



Environmental and Conservation Organization ♦ www.eco-wnc.org ♦ 828-692-0385 ♦ April-June 2009
"working to protect the natural heritage of WNC since 1987..."

ECO-ART Environmental Art Show To Benefit ECO

Artists have a long tradition of being the harbinger of the future, alerting society to its better nature, responding to issues of the day and providing perspective to facilitate the process of change. But today, the artist speaks not only through the medium they use but through the materials they choose to use or not.

Hand in Hand Gallery in Flat Rock has teamed up with ECO to present

ECO-ART: Artists Respond: Reclaim, Reuse, Recreate
May 8 through July 5
Hand in Hand Gallery
2720 Greenville Highway
Flat Rock

an environmental art exhibition they are calling ECO-Art: Artists Respond: Reclaim, Reuse, Recreate. The exhibition's opening and reception will be held on Friday, May 8th from 5-7 PM.

According to David Voorhees, co-director of Hand in Hand, "This "green" art exhibition will explore the artist's response to the world and times in which we live. As creative alchemists we work daily to transform materials and elements into something beautiful, useful and meaningful. We are pleased to work with ECO to help inspire greater protection for our region's natural heritage."

Contact the ECO office at (828) 692-0385 for more information.

ENERGY FUELS THE ECONOMY Second Annual Earth Day Energy Expo on April 25th

Just before Christmas last year, America received a stern wakeup call when 1.1 billion gallons of coal ash breached a retention pond flooding over 300 acres of rural landscape in Tennessee with a sludgy, black gunk which filtered into the Emory and Clinch rivers.

The people of Harriman, Tennessee and those downstream in Kentucky and Arkansas will be forced to live with the consequences of heavy metals such as arsenic in their drinking water for years to come. The rest of us have a real opportunity to re-vision what the future of America's energy policies need to be.

Steve Smith, a nationally recognized spokesperson for saner renewable energy policies as longstanding Executive Director of the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy will be this year's featured speaker at ECO's **Second Annual Earth Day Energy Expo on Saturday, April 25th**. He has frequently lobbied Congress to establish green energy infrastructure that replaces fossil fuels with more sustainable alternatives.

This year's expo will be jam-packed with presentations, workshops, exhibitions and student projects to educate, enlighten and empower local citizens to take action.

Other lectures include Ned Doyle on

"Energy Policy in the Obama Administration" and Vanir Energy (formerly Appalachian Energy) on the largest solar installation in the world that they are building in Henderson County and what the future of solar may be.

Five workshops are planned including presentations by Rick Bayless and Carl Donovan, two of ECO's Project Green Light experts, on finding and fixing the energy losses in your home. Exhibitors from around the region featuring products and services on home energy issues will be available for consultation and local organizations will showcase their current activities.

New this year will be student exhibits on green energy from several local

schools. Additionally several green cars will be on display featuring the new plug-in electric Prius.

Finally, a special feature this year includes a Computer Electronics Recycling Event done in conjunction with Henderson County. All events will be held at the new Technology building at the Blue Ridge Community College in Flat Rock from 10-3. The schedule is available online on ECO's website: www.eco-wnc.org.



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ECO COMMITTEES ROCK!

Water Quality Committee

The Biomonitoring team began the year with a "net-working" session -- half a dozen volunteers retrofitted ECO's old kicknets with new finer mesh donated by Diane Silver of the Mud Creek Restoration Project.

This was all done so that ECO's water quality work could evolve to the next stage of monitoring by joining the Stream Monitoring Information Exchange Program. By expanding our protocols to become more scientifically credible, ECO's work can be better coordinated with the Division of Water Quality as well as other water quality groups.



Biomonitoring – identifying insects that live in the bottom of our streams – gives a strong picture of water quality in that stream. In early March, 35 ECO volunteers were trained by biologist Eric Romaniszyn and Clean Water for NC coordinator Gracia O'Neill in an improved insect identification program so that the hard work of scores of volunteers will result in stronger policies that protect our streams.

Volunteers met at the science lab at Blue Ridge Community College for a day-long training program in this improved method. The stream collection results will be combined with data from throughout the state to give an ongoing picture of water quality in our rivers and streams. This information is helpful to local and state government agencies in their decision making regarding water quality and erosion controls.

April is biomonitoring month and volunteers are still needed to cover 30 streams. Call 692-0385 for details.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

I've been threatening my staff to move my desk to the top of Glassy Mountain until spring is over. If it didn't weigh 500 pounds and my paperwork another 1000 pounds, I might have made good on my threat.



