

# Gray Is Green

*Helping seniors around the United States create positive environmental change.*

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue No. 1 - Spring 2009

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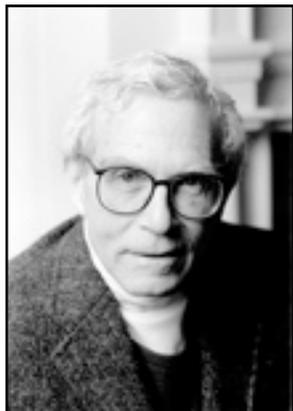
## The NSCC is Off to a Running Start!

The National Senior Conservation Corps was founded to help seniors “green up” their lives and aid them in greening their communities. We quickly learned that there were seniors around the country interested in decreasing their impacts on the environment. With the wisdom that comes from experience, seniors see the benefits in conservation and restrained use of resources. As a result, the NSCC has grown from a loose affiliation of interested individuals to a rapidly growing nonprofit organization with aspirations of becoming the leading resource for conservation minded seniors around the country.

With support provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the Rockefeller Family Fund, the National Senior Conservation Corps has appointed Rosi Kerr as its Founding Executive Director (see page 2). This represents a giant step forward for our organization. We are now able to offer expanded services to our members, and to accelerate our recruitment of new members. Our initial focus was on helping seniors living in retirement homes. Our vision now extends to all those, sixty five and older, with an interest in

### Join the National Senior Conservation Corps

Joining the NSCC is easy. You can join as an individual, or as a community group. Residents of CCRCs are encouraged to form a “Green Team” of interested individuals and join together. Please see page 4 for details on how to join and the benefits of membership. A membership application is on Page 8, or join by going to our website [www.grayisgreen.org](http://www.grayisgreen.org)

LETTER FROM THE  
FOUNDER

As stars go, our sun is young. And compared to Venus and Mars, our planet has been spared scorching, freezing

and battering. Life on this planet is only four million years old and our species, Homo sapiens, evolved only about a hundred thousand years ago. By calendar time, I am pretty old (91!) but on the scale of the stars, we are all quite young.

We mourn the death of the young because of their un-lived lives, the books unread, the songs unsung, the experiences forever lost. So it could be with our planet! So also with our species! Are we ready to admit defeat and bow to the damage we have caused to ourselves and our planet, allowing our young existence to be extinguished by our own hand?

Not yet. With the courage of our ancestors at Thermopylae, the gates of Vienna, and Valley Forge; with the willpower of Churchill and Lincoln, and endowed with the determination that is inherent in our better nature, we will defeat the looming threats to our human habitat.

Please join us.

Robert Lane, President and Co-Founder

## Rosi Kerr Appointed First Executive Director of NSCC

On February 1 Rosi Kerr became the first Executive Director of the National Senior Conservation Corps. A graduate of the Yale School of Forestry and Environment Studies, Kerr brings to the organization both training in environmental issues and the business experience of an entrepreneur who helped launch and manage a highly successful electricity brokering company in New York City.

Gus Speth, a member of the Board of NSCC and Dean of the Yale School of F&ES, said "Wonderful! I know Rosi well and think she is one the best people for the job."

Working out of her home in New Haven, Kerr will retain a part time interest in her electricity business for her first year as Executive Director. Funds permitting, the Board of the NSCC will then extend her tenure to



Photo by Annie Aquila

**Kerr and her faithful companion Gus explore the area around Arches National Park.**

full-time.

The appointment of an Executive Director is a major step toward

professional status for an organization managed up to now entirely by volunteers. The appointment was made possible by gifts from two Board members and a grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. As Lane, President of NSCC, said, "With Kerr on board, we can begin to fulfill our potential as the Green AARP."

Kerr's duties will include expanding NSCC membership from the 45 retirement communities with whom we are in communication, to as many of the 2500 continuing care retirement communities in the U.S. as we can reach. She will also develop the services NSCC offers its members, including assessment of greenhouse gas emissions at each facility, developing a Green Lending Library and a speakers bureau, help in waste management and recycling, organizing a warning service for retirement homes threatened by drought and flooding brought on by Global Warming, and individual consultation for facilities asking for help. Kerr will also begin the large-scale effort to go beyond retirement communities to enlist seniors living independently or with their families.

