



Kent Environmental Council

Fall 2008

KEC Fall Forum to Focus on Environmental Issues on Nov. Ballot

The environmental concerns facing voters as they go to the polls in November is the focus of the Kent Environmental Council's Fall Forum on September 29 at the Kent United Church of Christ, 1400 E. Main Street. The program begins at 7 p.m. in the second-floor multipurpose room.

Three ballot issues will be discussed: a state constitutional issue to extend the Clean Ohio Fund (Issue 2), County Issue 32 for a 0.5-mill property tax levy to provide support for the Portage Park District—the first and only tax support to date, and County Issue 31 for a 0.5-mill levy to fund the Portage County Health Department. Addressing these issues are Harold Walker (KEC board member), Chris Craycroft (Portage Park District executive director) and Bob Howard (Portage County Health Levy Committee), respectively.

There is little doubt that the environmental movement has had its setbacks during the past several years through the manipulation of the budget and regulatory processes and by the rejection of environmental legislation at state and national levels. At best, crucial issues such as global climate change, energy conservation, alternative energy development, and continued air and water pollution from the consumption of fossil fuels have been neglected; at worst, there has been active governmental interference with environmental protections.

To correct the damage that has been done and to reverse these trends, a major change in direction by the fed-

eral government will be needed along with continued actions at the state and local levels. While it will be important to consider carefully the records and proposals of candidates for national office, this election will also present to Portage County voters

Portage Park District. The Portage Park District (Issue 32) is asking for a 0.5 mill property tax levy that would amount to about \$1.50 per month for a home valued at \$100,000. There is currently no basic tax support for county parks in contrast to neighboring counties, which have several million dollars of tax money to budget each year.

Portage County Health Department. The Portage County Health Department is requesting a 0.5-mill property tax levy (Issue 31). While Kent (and Ravenna city) voters do not vote on this issue because each has its own health department, this issue has implications for the general environmental health by, for example, regulating and inspecting home waste-disposal systems, the failure of which affect water quality in the Cuyahoga watershed. KEC also has many members living in unincorporated areas of the county and who thus can vote on this issue.

See *LEVIES*, p. 4.

Kent Environmental Council Presents . . .

The November Election: Your Vote and the Environment

United Church of Christ
Second-Floor Multipurpose Room
1400 E. Main Street
Kent, Ohio
7 p.m.

Agenda

- **Clean Ohio Fund constitutional issue**
Speaker: Harold Walker, KEC board member
- **Portage Park District 0.5-mill property tax levy**
Speaker: Chris Craycroft, Portage Park District executive director
- **Portage County Health Department 0.5-mill tax levy**
Speaker: Bob Howard, Portage County Health Levy Committee

several choices that can have a local impact. The intent of the fall forum is to explore the implications of three ballot issues on the local environment.

Clean Ohio Fund. The state Clean Ohio Fund is a \$400 million bond issue enacted in 2000 that has accomplished much with its investments. Portage County received a significant share of this money—more than \$3 million—which helped in the construction of four sections of The Portage bike and hike trail, two watershed conservation projects and six grants for farmland preservation. The bond issue now needs to be reauthorized for the good work to continue.

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KEC Endorses Park District Tax Levy

The Kent Environmental Council board voted unanimously at its August meeting to endorse Issue 32, a 0.5-mill, 10-year levy requested by the Portage Park District.

Portage County is the only county of all the surrounding counties that does not have an earmarked tax levy for park maintenance, property acquisition and programming. The district's current budget of less than \$175,000 comes from the county's general fund.

Portage County is growing rapidly with the expansion of housing from the Cleveland area. Such additional earmarked public funds are necessary to ensure adequate protection for local water supplies, the establishment of open-space corridors for wildlife and the pursuit of outdoor activities by people of all ages.

The park district, under the leadership of Executive Director Chris Craycroft (with the assistance of park board members Jim Tucker, Gary Cross, Betsy Tomasko, Dick Abbott and Alan Orashan) has done an outstanding job of leveraging funds from other sources. This has enabled the district to acquire the land and rights-of-way needed to expand The Portage bike and hike trail.

Unfortunately, some properties remain unavailable to the public because there are no funds to develop the need-

ed parking, trails and restroom facilities. The park board now is in the position of having to refuse gifts of property because funds are not available to make them usable for the public. It also has had to forgo applying for grant funds because a local match is required, the money for which is unavailable under current funding.

