



## State Park Harvest Feeds Community

People's Harvest, a food "rescue" and farm education program, is literally breaking ground at Mashamoquet Brook State Park to feed local low-income families in northeastern Windham County. This food rescue program takes excess fresh, locally grown food and distributes it to agencies that serve hungry people. People's Harvest volunteers grow vegetables on 6 acres of the park.

In addition, local gardeners drop off a portion of their homegrown produce to increase the food donations. The group's goal is to have home gardeners throughout the area donate 10% of their harvest to local food pantries, senior centers, and soup kitchens. Last year People's Harvest donated 1500 pounds of veggies grown at the state park and received donations of 1000 more pounds from home gardeners.

The project reduces greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change because locally grown food reduces pollution from long distance food transport and packaging. Since the average produce grown in the United States travels 1,500 miles from farm to table, locally grown foods can reduce air pollution and greenhouse gases. In addition, the project helps educate the public about food security, gardening, and nutrition and it provides fresh local produce to families that have limited access to gardens and farms.

Carl Asikainen, director of People's Harvest, has worked closely with Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Park Manager John Folsom to bring the project to fruition. Now entering its second year, the group is starting to develop educational materials and partner with local schools to bring students to the farm to learn how food is grown. Since less than 2% of the public in the United States is involved in agriculture, projects like this help people reconnect with where food comes from and how it is grown.

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## State Park Harvest Feeds Community (continued from pg. 1)

For the past eight years, DEP has worked to connect people to the environment through food supply systems using the curriculum "Project Food, Land and People". These materials will be used with schools participating in the People's Harvest project and help connect children to their environment.

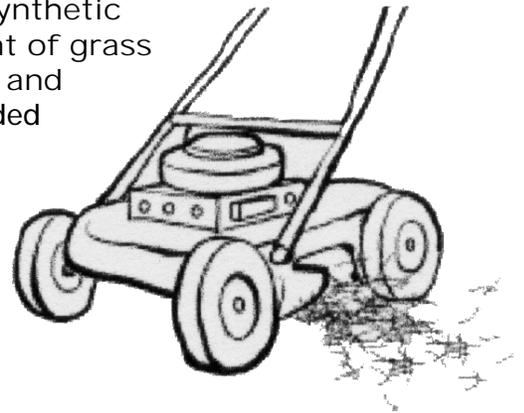
# Relieving Grass Pains

That smile you had when you first smelled fresh cut grass in the spring is a distant memory as you sweat in the summer sun mowing your lawn. It is hot, dusty, and the exhaust from the mower is making your eyes burn.

Lawns do have benefits -- they give us a place to play, keep the surrounding areas cooler in the summer and prevent erosion that carries soil and other contaminants into our rivers and streams. But they take a tremendous amount of time and resources to maintain. In the U.S, we manage 30 million acres of lawn, using about 100 million tons of fertilizer and 80 million pounds of pesticides per year. Annually 580 million gallons of gasoline is used for our mowers and nearly a third of urban fresh water in the eastern U.S. goes to watering our lawns. The typical homeowner spends 40 hours a year mowing the lawn – this is equivalent in air pollution of driving 14,000 miles in a car since most mowers do not have adequate pollution control devices.

There are "grassroots" efforts throughout Connecticut helping people rethink their high maintenance lawns – therefore reducing pesticide, fertilizer, and water use. Towns, such as Milford, Plainville, Guilford, and Cheshire, are encouraging their residents to sign on to the "Freedom Lawn" initiative. Besides voluntarily eliminating the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, residents are reducing the amount of grass around their homes in favor of trees, shrubs, groundcovers and perennial gardens. Where there is still lawn, those areas are seeded with grasses that are slower growing and tolerant of drought.

The Ecological Landscaping Network (ELN) has been helping Connecticut residents learn about sustainable landscaping through demonstrations and technical assistance. For example, ELN recently held a workshop at Eleanore M.'s backyard in Middletown. Once a typical suburban lawn, Eleanore's yard was transformed into an attractive landscape that provides year round habitat and food for wildlife.



### Ways You Can Support Locally Grown Foods:

- Donate your garden produce to local food pantries, senior centers, and soup kitchens
- Buy locally grown foods at CT Farmers' Markets [www.ct.gov/doag](http://www.ct.gov/doag)
- Buy a share in a local farm, known as Community Supported Agriculture [www.ctnofa.org](http://www.ctnofa.org)
- Learn more about Project Food, Land and People at [www.dep.state.ct.us/educ/workshops.htm](http://www.dep.state.ct.us/educ/workshops.htm)
- Get your school to buy local through the Farm to School program [www.ct.gov/doag](http://www.ct.gov/doag)
- For more information on People's Harvest, contact (860) 974-3198

To get started on making your lawn easier on you and the environment, please visit the following websites or call the DEP Office of Pollution Prevention at (860) 424-3694.

