

Tallgrass Sierran

November/December 1999 Volume 27 No. 6

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

HOI Group Meetings

WED
Nov 17

300 Years of River History in Illinois
Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

Mark Miller, watershed organizer, for the Prairie Rivers Network will present a slide show that overviews 300 years of river history in Illinois. His presentation will include land use, human attitudes toward the rivers, settlement patterns, and the Clean Water Act's impact. Prairie Rivers Network, based in Champaign, Illinois, was founded in 1967 as the Committee on Allerton Park. Later, it focused on river issues and changed its name to Prairie Rivers Network. Recently, Prairie Rivers published a series of papers collectively called "Dirty Water-Dirty Business" which points to agriculture as the principle river polluter, and the role of Illinois Farm Bureau in the "dirty water" equation. *All are welcome!*

WED
DEC 15

Happy Holidays!
Annual Potluck and Slides Party
Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

Bring your favorite food to share and a dozen or so slides from your latest trip or event, for a holiday time get-together. The Nature Center will be decked for the season, and this is a great chance to enjoy a relaxing evening during the holiday season. Bring some friends! Hot and cold drinks will be provided. You will need your own table service and a good appetite! A projector will be available for showing a sampling of slides after the meeting, and you will see your fellow/friend Sierrans in action!



Over twenty people at the October 19th Black Partridge Park hike, Metamora, enjoyed hearing the legend of Indian Rock in the park. Hikers were impressed by the beautiful woods, large trees, and many clear streams. The hike was organized by Rudy Habben, HOI Co-Conservation Chair, to show people the park. The park is being threatened by a proposal for a large golf resort and lake.

Photo: Joyce Blumenshine

In Memoriam

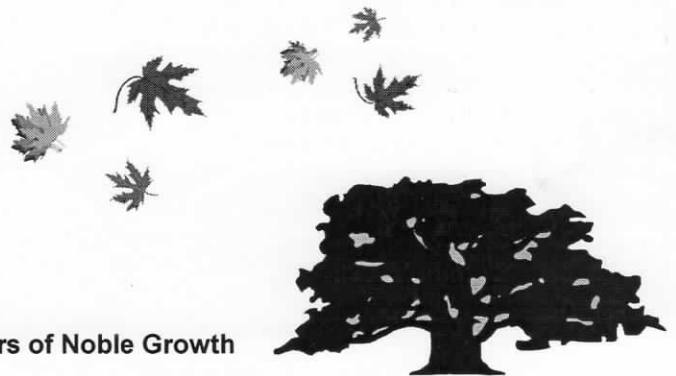
Quercus Alba - White Oak

Cut Down in the Prime of Health after Hundreds of Years of Noble Growth

By JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

A stunningly beautiful, massive old giant white oak tree was cut down October 13th, 1999, for the parking lot of a strip shopping mall on Big Hollow Road, Peoria. The mall is being developed by First Rockford Group, Inc., and a representative of the company had stated in August that the tree would be protected. The tree was cut down the day after a news story appeared about the tree, and the day before a Peoria Zoning Board of Appeals meeting. Heart of Illinois Sierra Club, along with several others, intended to appeal for the life of the huge tree at the Zoning meeting. The First Rockford Group presented a revised site plan to the Zoning Appeals Board, and their attorney, Tom Leiter, stated publicly that First Rockford Group wanted to save trees at the site. Their revised plan allowed one parking space for each of three giant trees. For their effort to

"save" the trees, First Rockford Group wanted a variance to move parking up to the edge of Big Hollow Road, instead of having a city mandated twenty foot landscaped buffer along the street. Peoria city arborist, Elroy Limmer, testified that the trees would surely die with so little unpaved space around them. The Zoning Appeals Board turned down the variance request for First Rockford Group, and the fate of the remaining oaks is yet to be determined. Heart of Illinois Sierra Club has phoned numerous staff at Michaels, The Arts and Crafts Store, which will be the largest store at the strip mall. A newspaper article and an appeal to save the trees was faxed to the president of the company. In spite of repeated calls to First Rockford Group, no call was received back. Copies of newspaper articles and a written appeal were faxed to the company.



