



Nebraska Sierran

P.O. Box 4664, Omaha, NE 68104

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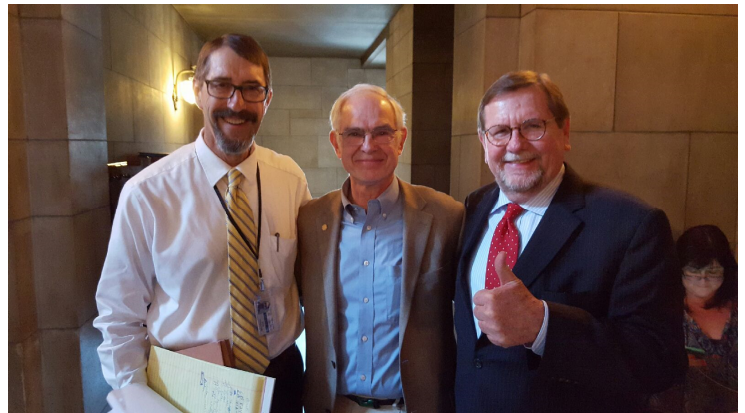
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April 2016

Busy Session at Unicameral and Lots of Wins for Sierra Club!

This year The Nebraska Sierra Club has a full agenda in the 2016 Nebraska Legislative Session. Our new Chapter Lobbyist, Jim Cavanaugh, and Chapter Legislative Chair, David Corbin, have been hard at work to achieve Sierra Club's legislative goals. Here is a brief summary of our accomplishments so far:

- Nebraska Farmers Union and Sierra Club led the effort to kill **LR 378CA**, The Right to Farm constitutional amendment better known to environmentalists as the Right to Pollute Amendment! If passed and signed by the governor, the amendment would have appeared on the November ballot. If enacted, the amendment would have eliminated or weakened most state and local environmental regulations on agriculture.
- **LB 1082**, which would require the Nebraska Oil & Gas Conservation Commission to be more responsive to public concerns about the disposal of fracking wastes, was passed by the Legislature and signed by the governor on March 30th. This was a huge success finally starting meaningful regulations over the fracking industry. We didn't get all the provisions we wanted, but we'll be back next year!
- **LB 1012** - Adopt the Property Assessed Clean Energy Act allowing property owners to capture credits for installing energy saving improvements – Sierra Club supports this bill, and it got final approval by a 45-0 vote. Next stop: the Governor!
- Sen. Ken Haar introduced four Legislative Resolutions to make environment-related special studies that will hopefully lead to legislation that will be introduced in the next session. It is vitally important that Sierra Club participate in the hearings and other meetings related to these studies which will probably occur next Fall.
- **LR552** - Interim study to develop a plan to address funding and budgetary issues relating to climate change. It was referred to the Appropriations Committee.
- **LR534** – Interim study to examine the extent that state funds are invested in fossil fuels and clean energy, and the feasibility of divestment consistent with the state's fiduciary responsibilities. It was referred to the Nebraska Retirement Systems Committee.
- **LR579** – Interim study to examine issues relating to solar energy development. It was referred to the Natural Resources Committee.
- **LR599** – Interim study to review the administrative rate review process currently conducted by the Public Service Commission. It was referred to the Transportation and Telecommunications Com.
- **Sierra Club helps pass LB 824!** - Introduced by Sen. McCollister LB 824 exempts developed renewable energy generation facilities from regulation. Thanks to all your calls, letters and emails to senators, we got this bill advanced and will likely go to the Governor!



Ken Winston, Sen. Ken Haar & Lobbyist Jim Cavanaugh

- **Sierra Club supported LB 716** that updates the Nebraska Rules of the Road to better define the rights and responsibilities of pedestrians and bicyclists. It's especially important that this bill establishes the right of way for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists where streets and highways intersect paths/trails designated for pedestrian and bicyclist use. The bill passed and awaits the Governor's signature.
- On March 24th Sierra Club held its annual **Cinnamon Roll Breakfast** at the State Capitol for senators and staff. It was heavily attended and a big hit! It gave us a great opportunity to get our message out regarding our legislative agenda going into the last 10 days of the session.
- Thanks to all of you that made donations to our Annual **March Fund Appeal** that helps fund our Nebraska legislative advocacy work. Haven't sent in your donation yet? Your contributions are always welcome. Just mail them to Nebraska Sierra Club, P.O. Box 4664, Omaha, NE 68104-0664.

"Paths of Discovery: Metro Area Trails"

Missouri Valley Group April Program

Thursday, April 28, 7 p.m.

First United Methodist Church, 7020 Cass Street, Omaha, NE.

Enter north side of building, "Education" wing.



Omaha will complete four miles of new trails this summer including an extension of the South Omaha Trail east to a connection with the Field Club Trail – see map on left. Another new trail this summer is a connecting link as part of the Turner Boulevard trail, which should be completed in May.

Come learn about recent trail improvements and future plans in metro trail development.

Speakers Dennis Bryers of the City of Omaha and Eric Williams of the Pappio-Missouri River NRD will give us an overview of what's to come, including plans for Omaha and Lincoln to eventually be connected by trails. Sierra Club programs are free and open to the public.



South Omaha Trail just west of 60th St. looking NW. The former C&NW tracks used to continue under the Union Pacific bridge.



Current east end of the South Omaha Trail near 45th St and G. Phase 2 of trail will continue straight ahead.

Upcoming Programs & Events

All of our programs are free and the general public welcome. We meet at First United Methodist Church, 7020 Cass Street, Omaha -- Enter north side of building, "Education" wing and proceed to Room 112.

Monday, April 11, 7 p.m. – Missouri Valley Group Executive Committee meeting at the law offices of Michael McClellan, southeast corner of 36th St. & Dewey Ave., Omaha. All members welcome.

Saturday, April 16 -- The annual Earth Day Omaha celebration will be held at Omaha's Elmwood Park from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Many environmental organizations including Sierra Club will be there!

Thursday, April 28, 7 p.m. -- "Paths of Discovery: Metro Area Trails" with Eric Williams (Papio-Missouri River NRD) and Dennis Bryers (City of Omaha Parks Dept.)

Thursday, May 26, 7 p.m. – Program to be announced

Saturday, June 18, 9:30 a.m. – Nebraska Chapter meeting in Lincoln, site to be announced. Members and allies are welcome to attend to discuss Nebraska environmental issues and conduct Chapter business.

Accountability Forum for OPPD Candidates

Omaha Together One Community (OTOC) is a non-partisan organization that works to educate on policy issues that affect our community. OTOC does not endorse particular candidates, however, one of OTOC's many rolls is to hold elected officials accountable and create positive change through collective action.

Elected Board Members of OPPD make decisions that affect everyone in OTOC's member congregations and organizations. From the impact on all of our personal utilities bills through things like the recent rate restructuring and rate increase, to decisions on OPPD's generation mix and its impact on our natural environment, OPPD Board members have great responsibility.

There is one OPPD Board seat in Douglas County up for election this year, and Subdistrict 5 includes many of OTOC's member congregations. **On April 18th at 7pm at St. Leo's Catholic Church**, OTOC will ask the OPPD candidates in Subdistrict 5 about the issues that are most important to OTOC members. Questions will includes the topics of:

- Whether the candidate will work to reverse the recent rate restructuring that will increase the residential fixed charge to \$30 per month (from \$10.25)
- Climate change and OPPD's efforts to mitigate its impact
- OPPD's 20 year generation plan
- How the candidate would consider public input in their decisions if elected
- How the candidate would encourage OPPD to be more transparent
- The candidate's long term vision for OPPD

General questions will be provided to candidates in advance, thus OTOC expects complete and thoughtful answers.

Please join us for this **important meeting open to the public.**

Date: Monday, April 18th

Time: 7pm Location: St. Leo's Catholic Church on 102nd & Blondo St.



MVG-Sponsored Tour of First Star Fiber

Plus Helpful Tips on Recycling



Missouri Valley Group sponsored an educational outing on February 13. Forty-three people came out in the bitter cold weather to tour the First Star Fiber plant located at 103rd and I Streets. CEO Dale Gubbels led the two-hour tour of this fascinating facility that processes all of the recyclables collected by local municipalities, including Omaha, and private waste collectors plus much of the recyclables generated by local industry and businesses. Dale had to call in additional employees to help lead the large group.

Participants had a lot of questions for Dale, and his answers provided several excellent tips on maximizing the value of recyclables and minimizing the volume going to the landfill:

- Glass can be recycled, but not in your recycle bins because the glass likely will break in the collection truck, ruining the value of other recyclables, especially the paper and cardboard. Instead, take your glass to one of the four collection centers. One of these centers is next to the First Star plant. Glass is taken to Kansas City where it is turned into fiberglass.
- Do not crush your cans and bottles. Crushing these items will increase the likelihood that they will not sort out correctly at the plant and wind up in the rubbish pile going to the landfill! For tin cans, put the lid inside and just squeeze the top enough so the lid won't fall out. Dale says to leave the paper labels on your cans!
- The value of paper and cardboard is much less if it arrives at First Star's plant wet. If you have the capacity to store these recyclables when rain is forecast, hold these materials until next week and just put out your plastics and metals.
- All hard plastics can be recycled, but the items must be large enough to get through the sorting process. For small items like plastic utensils, medicine bottles, and plastic straws, place them inside larger plastic containers like empty detergent bottles. Don't forget to save the plastic bottle tops and screw them on the bottles for recycling.
- Soft, light-weight plastics such as shopping bags cannot be handled by First Star's sorting system and must not be put in recycle bins. However, plastic bags and wrappers can be recycled, and many area grocery stores have collection bins for them. In case you have doubts, Dale says they do get recycled!
- Foam plastic items generally can't be recycled and go to the landfill. You can help by avoiding purchase and use of disposable foam plastic products.
- Items for recycling don't need to be "squeaky clean", but flush them out with water before putting them in the recycle bin.

Yes, cardboard pizza boxes can be recycled if there is only a small amount of grease or cheese on the box.

Interested in joining Sierra Club?

Go to <http://www.sierraclub.org/nebraska> and click on Join on the lower right