

# Environmental Studies

newsletter



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## Environmental news

### GMC Is First Vermont College to Sign College Presidents Climate Commitment

Green Mountain College president John F. Brennan is the first Vermont college or university president to sign on to the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment – a group of colleges and universities that have signed their commitment to reaching climate neutrality in their curricula and operations. Participating as a Leadership Circle member, Green Mountain College has agreed to provide both guidance and promotion of the initiative.


The agreement, organized by ecoAmerica, Second Nature, and the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, focuses on controlling climate change and curbing the emission of greenhouse gases.

tions, integrating sustainability into the curriculum and making it part of the educational experience, and making the action plan, inventory, and progress reports publicly available.

“This agreement calls for many things that are simply part of the fabric at Green Mountain College,” said Provost Bill Throop. “We begin with our core environmental liberal arts curriculum which assures a sustainability focus for every Green Mountain student.”

The College has not set a date for achieving “carbon zero” but has already taken many steps to reduce its carbon footprint. In October of 2006, the College began purchasing more than half of its electricity from the Central Vermont Public Service “Cow Power” program, which produces power from methane generated on Vermont dairy farms.

In recent years, the College has done extensive energy conservation work to its 173-year-old campus, including wholesale installation of low-flow showerheads and low flush toilets and campus-wide replacement of incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs. The latter initiative earned the College recognition from the EPA as the nation’s first EnergyStar Showcase Campus. Additionally, the Student Campus Greening Fund involves students and promotes striving toward a sustainable campus through innovative improvements.



“Our nation’s colleges and universities have a critical role to play in the battle against global warming. As we educate the leaders of tomorrow who will grapple continually with climate change, we need to lead by example ourselves.”

GMC President John F. Brennan

In brief, President Brennan has pledged to establish policies that will help the College achieve climate neutrality. This involves completing an emissions inventory, setting a target date and milestones for reaching climate neutrality, taking immediate steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by choosing from a list of short-term ac-

### GMC Earns EPA Recognition for Cow Power

Green Mountain College has been recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency's Green Power Partnership program for its commitment to purchase more than half of its electricity from Central Vermont Public Service's Cow Power program. This is a voluntary program intended to increase awareness and use of green power among leading U.S. organizations. Because GMC's renewable energy purchase accounts for such a high percentage of its overall electricity consumption, the College has been listed as a member of the Green Power Leadership Club, a designation reserved for those partners who significantly exceed minimum enrollment requirements.

### GMC Mentioned in Seven Days "Renewable Ed" Article

A recent article by Mike Ives discusses environmental education in Vermont, a distinctive emphasis that began in 1965 when Middlebury College created the country's first Environmental Studies program. Since then interest in "green" education has increased, along with greening of campuses. The article cited GMC's farm, solar panels, wind turbine, and local food purchasing as some of the progressive actions being taken by Vermont colleges. For the entire article go to: [www.sevendaysvt.com/features/2007/renewable-ed.html](http://www.sevendaysvt.com/features/2007/renewable-ed.html)



Dolomites, Italy

Lindsay Swinger

### Castleton State Visits Green Mountain

Representatives from Castleton State College's Green Campus Initiative visited Poultney for a tour of GMC's composting program. Professor Paul Derby, director of Castleton's program, and students Heather and Nicole, were particularly interested in GMC's Earth Tubs as they plan their own composting program. Having researched and worked on the Earth Tubs as a member of the D.E.E.P. Scholars ("Dedicated Excellence in Environmental Practices"), GMC student Sam Tischler answered questions and discussed some of the benefits and drawbacks of the system. Anastasia "Stash" Gaszynski and several other students discussed the Sustainable Living Floor's role in managing GMC's compost. The visiting group finished their tour over lunch in the dining hall where Campus Sustainability students encouraged them to properly dispose of their lunch waste.

## newEScourses-fall2007

### ENV 2019 Special Topics on Energy & the Environment

Solar Revolution: The Inevitable Transition of the Global Energy Economy

Steve Letendre is back! Students will tackle the difficult questions: Can solar energy replace fossil fuels as the primary energy source for economies world wide? What is the state of solar energy technology? Will solar energy always be expensive? What policies have proven effective at promoting greater investments in renewable forms of energy like solar?

