

Northeast Ohio Sierra Club May & June 2013 Newsletter

Green Energy, or Five Steps Back for Ohio

By [Steve McPhee](#), Executive Committee Chair

On Earth Day of 2013 Ohio stands at a crossroads for our energy future. Since 2008 Ohio has had a law on the books to require our electric utilities to obtain a portion of their power from renewable sources. **Senate Bill 221** has been the subject of much debate over the years, but has also quietly revolutionized a new industry for Ohio.

Recently I toured the new wind turbine at the Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds in Berea. It was built by shipping the major parts of a salvaged unit all the way from Germany. Other parts came from outside of Ohio as well. It was started in 2010 with a great deal of financial help from grants and special incentives. **Had it been started today, over 70% of the parts could be obtained from Ohio manufacturers.** This is partly due to the demand for these turbines created by Senate Bill 221. Solar manufacturers and developers have also enjoyed similar growth in Ohio.

Today, the requirement that Ohio utilities obtain 12.5% of their power from renewable sources is under attack. **Many utilities and Coal, Oil, and Gas suppliers are drafting legislation and pressuring PUCO to repeal or change SB221.**

Our legislators in the Ohio house and Senate need to hear from us that we want the renewable energy requirement and energy efficiency mandates of SB221 to be preserved. **We must not let the short term interests from large corporations drown out our voices.** Easy profit from keeping outdated power plants which pollute our water, air, and land is not worth scuttling 5 years of progress. Ohioans know that we need to be at the front of the train of clean, renewable energy, not choking on the fumes and poisons of outdated coal and nuclear plants and looking for the jobs that left for places that value a new energy economy.

If you did not get the recent email from Rashay Layman on April 19 via the **Action Alert list**, you can sign up here: <http://ohiosierraclub.org/get-email-alerts/>

The emails include links which will forward messages **directly to your representatives** and to the committees or other officials involved.

It's Spring; be sure to "Explore, enjoy, and protect the planet."

VegFest Helpers Needed!

The Urban Agriculture Committee needs help! We're tabling at the Cleveland Vegan Society's VegFest on Saturday, June 1, and we're short-handed. We particularly need help during the morning and early afternoon hours, though we'd love company throughout the day. VegFest runs from 9:30 AM to 7:30 PM at the Cleveland State University Student Center. More info is at clevelandvegansociety.org

If you've been waiting for your opportunity to get active with the Sierra Club, here it is! Call Randy Moyer at 216-235-0080 if you can help out.

Keystone XL Opponents Send a Million Plus Comments to the State Department

By [Randy Cunningham](#)

I doubt if the US State Department has ever received more than a million comments on any of its actions or decisions in its 200 year plus history. Now they have.

According to the final count on the 350.org counter, opponents sent in **1,038,853 comments** by the end of April 22nd when the comment period closed. The local Sierra Club's Coal and Energy Committee played its own modest role in this accomplishment by setting up laptops at the EarthFest in Berea on Sunday the 21st. To my surprise, they were about the most popular sites at our table, with a steady stream of people lined up to become part of a historic action.

I want to congratulate all the members of the committee for their participation in the final push that put us over the top.

An Oasis in the Desert

By [Andi Whitaker](#), Urban Agriculture Committee

Desertification is not a problem typically associated with the Greater Cleveland area. Water? We have plenty of that. Vegetation? It's just waiting to take over. Fresh food? Now there's the problem. The city of Cleveland has several areas that can be classified as [food deserts](#); places where people have little or no access to stores selling fresh produce. As a result, residents of these areas, dependent upon fast food and convenience store foods, have high rates of obesity and its associated health problems.

Cleveland's Kinsman neighborhood is a prime example of a food desert. Approximately 50% of Kinsman residents don't own cars and have no supermarket within a mile of their homes. In recent years, however, urban farms and gardens have sprung up throughout Cleveland to address the lack of fresh produce. One such enterprise is the Rid-All Green Partnership, which

is part of Cleveland's [Urban Agriculture Innovation Zone](#), a 26-acre area of mostly vacant land and tax-delinquent properties off of Kinsman Avenue.

In March, the NEOSC Urban Ag Committee attended a volunteer orientation session at the Rid-All farm. We were introduced to the partnership's agricultural practices (vermiculture, aquafarming, composting, etc.) as well as their mission. In a nutshell, Rid-All brings healthy, local food to area institutions and citizens while training others to do the same work. Two of the partnership's founders, Damien Forshe and Keymah Durden, gave our committee a tour of the farm's greenhouses, hoop houses, ponds, composting areas, developing nature trail, and teepee. Yes, a teepee!

The farm is truly an idyllic oasis. A happy and intended byproduct of Rid-All's success can be seen in a small park adjacent to the farm. Damien told us that before Rid-All moved in, the park was unused. Families didn't feel safe on the playground. On the day of our visit, there were over half a dozen children playing on the basketball court.

"Impressed" doesn't begin to describe our reaction to the Rid-All Partnership. Their vision is idealistic and their bar is high. And they are pulling it off seamlessly.

For more information on Rid-All Green Partnership and how you can get involved, please visit greennghetto.org.

Another Dog and Pony Show

By [Randy Cunningham](#), Chair – Coal and Energy Committee of NEO Sierra Club.

On Tuesday night, April 9th, there was a fairly typical dog and pony show held at the Slovenian National Home in Cleveland's St. Clair Superior neighborhood, where area residents were introduced to the proposed **VADXX recycling plant** that will take plastics (and maybe tires) and turn them into oil. It is a project that no one else wants except Cleveland – whose specialty is the desperation school of economic development. Residents of such neighborhoods may be poor but they are not stupid, and they know the game. From the drug trade to subprime mortgages, to shoot'em up policing, to dirty industry... their role is to accept what no one else will accept, and tolerate what no one else will tolerate.

