

Otsego County Conservation Association Burn Barrel Position Statement

At present, more than sufficient creditable documentation exists on which to base legislative initiatives, enforcement measures, and educational campaigns to prohibit the practice of outdoor burning without an authorized permit.

Scientific facts established in regard to burn barrels include:

- Outdoor trash burning emits toxic substances such as dioxins and furans which cling to ash, landing both near and far on soils, plant life, and in water as well as penetrating the biological systems of humans and other forms of animal life. The latter poses harmful implications to the food chain.
- Dioxins and furans, released at the low temperatures of outdoor burning, cause cancer and affect the immune, reproductive, and nervous systems. Children and the unborn are particularly susceptible to these harmful effects.
- Dioxins are highly stable and persistent, requiring many years to break down. Dioxins are highly soluble in fat, thus concentrating in the major parts of the food supply, such as milk and meat. From there, they are deposited for long-term storage in body fat and other cells of both humans and wildlife.
- Pollutant emissions from weekly trash burns conducted by as few as two households could equal the daily output of one municipal incinerator burning over 200 tons of trash per day.
- Based on this widely available scientific evidence, the Otsego County Conservation Association recommends the following action:
 1. Passage and enforcement of a county and/or state law prohibiting the open burning of solid waste, except for certain agricultural materials and yard waste.
 2. An intensive public education campaign carried out in cooperation with the Otsego County Solid Waste Department and Solid Waste Committee, Otsego County Burn Barrel Education Committee, OCCA, and other interested groups.
 3. Clarification and revision of Environmental Conservation Law Part 215 to prohibit outdoor burning of solid waste, except for certain agricultural materials and yard waste. Part 215 should reflect the scientific research documenting the hazards of open burning of solid waste.