Why Fens May Be the Canaries in Our Coal Mine

By Ed Ellinghausen

In the same way that canaries have served as early warning systems for methane in coal mines, fens may serve as early warning systems for chloride contamination in our groundwater since they are susceptible at lower levels than we are.

As a child growing up in Chicago, and into middle age, for me the term fen held a vaguely sinister connotation. I don’t know where this came from, somewhere in literature or film perhaps; maybe from The Hounds of the Baskerville. Most dictionary definitions refer to fens as “low swampy lands, bogs or marshes.” I was quite surprised upon moving to McHenry County in the 1960s, to find that there were areas out here called fens that were highly prized, and neither low, swampy, or boggy. As I became acquainted with the more modern interpretation, I learned that the current usage of the term “fen” referred to those rare places populated by very specialized plant and animal communities that can only flourish in areas supplied by mineral rich, alkaline, ground water flowing to the surface and spreading in a diffused manner. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has estimated that there are only a few hundred acres of fens in the entire state.

After moving into the Boone Creek watershed in the 1980s, I became acquainted with several fens in this area and came to realize how special they really are. It came as an awakening to me when I realized that 99.9 percent of the plants we normally see are sustained by rainwater, but that fens are truly unique in that they are sustained by groundwater, and have their roots in soil saturated by groundwater throughout the year. In that respect, we have something important in common with the fens, for our McHenry County human population is also totally dependent on groundwater.

It took a few more years for me to realize how different rainwater and groundwater really are. Rainwater is nature’s distilled water, and aside from

The Dream of Hackmatack Comes True…

“...a big milestone for this project that has been an eight year journey through extensive collaboration of over 70 groups,” stated McHenry County Board Chairman Ken Koehler. “The Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge will be the 557th wildlife refuge of its kind in the United States and is a great opportunity to provide recreational opportunities for the people in our area for generations to come.”

Read more on page 4.
About EARTH Connect

Members of The Environmental Defenders of McHenry County receive the newsletter as a membership benefit. Basic memberships start at $50. For information, questions, comments on membership or address changes, please contact our office at (815) 338-0393 or e-mail us at mcdef@owc.net.

EARTH Connect is published quarterly by The Environmental Defenders of McHenry County 110 S. Johnson Street, Suite 106 Woodstock, IL 60098 www.mcdef.org ISSN 1938-9795

Staff
Christy Matsuoka, Administrative Coordinator

Officers & Directors
Nancy Schietzelt, President
Mary Forni, First Vice President
Joe Starzynski, Second Vice President
Lori McConville, Secretary
James Wigman, Treasurer
Dwight Dalton
Ed Ellinghausen
Kim Hankins
Sue Jensen
Alice Lumsden
Rico Rotta

Newsletter Editors
Cynthia W. Kanner
Barb Day

Editorial Policy
Opinions expressed in EARTH Connect do not necessarily reflect the position and/or policy of the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County. However, EARTH Connect will not directly advocate positions in opposition to those of The Defenders. We reserve the right to condense or revise articles and illustrations for space, clarity or libel. Knowledgeable local environmentalists may be consulted to check facts.

Letters to the Editor can be sent to: ckanner@mcdefenders.net. Letters will be published based on space and Board review. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position and/or policy of The Defenders. Letters can also be mailed to: 110 S. Johnson Street, Suite 106, Woodstock, IL 60098.

Environmental Defenders of McHenry County
Mission Statement

The Environmental Defenders of McHenry County is a citizen organization dedicated to the preservation and improvement of the environment. We are committed to building sound ecological relationships between people and the natural world that supports all life.

To achieve the aim of environmental preservation and improvement, we provide the community with educational programs and volunteer action on pollution prevention, sustainable land use and energy and natural resource conservation.

We advocate policies that protect drinking water supplies and conserve land for open space and agriculture. We demonstrate waste reduction through recycling drives and reuse centers. We encourage natural resource protection through native landscaping and stream protection programs.

SHOP THE SPOT!

The Green Spot
Used Books and More
Gifts and a wide selection of books.

