

The Ecology Action Center

2011 Annual Report





From the Desk of the Executive Director

For the Ecology Action Center, 2011 was a year of celebrations, renewal, and setting ambitious goals. The 40th anniversary of the EAC's origins as a one-time recycling drive in 1971 was celebrated in a year-long effort which helped further increase the EAC's visibility in the community. The 40 Days of Green Ideas for 40 Years campaign provided local residents with 40 daily suggestions—both simple and more challenging—on how to live a greener lifestyle. These green ideas were distributed through the EAC's website, Facebook page, and daily press releases.

The 40th anniversary celebration continued with a well-attended open house and ribbon cutting at the EAC, the unveiling of a new EAC logo commemorating 40 years of environmental stewardship, the production of a video with highlights of our history, and the release of five promotional videos demonstrating environmentally friendly practices at home.

The exterior of the EAC's home, the historic Hewett House, received a much needed repainting in the Fall. This 1860 structure has now reclaimed its former classy appearance. We are grateful to our landlord, the Town of Normal, for their continued stewardship of this beautiful Victorian property.

Late in the year the EAC and its community partners took bold steps to meet the needs of the McLean County area in dealing with household hazardous waste (HHW). It has been four years since the last HHW collection event in McLean and the Illinois EPA is no longer able to fund local HHW events. In light of this, we launched a fund raising campaign in early December in order to reach an ambitious goal of \$125,000 so that McLean can hold its very first locally-funded HHW collection event in September of 2012. The EAC had already raised over \$7,000 by the end of the year. The HHW Fund is now a major priority for the EAC. This effort takes us into 2012 with the knowledge that we are helping to better address the needs of our community. We can't do it alone, and are extremely grateful for the continuing support of our members and community partners.

Sincerely,

Michael Brown



McLean County Solid Waste and Recycling Education Program Report

We reached 2,346 fourth grade students through the Earth Schools Recycling and Waste Reduction program at 26 McLean County elementary schools, as well as 1,309 other K-12 students through various programs and presentations. In addition, the EAC provided solid waste and recycling information for the Regional Office of Education Teacher Training Seminar, which had 30 participants.

The annual McLean County Green Awards were presented at the Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo (ILSWE) in April. The McLean County Waste Reduction and Recycling Award recognized ISU's innovative food scrap composting project which allows local businesses to reduce their waste landfilled by composting food waste. The McLean County World of Difference Award was presented to key individuals who helped build the Ecology Action Center into the respected community agency it is today.

Ecology Action Center staff provided solid waste planning and program administration to the communities of Bloomington, Normal and McLean County. In accordance with the Solid Waste Education contractual agreement between these bodies and the EAC, Executive Director Michael Brown serves as the Solid Waste Coordinator for McLean County.

The EAC surveyed area waste haulers, recyclers, municipalities, and large organizations to gather data for the annual calculation of county-wide municipal solid waste generation and recycling rates. Official rates were reported to the Illinois EPA as well as announced publicly; local radio stations and newspapers reported the improving rates as a story. The 2010 recycling rate as calculated by the EAC was 37.5%, a 2.4% increase from 2009, putting McLean County within a few percentage points of achieving its goal of recycling 40% of its waste.

This year, the EAC hosted Freecycle Free-4-All waste reduction events at Anderson Park and White Oak Park, with 360 participants. The EAC also provided a group of sustainability professionals on tour from Peoria with information about our efforts in regards to solid waste reduction and clean water education and outreach; as well as co-hosting an electronics recycling event at ISLWE, resulting in 50,524 pounds of electronics recycled from over 850 households.

ILSWE promoted many aspects of sustainable lifestyles including solid waste issues to the 3,000 attendees. The reuse of textiles was promoted specifically through the



Solid Waste and Recycling Education Continued

Affordable Fashion Challenge, a fashion competition exclusively focused on the reuse and redesign of existing clothing or home décor.

Staff and volunteers answered phone calls and other inquiries about the disposal of household hazardous waste and recycling, including 200 inquiries about recycling/waste disposal, 244 inquiries about household hazardous waste, and 178 inquiries about electronics recycling.

