Local Environmental Action Demanded

People have a Right to Clean Water and a Healthy Tar Creek

Intertribal Council Leaders Unanimous
At a meeting held on June 16, Rebecca Jim presented the Clean Water Protection Ordinance to the Council. After a lengthy discussion, a resolution to support the document was made, seconded and passed unanimously by the members. A short time later, Bo Reese, Miami’s City Manager spoke to the council about he and the City Attorney Ben Loring working with LEAD Agency on the ordinance.

Petition Circulators
George Briscoe  Kelda Lorax
Cori Stotts  Karen Fields
Mike Lillie  Ben Barnes
Steve Gilbert  Jill Micka
Eli Kreeger  Rebecca Jim
Chris Robinson  Justin Addis
James Walkingstick  Virgil Tartar
John Holt  Stephanie Addis

Petition Circulators have a copy of the proposed Ordinance, can answer any questions, and can witness your signature and can give you a copy of the gist as it will appear on the ballot. Contact any of the above or call 918-542-9399 to find out where to sign up.

Louis “Red” Mathia
LEAD Agency
President of the Board
was one of the first voters to sign the petition for Clean Water

Our TAR Creek has Rights!
Taking Initiative means the ability to see something that needs to be done and deciding to do it out of your own free will without someone else telling you to do it.

Many people all over Miami, Oklahoma will be taking initiative. Every single person who picks up a pen, reads through the wordy document and signs an initiative petition that is currently being circulated as an eligible and registered city voter will be demonstrating with their own free will—doing the one thing not attempted before in the known history of the city. Citizens will be exercising the inherent right of the people of the City of Miami to make laws which recognize and expand criminal liability and environmental rights at the municipal level under the actual authority provided in the Oklahoma Constitution. Each will be responding to the title: A CITY OF MIAMI CLEAN WATER PROTECTION ORDINANCE to give what most believe to be a God-given right, the right to Clean Water.

We as a community have not fought the fight, have not been in the streets, gotten arrested for our Clean Water fight. We don't have to. All we have to do is sign a petition, asking as a Citizen of Miami, OK for Clean Water as a Right, your very own right. And the right for Tar Creek to be protected from added pollution. And for polluters to face fines and restitution to correct that damage be paid to the city for the victim, Tar Creek. This ordinance cannot undo the damage Tar Creek has had with 42 years of a million gallons of acid mine water flowing through the city, some days much more is pouring out of the mines, at flood stage more of Tar Creek is spread vastly across the fields, parks and many residential yards. This ordinance does not charge or render blame on Tar Creek when that may occur.

With enough signatures on the petition, it will allow a special election to be held in the city, if the City Council does not on their own approve the ordinance. It could be easier for the City Counselors to do that with hundreds and thousands of registered voters saying, "Hey, clean water, I am for that" and demonstrating it with their signatures on the petitions we will walk into the meeting for them to see each time it might be on the agenda.

What are the Rights of the People of the City of Miami as stated in the ordinance? The people of the City of Miami possess the right to clean water, which shall include the right to a healthy Tar Creek that is free from pollution, and the right to be free from activities or projects which violate that right.

What are the Rights of Tar Creek as stated in the ordinance? Tar Creek possesses the rights to exist, regenerate, and flourish, which shall include the right to naturally recharge, the right to flow, the right to water quality necessary to provide habitat for native plants and animals, the right to provide clean water, the right to be free from pollution, and the right to restoration. Tar Creek shall also have the right to be free from activities or projects which violate those rights. The rights of the Creek secured within this Ordinance shall not be interpreted to confer liabilities, duties, obligations, or responsibilities on the Creek.

When Tar Creek is polluted, Tar Creek is harmed and becomes a victim with legal rights. “Tar Creek” as used within this Ordinance, shall include the Tar Creek ecosystem, which shall include, but not be limited to, tributaries of the Creek, and the Tar Creek watershed.

When I first read what rights Tar Creek has, it was like reading poetry. When reading the rights of the People in this ordinance, it reads like justice. Justice that can begin to be gained by the People of Miami, OK's long overdue claim to their Right to Clean Water. Take some initiative.

Your Tar Creekkeeper ~ Rebecca Jim
CONCERNED COMMUNITY LEADERS ATTEND GRDA/FERC MEETING

the invitation from GRDA to attend a technical meeting in Claremore on the Upstream Hydraulic Model as my first real outing. Once in the room, one of the first announcements was the signup sheet being on the back table. But the back table was devoid of anything but the red ballpoint pen. The table needed signup sheets, and I sat ours up, covering the whole table. Nearly a thousand people have signed LEAD Agency’s “We've flooded enough. We won't take it anymore” signs. And all of these folks came with me to this meeting. Their fates and their hopes were visible with their names, one after another covering these cardboard covered proclamations with one boldly saying STOP the FLOODING placed uniquely in the center. The pen stayed on the table, just in case another person would be moved to add their signature.

Over a thousand concerned citizens joined in the meeting, showing up on the boards held by these leaders. They signed saying they are “Not going to take it anymore!” These leaders held the names and the concerns of their neighbors for a photo at the end of the meeting.