Kerr welcomes communications from our members and all others interested in the work of the National Senior Conservation Corps. She may be reached at [rosikerr@grayisgreen.org](mailto:rosikerr@grayisgreen.org) or at the NSCC telephone: 203-764-0988.

Welcome Rosi Kerr!

environmental conservation. Our vision for the future is concentrated in three areas:

- Greening
- Learning and Teaching
- Advocacy

**Learning and Teaching** includes connecting senior mentors to young environmental entrepreneurs, educating seniors and expanding the audience of the NSCC. **Greening** includes dramatically expanding the reach of the NSCC to a target population of 40% of CCRC's nationwide, and expanding offerings to younger seniors, including second career programs and "oldternships."

**Advocacy** includes mobilizing seniors to support sound environmental policy in coordination with the many organizations aimed at politically engaging young people. Programming includes developing guidelines to help seniors engage in sound environmental policy making.

## Current Projects

The NSCC is currently engaged in an array of projects in our focus areas including:

- Developing a carbon footprint model for continuing care retirement homes
- Refining and editing our self assessment tool "Shades of Green"
- Updating our greening handbook.
- Focusing on food by developing an understanding of the environmental impacts of foods served to seniors in continuing care retirement homes

## Our Vision of the Future

The National Senior Conservation Corps has big plans for the future! We plan expansion in all three of our focus areas. Our evolving strategic plan includes, for example, expanded services for "young" independent seniors, developing partnerships with environmental organizations that target young people, developing a network of retirement "oldternships" in the environmental field and developing a powerful advocacy voice.

What do you think our future should include? We'd love to hear from you! Please contact us at [ideas@grayisgreen.org](mailto:ideas@grayisgreen.org) or call Executive Director Rosi Kerr at 203-764-0988 to share your ideas.

## Learning and Teaching: What is A Carbon Footprint?

"Carbon Footprint" is a ubiquitous term in sustainability work today. So what is a carbon footprint? We will attempt to answer that question.

There are six gases or gas families (greenhouse gases or GHGs) that are recognized contributors to global warming and climate change from human causes. Of these carbon dioxide is by far the most common, though also the least potent.

Methane is another common GHG.

Nearly every human activity releases some GHGs into the atmosphere, just as every biological process does. Very simply put, the problem of climate change occurs when activities which produce GHGs far outweigh those that absorb them, and the balance achieved in the evolution of our atmosphere is skewed.

What does this have to do with a "carbon footprint?" The term is used to describe the impacts a building, organization, campus or activity has on greenhouse gas emissions. Carbon footprints are typically measured in "carbon dioxide equivalents" (CO<sub>2</sub>e-). To perform a carbon footprint analysis, an organization quantifies the carbon emissions it creates in it's operation. This involves several steps, and is most clearly defined by the World Resources Institute's GHG Protocol Initiative. First, an organization defines its boundaries for the purposes of carbon footprinting. Then it identifies and quantifies emissions sources within those boundaries. If this sounds challenging, it is. Why bother then? Because

knowing where your organization started and being able to quantify progress is critical as an organization reduces it's impacts. This is the purpose of performing a carbon footprint. The NSCC is working to adapt this tool to make it easy for members to use. To find out more, visit our website

[www.grayisgreen.org](http://www.grayisgreen.org)! To learn more about carbon footprinting, visit [www.ghgprotocol.org](http://www.ghgprotocol.org).



Photo by Rosi Kerr

## In Appreciation

Thank you to all the members, volunteers and contributors who have helped to make our work possible. Particularly, we are indebted to:

*The Rockefeller Family Fund  
The Rockefeller Brothers Fund  
Neva Goodwin  
Robert and Helen Lane  
Alison Fox*

*And for their tireless labor:  
Lisa Davis, attorney  
Bonnie Turner, webmaster*

## The History of NSCC

In 2002, a group of retired professors from Yale University interested in environmental conservation decided to “green” their retirement home. As Dr. Robert Lane, Prof. Art Galston and others began to organize conservation resources, they were shocked to find there were none aimed at engaging senior citizens. Reasoning that their generation is in large part responsible for environmental degradation, and that seniors have significant political and financial leverage, the group decided to change that. They produced a set of tools to help other seniors address sustainability, including educational information, guides and suggested actions. They discovered that senior citizens are interested in effecting positive environmental change but often don’t know how to do it. The group launched a 501(c)(3) in 2008 to expand their work and perpetuate their gains. The National Senior

Conservation Corps was born. The group launched a website ([www.grayisgreen.org](http://www.grayisgreen.org)) and began to create a network of members around the country. Members were encouraged to form local Green Teams, equip themselves with the NSCC’s materials and enable change in their own communities.

