

Protests delay Keystone XL pipeline construction

by Catherine Jampel

President Obama postponed construction of the Keystone XL pipeline after a Nov. 6 protest at the White House. The demonstrators, estimated to be 8,000 to 12,000 in number, included a handful of State College locals and a strong Pennsylvania showing. The protest followed a two-week sit-in at the White House in August and September that led to 1253 arrests.

The proposed 1,700-mile, \$7 billion pipeline would carry crude oil extracted from Alberta, Canada's tar sands, through Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas to the Gulf of Mexico.

Pipeline developer TransCanada Corporation has announced plans to reroute the pipeline to avoid the Sand Hills and Ogallala Aquifer, the proposed route's points of greatest contention.

Nebraska citizens and their Republican governor, environmental groups including 350.org and the Sierra Club and two transport workers labor unions were among those in the wide coalition that surrounded the White House on all four sides, sometimes two-to-five rows deep.

This was the first time citizens have encircled the White House since 1965, when an estimated 35,000 people gathered to protest the Vietnam War.

Among the protesters were locals from State College and other Pennsylvania universities.

A large number of protesters came with organized college groups, including Pennsylvania's Gettysburg College, University of Pittsburgh and Shippensburg University. Over two hundred students from Eckerd College traveled by bus from St. Petersburg, Florida. No organized group attended from Penn State, though a few traveled in small groups.

"I was really pleasantly surprised at how many people were there when I got there," said Penn State junior Bernadette Brogden, who attended the protest. "The emails that went out said they were expecting 4,000 people, but when you show up and



In the first activist demonstration to encircle the White House since 1965, thousands protested the pending construction of the Keystone XL pipeline on Nov. 6.

Photo by Catherine Jampel

there's over double, almost three times that amount of people coming to one space to protest something they all care about, it's really cool."

Brogden said she heard about the protest when visiting Occupy Wall Street in New York.

Others also learned about the action through the growing Occupy movement.

"I first heard about the pipeline on Al Jazeera and learned about this protest at Occupy Harrisburg," said Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania freshman Julia Saintz, who took a chartered bus to the protest with others from Harrisburg, Lancaster and York. Several protestors credited scholar and environmental activist Bill McKibben for their involvement in the action.

"I found out about this when I saw Bill McKibben at the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability Conference in Pittsburgh this past October," said Gettysburg College senior Sara Tower, an environmental studies and globalization studies major who traveled to the protest

with 15 fellow students.

Another protester was so inspired by McKibben's recent book "Eaarth" that he made a two-day journey from St. Louis by train.

"I feel like I'm obligated as a steward of the earth to participate, and with enough people like me, change can happen," said Andy Clubb, 21, of Missouri.

McKibben was among the rally speakers, who included scientist James Hansen, actor Mark Ruffalo and Vice President of the Ogallala Lakota Nation Tom Poor Bear. Many of them emphasized Obama's potential role in preventing the permit from being awarded, since the President and State Department must approve the pipeline because it crosses a transnational border.

Protesters positioned directed their chants at the President, shouting "Mr. Obama, the earth is our mama" and "Hey, Obama, we don't want no climate drama."

Leading up to his decision to delay the Keystone XL permit, Obama faced criticism from the Democratic Party and the

base that helped him get elected.

"It is time to put pressure on the President within the Democratic Party to do the right thing," said Heather Mizeur, Maryland state representative and member of the DNC's executive committee, at the rally. "As the Community Organizer in Chief, he has asked us to hold him accountable to democratic values."

Courtney Hight, who worked as Florida Youth Director for Obama's presidential campaign, said she was hesitant about becoming a vocal critic of the pipeline, but that she finally joined the movement.

"Now I'm using the skills and training from the campaign to work on this issue," she said. "He laid out a vision that I still believe in, and today I was reminding him of that vision."

Anti-fracking activists also made a strong showing at the protest. Extracting oil from the tar sands is an energy-intensive process driven by natural gas. Anti-fracking groups anticipate a growth in the oil sands industry stimulating demand for natural gas.

Proponents of the pipeline cite reducing reliance on oil from the Middle East and job creation as primary reasons for allowing the pipeline.

Pipeline opponents are divided about whether the pending environmental review that pushes the decision until after the Presidential Election is a true or empty victory.

The delay might mean that a new administration approves the rerouted pipeline. But, according to Business Week, the strategy may work. The magazine suggests Obama will retain grassroots support because Republicans do not offer welcome alternatives.

Those who attended the protest expressed agreement that diverting the pipeline route from the Sand Hills would not be enough.

"Yes we can! Stop the pipeline!" was the rally's final cry.