The EAC Executive Director continues to participate in the Illinois Recycling Association Board of Directors, including participation in the annual statewide recycling conference; and the EAC staff attended the Zero Waste for Businesses and Communities Training Workshop at the national Resource Recycling Conference.

The EAC coordinated and promoted McFreecycle, a free listserv on the internet for the free exchange of materials in McLean County to avoid disposal of useable items. EAC staff facilitated migration of the entire McFreecycle listserv from Yahoo Groups to the more functional, custom built Freecycle.org site. McFreecycle has 1,273 current members with an average of 837 messages exchanged monthly.

We continue to administer and promote a Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL) recycling program with 3 drop-off points in Bloomington and Normal as well as the Household Battery recycling program in conjunction with Interstate Batteries, Batteries Plus, and Springfield Electric; 21,961 total pounds were recycled in this calendar year. Additionally, the EAC promotes the Illinois Plastic Pot Recycling Program in cooperation with the McLean County Master Gardeners. The EAC also participated in the permitting process of B & B Bedding Pollution Control Facility.

Workshops held by the EAC resulted in the creation of compost bins and vermicomposting worm bins by 29 participants.

The EAC facilitated Solid Waste Technical Committee quarterly meetings and subsequent actions, including coordination of a recycling grants program for McLean County Schools. The EAC also participates in follow-up reporting to the McLean County Land Use Committee.

The McLean County small municipality recycling grants program, coordinated by the EAC, resulted in \$2,500 in support for recycling programs in Arrowsmith, Downs, Carlock, Heyworth, and Lexington. The McLean County schools recycling program, also



Solid Waste and Recycling Education Continued

coordinated by the EAC , resulted in \$2,880 in support for recycling programs in Colene Hoose School, Lexington Elementary School, and Sheridan School.

The EAC also co-coordinated America Recycles Day Mega Recycling Event at Illinois Wesleyan University. Over 350 households recycled thousands of pounds of electronics, textiles, CFL bulbs, batteries, and garden pots. Each participant was given information about recycling these items during the year as well as updates about the Household Hazardous Waste collection.

Garbage Monster presentations were given to 87 children at 2 area preschools, and Waste Reduction/Recycling programs reached 181 additional scouts, students, and community members.

Additional school programs included presentations on waste reduction and recycling for 143 college students at 3 McLean County institutions. The EAC also provided recycling information and hands-on recycled paper making at ISU Family Science Day to over 350 people as well as at the Children’s Discovery Museum Earth Day event.

Solid waste reduction programs and information booths were present at 16 events, fairs, and festivals. Panel discussions and presentations on the subject attracted 329 participants throughout the year; additionally, the EAC loaned out Clear Stream recycling containers for Sugar Creek and Sweet Corn Fests in Uptown Normal.

Summer reading programs for children and families about solid waste reduction and composting were implemented at Crumbaugh Library in LeRoy, Towanda Library, Chenoa Library, Gridley Library, McLean Library, Heyworth Library, Lexington Library, and Danvers Library. The programs had 384 participants.

EAC press releases resulted in Bloomington Pantagraph stories on household hazardous waste and electronics recycling as well as interviews on WGLT and WJBC about America Recycles Day and household hazardous waste; and content provided for WGLT’s Uncommon Knowledge science program on the problems of compostable plastics which reached thousands of area listeners.

Other news coverage included stories in The Bloomington Pantagraph, WMBD TV 31, WGLT, and the ISU Vidette promoting the EAC’s 40th Anniversary, utilizing the “40 Green Ideas” campaign, which included a strong focus on solid waste issues.



Solid Waste and Recycling Education Continued

This year, the EAC produced four quarterly issues of EAC paper newsletter which featured solid waste issues, among other topics. This was mailed to approximately 250 households each issue, and made available as free download on EAC website. In addition, EAC Action News, a separate publication, was sent to over 700 email addresses to promote recycling and waste reduction, among other topics; the Talking Trash teacher newsletter was sent out electronically twice this year as a resource for educators on solid waste issues. A Household Hazardous Waste update was sent to 813 email addresses and 581 Facebook followers.

