

Klamath Sustainable Communities

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Oil for Food

Americans put almost as much fossil fuel into our refrigerators as our cars. We're consuming about 400 gallons of oil a year per citizen - about 17% of our nation's energy use - for agriculture, a close second to our vehicular use. Tractors, combines, harvesters, irrigation, sprayers, tillers, balers, and other equipment all use petroleum. Even bigger gas guzzlers on the farm are not the machines, but so-called inputs. Synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides use oil and natural gas as their starting materials, and in their manufacturing. More than a quarter of all farming energy goes into synthetic fertilizers.

But getting the crop from seed to harvest takes only one-fifth of the total oil used for our food. The lion's share is consumed during the trip from the farm to your plate. Each food item in a typical U.S. meal has traveled an average of 1,500 miles. In addition to direct transport, other fuel-thirsty steps include processing (drying, milling, cutting, sorting, baking), packaging, warehousing, and refrigeration. Energy calories consumed by production, packaging, and shipping far outweigh the energy calories we receive from the food.

A quick way to improve food-related fuel economy would be to buy a quart of motor oil and drink it. More palatable options are available. If every U.S. citizen ate just one meal a week (any meal) composed of locally and organically raised meats and produce, we would reduce our country's oil consumption by over 1.1 million barrels of oil every week. That's not gallons, but barrels. Small changes in buying habits can make big differences. Becoming a less energy-dependent nation may just need to start with a good breakfast.

From *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver, this piece by Barbara's hubbie, Steven Hopp.

Locally produced and distributed food will become more viable as energy costs continue to escalate. Join the KSC effort to create a local food distribution network. More later in this and future newsletters.

Strawbale Workshop Sharing

Debrief and share your strawbale experience

Tuesday, October 7, from 7-8:30 pm at 409 Pine Street

KSC just completed its first strawbale construction training last month with Andrew Morrison, at www.strawbale.com leading the training. He had his work cut out for him with our group. Thanks Andrew!

More than 20 people helped put up the walls for Karen Little's new strawbale home near Agency Lake. Everyone worked really, really hard in the heat, and Karen's food team kept us well sustained with great food and drink.

Several people took lots of pictures, so let's get together and share pictures of this event. Bring CD's, DVD's, print outs, computer shows, etc. We plan to pick the ones we want to use for a story board to show Klamath County what strawbaling is all about. Karen will let us know how her house is coming along at the meeting and what more she has learned since the training. We hope to have Andrew return when we attach the wire mesh to the straw walls so all of can learn this procedure.

We will talk about the next training, which hopefully will be next year at the home Carol Reed and Jerry Brown are planning to build. We plan to share what we learned with "newbies" to put up the walls at their home.

Know someone interested who is not receiving our emails? Please let me have their names and contact information.

Thanks again to Karen Little for providing the opportunity for us to learn this important and sustainable way of building in Klamath County.

Leslie Lowe 882-6509, inharmony46@charter.net

Reduce Your Carbon Footprint

We hope to reduce our carbon footprint and mailing costs by reducing the number of paper newsletters sent via snail mail. So far, 25 folks are receiving it electronically. We can reduce our paper mailing by 75 and still stay above the minimum of 200 copies for a bulk mailing rate. Email Dwight at oh_otter@charter.net to receive this mailing electronically.

Thoughts on Local Food Networking

By Brian A. Charlton, Klamath OSU Extension

The Basin already has several co-ops for individual crops – grain and potatoes for example. The concept could work for larger scale vegetable production; however, economies of scale are the sticky component. That is, a co-op to supply only local sources would be better served (in my opinion) by very small growers -- those of the 'farmer market' scale. Larger growers could easily supply local demand and likely have extra that would need to be moved through other channels. In addition, with hay, grain, and potato prices at high levels and existing marketing channels -- it might be difficult to get these folks excited about changing direction.

Price is the driving factor -- are local buyers willing to potentially pay higher prices for locally grown produce? I've heard OIT is interested in 'local' but wants the product at the cheapest price compared to current suppliers.

What needs to be a component in this equation is reporting of the 'carbon footprint' -- that is, how much fossil fuel is contained in a container of strawberries, bag of chips, or a bag of carrots? For example, tomatoes from Mexico consumed in December have a higher 'carbon footprint' locally compared to Rick Walsh's greenhouse tomatoes. However, economies of scale afford the Mexico tomato production to be offered cheaper (despite a higher 'carbon footprint') than locally produced greenhouse tomatoes.

