

DCEC Newsletter

Environmental News for Door County



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DCEC Supports & Promotes Wind Energy

WIND IS FREE AND NON-POLLUTING! Wind is renewable and sustainable! Wind belongs to everyone! We are indeed fortunate to live in one of the areas of Wisconsin that has a reliable wind resource that is predictable and constant. Any utilization we can make of this natural force of nature is to our advantage now, and into the future, to meet the needs of everyone without creating more of the undesirable impacts of coal generation and the unknowns of nuclear power.

Not many years ago there was a concerted effort by Wisconsin Public Service Corporation to build a coal-fired generating plant on their Sturgeon Bay canal property. This was a serious effort to locate a facility in an area of reasonably clean air, which would have been beneficial financially for the company.

This was followed by exploration by the local Sturgeon Bay Utilities to also use the same property for their coal-fired generation plans. Fortunately, for the residents of Door County both of these efforts fell short of being lucrative enough for justification of the expense involved.

Utility companies recognize the amount of loss that is created by transporting electricity over long distances: up to 10% loss is a common figure given. It is wasteful and economically unsound to operate with such a loss and that same loss is passed on to the ratepayers. The corporation or plant owners do not absorb that loss.

In addition there is the constant policing of emissions that must be controlled under provisions of the Clean Air Act. Our past experiences in DCEC with cooperative litigation to force compliance, confirm the reluctance on the part of generating plant owners to abide by the strict guidelines put in place to protect air quality. It's all about making money for the stock-



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DCEC Incorporated in 1971 under the laws of Wisconsin as a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation

Septic Systems Hate Water Softener Salt

Studies have shown that water-softener brine regeneration wastes not only harm the natural decomposition processes occurring in a wastewater treatment system, they can also cause the septic tank itself to discharge a greater concentration of solids, grease, and oil into the dispersal field.

Since the purpose of the tank is to separate the solids and fats, oil and grease from the liquid, discharging mostly dissolved organic matter and nutrients, any discharge of solids, fats, oil and grease will have a disastrous effect on the drainage field. The discharge of solids into the drainage field will cause the absorption soils to plug resulting in an expensive drain field replacement or repair.

Experiments with septic tanks have shown that a high concentration of salt introduced by slugs of backwash brine will cause salt stratification in the tank. The result is that the salt water dives to the bottom of the tank occupying space that is designed for the settling of heavier solids.

The heavier salt water can actually lift the sludge from the bottom of the tank, displacing it and washing it into the filter or solid dispersal field if no filter is

present. Field observation of tanks with brine discharge shows that these tanks have not developed distinct layers of sludge, scum and a clear zone, a prerequisite for proper operation.

It is not necessary to discharge regenerate salt water to the wastewater stream. Some regulatory authorities classify the brine as salt-laden water, free of contaminants and able to be dispersed directly to a sump or infiltration chamber in a manner similar to roof runoff. In most cases, regeneration brine began as well water (groundwater) and is still considered groundwater with a heavy addition of sodium chloride (table salt). A simple by-pass, which conveys water softener brine discharge directly to the drainage field avoiding the septic tank, is permitted in many jurisdictions.

Check with your plumbing contractor and the county Sanitarian's Office for information on the possibility of diverting your water softener discharge. Remember, here in Door County special considerations for groundwater protection are needed and mandated for our benefit. Consult with the proper agency and follow their recommendations.

WIND (cont. from page ONE)

holders.

In reality, wind generation is the only method of generating electricity on a large scale for use in Door County that is sustainable and provides the supplemental power that is needed with *minimal loss* from transmission. We also realize there are some impacts from wind generating facilities. *Careful siting* can, and will, eliminate many of the concerns residents presently have. The proposed County Wind Ordinance will address all of these concerns with careful planning requirements that include distance regulations and setbacks that are reasonable.

We also know that creating a *permanent income* for farm owners and those with vacant land will help keep those lands in private ownership and out of the domain of land developers. This is essential to continue family ownership of rural properties and vital to maintain the rural character of our County, much of which has already been sacrificed to development and landscape intrusion of open spaces.

