

DCEC Newsletter

Environmental News for Door County



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Spring 2011

Liberty Grove Voluntary Well Testing Program

Because of growing concerns nationally and in view of the easily polluted dolostone karst geology underlying most of Door County, DCEC has been cooperating with the Town Board of Liberty Grove to implement a *voluntary* water testing program for residents of that town.

This will involve private well owners taking water samples from their wells on specified dates for submission in the analysis program at US/Stevens Point laboratory. The preferred testing is a complete determination of any undesirable pathogens, chemical residue, and other significant elements foreign to safe water.

The sampling program is entirely voluntary and the cost for the complete test is reasonable at \$107 for the entire test analysis, which is more reasonable than commercial water testing in private laboratories. The target dates are planned with the distribution of sample bottles to homeowners a week before the collection date which is June 28th. The samples will then be taken to Stevens Point for analysis at the university laboratory.

The Town is taking sign-ups for the program now and the total number of tests is limited to 150 for this initial testing schedule. You can contact the Liberty Grove Town Office for more details or to register for your water test and become knowledgeable about the water your family is drinking.

This is extremely important information to know in view of the number of contaminants that are presently in our groundwater, and it is hoped that other towns will follow the lead of Liberty Grove and take advantage of this program from UW/Stevens Point. The test results remain entirely private and are completely confidential so your property value cannot be affected by the results, and you will have the knowledge of the quality of the water your family uses.

Contact the Town Office and get in on the *scheduled voluntary well water sample program* by calling: 920-854-2934 or stop in at the Town Office at 11161 Old Stage Road or email the Town at: tlibertygrove@dcwis.com. Office hours are 8:30-11:30 and 1:00-4:30 Monday through Friday.



In Observance of Earth Day 2011

The people of the world, other nations and this United States owe a debt of gratitude to the leader Gaylord Nelson our Wisconsin Senator, Governor and environmental leader for the establishment of Earth Day and the resulting environmental movement. Enormous gains have been made since those early difficult days in the changing of public attitudes in support of environmental concerns and legislation. Those gains benefit all of the people on this planet and were supported by progressive governments all around the world.

What has happened and is happening now as you read this?

Political forces are at work in our state and country hastily destroying many of those beneficial regulations as rapidly as they can under the guise of budget balancing. Regulations that were put in place to protect public health, clean up waterways and restore our trashed environment are under assault daily in gargantuan steps backward for a civilized nation. By allowing the diminishing of these common sense regulations that were put in place to protect the environment of our nation, we are giving up much of the heritage that should have ensured protection for the future generations, all in the quest for control and a new "balanced budget".

What can you do as an environmental steward planning for your family's future?

Strongly urge your state and federal government representative; regardless of the party they support, to take a firm stand in protection of the resources of this nation with the future of your children and grandchildren in mind. Urge these same representatives to create fair and equitable legislation for all of the citizens, wherever they may reside and are struggling to provide for their family. Contact your state legislator to demand that

programs to provide long term protection for farmland are left in place, continue the promotion and funding for the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements, and retain the fees for conversion of Farmland Preservation lands. These are all tools that help make it possible for small farms to compete with the mega-funded operations owned by out-of-state financiers. Demand that funding for resource protection does not become a victim of the budget cost slashing effort to ensure Wisconsin remains a conservation leader.

It is for us, as the current custodians of our resources of this State and Nation to take up and continue the efforts by leaders like Gaylord Nelson, Theodore Roosevelt, John Muir and Aldo Leopold to create a new generation of dedicated stewards of our wonderful and precious resources. Don't let them down!

(JMV)



Think Spring...Think Outdoors

With a change of seasons comes new ways to save energy, save money and reduce our carbon footprint.

People Power: Using an electric treadmill for 30 minutes produces 2 pounds of carbon dioxide and uses 0.75 kilowatt hours of energy. Instead, enjoy a walk outside or do spinning, resistance tubing, dumbbells, jump rope or other non-electrical exercise. Keep in mind that gardening, raking, mowing and cleaning out the gutters “count” as exercise and smells better than a stinky gym!

