

Earth Festival 2011 focus is on 'three R's' of waste management

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"Reduce, reuse, recycle" is the underlying theme of Earth Festival 2011, set for Saturday, April 9 at Milford Central School. In keeping with the event's earth-friendly theme, a number of items will be collected for recycling and reuse this year. Event organizers invite attendees to drop off Styrofoam (white only), bubble wrap, empty inkjet cartridges, old cell phones, prom dresses, unwanted videotapes and CDs, and used nylon monofilament fishing line at no charge.

Edison Computers will be on hand for an electronics collection (some fees will apply), and footwear of all kinds will be accepted for a donation of \$1 per pair. Athletic shoes and sneakers will be recycled as part of Nike's Reuse-A-Shoe program, shipped to the Nike factory in Tennessee to be re-ground into Nike Grind Foam, a raw material made from recycled athletic shoes collected

through the Reuse-A-Shoe program and mixed with other scrap materials to make athletic courts and tracks. Other gently worn footwear – dress shoes, sandals, pumps, heels, work boots, cleats, dance shoes and flip flops – will be donated to the Soles4Souls Program, which has given away nearly 12 million pairs of new and gently worn shoes in more than 125 countries since 2005.

"Waste, and the way we handle it, has a big impact on our water, land, and air. Practicing the three R's of waste management (reduce, reuse, recycle) is important for a healthy environment," said Martha Clarvoe, special projects manager for Otsego County Conservation Association. "We hope these collections will bring more people to Earth Festival than ever before. There's a lot of good information to be had, and it's a fun event for the whole family."

Immediately following Earth Festival, the



Photo provided

Fiona Brennan models a dress made from coupon books created by Brennan, Sadie Hogan and Michael Strenck.

adults used their imagination to create unique and unusual designs while helping Milford go a little greener."

The EcoArt/Trendy Trash contest returns to Earth Festival this year as well. This trash-to-treasure challenge to create something practical or artistic from items that have outlived their original purpose is open at no charge to students, with a \$5.00 fee for adults. Visit www.occainfo.org for an entry form, or call (607) 547-4488 to learn more.

"Students from Cherry Valley, Cooperstown and Milford schools have already registered to compete in the EcoArt/Trendy Trash contest this year," said Darla M. Youngs, OCCA administrative director. "In past years, contest participants from across the county cleverly used cast-off items such as old furniture, kitchen utensils,

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"Waste, and the way we handle it, has a big impact on our water, land, and air. Practicing the three R's of waste management (reduce, reuse, recycle) is important for a healthy environment."

– Martha Clarvoe, OCCA special projects manager

President's Message

OCCA continues education, programs on natural gas drilling, water quality

You may have noticed that gas drilling has been in the spotlight lately. Well, it's been in our sites for more than four years.

A lot has changed since OCCA first appealed to the Otsego County Board of Representatives in March of 2007 regarding landmen who were prospecting then for leases in the Town of Westford, along the Elk Creek.

Our educational efforts at that time (http://occainfo.org/documents/GasDrillingInfoSheet_002.pdf) called for local government participation in the process, permitting or registering of landmen with municipalities, site plan review, zoning, taxation, and application of SEQR. All are being called upon today as local governments lead by example to work to prohibit or restrict development that they perceive as incompatible with and/or unsafe for their communities.

OCCA, a grassroots environmental advocate since 1968, has both watched and assisted as a swell of momentum built throughout Otsego County addressing high volume horizontal hydrofracturing, the process currently under state review to unconventionally extract natural gas from tight shale formations. And, as the advocacy is well underway from the bottom up, OCCA has been a leader in the leveraging of water quality baseline data collection with which to make sound scientific statements, to fill existing information gaps, and to put research into action – our stalwart mantra.

Working with the Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District, OCCA continues to facilitate the collection of surface water samples throughout our watersheds in Otsego County. We are partnering to begin ground water sampling in those same watersheds, hopefully alleviating individual sam-



MARTHA CLARVOE

pling costs that could escalate into the hundreds of dollars per test for homeowners.

OCCA has also been part of the bigger picture, spurring needed change in regulations at the state level as signatories of letters to Governor Cuomo, prepared by Walter Hang of Toxics Targeting, and to Dr. Nirav Shah, the new commissioner of the state's Department of Health, as well as many others.

The demand for public education related to natural gas is at an all-time high. OCCA staff and Board members have attended and participated in workshops and forums in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and throughout New York State, from Westchester to Buffalo. More than a dozen meetings focusing on natural gas drilling and proactive planning have been held and/or sponsored by OCCA – the latest is a land and road use forum for municipal officials on April 9. And we are already looking ahead, laying the groundwork for additional forums on the implications of rural industrialization and the roles of municipalities and attorneys, and application of New York State building code to energy projects including gas drilling.

In addition, OCCA is in the early stages of implementing a new education program on self water monitoring, so that individuals may assess water changes and potential contamination issues moving forward. We continue to monitor gas lease trends and make that information available to the public – another example of how OCCA consistently leads the way in collecting and disseminating information and putting our research into action.

Along with numerous other organizations, OCCA has been an active part of an exciting environmental grassroots movement involving the general public as well as municipal officials. Individually we can only do so much, but together we can and will make a difference. Don't wait for someone else to step up and make changes – educate yourself and become a part of the process.

OCCA Board of Directors Alternative Energy Position Statement

The OCCA Board of Directors supports the research, development and application of alternative renewable energy sources preceded by a thorough New York State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process. The OCCA Board defines alternative energy as energy that comes from natural, renewable sources, such as geothermal, wind, solar, and hydro, and which does not exhaust natural resources or harm the environment. To read the full resolution, passed February 23, 2011 at the regular Board of Directors meeting, visit the OCCA website, www.occainfo.org. Links to OCCA position statements are on the home page.

OCCA in the news

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 sponsors Cherry Valley forum: On Wednesday, February 16, OCCA sponsored "Gas Drilling: What You Need to Know," a forum on geology and hydrofracking science, New York State law, and local options. Speakers included Lou Allstadt, retired Mobil executive; Scott Fickbohm, Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District manager; and Michelle Kennedy, attorney. The event, with attendance estimated at 85, was moderated by Tavis Austin, OCCA environmental planner.



OCCA staff attends EARTHWORKS Gas Summit: November 19-20, OCCA Executive Director Erik Miller and OCCA Environmental Planner Tavis Austin attended the EARTHWORKS 2010 National People's Oil and Gas Summit in Pittsburgh, PA. EARTHWORKS is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting communities and the environment from the destructive impacts of mineral development, in the U.S. and worldwide. The People's Oil and Gas Summit is a core component of EARTHWORKS' efforts to build bridges between communities that have been dealing with these issues for decades and those facing the drilling boom for the first time. Panel discussions of the summit included: "Health impacts from drilling, fracking, waste pits and gas production," "Community socioeconomic impacts of natural gas development," "Strategies for reducing community and environmental impacts," "When the landman comes knocking – strategic

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Sleeping Lion Trail,
Springfield



Betty & Wilbur Davis State Park,
Westford



Bear Swamp,
Roseboom

Our Environment. Our Home. Our Challenge.

WE NEED TO ENSURE THAT INEVITABLE CHANGE IS CAREFULLY PLANNED AND WILL NOT DESTROY THIS AREA THAT WE HAVE COME TO LOVE. OCCA IS WORKING HARD TO EDUCATE, AND TO GUIDE AND LEAD THAT PROCESS, SO THAT THESE TREASURES WILL NOT ONE DAY BE LOST.

Our effectiveness is directly linked to the degree to which our members support us. Among other initiatives, with your help we can:

- SAFEGUARD AGAINST THREATS TO **OUR ENVIRONMENT** IN GENERAL, AND WATER QUALITY, THE CORNERSTONE OF OUR MISSION, IN PARTICULAR.
- WORK WITH AREA MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS, OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS TO PROTECT THE PLACE WE ALL CALL **OUR HOME**.
- MEET **OUR CHALLENGE** – NATURAL GAS DRILLING AND OTHER FORMS OF HIGH IMPACT DEVELOPMENT – WITH SOUND REGIONAL LAND-USE PLANNING AND REVIEWS.



