

Appalachian Alternatives

Appalachia - Science in the Public Interest

Spring 2011 Number 98

Welcome to Alan Whetsel - New ASPI Executive Director

I am very honored for the privilege of serving the great region of Appalachia through the endeavors of such a prestigious organization as ASPI. When I first learned of this opportunity in the fall of 2010 I began to intensively research what ASPI was all about. It was almost overwhelming to realize the scope of accomplishment this institution has had over the past 34 years and frankly, quite humbling to even take a step towards the shadow of its legacy. I take the baton now from such great leaders as Ben Perry, Deb Bledsoe, Casey Sterr and

not least of all, Al Fritsch. I can hardly express how deeply committed I am to pouring my heart and soul into carrying on not only their mission, but also the mission of all who are and have ever served here. I feel a great sense of responsibility to our very talented Board, employees and many volunteers and to our remarkably generous supporters who have stood with such dedication to ASPI over the years. Together all of these fine folks have created what has become ASPI's greatest asset, nearly three and a half decades of meaningful influence in the application of appropriate technologies for the people of our communities.



New Executive Director Alan Whetsel

Next year is our 35th anniversary. Just in the short time I have had to get to know the dedicated laborers behind ASPI, I can tell you that everyone here is poised to make this next great milestone an unforgettable one.

My roots run deep here. I was born in Tennessee. Both of my parents' families have been in Appalachia for generations. My father came from a family of nine siblings. His father was a Car Inspector for the Interstate Railroad Company at Miller Yard on the Clinch River in Virginia. His mother (besides raising nine kids) ran the company hotel and general store and was the local U.S. Postmistress. My mother came from a family of 8 siblings. Her

father worked in the coalmines of War, WV in the late '30's. He was eventually able to buy a farm in Scott County, VA, which he worked for the rest of his life. His wife, my grandmother Lillian, lived a life well devoted to raising her 8 children. I spent many summers as I was growing up on my maternal grandparents' farm. In spite of living in many places, I have always proudly claimed my true heritage as rooted there. Four years ago, when my wife had the opportunity to become the new ceramics professor and director of the Ceramics Apprenticeship Program at Berea College, my side of the family was happy when she accepted the offer (she is a native Pennsylvanian through no fault of her own). Coming to Kentucky was for me like coming full circle and returning home and I was a little self-serving about it. She's settled into it pretty well too.

My background... I have a BA in Biology from Alfred University in rural western New York. I have also completed some coursework in Education at Goucher College in Maryland. There was a period of my life where I was essentially a professional undergraduate student. I have done undergraduate coursework at eight different colleges and universities. My interests are broad. Deb Bledsoe recently described me as a generalist and I guess that fits. I love nature, science and history. I raced sailboats on the Chesapeake Bay for many seasons. I spent over 17 years in instrumental performance. I am a former public school teacher where, among others things, I had the opportunity to introduce urban youth to environmental issues. Prior to coming to Kentucky I was the Supervisor for Hope Springs Farm in Hershey PA, providing special needs adults with the experience of participating in a working permaculture farm, raising vegetables, fruit, small livestock and goats. My wife and I are active in Garden Web's Seed and Plant Exchange and plants swaps in Maryland and Kentucky. We hosted our own 1st annual plant swap at our home here in Berea last summer. Also since coming here, I have been a volunteer participant for Berea College's Ceramics Apprenticeship Program Holiday Sales, Empty Bowls and Christmas with a Heart and recently became an individual supporter of Kentucky Sustainable Energy Alliance. I have also been an advocate of non-profits and church clients serviced by Blue Grass Energy having filed formal concerns with the Public Service Commission regarding demand billing policy.

Just through my initial research I realize that ASPI faces great challenges at this time. Things are different than they were 35 years ago and we are committed to finding our place in the rapidly changing landscape of grass-roots involvement. There is a new generation out there and ASPI is dedicated to reaching them. As I carry this mission, I earnestly welcome the continued input of those of you who have supported ASPI through the years.

News from the Kentucky Solar Partnership



In recent months the Kentucky Solar Partnership (KSP) has been consulting on a number of solar and energy efficiency projects, advocating for clean energy policies at the state level, and supporting the grassroots initiative Lighten Up, Frankfort! in partnership with the Frankfort Climate Action Network.

