

Miller featured in national conservation magazine

Erik Miller, executive director of the Otsego County Conservation Association, is featured in a story appearing in the summer 2008 edition of *Outdoor America*, an award-winning quarterly magazine with a circulation of 36,000 published by The Izaak Walton League. In March, Miller took part in a study tour of the Philippines sponsored by the league. The goal of the trip was to ascertain whether efforts to balance growth and conservation in this nation made up of 7000 islands provided lessons for sustainable development in the United States.

“What struck me most during my visit was the noticeable absence of the basic necessities of life – food, water, shelter,” Miller said of his experience.

“Impressions that linger most in my mind include the western influence in the developing world – consumerism at its worst and those who would characterize these trends as success,” he said.

While on tour Miller, with other members of the league, visited urban, rural, and coastal development projects that address key conservation, economic, and social issues. From March 5 to March 7, he participated in the Third National Conference on Population, Health, and Environment in Tagaytay City. The conference focused on how social issues such as poverty and rapid population growth, along with poor development practices, are at the root of threats to natural resources.

“Erik Miller, a League member and city alderman from Oneonta, New York, presented at a conference workshop. He highlighted the similarities between his hometown and communities in the Philippines in their work to address water quality issues, loss of natural habitat, and balancing economic needs with environmental concerns,” wrote co-author Michelle Orzech, sustainability education program director for the league.

In particular Miller talked about the impacts of development, tourism and agriculture on water quality and the grass roots approach of OCCA programs to address these impacts. For the Otsego Lake watershed – boat washing to prevent invasive species from entering the lake, riparian buffer planting to curb sedimentation and nutrient runoff, implementation of the septic system management plan for the lake to keep phosphorous and fecal coliform from polluting a drinking water supply and financial assistance to farmers to carry out water quality management projects on watershed farms.

“Our problems really aren’t that different from those experienced locally in the Philippines. The difference is magnitude. Many similarities exist and can be addressed cost effectively when education efforts are provided locally,” Miller said.

In 2007 *Outdoor America* won an award from the Society of National Association Publications for its coverage of Great Lakes issues, as well as an award from the Outdoor Writers Association of America for a story on the relationship between population growth, development, and the loss of duck habitat.