1999 HOI Excomm Election:

Rules and Procedures

1. You must be a HOI Sierra Club member to vote.
2. Vote for not more than 3 candidates for a 2000-2001 term to the Heart of Illinois Executive Committee.
3. Joint memberships may use Ballots #1 and #2.
4. Mail ballot(s) to: Sec. Norman Ewing
c/o Heart of Illinois Sierra Club
P.O. Box 3593
Peoria, IL 61614
5. Write the name of the voting member(s) on the outside of the envelope containing the ballot.
6. Ballots must arrive at the Sierra Club's mailbox by Nov. 17, or can be delivered to the Group Meeting on Nov. 17.
7. Ballots will be counted at the Group Meeting on Nov. 17.

1999 HOI Sierra Club Excomm Election Ballot #1

___ Rudy Habben
___ Joe Laszlo
___ John Wosik

1999 HOI Sierra Club Excomm Election Ballot #2

___ Rudy Habben
___ Joe Laszlo
___ John Wosik

Ballots Due November 17

Heart of Illinois Executive Committee Election: Candidate Statements

Rudy Habben

I am interested in serving a new term on the HOI Executive Committee because it is going to be an interesting two years. Consider the following:

1. Completion of the Rock Island Trail to the riverfront.
2. Army Corps of Engineers Transportation and Environmental Management Plan for the Illinois River.
3. The state of Illinois' \$160 million open lands trust program.
4. The plan to develop Black Partridge Park.
5. The state transportation Chicago-Peoria-Quincy and ring road plan.

My professional background is in city and regional planning and now retired can commit time to promote the Club position. I have served a previous term on the HOI Executive Committee and been Group representative to the Illinois Chapter. I have been a Club member since 1970.

Joseph Laszlo

I have been a member of the local Sierra group for fifteen years. For many years I served as the information provider for environmental

issues for the Heartland Regional Network (Freenet), supplying updated listings of the activities of several local organizations and answering questions. I have been a guest speaker at a Heart of Illinois Sierra Club group meeting. I now wish to take a more active role in organizing and participating in the activities of the local group. There is a lot of work to be done, so sign me up!

John Wosik (Petition Candidate)

I am currently the newsletter editor of the Heart of Illinois Group, and have previously served as Group Chair and Vice-Chair. I enjoy hiking and camping and have participated in National Sierra Club outings in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California.

As a member of the Executive Committee, I will continue as newsletter editor and focus my efforts on encouraging our members to participate in Club activities and in educating the public on environmental issues. We need to make all our members feel that it is of value to be a part of our Group, and that their participation is needed and welcome. Whether one's area of interest is conservation, outings, or politics, we all share an enjoyment of nature, and a desire to see it preserved and protected.

Public Meeting Held on Proposed Pekin Landfill

By JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

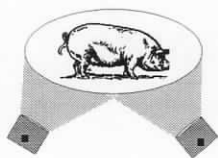
Several HOI Sierra Club members attended the September 30, 1999, Tazewell County Board session on a proposed Host Agreement for Waste Professionals, Inc., Chicago, to build a new landfill. The new dump is proposed to be next to Waste Professionals' closed landfill along Towerline Road, at the southeast edge of Pekin. The location is a known water recharge area and is over parts of two major aquifers. Bruce Knoll, spokesman for the citizens' group FOCUS-W (Families Opposed to Contamination of Urban Soil-Water) urged that the Host Agreement not be site specific and that other options be considered for Tazewell County trash. The Host Agreement is necessary for a landfill operator to proceed with a development in Tazewell County, and the document sets up general conditions between the County and the

dump company. A revised agreement was presented to a subcommittee on October 13th, and has been sent to Waste Professionals, Inc. Tazewell County Board Chairman James Unsicker has stated that another public forum will be held to present the revised Host Agreement. Heart of Illinois Sierra Club has sent a second series of letters to all Tazewell County Board members, urging them not to approve a landfill for the currently proposed site. If you live in Tazewell County, it is very important for you to contact your County representative and to urge him/her to not sign a Host Agreement with Waste Professionals, Inc., for the Towerline Road landfill site, Pekin, Illinois. For a list of Tazewell County Board members and their addresses call the Pekin County Clerk, 477-2274, or leave a message at 688-0950.

