

## SusCom Sustainability Forum #1

25 September 2009, Bond Hall, 12:30 pm

### Participants:

Carr Everbach, Sustainability Committee co-chair, welcomed the assembled participants and provided some background on his committee's charges for 2009-10:

- a. Facilitating communication among environmental groups and via GreenBox to discover best practices and make recommendations to the College community
- b. Developing a GHG inventory and carbon reduction plan, and obtaining community consensus sufficient for President Chopp to sign the Presidents' Commitment on Climate Change document
- c. Identifying money-saving projects for Student Council's Green Revolving Loan Fund; obtaining community consensus on top investments, and tracking the returns into the fund.

Everbach then asked the groups' representatives to send PowerPoint slides or Word documents to [suscom@swarthmore.edu](mailto:suscom@swarthmore.edu) for inclusion in Thursday's slide show in Sharples during Locally Grown Foods Night (October 1, 2009).

Stu Hain, Administration, welcomed the participants on behalf of President Chopp, who he noted was very interested in sustainable practices and simple living. She has asked that Stu and Ralph Thayer be involved in discussions such as this one, to listen carefully to ideas, and wherever possible to channel the useful energy and creativity of the College community in positive directions. Participants in campus sustainability planning should think carefully about paybacks, however; economic, financial, and social.

Zein Nakhoda and KC Cushman of Earthlust noted that their organization had embraced the goals of the 350.org organization to limit carbon dioxide levels in the world's atmosphere to 350 parts per million. October 24 is a day of action at PowerShift PA, this year hosted at Penn State in State College, PA. Earthlust's goal is to reduce the campus per-capita carbon impact by changing daily habits. They hope to work toward implementing the recommendations of the 2007 Environmental Studies Capstone Seminar in their "Greening of Swarthmore" document (available at [http://www.swarthmore.edu/Documents/administration/Greening\\_of\\_Swarthmore.pdf](http://www.swarthmore.edu/Documents/administration/Greening_of_Swarthmore.pdf))

Hannah Jones speaking for the Green Advisors, said her group is working in tandem with Earthlust. Ralph Thayer noted that Facilities has compact florescent bulbs to be handed out to freshmen, and was expecting help from the Green Advisors to distribute them. Hannah agreed to coordinate this effort. She commented that GA are central to the composting pilot program in Mertz, Mary Lyons, and Dana, in which compostable items are brought by the GA s to the compost bin at Kohlberg,

where Grounds transfers them to the composting area in the Crum Woods Nursery area. Hannah addressed the challenges of compost contamination and emphasized that education of the public is the best way to minimize such contamination.

Sheila Magee of Grounds spoke on behalf of Jeff Jabco, Director, who could not attend. Due to budgetary issues, Grounds is not ambitious about new initiatives, but still has a lot on its plate. The new Wister Education Center and Greenhouse is nearly complete, with a likely LEED silver certification (the Science Center is only certified), green roof, rain garden, and stormwater management innovations. There is an Open House scheduled for November 18, 2009, from 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm for the public to visit. The Arboretum's website has excellent videos and virtual tours (see <http://www.scottarboretum.org/Sustainability/video.html>). Recently the Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association had helped the College obtain a grant for supporting Japanese knotweed removal in the Crum Creek via selective herbicide (SEPTA bridge to Yale Avenue). Various native species of trees are being planted in the floodplain of the Crumhenge meadow, along the creek banks as riparian buffer. Grounds is soliciting volunteers for its October 22, 2009 effort, from 9 am – noon, in the Crumhenge meadow. Sheila noted that recycling totals for the College have gone down in recent years, even though consumption has increased. Students commented on the need for more recycling bins (e.g. Willets has only one bin per floor), and Sheila suggested they contact Jeff Jabco or go through EVS to request more.

