ReImagine Appalachia

On June 22 I attended an RA-sponsored webinar called, Making it in Appalachia. Representatives from the following organizations presented at this webinar: Ohio University, PittOhio, United Electrical Workers. One item raised at this event was the idea of electric school buses, which are made in West Virginia. I asked the superintendent of Marietta City Schools if there is interest in applying for funds to acquire these buses in his school district. He said he would consider this opportunity.

I would like to think that a recent initiative announced by the Southeast Ohio Port Authority had something to do with the meeting that two ReImagine Appalachia staff members and I had with Jesse Roush, Executive Director of the SEPA a few months ago. In May of this year Roush announced a new project, Recycle Technology Development Center, to be located just off Route 7 south of Marietta near the Eremet facility. The non-profit organization behind this initiative is OCEC (Organization of Clean Energy & Climate) I have met a couple of times with Dr. Tao Wu, the Executive Director of OCEC in order to understand this technology. Basically, this technology involves capturing heat from computer chips and transferring this heat via water to places that require heat for agricultural purposes, manufacturing, and recreational needs. There will be a grand opening of this research facility on August 9 where the heat generating computers, water pumps, and a greenhouse will be presented to the public. Dr. Tao has asked me to serve on the advisory board to OCEC. This kind of facility, which would replace natural gas as a source of energy, is exactly the kind of energy-development project that ReImagine Appalachia has been recommending. This facility is a research center, which will hire 50-100 jobs when fully operational; it will also have an educational component affiliated with Washington State CC.

Citizens Climate Lobby

A legislative item that CCL is supporting is the PROVE-IT Bill, which would authorize precise calculation of the carbon component in all goods manufactured by U.S. and foreign producers. This bill was introduced recently in the U.S Senate and will be introduced soon in the U.S. House of Representatives. Information from projects supported by this bill will be used to determine costs for the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.

The extreme weather (high heat in the south, flooding in New England, and the smoke from Canadian wildfires in the Midwest and east) is a cause of much suffering and even death but does offer the opportunity to connect these phenomena to human-caused climate change. I have asked CCL members locally to make that case in letters to the editor.

One of the persons involved in our CCL chapter asked Sam Hattrup, Congressman Johnson’s Legislative Director, about Marietta College’s new plan to expand its Petroleum Engineering/Geology Department and establish a new program called, Energy, the Environment, and Earth with some focus on renewable energy. Congressman Johnson (himself and through Sam) said that he would not support this program through any ear-marked funds because it neglects the long legacy of the college in educating for fossil-fuel extraction. After our meeting with Sam I contacted ReImagine Appalachia and received a list of federal grant programs that might support this new program; I sent that list to one of the people who is closely involved in developing the program. That person is quite supportive of including the idea of capping abandoned oil/gas wells into the new program.

HB 507, Fracking Public Lands in Ohio

Since this legislation has passed both houses of the Ohio legislature and was signed by the governor, those opposed to this issue are left with expressing our opposition to the Oil & Gas Land Management Commission in response to requests for permits from oil/gas companies. I attended (via live streaming) the meeting of this group on June 28, where Randi Pokladnik, Ted Auch, and a fireman from Youngstown, expressed their concerns to this group. On July 1 I attended a rally at Salt Fork State Park by a group called Save Ohio Parks, which is organizing opposition to this plan. There were about 50 people at that rally including Randi Pokladnik and Aaron Dunbar; I did not see any members of the press.

George Banziger