



ecoVoice

Environmental and Conservation Organization ♦ www.eco-wnc.org ♦ 828-692-0385 ♦ October-December 2010
“Working to protect WNC’s natural heritage since 1987.”

Film Festival Focuses on Dirt, Development, & Oil

With a successful environmental film festival already “in the can”, ECO is launching its second annual festival to showcase films that encourage greater stewardship, awareness of the issues that effect our local and global community and inspire greater environmental activism.

The festival will open with the Friday evening screening of *Dirt-The*

**Environmental Film Festival
Tickets on Sale!**
Hendersonville Little Theatre
Friday, Oct 8th, Saturday, Oct 9th
Order online: www.eco-wnc.org

Movie, which tells the story of Earth’s most valuable and underappreciated source of fertility--from its miraculous beginning to its crippling degradation. Each film will be followed with a discussion. *Dirt’s* panel will feature experts in permaculture, local foods and farms that work with nature.

Saturday films include *Division Street*, which takes us on a road-trip to mankind’s legacy to the North American landscape -- roadways, as well as how roadways can be transformed to include wildlife corridors.

The film festival wraps up with *Escape from Suburbia*, a film on peak oil, dealing with the convergence of climate change and peak oil and how this predicament can help “re-localize” communities to become more sustainable. ■

Out of Site, Not Out of Mind

Confronting Abandoned Development in WNC

By Harrison Metzger

When Hume Davenport saw his pond and a mountain stream on his property inundated by mud from a development up Davis Mountain, he said it was “a realization of my worst fears.”

That’s what Davenport told the Times-News in July after a heavy thunderstorm unleashed a flood of mud on his land and pond. He was one of the latest victims of a problem that has been going on for years in Henderson County and across the mountains.

Despite state law that says developers must keep dirt on their sites and state rules intended to protect water quality, mud running off construction sites continues to be a major problem.

Now, a couple of years after the housing market nosedived, the problem is taking on a new twist, says David Weintraub, executive director of ECO.

Despite Henderson County finally heading residents’ calls to take over erosion control enforcement from the understaffed N.C. Division of Land Quality, and despite a major drop in new construction, streams, ponds

and private property are still being damaged by silt and erosion. A big part of the problem, Weintraub says, is “abandoned” developments.

Some projects, such as the nine-lot, 16.5-acre Four Sims Hollow up the mountain from Davenport’s land, are tied up in legal proceedings.

In March, Carolina First Bank started foreclosure proceedings against the property. The bank claimed the Florida developer who started the project owed \$336,293. The bank completed the foreclosure process but never took possession of the property, and the case was dismissed.

Banks may want to avoid the liability of unfinished projects damaging nearby properties, Weintraub says. But he says rules need to be tightened



Seven Falls development deteriorating into local streams.

continued on page 3

⇒ INSIDE

- Director’s Corner pg. 2
- Regional News pg. 4-5
- Calendar of Events ... pg. 6

Recycling Committee Update

Where Is Recycling at Main Street Festivals?



At ECO's Recycling Committee's request, the organizer of Garden Jubilee in May agreed to put out some recycle bins for this 2nd largest festival of the year on Main Street. Afterwards, we analyzed the recycling results and our survey of 200 festival patrons.

There were 37 cans which accumulated 4 tons of trash, and just 15 recycle bins that captured only 210 lbs of recyclables in the seven block, highly attended event.

In June, and again in July, we presented these results to the Mayor and City Council, with a formal request that event organizers be required by the City to put out a recycle bin next to each trash can, so that patrons may easily recycle good materials. The request was accepted, but not acted upon. We were told instead a City committee would be appointed to study the issue. One of our members has applied to be on that committee.

At the Apple Festival, some of our members helped again to monitor the overflowing recycle bins. Remember, 90% of festival patrons want to recycle, based upon our survey of 200 patrons in May.

We also created an Apple Parade entry titled "Eat, Love, Recycle", using a nifty electric car from Lowery's Golf Cart Center of Hendersonville, and two Red Flyer hand-pulled wagons to collect oodles of plastic bottles from enthusiastic parade fans.

Next up is our Nov. 19th ECO Recycling Tour to the world's largest plastic bottle recycling plant in Spartanburg, and to a plant in Enka, NC, where new bottles are made from old ones. Transportation is provided, but please reserve your spot by Nov. 12th. Call ECO at 692-0385.

