

The Door County Environmental Council News



June 2021



“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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Overtourism and the Capacity of Door County

For the past several years there has been increasing discussion among residents concerning the growing number of tourists, vacationers, and visitors coming to Door County. Much of this growth has been encouraged by the room tax and promotion by Destination Door County, various visitor bureaus, businesses, realtors, and promoters, among others. Recently, many Door County natives and locals have become more outspoken in their opposition to what they consider to be over development and loss of the “Old Door County.” Some are saying we don’t want to be just like a suburb of Milwaukee or Chicago. People come here for the natural beauty of

Door County. However, there is a finite limit to the quality of Door County’s land, air, and water. Are we now approaching the tipping point?

Overtourism and the Capacity of Door County

June 9 at 7:00 PM

Guest Panelists:

Bob Bultman
Ryan Heise
Jon Jarosh
Susan Kennedy
Solomon Lindenberg
Steve Eatough
Mariah Goode

This panel discussion will be available through Zoom. Please access the link at www.dcec-wi.org or scan this QR code.



Proponents of development here in Door County argue that more business and development bring more needed jobs and more money to Door County. Relatedly, others add that we should not rely so much on tourism, that we need diversification, affordable housing, and increased sustainability.

As the Door County Environmental Council, our mission is to preserve and protect our unique natural beauty and resources. We are concerned that the

increasing number of tourists, vacationers, and visitors to Door County, as well as new developments, are beginning to stretch and stress the capacity of Door County.

So what is the capacity of Door County? As we begin to get on top of the pandemic and tourists begin to return to Door County—perhaps in even greater numbers this year—now may be the perfect time to ensure Door County is not overwhelmed beyond capacity with irreversible impact on our unique natural beauty and resources.

The above brings us to the program your Door County Environmental Council is planning for Wednesday evening, June 9, 2021, beginning at 7:00 pm, in the Kress Pavilion, Egg Harbor. The planned program will be a panel discussion with seven participants and a moderator addressing the topic—“Overtourism and the Capacity of Door County.” A question and answer session will follow. Scheduled panelists include Bob Bultman, Ryan Heise, Jon Jarosh, Susan Kennedy, Solomon Lindenberg, Steve Eatough, and Mariah Goode.

Given the COVID pandemic, vaccination rate, etc., the program format will take the form of a virtual meeting with panelists and audience members participating via Zoom. The Zoom link is <https://villageofegg Harbor.zoom.us/j/98293699165>, and, if needed, the meeting ID is: 982 9369 9165. The link is also available at the DCEC website at www.dcec-wi.org, or by scanning the QR code on page 1 with a smart phone camera and clicking on the displayed link.

We believe this is a much needed and timely discussion concerning the future of Door County, an area we all love for its unique beauty and character. Please join us on June 9!

By Mike Bahrke, DCEC president

Short-Term Rental Properties: Potential Environmental Impact

Short-term rental properties are residential dwellings that are generally rented through rental agencies for short periods of time. Currently, at least two Door County towns, Liberty Grove and Sevastopol, have begun moving forward to regulate, via town ordinances, short-term rental (STR) properties.

As their popularity among visitors has quickly grown, so has the number of STR properties in Door County. However, neighboring property owners, desiring to protect the health and security of their own residential neighborhoods, are seeking to ensure that these STR properties meet certain requirements, including safe private onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS) and properly maintained and functioning wells. Allegedly, however, some STRs have been advertising occupancy limits that apparently exceeded POWTS requirements.



STR in Sister Bay

Photo by Mike Bahrke

According to John Teichtler, Door County sanitarian, if a POWTS services a property,

the STR's occupancy is limited to the number of occupants for which the POWTS is designed and regulated by the state (Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection) and enforced by the county. In other words, 75 gallons per day per person and the cap of two people per bedroom, so that occupancy does not exceed the capacity of the septic system. STRs have no special POWTS requirements, as this requirement applies to all single and two family homes, regardless of the home's use. Every three years the Door County Sanitarian Office mails notices that require property owners to have their septic systems inspected and to verify that inspection with the Office.

For 50 years your Door County Environmental Council has been an integral part of Door County's environmental advocacy fabric. Our mission is to protect Door County's natural beauty and resources through effective land use measures, including zoning ordinances and other regulations. We support regulation of STRs for the continued protection of our Door County environment.

By Mike Bahrke

SafeLawns, A Return To Simple Care

SafeLawns was started by the non-profit group Door Property Owners in 2012. The Door County Environmental Council wants to continue the SafeLawns movement to promote the development of pesticide-free lawns in public and private areas. This is a chance to go simple and allow grassy areas to be sustainable.

Many fertilizers provide nutrients to



Photo by Ryan Bruce from Burst

green grass but destroy micro-organisms. Chemicals can change plants' stability and organic structure, as well as their function and reproduction. Chemicals like dioxin affect animals and humans, and high levels of dioxin can cause cancer. Persistent use of chemicals leads to dangerous levels of accumulation. These are known as persistent organic pollutants (POPs). If we allow places where we play to have limited chemical maintenance, nature will take care of itself. With limited chemical use, soil health can become a healthy closed loop cycle.

DCEC will feature short videos on Facebook on Thursdays evenings about maintaining safe lawns all summer long. The programs will focus on lawns and how important they are for animal habitats and humans and feature activities that are lawn friendly.

SafeLawns is trademarked and available through the Door County Environmental Council.

By Renee McAllister

Sources:
Door Property Owners
Collaborative on Health and the Environment
<https://www.healthandenvironment.org/environmental-health/environmental-risks/chemical-environment-overview/dioxins>
National Institute of Environmental Health
<https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/dioxins/index.cfm>



Forestville Millpond drawdown

Photo by Kelly Deuerling

Ahnapee River Water Testing Update

As you may recall from an earlier newsletter, DCEC has engaged two UW-Green Bay professors and a student to do a comprehensive study of water quality in the Ahnapee River and the Forestville Millpond. DCEC, in a related matter, has opposed the 2019 millpond drawdown plan as proposed by the Door County Soil and Water Department and approved by the Door County Board of Supervisors. We questioned what long term benefit, if any, would be achieved. We believed that the Ahnapee River water quality, and specifically the millpond, was a watershed problem, not just a pond problem. Now we fear the drawdown may result in significant environmental damage, but we require more than just our opinions.

In order to get the facts, we needed to obtain accurate water testing data and evaluation by objective experts. In that effort, we engaged UW-Green Bay professors Kelly Deuerling and Kevin Fermanich to undertake a scientific study of the river and to have water samples tested by an independent, certified lab. Interestingly, Professor Deuerling has, in turn, enlisted the

help of Door County native and UW-Green Bay Environment Engineering student, Kyle Chaudoir. She says Chaudoir's personal knowledge of the site has given her much good background information on the river.

In April, DCEC received our first written report on the river water testing. Early test results indicate significant unacceptable increases in suspended solids and total phosphorus water concentrations after rain events. The researchers also noted that there was "visible sediment mobilization at the dam after a rain event in March," but it is too early to draw conclusions from the Ahnapee River water data obtained thus far. The UW-Green Bay team wants to see the test results after rain events and in different seasons. DCEC should have a final report in October after the researchers have obtained and analyzed more data. We will share those results as soon as we have them.

By Steve Eatough

Foxconn, the Big Con?

Do you remember three and a half years ago when Foxconn was going to build the "eighth wonder of the world" in Mount Pleasant, Wisconsin? In that effort, many environmental concessions were made shortly after the original agreement was signed by Governor Walker. The first was the eminent domain action to take farm land and homeowner's property to construct the Foxconn campus. Then came the issue of environmental damage as the runoff from the elevated land flooded a stream flowing into the Des Plaines River. Foxconn was also given special consideration to draw millions of gallons of water daily from Lake Michigan and then return the

fouled manufacturing water to the Racine Wastewater Treatment Plant to be pumped back into Lake Michigan. Finally, any environmental legal issues were to be on the fast track, not going through the usual channels, but rather to the Wisconsin Supreme Court for a quick decision. From an environmental standpoint, it's been a blessing that so little development by Foxconn has actually occurred. If it had, we possibly could have been dealing with a toxic mess and Foxconn long gone with the taxpayers left to fund the cleanup. As you may recall, Foxconn had originally planned to build a Gen 10.5 manufacturing facility that was projected to employ 13,000 people. Additionally, the company pledged to invest \$10 billion as part of the state of Wisconsin's \$2.85 billion tax credit deal.

