

Community Development Update

A Newsletter For and About Outagamie County Community Development

July 2008

Energy Conservation Outreach Project Launched



The Outagamie County UW-Extension office has received a small grant to promote adoption of energy conservation measures that save county residents money. Our partners in the project include: Focus on Energy, Franklin Energy, WE Energies, Outagamie County Housing Authority, Rebuilding Together-Fox Valley, and Johnson Hardware & Appliance of Shiocton. Watch for our newly-hired Energy Outreach Coordinator, Mellissa Hansen of Kaukauna, as she speaks and demonstrates at events. She will be working on the project part-time through November, 2008.

The target communities for the project include Bear Creek, Black Creek (village and town), Deer Creek, Maple Creek, Nichols, and Shiocton, all of northwest Outagamie County. They were selected on the basis of being relatively underserved.

To get householders started in energy conservation, we will give away one free compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL) per participating household, in exchange for a working incandescent bulb. A CFL bulb uses about one-fourth the electricity used by an incandescent bulb, while providing the same illumination. Householders can build on the cost savings from installing CFLs by conducting a simple walk-through review of their home's energy efficiency, guided by a "checklist." We will offer cash-back reward coupons for purchase of additional CFLs when the householder completes the review.

Also eligible for participation in the project are farms, small businesses, apartment owners, and

nonprofits including local governments. More in-depth, professional audits for their buildings can be arranged with one of our project partners, through Mellissa. These types of audits can potentially save building owners thousands of dollars in annual heat & electricity costs, usually with some capital investment up front. Project sponsors offer financial incentives for many of these conservation measures; other measures carry tax credits.

The Energy Conservation Outreach Project is in part a response to last fall's UW-Extension county needs assessment, which ranked "conservation & renewable energy" as one of the top seven concerns of county residents. We plan to employ a total office approach, using traditional Extension audiences and venues - 4-H clubs, agricultural producer groups, and local governments, for example - as channels for a "new" Extension message on energy. We also hope to reach new audiences through less traditional means.

For more information or to participate in the project, call Mellissa at 920-841-7521 or Jim or Zen at 920-832-5122.

Calendar of Events

- "Water-Too Much, Too Little"-July 19, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., see page 3 for related article
- Greater Outagamie County Economic Development Corp., "Local Food Initiative", July 21, 1:00 p.m., Village of Black Creek Municipal Building
- Wisconsin Towns Association-County Unit, July 21, 7:00 p.m., Buchanan Town Hall
- Outagamie County Fair - July 22-27, Fairgrounds, Seymour
- ECOS-Fox Valley "Wind Energy", August 7, 6:30 p.m., Menasha Public Library

Regional Groundwater Issues, Local Solutions

By Eric Fowle, Executive Director, East Central WI
Regional Planning Commission



Outagamie County and the Fox Cities area are blessed with many natural resources, including that of life-sustaining drinking water. While many residents of Appleton drink water that originates from the surface (Lake Winnebago), many communities draw their public and private drinking water supplies from the regional groundwater aquifers beneath our feet. Population and employment growth over the past several decades has put a strain on the local and regional groundwater sources. And, with more growth on the horizon (about 36,000 more in Outagamie County by 2030 alone!), the demands for drinking and industry used 'process water' will continue.

Numerous problems already exist with respect to groundwater contamination in our shallow aquifers. Naturally occurring arsenic and high levels of nitrates (from fertilizers) are commonplace, while the presence of radium (natural), herbicides (agriculture) and fecal coliform (poor manure management or failing septic systems) occasionally cause concern in private water supply systems. Decades of demand from municipal systems have created a several hundred foot deep (and tens-of-miles wide) 'cone of depression' in the deep sandstone aquifer, as new wells are sunk and pumping rates increased. This increased usage had, at one point, resulted in lowering of the aquifer at a rate of over two feet per year. These levels may start to increase slowly over the next few years as a result of the Green Bay metro area communities' recent switch from groundwater to surface water via a pipeline to Lake Michigan; however, rising aquifer levels also bring about concerns of increased contamination.

