



# Clean Water Action News

July/August 2002

Pennsylvania Newsletter

## *Next Steps to Protect our Kids*

Now that the celebration is over, it's time to make sure that school districts do the right thing in implementing the new Pesticide Notification Act.

By January 1, 2003, all public school districts will be required to adopt an Integrated Pest Management plan and a system to notify parents before pesticides are used. Many school districts are making decisions about what they're going to do right now.

Clean Water Action is working with parents, teachers and school boards to help districts adopt good IPM plans that minimize pesticide use. We're also working to convince districts to make the right choice on notification.

Under the Act, school districts can either notify all parents using normal school communications, or they can set up a registry of parents who request notification. If schools decide to set up a registry, they must notify all parents of their right to request notification.

We're working to convince as many districts as possible to notify all parents (universal notification). We've sent a mailing to all school districts encouraging them to select universal notification, explaining that it's simpler and less expensive (since the notice can be sent home with children and there's no list to set up and maintain). We're also surveying all 501 school districts to find out what they're planning.



**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Write to your district Superintendent and encourage him or her to select universal notification for pesticide applications. Explain that universal notification is easier, cheaper and works better...and is more protective of children's health. Tell him or her that if they do not select universal notification, you want to be included on their notification list.

A sample letter you can use follows. Be sure to write...and get others to write too. Making sure school districts do the right thing is the next step in protecting our children's health.

### **SAMPLE LETTER**

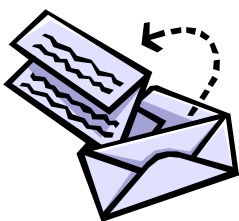
*Dear Superintendent,*

*I am writing to request that our school district agree to notify all parents of children in a school that is scheduled to be treated with pesticides.*

*I know that under the new Pesticide Notification Act, public schools are required to notify parents when children could be exposed to pesticides in their school.*

*If you choose not to notify all parents, please consider this my request for notification. Thank you.*

*(Include your NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE # and SCHOOLS YOUR CHILDREN ATTEND. Ask for a reply, and let us know what your district tells you.)*



## NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

### *Philadelphia Area:*

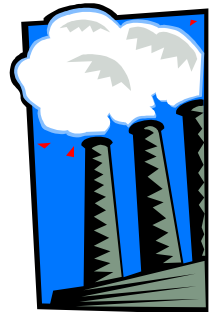
**Stopping Sunoco Pollution:** Earlier this summer, Clean Water Fund (CWF) and the Community/Labor Refinery Tracking Committee fought plans to increase production at the Sunoco refinery because the permit would have allowed increased pollution too. As a result of our pressure, the city agreed to allow the expansion but is requiring Sunoco to reduce its pollution levels. Our new Bucket Brigade collected its first sample near the Sunoco refinery, detecting ethanol, acetone, isopropyl alcohol, MTBE and toluene. Lastly, the siren system around the refinery continues to move forward, with installation of sirens anticipated this fall. If you live near the Sunoco refinery and would like to get involved, contact Christine at (215) 640-8800.

**Recycling:** Over the past few months, CWF has been working to strengthen the Recycling Alliance of Philadelphia, recruiting new members and leaders in the fight for weekly curbside recycling pickup in the city. The Alliance is lobbying the Mayor to replace the recently resigned Streets Commissioner with another person who supports a strong recycling program. If you would like to stay up to date on recycling issues in Philadelphia, please join the Recycling Alliance list serve by sending an email to [cknapp-subscribe@topica.com](mailto:cknapp-subscribe@topica.com).



### *Pittsburgh Area:*

**What's In Our Air?** CWF has been working with residents living near Neville Island to take air pollution samples when they smell chemical odors in their neighborhoods. Results from 2001 found 51 toxic chemicals, including 8 that can cause cancer. Several were detected at levels that exceed both EPA and state standards in Texas and Louisiana (PA does not have ambient air standards for most toxic chemicals).



Sampling this summer found high readings of two carcinogens, benzene and acrylonitrile. Benzene levels were twice the Louisiana standard, and acrylonitrile was almost **50 times** the Louisiana standard! While we know benzene is emitted by several plants on the Island, no one has a permit to release acrylonitrile. CWF and the Neville Island Good Neighbor Committee are demanding that the County Health Department and DEP take samples on Neville Island to find the source of these dangerous chemicals. If you live near Neville Island and would like to join our Bucket Brigade, please contact Myron at the Pittsburgh office.

**Support Clean Air for Allegheny County:** CWA continues to press Allegheny County Council to pass our air pollution bill, the Environmental Fairness and Pollution Prevention Act. This innovative bill would stop companies with current violations from getting permits to increase air pollution... force the County Health Department to consider cumulative impact in issuing air pollution permits, so no community has too high a concentration of pollution sources...and require companies to explore pollution prevention options when they are building new plants or expanding existing ones.

