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Earth Day: NV Tribes Walk Against Pollution & For Solar Future

Mike Clifford, Public News Service-NV

<http://www.publicnewsservice.org/index.php?/content/article/32024-1>

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(04/19/13) LAS VEGAS, Nev. [A] This year's Earth Day Walk will focus on transition, and the move that is under way from older fossil fuel-based energy to newer clean energy.

Vickie Simmons is an air quality technician with the Moapa Band of Paiutes. She says coal-fired power plants, like the nearby Reid Gardner plant, energized her to make her first Earth Day walk. Now, there are multiple reasons she will make the 16-mile weekend trek.

"At one end we fight against pollution and at the other end, we're going to be the first tribe in the nation to have a utilities-size solar plant," she says.

There are several Nevada walks this weekend. The first kicks off at sunrise on Saturday at the Moapa Community Tribal Council building.

Simmons lost a younger brother to what she calls "coal-related medical issues," and she believes other tribes need to hold their leaders accountable on pollution.

"I know there are other Indian people, the Navajo people, their government won't stand behind them because they make money off the coal," she says. [A] "What we're doing is trying to move from dirty coal to clean energy."

Simmons credits the Sierra Club and other nonprofit organizations with helping Native Americans in Nevada bring attention to the need to shift to clean energy.

SOUTHERN NEVADA WATER AUTHORITY PUTS WATER BANKING AGREEMENT WITH ARIZONA ON HOLD

For the time being, Nevada's water bank in Arizona is closed. Since 2005, Nevada has socked away almost three year's worth of Colorado River water in the Grand Canyon State and paid more than \$122 million for the privilege. On Thursday, the Southern Nevada Water Authority board voted to put the banking agreement on hold. The move will allow the cash-strapped authority to forgo another \$217 million in payments while freeing thirsty Arizona to keep the roughly 600,000 acre-feet of river water it still owed Nevada under the landmark, 7-year-old agreement. <http://erj.reviewjournal.com/ct/uz3688753Biz16704770>

Three simple questions

With Earth Day around the corner, a couple RN&R staffers sat down with two environmental activists

By [D. Brian Burghart](mailto:brianb@newsreview.com) brianb@newsreview.com This article was published on [04.18.13](#).

Murphy's Law is almost standard operating procedure in the world of journalism. Stories are more journeys than maps, and our original plan was to have a roundtable discussion with activists who represented a lot of different facets of the environmental movement. But, when you get right down to it, the biggest issue facing the planet today is global warming, and its symptoms and cures both have their foundation in the same question: What kind of energy are we using?

When Sage Leehey and I sat down with Bob Tregilus and David Gibson, we had a notion of a wider range of ideas to discuss, but if human beings could solve this one issue of our addiction to fossil fuels, all of the other weighty topics of "environmentalism" become a lot easier to fix.

Locals are probably familiar with Tregilus. He first hit the public eye in 2000 as the chairman of the Washoe County Libertarian Party. He says he's recovering from economic libertarianism, but he's still a civil libertarian. Around 2005, he got interested in electric-drive transportation, starting the Electric Auto Association of Northern Nevada, and trying to promote good policies in the Legislature. He went from there to an interest in alternative methods of putting energy on the grid, moving from centralized utility-provided power to a decentralized, small source (like cars, small arrays and homes) renewable energy grid, more in line with Germany's feed-in tariff. He's cohost of a radio show, This Week in Energy, at www.thisweekinenergy.tv.

David Gibson is originally from Maine. He studied civil and environmental engineering, beginning his career in large-scale construction, before moving to the nonprofit sector. He moved here in August 2009, and he now works for Envirolution, a nonprofit that focuses on sustainability and energy-efficiency education. "We primarily work at the middle school and high school level, but we're developing elementary school curriculum right now. We have a summer program we're starting to recruit for right now, called Three Spheres Leadership Academy." For more information, check out envirolution.org.



We only meant to ask three questions, but—as might be expected from two such impassioned individuals—we had a 20-minute conversation before we got down to brass tacks. These first two paragraphs were outside the three-question interview, but are illustrative. All responses are abridged for space.

