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OCCA Annual Dinner and Meeting
Monday, November 16 • Holiday Inn, Oneonta
OCCA honors Martha Clarvoe, Ben Guenther
North America Transmission has officially withdrawn all proposed Edic to Fraser transmission line routes and alternatives from further consideration during a competitive upgrade process that began more than four years ago. If selected, Edic to Fraser would have traversed four counties and 16 municipalities, traveling approximately 40 miles through Otsego County parallel to the existing Marcy South power line right of way.

In an order issued on December 17, the New York State Public Service Commission requested that NAT withdraw Edic to Fraser from the proceeding, thereby upholding an earlier recommendation by PSC Trial Staff. Trial Staff concluded in September after a lengthy comparative evaluation that all five of NAT’s proposed line segments and route alternatives inclusive of Edic to Fraser “should be eliminated from consideration. These projects, in comparison to the remaining scenarios, have the potential for greater environmental impacts.” NAT complied and, on January 15, formally withdrew Edic to Fraser.

“We are very pleased with the Trial Staff’s assessment and with PSC’s decision,” said Otsego County Conservation Association President Vicky M. Lentz. “While Edic to Fraser did not gain traction in the local media as a high-profile issue, it would have had significant negative impacts to Otsego County that could not be ignored.”

OCCA completed its own review of NAT’s proposed Edic to Fraser transmission line in April, culminating in a 157-page comment report submitted to the PSC on April 22 (http://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/Common/ViewDoc.aspx?DocRefId={26FA962F-4EF2-4086-AC09-2C11A59ABB25}).

PSC Trial Staff wrote: “OCCA filed an extensive report outlining the impacts of the proposed Edic to Fraser project to inform the public record and evaluate the project’s compatibility with the environmental and community characteristics of Otsego County. The report outlined the concerns of OCCA in relation to need and public benefit, siting, alternative proposals, environmental impact, other impacts, compliance with local laws, and community outreach conducted by OCCA.”

“The potential adverse environmental and socioeconomic impacts associated with the proposed Edic to Fraser project outweighed the project’s reported benefits,” Lentz said, in summarizing OCCA’s position.

OCCA Executive Director Darla M. Youngs added that Edic to Fraser would have had significant adverse impacts on Otsego County’s agricultural, scenic and historic landscapes.

PSC Trial Staff concurred, ranking NAT’s Edic to Fraser proposal “high” – anticipated to be the least environmentally compatible – in the parameters of new right-of-way, expansion of existing ROW, impact to major river corridors, length of ROW in agricultural districts, and visual assessment, among others.

The Edic to Fraser proposal was one of 21 plans originally considered by the PSC as it seeks to address reported ongoing electric transmission congestion problems by delivering an additional 1,000 MW of electricity.

“We are very pleased with the Trial Staff’s assessment and with PSC’s decision.”

– Vicky M. Lentz, President, OCCA

from upstate power sources to downstate consumers. Edic to Fraser included parts of the towns of Richfield, Exeter, Burlington, New Lisbon, Laurens, Otego and Oneonta.

Project proposals from developers were submitted to the PSC independently in September of 2014, each of which reflected a possible solution to address reported ongoing electric transmission congestion problems by delivering an additional 1,000 MW of electricity from upstate power sources to downstate consumers. At the request of the state, these companies were then given an opportunity to present new or modified proposals that would make greater use of existing transmission corridors and rights of way.

Funded in part by a $65,000 award from the PSC, OCCA contracted with C&S Companies and Springfield attorney Douglas H. Zamelis to conduct an environmental review of NAT’s Edic to Fraser power line proposal. OCCA Environmental Planner Danny Lapin worked with partner organizations, municipal and county officials, affected landowners, and the public to develop additional data and information pertaining to local environmental, agricultural, historic, and other resources in order to determine any potential impacts and effects this project may have.

“OCCA got on board early, influenced the PSC’s decision, and obtained a very favorable result for the people and environment of Otsego County. That OCCA was able to obtain a sizeable intervenor funding award so that NAT actually paid all of OCCA’s costs and helps makes it all the more sweet,” said Zamelis, whose law practice focuses on environmental and land-use matters.

The siting, construction, and operation of

Continued on Page 4
OCCA is dedicated to the protection, preservation and enhancement of Otsego County’s natural resources:
Your Annual Fund gift keeps our programs going!

Your contribution can help in the following ways:
- $10 will pay for one riparian tree in a compromised watershed
- $10 will recycle 10 pairs of sneakers
- $25 will pay for water sampling in one aquatic tributary
- $50 will harvest 25 pounds of invasive water chestnut
- $75 will stock 50 walleye in Otsego Lake
- $125 will bale 7,200 pounds of agricultural plastics
- $250 will pay for an OCCA education mini-grant to a local school
- $350 will send a middle-school student to Environmental Education Camp
- $2,500 will sponsor an intern at the SUNY-Oneonta Biological Field Station

Support these and other important OCCA-funded programs with an Annual Fund gift today!

---

YES, please renew my membership and/or support OCCA's programs!

- Otsego Lake Challenge/Upper Susquehanna Watershed Water Quality Protection Programs $________
- Environmental Education Opportunities, including DEC Camperships $________
- Willard N. Harman OCCA Biological Field Station Internship Endowment Fund $________
- Invasive Species Eradication Programs $________
- Membership Renewal $________

Name ____________________________
E-mail ____________________________
Address __________________________
City _____________________________ State _______ Zip _______ Phone ________

Clip and mail to: Otsego County Conservation Association, PO Box 931, Cooperstown, NY 13326
www.occainfo.org
Clarvoe receives lifetime achievement nod from OCCA

By Jeff O’Handley

Perhaps no one person has been as synonymous with the issue of solid waste and recycling in Otsego County as Martha Clarvoe. Once referred to as “The Trash Queen of Hartwick,” Clarvoe has been pushing the boundaries of recycling since organizing a junk mail collection on behalf of the Cooperstown League of Women Voters – an effort for which she received her first OCCA Conservationist of the Year award in 1991.

