

Tallgrass Sierran

January/February 2007 Volume 35 No. 1

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

HOI Group Meetings

WED
JAN 17

Emiquon Update

Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

Nature Conservancy Illinois River Coordinator Jason Beverlin will give an overview of the 11,000 acre Emiquon wetland restoration program. Before the presentation, Ted Turlentes will be given the Heart of Illinois Group Conservationist of the Year 2006 Award.

WED
FEB 21

The End Of Suburbia

Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

Join us for the movie, *End of Suburbia*. Suburbia, and all it promises, has become the American Dream. But as we enter the 21st century, serious questions are beginning to emerge about the sustainability of this way of life. With brutal honesty and a touch of irony, *The End of Suburbia* explores the American Way of Life and its prospects as the planet approaches a critical era, as global demand for fossil fuels begins to outstrip supply.

PDC Hazardous Waste Landfill Issue is Not Over

Your attendance is needed at the following hearings:

January 8 to 11, 9 a.m.

Illinois Pollution Control Board hearings on the Peoria Disposal Company appeal of the Peoria County Board vote begin at 9:00 a.m. each day at the Itoo Hall, 4909 W. Farmington Rd., Peoria

February 28, 5:30 p.m.

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency hearing on the Peoria Disposal Company Hazardous Waste Landfill operating permit extension, at the downtown Peoria Public Library, 107 N.E. Monroe

See page 2 for more information.

Bill Rutherford: Memories

BY RALPH GINN

In the fall of 1970 a few months after the first Earth Day, Bill Rutherford invited the public to a meeting at Forest Park Nature Center in Peoria Heights. The purpose of the meeting was to organize a regional Sierra Club Group. Heart of Illinois Sierra Club was born that night. But, Bill Rutherford was always a page ahead of everyone else and his underlying agenda was twofold: add a national environmental organization's support for his plan to develop and then deed to the State of Illinois the property abandoned for rail transportation by the Rock Island Railroad, property he had persuaded the railroad to donate to Forest Park Foundation, the foundation he and his wife Hazel controlled; the second item on Bill's wish list was to build local support opposing a project initiated by the C.A. Powley Company in East Peoria to backfill more than two acres of Lower Peoria Lake just north of the I-74-116 interchange, the space to be used for commercial property.

On that fall night 30 plus people filled the Nature Center's meeting room, Hal Gardner was elected chairman, I vice chair, and Tom Edwards conservation chair. Long before the meeting ended Bill Rutherford excused himself with a smile on his handsome face. Development of the Rock Island Trail and "Save Peoria

Lake" became the two nascent issues for HOI and unlike many to follow both would be remarkably successful, but not without setbacks and delays.

The Rock Island Trail would not open to the public for ten years, delayed by farmers with nearby property and a state legislator who pleaded fears of minority gangs from Chicago, descending on corn-and-bean-land, to rape and rob the good people of Alta, Dunlap, Princeville, Wyoming and Toulon.

In Memoriam

Celebrating the Life of Bill Rutherford
December 28, 1914 – November 21, 2006

Sierra Club Member,
Founder of Heart of Illinois Group,
and Attorney for Sierra Legal Defense

Bill, We thank you, we miss you,
but we will never forget you.
Your Good Deeds Will Live on
For Future Generations.

The Save Peoria Lake campaign was much shorter and ended when the Powley Company withdrew their permit request and, within two years, declared bankruptcy.

Bill Rutherford went on

to have a hand in many other HOI efforts over the last 36 years of his very full life. He died at age 91 in late November, his legacy unmatched by any other, from our part of the country. I witnessed a meeting in those first years that was virtuoso Bill Rutherford. It was a gathering of representatives from the Illinois Conservation Department (now Natural Resources), Army Corps of Engineers, HOI, The Powley Company and its attorney. Bill had managed to get himself designated as moderator of the meeting. As proponents and opponents spoke for three hours, all but one became tired and restless.

(See *Bill Rutherford*, page 2)



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Peoria Disposal Company Hazardous Waste Landfill Issues Update

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Peoria Disposal Company has appealed to the Illinois Pollution Control Board and is contesting the Peoria County vote against their Hazardous Waste landfill expansion. The Illinois Pollution Control Board Hearing on the PDC Appeal of the County Vote will be held Monday, January 8th through Thursday, January 11th, beginning each day at 9 a.m. at the Ito Hall, 4909 West Farmington Road, Peoria.

PDC is stating that they did not receive a fair hearing and correct notification of the County Board decision, among other issues. Attorneys for PDC have subpoenaed numerous citizens who spoke out against the landfill, for a second time, and will question them before the Illinois Pollution Control Board hearing officer. You can view documents posted on the Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) website regarding the Peoria Disposal Company appeal of the Peoria County Board vote at: <http://www.ipcb.state.il.us/Cool/External/CaseView2.asp?referer=coolsearch&case=1300> or go to the Illinois Pollution Control Board website; click on COOL, the Clerk's Office Online; select "View Case

Information" and search by Peoria County.

