

Conservation Watch

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Washington NAL Meeting Headlines

In late February of this year, hundreds of garden club members from across the nation attended the ever-popular GCA NAL meeting in our nation's capital. A full report of this impressive and influential meeting appears in the April-May issue of the *GCA Bulletin*. In this issue of *Conservation Watch*, we share with you the enthusiastic recollections of a first-time attendee. With fresh eyes, the author shares her experiences. You'll see how much she learned! Barbara MacEachern will make **you** want to attend next year!

Garden Club Members Descend on Washington, D.C.

Until you have spent a day in the Capitol's Cannon Caucus Room while four senators, three representatives, and three agency heads engage 300 women in passionate discussion about our future, it's hard to comprehend that GCA is such an effective lobbying force. By being informed, committed volunteers who can take long views of national issues, we are seen as valuable - sometimes crucial - allies in passing legislation to solve major problems.

Over four days in February, we heard a series of talks about environmental crises and possible solutions. From the breeding



Derry MacBride, Ellie Kelly, Claire Caudill, and Ann Coburn hold lunch material now being recycled in our nation's capitol.

program for endangered species at the National Zoo to Congressman Earl Blumenauer's (D-OR) plea for a new national plan for transportation and the environment, we learned about promising efforts at the federal level to address problems that alarm us all.

Politics aside, there was a strong consensus that there is no time to lose in tackling the global warming threat. Most startling fact presented:

If you are a plant today, you need to be moving north at the rate of 30 feet per day if you are to keep up with the rate of climate change.

Here in Connecticut, will we be selling cotton plants at our May Market and fending off kudzu 5-10 years from now? There was remarkable agreement that positive actions will be needed to prevent disaster.

Here are some striking examples of solutions presented for the problems of global warming:

- We need to disengage energy production from the generation of carbon dioxide.
- We must find ways to uncouple energy sales from profits. (How can we give oil companies incentives for selling fewer hydrocarbons?)
- There is a new world of carbon markets emerging that show promise in slowing the rate of emissions. Market forces can produce change faster than anyone predicts.
- Experiments with carbon capture and storage are providing models that may be practical.

(For a fine summary of these issues, read "The Big Foot," by Michael Specter in *The New Yorker*. You can find it at:

[newyorker.com/reporting/2008/02/25/080225fa_fact_specter?currentPage=6](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/02/25/080225fa_fact_specter?currentPage=6))

First steps toward solutions may come from the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act currently being considered. The bill would establish a mandatory "cap and trade" program for carbon emissions. Regulations would apply to 1) power plants, 2) vehicles and other modes of transport, 3) buildings, and 4) small businesses, according to Senator John Warner. His partnership with Senator Joe Lieberman, whom we visited the next day, and with Senator Barbara Boxer on this effort, give it tremendous impetus.

Senator Boxer (D-CA) spoke about securing promises from Senator Majority Leader Harry Reid and Speaker Nancy Pelosi to get this bill on the legislative agenda for consideration this year. The strategy is to garner support in this Congress in hopes that President Bush would be concerned enough about his legacy not to veto it. If that doesn't work, all three presidential candidates support the bill's passage in the next Congress.

Obviously, delays in developing remedies have enormous opportunity costs. First, it makes slowing the rate of climate damage more daunting, as Al Gore and many others have told us. Second, our ability to deal internationally is severely handicapped by our failure to act constructively at the national level, especially in view of our out-of-proportion contribution to the global problem.

So why do these busy, important leaders take time to talk with garden clubbers? They understand that we are influential in our communities **and** we vote. Moreover, several of them are spouses or offspring of garden club members and learned to value what we value. But the clincher is our track record of supporting key environmental initiatives over the years. Remember the 80's, when acid rain seemed to be an intractable problem that eroded our health and doomed species to extinction? Remember the campaign to remove lead from gasoline? Our voices were essential to passing federal legislation that addressed those crises with considerable success. And Representative James Oberstar (D-MN), in the U.S. House for 34

years, believes that the Clean Water Act of 1972 would not have been enacted at all had it not been for GCA support.

So kudos to all the conservation committee members who attend these GCA meetings and who have been working to inform us over the years about our long-term best interests. They are part of an impressive cadre of citizens who are really paying attention to securing a better future for us all.

