

Tallgrass Sierran

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THE HEART OF ILLINOIS GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB ♦ P.O. Box 3593, Peoria, IL 61614 ☎ (309) 637-1393



Is There Intelligent Life in D.C.?



By RALPH GINN

Less than four years ago we saw U.S. Congressmen pounding on puffed chests, proclaiming their righteous outrage over a President who had engaged in oral sex in his private office. Today, we see those same Congressmen groveling like puppies, whining their approval of an inexperienced President's demand for war against an irrelevant dictator and his inconsequential country. A war driven by vendetta, pre-election politics, and oil. Both the President and the Congress are perfectly willing to send young Americans into harm's way, some to their death. Aren't politicians grand!

In the mid 70's President Jimmy Carter warned the Congress and the country that continued reliance on Persian Gulf oil was not in our best interest. He was summarily ignored by 4 presidents and 14 congresses. Now, we sit on the precipice of Gulf War II orchestrated by Bush II, only 11 years after Gulf War I by Bush I. It didn't have to be this way, and it should be clear, to anyone with a living brain cell, that the United States would be infinitely better off, weaned from the mid-east oil addiction.

The U.S. imports 60% of its oil, half of that comes from the middle east. In 1973, when OPEC first tripled crude oil prices, and the Arab oil embargo ensued, America imported just 33% of it's consumption. Today, 68% of our oil use goes to transportation. But, in March 2002 the U.S. Senate, by a 2-1 margin, voted down a bipartisan bill that would have required auto manufacturers, for the first time since 1985, to produce more fuel-efficient vehicles. The proposal was a gradual and reasonable approach that would have increased corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) to 36 miles per gallon by 2015. If adopted, oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge would have become mute as the saving would be far more than could be produced

there. In only 13 years America would be virtually independent of Persian Gulf oil.

Between 1973 and 1985 fuel efficiency of new vehicles doubled. There has been no progress since. Last October the Environmental Protection Agency reported that the new car fleet's fuel efficiency is the worst in two decades. It's not that improved vehicle fuel efficiency isn't within our capability. Hybrid vehicles that marry a gasoline engine to an electric battery that charges off the brakes will increase mileage by more than 30%. Ford's hybrid SUV, the Escape, will reach dealer lots in 2003, and get 40 mpg. Chrysler, Ford and GM all expect to have fuel cell vehicles on the road by 2004. The hydrogen-powered fuel cell cars are genuine zero emissions vehicles which run on hydrogen combined with oxygen from the air. Fuel cells are powering a fleet of Chicago's buses today. But, don't expect the auto industry to lead the way. They don't spend millions for lobbyists and campaign contribution to change the way Americans think about their vehicles. The hybrids and fuel cell cars are for a few parsimonious buyers with a fuel conservation conscience, not for the masses....unless the auto industry is forced to change. David Nemtzw, president of Alliance to Save Energy, says "If you want to find more oil for America, drill in Detroit."

It is no coincidence that Islamic terrorism progressively escalated, starting in the early 1970's, when revenues from sales of middle east oil took off. So, what's holding America back? The technology is available, the terrorism is real, another Gulf War lies in wait. For answers look to Washington, D.C. Reducing our country's dependence on Persian Gulf oil is a no-brainer.....if they (the politicians) only had a brain.

HOI Group Meetings

WED
NOV 20

Peoria Tri-County Trails for the Future
Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

Howard Goldbaum, Professor of Communications at Bradley University and Chair of the Tri-County Trails Planning Workgroup, will present a Powerpoint presentation on the updated and expanded trails plan for the Peoria metropolitan area. The new plan includes not only off road hiking and bike trails but also a water trail and prioritizes county roads and city streets for safe biking. *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*

WED
DEC 18

Happy Holidays!
Annual Potluck & Slides Party
Forest Park Nature Center, 6:30 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. 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!

