

The Door County Environmental Council News



June 2019



“Fostering the preservation of Door County’s rich heritage of natural resources for the health, welfare, and spiritual uplift not only of its inhabitants, but of generations to come.”

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Cows, People, and Groundwater Quality

The Door County Environmental Council welcomes Dr. Mark Borchardt, a research microbiologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, who will present a program discussing the sources and risk factors of groundwater contamination in Northeast Wisconsin.

The public is invited to this free program at the Kress Pavilion in Egg Harbor on June 19, 2019 at 7:00 PM.

Dr. Borchardt and his colleagues have been researching well contamination in Kewaunee County and have presented their findings at national and international conferences. Due to multiple complaints of tainted drinking water in the county, there has been suspicion

that livestock farming, as well as human waste, in conjunction with the nature of the fractured dolomite aquifer geology, are the primary causes of contamination in Kewaunee County. Dr. Borchardt’s research reveals essential data that clarifies this

situation and suggests ways to reduce disease-producing illness due to the transmission of gastrointestinal pathogens to wells.



Dr. Mark Borchardt

Dr. Mark Borchardt is a research microbiologist for the USDA – Agricultural Research Service and Program Leader for the Laboratory for Infectious Disease and the Environment, U.S. Geological Survey, Upper Midwest Water Science Center. He has 38 years of

research experience, 25 years as a principal investigator, and he is an internationally recognized authority on the measurement, fate, transport and health effects of human and agricultural zoonotic pathogens in the environment. Data and methods developed by Dr. Borchardt have contributed to the establishment of policies that protect drinking water supplies for the health and safety of millions of North Americans. He is the 2015 recipient of the Dr. John L. Leal award for improving water quality and protecting public health given by the American Water Works Association.

What does Dr. Borchardt’s research mean for Door County where bedrock depth is within 5 feet in most of the karst landscape? How can we as individuals eliminate and prevent harmful pathogens from seeping into our wells, especially during the seasonal growth of population, increased water demand and waste? In Door County, where bacterial contamination of the water supply has already occurred, will the DNR’s recent restrictions of the spreading of trucked-in manure from neighboring CAFOs prevent other occurrences? Please join us for a glass of wine and an informative discussion that will be pertinent to every resident and visitor in Door County.



Photo by Mike Bahrke

Best Uses of Gills Rock Waterfront Properties

Last year, the Town of Liberty Grove purchased three waterfront properties in Gills Rock. In January of this year, during a series of public sessions, taxpayers provided Town officials with input as to how the properties might best be used. Based upon taxpayer comments made during the public sessions, Town officials mailed a survey to Town taxpayers again asking for opinions on how best to use the properties. Survey results revealed “public park with walking paths and benches,” “refurbish docks for public use,” and “a small pavilion for public use” as the three **highest** recommended best uses for the properties. Among the **lowest** recommended best uses for the properties were “a safe harbor” and “property to be income producing for the town.”

It is readily apparent from comments and survey results that Town taxpayers want to preserve and protect these three Gills Rock properties, that quality of life is important to them, and that taxpayers can’t afford, and do not want to invest large amounts of money in the properties.

As Town Chairman John Lowry stated shortly after purchase of the properties, “The town has no plans for these properties. What we want to do is come back to the electors for the electors to decide what to do with these properties.”

Town taxpayers have spoken as to how the Gills Rock properties should best be used. We trust the Town of Liberty Grove will now fulfill its commitment to follow taxpayer recommendations.

DCEC Board of Directors

Egg Harbor Takes First Steps in Going Solar

If you live in the Village of Egg Harbor, accessing solar for your home is about to become much easier. Egg Harbor, a Green Tier Legacy Community, is working with Midwest Renewable Energy and Associates (MREA) to assist with taking a deep dive into the rules and regulations that surround a residential solar installation in order to simplify the process. The Village received a grant through The Solar Foundation to cover the cost of the consultation. The program is known as SolSmart and is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy.

According to a press release from MREA, SolSmart is a designation program developed by The Solar Foundation (TSF) to assist and recognize communities that act to cut red tape and improve local solar market conditions by making it faster, easier, and more affordable to go solar in their jurisdictions. To date, 216 communities across America have become SolSmart designated. More locally, the MREA has begun advising nine Wisconsin communities pursuing SolSmart designation in 2019, including the Cities of La Crosse, Racine, Sheboygan, Stevens Point, Wauwatosa, and Portage County, as well as the Villages of Amherst, Egg Harbor, and Plover to take actions that reduce solar soft costs and promote use of solar locally.

