



One of the estimated 325,000 orphaned and abandoned oil and gas wells in PA - These wells are leaking an unmeasured and unknown quantity of climate-warming methane into the atmosphere. Source: saveourstreamspa.org

**"Extinction is the rule. Survival is the exception." -Carl Sagan**

Greetings!

February is here & we've got another jam-packed newsletter for you!

Unconventional gas drilling comes with a long list of problems and challenges: air and water quality, forest fragmentation, invasive species, ecosystem imbalance, infrastructure degradation, social woes, climate change and more.

Last month, Governor Wolf proposed new regulations on something that affects a few of the problems in that list - methane. More often called "natural gas," the volume of methane leaking into the atmosphere from all aspects of gas extraction, transport, storage, production and processing is anything but natural. RDA board member Barb Jarmoska brings you the story in her "Methane Musings."

Following the musings, RDA member Harvey Katz provides some informational highlights from Elizabeth Kolbert's recent lecture at Bucknell University. Kolbert, Pulitzer-prize winning author of *The Sixth Extinction*, was just presented with Bucknell's prestigious writing award.

A landmark court case defending our PA constitutional rights to clean air, clean water and a healthy environment will soon be heard before the PA Supreme Court. RDA is providing financial support to the Pennsylvania Environmental Defense Fund and you can too.

Eminent domain for the absurdly titled Constitution Pipeline threatens a family's land and maple syrup operation in Susquehanna County. Read the full story below.

*In Other News* covers Corbett's inflated gas industry job figures, more on the out-of-control methane leak in California, an infrared view of a gas compressor, oil loan worries for big banks and Josh Fox's new documentary tour. A number of worthwhile events and petitions are also included for your participation.

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### In Other News

#### Corbett's Office 'Cooked the Books' on Job Numbers

Industry advocates say Gov. Wolf's office played political games when it lowered the number of jobs created by Marcellus Shale development.

The state Department of Labor & Industry last year revised former Gov. Corbett's count from 250,000 jobs created during the drilling boom to about 29,000. That figure grows to about 80,000 when calculations include suppliers and service providers, such as architects, engineers, restaurants and physicians who care for workers.

Please share this newsletter far and wide.

Thank you for caring and staying informed.

Sincerely,

**Brooke Woodside**  
RDA Member, Managing Editor

[Click here to visit our Facebook page.](#)

## Methane Musings

by Barb Jarmoska, RDA Board of Directors

On January 19th, PA Governor Tom Wolf held a Town Hall meeting to announce new methane regulations for the state. Wolf was joined at the event by DEP secretary John Quigley and DCNR secretary Cindy Dunn. [Click here to view the 40-minute announcement.](#)

Wolf believes his administration has developed a cost-effective strategy to reduce methane emissions from the oil and natural gas industry, which claims that 115 tons of methane was emitted in 2014. Secretary Quigley, who believes industry claims are unsubstantiated and presumably low, admits that DEP doesn't know how much methane is leaking, and hopes that PA will one day have the best state regulations in the nation.

Let me begin with a confession: writing this op-ed piece on the Wolf administration's proposal presents a big challenge. First of all, the issue is far too complex to summarize in 1700 words or less. Secondly, it's that damn paradox again - the one I wrote about in the December 21st issue of this newsletter, the fact that the message of the scientific community and the Paris summit on climate change, "...is not reaching the ears of Pennsylvania's elected and appointed officials who, as a whole, remain heedless of the warnings, ignorant of the predictions, and deaf to the global consensus on climate change. The gas industry's stranglehold continues to dominate... welcome to [the Pennsylvania paradox.](#)"

We are certainly learning what Wolf meant last year when asked about his position on fracking. He proclaimed that he wanted to "have my cake and eat it too." Impossible? Many believe so.

On one hand, methane regulations are a desperately needed positive step in an ever-warming world. Methane is, after all, a greenhouse gas with a global warming potential 87 times more harmful than CO2 over a 20-year period. For this reason, Wolf is to be applauded for this proposal, especially in the face of a heavily pro-gas legislature that tries to strangle any attempt at increased taxation, accountability and oversight.

