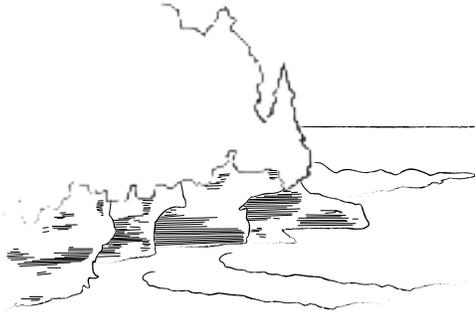


# The Door County Environmental Council News



June 2020



“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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## Impact of COVID-19 on the Door County Environment

We’ve all seen the news headlines and photos of how nature is returning to cities shut down by the coronavirus pandemic. Skies are free of smog in some parts of China, and Italy’s air quality has also improved as industries and businesses are shuttered. So has the air quality improved in major cities like New York, Seattle, Los Angeles, and San Francisco as shelter-in-place orders have dramatically reduced car travel. Peacocks are roaming the streets of Dubai, deer have been spotted hanging out in streets and subway stations in Japan, and mountain goats are overrunning a Welsh town as people stay indoors. With less boat traffic, the water in Venice’s canals is now clear instead of its usual murky green color. You can see straight to the bottom, and fish have returned to some parts. Locally, in Door County, DCEC members and friends are reporting increased

bird and animal sightings. Aside from slowing the spread of the coronavirus, social distancing obviously has had the unintended side effect of reducing pollution and replenishing wildlife across the globe.

As of May 19, 2020, there are now 1.55 million coronavirus cases and 91,582 deaths in the United States alone, and while there have not been many bright spots in the coronavirus pandemic, one has been the apparent return of nature as the frantic pace of modern life has slowed. Wildlife seems set for a bountiful summer. Fewer cars on the road means less roadkill and many birds

will be spared as owners decide to keep their cats indoors! In towns and villages, wildflowers may also flourish as cash-strapped local municipalities realize money is unavailable for mowing and brushing roadsides and underutilized parks.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our summer programs have been postponed. Please watch our website at [www.dcec-wi.org](http://www.dcec-wi.org) and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/DCwiEnvironmentalCouncil/> for updates.

Nature, it seems, is making a comeback. But, is this only a partial picture? Locally, how will Door County locals and visitors respond to the economic shock of losing their livelihood? For many, the waters and woods of Door County may offer a safety net. Will some resort to selling firewood, others growing fruits and vegetables, and still others raising chickens, goats, and other animals to supplement their income?

However, with reduced tax revenue and budgets for law enforcement agencies such as the Door County Sheriff's Department and the Wisconsin DNR, will surveillance and management of our precious wild places be considerably weakened? Will the slowdown of tourism pull out the financial rug from under dozens of protected areas, leaving them without oversight and maintenance? Will locals and visitors alike begin to exploit the natural resources for their own personal gain via poaching and lumbering? Will county, town, and village governments be understandably preoccupied with public health so there will be less law enforcement and environmental protection in rural areas? With numerous seasonal homes and rentals in Door County will there be an unprecedented influx to Door County following the pandemic, and what impact will this have on the Door County environment? These changes may be devastating for the biodiversity of our natural Door County resources.

Will a long-term drop in tourism revenues radically change the incentives for people living close to wildlife? Door County residents and visitors coexist with animals and plants throughout the county, but it is not always harmonious. Wild animals can—and often do—cause extensive damage to crops and livestock. Revenues from visitors offset a significant portion of the costs

local people pay providing an incentive for protection and preservation of our fragile Door County environment, but this may not last if visitors stay away.

So, while the newly emboldened wildlife and plant life brings happiness in these dark times and a welcome reminder of nature's resilience, our county's wildlife may need extra vigilance and protection to ensure its survival during these difficult economic times. We must continue to ensure the protection and preservation of our environment.

*Mike Bahrke*

## **Pondering Post Pandemic Door County**

It's hard to believe that three months ago I didn't even know what coronavirus was. Now it seems to dominate my life. As you well know, you can't turn on any media without hearing and seeing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we are now, almost all socially isolated and plenty bored, perhaps it is a good time to begin thinking about the future. We all want things to go back to "normal." Unfortunately, I don't think the world will even start to truly "normalize" until an effective COVID-19 vaccine is readily available to the general public. Even then, I believe the world will be different. The virus has no respect for man-devised borders, including national, state, or county delineations. This is truly a global disease. COVID-19 travels as a "human hitchhiker." We are the transporting vehicle for the virus regardless of our age, sex, income, race, or religion.

By its very nature, tourism brings people

from different parts of the state, country, and world together in Door County. Tourism, our main industry, has been and will continue to be dramatically negatively impacted by the virus. Our local situation is far from unique. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) says that tourism accounts for 10% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) worldwide. They further state that Asia is likely to be the continent most affected. The GDP of Door County, with our heavy emphasis on tourism, will likely be much more than 10% impacted by the pandemic. Our lack of economic diversity disproportionately hurts Door County, especially northern Door County. In the short run, we need to find safe ways to allow tourism to recover and function, even if it's at a significantly reduced level. In the long run, Door County needs much more employment diversity. A diverse economic base would also help protect our precious environment from the negative effects that over tourism could bring here. We really need a variety of employers providing a diversified economic base with good paying jobs and benefits.

Although this is a complex and daunting undertaking, it's one we must work towards. So how could this get accomplished? Perhaps a good start would be making highspeed broadband internet service available everywhere in Door County. Whether we like it or not, internet related businesses and occupations will dominate the future. Because of its incredible natural beauty, many people want to live in the Door County. But post pandemic, both existing residents and newcomers will need to be able to create new types of businesses and occupations here.

This could more readily happen if high speed internet was available everywhere

in the county. I don't begin to understand how that technological connectivity and advancement could be accomplished. Perhaps highspeed internet could be supplied by cable, or antenna, satellite, or something totally new? However it's accomplished, it will be expensive. High speed internet everywhere would be an investment that, I believe, will reap huge returns for Door County residents in the future. This advancement would not only affect businesses positively, but all aspects of life in Door County including the environment, education, medicine, arts, music, and entertainment. Northeast Wisconsin Technical College could help train or retrain people for jobs and occupations requiring high level computer skills.

The good news is that tourism will eventually return to Door County. We will always be a destination tourist area, but perhaps now we have both the need and the opportunity to advance our economic base and diversity.

*Steve Eatough*

*World: There is no way we can shut everything down to lower emissions, slow climate change, and protect the environment.*

*Mother Nature: Here's a virus. Practice.*

*— Anonymous*

# Meyer-Krouth Marina Project— Door County Environmental Council Opposition Statement

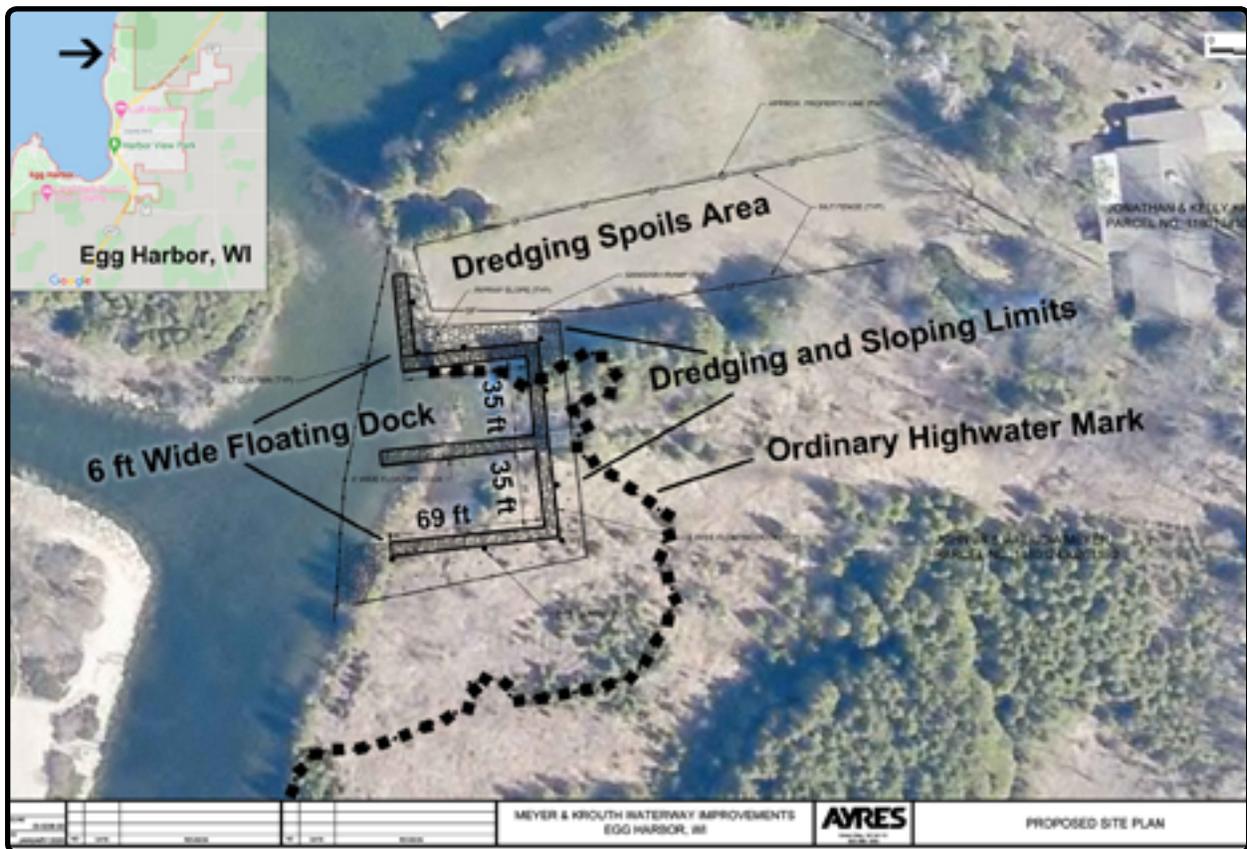
The Door County Environmental Council strongly opposes the John Meyer and John Krouth Marina Project (8191 White Cliff Road, Egg Harbor) which includes plans to excavate a shoreline wetland area to create a marina. The plans and specifications propose to excavate 1,125 cubic yards of material from the lake/harbor and the adjacent wetland and dispose of the materials on the Krouth property, in an area that is currently a meadow.