The MREA works closely with municipal partners to advance solar photovoltaic (PV) in the state. “As a partner, our goal

is to assist each participating community in identifying opportunities to streamline their permitting and inspections processes, removing zoning barriers, and educating community members about the local economic benefits of solar PV,” said Eric

Rehm, SolSmart Advisor.

The Village of Egg Harbor supports solar through simple building codes, ordinances, and upfront electrical utility discussions, and will include it as part

of their comprehensive plan. The depth of the program is fairly intense, but that’s the point—Village staff does the work because it’s part of the Village mission to promote sustainability.

To learn more, visit www.SolSmart.org.

By Ryan Heise



Majestic view over the bay

Photo by Mike Bahrke

Noise Pollution

Recently, DCEC was made aware of a type of pollution which is not often under our radar. Land owners on the peninsula were disturbed by a series of air cannon blasts all the way from Hat Island. It seems that the island is privately owned and the owner was attempting to permanently rid the island of birds which were interfering with his plans for the property.

So what is noise pollution?

According to the EPA, “The traditional definition of noise is ‘unwanted or disturbing sound.’ Sound becomes unwanted when it either interferes with normal activities such as sleeping, conversation, or disrupts or diminishes one’s quality of life. The fact that you can’t see, taste or smell it may help explain why it has not received as much attention as other types of pollution, such as air pollution, or water pollution. The air around us is constantly filled with sounds, yet most of us would probably not say we are surrounded by noise. Though for some, the persistent and escalating sources of sound can often be considered an annoyance. This ‘annoyance’ can have major consequences, primarily to one’s overall health.”

Perhaps a more useful term with regard to noise which rises to the above definition as it concerns environmental advocates might be “noise trespass” where sound, whether music or noise, encroaches onto the property of another. If music or other sound from a home radio is too loud for the comfort of an occupant of that home, that qualifies as noise but not trespass. However, if the home has a high powered sound system and the output is loud to occupants of a nearby home, that

would be noise trespass.

In legal terms, since the public expects that the sound of a jackhammer can’t be contained within the property where it is in use, one might argue that “implied consent” has been given for reasonable use of the jackhammer even though the noise is trespassing on the neighborhood. But its use during normal sleeping hours, whatever that is, could be construed as not protected by implied consent.

Like so many issues where a conflict exists between the rights of one impinging on the rights of another, laws don’t always fairly resolve the issues. Noise ordinances attempt to avoid unreasonable restrictions by measures such as specifying certain hours when those restrictions are in effect. Still, noise ordinances regardless of how thoughtfully written, may fail to satisfy all concerned.

Perhaps the solutions most satisfactory to all are those involving respect for the public and consideration for other individuals. In the case of Hat Island, at least one individual suspected that the owner heard the complaints and redirected the air cannons to fire away from, rather than toward the mainland. If that is the case and it is effective in avoiding cannon blasts heard on the peninsula, how much better a solution is that, compared to trying to solve the situation through law enforcement or the courts?

By John Beck

Solar Power Projects Can Support Dwindling Beneficial Insects

At the Wisconsin Renewable Energy Summit 2019: Scaling Up for the Job Ahead, Rob Davis explained his job as an educator promoting pollinator-friendly solar projects.

Rob works for *Fresh Energy*, a Minnesota-based advocacy group that promotes a clean energy economy in order to address climate change, protect the environment and public health, and support a vibrant economy.

Currently he has been working with Wisconsin-based Organic Valley on their quest to be the largest food-based company that uses only renewable energy to power their operations. They are currently building ten community-based solar projects throughout southwestern Wisconsin.

They are designing their solar projects to be pollinator-friendly. Where soil is built, carbon is captured, storm water is absorbed and wildlife is supported. Supported wildlife includes butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects, as well as birds. Some solar farms in Minnesota and other states are promoting the creation of habitat for pheasant. There are also examples of community solar farms keeping bees and using their honey in order to promote themselves and provide beekeepers income.

