

THE LILYPAD

Issue 5 | January 2021

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CAUCUS MEETING

We hold monthly telecom meetings on the last Sunday of every month. All are welcome!

Upcoming Meeting:
January 31st @ 7 p.m.

Registration:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZwpduCurTluGNxDJc7jBwQcqvfJJkrwS82S>

UPCOMING MEETING

Michigan Democratic Party
 Spring Convention

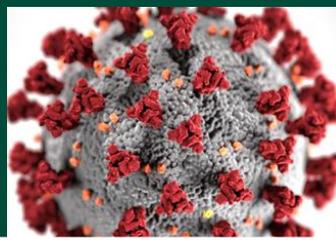
Saturday, February 20
@ 2:30 p.m.

Virtual event



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COVID-19 and Planetary Health



COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019

By Mike Buza

COVID-19 is an environmental issue but just not very often defined as one. In her 2016 book, “Pandemic,” Sonia Shah warned that modern man, by invading the territory of exotic animals increases the likelihood of releasing a virulent pathogen. She specifically mentions wet markets in China as a possible epicenter of a pandemic.¹ Does this sound familiar? She recommends taking into consideration environmental factors when deciding how to deal with pandemics. I want to emphasize this book was written more than three years before the current COVID-19 pandemic.

There are those who warn of more pandemics to come. In fact, there was such a concern that PREDICT was launched in 2009 during the Obama administration.² Their job was to identify possible viruses that would cause diseases and pandemics in humans. The focus of their studies was highly bio-diverse areas of the planet. Thomas Gillespie, an associate professor in Emory University’s Department of Environmental Sciences says, “The majority of pathogens are still to be discovered. We are at the very tip of the iceberg.”³ PREDICT was defunded during the Trump administration.

Increasingly, man is invading the environments of highly diverse ecosystems, such as the rain forests. It is believed that this is how the AIDS virus became established in humans. There are other viruses, such as Ebola, Zika, and dengue, that appear to have come about due to the invasion of humans into bio-diverse areas.⁴ It is now believed that planetary health is essential to prevent the emergence of new diseases. Planetary health is not just about carbon emissions. The greatest concern is that a pathogen will arise that has the virulence of COVID-19 and lethality of Ebola. The World Health Organization says that Ebola case fatality rates average around 50% but can range as high as 90%.

It doesn't have to be that way. More and more it is being recognized that planetary health promotes human health and prosperity.⁵ There are many steps you can do to promote planetary health. Deforestation is often driven by the expanding palm oil farms. Check the ingredient on the label of the food you buy for palm oil. Buy more of your food from local food sources. Joining a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) is a great way to do this. Anything you can do to lower your carbon footprint improves the planet's health. Re-evaluate your want vs need list. The less your demand on the Earth's resources the greater the planetary health. These may seem like small steps but we got into this mess with many small steps and that is how we will get out of it.

1 Shah, Sonia. Pandemic. New York, NY, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. 2016. Print

2 PREDICT (USAID) - Wikipedia

3 'Tip of the iceberg': is our destruction of nature responsible for Covid-19? | Environment | The Guardian

4 The Climate Crisis and COVID-19 Are Inseparable (jacobinmag.com)

5 COVID-19 is a crisis of nature as well as health. Here's why | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)

As of January 1, 2021... 131 Days and Counting!

Counting down to May 12, 2021.

By Shannon Donley

It's not nearly as exciting to hear that date compared to January 1, 2021 when we get to start a new year that will bring hope and better things than 2020 did. It's not a date like January 20, 2021, is when we pray our government starts to heal and represent a great nation.

That date, May 12, 2021, is the end of the 180 days Governor Whitmer and the Department of Natural Resources is 'requiring' Enbridge to cease operation of the Straits Pipelines and permanently decommission and dismantle Line 5!

Until this past Labor Day, for the past four or five years, hundreds of kay-activists, environmentalists, and others fighting for this cause have gathered and created a floating island under the Mackinac Bridge. Led by Indigenous groups, we would follow their lead and roll along the waves in the beautiful water and pray, sing, shout and some of us would even cry for the idea that this would be the last time we saw our beautiful water unspoiled. It was a time that would energize us and remind us we were not alone. Each year, as we would go our separate ways, we would say see you next year. And then we would look at each other with mixed emotions and wonder...would we have to do this again? Would those pipelines ever go away? Would this water be safe?

The Pollyannas of the group would say the next time we gather it will be to celebrate.

This may be the year we gather earlier. We DO indeed have cause to celebrate. Or will we?



Pipe Out Paddle Up 2019



Pictured: Shannon Donley (left) and Anishinaabek Caucus Chair Andrea Pierce (right)

The whoops and yays were not too presumptuous. Many people are very cautiously optimistic over the November 13, 2020 announcement by Governor Whitmer that she has revoked and terminated the Easement that gave Enbridge the permission to use the Straits as a short cut to save themselves money while putting no effort or investment in the protection of the life that surrounds those shorelines, uses that water for life or for their pipeline itself. They abandon their asset and leave us with an environmental disaster waiting to happen. Ask anyone in Kalamazoo. How well they know!