“I asked, ‘Why doesn’t anyone do junk mail?’” Clarvoe recalled. “Patty McLeish said, ‘Why don’t you do it?’ So I did. I worked with Emily Marcalus, whose family owned Marcal Paper Company. They were using pre-consumer waste to make toilet paper and paper towels for years. Marcal sent an empty truck to Cooperstown. We filled it in a day.”

The Montgomery-Otsego-Schoharie Solid Waste Authority (MOSA) was so impressed with the results that it soon started a junk mail recycling program of its own. This was the first in a string of recycling successes for Clarvoe, who has been active in Otsego County for so long it’s hard to believe she wasn’t born here. She and her husband, Paul, moved to Hartwick in 1980.

“Montgomery County [Maryland, where the Clarvoes lived] was the fastest-growing county in the United States,” she explained. “It was too fast for us. We wanted to get back to nature a little bit.”

Clarvoe “found” OCCA soon after.

“I was on a barge tour on Otsego Lake,” she remembered. “Bill Harman was leading the tour and he kept saying, ‘OCCA funded this,’ ‘OCCA did that.’ I thought, ‘That sounds like a really good group.’”

Clarvoe has served OCCA in almost every possible capacity: member, volunteer, Board member, secretary and president. As special projects manager, she coordinated volunteers for Household Hazardous Waste Day, organized Bike to Work Day, served on the Earth Festival steering committee, promoted energy conservation, and served on a variety of committees and boards. She is probably best known for her efforts in recycling.

“I just really like to reuse things,” she said.

Clarvoe started a Styrofoam collection at Earth Festival, and worked with teachers and students at Cooperstown Middle School to establish recycling in the school. At her urging, OCCA became involved with TerraCycle, a company that recycles non-traditional items such as writing implements, cereal bags and toothbrushes.

Of all Clarvoe’s accomplishments, she is most proud of her work on Otsego County’s Burn Barrel Education Committee, to which she was appointed in 2000. Partly in response to the committee’s work, which included research into the impacts of trash burning on human health and the environment, New York State enacted a ban on garbage burning in 2009.

“We got the state to adopt a law that ended a dangerous process and resulted in cleaner air,” she said. “How great is that?”

Predictably, Clarvoe was quick to share the credit with her committee members, particularly chairperson Mary Ashwood. In addition to the ban on burn barrels, the committee’s activities led directly to the development of a statewide agricultural plastic recycling program at Cornell University, which has recycled more than a million pounds of farm plastic since it began.

Clarvoe’s interest in “the three Rs” – reduce, reuse, recycle – carries over into her personal life as well.

“I built a countertop in my house out of the top of an old upright piano,” she said. “And I made some shelves out of drawers.”

That resourcefulness and creativity have served OCCA – and the community at large – very well over the last 35 years, culminating in a Lifetime Achievement Award at OCCA’s Annual Dinner.

And although she has given up her positions on the OCCA Board and staff to spend more time with her grandchildren, in her garden, and refurbishing a building in the hamlet of Hartwick, Clarvoe’s legacy continues on in the organization’s programs.


Ben Guenther: Living the dream in Otsego County

By Jeff O’Handley

Ben Guenther, co-owner of Five Star Subaru in Oneonta, understands that good business isn’t always about looking out for number one. Sometimes, it’s good to put others first.

“People ask me, ‘How does this directly help Five Star Subaru? Well, it doesn’t,’” Guenther told “The O-Town Scene” in 2011, referring to sponsorship of First Night Oneonta. “But it’s important to us as a business, and to me as a resident, that we created success in other businesses and in the community as a whole.”

This philosophy has led Guenther and Five Star Subaru to endorse a vast number of organizations and events over the last decade. In addition to OCCA, Guenther has thrown his support behind Foothills Performing Arts Center, Catskill Symphony Orchestra, Susquehanna Balloon Glow Festival, Susquehanna Animal Shelter, and many, many more. Of all the projects Guenther has assisted, he cites OCCA’s annual Earth Festival as one of his favorites.

“I look forward to helping this festival every year and feel that it really sends the message out about what OCCA is and does for Otsego County,” Guenther said. “This event is a great resource for educating people in our area about optional energy resources and sustainability of our natural resources.”

Ben Guenther receives a citation from Senator James L. Seward at the OCCA Annual Dinner and Meeting. OCCA recognized Guenther for his work to promote environmental initiatives.

OCCA in the first place is long-time OCCA member, Board member, and past president, Martha Clarvoe, who was also honored at OCCA’s Annual Dinner.

Clarvoe approached Ben five years ago about sponsoring Earth Festival. Guenther was intrigued.

“When I learned what OCCA has done and continues to do for Otsego County’s environment, I knew that any support I could give was appropriate that the person who called Guenther’s attention to OCCA in the first place is long-time OCCA member, Board member, and past president, Martha Clarvoe, who was also honored at OCCA’s Annual Dinner.

Continued on Page 12

Clean, Drain and Dry or Kiss the Fish Goodbye!

Invasive plants and animals can impact boating, fishing, swimming and the environment.

When leaving a body of water, always remember to:

**CLEAN** Remove all visible mud, plants, fish or other animals from your boat, trailer and any equipment that comes in contact with the water, such as waders and boots, paddles and fishing gear.

**DRAIN** Empty all bilges, wells and ballast tanks. Tip canoes and kayaks over to empty them.

**DRY** Allow equipment to dry for at least five days before using in another water body. If this is not possible, **DISINFECT** using hot water, steam, or a solution made with bleach or potassium chloride.

See [http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/50267.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/50267.html) for more details.

Be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

CLEAN, DRAIN AND DRY or kiss the fish goodbye!"
OCCA names environmental essay contest winners

Following a competitive essay contest, the Otsego County Conservation Association has awarded nine Otsego County middle-school students with a week-long stay at a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Summer Camp.

