

WEAL Newsletter

Waukesha Environmental Action League Fall 2012

President's Message

By Steve Schmuki

The struggle between economic development and jobs and environmental protections has never been sharper than since the Walker administration stepped into office nearly two years ago. Environmental protection rollbacks have been accompanied by a deliberate chiseling away of public participation and transparency in government. Wisconsin citizens are increasingly dismayed to find that the laws and regulations they assumed would protect their property, lakefront access, wetlands, woodlands, and farmlands are no longer in place or being



enforced. Whether the issue is strip mining in the pristine headwaters of Lake Superior tributaries, wetlands filling, tree destruction or unnecessary road expansions, it has felt at times like an all-out assault on the Wisconsin we know and love. It would be easy to get discouraged. But every day I'm buoyed by the spirit I see in WEAL members and our super board of directors: taking on the tough challenges, fighting the good fight, and

doing the right thing ***because it is the right thing to do.***

WEAL is now in year 12 of watchdogging the City of Waukesha's drive to obtain a Lake Michigan diversion; a protracted legal battle along with Highway J Citizens group to stop WisDOT's illegal, unnecessary and unwanted Highway J expansion through two counties; preventing wetland fills and location of mitigation sites not even in the same county, much less the same watershed; and most recently, assisting other communities to resist waste gasification (aka pyrolysis), a high-heat process whose byproducts cause environmental pollution and threaten human health.

Despite the extreme politicization of almost every issue and the DNR itself, I believe that a healthy environment and a healthy economy are not mutually exclusive and indeed, go hand-in-hand. I live by the Gaylord Nelson idea that "the economy is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the environment." I know that in these challenging times, we're all asked to give so much and do so much. I'm going to ask you for more of your time and commitment too.

Tell

us what you're interested in working on and then join us as we put our shared environmental ethic into practice: actions and words. Together we have and we will make a difference in our neighborhoods, communities, county and state.

See you out there,
Steven Schmuki

Wetlands

By Russ Evans

Filling of wetlands, as least as far as I know, has been insignificant in the County for the last six months. Very few new subdivisions are being built or planned. The permits issued by the DNR have been mostly for very small amounts (of wetlands lost) at road crossings involving culverts, so-called "conservation" lots, or bike paths. So there is good news because of the recession! Soon Dave Gennrich will be taking over the review of DNR permits.



WEAL Annual Meeting

Thursday

November 8, 2012

6:30 PM

Retzer Nature Center

S14W28167 Madison St.

Waukesha, WI 53188

TITLE: "Climate Change: Let's debate the tough issues"



LENGTH: 40 minutes followed by Q&A

PRESENTER:

Sue Loomans,
MS, Climatology

BIOGRAPHY: Sue

Loomans is a former Air Force meteorologist who is committed to finding solutions to the climate crisis. Previously, she was Executive Director for the Wisconsin Green Building Alliance, a non-profit organization that promotes sustainable building practices.

In 2007, Sue was trained by former Vice-president and Nobel Prize winner Al Gore as a presenter for "The Climate Project," a slide presentation based on the material from the award-winning documentary "An Inconvenient Truth." She delivers presentations on global warming to a variety of audiences, highlighting the global challenges of this alarming phenomena, and strategies we can implement to meet them. Melting arctic ice, droughts across the Midwest, record-breaking floods, and tornadoes in January. These are some of the headlines we read about each day. But what does changing climate mean for us and for our future here in Waukesha County? As it becomes clearer that many events are related to human activity, the more

important question becomes "what can we do about it?"

This audience- interactive presentation will begin with a discussion of the latest science behind global warming, and how our earth systems are responding to atmospheric changes. We'll investigate important related issues such as weather disasters, changing habitats and growing conditions, and national security. Then we'll turn to solutions. We'll look for everyday personal decisions that



can make a difference and ways that each one of us can lead by

example through our communities, businesses, and governments.

Join this visually stimulating and thought-provoking journey into the most important issue facing our planet.