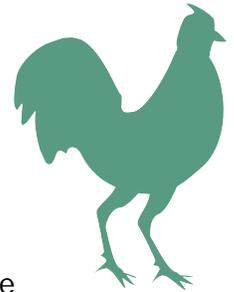
- Ecological Landscaping Network – USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service [www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/el.html](http://www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/el.html) or (860) 688-7725 ext. 120
- Smaller American Lawns Today – Connecticut College [www.conncoll.edu/ccrec/greenet/arbo/salt/challenge.html](http://www.conncoll.edu/ccrec/greenet/arbo/salt/challenge.html)
- Cleaner Lawn Care Equipment – Union of Concerned Scientists [www.ucsusa.org/publications/greentips/cleaner-yards-dirtier-air.html](http://www.ucsusa.org/publications/greentips/cleaner-yards-dirtier-air.html)
- Planting Native Trees, Shrubs and Groundcovers – CT DEP [www.dep.state.ct.us/cgnhs/invasive.htm](http://www.dep.state.ct.us/cgnhs/invasive.htm)

# We All Live Downstream

Clean water ... Most people would agree that protecting this resource is important --especially those of us who enjoy fishing, boating and swimming. Since the 1970s, we have seen great improvement in the water quality of Connecticut's 5,800 miles of streams and rivers – mostly due to stringent wastewater permitting requirements for our industries and sewage treatment plants. However, some streams and rivers located in less developed areas are being negatively impacted by human and animal activities.

Throughout the year, DEP and other organizations monitor the water quality of many of the state's waters. Unfortunately, some waterways fail to meet the minimum standards that help assure that the water is safe for full-body contact recreation, including swimming. Testing for several different types of indicator bacteria is usually performed to help monitor water quality. These indicator bacteria (usually E. coli and enterococci) are normally present in animal manure and wildlife droppings and generally are not a problem in low concentrations. However when in higher concentrations, they indicate that disease-causing pathogens may be present.

DEP has been working to reduce the water quality issues associated with large-scale animal farming operations. However, smaller "hobby" farms are becoming more commonplace throughout the state and may be contributing to degraded water quality downstream. In 2003, Connecticut had more horses per acre than any state in the U.S. Llamas and alpacas have become popular and more people are choosing to keep a few chickens. (Connecticut also leads the country in the density of egg-laying poultry.) And as we develop more greenways along our waterways, we are also increasing the number of pet-walkers along these trails.



Harbor Watch / River Watch, an organization based at EarthPlace, a nature center in Westport, has been conducting water quality monitoring in several streams that do not have designated wastewater discharges, including Sasco Brook and Aspetuck River. This program received funding from DEP and is fully certified to do water quality testing. Their results indicate that animal waste is indeed a problem -- very high levels of the indicator bacteria were documented almost immediately downstream from areas where heavy concentrations of domestic animals are kept, including family pets.

In order to continue improving our waters, here are a few actions you can take to minimize the impacts of your animals:

- Pick up after your pets and dispose of the waste. Pet waste should be kept out of street gutters and storm drains. As long as the waste is not mixed with other materials, it can be flushed down the toilet. This allows waste to be properly treated by a sewage treatment plant or septic system. Pet waste can also be sealed in a plastic bag and put into the garbage can. Another option is to bury the waste – see the EPA fact sheet on the proper method -- [www.epa.gov/safewater/protect/pdfs/petwaste.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/protect/pdfs/petwaste.pdf)
- Keep horses and other animals 25 – 50 feet away from streams, rivers, ponds, lakes and other surface waters by using fences. Where this is not feasible, consider installing some type of filtration or barrier to slow down and spread out the surface flow of water, such as a well-vegetated stream buffer area. For more information on creating buffers and better ways to manage animal waste, visit the Horse Environmental Awareness Program (HEAP) website [www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/rc&d/km\\_heap-program.html](http://www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/rc&d/km_heap-program.html) or call Mark Cummings, CT Natural Resource Conservation Service, at (203) 284-3663, extension 3. Your local Conservation District Office can also provide information and assistance – [www.conservect.org](http://www.conservect.org).