Otsego County students ages 11-14 were invited to compete for DEC camperships via the essay contest. In 750 words or less, they were asked to consider the question, “Imagine yourself in 50 years: What would you say to your younger self about the value of Otsego County’s beautiful land, lakes and streams?” OCCA received essays from Kathy Hardison’s Oneonta Middle School students and Amy Parr’s Cooperstown Middle School science class as well as independent submissions.

Earning a trip to DEC camp as a result of their efforts are: Eva Barberio, Danielle Basdekis, Michael Crippen, Brandon Gardner, Majesti Hamilton, Ray Hovis, Phoebe Jones, Reilly Mooney and Aaliyah Saunders. Alternates are Ian Quinn, Henry Wager and Mikayla Web. The authors of the winning essays will enjoy a week at NYSDEC camp this summer, where they will spend their time immersed in the natural environment and will enjoy a balance of environmental education, sportsman education, and outdoor fun.

OCCA will sponsor the campers at $350 per student, thanks to funds provided by private donors including The Tianaderrah Foundation. Alternates will be rewarded for their hard work as well with a small cash prize and the opportunity to attend camp if a spot should open up.

OCCA also recognized essayists who did not apply to attend camp. Brayden White took top honors, followed by F. Tulip Bailey and Jacob Rei.

Now in its fifth year, OCCA’s Campership Sponsor Program is intended to help connect middle schoolers with nature through their writing skills, knowledge of science, introspection and real-life experiences.

“Since 1947, kids have been making friends and memories at DEC environmental education camp,” said OCCA Executive Director Darla M. Youngs.

“Today’s children are spending too much time inside. Our program is possible thanks in large part to donors who attended these camps. They, like us, want to spark the interest of our young people in nature and, ultimately, get kids outside more,” Youngs said.

Recollection in the Woods

By Ray Hovis

Dear younger self:

I am writing to you from 50 years in the future. You have had many memories of experiencing the amazing wildlife of Otsego County; sledging down steep snow-covered forest hills, marching through the woods over boulders and down valleys, and sailing across Otsego Lake catching the warm summer wind. The ways you have interacted with this rich and wonderful environment are endless. These memories have shown you that the wildlife of Otsego County is marvelous.

The diversity of Otsego County is astounding. It has many forests of tall, mighty trees. Under them bear, deer and bobcats walk on the peaceful shaded ground while squirrels and chipmunks leap through the trees above. Mice and other small animals scurry through thicket and under carpets of ferns. Another of the most prominent features of our environment, but our community as well,” said Naomi Duncan, branch manager of the Cooperstown Main Street and Otsego offices.

“More and more homes have printers and electronic devices than ever before,” Youngs added, “resulting in a lot of consumables that have to be disposed of. This program helps keep them out of the landfill, and can support a good cause like OCCA at the same time. Everybody wins!”

Recycling bins are located at Community Bank’s two Cooperstown locations, 62 Main Street and 5378 State Highway 28, and can be accessed during normal business hours.

In addition to the proceeds raised by recycling, OCCA can also earn money from customers who purchase remanufactured inkjet and toner cartridges directly from Planet Green, said Youngs.

“When someone buys from Planet Green, they can designate OCCA to receive 15 percent of the purchase price,” Youngs explained.

For the full list of ink jet cartridges, cell phones and small electronics accepted by Planet Green Recycle, visit https://planet-greenrecycle.com/what_we_pay_plain_noSubmit.php?u=ShopEco.
A New Decade for Earth Festival!

- Information and Vendor Fair 11am-3pm
- Pre-festival Bird Walk, led by Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society
- EcoArt/Trendy Trash Contest
- TREP$ Marketplace - a unique flea-market style event comprised exclusively of Milford Central School eighth-grade vendors who will launch their own “Go Green” businesses for the day
- Children's Activities led by Milford Central School students and others
- Master Gardeners of Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie and Otsego Counties Spring Garden Day Keynote Speaker, Barbara Melera, President of Landreth Seeds “Sustaining Plant Biodiversity with Heritage and Native Species” and Workshops ($10 per person for workshop access for the day)
- Special recycling collections including Styrofoam (clean, white only), bubble wrap, empty inkjet cartridges, cell phones, eyeglasses, reusable shoes, and used nylon monofilament fishing line, all at no charge
- Empire Recycling will be back with the ConfiData Shredder from 11am-2pm
  (Electronics are accepted free at the Southern transfer station)

Please review the information enclosed and send your tax-deductible contribution along with the Earth Festival 2016 Participation Form.

With thanks from the 2016 Earth Festival Committee:

Darla M. Youngs, OCCA

Susan O’Handley, CNY Mobile Marketing

Martha Clarvoe

Rich McCaffery
Earth Festival 2016 Participation Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Contribution</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
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<tr>
<td>Canopy $1000 &amp; up</td>
<td>All Sustainable Forest benefits plus lead placement in all media including prominent entry signage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainable Forest $500-$999</td>
<td>All Pole Timber benefits plus placement in all media including event signage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pole Timber $250-$499</td>
<td>All Sapling benefits plus mention in radio interviews.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sapling $100-$249</td>
<td>All Seedling benefits plus listing on promotional fliers, press releases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seedling $50-$99</td>
<td>All Grass Roots benefits plus exhibitor/vendor privileges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grass Roots $25-$49</td>
<td>Listing on printed program and in media releases where possible, listing and weblink on the Earth Festival page at the OCCA website – <a href="http://www.occaninfo.org">www.occaninfo.org</a></td>
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Exhibitor/Vendor Rules

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Non-profit Exhibitor</td>
<td>Minimum of Grass Roots Level Contribution required: An interactive display preferred with information and resources about your environmentally-focused organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibitor/Vendor (Food and Retail)</td>
<td>Minimum of Seedling Level Contribution required: Set up a table to promote or sell your earth-friendly, nature related products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/School Exhibit</td>
<td>No fee required. Tabletop display on an identified environmental topic, presented by students and teacher representative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EcoArt/Trendy Trash Entry</td>
<td>$5 entry fee per item for adults; student submissions are free. A trash-to-treasure challenge to create something practical or artistic from items that have outlived their original purpose! Register and submit your creation made from materials that might ordinarily end up in the trash! All EcoArt submissions must be dropped off during set up, by 10:30am, and picked up at 3pm on Saturday, April 9. EcoArt entries will be juried, with small cash prizes for People’s Choice, Judges’ Choice and Best in Show!</td>
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Information about Exhibiting/Vending

