



36 Years Building Vibrant, Equitable and Sustainable Communities

2010 ILSR Program Report

December 2010



Institute for Local Self-Reliance

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Some of the Kind Words We Received in 2010

“*Big-Box Swindle*. It literally changed my life and changed my focus toward fighting for the small business owner across the country. We couldn’t be prouder to be partnering with so many like-minded individuals and businesses across the country!” – *RelyLocal*

"I have recently bumped up the New Rules Project to the top of my list of RSS feeds. It’s a rich information resource that will be of interest to anyone concerned with community development" – *Citizen Action Monitor*

“We appreciate your attention to details and the energy and time you put into these questions. You are a valuable resource to the composting community and your work is noteworthy.” – *U.S. Composting Council*

"Your book and the work of ILSR [are] terrific resources for those of us who aren't born grass-roots activists and community organizers (and I dare say even for those who are)." — *Guilford Citizens for Responsible Development*

“Christopher Mitchell is a bright leader in the realm of locally owned broadband infrastructure to serve community needs and interests. He's a great champion for localism, diversity and competition for next generation communications!” – *Access Humboldt*

"Many thanks for your hard work, site visits and commitment to educating the community about the adverse economic impact of garbage incineration and how alternative approaches can stimulate New Orleans' economy through jobs, small businesses and an expanded tax base." – *Deep South Center for Environmental Justice*

ILSR Flashback: In late 1973, as we were about to launch ILSR, the looming appearance of the Kohoutek Comet generated a frenzy of media attention. NASA promised it would be the “comet of the century”. Some experts promised it would be brighter than the moon. Demonstrating an admirable entrepreneurialism, ILSR staffers produced a hip new shirt using a design donated by Laura Seldman. Featured in the *Washington Post*, our “Kohoutek Cometh” shirt attracted long lines outside our Dupont Circle offices. By late November, however, the Goddard Space Flight Center had acknowledged, "from a public relations point of view, it has been a disaster." One paper headlined its story, "Kohoutek: The Flop of the Century." We did end up selling 5,000 t-shirts, however. And the shirt and slogan became immortalized when John Belushi wore it on an episode of Saturday Night Live. Here’s a picture of Belushi, and Candace Bergen on the set..



Cover Photo Credit: Flickr.com user emily_grace

Message from the Co-Directors

As 2010 draws to a close a tsunami of anti-government sentiment has dramatically altered the American political landscape. As one consequence, policy making at the federal level may be in gridlock for the next two years. Which makes work at the state and local level vital.



Battered by weak economies, states and cities now more than ever must exercise their collective ingenuity to fashion policies and build institutions that extract the maximum value from existing resources. History shows that most policy innovations come from below: unemployment insurance, worker's compensation, minimum wage and maximum hour laws, environmental protection, health care reform.

State and city innovation will be helped not only by the progressive policy experience they've acquired in recent years but by the growth of new institutions at the local and regional level that lay the foundation for a new economy by bringing producers and consumers closer together: the local foods movement, the decentralized energy movement, the independent business movement. For 36 years, ILSR has focused on the twin issues of scale and ownership. Humanly scaled institutions and economies and a wide distribution of ownership lay the foundation for building sustainable, vibrant and equitable societies.

At the local level ideology often gives way to pragmatism. For example, more than 70 cities, frustrated by recalcitrant private cable and telephone companies, have built their own publicly owned high speed fiber telecommunications networks. The majority of these government owned networks are in red, not blue cities.

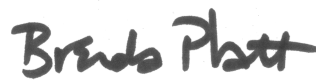
The November political earthquake was anti-government but it wasn't anti-governance. All ideologies agreed that human societies need rules. It is the design of these rules that is crucial. We make the rules and the rules make us. The rules—ordinances, statutes, incentives, regulations, standards—channel scientific genius and investment capital and entrepreneurial energy in certain directions.

In 2010, as this report attests, ILSR has continued and deepened our work. We have launched new web sites, published a dozen new reports and launched several new projects like the Community Banking Initiative. We continue to believe that local self-reliance can be a means to achieving our dream of collective economic and personal security and strong and dynamic economies that live in harmony rather than conflict with the natural world.

Sincerely,



David Morris
Co-Director



Brenda Platt
Co-Director

P.S. We know that times are tough for everyone but **please consider supporting our work** with a tax deductible contribution. **Your support is essential and you can make your contribution to ILSR on-line at www.ilsr.org!**



The New Rules Project

The New Rules Project (www.newrules.org) was launched in 1998 with the goal of developing, tracking and implementing policies that constrain corporate power and foster a more equitable, democratic and community-rooted economy. By “rules” we mean laws, legislation, incentives, ordinances, programs and regulations. It is a nimble program that has accomplished much by leveraging our research and policy expertise in partnership with grassroots groups, membership organizations, and other allies. In 2010, we had four main areas of focus: 1) implementing policies that expand locally owned businesses and limit the power and impact of big-box retailers, 2) transitioning from a financial system dominated by big banks and speculative activities to one that is rooted in and responsive to community needs, 3) fostering a shift to small-scale, locally owned renewable power generation, and 4) establishing community-owned broadband infrastructure that provides affordable access.



Designing rules as if community matters

Independent Businesses: The Hometown Advantage

Through research, policy development and advocacy, and technical assistance, we are helping propel a movement to rebuild local economies, which has led to the opening in the last few years of thousands of new neighborhood businesses, from independent bookstores to fresh food markets. Research shows that these locally owned businesses are expanding local income and wealth creation, building social capital, and dramatically reducing greenhouse gas emissions by enabling residents to obtain basic goods and services close to home (www.newrules.org/retail).