For updates on water quality at state swimming areas, call 1-866-287-2757 (toll free) or visit [www.dep.state.ct.us/updates/beach/wtrqual.asp](http://www.dep.state.ct.us/updates/beach/wtrqual.asp)

# Recycling Rundup

## Curbing Your Enthusiasm



We've had mandatory recycling since 1991 in Connecticut. All towns started off recycling the same items at the curb. But after fifteen years, many municipal programs have changed -- some accept more materials, especially PETE and HDPE plastics (see box ); some have gone from weekly to semi-weekly collections and most have decreased the amount of education they provide about their programs. So here are some tips for recycling right:

- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - - your priority should be to reduce the amount of trash you generate, reuse what you can, and then recycle the rest.
- Call your town's Public Works Department or transfer station. (Or you can go to DEP's website listed below to see who your town's recycling contact is.) Ask what can be put in the bin or what is allowed at the transfer station. Your town may also have places where you can drop off white office paper, textiles or phone books and other mandatory recyclables not taken at the curb such as leaves, scrap metal, waste oil and batteries.
- Ask how the recyclables should be prepared. Of course, cans and bottles and plastics should be rinsed, but labels are okay. Other items might be a little trickier. For example, some towns may accept corrugated cardboard tied-up with string, but not tape; other may only take it loose, but cut up into a manageable size. Don't put your recyclables in plastic bags. If the hauler is still leaving items in your bin, call them to find out why. It could be that their staff has not been trained properly and need a refresher, too.
- Lastly, close the loop. Make your effort count by buying products with recycled content. That plastic water bottle you recycle today may become part of the polar fleece jacket you buy tomorrow.

For more information on recycling and for the municipal recycling contact list, visit DEP's website at [www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/recycle/ctrecycles.htm](http://www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/recycle/ctrecycles.htm) or call (860) 424-3365.

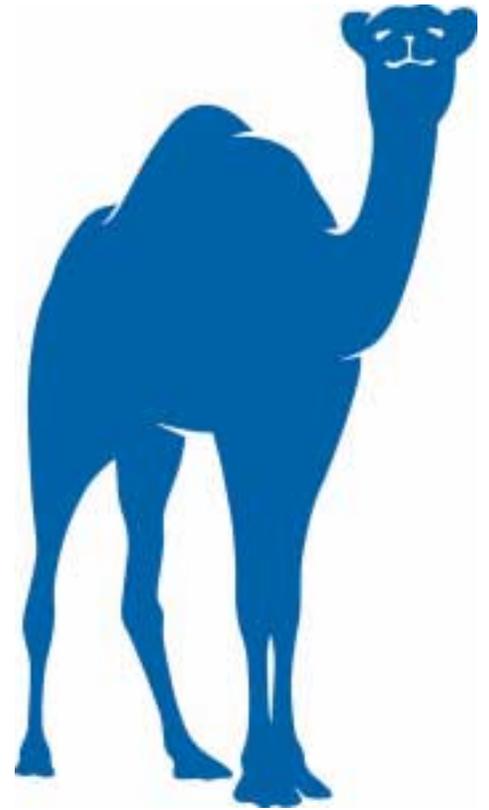
Some plastics are easily recycled and have good end markets; others are not. If your town takes plastics, you can look for the resin code in the triangle on bottom of the container. PETE (#1) or HDPE (# 2) are the plastics taken by most towns. Don't include other plastics, including shopping bags, in your bin. Different resin codes may not be able to be recycled together and plastic bags can clog recycling machines. Major chains like Stop & Shop usually have a container in the front of the store for recycling of clean bags.



# Camels Have a Mania For Recycling

The Connecticut College Camels, that is. Connecticut College, in its first year in the national RecycleMania contest, finished 5th in the Per Capita Classic category, collecting more than 56 pounds per person of recyclables over a ten week period. They also excelled in the Targeted Materials category, coming in 2nd in Food Service/Organics, 3rd in Bottles and Cans, and 4th in Paper. Ninety-three colleges and universities participated this year's events.

Amy Cabaniss, Campus Environmental Coordinator, and student volunteers, launched an educational campaign which included posters, presentations, articles, ad and prompts including a large banner, baseball caps with a stitched logo, and more. Individuals were invited to sign a Pledge to Recycle More and the pledges were entered into a bi-weekly drawing for prizes. Amy was amazed that they were able to recycle so much material and believes that next year they will place even higher. The competition was a great awareness builder, call-to-action and community effort.



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For more information on RecycleMania and results of the 2006 contest - [www.recyclemaniacs.org/index.htm](http://www.recyclemaniacs.org/index.htm)

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## Diesel Plan is an Award Winner

In May, DEP's Air Management Bureau received a Merit Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for its success in assembling a comprehensive plan for reducing diesel emissions in Connecticut. The plan, designed to reduce the health risks from diesel air pollution, was developed in just six months and included input from businesses, environmentalists, educational and government participants, and local community groups.