Bear Mine

By RALPH GINN

The HOI Sierra Club has asked the IEPA (Environmental Protection Agency) for a public hearing in regard to the issuance of a permit to the Silvercreek Construction Company for a new surface coal mine located 2 miles northwest of Farmington, IL. Silvercreek, an Oklahoma based company, operated Bear Mine for several months without a permit and was cited for illegal discharge of waste water by the IEPA on Aug. 4, 1999. In a strange turn of events, IEPA made a tentative decision to issue Silvercreek a permit to operate Bear Mine two weeks later. The Knox County Board has petitioned the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to stop the issuance of the permit. State's Attorney Paul Mangieri said, "Based on their track record, we're not too warm and fuzzy about Silvercreek operating in Knox County." Citizen's Organizing Project, an environmental group based in Knox County, has also asked IEPA for a public hearing.



HOG HIGHLIGHTS

Knox County Case Heard Before Illinois Supreme Court

By RALPH GINN

On September 28, 1999 The Illinois Supreme Court heard arguments in the mega-hog farm case of Knox County and Citizens vs Highlands. Knox County State's Attorney Paul Mangieri told the justices that large hog-raising operations, such as Highlands, are industrial enterprises and counties should be allowed to regulate them. George Muller, attorney for the Citizens, told the court that state zoning laws give counties control over land use that threatens health, safety, and the welfare of county residents. Muller's arguments were largely based on a brief prepared by Albert Ettinger, Sierra Club and Environmental Law and Policy Center, and Laurie Reynolds, a zoning law specialist on the faculty of the University of Illinois.

HOI watchdog and one of the "Citizens" in this case, Jane Johnson, attended the hearing and was favorably impressed with the arguments of both Mangieri and Muller. She was also encouraged by the "friendly" questions of the justices. The Supreme Court's ruling could be enormous in our effort to discourage concentrated animal agriculture. A decision is expected within 60 to 90 days

Corporate Hogs at the Public Trough

By JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

"Corporate agriculture is not inevitable. There is a better way to farm," stated Pam Hanson, staff member of the Illinois Stewardship Alliance. Her comments were part of the September 10, 1999, press conference organized by F.A.R.M. (Families Against Rural Messes) and the Illinois Stewardship Council. The press conference pointed out that corporate farms receive large tax breaks in Illinois, with counties losing hundreds of thousands of dollars because of special tax write-offs. Property tax assessments are reduced at corporate farms for pollution measures, such as pumps, lagoons, and other equipment. It doesn't matter if the equipment is working or if it is being used for the purposes intended. The Highlands Farm hog factory in Knox County was estimated to be assessed at about \$2 million, however, pollution write-offs reduced their tax assessment to about \$100,000 according to a Sierra Club study. Other issues at the press conference were health risks presented by large confined animal feeding operations. It was stated that 40% of all antibiotics manufactured in the United States go for agricultural use, and that 80% of that amount is used to promote quick growth in animals for meat consumption and not to prevent disease. For a mega-hog farm update go to F.A.R.M.'s website at <http://www.netins.net/showcase/megahoglaws>.



Bounded People, Boundless Lands **Envisioning a New Land Ethic**

Eric T. Freyfogle - Island Press, 1998, 196 pp.

REVIEWED BY TODD VOLKER

At the heart of most environmental controversy is the issue of private property rights. Typically a property owner is condemned for using his property in a detrimental way, with his critics working hard to make any change in the owner's property use.

While the courts are quite willing to impinge on other rights, the right to private property has a peculiar quality --- Private Property is the untouchable Holy Grail of the legal system, even though it's clear that a person can have so much property that he is unable to measure it or even control it. And like a parasite, corporations are able to feed well by enjoying the right to private property, as if corporations were living and breathing citizens and neighbors!

Eric Freyfogle, law professor at the University of Illinois, has recently published Bounded People, Boundless Lands. This won the Midland Society of Authors' prize for best nonfiction work of 1998. Freyfogle's work revolves around the idea that land has an ethical dimension for us, not only an economical function. Respect for the land's real needs ("land health") is the goal of true stewardship.

We must also respect the rights of communities and recognize our basic human need to develop well-ordered civil societies. He points out that "property" is a creation of states: a creation of communities that use it as a means of achieving particular aims such as maintaining communal solidarity and promoting economic enterprise. Viewed from this perspective, private property ownership is very much an organic institution, created by people and subject to change by them." (p.105-6)

Read this book. It's a rare (and wonderfully written) exploration of key environmental issues. More than most writers, Freyfogle connects abstract environmental concerns with possibilities for practical change. His reflections count for something, and Bounded People, Boundless Lands is the kind of book that will influence the thinking of thoughtful people.

☒ **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

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STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$19	<input type="checkbox"/> \$27

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For Our Families, For Our Future

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