This project is of concern not only because

of the potential navigational issues but also because the wetland on the Meyer property is part of a much larger contiguous wetland that extends beyond the site property onto property belonging to the Anchorage Cove Condominium Association to the south. More importantly, this wetland is also hydrologically connected to the wetland east of White Cliff Road, most of which is part of the White Cliff Fen State Natural Area.

The question is: how will this proposed marina project impact the environment?

The wetland delineation completed by Mr. Meyer describes a wetland that is dominated by native wetland vegetation species. We are concerned about the introduction of non-native species to the wetland and the potential impact to endangered and threatened plant species in the wetland area



Maps courtesy of the Door County Land Information Portal and Google—modified and adapted for print

such as the dwarf lake iris and Pitcher's thistle, as well as more than a dozen varieties of land snails, insects including the Hines emerald dragonfly, bats such as the northern long-eared bat, birds of prey nesting in the area, and bald eagles (Fish and Wildlife Service, Green Bay Ecological Services Field Office).

It is surprising to us that while the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is requiring a dredging permit for this project, it is not requiring a wetland permit or mitigation measures to offset the potential wetland impact. The Wisconsin DNR believes a wetland permit is not required because, according to the DNR, the Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) extends up into the wetlands and, all of the excavation of the wetland will be below the OHWM of the lake. While the DNR is recognizing some concerns, the DNR is not requiring a pier permit (for a 70 ft. pier) or the wetland permit. The DNR is also dismissing concerns about endangered or threatened animal species on the property. It is our understanding that the DNR has yet to conduct a site visit!

We also question access to the property—via a proposed driveway on part of the property—for servicing the pier.

We believe this type of development disregards the surrounding environment and, given the above, the Door County Environmental Council opposes the Meyer-Krouth Marina Project.

*The Door County Environmental Council  
Board of Directors*

## Upcycling During a Pandemic

**I**n my never-ending quest to keep things out of the landfill, I had plenty of time to conjure new ways to upcycle during my Stay-at-Home months. Here are my ideas:

**Stained Tablecloths:** Do you have a gravy stain on your favorite tablecloth? If you are a sewer, cut it up! Make a table runner embellished with tassels on the ends. Just by hemming the edges, you can make placemats and napkins. Finally, the scraps can be cut into squares for quilt pieces.

**Old Wooden Window:** The panes of an old window can be painted depicting each of the four seasons. Then add a small flowerbox at the bottom and hang it on the wall to brighten up a room. Another use for a window is to make a cold-frame outside. Add a hinge, attach it to a frame, and start the growing season early.

**Old Greeting Cards:** Birthday cards, holiday cards, and magazine pictures can be cut out and arranged on heavy cardboard. Then cover them with clear Contact paper to make placemats. Kids will love this easy project!

