



Kent Environmental Council

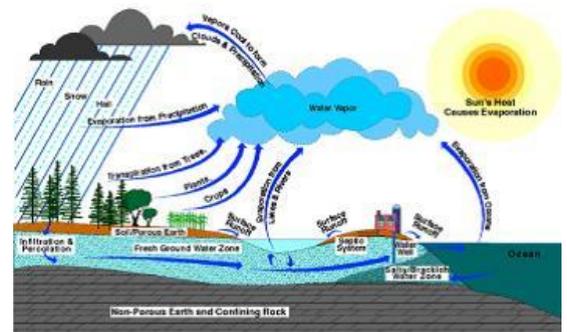
AUGUST 2015

Welcome to the August 2015 issue of the Kent Environmental Council newsletter. This month we are focusing on water issues.

→ Greentown Kent: Part 2

This article is the second in a series looking at several of the presentations given at a very successful two-day conference about many issues connected to sustainability organized by A5 and Seven Generations Ahead and co-sponsored by many organizations, including the city of Kent and Kent State University and the Kent Environmental Council. At times, workshops were held simultaneously, so I can report on only those I attended.

Several of the sessions I attended at Greentown Kent fit in perfectly with this month's focus on water. Bob Heath, professor emeritus from Kent State University, presented a seminar titled "Sustainable Towns Depend on Sustainable Water Sources." He explained that water is an irreplaceable resource. The average person drinks about a gallon a day; however, while a person can go five weeks without food, a person can go only five days without water to drink. If you consider quality of life issues, such as showers, toilets, laundry, recreation, and gardening, the average person uses 100 gallons of water per day. So we need water to live.



The water cycle

Heath explained that 97 percent of the earth's water is saltwater, and only 3 percent is freshwater. Of that 3 percent, 69.6 percent is ice, 30.1 percent is groundwater, and 0.3 percent is surface water. The major water source for human use is groundwater, because it is more abundant, easier to treat and safer. Threats to groundwater, which is 200 feet below the surface, include sources drying up, population and use exceeding well capacity, and sources becoming polluted and sometimes then unusable (such as water from fracking and injection wells). Also, as towns grow bigger, more surface area is paved. Because water cannot be absorbed through these impervious surfaces, groundwater does not recharge as fast as it needs to. Communities also can have problems with combined sewer overflow causing flooding problems, so water costs more. Once water is lost, it is difficult to regain.

According to Heath, we need to live within our water means. We need to consider whether we have enough available water before we develop (for example, towns, projects, industry), maintain sufficient open space, and use green infrastructure in planning and mitigation so that groundwater can recharge. Even pocket parks help. We have come to think of water as cheap and plentiful-it is not, as California is now showing us. To view Heath's full PowerPoint presentation, click [here](#).

Tim Murphy then presented "Toledo Water." From this presentation, I learned that Toledo draws its drinking water from Lake Erie and that the algae bloom/high microcystin (a class of toxins produced by certain freshwater bacteria) levels that caused the city's drinking water ban in August 2014 occurred in the lake directly over the city's water-intake valve. The city had very little warning. Murphy showed a very well-made video (by the University of Toledo) about the events and their resolution for now. The city is hoping for stronger guidance on testing protocols, have developed new procedures (including more frequent testing and training for emergencies), and are involved in developing best practices standards to decrease algae blooms. They also are looking at infrastructure improvements, although it would cost a half billion dollars to move the intake valve 25

miles farther into the lake. (For more on Toledo's water issues, see the following article titled "Threats to Lake Erie.")

Another water-related session was "The River Rebounding: State of the Cuyahoga River Watershed" presented by Jane Goodman, executive director of Cuyahoga River Community Planning. Goodman talked about the many specific successes and challenges involved in improving the river. The concepts she discussed are covered in the articles on the Cuyahoga River watershed, river restoration, and green infrastructure later in this newsletter. See [Goodman's PowerPoint presentation](#) for more details, including specific Areas of Concern, a chart showing those closest to being successfully remediated, and Cuyahoga River Restoration's five goals for 2019 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the famous fire on the river in Cleveland, which sparked national interest and helped lead to the federal Clean Water Act.

--Lorraine McCarty

→ Threats to Lake Erie Shared at Edith Chase Symposium

The inaugural Edith Chase Symposium held on June 5 was a success in all regards. Chase now lives in Ithaca, New York, but her legacy endures here in Ohio. The initial aim of this event was to commemorate and celebrate all that Chase accomplished during her many years of environmental action in Ohio and particularly in the Kent region. Chase was first of all a scientist who used her abilities to ferret out the truth about environmental issues. Secondly, she was a journalist and editor of *Shorelines*, an environmental newsletter focused on Lake Erie issues, and she was an environmental activist who worked tirelessly for legislation to protect the earth. The intent of the Kent Environmental Council in partnership with the League of Women Voters of Kent was to present an informative evening from the three facets of Chase's accomplishments. The theme, "Not a Drop to Drink," was focused on threats to and consequences of environmental damage to surface water sources of drinking water in general and on the Toledo drinking water crisis of 2014 in particular.