*Dr. Barbara MacEachern
Past-President Middletown G.C. (Zone II)*

Senator John Warner (R-VA), co-author with Senator Joe Lieberman (I-CT) of the Climate Security Act, made the huge effort to come directly after being discharged from the hospital to speak to the GCA attendees! The next day, Sen. Lieberman stated, “ Senator Warner credits his attendance at your meeting with boosting his recovery to 100% from a much lower percentage when he entered the Cannon Caucus Room where 300 GCA members were gathered.” Indeed, he seemed to gather strength as he enthusiastically told us about his plan for our energy future.

Notable Quote from the NAL Meeting:

“What will you say when your grandchildren ask: ‘What did **you** do to prevent global warming?’
You don’t want to say ‘*nothing*.’”

Senator John Warner

Submitted by Mikey Hirschhoff, G.C. of New Haven (Zone II).

The following are “headlines” from the NAL meeting.

Being Faithful to Old Faithful

Here’s a topic that was “front and center” at the Washington meeting – our National Parks. Did you know that the Garden Club of America’s association with our country’s National Park System is almost as old as GCA itself? In 1916, the year the National Park System was born, GCA created its own National Park Committee and for many years each GCA club had a National Parks representative. GCA member Mrs. Francis Farwell of Chicago was instrumental in crafting a National Park Service Conservation Bill of Rights at a 1921 National Conference on Parks.

Now, as our beloved National Parks approach their centennial birthday, they need our support more than ever! In spite of a mandate directing Congress to maintain Parks “in a manner that will leave them unimpaired for future generations,” today’s National Park System suffers from years of chronic underfunding for operations and maintenance.

On April 2, 2008 Senator Ken Salazar (D-CO) introduced the National Park Centennial Act # S-2817. Passage of this legislation will address much-needed improvements to ready the parks for their second century of service to all Americans. An exciting piece of the proposed legislation is a grant program that allows the Interior Department to match up to \$100 million in annual federal monies with private donations. According to the National Parks Conservation Association, this legislation “...is a partnership between the federal government and American citizens. It doubles every dollar donated leading up to the parks’ 2016 centennial, and inspires



Photo credit: Robyn Glover, Big Stock Photo

continued public and private investment in America’s national parks.” For parks that may not have the support of outside groups, Sen. Salazar says, “Non-federal philanthropic participation is encouraged, but not required, for a project to be executed with federal money from the Centennial Fund.” Enthusiastic park supporters have already come forward with over \$216 million for the program.

The bill requires that proposals fall into one of seven categories: Education, Diversity, Supporting Park Professionals, Environmental Leadership, Natural Resource Protection, Cultural Resource Protection, Visitor Enjoyment and Health, and Construction. Construction activities can account for no more than 30% of funds in any fiscal year. Another important note is that Centennial Fund dollars shall *supplement*, not *replace*, annual Park Service expenditures, and permanent staffing levels must be maintained.

The bill will be funded by a new conservation royalty derived from unanticipated off-shore oil and gas revenues in the Gulf of Mexico that the federal government is now collecting. The program will be further supplemented by the sale of a new postage stamp celebrating the 100th anniversary of the National Park System.

Each of the 391 National park units has submitted its Centennial plan to National Park Service Director Mary Bomar, along with a special project wish list. The projects range from protecting critical wild salmon habitat in Alaskan parks to modeling sustainable energy practices in a new education center in Yellowstone to new signage at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The main goals of the plan are stewardship, environmental leadership, recreational experience, education and professional excellence.

Speaking at Yellowstone Park during the country’s bicentennial in 1976, Gerald Ford, who spent a summer there as a Park Ranger, said, “I call upon all Americans – our Bicentennial generation which has enjoyed the blessings of liberty and the pursuit of happiness, ours for 200 years – to join in a great new undertaking to improve the quality of our lives and our land.” Ford remembered the awe he felt at Yellowstone’s Inspiration Point. He recalled, “... how lucky I

was that my parents' and grandparents' generation had the vision and the determination to save it for us." And he reminded the public, "Now it is our turn to make our own gift outright to those who will come after us, 15 years, 40 years, 100 years from now. I want to be as faithful to my grandchildren's generation as Old Faithful has been to ours."

President Ford's words are true today. Congress can and should pass Centennial Legislation to ready our parks for their 2016 anniversary. With just eight years leading up to their 100th year, the time to act on behalf of our nation's crown jewels is now. Please urge your senators to support S-2817 and your congressional representatives to support HR-3094. Keep those cards and letters going. It does make a difference!

