

Sustainability Action Summit

10-22-2009

Activity Report

Introduction

ECOS Fox Valley in conjunction with the many of the sustainability groups in the Fox Valley area held a sustainability Summit on October 22 from 6pm -9pm at Heckrodt Nature Reserve in Menasha, WI. Thirty two representatives from area sustainability committees and organizations (see Appendix A) heard an opening presentation by Kevin Crawford, Orion Energy Systems and former mayor of the city of Manitowoc, WI on his experience in developing sustainable communities. This presentation was followed by a “World Café” dialogue process led by Linda Stoll and Margie Weiss. Two questions were addressed in the discussion.

1. How can organizations and committees working on sustainability issues improve communications between the groups as well as with the citizens of the Fox Valley?
2. How can these groups provide support for each other on new and existing projects?

Communications

(See Appendix B for raw data)

WEBSITE

One of the items mentioned at all tables to be a pressing need was a “one-stop or super website” for the Fox Valley. This site should contain links to or pages for each Fox Valley municipality’s (city, village, town, county) sustainability efforts, any business or industry sustainability page open to the public as well as any NGO working on sustainability issues. These individual pages should include: list of actions completed, documentation of money saved and some type of regular report of activity. Contact information for each group would be helpful. The educational system – K-12/university – should be tied into this as well.

In addition, attendees would also like this website to contain:

- a common activity calendar to include meetings and events
- directory of “greens” in government
- list of Wisconsin eco-municipalities
- a reference section with links to additional sustainability information and websites

Discussion was held on who should host this site. ECOS-FV and Sustain FV have websites but no paid staff to maintain them. While volunteers could theoretically maintain this website, it was thought that it would take a paid staff person to keep the type of site people envisioned up-to-date and fully functional. East Central Regional Planning Commission might be able to help with this and should be explored as an alternate host. It was emphasized that in order for this website to be of value, it’s existence would have to be widely publicized and listed on all sustainability information created in the Fox Valley as well as displayed at all valley events. Someone suggested putting it on a bumper sticker. To reduce staff hours, it was hoped that groups could update the calendar with their activities as well as any individual home pages held on the site.

OUTREACH

Linked with the master Website was the need for additional ways to send information to people as well as hear back from individuals. The goal should be to involve as many people as possible in the area on a regular basis in sustainability issues and actions. Whatever methods were used, a tutorial should be created to maximize use and participation. Opportunity should also be provided for people to find partners and share ideas. The goal should be to make it simple for people to get in touch and stay in touch.

Participants at the Summit suggested the use of additional electronic media linked to the regional website to communicate with each other and area residents. Social media sites such as Face Book, Twitter and Linked In were given as examples. Blogs and Wikis should be used to create dialogue opportunities on various topics. Listserves could provide targeted information and a monthly e-newsletter could keep people “in the loop”. It was noted that not everyone has e-mail and there might still be a need to mail hardcopy letters to some.

Other ideas mentioned were to put information and ads in existing community newsletters, produce joint radio and TV ads, provide articles to the press (after educating them on the importance of the topic so they will print the information) and to create some neat T-shirts to sell to raise awareness and money to help pay for communications. Several people expressed a need to create a list of people who could serve as the “voice of sustainability” in the FV so media would know who to contact when they wanted information. This would create consistency in the message.

REGIONAL COUNCIL

It was suggested that the Fox Valley Regional Sustainability Council be created consisting of representatives from each community sustainability board, business and industry committees, education and NGOs working on sustainability issues. This council should meet quarterly to work on issues that needed to be addressed on a regional basis. A suggested topic for action could be review of existing community ordinances and policies with the goal of including sustainability language and creating regulatory consistency between communities. Another action item would be to create a regional sustainability plan

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Participants expressed a need for continued face-to-face meetings for communication, networking and sharing. They should be held at least once a year if not more often. ECOS was suggested as the group responsible for offering these meetings. They should be open to the public.