Local recycling data was submitted to the new statewide EcoPoint website hosted by the Illinois Recycling Association, and county-wide recycling information was updated at www.ecologyactioncenter.org and www.Earth911.com.

The EAC enlisted the help of a ISU Stevenson Center graduate class to perform community-wide recycling assessment. The resulting 85-page report from their scientifically conducted survey will be utilized in the 5-year update to the McLean County Solid Waste Management Plan which is to be coordinated by the EAC in 2012.

The costs and logistics of holding a locally funded Household Hazardous Waste collection event were researched, given the ongoing absence of state funding for the foreseeable future.

The annual residential waste audit was performed in order to determine trends in waste generation and usage of local recycling programs.

50 local electronics retailers were notified by the EAC of their obligation under the state electronics recycling law to provide consumers with information on electronics recycling at the time of purchase. Each retailer was provided with two copies of a color flier to help them to comply with this regulation.

The EAC launched a fundraising campaign to raise \$125,000 in order to hold the first Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event in McLean County in over 4 years. The event is planned for September 2012.



Bloomington-Normal Stormwater Education and Public Participation Program Report

The Ecology Action Center reached 1,531 elementary students at 19 area schools through clean water programs; 87 Heartland Community College students in presentations concerning stormwater issues; 54 IWU & ISU students in presentations including stormwater issues and Yard Smart; 57 Scout members through clean water programs; a clean water program for Normal Community High School Summer school students; 280 community members through stormwater runoff programs for classes at Sugar Grove Nature Center and programs at McLean County Soil & Water Conservation Day event. Other programs included presentations for Multicultural Leadership Program about stormwater issues and Yard Smart and Towanda Library about clean water issues.

The EAC co-sponsored the Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo with Illinois Wesleyan University, which included exhibitions on clean water topics and attracted 3,000 participants.

Informational booths including information on clean water protection, Yard Smart and stormwater runoff were present at:

- ISU International Fair
- ISU Earth Day
- Earth Day at Children's Discovery Museum
- Miller Park Zoo event
- ISU Horticulture Fest
- Ropp Road Round Up
- Chamber of Commerce non-profit showcase
- Wellness Fair at the Town of Normal
- Wellness Fair at ISU
- Wellness Fair at IRS
- Wellness Fair at Mitsubishi
- Sugar Creek Art Festival
- Sweet Corn Festival
- Cultural Fest

With these booths, the EAC reached over 830 community members.



Stormwater Education and Public Participation Continued

Presentations and panel discussions featuring clean water topics and rain barrels, among other topics, were given at area schools, businesses, and community events. These events reached 440 community members.

The EAC installed a demonstration Rain Garden on Oak Street in cooperation with Town of Normal. The EAC is performing ongoing maintenance including weeding, mulching, and additional planting. There is ongoing development of Yard Smart demonstration garden at the Ecology Action Center to demonstrate usage of native plants and other techniques to reduce detrimental impacts on local clean water.

Ongoing maintenance was done at the stormwater demonstration site at Davis Lodge on Lake Bloomington, which was installed in 2010. The Rain Garden was weeded and mulched.

A demonstration rain barrel and compost bin were installed at the Ecology Action Center to better demonstrate these Yard Smart practices.

Yard Smart information booths including information on rain barrels, stormwater runoff, and vermicompost were present at the Fell Arboretum Plant Sale, Master Gardener's Home Lawn and Garden Day, and at the Glorious Garden Tour; also, a presentation on Yard Smart was given to State Farm's Garden Club. These events reached 170 community members.

The EAC hosted the Annual Yard Smart Garden Walk on June 25 showcasing area yards that utilize practices that reduce impact on clean water with 65 participants attending.

5 rain barrel making workshops were held with a focus on stormwater runoff issues resulting in construction of 36 rain barrels.

EAC staff and volunteers answered 145 inquiries about the YardSmart program, rain barrels, and stormwater issues.

A total of 173 volunteers spent 417 hours painting 1,017 stormwater inlets and distributing information on stormwater runoff pollution and ways to reduce this pollution to 3,982 homes in Normal, Hudson, and Bloomington (see attached map).



