



E-BULLETIN FROM OTSEGO COUNTY CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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OCCA POSTS INVASIVE SPECIES INFORMATION ON WEBSITE: Links to three new brochures focusing on invasive species have been posted on OCCA's website. Created by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, **"Stop the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species and Fish Diseases in New York State"** includes recommended drying and disinfection techniques for fishing and boating equipment and identifies nine invasive plant and animal species common in New York State. **"Handpulling Water Chestnut"** is produced by OCCA with guidance from Northeast Aquatic Nuisance Species Panel, in conjunction with the Goodyear Lake Association, Inc. The pamphlet is a gathering of ideas and information on techniques for handpulling water chestnut that have been proven effective based on experience and research. "Handpulling Water Chestnut" is funded by a grant from the BoatU.S. Foundation. The third brochure, **"Didymo Alert,"** is also from NYS DEC. It focuses on Didymo, also known as rock snot, which can alter stream conditions and choke out many of the organisms that live on the stream bottom, affecting trout and other fish. Didymo has been documented in the East and West branches of the Delaware River. To view one or all of these brochures, visit the OCCA home page at www.occainfo.org. Scroll down to the "Miscellaneous" category at the left of your screen.

GAS DRILLING TOPIC OF NEXT LIBRARY LECTURE: The Friends of the Village Library of Cooperstown will host this month's Adult Lecture Series installment on Thursday, April 30 at 7 p.m. in the Cooperstown Village Meeting Room, just below the Village Library on Main Street. **Ramsay Adams and Wes Gillingham from the Catskill Mountainkeeper organization will present an informative program on gas drilling.** This educational lecture will include a general overview of gas drilling, hydraulic fracturing and regulatory issues. If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Lippitt at (607) 547-8154.

ANNUAL GARAGE SALE INCLUDES SILENT AUCTION OFFERINGS: Appropriately named for where it takes place – the former Leatherstocking Garage – the Otsego County Conservation Association's annual garage sale is bringing in the goods and getting them ready for prime time on Saturday, April 25 and Sunday, April 26. "We've gotten some interesting, high quality items, all of which are tax-deductible for the donor," said OCCA assistant director and event organizer Teresa Winchester. Winchester added that some of the more valuable items donated will be put up for silent auction. **"We have a large brass rubbing from a Belgian cathedral, an antique cobbler's bench, an English racing bike, and a GQ magazine cover with Shaquille O'Neal's certified signature. People will be able to bid on all of these on Saturday only,"** Winchester said. Also included in the silent auction are a garage door with electric opener and two remotes, an electric hot water heater, two original watercolors and an oil painting.

LATEST OCCA NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ONLINE: The **Otsego County Conservation Association has published the latest edition of its newsletter," The Lookout."** The newsletter, which has been mailed to OCCA membership, may be viewed at <http://occainfo.org/documents/OCCANEWSLETTER2.pdf>. Please note that the file is 9 MB and may take a few moments to open. Among other topics, in this issue of "The Lookout," Executive Director Erik Miller introduces OCCA's 2009 Annual Fund plans and the waste vegetable oil-based biodiesel fuel of

Greasecyclers is featured. A synopsis of our Lake Campaign programs is provided, and OCCA members and donors for 2008-2009 are honored.

CAPACITY-BUILDING GRANT AWARDED TO OCCA BY NYCON: The Otsego County Conservation Association has received \$1,000 in funding from the New York Council of Non-Profits to hire a consultant to facilitate a one-day retreat for its Board of Directors. **The purpose of this retreat will be to identify the components of a five-year strategic plan for OCCA, building on the existing framework.** For the retreat, scheduled for May 2 at the Upland Center in the town of Springfield, OCCA will be working with NYCON facilitator Claire Higgins. "In recent years, OCCA has made great strides in both Board development and program expansion. We are very grateful to NYCON for giving us the opportunity to pause and reflect on our achievements and come up with a roadmap for the next five years," said OCCA President Martha Clarvoe. The plan will serve as a management tool to focus OCCA's energies, ensure that Board, staff, and members are working toward the same goals, and adjust OCCA's direction in response to current environmental issues, she said.

OCCA SPEARHEADS RECYCLING EFFORTS AT EARTH FESTIVAL 2009: Thanks to OCCA President Martha Clarvoe, Styrofoam, bubble wrap and broken Christmas lights were collected this year as part of the Earth Festival 2009 program, and Confidata – a division of Empire Recycling – returned with its free document shredding service for disposal of confidential papers. **According to Confidata representatives, the total amount of paper shredded during the event was 1,580 lbs., far exceeding last year's total. A small mountain of Styrofoam and bubble wrap, filling the better part of U-Haul truck, was collected.** Event organizer Susan O'Handley said of this year's festival, "A great turn out this year with a steady flow of participants throughout the day. It was wonderful to see increased interest in alternative energy providers this year, with companies like Great Brook Enterprises returning and being joined by exhibits from the CNR Solar, Equity Energy, The Geothermal Exchange, and Otsego Electric Cooperative. We hope that this component will continue to grow in future years."