- Space is available indoors in Gymnasium.
- Please bring your own extension cords, table covers & equipment; One 8' table and 2 chairs are provided. (Please indicate if you require a space with access to electricity outlets.)
- Phone lines are not available; the school is equipped with wireless internet access
- Set up is Saturday, 4/9 between 9:00am and 10:30am to be ready for 11am opening
- We request that you don’t begin to break down exhibits until the conclusion of the event at 3pm
- Food will be available for purchase (we expect two vendors this year - tentatively: Origins Café and Larry’s Custom Meats!)
- To minimize waste, please feel free to bring your own cup/mug and encourage visitors to use recycling containers

Earth Festival 2016 Participation Form: Please respond as soon as possible, but no later than Friday, March 11, 2016 to be included in all pre-event publicity. Mail this form along with your tax-deductible contribution, payable to OCCA. Mail to OCCA, PO Box 931, Cooperstown, 13326. Note “Earth Festival 2016” in Memo section.

Name: _______________________________ E-mail: _______________________________
Organization/School/Business Name: _______________________________
Mailing Address: _______________________________
City/State: ___________________________ Zip: __________ Website: _______________________________
Work Phone: ___________________________ Home/Mobile Phone: _______________________________

Please check all that apply (descriptions above):

___ Financial Contribution (please submit donation with this form):

<table>
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<th>Financial Contribution</th>
<th>$1,000 &amp; up</th>
<th>$500-$999</th>
<th>$250-$499</th>
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<th>$50-$99</th>
<th>$25-$49</th>
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___ We require electric access *(bring your own cords)*

___ Non-profit Exhibitor (Minimum of Grass Roots Level Contribution required - Vending not permitted at this level)

___ Exhibitor/Vendor (Minimum of Seedling Level Contribution required)

___ Student/School Exhibit (No fee required)

___ EcoArt Submission (Enclose $5 entry fee per item; FREE for student submissions.)

PLEASE REMEMBER: In order for us to effectively promote your participation, we need detailed information about your organization and your exhibit. Please include this information with this form. Include any additional notes on space requirements as well.
Eighty-seven bales of used agricultural plastics were sent from Otsego County to a Brooklyn recycler last month as part of the Recycling Agricultural Plastics Program. Established by Cornell University through funding from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, RAPP is charged with developing sustainable means for New York State farmers to manage their used agricultural plastics by recycling, reusing and otherwise minimizing waste from plastic in agriculture. In Otsego County, RAPP is administered by Otsego County Conservation Association and the Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District.

“We received plastic from 34 Otsego County farms in 2015,” said Jeff O’Handley, OCCA’s program director and the outreach coordinator for RAPP. “We’re hoping to build on this success and further increase the number of farmers participating this year.”

In the RAPP program, farmers set aside bale wrap, silage bags, bunker cover and other types of film plastic so it can be recycled. When they’ve stockpiled a sufficient amount, they can either bring it to special collection days at one of Otsego County’s solid waste transfer stations, or have staff from SWCD compact the plastic into square bales that are temporarily stored on the farm. The bales are then shipped to a recycler, where they will be given new life as plastic or composite lumber and boards, pavers, or bags.

The program received a boost this year from the participation of the Otsego County Solid Waste Department and Casella Waste Resources in Oneonta, said O’Handley.

“The County and Casella provided much-needed logistical support in the storage and transport of the plastic, as well as promoting RAPP,” O’Handley said. “Their involvement has been instrumental in growing this program.”

SWCD conducted baling operations on 17 farms in 2015. In addition, a number of other farmers took part in the program or brought plastic to the four special collection days held last spring and fall.

Finally, approximately 2,400 pounds of wood pellet bags were collected from Otsego County homeowners and sent to the recyclers.

Farmers wishing to participate in RAPP should call O’Handley at OCCA at (607) 282-4087. “We’ll be collecting on May 7 in Oneonta and on May 12 in Cooperstown,” announced O’Handley. O’Handley added that there was no fee for the collections, but farmers need to pre-register to participate.

“There are some procedures we have to review with a farmer to make sure their plastic is usable. It’s not hard, but it takes a little more effort than it does to throw the plastic in a dumpster,” he said.

For more information, contact Otsego County Conservation Association at (607) 282-4087 or visit OCCA’s website, www.occainfo.org.

Thanks to a collaboration between Otsego County Conservation Association and the Otsego County Solid Waste Department, the County’s online recycling and disposal guidance document has been updated.

Titled “How Do I Get Rid Of …? The Best Way To Dispose of Things You No Longer Want or Need,” this compendium outlines ways in which unwanted items can best be recycled, reused or discarded.

From aerosol cans to aluminum foil, mattresses to metal scrap, and wood pellet bags to yard waste, Otsego County residents will find tips and information to help safely and easily get rid of trash, recyclables, and hazardous waste.

Options for reuse and for keeping perfectly good materials out of the landfill are also included.

“Many thanks to OCCA Recycling Advisory Committee members Martha Clarvoe, Herb Marx and Jeff O’Handley for working closely with Karen Sullivan of the Otsego County Solid Waste Department to refresh this information,” said OCCA Executive Director Darla M. Youngs.

“Kudos in particular to Martha and Herb, whose research and editing got the ball rolling, and to Karen for tying up the loose ends,” Youngs said.

To view the alphabetized list of items and learn how best to dispose of them, visit http://www.otsegocounty.com/depts/sw/documents/HowDoIGetRidOf2016.pdf.

