The Ohio Coal Transition: Pathways for Community Resilience

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School of Environment and Natural Resources

Jacquet

Stewart

Jeffrey Jacquet, PhD ~ jacquet.8@osu.edu
Associate Professor School of Environment and Natural Resources & Affiliated Faculty, Sustainability Institute Ohio State University
http://senr.osu.edu/our-people/jeffrey-jacquet

Gwynn Stewart, M.S. ~ Stewart.1818@osu.edu

Extension Educator IV, Community Development – Noble County Office: 740-732-5681

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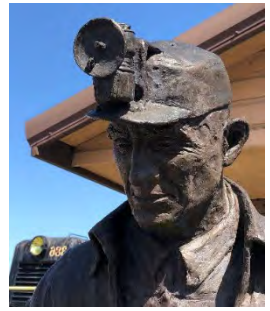
OSU Office of Responsible Research Practices Study Number 2020E1066

The Ohio Coal Transition: Pathways for Community Resilience Research Team

- Jeffrey B. Jacquet, PhD | Associate Professor School of Environment and Natural Resources and The OSU Sustainability Institute
- Gwynn Stewart, MS | Community Development Educator IV, Ohio State Extension – Noble Co.
- Max D. Woodworth, PhD | Associate Professor Department of Geography
- Jeffrey M. Bielicki, PhD | Associate Professor Department of Civil, Environmental & Geodetic Engineering, OSU Sustainability Institute, and the OSU John Glenn College of Public Affairs
- Thomas Dugdale, MFA | Assistant Professor Department of Theatre, Film & Media Arts
- Mandy Fox, MFA | Associate Professor Department of Theatre, Film & Media Arts
- Katie Finneran | Graduate Student, School of Environment & Natural Resources
- Elena Musser | Honors Student, School of Environment & Natural Resources
- Brian Capobianco, MA | Graduate Student, School of Environment & Natural Resources
- William Sharp | Graduate Student, School of Environment & Natural Resources



Memorial Coal Miner statue at the Byesville Village Park
Photo by: Gwynn Stewart

"Big Muskie" bucket in Morgan County at the ODNR Jesse Owens Park
Photo by: Gwynn Stewart

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The Ohio Coal Transition: Pathways for Community Resilience

Project Aim

- A group of faculty, staff and students at The Ohio State University interested in documenting how the coal industry has shaped Ohio's history, culture and economy, and how changes in the coal industry impact Ohio communities
- A research and arts project that blends social science, fine arts photography, library and archival research, theatre, and Extension to tell the stories and animate community-centered discussion around coal transition

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Coal Plant Closures

- Most coal-fired power plants last about 40 years
- In 2006, coal generated 87% of Ohio's electricity. Now, it supplies about 1/3
- Cost pressures from Natural gas production & abundance pressure the coal-fired energy market
- From 2007-2018, more than 500 U.S. coal-fired generators retired
  - *In the Ohio Valley alone, 34 coal-burning facilities closed from 2009-2017*
- Utilities have also announced 117 more units to close by 2024
- Coal Plant closures impact coal production in Ohio, production in 2019 was where it was in 1886

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Other Work on Coal Plant Closures

- The Univ. of Illinois Extension *(in cooperation with The Just Transition Fund)*
  https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/building-entrepreneurial-communities/2019-09-04-beyond-coal-illinois-just-getting-started

- Colorado State University: Center for the New Energy Economy

micro-documentaries about the energy transition in Craig, Colorado

- The Montana State University: Energy Communities
  https://www.montana.edu/energycommunities/documents/Colstrip_Status_Report-FINAL.pdf

