valve stems to deflate the tires, introducing sand into their systems, putting potatoes in the exhaust pipes, using contact cement to close off the machines' panels and fuel tanks and a variety of other mischievous improvised sabotage techniques.

We feel called to fight for the natural world and would be lazy to submit to the demise of the Earth, animals and self by not fighting against its destruction by machines and corporations who seek to kill it for capitalist growth. It was surprisingly easy and brought us so much joy.

We've read since that ETP has had to acknowledge the damage, which they are usually careful to cover up, and see that this wreck of a project could be seriously compromised by the proliferation of more actions like these.

For those restless, angry warriors out there, we hope you find similar happiness in destroying little by little the tools of this capitalist, settler-colonial nation.

Death to colonization and capitalism. Shout out to everyone out there still attacking in spite of repression and grief.

Source: <https://phlanticap.noblogs.org/pipeline-sabotage/>

Editorial Letter from *Earth First! Journal*

Volume 38 Number 1, Eostar/Spring 2018

It can be easy, with sea levels rising and Nazis closing in, to look at our movements as places for mutual support and community, but not as forces to be reckoned with. And that feeling we get when we are sitting around a fire in the woods or marching together in the streets, of being a small group fighting against unbeatable odds and doing it anyway, is powerful and important. But it isn't all we have to offer. As the threats get bigger, the least we can do for one another is to recognize how our struggles are connected, to take ourselves seriously and to fight to win.

But what does winning even look like? Does it look like staying pure enough in our politics that we have the time to unfailingly devote ourselves to one cause, one vision of the future? Does it look like one-off actions meant to sway the public and mainstream media, with no follow-through for impacted communities? Not according to the activists in this issue, who draw connections between everything from prison abolition and pipeline resistance to women's rights and reforestation – all while thinking strategically, digging in for the long-haul and creating spaces free from authority.

In this issue, you'll hear from people in Germany who have been defending the Hambach Forest from mining for over five years, activists in Northern California

who've resisted logging in the Mattole Forest for the last 18 years, and forest defenders in New York who've spent winter after winter fighting back chainsaws and pipeline construction equipment. You'll read about people from the Gulf South continuing the long-term fight against Energy Transfer Partners, and folks in British Columbia resisting a Kinder Morgan pipeline—again. You'll get a glimpse of the wildlife advocates continuing a decades-long tradition of taking direct action to defend the buffalo of Yellowstone. You'll read about the autonomous ZAD in France successfully fighting off a planned airport after years of on-the-ground resistance, and a graffiti-filled autonomous zone in Olympia, Washington fighting the fracking industry by occupying railroad tracks.

And you'll hear from people from around the world who have united in armed struggle against the Turkish state and ISIS in Syria for a freer, more ecological society there. In each of these lawless, wild zones, environmental advocacy goes hand-in-hand with creating a culture free from oppression and hierarchy.

You'll also read about the repression faced by those who stand up for the Earth and each other. Energy Transfer Partners' current lawsuit against Earth First! and the FBI's framing of Standing Rock activists, are calculated attempts to quash the wild spirit within us all – a trend also present in the story of Leonard Peltier, imprisoned for over 40 years for defending his people. You'll read updates

on eco-prisoners who have been caged for standing up for their belief, and about the ongoing Fight Toxic Prisons campaign, which simultaneously fights for prisoner and Earth liberation by targeting dangerous and environmentally destructive facilities and lifting up the voices of those inside.

The police state, the oil industry squeezing the last drops of crude out of the Earth, the men abusing us, the white supremacists screaming on YouTube, the militias bearing down, the school shooters wearing MAGA hats, the forest industry, the federal government, even Elon fucking Musk and his space car, are all operating in the service of keeping things the same. Their trajectory is just as pointless, soulless and guaranteed for destruction as that space suit drifting towards an asteroid field. They are afraid, incurious and really boring. Radical activist movements, networks of people so intensely loving that they're willing to break off from the oppressive mainstream and fight for a new way of living on the Earth, are a threat to their shitty way of life.

We hope this issue helps folks feel just a little less alone in their struggles and a little less afraid to stand up for the Earth and against the forces trying to destroy it and us.

Stay wild,
The Earth First! Journal Collective

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Antarctic Ocean Discovery Warns of Faster Global Warming

By Mikayla Mace, *excerpt* 
Arizona Daily Star via Climate Central via The Daily Climate
June 10, 2018

A group of scientists, including one from the University of Arizona, has new findings suggesting Antarctica's Southern Ocean – long known to play an integral role in climate change – may not be absorbing as much pollution as previously thought.

The old belief was that the ocean pulled about 13 percent of the world's carbon dioxide – a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change – out of the atmosphere, helping put the brakes on rising global temperatures.

To reach their contradictory conclusion, the team used state-of-the-art sensors to collect more data on the Southern Ocean than ever before, including during the perilous winter months that previously made the research difficult if not impossible.

Some oceanographers suspect that less CO₂ is being absorbed because the westerlies – the winds that ring the southernmost continent – are tightening like a noose. As these powerful winds get more concentrated, they dig at the water, pushing it out and away.

Water from below rises to take its place, dragging up decaying muck made of carbon from deep in the ocean that can then either be released into the atmosphere in the form of CO₂ or slow the rate that CO₂ is absorbed by the water. Either way, it's not good. . . .



Photo: Greta Shum/Climate Central

The crew of the N.B. Palmer used satellite imagery to avoid large fields of sea ice during a mission to deploy and recover floats, which remotely monitor ocean conditions, but sometimes encounters were unavoidable. The research vessel can break through ice three feet thick while traveling at three knots. Source: <http://www.climatecentral.org/news/antarctic-ocean-discovery-warns-of-faster-global-warming-21865>



Photo: AP Wilfredo Lee[®]

Demonstrators lie on the floor at a Publix Supermarket in Coral Springs, Florida on Friday, May 25, 2018.

Publix Halts Donations to NRA-Aligned Candidate Following ‘Die-In’ Protests Led by Parkland Survivors

Submitted by John Conner
Shade Gap, PA

By Marwa Eltagouri[®]
Washington Post: May 25, 2018

Survivors of a February shooting at a Florida high school were met with counter-demonstrators when they protested donations made by a supermarket chain to a gubernatorial candidate who supports gun rights. Diane Hodges reports. (Reuters)

The supermarket chain Publix on Friday announced that it would suspend its political contributions to Adam Putnam, a Republican candidate for Florida governor, after being faced with overwhelming pressure to cut ties with him because of his fierce support for the National Rifle Association (NRA).

“We would never knowingly disappoint our customers or the communities we serve,” Publix said in a statement Friday. “As a result, we decided earlier this week to suspend corporate-funded political contributions as we reevaluate our giving processes.”

The announcement came moments before “die-in” protests organized by 18-year-old

gun-control activist David Hogg began at several Publix supermarkets, forcing store managers to reroute shoppers around the protesters, who lay on the floors of the aisles. At an Orlando supermarket, store managers fetched grocery items for customers who stood to watch but mostly went on shopping, according to the Orlando Sentinel.

