

Twin Cities Chapter Quarterly Newsletter

May 2014 Volume 12, Issue 2

Upcoming Events/Monthly Meetings

Final Monthly Meeting of the spring, Tuesday, May 20, 2014: (Meetings at the Wood Lake Nature Center: social at 6:30, meeting to start promptly at 7:00. Free and open to the public) Gardening at the Water's Edge, Samuel Geer, reGen Land Design. This presentation will introduce shoreline gardening as a new approach to improving shorelines that prioritizes the importance of aesthetic beauty and the ecological benefits that are provided by plantings at the water's edge. By viewing shoreline spaces as gardening opportunities, it is possible to design beautiful gardens that also increase biodiversity, treat storm runoff, and prevent erosion. The presentation will detail garden design alternatives to turf grass and native restoration plantings that can be adapted to work with a diverse array of site conditions and owner preferences.

Summer Tours: Our summer tours concentrate on visiting gardens and restoration projects that use native plants and watershed friendly techniques. If you have ideas or questions, call Wild Ones Twin Cities phone number (612-293-3833). Information on upcoming local tours and new developments will be posted on our website calendar: www.WildOnesTwinCities.org. If you don't have internet access, contact us by using the number shown above.



buster flats for shade or sun, wet or mesic. Of course there's also a choice of shrubs and individual plants. All plants are from local seed sources, contain NO toxins, and are provided by Landscape Alternatives a Wild Ones member. Go to the Wild Ones Twin Cities page to print your order form and make your choices.

Monthly Meeting and February Conference Notes

Jan 2014 Winter Seed Planting, Carmen Simonet. This was a "hands on" instruction showing an easy way to start seeds in the winter. Not only was the event attended by a lot of adults but we also had the pleasure of the presence of a local girl scout troop. From all appearances this was a great demonstration that was enjoyed by all!

To grow plants using this technique, all you need are the following materials: Twenty-four to 32 oz cleaned plastic food containers (such as yogurt or cottage cheese containers); potting soil, and seeds. Then have at it by following these simple instructions!!

1. Poke three to four holes in the tops and bottoms of the plastic containers.

2. Fill each with potting soil to a depth of 4 inches.

3. Add water to moisten the soil. You may want to do this the day before and then remoisten just before planting your seeds.

4. In each container plant anywhere from 10 to 15 seeds of your choice that are from one native plant species. If the seeds are large, gently push them into the soil so they are just covered. If the seeds are small simply spread them over the top.

5. Replace the tops on the containers and label them with something that is water proof.

6. Place the containers outside where they will be exposed to rain and snow. (Do not put them under an eave.)

7. As the weather warms up, start checking your containers. When the plants begin to germinate and emerge from the soil, take off the lids to prevent the seeds from burning up. If you are concerned about critters such as squirrels, put something such as wire mesh over the top of each container.

8. As the seeds grow, prevent the pots from drying out (i.e., watch over them and water as needed).

9. Transplant into the garden after the first true leaves are developed. There is no need to plant individual seedlings, unless you want to. Just plant the entire patch or cut into smaller pieces of sod and plant.

10. Continue to watch over the newly planted seedlings while they take root in your garden.



Girl Scout Troop attendees



Troop members in action - Photos by Julia Vanatta

February 22, 2014 CONFERENCE: Ecoshifting: Re-imagining our place in a <u>changing landscape</u>

The Great Undoing. Lisa Lee Benjamin, Evo Catalyst, Environmental Design Consultancy. In this presentation we were invited to look at our place in the environment from a different perspective, and also to observe that world around us more closely. This involves considering ourselves to be an integral part of nature (not separate as we might want to believe). Should we not think of ourselves as just another animal that has evolved with other species over time? When looking from this point of view, all species and creatures in nature (including ourselves)

have a role: some creators, some destroyers, and some beers (sic.). Are we destroyers as we are so often considered to be by environmental groups or are we more creators? What of the beauty of a cityscape? She posed the question: Should one really see a difference between the attractiveness of a cityscape and a landscape?

It was stressed that we humans are a part of nature and as such we should be fully engaging with it. There is great joy to be derived in interacting with nature and not just observing from afar. Our very naming of processes and movements we can join: restoration, ecology, permaculture, biodynamics to name a few seems to put these actions outside of ourselves and to separate us from nature That is, we are not really thinking of ourselves as a part of the natural process in any positive way. We should relax and allow ourselves to be open to the world around us and to receive it with joy.