Instructor: Steven E. Letendre

### Ecology - Statistics Block BIO 2025, MAT 1015 (ELA 1101)

This fall, Ecology will be blocked with one section of Introduction to Statistics, creating a powerful way to learn ecological research methods, and making statistical applications more practical. Would you like to: Measure changes in an ecosystem along the transition from forest to open bluff? Explain differences in water flea densities in pools near the Poultney River? Test the effects of different planting methods in a restoration experiment? Reconstruct forest history using modern size and age distributions of trees?

Instructors: Diana Boyd, Jim Graves

### ENV 3057: Advanced Topics in Sustainable Agriculture

Understanding and Designing Farm Systems

Introducing GMC's new farm manager: Kenneth Mulder (Ph.D. Ecological Economics). Agricultural systems, especially very diverse organic farms, are highly integrated systems composed of numerous living entities interacting with each other and the environment through a complex web of relationships. To properly understand, manage, and design such systems, it is necessary to study not only pieces of the system but the relationships between them as well. The course will culminate in the development of a conceptual model for Cerridwen Farm. This will include development of a model of the current farm operation as well as design of new components to be incorporated in a three-year plan aimed at building the farm's productive capacity and integrating it further into the college ecosystem. This model will be presented to the college community.

Instructor: Kenneth Mulder

### NRM 306 I Hunting: History, Ethics, and Management

To kill or not to kill, that is the question. Hunting in North America today is a decidedly different enterprise than that which our forebears practiced even up to a couple hundred years ago. Our purposes in this course are to consider the history of this practice, to develop an understanding of the arguments for and against hunting and to analyze the role of hunting as a natural resources management tool.

Instructor: James Harding

### ENV 3000 Topics in Environmental Studies

Topic in environmental policy TBA in April. Save space in your schedule for this cutting-edge course in the specialty area of our new Environmental Studies professor.

# ESinthe**field**

## Southern California Biology Field Trip

Over Spring Break, 12 students explored the amazing natural history of Southern California on the Biology Field Trip (BIO 3072) with faculty members Mike Blust and Jim Graves. In this 9-day field-intensive experience, students developed observation skills, learned about flora and fauna in ecosystems ranging from Sonoran Desert to Live Oak Woodlands, observed conservation problems and solutions in a region rich in endemic species, and conducted field research. Before the trip, we discussed Bakker's An Island Called California, and each student searched additional literature on a topic of interest and designed a study. Solving problems with these studies in the field provided students with some of their best learning experiences. Trip highlights include our walk through the sparsely leafy and flowering desert to a palm oasis, Great Horned Owls hollering from the sandstone cliffs over Joshua Trees and Junipers, and our Darwinian experience on Santa Cruz Island where isolation has yielded a curious world of little Island Foxes, Island Scrub Jays, and Giant Coreopsis.



At University of California's Sedgwick Reserve: from left (back) Qiao-xia Chen, Mike Blust, Shannon Bonney, Christine Kenny, Kadie DellaCamera, Ryan Murphy, Dana Marshall, Megan Nugent, Kim Conway, Fred Emerson, Jim Graves, (front) Dana DeLancey, Irene Holak, Sheri Knowles, Laura DiNardo.

## Environmental Ethics

Four students from Jim Harding's Spring 2007 Environmental Ethics class attended a Deer Management meeting held in Rutland on March 19th. These students heard from the State's Chief Deer Biologist as he discussed the data on last fall's hunting season and the projected health of the deer herd heading into spring. Students also were able to participate in the question and answer session in which they heard a range of vocal perspectives on deer management in the state. These annual meetings tend to draw a range of hunters and wildlife professionals who sometimes disagree very pointedly on how the state's deer herd should be managed.

Photos were taken by Members of the Environmental Philosophy Class. The class is currently focusing on the aesthetics of natural environments.