Stacy Mitchell, director of our Hometown Advantage initiative, works tirelessly on behalf of our network of independent businesses.

This year our Hometown Advantage initiative gave more than a twenty presentations, reaching audiences of elected officials (e.g., featured workshop for planners sponsored by the Utah League of Cities and Towns), independent business owners (e.g. keynote to TriMega, the country’s largest wholesale office supply dealers coop), and the general public (e.g., the annual Bristol Schumacher Lecture in the United Kingdom). We gave well-attended presentations on engaging in policy at the national conferences of the American Independent Business Alliance (AMIBA) and the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies. ILSR continues to chair the board of directors of the American Independent Business Alliance and serve on the steering committee of the New England Local Business Forum.

We published several widely circulated articles, including "Putting Wal-Mart's Green Moves in Context" published in *Grist*; "Misrepresenting Small Business" published in *Business Week*; "Banks and Small Business Lending" published on the front page of *Huffington Post*; and "Why Does Target Have a Subsidiary in Bermuda" published on our web site and in numerous blogs.

We continue to send out our Hometown Advantage e-newsletter to thousands of subscribers and the newsletter celebrated its 10th anniversary this summer. With the help of a new media strategy and work plan our staff have been interviewed for dozens of print and broadcast outlets, including the *New York Times*, *NPR's Marketplace*, *CBS Sunday Morning*, *Fortune*, *Business Week*, the *New Republic*, *Yes! Magazine*, and *AARP Magazine*.

There is growing evidence of increased public awareness and support for local businesses, as well as knowledge of the impacts of big-box retailers. In particular, our analysis of Wal-Mart's sustainability initiatives, one of the only critical perspectives provided by an environmental group, has been widely circulated and appears to have influenced the reporting of a number of environmental journalists.

We continue to maintain and expand our Big Box Tool Kit web site (www.bigboxtoolkit.com), an online center that provides a broad range of tools to help grassroots groups more effectively fight big-box



development proposals and affect changes in local and regional planning and development policy. Relying on the resources and technical assistance we provide through the Big Box Tool Kit, citizens groups have defeated Wal-Mart or other big-box development projects in more than a dozen cities this year. User traffic and downloads on the site have remained steady and even increased slightly this year. There are many examples of citizens groups reproducing our material in their own flyers, web sites, testimony, and other campaign pieces.

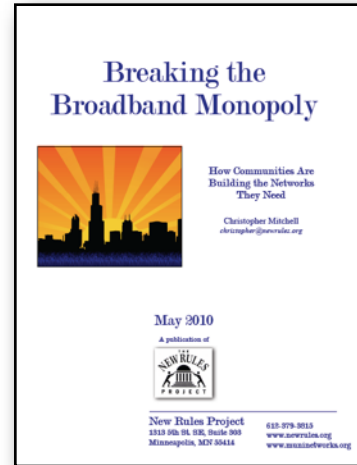
We use our NewRules.org web site to store and disseminate public policy models and supporting research, and to organize and engage independent businesses in policy advocacy (www.newrules.org/retail). In the last year, our resources have fostered the formation of several new independent business alliances (IBAs) and we've begun helping a variety of IBAs to help them engage more effectively in public policy formation. For example, we hosted a conference call that brought together a dozen local business networks in key states with coalitions working to close corporate tax loopholes and reduce state budget deficits in those states. Citizens groups and policymakers in several communities and states have relied on the New Rules web site and our resources to formulate and advocate for policy proposals. The number of local business alliances has grown to over 130, representing about 35,000 independent businesses.

Telecommunications As Commons

Our work on telecommunications makes the argument that information networks should be viewed as an essential part of local infrastructure in the same way that road and highway networks have been. Publicly owned networks (both wired and wireless) offer communities self-determination in the digital economy because they put local needs above profits. These networks are more responsive and offer more benefits to communities than absentee-owned networks. Our work under this project is being posted on our companion web site MuniNetworks.org – a clearinghouse of data, reports, news, and strategies revolving around community networks that are directly accountable to the community.

MuniNetworks.org has grown substantially this year, with regular updates published 4-5 times a week on issues around community networks. The focus on adding unique, insightful content has greatly increased our visibility and the number of people regularly visiting the site. One of our articles, the *Community Broadband Preemption Map*, went viral, attracting thousands of hits in a few hours. MuniNetworks.org was recognized by Google's Fiber for Communities program as an important resource for people who want to learn more about community broadband.

Our largest accomplishment of the year was a comprehensive report on community broadband networks that we entitled “Breaking the Broadband Monopoly: How Communities Are Building the Networks They Need” (download at www.muninetworks.org). Published in May 2010, the report offers arguments in support of community networks supported by a variety of short case studies demonstrating how communities have solved their own problems. The American Planning Association incorporated it (along with a previous report we published) in their broadband planning packet for all members. In New Hampshire, the chair of the Legislature’s broadband study committee asked all committee members to read it. The report has seen thousands of downloads from our web site.



At the local level, we provided guidance and technical assistance to more than twenty communities across the country this year, exceeding our goal.

We targeted work in North Carolina to assist local opposition to a bill pushed by Time Warner Cable to prevent communities from building their own networks, even in areas acknowledged to be uninteresting to the private sector. The bill did not pass but the political winds may have changed for the coming session.

