



ANNUAL REPORT 2011

BOROUGH OF KUTZTOWN ENVIROMENTAL ADVISORY COMMISSION

2011 Membership

The Kutztown Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) members at the beginning of 2011 were Jeri Colicchio, Karen Feridun, Jeffrey Henninger, Robyn Jasko, David Rustay, and Todd Underwood. At the February EAC meeting, officers were elected as follows: Jeri Colicchio – Chair, Todd Underwood – Vice Chair, and Jeffrey Henninger – Secretary. For 2011, the Borough Council Liaison was Kevin Snyder and the Planning Commission Liaison was Karen Feridun. One seat on the commission was vacant at the start of 2011. In addition, Robyn Jasko resigned in February 2011. These two seats on the commission remained vacant for 2011.

Report on Progress Toward Goals

In 2011, EAC members decided to pursue the same goals as in 2010. Members served on subcommittees that address each of the annual goals. To simplify some of this work, the Communication and Education Subcommittee and the Community Workshop Subcommittee were combined into one subcommittee. In 2011 focused on addressing the annual goals and any new business as it arose. Below is a summary of the progress toward accomplishing these goals.

Progress Toward Annual Goals

1. Maintain regular communication with Kutztown University's (KU) Environmental Committee.

The EAC co-sponsored two community outreach events with KU student's Environmental Action Club (see goal 2 below for full details).

2. Communicate and/or educate borough residents and local media (when needed) on pertinent environmental issues. Establish community workshops on growing native plants, planting trees, planting vegetable gardens, home composting, residential home energy audits, and decreasing energy use.

The EAC website and the Facebook page continue to be a source of information for borough residents on our activities and as a location to post environmental opportunities and information. The website was updated in September 2011 and the Facebook page now has approximately 114 fans who obtain information from this online forum.

The EAC cosponsored four community outreach events in 2011. On March 21st, Douglas Tallamy gave a presentation at Kutztown University on native plants based on his book "Bringing Nature Home: How you can sustain wildlife with native plants". A book signing followed after the presentation. From April 28 to April 30th, a film festival "What's in your water" was held at Kutztown University. Several documentary films were shown that focused on water-related issues. On May 7th, Elaine Bartholomew and Shannon Crooker gave a workshop on rain gardens and rain barrels at the Kutztown public library. Jane Meeks, Executive Director of the Berks County Solid Waste Authority,

gave a presentation on food composting and recycling in Berks County on October 25th at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in Kutztown.

3. Produce an annual report for the EAC.

A draft of the 2011 annual report will be submitted at the February 2012 meeting.

4. Request and review information on the borough's efforts to meet the 12 standards of the Climate Protection Agreement.

The EAC reviewed and discussed a draft of the borough's Alternative Energy Ordinance. Members provided detailed comments to improve and clarify the ordinance that were submitted to the Planning Commission in January. In February, EAC members reviewed the full set of proposed revisions to the ordinance from the planning commission and voted to support these changes in full.

In November, the EAC reviewed a proposal by MetroTek to build, own and operate a solar panel installation on the borough farm property near the wellheads. Members expressed concern that the time frame for implementation would not be sufficient to properly evaluate the project's impact in such an environmentally sensitive area. The EAC recommended that Borough Council not proceed with the proposal given its time frame. The EAC also recommended that Borough Council form an exploratory committee to investigate future alternative energy projects and energy conservation in the borough.

5. Examine and review air quality & water quality in the borough.

The EAC raised a concern over the dumping of street-removed snow near the Sacony Creek by the swimming pool. The snow contains large amounts of trash and may contain road salt that could make its way into the creek. The snow was dumped according to DEP regulations (>100 feet from a waterway). However, the Sacony Creek and Marsh are the most environmentally sensitive areas in the borough and a reduction of any potential impact may be beneficial. The EAC contacted the Superintendent of Public Works, Norman Milnes, and requested that he consider an alternative snow dumping site away from the creek. Mr. Milnes, after consulting with Larry Lloyd of the Berks County Conservancy, suggested there was no risk of dumping snow near the creek.

6. Study borough recycling program and recommend changes to increase recycling rates in the borough.

At the urging of a concerned resident in April, members discussed ways to improve compliance by businesses and residents with the recycling regulations in the borough. The EAC contacted the Superintendent of Public Works, Norman Milnes, to start a discussion of this problem. No major progress was made on this issue in 2010, but the EAC will continue to work on improving compliance in 2011.

In June, the EAC worked out an agreement with Ryly's auto repair shop to accept oil filters for recycling. Ryly's will charge a modest fee, 50 cents, to include any resident's used filters with their material for proper recycling. In December, the EAC spent the remainder of its budget on two recycling bins, one for plastic and the other for cans, to be placed in Kutztown Park. These bins will be placed near the concession stand and serve as a pilot project for the potential of widespread recycling bins in the park.

7. Award an Environmental Stewardship Award.

In 2011, the EAC received no nominations for its stewardship ward. Thus, no award was given.

8. Study Sacony Marsh management & trail development plans to make recommendations on implementing the plans. Oversee volunteer maintenance work on the Sacony Trail.

The EAC continued its efforts in 2011 to oversee activities along the Sacony trail. In February, members facilitated an agreement with the KU Community Outreach Center to adopt a section of the Sacony Trail for regular cleanup. On May 26th, members assisted Elaine Bartholomew with invasive plant removal on the Sacony Trail. Garlic mustard was removed from Phase II of the trail near the elementary school. In March, the EAC and Elaine Bartholomew established an adopt-the-trail program to encourage volunteers to adopt small sections of the trail for regular cleanup and weed removal maintenance. Most sections of the trail were adopted by the end of summer.

Vandalism along the Sacony Trail continued. Girl Scout Daisy Troop 1110 tried to maintain a bird feeder along the trail, but vandals cut down and broke the feeder several times during the winter. The kiosk Plexiglass also was damaged in December.

9. Study the use of pesticides and herbicides by the borough and make recommendations on how to make pest and weed management practices more environmentally friendly.

The EAC discussed ways to limit the amount of pesticides and herbicides used along the Sacony Creek. Members investigated any legal requirements for such chemical use near a waterway by contacting the DEP and Penn State Extension Service. The EAC learned that there are no general requirements for pesticide and herbicide use near a waterway in Pennsylvania. However, particular chemicals have specific requirements that may limit their use near a waterway. The EAC will continue to discuss and explore how to limit chemical use near the Sacony Creek.

Summary and Future Directions

In 2011, the Kutztown EAC completed its fourth year of meetings and activities. The commission worked diligently to make progress on many of the annual goals. Noteworthy accomplishments were commenting on two major alternative energy documents, sponsoring four public events (two presentations, a workshop and a documentary film festival), piloting a new recycling project in the park, establishing an oil filter recycling agreement with a local autorepair shop, and establishing an adopt-the-trail program for the Sacony Trail. In the future, the commission will continue to address and revise its annual goals based on progress and new business as it arises. Finally, the EAC will continue to investigate environmental issues affecting the Borough of Kutztown.

Respectfully submitted,



Todd Underwood, Chair of Annual Report Subcommittee
February 6, 2012