I'm rambling -- but do you see where I'm going? In short, for this to work effectively; price must not be the most important parameter or the chance of success will become more difficult. Connect the produce to an individual local grower, talk up the reduced 'carbon footprint', encourage local dollars to be spent locally -- the multiplier effect of spending a dollar more in the community. These must be part of the equation - in my opinion.

The City of Portland's energy office estimates that each American could cut down on carbon dioxide emissions by 230 pounds per year by purchasing products with reusable or recyclable packaging instead of disposable packaging. Don't support manufacturers that wrap items in multiple layers of packaging when one is enough. *News from the Bin* – WM

Going Green in Eugene

Neighborhood bike tours give participants a full view of yards built for green living.

In the eight years Jan Spencer has lived at 212 Benjamin St., he has torn out his driveway, eliminated all the grass and built a chicken coop. He calls his creation “edible landscaping.”

Spencer recently led 14 friends and neighbors on a bicycle tour of his River Road neighborhood to see what innovations people who use all or most of their yard space to grow food, keep chickens and produce solar power have made.

“These are all kind of models for food production and energy and rainwater,” he said. “These are all ways people are going to take care of their needs as we move into a constrained future.”

Spencer collects rainwater from his roof in 1,600-gallon water storage tanks. He then uses the stored water to provide moisture for his extensive garden. He said he doesn’t buy fruits and vegetables at the store, instead growing a variety of plants including a fig tree, kiwi vines, tomatoes, rosemary and countless others.

He transformed his house to include a sun room that takes advantage of its south-facing orientation to increase the amount of passive solar heating it can provide to the living space.

“Eugene is rich in pioneers of culture change,” Spencer said.

The second stop was just a few doors down at the Rev. John Pitney’s house. Pitney created a program called “That’s My Farmer,” in which 16 faith communities encourage their patrons to support local farmers through Community Supported Agriculture. Most often people who join CSAs pay for a subscription package at the beginning of the growing season and get a box of fresh fruits and vegetables every week.

Pitney has owned his home for nine years. In that time, he has installed two solar racks which feed energy into his house and the grid system whenever he produces more than his home is consuming.

Each rack produces about 1,200 kilowatt hours a year; that’s about one-third of his energy use, he said. He also has a solar water heater.

Pitney often has open houses and invites people to tour his yard. Part of the reason why our family chooses to do what we do is to be visible to others,” he said.

A few blocks away, the group stopped at Dharmalaya, the home of meditation teacher Ravi Logan and his family. Explaining to the group how he has arranged his backyard, Logan said, “We tried to make use of resources that are immediately available.”

That means sunlight, water and organic materials, he said. His property holds a home, a bath house and a meeting space for meditation and yoga, among other activities.

Dharmalaya came under scrutiny by the city last year in a dispute about land use permits. The center, the city said, was holding too many public activities. The city finally backed down and Dharmalaya has resumed small-scale offerings. The meditation center is a marvel of sustainable building.

Logan calls it the Straw Bale House because the walls are constructed with dried straw bales, which are then covered in plaster. When building it, Logan had a list of design objectives.

“As a spiritual teacher, I thought it was important to model my values,” he said. The building is powered by photovoltaic panels on the roof. “We adjusted the roof pitch to maximize the energy gain.”

Then it was off to a bike path along the Willamette River, where Kathleen Allison has been working with her neighbors and the city of Eugene’s Stream Team to restore an area of riparian habitat.

With a core group of seven to nine people, Allison has cleared out blackberries and garbage, including car tires, an auto hood and a transmission. The city provided 85 native trees and shrubs, wood chips and tools to the group, along with the Stream Team expertise. She said the group had four work parties last year.

“And then other people will see what we’re doing and put their bike down and help out for a little while,” she said. The new plantings often need watering, which Allison said is done with water from the river with five gallon buckets, fire brigade style.

“It’s building community, and it’s fun,” she said. Spencer added, “It’s neighbors looking after the neighborhood.”

The group then moved on to Goodwill where Spencer was commissioned to paint his ideal neighborhood, where everything is within walking distance and people grow food instead of ornamental plants. There were more stops along the bike tour that showed neighbors sharing space and responsibility.

