



Tallgrass Sierran

July/August 2009 Volume 37 No. 4

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

HOI Group Meetings

**WED
JULY 15** Birding Hike
Robinson Park, 6 p.m.

Join birders Rick and Tracy Fox for a hike through Robinson Park to view and learn about the resident and migratory bird species in the park. There will be an optional dinner at a nearby restaurant after the hike. To reach Robinson Park from Peoria, go north on Rt. 40 (Knoxville Ave.), turn right on Mossville Road, and go approximately 1 mile to the second parking lot on the left. Robinson Park can also be accessed by heading west on Mosseville Road from Rt. 29.

**WED
AUG 19** Peoria Riverfront Walk & Dinner - Liberty Park, 6 p.m.

Meet at Liberty Park on Peoria's downtown riverfront at 6 p.m. for a short hike. Dinner and refreshments will be at Rhythm Kitchen afterward. Please join us! *Everyone is welcome!*

Take Me Out to the Ballgame!

HOI Sierra members are spending time at the Peoria Chiefs games running a concession stand to raise funds for the Group. One game has already been cancelled due to lack of volunteers. We still need volunteers for the following games:

July 12 (Sun) at 2 p.m.
July 22 (Wed) at 7 p.m.
August 8 (Sat) at 6:30 p.m.
August 23 (Sun) at 2 p.m.
September 2 (Wed) at 7 p.m.

Please contact David Pittman at 676-5237 or dvdptmn@aol.com if you want to volunteer. Don't have the time or don't want to volunteer at a game? Then consider becoming an "Honorary HOI Concessionaire" for one game by donating \$35 to HOI Sierra Club.

Too Big to Fail.....Too Big to Exist

BY RALPH GINN, *Opinion Columnist*

One of President Obama's goals is to put our country on track to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 20 percent by the year 2020. He has released a budget that would invest \$150 billion, over the next decade, in clean energy and efficiency. Led by Lisa Jackson, the newly appointed Environmental Protection Agency director, a proposal to monitor 85 percent of the nation's global warming emissions from industry and transportation has been put in place.

The center piece of Obama's plan will be a cap and trade system that requires polluters to buy emission permits. If a company doesn't need a permit, it can trade, for compensation, to a company that does. The Republicans are calling it a "tax increase" and it is, because none of us would be naive enough to think that utilities, industry, and transportation will absorb the cost of permits from their profits. Representatives Henry Waxman and Edward Markley have filed a bill that will likely be a rough draft for final legislation. Waxman-Markley was praised by Al Gore, and approved by The League of Conservation Voters, and The Environmental Defense Fund. Much of the tax money from this bill will go toward investment in clean energy and utility rebates to consumers. There are objections. Waxman-Markley will issue a sizable number of free emission permits, particularly in the first years of cap and trade operation. But, the bill maybe the best that can win approval in Congress. It does represent incentives for power producers to clean-up old coal fired plants

and will fiscally prod the auto industry to build more fuel efficient vehicles.

President Obama has made an aggressive start to combat climate change and provide cleaner, sustainable energy. There are formidable barriers to negotiate and the most daunting is the failing economy. The public is shocked by the shenanigans of big banks and investment houses. Rising unemployment and underemployment have people frightened and they are not in the mood for more taxes, regardless of cause. Some of the country's biggest financial-services have, in a moment of rude hypocrisy, invoked the "too big to fail" plea. These are many of the same people who cheered when Ronald Reagan said, "The government is not the solution to our problems, the government is the problem." I like what Simon Johnson, chief economist for the International Money Fund in 2007 and 2008, had to say, "A company that is too big to fail is too big to exist." Simon insists that companies that receive government bailouts must be split up and run by new management. He qualifies these remarks, explaining that a company that knows the government can't afford to let it fail will take imprudent risks. A warning that, except for GM, is yet unheeded. The President faces a daunting task in his efforts to revive the banks and rally investment in low emission energy projects. We can hope banking and the economy don't become such a distraction that his energy strategy slides to the back burner.