OCCA NATURE WALK SCHEDULE TAKES SHAPE: Since 2001, OCCA has organized nature walks on local trails featured on a county trails map it partnered in producing some years ago and, more recently, trails featured in the 2004 OCCA publication "Otsego Walks and Paddles." This year's schedule is as follows – Sunday, May 24, Waterfall and Wildflower Walk with botanist Connie Tedesco (Hartwick); Sunday, May 30, a Bird Walk at Basswood Pond State Forest led by Robert Donnelly (Burlington); Sunday, May 31, Patricia Riddell Kent and Steve Kent lead a walk at the Robert V. Riddell State Park (Milford); Saturday, June 21, Bird Walk at Basswood Pond State Forest led by Tom Salo (Burlington); Sunday, July 12, Flora and Fauna Walk at the Milford State Forest with John Davis (Milford); Saturday, August 22, walk to Bear Swamp, in the Cherry Valley State Forest, with Terry Bliss (Cherry Valley); Saturday, September 13, tour Lordsland Preserve with Dick deRosa, OCCA Board member (Roseboom); Sunday, September 21, Joe Hart will lead a walk at Arnold Lake State Forest (Hartwick/Milford). For more information, contact OCCA Assistant Director Teresa Winchester at (607) 547-4488.

OPINION PIECE – OCCA SUPPORTS SEVERANCE TAX ON GAS DRILLING: *By Erik Miller, Executive Director, Otsego County Conservation Association*

Four business advocacy groups have issued a joint announcement protesting a 2009-10 state budget proposal for a severance tax on oil and gas production. The groups making this petition are the Independent Oil & Gas Association of New York, Unshackle Upstate, New York Farm Bureau and the Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce. They claim that this proposal would put thousands of low-volume producing wells out of business statewide.

The Otsego County Conservation Association finds much that is disingenuous in this statement. First of all, the current financial burden of drilling operations resides with taxpayers, *not* the gas industry. We all support the work of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation through our taxes, so

we are all paying the DEC to review, permit, and inspect drilling activities because fees assessed to the gas industry are not adequate to cover these costs.

A severance tax is needed to remove this burden from the taxpayers. Municipalities have the ability to bill developers for the hiring of engineers and other experts to review proposals. If this is the case for municipalities, why can't it be the case for New York State as well?

The appeal to state lawmakers purports that if gas and oil companies fail, state and local governments will lose property taxes and workers will lose jobs. OCCA foresees another, perhaps more pervasive, way these companies might fail. The environmentally sound execution of their drilling practices could wreak havoc on our aquifers, surface waters, and soil quality. As Robert F. Kennedy stated in Anita Roddick's "Troubled Water," "Environmental damage is deficit spending." History shows that industry and instances of major environmental pollution go hand in hand. Love Canal comes immediately to mind as a national symbol of industrial failure and criminal negligence in regard to public health.

Locally, we have the example of contamination from the chemicals benzene, toluene, ethyl benzene and zylene in Oneonta's Neahwa Park, where a manufactured-gas plant operated from 1880 to the early 1950s. Although New York State Electric & Gas Corp., who owned the plant at the time of its closure, agreed to fund the removal of several thousand tons of soil tainted with coal tar at a cost of \$12 million, DEC and, to a lesser extent, the state Department of Health, must continually monitor the site – at taxpayer expense.

"The profit-loss margin for most of the oil and natural gas producers is so thin that an additional severance tax could drive them out of business," the statement bemoans. But taxpayers nationwide are paying more than their share to bail out businesses from blatantly irresponsible, greedy practices. It is not up to "we the people" to compensate for poor business choices. It is our responsibility to see that public health and safety are ensured through sound policies requiring business to be responsible for the damage it does.

The business groups also assert that the proposed tax will force lay-offs, causing a "devastating" effect on our economy. But in Otsego County, we do not have a strong petroleum engineering infrastructure, and the majority of workers in drilling operations will be transient workers. What we need to understand more fully is that grassroots economic opportunities bring *local* dollars into the *local* economy. Greg Schnabel, owner of a local renewable energy business, Greasecyclers, states that, "Sustainable Business Network studies have reported "of every \$100 spent on a locally owned business, \$73 stays in the local economy, while only \$43 on every \$100 stays if money is spent on non-locally owned businesses." How many of the gas industry dollars will remain local?

We have entered an era in which the term "fossil fuels" takes on a new meaning. These are obsolete fuels! We should be focusing on the development of green and renewable energies, not the extraction of an energy source which contributes to global warming. The current intense interest in natural gas is the result of improved technologies. As a compromise, why don't we consider the Marcellus shale gas as a long-term investment, letting it lie dormant until technologies have improved to the extent that they pose virtually no threat to our life-giving natural resources?

ECO-FRIENDLY TIP: Start composting at work. What happens to those few sandwiches always sitting, curling at the edges, at the end of office meetings? Whatever the nature of your place of work, it's likely that you and your colleagues amass a fair amount of compostable waste during your working day. In most cases this goes straight into the bin for landfill, ready to produce methane, one of the most potent greenhouse gases. Talk to your office or cafeteria manager and see whether they can compost this valuable resource – either in on-site composting bins or by means of a local collection service. **Each pound of rejected sandwiches, apple cores, and soggy cookies will make about 5 ounces of compost – perfect fodder for encouraging verdant plants to detox your office air!**

From the book "1,001 Ways to Save the Earth," by Joanna Yarrow.

OCCA NEEDS YOUR HELP TO KEEP FIGHTING THE THREATS TO OUR NATURAL RESOURCES. Got a minute? Visit our website and look at everything else OCCA is

doing – and please consider an online donation whenever you can.

Visit www.occainfo.org and look for the Network for Good logo at the top right of the home page.