Left to Right: Presenters Kristy Meyer, Dr. Robert Heath, and Tom Henry and Moderator Iris Meltzer

Tom Henry, an award-winning journalist at the *Toledo Blade*, vividly described the events involved in the crisis. Residents awakened on the morning of August 2 and were greeted by a radio announcement that tap water delivered from the city's water treatment plant was unsafe to drink because of contamination by the toxin microcystin. This toxin was produced by a bloom of the cyanobacterium *Microcystis* in the western basin of Lake Erie, the source of Toledo's drinking water. Early risers notified their neighbors and rushed to hoard bottled drinking water. Markets from as far away as an hour's drive were rapidly exhausted of their bottled water. Henry worked continuously for 24 hours to find the reasons for the crisis and to discover what was being done to alleviate it. He attributes the efforts of the staff of Toledo Municipal Water Plant with restoring the drinking water to safe levels within two days of the initial crisis.

Bob Heath, professor emeritus from Kent State University and chairperson of Ohio's Coastal Resources Advisory Council, provided scientific insights into the origin of this crisis. *Microcystis*, a cyanobacterium (sometimes called a blue-green alga), grows rapidly under stimulation by excessive amounts of both phosphorus and nitrogen nutrients in the lake. Blooms (i.e., unusually large standing crops) of this organism have recurred annually since 1995. Living *Microcystis* cells float and form surface scums far from the municipal water intake pipes, which are set at four to five meters below the surface. This time, the bloom coincided with a major wind storm that mixed the bloom into the water column and drove it into the water intakes. Also, all *Microcystis*

blooms are not equally toxic. Current investigations indicate that high concentrations of nitrate stimulate the production of the toxin, and this toxic bloom was immediately preceded by a spike in nitrate concentration, likely due to a storm. Henry emphasized that controlling phosphorus alone will not prevent recurrence of such events; attention needs to be given also to preventing excessive amounts of nitrogen from finding their way into Lake Erie waters.

Kristy Meyer, an environmental legislative activist with the Ohio Environmental Council, spoke about current and impending legislation related to surface water quantity and quality. She especially noted that Gov. John Kasich recently signed legislation aimed at reducing agricultural runoff into Lake Erie, which is hoped to reduce phosphorus input by 40 percent within a decade. Meyer also discussed the process of legislation and the ways citizens can become involved directly, as Chase often did. Meyer emphasized that improvement of surface water quality will happen only if informed citizens are willing to express their views in public and challenge legislators to provide appropriate legislation to protect the quality of surface water. She ended by commending the Kent Environmental Council and the League of Women Voters of Kent not only for promoting and sponsoring this event but also for all the efforts that individuals of each organization had made over the years to inform and promote environmentally protective legislation in the manner often done by Chase.

The Edith Chase Symposium is intended to be an annual event focusing on a different and timely environmental topic each year. The inaugural event met a high bar of success, as it was an official part of Sustainable Cleveland - Year of Clean Water and it was sponsored by the Cleveland Water Alliance, the Portage Foundation, the League of Women Voters of Kent, the Kent Environmental Council, the Art Armory Design Studio, and Christopher J. Mallin. Notably, this event also was supported financially by contributions from 41 Friends of Edith Chase--including Chase herself. More than 100 people attended the event at the Kent State University Hotel and Conference Center and included local politicians and decision-makers as well as concerned citizens interested in preservation of clean drinking water sources.

--Bob Heath

Editor's Note: In recent days, the amount of excess rain we have had has increased pollutant runoff, prompting authorities to increase their forecast for the algae bloom in Lake Erie this year, now expected to be severe. This increased threat may or may not lead to drinking water problems in Toledo because wind and temperature patterns will play a part (the colder the better). Scientists have found toxic algae earlier than usual and have detected small amounts of microcystin at the intake mechanism for Toledo's water, putting it into a "watch" category, but the water is still safe to drink.



Microbeads Remain a Threat to the Great Lakes

Research has shown that a new threat to the Great Lakes is the negative impact of microbeads. These small plastic beads are used as an abrasive in many personal-care consumer products, such as face washes. They easily escape filtration methods and, as they accumulate, they pose a danger to the Great Lakes. From their impact on local fish and wildlife to their ability to concentrate toxic chemicals, it is important that the issue be attacked directly. Several leading beauty-product manufacturers including Proctor & Gamble, Unilever, Colgate-Palmolive, Johnson & Johnson, The Body Shop, and L'Oreal all have made recent commitments to phase out the use of microbeads in their products, but an outright ban seems necessary to address all producers. Illinois has banned microbeads, and other states are working toward this as well. In Illinois, the industry did not fight the ban and instead the Chemical Council of Illinois agreed to phase out microbeads.

According to Mother Jones News, products with plastic microbeads in them include toothpastes such as Crest Pro-Health Advanced and 3-D White Arctic Fresh, and CVS Brilliant White and face and body scrubs such as Neutrogena Gel-free Acne Wash and Deep Clean Scrub, Clinique Exfoliating Scrub, Aveno Skin Brightening

Daily Scrub, Clean N Clear Morning Burst Facial Scrub, Nivea Men Energy Face Scrub, Proactive Renewing Cleanser (now Skin Smoothing Exfoliator), The Body Shop Tea Tree Squeaky-Clean Scrub, Bath and Body Works Deep Cleansing Hand Soap, Walgreens Pink Grapefruit Foaming Acne Strub, Clearasil Refining Suuperfruit Scrub, CVS Oil Free Daily Acne Scrub, Olay Regenerist Detoxifying Pure Scrub, Pink Warm and Cozy 2-in-1 Wash & Scrub, Gathier Balancing Daily Exfoliator, and Walgreens Blackhead Cleaning Scrub. The Alliance for the Great Lakes says that consumers can determine if their personal care or beauty products contain microbeads by checking the product ingredient list for the words polyethylene or polypropylene. Locally, you can avoid products containing microbeads by frequenting the Kent Natural Foods Co-op, which has products using natural exfoliants, by finding a local Posh distributor (a personal care company dedicated to sustainability), by making your own cleaners and personal care products, or by visiting one of the local soap and sundry makers in town and at the Haymaker Farmers Market.

Sherrod Brown, U.S. from Ohio has co-sponsored Senate Bill 1424, the Microbead-Free Waters Act, which would ban the use of microbeads in cosmetic products, believing that a clean and healthy Lake Erie benefits all Ohioans. Stay connected with what's happening in Congress. [Sign up here](#) for regular updates on the issues you care about the most. For more information about the Great Lakes, click [here](#).

--Jim Geisey, Lisa Regua Meyer and Iris Meltzer

➔ Another Successful Cuyahoga River Day Celebration

River Day 2015 was a smashing success this May, starting with Kent Parks and Recreation Student Watershed Day on Friday at Heritage Park. Those students in attendance were fascinated with the fish shocking done by the Ohio Division of Natural Resources wildlife officials, which allowed the children to see 16 species of fish up close and personal and then return them safely to the water. Students performed river water-quality testing and viewed aquatic animals to learn more about the ecology of the Cuyahoga River and how to take care it. Along the edge of the river they looked at the native and invasive plants and then discovered recreation opportunities on the Cuyahoga River. Kent State University's Crooked River Adventures brought life jackets and kayaks to allow students to learn about water safety and participate in the Wear It Ohio campaign.



Curtis Wagner from the Ohio Division of Natural Resources Wildlife shares a catch from the fish-shocking with students, before releasing it.



Cathy Ricks of the Kent Parks and Recreation Department introduces families to aquatic and woodland critters while children create nature art projects at the Haymaker Farmers Market.

On Saturday, tents were set up at the Haymaker Farmers Market, which was well-attended. Families and children enjoyed all the art activities and animals at the Kent Parks and Recreation Department tent as well the free tree seedlings donated by Portage Soil & Water Conservation District and the city of Kent. Free milkweed seeds to help attract and feed the butterflies this summer were donated by Ohio Prairie Nursery.

Information about storm-water management, river access, rain barrels, hike-and-bike trails and the Kent Health Department Mosquito Program also was available.

Kent Environmental Council's tent sported a map and pictures of the Cuyahoga River Watershed. It was a learning experience for people to use these maps to locate where they lived on the watershed and put a mark on the painted representation of the watershed done by Catherine Ricks of the Kent Parks and Recreation Department. The U.S. Coast Guard was present to help families learn about how to use life jackets properly and be safe while enjoying boating this summer. Crooked River Adventures opened its canoe, kayak and bike rental livery for the season and participated in boating education.



Cuyahoga River Day visitor learns about the Cuyahoga River Watershed at the Kent Environmental Council booth.



Ron Tvorik from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Flotilla 61-01 Akron, showed Nick, Kayden and Tyler how to wear a life jacket and have fun on the river.

And as a special treat, the Akron Water District opened up Lake Rockwell for tours to celebrate their 100th Anniversary this River Day. The operations of the plant were explained, and it was very interesting to see how gravity and chemicals are used to ensure that the water is drinkable when it leaves the plant. Van tours of the area were given, highlighting the water district's excellent stewardship of the surrounding preserve and the environment and wildlife that were present. Wildlife included deer and several species of birds in their natural habitat. A Bald Eagle's nest was visible across a waterway. An access canoe launch has opened on the river just across from the plant and is open to the public but only in the direction away from the reservoir.