Mulch: Try sheets of newspaper or grass clippings as a weed barrier in the garden. They will decompose and can be worked into the soil at the end of the season.

Eggshells: Start seedlings in empty egg shell halves indoors and then crunch them into the hole as you transplant them outdoors for extra nutrients.

Lighten the Load: Remove ski-racks from the roof of the car and empty the trunk of the kitty litter, salt or shovel you may have had in there for the winter and you’ll get better gas mileage.

Recycle Baskets: Holiday floral baskets and empty vases can be re-used by your local florist.

Nursery: Ask you local nursery if they will take back the small plastic pots when you buy your spring plants. Also try and bring your own cardboard box or flat to carry your new plants home.

Mesh Bags: Save the mesh fruit/onion bags for container gardening. Fill the bag with styrofoam noodles or small stones (if you need the weight) and put the bag in the bottom of a pot to displace some of the soil. It makes a large container easier to move, water will still drain through and it can easily be removed and re-used at the end of the season.

Solar Pathway: Consider installing solar fixtures along pathways, flower beds or decks to light your way instead of harsh floodlights. The solar cells collect sunlight during the day and store the electricity in batteries for nighttime illumination.

The harsh winter is over and there is a whole lot of gorgeous to be had in a Door County spring, so get outside and enjoy it before we start complaining about the heat and humidity!

Eileen Andera DCEC President

Plans For Lake Michigan Water Trail

The Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, the Department of Natural Resources, and the National Park Service is taking public input on the Draft Wisconsin Lake Michigan Water Trail from April 18- May 13, 2011.

A water trail is a route along a water body for people using small beachable boats like kayaks, canoes, day sail-ors or rowboats. Water trails are based on land facilities that support water travel and the variety of natural, cul-tural and historic resources a traveler encounters along the way. The goal is to gain additional knowledge about water access points along the Lake Michigan shoreline.

Staff from the Wisconsin State Park System, National Park Service and Bay Lake Regional Planning Commission will review input, provide maps and background information at public meetings to be announced.

Anyone can also provide comments by regular mail, email, phone, or at the open houses. For information, questions, or to submit email comments you can contact Jeff Prey, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, PO Box 7921, PR/6, Madison WI 53703 (608) 266-2182 jeff.prey@wisconsin.gov

Chronic Sewage Overflows Into Lake Michigan

Milwaukee Has a Sewage Problem Partner

Billed as an engineering marvel and national model, Chicago's Deep Tunnel was designed to protect Lake Michigan from sewage overflows and put an end to the once-frequent practice of dumping human and industrial waste into local rivers.

But nearly four decades after taxpayers started paying for one of the nation's most expensive public works projects, billions of gallons of bacteria-laden sewage and storm runoff still routinely pour into the Chicago River and suburban waterways during and after storms, according to records. Lake Michigan, long considered the sewage outlet of last resort, has been hit harder during the past four years than it was in the previous two decades combined.

Between 2007 and 2010, records show, the agency in charge of Deep Tunnel dumped nearly 19 billion gallons of storm water teeming with waste into the Great Lake, the source of drinking water for 7 million people in Chicago and its suburbs. By contrast, 12 billion gallons poured out between 1985 and 2006. Most of the recent overflows into the lake came during two monsoon-like storms in 2008 and 2010 that were among the most intense downpours in Chicago history.

By now, this pollution was supposed to be an unsavory part of Chicago's sewage-choked past. When they broke ground on Deep Tunnel in 1975, officials at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District vowed that their subterranean labyrinth of tunnels would "bottle rainstorms," clean up local waterways and enable the region to meet federal and state water-quality standards. The district also said the project would reduce flooding in Chicago, a city built on a swamp.