The myriad of environmental and tribal groups have been de-crying and denouncing the easement and the atrocities that Enbridge has perpetrated against the state's land and water for decades. Those in Lansing have a history of turning a blind eye and a deaf ear. When Governor Whitmer ran for office on a promise to shut down Line 5, she garnered a lot of support. Some of that has waned as we've waited and waited. Public comment period after public comment period. Study after study. Finally! Finally, the Governor announces that she will FINALLY sign the order we have all been waiting for. Attorney General Nessel gets right to work and by the end of November, we have the lawsuit filed on behalf of the Governor and the Department of Natural Resources. Now we wait. Again. And in the meantime, of course, Enbridge has filed a counter suit. So we wait.

We wait for the other shoe to fall. There is still this matter of a tunnel. The permitting process for the tunnel is still ongoing. Here we go again. The fight is not done. The danger is not gone, but we are ready. Bring on 2021!

In the meantime, mark your calendars.... the countdown to the dismantling and demise of Enbridge Line 5 has begun!



Broken Bottle Bills

HB-5422-5425



*Research By Elizabeth Benyi & James Woodyard
Language by Elizabeth Benyi*

The above bills are meant to revise returnable bottle regulations that have had no major revision since 1996. All bills must pass en toto to be enacted into law. Currently, over 90% of returnable bottles are put back into recycling which shows the current success of returnable bottles.

A 25% portion of the monies collected would go to Distributors and Retailers and Law Enforcement. This is said to offset the costs, however, Distributors and Retailers already have the infrastructure in place to manage returnables and would not continue to do so if they were not profiting from the venture. The remainder of monies collected would go to the Clean Up and Redevelopment Fund administered by EGLE (Environmental, Great Lakes and Energy) for toxic site cleanups including PFAS sites and contaminated drinking water sites and to and the Renew Michigan fund that is designed to promote community recycling programs both of which the funds are capped.

In addition to the above funding distribution issues is the cost to the consumer. Particularly working families affected by toxic lead, PFAS, and other water contaminations through absolutely no fault of their own are now completely dependent on bottled water for their household needs. The added cost of the 10 cents to each bottle of water further penalizes these households at a cost of a minimum of over \$19.00 per month which is a half tank of gas to drive to and from work or 2 meals to feed their families in an economy where most working families are struggling to provide for their families needs.

The only possible positive for the taxpayer is the fine and penalty portion of the bills which would hopefully cut down on the huge amount of fraud being perpetrated by bringing large shipments of returnables from out of state for profit. But since all bills must pass together for even 1 single part to be considered this is not a major benefit to taxpayers.

The current status of the bills after going through recent revisions to increase the cap to EGLE and Renew Michigan is that the bills have been pulled from debate and consideration by the state senate majority leader Mike Shirkey for reasons that have not been disclosed and the bills will not be considered during the lame-duck session.

But the bills could be revived in the future so we must be attentive to that possibility.