COMMUNICATE WITH OFFICIALS

Acquiring the support of local elected officials was seen as critical to the success of sustainability efforts in the Fox Valley. It is important that citizens monitor government actions, attend and speak out at government meetings and present local success stories, especially those with good fiscal results. There is a need to “lead the leaders” in sustainability actions. Municipal support for and adoption of sustainability goals and objectives are critical for success.

COMMUNICATION FOR EDUCATION

Many of the ideas suggested by the Summit participants fell under the category of communication for educational purposes. The following are ideas that could have a major impact on the progress towards sustainability in the Fox Valley:

1. Develop a common language and definitions for sustainability to ensure effective communication
2. Conduct TNS study circle training for all members of sustainability boards and committees. Provide TNS training for all municipality staff and elected officials.
3. Create a Speakers Bureau with an on-line directory of names, topics and contact information
4. Develop a list of local “experts” by topic that could be contacted with questions
5. Publish a list of “green” businesses and businesses associated with green products
6. Create displays/booths
 - a. Permanent display site at public libraries focused on sustainability topics and issues
 - b. Regular educational display at each community’s farmers market
 - c. Educational displays/booths at existing local events and fairs
 - d. Creation of traveling displays that could be shared
7. Write up local success stories/case studies that could be used by area groups for education and to support future efforts
8. Create “programmed learning units” for teaching sustainability concepts at many levels (keyed to learner readiness)
9. Develop a Study Circle early adopters network
10. Establish eco-municipality “sister cities” to encourage partnering and sharing of information.
11. Create a series of prepared presentations on various sustainability topics. Include information on the financial impact of actions, how to implement objectives and local success stories
12. Find existing or create a series of press releases on various sustainability topics and issues, include local information and photos and give to local media for publication. Establish a regular weekly column in the local papers on sustainability
13. Offer demonstrations and open houses to show elected officials, business owners and community leaders and residents what is currently being done to improve sustainability in the Fox Valley
14. Create committee, organization, business and industry partnerships to offer regional events and activities focused on sustainability.
 - a. Earth Day, World Water Day, etc.
 - b. Same day event at all farmers markets
 - c. Participation at MREA Energy Fair, etc.
 - d. Local energy fairs
15. Reorganize “Green Drinks” in the Fox Valley to provide a social event focused on sustainability
16. Offer education opportunities and events at area schools
17. Create joint projects between local governments, business and industry, NGOs and areas schools to enhance student learning and get new ideas from the students.

FUNDING

Participants identified the need to develop funding sources for sustainability communication, education and events. This information should be made available to the public – posted on the regional website

Project Support- How can these groups provide support for each other on new and existing projects?

The groups provided insight into project ideas and needs. See below. The topics grouped into: Education/Awareness, Energy –related projects, Policy/Governmental and broadly-defined initiatives. Respondents provided tips, as well as offers of help for some of the projects. Many of the comments expressed in this section echoed those listed in the first section regarding communication and educational efforts. Some of the initiatives provided some novel ideas, such as having a policy exchange session. Names listed with the projects have some ownership/effort already invested in the listed activities. This listing will be circulated to attendees for further follow-up.

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Hosting a TNS group at ST. Joe's church in Appleton. John Gosling's project:

- Have you contacted other parishes and nearby churches?
- Consider Focus and WE Energy Grants (G. Dearborn)

Steve Barry Project Idea: Museum exhibit on sustainability

Margy-OSHSAB-community outreach forums

TNS circles starting-give us your emails

Get co-workers interested/involved with company sustainability taskforce-Sadie Schroeder

- Educate thru bulletin boards at work, Find the tie between the company products and a sustainable activity \$=support
- Offer incentives like premier parking or time off
- Allow them to participate on work time
- Competition between departments
- Reward winning/reducing efforts with vacation day.

Host monthly e-news letter for sustainability groups-Kathy Thunes

- Roger Kanitz support-explore limits of how many groups could be served
- Link all public school teachers with a "teachable" moment column

Host monthly or bi-monthly informal gatherings-Greg Steiner will try to co-host with others

- Morning coffee house/farm market
- Evening social/brew house/private residence
- Kathy Thunes willing to help
- I suggest after work at Brew house with same day, same time each week or month so no confusion-Joy Perry-also interested in the idea.