The Otsego County Department of Solid Waste and Recycling manages the county-wide recycling program and the annual hazardous waste collection event, and administers the Solid Waste User Fee. See http://www.otsegocounty.com/depts/sw/ to learn more.

Founded in 1968, OCCA is a 501(c)3 membership group dedicated to promoting the appreciation and sustainable use of Otsego County’s natural resources through education, advocacy, resource management, research, and planning. For the last 48 years, OCCA has played a key role in initiating and carrying out programs designed to improve and/or protect Otsego County’s air, land, and water, representing more than 800+ members and volunteers. Visit http://occainfo.org/ for more information.
OCCA Notes: Recycling is in the (plastic) bag

By Jeff O’Handley

Cliff Clavin, the character on the TV show “Cheers,” would frequently say, “It’s a little-known fact,” before boldly proclaiming something so outrageous it could almost be true. Here’s a little-known fact that might surprise Cliff, particularly because this one is true: Plastic bags are recyclable.

Sadly, many people probably still don’t realize this because you can’t put plastic bags in the recycling bin for your hauler to take away, and you can’t drop them off at the county transfer stations. Otsego County’s recyclables are taken to a facility that can’t process this material; in fact, just as we see bags getting tangled in trees and bushes, they can foul the gears, rollers and conveyor belts in the recycling center, leading to costly breakdowns. That doesn’t change the fact that the plastic itself can be recycled; it just has to go to the right place.

In 2009, in response to an ever-increasing amount of plastic bags going into landfills and polluting our environment, New York enacted the Plastic Bag Reduction, Reuse and Recycling Law. Under this law, stores that provide customers with plastic carryout bags and meet certain size conditions must take bags back and make sure they’re recycled.

Talk about a little-known fact! Furthermore, the law was amended last March. Those stores must now collect film plastic as well. Film plastic includes newspaper and dry cleaning bags; shrink wrap; sandwich, produce, cereal and frozen food bags; and the plastic packaging for toilet paper, napkins and paper towels. Instead of being consigned to the garbage, these things can now get a second life as plastic lumber, pipes and new bags. That’s a great improvement, but we can’t dispose of these items with our regular recyclables. Instead, they are collected at stores.

Before you rush off to bring everything film plastic to the nearest store, please read on. Only stores that provide customers with carryout film plastic bags are required to collect film plastic, and only if they are: 1) a standalone store with more than 10,000 square feet of retail space, or; 2) part of a chain that operates five or more stores in the state and has greater than 5,000 square feet of retail space. Many of the stores here in Otsego County, therefore, are not required to participate.

If the stated conditions are met, the store must provide a bin for bags and film plastic that is visible, easily-accessible to customers, and clearly marked, and must make sure the plastic actually gets recycled. Finally, participating stores must also accept any plastic bags for recycling, regardless of where the bags come from. So, no need to worry about separating your bags by brands, or rushing around to return them to the proper store.

While the burden for collection falls on the stores, it is up to consumers to do our part to make this successful. Call ahead to find out if a store is participating before bringing a load of film plastic, and don’t dump a pile at someone’s door if they’re not required to participate — it will likely end up in the landfill, which defeats the purpose of the program, and isn’t fair to the workers who get stuck cleaning it up, or to the store owners who have to foot the bill for disposal.

It’s also important that we follow proper disposal guidelines. Crumbs, cereal dust, grease, withered grapes: all these must be removed before putting film plastic in a store bin, or they may smell or attract pests. Keep your plastic dry, because moisture makes a mess, adds weight and promotes mold. Finally, hard plastic handles, zippers, drawstrings and such must be removed ahead of time. These items can damage the recycling equipment. This little extra work is well worth it in the long run.

Cliff might tell us, “It’s a little-known fact that Americans throw away more than 100 billion plastic bags a year.” This is a staggering number. Taking the time to learn how to dispose of these materials responsibly means we’ll use less oil to make new ones, and that we’ll keep the plastic out of our landfills, tree branches, lakes, rivers and oceans. Now, there’s a fact that means something.

Reprinted with permission from “The Cooperstown Crier.”

Editor’s Note: Among the stores participating locally are – CVS Pharmacy, 100 Main Street, Cooperstown; Family Dollar, 9 Commons Drive, Cooperstown (Tops Plaza); Hannaford Supermarket, 705 State Highway 28, Oneonta; Home Depot, 659 State Route 23, Oneonta; Lowe’s, 5283 State Highway 23, Oneonta; Office Max, 5006 State Highway 23, Oneonta; Price Chopper, 1000 Main Street, Oneonta; Rite Aid, 94 Chestnut Street, Oneonta; Tops Supermarket, 5 Commons Drive, Cooperstown; Wal-Mart, 5054 State Highway 23, Oneonta.
OCCA assumes lead role in ag, farmland plan revise

Otsego County Conservation Association has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District to take the lead in updating of the county’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

The AFPP update process began in 2014 with a survey distributed to Otsego County farmers, followed by a series of public forums geared toward the farming community. The original plan, adopted in January 1999, was designed to protect, preserve, and enhance farming in the county, and to ensure that Otsego County remains home to productive agriculture in the future.

Through its Circuit Rider Planner Program, OCCA provides assistance to municipalities, county agencies, and nonprofit organizations in land-use planning matters ranging from comprehensive plan updates to amending zoning regulations to various mapping services. OCCA Environmental Planner Danny Lapin is point person for the AFPP update.

“Danny will be working closely with Karen Sullivan of the Otsego County Planning Department and Soil and Water’s Jordan Clements to move things to the next level,” said OCCA Executive Director Darla M. Youngs.

“OCCA has been involved in the AFPP update prior to this as a working group member, and we’re honored to move into a role that will help facilitate the process,” Youngs said.