- *The Just Transition Fund*
  https://www.justtransitionfund.org/where-we-work

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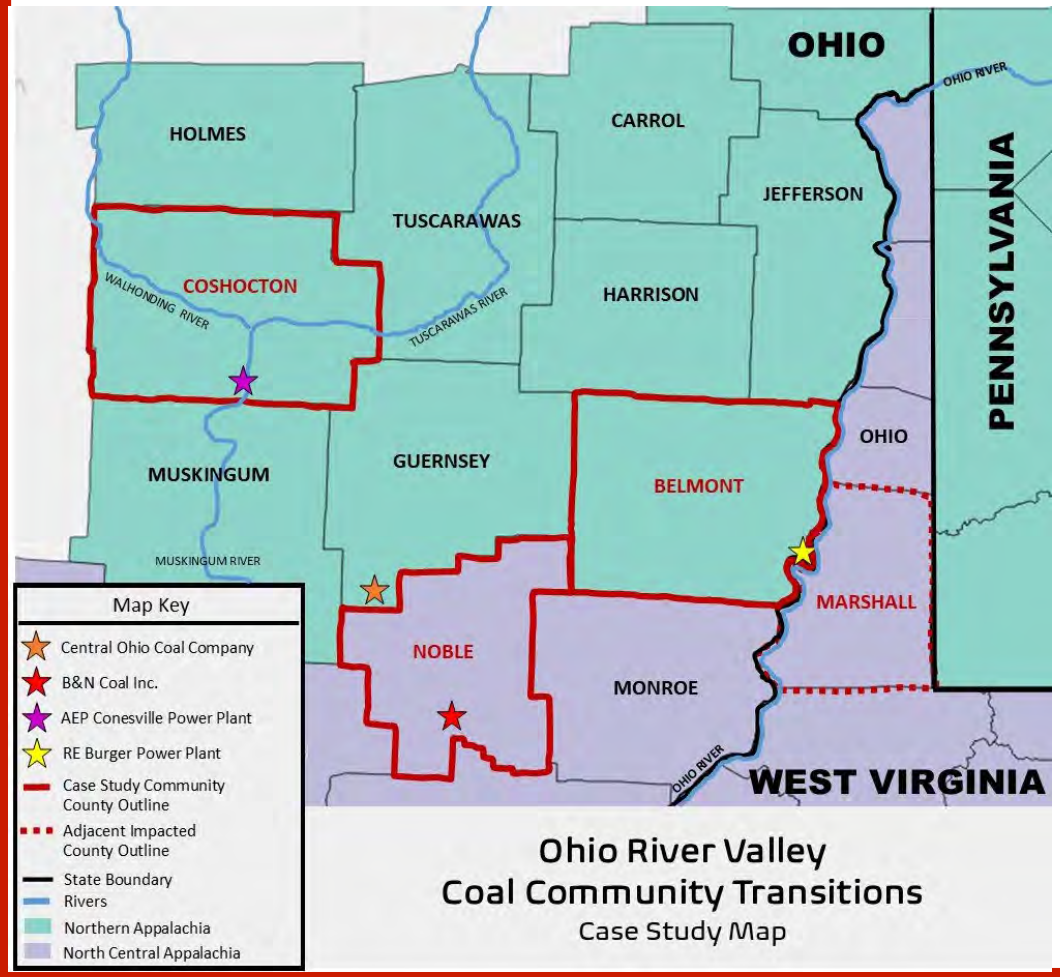
Ohio Coal Communities Project



- Belmont County – Shadyside, Ohio
  - Loss of Berger (1st Energy) Power Plant
  - History of Surface & Underground Mining
- Noble County – Caldwell, Ohio
  - Loss of Central Ohio Coal Company
  - Current Site of B&N Coal Company
- Coshocton County – Conesville, Ohio
  - Loss of Conesville (AEP) Power Plant
  - History of Surface & Underground Mining

Methods

- Historical research
- Archival collection: local histories, private archives and collections of textual and visual materials
- Local site documentation through repeated field visits
- Performing key confidential interviews with community leaders, residents, workers and industry representatives in Ohio Communities (N = 49 as of 5/8/22), about the role coal mining, transportation, and use has and will play in communities
- Focus group discussions
- Continuous local engagement: photodocumentary work, collaboration with local high schools, collaboration with local arts advocacy groups

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Belmont County

- In the heart of southeastern Appalachian region Ohio
- Located on east-west I-70, one of the nation's busiest interstates
- Belmont County is one of state’s highest coal producing counties
- Historic Ohio River Valley Industrial Center
- The Berger Power Plant along the Ohio River was closed in 2011

67,006
Residents

RE Burger Power Plant at Dilles Bottom. 7 miles downriver from Shadyside and across the Ohio River from Moundsville, WV *Photo: Chuck Mauer*

