

Environmental nnections

Spring 2007 CHISAGO COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Environment-Related Childhood Diseases Cost Minnesota \$1.5 Billion Per Year

So often the argument against environmental protection focuses on its cost to industry and farmers. That "coin," however, has another side, one we need to acknowledge and heed. Pollution costs Minnesota taxpayers. A lot!

A recently released study by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) estimated that Minnesotans incur \$1.5 billion each year in costs related to childhood diseases that are attributable to environmental contaminants. They include asthma, learning and behavioral disorders, cancer, lead poisoning, and birth defects.

"A large body of scientific literature clearly



// Preventing disease by reducing pollution could result in major taxpayer savings. //

links each of these childhood diseases to pollution and chemicals in the environment," said MCEA Public Health Scientist Samuel Yamin, a co-author of the report, entitled *The Price of Pollution: Cost Estimates of Environment-Related Childhood Disease in Minnesota*. While we have a moral duty to protect children from such hazards, this report demonstrates that it also makes good economic sense, too.

The authors used a variety of state and national data sets to estimate how many diseases are caused by environmental exposures, and how much each case costs the state. The study estimated that childhood cases of:

1. Asthma cost the state \$30.6 million per year
2. Cancer—\$8.2 million per year
3. Lead poisoning—\$1.2 billion per year
4. Birth defects—\$4.5 million per year
5. Neurobehavioral disorders—\$303 million per year

These findings challenge legislators to make our children's health a top priority. "Pollution is making our children sick, yet we continue to allow harmful chemicals like lead, pesticides and toxic flame retardants to get into our environment and into our children's bodies," said co-author Kathleen Schuler, of IATP. "Before we allow a new chemical on the market, we should evaluate how many illnesses it might cause and whether we really need that chemical at all."

Many childhood diseases can be prevented by reducing or eliminating key environmental contributors. The report's recommendations included:

1. Requiring non-mercury alternatives for all products
2. Reducing pesticide exposure through integrated pest management
3. Phasing out the use of toxic flame-retardants in products
4. Developing a state-wide public health tracking system
5. Providing more resources to address lead problems
6. Reforming Minnesota's chemical regulatory system to require safer products, comprehensive safety data, and phasing out the most persistent and toxic chemicals

"The tragedy is that many conditions leading to children needing special education (and the spiraling costs associated with that portion of school budgets) could be avoided through preventive action," said Susan Nordbye, a co-author of the report.

The complete report can be downloaded at: www.mncenter.org and www.iatp.org.

Environmental Connections provides Chisago County residents with information and news from Chisago County Environmental Services, located in Center City and North Branch.

To contact your Chisago County Commissioner:

1ST DISTRICT—Lynn Schultz, 651-583-2657 or 651-213-0458 (office) North Chisago Lake Twp, Lent Twp, Franconia Twp, North Branch S.

2ND DISTRICT—Rick Greene, 651-583-2513 North Branch N., Shafer, Shafer Twp, Taylors Falls, Amador Twp, Sunrise Twp.

3RD DISTRICT—Bob Gustafson, 651-257-6218 Center City, Chisago City, Lindstrom, South Chisago Lake Twp.

4TH DISTRICT—Ben Montzka, 651-464-8515 Wyoming, Stacy, Wyoming Twp., and part of Chisago City.

5TH DISTRICT—Mike Robinson, 320-358-3223 Harris, Rush City, Nessel Twp, Fish Lake Twp, Rusheba Twp.

Keep this information by your phone for future reference.

Yes, you can make a difference! Reduce Global Warming

Recycling is truly nature's way, and it provides a plethora of benefits to our natural world... and to our economy. Every year, each county in Minnesota reports the tons of materials recycled, land-filled, and incinerated to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. These reports show that Minnesota's recycling manufacturers contributed \$2.98 billion and 20,000 jobs to the state's economy in 2005. In addition to the **economic** benefits of recycling are the important **environmental** benefits: reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Again in 2005, Minnesotans reduced (global warming) greenhouse gas emissions by 1.6 million metric tons carbon equivalent. *This is the equivalent of taking 1.25 million passenger cars off the road!* Recycling also saved 27 million BTUs of energy use—the amount of energy use in 385,000 households! Congratulations recyclers, and keep up the good work!

(source: <http://www.nwf.org/globalwarmingathome/>)

Beyond recycling, the following actions—taken in your home—will further reduce your global warming pollution.	Pollution Reduction (Pounds of Carbon Dioxide Per Year)	Percent Reduction in Annual Emissions for Average Person	Potential Annual Energy Bill Savings
Replace 5 commonly used light bulbs with low energy compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs)*	1,150	6%	\$50
Set your computer and monitor to “power down” when not in use	300	2%	\$15
Use less hot water by installing a low flow showerhead and washing clothes in cold or warm water	850	5%	\$40
Purchase ten percent of your electricity from a green power source such as wind, solar or geothermal	625	3%	
Adjusting your thermostat two degrees cooler in the winter can save more than 5% on energy bills, and setting your thermostat two degrees warmer in summer can save 10% or more. Alternatively, you can use a programmable thermostat to adjust temperatures by four degrees automatically while you are at work and sleeping.	2,000	11%	\$100
Purchase an energy-saving washing machine or refrigerator that has earned the government's “Energy Star” label.	475	3%	\$25
Turn your water heater thermostat down to 120 degrees	500	3%	\$25
Keep your car off the road to and from work one day per week by teleworking, carpooling, riding a bike, or using public transportation (Savings based on a 10 mile trip to/from work)	1,000	6%	\$125
Use a car that gets 10 miles more per gallon than one you currently drive	2,850	16%	\$350
Keep your tires properly inflated, improving fuel economy up to 3%	250	1.5%	\$30
Eliminate one trip by car per week by stringing errands together (savings based on a 5 mile trip to the store)	500	3%	\$60
Plant six trees	300	2%	

