

James Herman lauded for conservation, environmental education efforts

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Otsego County Conservation Association has announced that James Herman is the recipient of this year's Conservationist of the Year award. Herman, nominated by OCCA volunteer Sarah MacArthur, is being recognized for his role in educating municipal officials and the community at large on the possible environmental risks of current high impact environmental threats, particularly high pressure hydraulic fracturing methods used by the natural gas drilling industry. Over the past several years, Herman has worked tirelessly to educate the public about the possible dangers of horizontal hydraulic fracturing, or hydrofracking. MacArthur wrote of Herman on the nomination form: "He believes in the power of people and grass roots efforts to prevent catastrophic damage to our environment."

"I spent a lot of time in intensely developed oil and gas patches in Kansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Wyoming and

Colorado," Herman explained. "The break neck gold rush mentality of exploration, production, and extraction of oil or gas is not a pretty sight and it can contaminate air, water, and soil. I knew this from experience, but I did not know the details. My research into these issues revealed the potential problems associated with unconventional shale gas production."

Herman lives in Hartwick with his wife, Lilian Voorhees. First coming to the area in 2006, for several years they

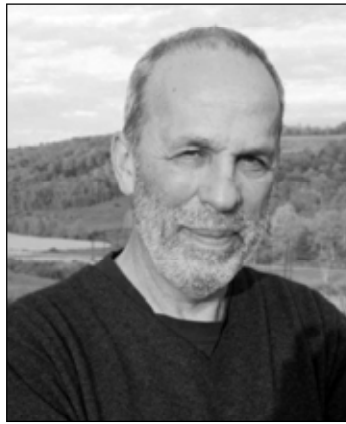


Photo provided

James Herman, OCCA's 2010 Conservationist of the Year.

commuted back and forth from New York City as they built a house and continued business relations downstate.

"Otsego County is beautiful. It has a low density population, as well as a world-class opera, a very good art museum, and great people," said Herman. "Eighty to 100,000 gas wells across New York State would mean that the same environmen-

1908, or something like that. Two of my uncles were wildcat oil and gas men in Kansas, Texas, Oklahoma and Mexico," James recounted. "As a kid I used to ask them to take me to the wells, but they always refused because they said that it would be too dangerous."

After months of investigation into unconventional shale gas production methods in 2007-2008, Herman said it took him about a year to reach his conclusions on hydrofracking.

"I gave three talks in 2008 about shale gas, and this was before I found out through OCCA's gas lease map that the 400 acres of productive farmland next to my property was leased to a land company," Herman recalled. "This gave me added incentive to investigate further and share my findings with municipal officials and the public. I had to convince myself that Lilian and I would be safe if drilling takes place on the 400 acres next door. Then when the

Special recognition for environmental excellence will also be given to the Milford Central School Education Foundation/M.I.S.S.I.O.N., Jane O'Bryan, and Milford Central School for promotion of environmental education, eco-friendly practices, and volunteerism, and to John Stevens of Oneonta for lifetime achievement in advocating for natural resource appreciation.

tal impacts experienced by the above mentioned states could become a reality here, where we still have clean water and air."

As an Otsego County property owner, Herman has a vested interest in learning all he can about hydrofracking, but his experiences out west are what prompted him to share information locally.

"I grew up in Wichita, KS near El Dorado, which was one of the first oil plays that pinpointed oil by scientific methods. This took place back in

draft SGEIS was issued by the DEC and the flaws were so obvious to so many, I was further motivated."

Among the presentations given by Herman in 2008 was a PowerPoint on the environmental risks of hydrofracking to the Otsego County Board of Representatives. According to MacArthur, he spent an enormous amount of time doing the research and shared his findings freely with others to empower their communities to help pre-

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President's Message

Leatherstocking Golf Course and environmental stewardship: Are they mutually exclusive?

For more than 40 years, OCCA has been involved with water testing and related water quality issues throughout the Upper Susquehanna River Watershed, including Otsego Lake, which serves as the water supply for the Village of Cooperstown.



MARTHA CLARVOE

Among the concerns we have addressed over the years are septic system management, agricultural runoff, sedimentation, the presence of pesticides and pharmaceutical contamination.

According to some of our critics we have not done enough, specifically with regard to the possible contamination of Otsego Lake by phosphates, fertilizers, insecticides and weed killers introduced into the lake via the Leatherstocking Golf Course. One of the most prominent "green grassed" fixtures on Otsego Lake, Leatherstocking has long been a contentious property perceived by some as a heavy polluter of our waters.