*Carole T. Hunter, Lake Minnetonka G.C. (Zone XI)
GCA NAL Committee
Vice-Chair – National Parks/Public Lands*

[Source: *National Parks Conservation Association Magazine*, Spring, 2007.]

Be Part of the Solution – A Lesson Learned at the Washington Meeting

The Wilkins Ice Shelf, which is about the size of Connecticut, has collapsed and is hanging "by a thread" to the Antarctic mainland. Over one million plants and animals are on the path to irreversible extinction by 2050. Without a significant reduction in CO₂ emissions, dramatic international instability may only be a decade away. Every week brings reports concerning the increasingly severe impacts of climate change on our planet. Too daunting? Time to give up?

Time to get involved! We can and should become active. Many choices are out there to help us become responsible citizens. Carbonfund.org, a Website dedicated to fighting climate change through education, offsets and reductions, has a motto we all should try to live by: **"reduce what you can, offset what you can't."** Carbon offsets represent the reduction of CO₂ in one location to offset the CO₂ produced in another location. For example, building a clean, zero CO₂ wind farm in Kansas could offset the CO₂ produced from a coal-fired power plant in Kentucky. Through a combination of relatively easy conservation practices and the tools to offset your carbon footprint, significant reductions in CO₂ can be achieved. It's time to imagine the impact that can be made if we start at the individual level, knowing that it can be multiplied by the 300 million people in the U.S. and by 6 billion people worldwide.

The Carbonfund.org site offers conservation tips that range from how to save energy and reduce our carbon impact when traveling by car or air, to home and office adjustments that all add up. You will learn for instance that junk mail produces more greenhouse gas emissions than 2.8 million cars. At Carbonfund.org, you can click on a link to request removal from a whole host of lists and start to reduce your carbon footprint immediately.

For the past two years, the National Affairs and Legislation Committee has purchased offsets from Carbonfund.org for the 300 people that attend the annual conference in Washington D.C. in February. The site has a user-friendly calculator to compute the impact and required offset. You may also select your preferred form of offset: Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency or Reforestation.

All carbon offset programs are not equal. If you decide to purchase offsets, high quality programs and projects should be certified by such groups as the Environmental Resources Trust, the Environmental Defense Fund and Green-e. Other reputable offset companies of note

are TerraPass and 3 Phases Energy Services in the United States and Eco-Securities in Oxford, England. Those who shop for carbon offsets need to look for the three **A**'s: Authenticity (genuine reductions); Additionality (investing in a project that otherwise would not have been done); and Affordability (ensuring a fair return in terms of reduced greenhouse gas reduced emissions for the money invested). Remember, however, that the more you reduce your own individual footprint by conserving, the less you will need to offset.

Whether you are crisscrossing the country or the globe for business or pleasure, planning a wedding, or adjusting your life to a more green, sustainable lifestyle, be a trendsetter and an important part of the solution to climate change. Reduce your carbon footprint.

*Derry MacBride, Piedmont G.C. (Zone XII)
GCA NAL Committee Chair*

End Catalog Clutter – Be Free and Green

Those unwanted catalogs keep coming and look at the consequences :

- 20 billion catalogs mailed annually
- 63 catalogs per person averaged
- 40 pounds of paper per person wasted
- 53 million trees harvested
- 5.2 million tons of CO2 added
- 98% of the catalogs discarded

The solution is in sight. Sign up with: www.catalogchoice.com. By registering with this online company you can find and decline the catalogues you do not want to receive. **The service is free.** Merchants and environmental groups are supporting this effort and cities are celebrating reduced landfills. Check out the “Bravo Merchants” page and see the nearly 200 catalog mailers who are participating. Relief is just a click away.



*Kathy Gillespie, Pasadena G.C. (Zone XII)
GCA Conservation Committee, Vice-Chair – Forests/Redwoods*

[Source: *Bill Moyers Journal* 10/12/2007]

What Do We Do With Those Fluorescent Bulbs?

The public is realizing the benefits to their pocketbooks of compact fluorescent (CFL) light bulbs. While they are more expensive to purchase, they last much longer than the average

incandescent bulb, which burns between 800 and 1500 hours. A coiled CFL can last as long as 10,000 hours. They save energy and reduce pollution by the overall reduction of emissions into the environment.

CFL's were a topic discussed at the Washington NAL meeting. A related concern that frequently arises is what should we do with them when they do finally burn out? Issues have been raised about whether what is inside the bulbs pose undue health and environmental dangers.

