

Appalachian Alternatives

Appalachia - Science in the Public Interest

Winter 2009 Number 92

SAVE THE DATE: ASPI's Sun Day - Saturday, June 20.

Join us for our Mt Vernon Open House as we explore and demonstrate the bounty provided by the sun: solar energy, gardens, solar water heating, & more.

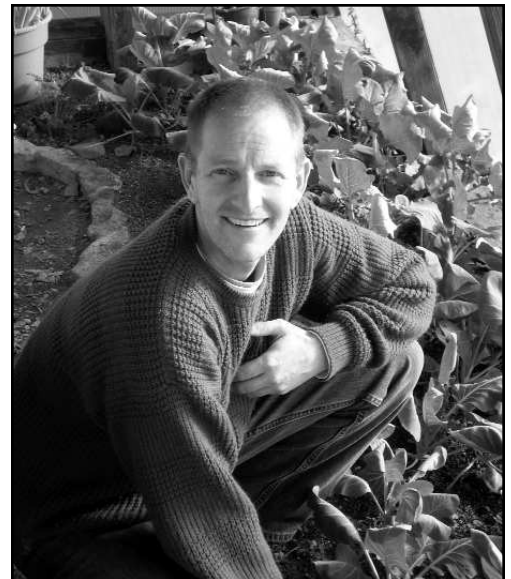
Welcome to Our New Director

In mid-November 2008 Casey Sterr began work as ASPI's executive director. Casey is familiar with ASPI's work as he was on staff in the late-90s. Casey took over for Deb Bledsoe who served as executive director for close to three years and remains on staff. "Deb's courage through her illness and willingness to share her experience on the many important issues is a wonderful gift for all of us associated with ASPI," Casey shares.

Casey was raised in Illinois and has lived in Kentucky for twenty years. He came to ASPI from Louisville, Kentucky where he worked with a non-profit organization focused on providing experiential education programs for youth on an organic vegetable farm. Casey also spent time overseas working on education and development initiatives in Cambodia.

"I look forward to serving with ASPI. We have been working on local sustainability issues for more than 30 years," Casey said. "We have a unique voice and history to lend."

Casey enjoys serving with small non-profits. "There is a wonderful opportunity to be engaged in all aspects of our mission." Most of all, Casey looks forward to meeting ASPI's supporters and interacting with others who live and work for healthy and sustainable communities.



Our new executive director, Casey Sterr

Facilitating Renewable Energy and Sustainable Communities

Several solar energy projects facilitated by ASPI's Kentucky Solar Partnership (KSP) came to fruition this past Fall. In the city of Frankfort, solar water heaters were installed at two City fire stations. Together these solar water heaters are expected to save the City nearly 500 therms of natural gas per year and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2.6 tons CO₂ per year. The downtown fire station at City Hall now has three solar thermal collectors and the fire station in East Frankfort has two collectors. Both units are visible public demonstrations of solar energy systems, an important aspect of this program.

This project was initiated when KSP offered to provide a free feasibility assessment to the City for the use of solar water heaters at their fire stations. Funding from the US Department of Energy enabled us to offer such free assessments to interested parties over the past two years. KSP also helped the City to secure a

grant from the State Energy Office, which covered about 40% of the cost of the units. The solar water heater project was one of many actions the City of Frankfort has taken to meet its commitment to the US Mayor's Agreement for Climate Protection, which Mayor William May signed in 2007.



Phillip & Kim with Solar Trailer at Bluegrass Green Expo

In October, KSP organized a five day solar photovoltaic (PV) training in Frankfort. The workshop was attended by nine participants and was taught by Chris LaForge of Great Northern Solar in Wisconsin. Over the course of the five days, a complete solar electric system was installed on a 12-foot box trailer, which includes six 110 watt PV modules, eight batteries, and an inverter package suitable for connecting the system to the electric grid. One week after completing the installation, ASPI exhibited the "Solar Trailer" at the Bluegrass Green Expo in Lexington, and demonstrated solar electricity in operation to the thousands of people who attended the event.

KSP is working with low-income housing developers to assist families with the purchase of solar water heating systems. Through a grant from the University of Louisville, KSP has partnered with the Low Income Housing Coalition of Eastern Kentucky (LINKS) to install a solar water heater on a home near Prestonsburg, Kentucky. The family receiving the solar water heater had been without any water heater for almost a year. After KSP provided a site assessment in August, Jeremy Coxon of Sun Wind Power Systems in Floyds Knobs, Indiana was contracted to install the unit. Two members of LINKS' construction crew participated in the installation and received hands-on training from Coxon.

ACTION ALERT on Kentucky Governor Beshear's new energy plan. Public comments are needed in support of energy efficiency and renewable energy, and opposing coal-to-liquids and nuclear power. To read ASPI's comments and submit your own, visit: www.kysolar.org.

