



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

April-August, 2014

Central Arkansas Group

Glen Hooks: Strong New EPA Protections

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Monthly Meetings

At the Oyster Bar every third Tuesday. We gather for social hour around 6:30 and the program begins at 7:00. We do not meet in August and December.

April 15

Beth Phelps
Timely Gardening Tips

May 20

Glen Hooks
Advocacy Techniques



June 17

To Be Announced Soon

July 15

To Be Announced Soon

August • No Meeting

The EPA under President Obama has put forth numerous rule updates dealing with air emissions, water discharges, mercury levels, coal ash disposal, and carbon dioxide. Each of these rules is helping to clean up our nation's dirty energy production—by requiring dirty plants to add modern pollution control equipment or by forcing utilities to consider cleaner, less expensive ways of producing electricity. The importance of Sierra Club members supporting these EPA rules cannot be overstated. Today, I'd like to bring your attention to one rule—the **Regional Haze Rule**—that is now in place and is going to have a direct impact on air quality in Arkansas.

The Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) is currently finalizing its plan to address regional haze affecting the Caney Creek Wilderness Area, located on the southern edge of the Ouachita National Forest. When this plan is finalized, we expect that it will affect Entergy's aging and dirty 1700-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Redfield, Arkansas. Entergy will likely seek state approval to add pollution control equipment—costing several hundred million dollars—and to pass those costs along to ratepayers. Your Sierra Club will be heavily involved in administrative proceedings in opposition to extending the life of this dirty plant, and we will ask you to make your voice heard by submitting public comments and attending public comment hearings.

A similar scenario is playing out right now in Texas, where the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has developed a weak plan to combat regional haze. Why should Arkansans care about this? Because pollution from coal-fired power plants in northeast Texas is blowing into Arkansas and directly affecting pollution levels in both The Natural State and in Oklahoma. Sierra Club will be asking EPA to disapprove the Texas Regional Haze plan, and we will be hosting a "town hall" meeting in Little Rock on April 14th to discuss how Arkansans can weigh in on the process. Will you join us?

Sierra Club "Town Hall" Meeting on Regional Haze Pollution

Monday, April 14, 6:00—8:00

The Centre at University Park • 6401 West 12th Street, Little Rock

In short, rules like Regional Haze have a direct impact on whether our nation will move toward clean energy production or stick with outdated, dirty sources of energy. EPA will be considering numerous similar rules over the next year—I urge you to stay tuned and chime in on the side of cleaning up dirty plants. Your Arkansas Sierra Club will keep you informed via action alerts on exactly how to do that.

Thanks for all that you do for Arkansas. Your Sierra Club membership, passion, and activism are what keeps us going. Please call on me if I may do anything for you.

Fun Stuff: Outings and Events

Sierra Club

Central Arkansas Group
arkansas.sierraclub.org

For our winter months, we had four fun events. Our January eagle watch was a great success. Every year we join the Petit Jean State Park staff for a car tour of Holla Bend Wildlife Refuge, stopping frequently for a spotting. And we did indeed spot three eagles along the way. A mild and sunny January day was perfect, and we had more great weather the following week for an impromptu hike at Bell Slough Wildlife Refuge.

Two hikes in March were well attended and exciting. The Bench Trail at Mt. Nebo State Park affords spectacular views—valley terrain on the downside and rockslides toward the mountain top.

Executive Committee

George Wise

Chair

Rel Corbin

Leah Wilkinson

Teresa Luneau

Carolyn Shearman

Gary Cawood

The Falls Branch trail at Lake Catherine State Park follows the creek up the hill and on over to the waterfall that spills into the lake. Some of our group elected to extend the hike from this point—the Dam Mountain trail circles the mountain by first climbing to the top. A slight drizzle only heightened the experience. After the hike, we gathered for some Mexican food.

We saw some new faces, and hope to see many more at our upcoming events.

Earth Day • Saturday, April 19, 11-5

The Sierra Club will be manning a booth for the Earth Day festivities at Heifer International, so please stop by. Earth Day includes lots of kid friendly activities. Anyone interested in helping us man the booth, contact Gary or Rel for details.