Mobile sources, including transit and school buses, trucks, and construction equipment are often thought of as main sources of diesel emissions in Connecticut. The Clean Diesel Plan looks at mobile sources as well as other key sources of particulate matter, like heating oil and wood burning, in a comprehensive way. It includes an inventory of diesel emission reduction opportunities and a menu of cost-effective strategies. The stakeholder group also identified creative strategies for overcoming funding barriers by employing tax incentives, contract specifications, Department of Energy State Energy Program funds and other funding available for vehicle retrofits.

One of the great benefits of the plan is that it will reduce emissions in several communities in the state which suffer disproportionately from the impacts of air pollution thereby addressing environmental justice concerns and serves as a blueprint for the state to move forward with a multi-faceted diesel reduction strategy. A copy of the plan and all of the materials compiled as part of the stakeholder process can be obtained on DEP's website at: [www.dep.state.ct.us/air2/diesel/index.htm](http://www.dep.state.ct.us/air2/diesel/index.htm)

# Bike to work in 2006



For the seventh consecutive year, "Bike to Work" events are being held on the last Friday of each month from April through September in the Capitol region. Employees throughout the region are leaving their cars at home and bicycling to work, experiencing a more enjoyable start to their day, while getting in a healthy cardiovascular workout.

While enjoying the benefits of improved health, they also gain from cost savings, pollution reductions, air quality improvements and reduced traffic in their community and the state of Connecticut. A free breakfast at the Old State House in Hartford is offered to all who commute via bicycle.

The Central Connecticut Bicycle Alliance, along with representatives from DEP and other agencies, are providing support for new bike commuters during the summer season and throughout the year. DEP staff volunteered to host the May 26th event in conjunction with "Ozone Awareness Week". This is to point out that the single biggest contribution we can make to cleaner air in Connecticut is to avoid driving. DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy rode her bike to the event, despite her very busy schedule.

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For more information, see:  
[www.wecycle.org/btw.htm](http://www.wecycle.org/btw.htm)

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## WHAT'S NEW IN P2?

from the Connecticut DEP

### Lights Down

Effective July 1, state funds may only be used for outdoor lights or lighting fixtures on state buildings or grounds if they maximize energy conservation and minimize outdoor light pollution (with some exemptions). The new law (PA 06-86) requires that all future replacements and new installations of outdoor lighting at state agencies must be fully shielded to prevent uplift. Lighting in excess of the intended purpose is prohibited. The legislation that passed this session also sets out a schedule to implement dark sky friendly floodlighting. [www.cga.ct.gov/2006/ACT/PA/2006PA-00086-R00HB-05051-PA.htm](http://www.cga.ct.gov/2006/ACT/PA/2006PA-00086-R00HB-05051-PA.htm)

### Tax Break for Saving Energy

Legislation (HB 5846, Sec. 18) passed this session extends the sales tax "holiday" on residential weatherization products to June 30, 2007. Products include: programmable thermostats, window film, caulking, window and door weather strips, insulation, water heater blankets, oil furnaces that are at least 85% efficient, and water heaters, natural gas furnaces and windows that meet Energy Star standards.

## Green State Buildings

Legislation (HB 5846, Sec. 70) passed this session requires that the State Office of Policy of Management (OPM) establish new building construction standards for State buildings that are consistent with or exceed the LEED silver standard or equivalent. OPM is to consult with DEP and the State Departments of Public Works (DPW) and Public Safety on the new standards. These standards apply to new construction of a State facility (not including salt sheds, parking garages, maintenance facilities, or schools) that has a projected cost of \$5 million or greater. OPM can exempt buildings from the new standards upon completion of a cost-benefit analysis. Such analysis is to be done in consultation with DPW and the Institute for Sustainable Energy at Eastern CT State University. Regulations implementing the standards will be adopted by January 1, 2007.

## Choose Cleaner Cars

State legislation passed this session will add additional information for new car buyers to consider beginning with model year 2009. The goal of the legislation (PA 06-161) is to encourage Connecticut citizens who purchase new vehicles to choose ones that emit the smallest amount of greenhouse gases. The new law calls for an education campaign on the environmental impacts of motor vehicles. A label will be developed and placed on all new and leased cars beginning in 2009 that will rate the greenhouse gas emissions for the vehicle in an easy to read format. The law also makes the sales tax exemption for the most fuel-efficient hybrid cars permanent.  
[www.cga.ct.gov/2006/ACT/Pa/pdf/2006PA-00161-R00SB-00660-PA.pdf](http://www.cga.ct.gov/2006/ACT/Pa/pdf/2006PA-00161-R00SB-00660-PA.pdf)



# Ask Eartha



Note: This feature offers answers to select environmental questions. Send your question to the editor's address -- [judith.prill@po.state.ct.us](mailto:judith.prill@po.state.ct.us) and watch future issues for an answer.