In 2001, prompted by the concerns of Michael Whaling and Andy Mason, Leatherstocking Corporation and The Clark Foundation sponsored a study to determine whether the golf course was having a negative impact on the water quality of the lake. Using two accredited laboratories, and with the assistance of Dr. Ted Peters, the Cooperstown water plant intake and Blackbird Bay (adjacent to the 18th tee) were tested. Peters, at the time a consultant in clinical chemistry/biochemistry and a member of the Otsego County Water Quality Coordinating Committee, conducted the sampling.

"We tested on two different dates – May 16 and August 20 – for a total of 15 possible pollutants," Dr. Peters recalled. "In 2001, Leatherstocking Golf Course stocked 21 bio-cides. Only seven of the 21 compounds stocked were reported to have been used in the 2001 season and of these, analyses were available for four. For none of the 15 substances, including the four used at the golf course, was a detectable amount found in the lake by either laboratory on either sampling date, detectable meaning greater than the lowest concentration measurable by the analytical method."

Last year, discussions continued here in the office about pesticide and herbicide use and the singling out of the golf course as a prime offender. Our Executive Director, Erik Miller, pointed out that in many instances the greatest threat to our environment comes from uninformed property owners, and the cumulative impact of each not adhering to proper application rates and procedures when using chemicals in the environment.

"How common is it for a landowner to spread fertilizer a little more robustly rather than store an almost empty bag for the winter season? For controlled applicators, such as a golf course or landscape professionals, this is not an option," Miller said.

With the help of OCCA member Holly Hren, in July and August of 2009 I set out to determine how many homeowners here in the Village of Cooperstown were using herbicides. Hren, who studied plant management at Cornell University, proposed an informal visual evaluation of lawns located in the Village of Cooperstown. Based on our observation of a monoculture of grass or a variety of weeds, we graded the lawns throughout the village. Only 20 percent of the lawns sur-

Earlier this fall, in order to address the continuing concerns about the golf course and to educate myself on its practices, I toured Leatherstocking with new OCCA Board member Linda Kehoe.

veyed appeared to use herbicides. The type of chemicals and number of pesticides used, and frequency and method of application, are questions we were unable to answer.

Earlier this fall, in order to address the continuing concerns about the golf course and to educate myself on its practices, I toured Leatherstocking with new OCCA Board member Linda Kehoe, who is also a member of the Leatherstocking Women's Golf Association. Course Superintendent Bernie Banas showed us around the 102-year-old, 18-hole championship course. Leatherstocking Golf Course sits in a valley under heavily forested hills, alongside the western shore of Otsego Lake, and is elevated above the level of the lake. It is a semi-private course, affiliated with The Otesaga Resort Hotel.

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OCCA in the news

Natural gas drilling and natural resource appreciation have figured prominently in OCCA's efforts this fall. Links on our website's home page (www.occainfo.org) and "News" page (www.occainfo.org/news), allow you to catch up on or revisit news items generated from our press releases. Look also for new additions on our "natural gas information" page.

Natural gas drilling

"OCCA executive director reports on Solid Waste Management Conference." OCCA's Erik Miller attended a presentation by Larry Shilling of Casella Waste Systems titled "Implication of Oil and Gas on Solid Waste Planning Units." His overview discusses the classification of wastes generated relative to natural gas operations, the expected volume of these byproducts, and more.

"City of Oneonta to host panel on gas drilling; Miller to discuss city, OCCA involvement in drilling debate." "OCCA and the City of Oneonta are working on many fronts to educate residents," Executive Director Erik Miller said.



Natural resource appreciation

"OCCA partners with UC&SV Route LLC to host rail trail walk." A three-mile section of the former Lackawanna Railroad right-of-way was opened to the public for exploration on Saturday and Sunday, November 6 and 7.

"OCCA, LVGC sponsor nature walk at Leatherstocking." On Sunday, November 14 from 2-4 p.m., OCCA and the Lake and Valley Garden Club will co-sponsor a nature walk on Leatherstocking Golf Course led by Course Superintendent Bernie Banas.

"OCCA sponsors two nature walks this month." The 2010 Nature Walk Series continued in October with hikes at the Betty and Wilbur Davis State Park and The Robert V. Riddell State Park.

OCCA's website features sections focusing on environmental issues facing our region plus details on current programming, how to donate and ways to contribute.

