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planning and education
in Westchester County

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FCWC Honors County Executive and CELF for Green Leadership

By Adiel Gavish

On Saturday, September 20th, over 100 Westchester residents, government, business and environmental leaders gathered at FCWC's 2008 Annual Fall Gala. The benefit was held in the solar and geothermally heated home of Richard and Maryann Ellenbogen in Pelham Manor. It featured organic food catered by the Flying Pig, and a silent auction with green products and services, such as planting an edible garden in your own backyard.



FCWC President Cesare Manfredi and Program Director Adiel Gavish, with honorees Patti Bressman, Katie Ginsberg, County Executive Spano and FCWC Boardmember Steven Levy

FCWC presented its first Green Leadership Awards to County Executive Andrew J. Spano and The Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation (CELF). The Green Leadership Award recognizes extraordinary environmental achievements of individuals, companies and organizations that are working to shape a future for Westchester grounded in the principles of sustainability.

See "FCWC Honors" on Page 2

Tappan Zee Bridge to be Replaced But Still Needs Rail Commitment

By Carolyn Cunningham

The plan just revealed by the state agencies for the TZ project proposes a welcome replacement bridge (not just a rehabilitated one) with mass transit capability, but no commuter rail until sometime in the future – and no rail for Westchester County. FCWC has long advocated a new bridge that must accommodate rail mass transit to serve the corridor and take cars off the congested I-287. Unfortunately, the announced transit mode plans are for BRT, Bus Rapid Transit, to be implemented immediately and for commuter rail to be added sometime later – and only for Rockland County. Even though up to 70% of current Rockland bridge commuters have been found to go east across Westchester County and the I-287 corridor, while only 30% go south to NYC, the two proposed Rockland commuter rail lines would join the Hudson Line at Tarrytown only - for a ride to New York City.

See "Tappan Zee" on Page 3

Visit us on the web at www.fcwc.org

CELF's Mission

By Katie Ginsberg

Founded in 2003, the Children's Environmental Literacy Foundation's (CELF, at www.celffoundation.org) mission is to ensure that every child graduates from high school understanding the fundamental connections between a healthy environment, stable economy and fair and just societies. Our goal is for every high school student to possess the knowledge, the inspiration, and the tools to become powerful and empowered citizens who won't simply perpetuate destructive, inefficient systems, but will, in fact, create systemic change for the good of all.

Through CELF's professional development programs, teachers learn how to integrate the principles of sustainable development into their curriculum. CELF's programs focus on coalition building between different stakeholder groups - connecting leaders in business and higher education with K-12 teachers and parents and students. Our school footprinting program is a perfect example. It brings together the entire school community to understand the concept of an "ecological footprint" through the categories of the foods they eat, the school building they are in, the transportation they use, and the water, energy and goods they consume, waste and recycle. The program shows how those resources, as well as wastes, can be measured, and how the overall footprint can be reduced to make the school healthier, more efficient and more cost effective.

CELF's "Students for a Sustainable Future Expo" annually attracts 1,500 students, teachers, corporate executives and community members to learn about some of the most promising innovations in technology, institutional practices, and education to spawn ideas for future career paths.

In geological time, since we're talking about the planet, we only have one very brief moment to prepare our children, and no competitive advantage, insight, or vision is too small or unimportant to ignore in these changing times. If we don't prepare them for tomorrow's world today while we still can, and as fast as we can – who will?

Katie Ginsberg is the Executive Director of CELF.

County Executive Spano was recognized for his long term support of environmental issues, as well as his recent initiative to combat climate change by commissioning the Westchester Global Warming Task Force. He appointed to the task force not only government representatives, but business and environmental professionals, who worked together to craft the County's nationally lauded sustainability action plan. Spano was also recognized for many other efforts including: protecting Hudson River and Long Island Sound watershed areas, reducing the use of pesticides, preserving over 2,000 acres of open space, and implementing healthy air initiatives, such as using clean diesel fuel in the county's fleet of cars and buses.

Executive Director Katie Ginsberg and Program Director Patti Bressman of CELF were honored for their visionary program to integrate sustainability education into current school curriculum, which trains students to re-think, re-design and re-imagine a socially and environmentally sound future. With their important program they are teaching the next generation of environmental leaders, including our scientists, accountants, CEOs, engineers, doctors, and lawyers to think sustainably. (See article on page 1.) An article on our benefit host's "green" home appeared in our summer 2008 WE, which can be viewed on our website www.fcwc.org.

Adiel Gavish is the Program Director for FCWC.



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Federated Conservationists of Westchester County, Inc. is a coalition of environmental organizations and individuals. Represented in it is a diversity of opinions. The FCWC Board of Directors takes positions on some environmental issues. Signed articles appearing in *Westchester Environment* are the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the FCWC Board.

President's Message

By Cesare Manfredi

FCWC Letter to New Rochelle Mayor Bramson and Common Counsel:

Thank you for inviting the Federated Conservationists of Westchester County to participate in the review process for the Echo Bay Project.