Open 11 AM - 4 PM, Tuesday through Saturday.
110 S. Johnson Street
Woodstock

Inside THIS ISSUE

Articles
Why Fens May Be the Canaries in Our Coal Mine, cover
by Ed Ellinghausen
Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge Approved, 4
by Cindy Skrukrud
Lessons from Big Rock, by Seth Johnson 5

News & Announcements
Bequest from Audrey Anderson 6
Summer Educational and Advocacy Efforts 6
Upcoming Events 7
News from "It’s Our River Day,” Algonquin 8-9
Cardboard Recycling Initiative 10

Cover border photo of Defenders’ Dean Street property by Cheryl Voss.
some unfortunate man-made chemicals absorbed in the atmosphere, such as SO2, it is pretty pure and neutral. Groundwater on the other hand has been flowing below the surface of the earth for decades, if not centuries, and has absorbed many chemicals contained in the media through which it has passed. In McHenry County our bedrock and overlying glacial till have a predominate limestone or calcium carbonate content and our alkaline groundwater chemistry reflects this.

So, our fen communities have evolved over thousands of years, with their roots in groundwater that provided a highly mineralized, alkaline environment.

**Enter civilization and the salt trucks**

Up until the 1940s, groundwater chemistry remained pretty much as it had been for millennia and the fen communities were happy. After that however, things started to change. The first use of salt to remove snow and ice from public roads was done on an experimental basis in New Hampshire in 1938. The experiment was successful, and during the winter of 1941 to 1942 New Hampshire became the first state in the union to adopt a general policy of using salt for snow control on highways. The practice took off nationwide and salt use for snow control on highways expanded from almost zero in 1940 to about 20 million tons annually in recent years. (See graph at right). In midwest, urbanized areas with curbs, gutters, and extensive storm sewer systems, much of the salt applied in winter finds its way into the stream systems and eventually to the Gulf of Mexico. In less developed areas, much of the runoff from roads infiltrates the soil, and road salt finds its way into our groundwater system. McHenry County roads have few curbs and gutters, and we have very porous soils. As a result, much of the salt applied to our roads enters the groundwater system, making our county particularly susceptible to groundwater contamination. In recent years, salt application to public roads in McHenry County has been approximately 35,000 tons per year, and private application to driveways and parking lots has been estimated to be an additional 8,000 tons per year. A further source of chloride contamination of groundwater is the salt used in water softeners that discharge to septic systems. A large percentage of the County’s 30,000+ properties with private wells use water softeners that require an estimated 10 to 15,000 tons of salt per year for their operation.

**The Reckoning**

The chloride levels in our groundwater have been on the rise since the 1960s. At that time the background chloride level in McHenry County’s groundwater was in the single digits, generally averaging around 5 mg/L. I have researched logs of wells tested in that time period and found many that had chloride levels that were below detectable limits, essentially zero. It is not unusual now to find groundwater chloride levels exceeding 200 mg/L. Chloride levels vary widely from place to place and the County’s overall level is probably under 100 mg/L. The Illinois State Water Survey indicates that some local municipal wells are seeing chloride levels increase by as much as 4mg/L per year, and that the trend is unabated. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), at about 250mg/L, although not toxic, water takes on a taste that may be undesirable, possibly making it unsuitable for human consumption.

The plants in our fen communities have evolved over a long period of time with their roots in mineral rich, alkaline, groundwater that has had a very low chloride content. During the last 60 years however, the chloride levels in some areas have increased to the point where it has affected the vitality of the native fen plants. Research at Sterns Fen near Crystal Lake indicates that groundwater chloride levels as low as 100 mg/L have shifted the balance in favor of salt-tolerant, invasive species at the expense of native plants, and the diversity in the fen has been compromised.

In partnership with the Boone Creek Watershed Alliance and the McHenry County Health Department, I have been sampling groundwater discharges at about a dozen fens over the past ten years. During that timeframe the chloride levels have increased significantly and in many cases have doubled. At sites that are remote from roads and developed areas, the chloride levels, which averaged 26.0 mg/L in 2003, have steadily increased to an average of 42.4 mg/L in 2010. At sites that were in closer proximity to roads and developed areas, the average chloride levels increased from 112 mg/L to over 150 mg/L.

Although the problem is huge, there may be some cause for optimism. The McHenry County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) has led the way in the search for the means to reduce road salt application. It has not only succeeded in making large reductions in its own salt usage, but has assisted numerous government agencies around the country, and internationally, to implement programs for the use of liquid anti-icing and de-icing agents that reduce overall salt use and total chloride loading. (You may recall that The Defenders gave an award to MCDOT for this effort a couple of years ago).

If you have the opportunity to support efforts to reduce road salt use, it is important to do so. There will be costs to do this, particularly up front, but failure to stem rising groundwater chloride levels will have a higher cost.

*Note: This article has focused only on chloride contamination of groundwater. The effects of salt contamination in surface water bodies is another topic that we may visit in the future.*
Sometimes Dreams Come True: Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge

**Nothing happens unless first a dream**  
-Carl Sandburg  

By Cindy Skrukrud

About eight years ago, Friends of Hackmatack adopted the above Carl Sandburg quote as the motto for our effort to bring a new national wildlife refuge to the Illinois-Wisconsin border. On August 15, our dream came true. Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar, joined by Senator Dick Durbin, and surrounded by Hackmatack supporters at Glacial Park’s Lost Valley Visitor Center, announced the establishment of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Wisconsin and northeastern Illinois.

Soils suitable for restoration are all that remain of the tall grass prairie that once graced over 22 million acres of the Prairie State. This habitat, along with remnant oak savannas, are among the most endangered ecosystems on the planet. The opportunity to preserve and restore these rare landscapes forms the basis for the new refuge, along with conservation and restoration of wetland habitat. Habitat for prairie, savanna and wetland-dependent birds will be enhanced, benefiting species of concern, including Henslow’s sparrow, short-eared owl, upland sandpiper, dickcissel, red-headed woodpecker, least bittern, pied-billed grebe and the Whooping crane. The pristine Nippersink Creek weaves its way back and forth across the state line and serves as the corridor connecting the four core areas of the planned refuge.

The refuge will not be officially established until the first parcel of land is preserved by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) through a conservation easement or purchase from a willing seller. Building the refuge will take many years and will ultimately conserve up to 11,200 acres of habitat for wildlife as well as outdoor recreational opportunities for the millions of people who live nearby.

Hackmatack will be the first refuge for the Chicago and Milwaukee metropolitan areas, joining the Service’s new set of urban refuges. Having a National Wildlife Refuge so close to the 11 million people who live in the Chicago-Milwaukee Metropolitan area heightened support for the refuge. Before Hackmatack, the closest refuges to McHenry County were Horicon National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin and the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge in Savanna, Illinois.

Hackmatack is also now Chicago’s closest refuge. Already young people from Chicago are being drawn to the Hackmatack area. Friends of Hackmatack sponsored activities in the Hackmatack area for teens from Chicago’s Humboldt Park neighborhood in September 2011 in cooperation with the Sierra Club’s Inner City Outings program. The teens canoed on Geneva Lake, hiked Glacial Park, collected prairie seeds from North Branch Preserve, studied aquatic insects and mussels from Nippersink Creek, and cut invasive buckthorn at their camp site at Big Foot Beach State Park. A number of those teens, students at Pritzker College Prep, were back the last weekend in September for more activities. At the end of their first outing, they wrote wonderful letters to the USFWS in support of the refuge. The Inconvenience, a Chicago art troupe, also supported Hackmatack by creating a video urging other young people to support the refuge.

There has been no shortage of Hackmatack supporters. Openlands, Sierra Club and The Trust for Public Land stepped up when Friends of Hackmatack asked for help to accomplish our lofty goal. The Defenders kindly agreed to serve as the Friends’ fiscal agent. McHenry County Audubon, Nippersink Watershed Association, The Land Conservancy of McHenry County, the McHenry County Board and numerous other organizations all enthusiastically backed the refuge. Governor Quinn and Senator Durbin, with other leaders from both Illinois and Wisconsin, were instrumental in getting the Fish & Wildlife Service to launch a study of the proposed refuge in 2010. State Senator Pam Althoff and State Representative Jack Franks were successful in garnering unanimous support of the refuge by the Illinois legislature. Most importantly, thousands of citizens championed the refuge by signing the Friends of Hackmatack petition and writing the USFWS with their support.

