



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

HOI Group Meetings

WED
JAN 21

80° N. Latitude – Cruising Svalbard Norway's Cold Coast

Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

Join Rudy Habben for a slide presentation of the July 2003 Sierra Club sponsored 1,000 mile cruise around the arctic island of Spitsbergen on the Russian research ship "Professor Malchanov". We visit the fiords, some of the 2,800 glaciers, see reindeer, walrus pods, polar bears on ice flows, and Guilanat and Little Auk bird breeding sites. *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*

WED
FEB 18

Dirksen-McNaughton Woods Land & Water Reserve

Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

Thomas Lerczak, preservation specialist with the Illinois Nature Preserves commission, will present a program on the recent designation of over 800 acres in Dirksen-McNaughton Pekin Parks as a land and water reserve. The parks, often overlooked by residents of the metro area, have a trail system for wildlife viewing, including 18 forest-area-sensitive bird species. He will also outline a future stewardship program for the reserve. *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*

From the Sierra Club website:

- Hours motorists spend annually in traffic: 3.5 billion
- Gallons of fuel wasted annually in traffic congestion: 5.7 billion
- Base cost of a Toyota Prius: \$19,000.
- Percent of rivers, lakes and coastal waters in the U.S. that are unsafe for swimming or fishing: 40%

PDC Wants to Expand Hazardous Waste Landfill Tell Your County Board Members NO!

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

At the December 11th Peoria County Board meeting the Board voted to sign a Host Agreement to enable the Peoria Disposal Company to begin efforts to expand the PDC Hazardous Waste Landfill just west of Peoria. PDC will be applying to the Illinois EPA for permission to expand the amount of hazardous waste the company can dump west of Pottstown. Dave Pittman of Peoria PEACE, Tom Edwards, and Joyce Blumenshine from Heart of Illinois Sierra, asked the County Board to postpone their vote on the Host Agreement until more information about the situation could be researched.

County Board member Lynn Scott Pearson made a motion for delaying the vote, and several County Board members began to ask questions on various concerns. There was about a half hour of discussion. The attorney for PDC was asked to address the issue. The PDC attorney proceeded to brow-beat the Peoria County Board. He stated that the County would gain a bad reputation with businesses if they delayed their vote, as this agreement had been in process for some time and PDC is on a timetable with the project. The PDC attorney also stated that PDC did not have anything to gain from the Host Agreement, and that they were paying the county \$1.00 per ton for the Hazardous Waste, which the company did not have to do. County Board member Carol Trumpe then urged the Board to vote so that the County would not get a negative reputation with the business community, and hurt their good working relationship with PDC.

Major questions were not answered. The Host Agreement is a 30 year contract which specifies that PDC will pay the County \$1 per ton of solid hazardous waste dumped, and that the rate will be increased one cent per year. Statistics from PDC that appeared earlier and that were mentioned at the County Board meeting made the money for the county sound as though it could be in the area of \$100,000 a year. Tom Edwards checked the EPA reports on tonnage of solid hazardous waste dumped at PDC, and the actual current figure range for the last three years was from the 30,000 to about 45,000 tons. Dave Pittman questioned if the \$1 per ton with only a penny a year increase for thirty years is a fair amount for the County, and asked if any comparison was made with rates from other hazardous waste landfills. No comparison had been made. Tom Edwards checked with another Illinois hazardous waste landfill, and that location is currently paying \$15 per ton to their local entity.

The Peoria Disposal Company has been praised for their current technology and high quality liners for their hazardous waste dump. The environmental concerns that have always existed for the PDC site are that all landfills eventually leak and that when the PDC landfill leaks it could/will contaminate the Sandkoty Aquifer. There is a creek at the edge of the site, which eventually feeds into the Illinois River. Expansion of this hazardous waste site is not acceptable. If PDC wants to grow their hazardous waste business, they should find a location

(See *Landfill*, page 2)



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

(*Landfill, from page 1*)

away from any possible aquifer and groundwater contamination threat.