Catherine Jampel, a Penn State graduate student in Geography, attended the Keystone XL protest as an activist.

Winter Hummingbirds

by Joe Verica

Anyone who as ever witnessed a hummingbird in action can testify to the magnificence of their flight. Their ability to hover, fly backwards and shift direction on a dime leaves observers captivated. Their aerodynamic mastery, combined with their small size and brilliant colors, make them a favorite of bird watchers everywhere.

There are over 325 species of hummingbirds worldwide—all of which are confined to the New World. Of these, 16 species are known to breed in the US, primarily in the west. East of the Mississippi River, there is essentially only one hummingbird—the Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

The breeding season for Ruby-throats in Central PA extends from late April to early August. No sooner does the breeding sea-

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son end when the hummers start heading south.

By early October virtually all the Ruby-throats have departed, although a scant few may lag behind. For many, this marks the end of hummingbird season.

People begin to take down feeders and store them until the following spring. For others, late fall and winter mark the start of the most exciting time for hummingbirds.

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Westerly Parkway site of new wetland education center

by Kay Shamalla

What began in 1989 as a large stormwater management site will soon include a park and wetland education center. Planned and supervised by State College Borough, this new addition to State College public space is scheduled to open in the spring of 2012.

Located between the Parkway Plaza Apartments and Westerly Parkway, the six-acre site includes a two-and-a-half-acre runoff retention basin that used to be surrounded by chain link fence topped with barbed wire.

In repurposing the site to become more attractive and functional, the borough will also create a hands-on resource for nearby State College High School students studying the environment.

State College Borough Arborist and Environmental Coordinator Alan Sam began submitting grant applications to develop the concept 10 years ago.

In 2008, funding sufficient to initiate the Westerly Parkway project was awarded by Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

Skelly & Loy, Inc., a Harrisburg engineering and environmental consultant firm, was selected to design the site. Work began in the

spring of this year.

The Community Conservation Partnership Program through the DCNR funded additional site development—regrading site contours, altering soil type and adding seed mixes. When completed, the center will feature native plants in an upland and lowland wetland scheme, circulating paths, benches, signs and a butterfly garden.

Stormwater retention will continue to be a function of the design. Stormwater inflow and basin outflow is fenced off. When a significant weather event is forecasted, the borough's Public Works crew will close the park to the public.

The project got an assist over the summer from Penn State students volunteering their time through Fresh START (Students Taking an Active Role Today) Day of Service on Aug. 27. In one day, the students mulched over half of the trail, removed brush and painted fencing.

The borough's Public Works employees continue to improve the site, but volunteers will be needed as the Westerly Parkway Wetland Education Center prepares for its official opening in the spring of 2012. Contact the Public Works office at (814) 234-7145 or email publicworksdept@statecollegepa.us for more information.

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— Pete and Marge Carpenter

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This site for a new wetland education center, still in development, is located off of Westerly Parkway near the Parkway Plaza Apartments. Photo by Kay Shamalla

Activists protest during Marcellus Summit

by Doug Bauman

Activists from across Pennsylvania gathered to express their anger with Marcellus Shale drilling, to support the health of the environment and to protest corporate America's role in government at Penn State on Nov. 18.

Marcellus Protest 2011, "Power To The People, Not The Corporations," was held in opposition to Marcellus Summit 2011, a conference held for industry representatives, government officials and various community groups at the Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel.

The grassroots event's sponsors included Groundswell, Eco-Action at Penn State and Elk County C.A.R.E.S.

The first part of the rally, held at Old Main, celebrated the Nov. 8 passing of an amendment to the State College charter that guarantees borough residents the right to clean water, clean air and a healthy, sustainable lifestyle. It also enables the community to take legal action against an outside entity that endangers any of the rights afforded by the bill. This was the first popular vote on a community bill of rights to ban fracking in the nation.

"We have the right to a sustainable future," said speaker Braden Crooks, a 2011 Penn State graduate who founded the local anti-fracking group Groundswell, which is also dedicated to responsible local environmental stewardship.

He also talked about the democratic process, saying that corporations may run Harrisburg, but the citizens of State College have made it clear they don't run their town.

Speaker Barb Jarmoska of the Responsible Drilling Alliance congratulated the community on the referendum and its "infusion of much-needed hope" to the anti-fracking movement.

"This is all preaching to the choir," said Jarmoska in an interview.

Jarmoska's speech focused on five sound bites circulated through the media by gas companies. She stressed how crucial anti-fracking publicity is when dealing with such formidable foes; ones, she said, she's never seen the likes of. The advertising and public relations campaigns run by these companies are some of the most clever and pervasive

ever seen in the history of our country, she said, adding, "All we have is the power of speech."