Hackmatack became a reality because so many citizens, elected leaders, and conservation organizations embraced the idea that the glacial landscape of Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin was deserving of the national recognition that refuge status would bring to our area. Thanks to the many Defenders’ members who helped make this dream come true!
Lessons from Big Rock

By Seth Johnson, Environmental Law & Policy Center

In early September the federal government announced it was pulling the plug on the Prairie Parkway. The road was intended to connect Interstate Highway 88 (Reagan Memorial Tollway) in Kane County with Interstate Highway 80 in Grundy County and slice through Kendall County. It was also known as the Hastert Highway because its primary backer, the former Speaker of the House, championed an idea that had been floated for decades by people who rarely listened to the communities that would be impacted.

One of my favorite parts of this story didn’t appear in the news media. It occurred in a farm pasture in Big Rock, Illinois that would have been paved under by the highway. There, each summer for the last decade, members of a community advocacy group, named Citizens Against the Sprawlway, held a picnic to give updates on their fight against the road. This day the good news came just three days before the picnic. The picnic became a party. I love this story because it captures the power of engagement. It details the resolve of members of a community who loved their rural surrounds and didn’t want to see it paved under. There are many lessons in the Prairie Parkway case. Here are a few:

Prepare for the Long Haul
Battles for change or preservation are rarely quick. Fights for things like conservation, clean air and clean water take time and never really end. When working towards a cause it’s important to stay level, and to always keep your supporters focused on the next objective.

Work with Allies
Community groups are great at gauging their members, building support, and identifying goals. But Citizens Against the Sprawlway also worked closely with groups like the Environmental Law & Policy Center for legal expertise, worked to get supportive politicians into office, and constantly updated the media to stay relevant.

Become an Expert
When the members of Citizens Against the Sprawlway learned their community would be transected by a multi-lane expressway, they were angry. But they didn’t stop there: they worked tirelessly to understand the law and their options; they were constantly requesting documents from entities like the Illinois Department of Transportation; and they were continually asking questions of the experts they engaged. As soon as they became experts they began educating others.

When you look across our policy landscape there is no shortage of opportunities to get involved. Whether you want to save a plot of farmland, reduce your community’s reliance on fossil fuels, elect politicians that embrace science, or stand up for healthy, pesticide-free food; there is work to be done. I believe that the same opportunities lie in McHenry County and with The Environmental Defenders, as with members of Citizens Against the Sprawlway. McHenry County is home to countless natural treasures that need to be cared for and preserved.

Engagement is the first step. The passion for outcome is a requisite. But the story of the Prairie Parkway shows us that there is so much more. Understanding your path, working with allies, and educating yourself to be your causes’ strongest advocate are all steps towards achieving success. And when all is said and done, you, too, may feel the thrill felt in that pasture in Big Rock – the thrill of victory.
Audrey Anderson’s Bequest

Audrey Masters Anderson worked to help the environment during her life. And due to a bequest that she made to the Environmental Defenders, she is continuing to have a positive effect on the environment in McHenry County after her death in 2010. Audrey was a Defenders’ member who put her love of trees to work through founding an Arbor Day celebration in Marengo. Over the years, she, and her husband Tom, planted over 40 trees from the Morton Arboretum in Marengo as part of this event. Then when she wrote her will, she decided to help the environment further through a bequest to The Defenders. The amount was contingent upon sale of property that she owned. When that sale occurred last spring, The Defenders received $36,124. During a meeting with Tom to determine her wishes for that money, it was decided that Audrey would be very pleased if it would be used to fund The Defenders’ annual scholarship, which is awarded each year to a student majoring in an environmental field. The Defenders will be forever grateful to Audrey and promise to steward her money wisely to continue to help educate environmentalists, such as Audrey was herself, far into the future.

