

# Tallgrass Sierran

March/April 2000 Volume 28 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 15

**Illinois Politics and the Environment**  
Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.



Jack Darin, State Field Representative for the Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club, will discuss the Illinois Chapter's priorities for 2000, and the current state of environmental politics in Springfield. Key Illinois topics include enforcement of the Clean Water Act, promoting smart growth solutions to urban sprawl, habitat protection, and management of the Shawnee National Forest. *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*

WED  
APR 19

**The Shawnee Forest Plan & Illinois Wilderness Campaign**  
Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

HELP SAVE THE SHAWNEE! Barb McKasson, Conservation Chair, Shawnee Group Sierra Club, will show slides of the wonders of the Shawnee, and also areas of the forest being destroyed by ATVs, crowds of horseback riders, and other overuse and abuse. The Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club has made protection of the Shawnee a conservation priority. Design of the new forest management plan, the need for Federal wilderness designation of key areas, and what you can do to help will be part of the message with this beautiful slide show. *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*



Recreational Trail Advocates, a coalition group made up of representatives from Friends of the Rock Island Trail, Peace, Illinois Valley Striders, Sierra Club, and other groups, held an "Afternoon Walk on the Rails" January 29th to demonstrate public support for turning the Kellar Branch Line into a hiking/bicycling trail. Photo: Joyce Blumenshine

## PACK THE HALL!!!

Be at the **PEORIA CITY COUNCIL MEETING, Tuesday, February 29th, 6:15 p.m.** to urge the City Council to extend the Rock Island Trail on the Kellar Branch Line. This can be a WIN-WIN: a new rail spur line from the Union Pacific railroad at the west edge of Pioneer Park going through Peoria's designated Growth Cell 3, and a win for the public to have safe off-street bicycling and hiking. Call Mayor Grieves (671-1011) and your City Council members to support the Trail.

## Whistleblowers Prove Army Corps Faking Data to Promote Expansion of Locks & Dams

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

The Army Corps of Engineers abruptly canceled a February 15th meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota, where they were to present their initial Recommended Plan for expanding locks on the Upper Mississippi and the Illinois River. News stories appearing February 12 & 13th in the Washington Post, Minneapolis Star-Tribune, St. Louis Post Dispatch, and other papers, revealed that the Army Corps of Engineers has deliberately and perhaps criminally manipulated data in a \$50 million study to justify expanding lock construction. A series of internal Army Corps communications were released. They show that upper Corps managers would not accept data indicating expanded locks and dams were not economically viable. In various ways these managers urged that data supporting the Corps construction goals be written. Please call the phone numbers listed below and

- 1) ask that the Army Corps be investigated for fraud and waste of \$50 million dollars of taxpayer funds for a Navigation Study that has no credibility;

- 2) ask that the Army Corps navigation study be ended because it is the product of intentionally deceptive economics and engineering work and cannot be fixed;
- 3) demand that Army Corps Commanding General Westphal be fired. He has presided over a process that may have resulted in a criminal conspiracy to commit fraud;
- 4) ask that the Army Corps Navigation Study be referred to the U.S. Attorney General's Office for a complete criminal investigation.

*Write up your comments and send them to: The Honorable Louis Caldera, Secretary of the Army, The Pentagon, Washington, D.C. 20301. PHONE Senators Dick Durbin and Peter Fitzgerald and Representatives Ray LaHood and Lane Evans at the Capitol Switchboard, 202-224-3121.*

## Silvercreek Hearing



By RALPH GINN

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) has announced a public hearing to receive oral and written comments on a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit application from Silvercreek Construction Company. *The hearing is Tuesday, March 7, 6:30 p.m. at the Tri-County Senior Center located at 88 E. Fort, Farmington, IL.* Silvercreek operates Bear Mine located two miles northwest of Farmington. Bear Mine is a surface extraction coal mine. The permit would allow the alkaline mine drainage and surface water runoff to drain into Littler's Creek.

Silvercreek is the company that operated Bear Mine several months without a permit and was then cited by the IEPA in August of '99 for illegal discharge into Littler's Creek. The IEPA has since made a tentative determination to issue a five year permit. Apparently, only a strong opposition will dissuade IEPA from this action. Written comments should be addressed to:

Hearing Officer Connie Tonsor #21 IEPA  
1021 N. Grand Ave. P.O. Box 19276  
Springfield, IL 62794

Written comments must be in the mail by April 6, 2000. The general public is invited to the oral hearing and anyone has the right to speak. For more information call Ralph Ginn at 274-3289.