The Downfall of America



BY LOUIS MARCHINI

A provocative college professor posed this question to his class. "What is it that makes this country one of the greatest in the world?" The answers were typical: "The ability to mass produce many things, the inventive ability of Americans, the get up and go of the American spirit, and so on." The professor responded, "You are patriotic and well intentioned, but those are not the most important reasons this country is so great.

His simple answer was: the combination of fertile ground, adequate rainfall, and a temperate climate. If one of these three things is missing, the other two are worthless. He went on to explain. The ability of our nation to feed itself with the effort of a small number of people is a resource few other nations enjoy. This ability left the rest of the country (now over 99%) with the time and energy to do all the things the students hastily answered had made this country great. Without this ability of the country to feed itself easily, many of the other "great things could not happen." You can't spend time being inventive or doing other constructive things when your day is consumed by the acquisition of food.

This nation is in the process of destroying one of those three basic elements - its farmland. The present and ongoing loss of America's greatest resource (loss of good farmland to sprawl) is made seemingly irrelevant and unimportant by events we live and see in the daily news.

We have more food than we can use. Farmers are struggling with low commodity prices that are sometimes below prices received before World War I. The government is saddled with the problem of commodity price supports that are a burden and a sore spot with many taxpayers. It may seem that sprawl, with the accompanying "jobs", "economic development, and reduction of crop production", must be a good thing. That view is offered by some respected writers. A few farmers look upon the conversion of good farmland into expansive and wasteful housing tracts, malls and industrial sites as an opportunity to cash in their land for a retire-

ment nest egg and also "helping other farmers" by reducing excessive farm production. The "rosy" picture of our declining amount of farmland is treacherously deceiving.

U. S. Department of Agriculture figures state that in the period from 1985 to 1999, 57 million acres of good farmland was lost to sprawl in the United States out of 1 billion acres of farmland. Using the USDA figures, all farmland would be gone in the United States in about 263 years. In the Illinois case, the Illinois farmland would be gone in about 300 years.

Two hundred or 300 years seems like a long time, but it is just a blink in the potential lifetime of our nation. Land lost to sprawl, malls and "economic development" would take at least 20 to 30 thousand years to become fertile if nature were allowed to restore its fertility. Humans would have to abandon it first. Each and every acre of fertile ground that is lost to sprawl is not recoverable within the foreseeable future of mankind. As the current trend to permanently destroying our good farmland continues, we are on a collision course to acquiring many of the impoverished characteristics of third world nations.

Sprawl has many facets and tentacles. It is fed by man's desire to "live in the country." This desire was recorded in stone tablets 500 years before the birth of Christ. We love the ability to go anywhere anytime. These desires are fed by the incessant construction of highways that make it much easier to develop good farmland. I once asked a question at a city meeting on who would use a proposed new roadway. The answer was, "Anybody that wants to." This mindless attitude towards wasteful new roads and expressways is still very much alive. The Illinois Department of Transportation throws out straw issues like how "little" farmland a particular proposed route would use versus another. The amount of farmland impacted by the immediate construction of a road is insignificant. The massive destruction of good farm ground comes with the

following development of good farm ground (sprawl) encouraged by the easy travel and access to previously "harder to reach areas."

We, and the rest of the world, are a growing population. Most of the world is in increasingly short supply of basic things necessary to life. Some countries scramble for food. They desire the better shelter and the mobility Americans are envied for. Even the United States finds itself in a quandary with respect to the increasing amount of energy that it populace demands and the availability of future energy sources. The availability and cleanliness of that energy is in question. Our farming ability is also tied to our ability to produce ethanol and soy diesel to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. The alarming loss of good farmland will be doubly impacted as our energy needs increasingly compete with the need for adequate food supply. We get, and deserve, little respect from the rest of the world for our luxury lifestyles. Who will sympathize with us when we have a shortage of food?

Well intentioned proponents of increasing the average fuel economy of automobiles have to examine the greater picture of the merits of "simply making it cheaper for more people to travel farther." The "picture" is more complicated than just "saving gas." What good does it do to increase fuel economy and decrease vehicle emissions, if it encourages more miles to be driven and along with the increasing number of vehicles results in outstripping the reduction in emissions and using more fuel overall? In this "fuel saving" scenario, we innocently encourage sprawl. It is a self perpetuating process. Sprawl is the single greatest waste of other precious resources - like clean air and oil. We should in fact encourage less fuel consumption by discouraging sprawl.