WEAL Fundraiser

By Donna Goodrich

WEAL, in conjunction with the League of Women Voters, places volunteer "reporters" at various polling sites throughout Waukesha County on Election Day evenings. The Election Day reporters, via their cell phones, relay the election results to the Wisconsin Election Service. (WES)

This reporting is a fundraiser for WEAL and will take approximately two to three hours of your time in the evening on Election Day.

The dates for volunteering for upcoming elections are: February 19, 2013 and April 2, 2013. For more information or to volunteer please call Donna at 262.547.7891.



Water

By Laurie Longtine

WisDNR has had Waukesha's application for a Lake Michigan diversion on its plate since August 2011, but as yet, has not issued an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). It's difficult at best to follow this shape-shifting document as environmental groups, represented by the Compact Implementation Coalition (CIC) have continually asked for a side-by-side comparison of alternatives which the Utility continues to resist mightily. When the DNR has asked for additional information or studies, Waukesha provides it in the form of an addendum, making the 4000+ pages a nightmare to navigate. The original Waukesha application hasn't changed—including its many assumptions—since they first submitted it to the DNR in May 2010,

when the DNR refused to review it as too incomplete.

In March and April of this year, the Water Utility had a series of neighborhood meetings (one in each aldermanic district) to 'sell' the idea of a diversion to the folks who will be paying for it—now and in the future. A long way into the future. People were told that their water utility rates would have to be raised approximately 25% per year for five consecutive years to pay for the cost of constructing pipelines to and from the water source, operation expenses, additional construction to move water around the system, deferred maintenance, and the cost a water supplier will charge. These were all residential customers—no mention was made of commercial and industrial users paying more, or how much, and if those other classes are going to be subject to mandatory conservation measures, such as the residential customers already are.

This totals up to approximately 175% increase in rates over the five years, not including the rate increases of 18% in 2007 and 16% in 2009—also levied exclusively on the residential customers.

"In May, the Water Utility submitted a request to the PSC (Public Service Commission) for a 24% rate

increase to be immediately effective in June. The PSC responded by giving the Utility a 27% increase (no, that's not a typo) "

Laurie Longtine

Membership renewals will be coming

By Angela Reifenberg

If you typically get your WEAL membership renewal notice in the spring, you may be thinking, "Hey WEAL forgot about me this year!" Rest assured we have not forgotten about membership renewals, we are just simplifying things a bit. Renewals used to be sent out year round, depending on when you sent in last year's dues. However, in order to make the process easier for all, we will now be sending out renewals at the same time of year for all members.

In order to help you coordinate with year-end contributions, renewal notices will be sent out around November. With your renewal you will get a card to complete and send back to us with your personal information and a brochure. You can keep the brochure for yourself but why not pass it on to someone else who might be interested in learning about the mission of WEAL? Help spread the word about WEAL one person at a time. Finally, in place of completing the card you can also renew or enroll as a member on-line

any time of the year at: www.WEAL.org

Waukesha West bypass fight

By Allen Stasiewski

WEAL is committed to a balanced highway plan that provides safe, well-maintained roadways, alternative transit options, and no new highways. The West Waukesha Bypass extension has been on the books for 40 years. And that's where it should stay. This project is a \$50 million road project looking for a reason to be built!



The project's Environmental Impact Study (EIS) will finally be released in late October, and in November we expect a Public Hearing to be scheduled. We expect that the reason the EIS has been delayed is that project planners have had trouble justifying building the southern end of the highway through the Pebble Creek Environmental Corridor. We can't allow this to happen! WEAL and other members of the Coalition Opposed to the West Waukesha Bypass will be at the Public Hearing! Months ago we proposed a "No Build, Improve!" alternative. Visit www.WEAL.org to learn more. And, if you haven't signed our petition go to ipetition.com

and use keyword "Waukesha". Please join our coalition: email Allen Stasiewski at astasiewsk@aol.com.

