



Connect with your environment

Learn about environmental issues, in your community and how you can get involved.



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John Norquist is the keynote speaker for Preservation Erie Awards on April 30.

'New urbanism' expert to give talk

By ANNA McCARTNEY
Contributing writer

Join Preservation Erie at its annual springtime award reception on April 30 at the Masonic Temple Ballroom, at West Eighth and Peach streets.

Three exceptional stewards of the Greater Erie's physical and cultural landscape will be recognized, and a keynote address will be given by John Norquist, an acclaimed lecturer in the fields of historic preservation and urban planning.

Norquist served as mayor of Milwaukee from 1988-2004. Under his leadership, Milwaukee experienced a decline in poverty, saw a boom in new downtown housing, and became a leading center of education and welfare reform. He oversaw a revision of the city's zoning code and reoriented development around walkable streets and public amenities such as the city's

3.1-mile Riverwalk.

Norquist later took the helm of the Congress for the New Urbanism, the leading organization promoting walkable, mixed-use neighborhood development, sustainable communities and healthier living conditions. He is also the author of "The Wealth of Cities: Revitalizing the Centers of City Life." The book argues that cities have natural advantages that have been undermined by a half-century of ill-conceived housing, education, transportation, crime, welfare and environmental policies.

Tickets, which can be purchased online at <http://preservationerie.org/event/2015-greater-erie-awards/>, are \$35.

ANNA McCARTNEY, a communications and education specialist for Pennsylvania Sea Grant, can be reached by e-mail at axm40@psu.edu.



TAYLA RUIZ/Contributed photo

Tom Cermak, PA Sea Grant coastal outreach specialist and local coordinator of the Lake Erie Watershed Cooperative Weed Management Area, helps students to remove invasive bush honeysuckles. One goal of LEW-CWMA is to involve private property owners in removing and controlling invasive plants that threaten native plants and animals.

Root of problem

New group will work to control invasive weeds

By ANNA McCARTNEY
Contributing writer

Private landowners and land managers are joining forces to protect natural heritage areas in the Lake Erie watershed.

These areas have been listed in the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, which gathers and provides information on the location and status of important statewide ecological resources (plants, vertebrates, invertebrates, natural communities and geologic features).

Research by the conservancy's staff shows that the Lake Erie watershed includes high sand and clay bluffs, remnant wetland forests and other natural features that support many rare species. Another unique landscape is Presque Isle Peninsula and Bay, a rare complex of beaches, sand dunes and sand plains that contributes greatly to the region's irreplaceable diversity of species. The Lake Erie tributaries also support aquatic ecosystems unlike any other streams in Pennsylvania. These areas are important habitat for several rare reptiles and many species of shore birds, native plants and fish.

The WPC and Pennsylvania Sea Grant are working to conserve these unique ecological places and species by establishing the Lake Erie Watershed Cooperative Weed Management Area (LEW-CWMA). Formally established in 2012, the LEW-CWMA is an important milestone in preserving the quality and diversity of the Pennsylvania Lake Erie watershed's unique natural communities because it involves private property owners in reducing invasive plants.

Once these plants become established, they have negative ecological and economic impacts on farmland, working forests and recreational land. These fast-growing invaders put native plants and animals at risk because they displace rare ones. They also reduce

plants that wildlife and fish depend on for food.

With only about four percent of land publicly owned, educating and involving private landowners is the best defense because invasive species spread beyond fence lines so controlling them requires a combined effort that crosses property boundaries.

A workshop for property owners held in February kicked off the effort. Two hundred and fifty people who own property that overlaps in whole or in part with one or more of the natural heritage areas along Elk Creek were invited to learn about the program's benefits and how they could become involved.

"Since then, about 30 landowners have shown interest and are excited about managing invasive plant species because their efforts will protect and enhance the ecological value of their property and the region as a whole," said Tom Cermak. Cermak is a PA Sea Grant coastal outreach specialist and the local coordinator for the LEW-CWMA.

Sea Grant and WPC will provide the participants with the necessary education and resources and the best management strategies to remove and control invasive species on their property. Their goal is to expand efforts to additional subwatersheds each season.

This team approach of involving landowners and helping them to identify invasive plants and understand the potential damage they can cause is essential to stopping their spread and protecting the cherished places loved by many in the Lake Erie watershed.

For more information, contact Tom Cermak at 217-9011, extension 106, or e-mail tjc29@psu.edu

Next week: Managing invasive plants on your property

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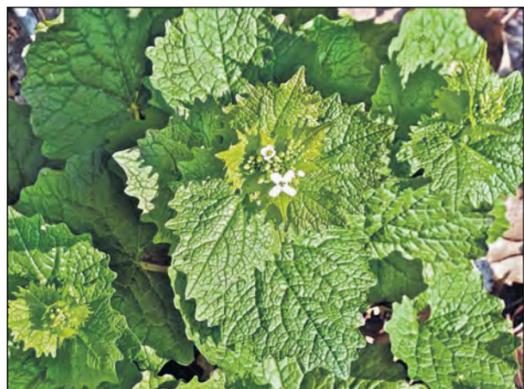
AMY L. JEWITT/Contributed photo

Jeff Wagner, director of the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program, Tom Cermak and Sara Stahlman assess invasive phragmites along the bluff in the western portion of the Lake Erie watershed.



RANDY L. EMMITT AT EN.WIKIPEDIA

LEW-CWMA identifies rare species, like this West Virginia white butterfly. LEW-CWMA also works to identify invasive garlic mustard, below, the white butterfly's biggest threat, to protect native plants and animals.



ANNA McCARTNEY/Contributed photo

Garlic mustard lacks natural predators in North America, so it spreads quickly and replaces native plants. When the butterfly, above, lays eggs on this invader, the larva dies after eating the plant.



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Register early for the 2015 Environment Erie Bike Around the Bay on May 16. Registration costs more after May 6.

Register soon to join Bike Around the Bay

By ANNA McCARTNEY
Contributing writer

Get in shape and support important environmental education programs for all ages by participating in Environment Erie's 13th Bike Around the Bay!

Join hundreds of bicyclists of all ages from the tristate area on Saturday, May 16, for the annual event, which begins at 7:30 a.m. at the Pilot House, home of the Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority. The Pilot House is behind the Intermodal Transportation Center at the foot of Holland Street.

Whether you are looking for a perfect tour for families, a casual ride or an event for avid cyclists, there is something for you. You can choose to bike 10, 30 or 50 miles. Enjoy the sights and sounds of the Lake Erie waterfront and

rest stops for water and snacks along the way. After the ride, enjoy a picnic lunch and participate in a gift auction.

Take advantage of pre-registration by May 6 to guarantee you get a T-shirt and the following rates: \$25 for individuals and \$50 for families. After May 6, registration rates, including the day of the event, increase to \$30 and \$60.

Sign-in on the day of the event is from 7:30 to 9 a.m. Departure for the 50-mile tour is at 8 a.m. Others begin at 9 a.m. For more details, contact Environment Erie at 835-8069 or register online at www.environmenterie.org.

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Check out these websites to learn more:

www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/CNH.aspx
<http://waterlandlife.org/346/what-we-do>
<http://paseagrant.org>

Find articles or ads on gardens. How many of them include native plants? Do you have a garden where you live? Can you name the plants and do you know if any of them are invasive? Check out today's websites to learn more about natural heritage areas. Share your ideas with readers about why it is important to remove invasive plants to protect native plants and animals. Send them to axm40@psu.edu for possible publication in the "your space" feature.

