

# The ARKANSAS Sierran

Spring 2016



## LET'S BRING CLEAN ENERGY TO ARKANSAS CITIES



**Glen Hooks,**  
**Chapter Director**

All too often, the environmental community is accused of being against everything. How about we prove that stereotype wrong—right here in Arkansas?

Like many stereotypes, there is a kernel of truth in the accusation. The Sierra Club and others often—rightly—stand in opposition to the endless stream of bad ideas that would harm our air, water, forests and special places. Because of those strong stands, we have a 120+ year history of success and accomplishments that have literally saved lives. I'm proud of the thousands upon thousands of volunteers who began our history by saving the Sierra Nevadas and, in modern times, have stopped hundreds of dirty coal-fired power plants and the mighty Keystone XL tar sands pipeline. There's absolutely nothing wrong with standing up against ideas that are bad for our environment, our health, and our communities.

All the years of standing up "against" dirty energy has now given us the opportunity to say yes. Stopping dirty coal has created space in the energy markets for solar, for wind, for geother-

mal, for aggressive energy efficiency projects. Every month we are seeing record solar and wind energy installations across the country—in 2015, for the very first time, there was more solar energy installed in the United States than natural gas. Let that sink in for a minute. The Sierra Club and our allies have completely changed the direction of our country.

Now it's time to take things to the next level. Let's be *for* something that can benefit Arkansas.

Specifically, I'm talking about convincing several Arkansas cities to go 100% renewable energy. We have the tools. We have the market space. All we need now is the political will and a group of citizens committed to making it happen.

Your Sierra Club has already begun visiting with mayors, city council members, and important partners in areas across Arkansas. We're making progress on the local level, where we can feel a real difference. The wheels are in motion, and I hope that we'll be able to announce some things publicly very soon.

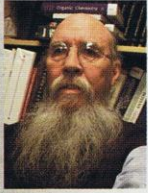
I invite you to be part of this new Sierra Club project. We're calling it "Ready for 100", because we are absolutely ready to start powering our homes, businesses, and vehicles with clean, renewable energy. It's

time. The science demands it, and we can make it happen here like it's starting to happen across our country. Check out what's on the horizon at [www.sierraclub.org/ready-for-100](http://www.sierraclub.org/ready-for-100).



If you think your community is ripe for this kind of fundamental transformation, let's make it happen. Are you ready to do this? Contact me at [glen.hooks@sierraclub.org](mailto:glen.hooks@sierraclub.org), and let's make history together.

# ALTERNATIVE ENERGY ALTERNATIVES



**Dr. Bob Allen**  
*Vice Chair, AR  
Sierra Club*

So you want to be green, or at least greener, when it comes to your electricity use. There are a wealth of options available. Here in Arkansas we are not blessed with sufficient wind resources to make homeowner wind very cost effective, so going green means solar photovoltaic systems (solar PV) are the best game going. But with this restriction there are still several different approaches to decarbonize your electricity.

In remote areas without grid connections, the only reasonable green electricity is with a solar PV system and batteries. The batteries are necessary not only to tide you over for when the sun doesn't shine but also to stabilize the power to your home or cabin.

Imagine on an otherwise sunny day a solar array is providing nicely for the home, but a cloud passes over. This would temporarily reduce the current, possibly to the point of damaging electronics, hence batteries are essential. Just how many batteries needed is a function of how long will the sun not keep up with demand. On occasion in this area we can

go for a week or two without much sun due to rain and clouds. The point is that this is the most expensive option due to the costs associated with the batteries.

Much more practical are so called "grid tied" solar arrays which essentially use the electrical grid as a battery. If you buy electricity from Entergy, SWEPCO, or AVEC for example, and you add solar panels to your home, the power company is your battery.

When the sun shines your meter will slow down or actually run backwards sending power to the grid. At night or on rainy or cloudy days power is drawn back from the grid. Because Arkansas is a "net metering" state, when producing you are paid the same price as when you buy. Depending on how many panels you have you can replace some or all of your electrical needs.