--Lorraine McCarty and Catherine Ricks



What Is a Watershed? Why Is It Important?

KEC's displays at River Day and the Kent Heritage Festival this year focused on the Cuyahoga River Watershed. A watershed is the area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off of it goes into the same place. The Cuyahoga River Watershed drains 809 square miles and includes 26 subwatersheds whose creeks and streams feed the river's flow. All or part of several dozen municipalities in six counties share the Cuyahoga River Watershed.

Water is a precious and finite resource. The Great Lakes contain 20 percent of the fresh water in the world. The Cuyahoga River empties into Lake Erie in Cleveland. By keeping the watersheds healthy, we assure that the waters of the river and the lake will be here for our future needs. To that end, watershed action plans to protect the Great Lakes have been developed for every watershed. The plans include an inventory of the watershed, list the problems found, and list goals and action plans. Certain areas with severe problems are considered to be an Area of Concern for the Great Lakes.



Cuyahoga River Watershed

The first 50 miles of the Cuyahoga River, from Geauga County through Portage County and on to Cuyahoga Falls, are designated as an American Heritage River. The removal of dams in Kent, Munroe Falls and Cuyahoga Falls have helped to make the river free flowing, which has improved the numbers and biodiversity of fish and plants, increased the ability of the land and water to filter some pollution, and allowed an increase in recreational uses in and near the river. There are no Areas of Concern in this portion of the river, but less severe problems still exist and need remediation.

From Akron up to the mouth of the river in Cleveland, there are federal Areas of Concern for the Great Lakes. Problems include sediment that needs to be removed, sewers that overflow and cause problems in the environment, and streams that have been polluted and channelized, thereby curtailing the flow, fish and natural plant growth. Numerous efforts are under way to fund and complete the remedial action plans that have been developed to improve water flow and water quality. The federally recognized Area of Concern for Great Lakes restoration also includes nearby Lake Erie tributaries from approximately Edgewater Park to Euclid Creek.

--Lorraine McCarty

→ Current River Realities

Restoration is working. The river lives.

- Fish populations, health and variety of species have increased hundreds-fold, attracting many birds and other animals. The river is the center of an active maritime industry.
- Recreational activity has grown, including paddlers between Lake Rockwell and the Gorge Dam in Akron and many trails along the river. Dozens of school rowing crews ply the waters daily, and the Cleveland Rowing Foundation hosts national rowing regattas annually.
- New riverside residential and commercial development demonstrates that the river is a good place to live, a resource to protect and a destination in which to invest.



Rainbow Darters increase in the free flowing parts of the river



Kayaking in Kent, Ohio

But problems persists.

- Bacteria coming from overflows of combined sanitary and storm-water sewer systems during and after heavy rains continue to make the river from Akron to Lake Rockwell unhealthy for swimming.
- Dams in Akron and in the Cuyahoga National Park prevent fish from using all of the Cuyahoga River for migration and reproduction.
- Fish habitat has been lost as streams are filled and their banks denuded of forest and vegetation.
- Nutrients from agriculture upriver and excessive fertilization of land throughout the watershed run off into the tributaries and into Lake Rockwell.
- Storm water overwhelms the built infrastructure designed to carry it away as land is paved and wetlands that would store it are filled in for development.

What the future holds.

A plan is in place, and restoration projects are under way throughout the watershed. The future is bright. With dozens of partners--businesses, park systems, government agencies (including federal funding from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative) and nonprofits--and hundreds of committed individuals, restoration will continue.

--Lorraine McCarty



What Are River Restoration and Green Infrastructure?

A spring Green Infrastructure Bus Tour sponsored by the Cuyahoga River Restoration Initiative expanded my understanding of the techniques used to restore watersheds. The first tour I reported on last fall in this newsletter included Summit County sites that were in rural or park settings. These sites illustrated some of the more common restoration techniques, such as the following:

- Removal of dams to allow fish and recreational users to pass
- Remediation of sewer overflows
- Restoration of aquatic habitat in the ship channel and tributaries
- Restoration of streams and buffer zones
- Removal, reduction and management of sediment, both toxic and clean
- Nutrient reduction
- Building of riffles and pools
- Creating braided and meandering streams
- Planting natural, water-loving plants and trees to create a canopy and curb erosion
- Removing concrete channels and reconnecting isolated channels



This spring, we toured several sites in the Cleveland area that were more urban and use the ground to filter out as many contaminants as possible to keep them out of the sewers, water treatment plants, and waterways.



