

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Everything comes from nature

Last week, I devoted two columns to PECO's plan to remove 33 mature planes and oaks along Charlotte and Franklin streets to make room for new poles and upgraded wires along those streets.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

The trees could have been trimmed, but it's easier and cheaper in the long run for PECO to just take them down.

PECO, like the rest of us, takes the natural world for granted.

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.

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 abundant water.

Each day, Pottstown's water and sewer authority withdraws about 4.2 million gallons of water from the Schuylkill 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.

Trees have been growing on the planet for millions of years. But humans have removed nearly half of them — and most of that has come in just the last two centuries.

We are continuing to lose millions of acres of trees annually, which is accelerating global warming.

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 nearly 8 billion in just the last 200 years, we are irreversibly, and likely 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.



STEAM RISES FROM THE COOLING TOWERS of the Limerick Nuclear Power Plant. The power plant uses more than ten times as much water daily as the entire borough of Pottstown.