The answer is complex. Fluorescents generate light by heating gases in a glass tube. CFL's use more than 50% less energy than incandescent bulbs and they last much longer. When they first hit store shelves several years ago, consumers complained about the loud noise they made, their harsh light, their bluish color, and how long it took for them to warm up. CFL's have been revamped and most of these problems have been alleviated.



However, the problem of disposal has not gone away. All CFL's contain mercury, a neurotoxin that can cause kidney and brain damage. The amount is small, about 5 milligrams, and has been continually reduced in recent years. But if these bulbs are not properly disposed of the mercury that can be released can contaminate our drinking water and get into our food chain.

Wal-Mart announced in 2007 that its suppliers of CFL's have agreed to reduce the amount of mercury in their bulbs by one-third. In a statement the company released, Noah Horowitz, senior scientist with the National Resources Defense Council, said, "The energy savings delivered through the use of CFL's will actually reduce more mercury pollution from coal-fired power plants than is added through manufacture of the bulbs."

When a bulb burns out, most consumers simply throw it in the trash. Manufacturers of the bulbs and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), however, direct consumers to handle CFL's carefully in order to limit the spread of mercury dust from the bulbs. The states of Ohio, California, Minnesota, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin have actually banned the disposal of CFL's as general waste. Qualified commercial recycling facilities are limited in the U.S. presently to about one per county. In some places the collection of CFL's is conducted at certain times, sometimes only once or twice a year. What do you do when a CFL bulb breaks? The EPA suggests that if a bulb should break, you need to follow these steps (from the EPA website):

- Air out the room where a bulb has broken for 15 minutes.
- Wear gloves.
- Double-bag the refuse.
- Place the bags in an outside trash receptacle.
- Use duct tape to lift the residue from a carpet.
- Don't use a vacuum cleaner – it will spread the problem.
- The next time you vacuum the area, immediately dispose of the vacuum bag.

Currently, the largest recycler is IKEA, the Swedish home furnishings chain. IKEA has free drop-off programs at all 29 U.S. stores. There are some other retailers accepting used CFL's. They include many Wal-Mart and Home Depot outlets. While the U.S. government has no single recycling plan, the EPA is working with manufacturers and retailers to develop, implement, and expand recycling options. How do you find a CFL recycling center near you? Go to:

<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/id/univwast/lamps/live.htm>

Click on your state below the U.S. map and you will be directed to recycling sites or collection programs for your area.

Consumers bought more than 300 million CFL's last year. The disposal problems must be solved soon so that we don't trade one problem (low energy efficiency) for another (hazardous materials going right into the earth). This topic would make an excellent club or zone conservation project to help your communities find the right places and methods for disposing of such materials. Garden club members can play an important part in helping educate the public about the potential benefits and dangers of CFL's.

*Elva Busch, Santa Fe Garden Club (Zone XII)
GCA Conservation Watch Editor*

If every American home replaced just one light bulb with a compact fluorescent, we would save enough energy to light more than 2.5 million homes for a year and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of nearly 800,000 cars.

Columbia River Gorge Threatened by Casino

The natural beauty of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) is in danger! Hearings on the proposed Environmental Impact Statement Proposal (EIS) for the Scenic Area have been completed. Public input, which has been ongoing since early this year, will be terminated on May 15th.

The Portland Garden Club, with the support of The Garden Club of America, was instrumental, through members Nancy Russell and Nancy McGraw in attaining the national scenic area designation. We now are encouraging all GCA member clubs and their conservation committees to respond to our plea for input to oppose the establishment of a mega-casino in the midst of the CRGNSA.

One major problem exists because of the distance between the Warm Springs Reservation and the proposed site for the casino. Most of the Warm Springs Tribal members live in or near the town of Warm Springs, which is a 218 mile, 4 to 5-hour drive from Cascade Locks. This, in itself, should be enough to defeat the proposal, since the Department of the Interior requires a "reasonable distance from the reservation" as criteria for the establishment of an off-reservation casino and resort. The on-reservation casino option not only exists, but it also could be located on one of the busiest arteries feeding the rapidly growing eastern Oregon areas of Redmond and Bend. An on-reservation casino option would also create more jobs within the tribe and be less disruptive for tribal members.

The Warm Springs Tribal Council insists that this fee to trust transfer is necessary for their Tribe to attain economic security and that the Cascade Locks (where the casino would be located), which is only a half hour drive east from Portland, the largest metropolitan area in the state, would be the only viable location for them to build the facility. It then would become the closest casino to the city. This would be detrimental for the Grand Ronde Tribe, which already had a very successful casino in the McMinneville area, about 45 minutes west of Portland. This casino has caused tremendous highway congestion, but also has added to the state coffers. To situate a mega casino in the midst of The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area would not only be destructive to the area, but also be negligent for the federal to not protect the



Columbia River Gorge from Crown Point

lands, truly a crown jewel for the state.

The Warm Springs Tribe has already spent over \$22 million on their EIS Proposal. Should the expenditure of tribal monies make it obligatory for the Department of The Interior to pass this proposal when it would destroy what should be preserved in the CRGNSA? The Tribe itself says that the DOI has encouraged them to pursue the option and should be responsible for approving their DEI.

Those who care for the Gorge are concerned about the effect of a mega-casino with 24/7 lighting and exponentially increased human activity. Both would disrupt native bird species' habitat and compromise Gorge air quality. Ultimately they could destroy many of the rare and endangered native flora, some which is unique to this area in the world. Three to five million more cars might enter the Scenic Area. Legalities would create an Indian Reservation within the Gorge, which would be a nation unto itself, with its own laws, which would not necessarily coincide with state or federal laws.

For those of you interested in submitting comments on this important issue, you can make a statement by following the suggestions below. You can help preserve Oregon's unique place , the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. For more information, please visit gorgefriends.org.

To make a statement, please do one or all of the following BEFORE MAY 15th:

- E-mail www.NoGorgeCasino.com or directly to Indian.senate.gov (US Bureau of Indian Affairs) or call the BIA at the DC Bureau at 202-224-2251.
- E-mail Mr. Stanley Speaks, NW Regional Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs at stanleyspeaks@bia.gov or call 503-231-6702.
- E-mail Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne at webteam@ios.doi.gov.

*Patricia Wall, Portland Garden Club (Zone XII)
GCA Resource Committee*

Synthetic Turf Alert

A new synthetic turf has sparked an international debate that is now raging in communities across the U.S. It surrounds “FieldTurf,” a surface used in playing fields that is made of a blended polyethylene-polypropylene material woven to simulate blades of grass. The problem, however, centers on its underlying cushion, which contains crumbled infill made from recycled tires.

Unfortunately, preliminary studies suggest that these rubber “crumbs” give off compounds that pose a risk to toddlers, children, and teens. They have not been assessed for safety in the United States, but in 2006, the Italian Minister of Health issued results that found levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), toluene (a volatile toxic compound), and heavy metals in them to be higher than legal limits. The study concluded that the presence of these substances underlying synthetic turf soccer fields could potentially cause cancer.

In 2007, New York held hearings on synthetic turf use in city parks. Leaders wanted to promote children playing outside, but weighing the dangers of pesticides and fertilizers used on grass against chemicals in artificial turf left decision makers confused. The New York State Assembly ultimately issued a moratorium on the use of synthetic turf containing crumb rubber while the state completes a study of its potential health impacts.

On the other hand, proponents of synthetic turf argue it will reduce grass triggered allergy and asthma; that synthetic fields can be installed more quickly and used continuously without the closures needed to allow grass to recover; and that there are lower maintenance costs. But a synthetic soccer field is no bargain, running almost \$1.4 million compared with a natural grass field at \$690,000. And when costs – including maintenance – are prorated over the expected lifespan of the field, the difference narrows to less than \$15,000 more for natural grass.

Another drawback is that synthetic fields get very hot, up to 60 degrees hotter than grass, with surface temperatures reaching 160 degrees F. on summer days. While synthetic turf does not need irrigation, some installations must be watered to lower heat buildup. Others are saturated before each practice and game to increase traction. Runoff from watering creates another set of problems.

In 2007, a study commissioned by the Connecticut non-profit, Environment and Human Health, Inc. (EHHI) found that 25 different chemicals and four metals (zinc, selenium, lead, and cadmium) could be released into water from the rubber infill. Since synthetic turf is unable to absorb or filter rainwater, these chemicals can pass into ground water or flow directly into storm drains, endangering rivers, harbors, and other bodies of water.

Airborne contaminants were also confirmed by the EHHI study. They included irritants benzothiazole and n-hexadecane; butylated hydroxyanisole, a carcinogen and suspected endocrine disruptor; and 4-(*t*-octyl) phenol, a corrosive that can be injurious to mucous membranes.

There are currently 3,500 synthetic turf fields in the U.S. Not a single environmental impact statement concerning them has been issued. Since crumb rubber from tires cannot be legally disposed of in landfills or oceans because of its toxicity, one has to wonder why children are playing on it and why it has been installed at the risk of contaminating water resources.

Be sure to make your voices heard if this debate comes to your community. Or bring it up yourself. Your garden club can take an active role in addressing this topic in your town.

*Gracelyn Guyol, Stonington G.C.
Zone II NAL/Conservation Representative*

[Source: Environmental Health Perspectives, Vol . 116, #3, March 2008, at www.ehpi.org.]

Partners for Plants

What You Need to Know About Partners for Plants

Partners for Plants is a joint initiative of the GCA Conservation and Horticulture Committees. Partners for Plants supports GCA clubs to partner with managers/botanists of Federal, State, and City parks over 150 acres. Projects may monitor rare, endangered, medicinal or invasive plants on city, state or federal lands. Here are the facts about Partners for Plants projects.

- Partners for Plants projects make excellent club horticulture/conservation or community service projects.
- Some projects involve inventorying, mapping, monitoring, propagating and transplanting endangered plants.
- Other projects focus on pulling invasive plants.
- Some projects may last several weeks with various volunteers participating while other projects take 2-4 days at a specific site using a fixed team.
- In all cases, volunteers work with professional botanists and land managers, who supervise the work and share their knowledge and expertise.
- It's great fun to be part of a valuable research project. Many volunteers come away feeling they have gained more than they have given. Certainly each project serves as a catalyst for accomplishing important endangered plant work that in many cases would not have been accomplished if it had not been for the interest and organization of a GCA member with a partner.

Please consider becoming a Partners for Plants project coordinator. Grab a group of friends and have a creative getaway. The project proposal form and project completion form can be found on the GCA website (www.gcamerica.org) under the Horticulture or Conservation Committee columns by clicking on Partners for Plants. What follows are some examples of different types of partnerships GCA members have undertaken to give you ideas.

*Diana Neely, Seattle Garden Club (Zone XII)
GCA Conservation Committee
Vice-Chair, Partners for Plants*

Continuing Legacy of Partners for Plants Projects on California Federal Lands

Almost every summer since 1996, there has been a Partners for Plants project on the eastside of the Sierra Nevada in Mono and Inyo counties of California. These projects were on either U.S. Forest Service (USFS) or Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands and were led by USFS botanist Kathleen Nelson or BLM botanist Anne Halford. It has been my job to recruit the volunteers for the projects. With the nearest GCA garden club 300 miles away, I am still a member of the Ridgefield Garden Club in Connecticut, the club I belonged to before moving to the eastern Sierra ten years ago. I recruit volunteers from among California GCA members and their friends, my relatives and college friends, and members of our local California Native Plant Society chapter. The fellowship among the volunteers, the relationships with the botanists, the fun of primitive camping and the satisfaction of helping out on our public lands bring volunteers back year after year.

Our work includes surveying for rare plants in an area chosen by the botanist. While most of us do not know the local flora very well, with a good search image and sharp eyes we contribute significant information to the data base each summer. We have counted large cream-colored Father Crowley lupine and the protected Fish Slough milk vetch. We've looked under sagebrush for rare *Arabis* species and have been on our knees combing grasses for tiny moonworts. And on and on. Our projects are published in USFS and BLM reports each year. We work under a memorandum of understanding with the USFS and the BLM and our volunteer hours help the agencies secure grants for other projects. Most importantly, the data we collect informs the decisions made about our public lands – when and where cattle should graze, where and how mining roads are built or not, and what restoration work needs to be done. Also of importance is the appreciation our volunteers gain for our federal botanists' knowledge of conservation issues and their commitment to the health of our public lands. Consider partnering on federal lands in the U.S., whether near or far from you!



Volunteers on the Montgomery Peak project in the White Mountains of eastern California.

