

The Door County Environmental Council News



December 2017



“Fostering the preservation of Door County’s rich heritage of natural resources for the health, welfare, and spiritual uplift not only of its inhabitants, but of generations to come.”

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DCEC and DPO Unite

It is my great pleasure to announce the merger of two terrific organizations: The Door County Environmental Council Inc. (DCEC) and the Door Property Owners, Inc. (DPO)! The great work and accomplishments of both groups will be continued and enhanced as the two groups join forces. Earlier this summer, board members of both entities agreed that the organizations would indeed be better served by combining memberships and resources.

In recent years, the interests of DPO and DCEC have become much the same. In fact, the mission statements are very similar. It’s interesting that the history of the two groups so closely align as well. DPO was founded in 1976 as a non-profit, non-partisan, volunteer group consisting of seasonal and year-round Door County property owners. DPO members joined together and started the group because they loved the peninsula and wanted to preserve its quiet beauty for future generations. Over the years, they accomplished much and definitely helped preserve the beauty of Door County. We

should all be very grateful to all past and present DPO members and Boards of Directors for a job well done.

Similarly, DCEC was founded in 1969 and incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1971. It seems that the founding DCEC members realized the looming threats that unrestricted commercial development could bring to the county’s natural resources and beauty. The DCEC group became an active and outspoken advocacy force for the preservation and protection of Door County’s natural resources.

Combining our efforts will result in a louder voice to address urgent environmental matters. In my opinion, the greatest environmental threat we face in Door County right now is to our water. When I say water, I’m talking about both our ground and surface water. The waters surrounding Door County are slowly, or not so slowly, being polluted. Huge quantities of phosphorus are being introduced to the aquifer, streams, rivers, lake, and bay

each year. There are many sources of this phosphorus contamination which include, but are not limited to, failing residential septic systems, discharge from municipal sewage systems, careless application of fertilizers, and manure from big agriculture, including dairy concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs).

In a recent in-depth study, financed in part by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), a third of the wells tested in Kewaunee County indicated levels of nitrates and bacteria in the water that were unsafe for human consumption. Some of the “bugs” found in Kewaunee County can cause diarrhea, vomiting, dehydration, and even death. Yes, that was Kewaunee County. But what’s happening in Kewaunee County is literally, and figuratively, coming to Door County. It is estimated that 700 million gallons of liquified manure is produced annually by dairy operations in Kewaunee County alone. Almost all of that untreated waste is simply poured or spread on the ground.

To date, the Wisconsin DNR has never refused a CAFO expansion, and a new CAFO expansion to over 10,000 animals was approved last spring for an operation near Forestville in Door County. We need to fight to protect our waters with logical and environmentally sound regulations. The water literally belongs to the people, not to big corporations or municipalities. Indeed, it’s *our* water.

Another threat to our water is the “Back Forty” sulfide mineral mine in Menominee, Michigan. The proposed mine is right next to the Menominee River that empties directly into the Bay of Green Bay. This project is only one permit approval away from happening. Unfortunately, there has

never been a sulfide mineral mine that has not seriously polluted the adjacent waters surrounding it. These are just two of the urgent matters that are demanding our immediate attention.

Further, I believe the battle for the environmental integrity and preservation of Door County’s natural resources has never been more critical than it is right now! The politicization of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, combined with the slashing of the DNR’s budget and staff, has very significantly reduced the protections that the DNR formerly provided. Our strong advocacy voice at government meetings and in the media, along with our ongoing education efforts, are vital. The preservation of our natural resources, including our land, air, water, and all living things, is our purpose.

The combination of these two organizations at this time makes perfect sense. The combined new group will continue under the DCEC name and tax status. DPO membership dues that have been paid after July 1 of this year will be applied and count as DCEC membership dues for all of 2018. In the future, DCEC will bill all dues in early December for the ensuing year. DPO members, we need you!

We welcome former DPO members that are now DCEC members, with open arms. Welcome aboard! We need your involvement! Individually we can accomplish very little, together we can do great things. Let’s make it so.

By Steve Eatough

Medicine in Our Water

This is an old and growing problem. As early as 1999-2000, the U.S. Geological Survey found low levels of pharmaceuticals - including antibiotics, hormones, contraceptives and steroids - in 80 percent of the rivers and streams sampled.

Seven years later the FDA established guidelines regarding the proper disposal of medications. Yet, patients were instructed by physicians or nurses to “flush them down the toilet.” When people took their expired or unused medications to a doctor’s office, hospital pharmacy, or drug store, they were given conflicting instructions, and nobody wanted to accept the responsibility of disposing of them properly.



