

CLEAN AIR COUNCIL

Jessica, thank you for being a Council donor.

Your financial support ensures the Council can fight climate change, sue for cleaner air and water, and advocate for environmental justice. We want to highlight some ways we use your contribution.



A quarterly collection of news featuring the Council's advocacy, outreach and legal work.

EPA proposals on methane need to be strengthened before they're adopted

by Joseph Otis Minott, WHYY

The last seven years were the hottest ever recorded on the planet, and a brutally hot summer is on tap for the Philadelphia region again. We know that dangerous heat is coming because of climate change. We have already baked in 1.2 degrees Celsius of warming from pre-industrial levels even if all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions worldwide magically stopped tomorrow.

Alarmingly, GHG emissions – both globally and in Pennsylvania – are on the rise again, especially methane leaks from the oil and gas industry. **Millions of tons of methane are leaked into the atmosphere every year from oil and gas infrastructure and operations.** The oil and gas industry emits about 16 million metric tons annually in the US with 1.1 million metric tons in Pennsylvania alone. Methane is an extremely potent greenhouse gas – up to 87 times more powerful than carbon dioxide at trapping heat when it's released into the atmosphere.

Even though the conservative majority on the U.S. Supreme Court issued a radical decision on June 30th that limits the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) authority to determine the "best system of emission reduction" under section 111 of the Clean Air Act, the agency still has plenty of authority and discretion to tackle methane pollution.

The EPA has a chance right now to substantially lower methane emissions through two recently proposed rules.

[Read the full Opinion piece.](#)



Bucks Quarry Monthly Conditional Use Zoning Hearings Continue

In Bucks County, H&K Group has proposed to develop a massive quarry right in the headwaters of the Tohickon Creek watershed. This quarry would carve away forests and could forever alter the surrounding streams and wetlands as well as threaten the nearby community's drinking water supplies.

In the summer of 2020, residents committed to protecting air and water quality and the undisturbed, natural areas of their community reached out to the Council for help. Over the last two years, Council's attorneys have been active in fighting for the environmental rights of nearby residents at each hearing.

[The Council's attorneys have cross-examined H&K Group](#) and their witnesses on a variety of topics including air pollution, threats to ground and surface waters, and how the quarry's operation could limit the public's use and enjoyment of the nearby Upper Bucks Rail Trail. Overall, the Council's attorneys have highlighted numerous environmental and public health concerns to demonstrate why Springfield Township should reject H&K Group's application.

This unwanted and harmful development project would threaten:

- Drinking water supplies in this area where residents depend on private wells
- Air pollution
- The destruction of wetlands, forests and wildlife habitats
- Pollution and disruption of downstream water bodies including Lake Nockamixon, Upper Tohickon Creek, Lower Tohickon Creek, and [Quakertown Swamp](#), which is listed as a "wetland of distinction" by the Society of Wetland Scientists
- Neighbors and recreational users of the neighboring Upper Bucks Rail Trail from dangerous blasting of the quarry
- Property values for residents living in the area
- Quality of life

The true scale of this quarry's environmental destruction remains unknown because H&K Group has failed to fully assess the quarry's environmental impacts, as required by the Township's zoning regulations.

The quarry proposal can only go forward if approved by the Springfield Township Board of Supervisors. Monthly conditional use zoning hearings for the proposal began in September 2020 with a powerful showing of public opposition thanks to the combined advocacy efforts of the Council and residents



The site of the proposed quarry, in the headwaters of Tohickon

and have continued every month since then. At one of the recent hearings, **Council attorneys put on expert testimony from a highly respected wetland ecologist, Dr. James Schmid, who spoke about H&K Group's failure to properly document wetlands on and around the site of the proposed quarry** and the dangers the quarry could pose to those wetlands. H&K Group has admitted that their water study did not account for wetlands, so Dr. Schmid's testimony stands largely unrefuted.

At the next hearing, Council attorneys will put on witnesses to talk about impacts the quarry could have on the Upper Bucks Rail Trail and a neighboring nonprofit that serves veterans.

