

DCEC Newsletter

Environmental News for Door County



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Winter 2013

GMO's, An Important Update

In the United States:

You probably were not surprised when Proposition 37 failed in California last fall. Remember this was a measure to require labeling of all foodstuffs containing any form of **genetically modified organisms (GMOs)**. The proposal was opposed by the parent GMO companies, Monsanto and others who pumped billions of dollars into the campaign to defeat the referendum. Even though the protective measure was defeated in California, several states are now bringing the issue for public vote in coming referendums.

With the growing controversy surrounding the pending commercialization of genetically engineered (GE) salmon; the prospect of upcoming high-profile GMO labeling legislative battles in **Vermont, New Mexico and Connecticut**; and I-522, a major ballot initiative working its way toward a vote in **Washington State**, and it makes sense that the Big Food elite may be preparing for a tactical retreat from the largest food fight in U.S. history.

According to informed sources in Washington, DC, representative of Wal-Mart, General Mills, Pepsi-Frito Lay, Mars, Coca-Cola and others are meeting with the FDA this January. Wal-Mart came under fire recently for selling unlabeled GMO sweet corn in its stores. General Mills, Pepsi, Mars and Coca Cola have been the targets of numerous consumer boycotts, including a social media-powered boycott of **Traitor Brands**: "natural" and organic brands, whose parent companies contributed millions of dollars to defeat Prop 37, the California Ballot Initiative to label GMO foods.

Consumers will find out the reason for the gathering together of these major food suppliers and the Food and Drug Administration and the ultimate goal SHOULD be to eliminate the lobbying and political pressure put on the FDA to not protect the health and welfare of United States consumers into the future. **We will see.**

Around the World:

Paving the way for other nations to introduce similar legislation and inform consumers what they're really putting into their mouths, the labeling of products containing genetically modified organisms (GMOs) within the nation of India is now mandated by law. The country's Ministry of Consumer Affairs declared in a 2012 notice that all **GMO-containing packaged foods must be labeled by January 1, 2013 or face legal repercussions.**

Each package containing GM ingredients will clearly be labeled directly on a prime location of the package as 'GM'. This is a warning that many heads of organizations and even bodies within the Indian government are praising for its ability to inform individuals as to what they are really feeding their family. This is an extremely bold message by India. A message that will likely be picked up by neighboring countries where citizens have been demanding GMO labeling — or an outright ban. The move also comes after other countries like **Poland** already took moves to ban Monsanto's genetically modified maize (corn). France and Hungary led the battle with health challenges to "Lasso" and a complete destruction of 1000 acres of GM Maize. **Denmark** advocated a proposal that would allow GM Maize to be grown on the entire continent; fortunately it was blocked by seven (7) other EU countries and failed.

Condensed from Nation of Change (JMV)

If You've Never Heard of MRSA!

MRSA is the acronym for **Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus** and this new life-ending deviate has captured national attention since becoming more common and more deadly. MRSA (pronounced mursa) can cause minor to life-threatening skin, bloodstream, respiratory, urinary and surgical site infections. A late fall issue of AGRI-View featured an article titled "**Living near livestock may increase the risk of acquiring MRSA**". The MRSA research in the feature was funded by two very reputable groups: The Johns Hopkins Center for a LIVABLE Future and the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Another deadly deviate, Escherichia coli 0157:H7 (EC157H7), is also found in the contents of animal intestinal tracts. E157H7 is a deadly bacterium that killed 4 children in Seattle Washington in 1993 before the **Public Health Service researchers realized how dangerous this mutated version of E. coli was** and took needed measures to protect the public from exposure to this threat.

In the DCEC fall newsletter, Dr. Margaret Pulera, a Wisconsin rural physician near Janesville, related her own experience with a young farm teenage boy who did not respond to any known treatment and suddenly lost his life to a MRSA respiratory deviate. This was a personal tragedy that left an immediate sense of urgency for Dr. Pulera **to make people everywhere** aware of the new dangers of incidental contact with animal waste that were previously unknown to anyone.