At two Publix supermarkets in Parkland, survivors of the February shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shouted, “USA, not NRA!” as customers navigated their shopping carts around them on the floor, according to the Associated Press. Counter protesters supporting the NRA turned up at one of the stores, where a near-confrontation almost occurred between two men before police intervened.

David Hogg survived the Florida shooting and is demanding that Congress take action to stop it from happening again.

Hogg, a senior at Stoneman Douglas, has risen to national fame in the wake of the shooting by advocating for gun reform and co-founding the March for Our Lives. This most recent protest came one week after a mass shooting at Santa Fe High School in

Southeast Texas killed 10 people, and on the same day that an Indianapolis middle school student opened fire in his classroom, injuring a student and a teacher.

The protesters were calling for an end to Publix’s support for Putnam, Florida’s agricultural commissioner, who has called himself a “proud NRA sellout.”

“A lot of people don’t support who Publix is supporting,” Haylee Shepherd, a 15-year-old sophomore at Stoneman Douglas, told the Associated Press. “It’s going to reflect on them as a brand and people shopping there.”

Publix has faced increasing backlash since the Tampa Bay Times reported that the company had given \$670,000 to Putnam in the past three years. Another \$147,000 was donated on top of that, including \$78,000 from Carol Barnett, the daughter of Publix’s founder; \$49,000 from former Publix executive M. Clayton Hollis Jr. and \$20,000 from Publix executive Hoyt Barnett, according to the South Florida *Sun-Sentinel*.

Putnam’s open support for the NRA led Hogg to call for a boycott of Publix, which said in the statement that it, “did not intend

Die-In *continued on next page*

Die-In *continued from previous page*

to put our associates and the customers they serve in the middle of a political debate.”

Hogg's calls for gun control have made him a target of conservatives in the months since the Parkland shooting. Just a week after a gunman wielding a semiautomatic rifle killed 17 people at Hogg's school, on-line media sites including YouTube swelled with false allegations that Hogg was secretly a "crisis actor" pretending to be a grieving student in local and national television news reports.

At the protest in a Coral Springs, Florida Publix, which Hogg attended, Hogg asked for a big round of applause for the supermarket chain for allowing the demonstrations, the Orlando Sentinel reported. At one point, he found himself facing counter-protester Bill Caracofe, who stuck his middle finger in Hogg's face, the AP reported. "There are millions and millions of people who don't worship everything that comes out of his mouth," Caracofe told the AP.

He was among about a dozen NRA supporters who held a counter-protest inside the store. He told the AP that students' anger toward Publix should instead be directed at the sheriff's office and school district for failing to keep the students safe.

Industry experts disagree on how Publix will be impacted by the protests and the suspension of political contributions.

Phil Lempert, who heads the website Supermarket Guru, told the Orlando Sentinel that Publix's recognition of the protesters' demands was unusual. "But we live in unusual times, and when we look at gun vio-



Photo: Whitney Shefte, Jorge Ribas/The Washington Post

Parkland student David Hogg: 'Blood is being spilled on the floors of American classrooms.'

lence, all the rules are being rewritten," he said. "I think the impact will affect their bottom line in the very short term due to the protests, but canceling all political contributions is a very smart move."

The move could also lead to a rush of support for Publix from loyal customers. That's what Chick-fil-A experienced when activists called for a boycott because of its CEO's opposition to same-sex marriage, said David Livingston of DJL Research, who spoke to the *Orlando Sentinel*. "Publix is a cult. Employees and customers are members," Livingston said. "Publix will probably have a positive reaction. Everyone knows they are a standup

company, especially after a hurricane."

Livingston was referencing the outpouring of gratitude customers showed Publix during Hurricane Irma last summer. The grocery chain set up hurricane landing pages on its websites, responded to customers on social media and even won the Internet over with hurricane-themed cakes, which read "Go Away Irma" and "Weather it Out," according to the Tampa Bay Business Journal.

Source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/business/wp/2018/05/25/publix-suspends-contributions-to-adam-putnam-amid-david-hoggs-anti-nra-protests/>

I Was Arrested for Protesting Against Canada's Pipeline – and the Battle is Far From Over

Submitted by John Conner
Shade Gap, PA

There is nothing logical about the Kinder Morgan pipeline – especially not the decision to gut environmental laws for it.

By Elizabeth May

Leader of the Green Party of Canada: May 30, 2018

The twists and turns in the saga of the Kinder Morgan pipeline just took a turn for the seriously weird today, but the path has never been clear.

The Alberta oil sands lie under thousands of square kilometers of boreal forest, wetland and muskeg. Bitumen is a viscous substance

found in small concentrations amid the rock and soil. It is either mined out from huge open pits or pumped out through *in situ* production, injecting hot water deep into the ground to loosen it. Either way, the resulting product is highly polluting, very expensive to produce and of low value. Bitumen is a solid. To be refined, bitumen must undergo costly upgrading. Bitumen, being both low value and expensive to produce, would never have been developed without government subsidies, with the lowest royalty rates in the world at 1% and massive federal subsidies of several billion dollars a year.

Before the 2008 global financial crisis, there were upgraders and refineries being planned. But when the recession hit, those investments, along with any new oil sands mines, retreated. When the economy recov-

ered, oil sands expansion came back. But not the upgraders and refineries. Instead, for the first time, industry began to promote pipelines. Keystone was the first pipeline proposed to run north-south to take Canadian bitumen to other countries for processing.

Since bitumen is a solid, there is nothing logical about proposing to move it through a pipeline. Stirring in fossil fuel condensate (essentially naphtha) creates a mixture sufficiently liquid to flow through a pipeline, without the expense of upgrading it to synthetic crude. The resulting mix of condensate (called diluent) and bitumen is called dilbit. And it is very challenging to clean up. The 2010 dilbit spill in Kalamazoo, Michigan was the first time regulators realized

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Photo: Dennis Owen/Reuters

Steel pipe to be used in the pipeline construction of Kinder Morgan Canada's Transmountain expansion project.

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dilbit behaved very differently than conventional crude. The diluent is highly toxic and volatile. Diluent separated from bitumen and bitumen sank to the river bottom.

By the 2011 election, pipelines had become a political issue. Former prime minister, Conservative Stephen Harper, an Albertan who stood four-square for fossil fuel development, opposed any pipelines heading to the British Columbia coastline. Harper's position was that Canada should not export bitumen to countries with lower environmental standards for refineries than Canada.

Justin Trudeau announced support for the Kinder Morgan pipeline. In doing so, he violated election promises to respect indigenous rights

Within months of that election, difficulties in gaining U.S. permits for Keystone led to an entirely new position. With Harper's support, Enbridge proposed a pipeline to Kitimat on the BC coast. In 2013, Texas-based Kinder Morgan asked to build a second pipeline more or less along the lines of the Transmountain pipeline purchased from a Canadian company from Alberta to Burnaby, not far from Vancouver BC. Kinder Morgan's pipeline expansion would be 100% dilbit for export. It would increase tanker traffic, loaded with dilbit, seven-fold.