Caterpillar Destroyers - photo by Lisa Benjamin

With regard to what humans have created, throughout history we have pulled ideas and patterns from what we see in life around us and applied these patterns to different structures during the design process. A great example was posited in the book "The Urban Cliff Revolution: Origins and Evolution of Human Habitat", by Douglas Larson, Uta Matthes, Peter E. Kelly, Jeremy Lundholm and John Gerrath. These Canadian scientists looked at our present day high rises found in urban landscapes and compared them to cliff-side dwellings of our ancient ancestors. Their conclusion was that the design of our current abodes draws much from our distant past.

All of the above considerations affected how Lisa Benjamin now approaches her ongoing endeavors. More attention

is being paid by her to working with "nature" (to include human constructions and plants out of place). She gave numerous examples of projects that reflect this change.

 More emphasis is put on carefully observing the surrounding landscape and incorporating it into newly designed nearby areas. For instance, when creating rooftop gardens, soil characteristics present below were used above, which in turn determined the plant communities to be used. Changes in soil depth were used to accommodate taller plants, with shallow soil placed for smaller plants. By creating well thought out foundations, less work was needed in growing and maintaining the new space. She offered the following advice: a) Design for the substrate not for a preconceived



Amazing roof garden - photo by Lisa Benjamin

plant list. b.) Design with micro climates in mind so the resulting habitat closely matches the environment. c.) Utilize what you have on site (if possible, collect seeds from the area). Although she was talking about roof gardens where her goal was to create a habitat that mimicked the lower ground, this advice also seems to apply to any garden.

- 2. Creating habitat in areas that are considered by many to be wastelands requiring excavation and disposal of debris. Take a parking lot as an example and put mulch over it instead of digging it all up. Eventually this will naturally re-create itself. One only needs to trust that, if you time the covering of the area properly, it will go through to native succession. Her advice is to just leave the ground and let nature take its course.
- 3. The most controversial thing she advocated was a positive case for weeds, which are considered by many to be invasives. She asked why we insisted on treating their presence as a calamity, rather than a vast evolutionary opportunity. We have evolved and created habitat in which weeds are very much a part of our environment. Should we not, therefore, take a more middle of the road approach and try to see how natives and weeds can work together? Along with this, are there weeds that we should look at as wanted? For instance, dandelions are really a very healing plant.
- 4. It was suggested that we all take a walk in the city and look for insects. There is lots of life in the surrounding neighborhood, although we think of this as fairly barren. Along with this, look at the trash you or others are throwing out. Find creative way to reuse this perhaps as bug habitats.
- 5. A share of her work includes commuting to and living in Switzerland. Being in Europe has provided her with a whole different approach to nature and time. In the United States we want results in 1 to 5 years if not sooner. Whereas, in Switzerland they are looking for results over a much longer period - 50 to 100 years.



Bug habitat - photo by Lisa Benjamin

Given the long-term approach, the expected results are different. In Switzerland they ask: Why is that plant there? Is it serving some sort of need? Here we have certain more short term expectations and design toward that goal. We should spend more time investigating what each plant is adding to our space.

In summation remember that nature is not outside us – not something we need to protect or destroy. We need to be our own artist - we all have something to create and contribute. We are it.

Final quote from Lisa Benjamin:

"We are the ones we have been waiting for..... We have everything we need to regain and re-merge with our animal selves, our true nature is at our doorstep and under our skin. We as a species are designers and developers and thus have developed and designed ourselves perfectly to where we are. The "Nature" we perceive is inside of us and outside of us, it is the compost by the kitchen sink, the dandelion in the sidewalk, the crumpled newspaper in the park, the eyes of our beloved, the chickadee's call, the airplanes in the sky, and in the soul of our shoes. We are it. There is nowhere to go, nothing to fix, as we are already there. We can, if we allow it, just be, immersed, and actively playing our role in this biotope we call earth. The undoing is observing, being awake, aware and neutral. This invites a new perspective, a new water to swim in and a new air to breathe, in which nature is not outside of ourselves and is not something we need to protect or destroy. If we believe we are worthy of being here, of existing... instinctively, we are fully responsible for how we give, we take, we design, we develop, we evolve and we die. Only then, can we trust and have faith we are exactly where we need to be, and we are the ones we have been waiting for....."

