



Kent Environmental Council

March 2007

Celebrate Spring at Ninth Annual Portage County Environmental Conservation Awards Benefit Dinner

Think spring, and help the Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) with its efforts to preserve the scenic beauty, rural character and natural resources of Portage County through its purchase of conservation easements within the county. To lend your support, make plans to attend the Ninth Annual Portage County Environmental Conservation Awards Benefit Dinner, organized this year by the Portage County Environmental Roundtable and the PLACE Chapter of the WRLC. The WRLC will be the beneficiary of proceeds raised from this year's dinner.

The event is set for April 14 at the American Legion Hall, 1945 Mogadore Road, in Kent. A reception and silent auction begin at 6 p.m. and are followed by dinner and speaker at 7 p.m. The event aims to bring together a broad cross section of people not necessarily members of environmental advocacy organizations to celebrate success with individuals and groups who have made a positive impact by improving the environment in their neighborhood in a variety of ways. The event also provides an opportunity for like-minded individuals and groups to raise funds for projects that will help sustain

the Portage County environment. This year's partner organization is the WRLC, which began in 2006 following the merger of several small land conservancies in Northeast Ohio (see article, p. 2). Speaker for the evening is Richard Cochran, president and CEO of the WRLC. He will be describing the conservancy's vision for the Northeast Ohio region and the tools available to help make that vision a reality. Previous partners and beneficiaries have included the County Clothing Center for its efforts to extend the useful life of clothing and some household goods by making gently used items available free of charge and diverting them from landfills; the Portage County Park District for the refurbishment of a bus to biodiesel for traveling exhibits and for the district's development of a bike/hike trail making connections to the Summit County bike/hike system; and the Audubon Society of Cleveland for the construction of blinds (which are available to the public) to observe birds on land the society owns in Aurora and to support the agency's remodeling of a historic building as a nature center. This year's partner, the WRLC and its PLACE Chapter, already has preserved more than 1,200 acres of landscape in Portage County for future generations to enjoy. These areas also meet a critical need to protect water quality and wildlife habitat.

Local musicians Brad Bolton and Peggy Coyle will provide entertainment for the evening. Bolton is a gui-

See AWARDS, p. 3.

Environmental Happenings of Note . . .

April 3

KSU Water Resources Institute Annual Research Conference; KSU Student Center, Room 306; 1 p.m.-5 p.m.; keynote speech by Brent Lofgren, a physical scientist with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, on "Global Warming and Its Effects on the Future of the Great Lakes"; student poster session 1 p.m.-3:30 p.m.

April 7-May 5

Fifth Annual Environmental Group Art Exhibition; North Water Street Gallery, 257 N. Water Street, Kent; annual Earth Day exhibition featuring scrapyards sculptures, oil, watercolor and more; opens April 7 with reception at 8 p.m.; through May 5; Thursday-Saturday, 1 p.m.-5 p.m. or by appointment; for information, contact Jeff Ingram at info@standingrock.net.

April 12

Green Fest; Risman Plaza outside KSU Student Center; information about reducing one's carbon footprint; also music and petition encouraging continuing environmental leadership at KSU; 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; organized by Kent Green Initiative.

April 14

Step It Up, Akron; local version of national demonstration in support of policy action to reduce the impact of global warming; noon-2 p.m.; screening of "An Inconvenient Truth," 10 a.m., Akron/Summit County Public Library, downtown Akron, with rally to follow at either Cascade Plaza or University of Akron; for information, contact Rich Fein at RichFein@certapro.com or go to www.stepitupakron.org.

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the Portage County environment.

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Previous partners and beneficiaries

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Recently Merged Regional Land Conservancy Sets Preservation Goals

The Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC), the product of a merger among eight Northeast Ohio land-preservation organizations on January 1 of this year, has established a set of goals for putting regionalism into action.

The WRLC aims to protect forests, farms, wetlands and other natural areas within a 14-county area

The merger of 14 Northeast Ohio land-conservancy organizations into a single entity has turned talk of regionalism into action.

stretching from Ashtabula, Trumbull and Mahoning counties in the east, to Erie and Huron counties in the west, along with Geauga, Portage, Cuyahoga, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Summit, Stark and Wayne counties.