RE Burger Power Plant Demolition
Photo taken by Joe Lovell at The Times Leader (Junkins, 2016)

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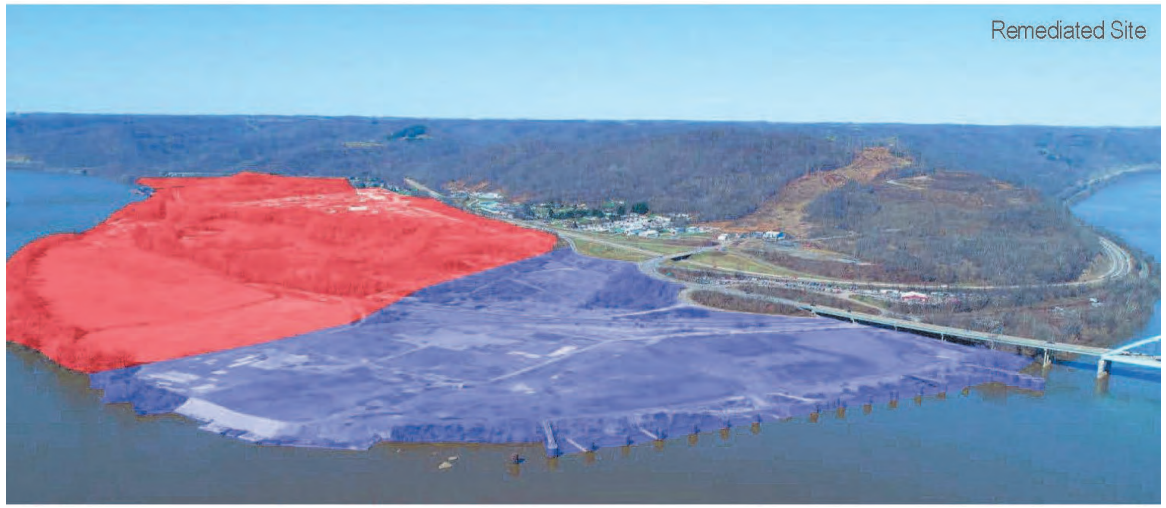
Belmont County

- Power plant Site is the potential location for the PTT Daelim Cracker Plant
- JobsOhio has invested $30M in Site Redevelopment



PTT Proposed Site along Ohio River in Belmont County

- Air & Water Permits have been approved
- Tax Agreements for Schools & Township Set
  - *$47.5m over 15 yrs. for education*
  - *$20m in sales tax revenue during construction*

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Site photo from JobsOhio

WV Impact

- Moundsville, WV, just across Ohio River in Marshall Co.
- Mitchell Plant 1,636MW – plant life recently extended to 2040, although uncertainty remains
- WV highest coal producing state in Appalachia, Marshall Co highest producing county in WV

Mitchell Power Plant in Moundsville, WV across the River from Belmont County

Photo Taken by Matt Sell

Coshocton County

36,600
Residents

- Important Native American trading site
- Located along historic water canals / tourism center today
- 24% loss in Natural Resources & Mining since 2013
- 1,191 farms *(average size of 153 acres)*

Conesville Power Plan, Memorial Coal Miner statue
at the Coshocton Village Park
Photos by: Jeffrey Jacquet; American Flag Photo by: Annin & Co.

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Coshocton County

- The AEP Conesville Power Plant operating since 1957, shuttered in 2020 *(62 years with 600 employees at height)*
- *6 coal-fired boilers generated over 2,000 megawatts of power*

AEP Conesville Power Plant in the Background of a Dollar General Store
Photo: William Sharp, OCCT Project Photographer

AEP Conesville Smoke Stack Demolition
Photo by Erich Skelley, Conesville Industrial Park Consultant

Noble County

14,424
Residents

- Last County created in Ohio, located in the heart of southeastern designated Appalachian region
- Bisected by north-south I-77 & 30 min. north is east-west I-70
- The Ohio River is 25 miles to the south of the county
- 31.3% loss in Natural Resources & Mining since 2013
- AEP's Central Ohio Coal Co. operated a surface mining operation in Noble County until 1991. They employed nearly 1,000 producing up to 1.7 million tons of coal annually

