

# CORR| AUGUST-OCTOBER 2021

# ON THE RIVER

Updates for Supporters of Concerned Ohio River Residents



## Advocating for a Better Future

The buildout of the petrochemical industry in the Ohio Valley has been on-going for years. From local water quality concerns and protecting the Ohio River from pollution to air quality issues and waste barging, CORR has been on the front lines of these fights alongside our coalition partners.



## OVERVIEW:

- Ohio Valley march
- Austin Master updates
- Air monitoring program
- Powhatan Salt permits
- Frack waste barging
- Blog post by Jill Hunkler
- *The Story of Plastic* wins an Emmy

Friends,

As the changing of the seasons are upon us, we wanted to provide you with updates on some of the work that CORR members have been doing recently. Your continued support - of your time or donations - allows this work to continue. We are grateful to each and every one of you as we continue to make the Ohio Valley safe, clean, and organized.

## Ohio Valley March

---

On Wednesday, October 13, residents from across the Ohio Valley traveled to Wheeling and Moundsville, WV for a march to end the expansion of petrochemical facilities in the valley.

As CORR has stated since 2018, PTTGC will not provide meaningful long-term employment to residents nor will the company offset the potential environmental costs to construction and production. "As far as I can tell," stated CORR organizer Bev Reed, "we're the only ones talking about the downsides and that's important for everyone to see both sides and they can decide what they want to support."

It was an honor to join forces with advocates from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia for a march of solidarity to advocate for a better future, one that's not tied to fossil fuel and petrochemical expansion. Citizens who stand to be impacted by the proposed PTTGCA ethane cracker plant and those who are already impacted by the Shell ethane cracker under construction in Monaca, PA, marched in an effort to call on the Biden administration and our local and national representatives to work toward a clean, sustainable, equitable future for the Ohio Valley and the nation; a future that benefits everyone.

This event was just one part of a nationwide effort under the banner "Break Free From Plastics Actions Against Extraction." We chose the historic and wonderful Suspension Bridge in Wheeling, WV for our banner drop. Our message was clear: "Fracking to enable cracking to make plastic is the wrong path forward. An immediate shift must be made to follow a fossil-free road. It is time to implement change, and let's begin here in the Ohio River Valley."



We ended the day at the Moundsville Riverfront Park, across the river from the Dilles Bottom site of the proposed cracker plastics plant. [Here](#) is a news clip of the event. Please tune in to the Youtube livestream on **Tuesday, October 26th at 1:00 pm** for a public viewing of all of the actions happening across the country and the messages being sent to the Biden administration from frontline communities. RSVP at this [link](#). We'll also send out a reminder of the event the day before. Sign the petition Stop Approvals for New and Expanded Petrochemical and Plastic Facilities by clicking [here](#).





## Austin Master Updates

Austin Master Services (AMS) is an oil and gas waste processing facility located at the site of the old Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel plant in Martins Ferry Ohio on the banks of the Ohio River- just 2,500 feet from Purple Rider High School Stadium. The facility processes radioactive material from the industry. Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) inspection reports show sloppy handling of material since opening in 2016, including a leaking roof, waste being stored directly on the floor, spilling out of containers, and being tracked out of the facility by trucks. It sits atop of the aquifer that feeds Martins Ferry's public drinking water wells and is in a flood plain.

After reviewing the AMS inspection reports, Teresa Mills, Director of the Buckeye Environmental Network formed a coalition to address the situation.



In August, CORR steering committee member and community organizer, Bev Reed led a coalition of canvassers in Martins Ferry. Over a two-week period, Reed and others discussed resident concerns about the toxic processing plant currently operating over the city's aquifer. On August 18, CORR hosted a well-attended community meeting held in Martins Ferry where experts Dr. Julie Weatherington-Rice, Chief Silverio Caggiano, and James Yskamp presented the facts about the serious concerns regarding the Austin Masters facility. This meeting was made possible due to the support of The Buckeye Environmental Network. A coalition of powerful individuals, The Ohio Water Guardians, contributed to the success of this meeting. We are grateful for, and truly appreciate the support provided by all.

Martins Ferry officials agreed to a meeting with CORR to discuss how to protect the drinking water supply from the threats posed by AMS. This meeting was very productive and all present agreed that working together to protect our water was the best path forward. CORR is very grateful for the officials willingness to continue to collaborate on this issue of concern.

Meetings are being held by residents who get their water from Martins Ferry and who are concerned about the threats posed by the Austin Masters facility. Please reach out to us if you are interested in joining us in this campaign. If you would like to help continue CORR's work in Martins Ferry, consider [donating](#). All funds raised will go directly to helping protect the drinking water of Belmont County residents.



Ohio Dept of Natural Resources inspection report, Sept. 2020



Sep 2, 2020 at 2:22:03  
N 40° 6' 8", W 80° 42'  
1001 M





# Air Quality Monitoring Program a Success

---

As part of the American Geophysical Union's Thriving Earth Exchange program, CORR and FreshWater Accountability Project have been collaborating with scientists in the development of an air monitoring program throughout the Ohio River Valley for more than a year. We have strategically placed dozens of monitors throughout the region. The data collected has proven effective in getting the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency to engage with impacted residents living near oil and gas infrastructure. The monitors are appreciated, and the homeowners have been actively involved in this community science project. They are keeping records of all incidents that occur regarding their health impacts, odors, excessive noises coming from the facilities, etc. The team is currently working on a white paper explaining the results of our air monitoring efforts.

One of our concerns is that due to the expansiveness of unconventional shale drilling (fracking) and associated waste facilities being permitted in Belmont County, the proposal to build a huge ethane cracker plant in the region is likely to put the county into a state of non-compliance with Ohio EPA standards.

It was understood that there was an immediate need for baseline monitoring around the proposed PTTG ethane cracker plant and an interest to get a cumulative look at particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, and greenhouse gases from facilities with air permits in current operation in the region. The expected emissions from the new plant would be overlaid with the existing information to understand the larger impact to communities in the vicinity.



We are trying to ensure that major polluters are held accountable for potential environmental and public health harms that would be caused by building a major petrochemical complex. There is also a need to expose the already dangerous levels of air pollutants being emitted by oil and gas infrastructure throughout the Ohio Valley threatening the health and safety of area residents and the land we love. We want to extend a special "thank you" to all of our coalition partners for assisting with this.

Watch a video about this community science project at this [link](#). At the end of August, CORR members Jill Hunkler and geomicrobiology expert Yuri Gorby traveled to Waverly, West Virginia to help install air monitors. This effort is to help determine baseline air quality for the proposed Methanol plant to be constructed very near this community. CORR was joined by Alex Cole in Waverly and he made great connections with area residents and helped install the monitors. Thank you, Alex.

West Virginia Methanol has been permitted to construct the Pleasants County Methanol Plant near Waverly, West Virginia. This project is a looming threat to the health and safety of area residents, and water and air quality for the region.

Methanol is highly toxic, extremely volatile and flammable. By-products of methanol processing include sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, some of which are known carcinogens, and tons of fine particulates that are released directly into the air and eventually into the soil around the plant. Whether ingested or inhaled, methanol is poisonous to the human body. Please sign our petition opposing the West Virginia Methanol plant.



Dr. Yuri Gorby installing an air monitor at a resident's home in eastern Ohio.



Particulate matter and a volatile organic compound air monitor installed at a resident's home.



# Thriving Earth Exchange Project Members

---



**Yuri Gorby, PhD**

An expert Geomicrobiologist, Yuri has been praised as “an impassioned researcher” and “a thoughtful academic.” He was Executive Producer of the 2013 documentary “Fracking Our Future,” which warned of the harmful health impacts of the emerging field of shale development.



**Lyssa Freese**

Lyssa is a PhD student in Atmospheric Science at MIT’s Earth, Atmosphere and Planetary Science Department. She researches the intersection of atmospheric chemistry, climate, international energy policy, and health outcomes.



**Garima Raheja**

Garima is a recent graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, where she earned a BA Data Science and a BS Civil and Environmental Engineering. Working at the nexus of science and environmental justice, Garima hopes to empower communities with the tools to make change.

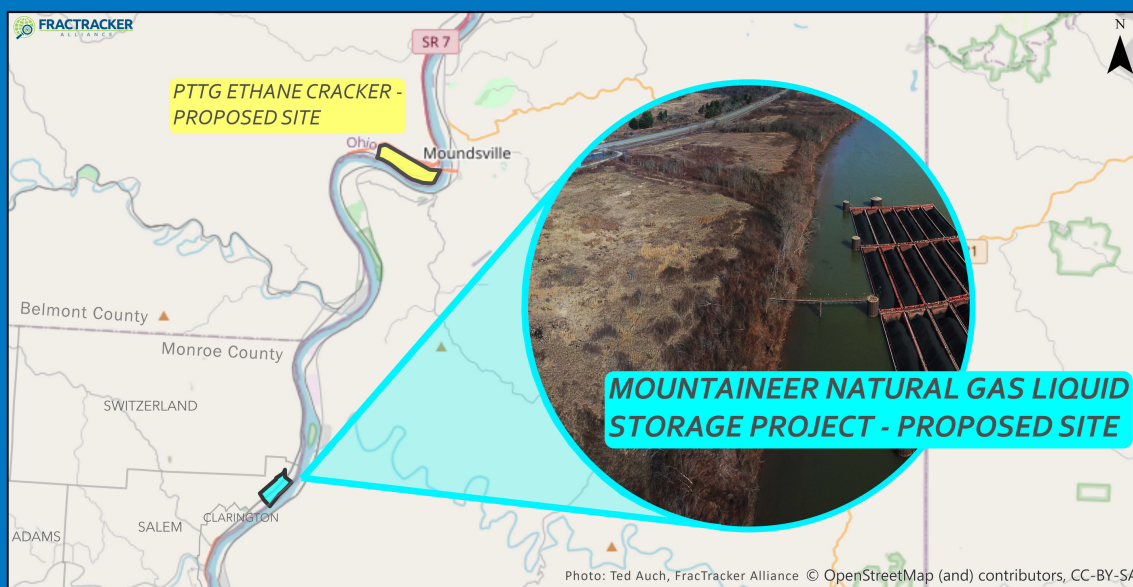


**Ana Hoffman**

Ana is the director of air quality engagement at the Create Lab of Carnegie Mellon University. She is an intuitive geographer with extensive experience engaging with various stakeholders using data-framed storytelling to support environmental advocacy.

## New Permits Issued for Powhatan Salt

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) issued permits to Powhatan Salt Company, LLC on August 30 for three solution mining wells located in Monroe County. These salt caverns, if built, would store natural gas liquids (NGLs) that could be used in nearby cracker plants. While the PTTG cracker plant proposed for Dilles Bottom is indefinitely delayed, the company has been marketing themselves in the region to be able to store NGLs and also hydrogen. We will keep you updated as this situation unfolds and as we learn more.



## Fracking Waste Barging Updates and Petition

Residents from Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia - joined by our downstream neighbors and nationwide friends - are demanding that the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) revoke all authorizations that allow the barging of toxic, radioactive fracking wastewater (i.e. produced water) on the Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio rivers.

We also ask the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to revoke all authorizations to construct barge loading and unloading sites for shipping these toxic wastes. Such activities will put millions of people's drinking water at risk of contamination from toxic chemicals, petroleum distillates, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), heavy metals, radioactive materials and other undisclosed "proprietary" substances. Please sign our tri-state coalition [petition](#) and help us take a stand against the barging of toxic, radioactive fracking waste.







## Ben Hunkler joins Ohio River Valley Institute

CORR would like to thank Ben Hunkler for his tremendous efforts over the past year as part of our team. We are so proud of him as he has transitioned to working full-time at the Ohio River Valley Institute (ORVI).

ORVI is an independent research center producing valuable reports on the economic performance and standard of living in the Ohio Valley. Their reports have been invaluable in identifying the dangers of the natural gas and petrochemical industry and providing insight into economic transition possibilities. There is so much appreciation for the crucial research being presented by this powerful organization. Check out their [website](#) to find much-needed information on how to implement a better vision for the Ohio River Valley and beyond.

## Witnessing Incidents of Harm Due to Fracking

Blog by Jill Hunkler

---

*If you would like to submit a blog post and have it featured in an upcoming newsletter regarding your experiences with the industry please email it to us!*

Near the one year anniversary of selling my Slope Creek property due to the pollution from fracking in close proximity, fracking began near my current residence. I experienced the same negative health impacts that I did when living in the hollow. I moved to a hilltop in an area that looked relatively undeveloped. I had hoped that the air quality would be better, knowing that the VOC pollution hovers in the hollows. It was the same symptoms, the same noise, and I was directly downwind, a mile away. If you can hear it, you are breathing it. I was forced to evacuate the area to give my body the clean air it needed to recover.

A fracking spill occurred right along State Route 800 just outside of Barnesville, Ohio. The spill happened at an injection well on Friday August 22, at 5pm. It is reported by the Times Leader that the company admitted that clean up on the site did not begin until Monday. It is unacceptable that it took two days for any remediation to be done on an injection well leak. This is a perfect example of the regulatory failure we are experiencing in Southeastern Ohio.

I passed by this site driving along 800 to visit my family, for days watching the cleanup. It was a pathetic scene and the workers were ill-equipped to be handling radioactive, chemical-laden waste. For weeks, there was black plastic covering the spill area. Now, it is simply covered in sand. Link to the Times Leader article [here](#).

There was another alarming incident that occurred around the same time as the injection well leak. I received a message on a Friday night saying, "I just heard there is a well pad fire somewhere in Belmont County." I contacted 911 and asked if they could tell me where the well pad fire was occurring. "I want to evacuate if the fire is near my home." I was told that they hadn't received a call about a fire and that they would look into it and call me back. The return call happened within a couple minutes. "There was a well fire in the county but it has been extinguished. There is no need to be concerned."

My response was that I would like to know where the fire had been located. The response was that the location of the fire was not given to the 911 dispatcher.

A week or so after the well fire, I received another message stating, "There was just an explosion and rumble that shook houses and was heard and felt throughout Barnesville. " I immediately began to think of my great-nephew, niece, sister, father, and aunt all certainly at home in Barnesville. I felt sick with worry. I called my Father and he said the explosion rattled the windows, and shook the foundation. There was no information available on the incident and no news coverage.



First day of clean-up on injection well spill on  
Rt. 800 ->





# Climate Justice & Film

---



The documentary, *The Story of Plastic* just won an Emmy and is a must-see for all those concerned about climate change, fracking, petrochemical production and the plastic pollution it produces. The film details the full extent of the global plastic pollution crisis and presents a timeline of the current environmental catastrophe, highlighting polluting corporations and debunking the idea that plastic recycling alone can solve the issue.

The producers of *The Story of Plastic*, Megan Ponder and Stiv Wilson were present at the Austin Masters Community meeting. They were taken on a comprehensive tour of fracking sites and the proposed petrochemical infrastructure proposed for our region by Jill Hunkler and Alex Cole. One of the goals CORR works towards is educating the Ohio Valley on how fracking is tied to plastics. We don't want the Ohio River region to be the face of the plastic pollution crisis. Watch *The Story of Plastic* here and learn more about why we advocate for a clean, sustainable region- one that doesn't contribute to the world's pollution problems.

The documentary originally debuted internationally on the Discovery Network on Earth Day, 2020. The Story of Stuff production company then rolled out a grassroots distribution campaign, resulting in over 2,000 screenings across 80 nations, before the film was crowd-translated and subtitled in 30 different languages, securing educational and institutional distribution with Outkast Films. Through a partnership with Greenpeace International media library, a catalogue of footage from the film's production will also be available to movement partners, without cost, in the coming months.

In the wake of receiving the award, the production company posted to their social media accounts: "Awards are nice, but holding corporations to account for their pollution is even better." You can watch *The Story of Plastic* on youtube at this [link](#).