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CITIZEN ACTION**



The Alert

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Missouri Coalition for the Environment
Effective Citizen Action Since 1969

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Planting the Seeds for Increased Healthy Food Production, Access, and Consumption Across Missouri

By Melissa Vatterott, Food & Farm Coordinator

MCE has hit the ground running to create thriving, local food systems. Through local food we can improve access to healthy fruits and vegetables and promote environmental stewardship across Missouri. We have started with the St. Louis Regional "Foodshed," an area comprised of all the counties within a 100-mile radius of St. Louis. Some of you may be wondering, **why is an environmental organization working on food?** The answer is our current, industrialized agriculture system threatens the quality of our water, soil, and air—all of which MCE has worked to protect for over 45 years—and has adverse impacts on the health of Missouri residents.

Current federal policies provide incentives for many farmers to maximize production of one or two crops over hundreds of acres. Farmers can receive large government payments for growing commodity crops—corn, soybean, wheat, rice, cotton, tobacco. Therefore, it is no surprise that 76% of the Foodshed's cropland is used to grow corn and soybeans, with 94% being used to grow crops that feed livestock, go into processed food and into ethanol. Fuel is another destination

for much of the crops grown in the Midwest. With some of the federal payment programs, farmers receive a larger check if they generate greater yield. These incentives lead many farmers to use fertilizers and pesticides on their farm to maximize yield, even when it is not sustainable for the land. When these chemical-based products are overapplied, they run off into our waterways, harming water quality and biodiversity. Many farmers also plant crops "fencerow to fencerow"—meaning they plant every possible inch of their land. For farmland near a water body, farmers with this mentality strip riparian buffers from the edge of the waterways to plant crops. Riparian buffers are vegetated areas typically made of trees, the roots of which take up water and nutrients flowing toward the adjacent water and protect stream banks from erosion. Therefore, riparian buffers are incredibly beneficial for intercepting pesticides, fertilizers, manure, and anything moving toward the waterway. In their absence, waterways have no defense against the pesticide and fertilizer that may run off of cropland.

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To protect and restore the environment through education, public engagement, and legal action.

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THE SPRING 2015 ALERT:

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From the Director

By Heather Broulliet Navarro, Executive Director

Watchdogs are great for vigilance, courage, precision, aggression, and tenacity. These are great qualities when a threat presents itself and MCE has developed a reputation for being an effective watchdog of our air, water, and land. However, watching and responding, no matter how good we are at it, isn't enough. By the time the problem seeps into the public's awareness, it has spent days, weeks, or even years building up. This is how environmentalists end up on the defense and earn a reputation for being "against everything."



MCE is for clean air and water, ample green space available to all, healthy soil and accessible local food. We work all the time to influence policies and systems that will safeguard these resources from emerging threats. You'll read in this issue about our work on the Clean Power Plan to reduce carbon emissions from power plants and our efforts to promote a thriving, local food system that positively impacts our health and the environment. This is important and necessary work. However, the problem runs deeper.

This year, MCE is looking at the root causes of environmental threats. We will continue to monitor permits and identify violations. And we will look for opportunities to address the excessive influence of money in our democracy. We are also discussing how our cultural preferences for "more" and "cheaper" are driving us farther away from "healthier" and "more fulfilling" choices. And we have to consider that for many Missourians those choices are not on the table because of the lack of jobs, livable wages, and educational opportunities.

We want to be your watchdog and more! Enjoy this latest issue of the *Alert* and please share your thoughts in the survey on the back about how we can better share environmental news that matters to you.

Sincerely,

Heather B. Navarro

Staff Updates

This spring we congratulate Lorin Crandall, MCE's Clean Water Director for the past 5 years, as he embarks on his journey to graduate school to pursue a degree in urban planning and design.



Lorin Crandall, center, talks with representatives from MSD and Missouri American Water during the Watershed Strategy Session sponsored by MCE and Watershed Cairns and hosted by the Missouri History Museum on December 5, 2014.

And we welcome Alicia Lloyd on board as our new Clean Water Policy Coordinator. Alicia is a completing a PhD in Environmental Policy from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, where she also earned her Master's degree in Political Science. She was a National Science Foundation Watershed Science and Policy IGERT Fellow (Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship) where she produced a natural resource and land use management plan for the Cache River watershed in Southern Illinois. She is passionate about how land and agricultural conservation policy can benefit our rivers and streams. Alicia enjoys running and hiking Missouri's trails with her dog, Rasta.

