

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Everything comes from nature

We take the natural world for granted. For example, we get up in the morning, turn on the faucet and expect clean water to come out. We flush the toilet and expect our wastes to go away.



Commentary by
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We flick on the lights, turn on the coffee maker, get juice out of the refrigerator, listen to the radio and look at our cell phones.

All this activity depends on the natural world Pennsylvanians have experienced for hundreds of years. But if we abuse the environment, it's not guaranteed to remain the same.

Consider the Schuylkill River. Each day, Pottstown's water and sewer authority withdraws about 4.2 million gallons of water from the river for people to drink, wash, and for industrial uses.

This is dwarfed by PECO's Limerick Nuclear Power Plant, which takes up to 58 million gallons of water a day from the Schuylkill to generate the electricity used throughout the region.

Other communities along the river depend on Schuylkill River water as well. But the river itself

depends on abundant rainfall. It starts in Schuylkill County, fed by rainfall and groundwater from a 2,000-square-mile watershed.

Groundwater comes from rainfall which is absorbed into the earth. Vegetation, especially trees, is vital to the cycle. Trees allow rainwater to percolate into the earth and then release water vapor back into the air.

Removing too many trees can turn fertile land into desert. Throughout history, this has contributed to the collapse of civilizations such as the Roman Empire and Carthage. Areas of Africa are desertifying even now.

Here in Pottstown, we have removed far more trees and vegetation than necessary. Parking lots — most of which are unused most of the time — cover 15 percent of our land area, more even than buildings (14 percent).

Excess pavement, and air pollution from too much driving, degrade the environment we currently enjoy.

With the world population growing from 1 billion to more than 7 billion in just the last 200 years, we are well on the way to irreversibly and perhaps catastrophically changing the climate.

It's a global problem, but the solutions require us locals to change the way we think about our environment.

We can no longer take it for granted. We must start protecting it.



There's no guarantee the earth will always remain the same