Carol Nackenoff, chair of the Environmental Studies Committee, told the participants that ENVS is up for program review this year, so any students who have been involved in ENVS cross-listed courses will be contacted as part of a survey. Students will be asked, what would you like to see ENVS do differently? Carol then described how her committee supports speakers brought to campus on topics such as privatization of water rights and environmental justice. She noted the November 21, 2009, all-day event sponsored by ENVS and the Political Science Department to examine sustainability and spirituality. ENVS has a new website, which it will use to notify students of opportunities (such as representatives from environmental graduate programs such as Duke's Nicholas School for the Environment, which will set up tables in Sharples on October 22). Carol noted that ENVS, and indeed many interdisciplinary programs, would like to influence hiring decisions by departments to ensure continuity in ENVS course offerings. ENVS is working with Development office staff (Nadine Kolowrat and Ken Dinitz) to secure outside funding for new faculty lines in areas such as climate change and environmental economics. As part of its program review, ENVS must articulate its learning and program goals. There is to be more collaboration between Haverford and Bryn Mawr environmental faculty/students as part of normal operations. Last year, ENVS was able to help fund participation in PowerShift in DC for several ENVS minors.

Colin Purrington spoke next on behalf of the Crum Woods Stewardship Committee, of which he is co-chair. The goal of the CWSC is to preserve and enhance the gem of a resource that is the Crum Woods, by focusing on trail maintenance, removal of

invasive plants, planting of indigenous trees (with the help of Grounds, Arboretum, and the Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association), and stormwater management. Deer are overpopulated and are destroying the understory by browsing; it is hard to find any young indigenous trees (the deer dislike eating the invasives). The College was told that any deer culling would have to involve an open hunt by the State Game Commission, but the College can regulate it to bow/arrow and during winter break, when few students/faculty are around. Jeff Jabco, the other CWSC co-chair, is awaiting final word from the State regarding when such a culling hunt could take place. Finally, Colin noted that the CWSC has had a longstanding request for a Crum Woods Manager/Outreach Coordinator as part of long-range planning (now frozen due to endowment droop, but Stu Hain commented that a thaw may happen within the year).

Anne Murphy of the Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association kindly joined the group to describe her organization's goals of undertaking watershed modeling studies, recently with the help of Arthur McGarity (Swarthmore Engineering Dept) who will be honored at a meeting in November. The CRC also publishes reports on conditions and practices, calculates stormwater loading of small tributaries, and constructs "Best Management Practices" infiltration areas to absorb the excess runoff. The CRC involves Swarthmore College students and staff regularly in their work (especially through Rotaract), offering training sessions in an interactive way. Currently efforts are underway to plant indigenous trees and remove Japanese knotweed, as well as monitor creeks for pinpoint discharge sources like restaurant grease. The CRC is working with the Borough's Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) on rainbarrel and rain-garden projects, and overseeing the restoration of Little Crum Creek Park. Tomorrow is National Public Lands Day, and CRC is planting 20 trees in Little Crum Creek Park during 9-noon, trees which were purchased from the Scott Arboretum's plant sale. The Swarthmore EAC meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month, 7:30-9:00 pm in Swarthmore's Borough Hall.

Mark Davis and Andrew Reuther discussed the increasing focus on sustainability issues, especially resource use, in ITS. Shutdown times for computers in clusters are pre-programmed when the library closes, and individual computers do not turn on again automatically (ITS uses the student's turning on of these as a tracking mechanism for use). LabStats is the program used to monitor energy use of computers in public spaces. Public computer clusters, however, are dwarfed by the number of individual faculty and student computers, and so public education is necessary regarding turning computers off when not in use. A question about Blackle (<http://www.blackle.com/>) versus Google was asked and Mark said he would look into the matter. ITS is working with Facilities on a building entrance monitoring system and website display of building energy use, including energy costs of fume hoods in the Science Center. There was a general discussion of how human habits affect resource use and how rapid feedback can be used to encourage wiser choices. Eric Jensen noted the persistent idea that leaving computers on is better for the computer, and that system updates would not be possible if computers are turned off at night. Mark and Andrew pointed out that updates

would occur whenever the computer is turned back on, so no updates would be missed, and that modern computers are OK with being turned off at night. Andrew pointed out the existence of a new Beardsley Media Center for student/faculty use that includes a print management system even for the large poster printer, to reduce waste. ITS has been virtualizing servers, which reduces hardware and energy costs (and cooling costs) as number of servers is reduced. In the future, especially for clusters, the software may be virtualized to run many instances of an application (like Word) on a single machine via terminals, saving energy, money, and solid waste of outmoded computers. A question was asked about default settings on replacement computers, and both Mark and Andrew assured the group that they are set to save energy, but that user education is still critical.