Newcastle, Ireland Erin Weaver-Hathway

## Campus Sustainability

Twenty-three members of this semester's Campus Sustainability class began a series of outreach actions this past month. Service-Learning and 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. Actions have included a dancing (compostable) banana, "free box" flyers, a door-to-door computer sleepmode campaign, and water conservation skits. Findings from the course will be made available to the campus community as a sustainability resource guide.

## Food, Agriculture, and Community

Philip Ackerman-Leist, Dave Ondria (Director of Dining Services), and Corinna Lowe ('07) went to the Community Food Security Coalition's national conference From Cafeterias to Capitol Hill: Growing Healthy Kids, Farms and Communities in Baltimore from March 16-17. Philip presented on GMC's sustainable and local purchasing initiatives in a session entitled "Building Partnerships with Student Groups, Clients, and the School Administration." His presentation focused on the college's ties with regional farms, connecting the college farm to the dining hall and the curriculum, and the fall 2006 block course on "Food, Agriculture, and Community Development in the Northeast." GMC guest instructor John Turenne of Sustainable Food Systems, Inc. was also on the panel. Philip, Dave, and Corinna returned with numerous ideas and contacts and had plenty of time to brainstorm in the 16 hours of unsustainable driving to get there and back! Philip highly recommends traveling with Dave Ondria, who brings a cooler-full of authentic local goodies—including smoked trout caught while ice-fishing on Lake St. Catherine!



Helen Buckner Preserve Elaine Blodgett

### Project: Clean Plate at GMC

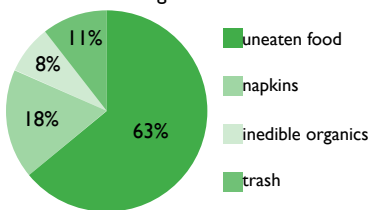
I have been working on Chartwells program Project: Clean Plate to reduce food waste. People who return a clean plate (no uneaten food) during plate monitoring times are given a raffle ticket. The raffle will be held after food waste is reduced by 10%. First prize is a pizza party. Chartwells will also donate 100 pounds of food to the Poultney Emergency Food Shelf if this goal is reached. Dining hall waste is being weighed to determine if food waste is actually being reduced.

I have conducted two waste audits to discover how much food is being wasted. A waste audit is performed by simply sorting the waste (with gloved hands) into categories and then weighing it. Whole pieces of pizza, untouched bananas and oranges, recyclable beverage containers and even a couple forks are amongst the things I have found.

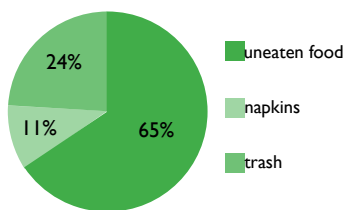
The first waste audit on March 7 revealed 65% of the dining hall waste (trash and compostables) was uneaten food. That was down to 63% on the March 20 waste audit. I noticed there were fewer compostable napkins thrown in the trash - it went from 17% to 11%. But the compost can had 1% more trash in it. This was mostly plastic straws. We're still a long way from reaching the Project: Clean Plate 10% food waste reduction goal, but at least there have been some noticeable changes.

Angela Olinghouse

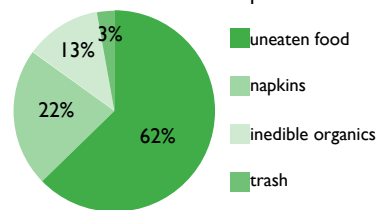
Dining Hall Waste



Contents of the Trash Can



Contents of the Compost Can



### Earth Week Announcement

GMC's Earth Week events will start on Wednesday, April 18th and will last through the weekend. This year's celebrations will feature service activities on the farm and in the field, career and networking opportunities with recent alums, student artwork on campus, contra dancing, and opportunities to Focus the Nation. Weekend activities will coincide with GMC's Young Alumni Event (April 20-21) and Honors Tea (April 22). The Honors Tea will feature alumna Jennifer Wilhelm (Environmental Studies, '00), sustainability coordinator at Philips Exeter Academy in Exeter, NH. Also watch for an announcement of Vermont poet David Budbill's April 16 visit!



Dolomites, Italy

Lindsay Swinger

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newsletter

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