



Tallgrass Sierran

September/October 2007 Volume 35 No. 5

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

HOI Group Meetings

WED
SEPT 19

Recycling e-Waste,
7 p.m.

Michael Hodge, Executive Director of Recycling for Illinois, Inc., will provide a presentation on how RFI, Inc. is taking on e-waste. Come and see what the company that offers recycling for "anything with a cord" does with your unwanted electronics and how they accomplish their "no landfill" policy. *All are welcome!*

WED
OCT 17

Upper Mississippi River
System Restoration, 7 p.m.

Brad Walker, River Restoration Coordinator for Prairie Rivers Network, will present "Upper Mississippi River System Restoration." It will be a summary of restoration efforts on the UMR, past and current, with some ecosystem status information on the river as well. PRN is a statewide organization that's been around for nearly 40 years and has concentrated primarily on clean water issues. Recently, they have expanded into the related issue of river restoration. *Everyone is welcome!*

Inside . . .

patagonia® presents the

Wild @ Scenic ENVIRONMENTAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ON TOUR

November 2nd & 3rd

Apollo Theatre, Downtown Peoria

Hosted by HOI Sierra Club

Pessimism Beats Optimism

BY RALPH GINN, *Opinion Columnist*

Contrary to what you may have heard about optimism from your personal trainer, your stock broker, in Sunday school, or at your AA meeting, pessimism has a Darwinian advantage over optimism. A sage of yesteryear, whose name I've forgotten, maybe it was Mark Twain, or W.C. Fields, but not Will Rogers who claimed the not to be believed, "I never met a man I didn't like" said optimists have never made any great contributions to civilization, those belong to pessimists. An optimist is satisfied with the status quo, the pessimist seeks change. So, hold your nose here comes a medicinal dose of pessimism.

The world's wild places are falling silent: Newsweek's report on endangered large animals is chilling. Recently, four adult mountain gorillas were found killed in the Congo's Virunga National Park. Three females and a 600 pound silverback male. They were 0.6% of the worldwide population of 700. Not killed by poachers, all of their body parts were left intact by human killers who kill for no known reason. The threat to endangered animals has escalated in the past ten years as once impenetrable forest has been opened by roads to accommodate logging. Three weeks after a logging company opened a Congo forest, the density of animals had fallen by 25%. A year after loggers went into a Malaysian forest, not a single large mammal survived.

In poor countries, one in five children don't live to see their fifth birthday: A report from the U.N. World Health Or-

ganization says that environmental hazards, mainly chemicals, are responsible for the deaths of several million children every year. Children are especially vulnerable to chemical exposures and neglected and/or malnourished children the most.

Lake Michigan to receive more pollutants: 45,000 signatures to a petition protesting an Indiana Department of Environmental Management permit will be delivered to Indiana governor Mitch Daniels. The permit would allow BP's Whiting Refinery to increase the amount of ammonia discharged into Lake Michigan by 54% per day and increase the amount of suspended solids by 35% per day. In July the U.S. House approved by a 387 to 26 vote a resolution urging Indiana to reconsider the permit. Daniels says he has no plans to rescind the permit because the expansion will mean an estimated 80 more jobs. Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich, has threatened legal action to stop the permit. To sign the petition online go to: www.ProtectOurLake.com

Save the bees: Albert Einstein is said to have written, "If the bee disappeared off the surface of the globe, then man would have only four years of life left." Probably an exaggeration, but the honeybee is in fact disappearing and the loss would be an agricultural disaster. A strange new plague called Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) is wiping out honeybee colonies by the thousands. Normally, a healthy summer hive has between 40,000 and 80,000 bees. Stricken hives have a small

(See *Pessimism*, page 2)



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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Banner Citizens Offered Settlement by Attorney General's Office

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

The Illinois Attorney General's Office offered settlement terms to the Banner Citizens who filed in Fulton County court, naming Acting Director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Sam Flood, Head of the Office of Mines and Minerals Joe Angleton, and Head of the IDNR OMM Division of Land Reclamation Scott Fowler, in a suit. This was in regard to the IDNR response to the citizen's petition to have Lands Declared Unsuitable for Mining at Banner. The settlement offer stated that IDNR OMM would redact all references to the issues citizens brought forth as "without merit" and that the citizens could refile their LUMP (Lands Unsuitable to Mine Petition) if the state denied the mining permit. On August 15th, the citizens directed their attorney, David Wentworth, with Hasselberg, Williams, Grebe, Snodgrass & Birdsall, to decline the settlement offer.