An environmental activism crash course

Local residents recently learned how to exercise that power during a Marcellus Shale citizen training event held on campus on Nov. 5. Organizers said they held it to educate people on Marcellus Shale drilling and how citizens can help change policy and influence politics.

About 25 people from the Centre County region and surrounding communities attended the event hosted by PennEnvironment, a statewide citizen-funded advocacy group working for clean air and water. The Philadelphia-based group has made appearances before in Centre County, notably every summer with its door-to-door canvassing campaigns to help acquaint citizens with current environmental issues.

"Marcellus shale and gas drilling is one of our top-priority issues because it's one of the top threats facing the state," said Adam Garber, PennEnvironment field director, who spearheaded the class. "We want to empower people who are new to fighting for protections from gas drilling to fight for our environment and our health."

While the event touched on how Marcellus Shale drilling is affecting the environment, it focused on how citizens can make a difference in their community and how they can convert their concern into action.

The event also featured a mock meeting with a local legislator where attendees had the opportunity to present their anti-fracking stance to a PennEnvironment representative acting as a legislator, as well as a "letters to the editor" how-to session.

Despite the attempts of PennEnvironment and other pro-environment groups across the state, no significant Marcellus legislation that deals with the environment or health impacts of drilling has been passed in the last few years, said Garber. Still, he remains optimistic.

"People are learning more and more about the serious danger gas drilling poses to



Photo by Doug Bauman
Carol Houser of Curwensville rallies outside the Penn Stater during Marcellus Protest 2011 on Friday, Nov. 18, 2011.

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Activists rally outside the Penn Stater during Marcellus Protest 2011.

Photo by Doug Bauman

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Pennsylvania,” he said. “As the public opinion shifts towards calling for more public health protections, more environmental protections and even for an outright moratorium, we know that will shift the political discussions—we’ve already seen that happen. We’ve seen legislators who didn’t want protections three years ago introducing legislation now that will introduce buffer zones or increase bonds or other things... so public opinion is a huge driver for this.”

Garber compared the situation to the biblical account of David and Goliath, in which Goliath, a colossal warrior fell at the hand of David, a young man dwarfed by Goliath’s size and might.

“We can’t win on the dollar-for-dollar battle, but we can win on the vote-for-vote battle because the majority of the public is growing more and more concerned about this,” he said. “By getting more people involved, we can actually win on this issue.”

A movement in action

After rallying at Old Main, about sixty of the protesters headed to the Penn Stater Conference Center. Businessmen in ties and jackets attending Marcellus Summit 2011 peered out through windows to see the bevy of activists holding anti-fracking signs and chanting “no fracking way” and “end the gasocracy now.”

Some protesters lined up for a chance to give an impromptu speech through a bull-

horn. A unifying thread among many speakers was the power of the people.

“We’re going to win,” said Jeffrey Kurland, a retired anthropology professor living in Pennsylvania Furnace. In his late sixties, Kurland has been an activist for decades (his list of experiences include a Martin Luther King Jr. peace march and the first Earth Day, to name a few).

“You know why?” he asked. “Because there’s more of us than them.”

Kurland had positive things to say about the anti-fracking and Occupy movements, which he called more “sophisticated” than their 1960s predecessors.

“One thing that makes these movements so important is that they come from the ground up; it wasn’t underwritten by the Koch brothers,” said Kurland, referring to the financial and organizational support lent to the Tea Party movement by conglomerate millionaire brothers David and Charles Koch of Koch Industries. “The Occupy movement has driven the media crazy because you can talk to someone over here, or over here, or over there.”

This is part of the movement’s success, said Kurland: it’s grassroots. He also urged activists not to give up.

Master of ceremonies and Groundswell member Peter Buckland said he was pleased with the event and hoped it would inspire a sense of solidarity and continue the movement’s forward motion.

“It’s not about my backyard, it’s about our backyard,” said Buckland. “We need to be persistent and focused.”

CATA and LeHigh Gas promote CNG use locally

by Sean Flynn

The Centre Area Transit Authority (CATA) and LeHigh Gas have joined forces to open up a compressed natural gas filling station open to the public.

LeHigh Gas is operating the station, located at LeHigh’s Uni-Mart/Exxon on West College Avenue in Ferguson Township. CATA is providing technical assistance and publicity, according to Jacqueline Sheader, CATA’s marketing manager.

This is not LeHigh Gas’s first venture into the field of compressed natural gas (CNG) filling stations.

“CNG was available to customers previously through the same pump,” according to CATA marketing manager Jacqueline Sheader, but “technical and logistical issues caused it to be shut down for several years.”