Betty & Wilbur
Davis State Park

NOW, MORE THAN EVER, WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

YES, I would like to renew my OCCA membership.

- Friends of OCCA (under \$200) The Contributors' Circle (\$200-\$499) The Sponsors' Circle (\$500-\$999)
 The Stewards' Circle (\$1,000-\$4,999) The Benefactors' Circle (\$5,000-\$9,999) The Trustees' Circle (\$10,000+)

Name _____

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Clip and mail to: Otsego County Conservation Association, PO Box 931, Cooperstown, NY 13326

www.occainfo.org

Photos by S. Tier French

Earth Festival

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plastic containers, cardboard, glass and fabric to craft art from trash, transforming discarded materials to things of beauty and new purpose. We're looking forward to more of the same this April."

A special Earth Festival art installation featuring the sculpture of Tony Murray – in conjunction with Murray's April exhibit at the Cooperstown Art Association titled "Out of This World" – will further emphasize the unique and beautiful qualities of recycled art.

"I have been using found objects to sculpt with, or create something with, for as long as I can remember," said Murray, who combines recycling, found objects and photography to form a new type of mixed media he calls "sculptography."

Earth Festival will also mark the unveiling of the BigFoot Baler by the Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District. This baler, provided through the Recycling of Agricultural Plastics Program, will allow local farmers to properly dispose of plastic used for bale wrap, bunker silo covers, and silage bags, and enable horticulturists to recycle plastic from greenhouses.

"We see a lot of plastic in the countryside and we know a lot of farmers who want a responsible way of dealing with it from year to year," said SWCD Manager Scott Fickbohm. "We're hoping this new baler and recycling program will help those farmers with waste management, and get a lot of that material out of the county and into useful products."

In its Otsego County debut, the ChicoBag™ Bag Monster® will help to educate this year's Earth Festival attendees about the impact single-use plastic bags have

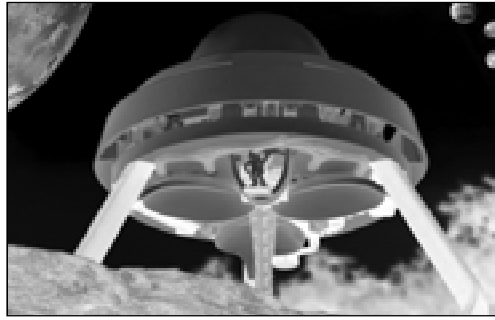


Photo provided

Ganymede, by Tony Murray.

on our environment. These flighty bags end up in trees, along roadsides and washed up on sea shores. Sponsored by OCCA, the Bag Monster® costume is made with 500 plastic bags, the average amount an American uses in one year.

Now in its sixth year, Earth Festival is an environmentally-focused, interactive event – free and open to the public – featuring exhibits, activities, vendors and entertainment, all with a fun, earth-friendly twist. Earth Festival 2011 is sponsored by OCCA and Wildlife Learning Company. For more information, call (607) 547-4488 or e-mail admin@occainfo.org.

Earth Festival 2011 includes:

- Traditional information and vendor fair from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Exhibitors and vendors, to date: Andela Products, Articulated Skeletons by Sy Lloyd, Bassett Green Team, Bath Fitter, Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship, CNR Solar, Cooperstown Farmers' Market, Cornell Cooperative Extension Otsego County Master Gardener Program, Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society, Equity Energy, Friends of Glimmerglass State Park, Gilson's Native American Crafts, Great Brook Solar NRG, Hanford Mills Museum, Natural Resources Conservation Services, Otsego County Conservation Association, Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District, Otsego Lake Association, Otsego Land Trust, Otsego Regional Cycling Advocates, Otsego 2000, Pine Lake Institute for Environmental and Sustainability Studies, United Methodist Women's Green Team, Wildlife Learning Company.
- "Pottery for Education" Silent Auction by MEF
- EcoArt/Trendy Trash contest
- Recycling collection of Styrofoam (clean, white only), bubble wrap, empty inkjet cartridges, old cell phones, unwanted videotapes and CDs, and used nylon monofilament fishing line at no charge
- Electronics collection by Edison Computers (some fees apply)
- Nike Reuse-A-Shoe athletic shoe/sneak-

- er collection (\$1 donation per pair)
- Soles4Souls shoe collection (\$1 donation per pair)
- Prom dress collection (no charge)
- Environmental art installation by Tony Murray, sponsored by Cooperstown Art Association, OCCA and Earth Festival 2011
- Go Green! Fashion Show by MEF (ticket only)
- Introduction of BigFoot agricultural plastics baler
- Bag Monster® by ChicoBag™, sponsored by OCCA
- Cooperstown Farmers' Market vendors and preview of countywide farmers' market cookbook
- "Sawdust clay" activity for kids with Hanford Mills Museum
- Pre-festival bird walk sponsored by DOAS and OCCA

Dave Kiehm of Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society will lead a bird walk at The Robert V. Riddell State Park as part of Earth Festival. Participants should meet in the Milford School parking lot at 8 a.m. to car-pool. Call (607) 286-9222 or e-mail dave@deadriftstudio.com.

- Tree identification workshop by MCS
- Before heading inside to Earth Festival, join local naturalist and Milford Central School teacher Eamonn Hinchey at 9 a.m. for a short walk into the school's forest property. This 15-acre plot is full of many different flora just waiting to be discussed. The hike will be suitable for all ages – dress for the weather.

- Children's activities led by Milford Central School students

Visit the Milford Environmental Club from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. for fun activities including plant potting, worm binning, recycled mask making and more.

- On-site maple sugar production demonstration by MCS

At 1 p.m., outside the main door to the school, learn backyard sugaring basics and enjoy the taste of pure New York maple syrup. This demonstration should be of interest to anyone who has ever considered making their own maple syrup or who supports this local treasure. This region of North America is the only place in the world that Acer saccharum (sugar maple) calls home, so if you haven't met yet, this is the time!

- Local beef burgers and other local food sold by CADE (Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship)

As festival goes work up an appetite, they can look forward to several local food items at the CADE booth. CADE will serve up beef burgers from Sunset View Farm, among other options. Sunset View Farm is located in the Town of Milford, just five miles up the road from the school.

Electronics recycling at Earth Festival 2011

On Saturday, April 9 at Earth Festival, Edison Computers will collect the following items:

- No charge: flat panel TVs and monitors, computer towers, laptops, keyboards and mice, and small electronics (e.g. walkmen, handheld games, remotes, calculators, etc.)
- \$1.00 each: printers, scanners, personal copiers, stereos, VCRs and DVD players, satellite/cable boxes
- \$2.00 each: microwaves
- \$5.00 each: tube-type (CRT) monitors
- \$.30 per pound: tube-type (CRT) TVs

WQCC hears report from hydrofracturing 'ground zero'

Close to 100 people attended the Tuesday, February 22 meeting of the Otsego County Water Quality Coordinating Committee to hear guest speaker Michael W. Lovegreen, Bradford County Conservation District manager.

In his presentation, titled "High Volume Hydrofracturing: An Overview From Ground Zero, Bradford County, PA," Lovegreen discussed experiences in Bradford County, Pennsylvania, both positive and negative, relating to the natural gas industry.

Bradford County is 724,000 acres, with 62,000 people, 1,200 miles of dirt and gravel roads, and about 29,000 housing units (comparable to Otsego County at 641,792 acres, 61,962 people, and 30,412 housing units as of 2008). It is considered "ground zero" in Pennsylvania's development of natural gas found in shale rock, using a controversial technique called hydrofracturing, or "fracking," in which water, sand and chemicals are injected at high pressure into the rock to form cracks that allow the gas to be pulled out.