Stormwater Education and Public Participation Continued

Stormwater Runoff Awareness advertisements appeared on 4 local radio stations (WGLT, WJBC, WBNQ, and WBWN) reaching approximately 130,000 area listeners.

The EAC participated in WGLT's Uncommon Knowledge Series with a two-part interview about water pollution issues, which was estimated to have reached 5,000 listeners per installment.

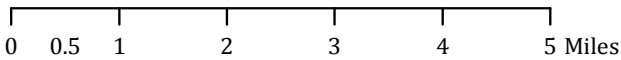
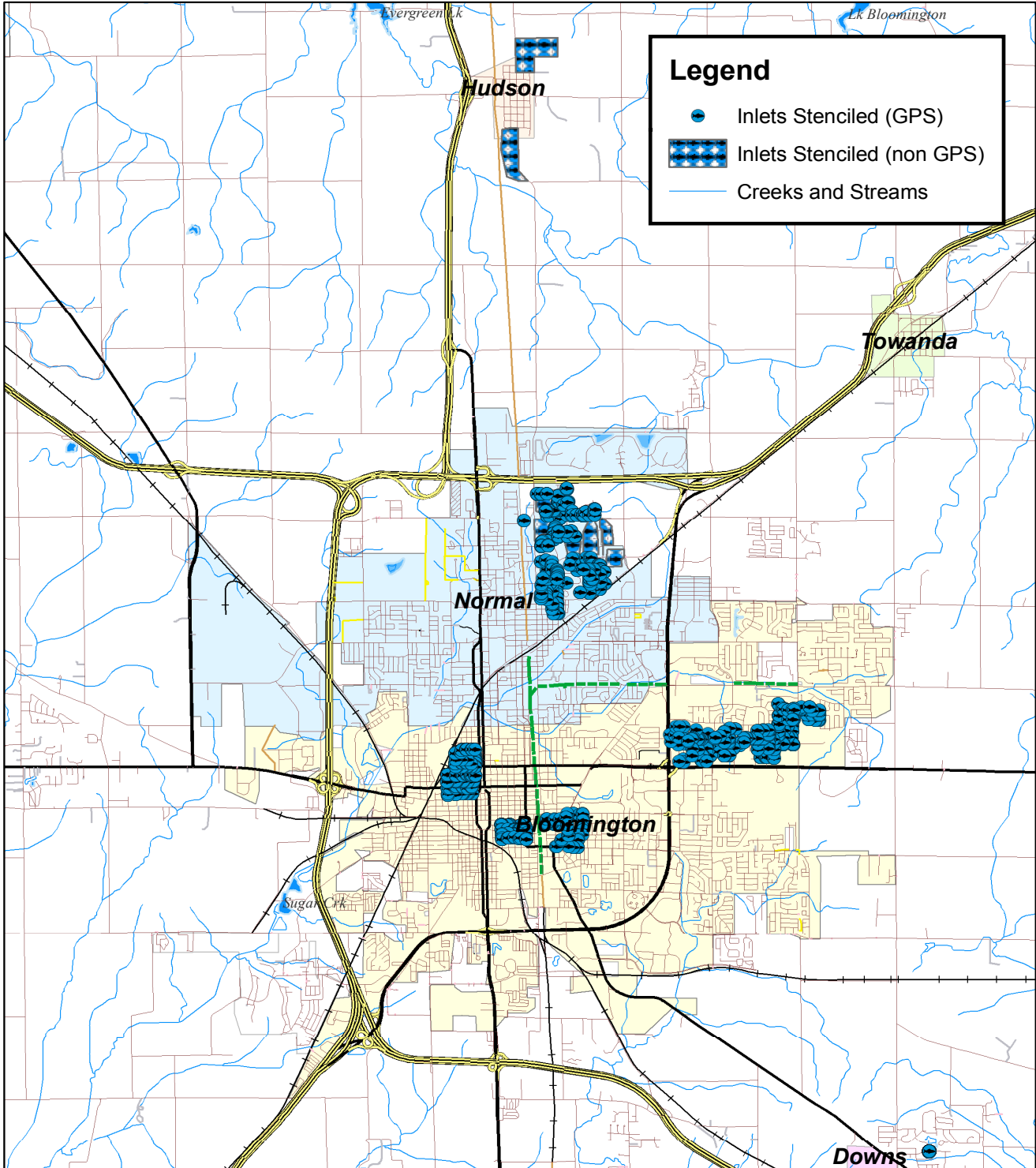
The McLean County watersheds forum website is in development; this community resource is to act as a clearinghouse of local information on watershed issues.