Conservation only a part of solution to sustainability

By Richard deRosa

Organizations like OCCA are a valuable resource in the fight against the willful desecration of the planet that unfortunately characterizes far too much human activity these days. Regardless of how many stands OCCA takes in favor of much needed conservation efforts, and despite the efforts of countless other environmental organizations, in the end what matters most is that these efforts function as catalysts for individual change and commitment. Ultimately, each and every one of us must make lifestyle changes that enable us to effect a cultural paradigm shift that will make a difference. Organizations, as necessary as they are, can only serve as stepping-stones to a paradigm that values both sustainability and renewal. The stark truth, however, is that at the world's present rate of population expansion, much more than mere conservation is called for.

In an essay titled "Epilogue: The Promethean Myth," Raymond B. Cowles characterizes Prometheans as optimists who "... accept the implicit promises of their new gods to provide not only magical new gadgets, but also limitless new substitutes for food and for diminishing resources" (249). This fantasy, he writes "is a ... delusion perpetrated by seeing only the promise of science and refusing to recognize its warnings, among them the admonition that since men themselves are biological entities ultimately dependent on a biological environment for their own individual salvation, they must exist in harmony with it and live in equity with it" (249). As anyone with her eyes open will attest, the relationship that now exists between humankind and nature is anything but equitable. After pointing out the obvious, that we are procreating at a dangerous and unsustainable rate, Cowles writes that "we should at long last direct our conscious attention to the grim history of mankind's proclivity to outbreed its resource base, and cease our persistent ignoring of the vital relation between the irresistible potency of reproduction and the finiteness needed for civilization Above all, we must understand the natural processes that maintain the balance of nature" (251). To paraphrase Yeats, if we do not do what must be done to achieve that balance, the center definitely will not hold. Thus far, despite the best intentions of many individuals and diverse organizations, that vital center remains at risk.

In "Summer World: A Season of Bounty," Bernd Heinrich warns

of the limitations of lifestyle changes. It suggests that "it is madness to suppose we would make a significant difference by using more energy-efficient lightbulbs and using agro-fuels rather than oil, or that city-dwellers can or would take up rural farming or a hunter-gatherer lifestyle: given our numbers there is no land. There is only one thing to do that will have an almost immediate effect (say, a century or two): radical reductions of population. Ironically, if we do take that route then we can have everything – cars, jetliners, television, and all the rest, even perpetual summer. With a low population we could subsist and get by, in perpetuity, with the most efficient method yet devised for capturing solar energy – trees" (184-5). He ends by stating that "the solution is obvious. The treating of symptoms is opinion and hype" (185).

We can argue about the efficacy of energy-efficient light bulbs or the ultimate practicality of ethanol and other plant-based fuel sources. My own view is that small steps add up and that all these strategies are eminently worthwhile. But without a commitment to long-term goals all these little steps will come to naught. It is both encouraging and exciting to hear and read about all the innovative research being conducted nationwide by private entrepreneurs and research universities into non-polluting, renewable energy sources. As Thomas Friedman pointed out in a "New York Times" op ed piece a few days ago, it is shameful that our government has committed so few resources to these projects whereas other nations with much smaller economies have poured substantially higher percentages of their resources into energy and sustainability related projects.

In the final analysis, each of us has a stake in the planet's health. At our present rate of population growth, no matter what we do it will not be enough. Unfortunately, every time an individual or organization suggests that we curtail our penchant for illimitable reproduction a maelstrom of conflict erupts. From where I sit the need for worldwide action on behalf of population reduction is indisputable. As Cowles reminds us, if the present imbalance persists, the consequences will be catastrophic.

Richard deRosa, a retired English teacher and essayist, is an OCCA member, a former member of the OCCA Board of Directors, and an active environmentalist.

Environmental planner joins OCCA team

Tavis J. Austin, a native of Hartwick and 1996 graduate of Cooperstown Central School, has been hired by Otsego County Conservation Association to fill the organization's newly-created environmental planner position.

Austin earned his BS in natural resources planning from Humboldt State University in Arcata, CA. His career has encompassed municipal and environmental planning posts on the West Coast and in the Intermountain West, where he was accredited by the American Institute of Certified Planners.

"My ultimate goal was to return to the Otsego County area, to assist the municipalities and people of the very region that originally pointed me in the direction of land use planning," Austin said.

Now living in Hartwick with his wife,

Erin, and their two children, Austin has come home to apply his knowledge and experiences. He will focus on assisting communities with planning their initiatives in order to preserve those resources inherent to the area while permitting development compatible with their needs and desires.