Now, their vision has expanded to include the larger and younger category of independent seniors.

## Why Join?

All over the country, NSCC members are making an impact. The benefits of membership in the NSCC are substantial. Members receive:

- A welcome packet, including The Handbook for Conservation, Shades of Green for self assessment and tips on how to get started greening your home and community.

- A subscription to this quarterly newsletter.
- Unmitigated access to our website.
- Access to our evolving and constantly growing programs.

When you join you help us:

- Reduce the impacts of 35 million seniors around the United States
- Expand our offerings and services
- Make sustainability the lasting legacy of seniors around the country
- Leave resources healthy for your children and grandchildren

## How to Join

There are two types of membership in the National Senior Conservation Corps: You may join as an individual , or as a group of individuals in the same CCRC or community. For either type of membership there are three ways to join:

- Go to our website [www.grayisgreen.org](http://www.grayisgreen.org) and click on “Join”
- Fill out the form included in this newsletter and mail it to us, along with your membership dues.
- Call us, contact us by postal mail or by email, and we will mail you a membership form. Fill it out and return it with your dues.



Photo by Howie Lawrence

The original Green Council meets with staff members of the Whitney Center, their Continuing Care Retirement Center, to advance a sustainability agenda.

## Make an Impact: What Can You Do?

Many of our members ask “What can I DO to help the environment?” First, we all must realize that positive environmental change is within our grasp if we take responsibility for our impacts. Next, set realistic goals and work on the conservation measures that you care most about in your personal effort to leave a worthy legacy for future generations. While each person’s conservation contributions might be a little different because we all have different priorities, we can all help. We’ve compiled a list of simple things you can do to get started.

**Drive Less.** According to the EPA, about 23% of 2007 US greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to climate change, come from the burning of transportation fuels. America has become a nation addicted to the car. If we all reduce our transportation needs, we can address this challenge and save money doing it. A few simple steps:

**Bundle your trips.** Plan your week so that you perform multiple errands on each and every car trip and cut out unnecessary driving. This saves you time and gas money.

**Carpool!** Bring a friend to their errands while you perform yours. Or, if you live in a CCRC or close neighborhood, organize friends to go at the same time to maximize the number of riders sharing the vehicle.

**Maintain your car carefully.** If you own a car, make sure your tires are properly inflated and your car is tuned. Tire inflation alone can increase gas mileage by as much as 10%.

**Eat Responsibly.** Agriculture accounts for 6% of the US greenhouse gas emissions but this percentage is much bigger if the transportation of food and the fossil fuels used to produce it are taken into account. To eat for the environment:



In New Haven CT, a not-for-profit organization called City Seed organizes local farmer’s markets and delivers seasonal local produce directly to resident’s homes.

**Reduce the miles an average food item travels before it reaches your pot or plate.** The best case is food grown in your own garden. Short of that, choose local foods whenever your budget allows. If possible, organize friends to buy from a local farm or to make a trip to a farmers market.

**Reduce the amount of meat you consume.** According to the chair of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, raising “Livestock [is] one of the most significant contributors to today’s most serious environmental problems.” Eating less meat is one of the best ways to improve your personal sustainability. Save steak for special occasions!

**Do your best to eat foods produced without chemicals.** Pesticides and fertilizers have profound negative impacts that are poorly understood. Many of these chemicals end up in groundwater and, ultimately, in us. When your budget allows, buy chemical-intensive foods organically instead. According to the Environmental Working Group these high

priority foods include peaches, apples, bell peppers, nectarines, celery, strawberries, lettuce, spinach and potatoes.

**Use Less Energy and Green(er) Energy.** According to the EPA, 86% of US emissions come from energy production including mobile and stationary energy activities. This is our biggest challenge.