To express gratitude and excitement at the success of the merger, Rich Cochran, executive director of the Chagrin River Land Conservancy, the largest of the merging groups and the one that led the merger effort, quoted an unknown source as saying, "It's easier to put a man on the moon than to merge nonprofits."

Other members of the merged organization are the Bratenahl Land Conservancy, the Firelands Land Conservancy, the Headwaters Land Trust, the Hudson Land Conservancy, the Medina Summit Land Conservancy, the Portage Land Association for Conservation and Education, and Tinkers Creek Land Conservancy.

The merged organizations, however, did not lose their local identity. Each of the individual merging land trusts are now known as chapters of the WRLC. For example, the Hudson Land Conservancy will be known as the WRLC - Hudson Chapter. The organizations' place names were retained in recognition of the importance of local support and the value of a local identity.

The WRLC began considering the idea of a merger or partnership in 2004 when it became apparent that a regional merger would be the best way to preserve land. Several politicians have observed that with all the talk of "regionalism," very little has been done along those lines—until now. "The WRLC merger is *real* regional activity," said Jon Jensen, the Gund Foundation's senior program officer for the environment and an attendee at meetings of the WRLC Steering Committee.

The 14-county WRLC region is home to more than four million people, many of whom are either poorly represented or not represented at all by a conservation organization. This region includes all or parts of 16 different watersheds (11 of which drain directly into Lake Erie), 165 miles of Lake Erie coast and nearly 40 percent of Ohio's Lake Erie basin.

"Our population is sprawling further from the region's city centers and this pattern of growth places an

The regional Western Reserve Land Conservancy member organizations collectively have protected more than 8,400 acres of land in Ohio at the time of the merger.

undue burden on the region's economy and environment by increasing the need for infrastructure and community services, while the population stagnates," said Cochran. "Existing infrastructure in the urban core and inner suburbs fall to disrepair from disuse, while emergent suburbs bulldoze the region's remaining natural areas and heritage. There has been little success in slowing this haphazard consumption of land and the concurrent loss of natural resources throughout Northeast Ohio. WRLC is

See WRLC, p. 3.

Memories of Earth Days Past, or How Our 'River Awareness' Has Developed

As RiverDay approaches this year, I feel inclined to remind us of how our "river awareness" has developed. When KEC was founded in 1970, one of the earliest observations of this group of concerned citizens was the deplorable condition of the Cuyahoga River in general and the part running through Kent in particular. It had become the back yard of the city, with refuse lining the banks and floating in the slowly moving water. One of our first projects was to clean up the part of the river in Kent. Mountains of trash were collected and hauled away.

A political objective to reorient the community toward the river as an asset rather than a nuisance was met by creating a hiking path along the west side of the river through the town. Over several seasons, a path was carved out of the steep banks with volunteer labor and donated materials—such as railroad ties—remnants of which can be seen here and there beneath the more recent, professionally constructed boardwalk, steps and asphalt trail that is there today.

As it happened, this effort was connected to KEC's other major project, recycling. The initial proceeds from that project were used to purchase many of the materials for the linear park.

Some were skeptical of the value of such a linear park, but KEC valiantly pushed on during the 1970s until the project eventually became "institutionalized" within the Kent Department of Parks and Recreation (and the volunteers became too old to hack away at the brush anymore). Public money was spent to do much more than volunteers could accomplish, but the public will to pursue this as a priority had been created. Moreover, the positive orientation of the community toward the river helped to enable the consensus that led to the most recent restoration of the naturally flowing river around the dam.

A dedicated band of volunteers risked sprains, aching muscles and blisters in doggedly carving out a lovely walk along the river in what had previously been a neglected part of Kent. It is good to remember this and particularly some no longer with us, like Ernie Miller and Ruth Meade, whose drive, commitment and hard work set an example that made the rest of us ashamed to be slackers! And all this was started nearly 40 years ago. Sometimes it is worthwhile to see where we have been.

Walt Adams

Portage Park District Developing Parks, Trails, Greenways Plan

It is expected to take a year to complete, but at the end of the path is a countywide Parks, Trails and Greenway Plan with a poster-size map displaying the details. To inform the community about the countywide plan, the Portage Park District is hosting a public meeting at the Reed Memorial Library in Ravenna on March 21 at 7:30 p.m.

