



# NEWS RELEASE

85 Second Street, Second Floor San Francisco, CA 94105-3441  
TEL: [415] 977-5500 FAX: [415] 977-5799 [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)

For Immediate Release: Sept. 26, 2009

Contact: Jim Steffens, 608-924-1413

## **VERENA OWEN RECEIVES 2009 SIERRA CLUB AWARD**

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. – Verena Owen of Winthrop Harbor, Ill., has won the Sierra Club’s 2009 Special Achievement Award. She will be honored Sept. 26 in San Francisco at the Sierra Club Honors and Awards Banquet.

Owen is the volunteer chair of the Sierra Club’s National Coal Campaign, which has the mission of protecting local communities from pollution from coal-fired power plants. Her work, which began locally when a new natural gas ‘peaker plant’ was proposed near her home, has grown from challenging air permits in Illinois to being a crucial part of the Sierra Club’s successful national campaign. In Illinois, Owen was critical in stopping or stalling at least six new coal-fired power plants from being built, the shutdown of two old power plants, and the increased purchase of wind power from Springfield’s utility and the Illinois State Government. As a result, more than 15 millions tons of carbon dioxide will not be released into our atmosphere annually, along with emissions of soot, smog and mercury. Owen has become an expert on reviewing Environmental Protection Agency air permits and the EPA’s process of issuing these permits. Owen is the only civilian invited by the EPA to service on its Title V air permit task force.

In her role as chair for the National Coal Campaign, Owen is dedicated to empowering more Sierra Club volunteers to become active leaders in their local coal-fired power plant challenges. She has been instrumental in connecting activists across the nation with monthly activist calls, and has created a listserv for such activists. She manages a small grants program through the Coal Campaign that provides funding for conferences, outreach campaigns and video productions to support the campaign.

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