FCWC was favorably impressed with the concepts of the Echo Bay Project as presented at the meeting of August 8, 2008. Taking depressed industrial wasteland and turning it into something that is environmentally, economically and socially sound and responsible is laudable. This project seems to achieve those goals in the concept that was presented and FCWC encourages New Rochelle to adhere to those concepts as the Project progresses.

FCWC looks forward to participating in the future SEQR process with New Rochelle to address our concern for the details that support the concept as presented. A generic concern was whether cost factors could limit the implementation of the progressive environmental initiatives later in the planning and even during the actual construction. Safeguards need to be in place to insure that what is promised is in fact what is delivered. It was gratifying to know that the City shared this concern and would work through the approval process to provide such protection. Please place FCWC on the mailing list for the purpose of the SEQR process.

Our other general concerns, but not limited to the following, are:

- Parking and public transportation to allow for the new waterfront to become a destination;
- Impacts upon the project from existing conditions such as the Thruway, city storm drains, and the county-owned sewage treatment plant (STP);
- Adequate sewage capacity at the county STP and excess water elimination from the sewage collection system and;
- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) compliance, alternative energy ideas, and sustainability.

Obviously, projects of this magnitude have many more details than noted here and we stand ready to be part of the continuing process for the Echo Bay Project. Thank you again for including FCWC.

Environmentalists Converse On The Health Of Westchester's Forests – And Why It Matters

By Bill Lawyer

More than fifty environmentalists from the tri-state region participated September 26th in a "Conservation Café" program series, co-sponsored by FCWC, at Pace University in Pleasantville on the topic: "Healthy Forests, Healthy Westchester."

Guided by moderator Fred Koontz, Executive Director of Teatown Lake Reservation, the group heard presentations by Bill Shuster of Black Rock Forest, Fred Gliesing of New York City's DEP, and Andy Hubbard of the Watershed Agricultural Council.

Dr. Koontz started the meeting by suggesting that in some ways Westchester's forests are similar to the nation's current economic situation. A few people have been warning about the dangers they are facing, and how this will impact us, but it may take a crisis to get any significant actions underway.

Through the use of illustrated presentations, the speakers laid out the problems of forest fragmentation, disturbances, and the failure of forests to regenerate. Forests are crucial to combating global warming, protecting drinking water supplies, and preserving diverse wildlife habitats. They highlighted and advocated research, test projects and expanded regulations for land use management.

Following the presentations Dr. Koontz led speakers and the audience in a spirited discussion on what should be done in light of the points covered. Some of the key actions proposed were controlling deer populations, eradicating invasive plants, and carrying out "shelter wood cuts" that remove less desirable species of trees so that the better trees can regenerate the forests. Visit: <http://www.westchestergov.com/parks/NatureCenters05/COCArchives.htm>

Bill Lawyer is the former Executive Director of Greenburgh Nature Center and a former President of FCWC.

An Example of Current Storm Water Control Actions

By Rob DeGiorgio, P.E.

Dvirka and Bartilucci Consulting Engineers (D&B) was retained by the Village of Scarsdale, New York to design a stream restoration system for the Brewster watercourse, a tributary to the Bronx River. The section of stream (about 1,500 linear feet) was subject to severe erosion; with stream velocities up to 15 to 18 ft/sec. D&B designed a combination of turf reinforcement mat (TRM) and articulated concrete block for bank stabilization and used a blended Flexible Growth Medium for erosion control.

The section of stream was also de-silted to remove sediment build up due to historical erosion. The result was a much smoother bank channel with a strong degree of erosion protection. The combination of bank stabilization and the institution of "no mow" zones at the top of the banks will greatly reduce erosion potential. The construction cost for the project was \$400,000 and was completed in September 2008.

D&B is also actively engaged in Storm Water District formation studies for municipalities considering forming a separate district for storm water management, similar to the type of districts formed for sewer and water service. The study elements include a review of the current and future storm water management needs in the municipality, the extent of storm water infrastructure owned and maintained, and an assessment of zoning and land use, to appropriate equitable levies to residential and commercial properties of varying sizes and configurations. Grants and other funding sources are often available for such work.

Rob DeGiorgio, P.E., CPESC is with D&B in White Plains, New York.

The Greening of Westchester

By Staff

Action in the Hudson River towns: The Dobbs Ferry Village Board and Hastings Board have recently joined ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) while the Town of Greenburgh has been an ICLEI member for over a year. In neighboring Irvington its Climate Protection Task Force has recently submitted a completed Plan to the Village Board for action. For information on the Irvington TF call, Hon. Nicola Coddington 914-591-5705 or TF chair, Anne Jaffe Holmes – 914-564- 9696.

Action on the Sound: Ashley Craig of the Rye Environmental Advocates notes: "We are very pleased with Rye's new addition of the blue recycling bins in the Central Business District. They have reduced the incidence of over-flowing waste bins and help conserve our valuable resources by encouraging recycling. Since they are not consistently being used correctly, however, we will have volunteers on hand on October 19th to provide some education on what can and cannot be recycled."

A new rain garden has been installed at the Native Plant Center at Westchester Community College made possible by Rob Doscher and the Westchester County Soil and Water Conservation Board.

