



Muskegon County
Environmental Coordinating Council

www.mcecc.org

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Muskegon County Environmental Coordinating Council

*The purpose of the
Muskegon County*

*Environmental Coordinating
Council ("MCECC")*

*shall be to advance the
environmental well being of*

*the Muskegon region by
providing opportunities for
collaboration, education, and
stewardship.*

**If you would like to submit
information on an issue or
your**

**organization in this newsletter,
please contact:**

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Your Environment

A collaborative information resource for the Muskegon County Community

SPRING/SUMMER 2008

Consumer's Energy Partnership Project

The Regional Commission, Consumers Energy, and the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership (MLWP) are working together on fish and wildlife habitat improvement projects in the Muskegon Lake Area of Concern (AOC). The MLWP, a multi-stakeholder, volunteer group, produced *A Guide to the Restoration of Muskegon Lake Fish and Wildlife Habitat*. The guide identifies habitat improvement goals for the lakeshore and river mouth. As part of a Consumers Energy project to repair a coal ship dock in an existing shipping channel, Consumers is required to restore aquatic habitat. With the help of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, United States Army Corp of Engineers, the City of Muskegon and Muskegon County, the Regional Commission has identified several acres of shallow water aquatic habitat improvements at Heritage Landing and Grand Trunk in Lakeside. Consumers Energy entered into an agreement with the Regional Commission to coordinate this mitigation project to meet community goals. The coordination of restoration and preservation projects funded by grants, mitigation plans, brownfield redevelopment and private landowner projects is helping the community reach their waterfront redevelopment goals and to restore and delist Muskegon Lake as an AOC. Please contact Kathy Evans, Program Manager at (231) 722-7878 extension 1.

EPA Awards Energy Star Status

CONTACT: William Omohundro, 312-353-8254, omohundro.william@epa.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
No. 08-OPA017

EPA awards Energy Star status to 176 buildings in Midwest

CHICAGO (Feb. 21, 2008) - In 2007, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awarded Energy Star status to 176 office buildings, schools, hospitals, banks, hotels, supermarkets and college dormitories in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin.

"These buildings are among the nation's top energy savers," said EPA Region 5 Administrator Mary A. Gade. "They use about one-third less energy than average buildings, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions and saves money."

Nationally, nearly 4,100 buildings and manufacturing plants had earned EPA's Energy Star through the end of 2007. More than 1,400 were added in 2007 alone. The total includes about 1,500 office buildings, 1,300 supermarkets, 820 schools and 250 hotels. Also, more than 185 banks, financial centers, hospitals, courthouses, warehouses, dormitories and - for the first time - big-box retail buildings earned the Energy Star.

More than 35 manufacturing plants such as cement, auto assembly, corn refining and - for the first time - petroleum refining are also being recognized.

In total, these award-winning commercial buildings and manufacturing plants have saved nearly \$1.5 billion annually in lower energy bills and prevented carbon dioxide emissions equal to the emissions associated with electricity use of more than 1.5 million American homes for a year, relative to typical buildings.

The complete list of buildings by state is at <http://www.energystar.gov/labeledbuildings>. More information on Energy Star is at <http://www.energystar.gov>. The Midwest buildings that received the Energy Star label in 2007 are:

MAYFEST 2008

MARK YOUR CALANDARS!

Saturday, May 17th

10 am - 4 pm

At

**Muskegon Community
College**

On-site sewage disposal systems (SDS) were initially designed to prevent the spread of contagious diseases. As sprawl has increased the density of housing beyond the public infrastructure, the impact of SDS to the environment is of ever increasing concern. Nitrate and nitrite contamination to groundwater arising from SDS has already cost Muskegon County residents millions in city water extensions.

Sewage Disposal Systems (SDS) dispose of sewage effluent by 5 processes:

Infiltration/Percolation/Absorption

Adsorption

Transpiration (plant uptake)

Evaporation

Microbial Action

Historically, system design emphasized infiltration. Very coarse soils coupled with deep installation ensured a system would be unlikely to back up into the home, or pond at the ground surface. This type of system promotes anaerobic breakdown of solids in the septic tank, and creation of ammonia. The ammonia is soluble in the effluent, and infiltrates. This type of system has very little or no nutrient removal. The nutrients (phosphorous and nitrogen) percolate to the ground water, and contaminate nearby water aquifers and surface water.