## Eagle Watch Outing Results



In the aftermath of a snow and ice storm we set out on February 19th to count eagles. Crystal forests and glazed grasses were set off by the gray skies. Fifty-six eagles were seen, with the best sites at Chillicothe Park, the Spring Branch Unit, and the Marshall State Fish and Wildlife Area. Highlight: at Spring Bay Park five eagles flew up into the trees almost over our heads! - *Mary Bodell*

## 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](mailto: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

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

Enclose check and mail to:

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



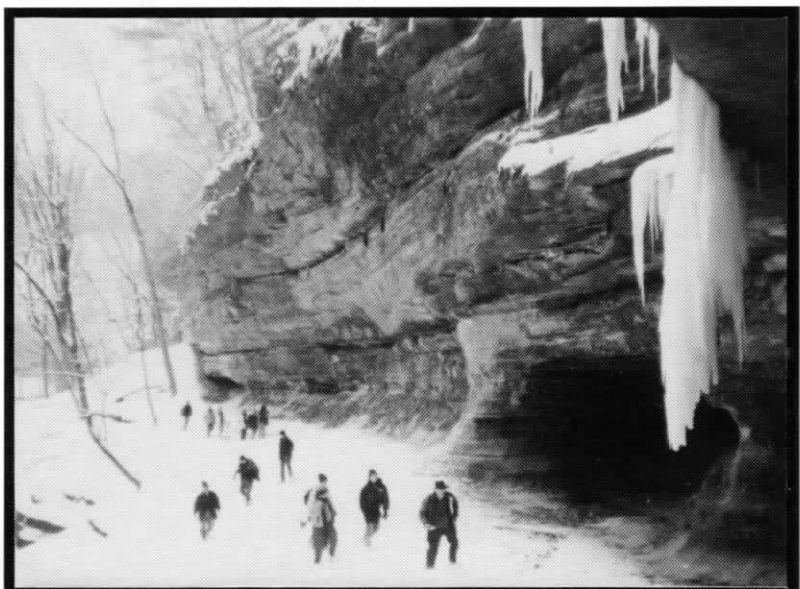
**PROTECT AMERICA'S ENVIRONMENT.**  
*For Our Families, For Our Future*

F940 **W-0703** -1  
W99901

## Black Partridge Park Group Holding Forum

By JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Advocates for saving Metamora's 455 acre Black Partridge Park from development will hold a public meeting February 24th. Efforts to save the park from becoming a major golf resort, with a 63 acre lake, an amphitheater, hotel, horse stable, and other construction, will be discussed. Daily and Associates Engineers, Peoria, completed an environmental and archaeological study of the park, which was commissioned by the Metamora Park District. The study found no significant archaeological remnants or environmental concerns, other than several areas with wetlands. The Army Corps of Engineers will need to issue permits for construction impacting the wetlands. *Donations to help protect the park can be sent to: Black Partridge Conservancy, 411 Northfork Rd., Metamora, IL 61548.*



**Starved Rock Outing, 2000:** Hiking below the frozen waterfall in Lasalle Canyon. Photo: Al Harkrader

## Review and Comments: *Dirty Water, Dirty Business*



By RALPH GINN

Since the Clean Water Act was signed into law by President Richard Nixon in 1972, four times as many streams have deteriorated as improved, according to the U.S. Geological survey. While point source pollution (from industries and sewage plants) has improved dramatically, non-point source pollution has increased. Storm water from roads and parking lots, treated lawns and golf courses, and agricultural lands have poured sediments, fertilizer nutrients, animal wastes, herbicides, and pesticides into the nation's streams and lakes. Agriculture is, today, by far the largest contributor to water pollution. And, ranking near the top in agriculture pollution, is Illinois. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) states that over 85% of the impaired river miles in Illinois are polluted by agricultural runoff.