There are, what would you expect, other obstacles to this administration.
(See *Too Big*, page 2)



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

A Superior Alternative to the Corps' Island Project

BY TOM EDWARDS

The Army Corps of Engineers is intending this summer to build a 21-acre island in the backwaters of the east side of Lower Peoria Lake with the idea of slowing its siltation. To keep the island itself from simply washing away, the Corps' plans are to encase its perimeter with massive soil filled "geotextile" plastic tubes six feet in diameter.

The idea is that silt dredged up from the lake to establish this island will marginally deepen the lake around the island for, the Corps estimates, maybe up to 20 years.

Before proceeding further into this multimillion, 2 to 3 year project, the Corps needs to simply excavate a small area in the lake to check its assumptions -- as I have done.

Any excavation in the bottom of a backwater lake of the Illinois River will fill with silt with the first flood, or just high water levels, and be gone within 3 years or less. Silt moves. It's been estimated that 161 million tons of silt a year may wash down the river due to manmade soil erosion. Any low, off-channel areas of the river's backwaters quickly fill with silt.

Piling up silt to make an island would itself be actually further filling the lake — something the Corps has been actively preventing lakeshore property owners from doing. And it likely would even in-

crease siltation due to effects on river currents.

Virtually forgotten is that Lower Peoria Lake and its original shoreline are essentially still there because of flood and silt control dams on the two creeks emptying into the lower lake. They are:

1) The two massive earthen flood control dams the Corps built in 1950 on East Peoria's Farm Creek and its tributary, Fondulac Creek. They also catch and hold huge quantities of eroded soil (silt) as well as storm water. And the extensive temporary water retention areas behind the dams (as Farmdale Park) are also much used recreation and nature areas.

2) In 1972 Caterpillar Tractor Co. constructed a deep 11-acre water holding basin on Ten Mile Creek to trap and remove the huge quantities of soil washing from its tractor testing grounds into the creek, which empties into the top of the lower lake. It made an observable difference in the water clarity of the lake.

These projects literally did "Save Peoria Lake" — and still are. They keep mega amounts of silt from reaching Lower Peoria Lake. And its natural shoreline remains essentially as it was originally -- something that even the Corps overlooks. The silt accumulation behind such dams as above can be, and has been, relatively easily removed as necessary and returned to the land.

Caterpillar uses earth moving machinery it is testing - and demonstrating -- to scoop up the accumulation of silt from its reservoir and return it to adjacent hillsides.

So instead of an island, to insure saving our lake created 10,000 years ago by glaciers, a superior and much more economical means to do so would be to:

- 1) Simply enhance the efficiency of the above three silt retention facilities.
- 2) Promote water and silt reservoirs on the river's tributary streams, especially where they can also serve recreationally and aesthetically in or near local communities.
- 3) Where silt dredging is done, rather than piling it up in the lake, put it on land where contractors and others can help themselves to it for topsoil or fill. They will. The Ivy Club in Peoria has been doing this for years with silt dredged from its river harbor.

The Corps actively prevents private lakefront owners from encroaching on the lake with fill. But its own island project would do just that. Rather, the Corps needs to continue to provide examples to follow, like its Farm Creek project. The funds slated for its island project can be rerouted into such alternatives.

Peoria and East Peoria are located where they are because of Peoria Lake. It is our heritage — and with a little help can remain so until the next ice age.

(Too Big, from page 1)

tion's energy strategy. A recent Gallup poll found that 41 percent say that concern for global warming is exaggerated. Thomas Friedman, New York Times columnist, flatly states, "Change your leaders, not your light bulbs." His point is that individual efforts to conserve energy are not enough, it's our leaders that write the rules for emissions from utilities, industry, cars and trucks. Although the President is on the environmental page, many in Congress, and in statehouses across the country are not. China has rapidly become the world's largest producer of carbon dioxide, and in January announced plans to increase coal production 30 percent by 2015. That decision would swamp all emission reduction plans from the rest of the planet. Optimistically, our new energy strategy will convince China to change course. Until now the Chinese have thrown our own first place in per-capita emissions in our face, repeatedly.

2008 Nobel Prize winning economist, Paul Krugman, hypothesizes, "What if the crisis of 2008 represents something much more fundamental than a deep recession? What if it's telling us that the world growth model we have created the last 50 years is simply unsustainable economically and ecologically and that 2008 was when we hit the wall--when Mother Nature and the market both said: No more?"