To continue: <http://www.newsreview.com/reno/three-simple-questions/content?oid=9617744>

Bad days for Newcastle

Health could improve as coal use declines

By [Dennis Myers](mailto:dennism@newsreview.com) dennism@newsreview.com

This article was published on [04.18.13](#).

The 1,021 megawatt Tracy generating station in the Truckee River canyon is an NV Energy facility that uses natural gas to create power. PHOTO BY DENNIS MYERS

In 2007, Nevada Gov. Jim Gibbons proposed that the state get into the coal business.

“After visiting with Wyoming Governor Freudenthal and seeing what his state is doing, I will encourage the creation of a coal-to-liquids fuels plant in Nevada, similar to the successful plant in Wyoming,” he told the Nevada Legislature. “It would use existing rail to transport coal to the plant and convert that coal to diesel and jet fuel for use at airports. It could also create natural gas to be injected into a natural gas pipeline for domestic use.”

The idea was widely derided. Assemblymember David Bobzien said, “Burning liquid coal fuel can emit twice as much CO₂ as regular gas.”

The Las Vegas Sun said the technology Gibbons described was water intensive, and Nevada is a desert state.

And nearly everyone pointed out that Nevada doesn't have coal.

That wasn't entirely true. Coal has occasionally been struck and mined in Nevada, at Lewis in Lander County in 1881, Elko County in 1901, and intermittently over the years at Verdi in Washoe County.

But not recently, and never in great volume.

It turns out there's another reason Gibbons' idea did not catch on. Support for coal is falling as fast as support for marijuana is rising. Nevada would have been buying into an investment in decline.

When NV Energy announced on April 3 that it will close its coal-generating plants, starting with Reid Gardner in the south next year (one of its three units will continue operating until 2017), and finishing with its northern plant at Valmy in 2025, is joining a national trend.

And there have been published reports that NV Energy is considering backing out of its investment in Arizona's 2,250 megawatt coal-fired Navajo Generating Station, which would be a financial jolt to that state's utility customers. NV Energy has 11.3 percent of the project, which faces from \$600 million to \$1.1 billion in federally-ordered improvements to cut down on pollutants. The city of Los Angeles has announced it will no longer be a customer of the plant.

Rate debate

At the same time, NV Energy will accelerate investing in renewable energy and increase its natural gas generating capacity. Its Tracy station east of Sparks uses natural gas.

In-state Nevada comment on NV Energy's decision on coal tended to focus on supposedly likely rate hikes. Bob Boehm of the Center for Energy Research in Las Vegas told KVVU News, "There's a cost associated with that and that's the downside to it. ... A lot of these renewables, you put all the expense in right at first." The state Bureau of Consumer Protection estimates 8 percent in rate hikes over 10 years while NV Energy itself said to expect 4 percent over 20 years.

Reno scientist Glenn Miller disagreed.

"There's no question that coal is cheap energy, but the price of natural gas has dropped so much that it is more competitive," he said.

Nevadans currently pay the second highest power costs in the Intermountain West.

Outside Nevada, investors and analysts seemed to agree with Miller. The day after the NV Energy announcement, its shares gained 1.24 percent, closing at \$20.36 on a volume of 6.02 million shares. A quick assessment by Goldman Sachs of the corporation reaffirmed its neutral rating and said the coal switch "will likely not impact earnings through 2015."

SBWire said the corporation's "focus on controlling costs and lower natural gas prices will certainly help. Lower natural gas prices have led to weakened demand for coal as more and more companies shift to natural gas from coal for power generation."

Health costs

Most of the calculations showing financial impact failed to take into account reduced health care costs, though that is one of the reasons Nevada Moapa Paiute tribe has been pushing for shutdown of Reid Gardner.

“The Native American communities surrounding the Reid Gardner facility are going to have better health because of the lack of coal ash,” Miller said. “Each of us makes a decision on our own basis, but I suspect that solar electric generation would not have those kinds of consequences.”