**Wine Corks:** Slice corks either across or lengthwise with a very sharp knife. Then glue them to a base to make coasters, trivets, or a bulletin board. Or glue them to a picture frame to remember a wine-tasting vacation in Door County!

This has been an opportunity to be creative, turning trash into something useful, and most importantly, keeping it out of the landfill!

*Eileen Andera*

# **An Open Letter to Our Door County Environmental Council Members and Friends**

**T**hese are unusual times, to say the least. But, hopefully, by the time you read this, Governor Evers' Badger Bounce Back Plan will be in effect and we will have entered the next (and a better) phase of the "new normal."

Thanks to your ongoing support, we continue to work on your behalf to protect and preserve the Door County environment during this difficult time.

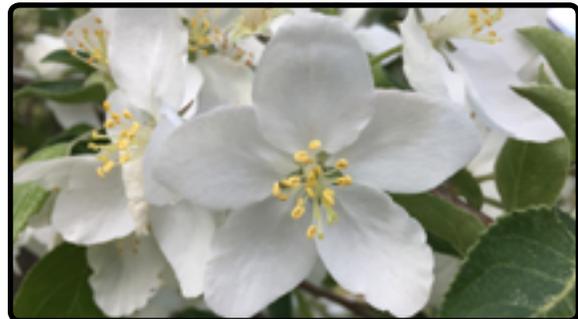
As in previous years (but also dependent upon resolving the COVID-19 pandemic), we have several free programs scheduled for this year including the Right to Harm film, Overtourism/Capacity of Door County, Invasives, a Composting Workshop, Sustainable Agriculture Practices, and Organic Gardening, among others. In addition, we will have our highway clean up in the fall as well as participate in the Sacred Water Walk and the Write On Writing Program. These educational programs and participant activities will provide residents and visitors with a greater understanding of our uniquely beautiful Door County environment.

We will continue to speak out, both in writing and verbally, at public and governmental meetings, to protect our environment. This year we've already participated in meetings opposing the Quarry Village RV Campground, updating and revising the 2021-2030 Door County Land & Water Plan, and in helping with the Mariners Park at Gills Rock Development Plan. We will also publish our four timely

and informative newsletters and continue to maintain our active DCEC Facebook page and our DCEC website to keep you, our members and friends, up-to-date on major developments concerning the Door County environment.

Be assured, your Door County Environmental Council will continue to be a strong voice and an active leader in protecting our Door County environment. Again, thank you for your support!

*Mike Bahrke  
President  
Door County Environmental Council*



*Apple blossoms Photo by Mike Bahrke*

## **In Case You Missed It on the DCEC Facebook Page!**

**W**ant 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 since the March newsletter. And, if you would like more information on any of these topics, check out the Door County Environmental Council Facebook Page.

- Satellite data show 30% drop in air pollution over northeast U.S.
- Sewage sludge spreading leads to farm groundwater PFAS contamination.
- Great Lakes whale migration begins;

humpback spotted in West Bay.

- Endangered sea turtles hatch on Brazil's deserted beaches.
- Cruise ships dumped over 3 million pounds of trash in Alaska last year.
- Record 51 Asian carp caught in Minnesota, a sign the fish may have established permanent populations.
- Traverse City pier owner says "no" to Great Lakes cruise ships.
- MN men pick up bags full of "lake litter," urge anglers to do better.
- Five Michigan DNR workers contracted tuberculosis, likely from testing deer.
- E.P.A. updates plan to limit science used in environmental rules.

*Mike Bahrke*

## **Village of Egg Harbor— a Green Tier Legacy Community**

The Department of Natural Resources formed the Green Tier Charter for Legacy Communities in 2010. Today, Charter membership includes many of the most innovative communities and counties in Wisconsin. The mission of the Green Tier Charter is "to help communities across the state of Wisconsin move continuously toward a sustainable future through initiatives that promote environmental stewardship, economic growth, public health, and social equity."

As a Green Tier Legacy Community, the Village of Egg Harbor has a strong focus on goals set to advance sustainably. Our journey began in 2018, with Eggy Bikes becoming one of our first achievements. This is a bikeshare program that has promoted leisurely exercise and increased

walkability in Egg Harbor, offering visitors and residents alike the opportunity to explore the outdoors. To continue minimizing our carbon footprint, the village upgraded all streetlights to LED, which use 40% less power and last up to 50 times longer than traditional incandescent lights.