Mark Szybist, RDA Board of Directors member and environmental attorney for NRDC, had this to say in his blog on the Wolf announcement: "*Since shale gas drilling started, Pennsylvania has made only marginal improvements to its air pollution standards for oil and gas equipment. Emissions are [going up](#) - and many existing sources are unregulated. With hope, Governor Wolf's announcement will signal a real change on Pennsylvania's approach that protects both the health of the Commonwealth's citizens and its climate - and speeds the momentum toward nationwide action.*" For the history and backstory on methane emissions in PA, as well as how the PA plan is seen in light of EPA's actions on the federal level, [read Mark's blog.](#)

On the other hand, Wolf's proclamation that he wants to "maintain PA's role as the leading energy export state in the U.S." while "responding directly to the needs of

The decrease of about 170,000 removes several positions previously included by Corbett, such as every job in trucking, highway construction, steel mills, coal-fired power plants, sewage treatment plants and others.

[Click here to read the full story from PennLive.](#)

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### **CA Methane Leak - Recent News**

#### **Gas Company Forced to Continue Offering Rental Housing to Relocated Families**

The Los Angeles city attorney has forced the Southern California Gas Co. to back down from a plan the utility quietly put in place to stop offering rental houses to Porter Ranch families dislocated by the nearby gas leak.

The company instructed its relocation specialists to no longer place residents in rental houses because they are increasingly hard to find and expensive for short-term leases. The utility, noting that it expects to plug the leak in four to five weeks, told agents to put families in hotels and motels instead.

[Click here to read the full story from the Los Angeles Times.](#)

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#### **Regulators Approve Health Study on California Gas Leak**

Regional air quality regulators in California voted to require the utility responsible for the ruptured underground pipeline in the Los Angeles area to underwrite an independent study on the health effects of the huge methane leak from the site.

The natural gas leak in Aliso Canyon, just outside the Los Angeles neighborhood of Porter Ranch, began on Oct. 23 and ranks as the worst ever in California.

Odorized methane fumes sickened scores of people and led to the temporary relocation of thousands of residents from the northern Los Angeles community near the leaking storage field.

[Click here to read the full story as posted on Reuters.](#)

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#### **Shields Compressor Video**

the business community" and "maintaining a role for every indigenous source of energy including coal" is a position that chains PA taxpayers and citizens to incentivizing and depending on fossil fuels while the rest of the world is moving in the opposite direction.

This past week, more than 500 global investors gathered at the United Nations to begin mobilizing the trillions of dollars needed to catalyze the global clean energy transition. Speaking just days after scientists confirmed that 2015 was the hottest year on record, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the crowd of financial leaders, who collectively represented more than \$22 trillion in assets, "*Sustainable, clean energy is growing, but not nearly fast enough to prevent excessive global warming that would trigger profound economic disruption and human suffering. The investor community is of critical importance if we are to move from aspirations to action.*"

Encouraging investors to pick up the pace of fossil fuel divestment, Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, reminded the financial powerbrokers gathered in New York City, "*You cannot build what you don't finance. Finance is the architect of the future. Five years are going to make the difference... For the world's sake, it must be fast: we must make this happen in the next five years.*"

Meanwhile, back in PA...the state is cheering on and subsidizing the use of fracked gas not just for these critical next 5 years, but, given the projected infrastructure - for at least 10 times that long. The planned pipelines and methane-fired power plants proposed by Wolf, SEDA-COG and others will commit PA to a fossil fuel future for the next 50 years.

The Wolf administration is proposing to regulate (in an as-yet-unspecified way) the unknown volume of methane that is leaked and released by the gas industry. This is a grand idea but an enormous challenge. How do we accurately measure, regulate and control those leaks and releases? Methane is, after all, an invisible and odorless gas. The only sure way to locate methane leaks is with a FLIR camera that senses infrared radiation and makes visible the invisible. [Click here for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's explanation and look through the lens of a FLIR camera.](#)

DEP is not currently equipped with the staff or equipment necessary to adequately detect leaking methane. DEP is understaffed, with only three people doing this work for the entire state. The gas industry is left to self-regulate and self-report, a woefully flawed plan. DEP reports are presently written based on a (nearly laughable if it weren't so serious) method known as an "AVO Inspection." Audio - Visual - Olfactory. In other words: listen, look and sniff.

