

www.mcecc.org

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Terms in body text that are underlined and printed in green are defined in the terminology section on page 3 of this issue.

Good Web Sites
Good Information

Household Hazardous Waste
www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/househd/hhw.htm

Beach Monitoring in Michigan
www.deq.state.mi.us/beach/

Beachgoer's Guide
www.epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/

EPA AirData
www.epa.gov/air/data/index.html

Michigan Environmental Council
www.mecprotects.org/



Your Environment

A collaborative information resource for the Muskegon County Community

MCECC Happenings

SPRING/SUMMER2003

With the assistance of Liz Vos, Project Director, and added effort from Council members, the Muskegon County Environmental Coordinating Council (MCECC) has initiated a number of projects over the winter. In addition to air, water, land use subcommittees, new groups were formed targeting wildlife/forestry, groundwater, and recycling. Formation of these groups should increase the Council's capacity to identify and assist in the rectification of community environmental issues.

In addition, the Council has begun exploring the issue of recycling in Muskegon County, with particular interest in electronic items. MCECC has received a grant from the Community Foundation for Muskegon County to participate in a multi-organizational, multi-county planning initiative meant to address the problem.

With the theme "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" MCECC is also heading up an Earth Day Celebration taking place at Lakes Mall on April 19. This event will highlight community organizations that are working to protect the environment in Muskegon County.

Beach Monitoring Bill No. 4719

Muskegon County Health Department

Due to a recognized relationship between swimming-associated gastroenteritis and the presence of Escherichia coli (E. coli), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends that fresh water bathing beaches are tested for the bacteria during high use season. Primarily used as an indicator, the presence of high levels of E. coli at a bathing beach could also mean that other pathogens are present.

According to the National Resource Defense Council's 2002 annual report, 93% of Michigan's public beach closings were due to elevated E. coli levels. In this report, storm water was listed as one of the sources of pollution for 89% of the closings and 86% listed sewage as a source. Nationwide, high bacteria levels, indicating the presence of human/animal waste, prompted 87% of the closures/advisories in 2001.

Although testing beaches for E. coli is not a requirement in Michigan, there are two important benefits to monitoring public beaches. First and foremost, monitoring a bathing beach for E. coli can protect the public's health, providing reassurance to

beach goers that the water quality is fit for bodily contact. Secondly, publicizing that a beach is regularly tested for the bacteria could potentially increase tourism dollars, especially since more beach goers are becoming aware of the hazards associated with the presence of E. coli and contaminated surface waters.

To further increase awareness, Representative Patty Birkholz, introduced House Bill 4719 to the Committee on Land Use and Environment in May of 2001. In summary, Bill 4719 states that the owner of a public bathing beach must post a sign in a visible location indicating whether the beach has been tested or evaluated for E. coli and where test results can be viewed if the beach has been monitored. Bill 4719 became effective in the fall of 2002 and amended section 12541 of the Public Health Code.

The Muskegon County Health Department can provide you with more information on bill implications, E. coli testing procedures, options, and posting requirements. For more information, call Environmental Health at (231) 724-6208 or email publichealth@co.muskegon.mi.us.

Upcoming Events

Muskegon Lake Shoreline Cleanup

Sunday April 27, 2003

8:00 am to 1:00 pm

Meet at CIO Hall on Western Avenue for coffee and donuts at 8:00 am. Volunteers will clean up the shoreline and help restore habitat and water quality at Heritage Landing. Everyone is welcome to join us. UAW Local 637 will serve chili-dogs to all volunteers!

For more information call the Muskegon Conservation District at (231) 773-0008 or visit www.muskegoncd.org.

Make Muskegon Lake Grand Day!

Friday, May 16, 2003

Grand Trunk Ramp at McCracken St. in Lakeside

Volunteers will improve native plantings and wildlife habitat; spruce up the bark path; identify invasive, non-native species; and other hands-on activities. Contact 788-3380 or mevans1899@aol.com for information.