The management of the groundwater resources starts with both you as an individual, and you as part of a broader community. Easy things to do as an individual include numerous water conservation and toxic waste management techniques, as well as landscaping in a manner which conserves water and assists in aquifer recharge (see your UW-Extension office for more info!). Communities, on the other hand, must protect groundwater using a broad array of tools falling in the areas of: volunteer efforts, investments in technology and infrastructure, and political support for new programs and regulations. The latter item will be of particular importance in the near future, as new state-level (WDNR) regulations will likely be affecting communities which lie within the boundaries of newly designated "Groundwater Management Area" (for more information on this new designation, see www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/dwg/gcc/rtl/2007report.pdf).

Regardless of the methods used, the importance of our groundwater supplies should take high priority. While existing residents change their personal habits and practices, communities need to start re-thinking the way in which they allow growth and development to occur on the ground. In the short term, new and consistent policies regarding the amount, location, and style of development need to be investigated and applied. For the long-term, new regional studies and plans need to be developed in order to gauge impacts to the aquifer system and to coordinate the pumping of high capacity public and private wells.

If everyone does their part, attitudes are changed, and commitments are made, we can ensure that the next several generations of Outagamie County residents will have access to a clean and abundant source of drinking water.

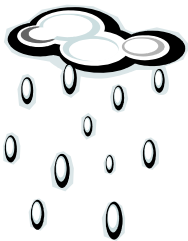
Firewood Regulations: What They Mean to Your Business

By Greg Hines, Coordinator, Glacierland RC&D



Fire wood regulations – what do they mean for your business? Why do we now have these regulations? What are the federal regulations? How about moving firewood out of state? All these questions and more are being raised in the firewood industry, and the answers are important to businesses that produce or use firewood. On Wednesday, July 23, a Firewood Regulations Workshop will be offered by Glacierland Resource Conservation & Development that will answer these questions, as well as address the issues of debarking and heat treating. Expert speakers from the WI Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection, WI Department of Natural Resources, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and USDA Forest Products Lab will share information that is critical to the firewood industry. The workshop will be held on Wednesday, July 23 at the Holiday Inn Select in Appleton. Cost is \$30 per person, and pre-registration is required by July 16. For more information, contact Glacierland RC&D at 920-465-3006, or email office@glacierlandrcd.org.

Water – Too Much, Too Little



Home rainwater (a.k.a. stormwater) management will be the focus of an open event free to the public on Saturday, July 19, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon at the Outagamie County UW-Extension office. The Outagamie County Master Gardener Association invites all interested homeowners and renters to learn about “water wise gardening” – an approach that evens out the peaks and valleys of the natural rainwater cycle and limits the need for tapping private wells or municipal systems to water gardens.

There will be a demonstration of the steps involved in constructing a rain barrel. Master Gardener Rod Sternhagen will take participants through the basics and answer any questions about how to effectively place and utilize one or more of these units in the home landscape.

Participants will also learn why rain gardens are an important environmental feature in any yard and how homeowners can design and install one on their own properties. There will also be a plant diagnostic clinic, so bring your problem plants and get good advice about corrective measures. Your green thumb will be the envy of the neighborhood!

Small Business Basics

The UW-Extension Small Business Development Center (SBDC), located at UW-Oshkosh, is presenting a monthly workshop series called “Small Business Basics.” The workshops are intended for existing small business owners and managers. In the Fox Valley these are held evenings at the new classroom in the Heart of the Valley Chamber of Commerce office, 101 E Wisconsin Ave., Kaukauna. Cost of the 2-hour workshops is \$25, which includes a notebook of useful information. To register call the SBDC at 1-800-232-8939 or see www.uwosh.edu/sbdc.

The dates/topics are as follows:

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| July 31 | Strategic Planning for Growth and Expansion |
| Aug 28 | Financial Management for Small Business |
| Sept 25 | Public Relations Basics for Small Business |
| Oct 30 | Health Insurance Options for Small Business |
| Nov 20 | Business Permits and Regulations |
| Dec 18 | Creating a Successful On-Line Business |

Revenues & Expenditures Tool Updated

The latest version of the local government finance tool known as G.R.E.A.T. – Graphing Revenues, Expenditures And Taxes – is now available. This software has been updated to include 2006 data for revenues, expenditures and property taxes, and to include 2007 property values. It comes in CD format.

The GREAT software allows a municipality to examine trends for itself and classes of comparison communities. This is a really good (or is that “great”) way for communities to ask themselves the question “how are we doing fiscally?” The answers may be illustrated visually in the form of graphs, pie charts and GIS maps (GIS software available online).