The tunnels, nine to 35 feet in diameter and up to 300 feet below city streets, have been fully operational since 2006. But the system's final element, a giant flood-control reservoir, now isn't expected to be complete until 2029 — more than half a century after construction began. Taxpayers have spent \$3 billion on the project, and the meter is still running.

Though there is no question that the completed tunnels have kept billions of gallons of polluted water out of the lake and area waterways, the ongoing sewage overflows are prompting an investigation by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Like many older cities, Chicago long ago built sewers that combine waste from homes and factories with storm runoff. When it rains, sewers quickly fill up and spill into local streams through overflow pipes. If waterways are saturated to capacity, locks and gates to Lake Michigan are opened to prevent flooding of streets and basements.

Deep Tunnel was intended to prevent those overflows. Most of the project has been funded by federal grants awarded under the 1972 Clean Water Act, the landmark law that called for all of the nation's lakes, rivers and streams to be clean enough for fishing and swimming. The first phase, digging 130 miles of geological ductwork, was intended specifically to "eliminate waterway pollution," according to district records.

Today, thanks to four decades of improvements including the completed portions of the Deep Tunnel, stretches of the Chicago River are pleasant enough that restaurants and housing developments are rising along its banks and kayakers paddle its waters.

But the river system still isn't clean enough to meet water-quality standards and remains among the nation's dirtiest waterways. Last year alone, sewage overflows into local streams contained an estimated 335 million pounds of suspended solids, a technical term for human and industrial waste and debris contaminating the water. Signs caution that the waterways are "not suitable for any human body contact" and "may contain bacteria that can cause illness."

A state rule-making panel last year designated stretches of the river system as suitable for "limited-contact recreation," a legal term for activities other than swimming. That likely means the district will need to disinfect wastewater from three big treatment plants, a germ-killing step that every other major U.S. city already is required to take. The ultimate legal authority on the river, the U.S. EPA, thinks the district needs to make waterways even cleaner. Among other things, sewage overflows will finally need to be eliminated.

For more than four decades, district officials have defended the Deep Tunnel as the best way to protect their top priority: Lake Michigan. Before the project, they have noted, the district had been forced to dump sew-

age into the lake 21 times between 1948 and 1978. Today that record is worse, even though a great deal of the Deep Tunnel project has been built. By the end of 2010, records show, the district had allowed sewage to flow into the lake 24 times since 1985, the year the first tunnel went into operation.

Some communities also are embracing solutions that rely on more small-scale projects, many of which are similar to ideas that Deep Tunnel critics proposed decades ago. As part of Mayor Richard Daley's efforts to promote Chicago as a green metropolis, the city has repaved 140 alleys with porous pavers or pervious concrete that allows rainwater to seep into the ground rather than drain into sewers. The mayor also has pushed for green roofs that help sop up storm water, including one atop McCormick Place that returns about 50 million gallons to Lake Michigan every year. (Condensed from Chicago Tribune)

Part 11 of "Let It Burn" the Haitian Monsanto Easter Gift

The Continuation of Relief Efforts After the Disaster

(continued from the Winter 2011 Newsletter)

The genetically-modified seeds such as those donated to Haitians cannot be saved from year to year. Some so-called terminator seeds which have been altered so as to not drop seed after harvest - require the farmer to buy new seeds from Monsanto the following year in a legally binding contract, instead of collecting the seeds that would have naturally developed on the plant. Other Genetically Modified seed which does drop fertile seed may not be replanted under penalty.

Diminished yields, health problems and weakened prospects to buy the next season's seeds in consequence of, and combined with that binding contract with Monsanto, have driven many rural farmers to poverty, and subsequently led to a rash of farmer suicides. As seed saving is prevented by patents as well as by the engineering of seeds, seed has to be bought for every planting season by poor peasants. A "free" resource available on farms became a commodity which farmers were now forced to buy every year. This increases poverty and leads to indebtedness in nations such as Haiti.

