



Environmental and Conservation Organization ♦ www.eco-wnc.org ♦ 828-692-0385 ♦ October-December 2009
"Working to protect WNC's natural heritage since 1987."

Exciting New Environmental Films Featured at Festival

Great films, a Hollywood actress, good eats and great conversation ... all of this and more promises to make ECO's First Annual Environmental Film Festival on October 9th and 10th



at Flat Rock Cinema a great entertainment opportunity and a chance to view some great environmental flicks. The festival will feature the

internationally acclaimed *A Sense of Wonder* about the life of the founder of the modern environmental movement, Rachel Carson.

Mark your calendars now!
October 9th & 10th
ECO Film Fest at Flat Rock Cinema
Tickets at www.ECO-WNC.com

Film star Andie MacDowell, who lives in WNC and has had a lifelong connection to environmental stewardship, will discuss the importance of citizens raising their voices to protect our precious natural gems. A half-dozen films, many of which are new to the area, will be shown.

For the full film schedule as well as menu choices available at the Cinema during the festival, log onto ECO's website at www.ECO-WNC.org. ■

BUY LOCAL, PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT!

By David Weintraub

I've often heard people concerned about the environment talk about the great deal they just got at their local MallWart or other big box store. There seems to be a disconnect between where we buy and what impact our purchases make on our local and global environment.

Aside from the fact that the quality of merchandise at big box discounters is notoriously low, there are many issues that mega-stores raise when it comes to protecting the environment. The most obvious is that the oil content of plastics is exceedingly high and the transport of plastic goods from China across oceans and then through intercontinental trucking makes the "carbon footprint" of discount goods at the high end of the spectrum. Given that many of these items have a very short lifespan, their immediate effect on our local environment is that they end up at our transfer station almost as quickly as they leave the chain store.

Other environmental concerns? Wal-Mart parking lots across America cover roughly 75,000 acres (or 117 square miles) in the U.S., equal to the

land size of Tampa, Florida. Parking lots contribute directly to non-point source water pollution, our leading cause of water pollution in the United States. And despite Wal-Mart's pronouncements concerning CO₂-cutting measures at their stores, the company's newest stores built last year alone will consume enough electricity to add approximately one million metric tons of CO₂ to the atmosphere. By 2013, Wal-Mart is expected to add 28 million metric tons of new emissions to our atmosphere.

In contrast to big boxes, locally owned businesses contribute significantly more to the local economy, leave a smaller footprint and often sell more durable products. Purchasing apples, crafts and other products from local stores contributes \$45 for every \$100 spent to the local economy with a smaller carbon footprint vs. chain stores that contribute only \$13 to the community. Make your dollars count for the economy and the environment: Keep them here. ■



Photo by Edgar Ward, courtesy of Downtown Hendersonville, Inc.

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Possible Big Changes on the Way

By Katie Breckheimer

At the time of this newsletter's publication, the ECO Recycling Committee was anxiously awaiting a decision by the Henderson County Commissioners regarding recommendations in the Solid Waste Feasibility Study. Depending on their vote, the county's transfer station could see some much-needed changes. All of it thanks to a lot of hard work by ECO, the county's advisory committee and staff.

One of several possible upgrades, (within 18 months), could be a shiny new convenience center where citizens can drop off recycling, house-



hold trash, unwanted electronics, and household hazardous waste.

We may see a new fee schedule, eliminating the bag-for-bag incentive program for residents who bring their own recycling/waste to the transfer station. ECO believes any fee schedule should reflect the amount of waste a household or business generates: the more trash you generate, the more you pay.

The county will also begin negotiations with the permitted waste haulers to work out a new efficiency plan (possibly a franchise agreement). The haulers will be required to pick up recycling (as well as trash) from their customers in the future.

Another recommendation is for the county to locate and run a material recovery facility in an industrial park convenient to major highways. Once it's up and running it could serve as an added convenience site that accepts recycling. **For updated info on this issue, log onto www.ECO-WNC.com.** ■

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Goals for 2010 are within reach, thanks to our supporters!