Housing Authority of Owensboro Solar Water Heater Project

In 2010 the Housing Authority of Owensboro (HAO) began installation of solar water heating (SWH) systems on seventeen apartment buildings in their Adams Village community. KSP worked with the HAO from the start of the project, providing the initial solar site assessment, designing the project, drafting specifications, and overseeing the installation of the systems. Through an open bidding process the project was awarded to Solar Energy Solutions of Lexington, Kentucky. As each apartment building contains four apartments, the total project will provide solar hot water to 68 apartment units. Each of the solar units includes a natural gas tankless water heater to provide back-up water heating. The project also includes two additional buildings with too much shading to allow for the use of SWH. On these buildings new tankless water heaters were installed.



Solar water heaters and collection tank at the Housing Authority of Owensboro

This project is expected to reduce natural gas consumption for the HAO by 3910 ccf per year (equivalent to 43,347 KWH) and reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions by 20.4 tons CO₂.

Capital Plaza Hotel

Since mid-2010 KSP and Jason Delambre of Interdependent Energies, LLC have been assisting Capital Plaza Hotel in Frankfort with a comprehensive energy efficiency renovation. The project's long-term goal is to upgrade the hotel's building systems to greatly reduce energy and water consumption and utility costs, while improving the services and indoor environment for the hotel's guests and employees. The project began with an analysis of the hotel's historic energy and water usage. From this baseline we were able to identify priorities for action and are in the middle of our efforts to upgrade the building's lighting systems, water fixtures, heating, cooling, and water heating systems. With 189 rooms, the Capital Plaza Hotel is Frankfort's largest hotel and, when complete, the project will stand as a model for other hotels in the Commonwealth.

Lighten Up, Frankfort!

In 2009 the Frankfort Climate Action Network (FrankfortCAN) began a pilot project called Lighten Up, Frankfort! which partners with local organizations to form teams of households to work together to reduce their personal carbon emissions. Participants in the program follow a workbook called *Low Carbon Diet*, which helps them to calculate their carbon footprint and identify the most effective actions for reducing their carbon emissions. After completing the successful pilot project, ASPI partnered with FrankfortCAN to win a \$25,000 grant from the US EPA's Environmental Justice Program to continue and expand the Lighten Up! initiative in 2010. This grant enabled us to hire a part-time coordinator for the initiative and provided resources for promoting the project. The project's goal is to involve 400 households working together to reduce Frankfort's annual carbon emissions by 1,000 tons. As of this writing we have over 230 participating households and have achieved over 500 tons of carbon emissions reductions. The grant from the US EPA is also enabling us to offer educational workshops in the Frankfort community to educate people about actions they can take to save energy at home and in their businesses.

Building a Clean Energy Economy in Kentucky

Efforts to build a clean energy economy in Kentucky took a step forward this year as HB 239, the Clean Energy Opportunity Act, was presented in the Kentucky House, sponsored by Representatives Mary Lou Marzian, Joni Jenkins, and Jim Wayne. This bill was created thanks to the efforts of the Kentucky Sustainable Energy Alliance (www.kyse.org), of which KSP is an active member. While the Legislature did not vote on HB 239 this session, the bill was presented for discussion by the House Tourism Development and Energy Committee. We see our efforts to create good clean energy policy in Kentucky as a long term process that will require the education of legislators and the public about the many benefits these policies can bring to Kentucky. In 2010 our clean energy bill died in committee without even a hearing. This year, we see some rays of hope, as we not only had a hearing of the bill in committee, but the committee members expressed their openness to new ideas that can benefit the people of the Commonwealth, and a willingness to listen.

HB 239 would establish a Renewable and Efficiency Portfolio Standard for Kentucky, requiring the state's electric utilities to meet 12.5% of their total electric sales from renewable energy by 2021. The bill would require utilities to achieve energy efficiency savings equal to 10.25% of their previous year's sales by 2021, as well. A dedicated portion of these efficiency savings would need to be achieved through programs targeting lower income families. Thirty states now have Renewable Portfolio Standards, policies which have been the greatest drivers of renewable energy development in the United States.

The bill would also establish Feed In Tariff's (FIT's) for renewable energy. Under a FIT, utilities would be required to purchase power from any customer generating renewable electricity (solar, wind, low-impact hydro, low-impact biomass) using standard, long-term contracts, providing premium prices for the renewable power established by the state Public Service Commission. FIT's are not yet common in the United States, but are widely used in other countries. Worldwide, 75% of all solar PV capacity has been developed using Feed In

Tariffs. They are recognized as the most effective policy for rapidly expanding a renewable energy industry and the generation of renewable power.

