

# **ECC NEWSLETTER**

## **OCTOBER 2006**

### **ECC MEETING, OCTOBER 19, 2006, 7:30 PM**

#### **CONFERENCE ROOM C IN PARSONS COMPLEX**

I experienced my first frost and freezing thirty-two degrees, early morning in New Brunswick. Then the thermometer reached 80 degrees the next day in Milford. And, I saw the leaves change color in two short weeks. Hope you all had a little respite and a good summer and are now ready to face a busy and hopefully productive winter looking after our planet. Though I must admit, winter conjures an image of hibernation, a soft chair, a good book and fireplace nearby. But forget it, only on the rare occasion.

This past summer, Milford received an award for our clean beaches; the Beach Buddies Award came from the NRDC, Natural Resource Defense Council. As it turns out, we had one of the cleanest beaches that wasn't closed any day during the entire summer. That means we are keeping animal feces and other contaminants from going into our storm drains. It also means that most of you living near those beaches are not using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. We thank you for your concern and your intelligence in protecting the waters of Long Island Sound.

We would like to thank all those who participated in our seminar meeting with House Speaker James Amann. They did one terrific job bringing our environmental messages home to the Speaker and to an audience of 50 people who came at the odd hour of 4:00 in the afternoon. Those who spoke on the subjects of Diesel Pollution, Energy and Energy efficiency and lastly Pesticides were: Joyce Acebo-Raguskus, Jackie Kochiss, John Borgatti, Tom Ivers, Jeanne Cervin, Thomas Jackson, Jeff Carter, Alex Fox, Dr. Laurel Lobovits and Diane Vasseur. Dr. Dennis McBride gave an overview of the health hazards of each of the issues and served as our moderator, while Letty Malone was our timekeeper. After which Jim Amann responded and also told about his Energize CT initiative, a panel that will make recommendations to the state on how legislation can be used to encourage the development of alternative energy sources.

All in all it was a successful event. Though we have brought our messages to our representatives, it cannot stop there, the pressure must still come from all our citizens and they have to hear from us on a regular basis. That is our goal for this coming legislative session to get our townspeople involved and let them know that they count, that everyone counts when we call and especially when we write our representatives. The accumulation of all our calls and letters change the votes in the Senate and the House, it shapes the way legislation is passed. One by one, we are the movers and shakers. It is our mandate to bring this message home to our relatives, friends and neighbors.

It was almost a done deal... the celebration of the opening of the Sikorsky Bridge and the bike and walking path across the bridge. It has been postponed to next spring.

There was a small glitch about some part of it not being completed and not having the DOT sign off before the celebration played havoc with the insurance liability clause, so next spring will be the official opening. The PED Committee with its Co-Chairs, Deborah Rowe and Betsey Wright have been very involved in the planning committee for the opening celebration and will keep us informed when it will happen and in the meantime when it will be permitted to bicycle or walk across.

I have just visited the Walker's Pond Site where the Alternative Education students, all 35 of them, have been cleaning out the invasive plants and making the trail circling the pond visible. They are nearly finished removing most of the invasives and have done one terrific job. You can enter at the corner of Meadowside and Robert Treat Parkway where steps have been unearthed or in the middle of the park on Robert Treat. I recommend that you go there before the leaves fall. You will experience exquisite vistas! What a gem we have right in the middle of Milford!!

Under the direction of Annaliese and Kelly, teachers at the Alternative Education School, five teams were formed each taking a section of the park for managing and cleaning. They first did an environmental assessment identifying the species of invasive plants and some of the major trees and wildlife. They did a cursory water test, which, to their utter amazement, even with all the algae, was not too bad. However, it did register very low in oxygen. A more comprehensive test will be done later. There are places that walking is rather difficult because of the slant of the terrain, but we hope to correct some of that and level it out with the use of either logs or railroad ties secured to the earth and filling in and leveling with crushed stones and soil which will also protect the tree roots. There are too many tree roots to dig into the side of the hill. There is a very special spot that Annaliese and I discovered that would make a beautiful viewing spot to place a footbridge to span the area of the inlet where water enters the pond. The bridge would complete the loop for the walk around the pond. There are other places that will be appropriate to have boardwalks and benches to sit and enjoy the vistas. It will be necessary to get grants to complete some of the initial work and then we hope that we will be able to have the walk become a handicap path at some future date. This will mean a great deal of money for planning and expert surveying, as much of the terrain is quite steep. So, for now, it will remain a walking path, which is not recommended for bad knees!

We will be inviting the Pond's adjacent neighbors to participate in a clean-up, as there has been some major dumping. We see these neighbors as potential partners and having an invested interest in the Park. They have this

beautiful park and natural resource at their doorsteps. They will be the ultimate beneficiaries, the ones to be the most frequent users of the park.

Fortunately, the path traverses, in most cases, away from their backyards and preserves their privacy, and that will be respected. Where the path is too close, if possible, it will be moved closer to the water. Come and visit before the leaves fall... bring your camera!

Our friend and very active ECC member, Steve Kraffmiller, has been laid up these past few months with a fractured knee. He is now up and around, but **not** ready yet to consider surveying Walker's Pond. Best of luck Steve for a complete recovery!!! And, thanks to Steve for introducing me to the book **Suburban Safari** by Hannah Holmes. [www.hannahholmes.com](http://www.hannahholmes.com)

The author talks about nature from her backyard, beginning and tracing its origins from glacial times to the present day. She has a chapter titled **Freedom Lawn**. She said, until she read "Redesigning The American Lawn", she referred to her lawn and yard as a "Darwin Lawn". She wrote, "Freedom Lawn is "becoming a movement." "In Milford, Connecticut residents now compete for an annual Freedom Lawn prize." She also mentions that one can order "eco-turf" mixes of clovers, wild daisies, chamomile, yarrow, rye, fescue, and baby blue eyes." And, some of the mixes are meant to be mowed only once a month.

This chapter mentions all kinds of facts, one that really hit home is that this nation spends \$45 billion a year on turf care, not to mention all the poisonous pesticides that goes on those lawns, more than is used for agriculture. But the kicker was to discover that guess whose really big house is a Freedom Lawn and has been since the early 1970's? In her words, the White House and the nation's capital have gone feral." "Biodiversity is running rampant. This is not what I expected."

During Nixon's administration, they discovered rats had taken over. They announced they would be using rat poison, which resulted in an outcry from squirrel lovers. So they announced, "we're against the rats, we're for the squirrels." President Reagan loved squirrels and would bring back acorns from Camp David. Scientists announced that nearby Lafayette Park has the greatest number of squirrels per millimeter of any place in the cosmos.

Jim Sherald, the chief of natural resources and science for the Park Service's capitol region, acknowledged that he and the whole park service has evolved from a regular schedule of fogging the nation's Front Lawn with pesticides and herbicides to none. Now the Mall is weedy. Ms. Holmes noted, "A dandelion spreads its leaves at the end of Jim's shiny shoes." And then asks, "Is that dandelion an abomination in your eyes?" He replied, "It used to be." But, he explains that with the masses of joggers, Frisbee-ers, baby strollers, and tourists busily breathing air, "We don't do that anymore." He further said, "When we stopped, we found out that the world didn't fall apart." He further remarked that after checking the cherry trees recently for

peach-scale bugs I couldn't find any. "I think when we were spraying, we were killing a lot of beneficial insects that now keep things under control." After this information gathering, the author exclaimed her pleasant surprise that the Nation's Front Lawn is "leading the way out of chemical dependency."

During my visit to Canada, I learned that many of the churches are advocating that people not buy water bottles. That tickled me to no end. I boycott them myself as I am tired of seeing them lining the streets and storm drains.

We ask you to attend this month so we can form our committees allowing you the opportunity to actively participate in whatever your passion is regarding the environment. It may be that you are only able to serve once a month or call or work from home a couple of hours a month. However, this may give you the satisfaction that you are indeed contributing. A few suggestions for committees are: recycling, diesel pollution reduction and climate change legislation, helping the Clean Energy Task Force get more signups for clean energy/working with the High Schools, Walker's Pond; developing new walking trails; Long Island Sound, re: loss of marshes; signage for water access for both swimming and boat launching along Long Island South and other waterways. We are open to any suggestions for adding your concerns to this list.

We will present the Freedom Lawn Contest Winners with their plaques and framed picture of their garden or lawn this month at our meeting. It is important that we engage you to help in any way that is possible to participate in our goal setting and volunteering in ways to fit your busy schedules.

**We are meeting at the Parsons Complex, Conference Room C, 7:30 on October 19. Bring a friend!**

Ann Berman  
Chair of ECC  
[www.milfordecc.com](http://www.milfordecc.com)

**ATTENTION:**

"An Inconvenient Truth" will be shown in Milford at:

Saint Andrews Episcopal Church  
283 Bridgeport Avenue  
Milford, CT 06460

October 15, 2006  
4:00 p.m.