Evidence for Climate Change and Its Consequences: From Global Perspectives to your Own Backyard. Mark Seely, University of Minnesota Extension Climatologist and Meteorologist. During this presentation we were inundated with a huge amount of facts and figures on weather trends both state-wide and nationally. All of this was given with a view on what the long term implications are for climate change in Minnesota.

Basically there are three drivers of observed climate behavior:

- Natural variability: This includes earth-sun geometry, solar fluctuations, and jet streams
- Land use: Actions such as urbanization, drainage, irrigation, deforestation _
- Changing composition of the earth: primarily from a rise in greenhouse gases and the consequences thereof _

The big picture changes that can be gleaned from the weather data include:

- Northern Hemisphere: Much more change is being seen here than elsewhere when looking across the entire globe.
- Latitude Bias: Mid and high latitudes (such as here in Minnesota) are experiencing more significant changes.
- Temperature Bias: Due to the expected rise in temperatures, there will be greater run-off from streams and across the landscape in general, higher evapo-transpiration, and increased lake levels.
- Eastern North America and Western Europe will be wetter, while subtropical/tropical areas such as Africa will become drier.
- Precipitation is changing dramatically in quantity and character.



Flood waters in 2007

continued.....

Minnesota's weather is changing at an astonishing pace. We should all be worried (*Editor's note:* alarmed!) at what some of the consequences of these trends will be:

- A decrease in the depth and duration of soil freeze and lake cover;
- More rapid breakdown of crop residue;
- Fall nitrogen application will be delayed because the soil will be so warm;
- Pathogens and insects will increase due to greater survival rate;
- Greater freeze/thaw cycles (resulting in damaged roads);
- Change in plant hardiness zone with our area going to zone 5;
- Change in exposure times to molds and allergies;
- Increased workload in health related care:
 - o Livestock stress: change in food ration, weight gain, and milk production to name a few
 - Human stress: primarily due to increased episodes of dew points of 70 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Because tropical air masses are coming more frequently this will inflate our heat index from 80 90 to 105 115 in the Twin Cities. (Heat index is an evaluation of the combined effects of temperature and humidity on the body's ability to cool itself. Usually with daytime values above 105 degrees Fahrenheit the National Weather Service issues a heat advisory to warn about health risks, including fatigue, heat cramps, sunstroke or heat exhaustion. (Definition taken from *Minnesota Weather Almanac, by Mark Seeley*)
- Due to the rise in extreme weather events we will need to alter irrigation systems, redesign and re-construct storm sewer systems, and mitigate for soil erosion problems. Our infrastructure was designed to run optimally and efficiently at what was the historic range for climate across many, many decades. These parameters no longer apply, so cities and designers will need to re-compute their statistical information and prepare for the new reality.

Presenter's Suggested Readings (Editor's note: in 2015/16 an updated version of Mark Seeley's Minnesota Weather Almanac will be published - look for it!):

- 1. The Rough Guide to Climate Change. (Robert Henson)
- 2. What We Know About Climate Change (Kerry Emanuel)

SOME IINTERSETING ITEMS NOTED
For 350 consecutive months – global composite temperatures have been tracking warmer than normal. This shows persistence when looking at the global composite. (Can NOT focus on individual weather reports which show daily fluctuations, instead we need to look at the climate - which is based on long-term statistical data.)
The rate of temperature change in the upper half of Minnesota is changing the most. In some other states (such as areas of the south-east) this isn't so.
The national record for highest heat index in North America was recently set in Minnesota. Heat waves with high dew points have caused devastating losses to farmers' livestock in 2001, 2005, 2006, and 2007.
Atmospheric measurements used to forecast severe thunderstorms are predicting these types of storm events with higher frequency in the upper latitudes such as Minnesota. In 2010 the largest number of tornadoes (115) were recorded in Minnesota with 48 sighted on June 17, 2010.