The project is being led by the Park District, with professional planning assistance from the Portage County Regional Planning Commission and Dilligaf Planning and Design Consultants. Funding comes from



the Portage County Commissioners, the Gund Foundation, the Ravenna United Fund, PARTA, the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, the Aurora Rotary, Kent State University and other partners.

"We're excited to begin this project that will engage the community to identify needs and opportunities for conservation and recreation," said Christine Craycroft, Park District director. "We hope to get a lot of partici-

pation in creating a vision for the future of Portage County that will yield many environmental, health and social benefits, such as wildlife habitat, healthy recreation, flood control and drinking water protection that's in everyone's interest."

The planning process will take a year to complete and entail a review of existing local plans and resource information, seeking input from interested stakeholders, and holding community meetings for residents to put their ideas for parks, trails and conservation greenways on a map.

After analyzing the feasibility of different options, a map poster will be created that includes existing and proposed parks, trails and conservation areas along with relevant reference information. Lynne Erickson, director of the Portage County Regional Planning Commission, points to ways the plan can be used, saying, "Besides guiding the Park District in their work and helping to get grant dollars, the plan will also be used as a reference by land developers and local governments to determine the best places to set aside open space and provide recreation amenities to residents."

For more information about the project, contact the Portage Park District at 330/297-7728.

WRLC

Continued from p. 2

among the oldest and the largest land trusts in the Western Reserve. By many measures, we have been extremely successful, and we seek to leverage our success to benefit the entire region," Cochran concluded.

The WRLC is the result of years of work and has gained national attention. And it's taking its message to the 50 states. The WRLC plans to develop and present a national seminar on mergers and consolidations that occurred in 2006. It also plans to have a major business school publish a case study on land-trust mergers. The Land Trust Alliance, a national organization, has given its wholehearted support to the strategic direction of land-trust mergers. The alliance plans to showcase the WRLC merger as a national example to be replicated. "We know this effort will reap rewards by showing others how to improve effectiveness and efficiency through consolidation, not duplication," said Cochran.

At the time of the merger, the 14 groups had collectively protected more than 8,400 acres. For information about the WRLC member organizations, go to www.wrlc.cc.

AWARDS

Continued from p. 1

tarist who devotes himself mostly to blues, folk, and other forms of roots music but also is comfortable playing multicultural music. Together, he and Coyle entertain audiences with blues, jazz, country and pop tunes. Appetizers prepared with locally grown or produced items will be available during the reception.

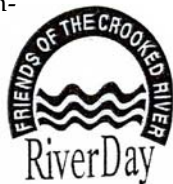
Many KEC members have already received an invitations. If you know a supporter of the dynamic balance of semiurban and rural landscapes in Portage County, call Nancy Adams at 330/673-6548 or go to www.kentenvironment.org.

Be sure to save the date, April 14, and join the spring peepers behind the American Legion Hall and friends and neighbors in welcoming the 2007 award recipients.

Kent: Where the Cuyahoga Runs Free

Take a historical river walk, visit with Henry David Thoreau or listen to a presentation on Kent watersheds. You can do all of this and more when Kent celebrates RiverDay on May 19 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Other activities include a presentation on historic Kent, a Riveredge cleanup, a Kent Bog open house and a variety of exhibits. All events are free and open to the public. The Kent Historical Society office at 234 S. Water Street will serve as the RiverDay headquarters.



For more information, contact River Day Committee cochairs Edith Chase at 330/673-1193 or Sandy Halem at 330/673-8632.

Until then, here are some facts about the Cuyahoga River:

- The river drains 813 square miles of land in parts of six counties.
- Originally the river drained into Lake Erie about 4,000 feet west of its current mouth.
- The river is considered to be a recent geological formation.
- After quality improvements, the river was named one of 14 American Heritage Rivers in 1998.



Letters from Eden: A Year at Home in the Woods

BY JULIE ZICKAFOOSE

(BOSTON, MA: HOUGHTON MIFFLIN, 2006, 225 PP.)

Reviewed by Gordon F. Vars, March 14, 2007

In this beautifully illustrated book, a noted wildlife painter and writer describes 31 encounters with a variety of wildlife on her 80 acres of Appalachian woodland in southeastern Ohio. Gathered over an eight-year period and arranged by seasons of the year, the encounters range from her joyous celebration of a “January Thaw” to a frustrating but eventually successful attempt to “Rescue Paul,” a Savanna sparrow trapped for more than a month in a supermarket.

