

Tallgrass Sierran

March/April 1999 Volume 27 No. 2

THE HEART OF ILLINOIS GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB ♦ P.O. Box 3593, Peoria, IL 61614 ☎ (309) 745-1920

HOI Group Meetings

WED
MAR 17

Prairie Dawgs: A Jubilee Prairie Update
Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

Hal Gardner, leader of the Prairie Dawgs volunteer crew at Jubilee College State Park, will give an update on the prairies at Jubilee. News about spring prairie burns and additional acres for prairie will be featured. Hal and his crew are returning cropland to prairie, and will be tackling several new projects this year. *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*



WED
APR 21

Pig Poop Stink: The Research Side of Mega-Hog Farms
Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

USDA scientist Terry Whitehead will explain his research on control of odors from large hog confinement facilities. Terry will also show slides and discuss the scientific approach to analyzing and reducing the smells of pig manure. *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*



Citizens for a Better Environment Lawsuit Against Caterpillar Goes to Trial March 29th

By JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

The grassroots environmental health advocacy group, Citizens for a Better Environment, is taking Caterpillar, Inc., to court in an effort to find out what toxins are in Caterpillar's landfill near the Illinois River in East Peoria. Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE) also wants to find out if any toxics are leaching from the landfill and getting into the Illinois River or the aquifer nearby, and to require that Caterpillar clean up the dump if problems exist. Caterpillar has refused to be a "good citizen" and come forward with information about the dump. There is a real potential that toxic industrial wastes dumped at the site in the 1950's, 1960's, and 1970's could be entering the river or the aquifer. This case is of serious importance to the safety of area drinking water. Please help Citizens for a Better Environment by sending in a financial donation for their lawsuit. Mail your check to: Citizens for a Better Environment, 407 S. Dearborn, Suite 1775, Chicago, IL 60605.

Heart of Illinois Sierra Club

Spring Dinner

Join us on Saturday, March 20th at 6 p.m. for a Spring Dinner at the Peoria Heights Congregational Church, 4906 N. Prospect Rd., Peoria Heights (intersection of Prospect and Grandview Drive). The dinner features a slide presentation, "*The Argentina Bike Project: A 13,000 Mile Bicycle Tour for the Environment*" by Argentina Conservation Team members Kelly Jonas and Leo Horochowski. Bicycle through Argentina with Kelly and Leo from Patagonia to the Pampas, from the Atlantic to the Andes. Kelly and Leo will discuss ecological awareness, environmental projects, and waste management. The Argentina Conservation Team is a charitable nonprofit organization working for environmental cleanup in rural Argentina.

Dinner will include spaghetti, salad, and bread from Avanti's, plus desserts and beverages. Cost is \$6 for adults, \$3 for children under 12. **Reservations are required by March 17th.** Call 745-5479, 682-0549, or the HOI HOTLINE at 745-1920 (mailbox 4). The public is invited to attend.

The Spring Dinner will also include a **Silent Auction** of new or good-quality used items that reflect an environmental or outdoor theme. A framed photograph by nature photographer Larry Kanfir will be available to bid on. Donations for the auction would be appreciated. If you do not plan to attend the dinner but would still like to donate an auction item, please call. We will also try to arrange transportation for anyone requiring a ride. *Get into Spring and help support the HOI Sierra Club!*

SINGING WOODS A FUTURE NATURE PRESERVE?

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PEORIA PARK DISTRICT BOARD

By HAL GARDNER

Illinois Nature Preserves status is the highest realistic protection that the Board can give to Singing Woods. The Nature Preserves personnel are best qualified to make scientific decisions regarding future management to maintain ecological quality.

As you well know, man has drastically modified the Illinois landscape. Historical records indicate that the Illinois River bluffs were maintained as a fire ecosystem that were comprised of largely oak/hickory forests interspersed with hill prairies. Since the arrival of white man, fires have been see page 2

■ **Singing Woods, from page 1** ■ suppressed, and aggressive alien plants have been introduced. Alien plants and animals are recognized by the federal government as a serious problem requiring large increases in federal research. For example, garlic mustard from Eurasia is gaining a competitive edge over our native woodland wildflowers, but I know of no program by the Peoria Park District to control it. On the other hand, the Nature Preserves Commission does plan for its future control.