Xeriscaping for Our Changing Midwest Climate. Douglas-Owens-Pike, EnergyScapes, Design, installation and maintenance and author of "Beautifully Sustainable" As with the climate change

presentation and maintenance and author of "beautifully Sustainable" As with the climate change presentation, a review of the current situation served as a backdrop for emphasizing the need to garden smartly and in an environmentally sound manner. In 2007 twenty-four Minnesota counties were declared drought disaster areas. 2012 was the warmest year on record. It was also the year in which both the lowest and greatest flows were recorded on a Minnesota river in a 5 month interval.

First, the definition of Xeriscaping: a landscape that relies on natural rainfall and requires minimal irrigation. It relies on communities of native plants that would be found in the area with the same site conditions (i.e., sun, soil texture, and water availability). Some of the principles that are employed include minimization of turf areas; clustering of plants with similar needs; rainwater harvesting; adapting poor soil structure with compost; and using drought resistant horticultural varieties.

A few of the guiding principles were then fleshed out.

- 1. Rainwater harvesting
 - Surface Flow: Guide these waters into rain gardens where possible.



Rain garden designed by Douglas Owens Pike

- Roof Runoff: Here it was suggested, given the amount of runoff from roofs, a cistern system would be _ more effective than rain barrels as more water could be stored for use during periods of drought. Although usually one thinks of an underground system, it is possible to install one above ground.
- Green roofs: Helps capture rainfall (although these areas may need occasional irrigation).
- Permeable Driveways: Pavers with gaps, porous concrete, and gravel with plants to help reduce runoff. Additionally less maintenance and cost is required to move water from existing pavement into rain

gardens shaped to absorb extra runoff water.

2. Soil structure. The need to determine your garden's soil properties was emphasized. There are two very simple methods that can be used to provide some information on soil type. (A) "Feel" Method: Rub moist soil

Soil	Feel Method	Water Suspension Method
Clay	Forms a ribbon	Stays suspended 24 hours
Silt	Doesn't form a ribbon	Particles drop in 2 hours
Sand	Falls apart, feels gritty	Particles settle quickly

between your thumb and forefinger and (B.) Water Suspension Method: Put soil in water and see how long it takes to settle.

- 3. Healthy Soil Needs. Much of soil health has been destroyed by increased use of manufactured fertilizer. To build a more healthy soil food web, one can add organic matter either to the surface or vertically. When looking at which mulch to use, a list of available products was given. The organic materials are listed below from worst to best (Note: there are also inorganic materials that can be spread. These will not enhance the soil and should be avoided – rocks, pumice and ground glass.)
 - a. Cocoa bean hulls
 - b. Long leaf pine needles
 - c. Local wood waste (i.) Dyed chips (ii.) Chips (iii.) Shredded Hardwood (Best since it won't move as easily if water is flowing over it.)
- 4. Horticultural Varieties. Bred for specific attributes where currently the emphasis has been on creating spectacular blooms that are a different color, are shorter in stature, or having a longer bloom time than the native counterpart. We should instead select for drought and disease resistance in our breeding efforts. The best natives already have these attributes and often can handle both extended drought and short-term flooding. These conditions will occur in rain gardens that are not irrigated.

Pollinator Revival - A grassroots initiative to protect pollinators from further decline by educating retailers and stopping the sale/use of pesticides known to be harmful to bees and other beneficial insects.

ASK before you BUY: Has the plant or seed been pretreated with: Neonicotinoids such as Imidacloprid, Clothianidin, Thiamethoxam, Acetamiprid or Dinotefuran?

HELP stop the SALE of these substances!!: For details on what you can do go to www.pollinatorrevival.org



Date/Time:

Saturday, June 7, 2014, 9 am to 3 pm, rain or shine

Location:

Community Pavilion at the Roseville Rainbow Foods (located at the NE corner of Larpenteur Ave. and Fernwood St., just west of Lexington Avenue) 1201 Larpenteur Ave W Roseville, MN 55113

More information: Go to <u>http://tinyurl.com/land-rev2014</u> for additional information and updates about the participants.

The Landscape Revival — **Native Plant Expo and Market** offers gardeners one convenient location to shop for Minnesota native plants from 12 local native growers and to learn how to use the plants from eight conservation organizations. Accessory products such as organic compost, rain barrels and native plant seed will also be for sale (cash or check only, please). The goal of Landscape Revival is to promote the use of native plants by educating about their benefits for wildlife habitat, pollinators and water quality. The event is sponsored by Saint Paul Audubon Society, Wild Ones and Blue Thumb.