New Member Interview: Seth Johnson

By Cynthia Kanner

Seth Johnson first heard about The Defenders and “their great work” at a Green Drinks at Duke’s Alehouse in Crystal Lake. Hailing from rural Iowa, Seth has always found McHenry County to be a place where he has felt at home. Seth recently joined The Defenders because he strongly believes in what the organization does to protect the natural heritage of the area and educate citizens on environmental issues. He believes that all of us working together can not only make a better McHenry County, but also a better Illinois and Midwest.

Seth is a policy associate with the Environmental Law & Policy Center where he is working on clean air, clean water and high-speed rail issues in Illinois and Ohio. He previously worked as an intern with the White House Council on Environmental Quality, U.S. Green Building Council, U.S. Green Building Council (Illinois Chapter), and the Office of U.S. Senator Tom Harkin.

Summer Education and Advocacy Efforts

In addition to the activities covered in more detail in this issue, many volunteers carried out the following educational and advocacy efforts listed below. Many thanks to them all!

- Attended McHenry County’s Drought Summit in July
- Provided information on the benefits of natural landscaping at the Bull Valley Garden Club’s Garden Walk
- Attended Bioneers’ meetings and Lou Marchi Total Recycling Institute’ meetings
- Met with other members of the Solid Waste Task Force to update the County’s Solid Waste Management Plan
- Distributed educational materials about the environment at the County Fair and at It’s Our River Day in Algonquin
- Coordinated a meeting between representatives from all the environmental agencies/organizations in the county with MCDOT to discuss ideas for the 2040 Transportation Plan
- Led efforts of the Silver and Sleepy Hollow Creeks Watershed Coalition to have the Watershed Plan adopted by the government bodies and organizations that created the Plan
- Continued working with the McHenry County Local Foods and Farmland Taskforce to complete the Local Foods Assessment to help preserve farmland in McHenry County
Volunteer Appreciation Day!
If you have volunteered for the Defenders during the past year, the Membership Committee would like to invite you to Volunteer Appreciation Day from 1-3 PM on Sunday, October 14th. The event will be held at the Defenders’ Office where we’ll have pizza provided by Napoli’s Pizza, cookies, music by Off Square Music, and gift bags for each volunteer. To help us with planning, please RSVP to Christy at 815-338-0393 by Wednesday, October 10th. Hope you can make it!

ALSO...stop in and warm up at the Defenders’ office with some hot chocolate and a cookie before you attend the “Tree Lighting on the Square” on Friday, November 23rd. The Membership Committee will welcome you from 5:30 - 8:00 p.m. The Green Spot will also be open for your shopping pleasure!

Wingate Prairie Workday
You’re invited to participate in a habitat restoration workday at Wingate Prairie in Crystal Lake on Saturday, November 3rd from 9:00 a.m. to noon. This event is being co-sponsored by the Crystal Lake Park District and the Silver & Sleepy Hollow Creeks Watershed Coalition. Wingate Prairie is part of Veteran Acres Park that lies within the Sleepy Hollow Creek Watershed. The goal of the day is to help restore this rare gravel hill prairie through the removal of invasive trees and shrubs. Volunteers will be dragging brush that has been cut at previous workdays. Please wear work clothes and gloves and meet at the Crystal Lake Nature Center on North Main Street at 9:00 a.m. In appreciation of your help you will be taken on a nature hike and given a free lunch at the end of the work time. To aid in planning, please call 815-459-0680 to sign up by Friday, November 2nd. Come out on this special workday and lend a hand to help improve habitat for native species!

Habitat Restoration at Two Woodstock Natural Areas
On Saturday, October 27, 2012, the Water Resources Protection Committee and the Natural Resources Committee invite Defenders’ members as well as members of the public, to join them in their efforts to “make a difference” at two sites in Woodstock as part of the national “Make A Difference Day” event. Habitat restoration and painting picnic tables will be completed at the Defenders’ property at the headwaters of the Kishwaukee River, while clearing a trail of invasive species will be the task of the day at the Gerry Street Nature Area near Emricson Park. The events will begin at 9:00 a.m. and conclude at noon. Volunteers are asked to wear work clothes and gloves, and to park in the Soil and Water District’s parking lot at the southeast corner of Highway 14 and Dean Street in Woodstock. All necessary equipment as well as water and snacks will be provided. If you have any questions about either event, please contact Nancy Schietzelt at 815-356-1710. Come help us make a positive difference in the environment and enjoy some time outdoors!

