

# DCEC Newsletter

Environmental News for Door County



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door county environmental council  
p.o. box 114 - fish creek, wi 54212  
(920)743-6003 fax: (920)743-6727  
www.dcec-wi.org  
email: info@dcec-wi.org

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## Another Full Season of Public Programs

Madison Attorney, Ed Garvey was the featured speaker at our annual summer program. Ed, with his usual humor and wit, elaborated on the happenings at the state level that are affecting environmental issues now and far into the future. As the co-founder of the Fighting Bob Fest along with Jim Hightower, he also was quite specific on the need for a **staunch reformer to clean up state politics** as Bob LaFollette had in those critical early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As governor of Wisconsin, LaFollette led the state through years that gave Wisconsin the reputation of clean and honest government.

The DCEC seminars at Crossroad At Big Creek began with **"The Story of Stuff"** a complete assemblage of the Annie Leonard messages dealing with our consumer-designed materialistic society. Her "Stories" are a expose' of the planned obsolescent products that Americans are bombarded with everyday and purchase because they are told to get the latest.

As expected, the presentation on Factory Farms by John Peck of **Family Farm Defenders** brought a contingent of mega-farm operators from Kewaunee County who felt obligated to defend their CAFO operations. John presented some statistics that should create awareness of vital problems in our food supply and eating habits; one third of the vegetables eaten by U.S. children are French fries and potato chips, Wal-Mart sells 25 % of the food sold in U.S. and nearly all is shipped from somewhere far beyond the selling location.

Animal and farm statistics John mentioned include: 12,700 individual farmers in Wisconsin with 50% owning their own farms, 220 mega concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) farms, with the average **industrial cow life expectancy being 4 years. This means 2 years of actual productive time past growing years.**

Dr. Roger Kuhns came from Mystic, CT with an excellent presentation on urban agriculture and green roof gardening. His experiences with Milwaukee's urban gardening projects; **Growing Power** and **Sweetwater Organics** led to his involvement with several green-city food growing projects in New York City. Amazing gardening activity areas were explained in depth, for

example, the Brooklyn Grange which was begun by a Wisconsin farmer, Ben Flanner, as a for-profit venture, and Battery Park Roof Garden which is a 2,000 square foot project by Blake Morrison.

To facilitate and enable soft-water irrigation, several below ground rainwater tanks hold long-term storage in discarded large plastic shipping containers all connected, to hold several thousand gallons of collected rainwater, basically ponds underground. The most exciting of the projects Roger works on is a continuous overhead garden that extends for more than 26 blocks in Manhattan.

This is a use for the discontinued overhead track platforms for the former city transit, which have been revitalized for use as a city garden and greenway area, referred to as the **High Line Strategies**. Roger indicated that Japan has been engaged in city building construction that involves green area roofs for each level of the building. This enables each window to open out to a green area and creates a visual break for the workers and residents, with some very futuristic designs used in these buildings. (JMV)



President Eileen Andera presenting the Environmental Citizen of The Year Award to Vinni Chomeau (on left) for her past work at the county Soil and Water Department and her current efforts in promoting stewardship with the Friends of Gibraltar and Gibraltar students.

# Oneida Nation Power Plant Update

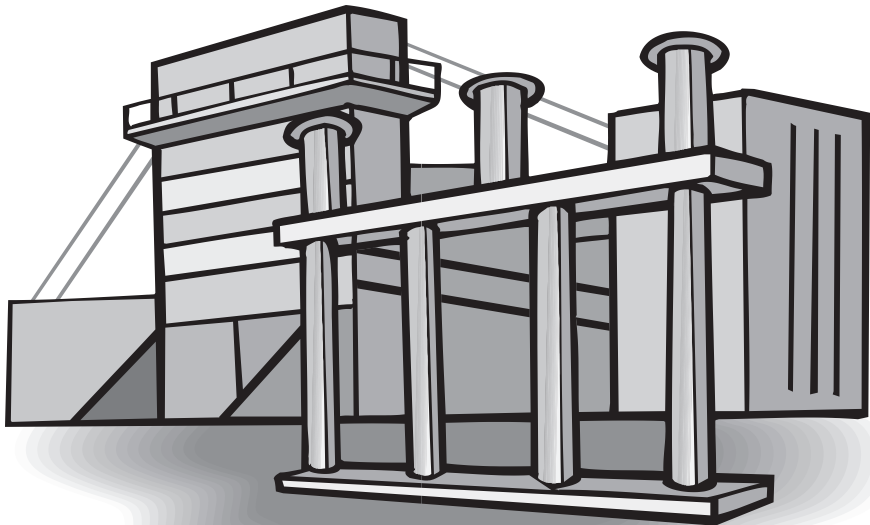
In the last newsletter we reported the basic information on the proposed generating facility utilizing garbage from Green Bay and DePere that is planned by the Oneida Seven Generations Corporation (OSGC) of Wisconsin. DCEC has joined with the Wisconsin Environmental Advocates (WEA) in requesting that a full environmental impact statement be completed rather than the environmental assessment that is planned by the Wisconsin DNR.

The reasons for the request are:

1. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has not been able to locate a comparable commercial pyrolysis gasification (garbage burning) facility in the United States. Studies at other locations would give accurate emission information, ash and other waste generated, and how that waste is utilized.
2. The effectiveness of programs for removing recyclable waste from the mainstream before it reaches the other facilities needs to be evaluated.
3. Legal issues must be addressed along with the question of the relation of proposed fuel sources and Wisconsin's solid waste disposal and treatment laws and regulations.
4. Pyrolysis may break down the volatile organic compounds and some organic compounds into combustible syngas, but metals such as nickel, mercury, chromium, lead and arsenic are going to remain, either as air or water discharges, or as contaminants in the ash or solid waste.
5. The environmental review needs to address the amount of water utilized and the strength of contaminants in the wastewater.
6. The flare (excess syngas) is estimated to burn more than the 3 ovens combined and the gas burned by the flare is not required to pass through the gas conditioning system to remove particulates, condensable organics and sulphur.

As this proposed facility is located in close proximity to the Fox River, Green Bay waters, and metropolitan areas, special examination of this proposal is mandated in view of the expensive efforts by the Federal EPA to remediate past mistakes that have been made in allowing long-life contaminants to enter our air and water.

(JMV)



# Private Water Testing Program For Towns

In view of the successful water-testing program recently completed in Liberty Grove town, DCEC is promoting similar testing programs for the other towns in Door County. Under the provisions of the testing program, private well owners are able to have a complete analysis of their water by the Ecology Department at University of Wisconsin/Stevens Point. The towns that wish to conduct the testing program will be responsible for the logistic operation of having sign-ups for the program by individual homeowners and the necessary recording of sample bottles given out and returned.

The individual cost for the homeowner is \$107 for the *complete testing* process which is much more reasonable than a similar individual commercial test. The town will need to promote this testing program and DCEC will contribute up to \$500 for promotion. The total cost for promotion in Liberty Grove was under \$400, so there is very little real cost to the town. Volunteers are always available to help with the sample bottle collection, labeling, and transporting the samples to the University for analysis.

The question always arises, will these results be made public, and the answer is no. These results are given only to the homeowner and held securely by the town of origin. The results have no effect on property values as the information remains entirely confidential and the big benefit is that the homeowner has the knowledge that his/her water is safe to use.

Initially, to get started, contact is made with the town planning committee for support. Once that happens a phone conference with the University staff is arranged to outline the provisions of the testing program. The town planning committee then decides if they wish to pursue the testing program and if they so wish, they will provide the town board with information and their support of the concept. The town board then takes the necessary action to proceed with the testing program during the following summer months. This program was very successful in Liberty Grove, as the first effort at town-wide private water testing, giving valuable information to the more than eighty individual water-source owners.