Green Actions by the Board of Legislators:

New legislation has been proposed to extend the current, county anti-idling ban on diesel engine vehicles to cover all motor vehicles. It would limit idling to three minutes for all vehicles in order to reduce green houses gasses and other air pollutants. Chair of the Environment and Energy Committee, Tom Abinanti, has introduced this law.

Chairman Abinanti is also calling for reconsideration of a 2004 County decision to abandon its plan to use methane gas emissions from the Croton Point landfill for energy. He is calling for re-evaluation of the amount of methane available in light of the higher fuel prices.

"Tappan Zee" continued from Page One

FCWC believes it is imperative that the new Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 corridor project includes a new commuter rail line from Suffern to Port Chester. We do not believe Bus Rapid Transit is the best long term solution for either the region's economy or its environment. We question the efficacy of BRT depending on where it is placed - if in local traffic, it will be too slow to get riders out of their cars for long rides from Suffern to Port Chester, if on I-287, among other problems, it will require flyovers to get off the highway. We also seriously question the long term environmental wisdom of continuing to use roadway vehicles that produce significantly more greenhouse gasses, while using more fossil fuel per passenger mile than commuter rail trains. As the project proceeds we hope to make the benefits of commuter rail across the corridor more obvious to all and obtain a commitment to add rail from Suffern to Port Chester.

The agencies will issue a Final Scoping Report after holding public information meetings at the end of October. Then there will be a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the report in 2009, with a Final EIS to be completed in early 2010. The studies for the project's proposals, cost projections, and a time line can be found on the project website (www.tzbsite.com).

Public meetings to present these recommendations and take public comments will be held in the three counties: in Westchester County – Tuesday, October 28, 2008, at 4:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at White Plains High School, 550 North St, White Plains, NY.

Carolyn Cunningham is an FCWC Board member and member of the Westchester/Rockland Tappan Zee Future's Task Force.

Recycling Plastic Bags

by Judy Martin

"What gets 20 minutes of use but can last 500 years?" asks County Executive Spano as part of his recent initiative to clean up plastic bag litter. The average American uses between 300 and 700 bags per year but what is a recyclable plastic bag under the county's new recycling plan? Grocery shopping bags, of course, but also clear produce bags, newspaper bags, bread bags, dry cleaning film (but not plastic cling food wrap), bags with sealed air for packaging, packaging for toilet paper and paper towel products and retail bags with hard plastic or string handles removed. Even if you take your own bags into the grocery store, the drug store and other retailers, you can probably collect a "bag full of bags" each week if you recycle all of the types of bags under this broader definition.

You can drop off your collection of "bags" at one of Westchester County's Household Recycling Days or Electronic Waste Days. Check westchestergov.com/recycling or call 914-813-5420 for upcoming dates.

Judy Martin is an FCWC Board member.

Send Us News Of Your Green Actions

FCWC wants to encourage the greening of the County by publicizing new local initiatives. Tell us what your organization, municipality and/or you as an individual are doing to advance this critical effort.

Email us at fcwc@fcwc.org



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Events Calendar

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25

9:30 am to 12:30 pm - Free-a-Tree Day and Saw Mill River/South County Trailway Cleanup by Ground Work Hudson Valley/Saw Mill River Coalition held at Farragut Avenue in Hastings. Please call (914) 375-2151 or e-mail annmarie@groundworkyonkers.org. If you have information on local wetlands and vernal pools in the SMR watershed please also contact same.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12

7:30 P.M. Snowy Owls to Saw-whet Owls: Recent Studies on Wintering Raptors in Massachusetts With Norman Smith, Director, Blue Hills Trailside Museum and Chickatawbut Hill Education Center in Milton, Massachusetts. Held at the Katonah Memorial House, Katonah. Call the Bedford Audubon, (914) 232-3508.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19

7 p.m. - Socially Responsible Investing Presentation to led by fellow Sierra Club member Seth Rutman, Financial Advisor, UBS Financial Services, and Mr. Anthony Eames, Senior Vice President, Calvert Funds. Call the Greenburgh Nature Center in Scarsdale, (914) 723-3470.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21

8:30 to 10 a.m. - A Conservation Café, on "The Dirt on Soil: Worms" at Pace Pleasantville Butcher Suite, co-sponsored by W.C. Dept. of Parks, Friends of the W.C. Parks, and FCWC. Please call Mindy at (914) 864-7047 or FCWC at (914) 422-4053 for more info.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17

7:30 pm - "Food Matters", the Film. Join the world's leading authorities on nutrition and natural healing as they uncover the true cause of disease. Becoming informed about the choices you have for you and your family's health and wellbeing can save your life. Discussion led by Sierra Club member John Crockett. Held at Greenburgh Nature Center, (914) 723-3470

We are Pleased to Support
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In Honoring
County Executive Andrew J. Spano
and
Katie Ginsberg & Patti Bressman
for their
Outstanding Environmental Achievements

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FCWC welcomes articles from our members. Please email them to:
fcwc@fcwc.org
or call Carolyn Cunningham at:
(914) 422-4053

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