Many pundits have written about 2009 being the start of an era where people re-learn how to do more with less. As environmentalists, we are used to being natural alchemists, turning growth and development fait accomplis into natural heritage protections. And at ECO, we've always been a pretty frugal bunch, trying to do much on small budgets, a minimum of staff, and riding the passion of hundreds of volunteers.

Towards this end, I'm always so amazed how volunteers and supporters alike answer our call and step forward when we need them most. When the Planning Board stood steadfast against any rules that would restrict bringing public water into our rural areas, ECO members and other community people stood firm and said no, such a rule was critical to our environmental health, and gosh darn it, the Board of Commissioners passed the controversial rule. When the Forest Service claimed that they could only protect Pisgah National Forest by logging it, you came out in large numbers to a community input session and later to an ECO forum, submitting comments making it clear that protecting our forests should not mean "open season" on our hardwood forests.

When ECO called on our members to dig deeper to help ECO keep-on-keeping-on during terrible economic times so that we could continue to expand our water quality work, our policy efforts, our recycling work and our energy programs, you contributed thousands to our Summer Splash Campaign. Thank you!

As we reach the fall and beyond, ECO will be looking to you once again to help continue our momentum on the recycling front in Henderson County, so that 2010 becomes the year that curbside pickup becomes a reality. With the changeover of some commissioners and greater proactive efforts on ECO's part, we expect that some of our major land use concerns—from stormwater management to steep slopes restrictions, greater wastewater treatment oversight and new open space rule—will take effect.

And we look forward to you continuing to be there for us, with your volunteer time, your financial support and your activism when we need you to lift your voice. Thanks again! ■

KEY WATER TESTING PROGRAM THREATENED

The VWIN program (Volunteer Water Information Network) is in trouble. VWIN has been the backbone of ECO's water quality work for more than 20 years because it provides an important snapshot into what's going on in our waterways by analyzing sediment, heavy metals, agricultural runoff, pH and more. The VWIN program regionally covers more than 200 sites in a dozen counties, 31 of which are located in Henderson County. For two decades, these counties have depended upon the Environmental Quality Institute (EQI) at the University of North Carolina, Asheville to analyze the water samples collected by dozens of ECO volunteers. UNCA opted to cut the Institute in July.

ECO has worked double-time to secure a local lab to ensure that not one month of data collection is lost while communicating with all participating counties to better coordinate our activities. EQI is attempting to secure permanent housing of the lab at another nearby university, but in the meantime ECO is trying to raise the additional \$10,000 it will cost to use a private lab. Our successful ECO Whitewater Day took a good first step forward to reaching our goal. ■

Eco-Tour of French Broad Spotlights River's Beauty, Challenges

By Harrison Metzger

AS PART OF ITS ONGOING SERIES of eco-tours, ECO turns its attention to the French Broad River in October to explore the history of the world's second-oldest river and the problems it faces. Our French Broad re-exploration will begin with a presentation at the Henderson County Library on Oct. 13th, followed by an eco-tour canoe trip down the Henderson County section of the French Broad on October 18th.

The French Broad will become an increasingly important resource for recreation as our area grows. With plans to tap the river for Hendersonville's drinking water, improving the river's water quality makes sense.

In the early 1970s, the idea of drawing drinking water from the French Broad would have been unthinkable. The river was heavily polluted with untreated sewage and industrial runoff, and was used as a dumping ground for trash and junk, from its Transylvania County headwaters to where it exits North Carolina in northern Madison County.

The federal Clean Water Act forced towns and industries to install modern pollution controls that dramatically improved the water quality of the French Broad. Environmental groups such as RiverLink and ECO have fought to clean up the river and its tributaries by working to control erosion and sediment from development and removing trash from banks.

Despite these gains, there have been some disturbing reports of poor water quality this summer. In early August, French Broad Riverkeeper Hartwell Carson reported the river was filled with mud in Asheville.