As the size and impact of large concentrated animal feeding operations increases along with the number of these facilities being promoted by Wisconsin legislation, past and pending, the danger to the public is being downplayed. As a cost-effective way to handle the huge amounts of animal waste generated by these operations, plans are being formulated to allow **center pivot irrigation systems to be designed and installed to spray diluted animal waste in the same manner as irrigation systems**, with aerial drift not being a major concern. As in the past, concerns over public health issues that can be linked directly to animal waste seem to play a passive role in the process.

The State agencies responsible for natural resource protection, including air and water quality: the **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection** have implied indication of preliminary approval for these new CAFO support initiatives as being cost-effective. The extra demand on the limited aquifer by high volume wells throughout all of Wisconsin and the underlying easily polluted Karst geology are being given a **relative assessment** in the process, as being one of the drawbacks facing permitting new high-volume wells. Fortunately, hydrology experts from the already-known problem areas in Wisconsin central sands are voicing their concerns based on their experiences.

One good development in the environmental/human health protection effort has been a seemingly **renewed interest by the federal Environmental Protection Agency, (EPA) in following-up on complaints filed with the district offices**. In the past, DCEC has filed formal local complaints with the Chicago EPA office only to have the complaint forwarded to the Madison DNR office, onward to the Green Bay office and ending up in Sturgeon Bay where there was no resolution.

Recently the Chicago EPA research staff was in Sturgeon Bay conducting studies on property that had been under complaint for several years. Still another site in Kewaunee County was **again** researched by EPA staff after the Wisconsin DNR failed to follow obvious violations with proper citations. They found violation that was in excess of the original pollution and indications are that the complaints will be brought to the Wisconsin Department of Justice for prosecution. DCEC is fortunate in knowing that a good friend, Cameron Davis, formerly heading the **Alliance for the Great Lakes** has been chosen by President Obama for an advisory position with the EPA.

(JMV)

Door County's 4th Sustainability Fair
Vendors • Music • Presentations • Trolley Tours
Saturday, April 27th 2013
10:00 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Martin Park • S. 3rd Ave and Oregon St., Sturgeon Bay
www.sustaindoor.org

Another Resident's Story about MRSA

Last November we had an unfortunate occurrence involving a liquid manure spill. I was angered, but I tried to "keep a lid on it". After all, it came from a farm we regard as a good neighbor, and have ever since we bought a home West of Krohn's Lake. And it was just cow manure! Heck, I was the kid whose daddy had his grandmother mix up a poultice, made from it, to cure a bad case of planter's warts, and it worked! I was also the kid who learned how to find leaf worms for fishing around the same manure pile.

But on November 6, 2011 I saw something I had never seen before. Right on top of a clump of spilled liquid manure was a very fresh, and very dead, leaf worm. It was the same specie of critter that I thought thrived on the stuff and it was as dead as the proverbial doornail. That's when I started researching and learned that this isn't your Grampa's cow manure anymore. This stuff doesn't come off of a manure pile. It comes from something Grampa never heard of called a "manure lagoon". The lagoon provides an ideal environment for the development of some pretty nasty life forms in the presence of something else that didn't pass through Grampa's cows, called antibiotics. Bacteria growing and mutating in an environment that includes low levels of antibiotics produces something else.

I found out what that "something else" is in a paper based on a Canadian study conducted from 2007 to 2009 and it garnered my undivided attention with the term; **Methicillin-resistant Stapholococcus aureus (MRSA)**. It got my attention because that's what killed my father 14 years ago and it was an absolutely horrible death.

Later, I found the same paper on the website of the United States Communicable Disease Center in Atlanta. (If you care to read it look for: "Emerging Infectious Diseases" • www.cdc.gov/eid • Vol. 16, No. 4, April 2010). That's when I learned the same people who take things like e-coli, influenza, encephalitis, plague, tuberculosis, and polio very seriously also regard liquid manure as a health threat.