As of July 2010, 25 percent of the Marcellus wells drilled in Pennsylvania were in Bradford County and 85 percent of the county had been leased. Lovegreen has weighed in previously on the broad effects of the natural gas industry in Bradford County on forestry/hunting, rental income, tourism and businesses/services.

He began his presentation here by talking a bit about perspective.

"Recognizing gas drilling is a real basic issue that a lot of people have very strong feelings about, it's good to exercise critical thinking. I've noticed that you seem to get a lot of different spins on information, so you need to be able to evaluate that information and deal with it accordingly," Lovegreen cautioned.

Legislators, industry, those who are anti-gas, economic development experts, businesses – everyone seems to have their own take, he said.

"I'm going to give you an overview of what I'm seeing personally and what we're seeing in Bradford County."

Lovegreen, who has served as Bradford County Conservation District manager for 31 years, is also a member of the Bradford County Natural Gas Exploration Advisory Committee.

"When it became apparent that gas was going to be a big part of our lives about three years ago, our county created the advisory committee so that we could start to deal with all the issues and impacts that would come up as part of it, so I've got some of that perspective, too, that I bring with me," he said.

Lovegreen briefly outlined the location of various shale plays in the U.S., the major pipelines which connect them, and why the Marcellus shale, in Bradford County and elsewhere, is of such interest to the natural gas industry. His discussion on the drilling process included a list of what to expect and common practices: seismic testing; site, pad and access road construction; drilling of wells; trucking of equipment and materials; rig and site crews/personnel on site at all times; temporary inconveniences including noise and lights; staging areas; water storage; and damage to roads.

Lovegreen stressed the importance of posting and bonding of

Lovegreen said Bradford County is currently under the microscope, as a team of sociologists from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Dickinson College examine what they consider to be the "ground zero" of high volume hydrofracturing in the Marcellus shale.

roads by municipalities and states, whereby an engineering firm assesses and documents the condition of their roads. A weight limit is set, based on the study, and businesses whose vehicles exceed that weight limit must then post a bond for any damages.

Road use agreements are also important, he said. In Bradford County, gas companies strongly pushed for such "we break it, we fix



Photo provided

Pipe and other supply companies are among those cropping up in Bradford County (top photo). Increased truck traffic makes road use agreements important to effected municipalities (above).

it" agreements.

"The gas company's needs have far exceeded the capacity and demands of local industries, so all the roads they are rebuilding and repairing have been to a higher standard than probably our local municipalities or even the state would have installed," Lovegreen said. "According to Chesapeake Energy, in 2010 they spent \$50 million on 110 miles of state roads in Bradford County. The entire state budget for road maintenance for Bradford County is \$10 million. This is just one of 25 companies with wells established here."

Lovegreen touched upon positive evolution in gas industry procedures – the use of geotextile under well pads to intercept and prevent leaks and spills; recycling of fracking water, resulting in a reduction in water usage and elimination of open water retention; and the construction of temporary reservoirs and overland pipelines to help minimize truck traffic – as well as problems, such as desalination of fracking fluids, the unanticipated burden on landfills caused by drill cutting disposal, and leasing horror stories.

"Leasing was a very big issue," said Lovegreen. "We were babes in the woods when it came to leasing. There were an awful lot of attorneys who all of a sudden became experts in leasing, but in reality they weren't experts."

Lovegreen went on to explain that when the leasing frenzy began, Bradford County was fairly depressed economically and the unem-

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Stewardship and the environment: The buck stops here

GUEST COMMENTARY

By Richard deRosa

E.B. White writes: "I am pessimistic about the human race because it is too ingenious for its own good. Our approach to nature is to beat it into submission. We would stand a better chance of survival if we accommodated ourselves to this planet and viewed it appreciatively instead of skeptically and dictatorially."

The key word here, for me, is "appreciatively." I wish I did not share some of White's pessimism. That is not the case. I am not about to give up the ghost yet, but there are days when that little hamlet on the coast of Newfoundland I visited several years ago seems awfully enticing.

White's observation that we are a bit too clever for our own good is right on. We seem hell bent on pummeling the planet rather than affording it the due appreciation that it deserves. For me stewardship means just that: appreciating this good earth. After all, it is what sustains us. It gives us life, a very precious commodity in its own right. It willingly provides for our basic needs. Unfortunately, we have gotten into the habit of taking far more than we need and giving back very little.

Eventually, as Bill McKibben put it several years ago, we will face the end of nature as we have known it and will then have to suffer the consequences of our selfishness. We will rise every morning as always. The sun will appear on the horizon and disappear below it at dusk. However, at our present rate of planetary desecration, this earth will not be so good anymore. We are already seeing the effects of climate change, for instance, in

the gradual march of southern climate zones northward and the rapid disintegration and melting of ice caps.

So, when it comes to stewardship of the environment the buck stops at every individual's doorstep. There are many environmental organizations that have launched courageous and very comprehensive environmental programs to redress some of the disrespectful destruction that we have wrought on the environment and, inevitably, on our selves. The philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset proclaimed the following some years ago: "I am the I plus my surroundings and if I do not

If an individual makes a commitment to live more simply, to live one's daily life in a more environmentally sustainable way, and makes a commitment to live the most self-sufficient life possible, then the possibilities are endless.

preserve the latter, I do not preserve myself." Stewardship of the environment begins when an individual begins to genuinely appreciate it and recognizes that each of us is part and parcel of a whole, and that unless each part performs its function in a healthy and natural way, as is the case with any organism, then our fate will be no less scary and self-destructive.

If, as I have suggested, environmental stewardship is ultimately an individual responsibility, what form might individual action take? The possibilities are endless. The first step is making the commitment to do something. The second step involves taking stock of one's lifestyle and deciding

where one might make significant changes. I have always believed that small steps ultimately take us farther than large steps.

When Thoreau writes that the swiftest traveler is he who travels afoot he is not referring to actual distance covered. Rather, he means that while the person who takes the train from Concord to Boston might get there faster, the walker's journey, while much longer, is far more rewarding – physically, aesthetically and, most importantly, morally. There is, after all, an important moral dimension to stewardship. Stewardship is all about caring, about the self, about one's family and friends, about this bountiful earth that makes everything else possible. Any unappreciative action taken against nature is an act of willful self-destruction. It is that simple.

It is not my intention in this essay to provide a list of what an individual might do. Up here on the hill we are doing what we can. That is all anyone can do. If an individual makes a commitment to live more simply, to live one's daily life in a more environmentally sustainable way, and makes a commitment to live the most self-sufficient life possible, then the possibilities are endless. Addictions end when addicts admit to having a problem.

Walt Whitman once wrote that only humans are industrious over the whole earth. Our salvation depends upon individual action and its subsequent radiant effect. It depends on making a commitment to live as appreciatively as one can. Otherwise, there really is no hope.

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.

Reprinted 'SOLO' bumper sticker revives piece of history

In June of 1974, James Bourdon of Coopers-town/Mount Vernon won a slogan contest sponsored by



the Lake Otsego Committee of the Otsego County Conservation Association with his entry, "Save Our Lake Otsego." The Lake Otsego Committee was formed in October of 1972 "to preserve and protect Lake Otsego and its environment." The aim of the slogan, printed on colorful bumper stickers and distributed throughout northern Otsego County, was to "awaken the public to the need for concern over Lake Otsego as its chief environmental asset."

Among the actions suggested to individuals back then to "Save Our Lake Otsego" were: "1) work toward decreasing the phosphate input to the lake by minimizing use of fertilizers and dishwasher compounds along the lake, or its tributary streams; 2) likewise minimize the use of insecticides, herbicides and other toxic substances in the watershed; 3) tell your town Planning Boards of the need to minimize further development along the shores of the lake; 4) promote conservation boating practices, including the use of devices to clean the exhaust of older out-

board motors; 5) keep the lake shores clean of trash; and 6) report possible sources of pollution or erosion to OCCA."

