

SSAFE Newsletter

Senior Stewards Acting for the Environment



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Taiga Landscape in Quebec, Canada, dominated by black spruce. Photo credit: Association PeupleLoup.

Books for Grandkids

Fostering a connection with nature in the earth stewards of tomorrow.

A Resident Composting Success Story

How community outreach and perseverance made it happen.

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Saving the Last of the Great Forests

By Larry Daloz, Kendal at Hanover

After an unusually wet spring, many of us were looking forward to some nice sun. Sure enough, June 7th dawned cloudless. But curiously hazy. “It will burn off soon,” we reassured ourselves. But in fact the haze grew thicker, and took on a vaguely orange tone at the horizon. And was that smoke we smelled? We were unaware at the time, but smoke from massive forest fires in Canada was threatening to trap us inside that day. Across the northeast, as Code Red alerts were issued and outdoor events were cancelled, people woke up to a new reality. Before we go for a walk, will we have to check the air quality now as well as the weather?

cont'd p.2

Great Forests (cont'd)

The boreal forest was burning, and most of us had never even heard of it. We all know about the Amazon, “the lungs of the world,” and we know how brutally it’s being devastated by logging and fires deliberately set to make way for agricultural crops. Seventy percent of deforested land there has been turned over to raising beef. That’s old news; and we know where the Amazon is. But where is the boreal forest anyway?



Logging in the boreal forest.

While the Amazon snuggles in the very belly of the earth, the boreal forest circles the top, like a monk’s tonsure, marking the boundary between the temperate forests that we all know and the treeless, frozen Arctic tundra. Also called the “taiga,” the boreal is almost twice the size of the Amazon. Three quarters of it lies in Russia. The rest is distributed among Canada, Alaska, and the Nordic countries. Unlike the tropical forests, however, the boreal is made up of barely a dozen primary tree species, most familiar to us: birch, alder, juniper, larch, spruce, pine, poplar, willow, mountain ash, and yew.

Yet despite their relatively low species diversity, boreal forests actually store twice as much carbon per acre as the Amazon

—indeed more than all the world’s tropical and temperate forests combined! Tropical soils are thin and store relatively little carbon. Boreal forests, on the other hand, are older and colder than tropical rainforests and rest on thick mats of peat moss, a highly efficient carbon storage material, accumulated over centuries.

Whether boreal or tropical, all forests are a critical part of a healthy planet. In addition to sequestering huge amounts of carbon, they provide essential “ecosystem services” worth over \$30 trillion. They clean the air, filter our water, control erosion, cool us down, sustain biodiversity, all the while providing fuel, food, building materials, and habitat for the critters essential to our own survival.

When the boreal burns, it’s releasing carbon that has been stored for thousands of years. And when peat moss burns—often at deep levels beneath the snow pack—it can be extremely difficult to put out. Here in the east, our smoke came down from Quebec, where more land has burned this year alone than in all the previous 20 years. When you combine the costs of fighting the fires, with the health costs of the smoke, with the costs of the carbon pollution, with loss of the services formerly provided for free by Mother Nature, the total is incalculable.

So where do we begin?

First, we must do everything we can to reduce the root cause of the damage: rising global temperatures caused by fossil fuels.

cont'd p.3

Great Forests (cont'd)

But at the same time, we can also address the problems of deforestation, whether from logging in the Amazon or fires in the boreal, by ramping up efforts at reforestation, replanting trees to heal damaged forests. And we must also seek out areas where the land is degraded or which never supported trees, and plant new forests, a practice known as afforestation. Creative people are providing hopeful research in places as remote as Greenland and as near as our own campuses to determine tree species that would have a better chance of survival under anticipated changing conditions. We've seen devastating loss of critical forest on an unprecedented scale. Now let's see what we can do to make sure what's left is preserved and what's lost is restored.



Degraded lands can be replanted with trees better able to withstand climate change.

Stay in touch with SSAFE as we monitor ways to manage our forests.