And, what does all of this have to do with us? Drive any rural road in Kewaunee or Southern Door County and you decide. See if you can count the cracks per mile or notice the "troughing" where water collects, flows into the cracks, freezes and causes further road bed deterioration. Or simply research our county's entire recent budget battle. Do you recall the figure \$1.13 million? Do you also recall that a very reliable county official claims that is the amount our road department is in the hole for?

Our roads are obviously being destroyed by overweight equipment. And what might be heavier than 9,500 gallons of liquid manure in an eight-wheel tanker pulled by a giant tractor? How many ton-miles of wear and tear does that inflict when they roll at 12 minute intervals for weeks on end?

But now a collection of environmental, conservation, and civil engineering nincompoops have come up with a new way of spreading liquid manure. Pipe it to a center point pivot irrigation sprinkler system and spread it as a spray. In plain English, squirt (atomize) the stuff and inject it---Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, and all---directly into the air we breathe!

Probably not a real big concern to people under the age of 50, with totally non-compromised respiratory and immune systems. But how many of us are in that category? If you've ever had bronchitis, pneumonia (even once), have asthma or sinus infections and allergies; and if you ever smoked or worked in second-hand smoke, **your respiratory system is compromised**. The same can be said if you worked in construction, shipbuilding, foundries, or handled paint, industrial coatings, or insulation materials. Of course if you operated the family farm, and stayed out of industrial occupations you're probably okay; provided you never came in contact with silo mold, dust, pesticides, herbicides, or chemically-based fertilizers.

Maybe you live considerable distance from the source-point poop sprayers and feel that provides safety. You need to learn why it is we are able to analyze industrial pollutants coming out of China by studying air samples gathered in California. Or maybe you have a friend in Florida who can't figure out where the occasional strange looking film of early morning dust on his car came from. Tell him it's from the Sahara Desert in North Africa and you will be 100% correct. Atmospheric air currents are able to transport particles much heavier and denser than microbes for incredible distances, even across country boundaries.

(Scott Kliment - Kewaunee County)

Who Said This?

"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."
"Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former."

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Hats Off to the Gardner Town Board

The Gardner Town Board in the Little Sturgeon area has reacted to concerns from citizens in their town over the possibility that large concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) might be attempting to locate in their town. As a result of citizen pressure the town board has taken a pro-active approach authorizing the town planning commission to move ahead with an ordinance proposal that would limit the number of animals. Town citizens also voiced concerns about the odor, spreading liquid manure on fields, and the long-range impact of such operations on the already high phosphorus waters of Green Bay.

Town officials expect to create an ordinance similar to the law adopted by the Town of Casco in Kewaunee County, limiting the number of cattle that can be involved in one operation. A similar town in Kewaunee County *without any ordinances* is facing issues of a CAFO with 5,000 animals with plans to expand to nearly 10,000 animals and a manure lagoon holding 20 million gallons also to be expanded to a capacity of 80 million gallons.

As you might suspect, the agencies in the State of Wisconsin responsible for controlling CAFO siting plans and the needed pollution discharge permits: the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Ben Brancl, Sect'y and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Kathy Stepp, Sect'y are visibly reluctant to oppose these plans and in most situations the proposal faces no real challenges for implementation from the regulators. As a result, citizen complaints receive a cursory scrutiny with little enforcement or penalties even when obvious violations are reported.