What's an overworked, underpaid, yet dedicated DEP employee to do? Detecting methane can't be accomplished at the rate of one staff person per region and clearly the already too-infrequent inspections for an invisible and odorless gas can't be accomplished using altogether insufficient human sensory organs. To even begin to carry out Wolf's proposed regulations, we need manpower and equipment - both of which cost money and neither of which is currently available to DEP in sufficient supply. Does DEP even own a FLIR camera? Are the gas industry cheerleaders in the PA legislature ready to pony up for the purchase of cameras and the operators needed to use them, staff to file reports and more staff to assure compliance and punish violators?

Another important fact to keep in mind: not all methane leaks come from wellheads, pipelines, compressor stations and other production facilities. There is absolutely no way to measure the completely unknown and unknowable volume of thermogenic methane that is released through the ground and into the atmosphere. The only way we see this release is when the methane passes through water, either in a water well or watercourse. We know these leaks occur, as DEP records clearly document and videos taken of streams in PA clearly show. Here in eastern Lycoming County, a dozen homes are on record with elevated methane in drinking water, leaks that occurred at the same time [methane was seen bubbling in nearby Little Muncy Creek.](#) When this same thermogenic methane (released by the drilling process



Springville, Pennsylvania

The video above was published on YouTube by Frank Finan. It was captured with his FLIR camera (as described in our feature article).

*"In the first 45 seconds of this video you will be able to see a black stack with black emissions. This is not a flare like the two stacks to its right. This appears to be raw emissions (not burning)."*  
-Frank Finan

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### Big Banks Brace for Oil Loans to Implode

Firms on Wall Street helped bankroll America's energy boom, financing very expensive drilling projects that ended up flooding the world with oil.

Now that the oil glut has caused prices to crash below \$30 a barrel, turmoil is rippling through the energy industry and souring many of those loans. Dozens of oil companies have gone bankrupt and the ones that haven't are feeling enough financial stress to slash spending and cut tens of thousands of jobs.

Three of America's biggest banks warned last week that oil prices will continue to create headaches on Wall Street - especially if doomsday scenarios of \$20 or even \$10 barrels play out.

[Click here to read the full story from CNN Money.](#)

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### The Let Go and Love Tour

Oscar-nominated director Josh Fox brings his new documentary on climate change to 100 cities world wide on the LET GO AND LOVE Tour.

RDA hopes to include Williamsport on the list.

Josh stated the following about the tour: "*After realizing that I could beat fracking in my own backyard and still lose everything I love to*

and not from decay of surface matter) escapes through a field or forest floor, who's to know? No one.

Even more disconcerting (and also ignored by the current proposed regulations) is the significant and unknowable quantity of methane leaking from orphaned and abandoned wells. [A study conducted by Princeton University and published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#) suggests that accumulating leaks from abandoned wells pose a substantial problem, one that cannot and should not be overlooked. This is especially true as we continue to permit an ever-increasing number of new wells which will one day add to the estimated 325,000 wells already abandoned across the state. [Click here for more information from saveourstreamspa.org](#) or [here to view an informative video](#) about these abandoned wells.

DEP has been working to identify and plug abandoned wells since 1989, but it's a slow process and funds are limited. Research suggests that there is little or no link between the amount of leaking methane and whether or not a well has been plugged. Princeton researchers found the largest methane flux in their study came from a plugged well. Mary Kang, research fellow at Stanford University, writes, "*The cumulative emissions from abandoned wells may be significantly larger than the cumulative leakage associated with oil and gas production, which has a shorter lifespan of operation.*"

And so...

I join with Governor Wolf and support these critical methane regulations.