The Clean Energy Opportunity Act was crafted by the Kentucky Sustainable Energy Alliance with key assistance from the Kentucky Resources Council in 2010. KySEA is a coalition of over 30 organizations and businesses that works to promote clean, sustainable and affordable energy solutions for Kentucky. This broad based coalition has come together to develop the ideas, resources, public understanding and political support necessary to advance solutions that can help all Kentuckians save money and energy, especially those who are most vulnerable to rising costs and rapidly changing energy conditions. KSP helped draft HB 239 and has been especially active in educating our coalition members about Feed In Tariffs and other policies that can support renewable energy development.



Spring is about to, well, spring! That means that citizen water monitoring across the Upper Cumberland Watershed Watch will resume shortly. Are you interested in how clean your favorite creek or river is? Volunteer to be a citizen sampler!

The time commitment includes a half-day training in April, a half Saturday in each of three months (May, July, and September), and a Saturday Annual Conference. In return, you will learn how to use equipment to test the field chemistry of your creek, including dissolved oxygen, pH, and other parameters. At the end of the sampling season, you'll have a good overview of water quality in the region, and a lot of new friends!

For more information about the program, or to sign on, contact Deb Bledsoe at ASPI, or by email at Deborah_Bledsoe@yahoo.com.

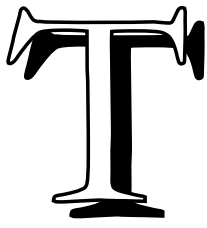
Down On The River by Jack Kieffer

Today is warm, sunny and bright. The Rockcastle River sparkles in the sun as the wind causes ripples. There are some young plants that are still green after our several cold spells. The small stream that is nearby makes quieting music as it tumbles over the rocks and roots along its path. It is amazing to see the green plants and River Cane still green after some zero degree weather out of Canada. One day I watched the snowflakes disappear in the river. The snow quietly fell and began to transform the landscape. Gradually the bare mountainsides appeared as if from nowhere. Having turned white they seemed to pop out at me. The trees rose out of the snow. In the evening, the outside light shone on the snow on the fruit trees in front of my place and the tree seemed to be lit up.

In the garden the onions and garlic survived the zero degree temperatures. Also, winter cress and chick-weed are still quite healthy. All of these are great in salads. They are fresh and organic and add a great flavor to the salad. The strawberry plants look a little worn out but are still green with some red in the leaves. There is also a creeping plant with round leaves that is quite healthy with the zero degree temperatures. I haven't found a use for it; it really grows fast and covers the ground. At least it serves that purpose.

For some of the cold winter days, I have split some of the pine logs that still remain from the building of the cord wood walls for my trailer. These logs give a good hot fire which warms up the place rather quickly. The pieces are large so they last for several hours.

A short time ago, I saw a huge tree topple on the hillside by the little stream. It was tall and made quite a thump when it landed. Other trees are bent or misshapen but are quite healthy. All these give me courage and hope, since I too get bent or misshaped as the days pass, so I take courage from the trees. I too can keep going and be of service to others even with my misshaped-ness. The Lord gives us a wonderful earth which can teach us many things and can supply all of our needs.



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Frankfort Climate Action Network
US EPA Environmental Justice Small
Grants Program
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Paul Sullivan

Rebates Available for Home Energy Efficiency Improvements!

The Kentucky Home Performance Program provides rebates up to \$2,000 and trained, certified home energy evaluators and contractors for homeowners to perform home energy efficiency improvements. To learn more, visit www.kyhomeperformance.org or call 877-741-4306.

WISH List

ASPI is looking for: 2 good-condition area rugs to cover spaces of 12' x 12' and 5' x 10', a 5' x 5' rubber entrance/welcome mat, and horse manure/topsoil for the Mt Vernon demonstration garden.

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 - Tammy Clemons, President; Jamie Johnson, Treasurer; Joshua Bills; Terrie Curd; Henry Jackson; Margie Stelzer; Alan Whetsel, Executive Director.

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The ASPI logo features the letters 'ASPI' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letter 'A' is stylized with a white globe of the Earth integrated into its upper right portion.