This is why active management of Singing Woods is necessary to stem the tide of non-fire ecology that promotes the growth of fire susceptible trees and shrubs, as well as invasion by alien plants. Realistically, a completely satisfactory solution is impossible due to limited manpower. Only a portion of the acreage can be maintained in its historic condition by dedicated volunteers overseen by the Illinois Nature Preserves personnel. A dramatic example exists in 300 managed acres within Jubilee State Park maintained by Nature Conservancy/Sierra Club volunteers. I would be willing to conduct a comparative tour through both managed and unmanaged areas; seeing is believing. Members of our team are not armchair ecologists, who pontificate about the Wonders of a Nature inhabited by alien plants, such as garlic mustard, teasel, burdock, and Hungarian brome.

SIERRA CLUB ITEMS FOR SALE:

- **Sierra Club Cap - \$8**
Khaki baseball style cap with blue visor and "SIERRA CLUB Member" embroidered on the front.
- **Sierra Club Weekender Bag - \$10**
Lightweight and durable forest green duffle bag has adjustable shoulder strap, two carrying handles, and a large zippered compartment (24"x12"x12").
- **Sierra Club Backpack - \$10**
Forest green backpack has adjustable padded shoulder straps and two carrying compartments - total dimensions 16-3/4" high, 6-1/2" deep, 13" wide.

All items are available at HOI Group meetings or by calling Cindy Matthias at 686-4134.

POLLUTION SECRECY AND IMMUNITY

By RALPH GINN

Some progress has been made in HOI's efforts to defuse the Illinois Audit Privilege and Immunity Law that literally "rode" into existence in 1994 as part of one of those eleventh hour potpourri bills that legislators and special interests love so much. Often called "pollution secrecy," this law allows polluters to audit themselves and keep violations secret from the public and harmed parties, even in civil and criminal proceedings. HOI has joined F.A.R.M. (Families Against Rural Mess) in this joint effort. A committee of five met with State Representative Ricca Slone in November to ask her advice and plan strategy. Ms. Slone told us that an outright repeal would be next to impossible. She suggested an attempt to modify the law, possibly narrowing our focus to mega-livestock operations. She offered to help write a suitable revision.

Another course of action our committee is considering is to ask the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Region V, based in Chicago) to put pressure on the State to bring Audit Privilege into compliance with federal law. In our view the Illinois law conflicts with both the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and the Clean Air Act (CAA) in several ways. It is also possible that conflict exist with the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

The HOI-F.A.R.M. Committee is now considering the best course of action. Input from Group members would be appreciated. Call Ralph Ginn (274-3289) or Rudy Habben (685-5605). Whatever we decide, it is imperative that we broaden our base of support. We have asked the Illinois Chapter of Sierra Club and the Stewardship Alliance to join us in this effort. Other conservation and environmental groups would also be welcome.

You can make a difference!

- ☐ **The White House:**
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue., NW,
Washington D.C. 20500
Comment Line: (202) 456-1111
E-mail: president@whitehouse.gov
- ☐ **U.S. Senators:**
Richard Durbin / Peter Fitzgerald
U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510
Capital Switchboard: (202) 224-3121
- ☐ **U.S. Representatives:**
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121
Local: Ray LaHood (309) 671-7027
Lane Evans (309) 793-5760
- ☐ **Governor George Ryan:**
State House, Springfield, IL 62706
Ph. (217) 782-6830
- ☐ **State Senator or Representative:**
State House, Springfield, IL 62706
Capitol Switchboard: (217) 782-2000

☒ **Yes, I want to help safeguard our children's precious natural heritage. My check is enclosed.**

Name

Address

City

State Zip

Phone (Optional) ()

Contributions, gifts or dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35	<input type="checkbox"/> \$43
SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$60	<input type="checkbox"/> \$68
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$120	<input type="checkbox"/> \$128
LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
SENIOR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$19	<input type="checkbox"/> \$27
STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$19	<input type="checkbox"/> \$27

PROTECT AMERICA'S ENVIRONMENT.
For Our Families, For Our Future

Enclose check and mail to:

Sierra Club
P.O. Box 52968
Boulder, CO, 80322-2968



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Heart of Illinois

SIERRA CLUB SPECIAL EVENT Dinner and a Program

“The Argentina Bike Project”

Saturday, March 20, 1999

Peoria Heights Congregational Church

4906 N. Prospect Rd., Peoria Heights

Spaghetti dinner from Avanti's begins at 6:00 PM

Then take a 13,000 mile
bicycle journey through
Argentina with Kelly

Jonas and Leo

Horochofski. Travel from
Patagonia to the Pampas
to Paraguay, from the
Atlantic to the Andes.



The slide program starts at 7:30 PM.

\$6.00 Per Person Donation

Children under 12, \$3.00

RSVP Required by Wednesday, March 17

For Reservations Call

745-1920 (Mailbox 4) or 745-5479 or 682-0549

see other side for more details

The HOI Sierra Club Presents a Dinner and Slide Show on
THE ARGENTINA BIKE PROJECT

A 13,000 mile bicycle tour for the environment.

Saturday, March 20

The Peoria Heights Congregational Church

4906 N. Prospect Rd., Peoria Heights

Dinner begins at 6 PM, Program at 7:30 PM



The program will be presented by the Argentina Conservation Team, a charitable non-profit organization dedicated to the environmental clean-up of rural Argentina.

The A.C.T. evolved out of a 3-month, 13,000 mile bicycle tour during which the originator of the project, Leo Horochowski, was getting re-acquainted with his native homeland.

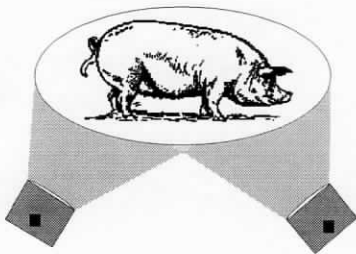
He was shocked by the lack of basic environmental awareness in a place that could be considered one of the last great wilderness frontiers.

Due to Argentina's struggling economy its environmental efforts are at a great disadvantage in comparison to those in the U.S.

Public education re: “green” issues is observably sparse, especially in less populated areas. Hence, rural Argentines are left uninformed, detached from the problem, and vulnerable to the hazards of “non-green” development.

**Visit our web site at
www.argentinabike.com.**

see other side for details on reservations



HOG HIGHLIGHTS

By RALPH GINN

The efforts of HOI and other environmental groups to strengthen regulation of mega-livestock factories is meeting strong opposition from Farm Bureau, Pork Producers and factions within the State Legislature. This is, of course, nothing new. Last year a bill sponsored by the "Central Illinois Six" (Rep. Ricca Slone, Peoria Hts.; David Leitch, Peoria, Don Moffitt, Gilson; Mike Smith, Canton; Senators George Shadid, Edwards; Carl Hawkinson, Galesburg) that would have strengthened regulations passed the House but was then held hostage until the legislative session ended by Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Todd Sieben, Geneseo. There was optimism that the 1999 legislature would be more amenable to new regulations. Michael Madigan, speaker of the House, appointed Mike Smith to the Chair of the Agriculture and Conservation Committee, paving the way for passage of a good House Bill. But, once again, the "Sieben hurdle" looms huge. Senator Sieben is reported to be working against new regulations

with enthusiasm and he still remains in the Ag Chair. HOI members with ties to Sieben's district, now is the time to call, write, fax, and scream at Sieben. For all HOI members, a letter or call of encouragement, to members of the Central Illinois Six, NOW, is important.

In other Hog News, the Knox County Board and Citizens Group has asked the Sierra Club to petition the Illinois Supreme Court as a Friend of the Court (*amicus curiae*) in support of an appeal that would reverse a Second District Appellate Court decision (2-1). That judgment upheld an earlier Knox County Circuit Court decision that blocked the Knox County Board's legal ability to enforce zoning regulations on a 3,650 hog operation (The Highlands) two miles south of Williamsfield. The role of a Friend of the Court is one of support and does not involve presence or oral argument. This request will be forwarded to national Sierra Club. Admittedly a long-shot, but if won this appeal would open the way for county zoning boards all over the State to gain control over siting and building construction of mega-hog factories.