Activism in the Amazon

By Judy Hyde, Kendal at Lathrop North

I've been an environmental activist for 45 years. I've marched, I've carried signs, I've been on committees, I've written letters, I've lobbied public officials. However, feeling discouraged and ineffective, I decided to zoom in on one high-priority need: conserving unspoiled land.

The opportunity soon came along for a major role when I stumbled upon the Andes Amazon Conservancy (AAC). A non-profit founded in 2019 by Adam Gebb, a land-use planner, AAC needed more support to continue. So in 2021 I helped to form a North American board, and I also kept the work going with financial support until grant funding could be secured.

AAC offers land-use planning skills and conservation education to 70 partnering communities in 4 Indigenous nations to plan for ecological connectivity and population growth for the next 100 years. Our grassroots land-use planning model is currently protecting 2.5 million acres for only a few dollars per acre. In collaboration with the people who live there, AAC is protecting a 175-mile corridor of contiguous rainforest from future development or exploitation by mining, logging, or oil companies.

The most critical quest in this time of global ecosystem breakdown is building the earth's resilience and stability where it's still possible. Only now, for the first time, at the age of 85, do I believe I'm doing something that actually can make a significant difference.

To learn more, go to <https://aaconserve.org/> or send an email to judyquake@gmail.com.

TURF TO MEADOW: A DEMONSTRATION LANDSCAPE

By Jim Seif, Jeff Stann, and Paul Ward, Kendal at Longwood

It could be said that landscaping is a way to help the global climate, one microclimate at a time. If so, our Countersett Court project may inspire others to address an important aspect of sustainability—landscaping.

Countersett Court at Kendal at Longwood is characterized by a large expanse of that well known suburban monocrop called turf, which slopes down to a poor drainage area at the lower end. The lack of walkways and benches prevents the full use of the space by residents.

In the spring of 2023, we developed a plan to restore the land to full use, and to make it a part of the overall sustainability solution that our planet needs. The master plan provides for:

- Water-pervious and fully accessible walkways and “outdoor living areas” for both spontaneous and organized gatherings.
- Native planting, designed to be low maintenance.
- A rain garden to absorb rainwater runoff.
- The use of plantings to block parking lot views and soften walkways.
- The replacement of the mowed turf with meadow plantings, to help with drainage, to feed and shelter wildlife, and to provide year-round color and variety.

In order to help others follow this path, we are keeping track of lessons learned and



The rain garden is the first part of the Countersett Court project.

creating a photographic record of our progress.

We have already completed recontouring and planting the lower area as a rain garden. The next step will be the installation of walkways. More plantings will come next season, and in the longer term, the new meadow.

We hope to show that a careful and well vetted plan can return the land to the state Mother Nature intended. Our overall aim is to create a sustainable model for the greater Kendal community.

For more information, email james.seif23@gmail.com.

A SCRAPPY ZERO WASTE STARTUP PROJECT

By Anne White, Kendal on Hudson

It was in November of 2022, when the Mayor of Sleepy Hollow appointed me Co-chair of the village Environmental Advisory Committee (SHEAC), that I realized fully what a major impact the simple act of collecting food scraps and turning them into compost can have on reducing emissions and slowing the speed of climate change. Two events inspired some Kendal environmentalists to begin a small resident food scrap collection program.

First was the launch of a village Zero Waste Campaign. Every household received a brochure explaining the multiple benefits of diverting food scraps from the county trash incinerator, with the catchy slogan “Grow Gardens, Not Garbage.” The village also offered Food Scrap Kits at half price (\$10 instead of \$20) and provided 64-gallon food scrap drop-off bins in three locations.

The second event was a tour of the Westchester County CompostEd demonstration site, attended by a couple of Kendal residents. Observing the various



The compost “cooking.” Suzy Allman Photography.

stages of transforming food scraps into compost, measuring the temperature of the compost “cooking,” and watching the steam coming out, we were motivated to find a way of getting Kendal residents involved in the process.