I join with Mark Szybist - in hoping that the Governor's announcement will signal a significant change.

I join with Navy three-star admiral and former Congressman Joe Sestak, who recently announced his candidacy for the U.S. Senate. In an editorial entitled "No better time than yesterday for a moratorium on fracking," Sestak wrote,

*As a Pennsylvanian born and raised, I well-know the lessons of the demise of the anthracite coal industry, where the Commonwealth was left with a \$15 billion cleanup of 2,500 miles of damaged streams and 250,000 acres of contaminated land because of the lack of adequate regulation and the absence of proper oversight. I called for a moratorium on Marcellus shale fracking because I was not convinced we had strong enough environmental, health, and property safeguards, and I was not satisfied that people would have the access to just compensation should even the best safeguards fail.... My position remains the same today because it was based on the facts then - almost all of which remain true now.*

I join with Naomi Klein, who writes in her book, *This Changes Everything*,

*Climate change detonates the ideological scaffolding on which contemporary conservatism rests. A belief system that vilifies collective action and declares war on all corporate regulation and all things public simply cannot be reconciled with a problem that demands collective action on an unprecedented scale and a dramatic reining in of the market forces that are largely responsible for creating and deepening the crisis.*

I join with Christiana Figueres who told the overseers of \$22 trillion dollars of investment capital, "*We must figure out how NOT to put good money into more high risk projects in fossil fuels...*"

I join with Josh Fox who states, "*I don't believe we're only motivated by our own self-interests. Often out of crisis comes this enormous wellspring of generosity and motivation.*"

Above all, I join with Pope Francis in his call for an end to the excessive and sometimes addictive lives of consumption that have become the norm in America.

*Climate change, I set out on an epic journey, traveling to 12 countries on six continents, to learn from communities on the front lines of climate change. It may be too late to stop some of the worst consequences, but in this film I ask, "What is it that climate change can't destroy? What is so deep within us that no calamity can take it away?"*

[Click here to learn more about this tour and fundraising campaign.](#)

## Well Count - Lycoming County

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The following permit renewal was issued in Jackson Township, Lycoming County. Click on the blue title below the company name for more information.

Jackson Township  
SWN Production CO, LLC  
[JOHN GOOD 13H](#)

## Events/ Action Points

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#### Keep it Wild! - Jacoby Falls

Mark your calendars & come join us at **11 am on Sunday, February 21st**, as we hike to Jacoby Falls.

Jacoby Falls was an icy wonder last year, as you can see from the picture below.

Directions: From Rt 180, take exit 21 and go North on Rt 87. Travel approximately 4.5 miles to Rt 973 on your left, which crosses the Slabtown Bridge. Cross the bridge and take an immediate right turn onto Wallace Run Road. Travel approximately 4.3 miles to the parking lot on the right.



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#### Tell Governor Wolf to cut methane pollution now

We must each pledge to reduce our energy consumption in every way possible: to reuse, repair and restore rather than throw away and buy new. We must support local suppliers of our needs for food and other basics. We must take advantage of the electric choice program and buy our electricity from renewable, sustainable sources. We must join with those who have committed to living lives simpler in consumption and broader in enjoyment.

In the end, such choices will create lives of greater connection to each other and to the natural world - lives richer in fulfillment and joy.

Bring on the methane regulations.

Most importantly, bring on a new cultural paradigm of understanding and acting on the dire consequences of climate change. Bring on commitment and personal responsibility and the positive outcomes available only through the collective consciousness of reduced energy consumption.

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## Elizabeth Kolbert at Bucknell

by Harvey Katz, RDA Member

Over the last 600 million years Earth has experienced five major extinctions, the last and most recent one about 65 million years ago when the dinosaurs (with the exception of their descendants, the birds) disappeared from the planet. Kolbert laid out in great detail a sixth extinction, this one caused by human activity, to a packed Bucknell theater. She talked about the rapid build-up of carbon dioxide (starting in the late 1700's and continuing to the present time) due to burning first coal, then oil and now natural gas. She said that people are, by burning, releasing carbon that had been trapped underground for millions of years and are now flooding the atmosphere with carbon dioxide. This carbon dioxide is causing the Earth to retain heat that otherwise would have dissipated into space. The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) early this month said that 2015 was the warmest on record.

