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Groups to share information on environmental hazards

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by The Indiana Gazette on April 04, 2017 10:48 AM
Marion Center, PA

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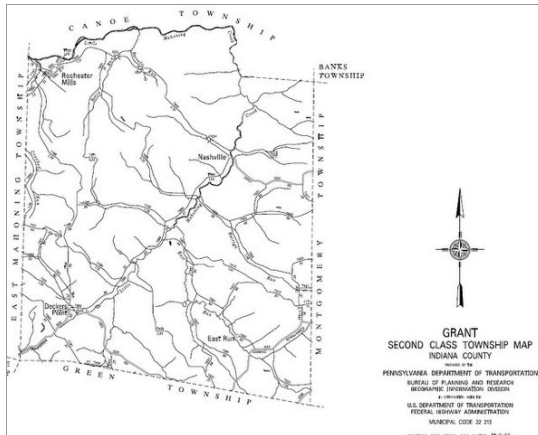
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A coalition of environment advocates and the leaders of a northern Indiana County municipality will host a program this weekend to rally support for their cause.

Officials in Grant Township, who have mounted a three-year fight against a proposed disposal site for fracking fluids and other well-drilling waste materials, are sponsoring the program set for 3 p.m. Sunday at the community building, 3907 Purchase Line Road.

Grant Township leaders and several grassroots, community-rights group representatives will share their expertise on how to fight environmental hazards that result from corporate development activities.

Partners in the program include the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF), an organization that has helped represent Grant Township in its protest against the injection well proposed by Pennsylvania General Energy Company.



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Others are the Pennsylvania Community Rights Network (PACRN) and the Ohio Community Rights Network (OHCNRN). The program Sunday in Grant Township is one of a series of community outreach efforts scheduled from Friday through Monday in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

"At a time of unprecedented climatic shifts and increasing environmental harms, the Ohio/Pennsylvania Communities Rising Tour: Defying the Corporate State is taking place in partnership between residents, local groups and nonprofit organizations in both states," according to a news release issued by the three organizations.

"CELDF, OHCNRN, and PACRN have been partnering with Ohio and Pennsylvania residents, who are inundated with environmental harms including fracking, pipelines, compressor stations, wastewater injection wells, factory farming, sewage sludging, and countless others threats," according to the statement. "They are working together to advance community rights, including the right to clean air, water, and soil; the rights of nature; and the right to local community self-government.

"Communities are joining together to protect themselves. They are finding the corporate state — corporate representatives and their own government — attempting to block them."

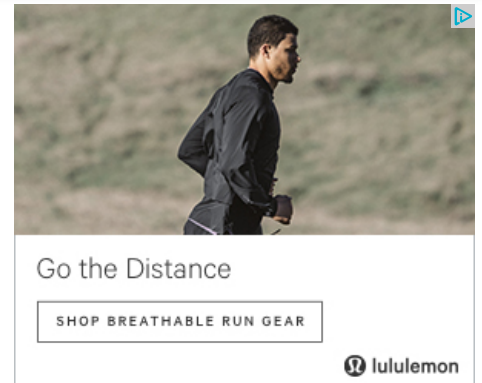
Among the speakers scheduled to appear at the Grant Township rally are Ken Ward, a co-founder of the Climate Disobedience Center; Kathie Jones, a board member of OHCNRN; Thomas Linzey, a leader of the CELDF; Chad Nicholson, a community organizer with CELDF; and Grant Township Supervisor Stacy Long, also the president of the East Run Hellbenders Society.

In Grant Township, community leaders filed objections with state and federal environmental regulators in opposition to the PGE injection well application.

The township enacted a "Community Bill of Rights" ordinance to declare the township's power to protect its land, air and water from potential environmental threats. When PGE went to court to have the ordinance invalidated, township residents in November 2015 voted to change Grant from a second-class township to a home rule municipality, again as a way to assert control over objectionable uses of the local environment.

After two years of protest, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection granted PGE a permit on March 27. At the same time, DEP filed a lawsuit asking for an injunction to prevent Grant from enforcing the provisions of the home rule charter that prohibit injection wells.

"The time is now and it is up to us," Jones said in the news release. "No one else is going to protect our communities. The Communities Rising Tour is about what we the people must do and what we are doing in the places we live, to safeguard clean air and water, to recognize the rights of ecosystems to thrive, and to exercise



our most cherished right to local community self-government."

Nicholson, who has helped to coordinate Grant Township's fight against the injection well proposal, said corporate agendas have been put ahead of democracy in many environmental issues.

"Our state and federal governments have removed the democratic veneer we've operated under for more than 200 years, exposing the truth that the will of the people is meaningless if it threatens corporate profits and empire," Nicholson said. "Pennsylvanians, Ohioans and people across the U.S. are taking action to change that."

For more information about the Communities Rising Tour, visit www.celdf.org or <https://www.facebook.com/events/386739778379685/>.

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April 04, 2017 10:47 AM

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