Currently costs are such that the payback period is about half the rated lifetime of the panels. You will recoup your initial investment in about a dozen years, and the panels will continue to produce for at least that many years to come.

All homes don't have access to the southern sky on their property due to shading from trees or the terrain. That said you can still participate via community solar farms. The first community

solar farm has begun near Little Rock. A developer is constructing a solar farm tied to Entergy's grid. Any Entergy customer can basically buy a piece of the solar production. The buyer has their own meter which is aggregated with their home meter, just as if the solar panels were on their roof. Entergy deducts any power costs produced by the solar panels from the power costs at the home. The cost for this approach is somewhat higher as because of the costs for site development and land acquisition.

Yet one more option exists to green up your electricity. The green power costs for the aforementioned approaches all require some significant startup costs. Another alternative is to buy "green tickets" or participate in the purchase of Renewable Energy Credits. There are companies that will for a nominal charge on top of your actual electric bill, buy green energy. The additional charge is used to buy power from green sources and send that electricity to the grid, which offsets electricity from fossil fueled sources. Basically you are subsidizing clean energy. You don't own any equipment but your dollars go to green the environment.

## PAPERLESS OPTION FOR NEWSLETTER

In an effort to save trees and money, your Arkansas Sierra Club newsletter is available in an electronic format. If you'd like to receive your newsletter electronically rather than via U.S. Mail, please email your address to [glen.hooks@sierraclub.org](mailto:glen.hooks@sierraclub.org), with "ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER" in the subject line.

NOTE: You will still receive a paper newsletter at the end of each year, so that you may receive and return your Sierra Club officer ballots.

The Arkansas Sierra Club newsletter is sent out on a quarterly basis. More frequent information and updates are available on our website at [www.sierraclub.org/arkansas](http://www.sierraclub.org/arkansas). If you haven't received any Sierra Club messages in the last few months, we may not have your email address. To be added to our email list, please send your email address to [glen.hooks@sierraclub.org](mailto:glen.hooks@sierraclub.org).

# THE BEST MEDICINE FOR FLINT - AND AMERICA

**Michael Brune**  
*Sierra Club Executive Director*

You have to look hard for good news about the drinking water crisis in Flint, Michigan -- but it's there. There was last month's #JusticeForFlint benefit show, which set out to raise \$100,000 and netted close to \$150,000 with a surprise appearance by Stevie Wonder.

The event, which featured Flint residents as well as celebrities, also reminded us why we need heroes like Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, the pediatrician who called attention to the rising levels of lead in Flint's children and refused to be intimidated by the state government. "This is the best medicine for us right here, right now," said Dr. Hanna-Attisha during the benefit. "You are giving us music, you are giving us laughter, you are giving us hope, you are giving us love."

Starting this month, the City of Flint is also supposed to begin replacing water service lines for residents at highest risk of lead poisoning. And with both political parties recently holding presidential debates in Michigan, we can hope that what happened in Flint will get some additional national attention.

Of course, the details of what happened are still unfolding. Not only are we learning more about who knew what and when but we're also getting a disturbing insight into how public servants in Governor Rick Snyder's administration thought about the public -- or at least some of the public -- they were supposed to be serving.

Last month, we saw a January 2015 email from Ari Adler, who's currently the governor's communications director. Adler wrote: "This is a public relations crisis—because of a real or perceived

*problem is irrelevant*—waiting to explode nationally." [emphasis added]

That's right, whether or not people were actually being poisoned was "irrelevant." What really mattered was how it might affect the image of the Snyder regime. We're talking about a governor who not so long ago was being encouraged by his advisors to pursue the Republican presidential nomination. Based on what we've seen so far, he doesn't deserve to finish his term.