Ruddiman Creek Cleanup

Saturday, May 3, 2003

McGraft Park - 9:00 am

To volunteer call Greg Moss at (231) 759-1415

Youth Conservation Tours

Muskegon River - April 28, 29, & 30

Lake Michigan - May 1 & 2

Teachers call the Muskegon Conservation District for details at (231) 773-0008

Environmental Excellence Awards

April 24, 2003, 6 pm

Muskegon Community College, Blue and Gold Room

\$15 for Adults

\$7.50 for Students

Keynote speaker Dave Milke, Siedman School of Business at Grand Valley State University. Awards for environmental excellence in education, natural resources, business/industry, government, and individual achievement will be presented. For more information call Cathy Brubaker-Clarke at 724-6702

Earth Day Celebration

Saturday, April 19, 2003

Lakes Mall

10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Let the community know what your organization is doing for our environment. Call Liz Vos at (231) 557-2915 or visit www.mcecc.org for more information.

Wild Rice is Nice Day!

Join the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly and Muskegon Lake Public Advisory Council as we search out the wild rice habitat along the lakeshore and river mouth. Call the Conservation District at 773-0008 or 773-0129 for details.

Project WET Teacher Training

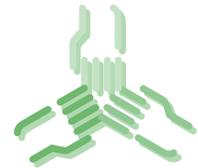
May 3, 2003

9:00 am - 3:00 pm

GVSU-AWRI Lake Michigan Center

Contact Janet Vail

(616) 331-3048 or vailj@gvsu.edu



Are You Harboring Hazardous Waste?

Sources: U.S. EPA, MDEQ, & Muskegon County HHW Program

Have you looked around your garage lately? If you're like most people, you have your own collection of hazardous waste products around your own home. If mismanaged, these items can create environmental and public health hazards such as water supply contamination, accidental poisoning, or other serious injury.

According to the U.S. EPA, Americans generate 1.6 million tons of household hazardous waste per year. The average home can accumulate as much as 100 pounds of household hazardous waste (HHW) in the basement or garage and in storage closets. Types of HHW include a variety of products such as old paints and paint related products, pesticides, pool chemicals, drain cleaners, degreasers, and other car care products. Some key words to look for on the product label are "warning," "caution," "flammable," "toxic," and "poison."

Potential hazardous products should never be poured down the storm drain, emptied onto the ground, or buried. The best way to manage HHW is to use up quantities of the product for its intended purpose. Often, proper use of a product is both environmentally and economically more feasible than disposing of the material at a HHW collection event.

The Muskegon County Department of Public Works has a Household Hazardous Waste collection program for County residents which holds collection events April through October during the year. Because this program collects a wide range of hazardous substances and collection times vary, please call Robert Ribbens, Environmental Planner, at 724-6411 for an appointment or disposal information.

Household Hazardous Waste Prevention Tips

Check the label for hazardous warnings before you buy. If you see a cautionary notice on the label, the material will become household hazardous waste if not used completely and properly.

Use products according to manufacturer instructions. Instructions should always be followed to get maximum benefit from products without compromising the environment.

Buy only what you need. Surprisingly, some products cost more to dispose of than they cost to purchase.

Store products for safety. Children, pets, and others may accidentally injure themselves when products are not safely stored.

Partnership for Health Conference 2003 *Environment: Your Health, Your Future*

The Partnership for Health Conference "Environment: Your Health Your Future" was held on Friday, February 21, 2003 at the Muskegon Harbor Holiday Inn in Muskegon, Michigan. A full day conference, the event highlighted Muskegon area focused presentations on outdoor air and water quality, healthy homes and businesses, land use, and the impact on community health. In addition, a number of community environmental programs were featured in hopes of raising awareness of activities that are taking place in Muskegon County.

The conference keynote was delivered by Lana Pollack, President of the Michigan Environmental

Council. Emphasizing the impact on clean air, Pollack reiterated her concern with the Bush Administration Clean Skies Act, which would in effect lessen restrictions on coal burning power plants, allowing more time for mercury reduction.

Conference sponsors included Annis Water Resources Institute, Community Foundation for Muskegon County, Hackley Hospital, Howmet Castings, Webb Chemical, Muskegon Area Chamber of Commerce, Muskegon Community College, Community Shores Bank, and Michigan Environmental Council.



Lana Pollack, President
Michigan Environmental Council

Outdoor Air Pollution and Our Health

Sources: Michigan Environmental Council, U.S. Health and Human Services, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Air pollution is a widespread public health and environmental problem in the United States, causing premature death, cancer, and long-term damage to respiratory and cardiovascular systems. Air pollution also reduces visibility, damages crops and buildings, and deposits pollutants on the soil and in bodies of water where they affect the chemistry of the water and the organisms living there. According to the American Lung Association, the estimated annual health costs of human exposure to all outdoor air pollutants from all sources range from \$40 billion to \$50 billion with an associated 50,000 premature deaths.