Eric Jensen spoke on behalf of a group of faculty from Swarthmore, Haverford, and Bryn Mawr Colleges working to increase curricular opportunities in Climate Change. To begin, the group has identified places in TriCo where such teaching already exists, and to synchronize and regularize course offerings in this area. One problem is that this topic falls between departmental boundaries, and so it is difficult to find funding resources on an ongoing basis. They are looking for seed money from the Mellon Foundation, which supported the group's meetings, and which is interested in TriCo collaboration.

Rebecca Ringle, Lang Center Intern, spoke briefly about the Lang Center's longstanding tradition of providing grant money for students to perform sustainability projects in the US and abroad (e.g., composting toilet project in Zimbabwe). The Lang Center's director, Joy Charlton, sits on the Sustainability Committee and that committee meets regularly at the Lang Center. Rebecca's own position as liaison between the Lang Center and SusCom allows her to collect GreenBox suggestions, post them on the SusCom website, and coordinate activities among student groups.

HG Chissell, alumni representative on SusCom and founder of the Alumni Sustainability Network on Linked In, spoke concerning alumni interest in campus sustainability. His goal was to find out how does learning show up in practice, both during the undergraduate years and thereafter. HG also was looking for opportunities for alumni to bring some solutions they have discovered back to Swarthmore and contribute to its sustainability. Through the Alumni Sustainability Network, HG hopes to increase the level of engagement with alumni and provide to students internships that relate to sustainability.

A representative from the Environmental Justice group outlined the history of how this group branched off from Earthlust with a focus on injustice, especially of the poor environmental conditions endured by Chester residents. EJ is an advocacy organization, and works with the Delco Alliance that meets every other Monday (including this upcoming Monday) at 7 pm in the Lang Center. Their current project is the establishment of a garden in Chester since there is no grocery store. PA Horticultural Association and Swarthmore College Grounds have donated time, tools, and seedlings to help, and EJ has provided campus tour for Chester youth. EJ

is also currently working with Cynthia Jetter of the Lang Center on raised beds for the Chester garden project, to improve soil management and fencing issues.

Hannah Jones from the Good Food group described their garden near the corner of Cedar and Elm. PACES is supplied with surplus produce, and Good Food is working with the Chester Co-op project. The primary goal of the Good Food group is to educate students on how they get their food. In addition, gardening is therapeutic for stressed-out students. A recent initiative is for a proposed solar-powered chicken coop (see previous SusCom minutes for September, 2009). In addition, Good Food oversees the composting effort on campus, including the composting of biodegradable “corn plastic” cups and starch-impregnated paper cups from the campus coffee bars. In response to a question raised about shredding these cups, Sheila Magee of Grounds noted that the unshredded cups seem to be composting just fine. They are mixed into the kitchen waste and brown material collected elsewhere on campus and mixed at the leaf composting site by the giant mechanical “scarab” machine there. A further discussion ensued of having the compost bins for these cups available over the summer (when students are not around to collect them) and at faculty lunches (where faculty regularly throw away the cups rather than putting them in the compost bins).

HG concluded the meeting by noting the usefulness of having each of the groups share what they are doing, thereby growing our little campus community into a kind of ecosystem. Interconnectivity will have a big impact on our success in making Swarthmore more sustainable. HG asked “How are we going to celebrate our sustainability accomplishments in the year ahead?”

The meeting adjourned just before 2:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Carr Everbach