As seemingly dead wood

explodes into life once more, its clear that change is in the wind. For nature, change and adaptation to circumstances is a perfectly natural occurrence. For humans, it often takes extra motivation.

It took 50 years for doctors to learn to wash their hands before removing their patients' gall bladders for no other reason than surgery with non-sterile hands was simply standard operating procedure. The same went for skull drilling to relieve headaches.

It takes time for a county with few development rules to changeover to one more responsive to the needs of its residents. There has been widespread support for the Etowah-Horseshoe Community Plan because it put into action what had been getting only lipservice for many years: steep slopes restrictions, an open space plan that

protects greenspace, restricting public water in rural communities, farmland protections and more. When citizens expressed their overwhelming support for the plan to the county's planning board (who unanimously endorsed the plan), the board expressed concern that a vocal "minority" had undue influence over the process. Funny thing is, 88% of the planning board are people from the real estate community. Did it ever concern them that *this* minority has been dominating planning decisions for eons in Henderson County?

Of course, the same painful changeover is happening on the energy front based on our penchant for fossil fuels to energize our American lifestyle. Change is a painful process, but as our friends at Vanir Energy are finding, even in dismal economic times, solar energy creates green jobs while it protects our air quality. This year's Earth Day Energy Expo on April 25th will highlight some of these successes and what we might expect from energy policies under the new administration. We hope to see you there. Happy Spring!

David Weintraub, Executive Director

WHERE HAVE ALL THE TREES GONE?

Its springtime! Birds are chirping, flowers are blooming . . . and trees are being clearcut throughout the county. ECO volunteers have alertly reported numerous incidents of trees being removed because "there was money in the budget." This gives new meaning to the song, "tie a orange ribbon 'round the old oak tree."

In addition to protecting some 100 year oaks in a public park, ECO is actively engaging with DOT who has been cutting down trees en masse along Rts. 191 & 64. "Removing trees wholesale from these areas is counter-productive," according to Mike Byrd of the NC Forest Service. Trees hold the soil firmly in the ground during hard rains and prevent erosion along

road banks.

Sources at the DOT have told ECO that as a result of expected stimulus money on the way, they have chosen now to implement major efforts to clean up debris along roadsides. Its understandable that trees that are potentially hazardous to pedestrians and drivers should be removed. But the wholesale removal of thousands of trees may come to haunt the DOT after the next deluge.

Apparently there's money in the budget to remove trees, but none to replant them.

According to Byrd, DOT should replant native trees to stabilize road banks. Concerned? Call DOT at 890-4685 and tell them your concerns.

ECO CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April-June 2009

Board meetings are held the fourth Wednesday of each month, 12:00 pm. **Recycling Committee** meets the second Tuesday at 4:30 pm, **Water Quality Committee** meets the second Wednesday at 4:30 pm, **Energy Committee** meets the second Thursday at 4:00 pm and the **Green Infrastructure Committee** meets the third Thursday at 4:00 pm. All meetings are held at the ECO office. Visitors are welcome. Contact ECO for details.

APRIL

APRIL IS BIOMONITORING MONTH! JOIN A TEAM, KEEP A STREAM PRISTINE!

Sat. 11

Guided Bird Walk. 9 a.m. Jackson Park, Hendersonville. Cosponsored by ECO and Henderson County Bird Club.



Sat. 25

Earth Day Energy Expo. 10-3 at the Blue Ridge Community College Technology Building. Celebrate Earth Day by participating in lectures, hands-on workshops, a display of green cars, an exhibition of vendors and organizations, student projects and a Hen. County Computer Electronics Recycling (*for accepted materials go online to www.eco-wnc.org*)

MAY

Thu. 7

Urban Walk with Walk Wise, Drive Smart. Enjoy an urban walk 1 to 1 ½ miles long in Hendersonville. Call Project Manager Sam Lovelace at 864.457.6166, or visit www.walk-wise.org to find out the location and time.

Fri. 8

ECO-ART: Exhibition Opening and Reception. 7 p.m. Hand in Hand Gallery, Flat Rock This “green” art exhibition will explore the artist’s response to the world and times in which we live while supporting ECO’s work.



Sat. 9

Guided Bird Walk. 9 a.m. Jackson Park, Hendersonville. Cosponsored by ECO and Henderson County Bird Club.

Tues. 19

Finding the Win-Win Solution To Natural Heritage Protections. 7 p.m. Henderson County Main Library Join us for a provocative forum on how concerned citizens can get more actively engaged in finding successful strategies to protecting our natural resources.