Please write and phone your Peoria County Board representative. Ask them if the County Board has done a good job in reviewing their Host Agreement for expansion of the Peoria Disposal Company Hazardous Waste Dump. PDC listed only \$2 million for cleanup funds if the landfill has a problem. Ask how much it costs to clean up an aquifer and why the County Board has saddled taxpayers with this liability. It would also be helpful to know why the Peoria County Board let themselves be pushed into accepting \$1 per ton of solid hazardous waste with only a penny a year increase in the payment, when they have no idea what other entities are being paid for similar agreements.

PDC brought this proposal forward at the Peoria County Board Health and Environment Committee in November, and it went to the full County Board in December. With the public distracted by the holidays, it would seem appropriate that a delay could have been granted on this important vote at least until the January meeting. Now the Peoria County Board has opened the proverbial floodgates, as PDC will proceed to request approval for expanding hazardous waste dumping at their site near Pottstown.

Check the Internet for Peoria County Board, and click on the Board member listing for addresses, or call your local library for the address information you need. Heart of Illinois Sierra Club is looking for pro bono legal assistance for this issue. If you or any attorney that you know could volunteer some time on

Tongass National Forest Give-Away

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

In a blatant holiday season give-away to the timber industry, President Bush has bypassed Roadless Area protections for the world's largest remaining old-growth temperate rainforest. Protected Roadless expanses of Alaska's Tongass National Forest will be opened for U.S. taxpayer subsidized, industrial-scale logging. Over the last 50 years the Tongass Forest has already lost 550,000 acres of centuries-old giant tress and has been marked by 5,000 miles of logging roads financed by the American taxpayer to the tune of tens of million of dollars per year, according to the General Accounting Office. Mark Rey, Bush's Undersecretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment and former timber industry lobbyist, is just one of the proverbial foxes in the chicken coup who have gutted the Roadless Protection and are stealing U.S. national forests and wilderness from the American public, wildlife that depend on the ecosystem, and future generations.

Write your outrage to your U.S. Representative and Senators, and send a letter to President Bush and your local newspaper. The Bush regime has bulldozed the National Roadless Area Conservation Rule,

which was enacted following more than two decades of broad debate and three years of official review and public participation. The rule was to protect remaining, unlogged and roadless expanses of National Forest lands 5,000 acres or larger from road building, commercial logging, mining and drilling. U.S. Department of Agriculture head Ann Veneman pledged to uphold the Roadless Rule two years ago, however, the agencies under her directorship have proceeded to chop away at these essential protections.

The Tongass National Forest stretches 500 miles along the southeastern coast of Alaska, and it is the last great expanse of old-growth rainforest within the United States. Its name comes from the Tongass clan of Tlingit Native Americans who inhabited the southernmost region of the area. The Tongass is home to the world's largest concentrations of bald eagles, grizzly bears, and Sitka black-tailed deer, and its clear streams are home to major runs of wild salmon. The Chugach National Forest, which is the nation's wildest with 98% of its area currently without roads is also on the chopping block.

Environmental Awards Presented at December Potluck

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

A festive spirit was in the air at the Heart of Illinois Sierra Club Annual Holiday potluck. Kim Sedgewick and Ron Dunbar received the group's highest honor by being selected for the HOI conservation activist awards for 2003. The award for Ron included his wife Cassie, who worked tirelessly on a variety of environmental and conservation projects until her untimely death last summer. Knox County defender and long-time environmental activist Jane

Johnston attended the meeting, and described the battle Kim and her fiancé Jeff Herrick have waged to save a unique heron rookery from destruction.

Good News for the Herons

An article in the December 30th Peoria Journal Star stated that Freeman United Coal Mining Company near Industry, Illinois, is idling operations. Worker layoffs were blamed on a reduction in coal usage and the slowed economy. Freeman United had been considering expanding their strip mine to an area along Grindstone Creek, which contains a unique heron rookery. HOI award winner Kim Sedgewick and her fiancé had been fighting the coal mining expansion in an effort to save the rookery.



Above: Kim Sedgewick, Jane Johnston, and Jeff Herrick

Right: Ron Dunbar and HOI Chair Ralph Ginn
Photos: Al Harkrader



Sugar Plums and Lumps of Coal

BY RALPH GINN

My "items of interest" file has accumulated for six months so I'm going to dump on you readers.

Let's do "sugar plums" first:

■ The All Terrain Vehicles (ATV's) lobby failed in their attempt to override the Governor's veto of SB1521. The bill would have opened most state lands to ATV's. The override did succeed in the Senate but was not considered by the House, and as a result the entire bill dies.....for now. Expect it to rise from the grave next year.

■ Aventine Renewable Energy Inc. (Pekin) has agreed to pay \$135,000 to settle a lawsuit filed by the Illinois Sierra Club alleging the plant polluted the Illinois River. The lawsuit claimed the ethanol plant discharged deoxygenating waste and ammonia into the river over its permitting limits. \$75,000 goes to the McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District, \$20,000 to Prairie Rivers Network, and \$40,000 to the U.S. Geological Survey.

■ Construction has begun on more than one mile of a hiking and biking trail that will be a link between Metamora High School and Black Partridge Park. The trail could eventually extend 10 miles and circle the entire village of Metamora.

■ HOI Sierra Club, in partnership with Planned Parenthood, has completed the first phase of a project that put sealable bags in each of Peoria's Walgreen stores. These "pouches" will be offered to all

customers who purchase birth control patches, along with information about the importance of disposing of the bagged patches in the garbage instead of the toilet. The hormones, impregnated in the patch, have been responsible for disruption of fish reproductive cycles in rivers throughout America.

Lumps of coal to the deserving:

■ President Bush nominated and the U.S. Senate confirmed (88 to 8) Utah Governor Mike Leavitt as head of the Environmental Protection Agency. Leavitt has long been a outspoken advocate of opening public lands to mining, gas and oil leases, and road building.

■ The Army Corps of Engineers marches on with a \$68 million study of a lock and dam expansion project on the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers, in spite of a second independent report, this time from The National Academy of Sciences, that criticized the corps for using a faulty economic model to determine that the \$2.1 billion project is justified.

■ The PEW Ocean Commission released a report that points to runoff from Midwest states, including Illinois, as the greatest pollution threat to Gulf coastal marine life. Nitrogen from fertilized fields, animal feed lots, and urban areas is causing massive algal blooms that deplete oxygen in the ocean and cause "dead zones."

■ The Army Corps of Engineers is proposing yet another study of the Illinois

River. This one, costing \$5 million, would examine the feasibility of restoring the river to its early 20th century condition.

■ The Bush administration is proposing to abandon the idea of treating mercury as a toxic substance requiring maximum pollution controls. They favor a plan that would allow power plants to "curtail emissions" through a pollution credits trading system. Mercury has long been known to be highly toxic to the human nervous system. It's their bad luck that Louis Carroll is dead, otherwise the Bushies might have persuaded him to cut the Mad Hatter* out of "Alice In Wonderland."

■ The Cheney energy bill is lurking on the U.S. Senate's January calendar. Senator Ron Wyden (Oregon) called it, "A hodgepodge of subsidies for the politically well-connected." "A bargain with the devil," said Senator Dick Durbin (Illinois). But the best line came from John McCain (Arizona), calling it the "Leave No Lobbyist Behind Act."

■ A final lump to our President, George Bush, who said, "It isn't pollution that's harming the environment. It's the impurities in our air and water that are doing it."

And what the heck is a sugar plum, anyway?

* In 19th century England, hat makers used mercury in their trade and suffered a high rate of "madness."

Wetlands Protection Act: Illinois Senate Vote in January

BY RALPH GINN

The Illinois Senate did not vote on the Wetlands Protection Act (HB 422) during the November veto session. It will probably be voted in mid-January. If you called your state senator in November, please call again, they have a short memory. If you did not call, **PLEASE CALL NOW!** If this bill fails, 60% of Illinois' remaining wetlands are vulnerable to drainage and row crop planting.

Local State Senators:

George Shadid (46th district)
phone: (309) 353 6276

Dale Risinger (37th district)
phone: (309) 693 4921
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John Sullivan (47th district)
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