

DCEC Newsletter



published by
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Winter
2004-2005

Environmental News for Door County

Year-End, or New Year:
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Focus on Phosphorus

Excessive phosphorus in Lake Michigan and Green Bay waters will continue to be a major focus for DCEC, because the issue of water quality is paramount to our quality of life and tourist economy here in Door County. As we heard in August, our Great Lake is an ecosystem "out of balance".

Vicky Harris of the UW/GB *Sea Grant Institute*, speaking at the DCEC Annual Program in August 2004, explained in detail the cause and effect of the "green stuff" on our beaches. It is due to rising phosphorus and nitrate levels in our waters. In particular, Green Bay is laden with excess phosphorus and nitrates.

Records for Green Bay show us that in 1986 the level of phosphorus was determined at 110 micrograms/liter, in 2001 that rose to 228 micrograms/liter, and in 2002 a new high of 230 micrograms/liter was logged. The target level as dictated by regulatory agencies is 45 micrograms/liter.

This indicates a very high level of phosphorus that is increasing with each year, more than five times the target level. This is not good news for the ecological integrity of the Green Bay and for those who are responsible for controlling the algae growth.

Vicky Harris explained that the high level of phosphorus creates a shortage of nitrogen, resulting in the nitrogen-fixing algae (the green and blue/green algae) to become more prevalent and rapidly increase in growth, as most visibly witnessed in Green Bay and Lake Winnebago.

The filamentous (cladophorus) algae which is now most common on the Lake Michigan shore (that nasty "green stuff") can be displaced by rapidly growing green and blue/green algae, which magnifies the problem. As Green Bay is more shallow and smaller, the mixing cycles present in Lake Michigan do not affect the dispersal of the nutrients as rapidly and the east shore of Green Bay is the recipient of extremely high nutrient levels.

The Fox River is the major contributor to the nutrient load in the Bay of Green Bay, with 20% of the total coming direct from the Fox. Records indicate that 80% of the amount contained in Fox River waters is from non-point sources, with the remaining 20% from *municipal sewage discharge plants* operating at the legal discharge limits.

In Wisconsin the rule for sewage plant discharge of phosphorus is 1.00 microgram/liter and most of the municipalities are operating at less than that amount. It seems ludicrous to allow municipal systems to discharge *any* phosphorus into our water when it is possible to remove it.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, as the Agency responsible, is attempting to deal with the "non-point sources" (everything that flows off the land) with the following methods to lessen the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen entering our waters:

- Transition to non-phosphate fertilizers for farms and lawns.
- Remove cattle from streams and create buffer strips.
- Gather pet waste and compost lawn clippings.
- Wash your car on the lawn letting the washing water leach into the ground.
- Create a rain garden to utilize the roof and driveway runoff. (*see page two*)
- Ensure that your rural wastewater system is operating correctly.

These are all valuable methods of lessening the flow of nutrients into our waters, **but we need to go much further** to prevent further destruction of our resource. Clearly there need to be regulatory changes to reduce nutrients going into the surface waters. DCEC is committed to creating awareness of this whole problem of these nutrients in our waters and addressing changes that need to be made in current regulations.



Rain Gardens: A Household Way to Improve Water Quality!

Rain gardens are just what they sound like - gardens that soak up rainwater, mainly from your roof, but also from your driveway and lawn. They are landscaped areas planted to wild flowers and other native vegetation to replace areas of lawn. The gardens fill with a few inches of water and allow the water to slowly filter into the ground rather than running off to storm drains. Compared to a conventional lawn, a rain garden allows about 30 percent more water to soak into the ground.

Holding back the runoff helps prevent pollutants such as fertilizer from washing off your yard, into storm sewers, and eventually into nearby streams and lakes. By reducing the amount of water that enters the storm drain systems, rain gardens also reduce the chance for local flooding, as well as other damage caused by excessive rainwater runoff.