On July 10, 2007, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Office of Mines and Minerals sent a listing of five issues to Capital Resources Development Company, which has applied to strip mine at Banner, asking for further information regarding their mining plans. Capital Resources has up to one year to respond to the letter.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Plans Seen As Threat to Rice Lake State Fish and Wildlife Conservation Area

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Environmental Management Program staff with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Rock Island District Office are planning major work in 2009 at Rice Lake State Conservation Area, including building a levee along the Illinois River side, digging a "fish channel" at the south end of Rice Lake to Big Lake, and adding a 133,000 gallon per minute pump to manage water levels in Big Lake and Rice Lake. Local residents are questioning these plans. While the work is to be done with environmental funds, the millions that would be spent are seen as detrimental to the overall condition of the conservation area. Long-time Banner residents see the massive ground moving projects as a waste of tax-payer dollars. The state is to supply part of the funding. Local people contend that site management practices have resulted in a decline in the overall health of the area. Many large trees used as eagle roosts on Hoxie Ridge have already been lost due to manipulated water levels being held high too long. Gravel mining is still being done on Duck Island, and the disturbed lands have not been reclaimed. The Army Corps plans to dump tons of river dredge sludge on Goose Island and at a river side location at Rice Lake. The impacts of the sludge dumping, major construction work, and further manipulation of the site are not seen as in the best interests of wildlife and habitat health.

HOI EXCOM Nominations Needed

Nominations for the HOI EXCOM Board are needed by October 10th. Three board positions will be up for election this year. Board members have a range of opportunities from organizing programs for the general meetings, representing HOI at various meetings and events, or being active by contributing ideas. Nominate yourself or send in a nomination for someone that would like to be on the Board. Meetings are held once a month, and are a great way to participate in your local Sierra Group. Send nominations to Joseph Laszlo, 330 S. Barnewolt Dr., Peoria, IL 61604, or call 637-4692.

(Pessimism, from page 1)

number of mature bees trying to take care of young, and developing bees. Older bees desert the hive or forget to return from foraging. The hive population dwindles and then collapses when there are too few bees to maintain it. Possible culprits behind CCD are a fungus, a virus, pesticides, a bacterium, genetically modified crops bearing a pesticide gene, and cell phone radiations.

Climate change action Bushed again:

Moveon.org. reports uncovering a plan initiated by the White House that would block any binding global treaty on climate change. Called the Coalition of the Polluting, the Bush administration is twisting the arms of several foreign governments to join the U.S. in rejecting mandatory greenhouse gas emissions.

The sum of all lobbies: Gal Luft, co-chairman of the Set America Free Coalition, describes energy legislation working its way through Congress as not "energy policy" but rather "energy politics." Thomas Friedman, author of the best selling

book, *The World is Flat*, writes for the New York Times that climate change is not a hoax. The hoax is that we are doing something about it. In June the Democrat-led Senate passed an energy bill that mandates an increase in fuel economy for the nations automobile fleet. Automakers would have to raise average mileage for new cars and light trucks to 35 miles per gallon by 2020. But, before you celebrate read the fine print. It also says that if the Transportation Department determines that the fuel economy for any given year is too expensive for the auto companies to meet, it can ease the standard. There is other squalor. Senate Republicans killed a proposal that would have required utilities to produce 15 percent of their power from wind, solar, biomass and other clean-energy sources by 2020 (23 states already have such mandates). Republicans also squashed a tax increase for oil and gas companies that would have raised \$32 billion for alternative fuel projects, and killed a "carbon counter" system to measure sources of greenhouse gases. The bill

did not even touch the idea of either a carbon cap-and-trade system or a carbon tax.

Fighting Bush on behalf of fat cats:

U.S. House Democratic leaders have pushed through a farm bill, over the objections of many rank-in-file Democrats, that is disappointing to reformers and environmentalists. It retains crop subsidies that mostly go to corporate farms with millionaire owners. President Bush sought a ceiling on payments to any one farmer of \$200,000 per year. The Democrats raised that to \$1 million and \$2 million for a couple. In the parlance of a hot dog eating contest, that is called a "reversal."