**Buy efficient appliances and make appliances efficient.** First consider NOT replacing old appliances. If they’re needed, consider replacing them with a high efficiency Energy Star appliance. (Continued on Page 9)



## MEMBER SERVICES



## Our Featured Service: Green DVD Lending Library

As a service to members of the National Senior Conservation Corps, The Green Lending Library lends books and DVD's without charge (except return postage). Members make requests via mail, phone or email and are sent DVD's via postal mail. The following DVD's are part of our small but growing collection:

**1. American Southwest: Are We Running Dry?** 76 min. (2007). Sponsored by the Southwest water companies. A Water Alliance spokesman says "Our systems are facing risk due to diminishing snowpack, bigger storms, more frequent drought and rising sea levels. We need to be organized to respond to these risks—that's why we've formed this alliance." The film shows the effects of climate change on Hopi reservations, irrigation systems, urban drinking water, and general quality of life.

**2. The End of Suburbia: The Depletion and the Collapse of the American Dream.** 78 min. 2004. A dozen diverse experts explain when global oil production will peak and begin

falling. They speculate on how oil prices going up and up will change our lives with decline of suburbs, higher food prices, and economic stagnation, especially in the global economy. Includes discussion of the energy waste of the "American Dream" and the environmental value of urban density.

**3. The Eleventh Hour.** 97 min. (2007) Warner Brothers. Directed by Leonardo DiCaprio. Dramatic account of how global warming affects agriculture, creates droughts and floods, and threatens life and property throughout the U.S. and the rest of the world.

**4. Kilowatt Ours.** 56 minutes, 2008. Created by Jeff Barrie. "What would you find if you traced the wires from your light switch to its energy source? We're paying a higher price than our electric bills reflect—mountaintop removal, air pollution, childhood asthma. Kilowatt Ours is the story of my 18 month journey across the southeast United States to document our energy related problems and present viable solutions."

**5. After the Storm.** 22 minutes; DVD) Deals with storms in cities such as Santa Monica Bay and NYC, and how to protect against damage

Comes with pamphlet on what you can do to avoid polluting lakes, streams. Printout in cabinet file "Water." Bought 11/24/08

**6. The 8<sup>th</sup> Fire: One Earth. One Whole Circle Again.** 60 min. (AmerIndian mystical union with nature; familiar themes, slow moving. A better film from the indigenous perspective is [Sila Alangotok: Inuit Observations on Climate Change](#))

**7. An Inconvenient Truth, Al Gore et al.** (96 min.)(2007 version; purchased 2008) Introduction on "The Making of An Inconvenient Truth." Rave reviews.

**8. Global Warming: The Signs and the Science.** 60 min. Narrated by Alanis Morissette; PBS interviews with scientists, activists, and victims. ©2005 South Carolina Educational Foundation. Excellent introduction to problem of global warming; good illustrations, clear narrative. [REL]

**9. Florida Topography with elevations** [www.MacGPSPro.com](http://www.MacGPSPro.com) (James Associates Inc.). Very fine detail. Requires purchase of further software to use effectively. This DVD is meant to aid seniors in Florida assess the risk of flooding of their retirement location.

## IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

### Calling All Gardeners!

Many of us remember the days of the Victory Garden, when growing your own food was considered an act of patriotism. Those days are here again! Growing our own food has health benefits, lifestyle benefits and environmental benefits. By reducing the fossil



Photo by Rosi Kerr

fuels required to produce food (presumably we don't use much in our own backyard) we increase our national security, environmental security and nutrition. The NSCC is considering how to best encourage retired and semi-retired Americans, many of whom are accomplished gardeners, to restore food crops to their home gardening efforts. Ideas are welcome! To contribute your two cents, please email Executive Director Rosi Kerr directly ([rosikerr@grayisgreen.org](mailto:rosikerr@grayisgreen.org)) or give her a call.

### Internship, Oldternship?

You have heard of internships. Have you ever heard of an "oldternship"? What if we could link environmental organizations in search of qualified, mature



workers to complete specific projects and retiring seniors with an interest in helping increase environmental sustainability? That is the foundational idea between the Gray Is Green Oldternship. We're still tossing this idea around but we feel there is a lot of potential for synergy between green grays and green greens. We'd love to have your feedback on this idea! Please contact us at [ideas@grayisgreen.org](mailto:ideas@grayisgreen.org) or call Executive Director Rosi Kerr at 203-764-0988 to share your ideas.

### YouTube, Green Grannies and Using Your Kids

Outreach is one of our greatest challenges, particularly as we strive to engage seniors living independently. We are not sure yet how we are going to approach this group challenge and are beginning market research that will help us decide. But we are very interested in using existing networks to engage this group. How can we best use YouTube, Facebook and The Web broadly speaking to connect with seniors interested in sensical resource conservation? What if we used the children of unaffiliated seniors to reach them? Using networking tools like

Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, can we reach these 30 and 40 somethings to help us spread the word? What do you think would work? Do you engage with YouTube? What social networks do you use?

### Greatest Generation, Greenest Generation?

Recently, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies Dean



Photo courtesy of Rosi Kerr

of Students Gordon Geballe floated an idea by us: All of the frugality of the Greatest Generation, learned by

hard experience during the Great Depression, probably made members of that generation experts in the new idea of sustainability. Could we plumb the knowledge of seniors who survived or remember via their parents the Depression to relearn sound conservation and sustainability today? Would a movie made be the best way to capture this information? A book? A series of short videos?

### The Big Idea: Send Us Your Suggestions

Please contact us at [ideas@grayisgreen.org](mailto:ideas@grayisgreen.org) or call Executive Director Rosi Kerr at 203-764-0988 to share your ideas.

# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation (if any):  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of Interest:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Would you like to be included on our email list? (Please circle one)**

Yes

No thanks!

**Type of Membership (Please circle one)**

CCRC Green Team/Community Group (\$100/yr)

Individual (\$25/yr)

I have included my membership dues check for \$100/\$25 plus my donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support the work of Gray Is Green: The National Senior Conservation Corps. (Please make checks out to “The National Senior Conservation Corps”)

**Please mail this application and your check to our temporary address: NSCC c/o 62 Lawrence St. #1, New Haven CT 06511.**

## From The Executive Director

I am thrilled to be joining Gray Is Green and the effort to engage older Americans in resource sustainability. My own love for the



Photo by Annie Aquila

**My Dad and I experiment with new vs. old snowshoes in the Tetons, WY.**

natural world was nurtured by my elders, particularly my father and grandmother. The National Senior Conservation Corps engages the spirit and wisdom of the graying members of our society. We also use the newest tools to increase the leverage this group can exert. Together, we can bring together older generation's belief in the sanity of conservation with the hope, optimism and

resources of this moment to create a powerful formula for engagement, change and action. Join us!

*(Continued from Page 5)*

With existing appliances, check to make sure settings are most efficient and that heating and cooling appliances are insulated as well as possible.

**Use appliances less and unplug them when not in use.** According to a Cornell University energy expert, appliances that are not in use but are plugged in account cost Americans \$3,000,000 a year! "Vampire" appliances steadily suck energy out of the socket as long as they are plugged in. Unplug TVs, appliances, chargers and computers when they are not in use.

**Wear a sweater!** Jimmy Carter was right. Turning the heat down one or two degrees in winter and up one or two degrees in the summer adds up to fossil fuels not burned. Heating and cooling are massive energy sinks.

**Buy green power.** About 85% of the energy we consume is produced using fossil fuels. Increasingly, renewable energy is becoming economically efficient. Support the development of greener fuels by supporting companies that buy green power and by contacting your utility to see if you can sign up for green power in your home.

**Join the NSCC and help spread the word that gray IS the new green!**

## Board of Directors

**Lisa N. Davis**, attorney

**William B. Ellis**, Lecturer at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and former President of Northeast Utilities

**Neva Goodwin**, Co-Director of the Global Development and Environment Institute, Tufts University

**Robert E. Lane**, President, Eugene Meyer Professor Emeritus, Yale University

**James Gustave Speth**, Dean of Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

**Bonnie Turner**, Webmaster Emeritus and former Assistant Librarian, Yale University

## Contact Us

Email: [info@grayisgreen.org](mailto:info@grayisgreen.org)

Call: 203-764-0988

Write: (TEMPORARY ADDRESS)  
The National Senior Conservation Corps  
62 Lawrence St. #1  
New Haven, CT 06511



**Parting Shot:** Gray Is Green supporter Annie Aquila and Delicate Arch, a fitting symbol for Earth's delicate balance.

# Gray is Green

Photos by Rosi Kerr



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