Zickafoose probably is best known for her bird paintings, which are often featured in *Bird Watcher’s Digest*. In this volume, we are treated not only to a great many beautiful bird pictures but also to field sketches and gorgeous watercolors of butterflies, box turtles, cicadas, deer, gray fox, and even the copperhead that bit her! The final paragraph of Zickafoose’s description of that encounter reveals her deep understanding and appreciation of nature in all its aspects. This kind of reverence for life must become the norm for all humankind if life on this small planet is to survive, in this reviewer’s opinion. Zickafoose writes: “Last season, I captured and relocated four adult copperheads from our yard; they like to bask on the warm sidewalk, where my children ride their trikes and tractors. I pinned them with a stick, picked them up by their tails, put them in a bucket, and drove them two miles down the road. Most people think I am crazy to let them live. I do it because they belong here, and I do it to thank the three-footer, sunning in the garage doorway, that allowed my little daughter to back her bicycle over it before she noticed it. Run over by training wheels, the copperhead simply looked at her as she froze in horror. I picked Phoebe up, carried her away, caught the placid snake, and relocated it. Thank you, Snake. Live long and well. Just live somewhere else.” (p. 135)

This book is a “must read” for nature lovers of all kinds.

Thank You to Ninth Annual Awards Benefit Dinner Helpers

Thank you to the following for their help with planning the Ninth Annual Portage County Environmental Awards Benefit Dinner.

For accepting most of the responsibilities of the benefit organization, the Western Reserve Land Conservancy and ensuring the event’s success:

- Bev Cole
- Tracy Wallach

For the collation of 1,500 dinner invitations in a record number of minutes—30 to be exact:

- Kent Roosevelt High School Key Club members

For offering to hand address invitation envelopes:

- Walt and Nancy Adams
- Harriet Begala
- Bev Cole
- Edith Chase
- Jim Geisey
- Karl Liske
- Polly Tucker
- Ted Voneida
- Harold Walker
- Ann Ward

For cosponsoring the event:

- Eileen Fitzsimmons and Carol Moraco from Streetsboro Greenspace Committee
- Gary and Karen Cross and Mary Ann Howitt, Portage Park District
- Lynne Erickson, Portage County Regional Planning Commission
- Stan Fischer, Headwaters Land Trust
- Tom and Dorothy Griffiths, Citizens for Portage Park District.

Once again, thanks to all of these individuals and organizations for supporting the 2007 awards benefit dinner. For more information about the dinner, see the article on page 1.

KEC Seeking Project Proposals for John Mitchell Estate Bequest

The KEC board is requesting project proposals for the distribution of funds for a bequest made to the organization by long-time member John Mitchell, who died last year. Projects eligible for funding will come from the following areas of concern that were established at a board planning retreat last December.

- Transportation and Land Use
- Sustainable Development
- Watershed and Storm Water Management
- Energy Efficiency
- Use of Local Food Supply
- Local Public Landscaping (such as Haymaker Parkway)

- Environmental Education
- Air Quality
- Parks and Recreation (particularly bike/hike trail development)
- Greenspace Preservation



An application process, the criteria for selecting one or more projects and the process for distributing the funds are being developed and should be available next month. For updates, go to kentenvironment.org.

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KSU Receives U.S. EPA Energy Star Award

Kent State University received the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 2007 Energy Star Combined Heat and Power Award March 1 for its leadership in energy use and management.

Kent State and Princeton University were the only two universities in the country to receive the award, said Thomas Dunn, associate director for campus environment and operations, adding that in order to receive the award, the Kent State Power Plant needed to achieve 68 percent efficiency. "We were able to achieve 71 percent efficiency and win the top award," Dunn said.

According to the U.S. Combined Heat and Power Association, combined heat and power technologies produce both electricity and steam from a single fuel at a facility located near the consumer. These efficient systems recover heat that normally would be wasted in an electricity generator and save fuel that would otherwise be used to produce heat or steam in a separate unit.

Dunn said that by using combined heat and power technologies at Kent State, the university's energy depart-

ment has taken advantage of existing electric tariffs by reducing demand charges, reducing risks associated with premature equipment failure, reducing emissions and ensuring the needs for steam and electric are met as the university looks toward the future.