- Current surface coal mining at B&N Coal company's Whigville mine; production began on the most recent coal seam in 2017

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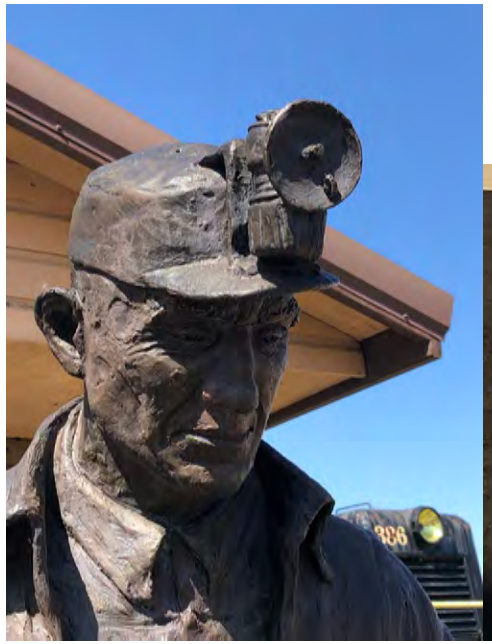
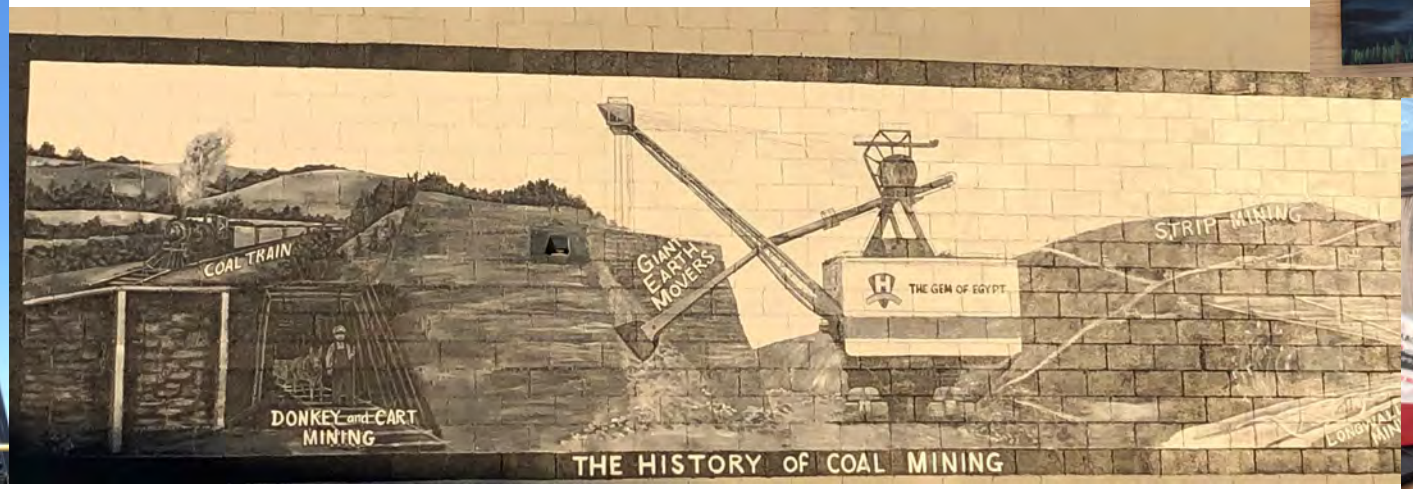
Current Study State

- Completing Key interviews
- Compiled data and literature review
- Cataloging stories & art-related items
- Continuing to build community partnerships





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Photos by Team members

Artwork by Elizabeth Halves Walsher

Preliminary Conclusions

- Coal community experiences are diverse, with a range of different issues depending on above ground mining, below ground mining, power plants, coal transport options, historical trends and proximity to urban areas.
  - There are many different coal transitions happening simultaneously, and yet some coal infrastructure will remain indefinitely.
- Coal losses most directly impact community tax bases *(esp. schools and levy services)* and local workforces without easy replacement options.
- Many Coal industry workers were highly paid but with niche, industry specific skills, many are older workers with long careers in the industry.