Weighty books will be written about the myriad ways government failed us in Flint, but the basic facts are already clear. The regulations for testing the drinking water in Flint were too lax and easily subverted. Authoritarian enforcement of "fiscal responsibility" trumped basic humanity. Politicians denied accountability for as long as possible. And in a colossal case of "blame the victim," an entire city was belittled, bullied, and treated like a nuisance while its children were being poisoned.

And what was Flint's biggest crime in the eyes of the state? Poverty. Which is ironic considering that its citizens were being forced to pay the highest rates for water in the nation.

It's a mistake, though, to imagine that all of this is unique to Flint. Dark money is corroding our democracy as surely as the Flint River's brackish water corroded the water pipes of Flint. A significant proportion of Americans from across the political spectrum no longer believe that their leaders can be trusted to do what's right for the people who elected them. And every time politicians put a polluter's profits first—by loosening protections, by approving more toxic projects, or simply by obstructing others from doing their jobs—they lose more of our trust.

Anyone following the news knows that these are strange and confusing days in America. But the higher road is still there. We can take back our democracy. We can build a more just and resilient economy based on clean, renewable energy. And we can invest not only in our infrastructure but in our people—people like the proud citizens of Flint whose lives were so brutally devalued.

The presidential candidates will surely have something to say about what happened there and how to make sure it doesn't happen again. In the end, though, Flint is only part of a



much bigger problem—one that no U.S. president is likely to solve on his or her own. Instead, it will be ordinary, extraordinary people like Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha. People who stand up to bullies—be they billionaires or bureaucrats. People of integrity who, above all, care about others.

The best news is those people aren't found only in Flint. In my job, I'm lucky enough to meet them all the time. And as much as I love wind and solar, I have to say that people like that are our single most powerful source of renewable energy.

# TPP UPDATE: RECENT EVENTS PROVIDE SOME CLARITY ON HOW TRADE AGREEMENTS WILL UNDERMINE US ENVIRONMENTALLY RELEVANT LAWS AND REGULATIONS

*Robin Rumph*

In May World Trade Organization (WTO) tribunal decided that the country of origin meat labeling by the United States violated trade rules. In December the WTO handed down its penalty that Mexico and Canada would be owed 1 billion dollars annually until the US repealed the law. Within weeks the country of origin rule was repealed by the US Congress in the Omnibus appropriations bill. This action was taken despite the fact that the country of origin meat

labeling law was favored by 90% of the public, according to a 2013 poll by the Consumer Federation of America.

In a staged event, President Obama delivered a speech before a corporate audience at Nike headquarters in May, 2015 to support the enactment of the TPP and the president's bid for Fast Track authority. The president stated that the TPP would not affect domestic law and regulation. The repeal of this popular labeling bill to conform to a trade agreement is more evidence that he was wrong.

The TPP contains a dispute resolution process that goes beyond government to government dispute resolution found in WTO trade tribunals. The TPP enables corporations, termed investor-states, to go directly to unaccountable tribunals to challenge domestic policies they believe violate the extremely broad rights that such trade deals give to foreign investors. Building on the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the TPP enables many thousands more new corporations to challenge our policies and undermine our national sovereignty.

In late November the WTO ruled against a US policy of allowing for voluntary dolphin safe fishing net labels on cans of tuna. Llana Solomon, director on the Sierra Club's Responsible Trade Program stated in a press release, "Americans want to know that the food

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Spring into action by helping out at clean-up and responsible discard events throughout the state! For more events, check out Keep Arkansas Beautiful's website - [keeparkansasbeautiful.com](http://keeparkansasbeautiful.com).

### Aubrey Spring Cleanup

Date: 04/02/2016

Times: 8:00 am - 2:00 pm

For more information, please contact Mayor Chad Glass at [chadcglass@gmail.com](mailto:chadcglass@gmail.com) or 870-394-6999.

### Cherokee Village – Roadside Litter Pickup

Date: 04/09/2016

Times: 9:00 am - 1:00 pm

For more information, please contact Event Coordinator Joe Waggoner at [joendoris@gmail.com](mailto:joendoris@gmail.com) or 870-257-5620.

### Cabin Creek Cache In Trash Out (CITO) Event

Date: 04/17/2016

Times: 12:30 pm - 3:30 pm

For more information, please contact Event Coordinator Debra Burris at [dburris@uca.edu](mailto:dburris@uca.edu) or 479-747-1728.

### UCA – Donate! Don't Dump!

Date(s): 04/21/2016 - 05/03/2016

Times: All Day

For more information, please contact Event Coordinator Thomas Bruick at [tbruick@uca.edu](mailto:tbruick@uca.edu) or Liz Philpott at [lizabeth.philpott@arkansas.gov](mailto:lizabeth.philpott@arkansas.gov).

### Monticello/Drew County Cleanup

Date: 05/14/2016

Times: 8:00 am - 12:00 pm

For more information, please contact Event Coordinators Brian Rodgers (Monticello) & Sandra Campbell (Drew Co.) at [atinspector@monticelloedc.org](mailto:atinspector@monticelloedc.org) or 870-367-4410.

### Recycle Saline – Dumpster + HHW Drop Off

Date: 05/21/2016

Times: 7:00 am - 11:00 am

For more information, please contact Event Coordinator Tiffany Dunn at [tiffany@salinecountyrswmd.com](mailto:tiffany@salinecountyrswmd.com) or 501-776-2533.

they purchase and serve to their families does not come at the expense of wildlife. Today's WTO decision limits environmentally friendly choices for Americans, puts dolphins at risk, and opens the door to further trade deal limits on consumer protections and environmental safeguards.

This should serve as a warning against expansive trade deals like the Trans-Pacific Partnership that would replicate rules that undermine safeguards for wildlife, clean air, and clean water." Penalties have not yet been announced by the WTO. There once was a complete US ban on tuna coming from dolphin-unsafe nets. Now, after numerous rounds of negotiations between the US and the WTO, even voluntary labeling regarding dolphin-unsafe nets is seen as a violation of free trade. What will this mean for other food labels like organic or non-GMO?

In January, 2016 the Canadian pipeline company TransCanada announced that it was suing the US for fifteen billion dollars for violation of NAFTA policies in response to President Obama's decision not to approve the northern portion of the Keystone XL pipeline in November, 2015. As prescribed by NAFTA rules this dispute will be resolved by a trade tribunal composed of three corporate lawyers not bound by US law. Should TransCanada win the dispute the tribunal will decide the penalty to be imposed unless the US and TransCanada can reach a settlement before the tribunal's decision.

In either case it becomes clear that trade agreements like the TPP and NAFTA empower corporations to challenge the sovereignty of the US government. Not only will the TTP embolden fossil fuel and other corporations to challenge US policy and law it will allow these corporations to make huge profits to be paid by US taxpayers due to provisions in the TPP that allow these corporations to sue for loss of expected prof-

its. Needless to say the expected loss of profits of the fossil fuel industry alone could be huge if the US or other treaty signing nations wanted to keep a large percentage of their existing fossil fuels in the ground as scientists have indicated is necessary to avoid catastrophic climate change.

Instances of corporations suing governments are rapidly growing under Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) processes contained in trade agreements like NAFTA and the TPP according to Dutch journalist Frank Mulder. Mulder states that only 15 cases were filed in 2000 rising to 70 in 2014. In total the number of cases stood at 629 in 2014. Mulder also states that Mexico, the US and Canada are the most sued nations.

While only foreign investor-states can sue under ISDS rules in the TPP, many corporations including US corporations have a foreign subsidiary or holding company in other countries. This raises the possibility that these corporations could sue their home country through their subsidiary or holding company. Although the Netherlands is not a party to the TPP, it will be a party to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) currently being negotiated by the US and European countries and will likely mimic the provisions in the TPP in regard to investor-state rights. Mulder states that in recent years the Netherlands has overtaken the United States as the country of record for claimants due to its corporate-friendly laws. Two-thirds of these claims are made by so-called mailbox companies which have little more than a mailbox presence in the Netherlands.

In a 2013 report entitled *Mining for Profits in International Trade Tribunals: Lessons for the Trans-Pacific Partnership*, the Institute for Policy Studies explains how domestic laws are undermined by the ISDS:

Whereas expropriation in the

past applied to physical takings of property, current rules also protect investors from "indirect" expropriation, interpreted to mean regulations and other government actions that significantly reduce the value of a foreign investment. Hence, corporations can sue over environmental, health, and other



public interest laws developed through a democratic process.

While the tribunals cannot force a government to repeal such laws, the threat of massive damages awards can put a "chilling effect" on responsible policy-making.

As we have seen above, the TPP may also lead US legislators to repeal responsible legislation that protects the environment and consumers rather than face serious financial sanctions.

**PLEASE  
RECYCLE  
THIS NEWSLETTER!**

# CENTRAL AR GROUP REPORT - HELP WANTED, HELP NEEDED



**George Wise, Chair  
Sierra Club, Central  
Arkansas Group**

The Central Arkansas Group of the Sierra Club needs your help. We have a vibrant and well received speakers program at our monthly meetings but we need to hear from you regarding programs and speakers which would be of interest to you.

In 2016 the January program was a standing room only crowd regarding the Interstate 30 Arkansas River Crossing project. In February we had Zac McCannon from Conway talk about seed swaps and how seed swaps can put

In June we will have a panel discussion on the recent bogus and highly suspect findings by the federal agencies that the hog farm has no significant impact on Big Creek and the Buffalo River. A recent peer-reviewed and published study contradicts the findings of the federal agencies and demonstrates that the hog farm is contaminating groundwater in numerous streams and the Buffalo River. We're still programming speakers for the remainder of the year and would love to hear from you on topics of interest. Also, we encourage any member who has an area of interest in the environment and who would like to give a presentation at our monthly meetings to contact us.

We also need help with our outings program. Carolyn Shearman has been our outings chair for a number of years and needs help keeping that program going and needs help with your ideas for outings. Our most recent outing was a pleasant 3 mile hike on the Lake Maumelle spill way portion of the Ouachita trail. By the time you read this, Joe Wankum will have presented an orienteering program at Pinnacle Mountain State Park. Let us know about a hike you have taken recently or one you would like to take. We are blessed in central Arkansas with abundant opportunities to get out and enjoy the outdoors. Let's enjoy them together.

Here is my big ask for help. We also need your help keeping Glen Hooks as our Executive Director. We currently have a fundraising campaign underway to raise the money needed to pay an executive director. Glen has done a remarkable job in the two years he has served as our Executive Director. Our chapter funds are running low. State chapters of the Sierra Club receive limited financial support from the Sierra

Club to pay staff. This means we must raise the money to keep Glen here doing the great work he does. The White Bluff coal-fired power plant would not be scheduled for retirement without Glen's work. Efforts to reduce regional haze would not have gotten done without Glen's help. The Clean Power Plan would not be getting the support we need to give it without Glen's efforts. We have a chance to make a difference



by implementing a program to encourage cities in Arkansas to become 100% powered by renewable energy sources. Glen will write about this in his column. We're excited about this project but we will not be able to do it unless we keep Glen here. Please donate to the Arkansas chapter of the Sierra Club. It's easy to donate online at [www.sierraclub.org/arkansas](http://www.sierraclub.org/arkansas). Our mailing address is included in this newsletter. I'll personally come pick up your check and visit with you about the work of the Arkansas Chapter of the Sierra Club. Donate so that we can keep Glen as our executive director.

I hope to see you at our monthly meetings in the party room of the Oyster Bar. We meet the third Tuesday of every month except for August and December. We start gathering for social time at six and start our program at seven. Please join us.



power back in the hands of people. In March Ross Noland spoke about the work of the Buffalo River Foundation. In April Chris Hiryak from Little Rock Urban Farms will talk about small-scale farming in the urban setting.

In May Dana Steward author of *A Rough Sort of Beauty* will talk about the natural heritage of Arkansas.

## ARKANSAS SIERRA CLUB WANT ADS

Are you looking for ways to get more involved? If so, consider serving on one of the important committees below. We'd welcome your participation and perspective—contact Chapter Director Glen Hooks at [glen.hooks@sierraclub.org](mailto:glen.hooks@sierraclub.org) or (501) 301-8280.

### WANTED: FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Are you an experience fundraiser, or simply a passionate Sierra Club member who has no qualms about asking for donations? If so, we need your help! Fundraising Committee members will help in all areas of Arkansas Sierra Club fundraising: major gifts, small donor projects, and fundraising events. Creative and dedicated people are a plus!

### WANTED: MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Our strength lies in our numbers—increasing our membership numbers is key to our success! The Membership Committee will work to add a significant number of new members to our Arkansas Sierra Club rolls in the next year through tabling events, public outreach, and other creative methods. Sign up today!

### WANTED: CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Chapter Conservation Committee identifies and researches Arkansas environmental issues of concern, and makes recommendations to the Chapter Executive Committee about our environmental priorities. The ideal Conservation Committee member is knowledgeable about Arkansas environmental issues, knows her way around state administrative and legislative bodies, and has a passion for finding solutions that will improve life here in The Natural State.

## YOUR "GREEN" HELPS KEEP ARKANSAS "GREEN"

The Arkansas Sierra Club depends mightily on the generosity and financial support of our members. For almost forty years, we've been at the forefront of our state's environmental battles—fighting tirelessly for clean air, clean water, healthy forests, and renewable energy in The Natural State—and we are winning. Because of your support, we are now seeing unprecedented opportunity and progress here in Arkansas. We are on the cusp of great things here!

### Will you support our work as we work for more environmental victories next year?

Your Arkansas Sierra Club plans to aggressively continue working to retire more dirty power plants while making way for wind and solar projects across the state. I'm also excited about Sierra Club's work to help several Arkansas cities set goals to become 100% powered by renewable energy. This work is rewarding and meaningful, but it takes your help to fund our efforts.

Invest in the financial strength of your Arkansas Sierra Club by making a gift at [www.sierraclub.org/arkansas](http://www.sierraclub.org/arkansas). You can make a one-time gift or spread a larger gift out by making an automatically recurring monthly pledge. Each dollar you give stays right here in Arkansas to fund our work in The Natural State.

THANK YOU



**SIERRA  
CLUB**  
FOUNDED 1892

Sierra Club of Arkansas  
1308 W. 2nd Street  
Little Rock AR 72201

• Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Little Rock, AR  
Permit No. 1377



Printed on  
recycled paper.

Check out our redesigned/updated  
website at [www.sierraclub.org/arkansas!](http://www.sierraclub.org/arkansas!)

## 2016 ARKANSAS SIERRA CLUB EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Thanks to every member who voted at the end of 2015—your votes were counted, and appreciated. Here are your 2016 Arkansas Sierra Club ExComm members!

### YOUR 2016 ARKANSAS SIERRA CLUB EXCOMM MEMBERS ARE:

**George Wise** (*Chair, Little Rock*)

**April Lane** (*Vice-chair, Little Rock*)

**Uta Meyer** (*Secretary, Little Rock*)

**Dr. Bob Allen** (*Dover*)

**Rel Corbin** (*Little Rock*)

**Rob Leflar** (*Fayetteville*)

**Tom McKinney** (*West Fork*)

**Aubrey Shepherd** (*Fayetteville*)