Image courtesy of lawrenceks.org

Fast forward to 2017. It doesn't take much of an online search to find out where used medications should be taken for proper disposal. Out of curiosity for this article, I stopped at several pharmacies and asked them how I should dispose of medications if I found any around the house during fall housecleaning. All responded without hesitation with directions to take them to the Door County Justice Center, some gave detailed instruction on how to package them, and one even gave me a printout with complete instructions.

Fortunately, the Justice Center accepts these items during convenient hours. There's no need to wait for National Prescription Drug Take Back Day. The website: <http://doseofrealitywi.gov/drug-takeback/find-a-take-back-location/> gives an interactive map of authorized locations which accept

medications for proper disposal. It is impressive, and in our area it also includes the Washington Island Police Department and the Kewaunee County Sheriff's Department.

The Door County Sheriff's Department posts these instructions:

- Items not accepted: liquids, needles, syringes, thermometers, creams, lotions, pet medications, etc. (It is my understanding that if the “pet medications” are tablets or capsules, they will be accepted.)
- Completely take the medications out of their packaging. Take the medication packaging with you and recycle or dispose of the containers.
- Put all medications in the provided plastic bags and close the bags.
- Put the bags in the metal pass-through to the right of the reception window. A support staff person will take the bag and secure it.
- Several times a month, the medications will be destroyed at an approved disposal facility.
- If you have any questions, please ask a support staff person.

The DNR recommends that household pharmaceuticals, including pet medications, be managed as follows:

REDUCE pharmaceutical waste whenever possible.

- Buy only as much medication as you can reasonably use before its expiration date.
- When your doctor prescribes a new medication, ask the doctor to prescribe only enough to see if the medication

will work for you and in the lowest dose advisable. That way, if the medication doesn't suit you, less would go to waste.

- Reconsider the use of products that claim to be antimicrobial or antibacterial. Plain soap and water is as effective as antibacterial soaps. The Centers for Disease Control recommend plain soap in its hand washing procedure.

REUSE/RECYCLE drugs when possible.

Wisconsin allows certain pharmacies to take back unit doses of drugs for cancer and chronic diseases. Certain drugs can be returned for re-issuance through the Wisconsin Drug Repository.

There are very few cases in which other drugs can be donated. This applies to overseas efforts as well. If you see an opportunity to do this, approach with caution and research the program well.

Those are things we can do to help reduce the amount of prescription medication getting into our groundwater. Still, human waste contains active substances from medications and unfortunately public water treatment facilities are not required to remove these materials. Orange County, California uses a reverse osmosis system which removes nearly all medication. The Nevada Water Authority in Las Vegas uses an ozone system but “tiny concentrations of the tranquilizer meprobamate and an anti-epileptic drug regularly resist the treatment, as on occasion has carbamazepine, another anti-convulsant.”

By John Beck

Emerald Ash Borer Found in Five More Wisconsin Counties

With the recent discovery of the emerald ash borer (EAB) in five more Wisconsin counties, the insect has now been detected in 46 out of 72 Wisconsin counties. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) reports the insect is now in Chippewa, Green Lake, Marinette, Waupaca, and Waushara counties. All five counties are under quarantine orders, meaning residents of those counties can't take firewood into non-quarantined counties, and businesses

handling wood products that could contain the bug need to ensure products are pest-free. The EAB was discovered in Chippewa County by a landowner who saw dying trees. The bug was discovered in the four other counties in traps put out by the United States Department of Agriculture and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The

insect has now been found in every county from Buffalo County east to Door County and points south, and in Douglas, Sawyer, Chippewa, Oneida, and Marinette counties in northern Wisconsin.

DATCP says property owners should watch their ash trees for any signs of an infestation, including the thinning of the canopy, D-shaped holes in the bark, new branches sprouting low on the trunk, cracked bark, and woodpeckers pulling at the bark to get at the larvae underneath.

An additional source of groundwater contamination from antibiotics, hormones, and other medications is the use of these substances in animal husbandry; these contaminants have been found in groundwater contaminated by liquid manure field application from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Runoff from these fields does not, of course, go through any treatment facility before reaching wells which draw on that groundwater.

For more information go to datcpservices.wisconsin.gov/eab/index.jsp.

By Mike Bahrke

Adapted from: Novak, B., “Emerald ash borer found in 5 more counties; two-thirds of state now has the bug,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, September 5, 2017.

