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January to April 2011

Rollercoaster Fight Against Proposed Turk Power Plant

Special points of interest:

- Turk Power Plant: The Latest Developments
- Lake Maumelle Water Quality Protection Update
- Information on Fracking and on Formation of Online Forum "Fracalliance"
- Central Arkansas Group (CAG) Welcomes New Officers for 2011
- Central Arkansas Group Spring Meetings and Activities
- Canoe Trash Pick-up April 23
- Uta Meyer Makes Environmental Education Fun for Kids
- Watershed Conference

Here's a brief review of the twists and turns in the fight against Turk, the proposed 600-megawatt coal-fired plant in Hempstead County. By Lev Guter, national Sierra Club Field Organizer, Beyond Coal Campaign. Contact him at Lev.guter@sierraclub.org.

The Sierra Club, Audubon, and the Hempstead County Hunting Club are plaintiffs in a Federal 404 wetlands permit suit against the Southwestern Electric Power Company (SWEPCO) and the US Corps of Engineers (Corps). We contested the Corps' construction permit to fill in or impair eight acres of wetlands and to build a massive water intake structure in the Little River on the grounds that not enough time was allowed for public comment. In the September 2010 hearings before U.S. District Judge Bill Wilson, he concluded that the 404 wetlands permit was improperly granted, and he ordered an injunction on construction concerning the wetlands and river intake structure.

SWEPCO appealed his decision to the 8th US Circuit Court of Appeals, and in November, the 8th Circuit handed down a one-sentence decision overruling the injunction. Judge Wilson, perplexed by the unusual one-sentence overruling,



recused himself. Then, in another rare move, the 8th Circuit reversed itself and reinstated the injunction, at least for now. However, construction on the rest of the 2,800 acres continues. The 404 appeals on the 8-acre injunction will be argued in front of the 8th Circuit in St. Paul, Minnesota, on March 15. A new judge has just been named to replace Judge Wilson. Stay tuned.

On the separate issue of the Turk air permit, the Sierra Club had appealed the Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission's decision to grant the air permit. The Arkansas State Circuit Court in Hempstead County upheld the air permit in December 2010. But the Sierra Club continues to contest Turk's air permit, and on January 13, 2011 we appealed to the Arkansas Court of Appeals. No briefing or oral argument schedule has yet been set.

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Lake Maumelle Water Quality Update

Lake Maumelle provides water for almost 400,000 Central Arkansans. The primary threat to its almost pristine water quality is residential development of the forest land around the lake. Efforts to protect the lake's water quality have now entered a new phase in the form of **Land Use Planning** by Pulaski County government.

"Land use planning" refers to that branch of public policy which orders

and regulates the efficient and ethical long term use of land. At its simplest, land use planning often involves zoning and transport infrastructure planning. While land use planning is commonly the backbone for any city in the nation, Arkansas county governments rarely use it because, they say, the sparse rural populations under their jurisdiction do not require it.

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What Is Fracking & Why Should You Care?

“Fracking” is the shortened term for a process to extract natural gas from shale rock formations. It involves drilling horizontally into shale formations and fracturing the shale. A combined sequence of explosives, and high pressure flushing with huge volumes of chemically laced water and sand releases the methane trapped in these formations.

Fracking causes environmental risks and harm, but the industry is not sufficiently regulated to protect water, wildlife, and people. Over 3000 fracked wells have been drilled in Central Arkansas with thousands more planned, including over 1700 in the Ozark and Ouachita National Forests.

If you're interested in joining a statewide online forum aimed at addressing the environmental impacts from this industry, send an email to: fracalliance@googlegroups.com

See these resources too:

Arkansans for Gas Drilling Accountability <http://a4gda.blogspot.com/>

League of Women Voters of Arkansas <http://www.lwvarwc.org/>

Sierra Club's Natural Gas Reform Page <http://www.sierraclub.org/naturalgas/details.aspx>

Greers Ferry Lake Natural Gas Watch <http://www.facebook.com/GreersFerryLakeGasWatch>



Fracking May Cause Quakes

Central Arkansas Group Officers For 2011

The Central Arkansas Group has just completed its 2011 elections.

Your officers are:

David Lyon (Chair)
David.Lyon@Arkansas.SierraClub.org

Gary Cawood (Vice Chair)
Gary.Cawood@Arkansas.SierraClub.org

Kate Althoff (Water Issues/Treasurer)
Kate.Althof@Arkansas.SierraClub.org

Bob Stodola (Communications)
Bob.Stodola@Arkansas.SierraClub.org

Uta Meyer (Outreach & Membership)
Uta.Meyer@Arkansas.SierraClub.org

Julie Joy (Outings) and Stephanie Wolmarans (Outings/Secretary). Zabelle Stodola will help ex-officio as Secretary.

Here are some comments from CAG's newest officers, Julie and Stephanie.

Joy is originally from Portland, Maine, and says, "I am a nature lover and wish to put my money (and my time and energy) where my mouth is."

Stephanie says she wants "to make a difference by supporting what I believe in and making a positive impact both locally and globally."

CAG Meetings January-April 2011 At Oyster Bar

The Central Arkansas Group meets on the third Tuesday of each month at the Oyster Bar in Little Rock. 6:30 pm social time, 7 pm program begins.

January 18: Scott Simon, from the Nature Conservancy, will show a

video on managing land along Kings River.

February 15: UALR Earth Sciences professor Beth McMillan will speak on environmental applications of GIS (Geographic Information Systems).

March 15: Ron Tyne will talk on "Low Impact Development: A Developer's Perspective."

April 19: Richard Davies, Executive Director of the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, will give a presentation.

Making Environmental Education Fun

Kudos to CAG officer Uta Meyer, a student at the University of Central Arkansas, for educating a new generation of kids about environmental issues.

In winter 2010 and continuing into spring 2011, Uta is organizing activities twice a month at the Billy Mitchell Boys and Girls Club in Little Rock.

Some of the topics that have gotten kids going include bird bingo, predator-prey games, scavenger hunts, and a presentation on reptiles.



Canoe Clean-up Activity At Pinnacle Mtn April 23

The Spring Canoe Clean-up of the Little Maumelle River will be held April 23, 2011. The Sierra Club and Pinnacle Mountain State Park jointly sponsor this annual event led this year by Bill Saunders, Charles Mullins, and Carolyn Shearman. We will put-in at the back parking lot of the Highway 300 entrance to Pinnacle Mountain State Park by

the boat launch to the Little Maumelle River no later than 10 am. Wear appropriate clothes, and bring a sack lunch, drinks, and bug spray. We will take out about 1 pm and the park staff will drive us back to the parking lot. Contact Carolyn Shearman at tucshea@gmail.com or (501) 603-5305 to sign-up or check with her at an upcoming CAG

monthly meeting. Because Pinnacle Mountain State Park will provide canoes, life-vests, garbage bags, and shuttle service, we will need to give them an exact count of participants.

This is a relaxing, fun trip that helps our local environment at the same time.

Sierrans Attend Arkansas Watershed Conference

Over 100 environmental activists and experts from the state and federal agencies get together every two years to learn about protecting Arkansas waters. Sierrans Kate Althoff and Bill Saunders were there too. Sponsored by the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and other entities, in



Lake Maumelle (Central Ark. Water website)

November 2010 this blue ribbon event sponsored many speakers on the state's most pressing water concerns, including "Accomplishments, Challenges and Awards," Teresa Marks, ADEQ Executive Director; "Arkansas State Water Plan," Ken Brizal, Arkan-

sas Natural Resources Commission; and "US Environmental Protection Agency's National Study of Hydraulic Fracking," Michael Overby, US EPA .

Contact Bill at wmsaunders@att.net or Kate at Ktalthof@aol.com.

Sierra Club, Central Arkansas Group
<http://arkansas.sierraclub.org>

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Lake Maumelle Story From Page 1 (cont'd)

After a very long public lobbying campaign spearheaded by Central Arkansas Water, the public water utility that owns and maintains the lake, Pulaski County government contracted the firm Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT) of Philadelphia to develop a Land Use Plan. The current stage of WRT's multi-stage process seeks public input by 31 January 2011. More information about the plan and how to provide your input is at <http://www.co.pulaski.ar.us/>

Members of the Sierra Club's Central Arkansas Group (CAG) have closely monitored this process for several years, and we

strongly believe that this Land Use Plan must call for at least 40% undisturbed land around the lake. The analysis is not yet complete, but CAG is concerned that the Land Use Plan will fall below the 40% minimum. CAG will circulate more information when the final analysis is available so you can send Pulaski County your comments. Be aware that even after the Land Use Plan is completed, the Pulaski County Quorum Court still needs to enact it. Ironically, the political process leading up to this vote may weaken those parts of the plan designed to protect water quality. This is because historically the

Quorum Court has passionately defended minimum government regulation and supported personal property rights (i.e. development) over the common good. Stay tuned for more information on what you can do to protect your drinking water.

Article by Kate Althoff, CAG officer with special interest in water issues. For information contact Kate at ktalthof@aol.com.