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Solarize: Community-Based Solar Bulk-Buys

By Sabrina Hardenbergh

The EPA's [Clean Power Plan](#) prompts a transition to renewable energy, although mitigating upfront cost to homeowners, businesses, municipalities and power suppliers pulls one into the complex choices of incentives. Community bulk buy projects are one type of incentive, with project models that predate the Clean Power Plan, including those in [Portland](#), Seattle, Boston and Chicago. Recent examples include Champaign-Urbana, Bloomington, and small towns like Godfrey, IL.

During 2009 to 2011, Portland, Oregon's community-based [Solarize Southeast](#) and subsequent [Solarize Portland](#) projects set a precedent for renewable energy projects utilizing community bulk buy discounts for supplies and less contractor marketing cost, in addition to grants, tax credits, and net metering. Market price was reduced 30%, while green jobs increased. What then was an \$18,000 to \$27,000 3 kw system became \$2,000 to \$3,000 after subtracting all incentives, although some of this was realized in tax credits such that upfront cost was in the middle. A succession of neighborhood solarize projects followed, each with slightly different foci (e.g., local jobs, lower price, best value); however, the common elements included competitive contractor(s)/partnership bid, community-led outreach/education, and limited time offer. The limited time offer prompted additional solar installations by contractors not selected by the project, decreasing the issue of favoritism. Going into the project as a group sped up the process since the decision-making steps were done by the project as a whole versus each and every buyer. The buyer is guided through a process of awareness, education, enrollment, site assessment, decision, and installation in about 3 to 6 months. Partners in the projects included a trusted local nonprofit, a technical advisor (provides template for project design and RFP for contractors, helps evaluate bidders with project organizer), a project organizer (e.g., city), and a solar industry organization. Some of the neighborhood projects' RFP's and MOU's specified use of local or small business contractors, apprentices from local training programs, and locally manufactured supplies (defined as from within the state, region or United States).

Soon after, in 2011 and 2012, [Northwest Sustainable Energy for Economic Development \(Northwest SEED\)](#) began a similar neighborhood solar program in Seattle, Washington, which expanded to additional neighborhoods and parts of the state. Some of these Solarize projects were contractor lead, not including the partnership with a local nonprofit, but offering bulk buy discounts, and often using locally manufactured supplies.

(Continued on Page 2)

(Solarize: Community-Based Solar Bulk-Buys, Continued from Page 1)

Between 2010 and 2012, Vermont Public Interest Research Group formed VPIRG Energy to prompt group solar PV and solar hot water buys. Existing VPIRG members facilitated interest through house parties. Eventually a new SunCommon company was formed that offered solar leasing with no money down. A variety of projects around the country narrow their scope to some of this project's elements.

The 2011 [Solarize Mass](#) was a similar pilot project in the greater Boston, Massachusetts area, featuring four "Green Communities," and the project now continues until the present, spreading to western Massachusetts and Cape Cod. Bulk buys lowered pricing tiers in both ownership and leasing options. They realized that pre-made marketing toolkits and the project model should have instead been geared to dynamically meet each community's specific qualities and needs.

Using a federal [SunShot](#) grant and bulk buy program in 2011, [Solar Chicago](#) offered residential solar installation at about half the cost to city and greater Chicago residents. The RFP selected a couple contractors to do the installations. Subsequently, [Chicago attempted](#) to further increase solar installations by improving the permitting process and using Illinois' [Solar Renewable Energy Credit \(SREC\)](#) program for further incentives.

[Solar Urbana-Champaign](#) enabled 81 residences and businesses to benefit from a solar bulk buy, a project facilitated between the City of Urbana, [Midwest Renewable Energy Association \(MREA\)](#) and the Environmental Law & Policy Center. MREA provides technical input to communities to help them plan their solar programs and RFPs, providing state [specific toolkits](#) to help navigate these procedures and the legal considerations. The project was modeled similar to the Portland example, and also benefited from promotional support from the [U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative](#). A similar [Solar Bloomington-Normal](#) project was recently developed after the Urbana-Champaign example. Nearby Bloomington, Indiana also had a recent Solar Bloomington [RFP](#) out to contract bidding, not only for residential and business bulk buy installations, but including the municipal City Hall and Police Headquarters buildings as well.