(JMV)

# The Dike Needs Serious Fixing

It is true that less than 1% of the earth's water is suitable for human consumption. Additionally, there is little doubt that our "1%" is in danger. The world's population continues to increase exponentially. By 2025 demands for all non-irrigation uses will rise by 62%. All the while, oceans and lakes continue to absorb the over *200 million pounds of contaminants*, that's 19,998,000 tons dumped into them each year. Within this context, it seems reasonable to worry that we do not have enough water to go around.

We must certainly protect our water supply, but doesn't part of that protection involve an analysis of water usage? Experts suggest the first step toward developing a plan should be a change in perspective. Some experts say our real problem is "a crisis of management of water supplies." And that the search for a solution to the world's water problems, fixing system leaks and replacing crumbling infrastructure should be the first step.

Could patching up old pipes and replacing outdated meters really make a difference? The effect would be

comparable to discovering an entirely new water supply. Not all waste involves gallons of gushing water. Over time, even small leaks add up. Between 40% and 60% of municipal water never reaches the end user because of leaks and faulty maintenance. And these small fixes put effective water resource management within reach.

After all, any community—from a large modern city with elaborate water infrastructure to a third world village relying on a local river and a town well—can afford to fix a leaky pipe. Eliminating current water misuse and waste can be achieved by developing comprehensive leak detection programs and implementing effective monitoring systems. Some of the methods available include state-of-the-art technologies, but do not underestimate the power of a simple water audit or meter upgrade. In the end we must tackle the misuse of our current resources by cutting waste whenever possible and being as vigilant about leaks as that brave little Dutch boy.

(Adapted from Water Efficiency magazine, Elizabeth Cutright, Editor).

# You're Never Too Old...

September found two DCEC families hosting and explaining how their commitment to saving energy, as well as money, led them to help design and build their unique, ultra-energy efficient homes in Door County.

Don Pardonner/Judy Reninger and Guy Fortin/Judy Samida, Renewable Energy Task Force members, literally threw open their front doors and led a class of ten Learning In Retirement attendees through their homes, explaining in detail the eco-design features each has incorporated in their very personal living spaces. The ideas range from building a foundation filled with heat energy-absorbing sand all the way to a system of pipes circulating water through a fireplace where the water picks up heat and distributes it throughout the concrete floor to provide a steady and uniform supply of heat even on the coldest winter day.

The all day tour was very informative, if exhausting, as lots of information was shared by both RETF couples with a very eager and appreciative, if slightly overwhelmed audience.

The success of the tour, with all of its positive feedback, has encouraged Learning In Retirement to plan a similar tour next spring.

You can get a copy of the catalogue by contacting LIR office in the Northeast Wisconsin Technical College building at 229 N 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Sturgeon Bay.

(Bill Utley)



## Wind Still Blows in Door County

The Renewable Energy Sub-committee **Community Wind Energy** (CWE) is alive and well and awaiting some changes in both regulation and citizen motivation to again promote virtual wind energy in the county. Many people assumed that because the effort was stifled in Clay Banks town, the issue was no longer being promoted.

Not so, in fact the same desirable utilization of *natural power sources* will again be promoted as soon as possible, even in full view of the politicians who are milking the conflict over problems the news media covers, real and imagined. Someone in authority will present actual fact-based studies that will change the public acceptance of wind power.

It's not that long ago when farm windmills were common-place throughout Door County, Wisconsin and the entire nation. These performed a service by pumping water for a whole cadre of uses, and no one seemed to mind the noise those early machines created. I don't know if any children developed constant colds, or if anyone moved out because of the noise the windmill generated, actually it was quite soothing to hear the wind trying to seduce that metal monster, because you knew you were getting water pumped almost free.

I suppose there were doubters back then who viewed water wind mills and wind chargers as evil, but they were few. Certainly anyone who hand pumped water for the livestock had a great appreciation. People are actually paying to restore those old clanking windmills!