To preempt another attempt to weaken community broadband in 2011, in November we released our report, *Faster, Cheaper Broadband in North Carolina Comes From Community Fiber Networks*, comparing community fiber networks in North Carolina to broadband options in the Raleigh-Durham Triangle area as well as Charlotte. Even where Time Warner Cable and AT&T have upgraded their networks, their services are paltry compared to the community fiber infrastructure built by Salisbury and Wilson, two smaller communities that have built impressive next-generation networks.

We did strategic work in our home state of Minnesota. In Red Wing, MN, we spoke at a community gathering and later discussed broadband options with the Mayor. In St. Paul, MN, we worked both with local leaders and met regularly with a group of citizens pursuing a neighborhood fiber to the home network. We have helped and advised officials in rural Cook County, which has secured stimulus funds to build a broadband network owned by the electric coop. We have twice traveled to rural Sibley County to join meetings discussing a fiber-to-the-farm initiative. We also gave a presentation on these networks to the Association of Minnesota Counties. In November we released and publicized a short report, *Twin Cities Broadband No Match for Community Networks*, examining the superiority of local community broadband network to options available in the Twin Cities Minnesota metro area.



Telecommunications as Commons project director, Christopher Mitchell, testifies at an FCC sponsored meeting in Minneapolis, MN.

We delivered a Keynote address to the Lafayette Fiber Fete in Louisiana, a Who’s Who gathering of next-generation network experts and activists. We traveled to Chattanooga, Tennessee to visit their new fiber network, the fastest in the country, and offered their utility leadership and other local political leaders a variety of ideas, several of which they have embraced to both promote their network and ensure everyone benefits from it.

We submitted testimony to the FCC regarding issues around community networks. In reading the submissions of others to the FCC, we found our previous publications and work on MuniNetworks referenced many times. On August 19th, we presented at the Minneapolis Town Hall on the

Future of the Internet, an event organized by the organization Free Press. Over 700 people packed the

venue to capacity, with more than 1,000 watching online, to tell FCC Commissioners Copps and Clyburn to regulate broadband in the public interest. Christopher Mitchell was one of three people specifically selected to offer testimony as part of a panel before the general comments from the public.

We worked this year to expand our relationships with people in the media to gain traction for more coverage of community broadband issues. Locally, we built relationships with Minnesota Public Radio, daily newspapers in several cities and on-line journals like *MinnPost* to expand our visibility in Minnesota – efforts that resulted in a variety of stories. Nationally, we have continued to work on our visibility by developing relationships with major tech reporters with outlets from Engadget to the *New York Times*. This year our telecom work was covered via blog, newspaper, radio, community radio, broadcast television, video webcasts, and podcasts.

Community Banking Initiative



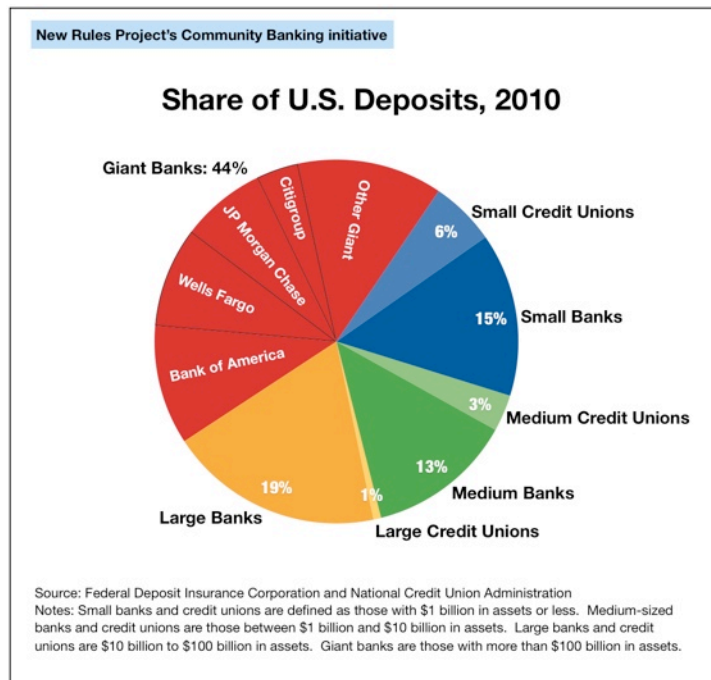
In 2009, in response to the financial crisis and as a result of our research-based conclusion that concentration in the banking industry was stripping wealth from communities and eroding their capacity to finance local business and community development, we launched the Community Banking Initiative. Our objective is to educate citizens and policymakers about the importance of scale in banking and the need for a financial system that is rooted in and responsive to the communities it serves, and to foster actions and policies that will achieve such a system. We're posting information from the initiative at www.newrules.org/banking.

We have been an outspoken opponent of federal preemption for many years and, during the financial reform debate, we publicized the role of preemption in fueling the mortgage crisis and called for restoring state authority over national banks.

The financial crisis and its aftermath, as well as the endorsement of state authority in the federal financial reform bill, have created new opportunities to advance state policies that protect consumers, regulate national banks, and foster community-rooted financial institutions. Our Community Banking Initiative is providing research and technical assistance to support state-level campaigns.

Through a partnership with the Move Your Money campaign, this year our articles investigating the banking industry, the policies that govern it, and the potential for establishing a community-rooted

financial system have been featured on the front page of the *Huffington Post*. These articles, along with our growing collection of graphs/charts, which provide a compelling visual illustration of consolidation and its impacts, have been reproduced by numerous blogs and in flyers distributed by grassroots groups.



For example, we had our banking project's resources featured on the PBS show NOW's web site related to its special show on "Fixing the Future."