Creek in Springfield Township (Bucks County).

Community opposition remains strong and the Council has partnered with local and regional environmental organizations. However, we need additional help to fund the Council's work to protect this threatened community and watershed. [Donate to help.](#)

Council In the News

[With state climate action in the spotlight, Gov. Wolf's carbon rule takes effect](#)

Philly Inquirer, July 3

Council Attorney Robert Routh said the Supreme Court decision "does not have any effect on the RGGI regulation, Pennsylvania DEP's authority, Pennsylvania law whatsoever and should not bear on the pending request still before the Commonwealth Court to enjoin the RGGI regulation." But Routh said it does make it more important for states and communities with the authority to limit the causes and effects of climate change to do so. "We need climate leadership on the state level and RGGI can absolutely deliver that in Pennsylvania."

['Major step backward': Pa. groups react to Supreme Court decision limiting EPA's ability to tackle greenhouse gas emissions](#)

Philly Inquirer, July 1

"It's an outrageous position," said Joseph Minott, executive director of the Philadelphia-based Clean Air Council.



Rosan and Russell Zerbo, a Clean Air Council advocate, are helping lead a team of academics and advocates that recently won a \$100,000 planning grant from the



From page left: Clean Air Council advocate Russell Zerbo and Temple University associate professor Christina Rosan display a phone displaying Philly-area air pollution data. A PurpleAir monitor collects air pollution data.

“

We want to help communities be able to make demands from the City ... to get more integrated policies.”

— CHRISTINA ROSAN, associate professor at Temple University

Tion. They believe that understanding air quality should become part of a school's

longtime residents. Rosan wants to flip the conversation about “resilience” and climate change over.

“We provide residents with the tools to understand existing problems and start to think strategically with the City in terms of a Neighborhood Bill of Rights: every neighborhood needs to have clean air, affordable housing, good schools, trees, parks, safety from gun violence, access to healthy food. This is what makes sustainable communities,” Rosan says.

Connecting greening and climate investments with community needs is central to their efforts. Rather than dismissing trees as unimportant, residents might consider that an investment in trees could bring jobs, and that greening their streets, or a park that kids could safely play in, could dramatically improve the environmental health for all residents. Longer term investments in green infrastructure could bring relief now to stressed communities.

Rosan and Zerbo's work aligns with other city initiatives. The Environmental Justice Advisory Commission is charged with creating a whole-government approach to

AIR RIIN



Project encourages community members to work together to monitor air quality and use data to seek environmental justice

story by MARILYN ANTHONY • photography by CHRIS BAKER EVENS

AIR IS SOMETHING we share. But clean air, it turns out, is not equally available to all.

Using technology with an alternative cartoonish name, the PurpleAir monitor, Christina Rosan thinks making disparities in air quality "in your face" will lead to more equitable, cleaner air everywhere, she believes, could promote climate resiliency, restorative social justice and more livable neighborhoods across Philadelphia.

Rosan, an associate professor at Temple

University in the Department of Geography and Urban Studies, hopes to use community data and stories to inform local infrastructure improvements to confront past inequity and future neighborhood challenges.

"We're trying to address the fact that many communities in Philadelphia have overarching vulnerabilities that are going to get worse with climate change," Rosan says. "We want to help communities be able to make demands from the City, framed in climate language, to get more integrated policies that help them deal with current and coming problems."

PROJECT ENCOURAGES COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO WORK TOGETHER

National Science Foundation's Smart and Connected Communities program to tackle urgent environmental injustice problems. Their project, PREACT (Planning for Resilience and Equity through Accessible Community Technology), fosters community engagement as a basis for equitable urban sustainability.

Enter PurpleAir monitors. Each about the size of a football and with a \$250 price tag, the monitors measure a regulated pollutant, particulate matter up to 2.5 micrometers. Zerbo explains that particulate matter is the only thing people complain about, such as when smoke or dust comes onto your property. But you can't make air quality complaints through air.