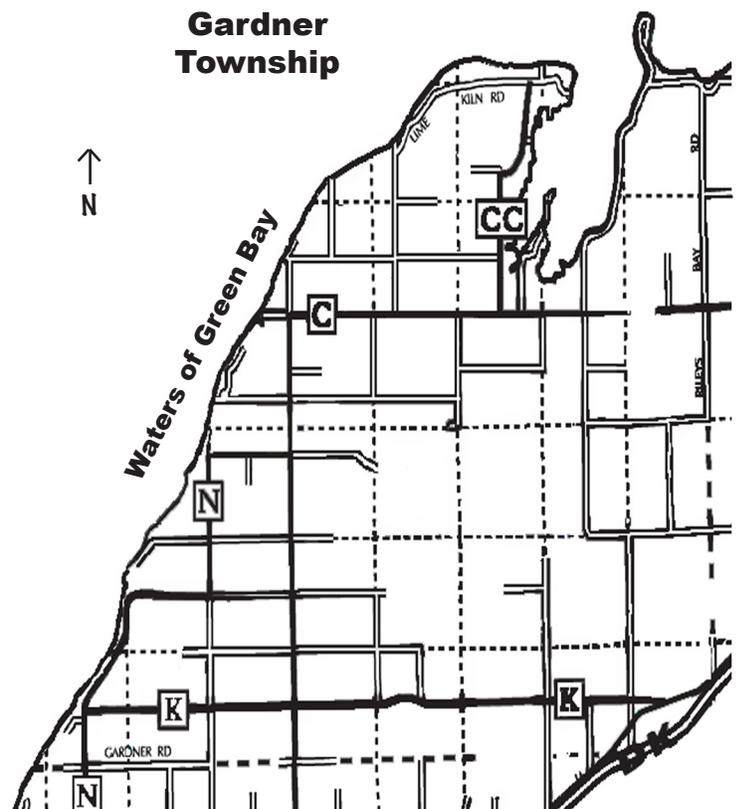
In anticipation of citizen efforts to protect their present air and water quality, *the Wisconsin legislature passed Assembly Bill AB 195/SB 138 which prohibits Wisconsin from setting standards for hazardous air emissions from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs).* SB 138 passed the Senate 24-9, the Assembly concurred, and the bill was signed into law as 2011 WI Act 122. WI. Act 122 leaves people living next to CAFOs vulnerable to

health problems and reduced property values.

We support the effort of the Gardner Town Board to put basic controls in place to ensure that *all of the residents of the Town are guaranteed clean air, that the shore land properties retain their value and that the present farm operations in Gardner are allowed to continue as family farms.* There are those who would maintain that family farms are not viable any longer, but it is our contention that family farms will remain if they are allowed to be competitive without unfair competition for land for crop use and a fair market price for their products.

DCEC would also urge all towns that have no land-use protection ordinances in place to take action to ensure that the few CAFOs that are in southern Door County presently do not expand to create unmanageable situations as in Kewaunee County with 15 large CAFOs and Brown County with 18 already in place.

(JMV)



Maybe They Will Do What Is Necessary!

Yes, we all know the lake levels are dropping dramatically, and several solutions have been proposed. Some good ideas and then the others. Whatever course is taken should be in conjunction with keeping the **Asian Carp out of our Great Lakes, permanently.**

Background: As reported in previous newsletters, the lake level of Superior is being maintained higher than normal to create a reserve that can be released via the St. Mary's river at the Soo Locks into the Michigan and Huron Lakes to supplement their levels when needed. Both Michigan and Huron are connected at the Mackinac Straits and basically are one water body.

The outflow from Lake Huron occurs at the St. Clair River near Detroit, Michigan, which flows in a southerly direction into Lake St. Clair and beyond into Lake Erie. This river is an important part of the St. Lawrence Seaway allowing shipping from ports on the upper Lakes and most experts agree that past dredging for shipping channels has caused erosion of the River bottom and increased flow. There were weirs (concrete structures to retain the flow) budgeted but experts at the time said they were not necessary. **Another mistake!**

The Lake Michigan level is affected directly by reversed flow out of the Lake at Chicago to accommodate the municipal sewage problem and allow using Lake water for municipal use, while the effluent passes downstream. Historic canals were put in place to allow shipping in both directions. **Still another mistake!**

Lake Erie forms the border between Canada and the states of Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York and is drained by the Niagara River via Niagara Falls and the Welland Canal. Lake Erie has a retention time of 2.6 years, which means that the water in Lake Erie is renewed by upstream sources every three years. Short-term level changes are often caused by seiches that are particularly high when southwesterly winds blow across the length of the lake during storms. These cause water to pile up at the eastern end of the lake, sometimes reaching 7 feet with waves 12-15 feet for a total rise of 22 feet. The western end of Lake Erie experiences the opposite effect.