Return Green River to a True Wildlife Preserve

By MICHELLE MOSS, *Assistant State Field Representative, and*
CHRISTINE WILLIAMSON, *State Conservation Chair, Illinois Sierra Chapter*

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) is at odds with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service over the mismanagement of the Green River State Fish and Wildlife Area in Lee County. The divisive issue is management for hunting, rather than management for habitat restoration. Letters, phone calls and e-mail from concerned Illinois citizens are urgently needed to help turn Green River back into a wildlife preserve, rather than be used as an elaborate hunt course for horseback riders and dog handlers.

Green River was purchased by IDNR in the 1930s with a Pittman-Robertson grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. The objective of the grant was to acquire land for the purpose of restoring unique prairie wetland habitats for native birds and mammals. Green River has 53 grassland dependent and 45 wetland dependent species, including bird species that are Illinois threatened or endangered.

But instead of burning the prairie and restoring it to a working native ecosystem, IDNR is mowing it. Since the 1950s, IDNR has been catering to horseback field trialers and put-and-take pheasant shooters at Green River by grooming the property for easier hunting and riding. The horseback field trials overlap with grassland bird nesting season and wreak havoc on habitat at Green River. In addition, IDNR's put-and-take pheasant hunting activities are not an eligible activity under the Federal Aid grant.

To use the USFW's own words, "Wildlife resource potential is not being met and will not be met as long as field trials and put-and-take shooting are allowed to continue at this site." In

late 1998, FWS was forced to do a review of site management and declared the IDNR in noncompliance with Federal law, regulations, and grant provisions based on the horseback field trials and put-and-take shooting practices. The agency was given until January 14, 1999, to come into compliance or risk losing its Pittman-Robertson money for the entire state.

A temporary solution was reached in January. IDNR sent a letter claiming compliance by not scheduling any more put-and-take hunting events or horseback field trails after April 1st. But the issue is far from over. IDNR has been continuing pressure on USFWS to allow at least limited scheduling of these activities at Green River, and is seeking support from Speaker Dennis Hastert. According to Representative Hastert's staff, over 5,000 letters in support of continued horseback field trials and put-and-take shooting at Green River have flooded his office. The horseback trialers will not give up on Green River without a fight, and we can't either!

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

Please write or phone Rep. Hastert and tell him you support management of Green River as a natural area, not for specialized hunting activities. Let him know that you think the USFWS did the right thing in enforcing the use of Pittman-Robertson Funds to insure that natural areas management becomes the primary objective at Green River. Speaker Dennis Hastert's address is 27 N. River St., Batavia, IL 60510. His phone number is 630-406-1114, his fax is 630-406-1808, and his e-mail is dhastert@mail.house.gov.

HOI Group Calendar

March

- 7 WTVP 47 Pledge Drive**
SUN HOI Sierra Club members will answer phones this evening during the March pledge drive for Peoria public TV station WTVP 47. Call John, 682-8950, if you are interested in volunteering. Or, tune in and make a pledge to support public TV!
- 11 Executive Meeting, 7 p.m.**
THU Peoria Pizza Works, 3921 N. Prospect, Peoria Heights.
- 17 Group Meeting, 7 p.m.**
WED Forest Park Nature Center. *Hal Gardner, Prairie Dawgs: A Jubilee Prairie Update.* Everyone is welcome!
- 20 Heart of Illinois Sierra Club Spring Dinner, 6 p.m.**
SAT Peoria Heights Congregational Church, 4906 N. Prospect Rd., Peoria Heights "The Argentina Bike Project: A 13,000 Mile Bicycle Tour for the Environment". (See front page.)
- 22 Clean Water Celebration**
MON Peoria Civic Center, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Open to the public. The HOI Group will again have a booth. Call Rudy Habben, 685-5605, for more information.
- 28 Detweiler Park Spring Wildflower Hike, 1:30 p.m.**
SUN Meet at the parking lot at the south end of Detweiler Park, by the shelters. Phone Mary Bodell at 745-5479 for more information.