People in many parts of the country are building rain gardens in their yards and promoting their use in other locations, such as neighborhood and city parks. Rain water can sometimes be collected from your roof, driveway and lawn by locating a rain garden in a low spot where the water naturally drains. The rain garden must be located where runoff can be diverted into it, away from building foundations and utilities. A shallow, saucer-shaped depression is created in the garden area to hold rain and allow it to soak in.

Soil placement and additional preparation are sometimes needed for success. A good soil mix for rain gardens is 50-60% sand, 20-30% topsoil, and 20-30% compost. Species of perennial plants native to our region are



A beautiful solution to water pollution!

recommended, as they are adapted to local conditions and will not need extra care once they are established. A mulch of shredded hardwood is an integral part of your rain garden. It keeps the soil moist and ready to soak up rain, and makes your garden low-maintenance.

You can easily create a simple rain garden in a weekend, for no cost if you use plants you already have. Or, you can install a deluxe rain garden that will take more effort and investment. Now is the time to plan your spring rain garden. It's all up to you!

Information sources online:

www.raingardens.org,

www.consciouschoice.com/enirons/raingardens

www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/nps/rg/

Harvesting Wind Energy - Crop of the 21st Century!

Mark your calendar for a fascinating program to explain the facts and discuss the possibilities of electrical generation by means of wind turbines in Door County.

Could Door County supply a significant percentage of the electricity we use - without the problems of mercury pollution and all the other pollutions from coal fired power plants? Could wind power be good for investors, as well as good for land owners?

On Wednesday, Feb. 9, at the Forestville Town Hall in Maplewood, 7 p.m., DCEC's Renewable Energy Task Force is sponsoring a public presentation on the subject. Plan to attend!

* * * * *

Do Your Part to Reduce Waste!

If you aren't one of those who refill your printer's ink cartridge, and if you have been throwing the spent cartridge in the trash wondering what sculpture you might have made with it, there is a solution as near as your post office.

There you will find an already addressed, postage paid envelope in which to return it. Open it, drop in the cartridge, seal it and toss it in the mailbox.

You'll get rid of that cartridge and reduce the planet's solid waste load. Now, that is a good deed for the environment!

(Another) Poison in Paradise

Public and private organizations interested in Door County's environment have repeatedly addressed pollution topics in the County: shallow soils, Karst topography with fractured bedrock, animal waste runoff, groundwater contamination, polluted wells and beaches, zones of contribution for Sturgeon Bay wells, and Lake Michigan algae.

A practice that pollutes, air, soil, and water but receives less attention is open burning of household waste, common in rural parts of the County. An article on page 3 of the October 23-24, 2004 *Door County Advocate* stated that most of the residents in one Southern Door Town burn their garbage.

Chapter NR 429 of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulations addresses Malodorous Emissions and Open Burning. Section NR 429.03 deals with objectionable odors. Section NR 429.04 deals specifically with the prohibitions and exceptions to open burning. **The DNR's Warning of Non-Compliance** with Wisconsin's burning regulations is specific, summarized as follows:

Homeowners: Wisconsin Law prohibits burning household waste, with the exception of clean paper waste that is not recyclable and small amounts of dry leaves, plant clippings, and clean wood. Burning household wastes (such as plastics, garbage, rubber, recyclable paper, aluminum cans, etc) in burn barrels is a form of open burning and is strictly prohibited by Wisconsin Law.

Burning waste and other materials outdoors and indoors harms human health and the environment and is the leading cause of forest fires in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Health reports that small particles and pollutants contained in smoke from burning garbage and other materials may 1) contain the following hazardous substances: arsenic, mercury, dioxin, hydrochloric acid, nitrogen oxide, polyaromatic hydrocarbons, benzene and other solvents, cadmium, chromium, formaldehyde, lead, and sulfuric acid; 2) cause the following health problems: eye, nose, and throat irritation; lung irritation, congestion, asthma; skin irritation or burns; stomach or intestinal upset; eye damage; and headache or memory loss.

Repeated exposure to hazardous air contaminants may cause developmental problems in children and an increased risk of cancer. People with lung problems,

young women, children, and pregnant or nursing women may suffer more serious health effects.

