

Resolving some of the confusion about natural gas

The Bethlehem Gadfly Climate Action Plan, Environment, Environmental Advisory Council, Serious Issues September 26, 2019

(The latest in a series of posts relating to the environment, Bethlehem's Climate Action Plan, and Bethlehem's Environmental Advisory Council)

Peter Crownfield is officially retired but spends most of his time working with students in his role as internship coordinator for the Alliance for Sustainable Communities—Lehigh Valley.

Gadfly:

I don't want to have a big debate on climate science, but I might be able to resolve some of the confusion about natural gas. Just this morning, I was working with a student at Lafayette looking at just this question, and we found the answer at the Energy Information Administration.

When it is burned, natural gas has far lower GHG emissions than other fossil fuels, so it is marketed as a "clean" fuel. Unfortunately, the "upstream emissions" — from the wellhead, transmission pipelines & compressor stations, and even the gas mains that deliver it to homes — are, on average, higher than the combustion emissions.

According to the Cornell engineers who studied this in detail, the total emissions from natural gas rival those of coal.

Peter

(In conjunction with the student strike last Friday, Bruce Haines has kicked off an important thread here, but Gadfly would still like to invite posts directly related to our local in- process Climate Action Plan.)