Passage of the levy would cost the owner of a \$100,000 house about \$1.50 per month, or the cost of a couple of cups of coffee or the cost of a Sunday newspaper. It is a small price to pay for a huge payoff for the county's children and grandchildren, who will be gifted with open space, clean drinking water and recreational facilities, and the opportunity to see wildlife in its natural habitat.

KEC members are urged to vote in favor of the levy, which will appear as Issue 32 on the November ballot. If you want to hike the extra mile in support of the levy, please pass out literature, write a letter to the editor, get commitments from 10 friends to vote in favor, staff an information booth, sign an advertisement of support or volunteer in some other capacity.

For volunteer opportunities or more information, go to info@citizensportageparks.org, or call Nancy Adams at 330/673-6548 and leave a message noting your interest in helping to get the levy issue passed.

New Solid Waste, Recycling Director for Portage County Introduced

The executive director of the Portage County Solid Waste Management District, William G. Steiner II, met recently with representatives from the Kent Environmental Council for an update on the district's recycling program and other activities. Steiner previously served as operations coordinator at the county re-cycling center. Steiner said that he plans "to run the district like a business."

With the accession of the new director, some staff consolidations and adjustments have been instituted, and a new accounting supervisor, Jackie Pettet, has assumed responsibility for financial coordination.

Steiner reported that the district's finances are in good shape and that increased fuel costs are being offset by increases in revenues from recyclables. Implementation and expansion of a transfer-station operation is being considered. Cooperation with adjacent counties has resulted in the provision of curbside recycling routes in Stark county, as well as various services in Akron and Summit County.

i-Tree Workshop Coming in Sept.

Learn how to calculate the environmental benefits of trees at a workshop sponsored by the Master Gardeners of Portage County on September 25. The workshop begins at 7 p.m. at the Kent Free Library.

i-Tree is a suite of tools designed to calculate the environmental services and benefits of trees. The i-Tree tools developed from a public/private partnership involving the U.S. Forest Service, Davey Tree Expert Company, the International Society of Arboriculture, the Arbor Day Foundation and the Environmental Protection Agency.

See *WORKSHOP*, p. 4.

Draft of Lake Erie Coastal Land Management Rules Released

The Revised *Draft Rules for Submerged Lands Leases and Permits* under Ohio's Coastal Management Program have been released for public review and comment.

The Coastal Management Program requires the issuance of a lease and/or permit for any development on submerged lands along Ohio's Lake Erie shoreline.

The public is invited to attend one of three public meetings scheduled for 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.:

- September 4 — Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge, 14000 S.R. 2, Oak

Harbor (Ottawa County)

- September 11 — Painesville Township Park, 1025 Hardy Road, Painesville (Lake County)
- September 18 — Don Umerley Civic Center, 21016 Hilliard Blvd., Rocky River (Cuyahoga County)

No deadline has been set for written comments. Send comments to Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Office of Coastal Management, 105 W. Shoreline Drive, Sandusky, Ohio 44870. For more information, call 419/626-7980 or go to <http://ohiodnr.com/coastal>.

KEC Summer Volunteers Thanked

Green hurrahs to all those KEC members and friends of KEC who contributed in some way to the success of our Kent Environmental Council Heritage Festival Booth in July and for other activities so far this year.

Heritage Festival Materials. The following individuals provided materials for the KEC booth at the Kent Heritage Festival:

- Dawn Alber, Portage Park District — environmental education materials
- Chris Carman and Kent Roosevelt High School Environmental Club members — energy-generating bike display
- Robert Fildes — update of energy-efficient dollhouse
- Audrey Kessler — KEC brochure design
- Tim Lenihan, Ohio Department of Community Services — energy conservation brochures
- Lowe's of Streetsboro — energy conservation brochures
- Laura Murphey, adviser, Stanton Middle School Garden Club — materials for poster display
- William Steiner, executive director, Portage County Solid Waste Management District—recycling center brochures and litter bags
- Gordon Vars—poster for Stanton Middle School Garden Club display
- Lynn Vogel, Portage County Master Gardeners—Ravenna rain garden interpretive sign and rain garden manuals

Heritage Festival Booth Workers.

