

from our viewpoint...

Support for plants not unconditional

We have been clear about our support of the power plant being built at Caruso and the ones proposed for Holcomb, because of the need to expand our energy options both in northwest Kansas and the surrounding region.

The plants will not be perfect. We know they will have some emissions from the smoke stack, and these will need to be monitored.

The plants, as proposed, will produce exhausts cleaner than what is being spewed from older power plants in the eastern part of Kansas. The cleanest coal-fired power plant in the state is Sunflower Electric's existing coal-fired plant has at Holcomb.

Emissions from the plant at Caruso will be markedly less than the toxic emissions from all the cars we drive every day, and the operators say they will continue to try to find ways to reduce the emissions.

For most people who questioned a request to modify the Caruso plant's air permit, the biggest concern was inclusion of trash, known to bureaucrats as municipal solid waste, as one of the things that could be burned to reduce dependence on coal. A big concern is all the plastics we use and throw into the trash every day.

Goodland Energy Resources has a long way to go before they are ready to handle any trash coming from either the county transfer station or from outside the area. When the firm is ready, it will have to conform to all state and federal guidelines about that process, probably sorting the trash to keep bad stuff out of the plant.

One easy way to help both the county and eventually the power plant is for Sherman County citizens to recycle plastics as well as we do paper, glass, aluminum and tin now. The county, in cooperation with collection contractor In the Can, is working on a program to start recycling cardboard to keep it out of the landfill.

Goodland citizens recently had a reminder of what happens when the city is left to depend on a single source of power when wind shorted out the power line east of town, leaving us without power for several hours.

The city crew did an excellent job of bringing the power plant on line to light up the city. The engines at the city power plant are not new, though, and without the partnership willing to build the plant at Caruso, city officials would be looking at spending millions to upgrade or replace them.

Having a newer and more efficient power plant within five miles will be more stable than depending on the single set of lines that connect the city with the Sunflower Electric transmission system coming from the plant at Holcomb.

The future of western Kansas is tied to the development of the power plants and the power transmission lines that will connect us with the rest of the region. This expansion will compliment efforts to increase the use of wind and solar energy, which will depend on the same grid to deliver power.

Our support of the power plants would change if there was convincing evidence that either Goodland Energy Resources or Sunflower Electric is not working to make their systems as "green" and environmentally clean as possible. We remember the days of black smoke coming from power plants and the steel mills out west, and we do not want to see that here. — Tom Betz



"DOES THIS MEAN WE WON'T BE GETTING OUR ECONOMIC STIMULUS CHECKS?!?"

I'm getting buried by the trash in the car

My car is full of trash, and it really needs to be cleaned out.

Not junk, mind you — although I've got a bit of that, too.

This is trash, waste products, garbage.

It started out innocently enough. I'm in the news business. We get a lot of newspapers — a half dozen weeklies and at least three seven-day dailies. Some are pretty small, but some, like the Sunday edition of the Denver Post, are whoppers.

I hate to add all those papers to our landfill and I knew that there were ways of recycling them, so I started putting them in brown paper grocery sacks.

At first there was nowhere to send them here, but I learned I could send them to our press department in Goodland, where they would go into a huge newspaper recycling bin.

Eventually, Oberlin got a little recycling trailer. I started taking my papers down and emptying the bags into the proper slot.

I noticed that you could also recycle catalogs and magazines. I had been taking my magazines to the library for their free pile, but there were a lot of catalogs coming in the mail, advertising everything from men's shirts to riverboat cruises in Russia.



cynthia haynes

• open season

I put a little pink Victoria's Secret bag behind a plant to catch all those tips, trips and assorted slick circulars. It takes longer to fill than my brown paper newspaper bags, but I still have to empty it about twice a month, more during the Christmas season.

With newspapers and magazines under my belt, I started reading the labels on the sides of the recycling trailer and even took a peek at what was in the bins so I would know what No. 1 plastic or chipboard looked like.

I found that I could recycle my milk cartons, cereal boxes, toilet paper cores and salsa jars. I just had to clean them out and have a spot to store them until it was time to go to the recycling center.

