



Kent Environmental Council

Fall 2009

KEC Fall Forum: Talking Trash— New Options in Portage County

The Kent Environmental Council has been involved in recycling since the organization began in 1970 and has been a leader throughout the state as recycling has become institutionalized.

KEC's Fall Forum will be devoted to a discussion of the future of recycling and resource conservation in Portage County, as many changes have occurred in the past 40 years.

The forum on Monday, October 5, at the United Church of Christ, 1400 E. Main Street, Kent, will start at 7 p.m. with a short business meeting to consider bylaws changes (see insert or Web site (What's New page) followed by a panel discussion at 7:30 p.m.

Four local speakers will be featured:

- Chuck Keiper - Portage County Commissioner. He will discuss new and rehabilitated facilities and

equipment, source separation and placing the Recycling Center on a sound financial footing.

- Bill Steiner - Director of the Portage County Recycling Center. He will discuss the current status and trends in recyclables, and new technologies and markets.
- Heather White - Kent State University Campus Environment and Operations. She will describe the waste reduction, reuse and recycling programs at Kent State, such as the Throw-and-Go program.
- Candy Pollard - Director of the Phyllis Zumkehr County Clothing Center. She will describe the center's reuse and recycling programs and all of the volunteers who make it possible.

A question-and-answer period will follow the presentations. Please make plans to join us.

Plans Developing for Plum Creek Restoration

The City of Kent is proposing to address problems with Plum Creek, its reservoir and the culvert beneath Mogadore Road. The dam has been found to require repair, and the culvert is being undermined, threatening the stability of the roadway. Federal stimulus funds are available for reconstruction of the culvert and removal of the dam as proposed by the Kent Parks and Recreation Department in order to improve the water quality of the Cuyahoga River watershed. Several environmental benefits arise from the restoration of Plum Creek in addition to public safety: improved stream flow, better aeration of the water and improved aquatic habitat.

At one time, dams served important functions, such as hydroelectric power generation and retention of surface water for public use. In the case of the Plum Creek dam, the purpose was to impound water to aid in the recharge of the city's main well-field to the west of Mogadore Road, which supplied the adjacent water treatment

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Company Drops Plans for Hydropower Project on Gorge Dam on Cuyahoga River

A Fairlawn company's efforts to construct hydroelectric power facilities at the Ohio Edison dam in Gorge Metro Park on the Cuyahoga River were dropped in June.

Metro Hydroelectric Company's \$4 million project was first proposed six years ago. It would have produced enough electricity to power 2,000 homes.

Metro Parks Serving Summit County and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency opposed the project because of the damage to Gorge Metro Park that would be created by

preconstruction studies and the construction itself. The project also would have interfered with the Ohio EPA's efforts to bring the Cuyahoga River into full attainment of federal and state water-quality standards.

The agency has suggested that the dam be removed because of the negative effects it has on water quality. Metro Parks took no position on removal of the dam.

Elaine Marsh, spokeswoman for Friends of the Crooked River, and area residents had raised many questions

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Last Chance . . . To Preserve Life on Earth

POWER

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When Larry Schweiger, president of the National Wildlife Federation, rhetorically asked an Akron Roundtable audience in August if global warming is alarming, his answer was that the threat from global warming is real and that Americans need to support green-energy options. He added that he is very concerned that too many Americans are unaware of the potential consequences of global warming.

Schweiger's new book, *Last Chance* (from Fulcrum Publishing), lays out the wide-ranging scientific evidence that Earth's ability to absorb carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases has been surpassed. He gave several examples: shrinking Arctic sea ice, melting ice in Greenland, methane gas emerging from lakes in Siberia and Alaska, increased storms, forest fires and lightning strikes, pine beetles that are wiping out western forests, and warmer oceans.

Global warming will have a big effect on wildlife, too, said Schweiger. Between 20 percent and 30 percent of animal and plant species are at risk if the annual average temperature increases 2.2 to 4 degrees Fahrenheit.

The climate effects are being felt in Ohio—with the Buckeye State, in effect, moving south at 30 feet per day, said Schweiger. Around the world, seas will continue to rise and methane will con-

tinue to leak from the tundra long after the planet's population has drastically cut greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. There is no time to waste.

