



Tallgrass Sierran

May/June 2006 Volume 34 No. 3

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

HOI Group Meetings

WED
MAY 17

Illinois Woodlands

Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

The Illinois Department of Revenue is seeking uniform valuations of Illinois woodland resulting in higher property taxes. One way to avoid a possible property tax increase is to enroll in a state sanctioned forestry management plan. Ray Herman with the Illinois Forestry Association will outline the association's program for improving Illinois woodlands. *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*

WED
JUNE 21

Annual Potluck Picnic & White Elephant Auction

Detweiller Park – Moose Shelter, 6:30 p.m.

Join us for our annual summer potluck picnic and fundraising auction of unusual, useful, and tasty items donated by our members. Bring a main dish or other food to share, plus your own table service. Iced tea and lemonade will be provided.

This year's picnic will be held at the **Moose Shelter at the south end of Detweiller Park, Peoria.** Enter the park from Rt. 29 and follow Detweiller Drive toward the bluff. Turn left before ascending the bluff and follow the park road to the far south end of the park. Turn right at the Moose shelter sign. Or, from Knoxville Ave. (Rt. 40) take Detweiller Drive east, turn right at the park entrance sign, and then turn right twice immediately after descending the bluff. If you'd like, don't forget an item to donate to the auction. *And bring a friend! Everyone is welcome!*

"I'm My Own Grandpa"

BY RALPH GINN

The popular tune preformed by Lonzo and Oscar, and written by Dwight Latham and Moe Jaffe, sold four million records in 1948. A favorite at Western Music jamborees and barbeques, it strikes a score similar to the deliberate confusion and twists of the Bush Administration's policies and pronouncements on global warming. The song's lyrics trace a genealogical line involving marriage, incest, and births that is not to be taken seriously unless you're a fan of "Dueling Banjos" (from the movie "Deliverance") or you relish word riddles like the Bush global warming logic: "global warming needs more study, global warming is not supported by solid science, reducing greenhouse gases will harm our fragile economy," and later, "global warming is a concern" (admission of existence) with nary a word of taking any corrective action. Six former heads of the EPA --five Republicans and one Democrat-- have accused the Bush Administration of neglecting global warming. For this President, global warming is a problem postponed for remediation by a future President..... but that maybe too late.

Four years ago the Bush Administration issued new rules that would have allowed 20,000 aging power plants, oil refineries, and other big polluters to evade pollution laws written into the Clean Air Act. Recently, the U.S. Court of Appeals struck-down Vice President Cheney's creative subversion that would have threatened the health of millions of Americans and accelerated global warm-

ing. For the next 3 years, it is evident that emissions of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, ozone, sulfur dioxide, methane) will be reduced only by efforts of the states. California and a consortium of nine northeastern states are on the threshold of imposing reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Illinois' attorney general, Lisa Madigan, has accused the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) of ignoring repeated pollution violations by coal-burning power plants. In a letter to IEPA director Doug Scott she has documented more than 7,600 violations since 1999 at six plants, five near Chicago and one near Pekin, all owned by Midwest Generation.

The scariest consequence of global warming is a phenomenon called feedback loop.....when a small change leads to ever larger changes of a similar type. For example, a modest amount of warming in the Arctic melts permafrost. Some of its carbon and methane is released into the atmosphere, adding more greenhouse gases, which, in turn, further increases warming. Another feedback loop: the Greenland and Arctic ice caps shrank by more than 386,000 square miles in the summer of 2002, the largest decrease ever recorded. The resulting open water reflects 10% of the sunlight striking it, comparatively, ice reflects 90%. As the area of the earth's open sea increases, more of the sun's heat is absorbed and global temperatures rise. There are other danger signs. In the U.S. greenhouse gases rose 2 percent in 2004. Melting sea ice in the Arctic and Antarctic is disrupt-

(See *Grandpa*, page 2)



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Press Conference Points Out Mercury Contamination in Illinois Fish

By JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Allison Neumeister, Illinois PIRG (Public Information Research Group) was the lead speaker at an April 11th press conference on the Peoria riverfront. Illinois PIRG released data showing that average mercury levels in Illinois fish are 20% above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency safe limit. Heart of Illinois Sierra Conservation Chair Joe Laszlo, spoke on the environmental impact of six coal-fired power plants in our area, from Hennepin to Meredosia. These plants annually release 1,500 pounds of mercury into our atmosphere. The mercury then gets into rivers and lakes and builds up in fish. Jean Flemma, Prairie Rivers Network, Champaign, discussed concerns that stores do not post warnings on mercury contamination. Also participating in the press conference was Dr. William Scott, Medical Director for OSF Center for Occupational Health, who gave warnings that women of child-bearing age should limit their fish consumption to one serving per week, and that pregnant women should not eat Illinois fish. Mercury is toxic to developing infants and children, and can result in impaired nerve and brain development, learning disabilities, and other problems. Rudy Habben, HOI Sierra Board Member assisted at the press conference, and presented a poster with warnings for different kinds of Illinois sport fish.

Prairie Lane Road Plowed Battle to Save the Banner Fields and Wetlands from Strip Mining Continues

By JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Capital Resources Development Company has again made a low blow in their on-going efforts to strip mine at Banner. During spring planting preparations on fields next to Prairie Lane Road, the roadway just happened to be plowed by farm equipment. This is another assault on local efforts in preserving Prairie Lane Road, which is owned by Banner Township, and has historic significance to the community. The road right-of-way is in court since a push last spring by Capital Resources, through the local Banner road commissioner, to have the roadway vacated. Early this year, Capital Resources had hundreds of trees cut down on the Banner property, in spite of Illinois Department of Natural Resources documentation of eagle and osprey nests in the adjacent area. On-going efforts to stop the Capital Resources strip mine are being made by Banner Mayor Ken Fuller and by Citizens for the Preservation of Banner Township. Donations to help with legal expenses are greatly needed. Send your donation check made out to "Citizens for the Preservation of Rice Lake" to Mike Grigsby, 21574 N. US 24, Canton, IL 61520.

☐ Yes, I want to join the Sierra Club! My check is enclosed.

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Conservationist of the Year Nominations Sought

The HOI Executive Committee is seeking nominations for the **Heart of Illinois Conservationist of the Year**. The nominee does not have to be a Sierra Club member.

This individual's conservation efforts should have been pursued on a volunteer basis, not for pay. Your nomination should include a brief explanation of why you feel this person should be considered. The deadline for nominations is August 9th. The winner will be announced at our September Group meeting. Send nominations to **John Wosik, c/o HOI Sierra Club, 12409 N. Blackhawk Ct., Dunlap;** or call 243-2230.

(Grandpa, from page 1)

ing biotic cycles of polar bears, harp seals, penguins, and whales. Endangered species will be the norm across the poles in the not so distant future.

James Hansen, NASA's top climate expert appeared on "'60 Minutes" in March. He delivered a frightening message, "We have to, in the next ten years, begin to decrease the level of carbon dioxide emissions, and then flatten it out....if that doesn't happen there is a great danger of passing some tipping points. If ice sheets begin to disintegrate, what can you do about it?" The White House tried to censor Mr. Hansen from delivering that message. Dr. Jerry Mahlman, a climate

expert at the National Center for Atmospheric Research says, "We are in a state of deep denial about how severe the problem is. Are we an intelligent species or not? Right now the evidence is against."

While a few state officials try to fill the vacuum of leadership in combat of global warming, our President recently spent an hour chatting up author Michael Crichton at the White House. It seems Mr. Crichton has written a novel, "State of Fear," that includes some of his scientifically challenged ideas about global warming....ideas Mr. Bush found attractive.

Bill Maher host of HBO's "Real Time" talks about global warming, "This is not about being a liberal or a tree hugger; it's

not even about love of innocent animals--it's about even more profound love of my own butt. Man is the animal on the endangered species list I'm concerned about, especially this man." If you read the highlights from Maher's speech at Sierra Club's national meeting in San Francisco last fall, you probably realize he has a stinging comedic style that reveals a serious conservation ethic. Maher's remark about global warming, begs for an answer to why there is no urgency among Americans, and peoples of the world for their own survival, and the survival of their children and grandchildren.

Closure of Toxic Waste Landfill in the Offing

BY TOM EDWARDS

Peorians are nearing the culmination of the citizen led effort of what is now almost certain to be a truly history making and nationally leading decision — if the Peoria County Board denies expansion of the Peoria Disposal Company's huge toxic waste landfill directly adjoining the densely populated west side of Peoria. The toxic wastes of a dozen or more states which don't have or allow such landfills are being shipped here.