At first, I tried keeping things in the garage in separate plastic crates. While this was a great idea, it didn't work as well as I had hoped during the winter.

My next idea was to just put another brown paper bag next to the trash can for recyclables.

This has worked well; I fill about a bag every three days.

The latest addition to the recyclable family in Oberlin is tin cans. Those go in the bag, too, now.

Last week we made chili. I washed out and threw away the plastic and styrofoam hamburger containers but rinsed and put in the recycling bag the cans from the tomato juice, paste and sauce. That plus the four plastic containers that held strawberries and cherry tomatoes (they were on sale), an empty milk carton, glass pickle jar, plastic Coke bottle, empty Bisquick box, an empty plastic mayonnaise jar and half a dozen metal and plastic lids pretty much filled up a paper sack.

When I get to the trailer, I just go round and round to the proper bin and dump each item in. It's easier than trying to keep it all separated.

When a sack of newspapers, magazines or trash is full, I put it in the trunk of my car to await a trip to the recycle trailer. It's been a couple of weeks since I made that trip and my trunk is getting real trashy — but my garage looks good.

I guess I'm not going very far in that car until I detrash my trunk, but that's a small sacrifice in this day and age.

Good news about global warming

You've no doubt seen the stories about strange snowfalls in Saudi Arabia. A brutal winter in China. The heaviest snow cover in North America, Siberia and elsewhere since 1966.

And if you are a vigilant observer of the global warming debate, you know how inconveniently cold it is in the Arctic this winter for Al Gore and his army of climate alarmists.

But how cold is it, Johnny?

Well, NASA says recent satellite images show that the allegedly endangered polar ice cap — which will melt completely one of these summers and kill off all the polar bears if we don't slash our greedy carbon footprints and revert to the lifestyles of medieval peasants — has recovered to near normal coverage levels.

That's what Josefino Comiso, a senior research scientist with the Cryospheric Sciences Branch of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, told Canada's CBC News — the Canadian government's version of NPR/PBS — recently.

As far as Google's search engine knows, Comiso's comforting report has appeared nowhere but in Canada.

There's even better news for polar ice-pack lovers from ice expert Gilles Langis, who says Arctic ice is now even thicker than usual in spots. A senior ice forecaster with the Canadian Ice Service in Ottawa, he's another scientist you shouldn't expect to see talking to Anderson Cooper on the next episode of CNN's "Galaxy in Peril."

Meanwhile, in other news too climatically incorrect for U.S. mainstream media to touch, California meteorologist Anthony Watts says January 2008 was the planet's second-coldest January in 15 years.

Even more shocking, the average temperature of Earth dropped significantly from January 2007 to January 2008. As Watts explains on his Web site watsupwiththat.wordpress.com, he determined the lower figure by crunching data from four major public and private global tracking sources.

You may remember Watts from last summer. He popped up on Fox News because of his self-funded project to quality-check 1,221 ground weather stations around the country that are used by NASA to measure the "official" average annual temperature of the United States.

So far, Watts and his volunteers have



bill steigerwald

• newsmakers

checked out more than 500 weather stations (none in Western Pennsylvania) to see if their temperature data can be considered credible. As he details on his other Web site, surfacestations.org, nearly 70 percent of the sites fail to meet the government's own standards because they are not 100 feet from a building, are on blazing rooftops, sit next to air-conditioner exhaust fans, etc.

Watts was shocked and surprised to find such unequivocal proof that Earth's temperature has cooled in the last year, he said to me. But he's very cautious about what it means in either the

short or long run.

Calling it a "fluctuation" and "a large anomaly" compared to the 30-year running temperature average that climatologists use, he emphasized the cold spell is "no indication that global warming is over" but does "illustrate that the driving mechanisms behind our planet's climate are still very much in control of changing the climate and that the planet's not in the death grip of CO2 just yet."

A careful, honest man of science, all Watts would say for sure was his findings and all the strange cold-weather events of this winter prove only one thing so far — "Mother Nature is still in control of things, not us."

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