While most of these examples have been in large urban locations, the neighborhood scope of the projects lends well to small towns such as [Godfrey, IL](#), which suggests possibilities for other rural southern Illinois communities. [Solarize Godfrey](#) is a partnership of the Godfrey Climate Protection and Energy Efficiency Committee, a solar installer, and [Piasa Palisades](#) Group of the Sierra Club (a Sierra Club [Cool Cities](#) program example). [Godfrey, IL](#) offers its own local cash incentive, one of three Illinois communities to do so, in addition to the bulk-buy discount, 30% federal income tax credits, and [Solar Renewable Energy Credit \(SREC\)](#). While SREC's are generally something obtained through an aggregator that purchases an allotment of the Illinois renewable energy credits, the homeowner or small business might eventually realize about a 20% net reduction of the solar installation cost.

Bulk-buys are variously structured, some offering a fixed rate, descending rate with donation to organization after a set goal, or later rebates based on extent of project enrollees. For those without upfront means to pay, municipal, bank or credit union loans are available for solar installation with liens on the property, some designed to bridge time gap between upfront payment to contractor and later tax credits. Home equity loans are another option. The community bulk-buy projects, as well as solar installers, may offer educational events concerning cash incentives/tax credits/financing, net metering, and installation. Solar ambassadors or champions, who already have solar, may show and discuss their choices to those considering solar.

Shawnee Group Sierra Club has been exploring potential community solar bulk-buy projects for our region.

WINTER 2016/2017 SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS

Saturday, 12:30–3:30 pm December 10, 2016, Fern Rocks Nature Preserve Invasives Pull **Service Project**

Meet at the Giant City State Park Visitor's Center on Giant City Blacktop by 12:30 p.m. for a short instruction. We will carpool to the nature preserve to pull invasive plant species. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes, and bring work gloves and water. Moderate difficulty. Call Jean Sellar at 618-893-1379 or Barb at 618-529-4824 for more information and to sign up. Outing will occur unless weather does not permit.

Sunday, 12:30 – 3:30 pm January 8, 2017, Fern Rocks Nature Preserve Invasives Pull **Service Project**

Meet at Giant City State Park Visitor Center at 12:30 pm for a short instruction (see similar details for Dec. 10th service event). Call Barb, 618-529-4824.

Sunday, January 15, 2017, Jackson Falls **Hike**

Meet either by the Murdale sign in the Murdale Shopping Center in Carbondale by 9 a.m., or at the Ozark General Store on Route 45 by 10 a.m. We will see the waterfall and have beautiful views from the cliff. Bring water, a hiking staff and wear appropriate shoes. You must call the leader, Bob Mulcahy, at 618-942-6342 in order to go on the hike.

Saturday, February 25, 2017, Bald Knob Wilderness

Garlic Mustard Pull **Service Project**

Meet at 9:30 am near the big sign at Murdale Shopping Center on Rt. 13 on the west side of Carbondale to carpool to the Rambarger Trailhead, where we will meet up with the Forest Service ranger. The garlic mustard is near the trailhead, so there will not be much hiking involved. Bring work gloves, water and lunch. The pull will be from 10:00 to 2:00. Call Barb at 618-529-4824.