Solar projects offer an opportunity to create or improve habitat and are being studied by Cornell University via a partnership with a North Carolina solar development to do more science on the relationships between various plantings and pollinators. Although no national statistics are available,

in Minnesota alone it is estimated that half of the 4,000 acres of commercial solar projects installed in 2016 and 2017 included pollinator habitat. (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/solar-farms-shine-a-ray-of-hope-on-bees-and-butterflies/>)

It is thought that solar pollinator-friendly projects will help surrounding communities and farms by pollinating fruits, vegetables and nut trees.

Although low-growing perennial meadow plantings have been shown to add a nominal upfront cost, they do offer operational savings. Solar projects have to be raised high enough to allow a yearly pass of mowers and plantings requiring professional expertise and initial care to establish them. In the long run they require less mowing, less or no pesticide use, and help to keep solar panels at lower temperatures during summer months, resulting in higher efficiencies.

Rob is also working with Xcel Energy, a large electric and gas utility based out of Minnesota that covers parts of eight states and has pledged to go carbon free by 2050. They are the first major utility to make such a pledge. They have also shown a great interest in pollinator-friendly solar projects and have so far agreed to work from a Pollinator Friendly Scorecard in order to help in designing more bio-diverse beneficial seed mixes for unique locations for all their solar projects. Wisconsin has its own unique scorecard.

As pollinator habitat wanes, solar installations are taking up even more land. The U.S. is expected to convert six million acres of land to such facilities before 2050, according to the National Renewable Energy

Laboratory (NREL). Recent pollinator-friendly solar offers more refuge for declining insect populations. Wisconsin is lucky to have forward thinking companies such as Organic Valley Cooperative embracing such projects.

By John Hermanson

Agricultural Composting: The Answer to Manure Management and Nutrient Recycling

Farmers are the truest form of conservationists; they are the stewards of the land and depend on the health of not only their herd, but the health of the environment (land, water, air). This stewardship ensures not only a productive and prosperous year for their families, but also support of their local communities and the food chain that supports our entire nation (and in some cases, the world).

America is an industrialized nation, and because industry has become so prevalent, the American farmer has been sold a “convenience model” that inherently bypasses Mother Nature. While most farmers understand the biological process of composting and the importance of returning nutrients to the soil, they have become disconnected from how nature really works; without human, chemical or technological intervention.

Unfortunately, this disconnection has left the agricultural industry in the United States in dire straits. Expensive equipment, ever changing technology, genetically modified plants, chemically engineered fertilizers

and pesticides, monocropping, and the continued expansion of herd sizes to push the economies of scale to the limit have had devastating effects on our nation’s largest industry. Small family-owned farms have nearly vanished from our rural landscape and are rapidly being replaced by industrialized factory farms, including Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations.

While the concept of efficiency in this business model makes economic sense to financiers, the environment is not capable of supporting this concept and it is proving not to be a long-term sustainable solution. When the composting model and its benefits are explained to farmers, nearly every one of them realizes immediately that the “convenience model” that they have been sold is NOT the most convenient, economical or sustainable way available.

While the United States still does better than about 50% of the world in waste management and nutrient recycling, the lower 50% is comprised of mostly third world/undeveloped lands or those in conflict. Europe leads the world in Waste Management and Nutrient recycling, with most European countries diverting less than 25% of their waste to landfills and either recycling, composting, or using their waste for refuse derived fuel or bio-fuels.

Most of these countries do not utilize the liquid manure model in agriculture, and in many countries, it is banned. The United States diverts over 50% of their waste to landfills, 20% is recycled, 15% is used as bio-fuel, and a measly 15% gets composted (mostly municipal waste).

Agricultural Waste Management is an industry that addresses the handling of all the waste streams produced in agriculture.

Nutrient Recycling in Agriculture is the effectiveness of the conversion of “inputs” to “outputs.” In the case of crops, nutrient use efficiency is the ratio of nitrogen and phosphorus in crops (outputs) to nitrogen and phosphorus in mineral fertilizer and livestock manure (inputs).

Currently, the most widely used Agricultural Waste Management/Nutrient Recycling system in the United States is liquid manure storage. This system is used by many larger dairy and swine farms. Liquid manure is transferred or collected into a pit or lagoon structure. It may be mixed, pumped into manure spreading equipment and land applied. This form of manure storage is the most complex and expensive system.

