

ECC NEWSLETTER

January 2009

ECC Meeting Thursday, January 22, Parsons Complex, Conf. Room C at 7:30pm

Finally, a New Year, but is it a new year? This New Year, a year beyond all new years, carries the burden of all the consequences of our past and accumulated errors, but hopefully we won't be hamstrung with the blame of the blatant neglect of the past eight years. Yes, there is legitimate blame, but we have to take our share of past neglect of our environment too. We must move on to embrace this new element of hope we have not seen in decades. Hope for REAL CHANGE the kind of hope that can carry one a long way, as it contains this adhesive quality that has the kind of directives and promise of great leadership. To this, I do cling!

Looking back over the years, we have had the privilege of Michael Ludwig's knowledge and expertise to help keep us abreast on the Global warming/climate change issues. He will speak with us at our January ECC Meeting and you can expect a very lively and informative discussion.

What should our priorities be for the coming year? There are three levels to consider: local, state and national.

For our local needs, I see FOOD as a prime concern. Where will our needed food come from? Paul E. Roberts, in the publication of *Pop!ulation Press* says, "Today's Food Crisis Isn't a Blip. Global Demand is soaring, yet arable land and water are becoming scarce. Fertilizer costs are rising, and then there are climate disruptions. So what's the world to do?" With pressure of over population, loss of farmland and the drain on water supplies, again, "So what's the world to do?"

During the Second WW, 40% of the world's food production was produced on small plots of land, along railroad tracks, city parks, and schoolyards, even in densely populated cities. These gardens prevented massive starvation. A dear friend of mine told her story of how her father, who was unemployed and on welfare, was able to produce enough food to carry them through hard times.

Can we, the ECC, make it our agenda to help our neighbors begin to think about and to make our yards, front and back into plots of organic vegetable gardens? We need your ideas and input. Because some yards have more sun than others, we know there are examples in Milford where neighbors are sharing their spaces and growing vegetables together. This is a wonderful way we can share and become a true community through gardening. We are putting together a panel discussion on small gardens, as a beginning you can start with the concept-- **Square Foot Gardening**. Watch for this event. (*Joy of Square Foot Gardening* by Daniel Rusanowsky)

State—our front and backyards are Long Island Sound. The report from Connecticut Fund for the Environment, GREENSHEET, tells us that the dead zone in LIS has dramatically grown, making it the largest in five years.

conditions over a wider area for 83 continuous days between June and September, setting an all-time record."

Leah Schmalz from Save the Sound, said, "The size of the dead zone provides a grim yardstick for the overall health of LIS, a resource that contributes \$8 billion to the regional economy."

The state passed a bill allocating \$90 million to upgrade sewage treatment plants (one of our largest contributors for increasing the nitrogen into LIS) for 2008 and another \$90 million to Clean Water Fund for 2009. We need to call the Governor to see that these funds will be released. We also need to be ever vigilant about not using chemical fertilizers and pesticides on our lawns and gardens as they all end up in LIS.

Statewide, the environment will be taking a big hit because of no funds. However, there are several bills that were not passed in the last legislative session, and if revived and passed this session, would not cost the state a dime, all of which are very important for preserving our biodiversity and human health. We could support these bills, if reintroduced: 1. The Bottle Bill, 2. Vehicle Idling bill, 3. Riverfront Protection Bill, 4. Toxins: Lead, Phthalates, Bisphenol-A Bill, 5. Toxins: Flame Retardants Bill, 5. Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Bill, 6. On-Site Sewage Treatment Systems Bill.

National top priority--CLEAN ENERGY. The League of Conservation Voters (LCV), said clean energy became one of the top campaign issues and "more than half supported immediate action on global warming and more, 76% supported more investment in clean energy-- 50% more voters than supported the failed "drill, baby, drill" policies of the past." However, they reminded us that even though clean energy has the potential to revitalize our economy, improve our national security and protect our planet from global warming, in 2007 and 2008, filibusters by Senate allies of the oil industry consistently blocked vital clean energy and global warming bills." We understand the oil companies are lining up to fight us again on these same issues. President Obama will need our help.

News on Clean Energy coming from a report by Lester Brown (Author of Plan B 2, etc.) published in the *Pop!ulation Press* on what is happening with the new Energy Economy emerging in the United States. Here is a summation of his report. He tells of the number of wind farms that are in operation, being built and in the planning stages. In Texas alone, when all are finished it will total 45,000 megawatts of wind-generating capacity (think 45 coal-fired power plants) which will satisfy the residential needs of the state's 24 million people and enough left over to send to such states as Louisiana and Mississippi.

