



Tallgrass Sierran

March/April 2007 Volume 35 No. 2

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

HOI Group Meetings

WED
MAR 21

Sierra Club Cool Cities Campaign

Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

Sierra Club Midwest staff person Becki Clayborn is the conservation organizer for the Illinois Cool Cities Campaign. She will present the Cool Cities energy conservation plan and how it can be implemented. *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*

WED
APR 18

Utah Wilderness & Legislative Update

Forest Park Nature Center, 7 p.m.

Clayton Daughenbaugh, Utah wilderness advocate, will review federal wilderness legislation regarding Utah. Senator Durbin's Utah wilderness bill will be a key topic. *All are welcome! Refreshments served after the meeting.*

Special Thanks to Elaine Hopkins

Work Well Done and Happy Retirement New Blogger!

Heart of Illinois Sierra Club extends its high respect and great appreciation to Elaine Hopkins, who retired from the Peoria Journal Star February 9th.

Elaine's reporting and coverage of environmental issues have made a great impact, and have been news upon which we all depend. Thank You Elaine!

In less than a week after her retirement, Elaine has begun PeoriaStory, her blog on Peoria issues at <http://peoriastory.typepad.com>

A White Flag for the Kellar?

BY RALPH GINN

Ten years will not be enough time, this time. A decade was the time it took to convert the Rock Island Railroad, from Alta to Toulon, into a biking-hiking trail. The Kellar Branch hook-up will take longer, or be chimerical.

The Kellar Branch facts: the conversion of the old, virtually abandoned for lack of customers, railroad would link the Rock Island Trail, with the Pimiteoui Trail that runs along the Illinois River front; area residents and visitors could ride/hike from Morton to Toulon on connected trails, if the Kellar Branch and a short section in East Peoria are completed; the City of Peoria owns the Kellar Branch; the Peoria Park District has a transportation grant of \$3.5 million that would fund most of the rail-to-trail conversion, but some of the grant has expired and the remainder is in danger of the same; legal maneuvers by Pioneer Railcorp have tied up the Kellar for years, with assistance from an enabling federal Surface Transportation Board's (STB) tortured rulings that have, in reality, taken control of the rail from the owner, City of Peoria; In a very generous concession, the City built a spur, at a cost of \$2.3 million, to serve the lone Kellar customer, Carver Lumber, Carver returned the favor with a kick in the ___ by petitioning the STB to allow Pioneer to serve them on the Kellar and dismiss Central Illinois Rail (CIRY) from serving them on the new spur; in twisted logic the STB denied Pioneer's request to provide service to Carver, but later ruled they

would re-consider Pioneer's petition, that ruling is pending.

If the above is puzzling to you, join the rest of us that have followed this bureaucratic nightmare for ten years. There are, however, several pressure points to be squeezed by the public. The City of Peoria has not been consistently aggressive in the pursuit of the trail and more benign now than at anytime in the past. They spent \$2.3 million on the spur and now seem content to dump that investment in the trash bin. Without the City's hard-line support the trail is doomed. 18th district Congressman Ray LaHood has been helpful at a level of one on a ten scale. After calling for a "white flag" he revealed his knowledge deficit by proclaiming that "trial supporters have been jerked around and we need to build a trail next to the rail." This is not going to happen. The cost of a side-by-side trail is \$29 million, compared to the rail-to-trail at \$6 million. Safety concerns effectively rule out a side-by-side trail because of the poor condition of the track. Federal inspectors have ruled it unsafe, and trains do derail, even on good tracks.

There are several tangential scenarios: Peoria Heights mayor Mark Allen, reversing earlier support for the trail, is now proposing a transportation trolley along the Kellar, a gambit originally offered by Pioneer; the City of Peoria is considering Pioneer's offer of a half million dollars for the Kellar; the STB could rule in favor of Pioneer and Carver. If any one of these become reality, the trail is gone.

(See *Kellar*, page 2)



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

It's Easy to Be Green: Start Small to Be More Energy Efficient



save money
save the environment

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Have you replaced your standard light bulbs with Compact Fluorescent/Energy Saving Bulbs? If not now, when?

