**Reports from George Banziger to Green Sanctuary Committee**

**For Meeting of March 17, 2024**

**George Banziger**

ReImagine Appalachia.

I attended the biweekly meeting of RA on March 12. Most of this meeting was devoted to “earmark” funding (aka, congressionally directed spending). I have contactted senators Vance and Brown about making requests for such funding for projects I am working on (see below). No response yet from their offices.

I attended another webinar that RA sponsored on addressing methane emissions. Apparently, the new EPA standards on methane emissions will require a lot of new jobs for this labor-intensive work—the Ohio River Valley Institute estimates about 2500 jobs from this initiative just in Ohio (there are over 33,000 active wells in Ohio).

Natalia Rudiak, who directs programs of faith-based groups and of local government agencies, was the featured presenter at the FUUSM worship service on March 3. She also met with several people on the Saturday evening before at Dawn Hewitt’s house to discuss building neighborhood connections with about 12 interested people.

Upcoming RA events:

-How women wannabe farmers; March 20, noon (featuring our own Annie Warmke)

-Natural infrastructure workshop: April 16, noon

Citizens Climate Lobby (I serve as the group leader for the Marietta chapter)

We have continued our enhanced collaboration with the Mahoning Valley CCL chapter (also in OH 06). Since Bill Johnson has left his seat in the House (January 2024) to assume the presidency of YSU, we have been focusing on our two US senators. CCL-Ohio is still looking for someone to serve as liaison with Senator Sherrod Brown’s office.

I had a conversation with John Sabin, Great Lakes & Ohio CCL Leader, about how much of CCL meetings are being devoted to local (Ohio issues) such as fracking on public lands, misinformation on health risks of renewable energy projects, and school districts leasing property to oil/gas companies. He and CCL understand these priorities in our region.

I had a separate conversation with John Sabin and Ray English, liaison with Senator Vance’s office, about filling the CCL-Ohio position of liaison with Senator Brown’s office. That decision is on hold for about a month. We also discussed the idea of a regular feature with Senator Vance’s office named “Notes from Appalachia.” I drafted a first offering for this feature, but we are still in discussion on the matter.

Organization of Clean Energy & Climate (I serve on the advisory group of the OCEC non-profit)

No word yet on the application we submitted to the Marietta Community Foundation on February 15. We hosted three members of application-review team of MCF at the project site on March 4.

The heat-exchange technology is also being considered in connection with the planning for a major aquatic center in the area. This technology would be utilized to heat the water and buildings for the proposed aquatic center. The location of the aquatic center has not yet been determined; Dr. Tao, Executive Director of OCEC, is pressing for the OCEC site (just off Route 7 between Marietta & Belpre) to be the location. I also serve on the advisory group which is developing the plan for this aquatic center. On March 16 I traveled with Dr. Greg Krivcheniat and Mark Krivchenia and others on the advisory group to Bridgeport WV to observe their new recreational facility which includes a swimming pool. At that meeting we will hear a presentation by a company from Florida that is offering to do a feasibility study for the pool in the Marietta area.

Dr. Tao is working on grant proposals for additional applications of the heat-exchange technology in the region and for support of renewable energy to power the data centers used to generate heat at the OCEC site. He is seeking these grants from the U.S. Department of Energy.

Devola Pollinator Project

I have purchased two pounds of native plant seeds from Gary Conley of Rural Action. I received those seeds last week and planted my own native plant seeds in the 250 sq ft plot in my back yard. I have posted a message (with a photo of my plot) on Next Door-Devola social media site. In that message I mentioned that I will be providing seeds on a first-come, first-served basis free of charge along with a species list and planting instructions to people in Devola who are interested in establishing the pollinator corridor. I got a message from Next Door on Wednesday that there were 624 views to my message. I have heard from only two people so far who are definitely interested in establishing a native plant plot.

Injection Wells

There is a meeting scheduled for March 27 at 7 p.m. at Coolville Elementary School to discuss K&H wells in the Torch area. This meeting is sponsored by the Ohio Environmental Network and the Ohio Brine Task Force. A scientist from Ohio U and an attorney from Earth Justice will be there. I plan to go. So is Bob Lane, the oil/gas producer who has filed a law suit against several brine-disposal companies (no update yet on his law suit).

Save Ohio Parks

SOP organized a protest for the scheduled March 4 meeting of the Oil & Gas Land Management Commission when the O&GLMC was expected to review bids from oil/gas companies to drill near and under public lands. Several bids were approved—in spite of the protests—but at least one company withdrew its application because of the ODNR restrictions. There were no bids approved in the Salt Fork Park area.

Anne Sparks who is on the SOP Sterring Committee may offer more details on SOP.