Green Sanctuary Committee

Annual Report

May 2020 through April 2021

Submitted April 17, 2021

Officers: Dawn Hewitt, chair

 (Annie Warmke stepped down from co-chair position in March 2021.)

Adeline Bailey, scribe

Active members: Adeline Bailey, Mike Bailey, Joe Baker, Dave Ballantyne, Shari Ballantyne, George Banziger, Michael Chisholm, Vic Elam, Jim Grecni, Dawn Hewitt, Chris Jacobs, Kelcey Jacobs, Roger Kalter, Ginnie McNeil, Maggie Meyer, Debra Miller, Katie O’Neill, Rebecca Phillips, Cindy Taylor, Patty Troisi, and Annie Warmke. Numerous other members and friends of FUUSM actively support our activities but have not attended Zoom meetings; several have participated in GSC projects in the past year, however. We are grateful for their help.

The mission of FUUSM’s Green Sanctuary Committee is: "To guide and encourage FUUSM and the wider community to live our Seventh Principle and achieve our vision of a sustainable and just world for all."

A Green Sanctuary Committee co-chair position is vacant, and the current chair eagerly and enthusiastically seeks help with leadership and organization of the committee.

COVID-19 disrupted our active and activist committee in the past year. Most notably, the weekend-long Sustainable Marietta Forum we put so much energy and effort into planning, which was scheduled for April 3-5, 2020, succumbed to Covid. Our planning was accomplished via Zoom meetings and email, and many of our projects involved personal internet research, making phone calls, and writing letters. But we did take one new project in the past year:

Thanks to Michael Chisholm, who works for DuPont, we applied for a DuPont Clear Into the Future Grant, and were awarded $7,500 to fund a 2021 Sustainability Forum. Later, DuPont said they’d prefer a tangible project. We proposed a **solar-powered electronics-charging station** to be located in downtown Marietta, and also **to design and install pollinator-friendly natural landscaping along the west side of the Muskingum River** on a steep bank—pending City of Marietta approval on both projects. DuPont approved both proposals and awarded the $7,500. City officials responded warmly to our proposals. We have been meeting with the city almost monthly to establish a design and location for the solar-powered charging station (a bench). Jay Warmke designed an affordable DIY solar charging station that could be installed near an existing bench, but eventually the city and the committee decided that an off-the-shelf model would be a more attractive flagship for this project.

On the Harmar riverbank, we salvaged desirable (mostly native) plants, then weed-whacked the long stretch of hillside, then “solarized” the area over the winter and spring to kill exotic, invasive plants. We contracted Master Gardener and Master Naturalist Andrew Clovis to come up with a landscaping plan for the hillside. Neighbors across the street from the project have been welcoming and helpful. Kudos and gratitude to Rebecca Phillips for her energetic and dedicated commitment to this project, and to Dave Ballantyne for his work on the solar-powered charging station. Both of these projects remain in progress.

Our initiatives in the past year included:

For much of 2020, members of the GSC actively **opposed a barge-docking facility proposed by Deep Rock Disposal,** to be opened on the Ohio River just south of Marietta along State Route 7. The facility would allow off-loading of fracking waste brine from Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio into antiquated pipes, to be pumped uphill for storage in injection wells off of State Route 550. Through letter-writing to officials, letters to the editor in the newspaper, and participation in a virtual public forum, we made our objections known to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Ohio Department of Environmental Management, and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Still, the Army Corps of Engineers approved the permit for the facility, and it went online. A few months later, **a leak was reported from the pipeline**, contaminating Mile Run. Members of the GSC requested information on the amount spilled and remediation activities, but got no response.

Because of our involvement in protesting the Deep Rock Disposal facility, some members of the GSC **sought more information on injection wells and related leaks and spills** in the area. There have been several, but they have not reported to the public. Because there are so many injection wells in Ohio, and in Washington County in particular, this is a topic we will continue to study and address. Kudos to George Banziger for his dogged pursuit of records and other information on fracking-waste disposal problems locally, as well as for participating in a video, organized by the Buckeye Environmental Network, of testimonials from residents of several eastern Ohio counties on the dangers, threats, and impacts of injection wells. The video will be presented to the U.S. EPA.