"As I sat by the river today eating lunch, a bass fisherman came by to complain that it was not worth even going on the river, because it was way

too muddy to catch any fish," Carson said in an August 3rd email. "I took a sample of the water today and the amount of *sediment in the water was over three times the legal limit.*" (my emphasis)



On October 13th, ECO will present a program on the French Broad at the Henderson County Public Library. The program is part of a follow-up on the canoe trip that I took down all 110 miles of the French Broad in 2002 for the Times-News series, *The French Broad: Past & Currents*. ECO will also lead an eco-tour canoe trip on October 18th down part of the Henderson County section of the river. For more info, see our calendar on page 6.

Now preliminary data from ECO's new bacteriological monitoring of five sites along the river and its tributaries indicates high concentrations of bacteria — in some cases many times the standard for waters to be suitable for swimming.

Where is the bacteria coming from? There are at least a dozen smaller "package" wastewater plants releasing effluent into the French Broad in Henderson County, ECO Executive Director David Weintraub said. And

there are other potential sources of pollution.

"We have not yet identified the cause of the high concentrations of bacteria. It likely includes faulty septic tanks, straight piping, farm runoff and more," he said.

ECO started doing the bacteriological testing in response to concerns of poor water quality expressed by members who live near the package treatment plant that serves the Etowah area. ECO is conducting the tests to show county leaders the need for more testing to pinpoint sources of pollution and clean them up.

North Carolina depends on the operators of wastewater treatment plants to do testing and rarely does independent tests for bacteria, Weintraub says. ECO is sharing its test results with the N.C. Division of Water Quality (DWQ).

What can residents do to clean up and protect the river?

"They can join the Adopt-A-Stream program to help monitor what is happening with the waterway," Weintraub said. "If you live in a subdivision whose effluence flows into the French Broad, ask your homeowners association who is checking the quality control of your wastewater treatment.

If you live in the neighborhood, please report any suspicious activity, dumping, strong smells, etc. to ECO and to the County Health Dept and DWQ." ECO can be reached at 692-0385. ■

WANTED!! Office Volunteers!

We need volunteers to assist with data entry and other office tasks. No need to be fast, just accurate! Become a volunteer for the leading force for conservation and preservation in the mountain region! ECO's efforts are long-term and ongoing and we need your help! Call today: 692-0385.

Crab Creek Rises to Chart Own Destiny, Preserve Rural Heritage

On July 7th the Crab Creek community invited ECO's Green Infrastructure Committee into its community center to hold a town hall meeting. A packed audience discussed past and current threats to the community's rural spaces.

Following the presentation of a short film by David Weintraub titled *Henderson County – A Lasting Legacy or a Vanishing Jewel?* there was a panel discussion led by Weintraub, Richard Naylor, Guri Andermann and Jerry David, on where the County is currently headed as it confronts less-than-adequate protection for farm land, open spaces, ridge tops and more.

As a result of a communitywide effort, the Crab Creek community was able to avert the destruction of their rural character when they worked to stop the Glen and Highlands development last year. The commissioners were forced to allow all affected residents to

participate in a series of public hearings which ultimately undermined any attempt to build a mini-city in their community. The main topic of the town hall meeting was "What is to prevent another mega-development from forever changing Crab Creek's rural character?" Weintraub responded that the passion and energy the community showed by standing up to Glen and Highlands will be needed again when future mega developments try a repeat performance. Residents had organized their community, educated themselves on the issues, held barbecues and meetings to bring the community together and showed up in large numbers when any hearing was held.

The response to the meeting was positive and the participants committed to working with ECO to take further steps to plan for their future. ■

Saving the Forest by Logging It?

The National Forest Service recently proposed a timber sale for the Pisgah National Forest.

Western North Carolina has a checkered forest history based on logging beyond what is sus-tainable. The result of past logging

operations fostered the propagation of invasive plants, threatening native plants.

