



SOUTHEAST SIERRAN

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Wisconn What?

From the Chair
by Tom Rutkowski

At times Foxconn seems like a train heading right toward us. There is a momentum to it that makes it all but unstoppable, but that's not the right comparison. Trains are familiar. Trains follow tracks and schedules. You can usually jump out of harm's way. Rather, Foxconn is a black hole, an object exhibiting such strong gravitational effects that nothing can escape its influence. Just as a black hole is so massive it can bend the shape of space-time, the immense size of Foxconn dwarfs our sense of scale and bends rules and regulations and even language to its own purpose.

Even now when the Foxconn development is only a big plan, it dominates conversation and distorts familiar language. It is hard to imagine a farm field as blighted unless the crops actually have some sort of disease, but now the word "blighted" serves another purpose—to make land available without the owner's consent. The Great Lakes Compact states that water can be diverted from the lakes to "serve a group of largely residential customers." Even if there were some unknown plan for worker dormitories, how can Foxconn's application for a water permit correspond to this residential requirement? The very scale of this facility defies the original intention of the compact and bends the will of those intended to enforce it.

A glance at any topographical map will confirm what we've seen and known all along, Southeastern Wisconsin is relatively flat. Straining for some parallel with that hub of innovation and technology in California, someone came up with the name Wisconn Valley and now, as if by pronouncement, we live in a valley? Even the part of this name most closely associated with Wisconsin reflects this obvious disconnect. That extra "n" in Wisconn shows where the emphasis will be; the first part of the name becomes a necessary appendage, providing some link to what was already there.

Since the Foxconn development was announced as some blessing to Southeastern Wisconsin, we've been assured that the company will comply with all requirements of the DNR and the EPA. Such assurances are not reassuring when we see how

easily Foxconn received the necessary air permits from the DNR even though this facility will be, in the DNR's own language, a "major source emitter" of volatile organic compounds, a precursor to health-threatening smog. Apparently close to three billion dollars in state aid was not enough incentive; Foxconn will avoid installing pollution control measures that would cost the company additional money.



Southeastern Wisconsin being swallowed by Foxconn

As if by decree, Scott Pruitt overruled his own staff's recommendations and exempted Racine County from the EPA's list of areas required to reduce smog, saying that it was an attainment zone meeting existing standards for air quality, when clearly it isn't. The cost of this largely political decision will be paid in public health, literally absorbed by the lungs of those who live in our area. Will other companies begin to expect similar exemptions, or are more lenient standards reserved only for companies large enough to warp such regulation?

No one has questioned if more screens are what we need at this time or if screens are really more important than farmland. We're well past that stage. Asking whether we need more screens is verging on heresy. Screens will be made somewhere the argument goes. It isn't so much the product, but the scale of it that raises alarms. Take something really big and multiply it to get a sense of this size. Foxconn will cover the same area as three Pentagons or eleven Lambeau Fields. This same scale that makes it irresistible to some with its lure of so many jobs and a jolt to the economy gives caution to others who have seen the costs of other "too big to fail" enterprises. A global business of such scale diminishes the voice of local citizens and can too easily distort democracy to serve its special interests.

There is another kind of attraction at work here, not as old as gravity, but powerful enough to lure many into risk and regret. It is a siren's song that goes something like this... "Give us your land. We'll take the air and water too. In return, we promise to make you rich." *What could go wrong?*



Weed Out! Racine

by Melissa Warner

COLONIAL PARK UPDATE

Imagine 1500 ash trees—dead, dying and/or diseased—removed from the Colonial Park flood plain. That's Racine City Forester, Matt Koepnick's, estimate of the number of trees logged by professionals late last winter. The forestry mulcher has been reducing the ash slash to chips in order to prepare the ground for reforestation over the next several years.



Weed Out! Racine volunteer Jed Haas is dwarfed by one of the piles of ash tree logs in Colonial Park. The trees were dead or dying as a result of the invasive emerald ash borer.

had allocated another \$500. Nevertheless we are still \$500 short of the amount we need; donations for this purpose are very much appreciated!