*Eggy Bikes in Egg Harbor  
Photo courtesy of Lydia Semo*

Following this change over, our next biggest accomplishment was receiving a Silver Sol-Smart Designation, allowing residents a better opportunity to utilize solar power. After an extensive feasibility study, the village is working to install solar power at both the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Kress Pavilion.

In February of this year, the Village of Egg Harbor was nominated for the Governor's Tourism Stewardship Award. This award recognizes organizations in the travel and tourism industry that demonstrate excellence, dedication, and creativity and have made significant impacts on Wisconsin's travel and hospitality industry. It was an honor to receive such

an outstanding nomination. Sadly, the Governor's Conference on Tourism was cancelled due to COVID-19. We would like to congratulate the other 41 industry representatives that were nominated and invited to attend the conference.

A Green Tier Taskforce was created to help the village stay on top of all-things sustainable. Led by Trustee Angela Lensch, many other community members, business owners, and village staff have joined the Taskforce. In conjunction with the Egg Harbor Business Association, the Taskforce had 30 businesses commit to becoming more environmentally friendly, beginning with eliminating Styrofoam and single-use plastics. The businesses have received guidelines and resources to help transition towards using compostable plastics and away from using petroleum-based plastics. In fall 2020, the Green Tier Taskforce will celebrate the most sustainable business with a Green Tier Advocate Award.

The Village of Egg Harbor is proud to celebrate all county-wide sustainable accomplishments, which would have been exhibited at the second annual Every Day is Earth Day Festival hosted at Kress Pavilion. Unfortunately, the festival was cancelled for 2020, but there are high hopes to recommence in 2021. The 50th Anniversary of Earth Day was observed on April 22nd of this year in the midst of a global pandemic. Times like these can be unsettling and adverse, but we have seen positive reactions in nature. Pollution has cleared up in major cities, wildlife has gone undisturbed, and society has been given an opportunity to pause and reflect. Learning and growing from situations like this only further exemplify the importance of acting now to create a sustainable future. The Village of Egg Harbor is glad to see public

interest, and we are thrilled that other local municipalities have committed to becoming Green Tier Legacy Communities. We strongly encourage other communities and businesses to take the initiative in creating a sustainable Door County.

*Lydia Semo*  
*Village Environmental and Sustainability*  
*Coordinator*  
*Kress Pavilion Marketing and Events*  
*Coordinator*

## **The Hidden Dangers of Milk House Wastewater**

The dangers of untreated agricultural waste (liquid manure) and the effects it can have on surface and groundwater are becoming more apparent with the contamination of private wells, but the hidden contaminants contained in untreated milking parlor wastewater are rarely addressed.

Dairy cows produce an average of 7 gallons of milk per day. Approximately the same amount of water is used each day for washing/sanitizing purposes per cow. Once the milk arrives at a processing plant, it takes an additional 9 gallons of fresh water per gallon of milk to process it into saleable products. In total, that is a 10:1 ratio (10 gallons of fresh water to produce 1 gallon of saleable milk).

Just one Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation milking an average of 6,000 cows will produce over 15,000,000 gallons of wastewater annually, which is added to nearly 40,000,000 gallons of liquid manure the herd produces. The 55 million gallons of untreated, combined waste is typically held in a liquid storage system and applied to fields as nutrients.

Milk house wastewater (water used to clean milking equipment and cows) can contaminate both groundwater and surface water if it is poorly managed. Runoff from the milking parlor itself or this effluent being spread on fields can wreak havoc on the health of humans, as well as cause environmental distresses.

The effluent coming from milking parlors contains a high concentration of organic materials and suspended solids such as manure, phosphorus, bacteria, oil, grease, casein, and lactose. There are also several inorganic compounds found in milk house wastewater such as chlorine, iodine (in the form of iodophors), quaternary ammonium compounds, chlorine dioxides, surfactants, and sodium hydroxide.

**Chlorine Dioxide:** used for sanitizing, can cause brain development delays in fetuses and young children.

**Quaternary Ammonium Compounds (QACs):** used as surfactants and disinfectants. This antibacterial agent is commonly used in household and industrial cleaners. QACs are a known skin irritant, and cause respiratory disorders, including asthma.

**Sodium Hydroxide:** used as a disinfectant, sodium hydroxide is highly corrosive and irritating to the skin, eyes and mucous membranes of animals and humans. Sodium hydroxide can severely affect the pH of surface water and plant life.