From the environmental standpoint, the concern with the Forest Service's plan is that it isn't clear that ecological and recreational concerns trump the value of selling timber.

As a result, a huge crowd showed up to a recent community input session on the sale.

Many expressed concern that timbering should be only one of many tools for forest restoration but should not be the goal.

Restoring the diversity of the forest canopy and its structure is critical to its future health.

The Forest Service will be submitting a revised plan soon allowing for public comment. Stay tuned for updates! ■



REPORT: TVA CULTURE CONTRIBUTED TO UNPRECEDENTED COAL ASH DISASTER

The Tennessee Valley Authority's inspector general recently released a scathing report outlining how the TVA could have prevented a 1-billion-gallon coal ash spill in Harriman, TN last December. When a coal ash pond reten-

tion wall at the TVA's Kingston Fossil Plant gave way, a wave of coal ash spilled into the nearby community and the Emory River. At first, the TVA minimized the disaster, saying it

would take weeks to clean up. Today, that estimate stands at three years, with a price tag of \$3 billion.

Perhaps not surprisingly, it's that very culture of minimizing risks and consequences that contributed to the coal ash disaster in the first place. Given that some scientists believe that coal ash (which contains toxic metals and radioactivity) may be more dangerous

to humans and the environment than nuclear waste, it is frightening that the TVA's inspector general found "ash management at TVA reflected a culture that ash was unimportant. ... a culture resistant to treating ash management as no more than taking out the garbage."

The inspector general further found that the TVA lacked the proper policies and procedures to manage toxic ash, storage facilities were poorly maintained, ash storage inspectors didn't have the proper training, and organizational accountability was lacking. One last depressing finding: The TVA culture is resistant to change.

In light of these findings, residents in Harriman might be fortunate that the EPA has taken over the massive cleanup (while demanding TVA pay the bill). We'll keep you updated on EPA's progress.

If you would like to read the inspector general's report in full, you can find it on our website: www.ECO-WNC.org. ■



Photo courtesy of Appalachian

JOIN US FOR A
HALLOWEEN BBQ, FILM
SCREENING and more!!
Sat., Oct. 31st 2PM
ECO Annual Board
Meeting

Fun Films
Food Raffles



Join us at the *LakeHouse Lodge and Spa* on historic Highland Lake for an event not to miss!

Spotlight on Local Green Business:

LOCAL ARCHITECT SEEKS TO GREEN WNC

According to Ken Gaylord, Hendersonville's local "green" architect, well-planned development achieves win-win prosperity for the inhabitants and the community at large.

Gaylord is an AIA and LEED Accredited Professional, who offers clients the synergy of his professional skills which combine his knowledge of architecture with his talents as an artist and builder resulting in creative designs that are environmental friendly, aesthetically pleasing and add value to communities.

By employing "GreenCraft" to his projects, the result is "a significant decrease in the use of fossil fuel energy, and a significant increase in the use of inspired human energy."

Pisgah House, which just completed construction on the campus at UNCA, is an excellent example of GreenCraft. The project incorporates energy saving features like geothermal heating and cooling, radiant floors, and insulating light-weight block walls while capturing a high degree of artistic splendor.

According to Gaylord, one of his objectives in designing and building is to take a comprehensive approach to sustainable development and energy efficiency through choice of materials, climate systems, and site location all of which impact energy consumption and our surrounding community.



Artist rendering of Pisgah House in Asheville



Asheville, NC
Discover a refuge in your own backyard!

ATTENTION ECO MEMBERS!
Bring in this coupon for
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ECO CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October-December 2009

Board meetings are held the fourth Wednesday of each month, 12:00 - 1:30pm. **Recycling Committee** meets the second Tuesday of the month at 4:30pm. **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.