Prairie Dawgs Work Crew

Work includes prairie burns, brush cutting, eradicating alien plants, native plant seeding, and planting root stock. Crews meet the 1st & 3rd Saturdays at 9 a.m. at Hal Gardner's old house about 2.4 miles west of Jubilee-Princeville Rd. on Jubilee-Brimfield Rd. Call Hal Gardner at 446-9792 for directions.

April

- 6 Executive Meeting, 7 p.m.**
TUE Peoria Pizza Works, 3921 N. Prospect, Peoria Heights.
- 9 Letter Writing Party! 7 p.m.**
FRI Join with other Sierrans to write your own letters to State Representatives and Senators. Fact sheets will be provided, along with a variety of recycled papers, and GREAT REFRESHMENTS! Everyone welcome. Stop in whenever convenient between 7:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. at 120 West Arcadia, Peoria. Call Joyce at 688-0950 for information.
- 18 Hike to Rocky Glen, 10 a.m.**
SUN Joe Laszlo will lead a hike to Peoria Park District's little known parcel above Kickapoo Creek. This is a short walk (about a mile total), but starts with an invigorating ascent of the bluff. Trip limited to eight participants. **Note: R.S.V.P. by April 11 a must!** Call Joe at 637-4692 for details and to R.S.V.P.

Other Events: (Not sponsored by the Sierra Club but provided as a public service.)



Friends of the Rock Island Trail Workdays

Workdays are Sat. March 6 & Sat. April 3. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Alta end maintenance building. Directions: Go about 1 mile west of Alta on Rt. 91, turn right on Radnor Rd., follow road around curves, maintenance building is on your right just before railroad tracks. Call Chris at 682-0549 for more information. *Everyone is welcome!*

Lakeview Museum Interplanetary 5K Race/1 Mile Fitness Walk

April 10 (Sat), 8 a.m. at Detweiler Park
This family oriented race/walk for participants of all ages will take you through portions of the world's largest model of the solar system. All participants will receive a specially designed T-shirt. Registration is \$12 before race day or \$15 at the event. Stop by Lakeview Museum for an entry form.

- 21 Group Meeting, 7 p.m.**
WED Forest Park Nature Center. *Terry Whitehead, Pig Poop Stink: The Research Side of Mega-Hog Farms.* Everyone is welcome!
- 21 Newsletter Deadline**
WED Send articles for May and June to: John Wosik, 3403 W. Richwoods Blvd., Peoria, IL 61604, or jwosik@mtco.com
- 22 Earth Day**
THU
- 24 Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup, 9 a.m.**
SAT Rt. 26 volunteers meet at the Total Gas Station at the Rt. 26 & 116 intersection. Rt. 40 volunteers meet at Fry Farm at the intersection of Rt. 40 and Singing Woods Rd. For more information, or if you have not viewed the safety video call Grayce Hayworth at 246-8397.
- 27 Newsletter Mailing, 7 p.m.**
TUE Peoria Pizza Works; All welcome!

SEHA presents Chuck McGrady, President of Sierra Club

April 19 (Mon), 5:30 p.m.
ISU Bone Student Center, Normal
Call Rudy at 685-5605 for more information.

Earth Fest '99

April 24 (Sat), 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Davis Caves, Armstrong, IL
Live music powered by the sun. Earth home tours, children's games, environmental displays, antiques and crafts, educational workshops, rooftop pony rides for kids. On U.S. Rt. 136, 8 miles east of I-155 & 7 miles west of I-55. Call 309-392-2574, or check out www.daviscaves.com for more details. (HOI Group will have a table.)

Earth Day Celebration at Lakeview

April 25 (Sun), 12-4 p.m.
Lakeview Museum Front Lawn: Music, environmental displays, games, and children's environmental art. (HOI Group will have a table.)

Heart of Illinois Sierra Club

HOTLINE: Local Meetings & Outings • Action Alerts (309)
• Public Contacts • Leave Messages 745-1920

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Vice-Chair	Ralph Ginn	274-3289
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Calendar Sales	Chris Meydam	682-0549
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HEART OF ILLINOIS

Sierra Club

P.O. Box 3593
Peoria, IL 61614

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... To explore, enjoy and protect the wild places of the earth ...