Stingless Wasps to the Rescue in the Battle Against the Emerald Ash Borer

State of Iowa and federal insect experts are hopeful a stingless wasp, recently introduced in Iowa, will be helpful in suppressing the Emerald Ash Borer that has attacked ash trees in over one-half of Iowa’s 99 counties. The wasps lay eggs in the EAB larvae before they can hatch. The wasps are harmless to humans. State and federal insect researchers say it likely will be next year before they will be able to fully determine whether the swarms of stingless wasps introduced in Iowa in 2016 are helping suppress the destructive pest. There are also study plots in Michigan.

Another natural predator of the EAB is the woodpecker. Unfortunately, there are not enough woodpeckers for all of the EAB, but woodpeckers offer an additional level of control.

Efforts are also underway to develop more ash trees that are resistant to the EAB. Finally, EAB researchers say that while the stingless wasps will not totally eradicate the EAB or put a complete halt to their spread, the wasps and other means of control do offer hope for the future.

By Mike Bahrke

Greenwashing

Although you may not be aware of the label “Greenwashing,” chances are you’ve seen environmental greenwashing in action.

Greenwashing occurs when a company or organization spends more time and money claiming to be “green” through advertising and marketing than actually implementing business practices that minimize environmental impact.

The term “greenwashing” was coined in the 1980s to describe outrageous corporate environmental claims. Three decades later, the practice has grown vastly more sophisticated.

During the mid-1980s, oil company Chevron commissioned a series of expensive television and print ads to convince the public of its environmental credentials. Entitled “People Do,” the campaign showed Chevron employees protecting bears, butterflies, sea turtles, and other cute and cuddly animals. The commercials were very effective. In 1990, Chevron won an Effie advertising award and became a case study at Harvard Business School. Chevron also became notorious among environmentalists who have proclaimed Chevron the gold standard of greenwashing, that is, the corporate practice of making diverting sustainability claims to cover a questionable environmental record.

But Chevron wasn’t the only corporation accused of greenwashing. American electrical giant Westinghouse’s nuclear power division was a greenwashing pioneer. Threatened by the 1960’s anti-nuclear movement, which raised questions about its safety and environmental impact,

Westinghouse fought back through the years with a series of ads proclaiming the cleanliness and safety of nuclear power plants. One ad, featuring a photograph of a nuclear plant nestled by a pristine lake, proclaimed, “We’re building nuclear power plants to give you more electricity,” and went on to say nuclear plants were “... odorless, neat, clean, and safe.” Some of these claims were true. However, given the ads appeared after nuclear incidents had already occurred, the word “safe” was arguable. Westinghouse’s ads also ignored concerns about the environmental impact of nuclear waste which has continued to be a problem.

Other corporate claims were equally outrageous. Forestry giant Weyerhaeuser ran ads claiming it was “serious” about caring for fish, even as it was cutting down trees in some of its forests and destabilizing salmon habitats.

By the early 1990s, consumers were wising up to sustainability concerns. Polls showed that companies’ environmental records influenced the majority of consumer purchases. This interest in the environment brought an increased awareness of the greenwashing.

Since then, the trend has only increased. A 2015 Nielsen poll showed that 66% of global consumers are willing to pay more for environmentally sustainable products. Among millennials the

number jumps to 72%.

However, at the same time, greenwashing has become more complex, including a shift towards “outreach.” Many companies are now working to engage customers in their sustainability efforts, even as their core business model remains environmentally unsustainable. For example, some home improvement companies encourage customers to do their part by offering onsite recycling for several products, including compact fluorescent lights and plastic bags. Meanwhile, they continue to sell billions of dollars worth of environmentally damaging products per year, such as paints that are loaded with toxic ingredients and which release noxious fumes. In other words, misdirection is intended to shift the customer’s focus from a company’s environmentally damaging behaviors to something that makes consumers feel good.

Another trend is linking sustainability claims to other issues, such as personal health. There’s a perception that personal health and environmental sustainability are two sides of the same coin. Sometimes this is true, but many times it isn’t. Bottled water is a great example. In terms of health, it’s much better

than soda or other drinks, but in terms of the environment and sustainability, even recycled plastic bottles are not good for the planet.