Decide today to start making your home more energy efficient. Compact Fluorescent Light (CFLs) Bulbs use about a quarter of the power of a standard bulb, which makes them a step in cutting power use and power plant pollution. CFLs are typically guaranteed for 8,000 hours and the old familiar incandescent bulbs last 500 to 2000 hours. CFLs save enough money in electricity costs to make up for their higher initial price within about 500 hours of use. A CFL will save up to \$36 in electricity, compared to the incandescent bulb, during its rated life according to Wikipedia.. Along with that savings in your electric bill is

the critical savings in energy consumption. Start your own power down for the planet now!

Remember that CFLs must be disposed of properly. These bulbs contain trace amounts of mercury, which means they should not be thrown away in typical trash. Check if the store where you purchase CFLs collects them for recycling, or keep your worn out CFLs for a local hazardous waste garbage collection day. In Europe, the purchase of a CFL includes an amount to pay for recycling, and manufacturers and importers are obligated to collect and recycle CFL lamps. The more of us that use CFLs, the more we can request convenient recycling. Philips and GE are stated to make very low mercury content CFLs.



Illinois Opportunity Coming in March

Opportunity ahead: How about a spring resolution! Plan now to donate to your state Sierra Club fund appeal. The proceeds for the Illinois Sierra Chapter March fund appeal stay in our state for Illinois environmental efforts. Reallocations of national Sierra Club funds have meant cuts in state program support. Your contributions are really needed.

☐ 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,
P.O. Box 52968, Boulder,
Colorado, 80322-2968



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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

(Kellar, from page 1)

Long time leader of Recreational Trail Advocates (RTA) George Burrier says that after years of optimism, he is now pessimistic that the Kellar will ever be converted to a trail. But, it is not unreasonable to think that LaHood, Obama, and Durbin have some clout with the STB. And they, in turn, along with the Peoria and Peoria Heights mayors, and their city councils can be influenced by the public. If you are inclined to vent, Carver Lumber and Pioneer Railcorp are richly deserving. The loss of the Kellar would be a societal insanity.

Please write or call:

- Congressman Ray LaHood
100 NE Monroe, Peoria, IL 61602,
Ph. 309-671-7027
- Senator Barack Obama
713 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Ph. 202-224-2854

- Senator Richard Durbin
364 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Ph. 202-224-2152
- Surface Transportation Board
The STB is in the process of moving their headquarters, but can be reached at a toll free phone 866-254-1792 or by email at railcustomer@stb.dot.gov
- Lee Miller, Carver Lumber
8700 N. University, Peoria, IL
Ph. 309-692-2000
- Mayor Jim Ardis and the Peoria City Council
419 Fulton St, Peoria, IL 61602
Phone:
Jim Ardis: 692-1149
Barbara Van Auker: 688-3039
Clyde Guley: 673-9868
Bill Spears: 688-0960
Patrick Nichting: 692-5580
Erik Turner: 686-8615
George Jacobs: 243-1838
Chuck Grayeb: 673-2913

Editor's Note:

At press time on February 20th, the Peoria City Council voted 9-2 to authorize city staff to enter into negotiations with Central Illinois Railroad for an operating agreement on the Kellar Branch. This is the best option at this time. The vote in effect reaffirms the city's intention to maintain ownership of the Kellar Branch and is a rejection of Pioneer Railcorp's bid to either buy the line or maintain operating rights on it. However, it does not set a date for the conversion of the Kellar Branch into a trail, which could still be years away. The outcome will depend on a near-term decision by the STB on Pioneer Railcorp's operating status on the line, and ultimately on a STB decision allowing abandonment of the line for a recreational trail, which will be dependent upon the level of service offered on the new rail spur into Pioneer Park from the west.

Peoria Disposal Company Efforts to Expand Hazardous Waste Continue

Make Your Voice Count: Send Written Comments BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

PDC Filing to Expand by Declaring They "Manufacture" a Product

Peoria Disposal Company has filed a permit modification request with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) to enable the hazardous waste landfill to expand by declaring that PDC "manufactures" the waste because they mix substances with some of the waste before landfilling. By declaring the hazardous waste a product, PDC says they can expand without any local governmental approval.

