

The ARKANSAS Sierran

Fall 2017



SIERRA
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FOUNDED 1892

WHAT PART OF “ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY” DON’T YOU UNDERSTAND?



Glen Hooks,
Director
Arkansas Sierra
Club

Night is Day. Up is Down. War is Peace. And the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) is using our tax dollars to fight against cleaner air for our state.

For more than a decade, the Arkansas Sierra Club has been pushing our state to follow the law and clean up power plant emissions that foul our parks and wilderness areas. The Regional Haze Rule, passed in 1999, requires states to reduce visible air pollution, otherwise known as haze, and improve visibility in places like the Upper Buffalo and Caney Creek wilderness areas.

In 2011, several years after the deadline, ADEQ submitted to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) a haze reduction plan that was partially approved and partially disapproved, and sent back to ADEQ for more work. Even with the opportunity to continue drafting its plan, ADEQ made an affirmative decision to not do so—that decision, by law, required the EPA to

write a federal plan for Arkansas. When EPA failed to meet its deadline for writing its plan for Arkansas, the Sierra Club successfully sued in federal court to force EPA to do its duty.

The result of this suit? EPA announced a draft plan, held a public hearing, received hundreds of comments from Arkansas citizens on the plan, and issued a final plan in 2016. The plan promised significant reductions in air pollution from the two largest sources of air pollution in Arkansas, Entergy’s White Bluff and Independence power plants. These plants are among the largest in the entire country that lack modern technology to reduce smog and other harmful pollutants. Under the plan, these old, dirty coal-burning power plants would install modern pollution controls no later than 2021. By dramatically reducing air pollution that harms people’s health, the plan would prevent more than 137 premature deaths, 4,000 asthma attacks, and 19,000 lost work and school days every year, saving more than \$1.36 billion annually in public health costs and lost productivity.

Sounds like a good plan, right? Cleaner air, better public health, more visibility in our Arkansas parks, and adding pollution

controls to aging power plants that can’t compete in today’s energy market. Who wouldn’t want that?

Answer: ADEQ, the arm of our state government that, according to its website, is “charged with preventing, controlling, and abating pollution that could harm Arkansas’s valuable natural resources.”

ADEQ has joined forces with Entergy in an effort to block the haze reduction plan in federal court. Let that sink in for a moment. We have the Natural State’s environmental protection team spending Arkansas tax dollars to team up with a polluting utility to fight against an effort to clean up the Natural State. Not only are they seeking to overturn the haze reduction plan in court—ADEQ is seeking to replace the plan with a much weaker state plan of its own. The ADEQ plan essentially requires the White Bluff and Independence plants to do nothing to reduce haze pollution in Arkansas.

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SUSTAINABILITY PLANS & PROGRESS IN FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS



Rachael Schaffner,
Sustainability
Project Coordinator
for the City of
Fayetteville

The City of Fayetteville often boasts about our creative local economy, our rich history of education, and the many opportunities for outdoor recreation and healthy living that characterize our City. While we have much to celebrate in Fayetteville, we acknowledge that we have a long way to go to build a truly sustainable and resilient community. Several recent efforts by the City government and its local partners highlight the community's ongoing commitment to improvement, smart growth, and long-term sustainability.

After the announcement that the U.S. would withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, Fayetteville's Mayor Lioneld Jordan became one of 2,500 mayors, governors, businesses, universities, and organizations to join the "We are Still In" pledge. This group, representing over 127 million Americans and \$6.2 Trillion of the U.S. economy, has pledged to track, report on, and achieve the goals set by the Paris Agreement. Mayor Jordan has also signed the 'Mayors for 100% Clean Energy' Pledge, an initiative created by the Sierra Club to help communities transition to 100% renewable energy. Thanks to passionate organizations like these and Mayor Jordan's strong leadership, the City has been able to make strides towards reducing GHGs, improving energy efficiency of facilities, and increasing our clean

energy supply.