I was active in last year's battle to prevent the City of Cleveland from dropping a **garbage to energy incinerator plant** into the Cleveland neighborhood surrounding Ridge Road, which is two blocks from where I live. At this hearing I felt like I was a character in the movie Groundhog Day. Here again were the usual representatives of regulatory agencies telling us there was nothing to worry about – which usually means that you have plenty to worry about. Here again were company representatives making presentations full of the usual buzz words that are in fact magical incantations designed to silence those who should be vocal. When you are in a

presentation dominated by such phrases as “show case,” “world class,” “innovative,” “growth potential,” “entrepreneurial,” and that old killer “jobs, jobs, jobs,” run for the doors because your brain and sanity are under assault.

The audience at this show did not just listen. They spoke their minds. **Bob Greenbaum** of the Sierra Club questioned the company on how they could ensure the quality of the feed stock going into the process. **Larry Cornett**, a retired engineer who has worked on air quality issues, critiqued the permit application. He also questioned the process of scaling up from a demonstration project in Akron, into a full blown facility in Cleveland. The strongest questions came from area residents who wanted to know why this plant was being placed in their neighborhood. They wanted to know why the company said that only plastics would be burned in the process, when the permit said the **tires and medical wastes** could also be used.

Councilman Jeff Johnson wanted to know **why an industrial plant was going into a neighborhood zoned residential**. A recurring theme in the questions and the discussion during the night was similar to the concerns expressed in the Ridge Road controversy last year. That theme was that **Cleveland is already out of compliance with the Clean Air Act**. How will a plant, even with a minor emission rating, contribute to the collective air quality problems of Cleveland and this neighborhood? They also questioned what was more valuable – the 17 jobs VADXX has promised to bring with the plant, or the health and well-being of the community.

Little was settled at this public event, but what was evident was that a community educated by hard experience is aware of its rights and will not be easily persuaded or run over by those promising them pie in the sky. It was an example of democracy in action that you do not find in civics books. We will keep you up on how this issue unfolds.

BEDBUGS: Please don't spray!

By [Laurel Hopwood](#), Human Health & Environment Chair

Bedbugs. The odds are that these unwelcome guests will visit you during your lifetime. I am reminded of the Hitchcock movie called "The Birds." Once they appear, they don't want to leave.

Bedbugs are smarter than us. Their genes detoxify pesticides and stop them from penetrating. The bugs tuck themselves away, surviving without a meal for more than a year. As you read this article, they are hitchhiking across the country. They stow away in suitcases, hide out in crevasses in hotel rooms and student dorms. One bedbug can lay 500 eggs, which means a single stowaway can cause lots of trouble. They can catch rides with migrating birds and bats to all sorts of places, including schools, theaters and stores. According to a recent article in the Columbus Dispatch, the poultry industry has also become a mass-transit system for the insect.

Please save yourself a trip to the hardware store to buy insecticides. Pesticide applicators tell me that despite frequent pesticide applications, bedbugs don't get annihilated.

There is good news. There is a way to get rid of these unwanted guests. When the infested building is heated to 113 degrees F for 90 minutes, they will die. At 118 degrees, it takes only 20 minutes. Please, remove your beloved four-leggeds before you try this approach.

May & June Events:

➔ Black River Cleanup

The first annual Black River Cleanup is happening this Saturday, May 5 from 10 to 3 embarking from the Black River Warf Boat Launch. There will be pictures taken, so wear your favorite Sierra Club T-Shirt, button, hat, or whatever. Complete details are available from the Loraine County Kayakers web site: brcu2013.webs.com

➔ RiverSweep

Ohio's largest done-in-a-day cleanup effort. This year the event will be held on Saturday, May 11th from 9 am until noon- volunteers receive gloves and bags. Multiple locations. First 1,000 volunteers to [sign up](#) will receive a commemorative Riversweep t-shirt. For more information, visit ohiocanal.org

➔ May Pub Night on the East Side

We want to see more of our East Side members, so we're holding the next Pub Night at [Cedar Green Wine & Cheese](#), located at [2179 South Green Rd. University Heights, OH 44121](#). Pub Night will still be on the fourth Wednesday, May 22nd, at 7 PM. Join us to find out what the group is up to and let us know what you're interested in! Free and open to the public, refreshments will be served. RSVP not required, but you can join the [event on facebook](#).

➔ Cleveland VegFest

The Cleveland Vegan Society presents VegFest 2013 on Saturday, June 1, from 9:30 AM until 7:30 PM. VegFest is a free event and will be held at the Cleveland State University Student Center. Featuring many top national speakers and authors in their fields on issues of health, environmental sustainability, social justice, and animal rights, the Cleveland VegFest will be an opportunity to explore how choosing a whole, plant-based, vegan meal, directly impacts conditions in each of these critical areas. For more info, visit: clevelandvegansociety.org

➔ Parade the Circle and Circle Village

Find yourself in the Circle at Cleveland's signature summer event starting at 11 AM on June 8th. This fabulous, fun, FREE celebration features the Parade, presented by The Cleveland Museum of Art, and Circle Village, presented by University Circle Inc.

The Parade, which begins at Noon, incorporates the drama and artistry of colorful floats, puppets, costumes, dancers, and musicians. For more information about the Parade, please visit ClevelandArt.org. Circle Village invites visitors onto Wade Oval for an afternoon of activities, live music, and delectable food.