



Kent Environmental Council

Summer 2011

WANTED: Environmental Advocates Willing to Speak Out and Stand Up for Preserving our Natural Heritage.

After 40 years of local environmental advocacy, the Kent Environmental Council (KEC) remains active in promoting a livable, sustainable environment. This special KEC newsletter edition provides the reader with a thumbnail sketch of the action agenda of our local Environmental Focus Groups. Please consider joining us as well as taking advantage of our members' environmental reading list included on page 3.

Focus Groups

Energy

The primary goal of this focus group is education. This may be subdivided into three major areas: Energy Conservation, Fossil Fuels as an Energy Source, and Alternative Energy Sources. First, is to inform the public on the methods to conserve energy by using less. Second, that burning fossil fuels not only contributes to serious health problems by filling the air and water with poisonous substances, it also contributes significantly to global warming and results in severe and often irreversible environmental damage (current concern – impact of gas drilling by fracking on Portage County environment). Third, that a great deal more attention needs to be given to the use of wind, solar, water, and geothermal power sources. We need to educate more people about the importance of energy conservation and cleaner, less destructive sources of energy. We welcome your participation in our educational efforts. For more information on ways to help, call Barb & John Brovarone (330.297.1148 or jobar20@neo.rr.com).

Environmental Education

The direction of 2011 is re-connect people with our natural world.

Research has shown that contact with nature promotes knowledge, appreciation and caring for the environment and, more important, is fundamental to human health and well being. The agenda for this year is to promote positive experiences for adults and children within the natural areas that surround us. We welcome your contributions as we begin planning our year's activities. For more information on ways to help, contact Nancy Adams (nbadams336@att.net).

Local Food

This KEC Focus Group is working on making fresh local food available through the support of farmers markets, school gardens, and local food days in schools with farmer visits. It is also focusing on developing and strengthening new and existing infrastructure for food entrepreneurs in Portage County. The Portage Local Food Project has been formed out of this focus group and members are currently working on a network of licensed commercial kitchens to rent for the production of value-added agricultural products for sale. We need your help with in-kind donations to enable Kent Social Services to finish upgrading their kitchen, which would allow the group to test-pilot the

program there. If you'd like to help surveying potential kitchen managers, as well as potential tenants, or if you would like to contribute to the local food focus group in any other way, please contact Kelly Ferry (kelly@kellyferry.com) or Lynn Gregor (lynng30@yahoo.com).

Transportation

We believe that transportation and the habits of life fostered by the dominant transportation systems have broad and deep environmental impacts. The focus group inquires into the existing modes and influences of transportation in our community and our region, and will advise the KEC Board about advocacy and action affecting the shape of our transportation systems and practices. Our areas of concern include the effects of transportation and land-use; energy prospects and alternatives for transportation, issues affecting air pollution and global warming, alternative modes of transportation, communication with policy-making bodies, and transportation as a community building influence. For more information on ways to help, contact Harold Walker (330.673.6534 or hwalk@sbcglobal.net).

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Haymaker Parkway

Adopt-a-Spot

This area on the north side of Haymaker between Mantua and River St. is maintained by KEC members and friends, with leadership by Bob Wilson and Helen Green. Helen has been lending her horticultural skills, labor and encouragement for three years (driving from Geauga County to plant and offer guidance). Bob supports the project with the use of his truck for mulching and hauling weeds. This is a labor intensive project and more volunteers are needed to help maintain the area with weeding, pruning, and planting. Future needs include signs to announce when we are working there, donations of dry-tolerant plants, and encouraging the city to maintain the remainder of the parkway (which was landscaped by KEC members and friends in the mid-90's). Thanks to Sherry Gedeon, longtime KEC member, we will have additional material to put in when cooler weather arrives in the fall. For more information on ways to help, call Ann Ward (330.285.0899).

Sustainable Community Development

The purpose of this focus group is to pursue sustainable community planning and development. We strive to monitor the plans and programs of the City of Kent, Kent State University, and Portage County in terms of environmental and ecological impacts and issues. Our current goals are to help guide the current downtown redevelopment in terms of sufficient green space and plantings and encourage green building methods; that the evolution of the downtown core is walkable and creates a pedestrian-friendly link to the KSU campus; and to explore the ideas of the Transportage program for Kent City planning. If you have interests and skills related to these, we need you. For more information on ways to help, contact Gene Wenninger (gwenninger@neo.rr.com).