CNG is rapidly emerging as a fuel used in fleet vehicles worldwide. CATA’s highly visible bus fleet runs entirely on CNG delivered to its depot in Cato Park. CNG is even penetrating to the consumer market.

NVGAmerica, a natural gas trade association in Washington, D.C., has published a Guide to Available Natural Gas Vehicles and Engines. It lists four pages of vehicles such as the Chevy Impala, the Dodge Ram, and the Pontiac G6, for which EPA-certified conversion kits are produced by ten differ-

ent companies.

The pump at LeHigh Gas’ Uni-Mart/Exxon reopened in August of 2011 after being closed for several years, thanks to what Sheader called “a joint effort” between CATA and LeHigh Gas. CATA has supported the venture with publicity, but according to Sheader does not profit from the filling station.

“We receive no revenue from the station and are just paid cost for the fuel,” said Sheader.

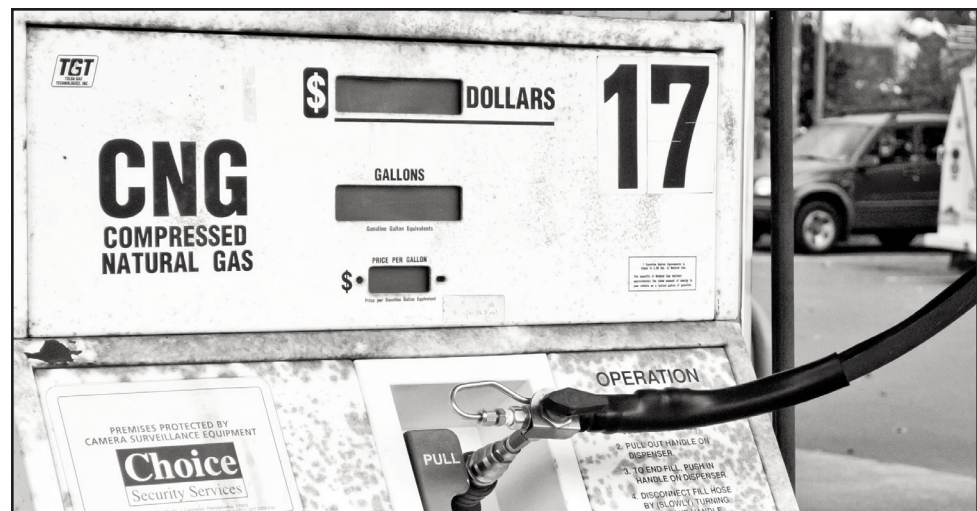
The station’s proximity to the CATA depot in Cato Park meant that CATA and LeHigh are able to share infrastructure.

“The geographic positioning is what made the partnership workable,” Sheader said.

She said CAT’s interest in promoting “clean natural gas” as an alternative fuel has led CATA to support the new venture. This is just one of the ways CATA has taken a proactive role in the promotion of CNG as an alternative fuel.

The Centre Daily Times and The Express in Lock Haven printed CATA’s press release about the CNG pump nearly verbatim, and CATA General Manager Hugh Mose recently wrote a guest column in the Centre Daily-

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The Lehigh Gas Exxon/Uni-Mart compressed natural gas filling station is now open for business after years of being shuttered for technical and logistical issues.

Photo by Sean Flynn

from Hummingbirds, pg. 13

This is the time to look for vagrant hummingbirds!

Vagrants are birds that have strayed or wandered outside their normal range. In some cases, birds simply get caught up in and displaced by weather systems.

In other cases, the causes of vagrancy are less clear. Because vagrants are more common during migration, it is thought that some birds, particularly juveniles, may simply get lost. Others may have genetic abnormalities in the migratory guidance systems that cause them head off in the wrong direction.

What kinds of vagrant hummingbirds can one expect to find in Central PA? By a wide margin, the most common hummingbird in Central PA after mid-October is the Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*).

Rufous Hummingbirds are similar in size to Ruby-throats. Males typically have bright green crown and rufous backs which are sometimes adorned with scattered green specks. The tail is rufous at its base and black at the tips. The underparts are whitish with rufous coloration on the flanks, giving the bird a vested appearance. The gorget (colored area on throat) is a bright orange-red. Females and juveniles have green backs with rufosity at the base of the tail, and a much reduced orange gorget.

Rufies breed in northwestern North America, from northern California to southeastern Alaska. They nest primarily in brushy or second growth forest habitats.

Rufies are highly territorial and are quite aggressive toward other hummers, particularly when it comes to protecting a nectar source. To attract a mate, the male performs an aerial display characterized by a steep dive toward a perched female. At the last second, the male pulls out of the dive and produces a popping sound with his tail feathers. It's quite a marvel to witness!