With our Kendal tightly perched on a rocky bluff overlooking the Hudson, we had no space to compost onsite. The new village food scrap drop-off bins became essential to meeting our goal.

In January, 2023, five of us bought Food Scrap Kits from the village. Our pilot program had begun! Our biggest challenge? How to get the food scraps to the closest drop-off site two miles away? With only two of us still driving a car, we agreed, temporarily, to deliver them whenever we went to the village.

This worked for a while, but as more people joined the program—up to a dozen by April—scheduling drop-offs became increasingly challenging. More people meant more food scraps, and the full bins occasionally sat for a week or more—S-M-E-L-L-Y!

We knew it was time to ask for help from the Director of Facilities. He found us a little-used closet for residents to leave their food scrap containers. This eliminated the need for multiple phone calls or emails to coordinate trips to the village. Then, after setting up the closet, we found that several new residents, feeling short of space, preferred to collect their food scraps in small compostable bags, keeping them in

cont'd p.6

Composting (cont'd)

the freezer or delivering them daily to the closet. Adapting as needed, a shared community container was provided, but soon, we needed another . . . and another.

Demand was growing, and we knew we couldn't continue depending on resident drivers to deliver our food scraps to the village. Once again, we asked the Director of Facilities for help with a weekly delivery. Being short-staffed, unfortunately, the answer was "no."

At a major Zero Waste Education event in June, we found a possible solution. It turned out that the village food scraps program was expanding more slowly than they had hoped; they were looking for additional drop-off bin locations. Would they consider putting some bins at Kendal on Hudson? With more than 200 residents, we had the potential to provide a big boost to the village program. Within a week, our Director of Facilities was hosting the Director of the Department of Public Works (DPW) for lunch. By the end of the visit, they had agreed that the village would set up two bins at Kendal, with free weekly pickups by the DPW.

Their agreement assumed the bins would be inside a garage but broke down over details of who would move the village bins outside on pickup days. We concluded the only option was to keep them outside. But we wondered if residents would complain about bins outside the building. Would they smell and attract flies? How could we stop hungry critters from getting in or tipping them over?

We finally found the perfect spot for the

village bins, tucked away near a garage in a shady, secluded spot. It was far from two of the buildings, though, so we decided to provide drop-off spots for those residents. Getting creative once again, we recruited volunteers to transport the containers to the village bins, pushing them through the hallways on baggage carts twice a week.



A resident transports food scrap containers.

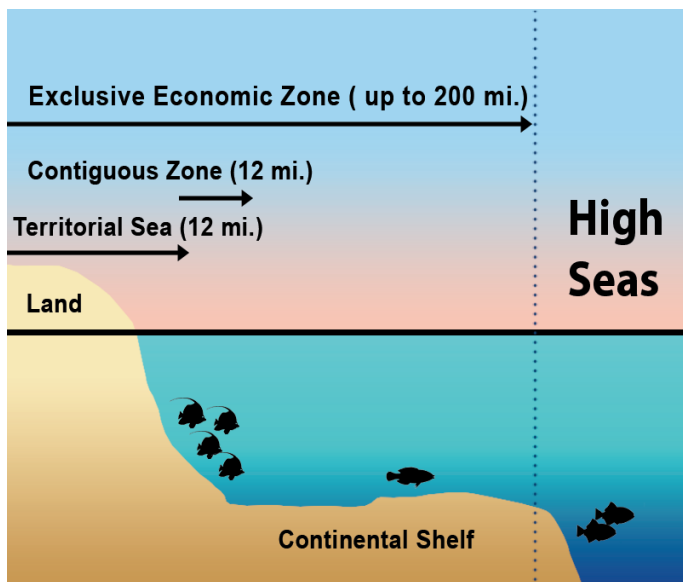
In early August, the village delivered the bright green food scrap collection bins. "They're quite handsome!" declared a resident. One week later, the DPW picked up our Kendal food scraps for the very first time. Our food scraps group is now 25 strong. We hope to triple that number by the end of the year. Beyond that, who knows?