Fast forward and closer to home, a group of mostly large dairy farms in



Cartoon by Susan C. Marks

Northeastern Wisconsin - some with herds of more than 6,000 cows, have formed a coalition to focus "...on more innovative ways to protect and improve ground and surface water through conservation practices and technology in Kewaunee and Door counties." This organization also provides "...education and outreach through things like on-farm demonstrations for both farmers and the public... [to]...empower farmers with knowledge, training, and shared experiences." With financial assistance from the Dairy Business Association and two \$20,000 grants from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, including one grant for protection of the Ahnapee River watershed, these "...farmers and caretakers of the environment [who] are committed to protecting, nurturing, and sustaining our precious soil, water, and air" are also responsible for some of the largest manure spills that have contaminated the surface and groundwater of Northeastern Wisconsin. In a recent study, up to 60 percent of sampled wells in Kewaunee County contained fecal microbes, many capable of making people sick. In response to the manure spills and well contamination, this same organization has offered to pay for bottled water, well inspections, and water treatment systems for homeowners.

Increased public awareness of environmental issues has forced large dairy farms to address these water contamination issues. However, many of these large factory farms resort to greenwashing. Several members of this coalition are polluters, but they invest significantly in creating the perception they are friendlier to the environment than their peers are, or that they are on the side of good, or that saving the local and regional ecosystem should be part of their broad public responsibility. After all, it's good citizenship.

Greenwashing may have taken on a new shape in the last decade, but it's still as murky as ever.

By Mike Bahrke

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Photo by Mike Bahrke

I Ain't Buying It!

Many people say, "I can't afford to buy organic food." I believe that we cannot afford *not* to eat organic foods. Our health is in jeopardy. Are we supposed to sit by and watch as our food supply is manipulated and poisoned and served to us on a platter of lies? Does the average person realize how much weed killer and pesticides we ingest on a daily basis? Does the average person know that the dairy products we consume and the animal products we eat are also the recipients, in many cases, of those very same chemically tainted foods that are being fed to us? The AG Chemical corporations are spinning us a story that all these chemicals that are sprayed upon and coating our vegetables, fruits, and grains are fine to eat.

I ain't buying it!

Fake news seems to be the new "click" phrase these days. However, fake news has been around a long time. We, the complacent public, have been sitting down to countless meals that most of us would consider wholesome and healthy while, in all that time, much of what we are ingesting is laced with a chemistry that is wreaking havoc upon our living systems. We see the pain and inflammation. The obesity and illness. The allergies and cancers. We see the unhealthy illnesses that seem to be out of control in our country.

We have heard about the deception of big corporations hiding the truth about their products, like the big tobacco companies

knowing full well about the deadly secrets of their product. And THEN manipulating the tobacco to make it more addictive and more deadly than normal. All for the dollar. Seems criminal, and so it is.

But the tobacco industry is not the only one. There are a number of big corporations that are spinning deadly untruths about their products and calling it wonderful (maybe because of the wonderful profits!).

Glyphosate-resistant weeds are evolving quickly to end the Big Ag party and sending many farmers into a crisis mode. Unfortunately, the crisis is causing the resurgence of past pesticide chemicals like the Agent Orange ingredient 2,4,D and the deadly paraquat to be spread. Glyphosate usage is creating a very gloomy picture for the future of our crops, food, and our already compromised public health. As of 2016, over 70 million acres were infested with these unstoppable weeds.

Possibly the biggest story is about glyphosates, more commonly known as Roundup, and the company that produced it, Monsanto. This chemical was touted as a "one in a 100-year discovery that is as important for reliable global food production as

penicillin is for battling disease."

The *Roundup* story has been published in a recent book entitled, ***Whitewash: The Story of a Weed Killer, Cancer and the Corruption of Science***, by Carey Gillam, a national correspondent of the Reuters News Agency who has been following the activities of Monsanto for nearly 20 years.

Monsanto is obviously a huge corporation, and the profits that they make in a year are in the multiple billions of dollars. Over their history they have been involved in the manufacture of the sweetener saccharine, sulfuric acid, PCBs, plastics, DDT, agent orange, dioxins and many other nasty herbicides. But now, with the manufacture of Roundup and Roundup Ready seeds, the negative implications of feeding millions

of humans and animals with food products heavily tainted with pesticides and being labeled “safe” is just too much to take. There is a lot of scientific research that says it is unsafe. Monsanto will be quick to tell you the opposite is true. The proof is in the science. However, the science has been well muddied in a PR campaign to discredit any outside science that might question the toxicity of glyphosate.