We are part of a working group on state bank campaigns organized by SEIU. We have also built a network of community banks and credit unions to serve as advisors to our project, and plan to forge relationships with some of the trade associations that represent community financial institutions (we recently addressed the Maine Credit Union League, for example).

Energy Self-Reliant States and Communities

For 36 years, ILSR has been working to promote decentralized energy technology and development. For our first 30 years, we worked to get renewable energy out of tinkers' garages and into the marketplace. Today renewable energy and energy efficiency industries are large and growing rapidly. Therefore we now focus less on expanding the use of renewable energy than on creating the framework to expand local ownership and ways to maximize efficiency. Our work is being distributed online in two places, www.newrules.org/energy and at the Energy Self-Reliant States blog at www.energyselfreliantstates.org.



Our policy briefs provide a data-rich examination of the diseconomies of scale of large wind and solar electric facilities and the significantly increased benefits to local and

regional economies from local ownership. In April 2010 we updated our groundbreaking report, *Energy Self-Reliant States* (ESRS), based on new wind energy data from a national lab and concluded that the potential for states to meet their electricity needs with homegrown projects was even greater, especially in the Midwest. One nice piece of feedback on the report included, "...this study really is revolutionary when it comes to the energy debate. I have not seen anything like the kind of coverage that this facet of the renewable energy discussion deserves. I find it exciting and full of promise, and hope it gets a permanent seat at the table."

In the last 24 months, strategies have emerged that promise to overcome the gap between energy savings opportunity and financing. One strategy is for cities or counties to use their bonding authority (taxable or tax-exempt) and extend long-term loans to private businesses and households at attractive interest rates to finance major efficiency improvements. ILSR has worked on municipal energy financing strategies for many years, most recently on property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing.

Upon request by Minnesota legislators, ILSR provided policy guidance for Minnesota's new PACE enabling law. Enacted in June 2010, the new law includes a provision pulled from our 2009 electric vehicle policy report's recommendations to specifically allow electric vehicle charging equipment to qualify as an eligible technology in Minnesota's PACE programs. To help spur action on the ground, we hosted a key analyst from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in our Minnesota office to present on PACE program design and potential benefits to about a dozen groups in Minnesota.

In May 2010 we published, *Municipal Energy Finance: Lessons Learned*, a report examining existing PACE programs and identifying stumbling blocks and offering valuable lessons about program design and possible strategies for addressing obstacles. Ultimately, using municipal financing can make the city or county a hub in a comprehensive community-wide energy self-reliance program. We've presented our findings via a webinar sponsored by the National Governors Association and disseminated our findings to key policymakers and their staff.

ILSR is participating in at least two organizational networks devoted to municipal energy financing – Efficiency Cities Network and PACENow. These networks are filled with key people from around the country – NGOs, private sector, and municipal leaders – working to get PACE programs operating in face of opposition from the Federal Housing Finance Agency. This opposition from FHFA has put a hold on existing PACE programs and halted the formation of any new programs. ILSR is working in collaboration with PACE advocates across the country to find a solution that will allow PACE to move forward. Several cities have filed lawsuits against FHFA.



ILSR senior researcher, John Farrell.

We expanded our work on solar power in 2010. We are a founding member of a Minnesota coalition of both private and nonprofit groups working to establish a 10 percent solar electricity standard in the state. We also completed a comprehensive assessment of collective owned solar business models in our September 2010 report, *Community Owned Solar: Opportunities and Obstacles*. The distributed nature of solar energy technologies can result in much quicker and more widespread deployment than other renewable energy technologies yet we find that an increased public policy focus on solar must take place over the next several years in order for substantial expansion of solar to occur.

We launched a new online communications tool in Fall 2010 titled, Energy Self-Reliant States, a blog at www.energyselfreliantstates.org and it's quickly garnered a substantial following. ILSR senior researcher, John Farrell is heading up the initiative and his posts are regularly cross-posted at two major environmental web sites, *Grist Magazine* and *RenewableEnergyWorld.com*.



Building on our recent report, *Electric Vehicle Policy in the Midwest: A Scoping Document*, ILSR is coordinating organizations across 8 Midwest states (RE-AMP region – <http://www.reamp.org>) in developing critical electric vehicle policy and regulations. We are a member and are providing policy models, technical assistance and campaign support for the Minnesota Electric Vehicle Coalition, with members from public and private sectors. We are actively engaged with electric utilities and are forming partnerships with private sector companies and NGOs in an effort to lay the ground to ensure that the Midwest has a stake in substantial funding that is currently outlined in the U.S. Senate's latest energy bill.

ILSR's New Rules Project Web Sites

www.newrules.org

www.bigboxtoolkit.com

www.energyselfreliantstates.org

www.muninetworks.org

Waste To Wealth

A key responsibility of cities and counties is the collection and disposal of solid wastes. ILSR works with activists, policymakers and businesses to reduce waste generation and maximize the reuse, recovery, or remanufacturing of these materials and their associated products.

In the 1970s and the 1980s, ILSR was a national leader in the fight against waste incinerators, falsely promoted by the industry as "waste to energy" plants. We developed and distributed citizen manuals and provided direct technical assistance in 30 cities and counties. In 1989, ILSR published the first case-study report on the potential for high level recycling, *Beyond 25 Percent: Materials Recovery Comes of Age* (updated in 1991, 1994, and 1999). By the end of the 1980s, grassroots activism had defeated the vast majority of the 300 proposed plants.