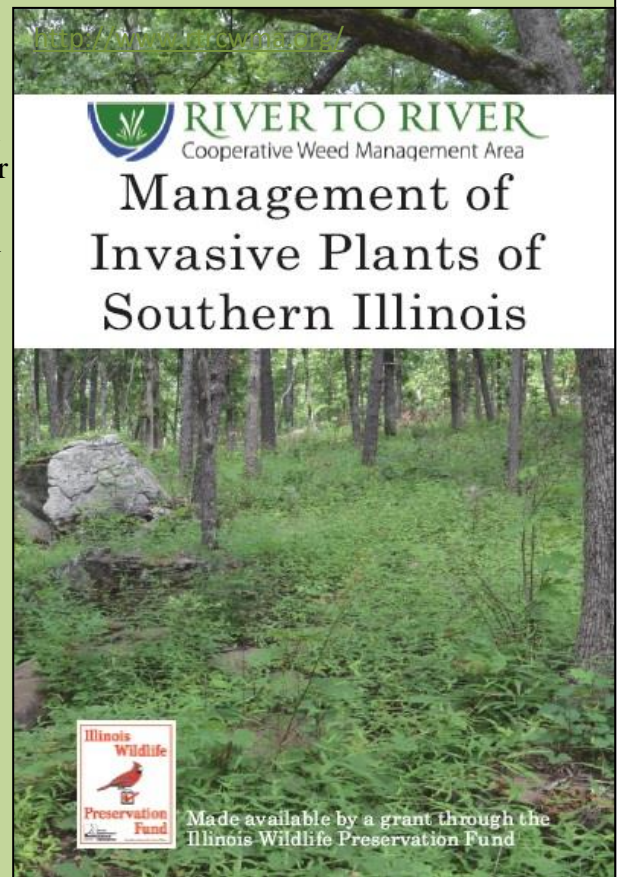
Sometimes other Sierra Club Chapters organize outings in and near southern Illinois, so also check the national and state Sierra Outings websites periodically for opportunities.

National: <http://content.sierraclub.org/outings/>

Illinois Chapter: <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/calendar>

Plus, remember that the late Bob Tyson documented many wonderful southern Illinois hikes remaining in the Index on our [Blog](#), as well as [Easy Trails for Seniors](#).

([River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area](#) provides references on invasive species.)



Piasa Palisades Group Outings Chair:

Carol Klinger, 618-288-5506, ciklinger@yahoo.com
<http://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/piasa-palisades>

Eastern Missouri Group Outings Chair:

Doug Melville, 636-288-1055
douglas.k.melville@gmail.com
<http://sierraclub.org/missouri/eastern-missouri>

Future Outings TBA:

Updates listed on our website:

<http://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/shawnee>

Other short notice outings and events may be announced on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubShawnee>

Call for articles and photographs for Shawnee Trails! The next Spring issue will be published in late February. Please send your Word, PDF or JPG files to sabrina@midwest.net by **February 6th**.

WINTER 2016/2017 PROGRAMS NOTE: Start time at 7 PM!

Location: Rear Entrance of the Carbondale Township Hall (front street address: 217 East Main), enter green door in alley behind Newell House, near Rock Hill Baptist Church, Monroe & Marion Streets. Front door is locked! FREE and open to the public. Refreshments and socializing before and after the meeting.

Thursday, December 8, 2016 at 7 pm

Speaker: John Schwegman, Author and first Illinois State Botanist

Presentation Title: Essays on the Natural Heritage of Illinois

Dinner at 5 pm: TBA

Thursday, January 12 at 7 pm:

Speaker: Myah Gary, Carbondale Sustainability Commission Chair

Presentation Title: State of the City Sustainability Commission

Dinner at 5 pm: TBA

Thursday, February 9 at 7 pm:

Speaker: Sendonia Sipes, SIU Plant Biology Professor

Presentation Title: Assessing and Conserving Bee Diversity in Southern Illinois

Dinner at 5 pm: TBA

Thursday, March 9 at 7 pm:

Speaker: Kathleen Logan Smith, FoodWorks Director with film on local food by Mike Covell, Emeritus Cinema & Photography Professor

Presentation Title: Local Food in Southern Illinois

Dinner at 5 pm: TBA



Sierra hike at Pomona Natural Bridge.
Steve Eberhart, 2016



Southern Illinois Alternative Gift Fair

Sunday, December 11th, 2-5 pm

Carbondale Civic Center

Live Music. Silent Auction.

Local art & gifts for sale.