Rosan and Zerbo want PurpleAir monitors on libraries and schools, where the technology can be paired with edu-

PROJECT ENCOURAGES COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO WORK TOGETHER

with hard data to inform conversations with City officials.

As the air monitoring network expands, residents viewing the monitoring map could see the disparities. Why is the air cleaner one zip code away? What is causing our poor air quality? Is it an illegal dump or something else? Neighborhoods could then request sophisticated grants from the City and be part of any interventions.

"We're trying to connect immediate needs for good schools, affordable housing, safe parks, and dealing with gun violence, while working with communities to help them see that the investments could solve some of those problems," Rosan explains.

Too often environmental improvements in neighborhoods are precursors to gentrification and "sustainability" code for upscale housing and amenities that displace

PROJECT ENCOURAGES COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO WORK TOGETHER

inequity to be about restorative justice — engaging residents to direct efforts to improve their neighborhoods in ways that make it possible for them to stay. Understanding what causes poor air quality can provide the intersection for the City's infrastructure investments and neighborhood permanence.

For too long, there has been a disconnect. The City advocates for a cleaner, safer environment while many neighborhoods suffer under terrible living conditions. It's not that residents don't care about climate change, but they face more dire needs. It's hard to get excited about trees when your block is awash in illegal dumping.

Distressed neighborhoods have been playing defense, fighting off development or further environmental degradation. Rosan and Zerbo think air quality data can help communities change their game to offense.

To see where regional sensors are located and learn more about the monitors, visit map.purpleair.com

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[**AIR BUD. Project encourages community members to work together to monitor air quality and use data to seek environmental justice**](#)

Grid Magazine, June 2022, Page 14

Russell Zerbo, Council Advocate, and Temple Associate Professor, Christina Rosan, are helping lead a team of academics and advocates that recently won a \$150,000 planning grant from the National Science Foundation's Smart and Connected Communities program to tackles urgent environmental injustice problems.

[**Could Delco get a major LNG export terminal? How Biden's plans to increase LNG exports could clash with its environmental justice goals in Chester**](#)

WHYY, June 14

Clean Air Council strongly opposes Penn America LNG proposal, and if it goes forward, the LNG facility would be one of the largest new sources of air pollution in Southeast Pennsylvania.

"It's like putting a power plant in downtown Chester," Bomstein said. "Hundreds of tonnes of particulate matter in such a densely populated area would have huge health consequences."

[**Letter to the editor: Don't ignore progress in pollution control**](#)

Tribune Review, June 12

It's unfortunate that the gas industry is waiting until it is absolutely required to make widely available technology upgrades that would actually save gas. State and local governments should not ignore current progress in pollution control technologies.

[**Proposed EPA settlement could further reduce 'Cancer Alley' toxic emissions**](#)

New Orleans Advocate, June 6

A proposed settlement of lawsuits against the EPA (that Clean Air Council is part of) could further reduce toxic emissions at Denka Performance Elastomers and other plants in the area of the state that environmentalists have dubbed "Cancer Alley."

[**Air quality concerns linger after Port Richmond junkyard fire**](#)

WHYY, June 3

Some residents of Philadelphia's Port Richmond neighborhood experienced what city officials called an "air quality emergency" in early June due to smoke from a junkyard fire.

[**Can Container Ships And Kayaks Co-Exist In Philly's Commercial Waterways?**](#)

Patch Pottstown, June 6

The Council joined other environmental groups in submitting a petition to the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC), arguing that the Commission is legally obligated under the Clean Water Act to recognize the 27-mile stretch between Tacony-Palmyra and Commodore Barry Bridges as recreational waters.

Thank you for your commitment to protecting the environment! Please reach out with any questions regarding your financial support, our programs or any other questions or concerns. [Click here for the latest Fresh Air Newsletter.](#)

Have a good summer,

Jessica Bellwoar (She/her)

Development Officer

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135 S. 19th Street Suite 300
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103
(215) 567-4004

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