To grease the gears for pipeline approval, Harper gutted environmental laws. The resulting environmental review of the Kinder Morgan expansion was the worst in Canadian history. No longer reviewed by our environmental assessment agency, the pipeline was before the National Energy Board. Intervenor rights, such as cross examination of industry witnesses, were eliminated. Many intervenors withdrew alleging the process was "rigged."

In the 2015 election campaign, Justin Trudeau pledged that no project could be approved based on such an inadequate process, Trudeau promised evidence-based decisions, respect for indigenous rights, the end to fossil fuel subsidies and an aggressive climate plan.

In 2016, the Liberals turned down the Enbridge pipeline due to the court ruling the previous government violated indigenous rights. Simultaneously, Trudeau announced support for the Kinder Morgan pipeline. In doing so, he violated election promises to respect indigenous rights, to base decisions on evidence, and to pursue real climate action. Having approved Kinder Morgan, he and his ministers became increasingly pro-pipeline.

Meanwhile 15 different court cases were working through the federal court of appeal. The new BC government raised its concerns

about the threat of a dilbit spill and about survival of the endangered southern resident killer whales.

In March, I was one of the several hundred people arrested protesting against the Kinder Morgan pipeline. As opposition built in British Columbia, Trudeau insisted the pipeline was in the national interest and must be built. On April 8, Kinder Morgan upped the ante and demanded the federal government remove the uncertainty created by all the court challenges to the project by May 31.


Astonishingly, the government announced on May 29 that the government of Canada will buy the existing Transmountain pipeline. Canada will pay \$4.5bn for those existing assets, valued by Kinder Morgan in 2007 at \$550m. As well, the Trudeau administration says it will get the controversial expansion pipeline built. Kinder Morgan had pegged those costs at \$7.4bn, and that is just the beginning of federal liabilities. With this, Trudeau's election promise to end fossil fuel subsidies is violated in spectacular fashion.

We await the court decisions. This battle is a long way from over.

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentsfree/2018/may/30/canada-kinder-morgan-pipeline-oil-approval-protests-battle-far-from-over>

An Indian State Banned Pesticides. Tourism and Wildlife Flourished. Will Others Follow?



Photo: Prashanth Vishwanathan/Bloomberg 

Organic farms are perched on hillsides on the outskirts of Gangtok, in the Indian state of Sikkim

**Submitted by John Conner
Shade Gap, PA**

By Annie Gowen 
The Washington Post: May 31, 2018

SORENG, India – Fifteen years ago, the tiny Indian state of Sikkim launched a radical experiment: Its leaders decided to phase out pesticides on every farm in the state, a move without precedent in India – and probably the world.

The change was especially significant for India, a country whose progress in agriculture was defined by the introduction of fertilizers and pesticides that rapidly boosted food production across the country, staving off famine and reducing the country's reliance on foreign aid.

But with the indiscriminate use of pesticides came a spike in cancer rates in industrial farming areas. Rivers became polluted and soil infertile. Sikkim's leaders say they were driven to go all-organic by those concerns and because pesticide residue – including from some chemicals banned in other countries – was tainting fish, vegetables and rice.

The cloud-wreathed Himalayan state is starting to see the dividends. Overall health

has increased in the state, leaders say, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has embraced Sikkim and organic farming throughout India, pouring about \$119 million to support organic farmers nationwide. India is betting that Sikkim can be the global model for other jurisdictions around the world that want to go all-organic.

In the years since the shift to organic, Sikkim has outlawed pesticides and chemical fertilizers, aided farmers in certifying about 190,000 acres of farmland as organic and on April 1 banned the import of many nonorganic vegetables from other states. The transition has not been always easy. Some farmers have complained that their crop yields have decreased and that they haven't gotten enough support from the government.

The small state's organic acres constitute just a sliver of India's 5.6 million acres of chemical-free farmland, which itself is a fraction of India's nearly 400 million acres of agricultural land. (The United States also has about 5 million acres of organic farmland.)

Demand for organic food is high in India and growing fast. Concern about pesticides and the desire for chemical-free food are fueling market growth that is rising 25 percent a year, more than the 16 percent globally,

according to a recent study by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India. The market for organic products is about \$600 million now and could top \$1 billion in the coming years, the study said.

"This is a big moment for India," said Radha Mohan Singh, the country's minister of agriculture and farmers' welfare.

In a brightly-colored tent in a mountain town one recent day, Sikkim's chief minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling, exhorted 300 or so constituents in the audience to embrace the eco-friendly lifestyle. "The approach Sikkim has started will be adopted by the whole world tomorrow," he said, in a speech that stretched five hours. "This is our vision!"

Chamling, 67, has been the principal driver of Sikkim's move to go all-organic since his state legislature set up the program in 2003. He's largely self-educated, writes poetry in his spare time and is India's longest-serving chief minister, in office since 1994.

"When we decided to go into organic farming in Sikkim, we faced so many challenges," he said. "Agriculturists or cultivators had no idea what organic farming is, so education was our first priority. Slowly, people began to understand and supported us."

But the executive order in March to

ban the import of inorganic produce from neighboring states threw the state into turmoil, with prices of cabbage tripling in the markets, traders in revolt and the opposition party marching in protest.

Chamling dismissed these most recent events as “teething problems” and said he was confident the chaos would sort itself out. The state government is introducing seasonal price caps on organic vegetables for consumers to keep prices affordable.


There was no blueprint for change when Chamling began his efforts to preserve Sikkim’s fragile ecosystem, a land of hundreds of species of birds, wild orchids and glacier-fed streams, in the shadow of Kanchenjunga, the world’s third-tallest peak. The state – population 610,000 – nestles among China, Bhutan and Nepal and was a separate kingdom until it merged with India in 1975.

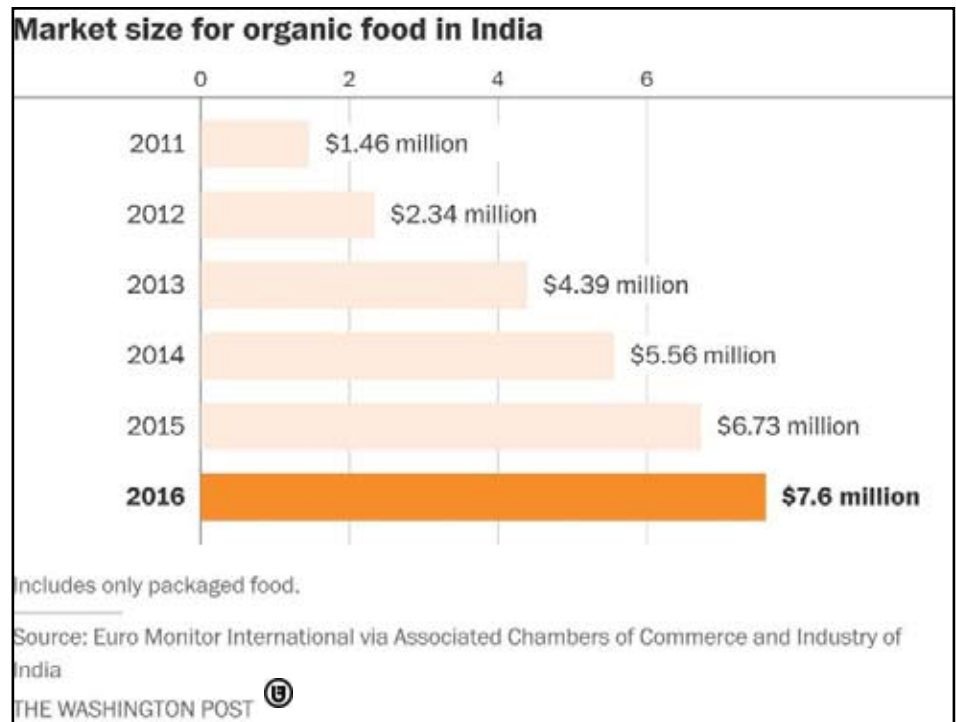
India has just begun formulating its policies for organic farming after its “Green Revolution,” during which the country adopted modern farming methods of high-yield seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