Currently over 20 environmental, health, labor, and community groups have endorsed our bill, plus 6 municipal governments including the City of Pittsburgh. With over 70,000 people with asthma in Allegheny County, including 20,000 kids, we need to pass this bill! **Please write your County Councilperson and Jim Roddey, Allegheny County Executive,** and tell them to support the

## BEFORE YOU VOTE ON NOVEMBER 5...



The next issue of CWA News will contain our endorsements for this fall's election. In the meantime, we're repeating the vote scores for our Congresspeople so you can make informed decisions about who to vote for this fall.

The voting record was compiled by the League of Conservation Voters. Its National Environmental Scorecard evaluates how Senators and Representatives voted on key issues in 2001.

Legislators were ranked on a number of issues, including oil and gas drilling, endangered species, farm conservation funding, mining, campaign finance reform, arsenic in drinking water and fuel economy standards for automobiles.

Scores for Congresspeople running for re-election are listed below. If you see them on the campaign trail this fall, ask them about their voting record. And **be sure to remember their record on election day!!**

Representative	% Right
Fattah	93%
Hoeffel	93%
Brady	64%
Greenwood	64%
Kanjorski	64%
Doyle	57%
Holden	57%
Weldon	50%
English	36%
Murtha	36%
Platts	21%
Hart	14%
Sherwood	14%
Shuster	8%
Toomey	7%
Gekas	0%
Peterson	0%
Pitts	0%

Help elect pro-environment candidates this fall! Check out your Representative's record, then hold him or her accountable November 5!

### **PITTSBURGH NEWS** continued:

Environmental Fairness and Pollution Prevention Act. Write to the following (at County Courthouse, 436 Grant Street, Pittsburgh PA 15219)

- ◆ James Roddey, County Executive, Ste 101
- ◆ Council Rep. \_\_\_\_\_, Suite 119

### *Allentown Area:*

The fight continues to protect watershed lands in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area. 6 years ago, when the water utility was sold, 25,000 acres of watershed lands were sold to a private company. Previous water providers acquired these properties to protect drinking water sources. Now this once protected land is being logged or sold for development.

This spring, CWA canvassers generated 1,000

letters to state and county elected officials, urging them to protect these lands. CWA staff also attended a press event with local activists and elected officials. CWA and its allies called on the PUC to forbid land development or sale without provisions for watershed protection, and urged the state or counties to buy or take the lands by eminent domain.

CWA has been asked by a committee of the Borough of Pen Argyl to help conduct a community health survey to determine whether there are excessive diseases or birth defects in the area. The effort grew out of a request to expand a nearby landfill. CWA is working with Borough officials and the University of Maryland School of Nursing's Center for Environmental Health on this study. The Center for Environmental Health also was involved in CWA's work in the Borough of Avis around the issue of drinking water quality.



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## PA Sustaining Newsletter

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**Clean Water Action** is a national citizen's organization working for clean, safe and affordable water, prevention of health threatening pollution, creation of environmentally safe jobs and businesses, and empowerment of people to make democracy work. Clean Water Action organizes strong grassroots groups, coalitions and campaigns to protect our environment, health, economic well being and community quality of life. This update was prepared for our Pennsylvania members who contribute at the sustaining member level of \$60 or more.

### *The Facts About West Nile Virus*

West Nile virus is back. But don't panic...there are things we can do to protect ourselves without using toxic pesticides.

The best way to control West Nile virus is to make sure mosquitoes don't have anywhere to breed. This can be supplemented with biological controls like "bti" that kill mosquito larvae before they turn into adults.

Recently, the state has been spraying for mosquitoes without giving the public much warning. CWA recently met with state officials to push them to give better notice before spraying, warning more people earlier.

#### **WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

1. If you're sensitive to pesticides, get on the state Hypersensitivity Registry. For info on how, call the Clean Water

office nearest you.

2. Eliminate mosquito breeding habitat. The mosquitoes that spread West Nile virus don't just breed in swamps...they also breed in small pools of water in yards, such as bird baths, swimming pool covers and gutters. Make sure there's no standing water around your yard. If you have a small pond, use biological controls to prevent mosquito larvae from hatching. Call CWA for details.

3. Avoid using DEET-based repellants, especially on children. Herbal or essential oil based products can be safer alternatives.

Finally, don't panic. Just a tiny fraction of people bitten by a mosquito will get sick. Protect yourself from West Nile virus... but don't make yourself sick with toxic pesticides either!

