

Environmental Studies

newsletter



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Environmental news

GMC Signs Deal with Vermont Law School

Green Mountain College has signed an articulation agreement with Vermont Law School, which specializes in environmental law, guaranteeing a spot for GMC graduates who meet the school's entrance requirements. "This is a great fit for our current class of pre-law students," said Provost Bill Throop. "Many of these students chose GMC for both its environmental mission and its proximity to Vermont Law. We have several exciting collaborations with VLS and this agreement is an excellent addition."

New Sustainable Purchasing Guidelines

Thanks to the hard work of students and faculty in the Fall 2006 9-credit block course on Food, Agriculture, and Community Development in the Northeast, along with unanimous endorsement by Green Mountain College faculty, the College's administration formally approved new food purchasing guidelines.

The new food purchasing guidelines encourage the purchase of products that foster environmental awareness, community stewardship, and good health. This includes increasing local food purchases by 5% of the total food budget for each year over the next three years. The College will maximize the purchase of appropriately-certified products whenever possible; ensure sustainable food products are featured prominently, seasonally, and regularly; and assess current and future levels of progress annually. Additional purchasing priorities are seasonality, locality, and on-farm reality.

Students Work to Convert Heating System to Biomass

On Thursday, February 1, 2007 the Rutland Natural Resource Conservation District held its Annual Public Meeting. The two speakers addressed the issue of alternative fuel opportunities for both agriculture and forests. The meeting was well attended with officials from natural resource and conservation agencies both on the state and local level. Governor Douglas attended for a short period to discuss his support for alternative energy ventures, and he mentioned the College's recent shift to Cow Power. I attended as a representative of the Green Mountain College Honors Club. While there I engaged in environmental discourse with a few officials on the state level and pressed them for information regarding grant money for use of biomass (woodchips) for energy. The Honors Club has been working for over a year in an attempt to convert Green Mountain College's heating plant from using crude oil to biomass. Two state-level officials mentioned that the National Departments of Agriculture and Energy recently appropriated funds specifically for biomass conversions. I asked the same question of the second featured speaker, Paul Fredrick, Wood Utilization Specialist with Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation. His advice was to lobby for congressional earmarks. The Honors Club is dedicated to making this project work for the betterment of the college and greater community.

Brett S. Dugan

ESinthearts

Environmental Sculpture

Karen Swyler's Environmental Sculpture class has been investigating a variety of environments, including those of both a traditional and an unconventional nature. Recently, projects challenging ideas about the domestic realm were created, and currently students are exploring the idea of the body as environment in performance-oriented sculptures. Snow sculptures will be created in the near future, weather permitting - so keep an eye out for them! When the weather warms, look for sculptures installed across campus.

The Service-Learning & Sustainability Office welcomes visiting practicum student Angela Olinghouse. She is a graduate student with the Audubon Expedition Institute at Lesley University.

Studentspotlight

My name is Christina-Alexa Liakos. I am a sophomore here at Green Mountain College, a Greenpeace Organizing Term Alum, and Campus Coordinator for Greenpeace, USA. This past fall semester, I was given the unique opportunity, thanks to support from professors and advisors here at GMC, to represent the College as 1 of 9 students from all over the country in the Greenpeace Organizing Term.

Based in San Francisco, the GOT, as it is called for short, is a semester of training for student activists. It is action-filled and provides hands-on experience for students to become environmental leaders. I learned and was trained in grass-roots organizing, media, direct action, and campaign strategy. But, all that said, it was so much more... I met and learned from some of the most inspirational activists and organizations fighting for the rights of our environment for future generations.

In my semester with Greenpeace I helped create and run a 2-week campaign and recruitment drive on climate change and global warming, focusing on the candidates running for an open seat in congress in Colorado. I gave class raps, petitioned, phone banked, recruited volunteers, listened to local citizens, bird-dogged each candidate, worked with college students, and ran a day of action for 150 volunteers. The message was "save our snow" spelled out by voters of Colorado, to alert their representatives that global warming is a serious issue. This experience has given me the confidence and tools I need to contribute to positive change; here at GMC and in the community.