Come to support Shawnee Group Sierra Club and over 20 other local non-profit groups at the 12th Annual Southern Illinois Alternative Gift Fair. Enjoy a mindful holiday, engage our community, help create a just economy and make a positive impact on the world with our consumer choices this season!

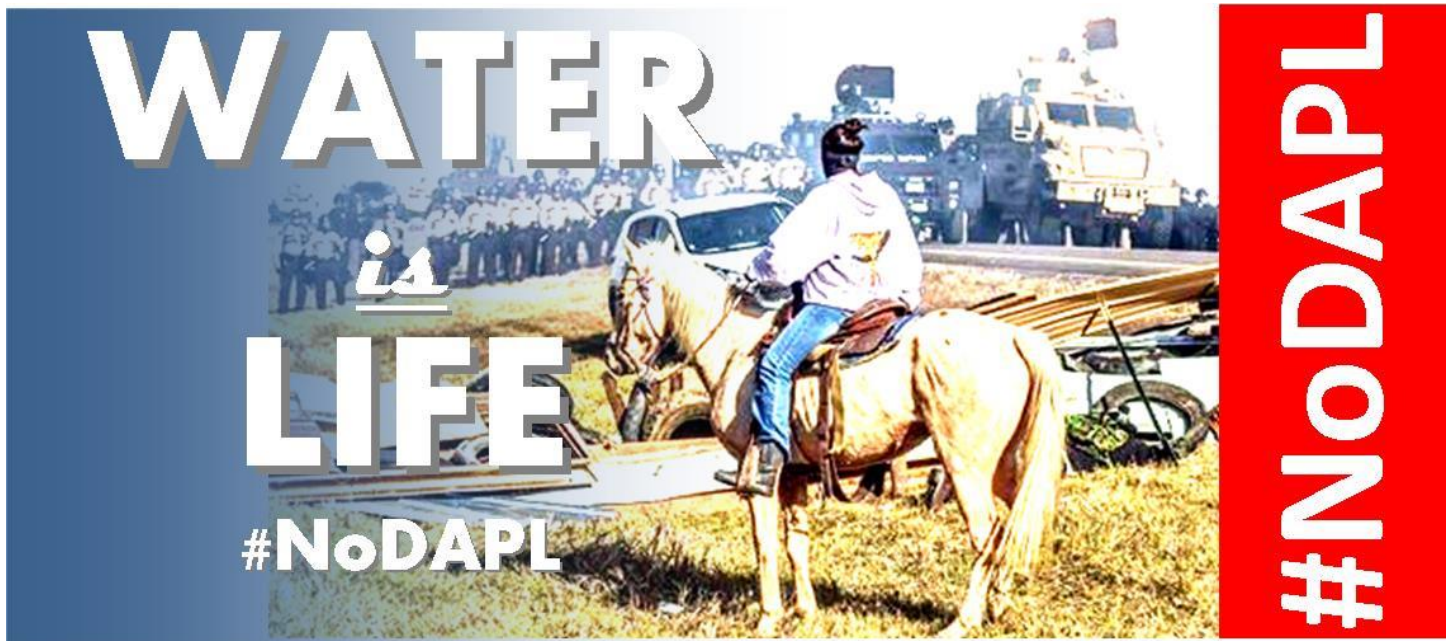
Fun and learning opportunities for the whole family while you shop! Sponsored by the Carbondale Unitarian Universalist Fellowship and friends. For more information, contact Jess at 534-1162.

Reduce, Recycle, Re-use and REJECT

Tired of those mail order catalogs that just keep coming? Feeling guilty that you are a part of all that wasted paper – and trees? To stop that flow of wasted resources, follow these steps:

1. Call the toll free number found on the catalog
2. Select the “customer service” line
3. Tell the agent that you want to stop receiving their catalog
4. Give the agent your customer number found on the back cover
5. Save the back cover as proof that you called
6. Recycle the rest of the catalog

Note: You will probably receive a couple more catalogs before they stop because they are pre-printed.