Send your written comments regarding the Peoria Disposal Company application to expand based on the PDC claim that they manufacture a product, and your concerns for the ongoing health and safety of our aquifer and community **by March 6th** to:

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
ATTN: Mara McGinnis
1021 N. Grand Ave. East, P.O. Box 19276
Springfield, IL 62794-9276

Illinois Pollution Control Board Considering PDC Appeal that Peoria Hearing Unfair

Peoria Disposal Company appealed to the Illinois Pollution Control Board saying that the Peoria County Board vote of 2006 denying the landfill expansion was unfair, among other issues. Your written comments will greatly help in building the record of local community concerns regarding the Peoria Disposal Company Hazardous Waste Landfill, and the tactics they have used. Send your letter **by April 6th** to:

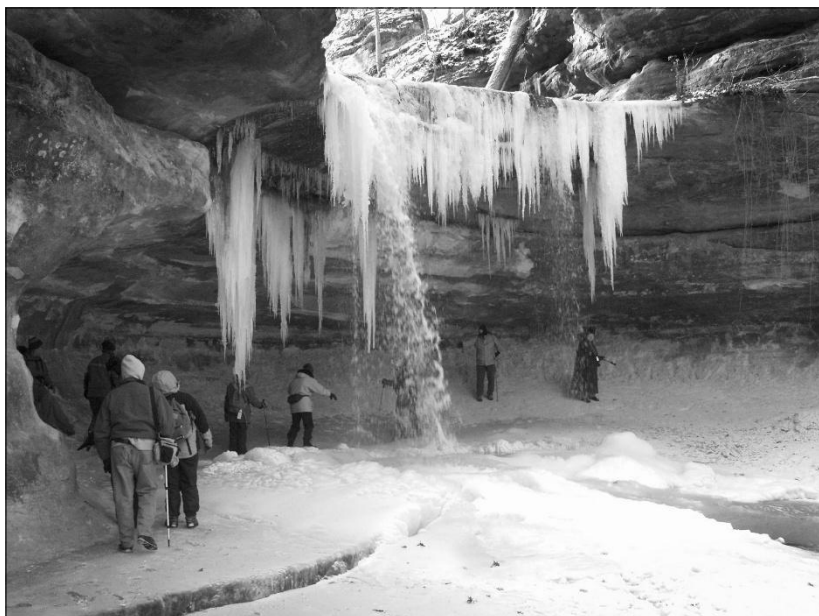
Public Comments, Case PCB 2006-184
Illinois Pollution Control Board
100 W. Randolph St., Suite 11-500
Chicago, IL 60601

IEPA Preparing to Issue PDC a Ten Year Renewal Operating Permit

Heart of Illinois Sierra and Peoria Families Against Toxic Waste asked the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency in September, 2006, to consider PDC site issues contained in the Peoria County Staff Report. County Staff had recommendations from a review done by Patrick Engineering Company. These site concerns should be acted upon now and should be included in requirements for a new operating permit. Such major safety concerns as replacing the open pond containing leachate (water that has run through the waste and is drawn off from the bottom of the landfill with pumps) with an above ground holding tank, and testing runoff water from where loading operations are done, are in the listing. IEPA did include new recommendations for PDC to contact local fire, police, and hospitals about their site hazards, which was part of the request.

Send your comments asking IEPA to require that PDC make safety improvements to their site as listed in the Peoria County Staff report, and state your concerns for having a ongoing hazardous waste facility immediately next to our city **by March 20th** to:

Stephanie Flowers, Hearing Officer (#21)
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
1021 N. Grand Ave. East, P.O. Box 19276
Springfield, IL 62794-9276



Starved Rock Winter Hike

Over twenty hardy Sierra Club members and guests braved the cold and wind during the annual Heart of Illinois Sierra Club Starved Rock Winter Hike on January 28th. Hikers were treated to views of soaring bald eagles hunting for fish just below the Starved Rock Dam. Pictured at left, hikers explore the frozen waterfalls in LaSalle Canyon. Lunch on the trail was followed later in the day by a hearty dinner at Mona's Restaurant in Toluca.