It appears now that the company has failed to meet any of the original expectations. In fact, Foxconn did not qualify to receive any state tax credits in 2019 because it didn't employ the required minimum number of employees for the project or invest the threshold amount in capital expenditures.

The company's plans have been in flux, and it's currently unclear what exactly Foxconn is planning to do. The proposed plant is now described as a "technology and manufacturing ecosystem." It's unclear what that means, and exactly what Foxconn plans to manufacture there. In the three and a half years since Wisconsin officials, under Gov. Scott Walker's administration, approved the original agreement with the Taiwanese tech company, there have been on again, off again talks. Those talks have ramped up in recent months.

Under a new agreement announced in late April, Foxconn is only eligible now to receive up to \$80 million in state tax credits.

This amount is just a fraction of the \$2.85 billion that the Taiwanese company was originally able to receive for its promised huge manufacturing plant in southeastern Wisconsin.

After Wisconsin Economic Development Board members approved of the new contract, Governor Evers released an overview of the recent agreement. It reflects the requirements that the company would need to create 1,454 new jobs by 2026, and make \$672 million in investments in order to secure the state's tax credits. It's quite possible that even this dramatically reduced deal may never occur as outlined. Evers also touted the fact that the state would now not invest the \$2.77 billion difference between the original deal and the latest agreement.

In a statement, Foxconn Technology Group said the amended terms "are based on Foxconn's current projections for digital infrastructure hardware products through 2025." Still, the statement makes no promises about what will be produced at the site.

All this makes one wonder if either side really expected the deal to be completed as originally announced to the public. Perhaps we may have really dodged an environmental bullet with the failure of Foxconn to fully bloom.

By Steve Eatough

Some of this article was taken from an article written by Briana Reilly for The Capital Times newspaper.

Back 40 Mine Update

On May 14, 2021, it was reported by Rebecca Bowe, Communications Strategist for the Earthjustice legal firm, that The Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin again has had an important victory in its fight to stop the Back 40 Mine.

The Back 40 Mine is a massive, proposed mine and ore processing center 50 yards from the Menominee River that divides Wisconsin from upper Michigan. The Canadian mining company, Aquila Resources, is seeking to dig an 80 acre open pit mine over 750 feet deep to extract copper, zinc, gold, and silver.

Poisonous, acidic mine drainage from the proposed mine would have a devastating effect on the river as well as the bay of Green Bay, Lake Michigan, the surrounding wetlands, and the Great Lakes at large. For how long? Essentially, forever.

In the article, Becca Bowe, reports:

Earthjustice, representing the tribe, filed suit to challenge the company's permits. In January 2021, a Michigan judge denied

a wetlands permit to the Back 40 Project, ruling that the mine "is not in the public interest," and will damage nearby cultural and historical resources. More recently, another court decision called the company's mining permits into question. Seeing the writing on the wall, Aquila resources announced in May that it will surrender its mining permits and drop its efforts to reinstate its wetland permit. Still, the company has announced plans to submit yet another proposal to revive the ill-conceived project.

"This is a win for the Menominee River, the people of Wisconsin and Michigan, and the Menominee Tribe, and we will not stop fighting until these waters, lands, and sacred sites are protected for good," says Joan Delanreau, chairwoman of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin.

For the complete story and more information about saving the Menominee River visit earthjustice.org. This is also the site where one can donate to support this ever so important fight.

By Paul Leline



Trillium

Photo by Mike Bahrke

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