

# COAL ACTION MURIHIKU

## CAM News Update No 7 Feb 2013

### Reflections from Summerfest 2013 Bell Murphy

This year's Summerfest was a great re-inspiration. Rob and Sally McCreath's visit and their story of Felton's successful community action was incredibly heartening especially after hearing the sobering reality of Sid Plant from Acland last year. Acland is an example of what could happen to Southland if Solid Enemy get their way, and Felton is a story of what Southlanders can do to protect the land, prosperity and health of their communities, with a little help from friends.

The fact that this year's event was primarily organised by Coal Action Murihiku (CAM) was really exciting. It's a tribute to the staunch, creative, loving and ingenious folk in Southland. Not to mention the fantastic hospitality and delicious cooking! I also take my hat off to the organising group of Coal Action Network Aotearoa (CANA) who organised last year's festival out of which CAM grew. CANA has striven to walk alongside locals against the mines, offering experience and skills to help build a campaign that is relevant to Southland. As such they have tried to take their cues from local people, respecting local knowledge and culture rather than swooping in and telling them how to do things (as some NGOs and activists have been known to do). It may have been a smaller gathering than last year but there is a greater core of committed local people willing to organise on the ground this year and that is powerful!

In the famous words of Margaret Mead "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."



### 2012 – Making a Stand

[www.southernexposures.co.nz](http://www.southernexposures.co.nz)



Pack-down Crew remind themselves that the whole point of the CANA and CAM

2013 Summerfest was: "Keep the Coal in the Hole" Photo: Jenny Campbell

# Community Day in Gore

Jeanette Fitzsimons



Sally & Rob McReath ... and the climate change elephant in the room  
(The elephant has his own Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/TheClimateElephant?ref=stream](http://www.facebook.com/TheClimateElephant?ref=stream))



Mark Smith describes the health effects of coal mining and use



Jeanette Fitzsimons – happy about CANA's progress



"And sea levels will come up *this* high."  
Gareth Renowden gives a climate change update

(A summary of Gareth's presentation with many links to the science is at <http://hot-topic.co.nz/the-gore-synthesis-where-we-are-now-where-we-are-heading-and-what-we-need-to-do/>)

The public open day began with a review of what had happened since Summerfest 2012 – to the lignite projects, to CANA (both good news) and to the climate (very bad news).

Jeanette Fitzsimons opened with an account of the failure of the lignite projects. Briquetting plant built but not operating, commissioning problems, and no markets. Scaled up plant abandoned. Lignite to urea on extreme back burner after departure of partner Ravensdown. Lignite to diesel not even a gleam in the eye of soon-to-be-sacked Don Elder. No capital for new developments without the sale of 49% and we are almost there on the referendum.

Meanwhile new coal action groups have formed around the country. Groups have held film evenings, raised money, opposed planning consent for new mines, drawn attention to Solid Energy sponsorship programmes, developed a joint declaration on the future we want and presented it to industry conferences (uninvited!) campaigned for hospital and school boilers to change from coal to wood, demonstrated alternatives to coal, toured Australian speakers with a positive message and posted masses of information on a coal wikki "Coalswarm".

However Gareth Renowden (author and blogger on "Hot Topic") showed us just how serious it has become. In brief: extreme weather events are now happening; records are being broken constantly for heat wave temperatures and polar ice melt; sea bed methane has started to bubble up; and there is only the slimmest chance now of limiting warming to 2°.

To have a chance we need to start at once, reduce emissions to zero and start extracting carbon from the atmosphere. We must plan for resilience – eg rebuild Christchurch on higher ground – and not lock the economy into high carbon technologies. It will need to be like a wartime mobilisation if we are to succeed.



Cath Wallace explains the rights of NZ land owners

Photos: [www.southernexposures.co.nz](http://www.southernexposures.co.nz)



### Multi-tasking

Jenny Campbell at Summer Fest

Photo: Cindy Baxter

## Lessons to be learned from the West Coast

**Pete Lusk** said his group had the most experience opposing Solid Energy, with more than 20 years of activity. They had campaigned for the clean up of local rivers from coal mining pollution, against fires burning in old coal pits, and against the expansion of coal mining. They had found they got a lot of support from people in the cities, and this was what helped win environmental campaigns – local people giving a lead on the campaign and getting support from city people.

Pete explained how Solid Energy put money into the local towns, including wages and local infrastructure such as swimming pools and schools; but also destroyed the surrounding community as young people and families tended to move out. It was hard to take on a corporation like Solid Energy because they were clever at busting environmental groups. The company set up a user friendly consultative group and invited local people to it, as long as they changed their goals to “sensible” ones like helping with rehabilitation and water discharges. The message from the company to locals was to “work with us and work on our agenda”.