About a third of the carbon dioxide has been absorbed by the oceans. As a result the acid level of these great seas is increasing. That in turn is making it difficult for shelled animals to form a shell. In turn these shelled creatures are disappearing or becoming extinct. Coral reefs and shelled animals and the life in them are rapidly ceasing to exist. Tropical land and fresh water environments have a large number of the known species on the planet. These forests are becoming impacted by climate change; in turn, both plant and animal species are disappearing.

Kolbert also discussed data that indicated that we now have 400 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere and that it will not be long before we reach 500 ppm. Recent research shows carbon dioxide levels in our atmosphere over the last 800,000 years. During this period carbon dioxide levels never reached above 300 ppm. So, we are entering a period of planet warming for which we have no experience. We are entering uncharted waters and can look with alarm at the rapid speed with which we are losing plant and animal species. All of this loss and we have no idea of its impact or repercussions to the ability of humans to exist on Earth.

[Click here to read more about Elizabeth Kolbert in Katz's full event review.](#)

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## PEDF on Supreme Court Schedule

In an historic action to ascertain whether or not Article I § 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution has meaning for the use of money generated by oil and gas development on state lands, Pennsylvania Environmental Defense Fund (PEDF) attorney John Childe filed an appeal to the Supreme Court with PEDF's claims described in

Methane is a potent greenhouse gas that has been leaking into our atmosphere at an astounding rate, especially throughout the oil and gas industry. Recently, Governor Wolf introduced new policies to cut methane pollution for the sake of our health and climate. This proposal isn't perfect, but it's a step in the right direction.

Show Gov. Wolf that you support this step for climate action and want to see PA cut methane pollution now.

[Click here to sign this petition from PennEnvironment.](#)

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### Tell EPA to take action on existing sources of methane pollution

The oil and gas industry is carelessly leaking millions of tons of methane pollution and toxic chemicals into the air that harm our health and speed up climate change. These industrial leaks are like an invisible oil spill happening every day and the oil and gas industry is getting away with it. We need stronger methane pollution standards for the country that will protect Americans with low-cost safeguards that already exist to clean up pollution from oil and gas sites.

Let EPA Administrator McCarthy know you want strong standards for all sources of methane pollution before President Obama leaves office.

[Click here to sign a letter prepared by the Clean Air Council.](#)

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### Thank President Obama for halting coal mining on public lands - and ask him to ban oil and gas removal

President Obama has announced a bold moratorium on all new coal leases on federal lands - a breakthrough move that will protect our climate and millions of acres of public lands from the ravages of coal mining. But this coal moratorium doesn't apply to all dirty fossil fuels, leaving New Mexico's Chaco Canyon, Utah's Desolation Canyon and many other natural treasures vulnerable to the dangers of fracking and other oil and gas development.

Thank the President for his continued leadership on climate, and ask him to accelerate our

this [Jurisdictional Statement](#).

The appeal was granted and a date has been assigned. On March 9, 2016, Childe is scheduled to present oral argument before Pennsylvania's Supreme Court in Philadelphia.

RDA is pleased to offer financial support to PEDF for this crucial case, and invites our members to do the same. For more information, visit [www.pedf.org](http://www.pedf.org).



Houslander Mountain in the Tiadaghton State Forest is one of many areas legally owned by the citizens of PA but now closed to the public. PA's once wild and healthy forests have become a patchwork of rural hardpack and industry.

## Standoff imminent as PA family opposes gas pipeline tree cutting through maple syrup operation

Last week, Constitution Pipeline Company received federal permission to cut trees on properties in Susquehanna County, including trees that are part of a family-owned commercial maple syrup operation in New Milford.