Farm Market Booths in each town-create series of informational displays rotate them among the cities;/towns. Each market would have a different booth each week-Kate

Increase awareness of sustainable wiki and discussion groups-Greg Steiner will demo

- Start with follow-up form today's meeting
- Could linked to town website-Allan Davies
- Good idea-I can help-Ron Hardy

ENERGY

Larry Roth's Project **Creating a Biggest Loser Program** for People who want to compare their electrical usage and reduction to their neighbors.

- Cool-get utilities to support the challenge
- Contact local businesses to donate prizes
- Check building permits for folks with alternate systems in the community
- I will propose to myHS3 participants-Margie
- Get home energy auditors involved to distribute collateral (marketing materials)
- Look into existing neighborhood associations and or districts/wards
- Bill Schulz-call me and I will get your idea on my show plus give you a booth at the next "Answers to Energy" event

Project: Jeff Ehlers at Renewergy (Oshkosh) **Energy Expo**-bring in vendors and organizations to showcase products and services that save people \$ on energy. Need to get more involvement from general public and organizations that support energy efficiency.

- Call Habitat for Humanity ReStore
- The public likes free-bees
- Educate citizens and company owners on sustainable employment. John Gosling can help.-IT using home -based, local survival needs. AITP good organization

Develop an **energy conservation outreach** education project for neighborhoods

- How about an Eagle Scout project?
- Allen Davies has target neighborhood in Grand Chute
- Get schools/students involved-get their parents. Involved
- Have all utility customers get a personal/household yearly use report and then support efforts

Env Engineering Internship Opportunity with local industry-Mike D. Need Assistance-special project

- Contact Michigan Tech/UW Madison/UW Platteville
- UW Extension Jim R.
- Roger Kanitz will help
- Town could offer stipend for student project

POLICY/GOVERNMENT

Need Policy Change so that "default" condition is that small scale food production is allowed on public land unless specifically prohibited in specific areas.

City of Neenah-promoting rain barrel use with water bill credits

- Agree-could partner T.O.M., George Dearborn-Town of Menasha and City of Menasha too
- Get neighborhood communities to adopt same ordinance/policy=safety in numbers
- Neighborhood champions with demos for a specific neighborhood area-invite your neighbor in for a "barrel of fun"

Get sustainability-focused people elected to public office

- Call local Green Party
- Ask all candidates to answer sustainability questions and post answers on the website (Larry Roth)

Build Eco-Lobby-Steve Barney

- Leverage Votes

Anyone writing **sustainability plans**? Dani-Oshkosh

- Manitowoc has one
- City of Menasha included sustainability options
- Allen D. writing comp. plan with strong sustainable goals-adopt 2009-Outagamie County Mike Hendrick-has energy plan concepts in progress
- Neenah school district has students writing a plan for school district

Town Comprehensive plan

- Adopt sustainability goals
- Change decision making process to include sustainability
- Citizen support for municipal sustainable activities
- George Dearborn doing also
- Read TNS as group-Kathy Thunes willing to assist

Write case studies and post on www.capacitycenter.org UW Ex site-Jim R.

INITIATIVES

Project: **New Food Shed** (new organization connecting consumers with local sustainable foods)

- Needs funding to purchase printing, media and part time staff
- Needs more people for steering committee
- Contact people who organize local markets
- Can this connect to local restaurants?
- Idea to add to this idea-coop restaurant? Sadie
- Waushara County Food Connections-working on this Jan Novak in Waushara-Kathy Thunes has information
- Bedet's Restaurant=Dani bedcetsrestaurant.com

Roger Kanitz-Project: Implement **Rain Gardens** to eliminate need for retention basins

- Follow Pierce Park pond issue in Appleton (J. Gosling)
- Master Gardens do teaching sessions on this-contact Kevin JEWK(Outagamie) OR Nick Schneider(Winnebago) at UW Extension
- Town of Menasha plan incentives
- Talk to Bryant Moroder at Sustain Dane
- Have Dave Wollangk paint a rain barrel for you