OCCA has reprinted the historic SOLO bumper stickers as a reminder that membership and funding support are still vital to OCCA in order to "Save Our Lake Otsego." We need your help to continue and to strengthen important existing Otsego Lake Challenge programs and to initiate new programs to prevent, control, and mitigate the impacts of watershed pollution, including: • New municipal planning assistance and services offered through OCCA • Expanded boat inspections • Expanded riparian buffers • Continued inspection and replacement of septic systems • Improved agricultural environmental practices for farms through the EQIP program • Increased support for lake monitoring and water testing by the SUNY-Oneonta Biological Field Station • Continuation of walleye stocking • Continuation of lake clean-up efforts • Development of education initiatives and partnerships focusing on fertilizer and pesticide use • Expansion of the Susquehanna River Trail and designation of the river as a Blueway Trail.

The new SOLO bumper stickers are available at the OCCA offices, 101 Main Street, Cooperstown (in the alley behind KeyBank).

From the Executive Director

Circuit Rider Planner Program offers valuable services to municipalities

More than six years ago, OCCA added a professional planner to its staff to better address environmental concerns countywide. In 2009, the Board of Directors decided to seek outside funding to create a program which would ensure that if a municipality needed planning expertise, OCCA could do everything in its power to assist them. Our Board realized then that sound planning at the municipal level is both cost effective for municipalities, protecting against frivolous lawsuits, as well as for the citizenry, ensuring a fair, efficient and legal application process.



ERIK MILLER

To date, OCCA has assisted the Town of New Lisbon in acquiring funds to create a comprehensive plan and worked with the Town of Hartwick to perform a hydrologic study of the Route 28 corridor. In the Village of Milford, we worked to secure more than \$300,000 for economic development, \$19,000 toward the establishment of a comprehensive street tree program including equipment and a maintenance plan, and began the first phase of village-wide historic district nomination. Also in Milford, on Goodyear Lake we are spearheading an invasive species eradication effort as well as the

creation of an interpretive area and DEC access point in Portlandville.

Expanding upon these efforts, in 2011 OCCA is now able to bring municipal and environmental planning services to the Upper Susquehanna Watershed with its new Circuit Rider Planner Program. This program is not meant to replace the services of contractual planning firms – and as such we are not offering a rewrite of land use regulations or comprehensive plans, though we can assist in these processes. Rather, our role is to provide technical assistance with the ins and outs of day-to-day planning issues. Our staff has experience in land use enforcement, environmental review, intake procedures and with fine-tuning planning functions at the local level.

Through our Circuit Rider Planner Program, OCCA is offering a service which provides basic planning assistance and unbiased planning expertise to address issues important to Otsego County municipalities. From planning board training on New York State Environmental Quality Review procedures to grant writing and funding assistance for infrastructure, we are already working with a number of towns and villages. OCCA also provides GIS mapping services and local law research and review.

Why is this important?

- Poor planning decisions cost the community money
- Different types of development effect different services – roads, lighting, flood control, emergency services – and, unchecked, have the potential to alter the way communities spend their resources
- There is no model town: Every community is different and requires different tools to ensure protections, enhance development, and increase the tax base while stabilizing expenditures.

The work of private planning consultants is usually project specific. Any one-on-one contact, attendance at meetings and availability outside of meetings is billed at an hourly rate. With its Circuit Rider Planner Program, through a basic fee OCCA is offering a year's service as staff to municipalities. We can help streamline planning work that is being contracted out, and assist in drafting requests for proposals for tasks outside the scope of our abilities.

Otsego County Planning is a great resource that we leverage and work with to help ensure that planning services are brought into communities in the most effi-

In the news

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options for individuals and communities," and "Citizen-based monitoring approaches." Presentations are now available online at <http://earthworksaction.org/2010SummitAgenda.cfm>, via links included in the final agenda.

Recycling

OCCA accepting empty inkjet cartridges, old cell phones. OCCA is raising funds and helping the planet through recycling. Working with Planet Green, OCCA will receive funds for every inkjet cartridge or cell phone collected for recycling. Purchases of remanufactured inkjet cartridges from Planet Green will also earn OCCA a donation. Participation in this program means less landfill and a cleaner environment. Cartridges and cell phones may be dropped off at the OCCA offices, 101 Main Street, Cooperstown (behind KeyBank). For a complete list of recyclable cartridges and phones, or to order remanufactured inkjet cartridges, visit www.planetgreenrecycle.com/occa. To learn more, call (607) 547-4020.

OCCA receives Lions Club Grant: OCCA is one of 13 local organizations awarded grant monies this month by the Cooperstown Lions Club for educational and recreational programs. Board President Martha Clarvoe wrote the grant request for \$500 toward new recycling signs for the trash receptacles on Main Street. OCCA received \$150 from the Lions Club and is working to raise the additional \$390 needed to complete the project. Grant requests were rated as to impact on community, availability to diverse segments of residents and consistency with the Lions Club International mission.

Water Quality

Walleye fingerlings released. This fall, between 10,000-12,000 walleye fingerlings were introduced into Otsego Lake at the Springfield Public Landing as part of the SUNY-Oneonta Biological Field Station's management plan for walleye stocking in Otsego Lake. Walleye have been proven to be an effective means of controlling the alewife, an invasive aquatic species which threatens the ecological balance of the lake. In 2010, OCCA contributed \$13,000, 80 percent of the funding necessary for this effort.

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

OCCA kicks off circuit rider planner program

With the recent hire of Environmental Planner Tavis Austin, OCCA is now able to bring municipal and environmental planning services to the Upper Susquehanna Watershed. We are currently launching a Circuit Rider Planner Program, which will enable us 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 planning decisions in a way that is compatible with the individual needs and desires of participating communities. For details on the OCCA Circuit Rider Planner Program, view <http://occainfo.org/documents/Circuitriderflyer.pdf>.

Continued on Page 15

Forum addresses costs associated with heavy industry

By Teresa Winchester

Horizontal hydrofracking, a method of gas production which has the potential to pollute millions of gallons of fresh water, may be allowed to start in areas of New York State outside the New York City and Syracuse watersheds by this summer. To prepare for the introduction of heavy industry into traditionally rural upstate New York, some towns have adopted, or are in the process of drafting, land use and road use ordinances to address the costs and problems associated with this kind of activity.

These problems may include high volumes of heavy truck traffic and the noise it brings along with it, damage to roads, bridges, culverts and other road construction considerations, all-night lights at drilling sites, noise from compressor stations, and the transformation of rural communities into industrial zones.

The forum is sponsored by Brewery Ommegang, the Cooperstown Chamber of Commerce and the Otsego County Conservation Association.

Because land and road use controls are not uncommon in Texas, James Northrup, who resides alternately in Cooperstown and Dallas, TX, was surprised that they are not generally already in place in New York towns. To get reliable information about these controls to area municipalities, Northrup sought out experts in municipal planning, law and traffic engineering to participate in a forum, "How To Apply Local Controls to Shale Gas Industrialization." This forum will take place on April 9 from 2-4 p.m. at The Otesaga Resort Hotel, 60 Lake Street, Cooperstown.

"I think we got the best in their fields," said Northrup.

The forum is sponsored by Brewery Ommegang, the Cooperstown Chamber of Commerce and the Otsego County Conservation Association. Seating is limited and registrations will be taken on a first come, first served basis through the Otsego County Conservation Association at admin@occainfo.org or (607) 547-4488.

Local elected officials in Otsego and other

counties were sent special invitations, as the forum is geared toward local legislative action. The invitation urges officials to avail themselves of the expertise offered at the forum to "protect your town, roads and property values under New York law."

Among the presentations will be "Why Local Controls Can and Should Be Applied To Regulate Industrialization," by Helen Slottje, managing attorney of Community Environmental Defense Council, located in Ithaca, NY, where she has lived for 12 years. Slottje attended the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard law schools and has practiced commercial real estate finance law in Boston at a large Boston law firm.