Choose-and-cut Christmas Trees
Help the Planet, Help The Defenders
Did you know that 18 people can live on the oxygen produced by one acre of Christmas trees, but around 60% of homes that put up a tree at Christmas time use an artificial one? So, if you can help the planet by using a real tree, please do so!

Working at Pioneer Tree Farm at tree-time has been a Defenders’ fund raiser for many years. Volunteers work for a day, and in exchange, the Defenders receive 10% of the gross receipts for the trees and craft items sold that day. Volunteers can also cut a FREE tree for themselves. For information call either Alice or Bill Howenstine at Pioneer Tree Farm, 815-385-8512.

Pioneer Tree Farm will be open for three weekends this year (Fri., Sat. & Sun.) Nov. 23, 24 & 25; and the next two weekends (Sat. & Sun.), Dec. 1 & 2; and (Sat. & Sun.), Dec. 8 & 9.

The farm has many white pines, some Scotch and red pines, and a good selection of several species of spruces and firs. All trees are $45 each, regardless of size or species. Saws, a wagon ride to the trees, and shaking/baling of your tree are all provided. After cutting, there will be free cocoa and coffee in the Warming House, with wreaths, crafts, and snacks available for purchase. Hope to see you at our place!

Alice and Bill Howenstine, www.pioneertreefarm.com

Our Green Transformation
McHenry County College Multi-Purpose Room
8900 US Highway 14, Crystal Lake
10 AM - 3 PM – Phone: (815) 479-7570
www.mcecoconference.org

Learn how to “green” your life and your community at the McHenry County Green Living Expo. This free event features over 50 local businesses and organizations in Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin offering eco-friendly products and services. In addition, live demos and free drawings will be offered throughout the day! FREE and open to the public.
From Fairs to Roasting Corn: Summertime, Defenders’ Style

By Sue Jensen

At the McHenry County Fair this summer, we saw the return of the “Trash Transformed” art contest and the addition of the “Bag Monster.” The Defenders’ booth was visited by many curious attendees who poured through informational displays and literature. The recycled craft display continued attracting attention. Inquisitive visitors contemplated reusing items in their own homes to create a variety of things from pop tab belts to aluminum can brooches. How-to sheets were available to many interested parties. As always, the fair was a great time for the Defenders to gain exposure and allowed us to answer questions and encourage involvement. We even attracted a number of new members!

The “Trash Transformed” art contest was organized a little differently than in the past, allowing us to proudly display winners at our booth for the duration of the fair. A lot of positive attention was achieved because of these very cool pieces of art. Thank you to all who entered and congratulations to those whose work was displayed and/or earned first, second or third place in their category. Those people included James Donnelly, Christina Dalton Whitworth, James Kanter, Mary Kanter, Ken Kolba, Mary Merle, Mitchell Montana, and Mary Murphy.

Although this was not his debut, the “Bag Monster,” made up of the average number of plastic grocery bags used annually by an individual, also grabbed a lot of attention at the fair. He was first introduced to McHenry County in the McHenry parade. He traveled the parade route atop Ken Santowski’s elaborately decorated van, while proud Defenders’ volunteers diverted used bottles and cans from the trash. They were dropped off for recycling instead, where they belong. The van displayed banners informing spectators of facts regarding single-use plastic bags, and those same banners were used again for the fair display. If you would like to learn more about the origins of the monster and what you can do to shrink it, visit bagmonster.com. If you would like to see the bag monster in person, visit him at his new home in the display case at MCC nearest the Lou Marchi Total Recycling Institute office.

Finally, the busyness of summer concluded with a lovely evening spent at Alice and Bill Howenstine’s farm for the return of the annual corn roast. The corn was sweet and delicious, the weather was divine, the company was pleasant, the food was spectacular and there wasn’t a mosquito to be found. We learned a little bit about the history of the underappreciated wild black cherry tree, tried fresh-baked pizza from Chuck Howenstine’s new brick oven, enjoyed various outdoor activities, and some folks even hopped aboard for a tractor-pulled hay ride through the Christmas tree fields.