The current AFPP strategy outlines seven goals: 1) improve awareness and recognition of the importance of the economic and environmental roles of agriculture; 2) improve profitability and the economic viability of farms and encourage new farming and agriculturally-related enterprises; 3) ensure that farming can continue as an industry and strengthen the role of agriculture in Otsego County’s economic development; 4) implement long term, cost effective farmland protection measures; 5) ensure and improve sustainability of the agricultural infrastructure that supports farming; 6) enhance farm-transfer programs so that needs of retiring and new farm operators are met; and 7) sustain the rural landscape and the natural resources that support both farm and non-farm uses.

“A lot has changed since the 1999 plan,” said Lapin.

“Farmers are faced with a host of new challenges. At the same time, there are a wide range of fantastic opportunities and technologies available to farmers that we would like to tap into. Updating this plan will allow us to chart a path forward in terms of protecting the economic viability of Otsego County’s agricultural industry and in terms of protecting the agricultural land base for the next generation of farmers,” he explained.

Upcoming actions for updating the plan include: review of 2012 USDA agricultural census data; interviews with county farmers and agri-business operators; map revisions; local inter-municipal reviews; additional farmer forums; engagement of local municipalities; and the development and updating of strategies to address key issues facing agriculture in Otsego County today.

This effort is made possible with a grant and assistance from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, a donation by The Scriven Foundation, and a local match provided by working group participants. Funding is being administered on behalf of the Otsego County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board by the Planning Department and SWCD.

Local agencies and officials concerned with farming in Otsego County are currently meeting to move forward with the update process. Committee members hope the update to the existing plan will offer an opportunity to actively engage farmers and include their insights and perspectives in the final document.

Those interested in participating in and/or contributing to the AFPP update process should contact Lapin at (607) 547-4488 for more information.

Public Input Invited

The updated AFPP will examine the current status of agriculture in Otsego County and establish a comprehensive strategy on farm and farmland protection that takes into consideration needs and trends specific to Otsego County. As a first step, OCCA is inviting farmers, agricultural producers, ag-related businesses, and the public to share their thoughts on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing agriculture and land protection in Otsego County. People are also asked to share their vision for agriculture in Otsego County in 10 years (see links below).

Climate, clean energy options to be discussed

Robyn Reynolds, a sustainability planner with Climate Action Associates, will give a presentation at Earth Festival on Saturday, April 9 titled “Climate and Energy Action in New York State.”

According to Reynolds, communities across New York State are realizing the opportunities associated with adopting sustainable practices and exploring clean energy options. The host of benefits associated with climate and energy planning range from enhancing ecological quality, reducing energy costs, and increasing local economic growth to being less vulnerable in the case of extreme weather events.

“I’ll give a brief overview of local climate change impacts and resources for communities to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to plan for the future effects of climate change,” Reynolds said.

Climate Action Associates is a sustainability planning and energy analysis firm based in Watervliet. Reynolds’ expertise in energy and climate policy paired with her local government educational and professional background helps her connect with community leaders and members to drive action and inform decision-making.

Reynolds has spent the last several years working in sustainability and climate action programs in the Capital Region and across New York State and has delivered tailored technical assistance to enable communities to reduce energy consumption and costs, enhance community resilience, adopt clean energy technologies, and advance community goals. She has worked on a number of projects involving organics diversion and recycling, analysis of municipal greenhouse gas operations and energy use, and evaluation of fleet efficiency.

A long-time resident of the Capital Region, Reynolds continues to be inspired by the efforts of local communities to engage with sustainable practices and take action against the future effects of climate change.

Reynolds will speak at 2 p.m. on April 9. Her presentation, to be followed by a question and answer session, is free and open to the public. Pre-registration is preferred by April 7; community members, local government staff, elected officials and municipal leaders are welcome to attend. To pre-register, visit http://occainfo.org/program-and-event-sign-up-form/ or call OCCA at (607) 547-4488.

Guenther
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them would be support well spent.”

Guenther’s assistance for Earth Festival has come primarily in the form of creating television ads promoting the event. Since his sponsorship began, Earth Festival attendance has increased every year. Guenther has also promoted other OCCA events such as Oktoberfest and, most recently, a “Clean, Drain, and Dry” public education campaign to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

“I love to continually look for ways to improve our area,” Guenther said. “I am very fortunate to live in an area that is so beautiful and has some of the nicest, environmentally-conscious people I have ever met.”

Guenther’s own personal philosophy lines him up nicely with that of Subaru, a company known for its environmentally-proactive policies, which made it the first zero-landfill automobile manufacturer.

“Subaru is a perfect fit for the person I am,” he said.

Recollection
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Otsego County are the streams and rivers. It is criss-crossed with beautiful, unique streams of water flowing over smooth rocks. Every inch of the streams is a masterpiece and they are very convenient to explore and hike through. Streams are home to many delightful surprises that make them so interesting and fun. In streams you can find islands, small waterfalls, large plates of shale, deep pools, and, of course, animals, including crayfish and minnows.

The Susquehanna River is another amazing body of water that starts in Otsego County and flows all the way down to the Chesapeake Bay. Every year you and your family take a day to go canoeing down the Susquehana. It is always fun, but the best part is when you take a rest stop. Every year you find a new place to stop, sometimes two places. Every time the site you choose is spectacular and interesting. Once you found a rope swing going over a deep pool with a huge hill made entirely of clay. Another time you ate lunch under a big tree whose branches hung over the water and whose roots stretched out far above the ground. On your trips you point out big fish or interesting dragonflies, or see who can make the biggest whirlpools with the paddles.

Perhaps the most important of all the geographical wonders in Otsego County is Otsego Lake. You, and many other kids and adults alike, swim in it at popular lakeside swimming parks, like Three Mile Point, Glimmerglass, and Fairy Spring. You also sail on Otsego Lake. You sometimes sail on your dad’s sailboat with your sister or a friend. You also do a sailing camp at the Otsego Sailing Club. During this camp you sail around Otsego Lake on small sailboats called lasers. The residents of Otsego County can enjoy everything from fishing to ice skating. Our county would not be the same without this beautiful lake.

