



Noah Lenstra <nlenstr2@gmail.com>

[cchcc-I] Update: 5th & Hill News - Toxic Pipe at Boneyard Creek

1 message

Allison Jones <allison@healthcareconsumers.org>

Mon, Mar 21, 2011 at 12:14 PM

To: cchcc-I@lists.shout.net

Dear Friends,

We sent this message to you last week on Friday, but some of the links were broken. Please see below for the corrected email with working links. Apologies for the duplicate message.

Thank you for your support of CCHCC!

Dear Friends,

Champaign County Health Care Consumers (CCHCC) has an important update on the 5th & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign.

We held a press conference yesterday about the toxic pipe at Boneyard Creek, and you may have seen or heard some of the news coverage from the press conference.

Here are some links to some of the press coverage:

http://www.wicd15.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/vid_3934.shtml

http://illinoishomepage.net/fulltext/?nxd_id=228526

<http://will.illinois.edu/news/spotstory/tests-confirm-toxins-found-in-boneyard-creek-site/>

BACKGROUND ON THE AMEREN TOXIC PIPE AT BONEYARD CREEK Yesterday, we released the environmental test results from samples of a pipe (and the soil around it) at Boneyard Creek. The pipe is one that belonged to the former manufactured gas plant at Fifth and Hill Streets in Champaign, which is now the Ameren toxic site. Our concern has been that this pipe could be an ongoing source of toxic contamination into the Boneyard Creek, and along the 5-block stretch of the neighborhood where the pipe runs, til it ends at Boneyard Creek.

When the plant was in operation, from the late 1880s until the late 1950s, the pipe was used to dump tons of coal tar and other petroleum-based wastes into the Boneyard Creek.

The environmental experts working with the 5th & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign learned about the existence of this pipe after only one day of conducting background research. The pipe and the gas plant's use of the pipe to dump coal tar was detailed in a 1915 report by Ralph Hilscher. The environmental experts working with us asked the IL EPA and Ameren to investigate the existence of this pipe, because of its potential threat to

human health, the environment, and Boneyard Creek.

The IL EPA refused to investigate, saying there was no evidence for the existence of the pipe.

It should be noted that in the 15 years that IL Power/Ameren have "investigated" the toxic site, they apparently never found evidence of this pipe.

CCHCC INVESTIGATES THE PIPE

After IL EPA refused to investigate the existence of the pipe, CCHCC's Executive Director, Claudia Lennhoff, and CCHCC Community Organizer, Grant Antonline, went looking for the pipe in the Boneyard Creek. They simply used the description in the 1915 Hilscher report, and they found the pipe within minutes, once they were in the Boneyard Creek. They then collected samples of the pipe and the soil surrounding the pipe.

To see what they found, click this link:

<http://www.healthcareconsumers.org/files/Pipe%20picture%20display.pdf>

ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERTS INVESTIGATE THE PIPE Based on the samples that CCHCC collected, and the test results from those samples, our environmental experts decided to come to Champaign in early February and collect their own samples.

TEST RESULTS - PIPE IS HIGHLY TOXIC!

The test results from both sets of samples show very high levels of toxic chemicals in the pipe and in the soil surrounding the pipe.

The test results also confirm that this pipe is the pipe that was used by the former manufactured gas plant for dumping its waste products -- the test results show a "fingerprint" that matches the former manufactured gas plant and its waste products.

To see summaries of the test results, you can click on these links:

Table 1 - Summary from CCHCC's samples:

http://www.healthcareconsumers.org/files/cchcc%20SampleResults_summary_Table1.pdf

Table 2 - Summary from environmental experts' samples:

http://www.healthcareconsumers.org/files/Champaign%20Table%202_Summary.pdf

Note that in Table 2, some of the toxins are more than 1 million times higher than the state EPA's allowable limits!

CONSULTANT'S LETTER TO CITY OF CHAMPAIGN:

Mark Zeko, one of the environmental consultants working with our Campaign, wrote a cover letter to the City of Champaign to explain the test results and the implications from the test results.

If you're interested, this letter is VERY good reading! Here is the link where you can see the letter:

<http://www.healthcareconsumers.org/files/EEC%20Letter%20to%20City%20of%20Champaign.pdf>

NEXT STEPS:

We are calling on the City of Champaign to do the following:

1. Cap the pipe at Boneyard Creek to prevent further discharge of toxic chemicals into the Boneyard (and prevent a lawsuit from CCHCC under the federal Clean Water Act -- the City has until April 11 to act and avoid a lawsuit. We suggest the City bill Ameren for the cost of any corrective action the City takes.

2. Stand with the 5th & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign in calling on the IL EPA and Ameren to do a real and full investigation of all toxic contamination associated with the operation of the former manufactured gas plant, including along the pipe and the Boneyard Creek.

3. Move forward to repeal the groundwater restriction ordinance that lets Ameren off the hook for cleaning up toxic groundwater. The City Council already took a straw poll calling for the repeal of the citywide groundwater ordinance, but no action has taken place since the February Study Session.

Thanks for your support, and we promise to keep you posted on any new developments!