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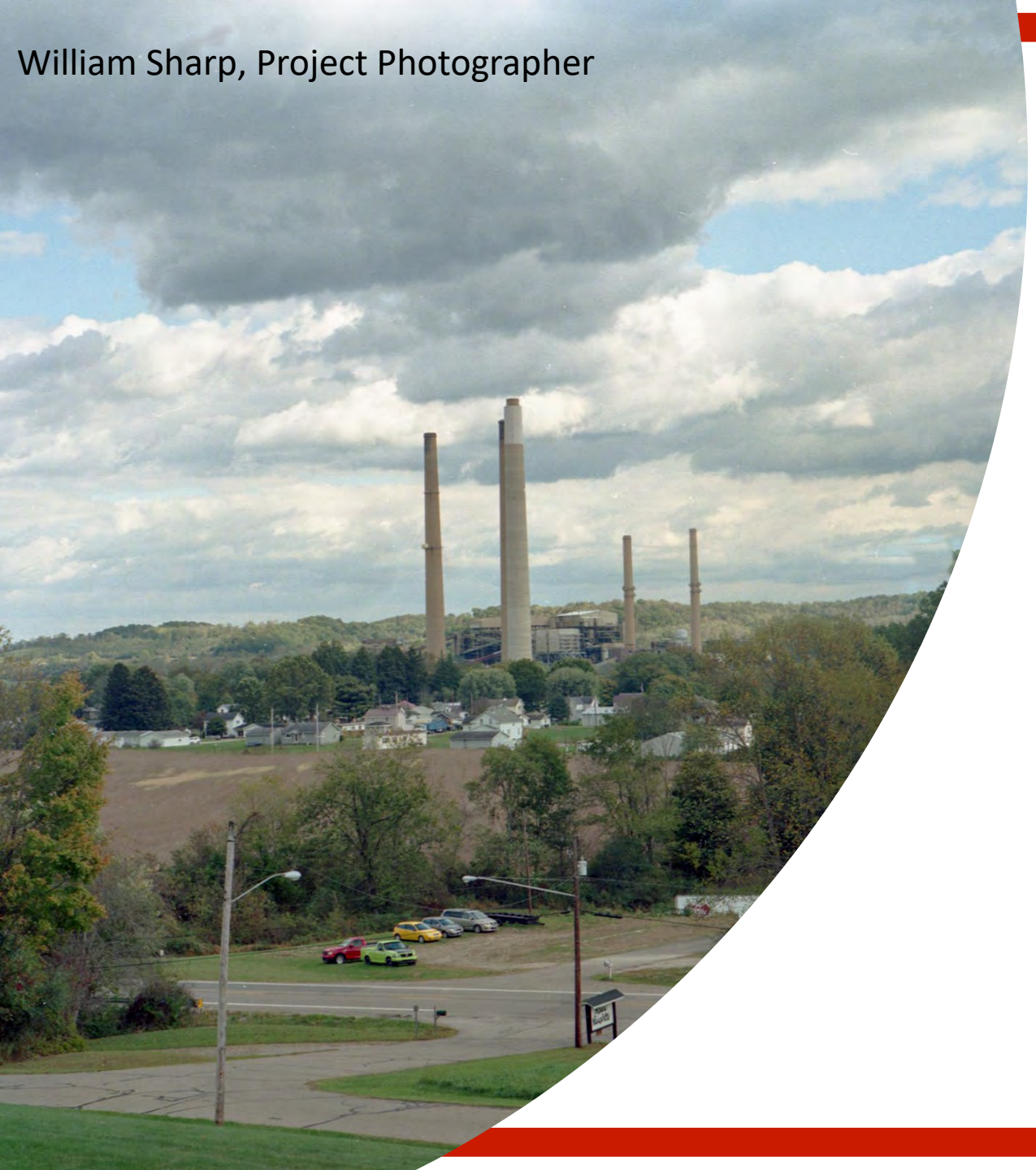
William Sharp, Project Photographer

Preliminary Conclusions

The Symbolism is Important

- Rural landscapes and industrial labor play important and complex real and symbolic roles in how residents interpret coal transition
- Power plants (and mines to lesser extent) are important symbolic community features. It's not just jobs and tax revenue.
- Strong cultural attachments to coal as way of life
- Surprisingly, almost everyone we talked to is resigned to coal's fate; a change from even 2-3 years ago.