Even if special precautions are taken to protect against smoke exposure, burning garbage and other materials leaves pollutants behind in ashes that also pose health risks and contaminate soil and water. There are very few waste items that cannot be handled by acceptable non-burning alternatives. Whenever possible, waste should be recycled, composted or go to a licensed landfill. These alternatives to burning are environmentally friendly and health conscious.

In addition to the health and environmental concerns, there are economic reasons not to burn. An individual, business, industry or municipality that violates Wisconsin's open burning regulation may be required to pay fines and forfeitures, assume the cost of soil and/or groundwater cleanup, and is subject to imprisonment. If the fire gets out of control, the responsible party may be required to pay costs associated with extinguishing the fire and any damage that is the result of the fire.

Door County's ordinance, 31.18 Burning and Fireworks, provides for using a burning barrel with a metal screen top, under direct supervision, with an extinguishing source. It says nothing about what may or may not be burned. Proper waste disposal should be a high Door County priority, because improper disposal is inappropriate, considering the pollutants and health risks cited by the DNR and Division of Public Health.

Door Residents and tourists tout our county for its many wonderful natural features, but pollution news in recent years has not been favorable. Burning garbage and other prohibited solid wastes should be on both County and Town agendas, and effective ordinance(s) should be enacted, with stiff penalties for non-compliance. It's time for mandatory countywide recycling and solid waste collection, or illegal burning will continue to poison paradise.

Communications favoring mandatory countywide recyclable and other solid waste collection with County Supervisors and Town Board members will help make this an issue that will not go away!

*Paul Lambeck, DCEC member
Sturgeon Bay*

DCEC Scholarship Recipient Joins Crew of Internationally Acclaimed Environmental Vessel: *Sea Shepherd*

The 1998 recipient of a Door County Environmental Council (DCEC) college scholarship award has distinguished himself once again. Door County native, **Kurt Ellison**, son of Bob and Maryellen Ellison of Forestville, was recently selected to join the crew of the world-famous *Sea Shepherd*, a vessel devoted to the prevention of illegal whaling and dolphin and seal slaughtering around the world.

Ellison, a 2004 graduate of UW-Madison with a degree in Natural Resources with a minor in Environmental Science, had an early interest in natural resources, especially when connected to the seas.

“Kurt has always been interested in maritime and environmental causes, from the time he was a little boy,” said Bob Ellison, his father. “He attended summer environmental camps during his high school years, and even made the front page of the Green Bay Press-Gazette with a scale-model solar powered car he entered in a Wisconsin Public Service competition.”

When asked about Ellison’s early involvement with environmental issues, his mother, Maryellen Ellison can only say “He’s been really involved in all sorts of [environmental] things, so it’s hard to remember them all!”

Being “involved” remained a theme through Ellison’s college years. While at UW-Madison, Ellison was not shy about his advocacy for a number of issues, being quoted frequently by both the campus and Madison-area press on topics ranging from environmental issues to worker’s rights. He was an active member of several campus organizations including the Alliance for Democracy, UW Greens and InfoShop, a clearinghouse for literature on activist issues.

Ellison learned of the opening on the crew of the *Sea Shepherd* from a UW-Madison classmate and friend, Adrian Thalasinis, who was already on the crew of the ship. Ellison applied for the position and was the enthusiastic selection. All hands on the *Sea Shepherd* are volunteers.

As of the printing of this issue, Ellison is aboard the *Sea Shepherd* en route to the Bahamas to take on fuel and water for a voyage to Northern Canada to prevent winter poaching of harp seals.

“We’re extremely proud of Kurt’s accomplishments over the years,” said Jerry Viste, Executive Director of the DCEC. “Kurt is definitely a demonstration of how one small investment in one person can make a big difference in protecting our global heritage. We wish him the very best with the *Sea Shepherd*.”

The *Sea Shepherd* has sailed the high-seas for over three decades under the watchful eye of Captain Paul Watson, who has skippered the vessel(s) since inception.