To encourage farmers to make the switch to organic, Sikkim tapered off its supply of chemical pesticides and fertilizers – making their use a criminal offense in 2014 – launched education programs and installed thousands of composting pits. By 2016, 190,000 acres of cultivable land had been certified organic. The state has also banned the use of plasticware. Roadside snack stalls use plates fashioned from leaves.

The transition, which took more than a decade, has not been easy. Some farmers say their income has decreased or have quit farming all together. One farmer, Pem Dorjee Sherpa, who grows potatoes and cardamom, said his income decreased dramatically since he switched to pesticide-free farming and he complained that farmers



Photo Annie Gowen/The Washington Post 
In the tiny Indian state of Sikkim, which banned disposable plastic plates in 2016, a spicy roadside snack of onion pakora comes on a disposable plate molded from leaves.



need better access to markets, organic manure and training. “The benefit of going organic has not reached us,” he said.

Sonam Taneja, the program manager for food safety and toxins at the Centre for Science and Environment, a research and advocacy organization in New Delhi, received similar feedback when she visited 16 farms across the state for a report that came out last year. “The information I was getting was that farmers are struggling, fighting with pests and yields are lower, and therefore they’re upset,” Taneja said. Productivity of most crops remained the same, except oranges, but the state will likely continue to have to rely on conventional produce from other states to feed itself, the study said.

In April, state officials opened two markets where farmers can sell their products directly to consumers and have added more than two dozen transport vehicles to help them move their goods to markets more easily.

Officials say that the switch to all-organic has health benefits for Sikkimese, who are getting more nutritious food, and has rejuvenated the health of its soil as well as wildlife and dwindling bee populations. The country’s yield of large cardamom – dependent upon cross-pollination from bees – has increased more than 23 percent since 2014.

The country’s move to all-organic also has been a boon to its tourist industry, with a growing market for eco-tours and farm vacations. *The Lonely Planet* travel guide named it the world’s top destination in 2014 and the number of foreign visitors has more than doubled since 2011, the state’s tourism department says. As a consequence, tourism is a growing force behind the state’s gross

domestic product, rising from 5 to nearly 8 percent by 2016-2017.

“It’s had a huge impact,” said Khorlo Bhutia, Sikkim’s secretary of horticulture and cash crop development. “It’s because of the good environment – chemical-free air, water, food – all these factors.”

Experts say that India’s organic product market has been driven by health-conscious, middle-class urbanites alarmed by the overuse of pesticides. But that’s changing. India is encouraging farmers to engage in a self-regulating organic certification process that is cheaper than outside consultants and will make organic food more accessible for the domestic market.


Choitresh Kumar Ganguly, an organic farmer from India who sits on the board of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, said Sikkim can be a model for other states, such as Kerala and Meghalaya, that are planning to go all-organic. Sikkim’s neighbor, the kingdom of Bhutan, aspires to do so by 2020.

“Sikkim is of course way ahead, and their political will is much stronger than any other state,” Ganguly said. “They’ve done a good job. They did not use so many pesticides to begin with so it was easier for them to move out than it will be for many other states. Still, there’s huge awareness and it’s growing slowly.”

Source: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/pesticides-helped-bring-modern-farming-to-india-one-tiny-state-is-leading-the-charge-to-ban-them/2018/05/29/95c7e594-3da6-11e8-955b-7d2e19b79966_story.html

The Secret Life and Value of Trees

Submitted by John Conner
Shade Gap, PA

By Timothy Egan 

The New York Times: June 8, 2018

While we were obsessing over the self-obsessive one, people who take a much longer view of things have been debating the question of whether trees talk to one another, experience pain, have sex and send out signals of distress about the imminent collapse of this little planet of ours.

Trees are sociable, it turns out, and even somewhat selfless, nurturing their drought-stricken or wounded arboreal siblings. They share nutrients. They suffer when a big arm is lopped during the growing season, or a crown is next to an all-night light. Some trees warn other trees of danger by releasing chemical drifts.

I found these relatively new discoveries not long after a giant fir came crashing down in my front yard during a freakish windstorm, nearly crushing my family and our century-old house. We were spared by six inches. But a question remained: What was the big guy trying to say?

Perhaps it has something to do with the 129 million trees that died from climate-change-aggravated drought and beetle infestation in California, or the five million acres of formerly sylvan green wiped out in Colorado by the same plague. Or maybe it's a president who dictated the largest single rollback of public land protection in our history, putting a national monument and its ancient flora at risk from predators with political connections.

Trees are fighting back, helped by others doing the talking for them. Sadly, we are past the point when an appeal to our better angels does any good. "It is worse than boorish, it is criminal to inflict an unnecessary injury on the tree that feeds or shadows us," wrote Henry David Thoreau. "Old trees are our parents, and our parents' parents, perchance." A lovely sentiment, but largely futile.

Instead, in this moment of mercenary politics, those of us who are out-proud tree-huggers have taken to citing the bottom line. And the winning argument here is simple: Trees are a vast source of wealth. A single national forest, the 1.7-million-acre Mount Baker-Snoqualmie east of Seattle, may be worth more in total value than the annual revenue of Amazon, the world's largest online retailer,



This is my favorite woods, which I pass every time I head out of our development. I stop and honor them, plus the ferns and moss which are alive this time of the year.

Photo: Iona

according to a recent study by the Wilderness Society.

The clean water, timber, cultural and recreation opportunities of this one forest deliver more economic value than all of the failing American coal industry. The entire outdoor recreation sector generates at least \$373 billion in gross domestic product, more than the gas, oil and mining industry, the government reported this year.

"I have mixed feelings about monetizing the geography of hope," said Peter Jackson, a writer and conservationist, using one of the best-known phrases of Wallace Stegner. A wilderness in the Cascade Mountains is named for his late father, Senator Henry M. Jackson, a giant of Congress from an era when support for purple mountain majesties was bipartisan.

So why is the Trump administration trying to prop up unprofitable coal plants, in a move that could cost consumers hundreds of millions of dollars, while an unsubsidized industry based on nature's glories has to fight

the administration? Plus, coal-burning, one of the biggest producers of Earth-warming carbon, is an indirect killer of those life-supporting and economy-enhancing forests.