What can citizens do? Schweiger recommends contacting elected representatives and senators, urging them to pass carbon-capping legislation, adopt a tight schedule to cut carbon dioxide emissions and support an international treaty to do the same worldwide. Ask them to put aside political differences and move toward clean domestic energy sources such as efficiency, wind, solar and geothermal. The people of Ohio and elsewhere can help set a new course toward recharging the nation's economy while stopping climate change, said Schweiger.

To contact Sen. Sherrod Brown, go to <http://brown.senate.gov/contact/>, and complete the online e-mail form. Send letters to 713 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510. To contact Sen. George Voinovich, go to <http://voinovich.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Contact.ContactForm>, and complete the online form. Send letters to 524 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. To contact Rep. Tim Ryan, go to http://timryan.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=129&Itemid=42. Send letters to 1421 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515.

over the last several years about the failures of previous attempts to generate hydropower on this dam, construction impacts on the steep slopes of the gorge that would increase nonpoint-source pollution, low flows during summer months, the insignificant amount of electricity generated and the loss of recreational opportunities in Gorge Park.

Thanks to the Kent residents who wrote letters or participated in the several public hearings (more than 350 attended) on the matter and stood up for the Cuyahoga River.

CREEK

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plant (circa 1888). The well-field and treatment plant were taken off-line in the 1970s, with the construction of a new water treatment plant on Hodgman Lane. Now the dam serves no municipal purpose. The main reservoir is heavily silted and prone to algal blooms, neither of which is beneficial to the creek. The old water treatment plant, now privately owned, is proposed to become a day-care facility.

KEC was one of the early proponents of the development of Plum Creek Park, and while some viewed the reservoir as an asset, it has become more of a detriment because it impedes water flow and stagnates. KEC believes that the option of removing the dam and restoring the stream to a more natural state would be a distinct benefit to the park, the community as a whole and the natural environment.

As of this writing, Kent City Council has voted in committee to approve the removal of the dam and the restoration of the stream. Implementing legislation is expected to be considered at a regular council meeting in September at a time yet to be announced. KEC members should take note of these developments and plan to voice their support to members of council. The plan may be viewed during regular business hours (8 a.m.-5 p.m.) Monday through Friday at the Kent Parks and Recreation Department, 497 Middlebury Road, Kent.

Headlines in Climate Change

The following are some recent headlines related to climate change from local and national print and audio sources:

World Sets Ocean Temperature Record. The U.S. National Climatic Data Center reports that July was the hottest the world's oceans have been in almost 130 years of record-keeping. The average water temperature worldwide was 62.6 degrees Fahrenheit. That is 1.1 degrees higher than the 20th century average and beat the previous high set in 1998 ([Cleveland] *Plain Dealer*, August 21, 2009).

Sea Levels Could Rise. Sea levels could rise by double previous estimates, up to three feet, by 2100 as a result of melting Arctic ice, according to the World Wildlife Fund (*Wall Street Journal*, September 2, 2009).

'Astroturf' Campaign Fights Climate Bill. Big oil and gas companies are using their trade associations to organize grassroots protests against the climate bill working its way through Congress, Steve Henn reports. Earlier in August, the American Petroleum Institute's president sent a memo to members asking them

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New Crain Ave. Bridge Sounds Death Knell for Two Centuries-Old Sycamores

Construction of the new Crain Avenue bridge may be seen as progress by some, but for two 100-year-old sycamore trees slated for removal, the future is not so bright.

These two living legends are on the chopping block to make way for the bridge project in downtown Kent. These trees began life on North Water Street before there were any cars on the road. They have seen history parade before them as the wheels of

progress rolled along the Cuyahoga River—from horses to trolleys to cars and semitrailers, sidewalks, sewers, utility poles—and telephone, gas and electric lines stretched through their branches.

Now they stand in the way of the largest construction project Portage



These 100-year-old Sycamore trees will be removed to construct the new Crain Avenue bridge.

County has ever seen. The Davey Tree calendar for 2009 states, "The death of one 70-year-old tree will return 3 tons of carbon to the atmosphere." Something to think about.