OCTOBER *Bio-Monitoring Month – Help Keep Our Streams Pristine!*

- Thurs. 1 **Urban Walk with Walk Wise, Drive Smart.** Enjoy an urban walk 1 to 1 ½ miles long in Hendersonville. Call Michele Skeele at 828-551-6415 with questions, or visit www.Walk-Wise.org to find out the location and time.
- Sat. 3 **Flat Rock Art & Wine Festival.** Enjoy great art, wine tastings, live music and a children's area while you support ECO's work. 10 am - 6 pm Rain or shine. Singleton Center, Flat Rock www.FlatRockWineShoppe.com
- Fri. 9 - **ECO Environmental Film Festival at Flat Rock Cinema.** Great films, featuring special guest of honor, Andie MacDowell. Friday 7 pm - 9 pm, Saturday 10 am - 3 pm. Tickets online at www.ECO-WNC.org.
- Sat. 10 **Guided Bird Walk.** 9 am, Jackson Park, Hendersonville. Cosponsored by ECO and Henderson County Bird Club.
- Tues. 13 **“The French Broad – Yesterday & Today,” Lecture with Harrison Metzger,** who wrote an award-winning series on this important waterway. Henderson County Main Library, 7 pm.
- Sun. 18 **ECO-Tour Canoe Paddle:** Canoe down the French Broad River with Harrison Metzger! Navigate down the world's second-oldest river while exploring a rare section that few have ever seen. Tickets online at www.ECO-WNC.org
- Sat. 31 **ECO Annual Meeting for Members and Friends** 2 pm, The LakeHouse Lodge and Spa. Join us for our annual meeting, to celebrate our successes and help choose our new Board of Directors and screen ECO's latest documentary film while enjoying a spectacular view of historic Highland Lake. The Green Infrastructure Committee will host a barbeque fundraiser in conjunction with our annual meeting this year starting at 1 PM.



NOVEMBER

- Thurs. 5 **Urban Walk with Walk Wise, Drive Smart.** Enjoy an urban walk 1 to 1 ½ miles long in Hendersonville. Call Michele Skeele at 828-551-6415 with questions, or visit www.Walk-Wise.org to find out the location and time.
- Sat. 14 **Guided Bird Walk,** 9 am, Jackson Park, Hendersonville. Cosponsored by ECO and Henderson County Bird Club.
- Sat. 21 **Cash for Energy Tax Credits - Financial incentives for homeowners,** 2 pm, Learn about current financial incentives available from NC, the federal government and manufacturers' rebates that make the cost of green energy installations more affordable than ever.

DECEMBER

- Thurs. 3 **Urban Walk with Walk Wise, Drive Smart.** Enjoy an urban walk 1 to 1 ½ miles long in Hendersonville. Call Michele Skeele at 828-551-6415 with questions, or visit www.Walk-Wise.org to find out the location and time.
- Sat. 12 **Guided Bird Walk,** 9 am, Jackson Park, Hendersonville. Cosponsored by ECO and Henderson County Bird Club.

Mon. 21



A Winter Solstice Night Hike. 7 pm - 9 pm, DuPont State Forest. Celebrate the darkness of the longest night and quietly welcome the sun as it begins its journey toward the northern hemisphere. We'll stroll together to Hooker Falls in DuPont State Forest on a ¼-mile moderate trail. Bring flashlights (we'll use sparingly) and a warm drink to toast the Winter Solstice. Meet at Hooker Falls parking lot on DuPont Rd. For directions, visit www.ECO-WNC.org or call ECO at 692-0385.

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 Infrastructure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing |

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 Avenue West, Suite 4,
Hendersonville, NC 28792 (828) 692-0385 or join online at www.eco-wnc.org**

ECO's Green Home Tour Dazzles WNC

With green tickets in hand, about 120 people ventured out on ECO's Second Annual Green Home Tour on Saturday, August 22nd. This year's event featured five homes along with bonus opportunities to see 131 solar panels at Kanuga Conference Center and Healthy Built™ construction at Habitat for Humanity's community near Edneyville.