The president is a fossil fool, but beyond that, he's never taken a view that extends to the world that Ivanka's grandchildren will inherit. His bias for dirty 19th-century energy is based on pleasing a coal industry that has gone from employing 883,000 people in the 1920s to barely 50,000 now. If the free-market philosophy were still the bedrock principle of governing Republicans, coal would be left to the creative destruction of capitalism.

Beyond the economic value, trees force us to measure time in epochs. In 1870, Victor Hugo planted a tree outside his home in exile on the island of Guernsey. His hope was that when the little sapling was a mighty oak, Europe would be unified. The European Union and Hugo's plant are still standing, though the tree may be in better shape than the E.U.

A spruce in Sweden, which sprouted sometime after the last ice age, is 9,500 years old, having survived all the upheavals of history and weather. But will it live through the current era?

In *The Hidden Life of Trees*, an international best seller by Peter Wohlleben, and *The Overstory*, a masterful new novel by Richard Powers, forests are main characters, crying to be heard.

In the summer, Powers writes, water traveling through a single chestnut, "disperses out of the million tiny mouths of the undersides of leaves, a hundred gallons a day evaporating from the tree's airy crown into the humid Iowa air."

Some scientists think it's wrong to anthropomorphize trees. They aren't sentient life-forms and can't really "talk" like that grumpy apple tree Dorothy encounters on the way to Oz. But surely they communicate, through a system that foresters compare to the neural networks of humans.

It's worth a listen.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/08/opinion/the-secret-life-and-value-of-trees.html>

On Cultivating a Sense of Wonder

By Tom Stapleford, Mercersburg, PA
Mercersburg Journal: May 9, 2018
Photos by Fran Staret, Spring in Philadelphia

Spring is a great time of year for me, as I suspect it is for many others. Here in the beautiful Cumberland Valley, the entire world seems to explode in this season, with the outdoors becoming a symphony of sights and sounds, colors and scents. I walk my dog around the ponds where I live and come upon a newly-hatched family of goslings with their vigilant goose parents ever-watchful close by. With the recent rains, our world seemed to become green in an instant, like an umbrella opening, with the trees now providing a canopy for the world. All of this, for me, provokes an awesome sense of wonder, as it's almost as if the world is enchanted.

Wonder is, I believe, an under-appreciated trait. In the techno-world in which we live, crowded with texting and Twitter, 24/7 news and talk shows, sports, music and all the other things – good though they may be – that we cram into our lives, paying attention is a skill we may have lost. We take everything for granted and in the midst of all this plenty, many complain of being bored. It's almost as if we can't take all the stimulation so we instinctively push it away, tuning out while we're tuned in to everything else. As adults, many of us lose our sense of wonder in life, as it gets buried under piles of bills, deadlines, responsibilities and housework.

Wonder, however, is a critical skill. According to Dictionary.com, wonder means "to admire, to be amazed, to be in awe, to marvel." It means something strange or surprising or a remarkable phenomenon. Interestingly, knowing how to "wonder" serves as the foundation of nearly all early-childhood and primary education. We systematically seek to instill a sense of wonder in children because we instinctively know that without it, children won't learn. Whether it's science (How does that water flow downhill? How do birds fly?); math (How far is it from our classroom to Miss X's classroom?); social science (Who lived here before we got here?); or the BIG one, English (What let-

ter is this? and this? and this? What sounds do they make?), we depend upon a child's natural sense of wonder to leverage the motivation and discipline required to begin the long journey of learning how to make it in the world.

Sadly however, by the time we arrive at adulthood, the sense of the magic by which the world works is often gone. It's our "right" as adults to forget all the foolishness of childhood and to be serious as grownups.

What a pity.

For Professor Alan Lightman of Brown University (whom I wish had been on campus when I was a student there), wonder is the lifeblood of our existence. An astrophysicist trained at CalTech who has taught at Harvard and MIT, Lightman spends most of his time contemplating "the big questions" which, he thinks, provoke the sense of wonder that is the real trait separating us from other life forms. According to him, coming to terms with our mortality is the greatest challenge of being alive, and without a sense of wonder, we cannot meet the challenge. In my view, wonder is such a fundamental need that we have, that in the Genesis account of creation, God himself demonstrated it by stopping each day to appreciate that the work he had done was "good." Should we expect no less of ourselves?

As Zoe Weil, President of the Institute for Humane Education, states beautifully, "While love may ground our impulses toward kindness; generosity, our impulses toward goodness; and integrity, our impulses toward responsibility and truthfulness; wonder grounds our impulses toward creativity, learning and the ability to make connections that lead to solutions."

In today's complex societies, where economies and production are globalized, where knowledge is communal and learning about anything is a click away, wonder may be the most important cognitive process to nurture. Potential global catastrophes, from climate change to rapid extinction of species, to resource depletion to pollution, loom amidst an ever-growing human population. Such a world demands inquiry, innovation

and communication across all boundaries, whether geographical, cultural, socioeconomic or religious.

While a college student, I became attracted to the writings of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. And while he was known for many more famous works, particularly *Being and Time*, my own favorite was a short essay he wrote during one of his many stays in his beloved vacation cottage in the mountains at Todtnauberg. In it, he writes of himself sitting at the table and simply looking around and recognizing – for the first time in a long time – the essential "being" of the everyday things that were close at hand around him: the hammer he had used to fix the roof and all the memories that went with it, and the blanket over the chair next to the fireplace, with the many times it had kept him warm. It was an epiphany for him – a revelation of all that he had taken for granted, and it brought him to tears.

Perhaps we live in a world that is too fast, too mobile and too connected. But my hope for you this spring is that you have the opportunity to stop – even briefly – and to wonder, at your life, your world and your place in it. As you sit in your car, recognize the many places it has taken you and the joy of the open road. If in your kitchen, listen as you put dishes away, to the stories they tell of the family meals, perhaps even long ago, that they helped you participate in. There are stories there to marvel at, to evoke a sense of wonder. And in those stories lies real life.

It's hard to imagine that truly wondering about the world won't eventually provoke thoughts of eternity. Our world and our universe almost inevitably lead us there. I pray that if that is where wonder leads you, it will be a good place for you to be. There is a saying – my terms – that to enter God's Kingdom requires the faith – the wonder – of a child.


Even if your own sense of wonder does not lead you there, my hope is that the joy of finding yourself in the here and now, and of really encountering, if only briefly, the wonder of all that is around you, will be yours this spring too. Then it will have been a good season for both of us.



Editorials

Here's How to Break the Impasse on Climate

Submitted by C.B., Blairs Mills, PA

By Trent Lott and John Breaux 
The New York Times: June 20, 2018

Former Senators Trent Lott and John Breaux have formed a group to press for a \$40-a-ton fee on carbon-dioxide emissions, with the revenues returned to the American people.

As former leaders of our parties in the United States Senate, we know what it takes to achieve a bipartisan breakthrough in Congress. For all the talk of discord in Washington, we see the possibility of finding common ground on a divisive issue. As surprising as it may sound, climate change offers an opportunity for both parties to come together and deliver a victory – and cash dividends – to the American people.