"We’ve flooded enough. We won’t take it anymore:"

We’ve flooded enough.
We won’t take it anymore:

SPEAKING OUT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
Everyday is Earth Day, but this year it came as a Tar Creek Fish Tournament held so LEAD Agency could thank the students and their instructors for all the incredible semester’s work done for our community. Special Thanks to instructors: Niall Kirkwood and Dan Brabander!

AND we were joined with music from our talented activist friends: The Picher Project Moriah Bailey Jim Stricklan’s Tar Creek And Bill Honker’s This ‘ol Town We all zoomed for one of our most memorable Earth Day!

Virtual Fish Tournament for Earth Day

Make every day Earth Day
MIAMI HIGH SCHOOL ART STUDENTS CREATE TAR CREEK FISH AND FRIENDS

Dawn Hill’s Art students once again became activists for the environment. None of them or their parents would have known a clean Tar Creek since it has been contaminated for the last 42 years! These high school students molded clay fish, frogs, snakes and turtles in hope that one day all these types of water loving species can find homes in a clean Tar Creek.

University of Oklahoma professor Todd Stewart was contacted by LEAD’s partner, Higher Ground’s Harriet Festing who encouraged him to bring his talents to Tar Creek. Todd took individual portraits of each of the artists with their pottery creation at Miami High School. Then all of the pieces of art were taken to the creek for time near the water.

See more Tar Creek Fish on LEAD’s Facebook Page.

I have laid aside business and gone a-fishing. Izaak Walton 1657
Special Thanks for the 2021 Donations:

Eric Ferrell
Joby Taylor
Sharon Douthitt
Mary Jean Brown
Wanda Couch
Bobbie Bigby

Diana Duran
Barbara VanHanken
George & Francis Webb
Marilyn Power Scott

Activism: Riverview Park Cleanups

Berkeley Ulrey continues the Monthly Cleanup at Riverview Park, never ending rains do not deter the cleanups. They are happening because of his leadership.

Tar Creek Tours for Legislators have been offered to Oklahoma State Representatives Bashore, Bush, Fugate, Ranson, Rosecrantz, Waldron and West by young Ulrey. Upcoming dates selected are for July 15 and July 17.

If you would like to assist with the tours, please contact LEAD Agency at 918-542-9399. Our representatives need to hear the voices of their constituents and they need to see the environmental disaster we live with here in Ottawa County.

Good job Berkeley for believing in the future. You are the future! And thanks for the work in the community garden, better for you being there.

Pride Fest in Miami Riverview Park – A FIRST!

LEAD Board member James Walkingstick and a motivated team of volunteers held the first Pride Fest Activity ever held in the City of Miami, OK. We are proud of all who organized and all who attended with great pride!

Three of our Clean Water Petition Circulators attended: Kelda Lorax, Rebecca Jim, and Justin Addis, each speaking up for our damaged victim, Tar Creek.

Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public
Cornel West
Vaccinated Garden Party

First time garden session was open for our vaccinated members, clearing, spreading pecan hulls with drinks and hot dogs with our day’s goals completed.

JoAnn Walkup, Bob Horn, David Anderson, Martin Lively, John Michael Scruggs, Jill Micka, Rebecca Jim were a few of our vaccinated gardeners.

LEAD continues to promote safe public meetings to protect us all.

OUR NEWEST VOLUNTEERS:

Jessi Stidham
Graduate Student in Physical Therapy volunteered in the garden and with designs for our outreach for Tar Creek.

Eli Kreeger
NEO Sophomore studying Environmental Science. He is spending summer hours in the garden but also doing outreach at the Farmer’s Market and serving as one of our youngest petition circulators.

How we spend our days is, how we spend our lives. Annie Dillard
ROSE FOUNDATION Grassroots Leadership Fund program provided a capacity-building cohort that LEAD has been active with and has provided funds to LEAD. Guided by a board of community activists and veteran funders, the Grassroots Leadership Fund’s mission is to bridge a significant gap between grassroots environmental groups and the traditional funding patterns of organized philanthropy by awarding small grants ($5,000 or less) to small organizations that are underserved by most foundations’ funding strategies.

Also using the Grassroots Leadership Mini-Grant LEAD was able to purchase 2 Acer Laptop computers to loan to our active volunteers to continue their service to us as we maintain the COVID restrictions at our office.

CDER has a history of working with governments, tribal nations, indigenous communities, civil society, and grassroots activists to protect the human right to a healthy environment and establish the rights of the environment itself – the rights of nature. This means securing the highest level of legal protection for humans and nature through the recognition of legal rights. Thus, it is critical to strengthen our democratic rights in order to expand and strengthen our authority to protect nature.

LEAD is proud to have been contacted by leaders from the Center for Democratic and Environmental Rights and began a working partnership on gaining rights for the citizens in Miami, OK for clean water and to establishing rights for our damaged Tar Creek. LEAD is now part of a powerful movement to protect our planet. We are grateful for the support, guidance and to have received a small grant from CDER to help us do this work.

LEAD is proud to have received a grant to help us with our general operating expenses from the Kirkpatrick Foundation Board of Trustees!