Sincerely,
Claudia Lennhoff, CCHCC Executive Director

~~~~~  
Champaign County Health Care Consumers  
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Champaign, IL 61820

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Champaign Council Recommends Case-by-Case Review for Groundwater Ordinance

Story date: Wednesday, February 09, 2011 from Illinois Public Media News



Champaign's City Council has recommended that it consider repealing the city's groundwater ordinance – but on a case by case basis.

A capacity crowd attended Tuesday night's 4-hour study session, urging the council to force the Illinois EPA and Ameren to conduct a full remediation of the former manufactured gas plant site at 5th and Hill streets, that includes neighboring properties.

Resident Lillian Driver operates a day care out of her home, where evidence of 6 different chemicals was

revealed in a recent test.

"Imagine these are your children that I will be watching," Driver said. "You wouldn't allow them to be in this situation. You would take them out. Now that this has been exposed, more than likely, these children I'm attending to, these parents are going to remove these children."

City staff and an EPA official still contend that levels of chemicals like benzene don't pose a health risk. But two environmental experts hired by Champaign County Health Care Consumers say samples taken this week from a Boneyard Creek pipeline prove Ameren hasn't done nearly enough to remediate the gas plant site.

Council member Will Kyles said Ameren appears to have done a good job with its cleanup efforts, but he said tests for chemicals like benzene continually prove otherwise.

"All I know is that as we continue to look into these issues, and continue to dive in and do more tests, we do find more stuff," he said. "Every time we go into meetings, we have homework assignments. And so that creates doubt. And that shows doubt there's doubt in our minds that this clean up is effective."

The City Council is also recommending that staff prepare a statement for the Illinois Pollution Control Board on vapor intrusion standards. Mayor Jerry Schweighart said it will likely require another study session before the groundwater ordinance repeal receives a formal vote.

But the Council's recommendation was not enough to stop a potential lawsuit against the city regarding the discharge of contaminants in Boneyard Creek. Claudia Lennhoff with Champaign County Health Care Consumers has given the city 60 days to treat pollutants flowing from a drainpipe into the creek, or the citizen lawsuit will proceed.

Lennhoff said the city is violating the Clean Water Act by allowing contaminated groundwater from the Ameren gas plant site to seep into that pipe. And said says it may contain coal tar, like another section of pipe she found in Boneyard Creek.

"And any time that water washes over that, it's spreading some of the contamination from the coal tar," Lennhoff said. "It's very important for the city to respond to this issue, but the city can thank Ameren for this pipe, or the predecessor company, but it is on city property and so the responsibility is up to the city to get it cleaned up."

But Lennhoff commends the city council's recommendation to consider groundwater ordinance repeals on a case by case basis, saying it will provide more transparency for residents. She said if the ordinance still exists citywide, it will allow the owners of gas stations, dry cleaners, and other businesses to try and avoid cleaning up groundwater contamination.



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Experts Say New Findings Prove Contaminants Remain in Neighborhood of Old Gas Plant

Story date: Monday, February 07, 2011 from Illinois Public Media News



Further tests from two environmental experts confirm that contaminants remain in the soil near the site of a former manufactured gas plant in Champaign.

Residents of the 5th and Hill neighborhood say evidence uncovered Monday from an old pipeline at Boneyard Creek proves that Ameren has failed to properly address the remnants of the site. The residents say if the city repealed its Groundwater Restriction Ordinance, it would force Illinois' EPA to require the

utility company to do the necessary groundwater extraction. Environmental investigator Bob Bowcock said when he told the agency about the pipeline, the EPA chose to ignore it.

"They had conducted an environmental investigation," he said. "They said there was no evidence of a pipeline, they denied its existence, and basically said they wanted nothing further to do with environmentally investigating it. We call on the Illinois EPA to do the right thing, to conduct a proper environmental investigation, and get their butts out there and do the job right, and do it now."

Members of Champaign County Health Care Consumers say the groundwater ordinance offers no protections for human health or the environment, and only protects corporations by exempting them from the costs of cleaning up the pollution for which they're responsible. Bowcock said vapors from chemicals like benzene are exposing residents to levels that can cause blood-borne cancers.

5th and Hill neighborhood resident Magnolia Cook said she was hopeful as Ameren started its cleanup on the former plant site, but her opinion changed quickly.

"I was outraged and heartbroken when I learned that Ameren is planning to leave the toxic groundwater in place in this neighborhood - a site surrounded by a day care, woman's shelter, and people's homes," Cook said. "This is not a toxic site miles away from anything surrounded by cornfields. This is a site with toxic chemicals in the soil and groundwater in a residential neighborhood."

If the city of Champaign doesn't repeal the groundwater ordinance, Bowcock said lawsuits against Ameren are likely. He said the utility did the bare minimum of cleanup by only removing soil on its own property. Ameren spokesman Leigh Morris said the gas plant site is in line with Illinois EPA standards, and does not pose a threat to human health or safety. Morris also said there is no evidence of a pipeline coming into the old gas plant site, and that the utility's remediation of the gas plant site will be completed next year.

The Champaign City Council will discuss the groundwater ordinance in Tuesday's study session, which begins at 7 p.m.

(Photo by Jeff Bossert/WILL)

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Toxic Site Exposed

Submitted by Brian Dolinar on December 9, 2007 - 6:09pm
Champaign Local Interest

A community meeting was held Saturday, December 8, 2007, at the Douglass Branch library about Ameren's toxic site at 5th and Hill Streets in Champaign. The 3.5 acre site is located in the heart of the north end and it is black working class people who have been impacted the most. A former coal-to-gas plant on the site is now gone, but a massive "blob" of coal tar 40 feet underground remains and may be the explanation behind numerous reports of cancer in the neighborhood, including two rare cases of multiple myeloma.

Approximately 100 people packed the room to hear about the information Ken Salo, Professor of Urban Planning, and his students have dug up about the 5th and Hill site. The site most recently came to the public's attention after CU Citizens for Peace and Justice, and its environmental justice committee, began organizing "toxic tours" with Professor Salo, highlighting the 5th and Hill site as one of its main attractions. The group then began organizing a coalition, which was joined by Champaign County Health Care Consumers.

At the meeting, Chuck Allen and Andy Bloeser presented their findings on the history of the plant and information they have collected from interviews with local residents. Between 1887 and 1953, the plant at 5th and Hill converted gas from coal for heating and lighting. The waste produced from this site, coal tar, was dumped in a massive pit where it has remained since. It is a veritable toxic soup containing polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH), benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylene (BTEX), cyanide, ammonia nitrate, sulfur, and fuel oil.

Several community members were present at the meeting to express their concern over the site. Kenyatta Chambers [pictured above] spoke to the audience:

"I live right across the tracks from the

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toxic site. My family has lived in the house for 35-plus years. My grandfather died of leukemia, which is rare, in 1992. My mother was diagnosed in 2002 with multiple myeloma, which is a rare cancer, I had never heard of it. I'm concerned and I still live in the house today."

Another man from the community spoke up:

"I have lived at my property for ten years. I was a semi-truck driver cleaning up hazardous waste sites. I went out to talk to the water testers. There were two guys with white jump suits on, they looked like space men. My concern was, if this is not hazardous, why are you wearing these white suits? My mother died of cancer. I have cancer now. My daughters have situations they probably shouldn't be having at a young age. I always felt something was wrong, I thought maybe I was overreacting. When I heard about all of this, I knew something wasn't right. They can cover it up because they got the best lawyers, the best everything."

A woman who lives near the toxic site and runs a child care service said,

"I have been concerned since day one. I experienced some bad taste in the water at my house and I called the water company. They were out in less than ten minutes. I really grew concerned after that. I said there's got to be something wrong in this neighborhood, because I would constantly see someone out testing the water. I asked the question, is there a problem with the water? Why are you testing it? They said, 'Oh, it's nothing, we're just testing the water.' I'm really nervous that there is something wrong with the water, because they confirmed it. But I want to know just how far the stuff is traveling. Because I have children there that I take great concern about. There could be contamination and I could be guilty of letting these children continue to be in this environment. And then there's my family. They need to look at cleaning this up quickly. Because it does affect our livelihood. That's why I'm here today. Because I'm really concerned about it. I know Ameren has never knocked at my door. The water company has never knocked at my door and said, 'Hey, there's a problem. We need to address it.' I said there's got to be somebody I can contact. But you don't know who to

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contact. You don't want to get a big issue going. Everybody would look at you like, hey what has she created. But now I'm convinced that there is a problem."

Ameren, the current owner of the site, has registered it with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) under the Site Remediation Program. As part of this program, Ameren is required to keep the community informed about the site, conduct periodic tests, and ultimately clean up the site. In exchange, they have legal immunity from any lawsuits that may come as a result of the site. It has been over 15 years since Ameren signed the agreement.

Many local residents said they have never heard from Ameren and had no knowledge of the site's toxicity. Ameren claims they have left information at the Douglass Branch library, but as of December 8, librarians deny having any such materials.

A local coalition has formed to ensure that neighborhood residents are not side-stepped in the remediation process and that they have some say in determining the fate of their community.

A follow-up meeting will be held on January 19, 2008 at the Douglass Branch library.

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We will not regularly publish until Jan. 14, but look here for breaking news, sports updates and new classifieds until we return. Enjoy break!

Former gas plant still left unclean

Site does not pose immediate threat

Melissa Silverberg Editor in Chief

Posted: February 7th, 2008 - 12:00 AM

Updated: September 19th, 2009 - 6:57 PM

Tagged with: Ameren, Champaign, Illinois, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Person Career, Quotation, News

Printer Friendly

Officials from Ameren and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency have said the former manufactured gas plant at Fifth and Hill streets in Champaign does not pose an "immediate" health risk to surrounding residents.

The site is one of nearly 100 such former plants across the state, according to the Illinois EPA.

These sites previously transformed coal to gas, were used to light streets or were used as sources of energy for the towns that housed them.

The site at Fifth and Hill, currently owned by Ameren, has not been producing gas since 1953, but has not been fully cleaned up since the stop in production.

"We know the site needs to be remediated," said Leigh Morris, spokesperson for Ameren.

Stan Black, community relations manager for the Illinois EPA, said there were other contaminated sites in Illinois that posed a greater environmental threat and public danger. Black said the other sites needed to be cleaned up before they could begin work on the abandoned Champaign plant.

Black also said the standards for cleaning projects like the one on Fifth and Hill have become increasingly stringent in recent years, which is part of the reason why the site has not yet been fully cleaned.

The issue recently gained public and media attention following the Jan. 19 meeting organized by the Champaign-Urbana Citizens for Peace and Justice, Champaign County Health Care Consumers, and the University Department of Urban and Regional Planning.

The meeting was informational about the toxic site and was meant to kick-off the Fifth and Hill Neighborhood Rights campaign in an effort to educate the public and residents about the dangers of the site.

"The people that organized that meeting are from Urbana, not the Douglass Park neighborhood," said Mable Thomas, the neighborhood coordinator for the City of Champaign.

Thomas also added that according to the information presented by Ameren and what she has witnessed, she does not believe the abandoned site poses a health threat to residents. Thomas said she also believes there has been a great deal of cooperation from both the Illinois EPA and Ameren.

The meeting spoke of a possible cancer cluster concerning houses surrounding the Fifth and

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Noah Lenstra <nlenstr2@gmail.com>

[cchcc-l] Last night's City Council Study Session - Success!

1 message

Allison Jones <allison@healthcareconsumers.org>
To: cchcc-l@lists.shout.net

Wed, Feb 9, 2011 at 10:49 AM

Dear Friends,

First and foremost, thank you to each and every one of you who contacted your Champaign City Council Members to urge them to repeal the City's groundwater ordinance. And thanks to every one of you who came out to last night's seemingly-unending Study Session.

The Study Session went from 8 p.m. til 11 p.m. last night, and amazingly, most community members who came out to support the repeal of the groundwater ordinance stayed for the whole meeting. Now that is dedication!

QUICK SUMMARY:

1. CCHCC announced that we had filed a Notice of Intent to Sue the City of Champaign under the Clean Water Act, because of the pipe at the Boneyard Creek;

You can see the Notice of Intent to Sue at:

http://www.healthcareconsumers.org/files/CCHCC_NOI%202-8-11.pdf

2. The City Council took a straw poll and voted to repeal the groundwater ordinance for Ameren and on a case-by-case basis (yes, that is confusing, and it falls short of a full scale city-wide repeal, but it's a start).

LINKS TO MEDIA COVERAGE:

You can see media coverage of last night's City Council Study Session here:

<http://will.illinois.edu/news/spotstory/champaign-council-recommends-case-by-case-review-for-groundwater-ordinance/>

http://illinoishomepage.net/fulltext/?nxd_id=215626

<http://www.wicd15.com/>

WHAT'S NEXT:

Please stay tuned to this issue. The vote last night was informal. Staff will still have to write an ordinance and the City Council will still have to vote on it. We will keep you posted!

Here are the highlights from the meeting:

STANDING ROOM ONLY

Supporters of repealing the groundwater ordinance packed the room! Every seat was taken, and it was standing room only for most of the night.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The comments made during public participation were great! They were all in favor of repealing the groundwater ordinance. There was not a single person who spoke in favor of keeping a city-wide groundwater ordinance. Many of the comments were poignant, insightful, and heartfelt.

OPPOSITION TO REPEALING ORDINANCE

The only opposition came from City staff, who recommended that the City Council keep the citywide groundwater ordinance.

5TH & HILL EXPERTS' TESTIMONY

I won't review their entire testimony, but they did talk about testing the 6 homes in the 5th & Hill neighborhood, and that the test results showed benzene and other toxic contamination to be at levels that far exceed the U.S. EPA safety levels, by as much as 10 times higher!

They also stated that there is no other state that allows cities to pass citywide groundwater ordinances like this, and that they will work with us to change the state rules that allow the IL EPA to offer these ordinances to our cities.

CCHCC'S TESTIMONY

CCHCC's Executive Director, Claudia Lennhoff, informed the City Council about that pipe from the Boneyard Creek (in case they hadn't seen yesterday's news).

She explained to the City Council that both the IL EPA and the City staff had REFUSED to investigate the existence of this pipe, even though there was a lot of documentation about it. IL EPA and the City said there was no sign that it existed.

This is the pipe that the manufactured gas plant had installed, that ran from the gas plant property all the way down along the railroad tracks, into the Boneyard Creek, so that the gas company could dump coal tar into the Boneyard Creek.

Claudia brought a piece of the pipe into the City Council chambers in a box. She said that the piece of pipe stunk with a petroleum-like smell, even though active coal tar hadn't flowed through it for the last 60 years. She offered to let the City Council members smell the pipe, but no one wanted to.

She notified the City Council that earlier that day, she had served the City with a Notice of Intent to Sue the City under the authority of the Clean Water Act.

She said CCHCC organization filed the Notice of Intent because of the urgency to stop contaminated groundwater from flowing into the Boneyard Creek through this pipe.

Claudia said the city is violating the Clean Water Act by allowing contaminated groundwater from the Ameren gas plant site to seep into that pipe. The pipe still contains coal tar in it, and every time water seeps into the pipe and flows through it, it's spreading the toxic chemicals from the coal tar.

She said that it's very important for the city to respond to this issue, but the city can thank Ameren for the pipe, or the predecessor company, but it is on city property and so, the responsibility is up to the city to get it cleaned up.

The City has 60 days to take corrective action, and if they don't, the Clean Water Act would subject the City of Champaign to fines of up to \$32,500 per day.

THE CITY COUNCIL'S INFORMAL VOTE (STRAW POLL) The City Council voted in a straw poll last night to change the citywide groundwater ordinance and repeal it for Ameren.

It was confusing, because it was not a straightforward repeal of the citywide groundwater ordinance.

Specifically, they informally voted to direct staff to repeal the ordinance for specific geographic locations, including 5th & Hill/Ameren, but to allow the four companies who had already used the ordinance, to keep it (mostly gas stations in other parts of the City).

The vote last night was informal. Staff will still have to write an ordinance and the City Council will still have to vote on it.

THANK YOU!

Once again, thank you for your support and activism on this issue! The community was out in force, and it made a huge difference! We were up against powerful interests, and even against the City Staff. Every single person's action, as part of this collective effort, made a huge difference!

Sincerely,
All of us at CCHCC and the 5th & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign

~~~~~  
Champaign County Health Care Consumers  
44 E. Main Street Suite 208  
Champaign, IL 61820

Phone: (217) 352-6533  
Fax: (217) 352-9745  
E-mail: [cchcc@healthcareconsumers.org](mailto:cchcc@healthcareconsumers.org)  
Web: [www.healthcareconsumers.org](http://www.healthcareconsumers.org)  
~~~~~

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~~~~~



Noah Lenstra <nlenstr2@gmail.com>

[cchcc-l] Stunning discovery of Boneyard contamination - take action tonight 2/8!

2 messages

Allison Jones <allison@healthcareconsumers.org>

Tue, Feb 8, 2011 at 9:40 AM

To: cchcc-l@lists.shout.net

BREAKING NEWS: Boneyard Creek contamination discovered, and toxic vapors are found in the homes of 5th & Hill residents.

CALL TO ACTION: Call on Champaign City Council to repeal the 2007 groundwater ordinance!

Dear Friends,

Yesterday, CCHCC and the 5th & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign and our environmental experts revealed a stunning discovery and findings from testing the homes of 5th & Hill residents.

The discovery is a pipe we found, from Ameren's former manufactured gas plant (the toxic site), that was used for decades to dump coal tar directly into the Boneyard Creek while the gas plant was in operation.

To see the pipe, you can go to our website at:

<http://www.healthcareconsumers.org/index.php?action=Display%20Page&id=815>

To see news coverage about the pipe, you can go to:

http://www.wicd15.com/newsroom/top_stories/videos/vid_3746.shtml

and

<http://will.illinois.edu/news/spotstory/experts-say-new-findings-prove-contaminants-remain-in-neighborhood-of-old-g/>

In addition to the discovery of the pipe, our expert consultants also disclosed test results from the homes of 6 residents of the 5th & Hill neighborhood. The test results show dangerous levels of toxic vapors from the Ameren site.

Please read below for more information. And please go to the TAKE ACTION section of this e-mail -- these findings show the importance of repealing the City of Champaign's 2007 groundwater ordinance that allows Ameren to leave toxic contamination in our groundwater, uncleaned.

WHAT THE FINDING OF THIS PIPE MEANS

This discovery shows that toxic coal tar was dumped into the Boneyard Creek for decades. It shows that there is a whole new source and location for coal tar, which will have to be excavated and cleaned. It shows that the IL EPA was derelict in their duty to investigate a major source of contamination associated with the Ameren toxic site. And, it is all the more reason to REPEAL the groundwater ordinance that we've been telling you about.

HOW WE LEARNED ABOUT THE PIPE

Our experts, Mark Zeko and Robert Bowcock, had found written reports and

accounts of this pipe during their research into the Ameren toxic site. The reports were very specific in describing an 8" tile pipe that ran from the northwest corner of Ameren's property, along the south side of, and parallel to, the railroad tracks, all the way down to the Boneyard Creek.

WE TOLD IL EPA ABOUT THE PIPE, AND THEY REFUSED TO INVESTIGATE

Last summer, CCHCC staff, 5th & Hill residents, and our experts met with the IL EPA in Springfield and presented the IL EPA with information and documentation about the pipe. In a follow-up e-mail, after we had asked the IL EPA to investigate the pipe and to expand the area of investigation associated with the Ameren toxic site, the IL EPA wrote that they would not investigate the pipe and there was no evidence for the pipe. Both IL EPA and Ameren deny the existence of such a pipe.

HOW CCHCC STAFF FOUND THE PIPE

My co-worker, Grant Antoline, and I found the pipe. How did we do it? We read our experts' report and simply followed the railroad tracks down to the Boneyard Creek. We climbed down into the Boneyard Creek (I was wearing waders), and looked at the spot where the pipe should be according to our experts' reports. We found the pipe in about 2 minutes of looking. The pipe was an 8" tile pipe, exactly as described, and it contained a nasty thick black substance that had coagulated and hardened along the bottom of the pipe. Our experts tested the materials we found, and determined that we had found coal tar and all the materials tested positive for the toxic chemicals from the Ameren site.

Yesterday, our experts came in from California and went to the Boneyard and collected samples from the pipe and the surrounding soil as media looked on. The petroleum smell was very strong, even in the very cold weather.

RESIDENTS' HOMES TEST POSITIVE FOR DANGEROUS LEVELS OF BENZENE, NAPHTHALENE, 1,4-DICHLOROBENZENE, AND ETHYLBENZENE

Our environmental experts tested the homes of 6 residents in the 5th & Hill neighborhood. One of the homes tested is as far as 3 blocks away from the Ameren toxic site. All homes were tested for vapor intrusion using sub-slab vapor testing. It's a way of testing to see what vapors are collecting underneath the foundation of the home. All tested positive at dangerous levels for Benzene, among other toxic chemicals. BENZENE IS NOT A NATURALLY-OCCURRING CHEMICAL. The toxic vapors invading the residents' homes are most likely the result of toxic migration from the Ameren property, through the groundwater.

WHAT ALL OF THIS MEANS

It means that the toxic contamination from the Ameren site is far more widespread and dangerous than the community has been led to believe. Ameren and IL EPA always say that there is no IMMEDIATE threat to human health. But the refuse to address the issue of long-term health consequences as a result of chronic exposure at varying levels.

It means that Ameren, and other polluters MUST be made to clean up the groundwater that they pollute. They shouldn't get a free pass to contaminate our groundwater and walk away.

It means that we've got to have the Champaign City Council repeal the 2007 groundwater ordinance that lets polluters out of their responsibility to clean up the groundwater they've contaminated!

HOW YOU CAN HELP -- TAKE ACTION!

Here are some ways that you can help:

1) Attend the City Council Study Session tonight, February 8, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. at the City of Champaign Building located at 102 N. Neil Street in Champaign. Everyone is welcome to come show their support for repealing the ordinance, and residents of the City of Champaign are especially encouraged to attend and speak out during public participation.

You can RSVP to let us know you'll be attending:

<http://www.healthcareconsumers.org/index.php?action=Display%20Page&id=813>

2) If you are a Champaign resident, call or e-mail your City Council member or one or more of the at-large members and tell them you'd like them to repeal the groundwater ordinance. To find out who your Council member is, you can call the City of Champaign at (217) 403-8700 or you can look up City Council members and their contact information on the web at:

<http://ci.champaign.il.us/city-council/>

City Council Member Information:

Will Kyles - District 1 - (217) 552-3625 - WillKyles@ci.champaign.il.us

Michael La Due - District 2 - (217) 367-5536 -

michael.ladue@ci.champaign.il.us Kyle Harrison - District 3 - (217)

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351-4765 - marcidodds@ci.champaign.il.us District 5 - VACANT POSITION

Thomas Bruno - At Large - (217) 398-2191 - tombruno@ci.champaign.il.us

Deborah Frank Feinen - At Large - (217) 356-2086 -

DeborahFrankFeinen@ci.champaign.il.us

Karen Foster - At Large - (217) 359-0356 - KarenFoster@ci.champaign.il.us

Gerald Schweighart - Mayor - (217) 359-9294 -

jerryschweighart@ci.champaign.il.us

Thank you for your support and activism!

Best wishes,

Claudia Lennhoff, CCHCC Executive Director

~~~~~  
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[cchcc-I] URGENT: Take action to protect our groundwater!

1 message

Allison Jones <allison@healthcareconsumers.org>

Fri, Feb 4, 2011 at 12:36 PM

To: cchcc-I@lists.shout.net

Dear Friends,

CCHCC and the 5th & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign is calling on the Champaign City Council to repeal the citywide Groundwater Restriction Ordinance, and we want to ask for your help.

The groundwater ordinance is bad environmental policy that threatens human health and damages properties throughout the entire city. Instead of protecting corporations and exempting them from cleaning up their toxic wastes, the City of Champaign should protect its citizens, properties, and its natural resources.

You can help by:

1. Attending the City Council's Study Session on the groundwater ordinance on Tuesday, February 8 at 7 p.m.

You can RSVP at:

<http://www.healthcareconsumers.org/index.php?action=Display%20Page&id=813>

2. Calling on City Council members to repeal the ordinance

For more information on how to help, see the Take Action section below.

We are opposed to Champaign's groundwater ordinance, on a citywide basis, for the following reasons:

. The ordinance offers no protections for human health or the environment; it only protects corporations by exempting them from the costs of cleaning up the pollution for which they are responsible and allowing them to redevelop the contaminated property more quickly;

. City staff say that the groundwater ordinance will protect city residents by preventing them from drilling private wells and drinking toxic groundwater, but city residents are already prohibited from drilling private wells for drinking purposes by another older ordinance. If the groundwater ordinance is repealed, City residents will still be prohibited from drilling drinking wells. The only real function of this ordinance is to save corporations the costs of cleaning up toxic groundwater;

. The ordinance results in the City of Champaign giving up its rights to one of its most precious natural resources - groundwater - which the City should be responsible for protecting;

. The ordinance results in the City of Champaign compromising the rights

and property values of property owners whose property may be trespassed upon with toxic chemicals and affected by someone else's contamination in the groundwater;

. The real effect of the citywide ordinance is that it gives protection to corporations/polluters from having to clean up toxic groundwater, while endangering human health, the environment, property values, and the rights of property owners in the City of Champaign.

. In the 5th & Hill neighborhood, if this ordinance is repealed, the IL EPA and Ameren will have to come up with a new strategy for physically addressing the groundwater contamination in some form or another.