Recently, because of higher energy prices and, ironically, because of incentives offered to "green" electricity, garbage incinerators are again being proposed in large numbers. To respond to the argument that burning garbage is "green," ILSR published *Stop Trashing the Climate* in 2008. A key conclusion of the widely cited report is that significantly reducing waste deposited in landfills or incinerators could reduce greenhouse gases by the equivalent of closing one-fifth of U.S. coal-fired power plants.

This year we increased efforts to fight planned incinerators and advocate for reuse, recycling, and composting as key job creation and climate mitigation strategies.

Zero Waste and Economic Development

This year ILSR was on-call to 25 communities from Atlanta to Detroit, Cape Cod to Alachua County, FL to San Juan Puerto Rico. Our strategy focused on helping start and expand local businesses, providing economic and financial analysis of incineration technology and alternatives; establishing incentive policies and programs for waste generators; promoting government and business procurement of green feedstocks and products; and developing resource recovery parks and reuse/repair clusters.

Bridgeport, CT, represents an excellent example of what this strategy can accomplish.

"Your presentation and visit was such a big part of our being able to present our case in a more positive light."

– Helen Livingston, Co-Chair,
Scotland County of Tomorrow

ILSR worked with the Deputy Mayor and U.S. EPA Region 1 to introduce successful social entrepreneurs in the recycling sector to city agencies, community organizations and private businesspeople through a workshop in June titled "Recycling and Economic Development." One result was the collaboration of two nonprofits, the Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises, a green technology and job-training group, and Family ReEntry, an employment and support organization for the formerly incarcerated. The Bridgeport BGreen 2020 Regional Plan Association is providing consulting services to integrate the project with other green business enterprises in the Bridgeport area.

Family ReEntry and Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises will develop a mattress recycling enterprise modeled after the one operated by St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County in Eugene, OR. The group is finalizing location, permits and licensing for the business to set up in a local warehouse.

They gained support from the state employment division to provide on-the-job-training funds. Operations are expected to start in the first quarter of 2011. Old mattresses and box springs will come from the area's waste transfer stations, local universities, and hospitals. This will save these institutions money, as the cost to recycle is less than the cost to landfill or incinerate these hard to manage items. The enterprise will employ between 5 and 15 workers and handle up to 10,000 mattresses and box springs per month when fully operational.

Also as a result of the "Recycling and Economic Development" workshop, The ReUse People (TRP) opened a regional office to serve Bridgeport and the greater Connecticut area. TRP is a building materials salvage, deconstruction, and training company with affiliates in 6 cities and over 300 workers. The company has already deconstructed and salvaged four buildings with 18 trained workers from the Bridgeport area. Nationally, TRP has taken down over 2,000 buildings over the last 17 years.

Some other examples include:

- ◆ Atlanta, GA – ILSR is working for the Office of the Mayor, Division of Sustainability, to increase recycling and composting to meet the demands of local and regional markets, and to establish a 'reuse cluster' of companies that repair and refurbish reusable components of the City's waste stream. Recovering reusable items can create the most value and the most jobs.
- ◆ Alachua County, FL – As a recycling and economic development advisor, ILSR helped the County staff secure zoning approval for a 40-acre Resource Recovery Park (RRP) for recycling, composting and reuse companies. ILSR also identified specific companies as potential occupants of the RRP.
- ◆ Scotland County, NC, Madison County, FL, and Gadsden County, FL – ILSR assists citizens groups fighting disposal facilities and advocating for recycling-based job creation. In workshops ILSR staff provides specific solutions to problems and opportunities, as well as on-going review of local developments and training for citizens in each locale.
- ◆ Fredrick and Carroll Counties, MD – ILSR continued its 4-year effort with citizen groups and small businesses to stop a proposed regional incinerator, slated to cost \$600 million. In November a completely new board of commissioners was elected in Carroll County; the new Board is planning to back out of the incinerator project.
- ◆ Albany, Dutchess County, and Orange County, NY – ILSR conducted workshops and private meetings with county legislators on solid waste management and alternatives to a planned garbage incinerator expansion, presenting specific alternatives that would stimulate local economies.
- ◆ Detroit, MI – ILSR is completing the 5th year of assistance to local groups who organized to close the downtown incinerator and implement recycling and composting programs.
- ◆ Lake County, IL – ILSR helped citizens groups eliminate consideration of garbage incineration in its solid waste plan, establish a Citizens Advisory Committee, and provided on-going training and review of developments.
- ◆ U.S. EPA Region 2 – ILSR is an advisor to the EPA's Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands Recycling Task Forces focusing on increased diversion of materials from landfills. In 2010 ILSR conducted similar projects in Prince George's County, MD, Baltimore, New Orleans, and Cape Cod, MA.
- ◆ Cape Cod, MA – ILSR is working with town Climate Action committees, Cape-wide grassroots and official organizations to address the pending tripling of disposal fees facing the entire Cape and Islands through reuse, composting and recycling enterprises and new rules.

DC Recycling Makes \$en\$e

While ILSR routinely works at the national level we maintain a deep focus on our hometown – Washington, DC. This year saw increased interest in our efforts to expand recovery of organic materials and reduce plastic waste in the region.

Organics Recovery

Recovering organic materials has benefits beyond maximizing landfill diversion. In the Washington, DC metropolitan area, 1 in 6 residents is at risk of or experiencing hunger, more than 641,000 individuals. Rescuing non-perishable and unspoiled perishable food from disposal can help feed people. Inedible food residuals could be composted, creating a valuable soil amendment – compost – that can support new enterprises, create local jobs, and help restore needed organic matter to increasingly depleted soils.



