



BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN
NUCLEAR DANGERS & A SAFE,
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Winter 2017 Newsletter

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CBG NEEDS YOUR HELP

FOR ALMOST 5 DECADES, CBG has worked against great odds on behalf of peace and the environment. Many victories have been won, but each accomplishment has been met with enormous push-back from powerful forces – especially now. Looking forward to the coming years, it became clear that one of CBG's greatest challenges was to help train a new generation of well-prepared environmental and social justice advocates. To that end, CBG and Dan Hirsch have committed to developing a program for student interns as well as providing, when possible, entry employment as they graduate and begin to their professional careers. Programs like this, crucial to the future health of our planet, are a worthwhile investment. But they do cost money and CBG needs your donations and support, particularly in this very dangerous time.

Please make a tax-deductible donation today using the enclosed envelope. Or donate online by going to our website

www.committeetobridgethegap.org

Click on the DONATE button and use a major credit card or Paypal to complete your donation.

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SANTA SUSANA CLEANUP IN DANGER

by CBG President
Dan Hirsch

SEVENTY YEARS AGO, A facility for testing nuclear reactors and rockets too dangerous to be conducted near populated areas was established on the boundary of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. Since then, the population has mushroomed, with half a million people now living within ten miles.

In 1979, Bridge the Gap brought to public attention a partial nuclear melt-down that had occurred at that Santa Susana Field Laboratory in 1959 but had been kept secret for decades. At least three other reactors suffered accidents there as well, along with numerous radioactive fires, spills, and releases. Tens of thousands of rocket tests added to the widespread nuclear and toxic chemical contamination

burdening the site, some of which migrates offsite. Government-funded studies found contaminants had migrated offsite in excess of EPA levels of concern, and a greater than 60% increase in incidence of key cancers associated with proximity to the site.

In 2010, Bridge the Gap was instrumental in getting legally binding agreements for full cleanup of the contamination, to be completed by 2017. As we approach the end of 2017, however, the cleanup not only hasn't been concluded, it hasn't even begun. The parties responsible for the pollution – the Department of Energy (DOE), NASA, and Boeing – and the regulatory agency, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) have all dragged their feet. And now they are trying to break out of the cleanup commitments and



A candle-light vigil, led by local families of children with cancer, was held in March to stress the need for full cleanup at SSFL. Photo: Parents vs SSFL

leave virtually all of the contamination not cleaned up. This would put at continued risk the people living nearby.

In January, DOE released its draft Environmental Impact Statement for the cleanup. Every option proposed would breach the cleanup agreement it had signed in 2010. Rather than cleaning up all the contamination, as promised, DOE

proposed to leave in place as much as 99%. Thousands of people submitted comments in protest. The Los Angeles City Council and the Los Angeles and Ventura County Boards of Supervisors passed resolutions in opposition. The Los Angeles City Attorney, Bridge the Gap, and the Natural Resources Defense Council submitted

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joint, extremely detailed critical comments. Fifteen years ago, CBG, LA City and NRDC successfully sued DOE when it tried to walk away from cleanup obligations, and the court retains jurisdiction. Now, we may have to return to the court to stop DOE all over again.

In September, DTSC released its draft Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR). It too breaches virtually every commitment DTSC had made to a full

and protective cleanup. The agreements DTSC signed bar "leave in place" alternatives. Now, however, in the EIR, it proposes to leave in place, not cleaned up, vast amount of contamination. Once again, CBG is spearheading public resistance to these broken promises.

The fight is really pretty simple: on the one hand, the power of the parties responsible for the pollution, particularly Boeing, and their captured regulatory agencies, and on the other hand,

the innocent victims of the contamination for which they are responsible and the obligation to clean it up which they are attempting to evade. Recently, a group of families with children with rare pediatric cancers has become deeply and movingly involved in the fight for cleanup. Many met in the halls of Children's Hospital's oncology ward. Most lived in neighborhoods within ten miles of SSFL and became convinced that Santa Susana may have caused some of the cancers. One

of the children, 7-year-old Grace, first diagnosed in 2014, had gone into remission after months of grueling chemo. This summer, the cancer returned, and she is back in Children's Hospital, valiantly undergoing more chemo and a bone marrow transplant. This is all a fight between corporate greed and corrupt agencies on the one hand and the Graces of the world on the other. And Grace has taught us, among so many other things, that we can't ever give up.

MEET THE STAFF

CBG'S POLICY ANALYST & 2017 STUDENT INTERNS



Policy Analyst, **Michael Rincon** joined CBG Research Associates, Devyn Gortner and Maria Caine, this year working on SSFL and other important projects. Michael's special talent for finding the crucial details hidden in thousands of pages of small print data submitted by the polluters to justify not cleaning up SSFL has been invaluable.