Preliminary Conclusions

Trauma-informed findings on the coal transition:

Recognition: Despite benefits (real and perceived) of the coal industry's presence and now absence on these communities – recognizing the traumatic impacts of that presence/absence is important to processing the transition

Processing: Honoring the need for communities to process transition on their own terms -> that while climate change demands swift action, whiplash from this transition on communities will have both internal and external consequences if not properly addressed

Transparency: The historical lack of transparency within the presence of the coal industry and now around its closure has been a large contributor to the way community trauma presents itself - > bolstering transparency around the closure process at all levels can be used not only for harm reduction, but also helps a community properly prepare

Space to Grieve: Upon initial closure of a facility, when community wounds are the most heightened -> curating a space – physical and metaphorical - to be able to grieve the loss of the coal industry is key

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Trauma Informed Coal Transitions:
The Importance of Peer Support

- Community events, memorials and online support groups
- Puts folks in community with one another who understand these experiences on a personal level -> who understand their psychological, social, cultural and political implications
- Helps communities process these transitions together: why it happened, why the symbolism is so important – why the loss of that symbolism cuts so deeply
- Curates storytelling and co-reflection -> engages not just the negative present experiences around loss and grief, but also help pull positive memories from the past

FIRST NATIONAL CONVENTION UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA
JANUARY 22, 1890, COLUMBUS, OHIO

Laying a Power Plant to Rest

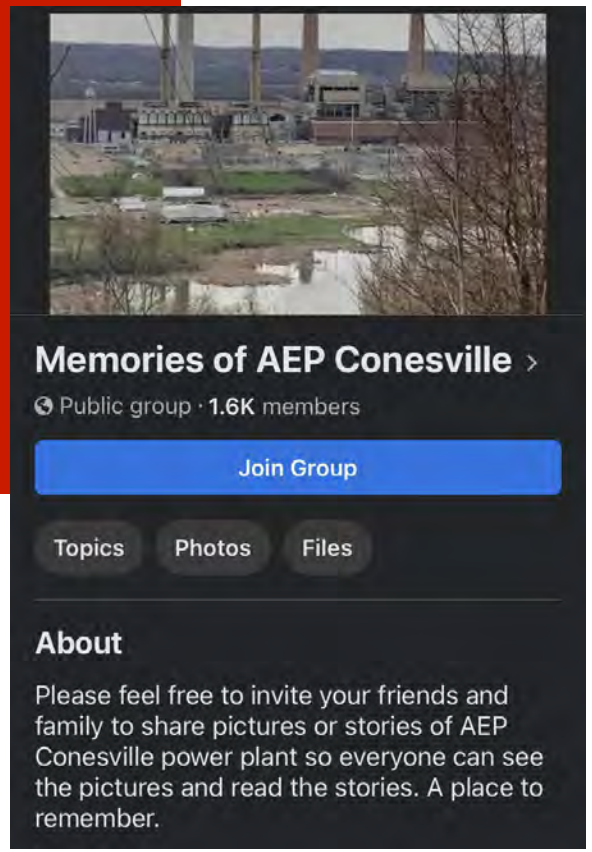
Power plant funeral, or a ‘Celebration of Life’ that coalesces alongside the demolition process

Creates an opportunity for the community to process grief

Online Memorial Forums

Accessible to those who stay in the community after closure as well as those who leave. Inclusive for those who miss out on community events due to work schedules, bodymind limitations or global pandemic

“A place to remember”

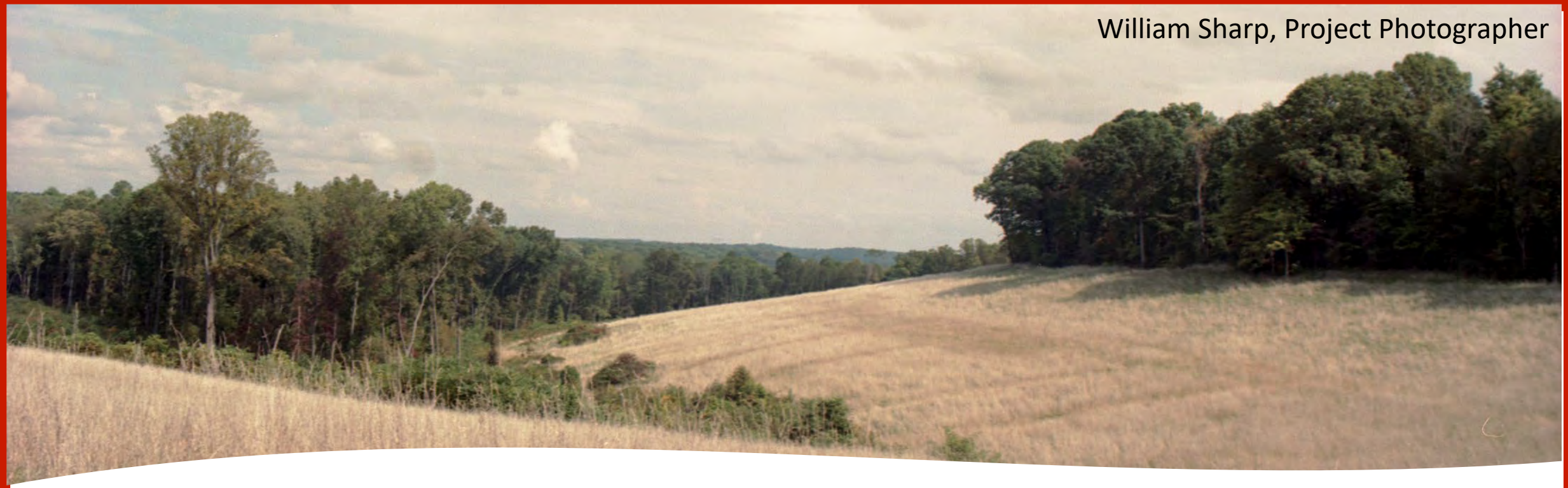


oto: William Sharp

Material and Creative Community-Led Memorial Projects

Built monument and dedication sites, historical markers, art installations

Painting of Conesville Power Plant by local resident, Elizabeth Halves Walser


William Sharp, Project Photographer

Preliminary Conclusions

Emerging sectors include Ecotourism

- **Paradoxically, coal sites now emerging as tourism and recreation opportunities**
- Noble/Morgan/Muskingum – The Wilds & ODNR ReCreation Lands
- Coshocton – AEP Conesville Coal Lands, Tri-Valley & Woodbury Wildlife
- Belmont – Egypt Valley Wildlife Area is 14,300 acres of wildlife
  County has $246M in Visitor Spending

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Preliminary Conclusions

Top Appalachian Horizontal Shale Rig
Bottom : Natural Gas Plant Const. (on I-70)
Photos by Gwynn Stewart

Competing sectors include **Natural Gas**

Over $86.4 Billion Has Been Invested since 2011 in the Ohio **Appalachian Shale Gas Play**

- Ohio Shale Region is “home” to 12 Natural Gas Power Plant Projects ($10 Billion in Investments)

William Sharp, Project Photographer

Preliminary Conclusions

Brownfield Solar Possibilities: Surface Mines

Noble County

- Recreation Solar, LLC, 49.5MW solar project
- Located on a reclaimed coal strip mine
- Power delivered into the AEP South Cumberland substation through the PJM interconnection process
- Begin construction in early 2023
- 200 construction jobs & 15 full-time operations jobs
- Expected to add $350,000 annually to tax base

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Big Muskie Bucket Courtesy Ohio History Connection

Preliminary Conclusions

Brownfield Solar Possibilities - Powerplants

Coshocton County

- Conesville Green Energy solar farm 68 megawatt solar array on Conesville Plant site

- Designed for areas otherwise not developable, and to attract new "green" businesses to the industrial park

Conesville Plant Construction 1950s,Courtesy Johnson-Humrick House

Courtesy Ohio History Connection

Outputs & Next Steps

- Master’s and Honor's theses
- Extension case study reports, fact sheets, and transition guides
- Summary and peer-review journal publications
- Photography, fine arts and archival exhibition from **August 22nd – Sept. 15th, 2022,** simultaneously at **Hopkins Hall Hybrid Arts Gallery and Thompson Library Special Collections on OSU Campus in Columbus.**
- Travelling exhibitions in 3 case study locations this fall/winter.
- Local audio-visual collaboration (Conesville/Cochocton) - OSU Theater Dept.
- Theatrical performance that utilizes interview data and community connections
- Co-authored book (Jacquet, Woodworth, and team) focused on “transition”