Composting is only beginning to gain acceptance within the industry in the United States. In other countries, especially in Europe, composting has dominated the market share of the municipal, human waste, landfill diversion and agricultural industry for decades, due to stricter environmental regulations. While the municipal, human waste and landfill diversion sectors have more readily implemented the composting concept in the United States, the Agricultural sector has been left nearly untapped due to more lenient environmental regulations.

Why choose composting? Composting is a biological process: if you give Mother Nature the inputs (carbon source, manure) and ideal conditions (hydration, oxygen), the microbes/bacteria do most of the work for you. In ideal conditions, fresh raw manure can be transformed into sterilized finished compost in as few as 8 weeks. There are minimal (if any) environmental effects from aerobic composting, unlike the myriad of environmental disasters that happen with anaerobic liquid manure systems.

Compost can be safely stored, transported and spread. It can be used for many other applications other than just a soil amendment. Compost helps to rebuild depleted soil by releasing nutrients that are bound in the soil into a plant-available form. It also aids in moisture retention of soil, reducing or eliminating run off, erosion, and desertification. Composting is also “neighbor friendly,” creating no air/water/noise pollution, unlike the liquid manure systems that cause noxious smells, run off issues, accidental spills on roadways and a variety of other issues.

Compost is a valuable commodity that can be sold, creating a residual source of income, unlike liquid manure. Most importantly, composting returns carbon to the ground where it needs to be to sustain plant life, rather than off-gassing it into the atmosphere.

By Lora Jorgensen



Grape Hyacinth Photo by Mike Bahrke

Burp! Excuse Me, I Haven't Had My Seaweed Today!

Could Door County cows play a part in combating climate change?

There has been much concern about how factory dairy farming may be responsible for polluting wells in Kewaunee County and creating dead zones in the bay of Green Bay. Livestock agriculture worldwide, including dairy cattle, has deep and wide-ranging impacts on the environment. Occupying nearly 30% of the world's ice-free land mass (*Livestock's Long Shadow*), the livestock sector is significantly responsible for deforestation, soil erosion, pasture degradation, desertification, extinction of species and land, water, and air pollution. It even affects human health either directly as in grazing and poor manure management or indirectly through feed crop production, processing, and marketing. Livestock agriculture is also a leading contributor to climate change.

As a brief review of greenhouse gases, there are four main types: carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), and fluorinated gases. Carbon dioxide, mainly produced from the burning of fossil fuels as in transportation, electricity, and industry, accounts for 81.6% of all U.S. greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. Methane, emitted by natural gas, petroleum systems, and landfills, and also from agriculture, namely, enteric fermentation and manure management, accounts for 10.2% of all U. S. greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. However, carbon dioxide is constantly being removed from the atmosphere and sequestered in oceans, trees, and plants. Methane, on the other

hand, has a Global Warming Potential (GWP) more than 25 times greater than CO₂ over 100 years. This means that methane, which only lasts about a decade in the atmosphere, compared with CO₂, which can last thousands of years if not sequestered, is much more efficient at trapping radiation than CO₂. It is also a precursor to ozone, another greenhouse gas (*Overview of Greenhouse Gases*).

Ruminant animals like cattle, sheep, goats, deer, buffalo, and camels have unique digestive systems consisting of four stomach compartments. The largest, the rumen, is where microbial fermentation takes place, and methane gas is produced and expelled in this process. Nitrous oxide, methane, ammonia, and carbon dioxide are all released in manure. In addition, carbon dioxide is produced in the respiratory process and also from feed crop production, manufacturing of fertilizers and pesticides, processing, and transportation. Cattle are the main contributor, representing 62% of all livestock emissions, according to the Global Livestock Environmental Assessment Model (GLEAM). Worldwide, animal agriculture and its related processes are responsible for 14.5% to 18% of total anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions (*The Meat Question*) or as much as 51%, according to Robert Goodland and Jeff Anhang, co-authors of "Livestock and Climate Change."