Composting: ILSR continued its partnership with the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments (COG) and the Alice Ferguson Foundation’s Trash Free Potomac Watershed Initiative. ILSR, along with COG, co-chaired an Organics Task Force to advance a regional strategy for expanding composting. One focus of this work was identifying policies that encourage on-farm and other small-scale operations as well as model state policies in place elsewhere that could be replicated in our region (see www.newrules.org/environment/rules/composting). ILSR presented a list of policy recommendations to expand organics recovery in the region. The Task Force reached consensus on a number of these policies such as banning yard trimmings from disposal and banning setting-out yard trimmings in noncompostable plastic trash bags.

ILSR provided assistance to Maryland Senator Jamie Raskin, at his request, on his sponsored law, the Green Maryland Act of 2010, which in part calls for state agencies to compost their grass clippings, brush, leaves, and other yard trimmings as well as requiring state agencies to procure compost. ILSR was an expert witness on the technical panel that made presentations to the Maryland House of Delegates as well as the Maryland Senate and is currently working with the Maryland Department of General Services to implement the compost-related aspects of the law.

ILSR staff also actively promoted on-farm composting of food residuals. ILSR worked with GrowingSoul and Engaged Community Offshoots, local non-profits in Maryland. ILSR staff provided assistance on business structures (e.g. tipping fees), materials handling systems, and navigating state composting regulations.

Fork It Over DC: While composting food scraps is a marked improvement over landfill and incineration disposal, recovering excess non-perishable and unspoiled perishable food to feed people is a better use. We found that few of the region’s local governments promote food rescue and that Oregon’s Portland metro area had a successful model that could be replicated in the DC area: “Fork It Over.” The Fork It Over food donation program includes an interactive web-based search tool to match those with food to donate to those who need donated food. ILSR received permission to replicate the program in the DC area. We are currently developing a web site, holding meetings with key stakeholders such as local food banks, and are actively fundraising to create a Fork It Over DC.

Plastic Waste

Single use plastics represent a major pollutant and cost for local jurisdictions. The fact that the Anacostia River, which runs through DC, is one of only two rivers in the U.S. classified as “trash impaired” by the U.S. EPA is indicative of the problem.

In 2009 ILSR provided research and technical assistance to the DC City Council that was vital to the passage of DC’s Anacostia River Clean Up and Protection Act, which established a 5¢ fee on plastic and paper shopping bags. The Act is the first per-bag fee established in the U.S. This year, ILSR focused on documenting the success of the act and worked with Maryland legislators and others to support a similar per-bag fee policy in Maryland.

Young Activist Club: Polystyrene poses numerous risks to environmental and human health including the contamination of food directly with styrene, a known neurotoxin. This is of particular importance to schools, as children’s bodies are still developing.

ILSR works with 3rd through 5th graders at a local public school in Takoma Park, MD, to facilitate a student-led effort called the Young Activist Club and its No Styrofoam Campaign. The students are working to replace the polystyrene lunch trays at the Piney Branch Elementary School, implement a pilot tray-washing project, and raise awareness in the wider community about the negative environmental and public health impacts of polystyrene in food service ware. ILSR provides students the tools to make changes in their small community while simultaneously creating a model that can have far-reaching implications.

“I am encouraged by their enthusiasm to take a stand in the community for what believe. I am also excited that this club is providing these students an opportunity to learn valuable life skills that may be difficult to experience in a classroom setting. Such skills as researching an issue; communicating their position; and public speaking will serve them far beyond the classroom.”
– Valerie Ervin, Councilmember,
Montgomery County Council



Young Activist Club members with Takoma Park Mayor Bruce Williams and City Councilmembers Terry Seamens and Reuben Snipper.

The Young Activist Club has had numerous successes in the last year. The school’s Parent-Teacher Association established a no-polystyrene policy at PTA events. Also, at the Club’s request, the Takoma Park City Council passed a resolution prohibiting the use of city funds for purchase of polystyrene food service ware, a first for the Mid-Atlantic region. The Club also received an official proclamation from the Montgomery County Council and the Community Hero Award from the Montgomery County Civic Federation.

Training New Recyclers: In 2009 the DC Department of Public Works (DPW) Office of Recycling launched a Recycling and Solid Waste Coaches internship program. Young adults learn about various aspects of resource recovery through hands-on training and connection with industry leaders, DPW staff, and facility managers. ILSR continued to provide training for five interns on plastics issues with its presentation, “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly.”



ILSR Co-Director Brenda Platt shows a range of plastics to DC DPW interns.

Composting Makes \$en\$e

In addition to our work at the local level, ILSR stepped up its composting advocacy policy work. Landfills are a top source of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Yard trimmings, food discards, and other organic discards are a liability when landfilled but a valuable resource when composted. The landfill gas recovery industry has a vested interest in landfill disposal of organic material and, in fact, has been working to overturn several states’ bans on landfill disposal of yard waste.

ILSR is fighting these repeals and working with elected officials to identify model policies to pro-actively facilitate expansion of well-operated compost facilities. ILSR joined with the U.S. Composting Council (USCC) and others to fight the repeal of a long-standing law in Florida that bans the landfill disposal of yard trimmings. The ban is essential to provide feedstock to in-state composters. While the Florida House and Senate voted to repeal the ban, as a result of a concerted effort to educate the Governor, he vetoed the legislation. ILSR’s data on jobs through recycling and the impact to the Florida economy were widely cited in letters sent to the Governor. Unfortunately, one outcome of the November elections is a promise to overturn the Governor’s veto. ILSR continues to work with the USCC to keep Florida’s disposal ban on yard trimmings.