We visited Oakwood Commons, a former golf course in South Euclid, where the developer was committed to having all tenants use green building techniques. The site includes the first LEED-certified Walmart (inside and outside), several smaller stores, graceful sidewalks, native plantings and grasses, walkable parking lots, electric vehicle charging stations, LED lighting, educational signage and numerous low-impact design measures, such as the following:

- Vegetated swales and bioswales to increase groundwater filtration integrated into the parking lot
- A pond twice the size it needs to be so that it releases water at a slower rate and is then pumped into a stream
- A 21-acre park donated to the city (and used by residents) that contains 5.5 acres of wetlands and is managed to keep microbes in there to help native vegetation to retain water longer
- Several types of permeable pavements (permeable pavers, which are the most expensive but last longer and allow for more water storage; permeable asphalt, which is difficult to put down, but flexible, the least expensive but wears down over time and fills in over time from



torquing of vehicles; permeable concrete, which has a middle line for costs, performs fairly well, freezes and thaws acceptably but requires training of maintenance crews to stop salting it,

I drove by Oakwood Commons in late June. The plantings have matured, and the area is blooming as it filters the water! This is opposite from the old goals of getting the water off the property as fast as possible.



We then visited the South Euclid City Hall where the city converted its parking lots to include permeable pavers to increase groundwater filtration. The front lot is totally permeable; in the lot, only parts were retrofitted. The aim is to keep the surface as flat as possible so the water drains down through the 30-inch stone base installed below it. Dirt collects over time and it needs to be swept out or vacuumed to keep out mud.

Also in South Euclid was the Langerdale Basin, one of the first storm-water basin retrofits in the county to improve the water quality measures for an existing 65-year-old facility. South Euclid officials created a green drain, flattened out a valley, and installed weirs and wildflowers, which help retention and water quality while camouflaging the ponds. The beauty of the new area has sparked new economic development around it.

Our next stop was Waterloo Street in Cleveland, where a recent redevelopment has installed a variety of bioretention designs within existing and new parking areas as part of the streetscape revitalization in the arts district led by the local community development corporation. With artists encouraged to buy their spaces, the area's former 40 percent vacancy rate is down to 4 percent. Signs have been installed to educate people about the bioretention techniques used in the design. In the future, plans are to use water off roofs to water an orchard nearby.



Our last stop was at Wildwood Park where a bioswale was installed by a local youth at an existing public parking lot to create new storm-water storage and filtration and stop flooding that happened in the lot regularly in the past. At only 370 feet long by 2 feet wide, this was the smallest scale project we saw, raising the drains and using dirt, 912 plants and a youth with a mission. While it could have been engineered better, it still works to hold the water and stop the flooding.



I can't wait to see what the third tour will teach me. For more information about joining a tour, contact [Lynn Garrity](#), program manager, Cuyahoga River Restoration Initiative, at 216-2412414 ext. 255.

--Lorraine McCarty

→ Cuyahoga River Water Walk

From June 22 through 25, Sharon Day, an Ojibwe Indian, led a small group on a walk from the headwaters of the Cuyahoga River in Geauga County to its mouth in Cleveland, carrying a bucket of water and a ceremonial staff, starting each day with a prayer, a song and sharing:

Water we love you, we thank you.
For love of water we walk, we sing, we pray
For love of Cuyahoga.

The group paced their walking at about three miles per hour, their estimate of how fast the water flows--always moving forward in a relay fashion so that the journey can continue. Elaine Marsh, Cathie Finn and Lorraine McCarty joined the journey through portions of Summit County. On the last day, Day was quoted on the Cuyahoga River Water Walk Facebook page as saying: "Walking, singing and praying for this body of water that flows into Lake Erie, and then to Lake Huron and up to Lake Ontario and then to the St. Lawrence Seaway and then out to the Atlantic. We are all connected as we are all water...." The walk is to honor the water and to call attention to water issues and that clean, quality water is a never-ending task. Day has also walked the Mississippi and other rivers.



Sharon Day holds a bucket of water during the prayer circle before the Cuyahoga River Water Walk began on its third day on the morning of June 24.

--Lorraine McCarty

→ Plant-Based Weed Killer Available

Trying to grow plants without harming the environment? Try Burn Out brand herbicide, a plant-based (clove) weed killer. While Kent Feed, 107 Lake St., Kent (330-678-3377) does not yet stock it, they will order it for you. Todd at Kent Feed commented that they have had enough requests that they may start to stock it in the future. (Remember, the chemicals we put into the ground eventually make their way into the Cuyahoga River and Lake Erie!)

--Brad Brotje



→ Don't Forget the Sunscreen

Ready for summer? Don't forget to stock up on sunscreen! Before you go outside, make sure you're covered with one of Environmental Working Group's (EWG) [top-rated sunscreens](#). Click here to check out their ratings for safety and efficacy of more than 700 sunscreens and daily moisturizers with SPF.

--Iris Meltzer

→ Breakfast Banter

Recent discussions at our informal Friday morning breakfasts have focused on sustainability (we presented our comments about the current goals to the Kent Sustainability Commission, and the commissioners have requested that we let them know what new goals we would suggest, which we are working to formulate.) We also have had discussions about water issues (local and worldwide), GMO food, solar issues and other topics of interest. Come and join us at Little City Grill every Friday at 8 a.m.