We propose the following solution:

Repeal this citywide ordinance! For the 5th & Hill area, let the IL EPA work with Ameren to come up with a real way to address the toxic groundwater contamination. Let corporations/polluters seek individual ordinances on a case-by-case basis for specific properties, where appropriate. A repeal of this citywide ordinance would cause no harm to the City, its citizens, or its environment, and may help affected residents and neighborhoods. Individual ordinances on a case-by-case basis will create greater protections and transparency for Champaign residents.

WHAT IF YOU'RE NOT A RESIDENT OF THE 5TH & HILL NEIGHBORHOOD?

Even if you do not live in the 5th & Hill neighborhood of Champaign, this ordinance affects you. The groundwater is yours, too! Groundwater is a natural resource that moves and spreads, and contamination from one source (for example, a gas station, or dry cleaner, or Ameren's toxic site) can spread to another area or even into a waterway such as the Boneyard Creek, and spread out from there. This citywide groundwater restriction ordinance protects any polluter within the City of Champaign from having to clean up their toxic groundwater contamination. This ordinance is nothing more than a license to pollute one of our most important natural resources - our groundwater.

TAKE ACTION!

Here are some ways that you can help:

1) Attend the City Council Study Session on Tuesday, February 8, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. at the City of Champaign Building located at 102 N. Neil Street in Champaign. Everyone is welcome to come show their support for repealing the ordinance, and residents of the City of Champaign are especially encouraged to attend and speak out during public participation.

You can RSVP to let us know you'll be attending:

<http://www.healthcareconsumers.org/index.php?action=Display%20Page&id=813>

2) If you are a Champaign resident, call or e-mail your City Council member or one or more of the at-large members and tell them you'd like them to repeal the groundwater ordinance. To find out who your Council member is, you can call the City of Champaign at (217) 403-8700 or you can look up City Council members and their contact information on the web at:

<http://ci.champaign.il.us/city-council/>

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- . Gerald Schweighart - Mayor - (217) 359-9294 - jerryschweighart@ci.champaign.il.us

BACKGROUND:

Currently, the health and properties of the residents in the 5th & Hill neighborhood are being adversely affected by the spread of toxic groundwater. Because of the City's groundwater ordinance, IL EPA is exempting Ameren from having to clean up its toxic contamination in the groundwater, including contamination that may have spread through the Boneyard Creek.

You don't have to drink toxic groundwater to be endangered by it: On its surface, this ordinance presumes that toxic groundwater is only a threat to human health if someone drinks it. But citizens can encounter toxic groundwater in several other ways. This ordinance does nothing to protect citizens from coming in physical contact with toxic groundwater (i.e., basement flooding), and the ordinance does nothing to prevent toxic groundwater from spreading and emitting vapors which enter and poison people's homes and workplaces. The real, functional purpose of this groundwater ordinance is to exempt corporations/polluters from having to clean up toxic groundwater.

If the ordinance is not repealed, our groundwater will become increasingly contaminated:

Although the situation at 5th & Hill has given rise to this examination of the groundwater ordinance, the ordinance applies citywide in Champaign, and all residents can be similarly affected by toxic contamination in groundwater from other sources, such as gas stations and dry cleaners, to name a few.

Over time, if this ordinance is not repealed, more and more corporations/polluters may use this ordinance, and the City of Champaign's groundwater will become increasingly polluted.

As always, thank you for your support and your activism! We hope to see you next week on Tuesday at the City Council Study Session.