### Dear Eartha:

I recently upgraded my computer and was wondering what I should do with my old one? I understand they may be hazardous to the environment. — Debbie S.,  
Coventry, CT

If the computer is still working, you should consider donating it or giving it to someone you would use it. Check with secondhand stores such as Goodwill to see if they will accept your computer or visit the website [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org).

If the computer is broken, or is very old technology, the next best option is to recycle it. Check with your town Department of Public Works to see if they offer electronics recycling at the transfer station. The Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority sponsors several electronics collection days for their member towns. Go to the CRRRA website, [www.crra.org](http://www.crra.org) to see if your town is a participating member. Other regions of the state also sponsor collection events. Check with your town for information on these shared collection days or keep an eye out for information in your local paper. Finally, there are some businesses that may take them from you, however they may charge a small fee. Go to

the DEP website [www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/recycle/electrecy.htm](http://www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/recycle/electrecy.htm) for a list of companies that recycle electronics. Some computer companies, such as Hewlett-Packard will also take any computer or peripherals back for a fee. Go to [www.hp.com/hpinfo/globalcitizenship/environment/recycle/index.html](http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/globalcitizenship/environment/recycle/index.html) for details.

The computer monitors and TVs contain large amounts of lead that may be released when the garbage is incinerated. Even if they were not toxic, the town is responsible for the costs associated with getting rid of garbage. With the sheer volume of electronic waste, disposal costs will continue to increase.

There is a growing movement across the country to have electronics manufacturers foot some of the bill for electronics recycling. A number of states, including Washington, Maine and Maryland have passed legislation requiring manufacturers to take a more active role in the recycling of their products. Having the manufacturer finance the collection will ease the burden for municipalities and provide an incentive for establishing collection programs.

- Eartha



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For a free subscription, please contact Judy Prill at (860) 424-3694 or e-mail your request to [judith.prill@po.state.ct.us](mailto:judith.prill@po.state.ct.us). If you want to save paper and postage by reading the P2 View electronically, you can either subscribe to the listserv or view it on-line (see [www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/p2/](http://www.dep.state.ct.us/wst/p2/)).

P2 View is published by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Pollution Prevention. Editor: Judy Prill; Contributors: Nan Peckham, Mary Sherwin, Connie Mendolia, Lynn Stoddard, Kim Trella, Chris Malik, David Westcott, Tom Metzner

Publication of this newsletter is funded by a grant from the U.S. EPA.

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper using water-based ink. 

# P 2 C A L E N D A R

## A S E L E C T I O N O F E N V I R O N M E N T A L E V E N T S

July 22, 2006

**Wildflowers, An Alternative to Lawn**  
 Westmoor Park –  
 West Hartford

Hear and see how a wildflower meadow can attract birds and butterflies. This workshop, sponsored by the Ecological Landscaping Network, features a slide presentation and walk through a blooming wildflower meadow that once was lawn.

To register, call (860) 688-7725 ext. 10 or visit [www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/eln-workshops.html](http://www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/eln-workshops.html).

August 5, 2006

**Tour of Ecological Landscaping Practices**

Tolland County Agricultural Center -  
 Vernon

View a rain garden, drought-tolerant plantings, an organic vegetable garden, an alternative lawn fertilization demonstration, a butterfly garden and a managed small pond. Although there is no registration fee, reservations are recommended.

Call (860) 688-7725 ext. 10 or visit [www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/eln-workshops.html](http://www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/eln-workshops.html).

August 15, 2006

**Organic Lawn and Turf Course**  
 New Haven

Topics include: Why Organic?, Site Analysis; Soil Fertility & Health, Soil Amendments, Compost, Cultural Practices, Pests, Weeds, Diseases, Insects.

Your choice of the following tracks: Lawns (residential or commercial) OR Sports Fields and Turf. Sponsored by the CT Northeast Organic Farming Association. To register, visit [www.organiclandcare.net](http://www.organiclandcare.net) or call (203) 888-5146.

September 9, 2006

**Home Lawn Care**  
 Auer Farm -  
 Bloomfield

This seminar, sponsored by the UCONN Home and Garden Education Center, will cover lawn seed selection, fertilizers, when to renovate, and problems such as moss, shade and grubs.

To register, call (860) 486-6271 or visit [www.ladybug.uconn.edu](http://www.ladybug.uconn.edu).