"Property ownership does not include the right to destroy your neighbor's peace and quiet. Municipalities should act now, before our towns are overridden with truck traffic, residential property values decrease and home loans and home insurance are difficult to find," Slottje said.

Planning consultant Nan Stolzenburg's presentation is titled "Land Use Plans to Protect Your Town from the Hazards of Industrialization." Stolzenburg is principal planner and founder of Community Planning & Environmental Associates in Berne, NY.

She is certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners, which is the only organization in the United States that establishes education, training, and experience requirements for planners. She also holds a master's degree in regional planning and has more than 20 years of professional and technical experience. She has developed many comprehensive plans and regulatory programs for upstate New York communities, some of which have won national and state-level planning awards.

Stolzenburg assisted Otsego County in the finalization of its award-winning Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, adopted in 1999. She was also the principal consultant for the Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Capacities of the Cooperstown Region, completed in 2002.

"The most important first step a municipality can take to address threats to water quality, the environment and rural character is to develop a new comprehensive plan, or update an old plan. After these threats

become a reality, land use planning is rarely successful," Stolzenburg said.

Stolzenburg stressed that comprehensive plans must be in place in order to support any kind of land use law and that it is impor-

The presentations will be followed by a question and answer panel moderated by Erik Miller, executive director of the Otsego County Conservation Association.

tant for communities to be proactive and articulate a land use plan as soon as possible.

Michael Wieszchowski, senior traffic engineer and project manager with Laberge Group in Albany, will address "How Road Use Plans Can Help Your Town Control Truck Traffic on Your Roads." A graduate of Clarkson University, he has more than 18 years' experience in the transportation field and is certified as a professional traffic operations engineer.

"Road use planning is a proactive way for municipalities to control the future of their roadway," Wieszchowski said.

Middlefield resident and practicing attorney Michelle Kennedy will speak on "Land Use Ordinances to Prohibit Heavy Industry in Your Town." Kennedy is a member of the New York, California and District of Columbia bar associations. She has recently opened a law practice in Cooperstown focusing on land use and municipal law. While in law school at George Washington University, she clerked for the Antitrust Division at the United States Department of Justice and the Office of General Counsel at the Central Intelligence Agency.

"Heavy industrialization of our region is positioned to occur at an unprecedented pace. Without local control, the existing landscape may become unrecognizable. It is incumbent upon local governments to exercise their power to protect the health, safety and order of our communities," Kennedy said.

The presentations will be followed by a question and answer panel moderated by Erik Miller, executive director of the Otsego County Conservation Association.

Teresa Winchester is the former executive director of OCCA.



"WELL-SPENT WEDNESDAYS. Please visit OCCA staff and Board members at Alex & Ika Restaurant on Wednesdays in April, as part of the restaurant's "Well-spent Wednesdays" campaign for non-profits. On Wednesday evenings in April, half of the price of every glass of draft beer and house wines sold will be donated to OCCA. We look forward to seeing you there!



SAVE THE DATE: Hagers to be honored

On Friday, July 8, the Otsego County Conservation Association will host a dinner honoring Lou and Susanna Hager at The Otesaga Resort Hotel, Cooperstown. This event recognizes the integral role played by the Hagers as co-chairs of OCCA's successful Otsego Lake Challenge Campaign and as long-time stewards of Otsego Lake. The Hagers were integral in the success of the Lake Challenge, which has funded more than \$300,000 in major Otsego Lake and Upper Susquehanna Watershed initiatives, including the septic system management plan, zebra mussel control, boat inspections, riparian buffers, walleye stocking to control the invasive alewife, EQIP projects, lake monitoring, and public education. Dinner proceeds will be put toward lake programs in 2012 and beyond. Details are to be announced – for more information, call (607) 547-4488 or e-mail admin@occainfo.org.

Photo by Barb Harman

OCCA announces two education mini-grants

The Oneonta Community Christian School and Camp Goldpetals have both received 2011 grants from OCCA for educational projects with environmental themes.

The Oneonta Community Christian School has been awarded \$250 toward the purchase of a Davis Vantage Vue weather station. The addition of a weather station to the school will give ninth- and tenth-grade students hands-on experience collecting and interpreting weather data such as temperature, relative humidity, wind direction, wind speed, barometric pressure and precipitation. In her grant request, principal Jane M. Cook wrote that students will also learn how the application of this knowledge can save lives, make people more comfortable, and provide essential information to farmers, gardeners, and ecologists. "A weather station would give students direct experience collecting and analyzing weather data, equipping them to better evaluate the larger, more complex, global warming issue," said Cook.

Camp Goldpetals, run by Ellen White Weir of Cooperstown, has received \$480 to provide a two-day nature camp experience for children from low-income families. "My goal," she wrote, "is to give the children a 'sense of place' by giving them information about the natural world around them and showing them how we fit into nature's harmony. Through education and play, Goldpetals campers will explore wildlife habitats, create art and music, identify plants, walk the fields, and swim in the pond. Topics covered will include herbicide use, recycling, clean air and water, and giving something back to the environment.

This marks the thirteenth year of OCCA's education mini-grant program. There is no standard application form; however, proposals should be presented clearly and concisely and be accompanied by a budget. Guidelines

for applying and for requirements, such as progress reports following receipt of grants, are available through the OCCA office, (607) 547-4488, or admin@occainfo.org.

OCCA, SWCD seeking water sampling interns

OCCA and the Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District are currently interviewing prospective interns to assist in twice monthly monitoring of 52 Otsego County water sampling sites. Job duties include:

- To act alone, or as part of a team, to visit 52 sites throughout Otsego County and directly measure and record (electronically and by hand) conductivity, pH, temperature, total dissolved solids, and time/date data. Data will be collected with a YSI Professional Series probe (to be kept at the SWCD office). The selected individual(s) will be responsible for proper calibration of the unit prior to use as per the manufacturer's instructions and for regular downloading of data and assistance with data compilation and analysis.
- Total time required to collect all data is approximately 30 hours every two weeks. The selected individual(s) will visit all sites within 12-15 day intervals.
- The selected individual(s) will be trained by SWCD staff and will follow the prescribed protocols for collection and safety.
- The selected individual(s) will hold a valid and clean New York State driver's license and be subject to the vehicle usage and responsibility portions of the SWCD Personnel Policy.
- The selected individual(s) will be representing the SWCD, and will be expected to present and comport themselves in a professional manner.

These internships are unpaid, but credit hours will be accrued and mileage will be reimbursed. Call (607) 547-4488 or e-mail admin@occainfo.org for more information.

Students present on micro hydroelectric

Students from Otsego Northern Catskill BOCES shared their studies on micro hydroelectric power at the March 30 meeting of the Otsego County Water Quality Coordinating Committee.

Eleventh- and twelfth-grade students, under the direction of agriculture production and science teacher John Janiszewski and science co-teacher Jill Eichler, presented the findings of their group projects on the feasibility and set-up of micro hydroelectric systems based on working models they developed. Hydroelectric power is used by many major utility suppliers in the form of hydroelectric dams – "micro-hydro" power is another option for gathering electric power from moving water sources by using small water turbines fed from a river or stream or via elevated water storage tanks. In their research and application, the BOCES students are focusing on the latter method.

This project, "Designing and Constructing a Micro Hydroelectric Model," was made possible by a \$500 award from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, recognizing its creativity and potential for increasing students' knowledge about energy issues and global climate change. Working with the agriculture production and science class, ONC BOCES visual arts students are also developing informational brochures, posters, PowerPoint presentations and movies on micro hydroelectric as part of the study.

This event, free and open to the public, was made possible thanks to the Otsego County WQCC which, in order to better satisfy the educational component of its mission, has restructured its monthly meetings to include public information sessions. The OCWQCC was established in 1992 as a sub-committee of the Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District.