It's been quite a journey to get the resident food scrap collection program off the ground, requiring patience, persistence, and teamwork. And for me, there's a special pleasure in partnering with the village to make both Kendal and the surrounding community more resilient in the face of a changing climate.

A TREATY TO PROTECT THE OCEANS

By Barclay Ward, Kendal at Hanover

After almost 20 years of talks and extended negotiations, a final marathon negotiating session of over 40 consecutive hours enabled the Intergovernmental Conference on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) to conclude its work on March 4, 2023. Almost 200 members of the United Nations agreed on the text of a biodiversity treaty that is intended to protect roughly 40 per cent of the total ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction. National jurisdiction includes territorial waters and exclusive economic zones that generally extend 200 nautical miles beyond territorial waters. The Intergovernmental Conference reconvened on June 19th and formally agreed on the text by consensus.



Sometimes informally referred to as the High Seas Treaty, the agreement is closely related to another convention, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The United States is not a party to UNCLOS but was very much a participant in negotiating the new BBNJ treaty.

The new treaty sets out a number of specific requirements for states wishing to exploit ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction, including environmental assessments for planned activities. It creates a number of structures to monitor compliance, which should strengthen transparency and accountability. A good deal of attention is given in the treaty to building the capacity of developing countries in order that they can share in the benefits of technology.

At the end of the day, as is the case with all treaties, it is up to each individual party to fulfill treaty requirements. There is no centralized enforcement.

This treaty completes the necessary triad of climate/biodiversity agreements and, in effect, aims to do in ocean areas beyond national jurisdiction what the Conference of Parties to the Biodiversity Convention (COP15) agreed to do several months ago, i.e., to protect roughly one third of land areas.

The new treaty will enter into force 120 days after 60 states deposit their instruments of ratification with the Secretary General of the United Nations. Now, let's just see if 67 votes in the Senate can be rounded up to permit ratification by the United States.

Go to SSAFE.org/deep-sea to learn more.

STYROFOAM RECYCLING? WHO KNEW?

By Cindy Rand, Kendal at Hanover

Styrofoam is the brand name for a #6 plastic called expanded polystyrene. It is cheap and light (98% air), which is why it is frequently used to make food takeout containers, cups, and packaging materials, among other things. Most of it, though, ends up in landfills, where it takes 500 years or more to degrade.

I became aware of the opportunity to recycle Styrofoam when I received emails from Sustainable Lebanon (in a nearby town) and Sustainable Hanover, announcing some upcoming Styrofoam collection events. Wanting to participate, I promoted the events in our weekly newsletter at Kendal at Hanover and talked it up at our SSAFE meetings. With enough other residents interested, I went to Facilities and got a bucket to place in our trash room specifically to collect Styrofoam.

For the first event, we collected two large garbage bags full of mainly food containers, medicine boxes, and electronics packaging—easily transported to the event collection points by car. This proved true for the second event as well. But we soon discovered that the word was out, and deposits were increasing.

I decided to approach Facilities once again, since a lot of the packing material they receive regularly as part of their appliance, furniture, and equipment deliveries was Styrofoam. Thanks to a very helpful member of our Facilities department, a growing amount of packing material

—actually the majority of the Styrofoam collected now was from staff—was added to the residents' waste, and more storage was found to contain the ever-growing supply.

Collection was becoming so successful that we were running out of room in the expanded space, and no more town events were planned until the fall. So we were referred to the area organizer of the Foam Recycling Action Group in Cornish, NH, which gathers Styrofoam every Saturday at their transfer station for their residents. She arranged with her community to rent a U-Haul to combine our loads for a trip to the Gilford Solid Waste Center (GSWC), the only processor of Styrofoam in New Hampshire. The cost was \$75.00 each, with my half being paid by a donor.



A New Hampshire Rotarian helps load Styrofoam destined for recycling as part of a community event.