Water Resources

Our focus group is committed to help protect and restore our local aquatic treasures, with public participation. We are active in the stewardship of the Cuyahoga River watershed and tributaries, Kent Bog, local parks and nature preserves, and wetlands. Our objectives are to identify existing and emerging threats to area lakes, rivers, and streams and then identify the causes and sources of these problems, and involve citizens and local governments in focusing on high priority issues. For 2011, we will continue to work on the Middle Cuyahoga Watershed Plan (a detailed plan to be developed with participation by citizens and all the local governments in this watershed in western Portage County, extending into Summit County), and continue to coordinate with Chris Carman, a teacher at Roosevelt High School, on water quality issues for his fall Environmental Science classes. For more information on ways to help, call Edith Chase (330.673.1193).

Friends of the Kent Bog

We are an informal support group of people of all ages. We are dedicated to the protection and preservation of the Tom S. Cooperrider Kent Bog State Nature Preserve for the education, enjoyment, and inspiration of present and future generations. Our focus is to spread the word about what a precious gift of nature we have right here in our community; to write letters to the editor and speak at public meetings that deal with the preserve; to publish and distribute free trail guides that point out interesting plants and animals that may be seen in the preserve during each season of the year; and to serve as greeters and docents during special events at the preserve. We keep in touch through e-mail, occasional post card mailings and meetings. To enroll as a member of "Friends of the Bog", contact Gordon Vars (gvarsnacc@sbcglobal.net or 330.677.5008 (O) or 330.678.0006 (H)

Parks and Trail Development

Our purpose is to support the extension, improvement and maintenance of the parks, trails, and open spaces of the City of Kent, Kent State University and Portage County. We have participated with the process of park & trail development and will continue to actively pursue more opportunities for our community. For more information on ways to help, contact Charles Frederick (charles_frederick@sbcglobal.net).

Communications & Publicity

The purpose of our focus group is to support the informing and educating of KEC members and the public through targeted communications: Website; Facebook; Newsletters; Brochures; Letters to the Editor; Legislative alerts; Special Events. Our agenda for this year is to enhance our internet contacts, prepare written copy and/or graphics for environmental messages; engaging in the planning and implementing of special events such as the Heritage Festival. We always welcome individuals who are willing to help us communicate our environmental message effectively with those who need to know. For more information on ways to help, contact Nancy Adams (nbadams336@att.net).



Summer Reading List - to inspire, inform, and call to action:

"The Way of Ignorance", by Wendell Berry

A book of essays of what our society is doing to our land, community, farms, and our sense of individualism.

"Eaarth, Making a Life on a Tough New Planet", by Bill McKibben

A different way to look at our planet because the issue of climate change requires us to look at things differently. The previous Earth (with one 'a') no longer exists because we have carbonized it to a new planet that he calls Eaarth.

"The Circumference of Home: One Man's Yearlong Quest for a Radically Local Life", by Kurt Hoelting

This book is an account of the author's commitment of living within a 100 km wide circle of his home in Puget Sound, using only his feet, a bicycle, a kayak, or public transit to explore and earn a living within that boundary for one year. He touches upon environmental problems within the boundary, relying on local food resources, how isolated people can become in their cars, Native American issues in the area, and the need for kids to get outside and explore their world in order to develop the desire to care for it.

"Great Lakes Journey: a New Look at America's Freshwater Coast", by William Ashworth

This writer is from Oregon, but loves and writes about the Great Lakes system, the largest body of freshwater on earth and also home to almost 60 million people. This book is a follow-up to a previous one written about the lakes, called "The Late, Great Lakes" (penned 15 years earlier), the author compares and contrasts improvements and losses during that interval. Unmistakable is the author's wonder of this ice age remnant in our midst.