On Wednesday, May 3, at a special 5 p.m. meeting at the Itoo Hall on Farmington Road the county board will take its final vote (the first was 10 to 7) on what many now think will be the most crucial decision affecting the future health and well being of the county in its history. It is certainly the most vital decision the board has ever had facing it.

Heart of Illinois Sierra Club founder Bill Rutherford put it succinctly in a letter to the Journal Star Jan. 29: "This landfill is the worst thing I have seen in my 90 years in this community. I say that without reservation." [His letter was written shortly after attending PDC's presentation to the city council.]

This will be a leading example for the rest of the nation if the county board takes the final step and forges ahead with bringing closure of this hazardous landfill — which the Illinois EPA mistakenly permitted in a bygone era to be located atop the major water supply aquifer of the Peoria area, and upwind of the city. Few if any other states have granted such local controls to the siting of landfills.

This campaign has been unique in that it has not been a "fight," but a long grass-

roots effort that began now over two years ago in which Sierra was initially involved with River Rescue along with members of Unitarian and Unity Churches, Native American Fellowship, Peace Group, Holy Family Catholic Church. A host of others have distributed River Rescue's information flier-petition; those so far returned contain 6,250 signatures.

Misconception:

A fear that has been voiced is that there may be an expense to local taxpayers to permanently close and care for this landfill. This is not the case! No more so than would sparsely populated Woodford or Fulton Counties be responsible for funding the closing of a privately owned landfill used by a dozen states under an Illinois EPA permit, as is PDC's. The original permit for this landfill was issued by the state EPA in 1987 over local objections — and before demands that brought a change in state law that gave local governments authority to say yes or no to landfill locations and expansions. It was the EPA's mistake to allow it where it is, a high risk site for both the local water supply and air contamination. It is the state's responsibility to close it, probably with federal aid.

Review of Particulars:

- PDC is asking the county for a permit to operate another 15 years and add 2.2 million tons more toxic waste, over twice as much as it reports has been put there since 1987 — and an amount that would fill 150 of one of Peoria's Twin Towers.

- It is on a hilltop sitting over the sand-gravel aquifer from which the majority of the Peoria area's water supply is drawn. It also sits immediately upwind of the city, and in studies elsewhere in the U.S. and Europe higher rates of birth defects, premature births, and strokes were found in people living in the vicinity of hazardous waste landfills, attributed to chemicals volatilizing into the air.
- The Illinois EPA permit allows 843 of the most toxic chemicals known short of nuclear waste to be put in PDC's landfill - and requires testing for only 20 of them, with highly toxic mercury not one of them. Its EPA permit expires this year.
- Also, of the listed "20 most dangerous substances found at superfund sites," 19 of them are permitted to be put in PDC's landfill
- PDC wants to increase the height of half of its 64-acre landfill by 45 feet (five stories), and add a new 8.2 acres. It would then become 10 stories higher than any other hilltop in the vicinity.
- Extensive dumping had been going at this site since the 1940s, according to U.S. Geological Survey maps. Safeguards such as liners were not required until 1987.
- Post-closure requirements are still far too nebulous and risky. If the landfill does contaminate the groundwater aquifer, not even a billion dollars would save it. And 15 years from now PDC might have dissolved. We need to take care of this now.

Thank You to the Magnificent 10!

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Great thanks goes to the ten Peoria County Board members who voted in opposition of the PDC Hazardous Waste Landfill expansion permit at the April 6th special meeting. HOI Sierra sends a sincere *Thank You* to Brian Elsasser, Jeff Joyce, Allen Mayer, Lynn Scott Pearson, Mike Phelan, Phil Salzer, Jim Thomas, Carol Trumpe, Junior Watkins and Board Chair Dave Williams. In the face of daunting pressures and financial enticements, these County Board members voted that facts did not prove that expansion of the facility was needed; that the expansion would not protect the public health, safety, and welfare; and that the expansion would impact nearby properties and property values. The final vote on the hazardous waste landfill expansion is May 3rd. Please phone and write to the County Board members listed above to let them know your appreciation for their vote and your support for their efforts.

All Hands On Deck!

YOU ARE NEEDED at the Wednesday, May 3rd, Peoria County Board Special Meeting: PDC Vote Will Be Made

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Please mark your calendar for Wednesday, May 3rd, 5 p.m. at the Itoo Hall, 4909 W. Farmington Road, Peoria. The Peoria County Board will be taking a final vote on the PDC Hazardous Waste Landfill Expansion Application. Your presence is needed to give witness to this critical vote. We need everyone possible at this meeting to show our concern for stopping 2.2 million additional tons of hazardous waste from coming into our county over the next 15 years. The Peoria County Board needs to see public concern. For directions or more information, phone 688-0950.

HOI Group Calendar



May

3 WED Final Vote on PDC Landfill Expansion, 5 p.m.
Peoria County Board final vote on the Peoria Disposal Company Hazardous Waste Landfill Expansion permit, 5 p.m. at the Itoo Hall, 4909 W. Farmington Rd., Peoria. PLEASE ATTEND! This is the County Board's final vote, and the public needs to be on hand for this process.

7 SUN Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup, 9 a.m.
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 Rudy Habben at 685-5605.

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

17 WED Group Meeting, 7 p.m.
Forest Park Nature Center. *Ray Herman, Illinois Woodlands*. Everyone is welcome!



Recycle Your Aluminum Cans and Help Raise Money for the HOI Sierra Club

Save your aluminum cans over the summer and help raise money for the Heart of Illinois Sierra Club! Drop off your cans at Forest Park Nature Center parking lot at our September 20th Group meeting, or on Saturday, September 23rd, from 10 a.m. to noon. Your donation will help finance HOI Group operating expenses, including this newsletter. Please call 243-2230 for more information.



June

14 WED Executive Meeting, 7 p.m.
John Wosik's home, 12409 N. Blackhawk Ct., Dunlap. Call 243-2230 for directions.

18 SUN Newsletter Deadline
Send articles for July/August to: John Wosik, 12409 N. Blackhawk Ct., Dunlap, IL 61525, or johnwosik@insightbb.com.

21 WED Annual Potluck Picnic & White Elephant Auction, 6:30 p.m.
Detweiller Park, Moose picnic shelter. See front page for more details.



24-25 Renewable Energy & Sustainable Living Fair

Renewable Energy and Sustainable Living Fair, Custer, Wisconsin (near Stevens Point). We will leave in the early hours of Saturday, June 24th, and plan on hearing keynote speaker James Kunstler, author of numerous fiction works and the recent nonfiction book, *The Long Emergency: Surviving the End of the Oil Age, Climate Change, and Other Converging Catastrophes*. This is a great get-away to be enthused with new ideas and products for a more environmentally conscious life-style. Phone 688-0950 no later than June 18th, if you wish to attend. Camping or an area motel will be considered for the evening of June 24th.

26 MON Newsletter Mailing, 6:30 p.m.
Peoria Pizza Works, 3921 N. Prospect Rd., Peoria Heights

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



Prairie Dawgs Work Crew

The Prairie Dawgs meet the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month at Jubilee State Park. Work includes prairie burns, brush cutting, eradicating alien plants, native plant seeding, and planting root stock. Call Doug Franks at 691-7993 for more information.

Springdale Volunteers

Springdale Cemetery is in a year long program of restoration of hillsides and stream banks. To volunteer and receive information on projects, call Pat Lewis, cemetery manager, at (309) 681-1400. Retirees are especially welcome.

Picturing the River...

Be Part of the Peoria Art Guild's Photography Exhibit

The Peoria Art Guild invites community members of all ages to participate in their upcoming photography exhibition called *Illinois River Stories*. This is a unique exhibit featuring the work of ten leading professional photographers whose work focuses on different aspects of the Illinois River. The public is being invited to add their photos to the exhibit. Tell your story about the Illinois River. Your photographs can show anything that happens in, around, or under the water. Up to three photos may be submitted by any one entrant. Deliver your entries between June 25 and July 1. Entry forms are available at the Peoria Art Guild, 203 Harrison St., Peoria. The exhibit will show at the Peoria Art Guild from August 18 to September 23. The Guild is also planning art and conservation events, field trips and programs. For more information contact Channy Lyons, exhibit coordinator, 691-2937.

Heart of Illinois Sierra Club

Hotline: Local Meetings & Outings • Action Alerts
Contacts • Leave Messages (309) 637-1393

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HEART OF ILLINOIS

Sierra Club

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