The Environmental Protection Agency cites a number of sources that contribute to outdoor air pollution stating "the problem of air pollution is national - even international - in scope;" and though some progress toward reducing unhealthy air emissions has been made, a substantial air pollution problem remains, with millions of tons of toxic air pollutants released into the air each year. The largest contributors to air pollution include cars, trucks, coal fired power plants, factories, and refineries.

Unfortunately, children are disproportionately affected by air pollution problems. They breathe more air for their size than adults do, pound for pound. They also spend more time in physical activity outside and their brains and nervous systems are still developing.

In addition, air pollution is considered a major cause of childhood asthma, a significant problem among youth. In fact, asthma ranks third in the nation as a cause for hospitalization of youth under age 15 and is also a tremendous issue in Michigan. Giving 14 counties in Michigan a poor air quality rating in 2001, the American Lung Association says it is no coincidence that nearly 100,000 children in these areas have been diagnosed with pediatric asthma.

Ozone Action! Season Starts April 1

Did you know:

- One hour of lawn mowing pollutes the environment as much as driving a car 340 miles.
- Ground level ozone damages plant life and is responsible for \$500 million in reduced crop production in the United States each year.

Do your share for cleaner air!

Become a partner of the
West Michigan Clean Air Coalition.

For more information, contact
Amy Haack, Program Coordinator
at 722-7878 ext. 19

Terminology

Escherichia coli

Escherichia coli (*E. coli*) is a bacterial species predominantly comprising the fecal coliform group of bacteria. *E. coli* bacteria are found and live in the digestive systems of humans and other warm-blooded animals. Therefore, they are often found in sewage and wastewater.

Gastroenteritis

Gastroenteritis is an irritation and inflammation of the digestive tract.

Pathogen

An infectious microbial organism such as a virus, bacterium, or fungus capable of causing disease.

The Impact of Used Electronic Equipment on our Environment Liz Vos, MCECC

The waste stream of computer and other electronic equipment is a growing concern. In 1998, 20 million computers became obsolete, as few as 6% were recycled. The National Safety Council estimates in five years, Americans will replace a staggering 500 million defunct computers and monitors. It is estimated that most computers are in storage, but many thousands end up in local landfills. By preventing electronic equipment from entering a landfill, resources can be conserved, and human and wildlife health can be protected.

The computer monitor alone contains 4-7 pounds of lead. Lead has been linked to learning disabilities and behavioral problems in children, and at very high levels, seizures, coma and even death. Other metals include mercury, cadmium, and chromium. In the United States, computers contain brominated flame-retardants, used to prevent fires in circuit boards.

Some countries prohibit the flame-retardants, which are suspected of blocking hormones and impairing some biological processes. Once these toxins are released into the environment they can find their way into groundwater becoming a potential hazard to drinking water.

Goodwill of Muskegon reports collecting an average 25 computer monitors a week and most are unusable and end up in the Muskegon County Landfill. With an average of 5.5 pounds of lead in a single computer monitor, a potential 7,000 pounds of lead could be released to poison groundwater, putting thousands of Muskegon County Residents at risk.

The Community Foundation for Muskegon County is supporting MCECCs efforts to participate in establishing a new regional organization to oversee the development of a cooperative electronic waste-recycling infrastructure. The year-long project will involve organizing a steering committee then researching and drafting an action plan to solicit potential partners; negotiating a formal agreement to establish a regional recycling cooperative; and organizing the background documents and forming the governing board of the recycling cooperative.



Project Partners

- West Michigan Environmental Action Council
- Goodwill Industries of Muskegon & Grand Rapids
- West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum
- Muskegon County DPW
- City of Muskegon DPW
- Allegan County
- Kent County
- Kalamazoo County
- Ottawa County
- Comprenew, Inc.
- Sustainable Research Group

If you would like to submit information on an issue, an environmental organization, or have questions pertaining to an article, please contact:

Jill Montgomery
Muskegon County Health Department
 at montgomeryji@co.muskegon.mi.us (231) 724-1293
 or
Liz Vos
Project Director, MCECC
 at liz@mcecc.org (231) 557-2915

**Muskegon County
Environmental Coordinating Council**

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