ILSR continued its comprehensive outreach campaign to inform farmers about opportunities for on-farm food scrap composting. Since the project’s onset in 2009, ILSR has provided technical support and consultation to more than two-dozen individuals including farmers, colleges and university representatives, and municipal and county yard trimmings facilities. In this emerging field, it important that practitioners use best practices to avoid problems with odors and water pollution.

On April 9, ILSR sponsored “Compost Matters” in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in Philadelphia. The landmark event attracted 300 enthusiastic participants in a forum that examined current food waste recovery barriers, public policy issues, and successful models from the local area, the region, and from around the state.

Sustainable Plastics and the Sustainable Biomaterials Collaborative

ILSR collaborates with leading green businesses, NGOs, and government agencies to promote policies that restrict harmful plastics and is exploring the potential of bioplastics – plastics made from plants – to substitute for fossil-fuel-based products. As part of this work ILSR co-chairs the Sustainable Biomaterials Collaborative (SBC), a network of organizations working to save the family farm, create healthy products, and stop trashing the climate via a market-based campaign to encourage biobased products that meet rigorous sustainability criteria.



Composting and Recycling Bioplastics: ILSR continued to identify composting facilities that accept compostable plastics to document their operations, lessons learned, and challenges. We added and updated six case studies this year (see www.sustainableplastics.org). In January, we completed a *Report on Composting and Recycling of PLA* (polylactic acid) summarizing our research on the current state-of-the-art of composting and recycling PLA, and applied our findings to Maine and the industry partners involved in the Maine Potatoes-to-Plastic Project.

We continue to work with NatureWorks, the number one manufacturer of PLA, on developing a clear path for sorting and recovering PLA bottles. ILSR participated in a closed-door meeting in March with NatureWorks, Primo, the Association of Postconsumer Plastics Recyclers, and others to discuss recovery options. Two recent developments are positive. A new U.S. company called BioCor is now an outlet to recyclers or others who have gathered small or large quantities of post-consumer PLA. NatureWorks and BioCor are collaborating with Belgian company Galactic, which has developed its own re-hydrolysis process to break PLA back down into lactic acid. NatureWorks executives have stated that they expect a U.S. plant to come online in the next 24-30 months. Meanwhile, the Coca-Cola Company opted to avoid PLA in favor of sugarcane-based PET, which is 100% recyclable in current systems. ILSR's work was cited as one reason the company chose its recyclable "PlantBottle."



Working Landscapes Certificates: This year, the SBC significantly grew its Working Landscape Certificate (WLC) program, an offset program linking sustainable corn production practices to purchase of PLA corn-based plastic. In July, the SBC held a webinar, "Starting at the Source: Sustainability of Bioplastic Feedstocks," on the importance of and tools for sustainable sourcing of biomass feedstocks. More than 150 people participated including businesses, universities, and federal and state government. The SBC also presented on WLCs in the Sustainable Packaging Coalition's October Open Forum.

This year, Stonyfield Farm, the world's leading organic yogurt company, announced the introduction of corn-based plastic for its multipack yogurt containers in conjunction with its purchase of WLCs. Stonyfield Farm is the first major buyer of WLCs, bringing 490 additional acres into sustainable corn production. Under the WLC program, Stonyfield pays a per-acre premium that goes to farmers who will take specific and measureable steps to raise corn according to sustainable production standards verified by a certification entity. We now have major opportunities to leverage additional companies to adopt WLCs as well as engage Stonyfield and other leading green businesses on the importance of the SBC's full range of sustainability criteria.

The BioSpecs: The *Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Specifications for Compostable Biobased Food Service Ware* (the BioSpecs), outline the criteria and recognition levels for food service ware made from compostable biobased materials. They provide a framework that enables buyers to assess the sustainability of these products during production, manufacturing, and end of product life. In order for

purchasers to more effectively use the BioSpecs, we partnered with the Sustainable Research Group to develop a transparent process by which manufacturers would have their products assessed for conformance to the BioSpecs criteria. In a complementary activity, we partnered with the Green Purchasing Institute to conduct a performance test of compostable food service ware to ensure that these products can perform in the real world. These tests – done in conjunction with Santa Clara County, California – were successful. The Green Purchasing Institute is also developing model purchasing bid documents based on the BioSpecs.

Most recently we presented at the Practice Greenhealth webinar “Styrofoam Elimination – Guidance on Purchase of Biodegradable Foodware,” introducing biobased alternatives to polystyrene to health care industry professionals.