*Sherryl Taylor, Ridgefield Garden Club (Zone II)
Partners for Plants Coordinator*

Club Partners with a State Park to Count Endangered Species Plants

Carmel by the Sea Garden Club members and friends did a census of *Erysimum menziesii* ssp. *yadonii* (Yadon's wallflower) in the dunes above Marina State Beach on April 28, 2007. The project was originally set up with Dave Dixon, State Parks Environmental Scientist. Joey Dorell an independent dune biologist was in charge the day of the event. We had two US Forest Service helpers, a California State University - Monterey Bay student, 10 GCA members and 4 friends do the survey. I made some small templates to aid in measuring the size of the plants and Joey supplied data sheets and showed us how to lay out the grids. Before we got there she had laid out lines with a Global Positioning System (GPS). We measured along these and laid out the grids every 6 feet on alternate sides of the line. We then counted the plants inside the grid. We used square meter grids laid out along a 100 meter transect line and counted the plants inside the grid. The plants were separated into groups by size. Joey told us that the survey will be used by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as well as by California Department of Fish and Game and that our work had saved a considerable amount of money for the state. The count will be extrapolated to give an idea of the total population. The important results of the survey help determine whether or not Yadon's wallflower has recovered enough to be removed from both the federal and state endangered lists.



Yadon's wildflower

Susan Osborne, Carmel by the Sea G.C. (Zone XII)
Partners for Plants Coordinator

[As we go to press, Yadon's wallflower is not anticipated to be removed from endangered status soon.]

Houston Club Partners with an Urban Park

The River Oaks Garden Club has the first Partners for Plants project designated in a city park of at least 150 acres, rather than a state or national park, the requirement for earlier projects. The 150-acre Houston Arboretum & Nature Center needs a scientifically grounded evaluation of invasive removal treatments. A professional naturalist agreed to set up a study with treatment sites and control sites, oversee the removal of invasive plants, supervise multiple plant counts, and direct re-vegetation with native plant material. Volunteers are assisting in all levels of this evaluation. Since the project began in October of 2007, a Texas A&M wildlife biologist has advised that we modify the sampling methodology from grid-based quadrants with pre-treatment vegetation surveys to radial sectors, which will reduce both time and labor. The study is now limited to three different two-acre sites, each consisting of three precisely delineated sections with three different schedules: 1) To remove invasives and plant appropriate natives, 2) To remove invasives only, and 3) To do nothing. Global Positioning System (GPS) technology, funded separately by the garden club, has played an essential role in delineating the sites.

To date, three volunteer groups have worked on this project. In December, 2007, members of the garden club delineated the first buffer boundary. In March, 2008, trainees from the Gulf Coast chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists delineated the remaining buffer boundaries and demarcated actual circle plots and treatment sectors. We are thrilled that this group would like to make this an ongoing project for their trainees. In April, 2008, ecology students from the University of St. Thomas conducted vegetation sampling in all three sites. In the early fall of 2008, volunteers will spend two months removing invasive plants from all six acres of forest. Before the end of the year, volunteers will begin planting Post Oak and other native species as well as do post-treatment vegetation sampling on all the plots. Ultimately, the results of this project will help address the problem of invasive plant infestation in the whole of Memorial Park, other Houston city parks, and beyond.



Hard at work at the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center.

*Gail Payne, River Oaks Garden Club (Zone IX)
Partners for Plants Coordinator*

*Ruth Flournoy, River Oaks Garden Club (Zone IX)
Partners for Plants Coordinator
Zone IX Conservation/NAL Representative*

Cypress Pledge Alert

The destruction of vital wetlands, and the wildlife habitat it provides stands in direct contrast to the conservation goals of the Garden Club of America. Cypress mulching is an important example of why.

The issue of how the cypress mulching industry has destroyed wetlands which help control storm surge from hurricanes and tropical storms is not new to *Conservation Watch* readers. Wendy Kelsey of the GC of Houston, when she was NAL Vice-Chair of Water/Wetlands, introduced it in the Summer, 2006 issue. The political and industrial mechanisms that can effect change were described by Derry MacBride, NAL Vice-Chair, Forests/Redwoods in the Fall, 2006 issue of *ConWatch*.

Kathy Gillespie, also a GCA Conservation Committee Vice-Chair, Forest/Redwoods, urged us in the Fall, 2007 issue to “Just Say No to Cypress Mulch”. She informed us that effective January 1, 2008, Wal-Mart stopped selling cypress mulch that was harvested, bagged, or manufactured in the state of Louisiana. That is a start, but the reality is that cypress mulch manufacturers are bypassing this boycott by secretly harvesting cypress in Louisiana and trucking it to nearby states where the mulch is manufactured and bagged. The mulch is then labeled as manufactured in states other than Louisiana. In order to avoid this treachery, Wal-Mart and other distributors need to take it one step further and stop selling ANY cypress mulch.