Our objectives are three-fold: to maintain and improve water quality, to create habitat for the critters that live there, and to make a pleasing experience for the humans that use the park.

We appreciate the groups that have worked in the park: students from The Prairie School, St. Catherine's HS, UW-Parkside, employees from the Johnson Financial Group, and Wild Ones volunteers who cleared invasives, pulled garlic mustard, and planted oak trees.

Our regular work days are the fourth Saturday of every month from 9:00AM to Noon.

Our task this spring and summer is to remove honeysuckle and buckthorn along the riverbanks and other areas where the mulcher cannot reach, and to locate and herbicide spray resprouts of the those invasives. We have also worked on the area near the entry from West High Street.

A Grant from Fund For Lake Michigan is funding herbiciding of the (invasive) reed canary grass in the wetland within the flood plain; when that is complete we will sow the area with an appropriate mix of sedges and other wetland plants. Sweetwater Trust has funded two-thirds of the \$3000 needed for the seed; your SEGG budget



The ash borer lays its eggs under the bark of the ash tree. The larvae that hatch eat the cambium under the bark creating these "munchie" trails. Eventually the trails interconnect, and the tree is girdled. It dies because water from the roots cannot reach the crown.



Students from The Prairie School observed Emily's Day of Service at Colonial Park. They piled ash debris and removed honeysuckle and buckthorn from the riverbank.



WATERshed Program Expands to Kenosha by Laura Schulz

Led and developed by Hawthorn Hollow Naturalist Nancy Carlson, the WATERshed Program features hands-on learning activities that aim to foster connections between local students and the Great Lakes. This award-winning program has been a district-wide field trip for all 4th grade students within the Racine Unified School District for the past 10 years.

Over 20,000 students have tested water quality, learned about water pollution, and studied river macro-invertebrates at the Root River Environmental Education Community Center (REC) as part of this program. In spring 2018, the WATERshed program was expanded from Racine to Kenosha, with programming at the Center for Environmental Education Demonstration and Applied Research (CEDAR), located at the Southport Beach House. Over 400 students in the Kenosha Unified School District participated this year.

The Kenosha program included many of the key elements of the Racine program, but also featured the exploration of a wetland and the Kenosha sand dunes. Students took soil samples, collected water samples from Lake Michigan (while wearing waders!), and discussed the importance of protecting our freshwater resources. The program received many compliments from students and teachers alike and is projected to expand to include more schools in 2019. 2018 partners included Hawthorn Hollow, the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, the City of Kenosha, and the Southport Beach House Association. Financial support was provided by Wisconsin Coastal Management Program and the Wisconsin DNR.

Why Get An Asphalt Roof When You Can Get A Metal Roof?

By Sandy Christensen, SEGG Member

In April I got a metal roof put on my house and garage and I couldn't be happier. Metal roofing is as an attractive and environmentally-friendly alternative to traditional asphalt roofs and one you should consider. Metal roofs are far more energy efficient than asphalt, since they reflect the sun's rays instead of absorbing heat. Most metal roofs are also made with more than 56% recycled materials, making them sustainable. Since steel is the most recycled material in North America, at the end of the long lifecycle of a steel roof, you can be sure the material will hold enough value to make it worth recycling.

In contrast asphalt shingles are not as favorable. The average residential roof removal generates 1-3 tons of asphalt shingles, depending on whether the old roof consisted of 1 or 2 layers. All this adds up to an estimated total of 10 million tons of torn-off shingles every year nationwide, plus another 1 million tons of scrap generated by the shingle manufacturing process. This is a huge amount of waste to add to our already overcrowded landfills, especially since shingles take approximately 300 years to break down. Unfortunately, the primary ingredient of asphalt shingles is oil (petroleum). Oil-based products are generally non-recyclable and are manufactured from non-renewable resources.