Optimism, as effused by Glinda, The Good Witch of the North in the *Wizard of Oz*, is the stuff of fairy tales. Look what it got her. She had to give up her magic ruby slippers to a girl, who didn't know enough to come in out of the rain, so that the girl, Dorothy, could return to Kansas.

patagonia[®] presents the

Wild @ Scenic

ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL o n t o u r

Apollo Theatre, Downtown Peoria

Hosted by Heart of Illinois Sierra Club

► Nov. 2 (Fri.), 7 to 9 p.m.

► Nov. 3 (Sat.), 2 to 4 p.m. & 7 to 9 p.m.

Tickets for each show are \$5.00 for adults, \$3.00 for children under 12.

Door prizes given at each show.



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Heart of Illinois Group



For more information, call the
Heart of Illinois Sierra Club at
(309) 637-1393.

Friday, Nov. 2

7 p.m.

Amsterdam: The Bicycling Capital of Europe

Amsterdam has created a bicycle-friendly city that promotes a healthier, more active lifestyle. With people meeting face to face instead of bumper to bumper, the city challenges us to rethink our car-centered lives in the United States. (5 min)

Discover Hetch Hetchy

Named after the grass native to its valley, Hetch Hetchy was once glorious, pristine wild land. Dammed in the early 1900s, it could be restored to the same splendor as its neighbor, Yosemite Valley. This recently remade film, now featuring actor Harrison Ford, tells the story of the Hetch Hetchy Valley and the campaign to restore it. (28 min)

***America's Lost Landscape: Tallgrass Prairie*
(Feature presentation)**

Prior to Euro-American settlement in the 1820s, one of the major landscape features of North America was 240 million acres of tallgrass prairie. But between 1830 and 1900 the prairie was steadily transformed to farmland. This drastic change in the landscape brought about an enormous social change for Native Americans. The extraordinary cinematography of prairie remnants, original score and archival images are all delicately interwoven to create a powerful and moving viewing experience about the natural and cultural history of America. (60 min)

Saturday, Nov. 3

2 p.m.

The Fallz - Journey into South America with local filmmaker Larry Huntington as he shares the great power of nature at the Iguazu Waterfall on the border of Argentina and Brazil. (6 min)

The True Cost of Food (animation) - Learn the truth behind your weekly grocery bills. The hidden environmental, health, and social costs of agribusiness food is scary, to say the least. (15 min)

Ride of the Mergansers - Viewers get a rare view into a family of just-hatched merganser ducklings and their perilous leap to the water below to begin life in the wild. (11 min)

Birdsong & Coffee: A Wake Up Call (Feature presentation)

What is the natural organic connection between coffee farmers, coffee drinkers, and birds? Coffee drinkers will be astonished to learn that they hold in their hands the fate of farm families, farming communities, and entire ecosystems in coffee-growing regions. In this film we hear from experts and students, from coffee lovers and bird lovers, and the coffee farmers themselves. We learn how their lives and ours are inextricably linked, economically and environmentally. (56 min)

Saturday, Nov. 3

7 p.m.

Who Killed the Electric Car? (Feature presentation)

The auto industry's biggest conspiracy . . . revealed. Running solely on electricity, General Motors' fleet of EV-1 electric vehicles were so efficient, they were on the brink of altering the future of driving in America – perhaps even the world. Those lucky enough to drive one gave it glowing reviews. So, why were they all destroyed? Narrated by Martin Sheen, "Who Killed the Electric Car?" is a murder mystery like no other, as it unravels the puzzling demise of a vehicle that could have saved the environment and America's dangerous addiction to foreign oil. (93 min)

Copperas Creek Illinois River Landing in Jeopardy

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

If you have used the boat ramp to the Illinois River, enjoyed views of the historic Copperas Creek Lock, or in other ways appreciated the open space at the east end of the Banner Dyke Road, this area will be undergoing huge changes if current plans proceed. The City of Canton is planning a radial collector well, with a vertical pipe diameter of 13 feet below ground and 16 feet above ground, with 54 pipes running laterally under the ground in numerous directions. The installation would include four 200-foot-long lateral screens which would reach to the aquifer level, estimated at only 10 feet thick. This well and the attending pumping station will be in the area near the end of the Dyke Road. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has an agreement with the City of Canton for management of the boat ramp and parking lot, however the City of Canton owns about ten acres at the location. Because of changes made to public water supply