We need more committee members who are passionate, or just interested, about recycling. Come see us at our meetings, 3rd Tuesday each month at the ECO Office. ■

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Water Under the Bridge

By David Weintraub



Rushing down the Green River this weekend as part of ECO's Whitewater Day (made possible by the generous contributions of

Green River Adventures), it was sad to see, on this beautiful stretch of stream, the high sediment load making the river brown, as well as the garland of water and soda bottles along its banks. In a nutshell, these signposts point to some of the issues we face in our own backyard.

We all appreciate the wonderful treasures around us, yet on a day to day basis, we are still behind the eight ball when it comes to confronting the results of our past nonstop development and the waste that comes from our consumer lifestyle. As dependent as our economy is on tourism, we tend to shoot ourselves in the foot when we do things that undercut industries that add to our local coffers such as boating and fishing.

These are some of the issues we'll be looking closer at as we continue to tweak our water quality monitoring work as well as our environmental

policy work.

I've spent the better part of the summer chronicling our connection to our waterways in my upcoming film, **CODE BLUE: Water in the Mountains** which will have its premiere at this year's Annual Meeting at the Historic Woodfield Inn. I hope you'll join us.

ECO had a very successful Green Home Tour in August and lots of positive feedback from participants, homeowners and green vendors alike. This is not an easy time to be in construction even though green retrofit work is doing better than the rest of the field. The irony is that in a down economy, it's more important than ever to lower our monthly nut, or for small businessowners, their monthly operating expenses. Making a home or a business more energy efficient has an immediate payback, and, in many cases, a healthy tax incentive.

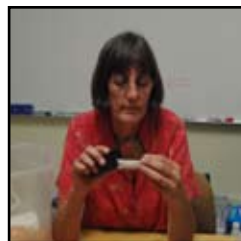
Not all of us can afford solar or geothermal but energy efficiency measures can easily deduct 20-30% from your energy bill, not to mention your energy footprint. The Energy Committee still offers discounted energy audits for members. Contact ECO for more details. ■

Introducing Kat, ECO's New Water Quality Administrator

ECO is pleased to welcome Katherine (Kat) Freeman as our new AmeriCorps Water Quality Administrator for 2010-2011. She is a graduate of the University of Tennessee Chattanooga with a BS in Environmental Science and a MS from Marshall University in Physical Science.

She has extensive experience in stream bioassessment, macroinvertebrate collection and identification, freshwater mussel scuba surveys and freshwater crayfish survey, collec-

tion and identification. Though much of her previous work centered around the issues of acid mine drainage and



its impacts on aquatic ecosystems, her knowledge of aquatic ecology will be an asset to our ongoing biomonitoring and VWIN programs. She looks forward to the opportunity to spatially categorize, depict and communicate ECO's endeavors

through Geographic Information System analysis. Meet Kat at the next Water Quality Committee meetings on the 2nd Wednesday at 4:30 at the ECO office. ■

TRANSITION HENDERSONVILLE LAUNCHES, ECO SIGNS ON

Transition Hendersonville (T-H) is a group of inspired local residents who, along with 537 other local initiatives in 25 countries, envision a thriving, resilient community that fosters a strong local economy, a regional food system, and a minimal dependence on fossil fuel. After several community meetings and a book group, a local chapter in Hendersonville was formed this summer and an Initiating Group was assembled.

While many of us have heard the mantra that growth is our community's salvation, the reality is that unsustainable growth has lead Hendersonville and much of the rest of the country into its current economic predicament. Instead of prosperity, we found an

environment that was rapidly degrading; energy costs skyrocketing while



we dig deeper and deeper for dwindling sources of fossil fuels, and an economy that's racing downhill with no bottom in sight.

The Transition Town movement was formed in response to these chal-

lenges, to find a way to meet more of our needs locally, live more sustainably and find meaningful ways to reconnect with our neighbors.

ECO's Board of Directors has officially endorsed the work of Transition Hendersonville and has agreed to begin running a series of events in conjunction with T-H to inspire greater re-localization of our resources.

ECO's Environmental Film Festival in October will be one of those joint events including the screening of *Escape from Suburbia* followed by a panel discussion featuring Transition Town participants, a local coal ash expert and discussion about local sustainability work. Contact T-H directly at transitionhendersonville@gmail.com. ■

OUT OF SITE, *continued from page 1*

to protect streams and neighbors.

"It is understandable the market is really terrible, however they do have a responsibility to the land, to their neighbors and the environment," he said. "Somebody has to be awake at the switch because every time it rains there is going to be damage. When it rains, someone has to be consciously and diligently checking on those sediment ponds and silt fences."

Four Sims Hollow is a small subdivisions built on very steep slopes. A few miles away in Etowah, one of the largest subdivision ever started in Henderson County has also been the site of repeated sediment and erosion violations.