Unfortunately, I’ve noticed over the last 50 years that the residents of Otsego County often take their amazing environment for granted. But I’ve learned that this unique resource is a privilege, not a right. If we do not appreciate and protect nature it will be destroyed. Not long ago, all of New York State, including Otsego County, was threatened by hydrofracking, a way of extracting natural gas and oil that requires opening the rocks beneath the earth’s surface. If the frackers had succeeded, many of the beautiful waterways of Otsego County probably would have been polluted, because fracking uses chemicals called contaminants that could have made the water unusable for anything – be it swimming, sailing or fishing. Luckily, hydrofracking was banned, but it was a close call. Something just as dangerous could easily happen again.

In other places, big companies have been destroying wildlife at alarming rates. Habitat loss is the primary threat to plants and animals. Every year 100,000 square kilometers of forests are destroyed. If your generation continues like this, there will be no forests left on earth by the time you are an old man.

It may sound like there is no hope, that the future is set in stone, but there is an alternative. There are many things you and your acquaintances can do to help conserve our stunning county. Wind and solar energy are great alternatives to fossil fuels. Conservation can be as simple as turning off a light. Anyone can do it. Otsego County needs to be appreciated and protected.

I will not say whether the environment improves or gets worse in the future, for that is your choice and the choice of everyone around you. Choose well. Good luck.
**Homeowners happy with solar installation, process**

By Nora Ashwood

As we witness climate change, the depletion of fossil fuels, and the advent of fracking all posing serious threats to the environment and our health, the need for an alternative energy source is more urgent than ever. Solar power appears to be the most viable and sustainable solution, since it is clean, renewable, and readily available. Solar providers are making it easier than ever for consumers to have this technology. With all the great advantages of solar power, it is quickly becoming the alternative energy of choice.

In an effort to get first-hand information about installing a solar system, I interviewed Win McIntyre, former OCCA Board member and president of OCCA. Win and his wife built their house just seven years ago, making sure that it was extremely energy efficient, well insulated, and furnished with special energy-conserving appliances. One thing they didn’t do at the time, however, was convert to solar power. With just the two of them in a specifically-designed home, they used relatively little electricity. Win estimates their old bills averaged about “70 to 75 bucks month.” He says he is a “firm believer in alternative energy,” but at that rate they assumed it could never be worth it for them to go solar.

The McIntyres have been approached many times in the past to convert to solar, because they live in such an ideal location – a sunny, open area with few trees. But again, they figured they could never recoup the cost with such low bills. Until one day, Win told me, “This man came to our house and I almost threw him out.” But after hearing what he had to say, the McIntyres became more and more interested because this man told a different story. The man was from Solar City, a national solar panel installation company, and he informed Win and his wife of the Power Purchase Agreement.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the definition of a Solar Power Purchase Agreement (PPA or SPPA) “is a financial arrangement in which a third party developer owns, operates, and maintains the photovoltaic (PV) system, and a host customer agrees to site the system on its roof or elsewhere on its property and purchases the system’s electric output from the solar services provider.”

In this case, the McIntyres are the host customers while Solar City is the third party developer and solar services provider. When the man from Solar City first contacted them about a PPA, the McIntyres quite readily agreed. That was in February 2015 and, from then until May 2015, planning was underway for a PPA.

Win recounted for me the process.

“Solar City did an assessment of our house, checking out the building structure and the roof, and watching the sun angles,” he explained.

After that, the information collected was sent to the Solar City headquarters, where they made a specifically designed solar system based on the McIntyres’ electricity usage and their house, which then went to New York State for approval.

Win said that Solar City installed the solar panels on their roof in May, in less than a day.

“They didn’t cut any trees or make a mess,” Win said. And, from his standpoint as an engineer, he added, “They did a great job.”

The McIntyres didn’t have to do much except agree to have the solar system placed on their roof; Solar City installs, maintains, and pays for the system. Win and his wife then purchase a set amount of kilowatt hours based on their historical usage for a price reduced by approximately $30 a month. The remaining energy produced by the solar panels is then sent back to the company. If the McIntyre household usage ever goes above their set amount, they won’t have to worry though, because they can always buy more from the solar company.

“Basically,” Win said, “it’s like paying an electric company such as National Grid, only the money goes instead to the solar company.”

There is one big difference from a regular utility company, though: The McIntyres are in a 20-year agreement with Solar City. During that time, Solar City is responsible for any problems with the system, and the McIntyres have to use solar power. However, to quote Solar City’s website, “You’ll secure your solar electricity rates for up to 20 years, protecting you from future energy price spikes.”

When time is up, the host customer has the option to buy that particular system already installed on their house.

Win told me that even if the cost per month had been equal or more than his original bills, he still would have gone solar.

“It is clean and powered by the sun,” McIntyre said.

He believes that prospective solar users “should just go for it, and even if you think that it wouldn’t work for you, it might not be true … You should check out all sorts of companies, research it online, and then see.”

There are many different methods of going solar available that are designed to fit the individual homeowners’ needs, Win pointed out.

As we try to break from our dependence on fossil fuels, solar power – being one of the easiest, cleanest and most affordable of alternative energies – appears to be the best solution.

It is clear after interviewing Win McIntyre, reading countless articles, and speaking with Mary Jo Cronin of Revolution Solar, a local solar business, that solar energy is not just something we read about in foreign places, but rather something that is being used more and more in our own communities.

Going solar is about far more than how much we might or might not save on our monthly bills. Mary Jo Cronin reflected that, “Even if it doesn’t effect you right now, you’re doing it for our future.”

Nora Ashwood is an intern and contributing writer for OCCA.
**Microplastics an emerging water quality concern**

By Danny Lapin

For decades, water quality professionals have faced the challenge of controlling a variety of conventional (e.g., nutrients, suspended solids, oil, grease) and nonconventional (e.g., pharmaceuticals and other synthetic materials) pollutants and toxic chemicals that can harm aquatic life as well as public health. Microplastic waste, or microplastics, are contaminants of recent and growing concern.