The EAC continues to participate in the Watershed Plan Implementation Committee's efforts. EAC staff facilitated the McLean County Greenways Coalition as Chair.

The Assistant Director of the EAC received certification as a Citizen Scientist for Illinois RiverWatch Network in day-long training.

The EAC monitored a stretch of Sugar Creek near Parkside Junior High as part of statewide RiverWatch program. 12 teenagers involved in EAC camp helped with data collection.

2011 Storm Drain Stenciling



Michael Brown 2011
Ecology Action Center



Radon Testing Awareness

A Radon billboard was prominently on display at the intersection of Veterans Pky and Brickyard Dr, Bloomington. It was viewed by approximately 250,000 people over the course of its display in January and “Radon Awareness Month” in October.

EAC Radon program staff participated in a statewide Radon awareness planning at the Radon Networking Day in Springfield and attended the Midwest meeting for the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists at the national AARST Conference in Orlando.

The EAC coordinated the meetings and activities of the McLean County Radon Task Force. It meets 2 times per year, sponsors a website designed and maintained free of charge by a Task Force member, and members donate many hours to Radon outreach. At the Habitat for Humanity New Homeowners meeting, EAC Radon program staff presented to Habitat for Humanity home owners on Radon. Free test kits were provided to the new home owners. In total, the EAC has distributed over 150 Radon test kits this year as part of sales to homeowners and VIP distribution.

Radon testing information booths were present at 5 events and fairs, including the Mclean County Home Show where we talked to 274 people about Radon and sold 47 test kits. The EAC also had an Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) booth at the IDPH Communicable Disease Conference. test kits were given out to Statewide representatives from health clinics and health departments; booths at other events attracted 185 visitors.

EAC Radon program staff presented Radon Community Engagement and participated in a panel with IEMA staff as part of the “Radon-a Medical Perspective” conference at SIU, Edwardsville.

The EAC has given presentations on Radon testing to Illinois Wesleyan University, the Health Educators Association, the Senior Services Council of McLean, and the East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging community coalition in Bloomington.

The Radon Task Force sponsored a Bloomington-Normal Realtors Association Social Hour in order to reach an audience that has the ability to communicate with a large number of new homeowners. Radon literature was distributed as Task Force members networked with realtors and donated professional tests for real estate transactions along with a mitigation discount.



Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo

The Ecology Action Center organized and promoted the annual Illinois Sustainable Living & Wellness Expo in partnership with Illinois Wesleyan University Wellness, which took place April 9. The event included 84 different exhibitors and 13 presenters covering topics about the many aspects of sustainability and wellness. Activities included a children's carnival, local and organic food, the Affordable Fashion Challenge, presentation of the 2011 McLean County World of Difference Award and the McLean County Recycling and Waste Reduction Award, and a panel discussion featuring Brian Sauder of Faith Place, an organization dedicated to giving religious people the tools they need to become good stewards of the earth, offered practical tips to faith-based organizations to help them develop ecologically-mindful plans of action. The panel also discussed how groups can come together community-wide to connect faith with sustainability.

ISLWE also featured test drives of the Misubishi "i" electric car, valet bicycle parking by the Friends of the Constitution Trail, and free electronics recycling resulting in over 50,000 pounds of materials recycled from over 850 households. The Expo was held on the Illinois Wesleyan campus, and approximately 3,000 people attended.

Some of the exhibitors present were Heartland Community College, McLean County Greenways, the Bloomington/Normal Electric Vehicle Task Force, WGLT's Good to Go, Eco-Lawn Organics, Energistics Energy Auditing, Living Green Locally, and the Community Cancer Center. The expo included a special screening of *Mad City Chickens*, a documentary on people who keep urban chickens in their backyards. Permitting of backyard chickens was under consideration in Normal, and this documentary was specifically chosen in order to educate local residents on this timely topic.

