



The S-C Connection: SEDA-COG and Animal Fac-

Ever heard of SEDA-COG, the “Susquehanna Economic Development Association – Council of Governments”? If you haven’t, S-C describes itself on its web page as “a regional multi-county development agency which, under the guidance of a public policy board, provides leadership, expertise and services to communities, businesses, institutions and residents.” S-C was incorporated in 1957, is funded by a combination of federal, state, and private grants, and now brings its services to eleven central Susquehanna counties.

Many area citizens, themselves direct or indirect S-C beneficiaries, see its efforts as important to a reasonable pattern of development in the area. We in OUE have long considered S-C an ally in the struggle to protect the regional environment, especially since the early 1990s when we worked together in the fight against the hazardous waste burner. Further, as an example of its environmentally-friendly work, S-C is a crucial participant in establishing a “greenway” in our region, one of many corridors planned to conserve and connect natural recreation areas in the state.

We also have considered S-C an ally because its Mission Statement states that it “seeks to enhance growth opportunities in an *environmentally sensitive* manner while retaining the region’s predominantly rural character.” (Our italics.)

Given this background, we were greatly disappointed to discover recently that S-C is participating in a low-interest loan program that supports the spread of animal factories in our region. S-C is involved in these practices because it is the Area Loan Agency for the state’s “Small Business First Financing Program” (SBFF). This program is funded by state and federal funds and is run by the PA Department of Community Economic Development. SBFF provides these loans to small businesses of all sorts for land, equipment, and in some cases working capital.

Why is S-C participating in a loan subsidy program that helps to spread animal factories, annihilate small farming, and threaten the environment all across the state? We contacted the agency to ask that question. The upshot was that on May 16th three Board members and Bill Smedley of Green Watch met with the S-C finance staff. In this meeting we learned that in 1982 many regional S-C offices, including the local one, chose to be designated as Area Loan Agents of the Commonwealth.

This role means that S-C assesses loan applications for several state programs in terms of a program’s rules and then makes a recommendation to the relevant state department for final approval. S-C also monitors how the loans are used by those who receive them.

Recently, the state government decided that long term growth in Pennsylvania depended particularly on tourism and agriculture, and the Small Business First Finance program is one of the consequences. Since SBFF defines “agriculture” to include animal factories, SEDA-COG is currently bound to assess loan requests from applicants building animal factories, or face almost certain legal challenges.

In a subsequent email, S-C officials informed us that, “We have processed five (5) applications for local farmers who will be raising livestock under contract to ‘local growers.’ However, to the best of our and DCED’s knowledge these projects do not represent CAFO’s or CAO’s.” This language seems to suggest that all this activity is local, but the phrase “contract to local growers” means that these operations are relatively large scale animal factories where the farmers getting the loans are being paid a fee to raise animals for absentee corporations such as Hatfield Meat or Empire Foods.*

What to do? We told the finance officers our side of the story: about the victimized families; about the growing mass of scientific literature demonstrating serious health and safety threats from animal factories (a big stack of which we left for their consideration); about how poorly monitored are the operations of animal factories by state Conservation Districts (and we left them recent photographs of dead and rotting hogs lying next to the barn and in the adjoining field of an animal factory in Kelly Township); and about property owners in Washington Township who fear their homes might plummet in value because a farmer there, whose application for a low interest loan is being reviewed presently by S-C, wants to construct a poultry operation with 64,000 chickens.

We asked the S-C financial staff to reconsider being the Area Loan Agents if doing so meant they must participate in the destruction of real farming in the state. We also told them that we did not come to denounce them personally, and we didn’t do that. Our impression of these three officers was that, despite

SBFF, they shared with us the hope that regional economic growth would not be at the expense of the civil liberties of many citizens and of the natural beauty of the area.

We hope our readers will follow our lead in urging SEDA-COG to abandon its participation in a program that seems thoroughly to contradict all its other efforts. You can do this by calling 570 524-4491.

**CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations) and CAOs (Concentrated Animal Operations) are technical descriptions of large scale animal factories that refer to the ratio between the total weight of all the animals and the amount of land available to the farmer to dispose of the consequent manure. Many such large scale operations avoid being a CAO, or CAFO, and thus escaping DEP regulations, by leasing or owning adequate land on which to spread the manure. An example is the one being contested in White Deer Township. There, the farmer originally applied to raise 100,000 chickens but cut that to 90,000, apparently to avoid the CAO designation. We use the term "animal factory" to describe all these large scale operations, and we are opposed to them because (1) a growing volume of scientific information convinces us that they threaten the health and welfare of neighbors, and (2) the contracts between the local farmer and the corporations specify that the farmer will*

Bucky Ziegler Reporting: Two New Alternative Food Outlets

Last summer, we ran a story about Bucky Ziegler and his organic farm in Limestoneville. OUE wants to support alternative food sources in the area, and we have asked Bucky to keep us updated on what's happening. Recently, he sent us the following information about two places many of our readers will want to visit this summer. We should remind our readers, too, that Bucky provides organically grown pork, poultry, and feed, and to get on his mailing list give him a call at 570 437-2156.

Allow me to introduce you to a couple of new food outlets in our area. One family owned and operated new enterprise is Homestead Produce of Watsonstown. This ready-pick and pick-your-own vegetable farm is run by Titus and Edith Martin. This couple has many years of experience home gardening, and plan to begin on a larger scale to offer their expertise to folks in our area. Their veggies will be grown all natural with sustainable gardening practices which include no chemical sprays, no raw manures, and no chemical fertilizers. Just compost, cover crops and natural amendments mixed with lots of TLC. Their farm stand is located on the farm, approximately three miles south east of Turbotville on Millheim Road, just off County Line Road. If you are interested in supporting their efforts, I would encourage you to contact them at 570 649-6648, Tuesdays or Fridays around 7 PM.

The other exciting development soon to become known in our area is the Susquehanna Valley Growers Market. This market will be located in downtown Lewisburg at Hufnagle Park parking area between 5th and 6th Streets. It will be held each Friday

afternoon from 2-6 PM beginning June 3rd through October 28, 2005. This will be a unique market as it is "grower only," meaning the folks offering their products will be the ones who grow, prepare or produce them. No reselling!! Approximately 15 different grower/members will be participating, almost every week, a few, part of the season, as their specialty produce comes and goes. Most of the growers are members of Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), although this is not a prerequisite. Some of the products that will be offered are bedding plants, flower arrangements, baked goods, grass-fed poultry and beef, natural pork, dairy goat products, free-range pastured eggs, a wide variety of vegetables, blueberries, as well as crafts and much more.

I would encourage those of you out there to consider supporting these new wholesome food avenues. It is a tremendous way to support local food producers in our region who are producing, in most cases, products superior to those one finds in the average supermarket. Sure, it is not always as convenient to do this, but consider some of the benefits of making an effort to buy local and fresh. For instance, the saving in fuel by buying from a local farm vs. the average grocery store product! Also, more and more folks, all the time, are becoming more discriminating about the foods they eat and where and how they were produced. I believe it is time some other people in our local area become as fussy about their food sources, as they are about their clothes, cars, homes, etc. This all relates to our caring for our community. ♦

Abram (Bucky) Ziegler
Organic Farmer/ Grower

We Need Your Help!

In recent years, many addresses, particularly rural ones, have changed. Although new addresses are provided by the post office at our request, since we use a bulk mail permit for our mailing, we are charged a fee for each address update. If your address has changed or changes in the future, you could help us save money by sending us your new address on the return slip that we provide in each mailing. Donations are not necessary with address changes, but they are always appreciated. While you're at it, you can include you email address, if you have one, or send both to: oue@ouenews.org. Thanks!

An Attempt to Clear the Air

Area residents got a warning late last fall when a full-page notice appeared in local newspapers announcing that a request had been submitted to the DEP by the Hoeganaes Corporation's Milton facility. The company seeks a modification of its existing permit that would allow the release of up to 28 tons of methylene chloride into the air annually. This notice caught our attention immediately and the OUE board and members of the local Sierra Club made requests of our own—for a public

hearing. OUE also hired Bill Smedley of GreenWatch, an environmental consultant, to conduct research into Hoeganaes's compliance history.

Our own research showed that methylene chloride is one of the most toxic substances commonly used in manufacturing, known to be a carcinogen in animals and with potential for horrific effects on humans. In a process described as "unique," Hoeganaes uses a mixture of methylene chloride and nitrogen in a fluidized bed process to coat powdered metal particles used to insulate ignition coils in automobiles.