The Problem: Great Lake water levels, especially Michigan and Huron are lower than any time in recent history with navigation problems for shipping, mooring problems for boaters, and a host of other impacts that cause expense and problems for property owners. There is no natural relief in sight and with current weather conditions prevailing, normal spring run-off will be minimal throughout the midwest and central United States, affecting barge transport traffic on the major rivers.

The Causes: Warmer summers and mild winters with limited ice cover and increased evaporation. Diminished supply stream flows from areas of low rainfall and snow cover and unrestricted uses with no required return to withdrawal origin site. Wasteful drinking water utilization for low water quality purposes. You know what they are.

Possible Solutions:

1. The reserve that is being held in Lake Superior as a precaution for even more intense weather coming should be maintained as a back up as intended and increased.
2. Installing the recommended weirs in the St Clair River will help control the loss from that location. Possible narrowing of the channel to the minimum for traffic would also limit outflow.
3. Convert the Chicago Canals/Illinois River to return proper flow direction is a very expensive project under discussion that would require Chicago to modify the sanitary system. Install a transfer station to off-load cargo at a site where the River/ Canal would be dammed, re-loading on other vessels or transport. This option would destroy the carp access to the Great Lakes.
4. Further restricting the Niagara Falls flow at night after hours would have serious restrictions by backing water into lowland areas with flooding, unless control originates at the river source.

Citizen water conservation is a mandate regardless of which solution is pursued.

All of these solutions have merit, but the most viable proposal would resolve the water level control issue and eliminate the danger of the Asian Carp invasion. The modification of the Chicago Canal(s)/Illinois River is currently on the official favored list as a long-range effective solution.

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This amount would really help! Thanks!

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Every year the fund grows as contributions are made and the interest accumulates. You can help this important fund grow even faster by remembering DCEC in your estate plans. Each bequest, through your will and estate funding helps bring us one step closer to financial independence, allowing us to take tough, sometimes unpopular positions that protect our county for future generations.

Whether you can contribute now or later please make a point of supporting the **DCEC ENDOWMENT FUND.**

Legacies, memorials, and direct gifts are deeply appreciated. Please call or have your advisor contact Jerry Viste at: (920) 743-6003 or dcec@itol.com for further information.



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0213

In This Issue

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Page 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GMO's, An Important Update <p><i>Page 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If You've Never Heard of MRSA! • Door County's 4th Sustainability Fair <p><i>Page 3</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another Resident's Story About MRSA • "Who Said This?" | <p><i>Page 4</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hats Off to the Gardner Town Board <p><i>Page 5</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why Not...Chemical Free? • A Voice For Cooperation <p><i>Page 6</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maybe They Will Do What Is Necessary! <p><i>Page 8</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCEC Homeowner Water Testing Continues! |
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DCEC Homeowner Water Testing Continues!

The highly successful homeowner water-testing program is being implemented in Baileys Harbor Town this summer with promotional assistance from DCEC's water task force. Gibraltar and Liberty Grove towns have both completed testing with the participants knowing their well water is safe for their family, and have base-line data on their own well.

DCEC furnishes up to \$500 for assistance in publicizing the testing program with the only test cost paid by the owner, with sample testing done at UW/Stevens Point during the summer. Individual costs are around \$100 for the complete test and the results are not individually identified or shared with any agency. If you are interested in having your town participate in this good deal well testing program, contact the DCEC Office at; 920-743-6003 or email at; info@dcec-wi.org.



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



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