Austin's planning background is extensive, as an engineering technician, planning technician, planner and senior planner. Since returning to Otsego County in 2009, he has worked with the Village of Cooperstown, the Town of Hartwick and the Otsego County Planning Department on topics ranging from road preservation to SEQR compliance.

OCCA is able to bring municipal and planning services to the Upper Susquehanna Watershed thanks to an increase in funding. Austin was selected from a pool of more than 80 candidates.

"We will be launching a circuit rider program," explained Executive Director Erik Miller. "Essentially Tavis is on staff to work with Otsego County communities on issues relative to them, ranging from comprehensive planning and regulations to environmental reviews. This position will help bring environmental concerns to the forefront of community decisions."

Austin's responsibilities will also entail public outreach on planning issues, invasive species and alternative energy, hands-on invasive species management and trail maintenance, research on various environmental issues, grant writing, and fundraising.



TAVIS AUSTIN

Herman

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serve the environment. Herman was also a panelist in gas drilling forums presented in March, 2009 by Sustainable Otsego in Cherry Valley, Cooperstown and Oneonta, which more than 300 people attended.

“James Herman has provided a personal account of an environmental issue to the public. His message resonates and has contributed to a grass roots movement and environmental awareness which continues to swell. His tireless efforts to educate and inform as an environmental advocate are what make him stand out,” said OCCA Executive Director Erik Miller.

In 2010, Herman was instrumental in a number of environmental initiatives county-wide. In February, he organized the Otsego County tour of DISH, Texas Mayor Calvin Tillman. DISH is located in the heart of the Barnett Shale natural gas fields and has 11 compressor stations, three monitoring stations, and 20 pipelines within two square miles. Tillman, responding to numerous community concerns, moved forward in 2009 with an air quality assessment of his township which confirmed the presence of high concentrations of carcinogens and neurotoxins. He met on February 16 of this year with county and state officials in both Cooperstown and Oneonta to share information and make recommendations based on his experiences. Later that same day Tillman also spoke to a crowd of about 120 people at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Oneonta.

Herman also organized the June 16 showing of the documentary “Gasland,” in which filmmaker Josh Fox raises awareness about the possible negative impacts of hydraulic fracturing on public health and the environment. Approximately 500 people attended this free event, which was held at Cooperstown Central School. Cooperstown was one of 20 communities in Pennsylvania and New York chosen to host an evening of awareness and action against unsafe gas drilling, leading up to the June 21 HBO premiere of “Gasland,” winner

of this year’s Sundance Special Jury Prize.

MacArthur praises Herman’s willingness to partner with area environmental organizations and activists. An originating contributor to Sustainable Otsego, Herman designed the SO website, provided visuals and researched appropriate documents on hydraulic fracturing. He has also worked with and assisted OCCA, Otsego 2000, Citizens Against Unsafe Gas Drilling and Chenango Delaware Otsego Gas Drilling Opposition Group, among others.

“I have tried to work with as many groups as I could. I found that they have points of disagreement which often prevent their ability to work together. I try to remain independent in order to be able to emphasize the best of each to the other,” Herman said.

Hans Arnold, a consultant to the Otsego County Solid Waste Committee, past president of the New York State Association of Solid Waste Managers and former executive director of the Oneida-Herkimer Solid Waste Authority, will give the keynote address at OCCA’s Annual Dinner on November 12.

In addition to environmental groups, Herman has also consulted heavily with gas industry representatives. This summer, he arranged a fact-finding trip to Dimock, PA to view gas drilling activities, during which he and others spoke at length with George Stark, director of external affairs for Cabot Oil and Gas, on Cabot’s approach to drilling. He has attended meetings hosted by Gastem USA, an oil and gas exploration and development company currently operating in Otsego County. Compulsory integration, real estate and gas leases, and payment of royalties are among the topics he has explored with New York landowner group attorneys as well as international law firms.

“James has proven himself to be non-confrontational in getting information out and leveraging like-minded organizations in environmental efforts. He has been able to effectively change behaviors, a difficult task, and build bridges between opposing groups,” Miller

said. “In his research, data collection and dissemination of information, James has included both sides of the hydrofracking debate, an important part of the education process.”

An internationally shown designer and creative director, Herman is recognized for combining creativity with practical implementation. He holds a master of fine arts from the University of Oregon and a bachelor of fine arts from Southwest Missouri State University and is the owner and operator of James Herman Art and Design in Cooperstown. Herman’s patented champagne stool – winner of the “Architects in Design” competition at the New York Design Center – has been featured in “The New York Times” and is used in the bar of The Bubble Lounge, New York City’s first champagne bar. For more information, visit www.jamesherman.biz.