EPA estimates have indicated that combined heat and power systems efficiently reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 13,071 tons per year. This reduction is equivalent to removing the annual emissions from 2,169 cars and planting 3,241 acres of forest.

"Through the recovery of otherwise wasted heat to produce steam for campus heating, cooling and research needs," the EPA said in a letter informing the university that it had won the award, Kent State University, "has demonstrated exceptional leadership in energy use and management,"

Dunn also said that because the university is generating a good portion of its power, it can avoid increased prices for electricity. "It is a very clean technology, and it is an economic savings for us," said Dunn. "By using steam and electricity, we are able to offset the costs for heating the campus. It's kind of like recycling."

Climate Project Trains Local Educators

The Climate Project, the nonprofit organization behind the production of the Al Gore documentary "An Inconvenient Truth," has trained two local educators as presenters for its cause: Jenny Baeseman, assistant professor of biological sciences at Kent State University, and Ken Riley, a science teacher at Waterloo High School, in Portage County's Southeast School District. The two educators were instructed on how to operate the computer-based slide presentation used in Gore's the global-warming film. Special emphasis was given to the actions that individuals could take to reduce greenhouse gases.

The Climate Project wants to reach as many people as possible and welcomes requests for presentations at houses of worship, public-service orga-

nizations, and business or professional organizations.

According to its Web site, The Climate Project aims to "educate and challenge citizens and governments into action against the growing crisis of global warming." The organization also works to "bring education, community information, research and citizen-action programs to communities across the country." Its first project is the training of 1,000 lecturers who will present the information in "An Inconvenient Truth" to audiences throughout the country.

To schedule a speaker, contact Baeseman at jbaesema@kent.edu or 330/672-2957 or Ken Riley at krileyjr@yahoo.com or 330/606-7562. For more information about The Climate Project, go to www.theclimateproject.org.

Rachel Carson: 1907-1964

May 2007 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of author Rachel Carson, perhaps best known for the book *Silent Spring*, which alerted the world to the consequences of pesticide usage in this country.

Whether it was dieldrin and heptachlor to "eliminate" the imported red fire ant in the south or DDT to control "all those pests," Carson asked if spring soon would come without robins or all of the songbirds that migrate north.



To Carson, campaigns to spray millions of acres across the country had devastating results. Bird populations crashed. Farmers in the sprayed areas reported that young calves had died, and hens had stopped laying eggs. Meanwhile, the fire ant population quickly rebounded.

Eagle populations in the Great Lakes region fell to record lows. In 1979, Ohio had only four pairs of eagles. Since DDT was banned in 1972, eagles have recovered. In 2006, Ohio's eagles produced a record 136 eaglets. The old record was 125 nests.

Silent Spring is often credited with having launched the environmental movement in the United States which, in turn, led to the first Earth Day in 1970, the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and the major environmental laws that still frame this county's approach to clean air, clean water, and solid and hazardous waste management. The Kent Environmental Council was founded in January of that same year.

Biologist, researcher, theorist, naturalist and environmental advocate E.O. Wilson has noted that "the battle Rachel Carson helped to lead on behalf of the environment is far from won. We are still poisoning the air and water and eroding the biosphere, albeit less so than if she had not written." Wilson currently is the Pellegrino Research Professor at Harvard University.

HAPPENINGS

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April 18-28

Re-Turn; exhibition of art constructed from post-consumer and post-industrial waste; curated by Janice Lessman-Moss, Kent State University School of Art; showing at KSU Downtown Gallery, 223 N. Water Street, Kent; April 18-28; reception April 17 from 5 p.m.-7 pm.; hours Wednesday-Friday noon-5 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

April 19-22

"Who's Your Mama" - Environmental Film Festival; Kent Stage; celebration of Earth Day with animations, documentaries, folk tales, locally grown foods, home brew tasting, alternative energy displays, green-item raffle, music and more; sponsored by the Standing Rock Cultural Arts Association and multiple cosponsors; headline event on April 22, 2 p.m.-9 p.m., Kent Stage, 175 E. Main Street, fee required; free films other days; for schedule of films and times, call Chris Craycroft at 330/297-7728 or go to www.whosyourmama.org.

April 30

Portage Environmental Roundtable Forum: Green Building in Portage County; 7 p.m.; location to be announced; for information, call Edith Chase at 330/673-1193.



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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Kent Environmental Council . . . on the Web at www.kentenvironment.org