Workshop presentations included sessions on multiple topics, including Renewable Energy Strategies; Homesteading 101; Backyard Chickens; Bicycle Maintenance; How Wind, Solar, and Energy Efficiency Work: Becoming Energy Independent; and more.



Education and Membership Activities

In 2011 the EAC's usage of social media to reach the community continued to expand. With over 650 followers on Facebook and 142 followers on Twitter, these and other social media channels are an increasingly effective means to get the word out.

Individual, family and organizational members are an important part of the success of the Ecology Action Center. Their monetary support provides revenue for additional programming which is not otherwise funded. Their participation in our workshops, camps, events and fundraisers such as Sustainable Gourmet helps insure the success of these endeavors. In 2011, EAC membership grew by 10%.

The EAC has previously had a role in the Bloomington-Normal community as a source of information about local environmental events. By creating the BN-Green (bein' green) Events Calendar, it has reclaimed that role. This community calendar of everything environmental in the McLean County area is a new way for the EAC to help promote the many sustainability oriented events and happenings in the community. The calendar, hosted on the EAC's website, has its own unique address, www.bn-green.org. It is free to use for both event organizers and the general public. Users can easily submit an event to the calendar to be shared with others. Residents looking for green events can check out the calendar on the EAC webpage, subscribe to an RSS feed of new events, or watch for the automatically generated event notices through EAC's Facebook page or Twitter feed. Nearly 500 visitors a month are now using the calendar and learning about great environmental events happening in our community.

As the EAC's annual fundraiser, the Sustainable Gourmet is a nice way to show support for the EAC and also a fun evening out on the town. Medici's in Normal hosted the EAC's annual wine tasting for the second year in a row and provided a great selection of hors d'oeuvres from ingredients grown and raised by local farmers. Another popular feature of this event is a silent auction of green items donated by local business owners. This year's event raised nearly \$3,500 to support the EAC's educational activities.

The EAC held EcoAction Camp at Comlara Park in partnership with the Town of Normal during the Summer, with 24 children participating in outdoor activities and learning about our environment on a very personal level.



Education and Membership Activities Continued

The EAC continues to assist other area environmental organizations by relaying messages and sometimes hosting meetings for the ParkLands Foundation, Friends of Kickapoo Creek, and the JWP Audubon Society. Vision2020 is a growing Transition Town group in Bloomington-Normal, and the EAC also began to provide similar services to them in 2011.

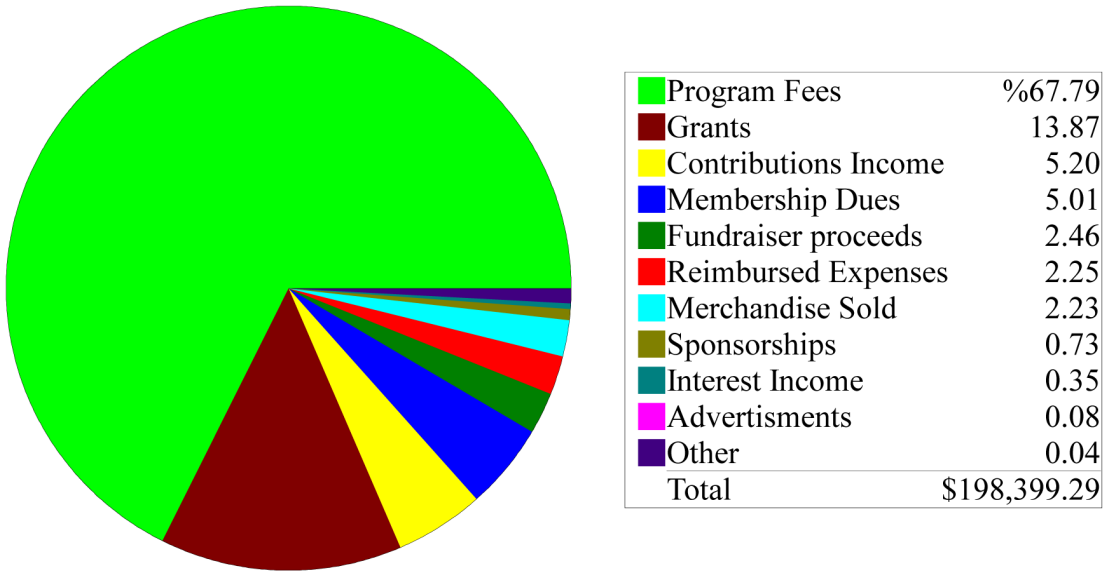
Green Drinks has become a popular monthly opportunity for members of the community to discuss environmental issues. Hosted by the EAC on the first Tuesday of each month at Medici's in Normal, Green Drinks is an informal event where people can socialize or network with other environmental professionals or others who are interested in environmental issues. There's no agenda, program or presentation, just a chance to meet others and chat. In 2010 Green Drinks drew 12-15 attendees each month, with a high of almost 30 attendees in August.