→ The Environment in the News

Portage Joins Call for Freeze on Injection Wells in Ohio Record-Courier and Akron Beacon Journal - July 10, 2015

Portage is the third county in Ohio to pass a resolution asking for Gov. John Kasich and the legislature to seek a state-backed moratorium on new injection wells for liquid wastes from shale drilling. The state has 202 active injection wells. Portage County has 14 active wells and about two dozen permitted wells. There are also a handful of permits for wells that have not yet been drilled. Mary Greer, a Shalersville activist, testified that injection wells dispose of waste without treating it and leaves aquifers used by thousands of people at risk for contamination. George Sosebee thanked the commissioners "for being with us all along and sticking your neck out." Since 2004, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources has maintained control of permitting, and local counties have no say. Trumbull and Athens counties also have passed similar resolutions.

Swimmers Warned Away from Brady Lake Record-Courier - June 18 and 19, 2015

Dangerously high levels of bacteria in the water have led Brady Lake village officials to ban swimming until further notice. Bacteria counts usually run as low as 30, and now reached 2,000. Counts of 200 or higher can be unsafe for children and infants because skin contact with heavily contaminated water can cause severe illness. Possible causes may be a large population of geese near one end of the lake and recent storms.

Akron Council Approves Resolution Opposing Drilling Bill Akron Beacon Journal - July 14, 2015

Akron unanimously passed a measure to stave off new legislation to use park land for fracking. House Bill 8 would allow forced inclusion of public land, including municipal parks. Council feared that the legislation would take local control away and that the activity could hurt the animals and plant habitats that are now protected in the parks.

Cuyahoga River Plan Proposing Canoes, Kayaks Akron Beacon Journal - May 15, 2015

The National Park Service and Kent State University's Crooked River Adventures/Recreational Service will be doing a pilot project to determine if paddling in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park is feasible. The pilot will be for small, select groups and not the general public. While paddling is permitted in the Cuyahoga Valley is currently permitted, it is not encouraged and there are no boat ramps because two dams and log jams pose risks and, after heavy rains, bacteria counts rise from Akron's overflowing sewers. Elaine Marsh, from Friends of the Crooked River, called this action "truly significant."

Activist Group Loses Drilling Suit, Plans to Appeal

Akron Beacon Journal - July 5, 2015

In Broadview Heights, Mothers Against Drilling in Our Neighborhood, claimed that the city's 2012 Community Bill or Rights supersedes a state law permitting drilling. But Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Judge Timothy McCormick dismissed the lawsuit and cited the February Ohio Supreme Court case that said municipalities' home rule does not overrule state law regulating oil and gas. Tish O'Dell argued that both federal and state constitutions allowed citizens to govern themselves locally and protect their community. Odell said, "Based on his decision it doesn't look like he read a word of our brief....We're not giving up. We're not going away."

Portage Gets \$200,000 Grant for Recycling Truck

Record-Courier - May 27, 2015

A grant from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency will allow Portage County to purchase its first front-loader truck to begin the planned change to single-stream recycling. The county will need to add \$160,000 of its own money to complete the purchase. The truck will be automated, so the operator can empty bins without leaving the truck. The district plans to purchase a second front-loader and three automated curbside route trucks also. The commissioners approved the purchase of these trucks at the beginning of May and will put out bids. Bill Steiner, head of the Portage County Recycling Center, says the new truck will increase the speed and safety of recyclables and begin to standardize the fleet, cutting down on the need to stock a variety of repair parts.

Rootstown Eyes Curbside Recycling

Record-Courier - July 15, 2015

To see if residents were interested in curbside recycling in Rootstown, 3,000 surveys were sent out, and 867 responses were received. Sixty-five percent of respondents were in favor of curbside recycling, with 58 percent favoring pickup on every two weeks, while 45 percent said weekly. Of the 302 residents who were not in favor of curbside recycling, 214 said they use the drop-off location. The trustees will now have to make a final decision. The program would be mandatory for all residents, with charges from \$2.25 to \$2.75 per month, and the current drop-off site will close. If approved, single-stream recycling would be used, and there would be no need to sort recyclables.