Fortunately, Wisconsin has finally joined the number of states that have set goals for energy

production from renewable sources by legislating standards for renewable energy and conservation. Conservation measures are essential, and local generation is a significant factor in stopping the waste of energy in both domestic uses and in transmission losses. Making the transition to less dependence on non-renewable fuel and energy sources will be a huge boost to the economy of Wisconsin and our county.

DCEC is proud to have had a small part in the formation of the Community Wind Energy group. And we are also fortunate that these dedicated people have taken up the task of promoting locally-owned wind generation to the end of ensuring that we all can utilize locally produced, sustainable energy.

We urge you to contact your County Board Supervisor and the members of the Resource Planning Committee with your support to ensure that these plans can go forward for the benefit of generations to come. Think about it and act!

Balancing Today's Development and Tomorrow's Taxes

How Door County's Open Lands Help Balance Town Budgets and Lower Property Taxes

"A community's land use is inextricably linked to its way of life. Door County, Wisconsin is known throughout the Midwest for its extraordinary landscape—from its vast rugged lakeshores and dense forests to its acres of cherry and apple trees and large expanses of agricultural land to its quaint down towns. Land use determines a particular way of life, and it also affects the community in very specific ways. Of particular concern to community residents and local policy makers is the effect of that land use on the fiscal balance sheet of the community and on their own bottom line."—Mary Edwards, Author of "Cost of Community Services in the Towns of Gibraltar and Nasewaupée"

Increasingly, communities struggle with land use issues. Town and county officials are charged with the task of providing services and generating enough revenue to pay for them. Different land uses demand different types and amounts of community services and bring in varying amounts of income, through taxes, to pay for them. *Cost of Community Services Study*

In an attempt to provide community leaders and policy makers with data on how land use decisions affect the bottom line of our communities and tax payers, the Door County Environmental Council and the Door County Land Trust commissioned Mary Edwards (Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Planning—UW-Madison and current assistant professor with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) to undertake a Cost of Community Services (COCS) study for Door County. COCS studies are quickly gaining popularity around

the country as they help communities assess how different types of land use (residential, commercial, manufacturing and open space/agricultural) affect their fiscal balance sheets. These studies compare a community's annual revenue with its annual expenses for services and determine the relationship between the two for each category of land use.

For Door County's COCS study, revenue and expense data were collected from two towns, Nasewaupée and Gibraltar. These townships were selected because they represent two different types of communities in Door County. Nasewaupée is a predominately agricultural community. Gibraltar, on the other hand, is predominately residential and commercial. For both townships, the results of the study echoed the results of over 80 studies done in Wisconsin and across the nation and are easily summarized: farm lands, forests, wetlands and other open spaces provide more revenue to a community than they require in expenditures, resulting in a net fiscal benefit to that community. On the other hand, residential development almost always costs more to a community in services than it brings in taxes.

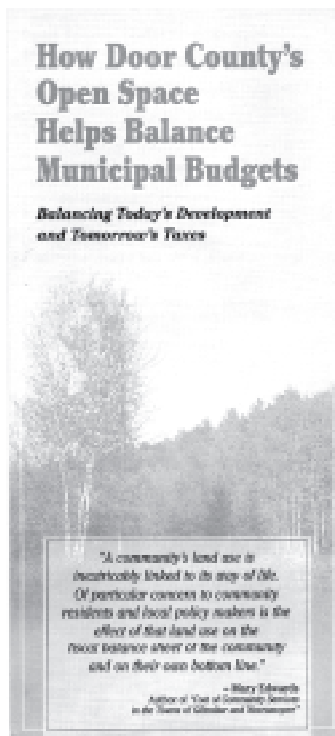
For every tax dollar collected from farms, forests, and preserves, in Nasewaupée and Gibraltar townships, the towns spent an average of \$.22 providing services. However, for every dollar of revenue raised from the residential sector, the towns spent an average of \$1.06 on community services. Thus,

revenue from undeveloped lands actually subsidizes our taxes and helps keep property taxes down.