Modern designs call for shallow installation. In this way, aerobic microbial decomposition, adsorption in the upper iron rich soils and plant uptake remove nutrients prior to infiltration. Sizing the SDS large enough to prevent constant saturation encourages aerobic microbial activity in the drainfield and further nutrient removal. In recent years, several subdivision approvals in close proximity to surface water was based on maintaining the absorption bed portion of the SDS no deeper than 18 inches below the finished grade. This places the effluent discharge within the root zone of grassy plants. (Everyone in Muskegon County with a walk-out basement is angry with the Health Department...)

Additional enhancements that can be utilized to protect sensitive environments include: biofiltration, drip irrigation and aeration devices. All of these technologies are maintenance intensive.

Sewage Disposal Systems in Close Proximity to Lakes

THE FACTS:

Most lake front lots are small

Lake front homes continue to get bigger

Many of the existing systems on lake front lots were installed pre-code; are small and deep; are probably in the water table.

These systems are unlikely to discharge bacteria to the lake because the bacteria cannot move easily through the soil. BUT:

- The SDS are likely contributing nutrients to the groundwater which then vents to the lake.

- Many viruses are small enough to move through sand grains. The survival ability of viruses in open water is difficult to study and not well understood.

The Health Department and Townships have been working on upgrading these systems at the time of renovation only since 2000. Prior to 2000, the micro seasonal cottage upgrade to year round mega mansion did not require replacement of the drywell installed 10 feet deep and 5 feet from the lake.

Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand Join Methane to Markets Partnership to Curb Greenhouse Gas Emissions

News for Release: Thursday, March 27, 2008

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand Join Methane to Markets Partnership to Curb Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Contact Information: Dave Ryan, (202) 564-4355 / ryan.dave@epa.gov

For soundbite: http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/names/hq_2008-3-26_M2M

(Washington, D.C. - March 27, 2008) Mongolia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand are the newest partners in the Methane to Markets program, which aims to reduce emissions of methane, a potent greenhouse gas and clean energy source. Methane to Markets now numbers 25 partners.

"Through the Methane to Markets Partnership, America is exporting our successes of cutting greenhouse gas emissions to our neighbors around the world," said EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson. "By tapping into sources of clean energy, we are ensuring methane emissions do not go to waste."

By 2015, Methane to Markets has the potential to deliver annual reductions in methane emissions of up to 50 million metric tons of carbon equivalent, which is roughly equal to the carbon dioxide emissions from the energy use of about 4.4 million American homes for one year.

As demonstrated by the partners, Methane to Markets focuses on reducing methane emissions from four sources: animal waste management, coal mines, landfills, and oil and gas systems.

- Mongolia intends to use cost-effective methane recovery techniques at both municipal landfills and in its agricultural sector; municipal landfills produce a significant portion of the country's methane.
- Pakistan plans to capture and reduce methane emissions from the production and processing of coal and its largest energy sources, oil and gas.
- The Philippines have opportunities for methane capture and use in both the landfill and agricultural sectors; landfill gas assessment and extraction projects already operate across the country.
- Thailand plans to reduce methane emissions in its agricultural sector by improving manure management; the country has already begun work on a livestock waste management project that captures and reuses methane.

Methane is a greenhouse gas that traps heat in the atmosphere at a rate 20 times higher than carbon dioxide; in addition, methane is a primary constituent of natural gas and an important energy source. As a result, efforts to prevent or utilize methane emissions can provide significant energy, economic and environmental benefits.

In addition to the four new partners, Methane to Markets partners include Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Ecuador, the European Commission, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States and Vietnam.

Methane to Markets, launched in 2004, is a public/private partnership that reduces greenhouse gas emissions by promoting the cost-effective, near-term recovery and use of methane, while providing clean energy to markets around the world.

For more information, visit the Methane to Markets Web site at: <http://www.epa.gov/methanetomarkets> R067

Bird Studies Canada's (BSC)
Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program
Volunteer Training

Where: McGraft Park Community Building
 2204 Wickham Drive, Muskegon, MI

When: Tuesday, April 22, 2008

Time: 4:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Sign Up Today! Please Call: (231) 903-7442

Cost: \$5.00 Donation for Light Supper, Payable at the Door

Monitoring materials and supplies are provided by BSC

Agenda

- 4:00 p.m. **Sign In at McGraft Park Community Building**
- 4:00 - 4:15 p.m. **Introductions & Overview of the Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program**
 Kathy Evans, Jeff Auch and Carolyn Weng,
 West Michigan Program Coordinators
- 4:15 – 6:00 p.m. ***Marsh Birds and Amphibians Training:***
 Carolyn Weng, MMP Volunteer Coordinator
- 4:15 – 4:45 **Classroom - Introducing Amphibian Monitoring**
- 4:45 – 6:00 **Outdoor - Route & Station Set up Practice** (Walk along Lakeshore Trail)
- 6:00 **Light Supper & Discussion at McGraft Park Community Building**
- 6:15 **Thoughts from a MMP Volunteer**