The following individuals helped staff the KEC booth at the festival: Nancy Adams, Caroline Arnold, Harriet Begala, Debrah Butler, Edith Chase, Bev and Larry Cole, Connie

Craven, Mary Lou Holly, Pat Keller, Terry and Liz Kuhn, Karl Liske, Craig Lucas, Renee Ruchotze, Beth Schoonover, Kathy and Marcus Schumann, John Thomas, Ann Ward, Harold Walker, and Bob Wilson.

A special note of thanks is extended to Heather Myers, who made arrangements for the Technical Consumer Products Company Inc. in Aurora to donate 300 compact fluorescent bulbs so that KEC could distribute them to booth visitors. Each visitor who received a bulb was asked to fill out a KEC interest card and should have received a complimentary copy of this quarter's newsletter.

Mitchell Bequest Grant Recipients. Thanks to the KEC's Mitchell-bequest grant recipients for the hands-on environmental projects that are engaging Kent area school students in learning about the natural world.

Their projects will be highlighted soon on KEC's Web site (www.kentenvironment.org) under the Legacy for Learning tab.

The recipients are Kent Roosevelt High School Environmental Club (advisor Chris Carman), Stanton Middle School Garden Club (co-advisers Laura Murphey and Megan Joseph), Portage Park

District (program coordinator Dawn Alber and Portage County Master Gardeners (program assistant Lynn Vog).

KEC plans many activities and programs throughout the year that work more smoothly and more efficiently with the help of volunteers. If you think you would like to take a more active role in educating Kent residents about local environmental issues and those statewide issues that affect the local community, contact Nancy Adams at 330/673-6548, or go to www.kentenvironment.org to sign up or find more information on volunteering.

CAC Offers Opportunity for Community Outreach

With winter approaching, the Kent Environmental Council once again encourages individuals and organizations to consider a contribution to the Emergency Energy Conservation Fund (EECF), which KEC helped to establish in 2006 in conjunction with Kent-area churches. The Community Action Council of Portage County administers the funds, which are tax deductible.

These funds are used to provide assistance for low- to moderate-income individuals and families in Portage County to enhance the energy efficiency of their homes, while also reducing residential energy consumption and environmental pollution.

To make a tax-deductible contribution to the EECF, make checks payable to *Community Action Council*, write *EECF* on the memo line, and mail it to CAC, P. O. Box 917, 1036 W. Main Street, Ravenna, Ohio 44266.

For more information, check the the KEC Web site, www.kentenvironment.org, or contact the Community Action Council of Portage County at 330/297-1456 info@cacportage.net.

KEC Web Site Enhancements Under Way

Enhancements are being made to the KEC Web site. The changes and additions are intended to provide you with more detailed information than what is published in the newsletter.

We will be implementing the enhancements over time, so check the site often to see what has been constructed. Possible additions include news items, feature articles, action alerts and an opinions page.

We want the site to be **the** place to go for local, county and state environmental information.

www.kentenvironment.org



Heritage Festival visitors learn about environmental topics.

The League of Conservation Voters (www.lcv.org) has published its scorecard for the first session of the 110th Congress, in which the voting records of the two presidential nominees may be compared. In 2007, there were 15 votes on actions with significant environmental impact. Sen. John McCain of Arizona was absent for all 15 of these votes so that his environmental voting score was zero percent. His score for the 109th Congress was 41 percent, a bit better than his lifetime voting score of 24 percent. Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois was absent for four of the 15

key votes and one of the remaining votes was viewed as anti-environment, giving him a 2007 rating of 67 percent. His rating was 96 percent for the 109th Congress, earning him an 86 percent lifetime score.

Neither of Ohio's senators is running for election this year, but our representative for the 17th District, Tim Ryan, has an 80 percent rating for 2007 and a 90 percent rating overall for the 109th Congress.

As the presidential campaigns develop, it will be worth tracking the emphasis the candidates place on environmental issues as well as their particular positions and policy recommendations as they affect the local environment.

Procex Facility Receives Notice for Air Pollution

The Akron Regional Air Quality Management District has issued a Notice of Violation to the Procex plant at the intersection of Cherry Street and Overholt Road in Kent, based on particulate emissions.

After numerous complaints from local residents, who described a horrible odor of burning rubber, Akron Regional Air Quality began an investigation that resulted in observations of particulate emissions in excess of the 20 percent opacity limit. Observations included particulate emissions of 48 percent and even 50 percent opacity.

Procex will be required to obtain an EPA permit and must make changes to its hoods, scrubber and stacks to come into compliance with air-quality regulations.