A Common Myth

There is a common myth that development, by increasing the tax base, lowers taxes. It is assumed, conversely, that

Please see "COCS"—page six



Download the FAQs at www.dcec-wi.org

More Litigation for Hines Emerald Dragonfly Protection

The recent release by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service of designated critical habitat areas for the protected Hines Emerald Dragonfly (HED) has some serious shortcomings. A major portion of known HED habitat has been deemed insignificant and excluded from the planned protected areas. Nearly 13,000 acres in the Hiawatha National Forest in Michigan have been deleted from the original plans.

The *Natural Resources Defense Council* and the

Center For Biological Diversity are both planning on challenging this exclusion along with other issues. DCEC has signed on in support of the proposed litigation. A 60-day notice of intent will be filed in early November, and litigation is planned for early 2008.



The Hines Emerald Dragonfly

For years, this has been an ongoing battle to ensure that critical lands will continue to be properly designated for complete protection of the dragonfly, and the prospect for continuation is evident. ~ JMV

DCEC Scholarship Recipient Goes to Sea

An Update on Kurt Ellison

DCEC scholarship recipient and 2004 UW-Madison graduate Kurt Ellison has taken to the high seas! We last reported that Kurt Ellison, son of Bob and Maryellen Ellison, Forestville, was on his way to join the crew of the good ship *Farley Mowat* of the *Sea Shepherd Conservation Society* for a one-year volunteer tour of duty helping to monitor and limit the slaughter by clubbing of harp seal pups in Newfoundland.

Kurt has completed that tour and is now serving as 3RD mate on the state of Wisconsin's environmental education flagship: the tall ship *Sullivan*. This is the first of two stories about Kurt's adventures at sea since he graduated.

KURT ELLISON WAS OVERJOYED to have been selected to work on the crew of the *Farley Mowat*. This was the vessel captained by Paul Watson, a man famous for over 25 years in endangered-species protection circles, for placing his vessel (the original *Sea Shepherd*) in between illegal whalers and the whales they were hunting. To Kurt, this was a man who walked his talk. It took courage to do what Watson was doing as the illegal hunters used explosive, cannon-fired harpoons that could be as lethal to men as they were to the whales.

While in college, Ellison was involved in a number of social justice and environmental movements. There, he realized that "direct action does get the goods, and if you want to question the mass society in which we all exist, it's the only way to even start to stop exploitation in its tracks."

An at-sea tour using direct action to protect harp seal pups seemed to Kurt to be an ideal way to spend a little time off before going on to graduate school. So, September of 2004 found Kurt in Trinidad, aboard the *Farley Mowat*, where training missions in Caracao and the Bahamas were held to get them ready for the long journey north to the harp seal birthing grounds in Newfoundland.

As a deck hand, Kurt's responsibilities, as he describes, were "first, the ship's safety— by keeping the vessel safe and running, and helping wherever I could on deck... and then assisting with documentation once the vessel made base camp off the ice floes in the north."

Was Captain Watson what he expected? "No," said Kurt, "He handled things a lot more democratically than I was expecting. While he maintained a firm grip on command, everyone on the crew had input and influence in many, many decisions."

The *Farley Mowat* made the journey north hugging the East Coast of the US, up to the seas off Labrador, where ice punched a hole in their hull. Fortunately, they were able to make port without incident for repairs, and still make it to the mouth of the St. Lawrence River in time for their mission.

When finally and firmly anchored to the edge of the ice pack, they began. Kurt stresses that their mission was a peaceful one. "We followed a policy of non-violent confrontation," he said, "We would monitor the hunt from zodiac boats, and then run out onto the ice using video cameras and distractions to slow down the hunters as much as possible."

Ellison was disappointed that his position as deck hand required he be one of the sailors to "hold down the fort" of the ship while more experienced activists were on the ice. But he had at least two occasions on the ice himself confronting hunters.



Kurt Ellison

Although, being left behind on ship during one encounter with the hunters may have been a blessing for Kurt.