Cache River Tour • Friday, April 25

In December 2011, Sierra Club and Audubon Arkansas concluded a years-long campaign against the Turk coal-fired power plant with a legal settlement. A portion of the settlement led to \$8M being directed to The Nature Conservancy of Arkansas, with the intent to purchase, preserve, and improve lands as a way of helping to offset the damage from the Turk plant. Last year, the first of these tracts opened with a nearly 400 acre addition to the Terre Noire preserve outside of Arkadelphia.

The second project involves restoration of a portion of the Cache River. Sierra Club and Audubon members will tour the progress being made on this project on Friday, April 25th at 11 a.m. Details are still being finalized—if you'd like to join the tour, please contact Arkansas Sierra Club Chapter Director Glen Hooks at glen.hooks@sierraclub.org for more information.

Woolly Hollow Hike • Saturday, April 26 @ 1:30

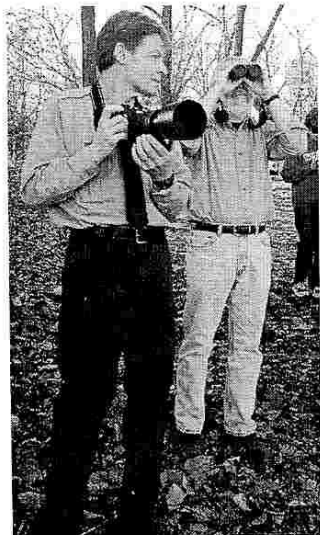
This hike is 3.5 miles rated moderate, with some up and down but nothing extreme. The trail circumvents the lake at Woolly Hollow State Park. We expect to see lots of spring flowers and trees. Take US 65 north out of Conway. You will turn right on state highway 285 one mile north of Greenbrier and go six miles to the park entrance. We will meet at the trailhead, which is near the visitor's center. (Approx. 50 miles from LR)

Birding Walk • Saturday, May 3 @ 9:00

We will assemble in the morning at Petit Jean State park for a guided birding walk, led by the park staff. Come to the Rock House Cave parking area. The walk will follow the Rim Trail (Approximately 55 miles from Little Rock)

Picnic • Sunday, May 11 @ 4:00-8:00

Come join us for food and fellowship at Allsop Park. Hamburgers, snacks and vegan options. Pot luck dishes are welcome, but definitely not required. It happens to be Mothers Day (not our all-time best planning), so mothers of any age are *especially* welcome.



B.T. Jones led our eagle watch event at Holla Bend Wildlife Refuge.

George Wise: Exxon Valdez Remembered

March 2014 gave us two anniversaries. On March 24, 1989, the oil tanker Exxon Valdez spilled by some estimates 11,000,000 gallons of oil into the Prince William Sound in Alaska. On March 29, 2013, the Pegasus pipeline ruptured in Mayflower, Arkansas spilling a still unknown amount of oil into a residential neighborhood and Lake Conway. Some estimates are that between 210,000-300,000 gallons of heavy tar sands oil spilled. As we continue to monitor and understand the devastating effects of the pipeline rupture in Mayflower, a look back at the Exxon Valdez spill is instructive.

What caused the Exxon Valdez spill? Exxon blamed the captain of the ship who was asleep in his bunk after a night of heavy drinking. The official report of the investigation blamed both the captain and fatigue of the third mate who was piloting the ship at the time of the spill. The real cause may have been that one of the tanker's radar systems was turned off. It was off because it was broken and had been broken for over a year. Some reports say Exxon knew it was broken but deemed it too expensive to repair. The broken radar system was not included in the official report of the cause of the spill.

Twenty-five years after the Exxon Valdez spill, pockets of oil are still found in remote beaches. As recently as 2010, 50 beach segments with lingering oil were identified. One can dig down a foot and find oil. It is estimated that oil will linger for at least another 50 years.

There are serious questions about whether the residents of Prince William Sound were treated fairly in the judicial

system by Exxon. The original court case filed by Native Americans, fishermen and residents of Alaska took 10 years to reach the trial court. In 1999 Exxon was ordered to pay \$5 billion in punitive damages to 32,000 individuals who have been affected by the spill. Appeals delayed compensation, and in 2008 the United States Supreme Court reduced the amount Exxon was ordered to pay 500 million. While that may seem like a large amount of money, it amounted to pennies on the dollar for the actual damages of the 32,000 individuals whose lives were devastated by the spill. Many residents never recovered financially because of Exxon's delay in paying for damages caused by the spill.

Will Mayflower and its residents be treated by Exxon the same way Exxon treated the victims of the Exxon Valdez spill? Exxon recently announced that it had cleaned up all of the oil. It made similar pronouncements in Alaska. Will Exxon be forthcoming about what it knew about weaknesses in the Pegasus pipeline and when it knew about those weaknesses? A year has passed since the Mayflower disaster, and Exxon still has not released data about its investigation of the cause of the pipeline rupture. Many other questions remain about the future of Mayflower and its residents. Our public officials have been diligent, but little information has been forthcoming.

We have a task force which is monitoring the situation in Mayflower and attempting to keep this devastating spill in the public light. We need more volunteers. If you like to join us task force, please contact us.

Officer Update

Your ballot for new officers is included in this newsletter. Two replacements were acted on by the ExCom at our February meeting. Leah Wilkinson and Teresa Luneau replace Stephanie Wolmarans and Kate Althoff. Three positions are still available. Carolyn Shearman and Gary Cawood's current terms expired (they are still serving in the interim) and there is one more vacant seat. So you will vote for three. Instructions on the ballot.



On the left is our group assembled for the Bell Slough hike. And far left in this photo is César Pérez, our special guest from Bolivia, who is working to train our next generation of environmentalist. The photo on the right is from the Mt. Nebo hike.



Sierra Club
Central Arkansas Group
The Arkansas Chapter

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Gary Cawood: Environmental Heroes

On the first page of this newsletter, we included a reproduction of the Rachel Carson stamp that was issued in 1981. You will note the price has increased almost threefold. Time flies, so as we approach another Earth Day, we want to keep her spirit alive. Many Sierrians are undoubtedly familiar with her accomplishments.

Rachel Louise Carson (1907 – 1964) was an American marine biologist, conservationist and author of *Silent Spring* (1961), which documented the detrimental effects of pesticides on the environment. Although *Silent Spring* was met with fierce opposition by chemical companies, it spurred a reversal in national pesticide policy, which led to a nationwide ban on DDT and other pesticides, and it inspired a grassroots environmental movement that led to the creation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Carson maintains that pesticides are more properly termed *biocides*, because their effects are rarely limited to the target pests. DDT is a prime example, but other synthetic pesticides come under scrutiny as well. Carson also accuses the chemical industry of intentionally spreading disinformation and public officials of accepting industry claims uncritically. Most of the book is devoted to pesticides' effects on natural ecosystems, but it also details cases of human pesticide poisoning, cancer, and other illnesses. (Source: Wikipedia)

Of course, the dangers to our environment still persist—some would argue even more so. But we also still have environmental heroes working to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink. Many in our own group participate in numerous advocacy activities, but two of our members deserve special mention. For many months now Kate Althoff and Carolyn Shearman have served on a task force charged with recommending new zoning ordinances to protect the Lake Maumelle watershed from future development. Kate has worked on water issues for many years and represents the Sierra Club on this task force. And while Carolyn is officially representing the Friends of the Ouchita Trail, her voice against unrestrained development is important for us also.

As the proceedings delved into many continuous issues, various sub-committees were appointed, so the effect is an overwhelming work load—something akin to a typical work week and sometimes more. And the response to our environmental advocates is not always friendly, to say the least.

As this newsletter goes to press, the recommendation is being finalized. So you can look forward to a detailed report at our next regular meeting. We will also include a comprehensive summary in our next newsletter. In the meantime, let's all give Kate and Carolyn our heartfelt thanks for the work they've done.