Spencer, Peter Eberhardt and John Jordan-Cascade are working on a movie about the changes going on in sustainable urban living.

“There’s enormous positive opportunity in all this,” Spencer said. “We’re wrecking the planet and it’s something we can’t keep doing.”

The film, titled "Closer to Home," has been in the works for about nine months. The filmmakers hope to finish it by the end of the year.

"Everyone has seen doomsday movies such as "An Inconvenient Truth," a documentary about Al Gore's crusade against global warming, but that's where it ends, Jordan" Cascade said.

"There's not that much out there about positive actions."

From *The 5% Solution to the Climate Crisis* a project of Oregon Peaceworks
2008 — The Register-Guard, Eugene, Oregon

Organic Food Cheaper than Chemical Food?!

Organic food is currently regarded as a luxury purchase by shoppers, who have been forced to turn to lower cost, intensively-farmed produce by the economic downturn.

But a study suggests that the price of oil could soon make cereal crops grown with fertilisers more expensive than those produced more naturally.

Industrial farming relies on fossil fuels to mine, manufacture and transport fertilisers which replace nutrients in the soil.

Organic farming, however, improves soil fertility through crop rotations and is less affected by oil prices.

With oil predicted to reach \$200 a barrel within five to 10 years, the profit margin on organic wheat, barley and oil seed rape would be as much as 411.

This compares with up to 348 for the same crops produced by non-organic methods, according to the study by Andersons, the farm business consultants.

Peter Melchett, policy director of the Soil Association which promotes organic farming, said: "This study suggests that as oil inevitably becomes scarcer and costs more, economic forces will increasingly favour organic farming.

"Organic systems are not perfect, but they do use less energy, generally emit fewer greenhouse gases, can sequester carbon in the soil, provide more jobs and support more wildlife. This report suggests they could also offer a more secure long-term financial future for the UK's farmers."

Organic farming is backed by Prince Charles, who has an organic farm on his Highgrove estate.

The report comes a week after organic food sales were reported to have dropped by 20 per cent in the past eight months to 81 million in August.

Charles Bourns, chairman of the NFU's poultry board, said: "I was talking to someone in the NFU and they were saying it's happening in beef and everywhere, because at the end of the day it's a nice-to-have, not a need-to-have."

From an OCA web link; article from the Daily Telegraph (UK)

Read the article

www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_14437.cfm

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Power Point Presentation by Rick Walsh
Circle Discussion with various stakeholders
Wednesday, October 22 * 7:00 PM
Klamath County Courthouse Meeting Room
Basement Entrance @ Fourth & Main Streets

Rick Walsh with Fresh Green Organic Gardens will give a power point presentation about his greenhouse operation and winter time CSA which will start in November. They operate out of four Liskey greenhouses. Fifteen to thirty pound boxes will be available each week. Check out their offerings at www.localharvest.org – click on CSA and then enter the zip code 97601.

They plan to produce 100 boxes each week. A full CSA order (\$30/week) will be between 15 and 30 lbs a week and a half order (\$18/week) will be half the weight of a full order. Veggies supplied will be determined by what is ready to harvest.

A circle discussion will follow the power point presentation. Focus of the discussion will be obstacles to and opportunities for increasing the amount of food produced locally for consumption in south central Oregon.

Fish Need Oxygen

The number of ocean dead zones are increasing dramatically. As if fish didn't have enough to worry about, now those near coastal areas are threatened by an unprecedented number of dead zones, says a recent study in the journal *Science*.

The number of dead zones -- oxygen-deprived areas that can no longer support marine life -- has doubled every decade since the 1960s, and the zones have been getting bigger and bigger. Researchers counted over 400 dead zones worldwide, the combined area of which is bigger than the state of Oregon. "We can say that human activities really screwed up oxygen conditions in our coastal areas," said Robert J. Diaz, the study's lead author.

Up where they spray all day in the sun, chemical fertilizers from farms and urban areas send nitrogen-rich runoff downstream and out to sea, where it spurs the production of algae. As the algae sink to the bottom and decompose, huge amounts of oxygen are sucked up. The resulting dead zones in turn kill huge amounts of sea life. The researchers say fertilizer pollution needs to be reined in. 8-19-08 Grist