permitting processes by the G.W. Bush administration, no public notice, no public hearing, and no public comments are required. Canton plans a water pipeline to go to the city water treatment plant at Canton Lake, about 9 miles away. Part of the water pipeline is expected to be built down the Banner Dyke Road to the edge of Banner, and this could result in the closing of the road for some time. Public access to the Rice Lake Conservation Area Ridge Field Walk-In and Refuge Area could also be affected. Please write to Sam Flood, Acting Director, IL Dept. of Natural Resources, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL, 62702, to state your concerns. No information is currently available if any studies have been done regarding the proposed 5 million gallons of water a day Canton expects to draw, and impacts on Banner Marsh to the immediate north or Rice Lake to the south or to Copperas Creek and the Illinois River confluence.

Pekin Powerton Coal-Fired Power Plant Listed for Violations

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

In early August, the federal Environmental Protection Agency filed notice accusing Midwest Generation of not installing pollution controls required under the Clean Air Act at 6 of its older coal-fired power plants. The Powerton, Pekin, plant is included in the list, along with five plants in the Chicago area. These plants have added tons of preventable pollution into Illinois air. In 2005, Attorney General Lisa Madigan wrote to state regulators with a listing of over 7,600 pollution violations at the six power plants since 1999, but no action was taken at the time. Midwest Generation bought these power plants from Commonwealth Edison in 1999. Over 33,000 asthma attacks a year in Illinois are thought to be due to air pollution from coal-fired power plants.

Woodford County Gravel Pit Hearing Postponed

Rescheduled to September 5 & 6, 6 p.m., Spring Bay American Legion Post 1115 in Bayview Gardens

BY DAVID PITTMAN

A proposal to develop the largest gravel pit in Woodford County is meeting strong opposition from local people. Nearly a hundred residents came to the Woodford County Zoning Board of Appeals Hearing on June 28, at Spring Bay American Legion Post 1115 in Bayview Gardens. Many had questions and concerns regarding the more than 200 acre proposed gravel pit in Spring Valley, west of route 26, north of Spring Beach Road and east of Sunset Drive.

They will have to wait. Everyone was told to go home and come back in 90 days, because the Zoning Commission granted the developer's request for postponement, until September 5 & 6. This determined crowd will be back, for sure. And now you have time to write letters or make phone calls to help make a difference.

East Peoria Materials LLC, hopes to get the County Zoning Board approval to re-zone two properties, then apply again to the same Zoning Board for a special

use permit for strip mining. Sierra Club has contacted the residents attorney, Danny Schroeder dschroeder@hrbklaw.com, 688-9400, to discuss ways we can assist the people against this very large project located very close to both current and future residential home properties.

Although letters and phone calls from anyone are important, if you are a Woodford County resident it will be especially helpful if you will please take time to get involved and write the members of the Woodford County Board of Appeals, urging a no vote on East Peoria Materials request to re-zone the properties. A no vote will prevent the gravel pit. Their addresses and published phone numbers are:

Nick Pisano
215 Lawndale Ct
Metamora, IL 61548
Phone: 309-383-2106

Walter Traper
Box 211
Goodfield, IL 61742

Robert Harbers
119 W Bertram
Metamora, IL 61548
Phone: 309-367-4696

Diana Uphoff
2897 County Road 60014
El Paso, IL 61738

If you want to learn more, or get involved in other ways, please contact Conservation Chair Dave Pittman, dvdpttman@aol.com, at 676-5237.

Global Warming Solutions Group Working to Bring CFL Recycling to Peoria



BY KIERSTEN SHEETS

The Central Illinois Global Warming Solutions Group is working diligently to bring CFL (compact fluorescent light bulb) recycling to Peoria and surrounding Central Illinois communities. Veolia Environmental Services, a company in Wisconsin, will be coming to the next group meeting to present information on providing drop-off CFL recycling in retail stores. Veolia has helped pioneer state-wide programs in Maine and Wisconsin. Could Illinois be next? This is an incredible opportunity to provide Central Illinois consumers with a responsible way to dispose of CFLs, which contain small amounts of mercury and lead. If you are interested in having this type of service in Central Illinois, please come to this meeting. The meeting will be on Thursday, September 6, 2007 at the Peoria Public Library, downtown location, in the auditorium at 6:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome!