Our most fundamental and vital resource is rapidly being compromised. The loss of our country's ability to grow adequate amounts of food and possibly substitute energy forms is rapidly approach-

(Continued on page 5)

2002 HOI Excom 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 2003-2004 term to the Heart of Illinois Executive Committee.
3. Joint memberships may use Ballots #1 and #2.
4. Mail ballot(s) to: Joseph Laszlo
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. 20, or can be delivered to the Group Meeting on Nov. 20.
7. Ballots will be counted at the Group Meeting on Nov. 20.

2002 HOI Sierra Club Excom Election Ballot #1

_____ Joyce Blumenshine
_____ Cindy Ewing
_____ Ralph Ginn

2002 HOI Sierra Club Excom Election Ballot #2

_____ Joyce Blumenshine
_____ Cindy Ewing
_____ Ralph Ginn

Ballots Due November 20

Heart of Illinois Executive Committee Election: Candidate Statements

Joyce Blumenshine

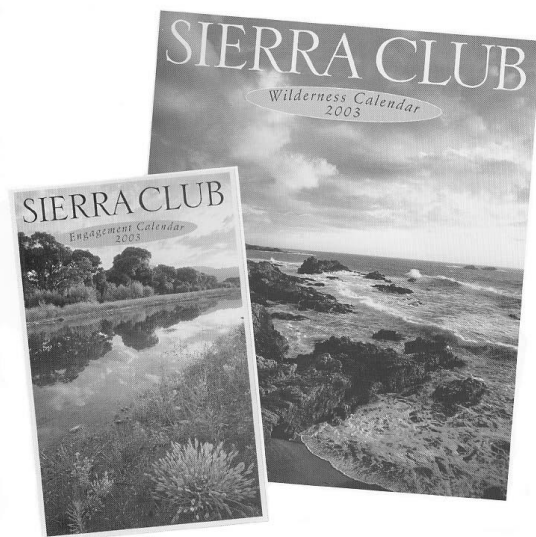
Heart of Illinois Sierra Club is a great bunch of people. I can truly say that volunteering with Sierra Club is an honor and a privilege, and I hope that more people make some time in their busy schedules to be involved with environmental activities and issues. This last year Heart of Illinois group has hosted two river issues press conferences, lobbied City Council for extension of the Rock Island Trail, worked to halt doubling the decorative lights on the I74 bridge, given comments at Army Corps hearings, and addressed a host of other local and national issues. I am running for the HOI Board to try to help however I can with environmental concerns. As a Sierra member since 1977, I have served in a variety of local group functions. I hope that you will have new issues and ideas that we can work on together as a group for a better environment, for our families and for our future.

Cindy Ewing

Because of my great respect for nature, I'm committed to learning more about our fragile ecosystems and to working actively in efforts related to environmental quality and the protection of wildlife. I've been a member of the Sierra Club for several years now and I've enjoyed and learned something from every meeting and outing I've attended. If elected to serve on the Executive Committee, I look forward to serving with and learning from the knowledgeable, experienced, and committed members of the Excom and I will do my best to support our organizational goals.

Ralph Ginn

The political climate at the state and national levels does not forecast well for the environment. Illinois is mired in deep debt, the U.S. Congress is, as always, focused on re-election and corporate benevolence, and the President obsesses over Iraq. It will take extraordinary effort from Sierra Club and other conservation groups to keep the environmental heart beating. I would like to be a part of that effort as a HOI EX-COM member.



2003 Sierra Club Calendars . . . The Perfect Christmas Gift!

Wilderness Wall Calendar (\$11.95) - Spiral bound, month-by-month format, featuring 12 majestic North American landscapes.

Engagement Calendar (\$12.95) - Week-by-week format, featuring 57 spectacular photographs and 'wire-o' binding.