Annual Meeting & New Board Members

MCE held its 46th Annual Meeting on Saturday, March 7th at the Unitarian Church of St. Louis. A representative from the congregation presented on the community's Green Sanctuary certification and members engaged with program staff who displayed information on their work science fair style. The membership approved the addition of board members of Nadim Kanafani, M.D., Stuart Keating, and Chris Burnette. Melissa Vatterott, Food & Farm Coordinator, debuted a short video on the St. Louis Regional Food Study. The membership also completed surveys on the Alert newsletter and we have provided a copy here on the back page. Please send it back and let us know your thoughts.



Melissa Vatterott (right) talks with attendees at the Annual Meeting.

MCE Celebrates 45 Years

MCE celebrated its 45th Anniversary at Alberici Headquarters in St. Louis on November 21, 2014. The theme was "Because Saving the Environment is Sweet!" The Barry Commoner Science in Environmental Service Award was presented to Paul Nelson. Greenway Network's Greg Poleski received the R. Roger Pryor Citizen Activist Award. And Rebecca Rivas of the St. Louis American was presented with the first ever Susan Flader Education and Advocacy Award.



Dave Ownes, VP Of Taste & Chief Chocolatier at Bissinger's Handcrafted Chocolatier served up chocolate fondue.



Coulter & Payne Distillery provided and served chocolate martinis.



Paul Nelson, forest ecologist, was awarded the Barry Commoner in Science Award. Other awardees were Rebecca Rivas of the St. Louis American and Greg Poleski of the Greenway Network.



Jenny Fung, 2014 Wetlands Coordinator, and volunteer Nay'Chelle Harris were part of the volunteer crew that helped make the event a success.

What would Amendment 28 mean for the environment?

By Brad Walker, Rivers Director

To be effective on environmental issues, MCE relies on a thriving democratic system. The influence of money in the democratic process, the concentration of wealth, and the “personhood” of corporations hampers, and sometimes stifles completely, our ability to be effective on environmental issues.

For decades we have relied upon well intentioned and specific regulations, backed by federal or state legislation, to improve our environment and protect natural resources. Unfortunately, that process is broken due to the massive influx of corporate money and the overwhelming influence of corporate lobbyists upon our elected officials at all levels of government.

Some constitutional experts have concluded that the only assured way to counter this is through the federal constitutional amendment process, which requires both the U.S. House and Senate to pass a bill by a two-thirds majority and then 38 states to ratify the amendment. This is purposefully a long-term process because amending the Constitution is an exceptional action intended to correct a major flaw. The amendment needed to rectify the problem of corporate power and

concentrated wealth will need to address and clarify two issues:

1. *Money is not speech.* The ability of corporations and wealthy people to use millions of dollars to influence elections is not free speech because those with the most money can drown out all others.
2. *Corporations are not people.* Corporations are fictitious entities created by a piece of paper and are obviously not human. Our Constitution is intended to protect real people primarily through the Bill of Rights. Corporate lawyers engineered the granting of 1st, 4th and 5th rights to corporations through the manipulation of our legal system. Corporations now not only have these protections but also others that humans do not have such as limited liability and a zombie lifespan. They can live forever or declare bankruptcy and re-emerge as a new corporation.

On September 11, 2014, a version of Amendment 28 covering only Item 1 above missed passing the Senate, receiving 54 of the required 67 votes. This in no way means that the issue is dead. To put this into perspective, the 19th Amendment that allowed women to vote took 45 years to become law.

This will be a generational battle for our democracy and for our environment because it is corporate and concentrated wealth and influence that have undermined our ability to deal with climate change and numerous other issues. We are reaching the point of a captured government where the democratic process is an illusion.

This can be solved but requires large-scale, continued citizen engagement. You can get involved first by reading the River Roils Blog article on this topic on our website: *Just What is a Plutocracy and How Can We Buy One?* A long-term commitment is required, but the results will be worth it—especially for our (human) children. ■



Photo credit: People to People blog, globalexchange.org

St. Louis County Announces Health Survey Around West Lake Landfill



Over 100 people attended a teach-in with Lois Gibbs last fall to learn about the West Lake Landfill. The event was sponsored by MCE, JustMomsSTL, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Franciscan Sisters of Mary, and State Rep. Bill Otto.