"Bringing Nature Home", by Douglas Tallamy

This book is a primer on the value of using native plants in our yards, based on the premise that native insect pollinators, crucial in pollination of both crops and ornamental plants, co-evolved with native plant to their both mutual benefit. Well-balanced insect life benefits crop production and also serves as a source of protein and fats for native birds. A well-groomed yard of mown grass and annual flowers is actually a very biologically inactive place. The author makes plant suggestions as well as ways to promote the idea to neighbors who do not yet see the advantages of such a yard.

"Honeybee Democracy", by Thomas D. Seeley

An engrossing account of how honeybee swarms use basically democratic processes in choosing and moving to a new hive site. Seeley reviews the history of beekeeping, describes his research and reflects on ways honeybee democracy might be applied to human decision-making, with friendly competition among different viewpoints, minimal dependence on a leader, and finally a method for reaching a majority-based resolution.

"The Vegetarian Myth: Food, Justice and Sustainability", by Lierre Keith

This book has ignited passions to the point that in 2010 three vegan militants threw a pie laced with cayenne pepper in Lierre Keith's face at a California bookfair. She raises a variety of environmental, nutritional, political, moral and humanitarian issues of food in a compelling and highly readable style.

"Pavane", by Neil Roberts

Sci-Fi/Alternative history: Six linked but separate stories set in England in the 1960s in a world in which Elizabeth I was assassinated in 1588 and the Spanish Armada won, making the nation Catholic. Although revolution is brewing, the Inquisition is still active, and because various Popes forbade the development of

electricity or internal combustion engines, they use semaphore for communications and steam locomotives for transportation. This is a haunting book that raises metaphysical and moral questions about the nature of society, history and faith, and the uses of science and technology.

"Last Child in the Woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder", by Richard Louv

Many successful programs have incorporated the informal pedagogical methods as an outgrowth of the Louv's approach to environmental education—simply getting children to spend more unstructured time in nature. These positive environmental experiences have demonstrated cognitive, emotional, physical and social benefits. Louv's newest book (2011) *"The Nature Principle: Human restoration and the end of nature-deficit disorder"* extends the benefits of unstructured experiences within the natural environment to adults. Research has shown that getting people outdoors does more to promote an environmental ethic than education courses, organizations, travel or books.

"World on the Edge", by Lester R. Brown

Lester Brown states that "we are facing issues of near-overwhelming complexity and unprecedented urgency," and that "our challenge is to think globally and develop policies to counteract environmental decline and economic collapse. The question is: Can we change direction before we go over the edge?" Brown looks at our economic future through an environmental lens to develop a plan that will sustain civilization. He concentrates on four major components that will head us toward a brighter future: a massive cut in global carbon emissions, the stabilization of world population, the abatement of poverty, and the restoration of our planet's diverse natural landscape"

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“In defense of Food, an eater’s manifesto”, by Michael Pollan
We have been overwhelmed with science and technology categorizing the elements and processes of food, nutrition, and eating. To these endeavors Mr. Pollan has stated that we no longer understand or can make rational decisions about food. He investigates the scientific approaches and suggests ideas for reconnecting with food and the simple act of eating.

“The Transition Handbook, from oil dependency to local resilience”, by Rob Hopkins
Mr. Hopkins examines the possible relationship of peak oil and climate change. He explains that the impacts of both issues will produce a tremendous change to our current life standards and then explores the idea of ‘transition’ to a more local and self-reliant society.

KEC invites you to visit our **Web site** at www.kentenvironment.org. Be sure to click on these tabs:

- Calendar – for information on local environmental events
- What’s New- for an update on KEC’s focus group activities
- Environmental Action Alerts- Timed messages to write letters, send e-mails, contact local officials.
- Eco-Tips- for ways to live our daily lives in friendship with the earth

Consider becoming a member of KEC at one of the following levels:

- Sustaining \$45
- Family \$35
- Individual \$25
- Golden Buckeye \$15
- Student \$ 5
- Lifetime \$500
[New offering 2011]

Send your check made payable to **“Kent Environmental Council”** to **KEC; P O Box 395; Kent OH 44240** along with the following contact information:

Name of member(s); Membership level; Street Address (Please include City State and Zip); Telephone no.; e-mail address (so that you may receive your KEC Newsletters and Environmental Action Alerts on line); Focus Area(s) of Interest.

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