Over the years the *Sea Shepherd* has been involved in a number of remarkable incidents in her quest to enforce international whaling and conservation law. Watson and his crew have used highly maneuverable Zodiac watercraft to place themselves between whales and the harpoon cannons of illegal whalers, effectively shielding the whales. They’ve dyed baby harp seals’ fur bright red to make them worthless to poachers. The *Sea Shepherd* has occasionally rammed illegal whaling vessels making it impossible for them to continue their illegal activities.

Watson himself has been arrested and jailed many times, by several governments, but has never been convicted of a crime by any court. Courts have always recognized that his actions and those of the *Sea Shepherd* have always been in the enforcement of the law rather than the breaking of any laws.

The *Sea Shepherd* is sponsored by a wide array of environmental and animal rights organizations including: The Fund for Animals, The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Canadians for the Abolition of the Seal Hunt, and the *Sea Shepherd* Conservation Society (SSCS), to name a few.

Sea Shepherd is also sponsored by hundreds of corporations providing goods and services to make its missions possible. Some individuals serving on the Board of Directors or the Advisory Board of the SSCS include notables like: Richard Dean Anderson, Sean Penn, Linda Blair, Pierce Brosnan, James Cromwell, Rutger Hauer and Martin Sheen.

For additional information on the *Sea Shepherd* visit the SSCS’s web site: www.seashepherd.org.

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Lead - the Silent Enemy of the Mind

“Landlord agrees to clean up lead hazards in units nationwide” AP:
November 22, 2004 Boston- A prominent Boston real estate company must test for and remove lead paint in thousands of apartments in Massachusetts and around the country as part of a settlement with federal regulators. The consent agreement announced Monday with WinnResidential Limited Partnership requires the company to pay \$105,000 fine and clean up more than 10,000 units in seven states and the District of Columbia. Nationwide, nearly 450,000 children under age 6 show dangerously high levels of lead, much of it caused by ingesting dust from flaking or chipping paint tainted with lead.”

Through the last few decades we have seen an increase in the awareness of the extremely damaging consequences of exposure to lead in its various forms. **Locally** we experienced the effort to clean up and remove the contaminated spray mixing sites for orchard growers of the past in Door County. Most of these sites have been addressed with removal and/or impervious covering under the program to eradicate the local threat from lead and lead arsenate. Farmers have not been able to use lead pesticides for decades under extreme penalty threats.

There have been media campaigns to create awareness of the problems associated with lead based paint, commonly used in homes in past years. Lawsuits have been filed because of liability in homes where children have come in contact with lead finishes on woodwork and furniture which had not been removed or destroyed as required by law.

Still, the battle to eliminate the threat of lead continues.

It has been documented that lead in various forms can and will damage

and limit the learning ability of children and cause severe physical and mental problems. In extreme situations of exposure and ingestion lead poisoning will result in a greatly deteriorated mental state and ultimate death. To best illustrate the mystique that is known to be a part of the lead poisoning saga, we can go back in time to the ill fated *Franklin Expedition to the North Polar Region** which was begun in 1845, shortly before the American Civil War.

This was an expedition to explore the possibility of a Northwest Passage and map the Canadian arctic regions of the North American continent undertaken by Sir John Franklin. Sir John was an experienced British explorer who set out with a crew of 134 men and two ships, the *Erebus* and the *Terror* and was never heard from again. Search expeditions in 1853 and 1857 and later found evidence of the great arctic tragedy and records found at Point Victory established that Franklin’s ships had been frozen in the ice between Victoria Island and King William Island. After his death in 1847, the survivors abandoned ship in 1848 and had undertaken a journey southward over the frozen wastes of Boothia Peninsula back toward civilization. No one ever reached civilization and no one survived the bitter cold and the unknown enemies.

All during the time when the ships were icebound and until the crew set out towing the lifeboats over the ice, a mysterious illness was causing the sailors to become disoriented and to suffer eventual death. The ships doctor autopsied the men as they succumbed and could find no cause of the mysterious illness and death. The men continued their journey towing the lifeboats laden with unnecessary articles and the remaining food, eventually

disappearing entirely. No trace was ever found of the crew members of that 1000 mile tragic journey until recent searches have given indications of the cause of the many problems.