Why natives? Plants considered "native" to Minnesota are ones that were present during the time of the Public Land Survey which began in 1847. These plants have been growing and adapting to Minnesota's particular conditions for a very long time and because of this, they seldom need watering, mulching or protection from frost once they're established. Minnesota gardeners like the easy care of natives, but these plants also provide a buffet of nectar, pollen and seeds for insects, butterflies and birds. With 30% of our food dependent on pollinating insects (think tomatoes, almonds, blueberries, broccoli and apples, to name a few) gardeners can help shore up dwindling pollinator habitat by planting a diversity of flowering plants and shrubs. "We've made survival difficult for wildlife by taking up so much of the natural world with human development," said Val Cunningham, local nature writer and bird enthusiast. "It's time to start looking at our landscapes as mini-wildlife refuges by planting native plants — our yards can be beautiful and support the natural world at the same time."

2014 (tentative) Market Participants Cedar Hill Natives

Ecoscapes Native Nursery Kinnickinnic Natives Minnesota Native Landscapes, Inc. Naturally WILD Sunrise Native Plants Dragonfly Gardens Hedberg Nursery Landscape Alternatives Natural Shore Technologies, Inc. Out Back Nursery & Landscaping The Vagary

Landscape Revival - What, How and Why

(Editor's note: This article is a result of an interview by Susan Tertell, assistant newsletter editor, with Karen Eckman who is at the forefront in organizing this event, Thanks to Karen Eckman for providing this information.)

This wonderful combination native plant sale and education event came about when the Shoreview Sierra Club members received special support from the Sierra Club Foundation to develop best conservation practices locally. Some of the members elected to educate fellow residents about the importance of rain gardens and shoreline buffers using native plants to improve water quality. The Shoreview Clean Water Committee was educating residents about

native plants and which ones to buy. However, when it came time to buy plants it was difficult for people to find the natives, and they would often buy cultivars instead. Cultivars are not nearly as effective a food source for wildlife (birds and insects especially) as are the true natives, but it was difficult to get to the growers of native plants since they were geographically dispersed outside of the Twin Cities area.

The Shoreview volunteers decided that rather than going to the growers, maybe the growers would be willing to come to a central location to sell plants. While exploring ideas for a native plant sale, Saint Paul Audubon Society joined the project adding an educational "Expo" portion as well – making this "more than a plant sale". And thus was born Landscape Revival Day, which will be holding their fourth event this June. In 2011, the first year of the event, about 400 people attended, and in 2013 there were a whopping 1,500! Hopefully this is an indication that this is becoming a landscaping change.

This year's gathering is going to be very exciting as participants will be selling not only native plants but also accessories such as mentioned in the previous article and nature related books and gift cards. The educational agencies and organizations there will provide information about planting and maintaining native plants, attracting pollinators and birds as well as the benefits of planting them instead of turf grass.

Minneapolis Programs and Events to help the Monarch Butterfly

The Nokomis Naturescape: Natural habitat & Minneapolis Monarch Festival site 50th St. & Nokomis Parkway, Minneapolis, MN

On the shores of Lake Nokomis, rests a 4-acre native planting to showcase the dynamic oak savanna and prairie natural areas that provide habitat for beneficial

insects and birds. The **Naturescape** is an official **Monarch Waystation** and **National Wildlife Federation Backyard Habitat** and part of the **Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board** system. Three demonstration gardens are maintained by volunteers including **Wild Ones** - come join us for any Tuesday evening gardening session.

Growing Monarch Habitat Workshop

Saturday May 31, 9:30 am, Nokomis Community Center 2401 East Minnehaha Parkway, Minneapolis, MN Pre-registration and \$25 fee for Monarch to Go Kit required. Attendance is free.

The workshop is a beginning how-to approach to gardening for monarchs. An image-rich discussion covering:

- Monarch butterfly life cycle, migration and required habitat needs
- Native plant benefits
- Introduction to the native plants in a **Monarch Gardens-to-Go Kit** (features 15 native plants: milkweeds, nectar and grasses)
- Resources for learning more about native plants and monarchs

5th Annual Minneapolis Monarch Festival

Saturday, September 6th, 2014, 10am-4pm at the Nokomis Naturescape, 50th St. & Nokomis Parkway, Minneapolis, MN

A colorful event recognizing the magnificent monarch 2300 mile migration from Minnesota to Mexico. The cultural connection is celebrated with music, dance, food, activities and art. Learn about monarch biology, planting for monarchs and conservation from experts including Minnesota Monarch Lab, Wild Ones, and Monarch Joint Venture. Native plants are available for home purchase. Have a fun nature-packed day by the lake while making a difference for monarchs. Mark your calendar for this totally unique festival!