The EAC provided a quarterly membership newsletter full of articles intended to help area residents live in a more sustainable fashion. This membership newsletter is also posted on the EAC website for public access in a digital form.

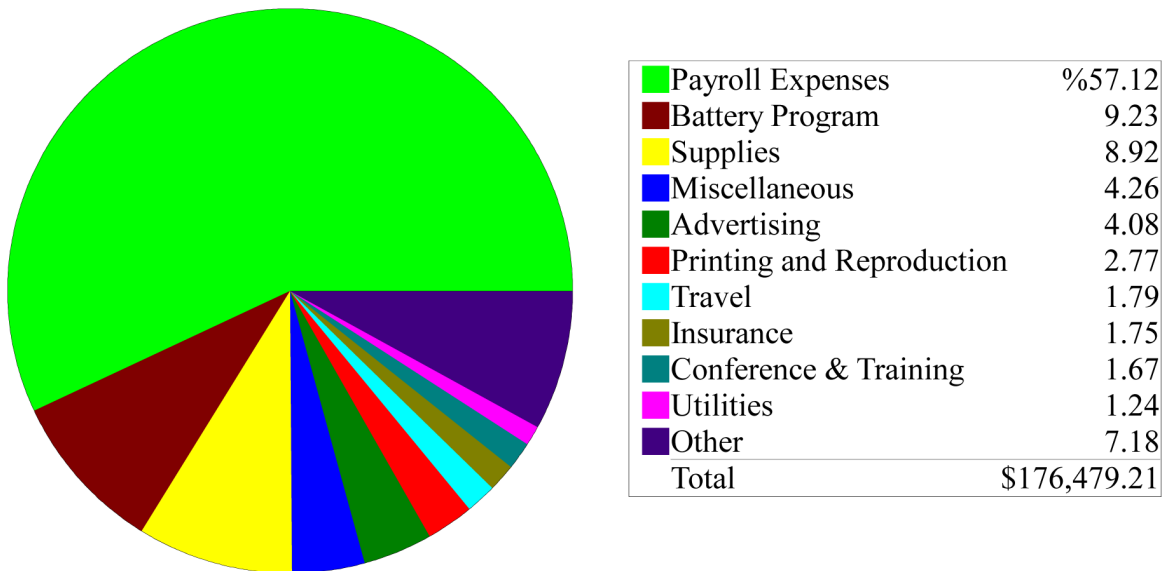


2011 Financial Report

Income Summary
January through December 2011



Expense Summary
January through December 2011





2011 Board of Directors

Kari Sandhaas - President
Nancy Armstrong- Vice President
Arti Kamatar- Treasurer
Charles Bristow - Secretary
Robin Weaver- Ex-officio Normal
George Kutz - Ex-officio Bloomington
George Gordon- Ex-officio McLean County
Myra Gordon
Charlotte Brown
Carl Teichman
Laurine Brown

Staff

Michael Brown - Executive Director
Kris Hall - Assistant Director
Larissa Armstrong - Program Assistant
Ruth Ann Lipic - Radon Program Coordinator
Gary Kamplain - Program Assistant
Dane Rasmussen – Program Assistant