Send comments to Ralph Ginn at randdginn@dishmail.net.

Sierrans Asked to Attend the Industry Mine Hearing July 17th

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Volunteers are needed to attend the court hearing regarding the appeal of the Industry Mine permit. The hearing will be Friday, July 17th, 10:30 a.m. at the Sangamon County Courthouse, Springfield, 200 South 9th Street, in the court of Judge Belz. By attending this hearing you will give silent witness to the importance of this case, which is fighting for protection of habitat for the federally endangered Indiana Bat, in addition to a historic heron rookery.

Attorney John McMahon of Champaign will be presenting the case for Macomb area environmentalists Kim Sedgwick and Jeff Herrick. In light of the spread of the White-Nosed Bat disease, protections and support for bat habitats is more essential than ever. The National Forest Service has closed all caves from human use in the Shawnee National Forest out of concerns for the spread of the bat disease. Call 688-0950 for more information.

Coal Combustion Waste Closer Than You Think!

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Depending on where you live in the HOI Group, you may have thousands of cubic yards of toxic coal waste in surface impoundments or landfills in the vicinity. The federal EPA Risk Assessment listing for Illinois has the following:

- Fulton County: Duck Creek Power Plant: 21 acre landfill/ ,5000,000 cubic yards capacity for coal ash; clay liner; no leachate collection; has water monitoring wells.
- Peoria County: E.D. Edwards Power Plant: 145 acres/11,000,000 cubic yards capacity for coal ash and coal waste; no liner; leachate collection; no groundwater monitoring.
- Putnam County: Hennepin Power Plant: 150 acres/3,460,600 cubic yards capacity for ash and coal waste; no liner; no leachate collection; water monitoring.

For everyone who remembers the December, 2008, massive coal waste spill that sent a billion gallons of toxic coal sludge across the countryside and into the Clinch River near the TVA power plant in Kingston, TN, these waste locations are real concerns. Coal ash is a byproduct of burning coal to generate electricity. It contains arsenic, lead, mercury, and other toxins which can contaminate drinking water sources. The risks from these sites include a sudden catastrophic spill or slow leaching of toxins that eventually contaminates water resources.

Sierra Club is urging that our federal Senators have the Department of Homeland Security release its listing of the 44 coal ash sites across the country that have been rated as "high hazard." *Please phone U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (Springfield Office 217-492-5089) and Roland Burris (217-492-5089) and ask that this listing be made public.* Check out the Sierra Club Beyond Coal website for more information <http://www.sierraclub.org/coal/>

Dates Set for North Canton Strip Mine Permit Administrative Review Hearing

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Canton Citizens for the Environment and Heart of Illinois Sierra volunteers will be in Springfield for the North Canton Mine LLC permit review scheduled for November 17-20th. The citizens have the burden of proof to show how the mine will cause adverse impacts and how the Illinois Department of Natural Resources is in error in approving the permit. At stake is over 1,000 acres in the watershed about one mile north of Canton Lake. Sediment and runoff from mine water collection ponds will go into creeks that run into Canton Lake. Farm fields, mature hardwood forested ravines and creeks, will be destroyed. Donations are needed for legal expenses. Send your check to HOI Sierra Club, P.O. Box 3593, and indicate that it is for the North Canton Mine fund. For more information phone 309-688-0950.

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

Name

Address

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Special Offer ☐ \$25 Individual ☐ \$39 Joint ☐ \$49

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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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Rock Island Trail Celebration!

50 Year Anniversary of Illinois Sierra Club

BY JOYCE BLUMENSHINE

Hike and Picnic for a great cause: Illinois Sierra Club is celebrating its 50 year anniversary! Events are being held across Illinois to mark this half century of Sierra conservation efforts and to raise funds for the Illinois Chapter. One state-wide effort that is part of our conservation heritage is the Rock Island Trail. HOI Group leader from the 1970's to 1990's, Hal Gardner, had an extensive series of articles in the Chapter newsletter LAKE & PRAIRIE, when a state-wide effort was being made to save the trail.