In April 2008 when ECO volunteers went to check the water quality of Little Willow Creek, they found the stream severely damaged by erosion from Seven Falls Golf and River Club, Weintraub said. The bottom of the stream was buried in silt and insects used to measure stream health had declined by 80 percent.

"Their first action in working on building their golf course was to rip out the stream buffers," Weintraub said. "They have had hundreds of

citations on WQ violations from the US Army Corps of Engineers, (N.C.) Division of Water Quality and local erosion control."

The subdivision, planned to have 900 homes on 1,400 acres, is bankrupt and under foreclosure. The developer keeps saying he is on the verge of getting new financing.

ECO's Stream Watch Action Team met with the engineer for the project who showed them remediation work the developer had done to try to repair the damage, Weintraub said.

"It kind of begged the question: you put all this money into restoring this stream but it would have been so much more cost effective and healthier for the ecosystem if you had done it to begin with," he says.

Fox says he is seeing more and more unfinished or partially finished projects that are causing erosion and silt problems. In some cases the properties are tied up in legal fights. In others, only a few lots have been sold or homes built and neither developers or homeowners want to spend the money needed to maintain silt fences, retention ponds and other measures.

No homes have been built in

Four Sims Hollow. Fox has issued several notices of violation to the developer but nothing has been done to correct the problems, he said. Parts of the road and slope below are failing and sliding down the mountain, and mud covers the bottom of what was once a clear-running stream on Davenport's land.

Weintraub says changes are needed to make sure abandoned and unfinished developments don't languish as slow motion stream-killers. One would be to allow bonds which local governments typically hold to assure roads and infrastructure are completed to also be used for environmental restoration work. The county is holding an almost \$6 million bond from Seven Falls that could be used to shore up eroding areas and plant permanent vegetation.

He would also like to see provisions that could allow land trusts to step in to take title to and restore abandoned properties if banks or developers refuse to maintain them. Fox, meanwhile, says he thinks the South Carolina bank foreclosing on the Seven Falls property will follow through and restore the property. ■

Greening of Downtown Leaps Forward

Hendersonville businesses are starting on the path to reduced energy usage. A total of seventeen businesses have received energy audits in a cooperative arrangement with ECO, Waste Reduction Partners and Downtown Hendersonville Inc. These efforts have been rewarded with a Main Street Energy Grant of \$52,200 for energy efficiency upgrades in three downtown businesses for heating, air conditioning, lighting, insulation and solar hot water installation. In addition, Hendersonville will replace 32 light fixtures on Main Street with LED light fixtures for a savings of \$11,500.00 annually.

ECO is a community partner in a second proposal submitted by four businesses for the Main Street Round II grants. ECO will assist Downtown Hendersonville Inc. spreading the lessons learned on the Energy Grants to all local businesses.

Taking these steps won't only dramatically cut the cost of operating these small businesses, it will drive more customers to their stores as well. A number of recent studies have demonstrated that even in a poor economic climate, increasingly consumers are making purchasing decisions based on how serious a business is about environmental stewardship. In a study last year by Miller Zell, 50% of shoppers surveyed were willing to pay a premium for green products. In fact, lower income shoppers were more likely to pay extra for eco-friendly products than higher income consumers. As an increasing number of retailers carry green products, their cost



decreases, offering greater incentives to the shopper. A good example of this is Motorola's "Renew" phone which is made of 100% recycled materials and is offered at the same price as their other models.

The next step is to recognize significant conservation efforts by local people and to promote local economic and community activities. Several recognition levels are planned for business addressing six areas:

§ Procurement of Goods - We'll be looking at whether businesses are sourcing their products locally and regionally rather than nationally or internationally as

well as how they minimize packaging. **§ Sales and Service** - How do businesses minimize the use of bags/boxing. **§ Utilities/Building/Equipment/Supplies** - Is the business using an existing building, recently had an energy audit, reduced electricity/gas/water usage in a quantifiable way.

§ Employees - Do they encourage walking/biking to work, provide "living wage" and benefits?

§ Minimize Waste - How do they reuse items internally, recycle cardboard, bottles, paper and encourage their customers to do the same.

§ Community - How do they support local community activities and enrichment.

An annual Green Business Award will be presented to businesses that have taken exceptional steps towards becoming a responsible steward and an emulative example to the community. ■

COAL ASH REGULATION

The Environmental Protection Agency has finally announced plans to regulate coal ash dumps across the country. According to the Southern Environmental Law Center, the announcement comes after months of delay and misleading statements by the power and coal industries and



Coal ash overwhelms the Kings

nearly 18 months after a billion gallons of toxic coal ash burst through a dam near a Tennessee Valley Authority power plant in Kingston, Tenn.