**Our Water, Our Rights, Our Climate and Native Americans Are Under Attack:
ACT NOW TO STOP THE DAKOTA ACCESS PIPELINE!!**

By Barbara McKasson

The standoff in North Dakota between hundreds of Native American tribes and hundreds of police has been ignored or glossed over by the mainstream media, but is all over the [internet](#) because people understand that this is a pivotal moment in the efforts to protect our environment and our rights. [Energy Transfer Partners](#), major banks, and other corporations such as [Enbridge](#), have used their clout to fast track permits to build the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) from the Bakken fracked oil fields through five states from North Dakota to Patoka, Illinois. In North Dakota, the pipeline was re-routed to avoid endangering the land and water of Bismark, ND, and moved downstream to the treaty lands of the [Standing Rock Sioux](#) tribe, threatening their water supply and their sacred lands.

[Democracy Now](#) and other [alternative media](#) sources have filmed and interviewed many of the Native Americans at DAPL, revealing the violence of the police and DAPL security against the peaceful and prayerful water protectors. Vicious dogs, tear gas, mace, rubber bullets, noise machines, bright lights, and low-flying aircraft have been used against the protestors, suppressing their rights of free speech and assembly. Journalists have been threatened and jailed, in efforts to suppress the rights of free speech and free press.

The DAPL would pass through five states, starting at the Bakken fracked oil fields in North Dakota, through central Illinois and ending up at Patoka, Illinois, there to connect to other pipelines leading to refineries in the south. [DAPL and ETCO pipelines are described in an earlier June – August 2015 Shawnee Trails newsletter](#). The protestors' cause is our cause: their water is threatened and our water from the Mississippi River and other rivers are threatened. Everyone is threatened by continued investment in pipelines that carry dirty, climate destroying fossil fuels. We need to be spending our energy, money and efforts investing in renewable energy, energy efficiency and ways to make our environment and communities more resilient to the changing climate.

Pipelines leak and explode all the time, and the Bakken oil is extra volatile. There are 2 serious pipeline incidents or leaks every 3 days, and human incompetence and negligence contribute to the problem. Over one million gallons of tar sands spilled into the Kalamazoo River in Michigan, when workers for that Enbridge pipeline waited over 17 hours to respond to their pipeline rupture. An official [Leak Detection Study](#) found that

the average pipeline “has a 57% probability of experiencing a major leak with consequences over the \$1 million dollar range, in a ten year period.” ([Keifner & Associates study for PHMSA, p. 240](#))



We must stand with Standing Rock! You can take many actions - please do as much as you can!

1. **Call President Obama** at 202-456-1111: Urge him to halt the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline.
2. **Donate to the Legal Defense Fund** of the Native Americans who are putting their bodies on the line to stop construction of the DAPL – online at: <sacredstonecamp.org>
3. **Write to the Army Corps of Engineers** and urge them to withdraw the “Nationwide 12” permits that were issued hastily and without proper consultation with the affected tribes at the Facebook page they have set up for public comments on the DAPL: <ow.ly/8TtG305RNYH> or call 202-761-8700. Or contact the U.S. ACoE directly: <http://www.usace.army.mil/Contact/>
4. **Sign the petition to the U.S. Dept. of Justice** urging them to step in to stop the militarized assault by the police and the corporate security forces against the people at the Sacred Stone Camp at <aclu.org/standingrockTW>. Or contact the DOJ directly: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/contact-office>
5. **Sign the Sierra Club petition** urging Obama to direct the Army Corps of Engineers to repeal the Nationwide 12 fast-track permit for the DAPL, and to investigate the militaristic police actions against the peaceful protestors: <addup.org/campaigns> and click on the Dakota Access Button
6. **Call the Whitehouse** at 303-816-3559 and urge Obama to investigate potential rights violations at Sacred Stone Camp and urge him to reject the Dakota Access Pipeline once and for all.
7. **Share videos and alerts** with your friends and relatives on Facebook, Twitter and Email.
8. **Sign** the petition to Gov. Dalrymple of North Dakota urging him to stop the militaristic attacks by the state police and ND National Guard at: http://act.credoaction.com/sign/dapl_assault/
9. **Call** the national TV networks and National Public Radio and tell them you are shocked and amazed that they are not adequately covering this important protest.