Pollution at Home



HOW MUCH DIFFERENCE CAN JUST ONE CFL MAKE?






If every American swapped just ONE bulb for an ENERGY STAR labeled CFL, it would collectively save more than \$8 billion in energy costs, prevent burning 30 billion pounds of coal, and remove 2 million cars worth of greenhouse gas emissions from our atmosphere. Just imagine the difference we could make if we replaced all of the lights we use most! Check out <http://18seconds.org> to see how enlightened your geographic area is.

**** Remember that CFLs (and all fluorescent bulbs) contain mercury and MUST BE RECYCLED.** Many recycling options are available in Chisago County. Residents should remember that fluorescent bulbs may be recycled at no charge at the Chisago County Household Hazardous Waste Facility in North Branch. For further information call 651-237-0912 or go to www.co.chisago.mn.us and click on Environmental Services under Departments.

* A compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) is a light bulb that uses less energy than a standard bulb to provide the same amount of light. Those bearing the government's ENERGY STAR label use 1/3 the energy of a traditional bulb, can last up to 10 times longer, and save \$30 or more in energy costs over their lifetime. You can find ENERGY STAR CFLs most anywhere you currently shop for light bulbs.



Environmentally friendly lawn care tips

-  Here's the secret to growing a healthier lawn in one easy step that stimulates root growth, reduces watering, helps control weeds, and reduces maintenance—all with nothing to buy and nothing to apply! Just raise your mower blade to 2.5–3 inches. Nothing else has a greater effect on turf health than this simple step.
-  When mowing, direct grass clippings away from the street, driveway, sidewalk, or other paved areas. These surfaces can transport grass clippings, leaves, and dirt into a storm sewer that goes directly to nearby lakes, streams, rivers, and wetlands. Instead, sweep up the grass clippings and return them to the lawn or compost the clippings.
-  By returning clippings to the lawn you can save on fertilizer—one year's worth of clippings equals one application of fertilizer.
-  Grass clippings and fallen leaves contain phosphorus, which is the nutrient that causes algae blooms in our lakes and turns them green. One bushel of grass clippings can contain 0.1 lbs of phosphorus—enough to produce 30 to 50 pounds of algae growth in a nearby pond, lake, or river.
-  When buying fertilizer for your lawn, be sure to look at the string of numbers and make sure that the middle number is zero (in other words, no phosphorus)



Help keep our lakes healthy!

Once again, our long winter is over, and as summer approaches, we all need to remember our basic **"Healthy Lake Habits."**

1. Enjoy a bonfire by the lake? After the fire burns out, remove the ashes to an inland spot to prevent them from washing into the lake—and adding phosphorus, which can cause algae to grow and stimulate undesirable aquatic plants.

2. Washing your car on a hard surface (concrete or tar) can create a run-off problem. Soapy water can flow into a nearby storm drain and end up in lakes and rivers, thus causing nutrients and chemicals to change the natural habitat of fish and vegetation. Wash your car in the yard where the water can soak in, or go to a commercial car wash where the soapy water is treated.

3. Before you leave the boat landing, remove all aquatic vegetation from the bottom of your boat, motor, trailer, and livewell. These weeds may become a problem in another lake, taking over and choking out the native vegetation and even changing the appearance of the lake and water quality for the fish.

4. Leave a buffer of tall grasses or plants between your lawn and the lake. While mowing your lawn down to the shore may make your yard look more manicured, it also removes the natural buffer to the water. Tall grasses and plants filter out many impurities before they can reach the water. Removing these plants also opens up space for geese to land and feed. [Think about this: one adult goose can produce 14 *pounds* of droppings each week!]

These and other simple steps, such as picking up garbage when you go for a walk, not spilling gas or oil into the water when filling your boat, and cleaning the weeds off your boat can help to improve the fishing, swimming, wildlife, and all around health of the lakes, rivers, and streams that we all love to enjoy throughout Chisago County.

Septic Pilot Program *Update*

The Chisago County septic pilot program has been underway since 2004. The purpose of the pilot program is to find and fix septic systems that have been determined to be an imminent health threat; that is, systems that are either discharging to the ground or surface water or backing up into a dwelling or other establishment.

County Environmental Services staff have performed 1,200 system evaluations since the start of the program. They have discovered 132 systems that are imminent health threats, and 160 systems have been upgraded. Some homeowners have volunteered to upgrade their system without a pilot program inspection!

Since the beginning of the program, the septic systems that have been repaired or replaced have prevented 52,200 gallons of wastewater per day from surfacing onto the ground or water. This translates to the volume of an Olympic sized swimming pool every 12.5 days!

In Memoriam: Marion Heemsbergen

It is with profound sadness that the Chisago County Department of Environmental Services and Zoning acknowledges the passing of longtime

Director, Marion Heemsbergen. A Chisago County employee for 26 years, Marion led the Department from 1984 through 2004, guiding it through 20 years of astounding challenge and change, helping create new policies, programs and technologies, and leaving behind a legacy of genuine, far-seeing environmental protection for the citizens of Chisago County.

Marion passed away peacefully on January 5, 2007, surrounded by his family, at his home at Dry Creek Ranch near Lometa, Texas. Marion had suffered from serious health problems for several years, but met each challenge with spirit, determination, and joy in each new day.

Born in Dallas, Iowa, on October 10, 1941, Marion grew up in Albert Lea, Minnesota, and later moved to Cambridge.



Marion Heemsbergen
1941~2007

His last days in Minnesota were spent on his beloved farm under the maples, at the end of Tern Avenue, in Shafer Township in Chisago County. Marion and his wife, Dorothy Person, moved to Texas in 2004, after his retirement. They loved their new life in Texas, with their horses, cats, and dogs, and they continued hobby-farming with their beef cattle.

Marion will be greatly missed by his wife Dorothy, daughters Cynthia (Curtis) Olson, Jill Snippen (Craig Thomas), sons Derek and Kirk, and their children and grandchildren.

Marion is also survived by another family, his longtime, loving friends and co-workers in the Chisago County Zoning Office. They loved him fiercely, mourn him deeply, and will miss him always.

The people of Chisago County are fortunate that the stewardship of their precious lands and waters was in the wise and gentle hands of Marion Heemsbergen for so many years. 🍃



Guide To Rural Living CD Available

We are pleased to announce a new edition of *The Guide to Rural Living*.

This comprehensive guide is designed to help rural landowners in Pine, Isanti, Chisago, Kanabec, and Mille Lacs counties become acquainted with country living.

The Guide to Rural Living includes a variety of topics, including land issues and zoning, wetland and wildlife management, and small acreage farming and living in rural areas. A resource directory is included in the Guide and features an extensive list and contact information for many federal, state and local public service agencies, educational resources and more.

The guide on CD is available for only \$5.00 at the Pine County Soil and Water Conservation District 320-384-7431, or at the University of Minnesota Extension Service, Mora Regional Center at 320-225-5051. You can also have a copy mailed to you from the Kanabec Soil and Water Conservation District at 320-679-3781 ext. 102, or email: Jan.Anderson@mn.nacdnet.net. You can view it online at: www.extension.umn.edu/ruralliving.

The Guide to Rural Living has been assembled thanks to a cooperative effort by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Chisago County, Pine County Soil and Water Conservation District, Resource Conservation and Development, and the University of Minnesota Extension Service, Mora Regional Center. 🍃

Mattress recycling now available in Chisago County



Recycling For Wildlife has recently begun recycling mattresses and box springs at their facility, located one-half mile south of Harris on County 30 (old Hwy. 61). Chisago County residents may drop off clean and dry mattresses for recycling every Saturday between 8 a.m. and noon at a cost of \$10/mattress. By comparison, the East

Central Solid Waste Commission (ECSWC) charges \$18.00 to dispose of a mattress at their landfill or transfer stations.*

Mattresses to be recycled will be loaded directly into a 53-foot trailer recently purchased by Chisago County with a \$5000 grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. When the trailer is filled, ECSWC will haul it to Goodwill Industries in Duluth, where workers will disassemble the mattresses and sort the marketable by-products: steel, cotton, foam, and wood.

A pilot study conducted by the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District in Duluth identified a number of markets for these mattress materials:

- **Covers or toppers** - used to make low-end carpet pads.
- **Polyurethane foam** - used to manufacture high-end carpet pads.
- **Cotton stuffing** - used as filler for packaging, shipping pads, wall insulation, and road noise abatement material in vehicles.
- **Wood** - shredded and used as mulch or compost.
- **Steel** - is used to manufacture new steel products. A unique market for bedsprings is Green Glass, Inc. in Schofield, Wisconsin, where they make beautiful vase holders and sconces for their recycled glassware.

Dick and Jenny Johnson at *Recycling For Wildlife* (651-674-7268) are also Chisago County contracted recyclers for tires, appliances, and electronics. Call Chisago County Environmental Services (651-213-8921) for additional recycling information for these items.

* **The ECSWC (763-444-6818) also charges \$10.00 to recycle a mattress or box spring at their Cambridge and Hinckley transfer stations.**

Chisago County Household Hazardous Waste Facility

North Branch
Industrial Park
39649 Grand Ave.
North Branch, MN 55056
(651) 237-0912

OPEN FOR COLLECTION:
Mondays: Noon – 7 p.m.
Last Sat. of each month:
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Closed on major holidays

ECRWSS
Postal Patron