Rain Gardens-Demo project at SCA office-I would like help-Mike Dillon

- I'll help-Sadie
- Talk to Sustain Dane-Bryant Moroder

Urban agriculture

- Growing power in Milwaukee
- City of Menasha sustainability board-Urban agriculture/local food in city
- Contact Susan Richardson-Community Garden Network
- Community gardens on unused space or school property Get kids tied into gardening
- There is a group in Cali that supports this movement-provide an email and I will find the link for you-Sadie
- Contact Portage County "Farmshed"
- Contact Betsy Rozell-540-4109
- Local CHAT Plunge Group-Paula Morgan and John Mielke heading-considering initiatives along these lines. Meeting will produce action items. See Joy Perry for more details.

Valley Transit Maps should show bike routes in all towns

- Increase rack usage on busses
- Local businesses with bike racks fund a guide to businesses have bike racks.
- Town bike program-employ kids to maintain the bikes

Encourage local **composting**-have a compost doctor as a resource-Kate

- Research and implement GPS on landfill compactor to save air space, fuel and man power –Lori O'Bright
- I have an in-house composter-Roger Kanitz

Mike Dillon-actively seeking **renewable energy joint projects-schools/utilities/industry** and will be sharing results with the community-residents and/or govt. and/or environmental groups and/or schools.

Note: Follow-up meeting has already been set for this initiative.

- SMC link-resources already there-contact David Weiss, Jeff Ehlers, Jim Funk
- Would like to investigate solar thermal and geo thermal
- Bill Schultz-call me Mike I will put you on my radio show.
- Communicate with community through PC and Bill's show
- Want to share results from energy efficiency projects and alternative water management projects as well.

Support for **passenger rail** in Fox Valley to Milwaukee

- Link new routes or change state law-G. Dearborn
- A. Davis would help
- Support www.midwesthsr.org
- Demonstrate how this can save money and be convenient to the commuter
- Most efficient form of travel compares with cost of road system
- Extend to Green Bay; Also to Stevens Point – Eau Claire – Twin Cities
- This could be addressed at municipal/school district/county govt. level by joint app of energy Independent Community –Jim R.

Educate homeowners about having a **green urban landscape**-Sadie Schroeder

- City of Neenah is working on zoning to "allow" this
- Maybe libraries can help with hosting a program
- I can help-Connie Kanitz or maybe hardware stores or work with some landscaping companies.

Margie/George Dearborn/Mike Dillon--**Develop Sustainability corridor**-Town of Menasha-Miron, SCA, McMahon, SMC **Note: Meeting in progress to follow-up on this idea.**

Build on the trails project, Invite sustainability groups to meet at these facilities

- Rails to trails
- Explore ECRP offer
- Mike Dillon working with Denny Lamer-McMahon
- Tours of solar systems at Town of Menasha
- Sign on CB to draw attention as traffic goes by
- Talk to Chip Bircher at WPS
- Work with MREA's solar tours
- Town also thinking of geo-thermal too.-George Dearborn

Appendix B Communications Worksheet Data

Group ☺ 1

1. Listserve – yahoo, gmail, etc. for communication and spreading ideas/discussion
2. Directory of “Greens” in government
3. Staff (\$)a regular coordinator
 - a. Industry reps – LinkedIn
 - b. List of eco-municipalities
4. Regional council
 - a. Quarterly meetings
 - b. Reps from all communities
5. Website for each community
 - a. List of actions completed
 - b. Money saved
 - c. Monthly sustainability report
6. Communicate with government officials
 - a. Citizens showing up
 - b. Get officials to adopt
 - c. Hear more success stories, especially good fiscal results

Group A

1. Annual group meeting for sharing
2. Open houses to see Menasha panels
3. Monthly news e-mail
4. East Central RPC to act as website coordinator
 - a. Menasha sustainability website limited access due to law
 - b. Explore rule changes
 - c. Limited city staff
 - d. How to use committed citizens
 - e. Hear from the community
5. Linked In Group for sustainability
 - a. Web ring linking related sustainability sites
6. Seminar presentations
 - a. How to discuss business aspect in community
 - b. Need to convey things done
 - c. Success stories – to inside community directors

7. Demonstrations – show community what cities/towns are doing

Group B

1. Website
 - a. Linked to all valley sustainability groups
 - b. Updated with info by city/business – mtgs listed, local events
 - c. Wiki
 - d. Twitter
 - e. blogs
 - f. Ads in community news letter
 - g. Sustain F.V. com. and monitor blogs
2. City to promote freecycle events
3. Media outreach – single liaison to be “voice of sustainability in FV
4. Events connected to local farm market
5. Regional committee
6. Facebook, LinkedIn
7. Library – local bulletin board focused on sustainability
8. Speakers bureau with on-line directory
9. Education and outreach – how to publicize website
10. How to educate the community
11. Round robin e-mail newsletters – pass from party to party

Group Δ

1. Buy some neat T-shirts
2. Solicit \$ from committed industry and/or foundations to support Env. Ed and events
3. Speak a common language
4. Make it simple to get in touch and stay in touch
5. Common calendar
6. Aim to involve more people in as many areas as possible
7. Use ECOS-FV and Sustain FV blog and website
8. Build organization websites and blogs into a “Superweb”
9. Where necessary, “lead the leaders”
10. Show up and make ourselves heard at gov’t meetings
11. Facebook and social networking
12. Re-organize “green drinks” in FV
13. Educational/teaching events at schools
14. Co-op with regional ENGOs or special groups (MREA) on eco events
 - a. Organize for large earth day celebration linked together
15. Use the media (after educating them)
16. Partner with local Mfg/Industry on “green events” and sponsor env. Ed events
17. Write the stories/press releases and take the photos for Media and give it to them.
18. Multi-community events – world Water Day, Earth Day
19. Free weekly sustainability column for the P-C
20. Educational booths at farm markets, fairs, etc.

21. Neenah School has a group of kids writing a school district sustainability plan
22. Link Sustain FV and New North and Local CESA for energy saving presentations
 - a. Link Environmental School to water utilities
23. Traveling display, shared experts across cities
24. Find/develop industry/mftg sponsors and partnerships
 - a. Technical resources
 - b. Money
 - c. Public relations
25. Create joint project and/or Env. Ed opportunities with gov't, industry, utilities, education
 - a. Share "canned" presentations with other on environmental education
 - b. Partnerships with local schools on env. Educational opportunities
 - c. Booth at farmers market
 - d. Sister eco-municipality to share with
 - e. Student projects can shake up "normal" thinking
26. Study circles early adopters network
27. Shake up the status quo – creative chaos, power to the people
28. Website ideas
 - a. Include university, business sustainability info on city/community sus. Website
29. Where necessary:
 - a. Lead your leaders
 - b. Show up to gov't meetings
 - c. Speak up
 - d. Cause creative thinking and actions
30. Social media outlets – Face Book, Twitter, Linked In
31. Ensure a common language and definitions exist – enabling effective communication

Group ☆

1. Focused committed group website and discussion
 - a. Encourage more members to regularly monitor discussions.
 - b. Have an educational session on how to use it
 - c. Publicize wildly about website (bumper stickers, advertize on everyone's publicity)
 - d. Link Co website to sustain F.V. site
2. Tie sustainability to other community events
3. Facebook
4. Bring awareness to the farmers market
5. Success stories – gov't, business, industry, schools
6. Create a "programmed learning unit" for teaching sustainability concepts at many levels (keyed to learner readiness)
7. Joint radio/TV ads and marketing budget
8. Open houses/tours
9. Community newsletter – e-mail and printed (sent snail mail)
10. Regular social events
 - a. "green drinks"

- b. Business associated with green products
 - c. Reminders to those we know
- 11. Face-to-face communication and networking
 - a. Annual ECOS sponsored sustainability meeting so that local groups can communicate face-to-face
 - b. 2-3 times a year.