2012 Waste Issues Update

by Charlene Lemoine,
Waste Issues Representative

WEAL continues to focus on issues promoting waste reduction, pollution prevention and environmental sustainability. This year WEAL has been involved in the following:

PAY As You Throw (PAYT)

Pay As You Throw (PAYT) is a method of trash collection that charges for garbage based on use--similar to the way we pay for utilities like gas, electric. With trash collection imbedded in property taxes, those who throw away the most are subsidized by those who throw away the least. PAYT offers residents control over disposal costs and creates an incentive to save money by reducing waste and recycling more.

The US EPA estimates 7,000 communities, with hundreds in Wisconsin, have PAYT trash collection. The EPA credits the success of these programs to three components: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and equity.



WEAL has been studying PAYT for years, and in **2009** began discussing PAYT with the City of Waukesha.

10/2010 – A WEAL presentation on PAYT was planned for a future Board of Public Works (BPW) meeting.

12/2010 – Public Works asked WEAL to contact Waukesha County Solid Waste to coordinate a joint PAYT presentation. A joint presentation was agreed to, and planned for 2/17/11.

2/17/11 – A joint presentation entitled "Pay As You Throw – PAYT, Unit Based or Variable Rate Pricing for Garbage Collection" was given during a Waukesha BPW meeting.

11/10/2011 – The joint PAYT presentation was also given during WEAL's Annual Meeting.

6/01/2012 – Public Works asked for another joint PAYT presentation and it was scheduled for the 7/19/2012 Waukesha BPW meeting.

7/19/2012 – The presentation was cancelled just hours before the meeting. A Freeman columnist and local blogger, James Wigderson, asked for, and received a copy of the presentation from Waukesha Public Works

earlier that day and complained to the County. County officials withdrew their participation in the PAYT presentation and the Board of Public Works removed it from the meeting's agenda. Although the BPW, Alderman and residents were not given an opportunity to hear the presentation and ask questions during an open, public meeting, the blogger took it upon himself to post the presentation on his personal website. In the following days the blogger received recognition in newspaper articles for causing the presentation to be cancelled. He also wrote about his success in his blog and his weekly Freeman column. The cancelled 20-minute overview of PAYT was an updated version of the original presentation given to the BPW in 2011. It was informational only and no action would have been taken by the BPW. The presentation outlined various ways a PAYT program might be structured along with potential benefits and obstacles that could be encountered. The presentation also stated an advisory committee could be formed if the City wished to explore PAYT in more detail.

WEAL continues to believe exploring PAYT could be beneficial for communities in Waukesha County. Recently, Veolia, the predominant hauler in the

County, was sold for \$1.9 billion to Highstar Capital. This acquisition creates the largest privately held waste disposal company in the US. It is important to note Veolia was the only company interested in the present City of Waukesha Waste Disposal & Recycling contract. The five-year contract expires in 2014 and contains 4.5% yearly increases, cuts weekly recycling to bi-weekly collections, and includes separate fuel adjustment and state tipping fee charges. In 2011, the cost for hauling and disposing garbage alone was \$1.7 million and there is no reason to believe future contracts will be less expensive. Exploring all options to reduce costs before the contract is due to expire makes sense. Methods to increase recycling, like PAYT could also boost revenues for the City because Waukesha County offers a rebate for recyclables delivered to the County Materials Recycling Facility (MRF).



This year the County Rebate totaled \$1,217,103.00 to participating communities with the City of Waukesha receiving \$285,562.00.

Although PAYT is not new, numerous cities and towns across the county have a renewed interest in PAYT, and many are adopting

this method of trash collection.

“Sandwich, MA has recently released a report on the first year of PAYT for that town stating solid waste disposal decreased by 42 percent, recycling increased by 74 percent and the town saved \$120,000.00.”

Charlene Lemoine

Staged Incinerators – Gasification, Pyrolysis and Plasma Arc

The Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the proposed Oneida Seven Generations (OSGC) Pyrolysis project in Green Bay was approved in 2011 but has recently been called into question by local residents, environmental groups and even the Green Bay City Council. A public hearing on the CUP has been scheduled for October 3, 2012.