Milk house effluent can be especially detrimental to surface water due to its extremely high biological oxygen demand (BOD), and chemical oxygen demand (COD). If the contents of milk house effluent make its way into water bodies, it

can cause an ecological imbalance, which will result in algae blooms, fish die-offs, abundant foam, and strong odors.

**Local loss of fish species:** Discharges and runoff into rivers and streams can be lethal to aquatic life depending on the strength of the contaminant and size of the waterway. Repeated exposure to sub-lethal doses of some contaminants can cause physiological and behavioral changes in fish that have long term effects on the population, such as reduced reproductive success, abandonment of nests and broods, a decreased immunity to disease, tumors and lesions, impairment of the central nervous system, and increased failure to avoid predators.

**Local loss of invertebrate species:** contaminants can be particularly lethal to invertebrates. Invertebrates are also food for fish and persistent discharges that kill invertebrates could cause fish to travel farther in search of food, exposing them to greater risks and stress.

**Decreased dissolved oxygen (DO) levels:** waste compounds released into waterways initiate biochemical reactions that use up oxygen as the stream bacteria break down the organic matter (biological oxygen demand, BOD). Excess nutrients can also lead to algal blooms, and oxygen is used up when the algae die and decompose. Fish 'breathe' oxygen through their gills; a decrease in available oxygen (anoxia) in the water column threatens their ability to respire, which may lead to death. Fish that tolerate low levels of dissolved oxygen (such as the introduced species gambusia) may replace native populations that are less tolerant.

**Increased turbidity and decreased water clarity:** water may become cloudy or

discolored with chemical contamination which reduces the ability of fish to see prey and detect predators.

*Lora Jorgensen*

<https://www.hindawi.com/journals/jther/2016/3746316/>

[https://www.niwa.co.nz/our-science/freshwater/tools/kaitiaki\\_tools/impacts/chemical-contaminates/causes-of-chemical-contamination/chemical-contaminates-and-meat-and-dairy-processing](https://www.niwa.co.nz/our-science/freshwater/tools/kaitiaki_tools/impacts/chemical-contaminates/causes-of-chemical-contamination/chemical-contaminates-and-meat-and-dairy-processing)

<https://ag.umass.edu/crops-dairy-livestock-equine/fact-sheets/milkhouse-wastewater-management>

## Letter from the Administrator

Spring in Wisconsin always seems to have many tricks up its proverbial sleeve. Along with the typical weather fluctuations (summer-like weather one day and snow the next), the entire nation is also dealing with a pandemic that has brought many things to a grinding halt. The “shelter at home” order over the months of March, April and May has “grounded” many businesses and people alike.

The effects of this have touched every single person in some way by changing the daily routine of people and businesses. For some, this disruption has been difficult to deal with, others are taking advantage of this extra time to spend with their children, take time to dabble with hobbies, or to complete tasks on their never ending “to-do” list.

For me, the extra time at home has reinforced the importance of “urban homesteading” and re-evaluating my

own daily practices to strive to live more sustainably. With shortages in durable goods, consumables, food production, and distribution chains, I find myself employing techniques to re-use, recycle, and “get by” in general with far less, especially when it comes to convenience items. This shift has some very exciting effects ... not only is it more economically feasible, but it also is much more environmentally friendly!

I’ve found myself relying much more on local producers to meet my needs, including purchasing food items directly from small farms in my neighborhood. Extra time at home has also afforded me the opportunity to do extra planning, reorganizing, and “ramping up” my own production ... namely in my vegetable garden, which will provide a bountiful harvest in summer and fall. All this extra attention I have been giving to these endeavors has not gone unnoticed. Friends and neighbors who never grew gardens before, have been spotted readying small raised beds and patio gardens.

I am hopeful that this is the blessing in disguise that comes from this pandemic experience, that people will gain a new appreciation for self-sustainable practices as well as continue to support their local producers, keeping our communities strong.

Normally in the spring, the DCEC is hard at work planning our summer programming and events. With the uncertainty of when life will “get back to normal,” much of this has been cancelled or put on hold until further notice. We are hard at work “thinking outside of the box,” finding creative ways to adapt and overcome these obstacles. Keep an eye on our website and Facebook page to see what great things we come up with!

*Lora Jorgensen, Administrator*

## DCEC Leadership

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SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT: Ryan Heise, Jacksonport  
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BOOKKEEPER: Nancy Raye, Sturgeon Bay  
COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR:  
Kaethe Gutierrez, Sturgeon Bay

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*Please mail with payment to: DCEC, P.O. Box 114, Fish Creek, WI 54212*



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