On the positive side, plans include the planting of hundreds of saplings in the area as part of the bridge and landscaping plans. But the rarity of old growth in a downtown setting should make these

trees a high priority for preservation. They are of enormous historical and environmental value. The lowering of North Water Street, as is needed for the bridge project, could spell doom for these stalwart monuments of a bygone day. It would be nice to think that everyone would relish these trees and protect them as family.

Film Illustrates Effects of MTR Mining Method

The documentary "Coal Country" tells of the devastating effects of the mountain-top removal method of mining. The film premiered at the Akron Civic Theater in mid September.

The film portrays the social conflicts and the devastating environmental damage inflicted by the coal strip-mining technique known as MTR in which the tops of mountains are dynamited to gain access to coal seams. Debris is then dumped into river valleys below.

There is an essential conflict between the economic and energy needs of society and the devastating effects of this process on the lives of the people of Appalachia. Watercourses are disrupted and poisoned along with aquifers. The air is rent with the thunder of dynamite and filled with dust and pollutants that constitute a real danger to the lungs of growing children as well as those with respiratory illnesses.

According to filmmaker Mari-Lynn Evans and writer-director Phyllis Geller, who were present at the theater to introduce the film to a full house, "we have tried to show the complexity of this issue. We talked to the courageous people of the coal fields, average people who have created a powerful grassroots movement to save their land and their culture. We also met with a coal company manager, a well-meaning man caught in a difficult position. We hope the film will move you and inspire you to take part in the critical debate over America's energy future."

KEC was an early supporter of legislation such as the Ohio Strip Mining law in the 1970s. Consistent with this commitment, KEC has joined the Ohio and the Portage Trail Sierra Clubs in sponsoring the showing of this unique and important documentary and in supporting several Appalachian citizen groups concerned about the environment.

"Coal Country" will be broadcast on the Discovery Channel on November 14.

Screening of 'Forever Wild' to Help Raise Funds for Portage Park District

One of America's most unique folksingers and backcountry travelers, Walkin' Jim Stoltz, on tour from the mountains of Montana, will bring his powerful multimedia show, "Forever Wild," to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent, located at 228 Gouglar Ave. in Kent, on Friday, October 2 at 7:30 p.m. The cost is \$18 in advance or \$20 at the door.

The mix of stunning photography, stories and music make this one-of-a-kind concert an inspiring journey into the nation's last wilderness areas. All proceeds will benefit the Portage Park District.

Walkin' Jim gets his name from the nearly 27,000 miles he has walked through the wild country of North America. Carrying a guitar and writing his songs along the way, his lyrics express a great love and respect for

the Earth and the wild places he knows so well. Known for his powerful baritone and emotion-packed vocals, Stoltz's "Forever Wild" show is much more than a concert. It combines live music and poetry with stunning, multi-image slides to create a stirring celebration of the natural world. During the performance, he will share images and songs from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, his Yellowstone-to-Yukon walk, the Utah canyon country, the Northern Rockies and wild places all across America.

Stoltz has been performing for more than 30 years and has toured extensively throughout the United States for the past 23 years. In 2006, he organized a 45-state outreach tour with other musicians and authors and

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to help turn out hundreds of employees for protests in more than 20 states. The aim is to undermine support for the climate change bill in Congress. Earlier this summer, a lobby shop working for the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity fabricated letters to members of Congress from local chapters of the NAACP and other civil rights groups, opposing climate-change legislation in the House. It turned out that these organizations had not send any such letters. The coal coalition apologized and fired the lobbyists (National Public Radio, August 17, 2009).

WILD

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worked with hundreds of community organizations to gain support for clean water, roadless lands and wildlife.

Jim received the Environmental Protection Agency's Outstanding Achievement Award for his sharing of nature and wilderness across America. Copies of Stoltz's book *Walking With the Wild Wind* will be available for signing at the event. His songs from nine audio CDs are played often on National Public Radio and will be available for purchase. To learn more about Stoltz, visit his Web site at www.walkinjim.com.

Tickets may be purchased at Woodsy's Music in Kent or by contacting Renee Ruchotzke at 330-968-7195 or zimlar@yahoo.com. Seating is limited.



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; 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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