The GSWC uses a new system that densifies the Styrofoam into plastic ingots by chopping, heating, and removing the air in a densifier manufactured by Foam Cycle, LLC. Foam Cycle is a patented foam collection and repurposing system

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Styrofoam (cont'd)

designed to be placed at outdoor city, town, and municipal recycling drop-off centers. The densified ingots are then sold for reuse into new materials. In our case they are trucked to Canada and remade into insulation.



Styrofoam is compressed into densified ingots.

This initiative began with the NH Network Plastics Work Group and the Rotary Clubs of Northern New England, who focused on reducing Styrofoam waste in landfills, saving money on trash disposal costs, and generating revenue for participating communities. During the pandemic, Styrofoam packaging production increased to support delivery of vaccines and food service applications, and it is still widely used today.

We are continuing to collect Styrofoam at Kendal at Hanover and hope that we won't have an overflow issue before the next town collection events occur. As far as I know, all Styrofoam from residents and staff prior to our involvement in these events was just tossed in the trash—meaning it ended up in a landfill. Fortunately, Styrofoam can now be recycled—an excellent reason to support this innovative way of reducing our waste!

SSAFE PETITIONING TIPS

By Dorothy Luciano, Kendal at Oberlin

You may have noticed SSAFE Advocacy Team volunteers petitioning at your campus. Setting up a table to collect signatures on a petition is a great way to put elected officials and agencies on notice!

Residents at your community will be more apt to stop and sign your petition if it looks quick and easy.

Tips from our efforts at Oberlin:

- Create a sign with, “Please Sign Our Petition” and stand it upright against a support rather than flat on the table to better attract attention
- Keep table clutter to a minimum (even clipboards can look like clutter)
- Make sure all reading material
 - is printed in large, easily read type
 - has a lot of white space
 - has main points emphasized
 - is not taped to the table
 - is available in several copies
 - is relevant to the petition
- Have several pens available
- Have hand sanitizer and a waste basket available
- Have a chair nearby if folks want to sit and read the petition information
- If allowable, leave your petition table overnight for residents to stop by after hours

The SSAFE Advocacy Team meets monthly. Email info@ssafe.org for more information.

GRANDKIDS' CORNER

By Merle Tanis, Cartmel at Kendal-Crosslands Communities



“Merma, I feel his feet on my hand!” granddaughter Olivia exclaimed in a hushed voice. “He’s gobbled three peanuts already!” We were on an August discovery hike through a wild, boggy Adirondack forest, and the gregarious Canada jays had found us! Darting from spruce limbs to our outstretched hands, their shiny black eyes often met ours. Just after the birds moved on, Olivia suddenly jumped high in the air and twirled around in unfettered joy!

A life-long educator, I only wish that every one of the thousands of students I taught could have experienced what Olivia did that day. Close up encounters with nature ignite a child’s innate curiosity and foster a sense of wonder. As children see, hear, smell, and touch the natural world, they gradually develop a deep personal connection with it. Over their lifetimes, awe and joy in nature may nourish their souls... and they irreversibly bond with it.

Yet in this age of screens and electronic devices, most children are being raised without meaningful contact with the natural world. In his thought-provoking book *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv makes the case that direct exposure to nature results in healthier, better adjusted kids, and he offers practical solutions for “saving our children from nature-deficit disorder.” Children need nature and nature needs them, for today’s children will be the earth stewards of tomorrow. They will only care about, respect, and fight to protect what has become an inseparable part of them.

While our grandkids’ hands-on encounters with nature are the ultimate, there are countless books that complement a child’s outdoor experiences. Here are a few recommendations that you can check for in your library or consider while holiday shopping this fall.

Messner, Kate, *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt*. Chronicle Books: San Francisco, 2015. [Ages 4–8] With its poetic writing and delightful artwork, this multi-generational story truly connects young children with nature, encouraging them to wonder about the life forms we can and cannot see above and below the ground. A primer for basic garden ecology, it introduces many plants and animals in a web of life, teaching awe and respect for all creatures, as discovered by a girl and her grandmother tending their garden.