Herman will be honored at OCCA’s Annual Dinner, to be held on Friday, November 12 at The Lake House in Richfield Springs. Special recognition for environmental excellence will also be given to the Milford Central School Education Foundation/M.I.S.S.I.O.N., Jane O’Bryan, and Milford Central School for promotion of environmental education, eco-friendly practices, and volunteerism, and to John Stevens of Oneonta for lifetime achievement in advocating for natural resource appreciation.

Hans Arnold, a consultant to the Otsego County Solid Waste Committee, past president of the New York State Association of Solid Waste Managers and former executive director of the Oneida-Herkimer Solid Waste Authority, will give the keynote address. Arnold will provide an overview of what comprises our solid waste, statewide solid waste management, a history of solid waste management in Otsego County, and options for the future.

Annual Dinner menu choices are prime rib, shrimp scampi or eggplant roulade. All selections include salad, rolls, carrot cake and tea or coffee. There will be a cash bar at 6 p.m., followed by the dinner and program at 7 p.m. Reservations, \$35 per person, are required by Friday, November 5. To inquire about space availability after November 5, call (607) 547-4488.

I support OCCA’s efforts against high impact environmental threats.

Please accept my donation of _____

Name: _____

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Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Leatherstocking

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We learned from Banas that, in 2000, Audubon International officially designated Leatherstocking Golf Course as a "Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary" under its Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System. This program, supported by the United States Golf Association, recognizes golf courses that protect the environment, conserve natural resources and provide wildlife habitats. Qualifying golf courses require a management plan which includes environmental management practices in six key areas:

- Environmental planning
- Wildlife and habitat management
- Chemical use reduction and safety
- Water conservation
- Water quality management
- Outreach and education

In order to achieve "Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary" status, Leatherstocking Golf Course has implemented best management practices to: enhance existing natural habitats and landscaping to promote wildlife and biodiversity conservation; to ensure that chemicals are stored, handled, applied and disposed of safely; to maximize the efficient use of water; and to eliminate potential nutrient or pesticide contamination of water sources.

Banas, who holds an AS in golf course management from the University of Massachusetts, began working to minimize Leatherstocking's impact on the environment when first hired 17 years ago.

Today he uses an aeration technique, soil plug removal, and also breaks up the thatch to allow nutrients to get into the soil, to encourage a deeper root system and stronger, healthier plants. This helps the turf be self-sustaining and, at the same time, minimizes run-off into Otsego Lake.

"We see ourselves, the golf course that is, as a filtering system for water running into the lake," Banas told us. "Several years ago a 1.5-2 foot-high berm was created all along the water's edge from The Otesaga to the bridge leading out to the 18th island tee. This area had previously been mowed with a weed whacker and the lawn was allowed to grow right up to the water's edge. So the berm was created as a structural riparian buffer; plants were allowed to regenerate on their own in the 2-4 foot-wide strip beyond the berm. The strip of grass, 20-30 foot-wide, that borders the fairway is the "No Spray Zone." The strip of land along the water's edge was allowed to re-seed itself and is now covered with goldenrod, loosestrife, forget-me-nots, iris and lilies.

Win McIntyre, Otsego Lake watershed coordinator, has suggested that to further improve this riparian buffer, it would be ideal to not cut the rough at all but rather let it become an out-of-bounds area. Letting the grass grow in the rough and eventually become native vegetation would be an even better solution, said McIntyre.

Other changes have been made to control the water that runs through the golf course. According to Banas, drainage from the hills to the west of Route 80 enters culverts which empty into ponds, ditches and canals, giving sediment a place to fall before it reaches the lake. Targeted control of the sprinkler system reduces water consumption and fungus growth (Leatherstocking's 1,200-head-sprinkler system is software controlled).

To further protect the lake, Leatherstocking has built a fire-proof and explosion-proof storage facility for fungicides, fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals. The 8-foot by 8-foot structure features a holding tank in the floor which prevents leakage outside the building and contains any spill inside. While not required, course officials felt this precautionary measure was appropriate.