VISTA Volunteer

ASPI is pleased to announce our newest volunteer, Derek Douglas, who will be coming to us for a year as a full-time Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team VISTA. Derek, a graduate of UT Knoxville, will work out of Newcomb, Tennessee to manage a community watershed project to serve the Clear Fork basin of the Upper Cumberland River. The Clear Fork basin includes areas in Campbell and Claiborne Counties in Tennessee, and Bell, Whitley and McCreary Counties in Kentucky.

This three year project will initially focus on identifying areas of historic mining in the Clear Fork Basin and roughly assessing the water quality of the first and second order streams - the smallest headwater streams which have previously escaped study, but are most likely to be receiving and impacted by undiluted pollution – straight pipes, and acid mine drainage and sediment from historic mining operations.

To achieve this, Derek will organize The Clear Fork Watershed Council, a local citizen watershed organization to serve the Jellico, Tennessee area. With Deb Bledsoe, Derek will work to identify and engage stakeholders in the basin, as well as set up and recruit volunteers for a framework acid mine drainage screening over the full watershed, in partnership with ECU's Environmental Research Institute and Upper Cumberland Watershed Watch.

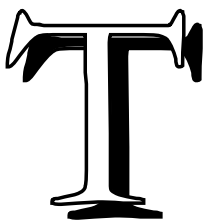
Watershed News

In 2009, ASPI will continue to take part in citizen water monitoring training and sampling in partnership with the Upper Cumberland Watershed Watch (UCWW). The UCWW Annual Meeting is February 7th. At this

meeting, results for 2008 will be reviewed, and the water sampling strategy and training schedule for 2009 will be mapped out by volunteers.

In the Rockcastle region alone, we are currently organizing water testing for *e.coli*, which is an indicator of sewage contamination, at 17 surface and subterranean stream sites. We also trained over 30 volunteers to do aquatic biohabitat assessments from Letcher County to McCreary County in the Upper Cumberland, which we funded with a World Wildlife Fund grant in collaboration with the UCWW. Over the last few years, we have seen consistent *e.coli* contamination and excess silt at several key sites, and found wide variation in the biological health of streams draining into the Rockcastle River.

Regardless of where you live in the United States, there is probably an organization in your area which sponsors and trains folks for citizen water monitoring, if you'd like to participate. Water sampling is a great way to get outdoors, learn more about the health of your watershed, and provide independent water quality data in your area.



HANKS

Steve & Julie LeBrun, Philip & Terrie Curd, Ruth Straus, Reverend John Burke, Mr. & Mrs. Rodrigo Botero, Roy Bledsoe, Bridigid Clifford SCN, Jerry & Patti Wolf, Julia Hensley, James & Hildegard Wacob, Margaret Gorey, Joan Hartmann, Colin Raitiere, Boyd M. Mangus, W.L. Galbraith, Edgar Hume, Stephanie Barrett, Gary Whitehead, Randall Smith, Robert Ukeiley, Joel DeFour, Jane Stephenson, Mark Jeantheau, Sandra S. Hudson, John P. Curd Jr., Andy & Kathleen Weigert, David Sheley, James & Kathleen Zeller, Carvel & Rosemarie Kreisel, Frank & Carol Schmidt, Hilary Lambert, David Greene, Ky. Heartwood, Leonard Levine, Robbie Pentecost, Fr. Al Fritsch, Leonard Wrona, James Hall, Gail Carone, Ihor & Cathy Hlohowskyj, Gerard

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Scribblings: Reflections on Nature

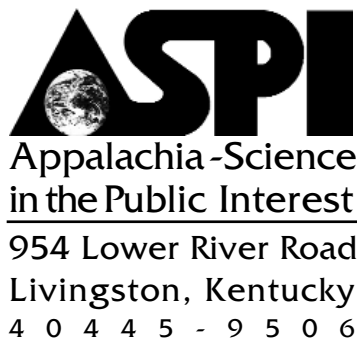
It's the middle of December, and we have finally begun to experience more seasonal temperatures here in Rockcastle County, with days in the high 30's and nights in the 20's. This morning a light snow is falling at the Nature Center and the birds are flocking to the feeders we keep stocked with different types of treats. In order to promote a diversity of feathered visitors, we have suet feeders, platform feeders, and hanging feeders. Millet, oilseed, thistle, suet, and cracked corn are offered.

Today's diners include snowbirds, several pairs each of cardinals and downy woodpeckers, a red-bellied woodpecker, a mixed flock of carolina chickadees, titmice and nuthatches, a pair of carolina wrens, and hordes of goldfinches. In the river valley, a great blue heron silently flies past our deep pool and on downstream, intent on moving to the shallow riffles where it can fish. It's a good morning for birdwatching at ASPI. *We invite you to share your nature reflections, poems, etc., for inclusion in our next newsletter.*

Another Way to Support our Work - Sign-up for discounted long distance service for your home or business. Mention this ad and designate (at no cost to you) 3% of your bill to ASPI. For more information or to order this service, contact Ian Rudick with Come From The Heart at 888-622-0957.

ASPI Board of Directors - Terrie Curd, President; Tom Dupree, Jr., Secretary; Susana Lein, Treasurer; Joshua Bills; Jamie Johnson; Ben Perry; Casey Sterr, Executive Director.

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