The public will be allowed to comment at some time during this process, however, at press time for this issue of *Tallgrass Sierran*, that time is not yet known. Call the Heart of Illinois Sierra Club information line at 309-637-1393 for updates on hearing times and scheduling.

Citizen comments are needed for both the Illinois Pollution Control Board, and for the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA).

The IEPA hearing will be February 28th at the Peoria Public Library downtown, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The IEPA is preparing to extend the operating permit for the Peoria Disposal Company Hazardous Waste Landfill up to ten years.

Your comments are needed! You can speak at this hearing and / or send a letter. The PDC permit extension application, the IEPA draft permit and related fact sheet is available for viewing at the downtown Peoria Public Library, 2nd floor, Business, Science, Technology Department.

IEPA has also published that PDC has applied to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to increase its existing

authority to accept waste containing PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). PCBs are persistent organic pollutants known to have a variety of adverse health effects, including as endocrine and immune system disruptors and they are carcinogenic.

Members of Heart of Illinois Group Sierra Club and Peoria Families Against Toxic Waste requested that the IEPA consider findings of the Peoria County Staff review of the PDC landfill information, and require that PDC complete many of the upgrades and safety measures listed by the Peoria County Staff report. Examples of these safety measures include using closed collection tanks for leachate; adding leak detection monitors to man-hole sumps; reevaluating the routine groundwater monitoring program and begin measuring compounds such as chloride and sulfite; and implementing an ambient air monitoring program at the site.

Written comments to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency must be postmarked by midnight March 30, 2007, and should be sent to:

Stephanie Flowers
Hearing Officer (#21); Illinois EPA
1021 North Grand Ave. East,
P.O. Box 19276

(Bill Rutherford, from page 1)

Bill, subtly and gradually took over the meeting. Starting with nuanced and carefully worded points of agreement he, astoundingly teased a concession from Powley that would, to their apparent unawareness, doom the entire project. Everyone, HOI, Conservation, The Corps, and Powley walked away happy, albeit the latter for a very short time. A few of us shook our heads in disbelief, "How did that happen?" The answer: Elmer Gantry (alias Bill Rutherford) made a brief reincarnation in East Peoria that night.

The curtain is down on the Bill Rutherford era and there may not be another with his accomplishments: Wildlife Prairie Park, Forest Park Foundation land acquisitions scattered over several countries, Forest Park Nature Center, The Rock Island Trail, Heart of Illinois Sierra Club. He will not be forgotten.

Thanks



BY KIERSTEN SHEETS

Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival a Success!

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival held at the Apollo Theatre on November 3rd and 4th. The event was a very successful fund raiser for the Heart of Illinois Sierra Club, raising over \$1,000.00! Each night was a success, with a sold out show on Saturday night for the presentation of Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. Thankfully, due to a huge showing of public interest, more opportunities for public education on recycling, global warming and other environmental issues may come about. While you are waiting for those opportunities, please take a moment to mark your calendar for the first weekend in November 2007 for another environmental film festival!

North Canton Strip Mine Applying for U.S. Army Corps Permit and IEPA Permit Donations Needed

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

The coal strip mine proposed for a 1,085 acre site north of Canton Lake, will impact the watershed currently providing water for Canton Lake and 18,500 people. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has published a public notice for comments, as streams going into the Illinois River will be impacted by the mine. The Army Corps states, "The decision whether to issue the Corps permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity on the public interest." While Canton is planning a pipeline to bring water from the Illinois River for their community water supply, this system is not in place. Sierra Club members have asked why a watershed should be strip mined and destroyed for just ten years of coal profits. Such short-term gains at the cost of sustainable water resources are not in the best long-term interests of the public at large and for a sustainable environment.

Your donations are needed to help with flyers and outreach on this issue. Please send a check made out to Heart of Illinois Sierra Club, c/o Treasurer, P.O. Box 3593, Peoria, IL 61614, and indicate that it is for the North Canton strip mine effort.

Thanks to Rep. Dave Leitch for His Vote! JCAR Approves Mercury Cut-Backs

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

In early December, the Joint Commission on Administrative Rules, the bipartisan legislative oversight committee of the Illinois General Assembly, approved a plan to drastically reduce mercury pollution from coal-fired power plants. Representative Dave Leitch is on this commission and was part of the unanimous vote to require Illinois coal-fired power plants to install modern pollution control equipment. The new regulations are intended to reduce mercury pollution by 90%. This is a huge step for Illinois, and gives our state among the toughest mercury regulations in the nation. Let Rep. Leitch know your thanks and appreciation for his vote in support of reducing toxic mercury pollution.

Phone his local office, 685-3900, or send a thank you card to Rep. Dave Leitch, 3114 N. University, Peoria, IL 61604.

Future Looking Brighter for the Springdale Cemetery Savanna

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Thanks to everyone who wrote a letter or phoned! The Peoria Springdale Cemetery management said they received 40 letters of concern about the savanna. There will be an agenda item for the January meeting of the Cemetery Board to affirm protection of the savanna for the next ten years, with the condition that Peoria Wilds burn or mow the savanna every two years. Thanks to Dave Pittman who pledged \$100. toward insurance needed for the prairie burn and spoke eloquently to the cemetery board at their December meeting.

Lt. Governor Gives Award to Jane Johnson

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Long-time environmental activist Jane Johnson, of Knox County, will receive an Environmental Hero award from Lt. Governor Pat Quinn, December 28th, at the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago. Jane Johnson's work in fighting strip mines in Illinois took her to Washington, D.C., as a key proponent for mine reclamation laws in the 1970's. She wrote the petition that succeeded in protecting Rice Lake Conservation Area from being strip mined. In addition to many other environmental projects, Jane has been a constant advisor for the Citizens for the Preservation of Banner Township and their efforts to protect floodplain land from strip mining at the edge of Banner. She is the lead for the Citizen's Organizing Project, a coal issues group in Illinois, and was instrumental in the national Citizen's Coal Council. Jane has received numerous awards, including the HOI Conservationist of the Year, and she has been an HOI Sierra member since 1986. Jane is an truly amazing and phenomenally dedicated person. Congratulations Jane!

Special Thanks to Grayce Mesner!

Heart of Illinois Group Sierra gives its great appreciation to Grayce Mesner, our group treasurer for over ten years. Grayce has faithfully paid bills, kept our financial records, prepared monthly treasurer's reports, and dealt with all the work that keeps our finances in order. Grayce, we thank you very much! Your dedication and years of volunteer effort have been a great contribution to this group. Grayce has been working with Chris Golden, who was appointed at the December HOI Group Board meeting, and will be taking on the Treasurer's duties. Thank you Grayce! Your years of work have been a mainstay for this group.

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

Name


Address

City State Zip

Introductory ☐ \$25 Individual ☐ \$39 Joint ☐ \$47

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.

Please mail this to Sierra Club,
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Colorado, 80322-2968

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HOI Group Calendar

January

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

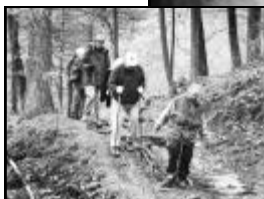
17 **Group Meeting, 7 p.m.**
WED Forest Park Nature Center. Nature Conservancy Illinois River Coordinator Jason Beverlin will give an overview of the 11,000 acre Emiquon wetland restoration program. Everyone is welcome!

Sunday, January 28

Starved Rock Winter Hike

The Heart of Illinois Sierra Club will sponsor their 29th annual winter hike at Starved Rock State Park on Sunday, January 28. Everyone is invited to participate in this annual outing. Meet at the Forest Park Nature Center in Peoria Heights at 9 a.m. for the trip to Starved Rock, or meet in the Great Hall of the Starved Rock Lodge at 10:30 a.m.

The approximate 4-hour slow paced outing will explore some of the picturesque areas of the park that should also include bald eagle sightings and other photo opportunities. Dress for the weather, including waterproof footwear and pack a lunch to eat on the trail. On the return trip to Peoria, an optional dinner stop is planned at Mona's Italian Restaurant in Toluca. For additional information, contact Chuck Buchna at 368-4446.



From Past Hikes

Photos: Al Harkrader



February

12 MON Executive Meeting, 7 p.m.
Joyce Blumenshine's home, 2419 E. Reservoir Blvd., Peoria. Call 688-0950 for directions.

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

21 **Group Meeting, 7 p.m.**
WED Forest Park Nature Center. Movie: *The End of Suburbia*. Everyone is welcome!

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.)

**Illinois Pollution Control Board Hearing
on PDC Expansion Permit
January 8 to 11, 9 a.m.**

Illinois Pollution Control Board hearings on the Peoria Disposal Company appeal of the County Board vote begin at 9:00 a.m. each day at the Ito Hall, 4909 W. Farmington Rd., Peoria

IEPA Hearing on PDC Permit Extension
February 28, 5:30 p.m.

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency hearing on the Peoria Disposal Company Hazardous Waste Landfill operating permit extension, at the downtown Peoria Public Library, 107 N.E. Monroe

HOI Board Welcomes New Members!

A warm welcome to new board members Bob Jorgenson, Diane Jorgenson, and Dave Pittman, who will begin two year terms on your local Sierra Excom in January, 2007. Congratulations to Wendy Marquis, who has been elected to a full two year term, after filling an earlier vacancy. Joe Laszlo, Rudy Habben, and John Wosik will complete their current terms at the end of 2007. New 2007 officers will be elected at the January 10th Excom meeting. The dedication, time and efforts of the HOI Board members are sincerely appreciated.

Heart of Illinois Sierra Club

Hotline:

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

Executive Committee

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