Banas' philosophy is to nourish the turf to make it healthy, as healthy grass is less susceptible to disease and fungus, with a

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Glossary of Terms

Audubon International

A not-for-profit environmental education organization, formed in 1996, dedicated to sustainable development. Not affiliated with the National Audubon Society. Audubon International: helps community leaders and stakeholders to embrace environmental stewardship and sustainability as a central element of planning, policies and practices; serves to leverage innovation and best management practices to create models for the proper siting, design, construction and management of new developments; fosters an ethic of environmental stewardship and helps people improve the way they manage resources so that they make a positive difference in contributing to a more sustainable world; seeks to assist golf courses in becoming a valuable part of our conservation landscape, while building support for more eco-friendly golf through the golf industry. www.auduboninternational.org

Integrated Pest Management

Integrated Pest Management is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest management that relies on a combination of common-sense practices. IPM programs use current, comprehensive information on the life cycles of pests and their interaction with the environment. This information, in combination with available pest control methods, is used to manage pest damage by the most economical means, and with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment. The IPM approach can be applied to both agricultural and non-agricultural settings, such as the home, garden, and workplace. IPM takes advantage of all appropriate pest management options including, but not limited to, the judicious use of pesticides. In contrast, organic food production applies many of the same concepts as IPM but limits the use of pesticides to those that are produced from natural sources, as opposed to synthetic chemicals.

National Audubon Society

A not-for-profit organization, the mission of which is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. For more than a century, Audubon has built a legacy of conservation success by mobilizing the strength of its network of members, Chapters, Audubon Centers, state offices, and dedicated professional staff to connect people with nature and the power to protect it. A powerful combination of science, education, and policy expertise combine in efforts ranging from protection and restoration of local habitats to the implementation of policies that safeguard birds, other wildlife, and the resources that sustain us all – in the U.S. and across the Americas. www.audubon.org

Organic Materials Review Institute

Founded in 1997, the Organic Materials Review Institute provides organic certifiers, growers, manufacturers, and suppliers an independent review of products intended for use in certified organic production, handling, and processing. OMRI is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. When companies apply, OMRI reviews their products against the National Organic Standards. Acceptable products are OMRI Listed® and appear on the OMRI Products List. OMRI also provides subscribers and certifiers guidance on the acceptability of various material inputs in general under the National Organic Program. OMRI® Listed products undergo a rigorous review to ensure that they comply with USDA organic standards. The online list of products is updated regularly to contain the most current information.

A Look Back at 'The Lookout'

Conservationists: A Decade of Activity

By Anne O'Connor

March, 1978: Volume 6, Number 1

A little over 10 years ago a dozen county residents with a mutual interest in the environment met at the Rex Restaurant in Oneonta and formed the Otsego County Conservation Association or OCCA. The first meeting of the new group was held at the Fly Creek Hotel with a total membership of 18. Today the OCCA boasts a membership of 440+ and has hopes for 400 more members.

Many areas of the county have felt the influence of the association. Its officers and individual members have sent letters and attended countless meetings to support or oppose legislation, proposed legislation, directives, or plans that would affect environmental matters in our county. Some of these have been: supported State Environmental Conservation efforts involving pollution of Canadarago Lake in Richfield Springs eight years ago; responsible for stopping the high phosphate and nitrate pollution of Lake Otsego from the sewer effluent of Glimmerglass State Park at Springfield (OCCA influenced the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to construct a new non-polluting sewage system); discouraged the construction of a dam in Gilbertsville which would have flooded valuable fertile land; discouraged the development of an additional marina on Lake Otsego by the state; supported the Youth Conservation Corps of 1969; supported, with the Otsego County Board of Supervisors and the County Planning Board, efforts to initiate

a comprehensive sewage study of the county; supported Otsego County's initial efforts to clean up junk cars (2,500 cars were sent for scrap the first year, individual members made arrangements to move some of the cars); against efforts of one individual to fill in 1/10 of an acre of Otsego Lake for a summer residence; and one of OCCA's biggest projects: initiated a successful glass, paper, and aluminum recycling program.

Services include (through the Conservation Practices Committee) consultation regarding soil conservation, wildlife habitat improvement, pond construction, stream improvement and other individual conservation improvements.

Outside the county, the Association: assisted the Nature Conservancy acquisition of Emmons Bog on Franklin Mountain; supported the log cabin program at Norwich Resource Conservation and Development Center (this has become a thriving business utilizing red pine for cabins; there are few alternative markets for this wood); supported re-organization of DEC region 4; supported the Wetlands Act Land Reclamation and Water Release from the Catskills; opposed flooding the upper Hudson; and supported the very important Department of Environmental Conservation Bond Issue (two discussions were sponsored locally by the Association to inform voters before the election).

OCCA has spent in excess of \$10,000 in the past five years to support many county projects. This money comes from member dues and contributions to the Association by

interested local people. Among the support projects has been: equipment for the State University at Oneonta Biological Field Station; fellowships to two high-school students yearly to work summers at the field station (these fellowships are named F. H. V. Mecklenburg Fellowships in honor of Mr. F. H. V. Mecklenburg of Fly Creek, who helped found the organization and served as its president for eight years. Students also receive college credit for this work); funds for four area junior high school students per year to attend one of the State Environmental Conservation Camps (students from Worcester, Richfield Springs, Schenevus, Milford, Cherry Valley, Edmeston, Morris, Oneonta, Laurens, Cooperstown and Springfield schools have been recipients of these fellowships and camperships); Oneonta State students have received money for lake or stream research; work on the "Otsego Trail," which is completed from Oneonta to just below Cooperstown; studies of Goodyear Lake; a SUNY-Oneonta study of productivity of forest lands in the county; the Otsego Lake Committee; expenses for bottle, paper and aluminum collection; and study of septic tanks in homes around Lake Otsego to check for pollution.

Editor's Note: For more than 40 years, OCCA has been your environmental advocate. Archived newsletter articles are invaluable in tracking the organization's history and progress as well as in differentiating between OCCA and other, similar groups operating here in Otsego County.



Baler

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are still being developed, but the goal is to provide this service in such a way as to encourage as many farms to participate as possible.

In anticipation of the kick off of the program, there are some basic Best Management Practices that farmers need to follow to begin collecting plastic for recycling. There are two BMP sheets, for dairy and horticulture. These can be viewed at <http://environmentalrisk.cornell.edu/AgPlastics/> (click on "Best Management Guidelines" for posters) or on the OCCA website, www.occainfo.org, on the "Issues" page under "Recycling."

Those interested in receiving laminated copies of the posters to display in their barn or greenhouse should call OCCA at (607) 547-4488 or Otsego County SWCD at (607) 547-8337, extension 3. More information will be made available as the program moves forward.

Leatherstocking

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stronger, deeper root system. However, healthy turf requires regular nourishment. Banas reports he uses far less granular fertilizer than when he started 17 years ago. He prefers liquid fertilizers because they are much easier to control, and uses StarPhite, a foliage nutrient, and Civitas, a mineral oil, both sprayed on plants to strengthen them. The oil acts as a barrier against fungus growth, thus reducing the use of bactericides. Banas and Keith Lindsay, the assistant superintendent, with an AS from SUNY-Cobleskill, are the only ones certified and licensed to apply pesticides. They do so with a computer-driven liquid dispenser on a small tractor. The computer adjusts the amount of liquid dispensed based on the speed of the vehicle, which prevents over-treating of the turf.

The plan to maintain healthy grass requires feeding of the turf every two weeks, so most of the spraying done at Leatherstocking is plant food, not pesticides, Banas said. A few of the fungicides used by Leatherstocking Golf Course are Organic Materials Review Institute certified. But, as Banas points out, even the organic products have warnings on them – “Harmful if swallowed,” “Harmful to children,” etc.

“We also use very few insecticides,” Banas continued. “We search for infestations, and don’t treat until there is a serious problem. We do not do a blanket spraying for insects, weeds or crab grass.”

Banas said the golf course has three different soil types – heavy clay by the lake’s edge, loam in fairway areas and gravelly soil on the hillsides. Different environments are susceptible to different insects and fungi. Treatments are customized for the conditions, and therefore, minimized, Banas said. All spraying is targeted to specific needs – there is no “general” spraying.

Banas assured us that he always looks for chemicals with low phosphorous content.

“We have plenty of phosphorous in our soil, we certainly don’t need to be adding any more. Herbicides are spot sprayed, treating only the areas that need the chemical. Occasionally the rough areas are sprayed once and we won’t go back again to spray them for four or five years. Ninety percent of the spraying is on greens, tees and fairways. It’s all so expensive – one must use it as efficiently as possible,” Banas said.

Leatherstocking’s budget for chemicals and fertilizers is much less than that of most higher end golf courses, Banas said. Phone calls to Albany-area courses yielded no results, but my research shows that, nationwide, golf courses spend anywhere from \$34,000-\$54,000.

Banas explained that introducing new varieties of grass which are more disease and drought resistant helps conserve resources. For example, on some tees they have replaced the turf with half-inch low cut blue grass, which requires one third of the fungicide and less water to maintain. Other areas, on banks and hillsides, have been allowed to revert to natural growth, reducing the number of acres that must be landscaped and treated.

“The course is not totally weed free,” said Banas. “An area would have to be 60 percent weeds before we would spray to kill them. But that isn’t likely to happen because the plants are so healthy. The root area is so extensive that many weeds can’t even get a foothold.”

He reminded us that Leatherstocking Golf Course was built 102 years ago and has been well kept over time, making his job easier today. By attending conferences and trade shows, Banas remains current on new, environmentally-friendly products coming on to the market and continues to “green” his operations. He sees himself as an environmental steward and views the golf course as a protected open space which acts as a giant riparian buffer for the hillside upon which The Farmers’ Museum and Fenimore House are located.

After touring Leatherstocking, I can see why some may perceive

the golf course as a major polluter of Otsego Lake. Its location, combined with the inorganic turf management applications, is not ideal. At the same time, I appreciate the beauty of this open space and am impressed by the improvements Banas has made, especially in the areas of chemical use reduction and safety, and water quality management. However, until local regulatory bodies determine that a zero application protocol is required, there will always need to be a set of checks and balances in which organizations such as OCCA continue to monitor the environment for water quality impairment.

In answer to the question posed by my headline: I do not think Leatherstocking Golf Course and environmental stewardship are mutually exclusive. I am confident that Leatherstocking will continue to reduce its use of inorganics and move toward more sustainable and natural methods. We’ll continue to check in with Banas now and then, and will update you periodically on the progress there.

In the meantime, Banas is willing to share his experience and learn from other local organizations. OCCA has scheduled an informational nature hike on the golf course on Sunday, November 14 from 2-4 p.m. The Lake and Valley Garden Club is a co-sponsor of this event, and Dr. John Davis of the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society will join us to help identify birds along the way. Banas will lead the hike, describe his work and answer questions. We look forward to seeing you there!



Photo provided

Return to Andy’s Trail

Hike leader Joe Ritton of Betty and Wilbur Davis State Park reported that Andy’s Trail was awash with fall’s foliage for the OCCA/Friends of Glimmerglass State Park-sponsored walk on Saturday, October 16. “The strong winds we had that day helped add to the already multi-colored ground, where we kicked through the leaves as we walked,” Ritton said. “Thanks to those who braved that cold day and enjoyed the beauty of the park.”

Pictured above, from left to right, are Jeanine and Janelle Harter, Gail Norris, Ritton, Mary Harvard, and Barb Stephenson. Ritton also led a hike at the park in August of this year. Located in Westford, Betty and Wilbur Davis State Park is a satellite facility of Glimmerglass State Park. Andy’s Trail, a fairly easy 2.7-mile hike, includes wooded areas, meadows and panoramic mountain-top views. A Moonlight Snowshoe Hike is being planned for February, 2011 – for more information, call (607) 547-8662 or e-mail friendsofglimmerglass@gmail.com



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BigFoot Baler available soon

Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager Scott Fickbohm has teamed up with Dr. Lois Levitan, senior extension associate at Cornell University, and others to bring the Recycling of Agricultural Plastics Program to New York State and to Otsego County. Dr. Levitan has been working with Dennis Sutton, designer of the BigFoot Baler, since 2006 and she has secured the purchase of six balers with New York State Environmental Protection Funds. Dr. Levitan's efforts were initiated by Mary Ashwood, former chair of the Otsego County Burn Barrel Education Committee, who had approached Cornell Waste Management Institute several years before on the subject of agricultural plastics recycling.

On October 6, Jordan Clements and John Jackson, Otsego County SWCD conservation technicians, Fickbohm, and Martha Clarvoe, OCCA special projects manager, attended a baler training course in Aurora and brought back with them a baler which is to be managed by Otsego County SWCD. This baler will allow local farmers to properly dispose of plastic used for bale wrap, bunker silo covers, and silage bags, and for horticulturists to recycle the plastic from greenhouses.

With the recent ban against open burning in New York State, effective October 14, 2009, this program is more critical than ever. The law specifically bans burning of any plastic products. That in itself is good, because it is well documented that harmful toxins are released into the air when plastics are burned. Farmers increasingly depend on these plastics, so this program is intended to provide them with an avenue to dispose of the plastic in an environmentally acceptable manner while also recycling it into other products. The BigFoot Baler allows for this process to start, since it provides a means of collecting and storing the plastic in an efficient manner.

The baler sits and is operated on a trailer so the Otsego County SWCD can transport it to individual farms or to a common collection site. Details

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