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Books (cont'd)

Bissonette, Aimée M., *The Second Life of Trees*. Whitman: Chicago, 2021. [Ages 4–8] A lovely, richly illustrated tale of what happens to a tree (and to the forest) when the tree dies. In simple, kids' language, it tells the story of the transformation of new life from the old.

Wohlleben, Peter. *Can You Hear the Trees Talking? Discovering the Hidden Life of the Forest*. Greystone: Vancouver, 2019. [Ages 14–20]. A spin-off of the German author's huge best-seller, *The Hidden Life of Trees*, this book, certain to fascinate the nature-curious teen, awakens with rich visual images and well-tuned imagination the adolescent sense of wonder in the discovery of the more-than-human world. Read aloud by an adult, it would inform and excite younger kids as well.



COP28 Controversy

By Michelle Goodwin, SSAFE Program Manager

The 2023 UN Climate Change Conference will take place November 30th to December 12th in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE).

This is the third time the conference will be hosted by a member of OPEC. Even more incongruent, the newly named COP28 president, Sultan Al Jaber, is currently managing director and group CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

The appointment of Al Jaber was criticized in an open letter from over 130 U.S. lawmakers and Members of the European Parliament, who were calling for the removal of Al Jaber as the president-designate of COP28 due to the obvious conflict of interest.

UAE pledged to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2050, the first middle eastern government to do so. They were also the first oil-rich country to sign the Paris Agreement on September 21, 2016. In addition to spending more than a million dollars on direct climate-focused advocacy, they paid millions more to advisory firms and think tanks to help polish their green credentials.

Unmoved by UAE's image management, climate activists intend to voice their opinions during the conference. However, they are worried that severe restrictions on the freedom of expression and criminalization of peaceful dissent will hinder any meaningful protests.



Wrapping Up

VOLUNTEER "GREEN STRINGERS"

Almost every bit of information in the SSAFE newsletter is resident-generated. Whether it be a hot tip or a full-fledged lead article, we rely on the life experience and wisdom of residents to supply us with stories and news worth spreading.

You can play an important role by being a "green stringer." See something, hear something, say something. Anyone can do it—once or on a regular basis. All it takes is an email, call, or letter.

Have you noticed any interesting green projects at your campus? Is there an event or activity that you think might inspire residents on other campuses? Is there an area where we can use your expertise to inspire our members?

Send leads, hot tips, or proposals to:

SSAFE NEWS

email: info@ssafe.org

call: 951-440-5968

mail: 31775 Quilt Way, Menifee, CA 92584

c/o Michelle Goodwin

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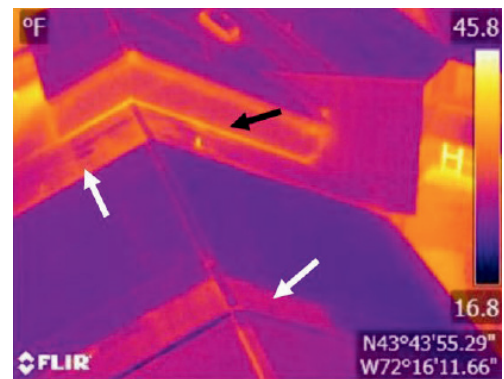
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SSAFE uses these funds to support efforts such as guiding senior living campuses to net-zero emissions, climate advocacy, and climate education. Senior Stewards Acting for the Environment (SSAFE) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. EIN: 87-1229514.

Erratum

In the July 2023 issue of the SSAFE newsletter, the infrared photo showing heat loss through a roof was incorrectly labeled as an image of Kendal at Hanover. The image supplied below is the correct one from Kendal at Hanover.



SSAFE Newsletter

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Submissions & Comments

We want your feedback! We're always looking for good stories to provide inspiration to other senior living community residents. Send us your articles, ideas, questions, or comments!

We'd love to hear from you—drop us an email at info@SSAFE.org