The “Save Happy Valley” group (who set up a base camp to protect the area and the kiwi there) had been wiped out by Solid Energy infiltrating the group with spies, which had enabled Solid Energy to read all their emails. Pete said “Be very aware of the dangers and stick to your goals. Don’t let yourself be diverted. Don’t listen to people trying to hold you back. Stick to your goals eg stop the coal mine, not half the mine.”

**Suzi Phillips**

## And some sobering thoughts from John Purey-Cust

We’ve had, and I hope enjoyed the second “Keep the Coal in the Hole” get together. The weather was agin us (particularly if you camped out) and the acoustics of the hall used on Sunday didn’t help audience participation. That apart, all went well, good speakers, good company, good food. We all came away feeling good.

But did we achieve what we set out to do? A difficult question to answer because I am not sure we defined that in the beginning, so try it now – “We are all for a carbon neutral economy and all against the use of fossil fuels”.

Easy, but are we? Do we all share the same feelings about deep sea drilling for oil and gas, open-cast mining of minimum value Southland lignite at the expense of productive farmland, open-cast mining of high value coal on the Denniston Plateau where the alternative values at stake are not nearly as well defined or agreed? And so it goes on.

At the national level, all are important, but the parts are the sum of the whole, and our part in Southland, our priority, is to put an end to any prospect of a large scale lignite industry down here. We support other peoples’ issues but we are responsible for our own.

Don Elder’s departure will help us all by removing that manic obsession with all things coal from Solid



Bert Holmes from Dunedin shares a joke with CAM’s treasurer John Purey-Cust (left) and Queensland farmer Rob McCreath (right) who told the gathering about his experiences with the “Lock the Gate” and “Friends of Felton” campaigns.

Energy. But they still have a business to run and face to lose as the briquette plant limps on. There is still a Council which apparently believes in nothing, discusses nothing, reveals nothing.

There are still councillors who believe that apparently successful rehabilitation at the New Vale mine (400,000 tonnes/year production) proves the inevitable success of rehabilitation after two million tonnes are removed for urea production and 15 million tonnes for liquid fuels.

There is still a province to convince that we lose more in agricultural values by large scale lignite mining than we gain from it. Value it how you like – cash, human values, environmental imponderables.

The warm fuzzies are over. No time for weeping over whales, just time to start work.

# Regional Round-up

Material provided by Suzi Phillips

## Auckland

Alex Winter-Billington

- Monthly meetings attended by a diverse group of people drawn from a membership of about 100
- Supported the Kanui Conference
- Campaign to get the NZSO to withdraw from a sponsorship arrangement with Solid Energy
- Educational campaign aimed at getting schools to switch from coal to renewable fuels
- Developed a “Coal-Free Pledge” to try and get people on board at an individual level
- Meeting with local people to support their stand against Fonterra’s proposed Mangatangi coal mine

## Christchurch

Rachel Eyre

- Established lots of links with other environmental groups including WWF and the Green Party
- Come together as a group for special activities such as running a stall at the Frack Free concert
- Took part in the Keep Our Assets March and signature-gathering
- Organised screening of “Bimblebox”
- Supported Denniston Bioblitz and other groups taking action against mining
- Will focus on positive campaigning and looking for more new members, despite the continuing difficulties faced by people in Christchurch

## Dunedin

Rosemary Penwarden

- Keen to build networks and relationships with other groups, and to share activities
- Hosted Rob & Sally McCreath during their visit and held a successful anti-lignite meeting
- Campaigned against lignite on the Otago campus
- Collected anti-asset sales signatures
- Held an NVDA training camp
- Rolled out the ‘black carpet’ to Anadarko

### WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Jenny Campbell is the Southland contact for both CAM and CANA (Coal Action Network Aotearoa)  
jennycam@xtra.co.nz 027-351-0180

Treasurer for CAM: John Purey-Cust  
203 Champion Rd RD4 GORE 9774

Newsletter items to Jane Young by March10:  
janejimyoung@slingshot.co.nz



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## Southland

Dave Kennedy & Jenny Campbell

- Group of more than 30 members in good heart and with lots of support from local businesses
- Importance of BERL report on low carbon options for a region in crisis because of job losses
- Aim to have monthly activities, which have included a film evening, public speaker (Drew Hutton), information stalls and bill-boarding
- Regular newsletter
- Submission writing
- Lots of effort put into organising Summer Fest

## Wellington

Tim Jones

- Small, informal group looking at how to work more effectively with all the other groups involved in environmental issues
- Bimonthly meetings – have had a presentation by Frances Mountier on Solid Energy
- Taken part in actions with groups such as Forest & Bird protesting outside the new Bathurst office
- Protest at the Mining Association Conference where the Kanui Declaration was read out
- Involved in related mining campaigns – problems of over-extension