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Amid the End of Coal
In Ohio
Ohio Coal History and Transitions
Project Team
RIVER CITY
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EMERGENCY
MEDICAL TECHNICIAN

Coshocton Tribune

COSHOCTON COUNTY

Theatrical presentation to eulogize Conesville AEP plant closing

"Calling Hours" to be performed next May to commemorate third anniversary of the plant's closure

Leonard L. Hayhurst
Coshocton Tribune

Published 5:45 a.m. ET Aug. 12, 2022 | **Updated 7:58 a.m. ET Aug. 16, 2022**

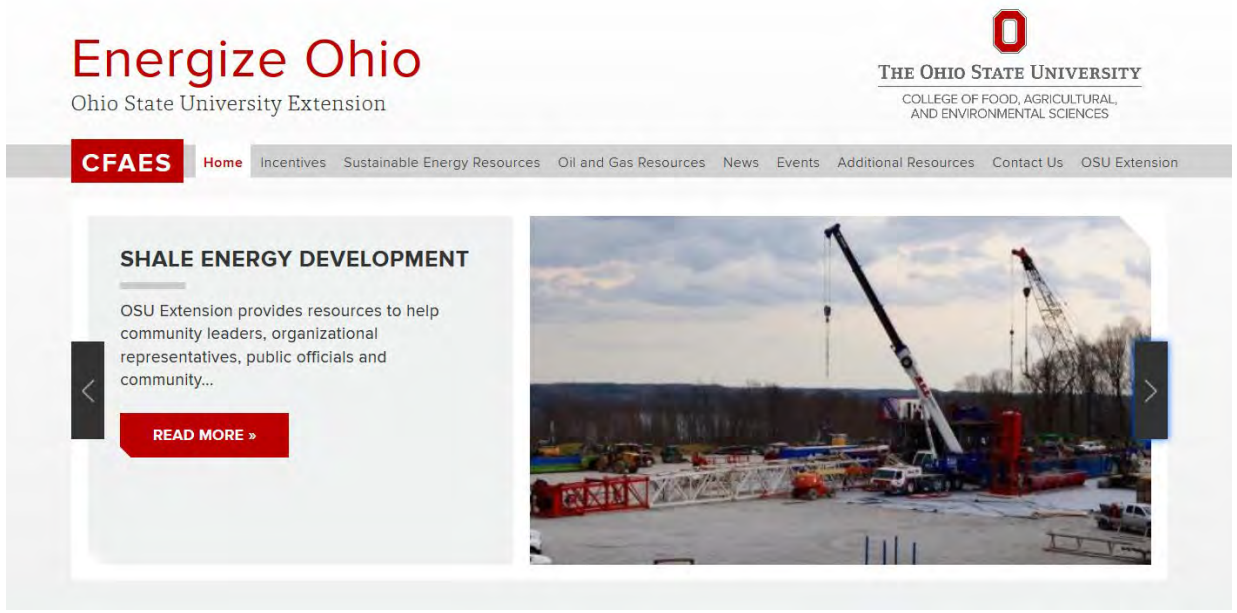
Key Points

- "Calling Hours" is a theatrical presentation being to eulogize the closure of the American Electric Power plant in Conesville.
- It will be presented next May to commemorate the third anniversary of the plant's closure and closure of Conesville Elementary School.
- Anne Cornell of the Pomerene Center for the Arts is working with other on writing a script to be performed by local actors derived from stories by those connected to the plant.
- The project is being funded an ArtsNEXT grant from the Ohio Arts Council of $14,757.

COSHOCTON – Many who worked at or lived near the former American Electric Power plant just outside Conesville might refer to its closing akin to a death in the

Ohio State Univ. Extension Energy Outreach Program

www.energizeohio.osu.edu



- The energy library with a wide variety of energy programs and resources including fact sheets, bulletins and videos

- Searchable database of energy efficiency and renewable energy incentives can also be filtered to meet individual needs

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