The Illinois Chapter Sierra Club’s Frack Fight Team is steered by Terri Treacy (terri.treacy@sierraclub.org). To receive periodic updates and communications from local and national Sierra Club, become a member of Illinois Chapter’s Frack Fight Team:
http://action.sierraclub.org/site/Survey?ACTION_REQUIRED=URL_ACTION_USER_REQUESTS&SURVEY_ID=138181

FYI, to receive more timely alerts from the Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club, sign up online at their state website: https://secure.sierraclub.org/site/SPageNavigator/Chapter/il_newsletter_signup.html;jsessionid=84420F4C49A5A8CD264E1E3C3F131E25.app205a

Illinois Clean Jobs Bill – Action Needed

By Barbara McKasson

As I write this, I am still processing what a Trump presidency will mean for our country. For one thing, Trump has promised to roll back the federal Clean Power Plan. However, that does not mean that we stop working for progress here in the state of Illinois. Our Illinois Chapter staff and volunteer lobbyists are still working to pass a [Clean Jobs bill](#) that will give a boost to solar, wind and energy efficiency in Illinois, as well as create tens of thousands clean energy jobs and provide training for people who have lost jobs in the fossil fuel industry. We are also working for a state or regional cap-and-invest system to limit carbon emissions and use the money generated from this for low income energy assistance, plus investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

What You Can Do to Help: Call your state senator and representative and let them know that you want them to support a [Clean Jobs Bill](#) that will support a strong Renewable Portfolio Standard, create thousands of new jobs in wind, solar and energy efficiency, and create a market-based cap-and-invest system that will lower carbon emissions.



VOTE!!

You should have received the fall Illinois Chapter Sierra Club bulletin, which includes a list of candidates that the chapter and groups have endorsed. We hope you voted for our environmental champions.

Further back in the bulletin are the ballots for the chapter and group Executive Committee elections, including the Shawnee Group ballot. Included are bios of each candidate. Please vote for up to four Shawnee Group candidates. We need your votes!

Cool Cities Team Needs Volunteers

Our "[Cool Cities](#)" campaign has been revived and we can use some help! We are focusing on helping to promote solar energy in our communities. Currently, we are educating ourselves on the "Group Solar Buy" process and plan to help kick start more residential and business installations, so now is a great time to join our team.

We are also helping to promote passage of the Illinois Clean Jobs Bill by collecting Clean Power Pledges and delivering them to our state legislators. Please read the alert to the left concerning the November push to pass this bill.

Illinois Legislative Contacts: Call Your Legislators Today!

State Dist. 109 Rep. David Reis: 618-392-0108 or 217-782-2087; www.davidreis.org
State Dist. 115 - Rep. Terri Bryant: 618-242-8115; 217-782-0387; staterepterribryant@gmail.com
State Dist. 116 - Rep. Jerry Costello II - 618-282-7284; 217-782-1018 Staterepcostello@gmail.com
State Dist. 117 - Rep. John Bradley - 618-997-9697; 217-782-1051; repjohnbradley@mychoice.net
State Rep. 118 - Rep. Brandon Phelps - 618-253-4189; 217-782-5131; bpphelps118@gmail.com
Senate Dist. 55 Senator Dale Righter: 217-235-6033 or 217-782-6674
Senate Dist. 58 - Senator Dave Luechtefeld: 618-243-9014; 217-782-8137; sendavel@midwest.net
Senate Dist. 59 - Senator Gary Forby: 618-439-2504; 217-782-5509; www.senatorforby.com
Governor Bruce Rauner: 217-782-0244, <http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/Pages/ContacttheGovernor.aspx>
Speaker of the House Madigan: 217-782-5350; 773-581-8000; <http://www.housedem.state.il.us>
Senate President Cullerton: 217- 782-2728; 773-883-0770; jcullerton@senatedem.illinois.gov