Gillam’s book points out that the WHO (World Health Organization) committee called the IARC (International Agency for the Research on Cancer) has found Roundup and other glyphosate products to be “probably carcinogenic.” One particular form of cancer called non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (NHL) seems to pop up time again as being associated with glyphosate exposure. In a side note, non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma seems to have higher rates of occurrence in Oconto County and Door County than anywhere else in Wisconsin. Gillam’s book provides countless accounts of the Monsanto company countering every claim of cancer from *Roundup* wherever it needs to, in very sneaky ways. Even while writing this story I have received pop-up stories on my computer, most likely due to my investigating this topic, that try to lead me to “scientific reports” that spin a positive story for their product. Even with all this controversy about the herbicide, the United States continues to ramp up its use of glyphosates and continues raising the acceptable levels that can be tolerated in the food products that we eat, while European countries are banning the product. Here in



Glyphosate-resistant weeds
Photo courtesy of UNL CropWatch

the U.S., it is in our vegetables, our fruits, our grains, our milk, our cheeses, our soil, and our water.

Another pesticide product, produced by the Dow Chemical Company, is called *chlorpyrifos*, and it is being used to spray vegetables and fruits to kill insects.

This chemical was banned by the EPA for use inside the home, but somehow has been deemed okay to spray outside and on our fruits and vegetables. This chemical was developed in Nazi Germany as a nerve gas for the war and is so prolific in our

environment that researchers have found it in the umbilical cord blood of 87% of newborn babies tested. To find out more about this pesticide, Google the New York Times article called *Trump’s Legacy: Damaged Brains*. The tragic reality of this story is that we cannot trust the food that we eat, especially if it has been treated with almost any of the pesticide products.

If we follow the money that supports the foods that are sprayed with these dangerous products and encourage the corruptive deception that follows along with it, we find that the money originates from us, the consumers who buy it.

And that’s why **I ain’t buying it!** Instead, I’m choosing “organic foods” as much as I possibly can. If we all do, those big companies will follow the money.

By Paul Leline

Administrator's Year in Review

Another summer season in Door County has given way to fall, and as I watch the first snowflakes accumulate in streets and yards, it is hard to ignore the fact that winter is almost here. The winter newsletter brings an opportunity to reflect on the past year and what has been accomplished.

In December 2016, Gordon Stevenson spoke at the Door County Fire Company about the expansion of concentrated animal feed operations (CAFOs) and their impact on the environment.

DCEC gave a Wisdom Wednesday talk at the Northern Door YMCA on CAFOs. Our Board President, Steve Eatough, drafted the DCEC position statement on CAFOs which was printed in both the Door County Advocate and Peninsula Pulse.

Another Wisdom Wednesday program was given on the topic "Preserving Our Dark Skies." The program was also presented at a Breakfast Rotary meeting.

As part of the Boys and Girls Club programming, DCEC taught an interactive class on pollution in our waterways, showing how subsoil characteristics and depth affect both surface water and groundwater quality.

In spring, during Celebrate Earth Week, DCEC presented "Before the Flood," followed by a panel discussion. DCEC also co-sponsored the Green Door Legacy Round Table at the Sevastopol Town Hall, honoring Door County environmental greats Charlotte Lukes, George Evenson, Carl Scholz, and Jerry Viste.

Mariah Goode opened our summer season with a talk about the impact of the new Shoreland

Zoning Ordinances in Door County.

In summer, Cameron Davis spoke in Baileys Harbor about water issues in a program called "Great Lakes in a Time of Hyper Change." A "Sustainable Farming Trolley Tour" visited Waseda Farms, the Peninsular Agricultural Research Station, and Emerald Acres. Summer also brought an environmental, non-profit benefit concert with Fish Stock.

In the fall, DCEC again collaborated with the Door Peninsula Astronomical Society to bring Dark Sky Preservation awareness to Door County. Kevin Poe, also known as the Dark Ranger, returned to Sevastopol, Sturgeon Bay, and Southern Door schools. He also presented a special public program at Southern Door and a Family Dark Sky program at Crossroads at Big Creek with the Boys and Girls Club. John Beck gave a presentation at Learning In Retirement, covering the history of DCEC and current issues. In November, DCEC and Door Property Owners finalized their merger.

The DCEC Board continued to meet monthly to review and address issues important to the membership and to attend local meetings of other groups advocating for the environment. Two new Board members, Renee McAllister and Susan Marks, were appointed.

With the merger, good communication with members is more important than ever. As always, your feedback, ideas, and concerns are greatly appreciated. Please let us know how you prefer to keep up with DCEC, be it mail, newsletter, and/or internet (DCEC website and Facebook page), and of your ability to volunteer.

I wish to thank the Board for the opportunity to help facilitate the DCEC mission. I look forward to future achievements in 2018!

Leslie Boden, Administrator

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