Coal is a factor in asthma attacks, chronic bronchitis, heart attacks, hospital admissions, heart attacks, premature deaths, and lost work days. Nevada tends to be at the wrong end of state rankings in a variety of health maladies.

A Clean Air Task Force study in 2010 estimated that pollutants from coal plants cause 20,000 heart attacks, more than 13,000 premature deaths, and 1.6 million lost work days each year at a total cost to the economy of more than \$100 billion.

Miller said there is a moral component to the decisions being made about coal, akin to the concerns over deficits of the Reagan and Bush I administrations, when there was widespread comment that the deficits that created that era’s prosperity were being pushed onto the next generation.

“What we don’t deserve to do is to have cheap electricity when those costs are going to be extended to people in the future because of climate change,” Miller said. Coal is regarded as a principal contributor to climate change.

NV Energy is jumping on an increasingly popular movement. Two days after its announcement, Reuters reported, “U.S. power companies plan to shut or convert over 50,000 MW of smaller, older coal-fired plants over the next few years as cheap natural gas prices and strict environmental rules have made coal the more expensive option in some areas. Eventually, the switch away from coal may shut 60,000 MW to 100,000 MW of power generation across the country, according to industry estimates.”

At the time that NV Energy announced its break with coal, it also offered an amendment to Senate Bill 123 in the Nevada Legislature to accommodate that break. The maneuver alarmed some legislators who said there was no legislative action required in order for NV Energy to accomplish its plans. Their suspicions were heightened when the amendment was reported to contain language reducing Public Utility Commission authority over rate hikes.

On April 8, the Las Vegas Sun reported that NV Energy “can accomplish [the coal switch] through existing regulation; a change in state law isn’t necessary.”

S.B. 123, sponsored by Sen. Kelvin Atkinson of Clark County, is intended to encourage development of renewable power sources.

All fracked up The possibility of fracking in Nevada awakens environmental activists
By [Sage Leehey](#) This article was published on [04.11.13](#).

To frack or not to frack?

This question is asked by more and more people as decisions are being made about whether hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, by Noble Energy Inc. will be allowed in northeastern Nevada.

While the public is divided on this issue, Dawn Harris, founder of the Frack Free Nevada website and Facebook page and a University of Nevada, Reno student, believes fracking is dangerous and should be stopped—at least until further research can be done.

“It’s our water and our air,” Harris said. “We cannot survive without it. We need to protect these things.”

The main issue Harris has with fracking is that there has not been enough research done on the topic for various reasons. She wants the practice to halt.

“I think that we need to have a moratorium until there’s science that can say what the effects are,” Harris said. “A pharmaceutical company cannot issue a drug unless it’s tested. Why is this industry allowed to perform all of these actions without any testing to prove that it is safe?”

Through her own research, Harris has spoken to people in areas where fracking has been done to see how it has affected them. She has found various health issues. She stated that the industry claims these are not scientific, only anecdotal, but Harris doesn’t feel this is reason to dismiss these findings.

“It’s a very wealthy, very powerful industry, and they want to protect their interests,” Harris said. “The people experiencing the problems are just everyday citizens. They don’t have anything to gain by standing up and saying, ‘Hey, I’m having nosebleeds, and my horses’ hair is falling out. The horses are having nosebleeds. Livestock is dying. And my children have asthma now.’”

Harris is currently looking into the implications of fracking on public health through her personal and university studies.

Although Harris does not agree with the practice of fracking, her goal is to raise awareness and general knowledge of fracking so people can make educated decisions about it. Harris reached out to the Sustainable Energy Network on campus to get *Gasland* and *Rooted Lands*—documentaries on fracking—shown on campus April 2 and 7 as part of this.

Harris wants the public to realize the issue of fracking is not a matter of choosing sides but choosing what’s good for the country’s health and future. She believes the industry has created a division in the public to deal with this issue, pitting people against each other who aren’t necessarily at odds.

“They put people who are trying to have money to raise their families against people who are trying to protect our air, water, soil and our way of life,” Harris said. “If we didn’t have that division, if we could see we are all on the same side trying to protect our basic rights to raise our families and eat good quality food and drink clean water and breathe clean air, the industry wouldn’t be able to stand.”

When reached by email to comment on the issue, Noble Energy said it would provide responses to our questions, but at press time, has not.

Note: SB390 made it past the first “drop-dead” date with a notice of exemption, meaning it will be one of those with a wild ride to the finish. sdc

A wild bison living in Yellowstone National Park must trek through miles of deep snow and high gusting winds during the harsh northern winters to search for the food she needs to survive. If her search drives her beyond the invisible park boundary line, should she be executed on sight?

Some Montana lawmakers think so.

A bill to mandate the slaughter of any bison that unknowingly wanders outside of Yellowstone's boundary was just one of the ten anti-bison laws that members of the Montana legislature introduced this year.

Last year, our work advocating for bison paid off in a big way. With the help of people like you we successfully restored 61 wild Yellowstone bison to tribal lands where they can roam free.

But, our work to continue securing safe habitat for wild bison could soon be halted if any of the harmful bills currently being considered in the Montana state legislature become law. These anti-bison bills would permanently block future bison restoration efforts by not allowing wild bison to be returned to lands where they would be welcomed.

[Bison need our help today to ensure that they have the room they need to roam safe and free. Please join the fight for bison by donating \\$50 or more now.](#)

The Montana state legislature is expected to vote on the series of anti-bison bills by April 27. We can stop these bills from becoming law by urging Montana Governor Steve Bullock to veto any anti-bison legislation that comes to his desk.

Right now, we're working around-the-clock to show Governor Bullock the widespread public support he has for preventing these bills from becoming law.

With your help we can organize Montana residents to speak up for bison at local public hearings with state agencies, we can make sure the media and lawmakers have the facts about the importance of conserving wild bison, and we can mobilize tens of thousands of people across the country to voice their opposition to this all-out attack on bison.

Together, we can win this critical fight for the future of our wild bison—please join us now!

Thanks for all you do for wildlife, Sincerely, Sue Brown, Executive Director, NWF Action Fund info@nwa.org Twitter: [@wildlifeaction](https://twitter.com/wildlifeaction) [Join us on Facebook](#)

Montana Senator John Brenden recently showed his hatred of bison, describing bison as "vermin...in need of extermination" and "a creeping cancer."

How the amount of fish you eat impacts water quality

[Sarah Jane Keller](#), High Country News

Idaho plans to conduct a \$300,000 study to learn how much fish its residents eat from state waters. The amount consumed helps determine regulatory limits for pollutant levels in rivers and lakes. Most Western states use the EPA's default fish-consumption rate, a cracker-sized 17.5 grams per day, to set human health standards for dozens of chemicals in surface water, and some chemicals in fish.

Dams aging, environmentally unsustainable

If dams are to remain, mitigation of impacts would be needed

Herald News

PacifiCorp's original 50-year license to operate the Klamath Hydroelectric Project's four dams expired March 2006. And since the 1956 license predated many contemporary environmental laws, the Department of Interior's analysis points out that only two dams meet standards for fish passage.

First-ever public 'California Water Rights Atlas' opens

Lake County News

Former Brown Administration Resources Secretary Huey Johnson, president of the Resource Renewal Institute, has unveiled the first-ever public "California Water Rights Atlas."

[Web strategist: Internet pushing most Americans into self-employment](#) Newsmax

The World Wide Web has led to the downsizing of businesses to such a startling degree that most Americans will eventually be self-employed — a return to the way things were 200 years ago. That's the alarming view of Nicco Mele, author of "The End of Big: How The Internet Makes David the New Goliath" and lecturer in public policy at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Mele contends that it's the result of jobs being eliminated because of sweeping technological advances in communication that require less people. [READ MORE](#)

From Green America:

NEXT WEEK: Our Climate Action director Todd Larsen points out that the 45-day State Department comment period on their endorsement of the Keystone XL Pipeline ends next Tuesday, April 22. [If you haven't sent your comments yet, please do so!](#)

MAY 4 - 19: Our Fair Trade director Elizabeth O'Connell encourages all Green Americans to get involved in [World Fair Trade Day events](#), coming up in early May. World Fair Trade Day itself is May 11, with events around the country over a two-week period.

And speaking of May, if following the Green Festival online this weekend **inspires you to attend one in person**, we'll be taking [Green Festival to Chicago](#) the weekend of May 18 and 19. We hope you can join us, and can [spread the word](#) to all of your friends in the Midwest too.

ExxonMobil hasn't yet released the final number on how many **barrels of tar-sands oil were spilled in Arkansas at the beginning of April**, though the burst pipeline near the town of

Mayflower prompted evacuation of homes and the closing of an interstate expressway.

Current estimates stand at around [500,000 gallons](#), and clean-up continues on what appears to be the largest pipeline spill since an Enbridge pipeline in Wisconsin burst last summer. In light of such accidents, we at Green America see the recent State Department report downplaying the environmental effects of the proposed Keystone XL pipeline as dangerously flawed.

To avoid these disastrous spills, and the terrible impact on the climate, [please urge President Obama today to reject the Keystone XL pipeline.](#)

Why do I follow these cases? The orchestrated market/policy changes that brought Natives from a "natural" diet to one of "Indian steak", white bread, Coke and commods should be reason enough, but if not convinced, peruse diabetes and other such health data. sdc

[Monsanto Wins Patent Battle With Dupont to Seize Full Rights of GMO Seed Patents](#)

Ethan A. Huff, Natural News.com: Apparently discontent with billions in annual sales, Monsanto has been trying for the past four years to extract billions more from rival DuPont for alleged patent infringements involving its Roundup-Ready soybean technology. [Read the Article](#)

Supreme Court Wrestles With Right to Patent Human Genes

[Read the Article at The Hill](#)

[LADWP proposes sweeping plan to save water while controlling Owens Valley dust](#)

[Dana Bartholomew, Contra Costa Times](#)

A century after its aqueduct drained waters from the Eastern Sierra, Los Angeles has already spent \$1.2 billion to dampen the blowing dust. Now after the largest dust control project in history, the city is proposing to spend up to \$1 billion more in a quest for a permanent fix.

Prime Source of NV Water Tops 'Endangered' List

Mike Clifford, Public News Service-NV

<http://www.publicnewsservice.org/index.php?/content/article/31992-1>

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(04/17/13) LAS VEGAS [A] The Colorado River is the most endangered in the United States, according to [a report released today](#). Local advocates for the river say that's both a major concern and an opportunity for Nevada.

Thirsty states such as Nevada need to be very concerned about the report and update their water-management practices, said Andres Ramirez, who heads the group Nuestro Rio. The Colorado is southern Nevada's prime source of drinking water, he said, and it also supplies a half-dozen other states.

"It's a huge problem around the Southwest and particularly in Nevada, [A] he said, [A] but it also is a huge opportunity for us to be able to implement some smart methods."

Millions of acre-feet of water could be saved in the Colorado River Basin by implementing low-cost water efficiency and reuse measures in cities and on farms, according to a recent Bureau of Reclamation study. The American Rivers report said persistent drought and water mismanagement are the biggest factors endangering the river.

It will take more than just "big utilities, big cities and big agriculture" cutting back, said Matt Niemerski, director of western water policy for American Rivers, adding that everyone has to do his or her part.

"We're in our 13th year of drought," he said. "If we invest in these conservation and efficiency solutions now, we're going to be thankful we did that 10 to 15 years from now."

Many Nevadans know the river often is in the crossfire when it comes to the competing water rights of neighboring states, he said, and that's a major factor.

"History has shown that the Colorado River basin has not been organized, politically," he said. "It has always been the nature of the resource to pit state against state, to make sure that people get what they need first - and they have not worked together. That needs to change."