Photo: Al Harkrader

HOI Group Calendar

March


14 Executive Meeting, 7 p.m.
WED Joe Laszlo's home, 330 S. Barnewolt
Dr., Peoria . Call 637-4692 for direc-
tions.

21 **Group Meeting, 7 p.m.**
WED Forest Park Nature Center. *Becki Clayborn, Sierra Club Cool Cities campaign.* Everyone is welcome!

"The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children."

~ Dietrick Bonhoeffer

April

7 SAT **Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup,**
9 a.m.  Meet at the Fry Farm at 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, call Rudy Habben at 685-5605.

11 Executive Meeting, 7 p.m.
WED David Pittman's home, 2422 W. Moss,
 Peoria. Call 673-6438 for directions.

15
SUN **Newsletter Deadline**
Send articles for May/June to: John
Wosik, 12409 N. Blackhawk Ct, Dunlap,
IL 61525, or johnwosik@insightbb.com

18 **Group Meeting, 7 p.m.**
WED Forest Park Nature Center. *Clayton*
Daughenbaugh, Utah Wilderness &
Legislative Update.

22
SUN



Earth Day

Celebrate Earth Day! The first Earth Day was in 1970. Take a moment today to do something good for the earth. Donate to your favorite earth organization, recycle, or just take a walk and think how lucky we are to be on this earth.

Rock Island Trail State Park - Wyoming to Toulon Hike

We'll hike this scenic trail from Wyoming to Toulon and then drive or hike back to Wyoming. Meet at Forest Park Nature Center at 9 a.m., or at the park depot in Wyoming at 10 a.m. Call Chuck Buchna, 368-4446, for more information.

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

Earth Day Events in April

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

Illinois Sustainable Living & Wellness Expo

April 13-14

(Fri. 10 to 3, Sat. 9 to 4)

Join over 100 exhibitors and 30 presenters at the Illinois Wesleyan University Shirk Center to learn about the many aspects of sustainability and wellness. Other activities include a fuel-efficient vehicles exhibit, children's carnival, labyrinth walks, free massages, and organic food. The event is free and open to the public. Check out www.islwe.org on the web for more information.



Clean Water Celebration

April 22 (Sun)

- **12 p.m. - Opening Ceremonies**
Gateway Building, Peoria. Native American blessing of the River, Parade of Waters, presentation of Making Waves Awards. Visit a variety of Earth Day booths & displays.
- **1 p.m. - Walk for the River**
Gateway Building. 3 mile walk and optional 1 mile course. Pre-registration due Apr. 15, walk day registration: 12-1 p.m. Call 246-8403 for more information.
- **2-5 p.m. - River Cruise**
FREE Illinois River cruise on the Spirit of Peoria paddle wheeler. Call 246-8403 for reservations.
- **6:30 p.m. - Dinner**, Packard Building
- **7:30 p.m. - Photographer David Zalaznik**, Multimedia presentation and discussion of the Illinois River. Lecture: \$10, Dinner & Lecture: \$20. Registration deadline: April 15. Call 246-8403.

April 23 (Mon)

Environmental Classroom

Peoria Civic Center, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free and open to the public. Keynote sessions by photographer David Zalaznik, 9 a.m. & 11 a.m.

Environmental "Streams" will rotate students every twenty minutes through learning stations covering the topics of Aquatic Life, Watersheds and Recycling and Resource Conservation. Exhibit Hall C will house interactive exhibits. A variety of special event/break out sessions will feature scientists, authors, storytellers, and more.

Lakeview Wilds Trail Clean-up

April 28 (Sat), Two start times: 11 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.

Gloves, bags, and drinks will be provided. Meet at the far east side of Metro Shopping Centre, at the south corner parking lot past Jo-Ann Fabrics.

Heart of Illinois Sierra Club

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

Executive Committee

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Conservation Chair David Pittman . . . 673-6438 DvdPttnn@aol.com
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... To explore, enjoy and protect the wild places of the earth ...