The order was obtained through eminent domain condemnation and a partial Notice to Proceed with Non-Mechanized Tree Cutting was issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. According to FERC, chainsaws are not considered to be "mechanized" equipment and tree cutting can begin any time during daylight hours now through March 31, the deadline set by FERC.

The Constitution Pipeline is a project of Williams Pipeline Companies and Cabot Oil & Gas to be used to transport fracked gas. The right of way would be at least 100-ft wide, with additional intermittent 50-ft wide workspaces and access roads.

Landowner Catherine Holleran and her daughter, Megan, have opposed the eminent domain condemnation of an access road, an additional workspace and more than 1,670 linear feet of their property, which is used for maple syrup production by their family business, North Harford Maple.

Megan Holleran said, "*This is our land and family business. The pipeline has been years in permitting*

move to a clean energy future by expanding this moratorium to all fossil fuels on public lands.

[Click here to sign a petition prepared by NRDC.](#)

### Tell Congress to keep fossil fuels in the ground

Left Action is planning to deliver one million petition signatures to the White House urging President Obama to keep fossil fuels in the ground by stopping new fossil fuel leasing on federal lands and waters.

Help us reach one million signatures: Urge President Obama to keep fossil fuels in the ground!

[Click here to sign a petition prepared by Friends of the Earth.](#)

### New Book Just Released:

#### Fracking America - Sacrificing Health and the Environment for Short-Term Economic Benefit

by Walter Brasch

Fracking America is a fact-based overview of the issues surrounding the natural gas industry and fracking. Although it focuses upon the Marcellus Shale, it looks at cases and issues in other parts of the country. The book is not meant to be a comprehensive analysis of the science and engineering of the process to extract natural gas nor an extensive discussion of the economic, health, environmental and political issues. It is meant as a basic reference to acquaint people with the issues, with the hope they will dig deeper into areas that directly concern them and rally their friends and neighbors to help protect the health and environment of the people, wildlife and natural vegetation.

[Click here to procure your copy from Greeley and Stone Publishers for 20% off the list price.](#)

### Join RDA!

Our next Working Group meeting will be held on **Monday, February 8th, 5:30 pm** at the Mill Tavern, Broad Street, Montoursville. Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend. We welcome your active participation and are in

*and we just staged our equipment to set up for this year's syrup production. If they cut the trees now, they would destroy our equipment and that's criminal. That's property destruction. We asked them to speak with our attorney before cutting and that hasn't happened yet. I'm ready to stop them by standing in the right of way if they try."*

In February 2015, Scranton's federal judge Malachy Mannion ordered that the Holleran property and several others in Susquehanna County be condemned using eminent domain for the private use of Constitution Pipeline Company. No construction activities proceeded after that, as state and federal agencies extended their reviews of archaeology, impacts on endangered species and wetlands.

In a cease and desist letter served to the company by the Holleran family this past Friday, Catherine Holleran wrote, "*We assert our Fourth Amendment rights, enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, that we must receive compensation before eminent domain condemnation. As compensation hearings have yet to be held, we find any action to develop our property to be unconstitutional. We hope that your client will proceed with good faith negotiations with our counsel prior to any tree cutting, especially given their affinity for the name 'Constitution Pipeline'.*"



Blue sap lines on the Holleran property are set and ready to receive maple sap when it starts running in February and March. Pink survey flags show the proposed pipeline route.

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### RDA Newsletter

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This biweekly e-newsletter is written and designed by the RDA consultants and Board of Directors and sent to RDA

need of help for special events, publicity, research and other projects. Please come join us & see what the RDA Working Group is all about. Attendance at a meeting is not an obligation to join the group.

It costs nothing to sign up for our e-newsletter, but tax-free donations are accepted & greatly appreciated. Please consider a tax-deductible donation to RDA.

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, RDA relies on donations for the important work we do. In order for RDA to continue its valuable education and advocacy outreach in 2016 and beyond, please consider a tax-free contribution to our efforts.

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Please note: The RDA newsletter includes reporting on a variety of events and activities, which do not necessarily reflect the philosophy of the organization. RDA practices only non-violent action in voicing the organization's beliefs and concerns.

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