Group Discussion Topics

- Places that Need Monitoring Near You
- Route and Station Selection - Questions and Ideas
- Resources Available for Improving Wetland Habitats

- 7:00 – 7:15 p.m. **Classroom – Introducing the Marsh Bird Monitoring**
- 7:15 – 8:00 p.m. **Monitoring Route Selections and Volunteer Sign Ups**
- 8:00 – 8:30 p.m. **Outdoor Monitoring Practice**

Amphibian Monitoring Near the Building (at Ruddiman Pond)

Happy Spring 2008 Marsh Monitoring!

This training was brought to you by:

Bird Studies Canada & the Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program

West Michigan MMP Volunteer Coordinators

Timberland Resource Conservation & Development Area Council; US Fish & Wildlife Service Coastal Program

Muskegon Conservation District; Glenside Neighborhood Association

Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership; White Lake Public Advisory Council

West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

Septic *P*ublic *E*ducation *A*wareness *K*ey



**Ewww – Sewer ? Sorry, but we need to S P E A K
Because WE are the KEY to SAFE and CLEAN water!**



We probably already know :

Septic problems can contaminate water, making it unsafe to drink or swim.
It also encourages weed growth in lakes.



Did you also know ?

Waste is an on-going issue that needs to be addressed.
Septic systems must be maintained and pumped regularly.
Home septic systems installed prior to the county septic code may be high-risk polluters.
Dumping waste from boats, RV's, or septic tanks is illegal.
Waste dumped into storm drains or streams flows into lakes.
White Lake needs extra protection because it is a designated "Area of Concern" and efforts to de-list it as a "toxic hot spot" are on-going.



What is being done ?

Long-term infrastructure strategies to install municipal sewer lines:
Public utility extensions can be costly to homeowners and local government, & facilitate the construction of higher-density housing-developments.
The Health Department is obligated to bring pre-code high-risk septic systems into compliance; as well as enforce laws against dumping.
Some areas have a septic certification ordinance; septic maintenance ordinance; or other regulatory measures.



What can we do ?

Ensure your septic system is adequate; pump your septic regularly.
See page 2 for more septic maintenance information.
Dump boats and RV's at waste stations (some clean outs charge no fee).
Proper septic system maintenance can prevent many contamination problems; and makes good economic sense.

The following septic maintenance information is from Tip of the Mitt Watershed:
<http://www.watershedcouncil.org/septic1.html>

Periodic maintenance can prevent many contamination problems and will help ensure that the system operates effectively throughout its expected lifetime of 20 to 30 years. Replacing a septic system can cost \$2,000 to \$4,000, so proper maintenance makes good economic sense. There are several important things that you can do to maintain your septic system:

Do not flush anything with the wastewater except toilet paper.

Contract a licensed septic tank cleaning service to pump the tank regularly, usually every 1-3 years. Reduced rates may be available by coordinating group pumping among neighbors.

Do not use chemicals: septic maintenance products, drain cleaners, and bleach increase the potential for ground and surface water contamination by liquefying sludge, and destroying beneficial bacteria necessary for the breakdown of the wastewater.

Fertilizer applied around a drainfield causes nutrients to saturate the soil which reduces the removal of pollutants from the wastewater, and diminishes filtering capacity. The nutrients in fertilizer also promote weed and algae growth in the lake.

Direct water run-off away from the drainfield; saturated soils reduce filtering capacity.

At shoreline areas, maintain a strip of vegetation along the water's edge to filter nutrients.

Never build, pave, drive, or store heavy loads on the septic system or drainfield.

Conserve water: your septic system will remove pollutants from the waste more effectively if there is not a deluge of wastewater.

A permit from the local Health Department is required for repair, replacement, or new construction of septic systems. Always be sure to follow the requirements of the Muskegon County health code and hire only reputable septic system installation firms.

More septic system information is available from the Muskegon Health Department:

724-6208 www.muskegonhealth.net/programs/environmental/sewage See also the 2007 Muskegon County Health Department Septic Operation and Maintenance Report.

Sewage Disposal System Evaluation cost is \$150.

This is a public awareness campaign sponsored by local watershed groups and the Fruitland Township Water Quality Committee. The project is administered by the Duck Creek Watershed Assembly. To join, send \$10 dues to 5706 Duck Lake Road, Whitehall, MI 49461 Attn: Glenn Hayden. Meetings are held at Fruitland Township Hall.