Fri. 29

Recycling ECO-Tour: Visit to Palmetto Landfill and MRF Center. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. ECO-tours to American Recycling in Greenville, the material recovery facility (MRF) where much of our recycling goes, and the Palmetto Landfill in Spartanburg County where all of our waste is buried. Space is limited so make your reservation by calling the ECO office at 692-0385. Carpooling instructions will be provided.

JUNE

Thurs. 4

Urban Walk with Walk Wise, Drive Smart. Enjoy an urban walk 1 to 1 ½ miles long in Hendersonville. Call Project Manager Sam Lovelace at 864-457.6166, or visit www.walk-wise.org to find out the location and time.



Sat. 13

Nature Hike to Daniel Ridge Loop. 9:30 a.m. Celebrate the coming of summer on this glorious hike in Pisgah National Forest. Reservations required.

Sat. 13

Guided Bird Walk, 8 a.m. Jackson Park, Hendersonville. Cosponsored by ECO and Henderson County Bird Club.

UPCOMING EVENTS: Green Home Tour - August 22nd, Big Sweep Stream Clean-up - Sept. 26th
See our website for updated dates and directions.

NEWS BRIEFS

Stimulus Bill Has Benefits for the Environment

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is just for banks, right? Wrong! It is a common misconception that the recent legislation passed by the Obama administration (signed into law on February 17, 2009) has little or no connection to them and their lives. Fortunately, this couldn't be further from the truth. There is money for the average citizen in this act. Provisions in the act enable homeowners to receive up to \$10,000 for doing things that make their home more efficient and protect the environment.

What qualifies? Homeowners can receive tax credits or even a grant check by installing high energy efficiency equipment in their homes such as as boilers and water heaters. Undertaking a qualified project to install a more efficient furnace, air conditioner, heat pump or insulation can qualify for up to \$1500. Improve drafts from doors and windows which cut energy consumption also qualify.

Solar thermal projects at home can qualify homeowners for money from both the Federal and the State governments. Installation of a solar hot water unit can qualify an average citizen for up to \$7000 in tax benefits. A 2-kilowatt Photo-Voltaic Solar system with an installation cost of \$19,500 is now eligible for

a federal tax credit of \$5,850 and a NC state credit of 35% or \$6,825, bringing the unit down to the not-too-shabby price of \$6,825.

More information on taking advantages of these programs will be available at this year's Energy Expo on April 25th. *See calendar p. 3.*

THE END OF MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL?



The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has sent letters to the Army Corp of Engineers about their concern with West Virginia mountaintop removal operations because the coal

mining would "likely cause water quality problems in streams below the mines, would cause significant degradation to streams buried by mining activities, and that proposed steps to offset these impacts are inadequate."

The EPA has recommended specific actions be taken to further avoid and reduce these harmful impacts and to improve mitigation.

Although coal mining operators and power companies have complained that restrictions on mountaintop removal could increase the cost of energy, environmentalists counter that coal is artificially cheap because mine operators have never adequately been held accountable for the consequences of mountaintop removal including destruction of watersheds and contaminated drinking water.

Local Recycling – Where Are We Now and Where Are We Going?

For the past several months ECO has collaborated with the League of Women Voters to study the issue of solid waste and recycling in Henderson County. On February 17th the 2 groups held a public forum at the downtown library to share information with the community. Representatives from the city, the county, and the state were invited to serve on the panel of experts.

Here's some of what we learned:

"The county makes it hard to recycle, but things are changing," according to Commissioner McGrady. Henderson County ranks in the middle (in the average range) compared to the other 100 NC county recycling programs. We have a lot of room for improvement.

Currently, consultants are making recommendations on how to overhaul the county transfer station and finance the changes. The consultants will soon present their recommendations to the commissioners which will include changes for the independent waste haulers.

The city is in the process of verifying whether those who say they participate in the recycling program, really do. We cannot recycle plastics in numbers 3-7 because there are no regional markets (manufacturers in our region who use the materials in their processing). The state is now charging us a tax on garbage at a rate of \$2 per ton. Much of the money is used to take care of old polluting dumpsites, and some of it is returned to improve recycling programs.

What you can do:

Keep up with what's going on regarding the political status of local recycling. Let your representatives know what you want them to do. Know the rules on what you can and can't recycle. Buy recycled products. Use cloth bags when you shop. Buy products with recycled content. Pre-cycle – buy products that are recyclable. Compost if you can. Join our Recycling Committee to be actively involved in these issues.