Several members of the GSC are also **actively involved with Citizen’s Climate Lobby, Marietta Chapter,** which is seeking to educate, inform, and work with Rep. Bill Johnson on climate-related issues, and encourage him to support HR 763, a carbon fee and dividend program, George and Dave have met several times with Johnson’s aide, Sam Hattrup, in the past year, and in August, several additional GSC members met (via Zoom) with him, each asking a question on a climate-change topic.

Several members of the GSC wrote letters **opposing a natural gas storage hub** proposed for Monroe County, up-river from Marietta.

Several members of the GSC worked with Becca Pollard of the Ohio Sierra Club to **encourage the city to aggregate electrical service from a 100-percent renewable energy** source. Ultimately, the city opted against an aggregation plan that used renewable, or provided any such environmentally conscientious goals.

The GSC supported **Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action’s “shoe strike”** by collecting shoes to display at the events, held in Parkersburg in July, in Marietta in September, and in Vienna in October.

Several members of GSC wrote letters to the mayor, asking him to **protect our drinking-water well field in Indian Acres** park, and to enforce the no-parking zone on it.

Ginnie McNeil reported on a project sponsored by FACT Ohio ([https://www.factohio.org/](https://www.factohio.org/#_blank)), an interfaith group concerned with the health effects of the fracking industry in Ohio, especially of those who live near fracking sites, injection wells, and other high-exposure locations. After developing an ambitious fair-weather schedule of health registry events across the Ohio, Covid forced the group to put their plans on hold. Ginnie invited the GSC to support and participate in **FACT Ohio health registry**. Following our January 2021 meeting, guest Ron Prosek gave an overview of the FaCT Ohio organization, followed by information on how GSC and FUUSM could help with their Ohio Health Registry Project.

Several members of the GSC worked with the Williamstown Women’s Club and other groups to **protect the Williamstown Wetland** from being filled in. The Williamston City Council denied related plans the owner had proposed, so her “need” to pave paradise and put in a parking lot was no longer an issue.

Several members of the GSC expressed their shock and disappointment when **trees on the Muskingum Riverbank behind the armory were unexpectedly and wantonly cut**, and erosion protection measures on the denuded slope were lame and ineffective. City officials insist that they did have a plan, do have a plan, and that Pickering and Associates’ landscaping was contracted (after public complaints) to develop that plan.

Several members of the GSC participated in a **Sierra Club training on efforts to repeal Ohio HB 3**, the corrupt nuclear bailout.

The Green Sanctuary Committee **sponsored and decorated a tree** (with an environmental theme, of course) **in Marietta Mainstreet’s Holiday Tree Walk**.

Dave Ballantyne informed us of changes to the rate AEP charges for home-grown solar electricty, now that our solar installation shares one meter between both the Sanctuary and RE building. Dave financed and technically owns the installation, and previous rates and tax incentives were a win-win for Dave and FUUSM. That seems to be less true now. Dave continues to investigate.

Many members of the GSC participated in MOVCA environmental-themed (streamed) movies, followed by a Zoom discussion, and a presentation by Dr. Sandra Steingraber, nationally known and highly regarded speaker on the effects of fracking on health.

The GSC purchased biodegradable take-out containers for use by Charlie and Dennis Hensley-Lumbatis during their monthly community soup distribution.

On April 25, 2021, the GSC will screen the film *Kiss the Ground* in the FUUSM courtyard, with socially distant seating, weather permitting. (Please come!)

Ongoing projects of GSC—conducted in the past, this year, and planned for the future:

* Mike Bailey continues collecting and selling aluminum, with profits going to the GSC Pocket Change Fund
* Six river trail clean-up teams did their monthly duty throughout the year, with Darryl Ting as coordinator.
* The GSC planned and undertook an entire worship service in April, as usual.
* Several members of the GSC are involved in planning and participating in the 2021 Earth Day Celebration (as usual), although the event will be smaller and more dispersed than pre-Covid.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Hewitt

GSC Chair