During this encounter, the hunters started throwing punches at the activists, even though they knew video cameras were recording the event. "The fisheries police were called in and guess who they arrested?" said Kurt, "Our crew!" The crew was arrested and charged with interfering with the hunt in violation of the Seal Protection Act of Canada! (The Canadian courts later threw out the charges as completely unfounded.)

What impact did these experiences have on Kurt? "In the late 1800's, there used to be 50 to 60 million harp seals on these ice floes. Now the seal population is down to only 2 million," remarked Kurt. "This has been a disaster for this species."

"While there was a reprieve during the 1980's when wearing seal fur became highly unfashionable, the 1990's saw a rebound in the wearing of the fur, especially in Eastern Europe and Asia," he continued.

Canadian law, pushed through by Canadian endangered-species activists, helps a little by limiting the "harvest" to only 10,000 pups. Canadian commercial fishing advocates helped to push this enacted number up by claiming the seals were hurting the cod population in area waters. No mention was made of the effect that years of over-fishing these waters had also had.

Does Kurt think the seals will survive? "Their best protection hasn't come from activists, it comes from foul weather: in the form of high winds that stop the hunters from going out."

It may also be the weather, in the form of global warming, that becomes the worst enemy of the seal. "Last year, there wasn't even a hunt... there was not enough ice... almost all of the baby seals drowned," said Kurt sadly.

At the completion of the hunt, Kurt disembarked the *Farley Mowat* at St. Pierre and boarded a small plane for the long journey back home to Wisconsin. Would he do it again? There is no hesitation from Kurt Ellison: He plans to volunteer again as soon as he is financially able.

DCEC is proud to have helped start Kurt along his journey. For Kurt the feeling is mutual. Even though he had received several larger scholarships, he said: "the one from DCEC meant the most to me because it came from fellow environmentalists."

COCS (cont. from page three)

lands left undeveloped either as farmland, forests or conservation areas are not contributing to the fiscal health of our communities. As it turns out, neither is true.

With residential development, citizens and community officials often believe they'll see a boost to the local tax base and, in fact, they usually do. At first glance, residential development can look very lucrative. However, there's another piece to the puzzle that is often ignored. As COCS studies across the country are now showing, development typically results in **raised** taxes because it requires more in community services than it generates in income.

On the whole, development is very demanding of public services. It requires new roads or more repairs to roads due to increased traffic, new water lines, sewers, police patrol, garbage collection, snow plowing services, maintenance of parks, cemeteries and municipal facilities and fire and rescue services. Open land, on the other hand, demands very little in services.

Open Spaces Protect our Environment and our Economy

In addition to providing net revenue to a community, farmlands, forests, wetlands and other open spaces protect the quality of our air and water—valuable resources that are expensive to clean once they are polluted. Door County is a narrow peninsula of bedrock and limestone surrounded by 250 miles of shoreline and, therefore, has a particularly fragile eco-system. We share this eco-system with over two million tourists each year. Visitors are drawn to Door County because of its rural charm and natural beauty. Preserving our open spaces not only helps keep our community balance sheets in the black; it also is good for our environment and our tourist-dependent economy!

Looking ahead...

It is time to discard the old notion that our open landscapes must be converted to other uses to ensure economic stability. In fact, just the opposite is true. Protection of our farms, forest and conservation areas should not be looked at as precluding other more lucrative options. It may actually be protection against more expensive ones. It is time that we factor in all the benefits of open space to do our best and wisest land use planning.

As you pass an open field or woodland, say "thank you!" It's keeping property taxes down for all of us.

Most people agree that our quality of life, the health of our environment, and our tourist economy benefit greatly from undeveloped lands and open spaces. However, it is less generally understood that open space improves a community's fiscal situation as well.

Frequently asked questions

"What about preserved land that is tax-exempt? Doesn't taking land off the tax rolls cost us more in taxes?"

