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

**For Meeting of April 21, 2024**

**George Banziger**

ReImagine Appalachia. RA announced a webinar on developing a workforce around restoration projects. I told Mark Krivchenia about this event, and he registered. In the federal update it was announced that the Farm Bill will be marked up in the Congress in April/May (the major focus should be on keeping the IRA funds in the bill regarding forest development).

There was also discussion on community benefit agreements, repurposing coal plants, and research at WVU on processing rare-earth minerals from coal ash.

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 several conversations with John Sabin, Great Lakes and (temporary) Ohio CCL Coordinator about our strong concerns about state and local issues regarding climate, such as fracking under public lands in which Save Ohio Parks is involved , in the context of CCL. He advised that we keep our CCL affiliation divorced from our advocacy for these issues and opposition to fracking in the state.

We are still without a congressman in OH06. A few of us have been in contact with Michael Kripchak, Democratic candidate for the OH06 seat. We have commented on the policy statements on his web site, and he has responded with some impressive statements about climate issues. The special election for that seat will be in June. John Sabin recommends not discussing our interest in specific candidates at CCL events.

I discussed with John Sabin the idea of creating a small group to begin a discussion with Senator JD Vance’s office, as we did with Congressman Bill Johnson’s office, to discuss energy and climate issues. John advised that we arrange this kind of group here in Appalachian Ohio (Vance got his public name from his book about Appalachia) outside of CCL—since it involves only part of the state.

We will be tabling at Earth Day on April 20 and will be joined by Elli Sparks, who is on the CCL national staff as Field Director. She has moved to Marietta to be with her mother.

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. Results of the review should be announced soon.

Dr. Tao is arranging a transition from Bitcoin mining as a major activity of the data center near Marietta to artificial intelligence (AI) and focusing on liquid cooling and heat capture with these data centers.

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 programs on the decarbonization of industry.

Devola Pollinator Project

In response to my three postings on Next Door-Devola about this project in the last four months, I have been told by Next Door that there were over 470 “views” to each posting. I now have four families interested in this project. On April 18 I delivered seeds, planting instructions, and a species list to the first family to request the seeds. I look forward to delivering the sowing materials to the remaining families who have already expressed interest and more families as word of mouth spreads the message about the project.

Injection Wells

I have no news about the legal case Bob Lane has taken against injection well companies. I was not able to attend the March 27 meeting on this topic in Coolville. Dawn Hewitt did attend and can report on her observations of that meeting.

Save Ohio Parks & Wayne National Forest

SOP is urging those concerned about fracking under public lands to send comments to the Oil & Gas Land Management Commission about the latest “nominations” for fracking at Egypt Valley Wildlife Area and Keen Wildlife Area.

On April 8 (6 p.m.-the dinner hour and eclipse day) I attended a virtual meeting on the plans to allow leasing for oil/gas drilling at the Marietta Unit (near New Matamoras) of Wayne National Forest. I posed a question about brine waste at that meeting, which was not adequately answered. I submitted my comments on this plan to the site mentioned at that meeting. I sent my comments and the link to the Bureau of Land Management site to the GSC members this past week.

The Marietta Times published an op-ed I wrote on this topic in their weekend edition (April 13-14).

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