Those who have previously used GREAT will notice several new features. One can now use the software to create a custom comparison group of single local governments; they will appear individually, side-by-side, on graphs and charts. On the UW-Extension Local Government Center website <http://lqc.uwex.edu/>, there are two property tax models that show relationships among local property value, levy, mill rate and property wealth. This same website contains downloadable companion articles on public finance topics.

To request a copy of the GREAT software and its documentation, call 832-5122. There is a nominal reproduction fee for local governments. Please allow one week for order processing.



Input Needed For 5-Year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update

By Kara Homan, Associate Planner, ECWRPC

The East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC) has developed a brief online survey to gauge the current and future perceptions toward economic development in the East Central Wisconsin Region. **Survey respondents are eligible to win a \$100 gas card!** All residents of East Central Wisconsin are encouraged to take the survey at the link: www.eastcentralrpc.org/planning/economic/EConDevelDistrict.htm. The survey asks for participant views on four economic development factors: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats.

Results from the survey will be included in the Commission's 2008 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, or CEDS. By preparing the document, the commission ensures that communities within the East Central Wisconsin Region remain eligible for Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant and loan programs.

The CEDS will provide the latest information and analysis of demographic trends and socioeconomic conditions such as population, labor force, personal income, wage information, and regional industries. In addition, the document will contain a prioritized list of economic development projects from throughout the region. For more information on the CEDS, or EDA funding opportunities, please contact Kara Homan at 920-751-4770 or khoman@eastcentralrpc.org

Editor's Note: Outagamie County UW-Extension is represented on the CEDS advisory committee.

“The Natural Step for Communities” Study Circles Forming

By Leslie Taylor, Natural Step Study Circle Coordinator

Are you interested in helping to build community understanding and knowledge about sustainability?

Communities, individuals and groups all over Wisconsin are reading *The Natural Step for Communities: How Cities and Towns can Change to Sustainable Practices*. This book is commonly used for group study circles to deepen people's understanding about sustainable communities and the decision-making process that leads to them.

Torbjorn Lahti (co-author of the book and founder of the eco-municipality movement) has been quoted saying, "Perhaps the most important factor to why we were successful in becoming an eco-municipality were study circles...It's a question of people taking control over their own situation and their own future."

Many people who have participated in a study circle have felt more informed, empowered, and encouraged to create positive change in their own community.

If you are interested in being part of a study circle, please contact:

- Leslie Taylor at ltaylor@sustainfv.org (920-739-7307), **or**
- Catherine Neiswender at catherine.neiswender@ces.uwex.edu (920-232-1972).

We will do our best to coordinate groups at times and places that work for the greatest possible participation. If you are part of an existing group that's interested in learning about The Natural Step for Communities, let us know.

The Appleton Public Library has several copies of the book in circulation, or you can purchase your own copy. Conkey's bookstore in Appleton and Amazon.com have been good sources.

Study circles work best when done over an 8-week period, but we can condense them into 4-week timeframes if that's all you have time for!

Editor's Note: For additional resources on study circles and sustainability, please see the "Sustainability Corner"

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/outagamie/Sustainability3.htm>

Community Design Research Services

Is your community thinking about a community design or physical planning project? You may want to submit a proposal this summer for student services from the UW-Madison Landscape Architecture Department.

Students in the professional Landscape Architecture program must complete a "Senior Thesis/Capstone Project" in their senior year. Up to 25 self-nominated projects are accepted each year from across Wisconsin. A project is executed by the student, guided by an advisory committee from the host community, and supervised by Landscape Architecture faculty.

Besides forming an advisory committee, there are two other requirements for consideration. A small grant (typically under \$5,000) is needed to cover out-of-pocket design & travel expenses. And, the project must be broad enough in scope to demonstrate a diversity of student skills. This last condition usually means the project should involve three scales of design: 1) large-scale land analysis/land use planning, 2) masterplan or neighborhood design, and 3) small site detailed design.

If you feel your community may have a project worthy of consideration, feel free to call Jim Resick at 832-5122 to discuss its potential. Also, check out the Design Research Services announcement and application form at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/outagamie/cnred/index.html>. A list of recent sample projects is also available for review in the announcement.