Climate change is one of the great challenges of our generation. The politics of the issue have been divisive for decades and a new approach is needed to address this urgent problem.

Both Democrats and Republicans can find that solution. America has always come together at moments of crisis or opportunity, from the shadows of economic depression and world war to the promise of the technology revolution and our rise to global energy dominance. America now must marshal its political will to lead on climate as well.

There is only one lever powerful enough to solve this problem at the required scale and speed. Congress should approve legislation to place a meaningful fee on carbon-dioxide emissions that ripples through all sectors of our economy, and return the revenues it generates to the American people in the form of cash dividends. We must set it high enough to encourage a turn to cleaner energy sources and accelerate our transition to a low-carbon future. If America leads on carbon pricing, the rest of the world will follow.

We can do this. We are proposing that Democratic and Republican leaders put their former differences aside and support a plan proposed last year by two former Republican secretaries of state, James Baker and George Shultz. The Baker-Shultz plan has since been endorsed by two former heads of the Federal Reserve, by Treasury secretaries from both parties and by leading corporations from nearly every sector in the American economy.

The plan is simple and elegant. It calls

for an initial fee of \$40 on every ton of carbon-dioxide emissions at the source, and raising it each year until we reach the necessary emissions reductions as businesses and consumers move to cleaner sources of energy. All revenue would then be disbursed to Americans as cash dividends. A family of four would receive approximately \$2,000 a year.

We would then export this approach and leadership on this issue to every corner of the global economy, while protecting the competitiveness of American firms.

If Exxon Mobil and the Nature Conservancy can back this common-sense solution, shouldn't Democrats and Republicans be able to do so as well? Indeed, the Baker-Shultz carbon dividends plan is based on a few grand bargains meant to offer everyone with a stake in the climate debate an important win.

For example, it would achieve far greater emissions reductions than all Obama-era climate regulations combined, which will appeal to Democrats and environmentalists. At the same time, this market-based solution would render carbon regulations unnecessary, which will appeal to Republicans and business interests. And according to the Treasury Department, 70 percent of Americans, including the most vulnerable, would come out ahead economically.

Economists have long agreed that putting a price on carbon dioxide emissions is the most cost-efficient way to tackle climate change. The ground rules make intuitive sense: The more businesses pollute, the more they pay, the less they pollute, the more they come out ahead. That goes for consumers and the cars they drive as well.

It is time to push this breakthrough carbon-dividends plan more squarely into the political arena by launching a national campaign around it. That is why we are proud to sign on as co-chairmen of Americans for Carbon Dividends, a new 501(C) 4 entity that launched on Tuesday. Over the coming months, this group will roll out a multifaceted campaign to promote this winning solution.



Photo: George Frey/Getty Images

A coal-fired power plant in Castle Dale, Utah. Former Senators Trent Lott and John Breaux have formed a group to press for a \$40-a-ton fee on carbon-dioxide emissions, with the revenues returned to the American people.

Americans already like the idea. A poll released Tuesday by Americans for Carbon Dividends shows that 81 percent of likely voters – including 71 percent of moderate Republicans and 58 percent of conservative Republicans – agree the government should take action to limit carbon emissions. And by a two-to-one margin, likely voters support taxing carbon emissions and rebating the money directly to the American people. Support for this concept among Republicans is similarly strong, with Republicans favoring the dividends plan by a 23-point margin.

There are various policy details that will need to be addressed. We recognize that. But this is the only realistic, workable path now open to us if we want to actually solve one of the most daunting challenges of our time. We must put a meaningful price on carbon in America, and then convince the rest of the world to follow our lead.

To do so, we must set our politics aside for the greater good. America has done it before, time after time. We believe the country will do so again.

Trent Lott is a former Republican senator from Mississippi and was the Republican Senate majority leader from 1996 to 2002. John Breaux is a former Democratic senator from Louisiana and is the chief deputy whip for the Senate Democrats. They lead the public policy practice at the law firm Squire Patton Boggs.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/20/opinion/climate-change-fee-carbon-dioxide.html>

Op-Ed: Climate Change, a 'Man-Made Problem with a Feminist Solution.'

By Zoe Tabary

Thomson Reuters Foundation: June 18, 2018

Women are most adversely affected by disasters and yet are rarely “put front and center” of efforts to protect the most vulnerable.

LONDON – Women must be at the heart of climate action if the world is to limit the deadly impact of disasters such as floods and storms, former Irish president and U.N. rights commissioner Mary Robinson* said on Monday.

Robinson, also a former U.N. climate envoy, said women were most adversely affected by disasters and yet are rarely “put front and center” of efforts to protect the most vulnerable.

“Climate change is a man-made problem and must have a feminist solution,” she said at a meeting of climate experts at London’s Marshall Institute for Philanthropy and Entrepreneurship.



“Feminism doesn’t mean excluding men, it’s about being more inclusive of women and – in this case – acknowledging the role they can play in tackling climate change.”

Research has shown that women’s vulnerabilities are exposed during the chaos of cyclones, earthquakes and floods, according to the British think-tank Overseas Development Institute.

In many developing countries, for example, women are involved in food production but are not allowed to manage the cash earned by selling their crops, said Robinson. The lack of access to financial resources can hamper their ability to cope with extreme weather, she told the Thomson Reuters

Foundation on the sidelines of the event.

“Women all over the world are ... on the frontlines of the fall-out from climate change and therefore on the forefront of climate action,” said Natalie Samarasinghe, executive director of the United Nations Association - UK.

“What we – the international community – need to do is talk to them, learn from them and support them in scaling up what they know works best in their communities,” she said at the meeting.

**Robinson served as Irish president from 1990-1997 before taking over as the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, and now leads a foundation devoted to climate justice.*

Reporting by Zoe Tabary @zoetabary, Editing by Claire Cozens. The Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, covers humanitarian news, women’s rights, trafficking, property rights, climate change and resilience. Visit <http://news.trust.org>.

Source: <http://news.trust.org/item/20180618184812-gcb1a/>



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Thank you.

Take This Empire and Shove It: Openly Hostile to Capitalism, Outspoken U.S. Army Lieutenant Resigns

Submitted by John Conner
Shade Gap, PA

“I would encourage all soldiers who have a conscience to lay down their arms and join me and so many others who are willing to stop serving the agents of imperialism and join us in a revolutionary movement.”

By Jon Queally
Common Dreams: June 19, 2018

Once his eyes were opened and he later became committed as a “revolutionary socialist,” it wasn’t easy for Spenser Rapone – a West Point graduate – to maintain conformity with the ideological strictures most valued by the U.S. Army, among the numerous military branches tasked with acting as the muscle of U.S. imperialism and projecting strength on behalf of American capital and corporate interests abroad.

But committed he was and – nearly a year after he was famously photographed with the words “Communism Will Win” under his graduation cap – the trained soldier, a second lieutenant with the Army’s 10th Mountain Division based at Fort Drum in New York State, tendered his resignation from the service on Monday after he was earlier reprimanded by higher-ups for “conduct unbecoming an officer.”

Outside the base on Monday, he offered one final military-style gesture [*photo of him giving them the finger*].

Rapone first made headlines in 2017 after he posted pictures of himself at his West Point graduation wearing a T-shirt of the Cuban Revolution’s famed Che Guevara under his uniform and the message “Communism Will Win” inside his cap.

According to an interview with the Associated Press, Rapone seemed at ease with his decision to leave the U.S. military and called on other enlisted soldiers who feel like he does, to do the same.

“I consider myself a revolutionary socialist,” the 26-year-old Rapone said. “I would encourage all soldiers who have a conscience to lay down their arms and join me and so many others who are willing to stop serving the agents of imperialism and join us in a revolutionary movement.”



Prior to being accepted to West Point, Rapone enlisted in the Army after high school and served in Afghanistan. It was during his deployments there, he says, that he began to doubt his earlier assumptions about the roll the U.S. military was actually playing in the world.

“We were bullies in one of the poorest countries on Earth,” Rapone told AP. “We have one of the most technologically-advanced militaries of all time and all we were doing is brutalizing and invading and terrorizing a population that had nothing to do with what the United States claimed was a threat.”

He explains he was further influenced by Marxist writings and reading more about other combat veterans who later spoke out about the evils of war and the influence of capitalism in generating them.

Now out of the military, Rapone did not seem upset and suggested gratitude for the support he’s received since speaking out about his beliefs.

“I knew there could be repercussions,” said Rapone, who AP reports is scheduled to speak at a socialism conference in Chicago next month. “Of course my military career is dead in the water. On the other hand, many people reached out and showed me support. There are a lot of veterans both active duty and not that feel like I do.”



Photos: Courtesy of Spenser Rapone via AP
(Top) Spenser Rapone raises his left fist while displaying a sign inside his hat that reads “Communism will win,” after graduating from the United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. (Bottom) Spenser Rapone displays a shirt bearing the image of socialist icon Che Guevara under his uniform at the United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.

Source: <https://www.commondreams.org/news/2018/06/19/take-empire-and-shove-it-openly-hostile-capitalism-outspoken-us-army-lieutenant>

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Why is Change so Hard?

By Tom Stapleford, Mercersburg, PA
Mercersburg Journal: June 13, 2018

One of my favorite places to visit is a faraway land called Someday. In fact, I like it so much that I often visit two, three or more times per day. And while Someday's name may make it sound really nice, like maybe Candyland, it's actually more akin to the solid waste facility here in Montgomery Township. That's because Someday is the place you go to drop off all those things you've promised yourself you're going to do, but never quite get to. Be it that diet you've always promised yourself (or your doctor!); the exercise program you've always been meaning to get into; the smoking habit you've been saying you'd quit for years; or any of the innumerable other things you've always promised yourself. Most of these promises end up at Someday, waiting – likely never to be fulfilled.

Why is Someday so hard to avoid? It's because Someday's best friend is Habits, and Habits can be our worst enemy.

Recent advances in cognitive neuroscience have provided insights into the power of Someday. At a basic level, we know that our brains are made up of billions of special cells called neurons. Neurons communicate with other neurons when we think or act, and even when we're asleep. They hold us together as personalities and direct our brain to "act out," physically, the behaviors we tell our bodies to perform through our minds. The interconnections among neurons for any given behavior or thought

can number in the tens of billions, and what neuroscience has now discovered is that the more often we repeat a behavior, the more "hardwired" those connections become.

In a sense, we literally become the behaviors and thoughts we have and perform, and as a result, over time those thoughts and behaviors can become ever more difficult to change.

The good news is that the hardwiring we create in our brains can be changed. The emerging knowledge in the field of neuroplasticity demonstrates that we can choose to change our thoughts and behaviors. We can literally become different persons. The challenge is that, over time, change becomes harder and harder because of that hardwiring we've engaged in over a long period of time.

Anyone who has tried to change their behaviors – including me – knows how hard long-term habits can be to change. There's no magic switch to flip that will just change our thoughts and behaviors, letting us go on our merry way a new person. Change is hard work – many behavior change specialists claim it's the most difficult thing a mature human being can attempt to do – as according to experts, there are specific reasons why.

First, we tend to focus on negative thinking and emotions, rather than the positive feelings we may get from changing our behavior. For many of us, the changes we want to make are just a bridge too far.

Similarly, we give up too soon. We take

too big a bite of the apple. We want to see change happen right away. We're easily frustrated because we throw in the towel too soon, failing to be patient with ourselves and to realize that, just as old – and sometimes bad – habits have taken time to settle in, so too will good ones. Setting realistic and – at least first – small goals, and recognizing that change won't come all at once or very quickly, are key.

Further, most experts agree, failure is a necessary step; that is, most change involves multiple attempts before we reach success. However, we need to move past the failure to see that success is a long-term project and to believe that we can achieve it.

The phrase, "You are what you think; you are what you do; you are what you believe" goes to the heart of change. We can literally change the person we are by changing our thinking and our behaviors; we can rewire our brains by changing the patterns of neuron connections that govern how we think and feel.

What a wonderful revelation – by working with and within ourselves, we truly can change. It is a rough road and very, very hard work, but over time, the change that we seek, and all the "things" we've deposited in the land of Someday, can come to us, through our own effort. Change your attitude and change your life. Change your behavior and change your mind. By so doing, Someday might just become today, and the "you" you've wanted can become the "you" in the mirror. It's all a matter of mind.

"Speak as your purpose, position and privilege demand."

– Grant Oliphant, President of the Heinz Endowments –

Last week, more than 700 social justice communications warriors descended upon Miami to gather for the annual ComNet conference. There, Heinz Endowments President Grant Oliphant delivered a rousing speech to the crowd. His point? If it's OK to talk about the apocalypse and unprecedented storms and flooding, then it's OK to talk about climate change. If it's OK to send thoughts and prayers to victims of gun violence, then it's OK to talk about reforming gun policy. And if it's OK to talk about respecting the flag, then it's OK to talk about racism. Now is precisely the wrong time to remain silent in the face of those who actively seek to silence us. "What does it mean to be nonpolitical in a moment when your values are being politicized by forces that oppose them?" he asked.

Source: <https://mailchi.mp/mediafundrs/announcing-an-exciting-partnership-with-the-hewlett-foundation>



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(See page 2 for address.)



Note from the Editor: Can you believe I just received a letter from Agence France-Press, PicRights.com telling me I owe them \$1,695 for a photo I used back in 2016! It's true; I did use it. I used to try getting permissions for everything until I worked with our Wire Editor, who reminded me that I can rely on the Fair Use Law (page 2) but I have taken many risks here using lots of material from well-financed and large sources so I think I'd better be more cautious from now on. Common Dreams has great stories and photos licensed under the Creative Commons rule that believes in and promotes sharing. The way I feel about Global Warming/Climate Change is that every single piece of news that is helpful to people, SHOULD be shared and widely disseminated. This is a great way to ask our readers to write their own stories and send us their own photos. For obvious reasons, I'm printing the Common Dreams email I received asking for contributions. I have sent them \$5 but they need a lot more than that. Usually I'm asking you to support ME but this time I'm asking you to support THEM. Thanks for understanding the delicate situation I'm in.

Dear Iona,

"Because there is no single moment — no coup, declaration of martial law, or suspension of the constitution — in which the regime obviously 'crosses the line' into dictatorship, nothing may set off society's alarm bells. Those who denounce government abuse may be dismissed as exaggerating or crying wolf. Democracy's erosion is, for many, almost imperceptible."

– *This is How Democracies Die*: Daniel Ziblatt, Steven Levitsky –

Alarm Bells:

- Thousands of Children Ripped from Their Parents Arms at Our Border.
- The Media "is the Enemy of the American People," according to Trump.
- Climate Crisis Science Purged from All Government Publications.
- Income Inequality Reaches Highest Level in Decades.
- Millions of American are Without Health Care.
- Over 60,000 Americans Died Last Year From Drug Overdoses.
- A Gag Rule of Planned Parenthood to Take Away Women's Basic Rights.
- Trump Vows to 'Pardon' Himself and His Cronies.
- Supreme Court Rules that Voter Registration Files can be Purged.
- Mueller Investigation a 'Witch Hunt,' Says Trump.
- Not Just the Supreme Court, Trump Packing Lower Courts with Far-Right, Lifetime Appointments.

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With deep gratitude,
Craig Brown, Co-founder, for the whole Common Dreams news team

IQ Scores are Falling and Have Been for Decades, Study Finds

Submitted by C.B., Blairs Mills, PA

By Rory Smith 
CNN: May 14, 2018

IQ scores have been steadily falling for the past few decades and environmental factors are to blame, a new study says.

The research suggests that genes aren't what's driving the decline in IQ scores, according to the study, published Monday.

Norwegian researchers analyzed the IQ

scores of Norwegian men born between 1962 and 1991 and found that scores increased by almost 3 percentage points each decade for those born between 1962 to 1975 – but then saw a steady decline among those born after 1975.

Similar studies in Denmark, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Finland and Estonia have demonstrated a similar downward trend in IQ scores, said Ole Rogeberg, a senior research fellow at the Ragnar Frisch Center for Economic Research in Norway

and co-author of the new study.

Fluoride exposure in utero linked to lower IQ in kids, study says.

"The causes in IQ increases over time and now the decline is due to environmental factors," said Rogeberg, who believes the change is not due to genetics.

Source: <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2018/06/05/1718793115>; the study is at <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/13/health/falling-iq-scores-study-intl/index.html>



Remember your dreams.

Letters and Emails from our Members



(Posted on Facebook on his 32nd birthday a year ago)

You know growing up in developing countries you see all kinds of things, some of them good others bad. You see people die fast and the money is slow because the government feeds us to ourselves with hate.

In our world today decency is now a thing of the past, our norms, values and cultures have become extinct and we have become a ridicule of our own very existence.

Believe it or not, there can't be any large-scale revolution until there's a personal revolution, on an individual level. It's got to happen inside first.

Remember the Earth is not ours, we all need to impact on someone's life today not withstanding anything.

Trust God, help the helpless, be bold, be brave and stay inspired.

HBD to me...

Ekwe Chiwundu Charles, Owerri, Nigeria

(after final proofing of the June issue)

Below are some missing links, shortened URLs and one misspelled photo credit. Otherwise, the June newsletter is typically spot-on and – at 21 pages – truly epic

Everything is copacetic!

Allen Hengst, Wire Editor, Washington, DC

#1 Hey there –

Of course it's okay to reprint the column... are you kidding? ["Wonder," page 19] I'm flattered . And yes, I'd love to be on your email list, and I've already checked out your website too!!

You may have sensed a resonance in the column with a field of thought referred to as "ecological theology." There is an emergent line of theological thinking that stresses our linkages to the creation and our responsibility for thoughtful stewardship of it. If you believe – as I do – that ultimately all that is is a part of the creation, by disrespecting nature we defile ourselves.

Hope that wasn't worded too strongly. But you've been a true crusader longer than I, and you know how true it is :-)

#2 Hi Iona!

Just wanted to let you know that I'm

around and am working on a couple of things... hope you and John are both well.

Loved your newsletter!!!

#3 *(after realizing I'd forgotten to publish "Wonder" earlier)*

Ha! No worries... I still loved the paper!! Hope you have a WONDER-FULL day!!!

Tom Stapleford, Mercersburg, PA (author of "Wonder" and "Change" articles)

Submitted by **Alanna Hartzok**
Scotland, PA

The link in the article from Dr. Gary Kohls (<https://www.globalresearch.ca/war-profiteers-vs-the-people-of-the-united-states-opening-statement/5636947>) is outstanding both by describing the enormous national and planetary crisis we are facing and an outline of a way forward which is:

Exit Strategy *(excerpt)*

"However critical the situation and circumstances in which you find yourself, despair of nothing; it is on the occasions in which everything is to be feared that it is necessary to fear nothing; it is when one is surrounded by all the dangers that it is not necessary to dread any; it is when one is without resources that it is necessary to count on all of them..."

~ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*~

It is always darkest just before the dawn.

On the precipice of the abyss, an evolutionary leap is required. In this spirit, we will crowdsource and propose Exit Strategies.

The modern day dominance hierarchy is a global centralizing system that consolidates power, wealth and resources into fewer and fewer hands, which makes the masses dependent upon it for the basic necessities of life for ever-increasing costs.

However, new decentralized, sustainable technologies empower people to become self-sufficient for basic necessities. We now have the technological capabilities to form self-sufficient micro-communities in synergy with nature.

Renewable energy, hydro/aquaponic farming, water purification, wireless communication, liquid democracy, cryptocurrencies, alternative systems of trade and new economic systems that decentralize

power are emerging.

These innovations must be urgently spread to reach a critical mass tipping point as quickly as possible.

Alas, the biggest obstacle to the more widespread use of these empowering technologies is the National Security State, which diverts resources and undermines and/or co-opts any innovation that does not centralize power (the Iron Law of Oligarchy Dominance Hierarchy).

Therefore, to get the debate started, this proposed Exit Strategy runs on two tracks:

1) Proliferating sustainable technologies in alignment with nature to become self-sufficient for basic necessities, while deploying decentralized systems that make the entrenched centralized power structure obsolete.

2) Either transcending or repealing the National Security Act, corresponding secrecy laws, the Federal Reserve Act, and corruptly implemented campaign finance, lobbying, gerrymandering and revolving door laws, while demanding a Return On Public Investment and protecting our natural resources, environment and overall health.

On these issues, we should demand firm commitments, clear strategic plans and immediate action from our political representatives. In the 2018 mid-term elections, people running for office should sign statements specifically describing their strategies for solving these issues.

To the extent that all of this is too much to ask, we are in for a serious crash and exponential collapse. If widespread strategic action is not implemented and acted upon, we should start seriously debating proposals and implementing new local governments that can act independently and peacefully defend local populations from illegitimate and tyrannical government activities that are designed to enrich Global Interests by exploiting hardworking Americans, poisoning our land and robbing our resources.

Make no mistake, on the precipice of the abyss, an evolutionary leap is required. . . .