The EPA is proposing two possible options to regulate coal ash. One would classify coal ash as hazardous waste or option two would regulate it as non-hazardous. Given that coal ash contains arsenic, lead, cadmium, mercury, selenium, and many other dangerous pollutants tied to cancer and neurological damage, especially in children, the choice is clear.

The coal industry and power companies are claiming that to designate coal ash as hazardous waste will be cost prohibitive. However, if these same industries were



Please donate your good condition rubber boots and waders for ECO's water quality volunteer monitoring programs.

WNC MIGHT BE IN SIGHT

responsible for paying the costs to public health of dumping unregulated coal ash into ponds and landfills, they might sing a different tune.



Last year the EPA rated 49 coal ash sites across the country as 'high hazard potential' sites, meaning a failure will probably cause loss of human life.

The two coal ash ponds located at the Progress Energy plant in Skyland fall under this high hazard category. This gives more impetus to residents of WNC to weigh in on the future of coal ash regulation.

The EPA has begun a series of public hearings across the country to assess public concern. They are also accepting comments via email, fax or snail mail. ECO urges all readers of the *ECO Voice* to promptly contact the EPA about this issue. *Comments can be sent by email to rcra-docket@epa.gov, Attention Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-RCRA-2009-0640, By Fax: 202-566-0272; Attention Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-RCRA-2009-0640, By Snail Mail: Hazardous Waste Management System, Attention (same docket # above), EPA, Mailcode: 5305T, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20460. Mail two copies. ■*

Check out our new website!
www.ECO-WNC.org



SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL GREEN BUSINESS

Energy Conservation Starts with a Checkup

Carl Donovan, Robert Price, and Rick Bayless are experts at helping area homeowners improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

What are their clients saying?

"That room is not drafty anymore and is finally comfortable."

"My energy bills are so much lower than they used to be."

"I should have done this years ago."

Done what? Basic projects like duct seal, ceiling air seals, attic insulation, caulking, weatherstripping, HVAC changes, and crawl space work.

"It's all about the energy objectives that the homeowner wants to accomplish," says Conservation Pros

Founder and President, Carl Donovan. "An energy savings of over 30% is not uncommon at all. Imagine how much energy would be saved if whole neighborhoods did this stuff!"



Rick Bayless checks on insulation levels in an attic.

It all starts with a thorough Home Performance Check-up by their Building Analyst and Indoor Air Quality Expert, Rick Bayless. He then helps the homeowner decide which efficiency

projects make the most sense to do. They either coach the homeowner through some do-able projects or their Project Coordinator, Robert Price, can get the job going for them.

Conservation Pros can be reached at (828) 243-5192 or www.ConservationPros.com. ■

photo courtesy Rob Travis

ECO CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October-December 2010

Board meetings are held the fourth Thursday of each month, 12:00 - 1:30 pm. Committee meetings are as follows:

Recycling Committee: 3rd Tuesday, 4:30 pm ♦ **Water Quality Committee:** 2nd Wednesday, 4:30 pm

Energy Committee: 2nd Thursday, 4 pm ♦ **Green Infrastructure Committee:** 3rd Thursday, 4pm

All meetings are held at the ECO office. Visitors and volunteers are welcome.

OCTOBER

Fri-Sat 8-9 **2nd Annual Environmental Film Festival.** Friday 6:30 pm, Saturday 10 am, Great films, good panel discussions, refreshments and food. Hendersonville Little Theater.

Sat. 9 **Guided Bird Walk.** 9 am, Jackson Park, Hendersonville. Co-sponsored by ECO and Henderson County Bird Club.

Tue. 19 **Candidate Forum.** 7 pm, Candidates for Henderson County Board of Commissioners will address the community's concerns on environmental policy issues. Henderson County Public Library.

Sat. 23 **ECO Annual Meeting for Members and Friends.** 1 pm Hike, 2 pm Meeting. Join us for a lively annual meeting, including the screening of a new film, *Code Blue: Water in the Mountains*, a review of ECO's accomplishments, and the election of ECO's 2011 Board of Directors. Refreshments will be served. A hike will begin at 1 pm headed by a local naturalist. Historic Woodfield Inn.



NOVEMBER

Sat. 13 **Guided Bird Walk.** 9 am, Jackson Park, Hendersonville. Cosponsored by ECO and Henderson County Bird Club.



