



DECEMBER 2007 – JANUARY 2008

SAVE THE DATE

Co-Creator of
Ecological Footprint
to Speak at MCL

Annual Dinner April 25, 2008



It is with great pleasure that the Marin Conservation League announces that Mathis Wackernagel, Ph. D. Executive Director of Global Footprint Network, will be the speaker at the MCL Annual Dinner on April 25, 2008, at the Mill Valley Community Center. Dr. Wackernagel, co-creator of the Ecological Footprint, will speak on the global alliances the Network is forging and its success in applying the “footprint” as a natural resource accounting tool to both developed and developing nations. Marin County’s per capita “ecological footprint” continues to be one of the highest in the world, in spite of Marin’s environmentally-aware populace. Dr. Wackernagel will contrast Marin’s record with efforts by others around the world to curb ecological debts, and suggest how Marin can tailor its demands to better fit within the means of our planet.

Twenty years ago, the term “sustainability” began to be applied to the environment following publication in 1987 of the United Nations report “Our Common Future.” The report’s definition of sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations,” paved the way for the creation of principles and initiatives which attempted to capture the practical implications of overreaching the ecological limits of the Earth.

Now use of the term “sustainable,” along with its many synonyms such as “green,” has become commonplace. However, questions remain as to its meaning and practical application.

One of the “sustainability” initiatives that evolved early in the 1990s – the *Ecological Footprint* – put the illusive concept to work by measuring the amount of biologically productive land and water area of the earth required by a population to produce the resources it consumed and to absorb its wastes – that is, the resources necessary to support its lifestyle. This concept was developed by Mathis Wackernagel, then a Swiss graduate mechanical engineer at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver pursuing a doctorate in Planning. Working with Professor of Community and Regional Planning William Rees at UBC, Mathis suggested in his doctoral thesis that we could quantify our consumptive needs in terms of acres, or hectares, of productive land, regardless of where that land might be. These acres would constitute our “footprint” on the planet and would allow the footprint for different populations and nations to be compared.

The Ecological Footprint has proved to be a powerful metaphor – one that people universally can visualize – as well as a practical accounting tool. The non-profit Global Footprint Network, based in Oakland and headed by Dr. Wackernagel, was formed in 2003 to help apply the concept internationally. The Network is now working with over 75 partner organizations in coordinating research and developing standards and resource accounts to assist decision makers here and abroad in finding ways to operate within the Earth’s ecological limits. (See also www.footprintnetwork.org)

Land Use Planning and Global Warming

As discussions of global warming intensifies, there is increasing attention devoted to the connection between land use patterns and global warming. The Kyoto Protocol conference identified deforestation and land use change as key contributors to global warming that must be addressed. Recently, California endorsed forest-based measures, among others, to help meet its greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Likewise, the new revised Marin Countywide Plan acknowledges that open space and other vegetation should play an important role in the County's climate change policy objectives

Conservation and sustainability of our natural resources are a key parts of the climate change equation. On a global level, forest loss and land use change are responsible for over 20% of global emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂), the most prolific greenhouse gas. Trees (and vegetation in general) through photosynthesis, naturally absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as they grow and store this CO₂ as carbon in their trunks, branches, leaves, roots and surrounding soil. However, when woodlands are disturbed through removal or conversion to other uses, unsustainable harvest, and fire, much of the carbon that is stored in them is directly emitted back into the atmosphere as CO₂.

Although disturbances of forests and land use practices are a part of the global warming problem, their care can be a part of the solution. When maintained and protected from conversion to other uses direct CO₂ emissions from the land base can be prevented. In addition, the maintenance and restoration of forests and vegetation, allows additional CO₂ from the atmosphere to be absorbed and stored in our natural landscape for very long periods of time. Even in urbanized areas, the maintenance and restoration of trees and vegetation can provide meaningful climate benefits. So, whether you live in the wooded areas of West Marin or the urbanized areas along the Highway 101 corridor, the trees and open spaces in your community can and do make a positive difference for the climate.

While solutions to global warming must address reliance on fossil fuels, it is also clear that other measures, including land use policies, must also play a role. A complete inventory of Marin's terrestrial carbon footprint has yet to be developed, but it is likely that Marin's legacy of controlling development and preserving agricultural lands and greenbelts has fostered and continues to foster significant climate benefits. Such land use planning will only become more important as the effects of global warming intensify and Marin seeks to implement its Countywide Plan plus meet greenhouse gas reduction goals. Marin needs to maintain its environmental leadership to ensure that the climate benefits of its natural assets are sustained and enhanced through their continued protection, restoration and stewardship.

The Marin Conservation League will continue to advocate vigorously for the careful protection of the natural assets of Marin through the land use planning process as well as through its Lands In Between program, which focuses on and supports community based open space preservation efforts.