To order, call Emiko Yang at 691-5213. Calendars will also be on sale at all Group meetings through January.



2002 LCV NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SCORECARDS

Richard Durbin (D)
Peter Fitzgerald (R)
Lane Evans (D)
Ray LaHood (R)

The League of Conservation Voters (LCV) has issued its 2002 Scorecard of the Second Session of the 107th Congress. The Scorecard represents the consensus of experts from 22 respected environmental groups who selected the key votes on which members of Congress should be graded. Included here are the scorecards for our U.S. Senators and the House members covered by the HOI Group's geographic area.

Check out the LCV homepage at www.lcv.org for more complete information on Congress' Environmental Scorecard.

1999 Environmental Scorecard	100%	44%	94%	19%
2000 Environmental Scorecard	100%	57%	93%	21%
2001 Environmental Scorecard	100%	38%	86%	50%
2002 Environmental Scorecard	88%	59%	88%	13%

+ = Pro-environment action
- = Anti-environment action

2002 VOTES	SENATE		HOUSE		Description of pro-environment position
Factory Farms	+	-			Support of Farm Bill amendment to ensure that taxpayer dollars do not subsidize new factory farms or the further concentration of existing operations.
Water Conservation	+	+			Support for Farm Bill program to help endangered fish and other freshwater species by allowing the sale, lease or transfer of water rights on 1.1 million acres of land under the 36-million-acre Conservation Reserve Program.
Nuclear Accident Liability	-	-			Opposition to continuing the subsidy to nuclear plant operators that limits their liability to the public in the event of a nuclear accident.
Drinking Water Protection	+	+			Support for the regulation of hydraulic fracturing, a mining procedure that uses the high-pressure injection of sand, water and chemicals into natural gas and oil wells to recover greater quantities of oil and gas, and which poses a serious threat to nearby drinking water supplies.
Fuel Economy I	+	-			Support to increase the CAFE standard for each manufacturers fleet of cars and light trucks to 36 miles per gallon by 2015.
Pickup Trucks Exemption	+	+			Opposition to an energy bill amendment that would prevent any future increase in fuel economy standards for pickup trucks.
20% Renewables	+	+			Support to require the largest investor-owned electric utilities to generate at least 20% of their electricity from renewable sources by 2020.
10% Renewables	+	+			Opposition to an energy bill amendment that would require utilities to offer electricity from renewable sources only to the extent available.
Arctic Drilling (scored twice)	+	+			Opposition to oil development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
Farm Conservation I			+	-	Support for a motion to instruct House conferees that the farm bill should contain a reasonable cap on crop subsidies and the resulting savings should go to boost funding for agricultural conservation and research programs.
Dam Relicensing	+	-			Support studying ways of making the relicensing of dams more efficient while maintaining environmental protections.
Municipal Solid Waste	+	+			Support for an energy bill amendment to make clear that garbage incineration is not a renewable energy source.
Renewable Fuel Liability Waiver	+	+			Support for an energy bill amendment to ensure that renewable fuels are not subject to a lesser liability standard than other motor vehicle fuels or additives.
Energy Efficiency	+	+			Support for a 30% increase (instead of 20%) in the minimum energy efficiency standard for central air conditioners and heat pumps.
Fuel Economy II	+	-			Support for an energy bill amendment that would require the Transportation Department to reduce the oil consumption of cars and light trucks by at least 1 million barrels per day by 2015.
Defense Exemptions			+	-	Opposition to granting the Defense Department sweeping exemptions from some of the nation's most important environmental and public health laws.
Farm Conservation II			-	-	Support for a motion to send the farm bill back to the House Agriculture Committee with instructions to restore the crop subsidy cap and dedicate much of the savings to conservation programs.
Yucca Mountain	-	-	+	-	Opposition to Yucca Mountain as a permanent nuclear waste storage facility.
CA Coastal Drilling			+	+	Support to prohibit drilling activity in 36 California offshore oil leases.
Klamath Farming Leases			+	-	Support to prohibit the Fish and Wildlife Service from issuing new commercial agriculture leases in the Klamath Basin for crops that have severe environmental impacts.
Right to Know			+	-	Opposition to a homeland security bill provision that would allow a private company to unilaterally determine whether information it shares with the government would be exempt from a number of public disclosure requirements.
Trade and Environment	+	-	+	-	Opposition to the Trade Act of 2002, which grants the President "Fast Track" trade negotiating authority but does not adequately encourage environmental protection and guard against weakening environmental standards.