On Sunday, July 26th, 3:00 p.m., hikers can meet at the main Rock Island Trail parking lot in Alta for about a three mile walk to the trail Kickapoo Creek camping area picnic shelter. Those wishing to cut the distance in about half can enter the trail at the curve of Fox Lane and Radnor Road by turning off Route 91 west out of Alta to go north on Radnor Road and park along the road. Bicyclists are welcomed!

Bring your friends and family, and your appetite, as picnic supper will be held from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the picnic shelter just off the trail near the Kickapoo Creek. A donation jar will be at the picnic. All proceeds go to the Illinois Chapter Sierra Club. Reservations are requested by July 24th. Please phone 688-0950. The picnic will include standard favorites and vegetarian options.



Twin Groves Wind Farm - Sierra Club members listen as Twin Groves Guide Karen explains the diagram showing the frequency of wind directions and the resulting percent total energy derived. Sierra Club members toured the farm on May 28.

Photo: Wendy Marquis

HOI Group Calendar

July

- 2 THU Global Warming Solutions Group Meeting, 6:30 p.m.**
Peoria Public Library, 2nd floor conference room, downtown Peoria. Check <http://gwsolutionsgroup.com> for more information.
- 8 WED Executive Meeting, 6:30 p.m.**
Bob and Diane Jorgensen's home, 212 Sunnybrook Dr., East Peoria. Call 698-0325 for directions.
- 15 WED Birding Hike at Robinson Park, 6 p.m.**
See front page for details. *Everyone is welcome!*
- 18 SAT Gilles Farm Tour, 9:30 a.m.**
HOI Group has 8 reserved seats to tour the farm of Ted and Ron Gilles in Peoria County and see the conservation practices they have adopted. Call 645-6263 by July 10 to reserve a seat and for directions to the farm.
- 26 SUN Rock Island Trail Celebration, 3 p.m.**
Celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Illinois Sierra Club by a hike and picnic on the Rock Island Trail. Meet at the Alta parking lot at 3 p.m. Reservations are requested by July 24th. Please phone 688-0950. *See the article on page 3 for more information.*

Many thanks to those who donated and bid on White Elephant Auction items at our June 17th picnic. We raised \$361.25 for HOI Sierra Club.

August

- 1 SAT Matthiessen State Park Hike, 8:30 a.m.**
Join us for a hike at Matthiessen State Park near Utica. Meet at Forest Park Nature Center at 8:30 a.m., or at the park entrance at 10 a.m. Lunch afterwards at nearby Starved Rock State Park Lodge. Call 645-6263 for more information.
- 6 THU Global Warming Solutions Group Meeting, 6:30 p.m.**
Peoria Public Library, 2nd floor conference room, downtown Peoria. Check <http://gwsolutionsgroup.com> for more information.
- 12 WED Executive Meeting, 6:30 p.m.**
James Thomas' home, 1303 N. Glenwood Ave., Peoria. Call 673-0083 for directions.
- 19 WED Peoria Riverfront Walk & Dinner, 6 p.m.**
See front page for details. *Everyone is welcome!*
- 23 SUN Newsletter Deadline**
Send articles for September/October to: John Wosik, 12409 N Blackhawk Ct, Dunlap, IL 61525, or johnwosik@comcast.net
- 31 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.)



Annual Prairie Dawgs Jubilee Prairie Tour, July 25 (Sat), 9 a.m.

Join the Prairie Dawgs for their annual public tour of Jubilee State Park prairies. The prairies will be in full bloom this time of year, providing a spectacular visual treat. Refreshments will be provided.

Directions:

From Kickapoo on US150, go 0.8 mile west to Princeville-Jubilee Road (R40); go north on Princeville-Jubilee Road 3.7 miles to Brimfield-Jubilee Road (D29); go left on Brimfield-Jubilee Road for 2.5 miles to the steep gravel driveway on your right. Turn right on the driveway and go up a small hill where you will see an old house, a large open shed for park equipment, and the Peoria Astronomical Society observatory.

Call Doug Franks at 691-7993 for more information.



Heart of Illinois Sierra Club

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Executive Committee

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