Fri. 19 **Recycling ECO-Tour.** 9:30 am- 4:30 pm. Join ECO's Recycling Committee and Henderson County SWAC members for a tour of the world's largest plastic bottle recycling plant, United Resource Recovery Corp., located in Spartanburg, SC. The second site is Southeastern Container Corp. in Enka where new bottles are made from old ones. Transportation is provided, but reservations required by Nov. 12. Call 692-0385.

DECEMBER

Sat. 11 **Heat Your Home For Less.** 2-4 pm, Workshop on how simple things in the home can make a dramatic difference in heating costs as well as your energy footprint. Henderson County Public Library.

Sat. 11 **Guided Bird Walk.** 9 am, Jackson Park, Hendersonville. Cosponsored by ECO and Henderson County Bird Club.

Tues. 21 **A Winter Solstice Night Hike.** 7-9 p.m. DuPont State Forest. Celebrate the darkness of the longest night and quietly welcome the sun as it begins its journey toward the northern hemisphere. Weather permitting, we'll stroll together to Hooker Falls in DuPont State Forest on a ¼-mile moderate trail. Bring flashlights and a warm drink to toast the Winter Solstice. Call for directions/reservations 692-0385

MORE TO COME ... Christmas Tree Recycling, Heritage Apple Tree Sales and more.

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 Showcases New Documentary Film

David Weintraub, ECO's Executive Director and perennial filmmaker, has produced his third environmental film, this one a short documentary titled, **Code Blue: Water Quality in the Mountains.**

According to Weintraub, "We are all aware of the rich water features that surround us, but few are aware how many individuals and businesses depend upon good quality water and how vital it is to our local economy. This film hopes to demonstrate that protecting our waterways is everyone's business."

The film will feature interviews with farmers, boaters, flyfishermen, and camp directors while focusing on five watersheds in WNC. Also spotlighted will be some of the issues that cause the most concern in regional streams, including coal ash

infiltration, abandoned development sedimentation, and agricultural runoff. The film demonstrates the success of citizens' water quality efforts and how they make a difference in educating the public on water quality issues, hold polluters feet to the fire to insure compliance and preserve the community's most precious natural resource.

The film will have its premiere at ECO's Annual Meeting on October 23rd at the Historic Woodfield Inn in Flat Rock. Organizations, institutions or governmental bodies that which to screen the film at their event or meeting may contact ECO at 692-0385 to schedule. Screenings are free but ECO requests a reasonable honorarium, if possible, to support ECO's water quality work. A trailer can be found at eco-wnc.org.

Volunteers Needed for October Biomonitoring

What is biomonitoring you ask? It is a sampling process that evaluates the health (water quality) of a stream by determining the types of invertebrates ("bugs") that live in the stream where the water is sampled. Some families of "bugs" are more tolerant of pollution than others therefore the presence of those that are least tolerant indicate the best water quality.

Teams of volunteers from ECO make evaluations of their assigned streams twice a year in April and October. The information is assembled in a report that is used by local and state governments to ensure compliance with environmental regulations. It is all used by ECO to evaluate trends in watersheds and to formulate action plans to determine the source of the degradation and what steps that might be carried out to remediate the stream.

ECO values its volunteer water monitors and offers regular training to aid their work. Formal trainings in a lab are offered in February and individualized training is offered on an as-needed basis. If you volunteer you will be assigned to a team and you'll work under the guidance of more experienced volunteers. Please contact Kat Freeman at ECO at 692-0385 to sign-up. ■

Are You Passionate About the Environment? Want to Make A Difference?

Become An ECO Volunteer!

**No experience
necessary.**

**Call us today
692-0385**



**THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND
CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION**
121 THIRD AVENUE WEST, SUITE 4
HENDERSONVILLE, NC 28792
(828) 692-0385
Return Service Requested

**Nonprofit Org.
US Postage Paid
Hendersonville, NC
Permit no. 655**



ECO Officers and Directors

President/Treasurer: Chris Youngblood
Vice President: Rich Bowerman
Secretary: Jeri Peterson

Directors: John Avery, Rich DeSimone,
Ryan Lubbers, Jim Monahan,
Harrison Metzger

Executive Director: David Weintraub
Administrative Assistant: Susan Harris
Water Quality Administrator: Katherine Freeman
ECO VOICE Editor: David Weintraub
Interns: Jenai Bounds

ECO Voice cover photo by RobTravis.com.
Printed with soy ink on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper.

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 \$10,000
- Mount Pisgah \$ 5,000
- Pinnacle Mountain \$ 1,000
- Bearwallow Mountain \$ 500
- Sugarloaf Mountain \$ 250
- 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: _____
Address: _____
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