Congressional Contacts

Senator Dick Durbin: 618-351-1122; 202-224-2152; durbin.senate.gov
Senator Mark Kirk: 202-224-2854; 312-886-3506; kirk.senate.gov
Representative Mike Bost: 618-457-5787; 202-225-5661; bost.house.gov
Representative John Shimkus: 618-252-8271; 202-225-5271; shimkus.house.gov

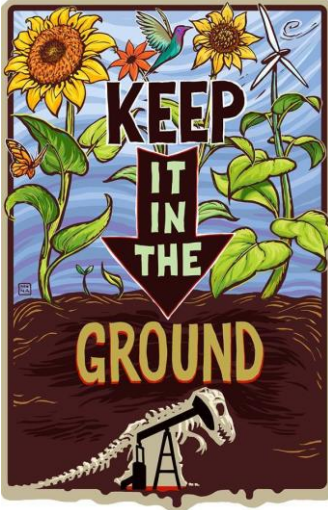
Has Your Email Address Changed?

To continue to receive notification when the latest Shawnee Group newsletter is posted online, be sure to inform the Group when you change your email address. Send email address updates to:

jane.cogie@gmail.com

At any time you can read current and past newsletters on the Shawnee Group website:

<http://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/shawnee> Visit the website also for information on upcoming local programs and outings as well as state and national Sierra Club issues.



Volunteers Needed to Help Protect the Shawnee National Forest

Protecting Shawnee National Forest involves frequent communication with the Forest Service, research on issues, and educating others about those issues. We especially need help in keeping oil and gas wells out of the forest - including fracking wells. Please contact Barb at babitaji@aol.com if you are interested in helping in any way.

Leadership Opportunities Run for the Board!

We need a few good women and men.

Join the board of directors (the executive committee, also known as the ExCom) in overseeing the Shawnee Group's strategic direction and economic health.

Board members meet monthly for about 2 hours.

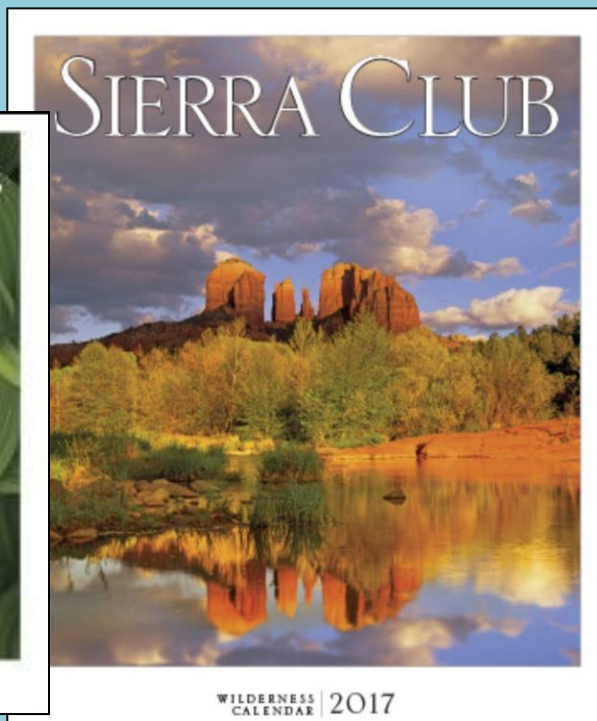
Board terms are for two years.

We are always interested in potential candidates.

2017 Sierra Club Calendars Available!

Buy at our monthly meetings this fall. Or contact Barb McKasson (babitaji@aol.com).

We also seek volunteers to sell calendars.



We also need:

Hospitality team members

Provide refreshments for one monthly meeting each year (second Thursday). Be the Hospitality Chair to organize refreshment providers and greeters OR Act as a greeter for a monthly meeting or welcome and assist our speaker OR Select and make reservations at a local restaurant for our monthly "Dinner Before the Meeting."

Contact the Membership Chair, Jane Cogie
618-549-4673

jane.cogie@gmail.com