Along with the training and campaign, I traveled to Holland to the International Headquarters of Greenpeace to get campaign briefs about environmental and human rights issues by people who are working all over the world to protect this planet. While we were there we kicked off Greenpeace's newest campaign on toxins, Green My Apple, by handing

Greeningthecampus

Eco-Reps are Acting Out

Twenty-three members of this semester's Campus Sustainability class began a series of outreach actions this past week. Service-Learning & Sustainability Coordinator Jesse Pyles is facilitating the course, which is designed to promote individual responsibility for campus environmental sustainability. As part of this one-credit, special topics elective, students are addressing key sustainability issues through alternating sessions of focused discussion and appropriate outreach actions in the areas of waste, energy, water, transportation, and consumption. Waste actions last Tuesday included a dancing (compostable) banana, Eco-Adventure Fun sheets, "free box" and RecycleMania! flyers, and a campus-wide recycling program assessment. Findings from the course will be made available to the campus community as a sustainability resource guide.

out free organic green apples along with info on the campaign in front of Apple stores. Connecting to individuals with whom I did not even share a language was quite an experience in itself!

I have learned so much from this Greenpeace experience that I could not even begin to explain my personal growth. The memories are forever, and I have taken all that I have been taught back to GMC where I want to give back to this campus. The positive change that is waiting to be done to create less of an impact on the earth is endless, and GMC is just the place to get students involved and engaged in making positive changes for mother earth.



GOT students at a bird-dogging event, with congressman Ed Perlmutter (D-CO), who talked to us about Greenhouse gas emission cuts and policy improvements. Christina-Alexa Liakos is second from left.

RecycleMania

Green Mountain College is competing in RecycleMania this semester. The ten-week competition runs through April 7th and pits more than 200 colleges and universities from across the country against one another. Students in Sue Sutheimer's Environmental Chemistry class are helping GMC's efforts by measuring various recyclables in the campus trailer, and everyone is encouraged to help out by recycling whenever possible. For more information about RecycleMania, check out <http://www.recyclemaniacs.org>.

Recycling Crew Welcomes New Members

Matt Luby and Malik Owens are the newest members of the GMC Recycling Crew. They join Crew Chief Ashley Graban, and veteran members, Gabbi Bellegarde, James Keiner, and Jane Day. Help the crew out by placing clean materials in the proper recycling bins. And thank them for all of their hard work when you see them.

DEEPers Projects

In fall 2006, the D.E.E.P (Demonstrated Excellence in Environmental Practice) Scholars worked with maintenance to install clotheslines in most of the dorms. The main goal of this was to implement an alternative drying opportunity with much less energy input. We installed Vendingmisers to a few of the vending machines which lower the energy use. We resurrected the rideshare board through the GMC Journal and constructed a physical board which is located near the Student Life Office. We have also put up signage for the farm's compost system. For spring 2007, we plan on researching the actual input/output of all energy/water/and maybe wastes to determine how much we are saving and need to in the future. We also want to investigate the possibility of green roofs on Withey and how this can be a positive for the College. Other ideas include replacing the existing cleaning supplies (including paper towels) with sustainable ones, and a substantial education campaign to let students know the facts about Green Mountain College and its sustainable (or not so) practices. The DEEPers (Joe Karr, Emily Aronowitz, Sam Tischler, Kelly Wassell, Shannon Bonney, Josh Hanrahan, Alex Insler).

SCGFupdates

New Lights in Dining Hall

Green Mountain alums Tim Poole, Chris Babcock, and Tyler Crow returned to campus between semesters to put the finishing touches on the Withey Dining Hall light bulb retrofit. GMC's maintenance staff completed the bulk of the installation early in January. Hundreds of students, faculty, and staff have expressed an interest in the project over the last several years. 236 40-watt incandescent bulbs were replaced with dimmable 8-watt compact fluorescent lights (CFLs). The new bulbs – which are expected to reduce energy consumption in the dining hall by about eighty percent – cost \$3,225 and were purchased entirely by students through the Student Campus Greening Fund (SCGF). Poole, Babcock, and Crow researched and wrote the Greening Fund Proposal that secured the bulbs during the Spring '06 semester.