Lands In Between News:

The Marin County Parks and Open Space District is in the final stages of negotiating the purchase of property from the Lessin Family Trust that will provide much needed maintenance and trail access to the Baltimore Canyon Preserve as well as the Northridge Open Space in Larkspur. The Marin Conservation League's Board of Directors has enthusiastically agreed to have MCL partner with the Marin Parks and Open Space District in a Public-Private Sector Campaign to raise the necessary funds to complete this important open space land purchase.

We are excited with this opportunity and hope that you, our members, are too. We plan to bring more detailed information to you on this open space acquisition campaign in the very near future and look forward to your assistance in making the campaign a complete success.

Desal Project and Marin's Water Needs

The Marin Municipal Water District took another step toward saltwater desalination in February by releasing the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for a 5,000,000 gallon a day, and expandable facility to provide potable water to its customers. The proposed plant would be located on MMWD owned land near Pelican Way in San Rafael and would utilize a rebuilt Marin Rod and Gun Club pier for intake of San Francisco Bay water. At the plant, Bay water would be filtered through reverse osmosis to remove salts and other impurities, with the resulting concentrated brine discharged through Central Marin Sanitation Agency's existing outflow pipe. Treated potable water would then be piped from the Pelican way facility through new 2,000,000 gallon and 1,000,000 gallon ridge-top tanks and into MMWD's existing distribution system.

Even as they released the DEIR, the MMWD board of directors stated that a final decision on the future of desalination in Marin had not yet been made, and they were looking forward to hearing from the community during the public comment period ending March 2, 2008. The Marin Conservation League has been following the MMWD water supply decision-making process closely over the years, and will be playing a leading role in the community's response to the desalination proposal. Although MCL has not yet taken a formal position on the environmental appropriateness of the desalination proposal, we have taken the position that the public must be provided enough information to be able to make informed decisions regarding future water supply options - including desalination. Water supply decisions have significant ramifications for both the natural environment and the future of our communities, and deserve to be made in a collaborative and informed manner.

After reviewing the environmental document, MCL is disappointed that the Draft Environmental Impact Report does not provide enough information for the public to make this kind of informed decision regarding the merits of desalination, and believe it falls short of CEQA requirements. Although many parts of the document are well done, we believe the DEIR does not provide an adequate level of analysis regarding the need for a desalination plant, or provide a range of reasonable alternatives to desalination. The environmental impacts of increased energy use also deserve more extensive analysis.

Therefore, we suggest that MMWD must considerably expand and revise the document before releasing the Final Environmental Impact Report.

MCL will continue to work with the environmental community and MMWD to ensure that the community gets all the information it needs to make informed decisions regarding desalination and meeting our future water supply requirements.



What is the Legacy of the Land?

The Legacy of the Land is MCL's Board created endowment fund. It provides a way for MCL supporters to assure that donations will work to protect Marin's environment for years to come.

The Legacy of the Land ("LOL") was established in the early 1980's to provide a stable and growing source of support for MCL's ongoing advocacy work. Under MCL's Bylaws, once funds are donated to the LOL, only the income the funds generate may be spent. The LOL funds themselves are invested for future years.

Since its establishment, the LOL has grown to a total of \$1,523,000. In 2007, the income from LOL endowment fund provided over \$68,600 to help support MCL's current work.

Last year, the MCL Board decided that all donations to the MCL's Annual Appeal would be added to the LOL. As a result, the total donations to the LOL for 2007 were more than \$32,000. These additional funds will provide about \$1,600 each year in additional operating support for MCL's work.

MCL policy directs that all bequests go to the LOL (unless the donor specifies otherwise). These gifts support MCL's environmental work for years to come. If you would want to make a gift to MCL which will benefit Marin's environment for many years, consider making a gift to MCL now or in your will or trust and designate your gift for the Legacy of the Land.

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*Marin Conservation League was
founded in 1934 to preserve,
protect and enhance
Marin County's natural assets.*

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**Marin
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NEWS

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Leave a Legacy

Have you considered leaving an environmental legacy? There are at least two simple ways to do it:

- Include a gift to the Marin Conservation League in your will or revocable trust.
- Designate MCL as one of the beneficiaries of your IRA or retirement plan.

Funds received from these sources are placed in MCL's Legacy of the Land Endowment Fund (unless the donor specifies otherwise). The Fund is invested for the future; its income is used to support MCL's ongoing advocacy work. For more information on these options, call the MCL office at 415-485-6257.

Save this date on your calendar:

April 25, 2008 – MCL's Annual Dinner

will be held in the evening at the Mill Valley
Community Center. Our featured speaker
will be Mathis Wackernagel, Executive
Director of the Global Footprint Network.