'Ground zero'

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ployment rate was high. Leases that started at \$50 an acre rose over time to almost \$6,000 per acre, with royalties increasing from 12-20 percent.

"The leasing process is pretty complicated and you need to consider an awful lot of things – well location, associated disturbances to property, pipelines, compressor stations. The phrase 'drilling of well and associated activities' covers a lot of stuff and you need to be really specific in your lease. I could spend a whole session talking about leasing. We were very naive to the nuances."

Water quality and water sampling have received a lot of attention in Bradford County, just as they are hot button issues here. In Pennsylvania, testing of all water supplies within 1,000 feet of a gas well is required. Lovegreen says gas companies there have extended testing to 2,500 feet and are hiring third-party laboratories to collect and analyze samples prior to drilling, sharing the data with landowners to protect themselves. Chesapeake Energy has tested approximately 10 percent of the housing units in Bradford County. According to Lovegreen, about 30 percent of those wells tested below federal drinking water standards and 20-25 percent of the water wells already had methane in them.

"The gas companies want to know what the water quality is before they can be blamed for an impact," Lovegreen said.

And while hydrofracturing has come under heavy scrutiny, Lovegreen said calls to the Conservation District mostly involve methane migration and increased sedimentation – to date, they have received no complaints regarding fracking fluids.

Methane in the water was not unusual prior to gas drilling, but amounts are increasing and there have been some spikes in methane levels in Bradford County water wells. This is not quantified in any way as yet, Lovegreen said, and authorities are not sure if it will last.

"We're not hearing anything directly in our office regarding fracking fluids or chemicals used, but DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) doesn't share that information with us. A certain amount of information may not be getting out there."

Responding to a question about the level of environmental impact in Bradford County due to gas drilling, Lovegreen replied that he has not seen the impacts from the gas industry that might be found in urban residential development.

In Pennsylvania, conservation districts are delegated the authority to review any developments or activities that disturb the earth.

"We review primarily for erosion and sed-

imentation pollution control," Lovegreen later clarified. "What I was sharing was that if there were hundreds of houses being built in the county at the pace that hundreds of well pads are being built, we would probably see considerable problems with those sites. So I guess I was looking at overall scope. While we're seeing some sediment issues from all the gas earth-moving operations, it doesn't seem to be what one would expect from the number of sites we're talking about."

"Having said that," Lovegreen continued, "there are a number of potential environmental impacts other than sediment pollution that could be related to gas drilling. I don't really have a definitive knowledge of those impacts since neither DEP nor the gas companies share those numbers of instances."

Environmental impacts may not be the most pressing concern for Bradford County at this time. It was the economic and social dichotomy of the gas drilling issue that stood out in Lovegreen's presentation. Bradford County's real estate prices, both rentals and purchases, have skyrocketed, he said, but there is now a housing shortage and the fixed-income housing situation is critical.

Unemployment is the lowest it has been in two years, but competition for jobs is high – the Conservation District lost five employees to the natural gas industry in three months.

Hotels and motels have been booked far in advance, but hunters and tourists cannot find lodging. Enrollment in schools is increasing, he said, but no one is reaching out to the young families of gas industry workers and, as a result, they are not yet integrated into the community.

The demand for aggregate quarries has grown exponentially. Income has risen for restaurants and laundromats. New businesses and industry – pipe companies, haulers, port-a-jon dealers, welders – are cropping up, and opportunities for attorneys, surveyors, abstractors, and other professionals have increased.

But the infrastructure needs to catch up with the boom.

Energy boomtown studies in the 1970s and 1980s showed that natural gas development has the potential to cause significant positive and negative impacts to local governments and communities, and whether that potential is realized depends on many things, particularly the intensity and location of development.

Lovegreen said Bradford County is currently under the microscope, as a team of

"It's good to exercise critical thinking ... you seem to get a lot of different spins on information, so you need to be able to evaluate that information and deal with it accordingly."

– Mike Lovegreen

sociologists from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Dickinson College examine what they consider to be the "ground zero" of high volume hydrofracturing in the Marcellus shale.

"They want to observe the whole process of how we react during this boom type of transition," Lovegreen explained. "People are starting to change some of their attitudes about the place where they've lived for the last three generations as a result of dollars. How people feel about their connection to the land, how they feel about where they're living, is beginning to change. We're seeing some of that 200 years of very stable culture starting to change, whether for better or worse I don't know."

According to Lovegreen, the sociologists have shared a study of 90 different boomtown impacts across the nation, fueled by gold, oil and coal. Their conclusion from this data is that 80 percent of boomtown impacts leave a community worse off at the end than it was before.

"Part of reason for that is you have to build the infrastructure, and you have to build it quirky, to adapt to the influx of people. Then the people who make money move away, and the people who are left are on fixed incomes, and all of a sudden you have an infrastructure that is bigger than you can support," Lovegreen said.

"One of the main reasons we started our advisory task force is to look at what happened in these other places – to figure out how to plan and how to grow so that in 20 or 50 years, or whenever this ends, we're in a better situation."

This isn't the first time this has happened, Lovegreen said. The pattern isn't all that different, so the tools are out there with which to figure out what you can expect, what typically happens, and how to become part of the 20 percent that benefits from this boom as opposed to the 80 percent that, when it went away, were worse off than before.

"If that isn't enough, come to Bradford County and we'll show you first-hand."

Lovegreen added, "A lot of people seem to focus on the hole and the frack fluid. The point I want to leave everybody with is that this works its way into the whole community. There are social, economic and cultural impacts to consider. Whether it will happen to this extent in your county, I don't know."

Editor's note: Lovegreen's presentation was full of first-hand accounts of the positive and negative effects of the natural gas drilling industry experienced in Bradford County – too many to cover fully here. To view Lovegreen's PowerPoint, visit <http://www.occainfo.org/bradforddisclaimer.htm>. A video of this event is available through OCCA – call (607) 547-4488 for more information.

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Remembering Someone Special

Making a gift to the Otsego County Conservation Association is a special way to honor a loved one who shares your appreciation of the environment.

There are many occasions to remember someone – a wedding, birthday, graduation, anniversary, homecoming, or celebration of a person's life.

Whether to congratulate or comfort, simply send your donation to OCCA, PO Box 931, Cooperstown, NY 13326, along with the name and address of the person you are honoring. Or you can make your donation online through Network for Good at www.occainfo.org.

Planning for the Next Generation

By making a bequest to OCCA, you can ensure that we will always be there to protect and preserve the environment. To learn more about including OCCA in your will or estate plans, contact our office at (607) 547-4488.

Back yard composting good for gardening, environment

GUEST COLUMN

By Suzanne Evans

According to the Environmental Protection Agency website, yard trimmings and food residuals together constitute 26 percent of the U.S. municipal solid waste stream. Composting offers a beneficial way to reuse this “waste.”

Composting can help extend the life of our current landfills and reduce carbon emissions during the transportation of food scraps and yard waste to those landfills.

Composting can help you save as it reduces your need for water and fertilizers for your garden. The soil produced by your compost could also be used as a top dressing to improve the quality of your lawn rather than using chemical-enhanced fertilizers.

My husband and I started composting almost two years ago. My mother, being a “tree-hugger,” was very influential in convincing us, despite my negativity. I was concerned for several reasons: (1) We live in a townhouse with immediate neighbors on all sides. How would they feel about our rotting pile of food? (2) What about animals getting into the compost? (3) Do I really want a bowl of smelly food scraps, surrounded by fruit flies, sitting on my kitchen counter?

Two years in, I am now a firm believer that anyone can compost!



Photo provided

Composted food scraps can enrich the soil in back yard gardens.

To address my first concern, we decided to keep our compost as inconspicuous as possible. We dug a large hole (about 3 feet by 2 feet) at the end of our garden and covered the top with burlap. Instead of hearing our neighbors complain, they have actually showed interest in starting their own compost pile.

