

Philanthropy Women

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Rachel's Network and People Over Petro Battle Industry Giants

Ecofeminist funder [Rachel's Network](#) is collaborating with the [People over Petro](#) Coalition in combating the petrochemical industry in the Ohio River Valley.

Rachel's Network is collaborating with the People over Petro Coalition to increase civic engagement.

The Ohio River forms at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers in Pittsburgh, and flows southwest nearly 1,000 miles to southern Illinois where it meets the Mississippi River. Several corporations, notably Shell, have projects in the works to produce plastics and chemicals in the Ohio River Valley, and have already begun building ethane cracker plants, pipelines, storage facilities, and other dirty infrastructure. These projects will foul the air and water, exposing residents of parts of Ohio, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia to toxic emissions, sending health costs from just three proposed plants into the billions over the plants' lifespan. Moreover, such production exacerbates climate change and make local economies vulnerable to the boom-bust cycles typical of the energy industry.

In 2019, local activists formed the People Over Petro Coalition to represent organizations and individuals in the Ohio River Valley. People Over Petro's mission is to support the local population in creating a world that puts peoples' health and well-being over fossil-fuel corporate profits.

Rachel's Network is aiding the coalition's efforts to increase civic engagement around the issue. Funding from Rachel's Network will enable the coalition to send thousands of residents in the region outreach materials explaining the health and environmental impacts of existing or proposed facilities in their communities. The materials will also include calls-to-action, and a directory of key government contacts.

"We decided to fund this work because the negative impacts of using fossil fuels to produce more plastic, which itself is a tremendous scourge, are wide-ranging and long-term," said Rachel's Network Member Abigail Rome. "The industry is projecting that by 2050 nearly half of the growth in oil demand will be for petrochemical production. Resistance from communities on the frontlines can be incredibly effective in changing the minds of decision-makers."

Rachel's Network is named in honor of scientist, ecologist, and writer Rachel Carson (1907-1964), the godmother of the post-War environmental movement. As noted in the 2018 PW article [A Healthy World for All: Rachel's Network Integrates Environmental and Gender Equality Philanthropy](#), Rachel's Network is a community of women at the intersection of environmental advocacy, philanthropy, and leadership. Its mission is "to promote women as impassioned leaders and agents of change dedicated to the stewardship of the earth."

Rachel's Network members occupy over 100 director positions on the boards of major environmental organizations, and are working to fund solutions in areas ranging from sustainable agriculture and toxics, to conservation and climate change. Over the last 20 years, Rachel's Network has collectively given two million dollars that invest in women leaders and environmental initiatives.

Current projects include funding to combat pesticides and chemicals, promoting gender parity in politics, improving agricultural practices and creating a more sustainable food system, promoting women of color in environmentalism and green entrepreneurship, and opposing the border wall. This latter initiative has been in partnership with the Texas Civil Rights Project, the Center for Biological Diversity, and the Sierra Club.

Rachel's Network's twentieth anniversary meeting will take place in Washington, D.C. on March 23-25, and will honor the 2019 (and inaugural) group of Catalyst Award winners. The [Catalyst Award](#) "celebrates women of color who are building a healthier, safer, and more just world."

Tim Lehnert – Posted on March 2, 2020