Sincerely,
Claudia Lennhoff, CCHCC Executive Director

~~~~~  
Champaign County Health Care Consumers  
44 E. Main Street Suite 208  
Champaign, IL 61820

Gmail - [cchcc-l] URGENT: Take action to protect our groundwater!

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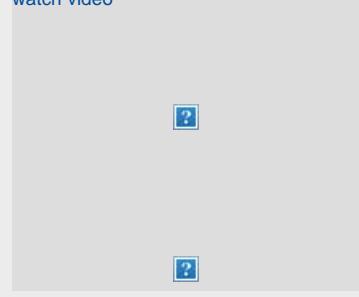
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Reported by: Ashley Sears
Tuesday, February 08 2011

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A Champaign neighborhood group says it'll sue the city if its land isn't cleaned-up. Members are concerned about an old gas plant at Fifth and Hill Streets in Champaign. Ameren owns it. Neighbors say it's contaminating the groundwater.

Dozens of concerned neighbors went to the city council meeting asking for their help. They want the city's groundwater ordinance to be repealed. It stops people from digging wells where there's contamination. Neighbors say it gives companies like Ameren a license to pollute.

Environmentalists found toxins in six homes near the site. City leaders spoke at the meeting. They say the chemicals aren't doing any harm.

Neighbors say their complaints are falling on deaf ears.

"Being here seems like a waste of time really. It seems as though the city is not concerned about us as neighbors or as residents that live in this area," neighbor Lillian Driver said.

The group says they really don't want to sue. It filed an intent to, but it just wants the groundwater to be cleaned-up.

The city council hasn't made a decision on the groundwater ordinance yet.

Ameren and the Illinois EPA say tests show the groundwater is clean, but critics say that testing wasn't extensive enough. In fact, clean up efforts at the site continue, but focus mainly on soil contamination. That will be finished in 2012.

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The American Cancer Society's Relay for Life is having its kick off in Moultrie County. [Read More >](#)

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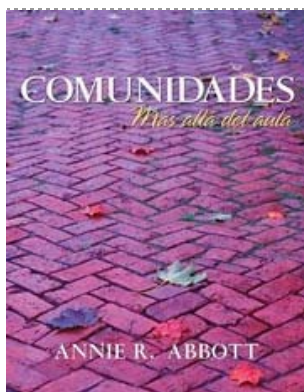
News from Ann Abbott at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign about:
 Spanish community service learning
 Spanish & entrepreneurship

Thursday, January 27, 2011

UIUC: Learn about Activism at the University YMCA

by **Ann Abbott**

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Click the cover to order your copy of this Spanish community service-learning textbook.

Considering Adopting "Comunidades" for Your Course? [Click here to get a review copy.](#)

Follow me on [Twitter](#): @AnnAbbott. I tweet what I teach.



In *Comunidades: Más allá del aula*, I have an activity about certain actions one can do to address the problem of affordable housing (p. 120). Each item in the activity presents a problem and a possible solution. Students' task is to decide if the solution involves charity, volunteerism or activism.

That difference is something that most of my students haven't thought much about. By doing academic service learning, students' volunteer work is at least connected to their academic learning, providing them insights into the larger cultural and policy issues that impact the realities they observe in the community. Sharing and comparing their experiences in the classroom helps students make sense of their volunteer work. Furthermore, many of the prompts for reflective essays included in *Comunidades* ask students to conclude with a paragraph about what actions they can take to address the larger issue at hand.

Still, teaching students about activism is not the primary goal of the course. It's difficult enough to cram into one semester all that they need to work effectively in the community just in terms of language skills, cultural know-how and professional behaviors.

But a few students are already activists when they enter the class. And a few more are certainly ready to take the next step at the end of the semester. But then they move on to their next set of courses. Or they graduate.

That's why I'm so excited to see that Aaron Johnson-Ortiz is offering an "[Activist Laboratory](#)" at the University YMCA. This is what I would have loved to had available to me when I was a student! And I hope that it will appeal to some of my students now.

Read the description below, and be sure to sign up if you're interested. I think this is a very exciting opportunity.

ACT LAB is a 6-workshop training series for emerging student activists hosted by the University Y. The series welcomes individuals with a background in activism who are desiring of a more formalized training, and who want to be exposed to a wide range of issues and methods beyond their own backgrounds. ACT LAB workshops will emphasize interactivity rather than lecturing, requiring each participant to be fully engaged in each session. Participants are expected to go through the whole series, and will receive a University Y ACT LAB certificate at the end, which will help student leaders pursue a

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[Click here to view all bibliography on Spanish community service learning \(CSL\).](#) Please leave a comment to add references that are not on the list!

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career in activism.

To register or for more information, email aaron@universityymca.org.

AL1 - Community and ActivismFriday, February 4, 2011, 5PM-7PM

Through hands-on exercises, participants will challenge themselves with questions like: What is your leadership style (your strengths and challenges)? When working with others, what do you bring to the table, and how do you improve group dynamics? How do you envision the world you want to live in? How do you see your role in bringing that world into being?

AL2 - Solidarity and Mediation

Friday, February 18, 2011, 5PM-7PM

This session will focus on coalition-building and solidarity between different groups. The first half of the workshop will be an Interfaith Dialogue training, which promotes finding common ground between faith groups. The second half is called Solidarity Organizing, which will help participants think critically about their role as activists, and especially their relative positions of privilege when working with oppressed communities in terms of race, gender, sexuality, and/or class.

AL3 - Another Planet is Possible

Friday, March 4, 2011, 5PM-7PM

We will visit to the 5th and Hill site, and talk with local residents and organizers associated with Champaign County Health Care Consumers (CCHCC). 5th and Hill is a toxic site in the African-American community in North Champaign, and residents and activists will share their stories and then talk about intersecting issues (What do the toxic remains of a local coal processing plant say about fossil fuel consumption and sustainability globally? What does the environmental damage say about race relations and economic inequality locally, nationally and internationally?).

AL4 - Theater of the Oppressed

Friday, April 1, 2011, 5PM-7PM

This session will focus on interactive and performative art forms as activism. Participants are expected to utilize their full selves and bodies in the session. "Theater of the Oppressed" is a theatrical form developed by the Brazilian director Augusto Boal that utilizes role playing and actor-audience interaction to aid in community dialogue and conflict mediation.

AL5 - Media and Mobilization

Saturday, April 9, 2011, 3PM-5PM

(Held at the Independent Media Center) The session will include a tour of the Independent Media Center, and several of its working groups, and will include a radio training at W-RFU (Radio Free Urbana).

AL6 - Education as Activism, Activism as Education

April 22, 2011, 5PM-8PM

This session will take a look at inequality and social justice organizing in education. Their will be a dialogue on racial, political, and economic inequality in K-12 education, followed by a workshop on collective bargaining and union organizing in a university context. At the end, we will have time for reflections and dialogue about the series.

Aaron

Posted by Ann Abbott at 8:42 PM

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