Pope: Urgent Changes Imperative to Address Environmental Woes

Record-Courier - June 21, 22 and 23; Akron Beacon Journal - June 21, 2015; USA Today - June 18, 2015

Pope Francis called on people from all religions to correct a "structurally perverse economic system where the rich exploit the poor, turning the Earth into an "immense pile of filth." In his papal encyclical, "Laudato Si," he framed climate change as a moral issue and sees climate change as man-made and based on an unfair fossil fuel industry model that hurts the poor the most. Those who exploit the world's resources have a special responsibility to deal with the issue, according to the pope. He stated that halfway measures are not enough to save the earth--just a way of delaying the inevitable disaster. The world cannot be apathetic, he continued, adding that we need to redefine our notion of progress. There is a difference, he said, between "human needs, which are limited but non-negotiable, and appetites, which are potentially unlimited." He believes we need to change lifestyles, production and consumption. In his belief in the transformative power of simplicity and compassion, he states, "We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and that the world, and that being good and decent are worth it." Michael Mann, a leading climate scientist at Pennsylvania State University who published a book on the role of science deniers in subverting global warming discussions, says, "As a scientist, I can say that it is possible for us to prevent truly catastrophic, potentially irreversible climate change. But I cannot say as a scientist whether or not we will find the will to do what's necessary." Mann believes that only strong public outcry can force policy changes, and this is where he believes the encyclical is crucial and can make a difference.

Decarbonize by End of Century, G-7 Says

Akron Beacon Journal - June 9, 2015

G-7 leaders agree that urgent action against climate change is needed and countries should move away from using fossil fuels by the end of this century (an ambitious but distant goal). A global climate change conference will be held later this year in Paris. The leaders agreed to press for a reduction from 2010 emission levels of 40 percent to 70 percent by 2050, while many pressed for the upper end of this range.

New Federal Rules Hailed, Criticized

Akron Beacon Journal - May 28, 2015, and June 2, 2015

New federal regulations have been issued by the Environmental Protection Agency to better protect small streams, tributaries and wetlands (and the drinking water of 117 million Americans). The rules were pushed by Supreme Court decisions showing a need to clarify which smaller waterways fall under federal Clean Water Act provisions, namely those with a "direct and significant" connection to larger bodies of water downstream that are already protected. "For example, a tributary must show evidence of flowing water to be protected--such as a bank or a high water mark," the regulations state. The new rules maintain current exemptions for water use involving farm and forestry operations and would kick in and force a permitting process if a business or landowner took steps to pollute or destroy covered waters. The rules are criticized by Republicans, farm groups and some landowners for going too far. These groups are concerned that every stream, ditch and puddle on their private land might be subject to federal oversight. The EPA says that the only ditches covered are "those that look, act and function like tributaries and carry pollution downstream." President Barack Obama said that the rules "will ensure polluters who knowingly threaten our waters can be held accountable. In Northeast Ohio, we know how easily trouble at a local stream can find its way to the Cuyahoga River, Lake Erie and the rest of the Great Lakes. Unlike California, we have an abundance of water, and we also have a responsibility to protect this invaluable resource.

Power Plant Limits Take Legal Hit

Akron Beacon Journal - June 30, 2015

The Supreme Court ruled against Environmental Protection Agency's plan to limit emissions of mercury and other hazardous pollutants designed to uphold the Clean Air Act, saying the agency failed to take costs into account when it first decided to regulate toxic emissions from coal- and oil-fired plants. While the EPA did figure costs in a later writing of the standards, the court said that was too late. Some rules took effect in April and will remain in place while the court case goes back to a lower court for a ruling on how to account for the costs. But because the initial rule was issued more than three years ago, 70 percent of the country's power plants already have installed controls to comply with the rules. The EPA is reviewing the decision to determine the next steps.

Landmark Dutch Ruling: Cut Emissions

Record-Courier - June 25, 2015

A Dutch court ordered the government to cut greenhouse gas emissions in a decision that marks the first time any government in the world has been ordered by a court to decrease emissions (by 25 percent by 2020 from 1990 levels). The case was brought to court on behalf of hundreds of citizens. Greenpeace called the ruling "a game-changer in the fight against climate change." Similar cases are coming in Belgium and Norway to challenge their governments. The government has a legal obligation to protect its people against looming dangers, including the effects of climate change on this low-lying country where great swaths are below sea levels, the court noted.

Why Is There a Skyscraper in the Amazon?

Time - June 1, 2015

A 1,000-foot Amazon Tall Tower Observatory will become functional in August and fully operational by 2017. Co-funded by Brazil and Germany, the tower will gather data about temperature, greenhouse gas levels and other chemical changes in the atmosphere that will help give scientists unparalleled insights about climate

change. The "data will be readily available to scientists across the globe, who can use it to inform their recommendations for climate change policy and sustainable development in the Amazon."

Tesla's \$3,000 Power Wall Will Let Households Run Entirely on Solar Energy

***Techcrunch.com* - April 30, 2015**

Tesla's battery is a stationary solar powered lithium-ion battery that can power a home without requiring the grid. It can be fixed to a wall and provides 7kWh (or 10 KW for \$3,500). Up to nine batteries can be stacked together to provide a strong and reliable power source, according to Elon Musk of Tesla. In addition to charging using solar power, the battery also integrates with the grid, giving customers the flexibility to harness excess power and to draw from their own reserve. Musk claims that 160 million battery packs could transition U.S. power usage to renewable energy and that 900 million units could shift the entire world's energy needs. And then there is the potential to make the world's cars run on clean energy. Musk says that this is within the power of humanity to do, but other companies will need to be involved. Tesla will continue its policy of open-sourcing patents to help make that happen.