Foreign farmers are not the only ones affected by these product features and associated business practices. As of 2007, Monsanto had filed 112 lawsuits against US farmers for alleged technology contract violations on GMO patents, involving 372 farmers and 49 small agricultural businesses in 27 different states. From these suits, Monsanto has won more than \$21.5 million in judgments. In estimates based on Monsanto's own documents and media reports. "Farmers have been sued after their field was contaminated by pollen or seed from someone else's genetically engineered crop or when genetically engineered seed from a previous year's crop has sprouted, or 'volunteered,' in fields planted with non-genetically engineered varieties the following year," said Andrew Kimbrell and Joseph Mendelson of the Center for Food Safety. A Monsanto seed will often magically appear in an ordinarily organic field, giving Monsanto grounds for an onerous lawsuit that will eventually lead to the complete occupation of the innocent farm.

Many Haitians consider Monsanto's seed donation to be part of a broader strategy of US economic and political imperialism. Haiti's agricultural sector has already been decimated by United States' interference once their country was opened to free trade. Shortly thereafter, the tariffs on rice fell from 35 percent to 3 percent and the money that was originally reserved for agricultural development went into paying off the country's external debt, and the Haitian market was flooded with subsidized rice from Arkansas. Since then, almost all of Haiti's rice is imported and subsequently, much of that local knowledge and expertise of rice cultivation is lost. As the new earthquakes continue to shake Haiti, this seemingly benevolent donation of vegetable seeds will forever change the success of Haitian agriculture and thus lead to its further dependence on seeds that create financial dependency on the biotechnology firm Monsanto. Small wonder that the Haitian farmers chose to burn the seed rather than planting it.

A recent Haitian study by the University of Michigan showed that sustainable, small-scale farming is more efficient at conserving and increasing biodiversity and forests than industrial agriculture. Haiti cannot gamble on the disastrous environmental effects of industrial monoculture to feed its many hungry. If the US government truly wants to help Haiti, it would help the Haitians to build food *sovereignty and sustainable agriculture*, based on their

New Studies Expose Threats to Ground Water

A new health study found drinking water in 31 out of 35 U.S. cities contaminated by a dangerous form of chromium known as hexavalent chromium. Another study found that hexavalent chromium, a known carcinogen when inhaled and a suspected carcinogen when ingested, often contaminates water leaching from coal ash impoundments.

The recent studies by environmental and public health groups shed new light on the extent of drinking water contamination in America and the potential sources of that contamination. Chromium is found in many forms, and the two most prevalent forms are trivalent chromium (chromium-3) and chromium-6. In small amounts, chromium-3 is a vital nutrient needed for healthy human metabolism, but chromium-6 is a known carcinogen and dangerous even in small amounts. Chromium-6 was the toxin in the case made famous by the 2000 film *Erin Brokovich* and California is currently the only state that requires water utilities to test for hexavalent chromium.

According to the EWG report, drinking water can be contaminated by hexavalent chromium released by steel and pulp mills. However, researchers from Earthjustice, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the Environmental Integrity Project contributed to a report released April 5th linking numerous cases of chromium-6 groundwater contamination to pollution from coal ash impoundments. Coal ash, a major byproduct of burning coal for energy, is often disposed of in huge landfills or surface impoundments. The report draws on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports and other studies to identify 28 coal ash dump sites in 17 states that have contaminated groundwater with chromium at levels far above the public health goal proposed by the state of California.

The report also uncovered a study by an electric utility industry group, Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), that found that 97 to 100 percent of the chromium leaching from coal ash impoundments is the deadly chromium-6. The report cautions that the high levels of hexavalent chromium at the sites may pose a danger to those living near the landfills.