In order to ensure that Fayetteville continues in a strong, sustainable trajectory, Fayetteville City Council passed a resolution in February 2017, requesting staff to develop an Energy Action Plan (EAP). This plan, which will be presented to the Fayetteville City Council for adoption in December, will be the first comprehensive energy and climate plan for the City. The EAP includes goals, strategies, and actions targeting efficiency improvements and GHG reductions across four sectors: Buildings, Energy Supply, Transportation, and Waste. Each of the sector-level goals will contribute to the overarching GHG reduction targets:

- 40% reduction from a 2010 baseline by the year 2030
- 80% reduction from a 2010 baseline by the year 2050

The EAP will act as a guide to reduce waste, reduce energy use, and transition to cleaner forms of energy. The plan was developed by the City's Sustainability Department, with the assistance of a large group of expert stakeholders, interdepartmental collaboration, and input from the community. The plan employs a triple bottom line commitment to developing economic, environmental, and social value. It also utilizes an equity lens throughout to make sure that proposed strategies and actions do not disproportionately influence at-risk or marginalized populations. The draft plan is available for review on the City Website: www.fayetteville-ar.gov/EnergyActionPlan

In addition to the Energy Action Plan, the City has a host of ongoing

efforts in the realm of environmental, economic, and social sustainability. The City rolled out a new Sustainability Report Card this year to help residents and other interested parties chart Fayetteville's progress in a wide variety of sectors. This report card collects key metrics, accomplishments, and progress towards goals in a host of categories including climate, economy, education, public health, and natural systems. A few key data points from the 2016 report card include:

- 18% diversion of waste from landfills with a target goal of 40% by the year 2027
- 8% reduction in per capita GHG emissions since 2010, with a goal of 40% reduction by 2030
- 6.3% of electricity currently coming from renewable sources, with a goal of 50% by 2030

More information about Fayetteville's sustainability goals and progress can be explored in depth on the webpage: <http://www.fayetteville-ar.gov/sustainability>

In addition to these internal projects, the City of Fayetteville works closely with local organizations, companies, and schools to further sustainability goals. The City is currently working closely with the University of Arkansas on a city-wide Resiliency Assessment. This effort is a nod to the growing "Town & Gown" partnership whereby both the City and University experience compounded benefits from collaboration. The assessment will use a resilience lens to examine potential threats and strengths inherent in the following sectors: Ecosystem Management,

Physical Infrastructure, Human Health, Social Systems, and Economic Stability. The City and University look forward to developing strategies and plans that can be used for locally and regionally to build a more resilient future.

While Fayetteville has long had a commitment to fiscal and environmen-

tal responsibility, the need to embed sustainable practices in our community is ever increasing due to a rapidly changing global climate and a recent change in Federal priorities. Thankfully, the residents, businesses, and organizations that call Fayetteville home are passionate problem solvers, creating innovative

and effective solutions to even our most pressing problems. The City is proud to partner in the efforts of businesses, institutions, and organizations like the Sierra Club to make Fayetteville a safer, happier, healthier place to live. ■

FORESTRY BILLS THREATEN ARKANSAS ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM



Dr. Bob Allen,
Arkansas Sierra
Club ExComm
Member

Last week The Wilderness Society sponsored a citizen lobbying event in Washington, DC to address a couple of forestry bills. After a training day we spent the next two days pounding the halls of the Senate and House office buildings to contact various members and their staff. At issue were two bills, one of which we supported and one we opposed.

There is an obvious trend in republican legislation to roll back environmental regulations. Invariably this favors corporate exploitation of natural resources on federal land – our land.

Mining, drilling, logging, rapacious use of surface and ground water are all up for grabs in a slew of bills offered up recently.

Congressman Bruce Westerman (AR-04), who holds a graduate forestry degree from Yale University, has offered versions of his “Resilient Federal Forests Act” for a couple of sessions. The bill, HR 2936, was pitched as necessary to help with the increasingly prevalent wildfire disasters.

Currently, before a logging contract is let in a national forest several condi-

tions must be met. Most important is a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review. This is to ensure that the best management practices are followed and that the logging won’t negatively impact the environment. Also other relevant agencies such as the Corps of Engineers, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the public are consulted.

There are exceptions in extant law to these requirements, called categorical exclusions. For example, salvage logging, if conducted over a small area can be excluded from NEPA review, the idea being that for a small plot of forest the impact of logging is minimal. Salvage logging is a special situation where damage has occurred to a small portion of the forest due to storms, insect infestations, etc.

The Westerman bill takes advantage of this special condition but widely expands the area that can receive a categorical exclusion. Up to 30,000 acres, nearly 50 square miles can be subject to clear cutting for salvage logging or to promote “early successional growth.” I can only guess that you can’t have a forest fire without a forest!

The Forest Service, with the wise counsel of the logging industry, will be allowed to make the determination of a categorical exclusion. No NEPA review,

no consultation with relevant agencies, and especially no input from the public.

In Arkansas agriculture, including forestry, is the number one industry in the state. Most forestry however occurs on private land. It would seem to be anathema to business to have logging on public lands compete with private forestry. Recreation is the second most important economic activity in the state. Who would hike, bike, camp, fish, hunt, or just enjoy a fifty square mile clear cut?