(Jerry Viste)

# Wetlands and Mining

Recently Governor Walker called a special session of the legislature to focus on job creation in Wisconsin. It is anticipated that there are many areas of environmental concern that will be undergoing major changes to reflect the current direction of the legislature that will be brought forth in the current session. Probably most significant is the proposal to create new regulations on mining large areas of northern Wisconsin for iron ore (taconite). During these revision processes of current environmental regulations in all instances at the State level, the end result is lessening the controls that are in place and replacing or minimizing their enforcement capabilities. The argument here will of course be again, job creation.

In communication with one of the State Senate supporters of this legislation, **the following was in part the response to our objections to the mining permit:** “The iron field that is the site of the proposed mine is one part of the a rock formations found in the Animikie Basin which sweeps from Upper Michigan, Northern Wisconsin, up to Hibbing Minnesota.’ ‘The Animikie Basin contains the single richest iron ore field in the world. The one mine proposed in northern Wisconsin has enough iron ore to mine for the **next 100 years bringing thousands of living wage jobs (salaries of approximately \$80,000 dollars a year)**. These mining jobs have a multiplier effect creating two to three jobs in other industries in northern Wisconsin, an area that has been devastated by the decline of the timber industry.”

The response continues: “Northern Minnesota and northern Wisconsin have a similar climate and geological profile. Both are blessed with abundant lakes, forests, and wildlife. Both places are destinations for tourism; the only difference is Minnesota has been mining iron ore since 1844. Often, when iron ore mines are abandoned they become lakes, *increasing property values in the area for lake front property.*”



It would require a *forceful real estate salesperson* to sell shore property on this lakefront near Ishpeming in upper Michigan when the mining operation is gone. (Tilden hematite mine in Marquette Iron Range).

A coalition of statewide organizations is focusing attention on this latest effort and to rally strong support for *maintaining our current environmental protections*. This is about countering the systematic dismantling of the laws we depend upon for our quality of life, dressed up as essential jobs creation.

Some members of the legislature hope to achieve significant revisions in environmental protections - not just for mining operations but also **for any and all activities around the state that impact waters** - under the guise of job creation, and outside the normal mining committee process.

The Wetlands regulation modification effort will probably follow the example that was set earlier this year with the permitting of the wetland filling under special consideration to accommodate a commercial business venture that was opposed state-wide as being a direct violation of the public trust doctrine. (emphasis added).

(JMV)

# Mega Farms Moving to Wisconsin

## (The Rest of The Story)

On Sept. 2, 2011 the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency denied the Water Quality Certification application submitted by California Dairy Magnate A. J. Bos. The permit was originally applied for in July 2008. The Army Corps of Engineers will not allow the construction of the manure pond without the certification, and the facility can't receive an Illinois Department of Agriculture operating license without the proposed manure pond.

In the end, these developments appear to have finally shelved Bos' plans for building a mega-dairy of 11,000 cows near Nora, Illinois. Unfortunately, reports telling that disassembled barns from Bos' Nora mega-dairy site are being trucked to the site of another mega-dairy under development in Rock County, Wisconsin. **Rock Prairie Dairy**, is a facility that would eventually house between four and five thousand cows, making it Wisconsin's fourth largest dairy, originally requested up to \$25 million in federal bonds through the Bradford Township Council.

However, Wisconsin state law allows local residents to petition for a referendum, and a group of locals got organized and did just that. But Todd Tuls of Nebraska, the principal investor in the project, decided he'd avoid a pesky vote of the local citizenry. Instead, he requested **\$15.6 million in Midwest Disaster Area bonds be issued from the Public Finance Authority**, a governmental entity authorized to issue bonds to public and private projects without any provision for a referendum. A bank would buy the bonds, issue a loan to Tuls, earn interest on the bonds, and thereby reduce the interest the project would be charged.