It is clear to see that metal roofs are far superior to asphalt. Some people might see the price of metal roofs as the only downfall. Getting a metal roof costs about two to three times more than getting asphalt shingles; and yet, a metal roof will more than likely last three times as long. Most metal roofs have a non-prorated lifetime warranty. And if you are of a certain age where a lifetime warranty doesn't really mean much, think about the next generation, get the big picture. Or if you are a younger age just buying your first house, how great it will feel to only have to put on one roof your entire life! If you end up moving, your house will surely be worth more money with a metal roof so you should be able to recoup part of your investment. And the warranty is transferable to the new owners. I believe you get what you pay for, and what I got is a high-quality, attractive roof that is definitely something different.



Sandy's garage with a new metal roof reflecting the sun's rays.

My metal roof was made in the USA by EDCO Products, Inc. (www.edcoproducts.com) based in Hopkins, Minnesota. EDCO is a family-owned company and has been in business since 1946. My local contractor, Shaun Stauffer of Stauffer Enterprises, had a few samples to show me of the EDCO product, which I found to be pleasing to the eye and very unique. You can pick out a metal roof that looks like cedar shakes or one that looks like slate, both of which possess innovative charm and distinction, a cut above your average metal roof. Besides the great style selection, the choice of colors EDCO offers is amazing. I got the *Infiniti Textured Shake, Aged Bronze*. For contrast, I got a different metal roof on my front and back porch from Union Corrugated out of Janesville, WI: a seamless standing roof, which is most commonly found on commercial buildings and what most people think of when they think of metal roofs. Stauffer Enterprises did a

top-notch job installing my roof and I would recommend them to anyone.

A bonus of getting a metal roof is that most insurance companies will give a 5-7% discount on your homeowner's insurance due a metal roof having a class 4 hail impact rating. An asphalt roof is much more likely to get damaged in a hail storm. Most importantly, I have the peace of mind knowing that I have a quality roof that isn't going to hurt the environment and will last longer than I will. And why be boring and get the same roof everybody else gets? If you are going to spend money, make it a sustainable purchase and also something worth showing off and telling your friends about. And finally, contrary to popular belief, the sound of rain falling isn't extremely loud in a house with a metal roof. Perhaps the rain can be heard just a bit more with a metal roof, but for the outdoors person, isn't this a good thing? 💧

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These pre-health students from UW-Parkside planted small oak trees from the Argosy Foundation in Colonial Park. Tree protectors were used because in past years, deer seemed to think we were serving them dinner. See p.2 for more Weed Out! Racine updates.

Sign up for monthly SEGG E-news by emailing:
melissa.warner3@sbcglobal.net
Check our website for updates and events.

Mark Your Sierra Club Calendars!

Weed Out! Racine Work Days

Colonial Park, W High St Lot
Saturdays from 9AM to Noon:
July 28
August 25
September 22

HWY 38 Cleanup

Meet at Blessed Hope Church
Hwy 38 and Four Mile Road
Sat., August 4 - 8:30 AM
Sat., September 29 - 9:00 AM

Good News from WI Clean Power Coalition

May was a busy month for the Clean Power Coalition of Southeast Wisconsin. On May 3, concerned residents and We Energies shareholders gathered to protest outside of We Energies' annual shareholders meeting in Mequon. Our efforts were covered by two local television channels and Wisconsin Public Radio. On May 12, the Clean Power Coalition joined protesters in Madison to call on the utility there to go coal-free. Madison Gas and Electric gets almost 20% of its power from the Elm Road plant in Oak Creek. A fundraiser for an independent air monitor was launched at that event and so far we've raised \$1,600!

Sadly, while We Energies claims they are taking steps to address the dust problem, residents near the plant continue to report coal dust in the air, on homes and properties, and the playground. We need independent air monitoring – not self-monitoring by We Energies – to guarantee health and safety for residents. More event details at www.cleanpowerwi.org. We're always looking for more volunteers to join our team! If you're interested, please email miranda.ehrlich@sierraclub.org.