Fall migration commences in late July and early August. Rufies migrate down the west coast and through the Rocky Mountains to their wintering grounds which extend from southern California and the Gulf Coast to south-central Mexico.

It is during fall migration that they are most prone to vagrancy. During this time, they can be found just about anywhere within the US. They most often show up at

It is during fall migration that [hummingbirds] are most prone to vagrancy... With this in mind, you may want to think twice before taking your feeder down.

feeders, as most natural nectar sources are withered. Several Rufies have been already identified in Pennsylvania this fall, including one just down Rt. 322 in Dauphin County.

With this in mind, you may want to think twice before taking your feeder down. On nights where freezing temperatures are expected, you can bring your feeder inside until the following day.

Some birders have even left feeders up all through the winter by rigging up a heater to prevent freezing. Whatever strategy you choose, just be sure to change the nectar every few days. As for nectar, it is not necessary to buy it. You can make it at home by mixing one cup of cane sugar with four cups of water.

In addition to Rufies, three other western species are regularly recorded in the east: the Calliope Hummingbird with its carmine-streaked gorget, the Black-chinned Hummingbird which has a black gorget underscored by an iridescent violet band, and the Allen's Hummingbird which is similar to the Rufy.

Other vagrants, such as Broad-billed, Anna's and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds have been observed on a more casual basis, with sightings increasing each year.

If you happen to observe a hummer at your feeder this fall/winter, consider having it banded and identified. Email me at the address below and I can have a licensed hummingbird bander contact you.

Banding is a simple, non-invasive process where a hummer is captured and has a tiny ID band placed on its leg. The bird is measured, sexed and then released. Banding can help ornithologists determine hummingbird distribution and discover how things like weather and climate change affect their movement.

Questions or Comment? Joe Verica can be reached at joeverica101@gmail.com.



Rufous Hummingbird. Photograph by Dean E. Biggins. This image is the work of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee, taken during the course of an employee's official duties. As a work of the U.S. federal government, the image is in the public domain.

from CNG, pg. 15

Times touting the benefits of CNG as a fuel in early October of 2011.

CATA is not the only organization trying to promote CNG. Pennsylvania House Bill 1087, introduced in spring 2011, provided tax credits for establishing a CNG fueling corridor in Pennsylvania.

H.B. 1087 would create a tax credit of 50 percent of the cost of construction to any company building a CNG filling station in Pennsylvania, provided the station stayed open for at least five years. The bill was referred to the Finance Committee in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in April of 2011 and received no further action.

Bob Beatty is owner of Innovative Entrepreneurs and operates two CNG fueling stations located in Punxsutawney and Cool-spring, Pa., roughly 65 miles west of State College.

Beatty says that he sees the majority of his business from small business owners operating small fleets of heavy duty trucks.

"They run a fairly tight circle, [running] maybe 100 miles from home, and then they come back at night," he said.

His customers include a lumber delivery vehicle and a laboratory truck that collects natural resources samples from the surrounding area.

Beatty says CATA's claims that natural gas burns cleaner are true and that CNG is a safer fuel than gasoline.

"It's got some bad publicity because

everyone thinks 'natural gas, oh it's explosive,' but it's lighter than any liquid fuel or propane, so it rises—it doesn't collect underneath a vehicle or on the ground."

Beatty went on to explain that CNG requires a spark of roughly 1000 degrees to ignite and only burns in a specific CNG-oxygen mixture, making it less easily combustible than gasoline.

The filling station works much like a gasoline filling station, according to Beatty, with the addition of a few safety interlocks.

"The main difference," he said, "is that the tank is a pressure tank, like an oxygen tank or a nitrogen tank that holds gas under pressure. You're not pouring a liquid into a tank, you're charging a tank with pressurized gas. So it's a little bit different in that aspect."

CNG is sold in "gas gallon equivalents," or GGEs, which is the amount of CNG required to substitute for one gallon of liquid gasoline.

Beatty says that CNG as a consumer fuel is so new that prices haven't stabilized yet. He says he recently drove his CNG-fueled pickup from Punxsutawney, Pa., to Lake Tahoe on the California-Nevada border. He encountered prices ranging from \$0.95c/gge in Indianapolis, to \$3.00/gge in Rifle, California; he is currently selling CNG for \$2.00/gge.

LeHigh Gas was unavailable for comment, but CNGPrices.com lists the State College station as selling CNG for \$2.13/gge. Prices at stations in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia ranged from \$1.85 to \$2.00, up to \$2.35 in Atlantic City, N.J.