The Department of Natural Resources will reconsider a key permit for a large dairy farm proposed in Adams County after the agency received an analysis by a University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point hydrogeologist who concluded the farm is likely to reduce local water supplies. The DNR had made a preliminary determination that groundwater pumping by the 4,200-cow Richfield Dairy would not harm local conditions.

And a spokesman for the company developing the farm also emphasized that the pumping of more than 50 million gallons of water annually won't be more than the irrigation now used for potatoes on the same land, but neglected to say that **their amount was in addition to the amount used for irrigation**.

The Richfield Dairy is being developed by Kaukauna-based Milk Source, which owns the state's largest dairy farm, Rosendale Dairy, in Fond du Lac County. It operates two other farms and a third is slated to open early next year.

If Richfield Dairy is constructed, Milk Source will own five dairy farms with about 26,500 cows, according to the company. In addition, it owns a separate 9,200-calf operation near De Pere.

Richfield Dairy needs DNR permits for a high-capacity well and wastewater discharge, along with an environmental assessment of the project. Approvals on all three are pending, according to the DNR. The DNR said it is reconsidering the permit for the high capacity well after George Kraft, a geologist of UW-Stevens Point, said the farm would harm local water bodies and draw down the aquifer. Dr. Kraft uses more sophisticated water modeling software than the state agency, the DNR acknowledged.

The decision to revisit the issue comes after a Wisconsin Supreme Court case this year involving municipal wells near Lake Beulah in Walworth County. In that case, the court said the DNR has the duty to consider adverse impacts of wells if presented with scientific evidence. Eric Ebersberger, water use section chief of the DNR, said the agency would evaluate the research. Depending on the outcome, the DNR could put conditions on the farm or deny the permit altogether.

In the latest case, the **Pleasant Lake Management District asked Kraft to study the effect of Richfield Dairy's water use on local groundwater and surface supplies**. Kraft has studied groundwater in the Central Sands region of Wisconsin for years. In a 2010 study he found that between 2000 and 2008, climate conditions alone could not account for depressed water levels and stream flows where many large wells are located. In his most recent analysis he concluded that the effect of the new dairy farm would increase the draw down of the water table and divert water from several streams and Pleasant Lake.

Two other studies supplied to the DNR by the company showed the new wells won't have any effect. Surprise? (JMV)







door county  
environmental council, inc.  
p.o. box 114  
fish creek, wi 54212

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- Find a Farmer's Market Near Your Home

## Find a Farmer's Market Near Your Home

<http://apps.ams.usda.gov/FarmersMarkets/Default.aspx>

This link will take you to the US Department of Agriculture complete listing of farmer's markets in the United States. You will be able to access farm products available at market locations near you to enable you to buy fresh produce direct from farmer growers and get quality food fresh from the local farms. Entering your zip code will enable you to find the closest locations, with specific schedules and in most instances a complete listing of the available organic and non-organic items.

Though there are now 227 farmers markets across the state—from Madison's year-long fixture, to Milwaukee, to Eau Claire—much more remains to be done to expand Wisconsinites' access to fresh, local food. That's why this summer, DCEC joined a coalition of groups working to make sure local farms can provide their communities with safe, fresh, delicious food.

We should be doing everything we can to encourage healthy food and responsible farming. Unfortunately, too much of the food we buy in the supermarket comes from factory farms that pollute our lakes with runoff and pollute our air by trucking food to all corners of the country. The U.S. House of Representatives recently voted to continue sending billions of dollars in subsidies to those huge farms, while eliminating a program that supports small, sustainable farms.

In Wisconsin, polluted runoff is the number one cause of algae blooms in our lakes. Across the country, runoff and spills contribute to massive fish kills and unsafe swimming and fishing conditions. Much of this pollution comes from massive factory farms, which house thousands of cows each and spray huge amounts of pesticides and fertilizer on their fields.

***...and, after you read this newsletter, please pass it along to a friend.***



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