In 1993 a memorial expedition traced the route of the Franklin expedition and located some of the stone cairns where food supplies had been left on the inward voyage. Also found were tent rings and traces of whaler’s boats similar to the lifeboats from the *Erebus*. A few of the sailors who had died had been interred in the permafrost which preserved the remains and enabled the scientists to determine that the cause of the ultimate **death of the sailors was from excessive amounts of lead contained in their bodies.**

Near the stone cairns the searchers found rings of lead solder that were all that remained of the tin containers used to preserve food: potatoes, meat, etc. that had been intended for consumption by the crew of these two ships. The lead solder used to seal the tins became part of the food that was stored within these same containers. The mystery of the Franklin expedition was solved. The suffering of those 120 men who tried to get back to civilization and were driven insane by slow lead poisoning, lack of food and the intense cold will never be known, but we now know an important part of the story.

We may be facing new problems in the future from lead and its affect on humans, effects that have been dramatized in the past with stories such as the Franklin expedition. Recently, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Warden Supervisor, Thomas Hansen** of the Green Bay office issued a paper on the problems caused by a few sport fishers, more specifically, “Use of sinker release by sport fishers on Lake

(Continued on page 7)

DO YOU LOVE DOOR COUNTY???

Then help us protect it... please.

I support the Door County Environmental Council, working to preserve our heritage of natural resources .
Please enlist me as one of the following: (check enclosed)

Individual Member	\$15	Family Membership	\$25
Student Member	\$10	Sustaining Member	\$35
Guarantor	\$50	Donor	from \$100

Renewal? _____ **New Member?** _____ **Door County Voter?** YES _____ NO _____

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Please name your Door County municipality (town, village or city) _____

All donations are tax deductible to the extent the law provides.

DCEC is a nonprofit, tax exempt organization.

We supply receipts that meet IRS requirements for your gift of \$250 or more.

Thank you for being part of DCEC!

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for more information, call DCEC at 743-6003 email dcec@itol.com

Please contact DCEC if you are interested in volunteering for the Board or special projects.

Visit DCEC on the Internet!
www.dcec.us or
doorcountycompass.com/dcec/

Read the DCEC Column in the Door Peninsula Voice (pick it up free at many locations).

Governor James Doyle Room 115 E, State Capitol Madison, WI 53702	Representative Gary Bies PO Box 8952 Madison, WI 53708	US Senate Washington DC 20510 WI Representative Mark Green US House of Representatives Washington DC 20515
Senator Alan Lasee PO Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707	WI Senators Russ Feingold and Herbert Kohls: <i>write them at</i>	

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(Continued from page 5)

Michigan”. The problem is “the intentional discharge of a known soluble, toxic metal into the environment.”

“Conservation wardens have received complaints that sport fishers are running sinker releases on their trolling lines on Lake Michigan. The device allows the attached sinker to release or drop away when a fish hits the line. The sinker release is typically used with ski boards that allow the side fishing to function in the same manner as a downrigger. We are advised that typically lead weights of 1/2 to 4 lb. are used on the lines to get the lure down to the desired depths.

“Investigation has revealed that sinker releases are being used more than initially expected. We have been advised that the devices have been used by fishers for the past 30 years. In an interview, one sport troller estimated that he had dropped 3,000 lb. of lead into the lake and that he has 11,000 lb. of used lead in storage for molding new weights.

“Lead is a highly toxic metal that has been proven to cause several major health problems. Due to the solubility of lead in water, municipalities have been eliminating lead pipes in their

drinking water systems to ensure compliance with drinking water standards at the tap. Homeowners of houses 15 years old are encouraged to run their tap water for a period of time each morning before drinking the water, to purge the system of lead that may have entered the pipes overnight. Plumbing codes severely restrict the amount (%) of lead used in plumbing solder because of its solubility. The criteria used to determine effluent limitations for sewage treatment plant discharges include “Acute Toxicity Criteria of 0.33 parts/million and “Chronic Toxicity Criteria” of 0.039 parts/million (These are both a function of the hardness of the water.)