Prairie Rivers Network, based in Champaign, Illinois, recently released *Dirty Water, Dirty Business*, a report examining Illinois' largest source of water pollution.... agriculture. The report is an indictment of the agriculture industry's efforts to delay, halt and sometimes reverse progress on solving water quality problems. And, according to Prairie Rivers Network, Illinois Farm Bureau is a major player in the industry's efforts to promote profits with little regard for the pollution consequences. Unknown to many, Illinois Farm Bureau owns, in full or in part, 18 separate corporations, that include chemical companies, insurance companies (Country Companies) and companies dealing in seed and feed production, livestock production, commodities, mutual funds, fuel oil and refining and communications. Illinois Farm Bureau and these eighteen companies employ 57 registered lobbyists.

This not to imply that any of these corporate activities are illegal. BUT! Illinois Farm Bureau is using money and influence to improve its own profits at the expense the environment. Examples: Illinois Farm Bureau called for compensation to property owners when they are restricted by wetlands protection laws; repeatedly calls for "sound science"

to delay or prevent implementation of water quality solutions, insinuating that the huge number of scientific studies that link agricultural run-off to lower water quality are flawed (reminiscent of the tobacco industry); resists accountability of agriculture for pollution from CAFO's (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations) and erosion; a 1999 policy opposes enforcement of regulations of the Clean Water Act that require all states to use TMDL's (Total Maximum Daily Loads) for assessing pollutants in streams. Yes, twenty- eight years after the Clean Water Act was signed into law, the IEPA is beginning to implement the TMDL assessment plan.

Other examples: A Farm Bureau policy states, "The IEPA should be required to prove intent to violate as part of pollution prosecution" (the key word here is "intent" .....a very difficult proof in a court of law); supports only voluntary measures, and economic incentives as means to reduce agriculture pollution.

If these Farm Bureau policies and positions, sound familiar, that is because they are identical, or similar, to statements heard from other agribusiness corporations that opposed regulation of CAFO's as they sprang up like weeds in rural Illinois during the past five years. These policies have also been broadcast in opposition to initiatives that would reduce siltation and pollution of the Illinois River. And, these same positions and policies have appeared in the media as the utterances of several Congressmen and Illinois legislators (those 57 lobbyist aren't well paid for doing nothing).

*Dirty Water, Dirty Business* singles out Illinois Farm Bureau for much of the blame for lagging agriculture pollution abatement programs. Illinois Farm Bureau might accuse a vendetta. And to be sure, there are other agriculture industries, that should share the condemnation. But, Illinois Farm Bureau is the "big guy on the block" and there is no paucity of evidence that Farm Bureau serves its own corporate interests far beyond those of the family farmer and the public.

## Clean Water Celebration

By RUDY HABBEN

The Clean Water Celebration will be held on Monday, March 20 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Peoria Civic Center. Over 2,000 junior high students are expected to attend a variety of performances, demonstrations, and exhibits to learn what they can do to improve water quality and promote the wise use of natural resources.

This year's featured speaker will be Chad Pregracke. He will review his crusade to clean up Illinois waterways. He and his crew of volunteers have removed over 400,000 pounds of trash from 1,000 miles of Illinois shoreline.

The HOI Sierra Club booth will feature the Big Tree survey that was included in the last newsletter. Each class visiting the booth will be given an assignment to identify, locate, and measure a big tree and fill out a form to be sent to the IDNR District Forester by the end of the spring term. The Celebration is open and free to the general public.

## Thanks to Representative David Leitch!

By JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Sierra Club extends its thanks and appreciation to State Representative David Leitch. On February 16th he voted in support of House Bill 4628, the Net Metering Bill. This legislation was presented in the House Deregulation Committee, and it is an important bill to promote wind and solar power. It allows the owners of wind or solar systems to put excess power into the grid and draw it back later without having to pay extra for the power. Representative Leitch has also obtained funding for construction of the railroad line extension that will connect the Union Pacific line to Pioneer Park from the west side of Peoria. This will provide rail service for Pioneer Park and free the Kellar Branch Line route for development of the Rock Island Trail extension. Representative Leitch has worked hard over the years to aid in development of the Rock Island Trail, and he has provided critical assistance, again, for this latest development. Please phone Rep. Leitch's office to leave a message of thanks at 217-782-8108 or 309-685-3900.



# HOI Group Calendar

## March

**5 WTPV 47 Pledge Drive**  
SUN HOI Sierra Club members will answer phones this evening during the March pledge drive for Peoria public TV station WTPV 47. Call John, 243-2230, if you are interested in volunteering. Or, tune in and make a pledge to support public TV!