If you missed the fun this year, make sure you get it on your calendar for next. If it’s anything like this year, you won’t regret it.

It’s Our River Day 2012

By Cynthia Kanner

The fifth annual “It’s Our River Day” in Algonquin, co-sponsored by The Defenders and The Village of Algonquin, can be counted among its most successful, thanks to partner organizations: The Sierra Club; Friends of the Fox River; The Prairie Coast Paddlers; and members of The Prairie State Canoeists.

With low water levels due to drought conditions this summer, unusual debris, even in the form of a 300-lb. truck tire (at right), was exposed. One group of volunteers worked for well over an
The group reminded participants that rivers are fun, and if we take care of them, we’ll enjoy them even more.

The Sierra Club’s Cindy Skrukrud once again conducted the clean-up and spoke to the group about ending the use of phosphate fertilizer, which, through run-off, end up in our river, helping it to turn the green color it currently is. Cindy informed everyone that our soil is already phosphate-rich. The Fox River is actually a rock bottom river and its water should be clear to the bottom. Each household should be sure that if it fertilizes its lawns, it should do so without the use of phosphates. She added that a new law is in place to prevent lawn care companies from using phosphates in their products. Cindy urges citizens to be aware of this law and question any lawn care professional about ingredients used in their products. Gary Swick talked about Friends of the Fox River (FOFR) and showed participants how to conduct water quality monitoring. He even had volunteers monitor the day of the event. FOFR heads up a major monitoring program all along The Fox River and its tributaries.

This year, participants also had a chance to learn about geocaching with Gary Kanner from Cub Scout Pack 151. Gary led the kids on a pre-established GPS route in search of a special cache hidden at the park. Their reward came in the form of edible treats and information about drinking water.

As always, the Village of Algonquin was a wonderful partner, especially the general coordinating done by Katie Parkhurst. We are grateful to the Village employees that hauled all the trash away and to President John Schmitt and Trustee Jerrold Glogowski, who reminded everyone that Algonquin is a conservation-minded town. With all the partners and participants, it’s safe to say that the event has a special niche in this river town! Please mark your calendars for next year’s “It’s Our River Day,” scheduled for Saturday, September 21, 2013. And, let’s hope for another beautiful, sunny day like we had this year!
Recycling NEWS

Cardboard Recycling Initiative

By Dwight Dalton

The Defenders received a grant from the McHenry County Community Foundation to begin a pilot commercial cardboard recycling program in the county. Many big stores currently have the opportunity to recycle, but small businesses that want to do the right thing are unable to participate in a commercial recycling program. The Defenders understand how important it is to keep valuable cardboard out of our landfills, and we would like to help small businesses get access to successful recycling initiatives. Establishing cardboard recycling pilot projects in Crystal Lake, McHenry and Woodstock would help businesses do the right thing and provide an excellent educational opportunity to promote increased recycling in McHenry County.

Initial success allowed us to supply a recycling container for Mid America Vacuum Center in Crystal Lake. Educational materials and posters were created in order to help all employees learn about breaking down cardboard boxes and to become familiar with items that can be placed in the container. A second container is planned for the Computer Recycling Center on Virginia Road. Contact has been made with a business in McHenry, and we expect that a container will be in place there soon as well.

The recycling group working on this project has found many stores and employees who want to recycle their cardboard. We have seen employees carrying cardboard boxes out to the trash dumpster and expressing frustration that they do not have a place to put materials that they know can be recycled. The difficulty has often been getting in contact with building owners and landlords. Frequently, the store manager pays rent that includes the cost of trash removal. Negotiating new contracts, which involve reducing the size of the trash dumpster by diverting cardboard to a separate recycling dumpster, requires contacting the landlord. The waste hauler firms we have dealt with have been very cooperative. Communicating with the building owner/landlord has been difficult and has kept our committee from placing dumpsters in many locations. A good selling point is a free recycling dumpster for six months, so we hope the situation improves!

Harvest Fest on The Square

By Alice Howenstine

The weather was beautiful, the crowd was large, and the Defenders who volunteered to take care of the recyclables and trash generated at the Harvest Fest (and before) had a good time! A hearty thanks goes to our members who worked all or part of the time: Gary Johnson, Sue Jensen, Annette Sathers, and Dick and Mary Wantuch.

The best part was being able to talk with folks. During our conversations, we were able to do some education regarding the importance of recycling. We also talked, when appropriate, about not only picking up your own trash but picking up other trash and disposing of it properly. The Defenders t-shirts and aprons stood out, and dozens of people thanked us for what we were doing.

Defenders’ Recycling Drives

What:

- Fluorescent tubes, rechargeable batteries, car batteries, button batteries, and block white styrofoam.
- Packing peanuts and re-usable bubble wrap may be dropped off for no charge.
- We will also be accepting certain electronics, such as computers, phones, printers, toys, TVs and computer monitors for a donation to the Defenders.
- T/C metals in Crystal Lake has been friendly and helpful as can be when we bring aluminum or non ferrous metals to them. With metal prices up, this has been a steady source of income. Many folks have used the McHenry drive and donated their aluminum cans. Keep it coming!!

When:

- Second Saturday of every Month.

Where:

- Woodstock: The Woodstock collection takes place on the second Saturday of each EVEN numbered month and is held in front of the Farm Bureau, 1102 McConnell Road in Woodstock, from 9:00 a.m. to noon.
- McHenry: The McHenry collection takes place on the second Saturday of ODD numbered months at the Metra Station Parking lot, 4005 Main Street in McHenry, from 9:00 a.m. to noon. The McHenry collection will also pay for aluminum, brass and copper.

Styrofoam Drop-Off

- Village of Algonquin: Public Works, 110 Meyer Drive.
- Village of Lakewood: Lakewood Village Hall, 2500 Lake Avenue, Lakewood Public Works garage, 6570 Haligus Road, Redtail Golf Course, 7900 Redtail Drive.
Please return completed form to:
Environmental Defenders of McHenry County
110 S. Johnson Street, Suite 106
Woodstock, IL 60098

OR
Join on-line at www.mcdef.org

Questions? Call 815-338-0393

Code: nwslnrFALL2012
# Calendar of Events & Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>OCTOBER</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Wednesdays, October 3 | “Green Wednesdays” Talk & Reception at Duke’s Alehouse & Kitchen, Crystal Lake. 5-7 PM  
Volunteer Appreciation Day. Defenders’ Offices, 1-3 PM. See page 7 for details.  
Make a Difference Day, Details page 7. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!  |
| Sunday, October 14 |  |
| Saturday, October 27 |  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>NOVEMBER</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Saturday, November 3 | Green Living Expo at MCC and Wingate Prairie Workday. See page 7 for details on both events.  
“Green Wednesdays” Talk & Reception at Duke’s Alehouse & Kitchen, Crystal Lake. 5-7 PM  |
| Wednesday, November 7 | Cocoa & Cookies at Defenders’ office at the Tree Lighting on the Square. See page 7 for details.  
Christmas Tree Sales. See page 7 for details.  |
| Friday, November 23 |  |
| November 23, 24, 25 |  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DECEMBER</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| December 1, 2, 8, & 9 | Christmas Tree Sales. See page 7 for details.  
“Green Wednesdays” Talk & Reception at Duke’s Alehouse & Kitchen, Crystal Lake. 5-7 PM  |
| Wednesday, December 5 |  |

## Save The Dates!

- **GREAT LAKES BIONEERS MCHENRY COUNTY**  
  January 22, 29/February 5, 12, 2013, 7pm MCC Luecht Conference Center, FREE Admission!!

## Save the Date

**- March 10, 2013 ~ Defenders’ Annual Meeting with young activist Abby Goldberg!**

---

### Support The Environmental Defenders of McHenry County through workplace giving!

For more information on how you can contribute to the Defenders call us at 815-338-0393!!

---

**EarthShare Illinois**

---

**Environmental Defenders of McHenry County**  
Preserve. Protect. Educate  
Citizens working for a healthy environment.

110 S. Johnson Street, Suite 106  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
www.mcdef.org

---

Non Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 43  
Woodstock, IL  
60098

Address Service Requested