First of all, most preserved land in Door County remains on the tax rolls or it participates in the PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) program. For instance, the DNR must, by law, make payments to each taxing jurisdiction that are equivalent to or greater than the taxes that would have been collected from private owners. The Door County Land Trust, like other non-profit organizations, is not required by law to make tax payments, but often voluntarily participates in the PILOT program. However, even if a piece of property is removed from the tax

rolls and no taxes are paid, in most cases it is still lowering your taxes. Consider this. A parcel of land can be used as a preserve or it can go to some other use. Preserving the land and taking it off the tax rolls will lower the tax base and, considered as an isolated act, will probably result in a tax increase for you and other residents. However, the increase you'll pay is almost certainly lower than what you would have paid if the land had been residentially developed and required services. If the choice for a piece of land is between (1) preserving it and removing it from the tax rolls, and (2) developing it as residential property, a community's taxpayers are almost always better off with the preserve. If open space is left on the tax rolls or is used agriculturally, the resulting benefit is even greater.

"Can the ratios in this study be applied equally to every piece of property within a category?"

Although a general class of land use may be associated with a net fiscal benefit or loss, individual pieces of property may have an impact that can be significantly different from the overall averages. However, this study echoes others done around the state and nation to show that, on average, the land categories studied have the reported fiscal effects.

"Does this study imply that all development is bad?"

No. COCS studies do not attempt to calculate all the costs and benefits of different types of development. They also do not suggest that a community should follow a particular growth strategy. They do, however, provide a community with a baseline of information about the fiscal effects of different types of land use as studied at one particular time. They are intended to generate discussion and provide a larger picture to land use planning decisions.

CROSSROADS

(cont. from page five)

State. Information learned at Crossroads will be disseminated throughout Wisconsin and beyond. Door County high school students are involved in testing the efficacy of these systems while creating an awareness of new and innovative ways of properly handling our wastewater needs. Crossroads also provides laboratory space and equipment for the research team from the University of Wisconsin/Oshkosh each summer, where they test beach water while also looking for non-point source causes of water pollution.

Thank you to Coggin Herringa, the staff of volunteers at Crossroads and the businesses that make this all possible.

~JMV

visit the DCEC's website at:
www.dcec-wi.org
(New Zimmerman Maps Soon!)

My Door County Water in 10 years?



Not If You Can Help It!

If you're not already a member, please consider joining DCEC today. Help preserve the quality of the peninsula we love for now and for generations to come. Thank You.

dcec membership application

() \$25 Individual () \$35 Family () \$50 Sustaining
 () \$100 Donor () \$_____ Other () \$15 Student/Limited

This amount would really help! Thanks!

Name(s) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Door County voter? () yes () no

Township or Municipality: _____

Email: _____

Summer mailing address, if different:

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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[Ed. Note: visit <http://www.vote-smart.org> if you don't vote in Door County Just enter your zip code and they'll display all of your elected representatives with links to detailed fact sheets and contact information about every one]



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It's Time to Stand Up for Wind!
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DCEC In The News

DCEC IS BLESSED by the news coverage we receive from Door County's media. From coverage of our events to interviews and special guest appearances by DCEC's executive director Jerry Viste, we've been provided the opportunity to get our educational message out to the public and to provide valuable input on issues that will be tomorrow's news.

In this issue we'd like to thank all the radio stations connected with doorcountydailynews.com and especially it's flagship station WBDK.

Thanks to station owner Roger Utnemeyer and on-air reporters Karen Klement and Nick Friemuth for helping with our efforts to keep Door County beautiful!



DCEC Presenter Sarah Utley with WBDK's Karen Klement (r)

The DCEC Endowment Fund

THE *DCEC ENDOWMENT FUND* EXISTS to fund the activities of the Door County Environmental Council far into the future.

Every year that the fund grows is one year sooner that DCEC can devote our efforts exclusively to protecting our county's beautiful environment.

You can help this important fund grow even faster by remembering DCEC in your estate. This has become easier with the recent federal law allowing donors to transfer IRA balances *without first paying federal income taxes* on those amounts. (Consult your financial advisor, please.)

So, whether you can contribute now or later, please make a point of supporting the *DCEC Endowment Fund*.

Legacies, memorials and direct gifts are all deeply appreciated. Please call, or have your advisor call, Jerry Viste at (920) 743-6003 for further information. Donate directly online at <http://www.dcec-wi.org> the official website of DCEC.

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