Scientists predict the Colorado's flow could be reduced by as much as 30 percent because of climate change.

Nimerski said the river helps provide 250,000 jobs in seven states. The report is online at americanrivers.org.

Support your local library

By [Sheila Leslie](#) This article was published on [04.18.13](#). RN&B

Libraries are democracy's great equalizer, providing access to knowledge regardless of income, race, gender or class.

I earned \$1.50 an hour at my first job shelving books after school at the Pacific Grove Public Library in 1969, half a lifetime ago. I quickly learned the messiest days were those with the children's reading hours, when little ones would leave piles of books on the floor in the reading circle, along with messy shelves and sticky little chairs. Still, it was fun to see them leave the library late in the afternoon with their piles of picture books held tightly in their arms, chattering about whatever story they'd heard that day.

Less than a decade later, I worked in a library again, as a college work-study student at Sonoma State, a job that paid enough to live on, barely, while I earned a degree in a thriving state college system that was both financially accessible to lower middle class students like me and challenging enough to attract top students from across the state.

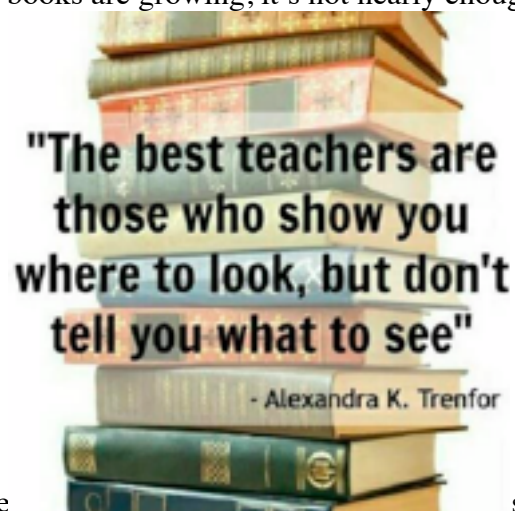
When I walked into the downtown Reno library on my lunch hour a few weeks ago to reactivate my long-dormant library card, I reflected on those past job experiences as the uber-efficient young woman signed me up in less than two minutes, briskly competent as most library people tend to be. She and her colleagues quickly helped the people ahead of me with kindness and

ease: a scruffy, homeless-looking man checking out some battered paperbacks, an older woman, of retirement age, with a stack of novels, and a younger downtown worker with some audio-books.

I was mostly interested in gaining credentials to access the library's e-books, having finally converted to the pleasure of reading on an iPad with its back-lighting and adjustable text size. E-books are still a small percentage of the Washoe County book collection, with just 7,000 titles out of 750,000, but still about 6,975 more than those in my personal collection.

The downtown branch was the library's flagship when I moved to Reno 35 years ago, with its multi-level greenery and open floor plan, filled with the constant murmur of activity of patrons of all ages. Today, budget cuts have slashed its hours to just five days a week, along with other library branches, a 36 percent reduction in public hours.

The recession has not been kind to the library, despite its role as the literary heart of the community. The materials budget is now just 52 percent of what it was in 2008, and its staff has 94 fewer positions. Although volunteer hours have increased 74 percent and community donations of magazine subscriptions and books are growing, it's not nearly enough to provide the



depth and quality our community deserve

s.

In recognition of National Library Week, April 14–20, why not celebrate by joining the Friends of Washoe County Library, a volunteer group that offers book sales and other fundraisers to support basic library needs. With more support, perhaps the Friends can revitalize their traditional role of expanding the library's offerings by supplementing its budget instead of maintaining the basics, by replacing the funds lost to budget cuts.

You can even be a little selfish, like me, and donate a book through Amazon Wish List that you really want to read, like *This is How You Lose Her* by Junot Diaz, knowing that you and hundreds of others can enjoy the book through your contribution. Buy a book every month this year, and do something concrete to build your community's sense of civic engagement, one book at a time.

Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "Libraries are the great symbols of the freedom of the mind ... essential to the functioning of a democratic society." How about doing your part for democracy and freedom?