“Conservation wardens routinely issue citations to individuals who toss a soda or beer can which is manufactured with a harmless/inert metal into state waters. (Penalty \$181. Is not the intentional discharge of lead into state waters an even more serious problem? What are the long term ramifications of this practice considering that the waters of Lake Michigan and Lake Superior are used for drinking water by millions of people living adjacent to their shorelines?”

You should understand that the majority of sport fishers are not involved in this practice in defiance of

common sense and long term welfare of our precious water resources. There are a few sport fishers located in some of the fishing communities that are using this sinker release option and it appears that public sentiment will be the best method to bring this practice to a halt. The Department of Natural Resources needs your help and support by making our state legislators aware of this problem.

It is essential to keep the lakes free from further lead contamination. We have an obligation to our children and the next generations to limit abuse of our resources whenever possible. Water is now our most precious resource and deserves extra special protection.

Jerry Viste, Executive Director, DCEC

*www.sirjohnfranklin.com
links to follow:
sirjohnfranklinwashere
franklinexpedition

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* * * * *

Great Lakes Partners Tackle Key Issues

Executive Director Jerry Viste represented DCEC at a conference held at the prestigious Wingspread Conference Center in Racine on November 21st and 22.

“Lakewide Summit 2004: Community-Based Restoration for Lake Michigan”, co-hosted by the Lake Michigan Federation and the Johnson Foundation, was attended by key environmental organizations around the region.

Discussions dealt with the following critical policy areas:

- *The Great Lakes Basin Water Resources Compact:* A bi-national agreement released this summer in draft form to promote sustainable water use and discourage harmful withdrawals and diversions inside and outside the basin.
- *Great Lakes Restoration: Federal legislation* for the Great Lakes that, if adopted, would set the standard

for Great Lakes Health and would provide billions in federal funding for helping with cleanup and rehabilitation.

- *Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement:* A landmark agreement to restore and maintain the integrity of the Great Lakes ecosystem; the United States and Canada are currently negotiating the agreement.

Thirty years of efforts at the federal and state levels have resulted in important but limited progress in restoring the health of our Great Lakes. The summit was another opportunity to plan for the future of the Great Lakes basin, working to ensure adoption of the pending policy reforms with emphasis on community-based restoration efforts. Lake Michigan Federation’s manager of outreach, Jamie Morton, summed it up when she said, “Strength at the local level will mean a stronger Lake Michigan.”



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Lead - a silent killer.
See page five. (The Erebus)

Great Lakes Charter Annex 2001 Update

Many of you testified at the hearings held during the summer and fall to secure input from the citizens/residents of the Great Lakes basin regarding the proposed plan to control diversions of water from lakes. Many more of you sent letters of comment during the 90-day comment period. There were more than 10,000 letters received and 5,000 of those came from Wisconsin residents. That effort shows the Governors and Premiers that we value the present status of our lakes and want them to be maintained at all locations by all responsible agencies.

Three years in the creation, the long-awaited draft Annex was announced this past summer by the Great Lakes governors and Canadian premiers. The proposed regulations come at a time when officials are concerned about pressure building beyond the basin to divert water from our Great Lakes.

The protections also met with criticism, with some industry representatives saying they are too strict and far-reaching, weaknesses they say might make it unfeasible for industries within the basin to use Great

Lakes water. There also is slight disagreement between the Canadian premiers and the State governors over the individual veto rights and other concerns which create an imbalance between the delegation if final approval of diversions are granted. Canadians want to be able to individually veto planned diversions by others which may compromise the future of their lakes.

A final version of the protection plan is expected to go to the governors for approval in spring 2005. From there comparable bills will be sent to each of the Great Lake State legislatures for approval and an interstate compact will be sent to Congress.

DCEC would like to express our most sincere appreciation to the Lake Michigan Federation for their efforts to inform the public of the plan and the requirements contained therein to protect our lake basin. We wish also to thank CHERYL MENDOZA of the Federation, for her diligent work with our organization to bring this all to an acceptable conclusion for our next generations' water resources.