Ohio Crops Hurt by Rainfall

***Akron Beacon Journal* - July 17, 2015, and May 17, 2015**

Boggy conditions caused by constant rain from mid-June through mid-July, left corn and soybean crops in poor to very poor condition in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and other top crop producing states. Waterlogged fields stunt root growth, boost diseases and make spraying pesticides and herbicides almost impossible. Inundated fields also make it difficult to harvest winter wheat or to cut hay. Farmers are hopeful that the pattern of daily thunderstorms will end. The U.S. Department of Agriculture still predicts a record soybean harvest this season because farmers planted a record-high number of acres. Earlier this spring, fruit growers felt the effects of two abnormally cold winters that harmed the peach crop. Many growers chose to increase apple trees because they are hardier. Ohio ranks tenth among the 32 states that grow apples.

California Tells Farmers to Stop Taking Water from River

***Record-Courier* - July 17, 2015**

California regulators ordered a group of farmers to stop pumping water from the San Joaquin River, as the battle warms up over how much power the state has to protect drying waterways. The State Water Resources Control board issued the order against an irrigation district in Central Valley, saying it had failed to obey a previous warning to stop pumping.

Bumblebees' Range Shrinking

***Akron Beacon Journal* - July 10, 2015**

Climate change has caused the geographic range of many bumblebee species in North America and Europe to shrink and puts the bees at risk for extinction. Over the past 40 years, the bee's southern borders have been moved northward, more than 100 miles in some places. Studies have shown that the changes were not caused by differences in land use or pesticides and that the only explanation that fits is that it has become too hot for them. Bumblebees play a crucial role in pollination of wild plants and crops such as tomatoes and blueberries. Shrinking species hampers diversity and the ability of plants to cope with changes such as droughts.

Honeybee Decline Still Troubling

***Akron Beacon Journal* - May 14, 2015**

In managed honey bee colonies, annual losses of 42 percent occurred, with declines in summer being higher than in the winter according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. While these declines are not as steep as those seen in 2006 when colony collapse disorder was first recognized, they are still troubling and have driven up prices for crop pollination services.

FirstEnergy Clings to the Energy Past Akron Beacon Journal - July 9, 2015

Our electricity system is essentially the same model that Thomas Edison set up 100 years ago: "Burn fossil fuels at a remote location and transmit electricity across the country." The author of this article, Dick Munson, posits that as an inventor, Edison would look at the global environmental crisis and tell us to invent something better. Renewable energy has blossomed in the recent past and is now cost competitive with 19th century fuels. Energy efficiency also has proved dependable. Yet just as these concepts should become fundamental in our energy mix, they are increasingly under attack by old-school companies. These renewable and energy-efficiency standards had saved customers more than \$1 billion and led to creation of almost 90,000 new jobs in Ohio. Yet last year, Ohio was the first state in the nation to gut its successful clean energy standards, the prime driver being lobbying by FirstEnergy, which is looking for a bailout--funded by customers to the tune of \$3 billion--to prop up outdated, uncompetitive coal and nuclear plants for another 15 years. While claiming to support free markets, FirstEnergy argued against incentives or standards for solar, wind and energy efficiency. This puts them at odds with other companies across the country whose executives are thinking creatively about new business models and opportunities for energy systems. For example, New York power companies and regulators collaborated on an innovative review of technologies and business practices and plans to allow alternative solutions to bypass the centralized grid and compete fairly with traditional energy resources--an overhaul of the system as we know it. "The new approach will create a marketplace where benefits and costs of each energy solution... are embedded in electricity prices." Utilities are beginning to accept that energy efficiency, a clean energy future and innovation will strengthen the industry if they lead and embrace changes.

--Summarized by Lorraine McCarty



Date to Remember

September 6: Protect Your Groundwater Day

For more information about steps you can take, go to the National Ground Water Association's [website](#).



KEC Membership

We welcome anyone who wants to join the Kent Environmental Council and support our efforts. If you are already a member, you will be receiving a reminder of renewal by mail the month before the expiration date for your dues. Remember, dues are the main source of income for KEC. **We need your support to do our work.** Just send in your name, address, phone, email address and your check made payable to: Kent Environmental Council and mail to:

KEC, P.O. Box 395, Kent, OH 44240.

To join or renew online with PayPal, go to kentenvironment.org/Membership

Membership levels are \$45, Sustaining; \$35, Family; \$25, Individual; \$15, Golden Buckeye; \$10, Student; \$500, Lifetime; and \$200, Organization. KEC dues are not tax deductible because the organization has a 501(c)(4) status.

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