

Sierra Club: Local residents highlight water concerns with coal and oil

Posted on Thursday, Aug 31, 2017

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Contact:

Bill Davis, [608-256-0565](tel:608-256-0565) email: bill.davis@sierraclub.org

OAK CREEK — Today residents and activists gathered at Bender Park in Oak Creek to release the Sierra Club's newest white paper: [Electric Power Plants, Oil and Natural Gas Threats to Water Quality](#). The white paper discusses the important connection between water and the energy. Approximately 70 percent of all water used in Wisconsin is used to generate electricity and about 30 percent of all energy in the state is used to move water. This connection between the transportation, use, and disposal of waste from fuels and water pose significant risks.

"I served as the youth and family director at North Cape Lutheran in Franksville from 2012-2016. My heart was broken for our Sunday School kids who attended Yorkville and were exposed high levels of molybdenum. Because of the church's proximity to Yorkville Elementary, as well as other wells that were contaminated, we stopped using our well water for drinking and brought in bottled water. I remember feeling like we all were part of an uncontrolled, reckless experiment, where we were the guinea pigs. For the sake of everyone who lives near the Oak Creek plant, and especially the kids, I hope they will shut down that plant replace it with clean energy. I am reminded of Jesus' instruction to love our neighbor—certainly, it is not loving to pollute a neighbors' water," said Rev. Jonathan Barker, Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Kenosha.

In addition to the water impacts of our electricity system, Wisconsin transports a lot of oil through the state. As Cheryl Nenn, of the Milwaukee Riverkeeper, said, "In the Milwaukee River Basin, said Canadian Pacific operates a major rail route where

combustible crude oil is being transported through major urban areas, crosses our local rivers and creeks at least 36 times and runs parallel to our rivers for miles. These railways have become “virtual pipelines” for hazardous fuels and much of our rail infrastructure is in extremely poor condition, which endangers the health of our water and our communities. A spill of crude oil into the rivers could cause long-lasting, if not permanent, damage to fish populations and other aquatic life, and threaten Lake Michigan, our drinking water source.”

“Water protection all comes down to the common sense goodness of one simple thought – what we have today we want to be there for tomorrow,” said Eric Hansen of, Citizens Acting for Rail Safety – Milwaukee Area. “Wisconsin is a land where water sparkles. Let’s keep it that way,” he concluded.

Bill Pringle’s family suffered serious health issues until they moved away from the power plant. Through exhaustive efforts, Bill found out that the cause of their illnesses was the power plant. He stated, “The sad truth is that people have to find out the truth about the health impacts from these power plants on their own.”

“All of this points to the importance of shifting away from fossil fuels”, said Bill Davis, Chapter Director of the Sierra Club’s John Muir Chapter. “To protect our water and our health we need to take serious steps to increase solar and wind power, and energy efficiency,” he concluded.

This is the last in a series of white papers released by the Sierra Club-John Muir Chapter. Previous papers have focused on water quantity, water quality issues around Wisconsin, factory farm impacts, and lead contamination. All reports can be found online at sierraclub.org/Wisconsin.

###

Founded in 1892 by John Muir, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. The Sierra Club’s mission is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth. The Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter is made up of 15,000 members and supporters working to promote clean energy and protect water resources in Wisconsin.