Michael: I started working for CBG as an intern in college working on the SSFL cleanup. After graduating from UC Santa

Cruz, I began working for both CBG and Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles continuing on the SSFL cleanup efforts, as well as other environmental campaigns to improve public health and environmental quality. Through my time with CBG and PSR-LA, I've improved my ability to understand and create public policy, as well as improving my social skills in public speaking, meeting with elected officials, and working with concerned local residents.

Taylor Altenbern: I am a third year at UCSC, studying Anthropology and Sustainability. I am from San Diego, California and grew up passionate about environmental issues. I was first introduced to Dan about a year ago, when I took his course "The Making and Changing of Environmental Policy." I now continue to work with him and the Committee to Bridge the Gap as an intern on nuclear policy projects such as Hunters Point Naval Shipyard and Santa Susana Field Laboratory. Dan's was a class unlike any other I had taken at UCSC because rather than just informing me of the immensity of problems we face as a society, it taught me solutions. I entered the class frightened of and

intimidated by any sort of policy work and left feeling like I had the tools to create change. That's why I still work with Dan and the CBG team. It is empowering to have the knowledge base and skill set to create the kind of change I wish to see in the world.

Roxanna Diaz: From Riverside, California, I am a third-year student intern at UCSC pursuing a major in both environmental and legal studies. I chose this path because I value the preservation of the environment and wildlife and justice for the vulnerable communities affected by environmental problems. I believe the most efficient change comes from a legal approach because law is the ultimate indicator and source of protection. I chose to intern with Committee to Bridge the Gap, because of their genuine focus on and commitment to environmental justice using research and litigation.

Blake Pfister: I am from Southern California, about an hour drive south of Los Angeles. I became interested in environmental studies after taking AP Environmental Science in high school. Now a junior undergraduate majoring in Environmental Studies combined with Economics, I am interested in the integration of such both fields, as they are inseparable in the real world. As invaluable as most service work internships I have done in the past have been, I wanted experience focusing on other kinds of sustainable work combining policy, economics and the environment. Committee to Bridge the Gap allows me to see where my passions can lead.



Diaz (left) & Altenbern (right)



Blake Pfister

SAN ONOFRE UPDATE

On December 2, 1942, the first high level nuclear waste in the world was created. Three quarters of a century later there is still no permanent repository for such waste. We created immensely dangerous stuff with no thought as to how to safely dispose of it.

Irradiated nuclear fuel is among the most toxic materials on earth. The waste has to be isolated from the human environment for about half a million years, a period longer than our existence as a species. Our government has existed for a mere 230 years. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has been around for about 40 years. This is a matter of intergenerational ethics: we got 50 years of

power, they get 500,000 years of waste.

This issue has arisen near San Onofre, the nuclear plant that CBG played an instrumental role in closing. It may not be operating any more, but the waste remains there, and Southern California Edison intends to bury the waste on the beach. A dumber idea is hard to imagine. Many in the area understandably want

the waste out of Southern California, now, no matter what. CBG has been trying to play a constructive role in helping the community push for a safer alternative than what Edison is proposing, while not forcing the waste onto other communities, transferring the risk to them.

A permanent national repository that has the least

chance possible of leakage must be established. In the meantime, the first rule is "do no harm." The second is to not do unto others what you don't wish to be done to oneself. Production of radioactive waste was a terrible sin; we should make no more of it, and beg forgiveness of future generations.



Above: Google Earth image showing new location of nuclear waste storage site at the San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant (bottom left corner).

RADIATION PROTECTION STANDARDS WEAKENED CBG AND PEER TO FILE SUIT

EARLIER THIS YEAR, DESPITE YEARS OF EFFORTS by Bridge the Gap, EPA issued new Protective Action Guides (PAGs) which dramatically weaken protection of the public from exposure to radiation. The PAGs allow the public to drink water contaminated with radioactivity at levels thousands of times higher than the Safe Drinking Water Act permits, without any action taken to protect them from such exposures.

The PAGs also would allow long-term contamination of areas so high (the equivalent of thousands of chest X-rays a year) that EPA's own official estimates are that every fourth person would get a cancer from the radiation, without there being any requirement for cleanup to protect people from such huge doses. The PAGs apply not merely to catastrophic events but to any radiological release for which a protective action might be considered.

Recently the Trump Administration issued additional guidance associated with the PAGs which declares that doses as high as 5000 chest X-rays are harmless. This conflicts

with decades of EPA scientific findings and the longstanding conclusions of the National Academy of Sciences that there is no safe level of radiation and that doses that high would cause large numbers of cancers. Bridge the Gap, working with Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), brought this story to the news media. Bloomberg News, among others, ran it.

Bridge the Gap and PEER are now preparing to file suit against EPA to overturn the radiation PAGs. The Environmental Protection Agency is supposed to protect the environment, not place it at risk. As is often the case, it is non-profit environmental organizations that must act to try to get government to fulfill its obligations to protect the public and the environment.

Visit our website www.committeetobridgethegap.org for in depth coverage of the fight to clean up SSFL and much more