A smoldering fire has burned at the West Lake Landfill Superfund site in St. Louis County since 2010. People who live around the site have been concerned for several years about how the landfill gas emissions are impacting their health. Reports of headaches, rashes, burning eyes, trouble breathing and bloody noses appear to have increased since the smoldering fire started. Newly elected County Executive Steve Stenger has directed the St. Louis County Department of Health to conduct a survey of people who live around the landfill, bringing a lot of hope as well as some frustration that this was not done faster. The health survey, which is currently under design and subject to change, will look at respiratory illnesses, asthma, and allergies of people living within a two mile radius of the landfill. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) collects and interprets air data around the landfill but this will be the first time a government agency has looked directly at the health of people surrounding the landfill. MCE will update our website and social media with new information about the health survey as it becomes available.

Missouri's Role in Tackling Climate Change Pollution: Your Help Needed

By Ed Smith, Safe Energy Director

Pope Francis is calling on Catholics worldwide to address climate change as a moral obligation. The Pentagon describes climate change as a threat multiplier regarding national security. A bipartisan group of former Treasury Secretaries is warning of the economic perils if carbon reduction investments are not made now. Never before has consensus for action on climate change been greater.

In June 2014, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a draft rule to reduce carbon dioxide pollution from existing fossil fuel-fired power plants. The draft rule, known as the Clean Power Plan, seeks to decrease the nation's carbon dioxide pollution for the first time ever, to 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. The EPA received millions of comments on the draft plan before its comment deadline on December 1, 2014.

Missouri has shown broad support for a strong Clean Power Plan. MCE gained support letters from 34 environmental, faith, and health organizations from Columbia, Jefferson City, St. Peters, Labadie, St. Louis, and Kansas City in support of the EPA's plan with an emphasis on strong renewable energy and energy efficiency implementation. Reasons for such broad support range from concern about climate change, ecological degradation, species loss, safe energy, clean water, clean air, human health impacts, and care for all of creation now and into the future.

Laws and policies are a reflection of our morals. That's why MCE found strong support from organizations and leaders in the Presbyterian, Jewish, Islamic, Catholic, Interfaith and Humanist communities. Some of the organizations in support of the Clean Power Plan include the Midland Islamic Council, Jewish Community Relations Council of St. Louis, Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri, and Missouri Interfaith Power and Light.

The EPA is currently reviewing the millions of comments it received and expects to have a final rule published sometime this summer. Missouri will be responsible for establishing an implementation plan that will be submitted to the EPA in 2016 detailing how our state will meet its carbon dioxide reduction goals. If the state fails to develop a plan, EPA will provide its own plan

for Missouri. A federal plan would likely be more generic, whereas a state plan can be tailored to Missouri's specific circumstances and needs.

Missourians around the state are also engaged in Governor Nixon's creation of a State Energy Plan, which came with its own public engagement period that ended January 31, 2015. MCE contributed as part of the working groups to help inform the State Energy Plan as well as submit general comments before the January deadline. We are told the State Energy Plan will help influence the State of Missouri's implementation of the EPA's Clean Power Plan. A majority of the comments regarding the State Energy Plan, which is expected to be published in May, are in support of further energy efficiency and renewable energy investments. This comes as no surprise given that 66% of Missourians voted for Proposition C in 2008, which requires monopoly electric utilities source 15% of their power from renewable energy by 2021.

The Missouri legislature is not waiting for finalization of the EPA's rule before rushing in to undermine carbon dioxide reduction efforts. Missouri is largely dependent on coal burning power plants to provide our electricity and is home to the world's largest coal company, Peabody Energy. Missouri legislators have introduced bills to delay implementation of the Clean Power Plan and anti-EPA resolutions.

We need you to stay engaged with MCE as we follow the legislative session, which ends in May, to ensure that bills or amendments that would make it harder to reduce carbon dioxide pollution are not successful. MCE supports House Bill 821 introduced by Rep. Tracy McCreery that would allow the Air Conservation Commission to enact rules or regulations that are stricter than those required by the Clean Air Act or enforce standards or guidelines earlier than required. HB 821 would allow the Commission to take such action in case of "substantial additional economic, employment, or environmental benefits beyond the benefits that would have resulted from minimal compliance with the federal Clean Air Act, as amended." Missouri is currently unable to propose or implement standards or guidelines that go beyond minimal compliance even if it will save lives and create jobs.



Solar panels atop the Dickmann Building, home of MCE headquarters in St. Louis.

You matter when it comes to climate change and what's happening in Jefferson City. Handwritten letters and phone calls are great ways to reach your state representative and state senator. Ask to meet with them before the session is over and tell them why you care about addressing climate change by decreasing carbon dioxide pollution. We cannot stress how important it is for you to be involved in the legislative process. You can start by making a phone call or writing a letter.

Finally, MCE is helping launch the Missouri Clean Energy Coalition. The newly formed group is dedicated to growing our clean energy economy while reducing fossil fuel use in order to address climate change and improve our health. The Coalition is engaging the grassroots as well as organizations, businesses, elected officials and others for their support. We can only make a big impact on climate change issues in Missouri if we are organized and working together. That's why we are focusing our efforts on defending attacks on the Clean Power Plan in the Missouri legislature and supporting a strong state implementation plan. Contact moenviron@moenviron.org if you want more information about how you can get involved with the Missouri Clean Energy Coalition. ■

Increased Healthy Food Production in Missouri

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In addition, the industrialized livestock industry places thousands of livestock in one building, called a Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO), which results in an amount of manure too great to be spread on cropland as a natural fertilizer. Therefore, manure often is stored in lagoons, which can break and cause manure to pollute cropland and can run off into waterways. Lastly, manure is a source of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. With manure no longer being used as fertilizer to provide nutrients for crops, it often sits in lagoons and releases methane into the air. The management of manure from industrialized agriculture accounts for 9% of the total methane emissions in the U.S., with agriculture being the *primary* contributor of methane in the world. As you can see, everything that MCE works to protect is threatened by our current industrialized agriculture system. Therefore, we are working to address the cause of all these threats and beginning to work with stakeholders within the St. Louis Regional Foodshed to shift our current system to a local, small-scale, diverse, agriculture system that promotes conservation.

As our nation's current industrialized agriculture system continues to threaten soil and water quality, there's another side to the coin: inadequate access to healthy food, poor diet and nutrition, and the resulting health problems. For example, in 2009, nearly a half a million people, or 12% of the population living within a 100 mile radius of Saint Louis lived in one of the Foodshed's 125 Food Desert Tracts. The average American over-consumes meat, grains, added sweeteners, oils and fats, while underconsuming whole grains and vegetables and barely meeting the requirement for fruit consumption. With overconsumption of foods that are threatening to our health, it is no surprise that 9.5% of the Foodshed's population was diabetic and 30.4% were obese in 2009.

Fortunately, a local food system that prioritizes fresh food and environmental stewardship can resolve these environmental and health concerns.

In order to develop a thriving, local food system we need to engage diverse stakeholders. Beginning in December, we engaged with many stakeholders at an MU Extension workshop, *Creating Economic Development Through Local Food Systems*, and we connected to many incredible people who work in our local food system in some way. Here's what we've found from our networking and partnership development: farmers would grow more healthy food if the proper incentives were in place and if adequate financial and technical support was available to help them reach existing local food markets and establish new markets. After speaking with grocery stores and restaurants, it turns out that these entities have high interest in sourcing more of their products or ingredients locally, but there is a communication disconnect with farmers. Often, they have no way to find new local farmers with whom to do business and must wait for a new local farmer to approach them. However, many small farmers do not spend a lot of time marketing their products or researching new markets because they are focused on producing their crops and raising their livestock.



Melissa Vatterott presents information about the St. Louis Regional Food Study.

From conversations with various individuals working in different aspects of the local food system, we've identified gaps in the food system that need filling.

1. **Education gap.** The demand for local food has increased some, but more education about the harmful impacts of industrialized agriculture is needed for individuals to understand the benefits of locally-sourced products and reduced consumption of low cost meats and processed foods.
2. **Affordability and availability gaps.** In many communities, we need more stores that offer affordable, local food. For individuals already interested in locally-sourced food, it's often hard to find local food in neighborhood stores. This is an issue of local food access, which is tied to the type of store available in different communities. Some communities have more corner stores than grocery stores; in other communities, the closest food store is 20 miles away. In addition, we've learned that for many people, affordability is more important than accessibility. If a locally-sourced product is a dollar more per pound than the same type of product from Chile, purchasing the locally-sourced product is out of the question for many households, especially those with low to moderate incomes.
3. **Farmer-buyer connectivity gap.** Our food system needs increased connectivity between existing farmers and buyers, because the two entities often have difficulty finding each other.
4. **Policy gap.** We are in need of new policies because our current policies incentivize growing commodity crops—mostly corn and soybeans—and raising livestock in CAFOs, which are not building up a healthy thriving food system.



One way to support the local food movement is to encourage your local corner stores to offer local food products. These bottles of honey from Jim 'n' I Farms, Inc. were available for sale at a gas station in Kingdom City in March.



Saint Louis University High School (SLUH) demonstrates its commitment to the local food movement by using a small-scale aquaponics system to grow lettuce. Sustainability and Environmental Science teacher, Bill Anderson, illustrated how this aquaponics system works to a group of attendees at the Gateway Greening Community Garden Summit in March, which was held at SLUH.

What Can You Do to Help Fill Local Food Gaps and Create Thriving Local Food Systems Across Missouri?

Buy local and buy seasonal. Support local restaurants and grocery stores that source locally and seasonally. Challenge food businesses to source locally and seasonally. Here is a list of a few places to find local farms, restaurants, farmers markets, stores, and resources around Missouri:

- St. Louis - Local Harvest Grocery, Cafe and Catering; Fair Shares CCSA; Bailey's Restaurants; Schlafly; Slow Food St. Louis
- Kansas City - KC Food Circle, Eat Local KC
- Columbia - Root Cellar Local Food Box, Clovers Natural Market
- Springfield - Urban Roots Farm, Home Grown, Well Fed Neighbor Alliance
- Kirksville - Kirksville Permaculture Resource Center
- Hermann - Hermann Area Regional & Economic Stability
- Dexter - Look for local produce at the new farmers' market by the depot.

Challenge the sources of food in cafeterias. Ask your children's schools to source cafeteria food locally and to begin a vegetable garden for the children to use as part of their math, science, art, geography, and other classes. Ask your workplace to source its cafeteria food from local sources.

Visit the MCE Food and Farm webpage and sign up to receive food and farm e-alerts. Through our online resources, we will keep you up to date on our food and farm work, including the development of a new St. Louis local food policy initiative, upcoming food and farm events, relevant news, and legislative bills that need your support or opposition.

Donate to our Food and Farm crowdfunding video. Thanks to the generosity and dedication of cinematographer and video producer, Stephen Greathouse, MCE will be launching a crowdfunding video this spring to raise funds for our Food and Farm Program. Look out for an e-alert and social media posts when we launch the video! ■

Members Drive Our Work - Join MCE Today!



MCE Staff (from left): Brad Walker, Melissa Vatterott, Laura Illy, Heather Navarro, Alicia Lloyd, and Ed Smith

Your membership matters! None of us can protect the environment alone. When you join MCE you amplify the voice for environmental protection. Not everyone can drive to Jefferson City to talk to lawmakers or take the time to attend meetings with government agencies. MCE represents our members by engaging decision makers. We take your voice with us when we meet with the Department of Natural Resources, the Attorney General, or the media. Our staff and board members travel to Washington, D.C. and Jefferson City regularly to ensure that the environment and public health are at the top of policy makers' minds. Join the force for change and become a member today!



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We need your help improving the *Alert*. Our first issue was printed in 1970 and much has changed in how we communicate. Please take a minute to answer the 3 questions below and mail your responses back to MCE, 3115 S. Grand Blvd., Ste. 650, St. Louis, MO 63118 or fill out an online version at www.moenviron.org/survey. Thank you!

1. When you receive the *Alert* newsletter, do you...

- a. Read it cover to cover
- b. Glance at it and then recycle it
- c. Cherish it, file it away, and refer to it lovingly from time to time
- d. Other _____

2. What value do you find in an 8 page newsletter printed on paper?

- a. I'm not on the internet much so this is my primary source of news from MCE.
- b. More in-depth articles than emails and Facebook updates generally provide.
- c. I like hearing about what's happening at MCE.
- d. None. Please save the paper.

3. Is there anything else you'd like to see in a newsletter from MCE?

- a. More information
- b. More opportunities to take action and get involved
- c. Stories from members and volunteers
- d. Other _____

If you would like to go paperless, please give us your email: _____

Would you like to be added to any of the following email lists?

General information / Climate / Water / West Lake / Food & Farm / Volunteer Opportunities

Check out our Facebook Page, [facebook.com/moenviron](https://www.facebook.com/moenviron), E-alerts - and our website for more events this spring!

There is always more news on the website at www.moenviron.org! Join the MCE online at www.moenviron.org

Attention Federal Employees: Your Support of the Combined Federal
Campaign Makes Missouri Cleaner & Greener. Remember MCE! CFC #92907