In January 2011, the EPA recommended that water utilities nationwide test for chromium-6. According to EPA, systems that perform the enhanced monitoring will be able to better inform their consumers about any presence of chromium-6 in their drinking water. Currently, EPA only requires public water utilities to test for total chromium, which lumps the essential nutrient chromium-3 with the carcinogenic chromium-6. EPA's drinking water standard for *total* chromium, set back in 1991, is 100 ppb, or 5,000 times higher than California's recent proposed goal for chromium-6 in drinking water.

Environmental advocates are calling for strong federal regulation of the disposal of coal ash to prevent water contamination, as well as setting a legal limit for chromium-6 in drinking water and requiring water utilities to regularly test for the contaminant. Coal ash disposal proposals have met with fierce industry opposition.

DCEC's own experience with Wisconsin Public Service Corporation based in Green Bay, operators of the huge Pulliam coal-fired generating facility located at the mouth of the Fox River bears out the need for research of surface waters for levels of Chromium 6. Since the beginning of coal utilization at that facility many decades ago, the ash material was stored "long-term" within a very short distance from Green Bay with no impoundment or legal restraint in place.

A portion of the ash waste was historically used in concrete construction while the balance remained, uncovered and leaching directly into the waters of Green Bay. Since our efforts to change that practice, the ash material is stock piled inland with a berm controlling runoff into the Bay. With the last heavy rains, we have cause to wonder how effective the restraint is in keeping the deadly elements from entering the Bay.

The same corporation was under litigation by DCEC and state organizations to abide by the limits imposed by the Federal EPA on the release of mercury into the atmosphere. The corporation had been in violation of the standards every quarter since 1999 and was ordered to comply by the court and as a result closed down the older units, thereby meeting the standard. Mercury which is still being emitted has been blamed for contamination of our lakes and in addition is now linked to *atopic dermatitis*, a common skin disease known as Eczema, and the association has been seen at mercury blood levels at or below the safe levels as determined by U.S. health agencies.

(JMV)

DCEC Endowment Fund

The *DCEC ENDOWMENT FUND* exists so that the future of Door County's wild spaces and family farms can be protected far into the future.

Every year, the fund grows.

Every year that it 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. Each bequest, through your wills and estate plans, helps to bring us one step closer to financial independence, allowing us to take tough, sometimes unpopular positions that protect our county for our future generations.

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

door county environmental council

() \$ 25 Individual () \$ 35 Family () \$ 50 Sustaining
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This amount would really help! Thanks!

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REMINDER: Your membership in DCEC runs with the calendar year.

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We appreciate your generosity!

Thank you for your support. You are DCEC!

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• Scotts to Take Phosphorus out of Fertilizer One

Scotts to Take Phosphorus Out of *FertilizerOne*

One of the world's biggest lawn care companies has announced that it will stop making fertilizer with phosphorus, one of two ingredients blamed for pollution problems in Wisconsin waterways. Officials from Scotts Miracle-Gro Co., which dominates roughly half the fertilizer market, said they were changing their formula to help clean up pollution from storm runoff. The reason: new rules across the country that target fertilizer runoff.

Water quality issues in Wisconsin counties tend to be nitrogen-driven, the second pollutant targeted by fertilizer ordinances — one that Scotts products will still contain. Nitrogen is the element that spurs algae blooms in fresh and salt-water locations. Scotts Miracle-Gro took the step of removing phosphorus from its products after research showed that it's not really necessary for any lawns except ones that are just getting established.

By this time next year Scott will have the phosphorus out of all their products with the exception being a fertilizer just for starter lawns and one that's made of organic components where the phosphorus is naturally occurring. Anyone who uses the new phosphorus-free products won't have to change normal fertilizing patterns or amounts; the results should be the same.

Scotts began working on the new formula five years ago, and eliminating the phosphorous "wasn't easy," but the nitrogen "is not something we can take out," according to company officials. Instead the company is working on a new formula that will slow the release of nitrogen so more of it sticks to the lawn and less runs off with the rain. (JMV)



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



DCEC Incorporated in 1970 under the laws of Wisconsin as a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation