

McLean County Greenways News

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From the Chair

Michael Brown, Ecology Action Center

Protecting our greenways takes many forms; this fall we are fortunate to have multiple opportunities to engage in greenways related events in McLean County.

Oct. 5 marks the second Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Event in two years, a rarity in these days of budget cutbacks. This event will take place at the Mitsubishi Motors production facility at 100 N. Mitsubishi Motorway from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and is open to all Illinois residents. Complete event details are available by calling the Ecology Action Center at 309-454-3169 or by going to www.ecologyactioncenter.org.

Providing for convenient HHW collection is crucial to reduce improper disposal of hazardous materials such as oil based paints, harsh household cleaners, yard care chemicals, items containing mercury, automotive fluids, etc.



Workers separate hazardous materials during the Household Hazardous Waste event last fall at the Interstate Center in Bloomington. Another event is scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 5 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Mitsubishi Motors' manufacturing facility parking lot located off of Mitsubishi Motorway in Normal.

This improper disposal usually takes one of three forms. First, and most commonly, individuals will throw these items in the trash, whether because of a lack of awareness of better alternatives or alternately, intending to willfully hide HHW items among more innocuous waste. This means of disposal can result in pollution of groundwater due to the deterioration of landfill liners from exposure to corrosive HHW substances.

Secondly, liquid HHW is sometimes dumped down the drain, either into the sanitary sewer or the storm sewer system. The storm sewer is largely untreated, resulting in direct contamination of surface water supplies. Dumping in the sanitary sewer is also problematic, increasing the toxicity and volatility of water that arrives at the Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District's treatment plants. Given the hundreds of thousands of chemical compounds now in use, many cannot be easily identified much less removed through conventional treatment process.

Some hazardous wastes are simply dumped along roadsides or into creeks and streams, leading to a direct contamination of surface water supplies and degradation of our greenways. While we would all like to think this is an uncommon occurrence, one such incident came to light recently, when several paint cans were found dumped in Henline Creek, not far from the ParkLands Foundation's Henline Tract. Thankfully, dedicated individuals were quick to volunteer to help out, and the cans were collected in a matter of hours.

Thankfully, we have many dedicated individuals who are working to protect our local greenway areas and water supplies. Many of them will be gathering on Nov. 8 at Davis Lodge for an educational greenways workshop, open to any interested individuals (pre-registration required). Sessions include discussions of trails, stream buffers, public outreach, and more. Find more information, including a registration form at the McLean County Regional Planning Commission website at www.mcplan.org

So regardless of your role, please participate in our local greenways activities. The question is, will I see you at the HHW collection or at the greenways conference? Maybe both? See you there.

Household Hazardous Waste Event

On Saturday, Oct. 5, McLean County residents will have another opportunity to dispose of hazardous waste materials. The Ecology Action Center along with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency will be co-sponsoring a household hazardous waste event from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the parking lot of Mitsubishi Motors North America in Normal.



The event is free and open to all Illinois residents. Per state regulations, only residential waste items can be collected.

Items that will be accepted include: oil based paints, household batteries, paint thinners, used motor oil, herbicides, drain cleaners, insecticides, lawn chemicals, pesticides, mercury, fluorescent lamp bulbs, double bagged and wetted asbestos, old and outdated machines, and electronics.

“Light the Night” Attracts Local Cyclists

Over 700 cyclists turned out for the first ever “Light the Night” event on the evening of Sept. 5 in Uptown Normal. The 500 sets of free front and rear bike lights and reflectors were gone approximately two hours into the scheduled four-hour function. However, several other attractions and free service kept the crowd steady throughout the evening



Students from Illinois State University, area youngsters and their parents were among those participating in the “Light the Night” event in Uptown Normal. Besides free front and rear lights, many cyclists took advantage of free tune-ups and other services.

Connect Transit instructed riders on how to load and unload bicycles onto their bicycle carrier. Local bicycle shops were available to provide free services such as bicycle tune-ups and instruction on how to do a variety of simple bicycle repairs. The Town of Normal and ISU law enforcement were on hand providing information on bicycle laws and rider safety. Many attendees also stayed during and after the event to enjoy the free concert and food vendors. More than 25 volunteers contributed, including staffs from the Town of Normal, Bike Blo-No, Vitesse, and Bloomington Cycle and Fitness.



Bicycle enthusiasts were on hand to assist with simple bicycle repairs and conduct mini-repair clinics for more than 700 people who attended the first “Light the Night” event in Uptown Normal.

Friends of EverBloom

Friends of EverBloom (FOE) continue to meet on the last Thursday of the month at Davis Lodge at Lake Bloomington. The group continues its effort to plant and introduce native vegetation into Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake.

In cooperation with the City of Bloomington Water Department, FOE is also partnering on the City's shoreline protection project. FOE member Mary Jo Adams has also been actively involved in the COMLARA Park restoration project.



Interested citizens and members of Friends of EverBloom get to know each other during the ice cream social hour at Davis Lodge on Aug. 29. The organization meets the last Thursday of each month at Lake Bloomington. Students from Illinois State University biology and geography departments were also in attendance.

Anyone interested in becoming involved or seeking more information about Friends of EverBloom is encouraged to attend its monthly meetings which begin at 5:30 p.m.

The mission of the organization is to positively contribute to the overall health and function of Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake through enhancement and restoration efforts.

Local Watershed Group Advancing Projects

The McLean County Watershed Committee met on Sept. 13 at the office of the McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District. A grant has been awarded to the group which will advance watershed protection at Evergreen Lake as well as provide funds to purchase 24 fish lunkers that mimic undercut banks. The project is scheduled for completion by Oct. 18.

McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District has applied for a 319 EPA grant with Illinois State University in order to perform a social indicator survey for lake usage.

A shared watershed program (TNC) near Colfax is progressing with volunteer landowners. However, there is state approval needed to change existing filter strips. Approximately 50 fields in

McLean County will be utilized to test for corn residue and soil nitrogen. Various local farmers have agreed to take part in this program which will include 4,000 acres overall.

The City of Bloomington and volunteers from ISU continue stream gauge monitoring on Money and Six Mile Creeks. This effort includes updating of pollution data, upgrading techniques for data reporting and modeling, and improving best management practices.

Fall Calendar of Events

COMLARA Park, Sugar Grove Nature Center, McLean County Wheelers, and ParkLands Foundation have various events scheduled for the fall.

Fall Colors Family Day is scheduled for Oct. 19 at COMLARA Park. This event features a wiener and marshmallow roast, hayrack rides and various other family activities.

Sugar Grove Nature Center will be hosting Family Nature Exploration and the Twin City Amateur Astronauts on Oct. 5 as well as a Happy Trail Hike on Oct. 10 and the annual Autumn Celebration on October 19.



Sugar Grove Nature Center will have its Autumn Celebration on Saturday, Oct. 19. Picture is a basket weaver from last year's event. Admission is \$3.00 with children under three-years-of-age admitted free. Many children's activities are planned as well as live music from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The McLean County Wheelers will be sponsoring October bicycle rides on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Please visit www.mcleancountywheelers.com for more information.

ParkLands Foundation will be conducting seed collections on Oct. 12 and 26. Its preserves will be closed on Nov. 15 and 28 for the annual deer management hunt.

Greenways Info

If you are interested in becoming a member, or are interested in attending McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee Meetings, please contact Rick Nolan at rnolan@mcplan.org or (309) 828-4331 ext. 26