There are, for example, other wind projects that are in construction and planning stages in South Dakota, Colorado, New York, Kansas, Oklahoma, Maine and Delaware. In addition, a 900 mile long transmission line is to go from Wyoming to California and has been approved, one to go from South Dakota south and one east to Illinois. Missing and necessary, is the development of a strong national grid system.

Running parallel with the wind projects are major increases in developing solar voltaic, solar heat with mirrors, for generators that run turbines for making electricity and increased development of geothermal.

This is an amazing and historic increase in development for renewable energy in just 2-3 years. With this kind of change, just think what we can do with the right support from our new government. If Roosevelt got the war machinery going in 90 days, think what we could do in just twice that time for our clean energy production. These projects will bring new industries (E Magazine states that many new turbine factories are in the works), basic supply industries such as steel, aluminum and silicon for manufacturing. It will bring in a million new jobs plus generating new jobs in construction, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and roofers. And it will employ countless numbers for high-tech professionals such as wind meteorologists, geothermal geologists and solar engineers.

E Magazine, January/February issue WIND POWER tells of those advocating for smaller versions of building wind communities, saying smaller might be better. Community-wind advocates midsize projects as in two to five Maws. "A coalition called 25 X '25 has brought together farmers and conservationists who are dedicated to seeing 25% of our power come from renewable resources." One decided advantage is that it is better suited for utilizing existing transmission lines. They also say, "80% of the geography is served by rural electricians." Given half a chance, Americans are very resourceful in solving problems.

Lester Brown said, "This energy transition is being driven by an intense excitement from the realization that people are now tapping energy sources that can last as long as the Earth itself. This new energy economy can be our legacy to the next generation."

Yes, we know we still need to drive our cars, buses and trucks, but they can be changed to electric. As we speak, a company in California is working feverishly developing algae, which costs less than purifying low grade oil to gas, into plants that biodegrade into a pure cleaner oil/gas for fuel. While growing the plants, they take in the same amount of carbon that will be given off in the burning, thus making it carbon neutral.

The renewable clean energy industry must be given government subsidies, like what are and is being given to the gas and oil industry. A few years ago, the cost for one wind tower, was 1 million but is now 2 million because then, 70% were being manufactured in Europe. That is changing and has been reduced to 50%. Also, there has been an increase in the number of new plants that are

beginning to come on-line here in the US. These wind towers cost less when manufactured near the site of installation as the length of a blade being 125 feet long, is not easily transportable. Wind farms cost more placed in the sea, but easier to install because the shipping is easier by sea. There is also a decided advantage of a Sea wind farm as wind off the water is superb being it is stronger and constant.

Sounding good so far? So what are the most difficult problems? They are basically, human habits and behavior. One couldn't be more succinct as Paul & Anne Ehrlich who stated it in their title article in Pop!lation Press, **THE PROBLEM IS SIMPLE: TOO MANY PEOPLE TOO, MUCH STUFF.** Friedman's latest book, *Hot, Flat and Crowded* paints a picture of a planet beset by rising temperatures, petro-dictatorships, crowded humanity with new 'Americas' of spawning middle-class consumers, all busy destroying the Earth's biodiversity. With the addition of 80 million new births each year, we can only expect further exhaustion of land, resources and water, all those things that the average American and NEW American acting Chinese and Indian think they deserve and need for their want-free existence. Gone will be our Christmas Shop shopping sprees. We need to think only green, green and greener. To survive, the economy and industry will need to be green.

The time for CHANGE IS NOW! Dr. James Hansen says, "The window of opportunity for effective action is rapidly closing and without an effective government-led response, the world is in danger of "passing tipping points that lead to disastrous climate changes." WE do not want to go there.

The ECC has been offered a great opportunity to have a weekly column. I am in the process of recruiting volunteers to write maybe a column, say bimonthly, or whatever one feels comfortable with. The column could be flexible; one week its venue could be question and answers. It could be a week of solving problems, coming from our readers. It could be a week for tips for recycling, tips people have discovered solutions on their own. It could change according to what is environmentally pressing for that particular week. There is no end of ideas that are environmentally related, that could inhabit this column. We need you to respond and volunteer with no obligatory timetable.

If you Google **Woodmont greendrinks** you will get one great list of interesting people who will be speaking and present at the unofficial green drinks, held, January 15, 6-8:30 pm at Scribner's, 31 Village Road, Milford, CT 06460. www.gogreenmilford.com

An inauguration party will take place, no fee, at Citrus, January 20, between 6:30 and 8:30 pm.

This is our yearly request time for a \$10 donation, made out to ECC and sent to Kathlyn Kraffmiller, 37 Sycamore Drive, Milford, CT 06460. We greatly appreciate your gift.

Ann Berman, Chair of ECC www.milfordecc.com