Procex uses induction heating to separate rubber and other coatings from metal parts so that the parts can be reused.

WORKSHOP

Continued from p. 2

The public-domain software programs enable users to link advocacy efforts and management techniques for community tree resources. The four i-Tree software applications provide the basics to get started on urban forest resource projects.

The workshop will include information about basic tree care to promote optimal tree health and maximize tree benefits—such as proper tree placement for energy conservation relative to one's home and tree selection criteria to assist in choosing the right tree for a particular landscape. The workshop should be particularly helpful for municipal foresters or commercial arborists who manage the structure, function and value of urban tree populations.

The workshop is free, but registration is required. If you are interested in attending, contact Kelly at 330/296-6432.

KEC Endorses State Funding Renewal for Clean Ohio Fund Bond Package

The Kent Environmental Council board unanimously adopted a resolution at its August meeting supporting a full funding renewal of the Clean Ohio Fund bond package, a statewide issue on the November ballot.

The Clean Ohio Fund was



adopted eight years ago as authorization for the issuance of \$400 million in bonds for funding green-space conservation projects,

brownfields revitalization, recreational development and farmland preservation. Since its adoption, the Clean Ohio Fund has provided the money for more than 700 projects throughout the state, including the following:

- Preservation of more than 26,000 acres of natural areas and 16,000 acres of farms
- Creation of more than 216 miles of recreational trails
- Clean-up of 141 polluted sites

The fund is now exhausted. Passage of the ballot issue will allow for the reauthorization of \$400 million in funding. Passage does not represent a

direct tax increase because bonds are amortized through state general revenues.

Portage County voters will want to give special attention to the significant benefits the county has received from the Clean Ohio Fund—a total of more than \$3,126,000—through the following projects:

- Bicycle and pedestrian trails (more than \$780,000), including The Portage bike and hike trail and the Kent Downtown Trail (now under construction)
- Breakneck Creek protection (\$138,432), including the purchase of land by the Portage Park District)
- Cuyahoga River restoration (\$590,855), including modification of the Kent Dam
- Farmland preservation (more than \$1,617,000), including six farms totalling more than 700 acres
- Brownfields restoration (\$200,000), including the city of Kent's research on petroleum-contaminated property slated for clean-up

Reauthorization of the Clean Ohio Fund will extend the possibilities for similar projects, help promote a broad range of environmental conservation initiatives, improve the quality of life for Ohioans and should, as Gov. Ted Strickland has pointed out, contribute significantly to the creation of jobs.

KEC Funds Moved to Portage Foundation

After several months of deliberation, the Kent Environmental Council board approved the establishment of two funds at the Portage Foundation, Portage County's only community philanthropic foundation.

Thanks to the generosity of longtime members John and Betty Mitchell, a bequest in the amount of \$20,000 was made to the Kent Environmental Council from their estate in 2006. Half of those funds were used last year to support four community environmental projects:

- Purchase of equipment by the environmental science class at Kent Roosevelt High School to measure water quality
- Purchase of worm-composting bins for the Garden Club at Stanton Middle School in Kent
- Creation of an interpretive sign for a demonstration rain garden to be established by the Portage County Master Gardeners
- Purchase of educational materials to be used with Portage Park District programs

These four projects were selected for funding from among 13 proposals submitted by community groups, schools and government or nonprofit agencies. The KEC board was pleased with the interest these projects have generated in the Portage County community and wanted to find a way to make these small grants "sustainable."

The board therefore authorized the KEC treasurer to transfer \$5,000 (or the remaining Mitchell bequest) to the Portage Foundation to establish

an endowment fund. The other \$5,000 will be placed into another Portage Foundation working account, which will receive proceeds from the endowment fund investments.

It is from this working fund that small grants can continue to fund environmental projects in six categories: environmental education, park and/or trail development, clean and renewable energy development, resource conservation, public policies that enhance sustainability, and related projects that might not fall neatly into one of the other areas.

KEC is incorporated as a 501c(4) organization because it advocates for political issues (but not candidates at any level), and contributions to KEC are not tax deductible. Establishment of these two accounts within the Portage Foundation, which is incorporated as a 501c(3) charitable foundation, will allow contributions to the KEC funds to be tax deductible.

Thanks to Ralph Kletzien, executive director of the Portage Foundation, and KEC members Walt Adams and Gene Wenninger for the work they put into this project.