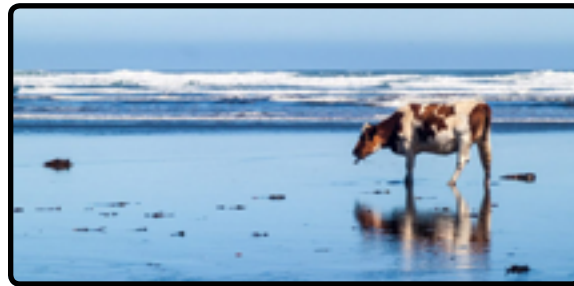
As discouraging as all this is, there is potential for mitigation of human-influenced climate change due to livestock agriculture. The sensible thing to do is for people to acquire vegan diets, reducing the demand for animal products. Yet 80% of the world's population consumes milk and other dairy products, and the demand for meat and milk is rapidly increasing, not decreasing. Additionally, about a billion people depend

on livestock for survival. Eighty million women, in fact, are in some way engaged in dairy farming. Owning and/or managing dairy cows give women the ability to enhance their family's diets and have a more secure place in the community. It would take considerable time to educate people worldwide as to the value of vegan eating and convert livelihoods—time that we do not have in addressing climate change (*Climate Change and the Global Dairy Cattle Sector*).

At the Paris Agreement of 2016, ninety-two countries agreed to include the livestock sector in their

commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Ways this can be achieved from the dairy sector are by 1) improving feed and feeding management which includes better grassland management, 2) better manure management, 3) fertilizer management, 4) reducing fossil fuel use at the farm, and 5) improving animal health and husbandry (*Climate Change and the Global Dairy Cattle Sector*).

Methane-laden cow burps account for 26% of the United States' total methane emissions (*Study: Seaweed in Cow Feed Reduces Methane Emissions Almost Entirely*). Since highly fibrous feed rations cause higher methane emission per unit of energy ingested, improving feed can greatly reduce methane emissions from enteric fermentation. One recent study at James Cook University in Queensland, Australia, indicated that a red macroalgae, *Asparagopsis taxiformis*, added to the feed of cows at a dose of 2% can almost completely eliminate methane production before it is released into the atmosphere.



blog.csiro.au/seaweed

Seaweed, or macroalgae, aquaculture offers several other ways to control climate change. It can replace synthetic fertilizer, raise pH levels, and supply oxygen to the oceans. If seaweed aquaculture could be expanded, this might be one of the quickest ways to reduce methane emissions from ruminant livestock, especially in areas like Western Europe and North America that have the highest concentration of cattle farming.

So, pass the seaweed, please! This is one way that Door County dairy farmers, especially the factory farms, can help stall climate change.

Of course, this method needs to be practiced on a global scale, but small changes can lead to major and consequential ones.

By Kaethe Gutierrez

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The Meat Question, by the Numbers. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/25/climate/cows-global-warming.html>>

Spring Highway Cleanup

Thank you to all for supporting the Highway 42 DCEC Cleanup in Egg Harbor on May 4.

The weather was pleasant, and two members, Joe and Liz, joined our group. About five bags of garbage were collected.

Please join us for our fall cleanup. An announcement will be posted when the date is determined.

In Case You Missed It on the DCEC Facebook Page!

Want to know what issues push the hot button for your fellow environmentalists? Here's a listing of some of the most popular DCEC Facebook Page posts during the past few weeks. And, if you would like more information on any of these topics, check out the DCEC Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/DCwiEnvironmentalCouncil/>.

1. Start holding companies accountable for the externalities of the products they sell.
2. Lake Michigan/Huron is up 8 inches in the last month, 9 inches in the last year, and is now 26 inches higher than the May average level.
3. You remove wetlands and pave over other areas so with heavy rainfall, the water has to go somewhere else.
4. National parks open for free this weekend.
5. The amount of plastic in the ocean is far more than we thought.



Welcome Lora Jorgensen, DCEC's New Administrator!

Lora is a Trustee for the Village of Forestville, Member of the Board of Directors for the Clean Water Action Council, and a Founding Member of the Friends of Forestville Dam. She is also an artist, jeweler, and does free-lance graphic design and marketing for small area businesses.

Lora is a recent graduate of UWGB, with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, minoring in Marketing and Environmental Sustainability.

Lora has a passion for the Great Lakes, clean water, sustainable agriculture, and reducing our carbon footprint. She devotes much of her time in Southern Door, Kewaunee, and in Madison lobbying for the protection of safe ground water and promoting composting as a sustainable solution for agricultural waste management.

Lora has one daughter, Abigail, who currently attends the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design.

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