Microplastics are synthetic particles less than or equal to five millimeters in their largest dimension. Increasing numbers of personal care products such as toothpaste, facial scrubs, and hand and body washes marketed over the last decade contain manufactured microplastics or “microbeads” as an exfoliating agent. A single package of a product can contain hundreds or thousands of microplastics. A number of companies have volunteered to remove microplastics from their products, and states have passed bans on microplastics. Several states including New York are currently considering bans on microplastics. The U.S. has passed a federal ban to be in effect as of July 1, 2017. National and international bans are under consideration in Canada and by the European Union.

After use, microplastics are washed down the drain and typically end up in municipal sewer systems. Because they are so small, municipal wastewater treatment plants often do not have the technology necessary to remove them from the waste stream. According to a report from the World Economic Forum, 78 million tons of plastics are produced each year, 32% of which is then released into the environment. A study conducted by the New York State Attorney General’s Office revealed that microplastics were found in effluent samples from 25 out of 34 wastewater treatment plants tested. This finding suggests that microplastics are being discharged at a majority of wastewater treatment plants statewide.

The term “microplastics” also encompasses small particles that result from the breakdown over time of plastic bottles and other plastic products. Some aquatic and marine organisms cannot effectively differentiate between plastics and their food sources. Because of this, microplastics are accidentally being ingested by small organisms like plankton and corals. Most academic research to date has focused on the effects microplastics have on zooplankters and larger animals. However, there is a growing need to understand the impact microplastics have on algae. This type of knowledge will allow researchers to obtain a better understanding of how microplastics may potentially move up the food chain.

A 2015 study by Kiyoko Yokota of the State University of New York at Oneonta was conducted to assess the effect of microplastics on algae. Yokota’s study compared batches of blue-green algae that were exposed to microplastics against a control group not exposed to microplastics. Initial results indicated that microplastics tend to reduce the colony size and other growth characteristics of certain blue-green algal species. The study also indicated that microplastics stick to one type of cyanobacterium (*Dolichospermum*) more often than to another (*Microcystis*). These two types of algae are known to be capable of producing toxins in some cases, and changes to their growth patterns may affect bloom formation as well as consumption by grazers (zooplankters). This is of concern to lake managers because, if organisms lower on the food chain are exposed to higher levels of toxins, it could follow that these toxins may eventually make their way up the food chain to larger organisms.

A 2014 study conducted by Holly Waterfield of SUNY Oneonta and a team of Biological Field Station summer interns sought to determine the presence of microplastics at wastewater treatment plants in Cooperstown and Utica. However, the results from the study were inconclusive. It should be noted that the methodology for detecting microplastics in aquatic environments is improving and, therefore, future testing could bring more definitive results. Additionally, Waterfield and Yokota hypothesize that on-site wastewater treatment systems may be acting as a buffer that prevents microplastics from entering the Otsego Lake Watershed. Proper maintenance and sludge disposal, however, are critical for ensuring that septic systems are capturing as many microplastics as they can.

While microplastics have not been detected in local drinking water sources to date, the risk of their presence is very real. The research of Yokota and Waterfield, coupled with documented environmental and public health impacts of plastics pollution, show a real need to conduct additional localized research to determine whether microplastics are present in our drinking water and, if so, to develop appropriate best management practices accordingly.

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*‘Keeping Pace With the REV’*

Governor Cuomo’s ambitious energy policy initiative, known as “Reforming the Energy Vision,” or “REV,” is intended to allow New Yorkers to transition away from a centralized energy system to a more decentralized model as well as to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase energy generated from renewable resources, and reduce energy consumption. Environmental Planner Danny Lapin provides an overview of the REV, New York State’s energy overhaul process, in a recent white paper now available on OCCA’s website—http://occainfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/OCCA-Keeping-Pace-with-the-REV.pdf.
OCCA Annual Garage Sale!

Sat., April 30 & Sun., May 1, 2016
Sat. 9am-3pm; Sun. 10am-2pm

Accepting donations of gently used...

Furniture    Appliances
Toys          Books
House Wares   Sporting Goods

Other Items

Please **NO** TV’s unless **HD**

COLLECTION DATES:
Monday, April 25 through
Thursday, April 29 from 9am-4pm
at the Cooperstown Farmers’ Market

Otsego County Conservation Association
Sale location: 101 Main Street (behind KeyBank)
Cooperstown, NY 13326
Ph: 607-547-4488    E-mail: admin@occainfo.org
www.occainfo.org
First ever yoga sessions planned for Earth Festival

A healthy earth begins with a healthy body. Learn how to achieve this through yoga at Earth Festival 2016! Sessions will be hosted in the Milford Central School small gym on April 9 by yoga instructor Katherine Walters. Walters, of Love Your Life Fitness, will lead adults in beginner’s yoga classes at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Participants should bring comfortable clothing and a great attitude. Eclectic ambient music will be provided by Angelica Palmer and Friends. Coming from decades of teaching fitness and dance, Walters knew her whole world would change the morning tears of joy fell onto a borrowed yoga mat in class, inspiring her certification with Beth Shaw’s YogaFit and, a few years later, the 200-hour Kripalu Yoga Teacher Training. Walters said she feels eternally grateful for the opportunity to study with masters including Suddha, Rolf Gates and Priti Robyn Ross. She blends her passion and devotion with creativity in leading intelligently designed practices with kindness and compassion, and has a gift for connecting with her students in a way that encourages their inner radiance to shine. Adult yoga classes at Earth Festival will run approximately 45-60 minutes and are free of charge. Pre-registration is preferred. Call (607) 547-4488 or register online at http://occainfo.org/program-and-event-sign-up-form/.

Drop off used inkjet cartridges and small electronics with the following to benefit OCCA and the environment:

- KeyBank, 102 Main Street, Cooperstown
- Lions Club of Cooperstown
- Community Bank NA, 62 Main Street and 5378 State Highway 28, Cooperstown
- Cooper Country Abstract, 196 Main Street, Cooperstown
- Drop Spot Coming Soon at the Otsego County Chamber of Commerce