Hendersonville was represented this year with two houses. Within walking distance of downtown Hendersonville. Anne Hansley's house was built in 1920 and now has three solar panels providing radiant heat to lower and upper levels. By afternoon, Anne was describing the features to groups of seven or more. A few blocks away Diane Rhoades explained how to live spaciously in a 672 square cottage designed by Ken Gaylord. The home is constructed with autoclave aerated concrete for enhanced insulation.

Diane travels only as far as her surrounding organic gardens and orchard to obtain a spectacular array of vegetables and eggs — yes chickens are being raised in Hendersonville.

To the east, the Schlueter Home capitalizes on passive solar with large windows combined with a solar panel. The home uses insulated concrete

forms for the walls and Icynene® spray foam for the roof resulting in utility bills to make you jealous. Most of the wood in the home comes from re-claimed trees on the property.

Going north, the materials in the Gleydura home are a tutorial in sustainable, recycled, local procurement, with lumber harvested on the lot. Other features are super-insulated walls, a grey water system and over 2,500 gallons of rainwater storage in an inflatable tank in the crawlspace.

Gaia is an urban village in Asheville whose goal is to create a sense of community. The development consists of 15 Healthy Built GOLD™ homes, each with two solar panels providing heat and hot water. Walking trails connect to a nearby park.

Sponsors supporting the event and ECO were: Wild Birds Unlimited, Hendersonville Home Builders Association, RBC Mortgage, Ken Gaylord Architects, Barbara Gummere, Sandra Schorr, Charles Breckheimer, and the Whole Log Lumber Company.

Making it all possible was a small army of ECO volunteers who organized and staffed both the Green Home Tour and the ECO booth at SEE Expo for three days. Thanks once again for your continued support!



CLIMBING OUR NEXT MOUNTAIN

It's that time again. ECO's Mountaintop Campaign, our major donor drive that helps ECO climb the next mountain and grow in our four strategic areas:

Protecting Water Quality, Promoting Recycling, Advancing Green Infrastructure (through public policy advocacy), and Promoting Green Energy and Energy Conservation. Many folks stepped forward to help us make up for this year's shortfall through our Summer Splash Campaign. We thank all who participated. Our Mountaintop Campaign focuses on expansion.

How can ECO become more proactive, ensuring that whenever development, growth and planning issues arise, that the environment is considered and its impact is carefully evaluated? The short answer is that it takes funds to hire experts to participate in public hearings, biologists and chemists to oversee our water quality work and good quality staff continuing to fight the good fight. For that we need your help.

Please see the back page on our Mountaintop Campaign and thank you for contributing to protect WNC's natural heritage. ■



**THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND
CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION**
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Harrison Metzger, Russ Robinette and Nancy Tanker,
Directors

David Weintraub, Executive Director,
ECO VOICE editor
Susan Harris, Administrative Assistant
Kara Raymond, Water Quality Administrator
Nancy Tanker, ECO VOICE Designer

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Help ECO reach the next mountaintop!

Join our Mountaintop Fund Campaign today!

ECO has launched major initiatives to make sure our land-use regulations protect sensitive habits, our waterways remain pristine and recycling becomes a county-wide practice. (Isn't it about time?) Pledge your support today so ECO can reach new heights!

Total Pledge Amount

- Mount Mitchell \$30,000
- Mount Pisgah \$10,000
- Pinnacle Mountain \$ 5,000
- Bearwallow Mountain \$ 1,000
- Sugarloaf Mountain \$ 500
- Stone Mountain \$ 100
- Name Your Mountain \$

Pledge Frequency

- Lump sum Annually Quarterly
- Enclosed is a first gift of \$ _____ Begin installments on: _____
- Enclosed is a single gift of \$ _____

Yes! I want to protect WNC's natural heritage!

Name: _____ Company: _____
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 Evening phone: _____ Daytime phone: _____
 In Honor/Memory of: _____

Mail to: ECO, 121 Third Avenue West, Hendersonville, NC 28792 • Or donate online: www.ECO-WNC.org.