Kirkpatrick Foundation grants support to organizations with projects and programs that complement the mission of the foundation, within its areas of interest: arts and culture, education, animal wellbeing, environmental conservation, and historic preservation.

Sierra Club awarded LEAD a sub-grant for $1,500 which was received this spring for our continued work to protect our Tar Creek!

The 2020 U.S. Accelerator Catalyst Grant was open to all leaders of the 2020 U.S. Grassroots Accelerator program to further support the development and implementation of our projects. LEAD received $1,700!
Maryann Hurtt, Poet and friend to LEAD Agency has published a volume of persona poems, actually giving voice to the events, people, places and creatures who call Tar Creek and this area home.

Dedicated to the Tar Creek Monster, who as she writes “was the initial inspiration for this book” but also she goes on to include “the monsters in all of our lives.”

“Over and over again, I am drawn to water.” And water, our orange water in Tar Creek perplexed her and drew her back over the years to better understand how it got that way and to learn about this place and her people. Her own grandfather had been a miner and on one of her trips she found his photo and his card on file at the Picher Mining Museum.

Ms Hurtt knows us because she listens with heart and she has captured our voices and those who have gone from us already. Once Upon A Tar Creek, Mining for Voices is a treasure.

We will are recommending Chapters stock this as it becomes available. It is a must read!

Higher Ground is the largest coalition of communities on the front line of climate change. LEAD Agency is a proud member of this organization! Because of our relationship LEAD has been linked to many of the funding groups assisting us as we grow to meet local environmental needs our communities face.

https://anthropocenealliance.org/

Easy ways to support LEAD Agency:

Choose goodsearch as a search engine. Each search raises a penny for LEAD.

Support LEAD Agency

Go to smile.amazon.com

#MyTAR CREEK

OTTAWA COUNTY RESIDENTS:
GET YOUR YARD TESTED FOR LEAD AND CLEANED UP FOR FREE
DEQ Hotline
1-800-522-0206
Coal Combustion Residual (CCR) lawsuit:  - Earl Hatley

LEAD is in Federal Appellate Court in Washington DC, appealing the portion of our case against EPA we lost in the lower court regarding Oklahoma’s CCR rules that lack adequate public participation and that allow coal ash (waste from burning coal in coal-fired power plants) storage units to have permits for life (never come up for renewal, hence public awareness/participation). EPA wanted to settle this case out of court, however, their attorneys don’t see anything wrong with permits for life. LEAD does!! Our attorneys at Earthjustice are prepared to file a suit against EPA over this point if we cannot settle this case on both points. We won that portion of our suit that will now require all these coal ash storage units to have membrane liners under them. Almost all of these units in Oklahoma have shown that they have polluted the groundwater under them, including GRDA in Chouteau.

THRIVING EARTH EXCHANGE program advances community solutions. TEX will recruit, support, nurture, and celebrate scientists who work as partners with community leaders. Thriving Earth Exchange scientists offer relevant Earth or space science with humility, develop new research questions based on community priorities, and then works with community leaders to make concrete local impacts.

LEAD Agency was referred to this program by the Anthropocene Alliance and have been assigned two scientists to work on what we believed to be one of our most pressing needs. We needed an interactive map for residents in Ottawa County to use to determine the eminent danger they might be in as flood waters begin rising. After a search, our Community Science Fellow, Jessica Tran located Kate Meierdiercks, Siena College in the Department of Environmental Studies and Sciences and Jim Kuipers, an engineer who joined our team and began in earnest to collect the information needed for the layers a map like this would require. A layer came from DEQ, the Ottawa County Assessor’s office and another valuable layer from the Quapaw Environmental Dept.

We are reviewing the map that has been created and as the layers are being made more “user friendly” we have seen more is possible from the map than we first believed was needed. Yes, community members will be able to use it to answer pressing needs as flood waters rise, but as we zoomed out to look more broadly, it is obvious when looking at the whole county how much contaminated chat and chat bases are affected when flooding occurs. We will use this tool to demonstrate the risk to human health each flood brings to the people and the environment when the mine waste is disturbed by waters. This map will be shown to federal, state and the Quapaw Nation to help guide the way cleanup of the site moves forward. Moving chat and chat bases away from the watershed will be more protective for all of us. We are extremely grateful for the assistance AGU’s Thriving Earth Exchange has given LEAD Agency!

ED KEHELEY—GIVES THE MOTHER LOAD

Throughout the last year LEAD has been gifted a number of files, maps and “loads” of documents that have allowed our organization to speak with truth more often and more clearly than we have done before. Ed has given detailed research and photos that we have been able to use in our work, have been able to share with this semester’s Tar Creek Remade Studio at the Harvard School of Design and place into the official comments we submit during the year to numerous opportunities EPA has extended for public participation to the efforts that will be conducted at the Tar Creek Superfund site. Thanks Mr. Keheley for the shared treasures.

“Words can light fires in the minds of men.” — Patrick Rothfuss
Voters in the Miami City Limits
Sign Petitions for clean water
and a healthy Tar Creek

We all thank the Proponents
for the Clean Water Protection ordinance:
James Couch  John Holt  Jacklyn Robinson
Paula Johnston

Ask for justice  SIGN A PETITION