Waste to Wealth’s Working Partners

Advac Elastomers, Inc., LA	Elemental Impact, GA	Office of Congresswoman Donna Edwards, MD
Alachua County Public Works Department, FL	Energy Justice, PA	Office of County Executive, Prince George's County, MD
Alice Ferguson Foundation, DC	Engaged Community Offshoots, MD	Office of Detroit City Councilmember Cockerel, MI
All Bridgeport Community Development, CT	Eureka Recycling, MN	Office of Detroit City Councilmember Watson, MI
American Sustainable Business Council, DC	Falmouth Climate Action Committee, MA	Office of Mayor, Bridgeport, CT
Architectural Salvage Warehouse of Detroit, MI	Florida League of Conservation Voters	Office of Mayor, Chestertown, MD
Atlantic States Legal Foundation, Syracuse, NY	Friends of the Earth, DC	Office of Maryland Delegate Doyle Niemann, MD
Aucilla Landfill Authority, FL	Gaia Strategies, NY	Office of Maryland Delegate Heather Mizeur, MD
Austin City Council, Zero Waste Task Force, TX	Gary Liss Associates, CA	Office of Maryland Senator Jamie Raskin, MD
Autoridad de Desperdicios Solidos, Puerto Rico	Georgia Institute of Technology, College of Architecture, City and Regional Planning Program	Office of Resource Management, IA
Bearded Brothers Deconstruction, FL	Gibsons Recycling Depot, BC, Canada	Ohio Citizen Action
Berkeley Ecology Center, CA	Global Anti-Incineration Alliance/Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives	Orange County Environmental, NY
Blessing Greenhouse and Compost Facility, DE	Green Delaware	Peninsula Compost Group, DE
Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, NC, SC, VA	Green Purchasing Institute, CA	Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands Recycling Task Force
Building Materials Reuse Association	Greenaction for Health & Environmental Justice, CA	RecycleWorlds, WI
Bringing Urban Recycling to Nashville Today (BURNT), TN	GrowingSoul, MD	Roberts Enterprise Development Fund, CA
Californians Against Waste	Healthy Building Network, DC	Resource Recycling Systems, MI
Cape & Islands Self-Reliance, MA	Hidden Resources, CA	Responsible Purchasing Network, CA
Center of Excellence, Syracuse, NY	Huls Environmental Services, CA	Reuse Alliance, NC
Central Baltimore Partnership, MD	Incineration Free Lake County, IL	ReUse Works, WA
Citizens Environmental Coalition, NY	Indian River County, FL Division of Solid Waste	Richard Anthony Associates, CA
Clean Production Action, CA	Infinity Recycling, MD	St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, OR
Clean Water Action, MA	Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy, MN	San Francisco, Department of the Environment, CA
Cape Cod Commission, MA	Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, MD	Scotland County of Tomorrow, NC
Coker Composting and Consulting, VA	Institutional Recycling Network, NH	Second Chance, MD
College of Medical Surgeons, Puerto Rico	Jobs for the Future, MA	Sierra Club of Cape Cod, MA
Community Action Partnerships, DC	LA SHARES, CA	Sierra Club of Detroit, MI
Community Forklift, MD	Lowell Center for Sustainable Production, MA	Sierra Club of Lake County, IL
Community Resources, MD	Lower East Side Ecology Center, NY	Sierra Club, Catoctin Chapter, MD
Community-Vision Initiatives, MD	Maryland Avenue, NE Community Development Corporation, DC	Sound Resource Management, WA
Concerned Citizens of Gadsden County, FL	Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, DC, MD, VA	Sustainable Research Group, MI
Conservatree, CA	Mid-Atlantic Consortium of Recycling and Economic Development Organizations, PA	TechSoup, CA
Department of Public Works, DC	Mission Industrial, Puerto Rico	The ReUse People, CA
Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, LA	NAACP Nashville, TN	University of Florida, M.E. Rinker Sr., School of Building Construction
Del Norte County, CA Solid Waste Management Authority	National Association of Regional Councils, DC	Urban Ore, CA
Department of Sanitation, SWIRP Program, Los Angeles, CA	Niche Recycling, PA	U.S. Composting Council
Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice, MI	Oakland, Office of Sustainability, CA	U.S. EPA Region 1
Division of Sustainability, Atlanta, GA	Office of City Councilmember Mary Cheh, DC	U.S. EPA Region 2
e-End, MD	Office of City Councilmember Tommy Wells, DC	U.S. EPA Region 3
Eco-Cycle, Boulder, CO		Waste Not Carroll County, MD
Ecology Center of Ann Arbor, MI		Young Activist Club, MD
Take It Back Network, WA		Zero Waste Procurement Team, CA

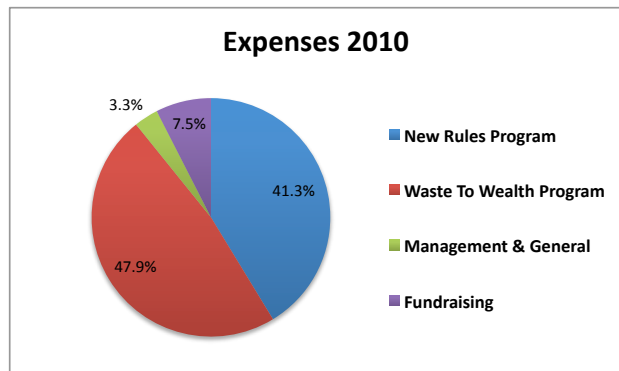
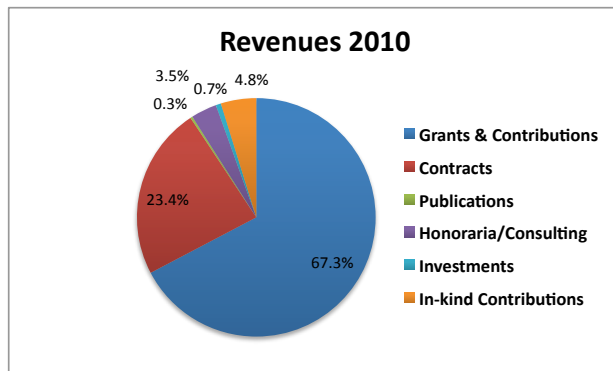
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John Farrell
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Linda Knapp
Christopher Mitchell
Stacy Mitchell
David Morris
Sarah Pickell
Brenda Platt
Neil Seldman
Patrick Tuffy

2010 Board of Directors

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Kirk Marckwald - California Environmental Associates
David Morris - ILSR, Vice President
Roy Priest - Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority
Andy Reicher - Urban Homesteading Assistance Board
Neil Seldman - ILSR, President

Brief Financial Information FY2010 (\$1.1 million budget ended June 30, 2010)



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