**8 Executive Meeting, 7 p.m.**  
WED Joyce Blumenshine's home, 120 W. Arcadia Ave., Peoria. Call 688-0950 for directions.

**10-12 Illinois Chapter Excom & Strategic Planning Meeting**  
FRI-SUN Illinois State Sierra Executive Board Meeting and Strategic Planning Meeting, with facilitator Paula Carrell, Sierra Club National staff, San Francisco. Meeting location to be announced. Call Joyce, 688-0950, for more information.

**15 Group Meeting, 7 p.m.**  
WED Forest Park Nature Center. *Jack Darin, Illinois Politics and the Environment.* Everyone is welcome!


**19 Jubilee Hike, 1 p.m.**  
SUN Get acquainted with Jubilee State Park! Meet at the Jubilee College State Historic Site parking lot. After a refreshing hike we plan to stop for pie at the Jubilee Cafe. Call Dick Klatt at 274-3792 for more information.

**20 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.

**21 Vote!**  
TUE  **Illinois Primary Elections Day**

## April

**12 Executive Meeting, 7 p.m.**  
WED Ralph Ginn's home, 20822 N. Blue Ridge Rd., Chillicothe. Call 274-3289 for directions.

**15 Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup, 9 a.m.**  
SAT  Route 26 volunteers meet at the Total Gas Station at the Rt. 26 & 116 intersection. Route 40 volunteers meet at the Fry Farm at the intersection of Rt. 40 and Singing Woods Road. Gloves and hard-soled shoes are recommended. Sorry, no helpers under 10 years due to safety concerns. For more information, or if you have not viewed the safety video (required), call Grayce Haworth at 246-8397.

Other 2000 Adopt-A-Highway dates:  
June 17 • Sept. 16 • Nov. 18

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

**Earth Day Celebration at Lakeview**  
**April 16 (Sun), 12-4 p.m.**


Lakeview Museum Front Lawn: Music, environmental displays, games, and children's environmental art.

**Earth Fest 2000**

**April 29 (Sat), 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

**Davis Caves, Armstrong, IL**

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](http://www.daviscaves.com) for more details.

 **Friends of the Rock Island Trail Workdays**

We are planning a spring workday. Call Trail Superintendent Melinda Kitchens at 695-2228 or 243-5082 for more information.

**16 Jubilee Hike, 1 p.m.**

SUN More trail walking at Jubilee State Park! Meet at the Jubilee College State Historic Site parking lot. Pie afterwards at Jubilee Cafe? Of course! Call Dick Klatt at 274-3792 for more information, or to suggest other alternatives.

**19 Group Meeting, 7 p.m.**

WED Forest Park Nature Center. *Barb McKasson, The Shawnee Forest Plan and the Illinois Wilderness Campaign.* Everyone is welcome!

**19 Newsletter Deadline**

WED Send articles for May & June to: John Wosik, 12409 N. Blackhawk Ct., Dunlap, IL 61525, or [jwosik@mtco.com](mailto:jwosik@mtco.com)

**22 Earth Day** 

**26 Newsletter Mailing, 7 p.m.**

WED Peoria Pizza Works; Everyone welcome!

 **Prairie Dawgs Work Crew**

*We need volunteers!* 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 more information.

 **Forest Park Nature Center Book Club**

March 28, 7pm - *Living Downstream* by Sandra Steingraber  
April 25, 7pm - *Where the Sky Began* by John Madson  
May 23, 7:30pm - *A Walk in the Woods* by Bill Bryson

Copies of all chosen books may be purchased at the Trailhead Nature Store at a 25% discount. For more information, call Kristin Jacobson at 686-3360.

## Heart of Illinois Sierra Club

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

### Executive Committee

Chair	Rudy Habben	685-5605
Vice-Chair	Norman Ewing	686-4127
Secretary	Joseph Laszlo	637-4692
Treasurer	Grayce Haworth	246-8397
Conservation Chair	Ralph Ginn	274-3289
Outings Chair	Richard Klatt	274-3792
Newsletter Editor / Chapter Del	John Wosik	243-2230
Membership Chair	Cindy Ewing	686-4122
Alternate Chapter Delegate	Joyce Blumenshine	688-0950
I-TAN	Mary Bodell	745-5479
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HEART OF ILLINOIS

**Sierra Club** 

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