The OSGC submitted plans for a CUP to Green Bay that did not include any emission stacks. There were also numerous statements made saying the project would not have any emissions. However, plans submitted to the DNR included 10 emission stacks with three being 60 feet in height. Not only were stacks omitted during the conditional use permitting process, the 60 foot stacks were not in compliance with a city height restriction of 35

feet. Additionally, an artist's rendition still remains on the OSGC website without emission stacks. http://www.osgc.net/pdf/oneida_energy_site_plan.pdf WEAL has consistently opposed this experimental, pyrolysis-staged incinerator and will be submitting comments asking the City of Green Bay to rescind the CUP because inadequate documents were submitted when the City Council approved the plans. To learn more about the OSGC project check out the Incinerator Free Brown County website at <http://incineratorfreebrowncty.com/>

Zero Waste

“Zero Waste is a design principle for the 21st Century that seeks to redesign the way resources and materials flow through society. Zero Waste requires eliminating subsidies for raw material extraction and waste disposal, and holding producers responsible for their products and packaging 'from cradle to cradle.' The goal is to promote clean production, prevent pollution, and create communities in which all products are designed to be cycled safely back into the economy or environment.”
--- The GrassRoots Recycling Network (GRRN) website <http://www.grrn.org/>

On June 3, 2012, WEAL Board members, Russ Evans and Charlene Lemoine attended The GRRN National Zero Waste Action Conference in Rockford, IL. Presentations were given on Communities that have adopted Zero Waste Resolutions, Zero Waste Businesses, Producer Responsibility and Product Redesign, Resource Recovery Parks, and much more.

Better Brewer recycling on horizon?

By Nancy Gloe

Over the past few years the Milwaukee Brewers have undertaken several “**green initiatives**” including planting trees, saving energy and water, donating money to environmental organizations, donating unused food, and more.

But there has been one initiative that has been conspicuous in its absence: parking lot recycling.

At the urging of the DNR, the City of Milwaukee and Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful, the Brewers have taken their parking lot recycling program from essentially non-existent to “bare bones.” The issue seemed to be stuck there and many hundreds of single-use beverage containers continue to be tossed into the trash before each game. Further, most of the bins that *are* there are not well designed.

It should be noted that the Brewers face a unique challenge with parking lot recycling. The amount of tailgating at Miller Park is unique among major league baseball clubs. The Brewers, however, have expressed an unwillingness to put more recycling bins in the lot due to the cost issues. Major league sports is, after all, a business.

So we needed an innovative approach. In August of 2011 WEAL and the Sierra Club-Great Waters Group sent a letter to Brewers’ president Mark Antinassio thanking him for the past “**green initiative**” and asking him to improve the parking lot recycling. We’re happy to say that this season the Brewers have agreed to work with WEAL, Sierra Club, Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful, DNR and Miller Coors on a pilot “**blue bag**” program for tailgaters. The pilot consists of volunteers handing out blue bags to tailgaters in three lots during six home games. The volunteers then instruct the tailgaters where to place the bags for recycling. Blue bag tailgating programs, it should be noted, have been successfully undertaken by several major league football teams.

“So far the pilot project has been very well received by fans and it has netted a

significant increase in materials recovery (we’ve estimated a minimum of 40% additional materials in recycling dumpsters). It has also given the project’s proponents a closer look at how tailgating, garbage and recycling currently work and how they can be improved.”

Nancy Gloe

In summary, we don’t yet know what the future holds for meaningful Miller Park tailgate recycling, but we are hopeful that there will be on-going improvements. One thing we can definitely say, though, is that the vast majority of Wisconsinites continue to enthusiastically embrace recycling (as long as it’s relatively easy and convenient, that is).

*Save this
planet.
It’s the
only one
with
chocolate.*

Anonymous