The Forest Service does need help with fighting wildfires. In 1990, wildfires consumed only 12% of the budget, that number is now up to 55%. The Forest Service is constantly “robbing Peter to pay Paul” mainly to fund wildfires in the western US.

The Wildfire Disaster Funding act (HB 2862) would set a cap on the portion of the Forest Service budget dedicated to fighting wildfires. The increasingly frequent wildfires would be declared disasters just like tornadoes and hurricanes and funded through FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

We oppose HR 2936 and its inclusion in any “must pass” legislation such a farm bill or appropriations bill. We support the Wildfire Disaster Funding act, HB 2862 to help maintain our national forests for real multiple use, more than just timber plantations. ■

2ND ANNUAL ARKANSAS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY SUMMIT A HUGE SUCCESS

Our 2nd annual “Arkansas Environmental Policy Summit” on October 27th at the Clinton Presidential Library was fantastic! Almost 200 people joined us for a full day of presentations and breakout sessions on energy, water, CAFOs, and more. The crowd was full of everyone from high school students, utility executives, environmental activists, state regulators, and experts from Arkansas and multiple states.



Sierra Club co-sponsored the event along with our partners at Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Arkansas Audubon, Arkansas Environmental Defense Alliance, and the Clinton School of Public Service.

The biggest news of the event

came when a panelist from Entergy announced that the utility plans to develop a 100 megawatt solar energy facility in Lake Village! That will be the biggest solar facility in the state.

Also of note: the Arkansas Environmental Defense Alliance announced a new, free online tool to help environmental activists stay abreast of pending industry permits that threaten air and water quality. By signing up at ADEQWatchdog.org, Arkansans can be automatically notified when the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality is considering a permit. This tool can be absolutely critical for groups or individuals who wish to involve themselves in battling a permit, making comments, or raising objections. As agencies do the absolute bare minimum when it comes to notifying the public, a tool like this can really help ensure that we are on top of dangers to our environment here in Arkansas.

Other highlights included an inspiring keynote address from Sierra Club’s Dr. Al Armendariz, on how our state, region, and nation are all moving away from dirty fossil fuels and toward an embrace of clean, renewable energy. Dr. Armendariz is a former Regional Ad-

ministrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and an engineer by training, and currently helps lead the Sierra Club’s “Beyond Coal Campaign”.



Our generous sponsors for the event included Centennial Bank, The Ashley Company, and Vincent Insalaco. The planning committee for the Summit included Anna Weeks of the Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Mary Anne Salmon and Richard Mays of the Arkansas Environmental Defense Alliance, Emily Kearns and Gary Moody of Arkansas Audubon, and Glen Hooks of the Arkansas Sierra Club. Many thanks to each of you for your great work in putting this event together! ▀

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, with “ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER” in the subject line.

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. 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.

SIERRA CLUB'S BEYOND COAL CAMPAIGN CELEBRATES MILESTONE

Our “Beyond Coal” campaign has been one of the most successful environmental campaigns in history, stopping more than 200 dirty coal-burning power plants from opening and saving untold millions of tonnes of hazardous air pollutants from entering our atmosphere.

In addition to stopping new plants from opening, the Beyond Coal campaign has been diligently working to retire the nation’s existing coal fleet. In October, we celebrated a significant milestone with the announced retirements of two dirty plants in Texas—which means that more than half of the nation’s coal plants are either retired or scheduled for retirement. That’s 266 plants and counting.

Nationwide, since 2010, coal retirements secured by the Sierra Club’s Beyond Coal Campaign and over a hundred allied organizations have prevented 7,029 premature deaths, 10,906 heart attacks and 116,043 asthma attacks every year.

This is also an affirmation to the rest of the world that the US will continue to do its part to cut carbon pollution and prevent the worst impacts of climate change. For the past decade, the US has led the world in reducing carbon pollution, primarily by replacing coal plants with clean energy. With today’s announcement we are letting the world know that they should ignore the hot air out of Washington and look at what is actually happening in cities and states across this great country. As storms and fires worsened by climate change relentlessly besiege our country, continuing this progress is more important than ever.

Congratulations to everyone who has played a part in making this reality happen! ■

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Even in a time when a new outrage is around every corner, this is absolutely maddening. The haze reduction plan is literally a decade overdue, because of delay after delay, resulting in a decade of additional and unnecessary pollution for Arkansans. Now, after the plan is complete, ADEQ wants to write a new, weaker plan that will result in still more delay—and in weaker haze reductions.

Arkansans deserve much, much better than an Environmental Quality department that is unconcerned with reducing pollution. It is beyond outrageous that Arkansans who want clean air and wilderness areas are being actively opposed by the one department specifically charged with protecting our

environment. ADEQ is not an arm of our state’s utilities and industrial polluters. The Department of Environmental Quality’s entire “reason for being” is stated right there in its name.

The Arkansas Sierra Club is committed to protecting our state’s air, water, forests, and special places. Our “reason for being” is to serve as a check on those who would harm our health and resources. We are used to fighting against those in industry who are irresponsibly endangering our great state—but having to fight our own Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality is frankly sickening.

There is still time to correct this erroneous course of action and serve Arkansans properly. We call on those to whom our ADEQ answers—namely, Governor Asa Hutchinson and the Pol-

lution Control & Ecology Commission—to strongly remind ADEQ of its core mission and to order ADEQ to drop its opposition to reducing smog in our parks.

Also: ADEQ will be holding a public hearing on January 2nd at 2:00 p.m. (at 5301 Northshore Drive in North Little Rock) to take comments on its weak haze plan. We need you to weigh in! You can email in your comments to treecep@adeq.state.ar.us with a reference to “REGIONAL HAZE: SIP REVISION” in the subject line. You can also join us at the hearing and deliver your comment in person if you are able.

In a time of deep divisions, Arkansas’s air quality is an issue that should unite us all. Let your voice be heard! ■

SIERRA CLUB & CITY OF FAYETTEVILLE CELEBRATE “DRIVE ELECTRIC” WEEK

As part of a national “Drive Electric Week”, your Sierra Club held an electric cars event on Dickson Street in Fayetteville earlier this fall. The event featured several different models of electric vehicles for inspection by the public, and aimed to distribute information about clean vehicles and the need for more infrastructure (charging stations) to support this emerging industry.

Fayetteville Mayor Lioneld Jordan was on hand for the event, along with representatives from Ozarks Electric Cooperative, Chevrolet of Fayetteville, and local electric vehicle owners. At a press conference on Dickson Street, Mayor Jordan said, “Fayetteville is a state leader in energy efficiency and clean energy. Our community has demonstrated our commitment to clean energy in a variety of ways, including installing electric vehicle charging stations around the City and incorporating electric vehicles into company fleets. More electric vehicles

and alternative fuel vehicles mean cleaner air for Fayetteville and better public health outcomes for our citizens. I am proud of the many Fayetteville citizens and businesses that do their part to protect our Natural State.”

Each year, American passenger cars and trucks burn 121 billion gallons of gasoline and spew upwards of 3 trillion pounds of carbon pollution into the air. These emissions are from both the vehicle tailpipes and the “upstream” emissions from extracting, refining, and transporting the oil to our vehicles. Our dangerous dependence on oil has resulted in catastrophes like the BP spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and every day, we send more than \$500 million abroad to pay for oil, increasing our national debt and dependence on many nations hostile to our policies.

Automobiles, above all else, represent America’s addiction to dirty oil. Plug-in electric vehicles (EVs), which re-

quire no gasoline and emit no pollution from their tailpipes, present a critical opportunity to slash pollution, reduce our dependence on oil, create American jobs, and improve national security.



To drive this change, the Sierra Club has launched a national campaign to promote electric vehicles—just as new EV models are hitting the roads. Learn more about our “Go Electric” campaign by going to <https://content.sierraclub.org/evguide/go-electric>. ■

CHAPTER AND GROUP EXCOMM ELECTIONS SWITCH TO ELECTRONIC VOTING

In an effort to save postage and paper, while also increasing participation, we will be implementing an on-line voting system this year to elect officers for the Arkansas Chapter plus the Central Arkansas and Ozark Headwaters groups.

Please be on the lookout in your email inbox for a link to the ballots for these elections, along with instructions on how to cast your ballot.

NOTE: some members do not have email or choose not to share their email. If you fall into one of those categories but would like to participate in the election, please email glen.hooks@sierraclub.org or call him at 501-301-8280 to request a ballot either by email or U.S. Mail.

Thanks!

NEW SIERRA STUDENT COALITION CHAPTER AT LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL



Sophie Ryall
Senior, Little Rock
Central High School
Arkansas Sierra
Club Intern,
Fall 2017

As a school with a club for just about everything, I was honestly shocked that Central High School did not have a Sierra Club chapter. After attending the March for Science and hearing Glen Hooks speak about the amazing work the Sierra Club has done with shutting down coal plants in Arkansas, I was eager to learn more on what students could do to help with these efforts. Starting a Sierra Club at Central was the first step to getting more students involved with environmental justice efforts in our community.

The first Sierra Club meeting was this past October and was met with an unbelievable turnout of students from all grades. My fellow club leaders and I had no idea that there were so many students who were just as passionate about environmental justice as we were.

While sharing with attendees what the Sierra Club has done in Arkansas specifically, we also facilitated an intense discussion about what we as students could do at our own school to reduce our waste and carbon footprint. Many ideas floated around, such as installing solar panels, creating a compost, and educating students on the harmfulness of e-waste.

Our first major event to attend as a club was the Arkansas Environmental Policy Summit held at the Clinton Library. There we were able to expand our knowledge of pressing issues in our state, such as CAFOs, solar energy, and the depletion of aquifers.

Education is the first step to making progress with most of these issues, so learning was one of the most beneficial parts about this summit for students. We were able to meet with and listen to environmental groups like the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society. It was a great opportunity for those in the club to see what actual environmental policy work looks like in our state. Seeing firsthand what a career in environmental justice

work is was an important opportunity most young people don't have.

A future in environmental work is one that is applicable and one that needs more dedicated young people to join its cause. I think that this summit was one of the best opportunities for our Sierra Club members to expand their breadth of knowledge and to relight their fiery passion for environmental justice.

The Sierra Student Coalition has also helped our club get off its feet through the Climate Justice League. Once a week for four weeks there would be a video presentation about how students can organize to fight for environmental issues. I was joined with fellow Sierra Student members from across the nation to discuss our passions for environmental work. This was a helpful way for me and the other club leaders to learn the best ways to reach out to students and encourage them to get involved in the Sierra Club.

Creating the Sierra Club at Central has been an overwhelming success, but we still have much more work to do. Hopefully we can bring in more members each year and continue to make a noticeable difference in not only our school, but in our community as well. ■

SIERRA CLUB & AUDUBON ARKANSAS PARTNER TO SCREEN "AN INCONVENIENT SEQUEL"

Sierra Club and our partners at Audubon Arkansas teamed up earlier this year for a sold-out preview screening of "An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth To Power" at the Regal movie theatre in Little Rock. The film is an update to former Vice President Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth", and focuses

largely on what's been done to combat climate disruption over the last decade.

After the film, we hosted a panel discussion about climate disruption and how to combat it. Our panel included Rev. Malik Saafir of Interfaith Power & Light, Dr. Terry Tremwel of Picasolar, and Dr. Dan Scheiman of Audubon Arkansas. Panelists fielded questions from the audience and shared their own insights about how climate disruption has affected people, birds, and the environment.

Both State Senator Joyce Elliott and Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola were on hand to view the movie, and Stodola spent a few minutes discussing Little Rock's environmental initiatives. Stodola, a Sierra Club member, was applauded for his decision to keep Little Rock committed to the Paris Climate Accord (which President Trump has withdrawn from).

Many thanks to our panelists and all who attended! ■



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COLLABORATION AND GRASSROOTS NETWORKING



George Wise,
*Chair, Central
Arkansas Group*

These are difficult times for those who work to protect this planet. Every day we reading about another rollback of environmental protection or plans to give polluters a license to dirty our air and water. As I write this column, the Keystone pipeline just sprang a one point leak spilling almost one quarter million gallons of oil in North Dakota. Our attorney general consistently puts the rights of polluters over the rights of Arkansans

to breathe clean air and drink clean water. So, what do we do?

We are not going to change the mindset of Donald Trump or Scott Pruitt. What we can do is go back to the grassroots level and work locally to protect the environment. There is strength in numbers. Building a grassroots movement to protect our natural state means collaborating with like-minded groups. The Central Arkansas Group of the Arkansas Sierra Club made a commitment several years ago to reach out to other environmental groups to begin building a grassroots network to advocate for the environment. Our monthly meetings focus on introducing our members to other groups with whom we can work to fulfill our mission to explore, enjoy and protect the planet; to practice and promote the responsible use of the

earth's ecosystems and resources; to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment, and to use all lawful means to carry out those objectives.

Think locally. Collaborate with other environmental groups to help us build a coalition in Central Arkansas to protect the natural state. Check out Arkansas Audubon, the Arkansas Wildlife Federation, the Nature Conservancy and the Arkansas Public Policy Panel. These groups are our friends and can help us build a local movement advocating for clean air and clean water and green open spaces. Let's lead from Central Arkansas. Let's show the rest of Arkansas and the country that protecting the planet is a priority. ■