A crowd of about fifty OUE and Sierra Club board members, local residents, neighbors and a former employee of Hoeganaes, students, and company representatives—attended the DEP hearing in February. We know from past experience that DEP does not consider questions of public health in its permitting process. In the initial presentation, Dave Aldenderfer, DEP's Air Quality Program Manager, reminded us, "Virtually all attention in the review of a permit focuses on technology."

During a question and answer period, we learned that due to faulty equipment, fugitive emissions of methylene chloride from the plant have been much greater than expected when conditions for the original permit were written in the early 90s. In a nutshell, the company has been in violation of its permit conditions and it is seeking a revision so that the permit more closely reflects reality. Because emissions from the plant are so poorly monitored, measurements of the volume vary widely.

After one questioner raised the issue, Smedley called the DEP "negligent" for *still* not having any data on atmospheric thermal inversions when citizens groups brought this concern to the agency's attention more than a decade ago. He also noted citizens' disgust with how DEP has handled this facility, calling it a violation of the public trust. In a review of files on the Hoeganaes facility at the DEP's Williamsport office, Smedley uncovered an email between Mohammed Zamad, Chief of DEP's Facilities Permitting Section, and a Hoeganaes official in which Zamad says, "We will be issuing the plan approval next month." This communication took place *ten days before the end of the public comment period*--yet the approval had already been decided!

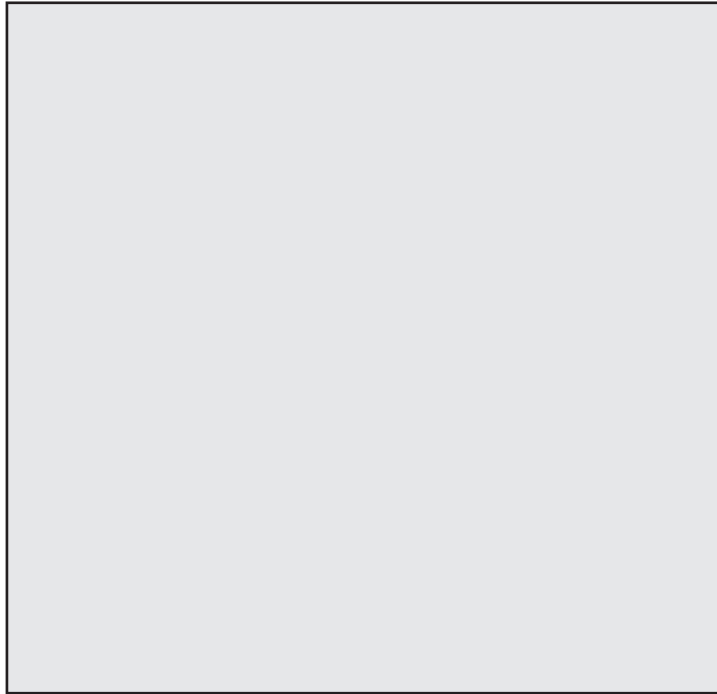
In a formal hearing, Linda Godfrey of OUE and others presented testimony. Ed Lawrence of the Otzinachson Regional Group of the Sierra Club asked: "What incentive is there for a company to honor its permit obligations if it knows that if it balks long

enough, DEP will adjust its permit to allow them excessive and illegal emissions?" He referred to Zamad's email as "ignorance of or contempt for the public participation process."

Jim Tracewski of Hoeganaes complained, "It's a very difficult permit to live with." He ignored concerns of the other speakers and ended with a threat, saying elimination of this process "could jeopardize the Milton facility's future."

An environmental engineer who is a ten year resident of the area commented that no one wants to see a company pack up and go, but pointed out that many companies are finding ways to reduce pollution and save money.

We don't know how long it will take for DEP to officially announce the decision Zamad made in that December email. Perhaps they have decided to "file" the comments from the hearing and allow the pollution to continue unabated.◆



White Deer Chicken Factory Still on Hold

In our last issue we reported on a battle being waged in White Deer Township over a farmer's application to build an animal factory where 90,000 chicks would be raised into broilers. This story began last October when residents in the

border area between Kelly and White Deer Townships found flyers on their doors announcing the application for three poultry barns on land surrounded by about 125 homes and 500 residents.

Within days, a few of these residents began to resist the application, and we in OUE aided their cause with seed money and tactical suggestions informed by our experience of working with similar groups during the past three years. In November, the residents formed the Don Snyder White Deer Chapter of OUE, and its members have so far successfully kept the application from being approved by the White Deer Township supervisors.

The chapter's leaders, Bob and Darlene McBryan and Tim Swank, have organized a tight and effective core group that has raised money, held rallies, put out a newsletter, waged an expansive educational campaign, engaged the media and hired an attorney to represent them at key township meetings. Most impressively, chapter members have contested the application at zoning hearings, Planning Commission meetings and at the April meeting of the township supervisors when they formally considered the application.

Due to delays, the supervisors will not announce their decision until June 28th. The problem facing them as they consider the application is that the township ordinance is badly contradictory. On one hand, some of its language encourages animal factories such as this one, even to the extent of making it unnecessary for the farmer to apply for a building permit. At the same time, the ordinance charges the supervisors with protecting the interests of all the residents of the township, not just those of farmers and their corporate contractors who want to build animal factories. Thus, at the April hearing, opponents of the application presented a notebook full of scientific documents attesting to the health hazards of such operations. If the supervisors approve the application, the opponents will make a legal challenge.

We on the OUE Board, having worked with the Don Snyder Chapter since last October, tip our hats to their imagination and perseverance, and for defending their home turf in a way that has inspired us greatly and made us glad that they are a part of OUE. Of course, we will update this story in our next issue. ♦

OUE's Alternative Energy Project

In our summer issue, a year ago, we reported an "alternative energy initiative," whereby we had set aside \$2,500 to fund a model alternative energy project at a home, school, or business. We then earmarked all the donations we received from that issue, ultimately accumulating \$5,000 for the project. Further research and consultation convinced us that we would best locate the project at a school, with the plan that once the system was up and running, students at the school and others who are interested in the technology could inspect it and learn how such a system works. We pursued our new initiative by having talks with officials at Warrior Run and Milton High School, all of whom expressed much interest. After the early promise of these preliminary contacts, talks were stalled by the necessarily frenetic schedules of officials at both schools. Recently we learned that Warrior Run officials are again interested in talking to us about a project.

Further, during this unplanned delay, we discovered another potential partner at Greenwood Friends School, in Millville, Montour County. This is a small, private school with about eighty students, and its operations and scale suggest that a solar

energy system there would nicely complement the school's science program. We have now scheduled a mid-June visit to both schools by a few Board members and our alternative energy consultant, Pamela Downey of Solair Energy. In our next issue, we hope to be able to report that the construction of a solar energy project is underway at one or more of these schools.

In the meantime, we will keep the \$5,000 allocated to this program in reserve. Once again, we express thanks to our readers who made generous donations to this alternative energy fund and seek their patience as we work to discover the best way to expend them. ♦

The Planet Very Badly Needs Your Help!

Most of us are already wise enough about such problems as global warming and the extinction of species and yet still sit and watch glaciers melt and fellow creatures pass into oblivion. Likely, we do that because we are convinced that regular people can no longer contend with the massive power of corporations and the elected officials who do their bidding. That conclusion, that "we" can't do anything to stop "them," is the most powerful ammunition "they" have. Our pages have often included striking counter-evidence, such as our stories about how a handful of people in Nippenose Valley and one in Montour County brought together their neighbors and together defeated applications for animal factories. They did this despite the fact the applications had the backing of huge meat and feed corporations, the Farm Bureau, and elected officials at every level of government. These people prevailed over "them" primarily by coming to discover that together they had a collective power that none could imagine while fretting alone at home.

Thom Hartmann, an influential writer on democracy, had this wise counsel for people who want to take back power: "My advice is to join something. . . . However you do it, get together with other people. Connect. That's what society is about."

In other words, to take back power you need to get out of the house and start connecting. And you always can connect with us! **OUE Board meetings, open to one and to all, are held at 7:00 p.m., the first Monday of every month at the Watson town United Methodist Church.** ♦

OUE Publications Committee: Editor, Charles Sackrey; Associate Editors, Linda Godfrey, Dave Laidacker, and Clyde Peeling; Distribution, Bessie Bush and Linda Godfrey.

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OUE is a grass-roots organization dedicated to protecting the environment. As a non-profit, charitable organization, OUE is completely dependent on public support to continue its work, and you can help us along with a tax-deductible contribution. Donations are used to fund efforts such as the *Ban the Burner* campaign in the early 1990s, activities of *The Task Force on Hog Factories*, alternative energy projects that are planned for local schools, and for public education. Our web site is: www.ouenews.org. Please send your comments to: editor@ouenews.org.