Double-Sided Printer in Withey

In other SCGF news, the Withey Computer Lab has been upgraded with a new double-sided printer courtesy of GMC students through the Fund. Nicole Ainsworth and her student peers in Natalie Coe's Environmental Science class wrote the awarded proposal last semester, and Jeff Wright of the IT staff installed the printer last week. \$1,792 was spent on the printer, which is estimated to save nearly four reams of paper each semester. Thanks to Gail Schaumlöfel for coordinating the purchase and to all students involved in the research and writing of the proposal.

Questions/comments regarding the SCGF can be addressed to Co-Directors Corinna Lowe and Jane Engelman, or to Jesse Pyles in the Service-Learning & Sustainability Office.



GMC Alums Tyler Crow, Tim Poole, and Chris Babcock

Thalweg

Peace of mind
is not achieved
in glassy laminar flows
but in turbulent currents
of shallow rapids.

Bring your burdened mind
to the armored banks
and take a seat
on uncomfortable
sun bleached cobbles.

Listen
to dry grass
battle with living blades
invoked by the slightest
of breezes.

Let the ripping
chewing
and jaw popping of insects
drive you to the brink
of insanity.

And right before
you cannot handle any more
drop
your heavy mind
into the rapids.

Let it crash
along the bed load
knocking,
squeezing,
kneading out
your frustrations.

Let it collide
with dead fallen trees
that lost the war
against an undercut bank.

Let it surface
and get hung up
on stranded piles
of rotting foliage.

And after
it has been put through
the rapids,
retrieve it
and thank the obnoxious bank
for its cleansing.

Peace is found
in shallow rapids
that bathe
and softened
the mind.

Desiree Violette

Ecoleagueexchange

I returned from Mexico a few days ago and gave final presentations for the Prescott College course. Still stunned by the tragic beauty of an eroding third world and exhausted from two and a half weeks of rigorous traveling, it was quite a task. My group and I were given the chance to piece together the cultural construct of the society that we observed and took part in. From playing soccer with poor Mexican children in the street, to sleeping in wooden shacks on ghetto mountains, to stepping into the offices of high government officials, the truth was discovered in all of us. Our task was to show how the oppressed indigenous people fought to reclaim their cultural identity and strengthen the social fabric that has worn so thin as a result of the free trade agreement (NAFTA) that was implemented in 1994. No thought has been made of the deteriorating state of the country while rich landowners are selling away Mexico with subsidized costs, and the people are the only ones to cry out for their own name. Through rebellion, through art, through community protest, through music, through merely surviving, these people have fought back. "No Olvidado" we called them, a race of people fighting not to be forgotten. And that is what we brought back after traveling from Prescott to San Diego to Tijuana and all the way across Northern Mexico, finally to return to the majestic granite mountains of Arizona.

GMC Student Joseph Palmiotto

EScalendar

March 12 - Bill Porter (aka Red Pine), an internationally renowned translator of Chinese poetry and Buddhist texts will visit Laird Christensen and Mark Dailey's block course, "Chinese Mountain Poetry," then give an evening talk and slideshow relating to poetics and cultural landscapes of mainland China. He has been a practicing Buddhist monk, worked as a radio journalist, wrote a book about searching for hermits in contemporary China, and penned several books of translations, including the famous Song Dynasty Qianjiashi collection, or "Poems of the Masters," and "The Collected Songs of Cold Mountain," the 300 surviving poems of a Tang Dynasty hermit poet. When he is not traveling, he resides in Port Townsend, Washington. Vermont poet David Budbill (aka Judevine Mountain) will be our guest April 16.

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