Green Sanctuary Committee

Annual Report

May 2021 through April 2022

Submitted April 11, 2022

Officers: Dawn Hewitt, Debra Miller, Jim Grecni, co-chairs

Adeline Bailey, scribe

Active members: Adeline Bailey, Mike Bailey, Dave Ballantyne, Shari Ballantyne, George Banziger, Vic Elam, Jim Grecni, Dawn Hewitt, Chris Jacobs, Kelcey Jacobs, Roger Kalter, Mark Krivchenia, Ginnie McNeil, Maggie Meyer, Debra Miller, Rebecca Phillips, Cindy Taylor, and Patty Troisi. The GSC email list is much longer than those who actively attend meetings. It’s a sign that a LOT of people care about what we’re doing, but—we get it—they are spread too thin. We are grateful for their support, input, and help when we need it.

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."

Noteworthy projects and activities:

We received a Clear Into The Future Grant from DuPont in early 2020, just as the pandemic hit. The $7,500 we received would be spent on two projects: Installing a solar charging bench at a high-visibility location in downtown Marietta, and turning a long swath of steep hillside between the Muskingum River and Fort Street in Harmar into a pollinator plot. We have big progress to report on both projects:

1) The City of Marietta has taken delivery of the solar charging bench. It is in storage while the city continues plans for its Lock One Project near the Armory, where the bench will be installed, someday. Several members of the GSC are involved in the planning the project.

2) Under the leadership of Rebecca Phillips and the guidance of Master Naturalist and Master Gardener Andrew Clovis, many volunteers, including friends and members of FUUSM and several Marietta College students got their hands dirty—literally. The pollinator plot is work in progress that grows more beautiful each year. Bees and butterflies found the first blooms. Plants were installed in May and October 2021. Thanks to Al Tuttle and Chris Hoke for donating a dripper hose, which was installed in fall 2021. The pollinator plot has inspired several nearby residents and businesses similarly to turn vacant or neglected spaces into beautiful, wildlife-friendly natural areas.

As a result of these projects FUUSM was one of 12 winners in the Interfaith Power & Light 2022 Cool Congregations Challenge. We received a $500 runners-up award in the Sacred Grounds category.

Throughout the past year, we have presented and answered countless calls to action: Contacting legislators, President Biden, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Mayor Schlicher, Marietta City Council members, and the Washington County Commissioners regarding various environmental issues. As individuals and as a committee, we have signed on several petitions, because there is power in numbers. We have written letters, sent emails, made phone calls, and submitted letters to the editor.

Either as a group or individually, we watched several documentary movies, mostly about environmental activism, and discussed them afterward. One of them, *The Condor and the Eagle*, was about Indigenous activists in North and South America who are Water Protectors and Climate Warriors, inspired us deeply. We are actively planning several projects to support them—morally and financially. The first such activity is a book discussion group of *Braiding Sweetgrass*. (You’re welcome to join us!)

There is a lot of overlap in membership of GSC with Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action and the OH-6 Congressional District Chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby. As a result, we keep in touch with (and participate in) the activities of both groups and support their projects, as they do ours. We have worked with many other groups, as well, if less frequently. Most notably, we had a special evening meeting on December 14 with Ted Auch, program coordinator for FracTracker. He shared with us information on other Ohio communities that have had success in stopping injection wells.

In the past year, we have been actively focusing on fracking waste (brine) injection wells, because Washington County, Ohio, has more of them than Pennsylvania and West Virginia combined. We are tied with one other county for the most in the state. Sometimes these wells leak, and sometimes brine is spilled. Such incidents are inadequately reported. We are actively seeking a moratorium on injection well permits in Washington County. Even better would be an moratorium on fracking. Kudos to George Banziger for his persistence and research on this important issue.

Similarly, kudos to Ginnie McNeil who has been working with Fact Ohio, a faith-based anti-fracking organization that works with UU Justice Ohio. They are also concerned with lead contamination in drinking water—an issue that deserves more attention in historic Marietta.

And if old lead water-supply lines weren’t adequately frightening, Roger Kalter brought to our attention the threat of contamination of Marietta’s drinking water source from vehicles that park on top of the aquifer under Indian Acres Park. Several of us were in touch with the Mayor and other city officials requesting more protection for the area. We got their attention, and additional measures were promised to prevent vehicle encroachment on this important empty field.

George regularly contributes to the Climate Corner in the Parkersburg *News & Sentinel,* but our request to have them also published in the *Marietta Times* have been ignored. Many GSC members have had letters to the editor published in the *Marietta Times* regarding various environmental issues.

George has also been dogged in advocating Reimagine Appalachia, a policy platform that guides and encourages municipal governments to keep an eye on the future, rather than the past, for their local economies, in ways such as facilitating renewable energy sector. Neither the Washington County Commissioners nor the Marietta City Council was exactly welcoming or open to the topic.

We’ve continued sweeping the River Trail through East Muskingum Park, twice monthly by six teams of two, with extra help from Mark Krivchenia when he is in town. Mostly we sweep sweet gum balls for the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, but we also pick up litter and relocate branches.

We are excited and grateful that the FUUSM Board approved our request to join Ohioans for Sustainable Change, a state affiliate of Interfaith Power and Light.

GSC will have a booth at the Earth Day Marietta event (as usual) on April 23. Some of our committee members will also staff a voter registration booth, and the Ohio-6 Chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL).