

GOVERNOR'S INITIATIVE: NEW DISTRICT ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

By Christopher F. Puttock, District Environment Committee Chair

Several weeks ago, DG Jimmie Gorski asked me to head up the Environment Committee for our District. I am also the current Chair of the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (ESRAG www.esrag.org), including our international youth group Climate Solutions Coalition (CSC). Combined we have 1000 members in 50 countries and growing rapidly. We will double this year.

The Mission of the District's new Environment Committee will be to provide expert resources for Rotary in our District, to assist in preparing environmental projects, particularly now that there is a new Area of Focus (AOF) "Supporting the Environment." I do not see the environment as separate from the other six AOFs, but as intricately connected to all, as clearly recognized by the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. You may have noticed that to be funded by The Rotary Foundation (TRF) projects must be clearly centered in an AOF. The new AOF becomes eligible for TRF funding on July 1, 2021 (once the funding resources are restored after being exhausted by the COVID-19 pandemic), funding for projects will need to come from DDF and club-matched funds.

I am in the process of forming the Environment Committee. I currently have the names of about 20 Rotarians who may wish to be included. My goal is that the Environment Committee will have five action teams. These teams will include:

1. clean air, clean soils, and clean water;
2. biodiversity, ecosystem restoration, food production, and environmental justice;

3. transforming the linear to circular economy (including reduce, reuse, recycle and plastics, and net zero Rotary);

4. clean energy production and use (including solar, wind, water, geothermal, and transport and buildings);

5. zoonotic human diseases and population.

Members of these teams will be available to speak on these subjects to Rotary clubs in our District.

The Objective of the Environment Committee is to help our Interact, Rotaract and Rotary Clubs and the District, in formulating projects that are local, district wide, nationwide,



and global. Our environmental goal is a humanitarian one for a healthy and prosperous future. Some examples of potential projects are to:

- participate in local, national, and international events:
 - o International Coastal Cleanup Week – September 2020
 - o Maryland Day – March 25, 2021
 - o Earth Day – April 22, 2021 – theme: Restore Our Earth
 - o UNEP World Environment Day – June 5, 2021 – UNEP 2020 theme: Time for Nature.
- continue supporting PRIP Ian Riseley's tree planting projects, develop new projects that will

encourage native pollinators by having abandoned fields converted to pollinator meadows, and pollinator gardens in schools.

- provide a collection point for feral freon in Baltimore. Tradewater, Inc. will remove the freon for incineration in Chicago. Freon is a very potent greenhouse gas; 1 ton of destroyed freon is equivalent to taking off c.10,000 vehicles from our roads for a year.

- reduce food waste in school and teach about composting (Lunch out of Landfills program).

- establish International projects such as:

- o coconut palms for windbreak protection in Bangladesh;
- o reforestation in Mindanao Philippines;
- o coral reefs for fisheries in Tamilnadu India;
- o food distribution to alleviate bush-meat and poaching in South Africa and Zimbabwe, and many more.

- produce a database of all projects district-wide connected to the environment.

I believe that all projects that we undertake should provide environmental STEAM education, encourage monitoring for effective conservation, and establish partnerships with local, national, and international organizations.

To make this successful for the District, please become engaged. It is likely that you are already doing environmental projects. Let's work together and build this program. We are just at the beginning of seeing all the new opportunities that "Supporting the Environment" will open for us.