So far, we have had no issues with animals. And as for the mess of collecting compost in the house, we found a great Oggi brand compost bin that eliminates all odors and looks just fine on the counter.

The best part about composting is getting the rotting food out of your trash can! We never have an issue with our trash smelling

because the food scraps go right into the bin and out to the compost. We are amazed at how quickly the food breaks down and we were able to enrich the soil of our vegetable garden with compost this year.

Knowing that we are reducing the amount of waste we put into a landfill and making nutrient-rich soil for gardening has definitely made composting worthwhile. For more information on what should and should not be composted, check out the EPA's website, www.epa.gov/epawaste/conservation/composting/index.htm.

Suzanne Evans is the daughter of OCCA Board President Martha Clarvoe.

Wetlands treatment project yielding promising results

GUEST COLUMN

By Brie Olsen

Wetlands occupy an important niche in our ecosystems over scales both large and small. Naturally, wetlands have the ability to filter toxins and pollutants out of flowing waters, while providing habitats for a variety of organisms, be it animal, plant, or microbe.

Recently, the science of aquatic filtration has been delving into the possibility of using constructed wetlands to cleanse public water supplies. Traditionally, wastewater treatment involves at least two processes, primary and secondary. Primary treatment removes at least half of the solid materials through sedimentation or skimming. Secondary treatment uses microbial processes to extract dissolved materials or suspended solids that made it through primary treatment. A third process, known as either tertiary treatment or advanced treatment, is not a required practice in the United States, so it is not always employed.

Tertiary treatment targets more specific pollutants, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and heavy metals, through specific removal methods. Wetlands can replace secondary or tertiary treatments due to their exceptionally high rate of productivity. Microbial and vegetative activity

in wetlands can convert undesirable materials into harmless substances. The sponge-like characteristics of plants that allow them to thrive in these environments also enable them to take up toxins and store them in their biomass.

As a part of the Susquehanna River Valley and, thus, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, Otsego County has a responsibility to ensure optimal wastewater treatment, especially concerning organic materials such as nitrogen and phosphorus. These materials are most affecting the Chesapeake Bay through a process known as eutrophication, where excess nutrients increase biomass, which consumes oxygen when it decays and leaves little for living organisms.

Because of the regional impact on the Bay, local wastewater treatment plants are always looking for ways to improve water quality. A constructed wetland in Cooperstown started receiving effluent in July of 2010. As an environmental biology student at SUNY-Oneonta, I was interested in monitoring the effectiveness of the wetland.

Knowing that plants and microbes work together to convert and take up phosphorus, I decided to sample the most abundant plant on the site, reed canary grass (*Phalaris arun-*

dinacea). I sampled a series of plots; their locations were chosen based on their proximity to the effluent. Two plots were placed within the effluent flow path, and two were on “upland” terraces.

After collecting the samples and testing them for phosphorus, I discovered that the locations within the flow path contained 0.41-0.42 percent phosphorus content, and the upland sites contained 0.30-0.36 percent phosphorus content. In a control wetland sampled, the phosphorus content was 0.23 percent.

So what do these results show? They show that, near the site of effluent release, reed canary grass is taking up more phosphates than at upland and wetland sites out of the line of effluent. Further, these preliminary findings support the theory that constructed wetlands can be effective tools in the wastewater treatment process.

Brie Olsen is an environmental biology major at SUNY-Oneonta, studying under OCCA Board member Donna Vogler, associate professor and chair of the biology department. Olsen conducted her research this past summer as a SUNY-Oneonta Biological Field Station intern. OCCA Vice-President Willard N. Harman is the director of the BFS.

OCCA sponsors three DEC camperships

Reviving a program first offered by the organization in the 1970s, OCCA has reinstated its sponsorship of New York State DEC Environmental Education Camperships. Three middle-school students – Katlyn Palmatier, Cooperstown; Scott Segit, Fly Creek; and Travis Thompson, Hartwick – will attend Camp Colby for a week-long session this summer, where they will enjoy a balance of environmental education, sportsman education, and outdoor fun.

According to the DEC website, Camp Colby is located on the western shore of Lake Colby, just outside the village of Saranac Lake. Formerly a private estate, Colby was purchased by the state in 1961 from William Morris of the William Morris Theatrical Agency. It is situated on 100 acres adjoining the Adirondack Forest Preserve.

Led by college-educated counselor staff, campers will participate in a discovery group while at Camp Colby, completing six lessons ranging from group dynamics to field, forest, and pond explorations, to a study of human impact. Group members learn science, solve challenges, play games, keep a journal, catch salamanders, net butterflies and discover the interconnectedness of life on earth.

Additionally, campers choose from a variety of optional activities throughout the week that introduce them to outdoor pursuits and pastimes, including fishing, canoeing, archery, exploring a bog and overnight camping trips.

OCCA-sponsor DEC camperships are made possible this year by a grant from The Tianaderrah Foundation.

Nature walk schedule beginning to take shape

We have already received confirmation of two hikes for this year's nature walk series. Connie Tedesco will lead a tour of Lordsland Preserve on Saturday, July 2, followed by a Hooker Mountain outing on Saturday, July 9 with Terry Bliss. Stay tuned for details and the complete nature walk schedule.

August picnic planned for Glimmerglass Park

OCCA and Friends of Glimmerglass State Park are among the groups to host a Lake Appreciation Day on Saturday, August 13 at Glimmerglass State Park. Still in the planning stages, this event is intended to bring members of OCCA and other area environ-

mental and lake organizations, their families, and friends together for a day of fellowship and recreation on the shores of Otsego Lake. A hike of the Sleeping Lion Trail, a picnic lunch, swimming and kids' activities will be among the highlights, and lake-focused groups are welcome to exhibit in the enclosed pavilion. Save the date and stay tuned for further details!

Social media intern joins OCCA team

Kristen Abrey, a business economics major at SUNY-Oneonta, has been working with OCCA as a social media intern since January. After reviewing the organization's history, objectives, and priorities, Abrey is collaborating with OCCA staff on social media research, web analysis, creating social media profiles, and blog monitoring, among other projects.

Abrey's interests have included Ski Club, International Club and intramural sports. As part of a high school foreign exchange program, she studied abroad in Australia. Through SUNY-Oneonta, she later returned to Australia for the spring 2010 semester, attending Australian studies classes and participating in Outing Club.

During the fall 2010 semester, Abrey enjoyed her first intern experience as an assistant to the physician recruiter at A.O.



KRISTEN ABREY

Fox Hospital, where she created itineraries for physician site visits and databases, developed new marketing materials, and was responsible for the Fox Gala raffle ticket sales and drawing.

A graduate of Voorheesville High School, Abrey is on track to graduate in May.

Donations, volunteers sought for Garage Sale

OCCA's Annual Garage Sale will be held on Saturday and Sunday, April 30 and May 1 in the Cooperstown Farmers' Market building at 101 Main Street, Cooperstown. Please begin setting aside items now for this fundraising event. The official collection dates for the OCCA garage sale will be April 22-28 (closed Easter Sunday). All donations are tax deductible: OCCA will provide a donation voucher upon request. Those interested in dropping off materials sooner, or who would like more information about volunteering to assist with the event, should call (607) 547-4488 or e-mail admin@occainfo.org for further details. In addition to raising funds for OCCA programming, the garage sale also benefits the environment through waste prevention, or "source reduction." Source reduction, including reuse, can help reduce waste disposal and handling costs, because it avoids the costs of recycling, municipal composting, land filling, and combustion. Source reduction also conserves resources and reduces pollution, including greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.

Small, dedicated group enjoys snowshoe hike

Patricia Riddell Kent reported that five intrepid hikers joined her husband, Steve, as he led an OCCA-sponsored Winter/Snowshoe Hike to Mud Lake and back in The Robert V. Riddell State Park on January 16. According to the Kents, the weather was ideal – in the 20-degree range and sunny – and the winter scenery was lovely.

"The frozen bog (Mud Lake) has its own picturesque beauty in the wintertime," Patricia said, "and the group made a detour to the waterfall on the way up."

Next time, Patricia said, Steve will begin the hike sooner so that he doesn't need to rush participants along to make it to Mud Lake and back before dark. A prior engagement delayed the start this year.

"Next winter, we will clear the morning to get an earlier start so people can take their time. Beginning the hike earlier will allow for a slower pace more comfortable to all," wrote Patricia.

Winter/snowshoe hike participants should have good quality snowshoes and practice walking a mile or so to prep for the five-mile walk, Patricia advised, though it is possible to make the trip without snowshoes.

"Two people hiked along without snowshoes and did remarkably well, following in the path made by the snowshoers," Patricia said.

"OCCA did a fabulous job advertising the walk, but we had low participation this time around. Not sure why, but if we allow more time and a slower pace, hopefully others will want to join us for the snowshoe hike next year," she added.

Solar energy versus natural gas: the responsible choice

GUEST COLUMN

By David M. Austin

Drilling for natural gas is coming to a plot of land near you!

Agree with it or not, the fact remains: If nothing is done, you will become a participant in the game. We live in a society where those with money have power and influence. Those with less money have less influence. The gas companies have money and power. The solar industry and environmentalists have a much smaller budget to work with to get their voices heard. Does this mean that the truth is the voice you hear the most? No. We live in a world full of deception. Therefore, it takes critical thinking to sort out who is telling the “real” truth.

Can one trust those who stand to make a huge amount of money from the gas in the earth to be telling the truth? Why is the rest of the world pushing to use more and more renewable energy and reduce fossil fuel usage, while we go the other way, still dependent upon fossil fuels? Are we letting ourselves be blinded to what the rest of the world sees clearly by the potential of quick money? Are we sacrificing the future of our region’s most valuable resource, the water? Without good water, this region would be rendered virtually useless. You only need to ask other counties and states where hydraulic fracturing for natural gas has already been implemented.

The answer lies in solar and other renewable energy sources. Don’t let anyone tell you solar is not capable of the task! The cloudiest countries in the world generate large percentages of their energy from solar and renewable resources. This has nothing to do with the limits of technology and everything to do with commitment by the people and their governments.

Solar energy is the primary source of all energy on earth. It is the energy source that grows plants and produces our food. Without it we would surely die. It was stored via past plant and animal growth in the form of fossil fuels. If prevailing theory is correct – that the planets spun off from the sun – then all things on and in the earth came from the sun. Why do we have to use up all the stored solar energy in the earth? Why must we use tremendous amounts of energy in the extraction process, polluting the air and water, when it is possible to use solar energy more directly and more efficiently for so many applications with the technology that exists right now?

We should be saving the stored solar energy in oil and gas for applications such as making plastics. We should be conserving and using free energy from the sun, instead of being concerned with just the short term monetary “bottom line.” What difference does it make if we gain the whole world in the short term just to use it up and burn it out, rendering it useless for future life on earth?

The best way to fight the gas companies is for individuals to rise

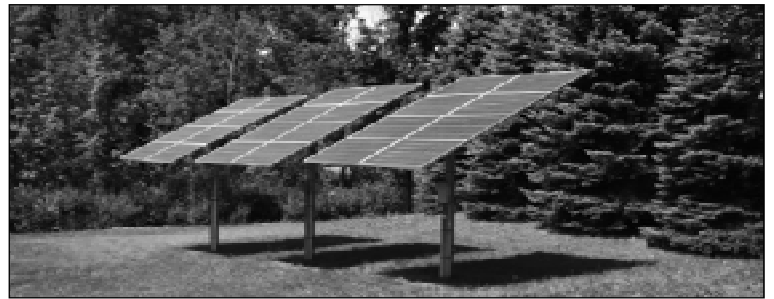


Photo provided

Solar installations in Earlville (top) and Taberg.

up and invest in the future of the planet with the purchase of renewable energy systems, including solar. Stand as an example of what the people can do. It isn’t as expensive as you might think. For far less money than buying a car, and with available incentives and tax credits plus a little creative financing, many people can do it. With the help of knowledgeable and experienced professionals, you can find the information you need to make solar one of the answers to eliminating the need for natural gas.

Direct use of solar energy helps people save money and raise their standard of living. It provides them with a measure of freedom from dependence on centralized energy distribution that the gas drilling industry represents. An integral part of reducing energy dependence appeals to our spiritual nature. Becoming more aware of our energy usage patterns and how to be more energy conservative is one step in the direction toward fulfilling a purpose given the human race by the creator to tend the “Garden of Eden” in a responsible and respectful manner, instead of plundering it.

David M. Austin is the founder of Great Brook Solar NRG, LLC.

Planner program

continued from page 7

cient and cost-effective manner. The Planning Department is not staffed to attend all meetings or address all concerns individually – but they and other county departments can assist in many areas, and OCCA will help towns find these and other resources needed to address their individual concerns.

Among other things, planning helps to better utilize scarce resources, identifies risks and health hazards, protects open space, improves quality of life, and encourages economic and

social growth. Planning efforts can assist our municipalities in preparing for change, which is inevitable, and through planning it is possible to achieve change in a way that is tailored to – and which best suits the needs and desires of – the effected community.

OCCA’s Circuit Rider Planner Program will enable us 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 planning decisions in a way that is compatible with the individual needs and desires of participating communi-

ties. Details of the typical services provided through this program and background on our newest staff member, Environmental Planner Tavis Austin, are available on our website, www.occainfo.org. Click on “Issues” on the home page, and then on “Land-Use Planning.”

Local governments, especially in rural areas, often express their lack of staff expertise to manage growth and development within their borders. For more than 40 years, OCCA has been Otsego County’s environmental advocate. Today we want to be your planning resource as well – please let us know how we can help.



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PO Box 931
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607-547-4488

e-mail: admin@occainfo.org
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Bike To Work Day is May 20

Otsego Regional Cycling Advocates, a committee of OCCA, is planning its third annual Bike to Work Day for Friday, May 20. The aim of this event is to encourage people to choose an alternative "green" mode of transportation – biking, walking or even skateboarding – to get to work or school, to run errands, or just for fun on May 20 in particular and as a lifestyle choice in general.

More people bicycling and walking means a healthier community and reduced automobile traffic results in decreased gas consumption and improved air quality.

This year, ORCA is seeking business sponsors and event champions. Sponsorships are \$100; championing involves promoting Bike to Work Day to employees, sharing the on-line registration link, and setting up a check-in location. For more information, call Martha Clarvoe at (607) 547-4020.

Bike to Work Day check-in locations throughout the county will be staffed from 6:30-9 a.m. Those interested in participating, in setting up a check-in station or in recruiting riders and walkers should call Clarvoe for details. Competition between local businesses for the most employee participation is encouraged.

Check-in locations to date include: Bassett Healthcare, Cooperstown; Bugbee Hall, Oneonta; Clark Sports Center, Cooperstown; Cooperstown Elementary School; Cooperstown Middle/High School; Edmeston Central School; A.O. Fox Hospital, Oneonta; FoxCare Center, Oneonta; Hartwick College, Oneonta; Hartwick Seminary Specialty Services, Milford; Laurens Central School; Kim Muller Plaza, Oneonta; Milford Central School; NYSHA, Cooperstown; Opportunities for Otsego, Oneonta; Pathfinder Village, Edmeston; Prolifig Sign Studio, Oneonta; Richfield Springs Central School; Springbrook, Portlandville; SUNY-Oneonta; and Valley View Elementary School, Oneonta.

For the first time ORCA is now offering departure locations, enabling participants to network. Visit <https://orca.sportssignup.com/> to register and for more information on check-in and departure.

We try to conserve precious resources at OCCA by printing on recycled paper and using soy-based inks when feasible. If you would like to help us do even better, consider being put on our electronic distribution list and receive future newsletters and general correspondence via e-mail.