Join Us!



Help make a difference, join our committees! It's a great way to get involved!

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recycling | <input type="checkbox"/> Water Quality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Green Infra-structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership | |

Please check your category of membership:

Corporate \$ _____	Maple _____ \$65
Chestnut _____ \$500 or more	Hemlock _____ \$40
Sycamore _____ \$250	Oak _____ \$25
Dogwood _____ \$100	Redbud(student) _____ \$10

____ Please contact me about special funding opportunities

Phone number _____ (day) _____ (night)

Name _____ email _____

Address _____

Clip and mail with your check to: **ECO, 121 Third Ave. West, Ste 4, Hendersonville, NC 28792 (828) 692-0385 or join online at www.eco-wnc.org**

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE TACKLES IMPORTANT LAND USE ISSUES

Headed by a team of enthusiastic volunteers, ECO's Green Infrastructure Committee has worked hard to galvanize Henderson County's citizens on issues that could make or break the future of our natural resources.

Of primary interest early this year was Etowah-Horse-shoe's Small Area Plan which includes some key environmental components that could maintain the rural character of the community including steep slope protections, restrictions on public water in rural spaces, monitoring of waste water treatment plants, establishing an Open Space Plan for the community, farmland preservation initiatives and much more.



ECO launched a drive to insure concerned residents contacted commissioners and planning board members so that any decisions that were made took local residents' concerns in mind. The result was that this precedent-setting plan was passed unanimously by the Planning Board. Now it goes on to the Board of Commissioners for hopeful approval.

The Public Policy Subcommittee has met weekly for several months to begin to research issues that are most important to many Henderson County residents including open space protections, public water limitations, steep slopes, stormwater management, farmland protections and more. The Green Infrastructure Committee is holding a forum on Tues, May 19 at the main library to help county residents play a more active role in winning natural heritage protections battles. Join us to learn how citizen activists can make a difference in our county's policies. *See our calendar p. 3 for more information.*

SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL GREEN BUSINESS

ECO VOICE focuses on local businesses who have made important strides in environmental stewardship.



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY GOES GREEN!

Habitat for Humanity has always been about helping with poverty housing by involving communities and recipients to build quality homes. But are those homes green?

According to Alan Stissel, Henderson County's Habitat Site Facilitator, "There's a fear of green building because everyone thinks its cost prohibitive. However, we found that by changing approach to framing techniques and use of materials, it was possible to do and do economically."

The current homes Habitat is building will net a 100% decrease in energy costs through the use of Energy Star appliances, CFL lighting, extra insulation and a tighter building envelope. Additionally, these NC Healthy Built homes include the use of native vegetation, permeable materials in walkways, water restricted plumbing fixtures, minimizing the use of lumber through engineered design and more. Site plans are designed as well to minimize tree removal.

**THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND
CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION**
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HENDERSONVILLE, NC 28792
(828) 692-0385

Nonprofit Org.
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Return Service Requested



Members who sign up or renew this Spring at the \$100+ level receive one free trip!

ECO Officers and Directors

Katie Breckheimer, President
Chris Youngblood, Vice President/Treasurer
Sara Bell, Secretary

Mac Brackett, Melanie Giraldo, Harrison Metzger, Russ Robi-
nette — Directors

David Weintraub, Executive Director, *ECO Voice* editor
Alexandra Meyer, Administrative Assistant
Stephanie Grant, Water Quality Administrator

Mary Jo Padgett, Founding Executive Director

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Fantastic Filanthropist Level:

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Mountain First Bank	The Atomic Sisterhood
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Courtney & Chris Youngblood	Sandra Schorr & Charles Breckheimer
	Katie & Steve Breckheimer

Salt Of The Earth Level:

Black Bear Coffee Shop	Highland Brewing
Blue Water Seafood	Kilwin's
Diane Rhoades - Worm Rancher	Purple Sage
Fatz Café	Rabbit & Co.
Flat Rock Wine Shop	Saluda Wine & Cheese
Fresh Market	Sam's Club
Green River BBQ	Sinbad's Restaurant
Harris Teeter	Square One Bistro
Heart & Soul Singing Telegrams	The Purple Onion Cafe
Hendersonville Food Co-op	West First Woodfired Pizza
	Wildflour Bakery

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THANK YOU! ON BEHALF OF THE EARTH, WESTERN NC, HENDERSON COUNTY & YOUR ECO FRIENDS