As citizens, we can appeal to our politicians and policy makers to create legislation to stop the manufacture of all cypress mulch, regardless of advertised state of origin, and at the same time to create economic incentives that encourage local landowners to cease the harvesting of their cypress forests. As gardeners, we can pay attention to what we are buying and using to mulch our flower beds and landscapes and eliminate the favorable economics of cypress mulching. As conservation advocates, we can pledge to join the fight to stop cypress mulching once and for all. Please consider shepherding a Cypress Pledge in your garden club community this gardening season.

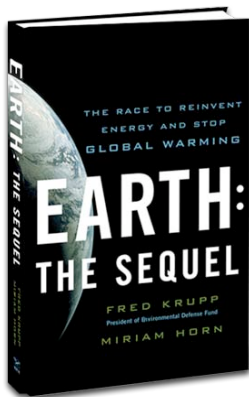
For more information on Waterkeeper Alliance’s Earth Day 2008 Pledge, please contact Eddie Scher, Communications Director, Waterkeeper Alliance at Escher@waterkeeper.org or see www.waterkeeper.org.

*Darlene Kasten, President – Plainfield G.C. (Zone IV)
Development Associate, Waterkeeper Alliance*

Book Reviews

Earth: The Sequel

The Race to Reinvent Energy and Stop Global Warming

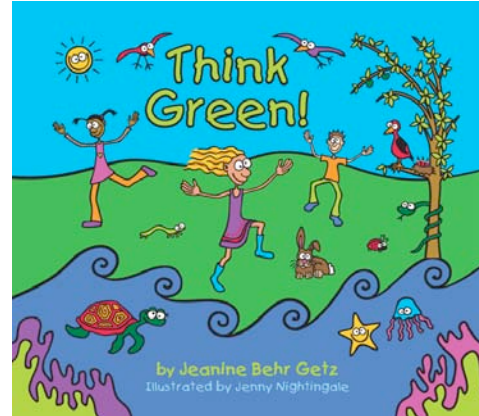


by Fred Krupp, President of Environmental Defense Fund
Mr. Krupp was a speaker at the recent GCA NAL Washington meeting. He provided each attendee with a copy of his new book, *Earth: The Sequel*. Why “the sequel”? It is the riveting story of the next new thing that none of us can afford to miss: how the multi-trillion dollar energy sector is being transformed – right now – by the American entrepreneurial spirit. As stated by New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, “Krupp . . . has turned the doom and gloom of global warming on its head. *Earth: The Sequel* makes it crystal clear that we can build a low-carbon economy while unleashing American entrepreneurs to save the planet, putting optimism back into the environmental story.”
Editor

Think Green! By Jeanine Behr Getz

Looking for a great gift for your children or grandchildren? Jeanine Behr Getz, a member of Hortulus (Greenwich, CT, Zone II), has recently published her first children’s book, *Think Green!* This colorful book introduces and educates our youngest generation on ways to think and act green through colorful illustrations showing simple everyday ideas for children to help keep the earth clean and safe for all people, animals, fish and birds. *Think Green!* is the first book of it’s kind to have an eco-audit on the back cover. Jeanine’s inspirations for the book came

from many different facets of her life. Hortulus first opened her sensitivities to conservation and the powerful impact the GCA has on environmental issues. Her daughter enlightened her on the idea that children understand big ideas, want to help make a difference and can set the pace for all of us. The honorees of the Rachel Carson Award for Women in Conservation exemplified the work that has been done, is being done and can be done. They, too, have influenced and encouraged the author to write *Think Green!* For a sneak preview or to purchase a copy, please visit www.kidsthinkbig.com.



Wendy Serrell, Hortulus G.C.
Zone II Chairman

[Note: The Audubon Society's Women in Conservation presents the Rachel Carson Awards to honor the remarkable environmental efforts of women in the U.S. The awards ceremony raises money to preserve and protect Long Island Sound's wildlife and habitat. This year's honorees are: Bette Midler, Teresa Heinz Kerry, and The Central Park Conservancy Founders. Editor]

Conservation Quote

Ubiquitous Plastic – What Can You Do About It

“Recycling will not actually put the carbon genie back in the bottle. Drinking filtered water from the tap might do it.”

[Source: google image]

Submitted by Gracelyn Guyol, Zone II Conservation/NAL Representative.



Two million plastic beverage bottles are used in the U.S. every five minutes.

[Photo from: http://www.chrisjordan.com/current_set2.php?id=7]

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Elva Busch, Editor