Updates on the Movement to Ban Fracking

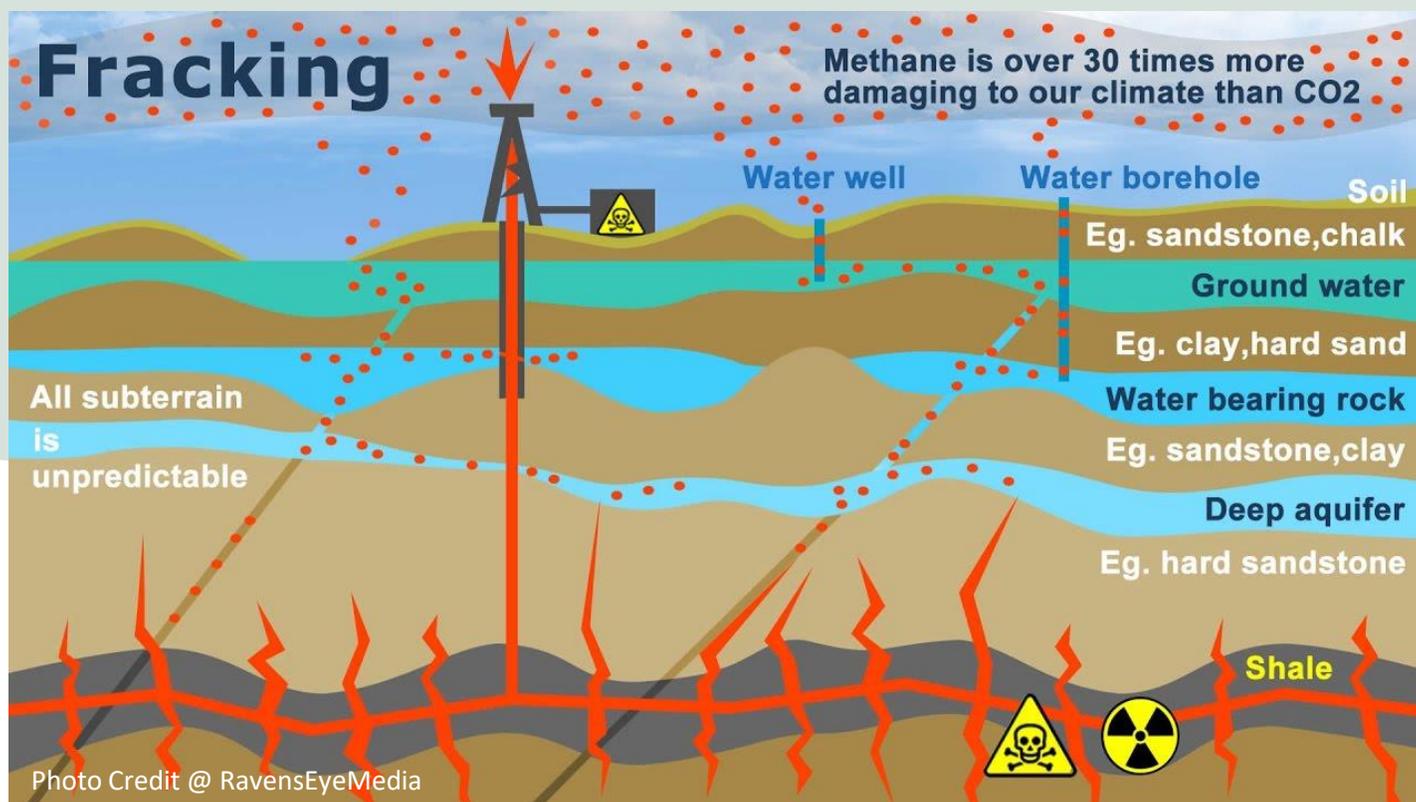
By Mike Buza

Fracking for natural gas has been one of the environmentalists' most detested activities. It has been shown to contaminate groundwater. It appears to increase earthquake activity in areas where it is heavily pursued. Of course, its use increases global warming either through the leaks of natural gas or with the carbon it produces when it is burned.

One of the champions of the anti-fracking movement in Michigan is Luann Kozma. She is the Director of the Committee to Ban Fracking in Michigan. She has been one of the main organizers to get a fracking initiative on the ballot. LuAnne did a presentation to the caucus several months back.

LuAnne explained that the ballot initiative has been held up by several legal battles. They fall under three general categories. The first is the time limit set by the legislator to gain the required number of signatures. This has been a long-term issue going back long before the ban fracking initiative. The second issue was that of "estoppel" where the State says one thing to the courts and later says another. The third issue is where the State ignores what the constitution says.

LuAnne explained to the Caucus all of the legal battles and the twists and turns they encountered to prevail to this point. Currently, they are awaiting a decision by the Michigan Court of Appeals. It is hoped the fracking ban initiative will be on the ballot for the next election.



Election 2020 Results

The Environment was on the table this election cycle and we are already looking immeasurably better off than during the Trump administration. But our work in bringing about a Green New Deal and a restoring a health planet is far from over. Here are a few takeaways from the last cycle:



NEWS

Proposal 1 highlighted flaws in conservation funding

Although the results did not go as we hoped, proposal one sparked a long needed discussion on how parks & conservation are funded in our state. We'll need to build upon those discussions to push for real reform that will keep Michigan ecosystems safe. Conservation still lacks a reliable source of funding.

Read more about Prop 1 at: greenmdp.com/post/what-is-proposal-one

Democratic Turnout was High

Dana Ferguson, Jim Page, and Kimberly Bizon all earned more votes than any other democrat in their race in nearly a decade. Unfortunately, the increase in conservative turnout kept these candidates from victory. There is still work to be done in combating the lies and misinformation Republicans benefit from and each campaign brings us closer to achieving that. Thank you to all the candidates for your tireless efforts that will continue to have impacts for years to come.

Congrats to our endorsed candidates on winning their elections!

<p>MDP Environmental Caucus</p> <p>Proudly Endorses</p> <p>Dr. Rema</p> <p>For MSU Trustee</p> 		<p>MDP Environmental Caucus</p> <p>Proudly Endorses</p> <p>Eli Savit</p> <p>For Washtenaw Prosecutor</p> 		<p>MDP Environmental Caucus</p> <p>Proudly Endorses</p> <p>Bridget McCormack</p> <p>For Michigan Supreme Court</p> 		<p>MDP Environmental Caucus</p> <p>Proudly Endorses</p> <p>Elizabeth Welch</p> <p>For Michigan Supreme Court</p> 	
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