Gardener's To-Do List (May, June, July)

Spring has sprung and we hope you are enjoying signs of your garden coming to life. Here are a few reminders as the gardening season gets into gear.

* The garden centers and native plant nurseries have opened their doors - do you have a list of your plant wants yet?

* Start turning your compost pile, if you have the energy or a helper!

* A little time spent weeding early in the spring while weeds are tender will save you extra work later, when the weather is hotter.

- * After the ground has warmed, spread 2-3 inches of mulch on beds to help conserve water and reduce weeds.
- * Keep an eye out for the return of wildlife: dragonflies, caterpillars and hummingbirds, to name a few.
- * Water any newly planted seedlings weekly during drier periods to help them get well established.
- * Cut off dried seed heads of spring blooming flowers. Save seeds for propagating next spring or direct sow now.
- * In May start moving out seedlings that you germinated indoors over the winter. Gradually accustom them to their new surroundings.
- * Divide crowded clumps of late summer and fall bloomers as shoots emerge from the ground.
- * If you have a small prairie garden, cut or mow (with mower at a very high setting from the ground) as needed.

* Do you remember thinking any of your plants were a bit leggy or just too tall last year? Pinch them back as early as June to encourage denser, shorter growth - and with more blooms, too!

* Don't get so busy with your gardening work that you forget to enjoy the beauty of your native plants, while sitting in the shade sipping an iced tea. Your back needs a break.

Co-Presidents' Message

Lisa Lee Benjamin, our Design With Nature conference speaker, said the truth: "We are the ones we have been waiting for." We are the ones who can rise to the need for a healthy ecology.

EDUCATION: Our Wild Ones purpose is education and participation in many forms of education is available. We educate with our monthly meetings, we educate at Outreach events, we educate by showing our native gardens to others, we educate when we work beside learners. We are the ones whose passion for natural habitats is timely.

DEMONSTRATION: Perhaps you have maxed out the naturalizing of your yard. Think about shepherding a native landscape in a garden around schools, commercial boulevards, businesses, churches, medical centers and senior housing. Last year I consulted with the manager of a senior housing center who was about to plant Amur maples upon the recommendation of a landscaper! Yipes, a near miss. Just happened to be where my Mom lives so I found out about it. We are the ones to reach beyond our yard and help others build habitat.

ACTION: Our pollinators and all that depends upon them are under siege from toxins used by home owners, farmers, lawn care services, and plant nurseries. Do not be complacent about this. We are the ones who can stop this. If not us, then who.



2014 Officers

Co-Presidents: Marilyn Jones/Julia Vanatta Secretary: Joelyn Malone Treasurer: Elaine Larson

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Mild Ones

T win Cities Chapter c/o Marty Rice 4730 Park Commons Dr. #321 St. Louis Park, MN 55416 Chapter Website: www.wildonestwincities.org

MEMBERSHIP Benefits To You

- Monthly meetings featuring excellent presentation on a wide array of native landscaping topics.

- Receive the new member packet.

- Receive the bi-monthly Wild Ones Journal, with

articles and information to inspire and educate you about natural landscaping.

- Free admission to most Wild Ones' events, such as our garden tours, and native plant walks and sales/swaps.

- Reciprocity with other chapters' meetings.

- Share experiences and expertise with other like-minded native gardeners.

- Access to the Wild Ones library of native landscaping books.

- Support for the Wild One's Mission.

- Membership dues and donations are tax deductible

Join or Renew

- 1. Sign up at meetings, or
- 2. Call Marty Rice at 952-927-6531, or
- 3. Access the national website at <u>www.wildones.org</u>

OUR MISSION

Wild Ones: Native Plants, Natural Landscapes promotes environmentally sound landscaping practices to preserve biodiversity through the preservation, restoration and establishment of native plant communities. Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy