



A project coordinated by PennFuture

For Immediate Release
January 22, 2009

Contact: Jeanne K. Clark (PennFuture)
412/258-6683 or 412/736-6092
Joe Osborne (GASP)
412-325-7382 or 617-909-8365

PennFuture, GASP: Allegheny County air pollution cleanup plan too little, too late, leaving human health sacrifice zone

Pittsburgh, PA (January 22, 2009) – Citizens for Pennsylvania’s Future (PennFuture) and the Group Against Smog and Pollution (GASP) have filed objections to the air pollution cleanup plan proposed by the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) for the Liberty-Clairton area of the county. The plan, required by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and already overdue, must detail the steps the county will take to guarantee that air quality meets national fine particle health standards by this year. The failure to clean up this area is part of the reason the Pittsburgh region has been ranked dirtiest in the nation by the American Lung Association.

“The plan proposed by the Allegheny County Health Department fails to meet the basic test – it doesn’t result in clean and healthy air for the people living in the area,” said Charles McPhedran, chair of PennFuture’s law staff. “In fact, there will be at least 80 occupied homes in the human health sacrifice zone close to the Coke Plant where the air will not be safe to breathe.

“The plan also fails to meet the timetable the law requires,” continued McPhedran. “The plan itself is nearly two years late, and it delays cleanup until at least 2015. The plan relies, in part, on a voluntary agreement the county signed with US Steel without public notice, which allows the company to replace its outdated and dangerous coke batteries at a timetable chosen by the company. This is just too little cleanup, too late.”

“The county proposes pushing its deadline back five years. That’s five additional years the residents of the Mon Valley will have no choice but to breathe air we know for certain is unhealthy,” said Joe Osborne, GASP legal director.

“It is unlawful, as well as patently offensive, to sacrifice the health of families by exposing them to unsafe air,” said Dr. Joylette Portlock, PennFuture’s western Pennsylvania outreach coordinator. “We need a good clean air plan now, if we are to end Pittsburgh’s dubious leadership in dirty and dangerous air pollution. And cutting our pollution will also benefit families and businesses downwind, in Westmoreland County and beyond.

“We are pleased US Steel has agreed to replace its dangerous coke batteries, but it has to be done now, not later,” included Portlock. “We cannot allow another Mon Valley generation to live and die from poisoned air.”

Last summer, PennFuture, partnering with GASP and other local organizations, launched “[Breathe Easy, Stay Healthy](#),” a comprehensive campaign to make Pittsburgh’s air clean enough to meet federal health standards; hold polluters accountable by taking legal action where necessary; and work to make sure people understand how important it is to clean our air. As part of the campaign, PennFuture signed a court-enforced consent decree with FirstEnergy to clean up the dangerous air pollution from the company’s Bruce Mansfield coal power plant in Beaver County. Other actions include public education, supporting new state regulations to reduce air pollution from outdoor wood boilers and evaluating permits and compliance for major air pollution sources in the county. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* called PennFuture the “state’s leading environmental advocacy organization.”

The Group Against Smog and Pollution, Inc. (GASP) is a non-profit citizens’ group working for a healthy, sustainable environment. Founded in 1969, GASP has served as a watchdog, educator, litigator, and policy-maker on many environmental issues with a focus on air quality in southwestern Pennsylvania.

The PennFuture/GASP comments can be downloaded at <http://www.pennfuture.org/userfiles10/ACHDCleanupPlanComments.pdf>. Other organizations signing on to the comments include the American Lung Association in Pennsylvania, Clean Water Action, Environmental Integrity Project, Sierra Club Allegheny Group, and Sustainable Pittsburgh.