The KEC board plans to launch the next request for grant proposals as soon as the transfer process has been completed. KEC members and friends will be able to contribute toward the growth of these two funds in the years ahead. Look for an announcement of the transfer completion date as well as detailed information concerning the donation procedure on the KEC Web site, www.kentenvironment.org.

Gas Prices Affect Pollution, Traffic

High prices at the gas pump are taking cars off the road and reducing air pollution, the Akron Regional Air Quality Management District (ARAQMD) reports.

The Federal Highway Administration estimates that from November 2007 through May 2008, Americans had driven 40.5 billion fewer vehicle miles than for the same period a year ago. The decrease in travel nationwide is equivalent to removing 1.3 million cars from the road for a year and 7.1 million tons of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, from the air. That is about the same amount of carbon dioxide that a large coal-fired power plant spews into the air every year.

In Ohio, drivers cut 134 million miles. "Every gallon of fuel that we avoid buying reduces emissions into our environment, so there are local and regional air-quality benefits," said Sam Spofforth, executive director of Clean Fuels Ohio.

Lynn Malcolm, director of ARAQMD, concludes that as difficult as higher gas prices are for consumers and the economy in general, it has had an unmistakably positive impact on the air and health. Northeast Ohio remains in nonattainment for clean air standards. However, Malcolm reports that there have been only four ozone exceedances this year to date (with an average of 28 exceedances in the eight-county attainment area). Also reported were 20 exceedances for fine particulate matter (particles less than 2.5 microns), which is less than the average.

As more people become fed up with paying \$4 a gallon for gas, they are turning to smaller cars, mass transit and other alternative modes of transportation. About 18 million bicycles have been sold annually in the United States in the past few years, accounting for about \$6 billion in sales, said Fred Clements, executive director of the National Bicycle Dealers Association in Costa Mesa, California.

The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) reports

See GAS, p. 6.

A Brief Review of GreenCityBlueLake

GreenCityBlueLake started as a "magical name," according to the organization's Web site. The phrase was intended to excite people's imaginations with the possibilities of creating green cities on a blue lake in Northeast Ohio.

The organization's Web site became a new kind of community workspace—an online presence where those advocating sustainability in the region can tell their stories, learn

from each other and develop strategies to accelerate the progress.

GreenCityBlueLake's vision of sustainability sees Northeast Ohio as part of a global movement that is "defining the future." Its objectives focus on a "community knowledge network" for sustainability. To learn about how to be an effective and appropriate user who contributes to the civic dialogue, go www.gcbl.org/about.

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that gas at \$4 a gallon has spurred commuter interest in OhioRideshare, with 299 active registrants in December 2007. The new AMATS *Bicycle and Pedestrian Needs Report* urges the establishment of a regional network of interconnected bike-ways. This network would be aimed at doing the following:

- Expanding the regional network for system continuity
- Connecting communities and residential areas with jobs, shopping, schools and other services
- Complementing and connecting improvements planned at the local level

Recently constructed bikeways include portions of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail in Summit County and The Portage bike and hike trail in Portage County. To meet its aims, the report presents a list of 52 recommended bikeway projects totaling more than \$135 million, including the extension of The Portage from Ravenna to Windham.

For more information, contact the following:

- ARAQMD at 330/375-2480
- AMATS at www.ci.akron.oh.us/AMATS/
- OhioRideshare at 800/825-7123 or www.ohiorideshare.com

And one final note: This year is the 100th anniversary of the Model T Ford, the first low-priced car that introduced motoring to the masses. The estimated average fuel economy of American cars today is the same as it was for the Model T!



KEC Membership Reminder . . .

Please take the time and energy to check your mailing label for the current status of your KEC membership.

If you see **REN** above your name and address, KEC is reminding you that it is time to **RENEW** your membership. A return-addressed envelope will be attached to the newsletter for your convenience. You can indicate your support of KEC at the following membership levels:

Sustaining, \$45; Family, \$35; Individual, \$25; Golden Buckeye, \$15; Golden Buckeye Family or Couple, \$25; Student, \$10

If you see OK on your label, you are a **member in good standing**. Thank you for your trust and support!

The letters **CC** mean that KEC has sent you a **complimentary copy** this month. Please consider joining KEC at any membership level you find appropriate. Make your check payable to Kent Environmental Council, and mail it to: Kent Environmental Council, P.O. Box 395, Kent, OH 44240.

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