Water Quality: Getting to the Source of the Problem

BY JOSEPH LASZLO, CHAIR

We have taken a tiny step forward in the fight for improved water quality in central Illinois. Over the past two years our group undertook a program to examine the water quality of the Illinois River. We found that the health of the river is threatened by high nutrient levels. Early this summer we released the results at a riverfront press conference. The point of all this was to influence the Illinois EPA so that the river would be included in their cleanup plans. And it worked! A few months following our press conference the IEPA published its list of rivers needing cleanup plans. Our segment of the river (Lacon through Peoria) was included, which is a surprising reversal from their preliminary intent.

Now, we can't take full credit, but a brief moment of celebration and self-congratulation might be in order. Working behind the scenes on our behalf were the folks in the Chapter office, particularly Jack Darin, executive director of the Illinois Chapter of Sierra Club, and Jen Hensley. They started us on the water monitoring project, got us the equipment and training, produced a lovely

brochure, and made sure that the powers that be in Springfield heard our message, from in front of the cameras as well as by more private conversations. What was accomplished was in every way a reflection of their hard work and I personally extend my gratitude to them for their efforts.

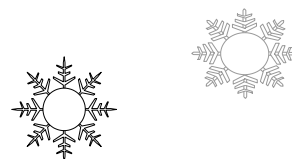
Listing a river is many steps away from implementing a cleanup plan, so we'll be keeping an eye on this issue for years to come. However, for the next year or so, we'll let our focus turn to another water quality problem, that caused by confined animal feeding operations (i.e., factory farms or CAFOs). We are planning to monitor streams in the vicinity of CAFOs throughout central Illinois for fecal contamination (E. coli and other coliforms). So if you live near one of these stinkers, we need your help. Specifically, give me a call if you know something about where and what streams might be impacted by CAFO lagoons and the fields where their manure is applied. You never know when a little shove will get things moving in the right direction.

(Continued from page 2)

ing. We will not be here, five or six generations down the road, to suffer the consequences. We have to plan for those generations that are doomed if we fail to plan. There are many reasons, and varied solutions, to curtail sprawl. Some may require change in our lifestyle. Discussion and dialog must come forth to form a national policy in order to solve the problem for future generations. Along with a more sensible approach to additional highways, an examination of the role in local mass transit, rapid train transit, rebuilding our inner cities, "green" energy sources, and making more efficient use of land is essential. Economic development can take place without sprawl.

All of us fiercely defend "our right" to do what we want with "our land." If we are to save this great country for future generations, we must ask ourselves the John F. Kennedy question of "What can we do for our country?" We must save our most precious and non-replaceable resource - our ability to produce food abundantly and cheaply. We may find substitutes for oil, but there is little hope of finding a substitute for food.

To save this wonderful nation, we must save our farmland! Feeling good about a new highway won't do it.



THANKS Peoria City Council! Trail Extension Moving Ahead!

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

At its meeting October 22, the Peoria City Council passed a series of issues that will make huge progress for the extension of the Rock Island Trail along the Kellar Branch line. Special thanks goes to the Council and Steve Van Winkle, City Engineer, Peoria Park District and City staff who have worked so hard on this issue. Thanks goes to Representative David Leitch for obtaining essential funding for this effort.



Membership

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

Name

Address

City

State ZIP

email

☐ Check enclosed, made payable to Sierra Club

☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa Exp Date

Cardholder Name

Card Number

Contributions, gifts and 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"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
SENIOR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
LIMITED INCOME	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

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