



# Shawnee Trails



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

**Sierra Club – Shawnee Group**

**December 2018 – February 2019 QUARTERLY**

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## Pond Creek Mine Pipeline Permit No. 456 and TMDL

by Sabrina Hardenbergh

*“The purpose of the Water Management Pipeline and the diffuser is to discharge high concentrations of sulfites and chlorides.... There are no public water supplies near the Water Management Pipeline discharge; therefore, no adverse effects are anticipated.”*

--[Foresight Energy, Pond Creek Mine, permit application No. 456](#)

You might have easily missed notice of the recent public hearing and comment periods for the [Pond Creek Mine Pipeline Permit No. 456](#) and draft report for the [Big Muddy Watershed](#) Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), given IDNR did their typical scheduling, concurrent with congressional debates, elections and holidays. However, Chris Cline and Bob Murray are furthering their [Foresight Energy](#) enterprise with plans to pipe process and mine infiltration water from their longwall coal mine 12 miles across farmland, streams, federal wildlife land, under roads, past homes, and into the Big Muddy River. Presently the waste water has been discharged into a nearby tributary of Pond Creek; [Pond Creek has been 303\(d\) listed for high chloride levels](#). Review the mine's repeated EPA non-compliance or violations for its [three discharge points](#) on the perimeter of the mine site, wherein high chloride and sulfate levels are recurrent issues. The [high-sulfur coal](#) gets sold to foreign countries to offset [financial asset and debt juggling](#); millions of gallons of polluted water could soon be dumped into the river near Zeigler, Illinois, where it then meanders to Murphysboro, Oakwood Bottoms (by Little Grand Canyon and Inspiration Point), and the Mississippi River.

Basically, the [Foresight Energy aka Williamson Energy aka Mach Mine aka Pond Creek](#) longwall coal mine floods with mine infiltration water from the overlying sandstone. The company chose to invest hundreds of millions of dollars to develop such a site that puts underground miners' safety at risk, and that causes environmental and property risk to properly hold back polluted water; IDNR permitted the initial mine. The average 2,237 mg/L chloride and 1,940 mg/L sulfate concentration of this water exceeds quality standards allowed to be discharged into receiving waters. Approximately 2.7 million gallons of water are pumped from the mine daily, and this may increase to 3.5 million gallons. While the application admits chloride and sulfate issues, nothing is said of other toxic [trace elements potentially found in Herrin coal](#), that might end up in the infiltration water. [Oxidizing coal particles in water](#) reduce the oxygen available for invertebrates like mussels, with damages up (Continued on Page 2)

(Pond Creek Mine Pipeline , Continued from Page 1)

the food chain, and water quality for local [mussel and fish diversity](#) are of concern on the Big Muddy River. The [application](#) denies acidic impact to the river, yet such water pollution is [common](#) with coal mining, and the Pond Creek Mine has had [non-compliant pH discharge levels](#). [Acid mine drainage](#) from high sulfur coal mining contaminates drinking water, [disrupts aquatic plant and animal growth and reproduction](#), and corrodes infrastructure such as bridges and culverts (and by inference, pipelines); we know this from Appalachian mining and our own [Will Scarlet Mine](#) debacle. Foresight has incurred such problems, including its Hillsboro [Deer Run](#) mine (also recently [offloaded](#) because of a combustion event and unrecoverable buried equipment). Foresight proposes water go to water holding cells on the mining site (and possibly to their preparation plant or slurry impoundment), and then through the pipeline and diffuser to a “mixing zone” in the Big Muddy River.

[Transcripts](#) and [news](#) articles of the October 23<sup>rd</sup> public hearing document complaints of minimal notice, speaking and research time for those concerned about the pipeline permit and the larger coal industry operations. People are concerned about drop in the water table impacting their ponds and [wells](#), high [chloride](#) and sulfite levels’ impact on human and wildlife health, impact to outdoor recreation (canoeing, kayaking, fishing), and the overall impact of the coal industry to climate change and economic imbalances. In reviewing the company’s [application, maps, and their correspondence with IDNR](#), a little more geographical detail was added to the paperwork, and the pipeline plans changed to boring under roads and streams instead of cutting through them. However, the updated Foresight application superficially accounts for environmental impact in the immediate pipeline construction zone, and it largely ignores the project’s impact to the Big Muddy River and its surrounding watershed habitat. Foresight admits earlier violations in its application, including poor water quality (e.g., acidic, high iron, aluminum, [manganese](#), chloride, black water/coal fine, drilling fluid, ammonia/nitrogen, dust suppressant, possible asbestos, etc.), inappropriate discharges into wetlands and streams, coal waste in ditch, inappropriate or lack of water monitoring, gob pile gullies, and pipe breakage. Such issues do not prompt confidence in a safe pipeline project; instead, Foresight seems to be taking advantage of the recent federal administration’s repeal of the new Stream Protection Act and weakening of EPA Acts and Rules.

*“When coal is mined, fresh sulfur-bearing minerals in the coal and rocks are exposed to air and water. The resulting chemical reactions produce sulfuric acid and precipitates. The acid water flowing from coal mines, if not treated, can damage life forms in the receiving streams. The iron and sulfate precipitates often discolor stream beds with yellow and orange stains. In a similar manner, when burned, sulfur escaping in the flue gases can combine with water in the atmosphere to produce acidic precipitation (“acid rain”). For the same reasons, burning high-sulfur coal can be corrosive to the metal equipment used in a power plant.” -- [WV Geological & Economic Survey](#)*

*“The negative impacts of acid mine drainage are high levels of dissolved solids, especially iron, sulfates, chlorides, and manganese associated with the mine drainage.” -- [IEPA](#)*

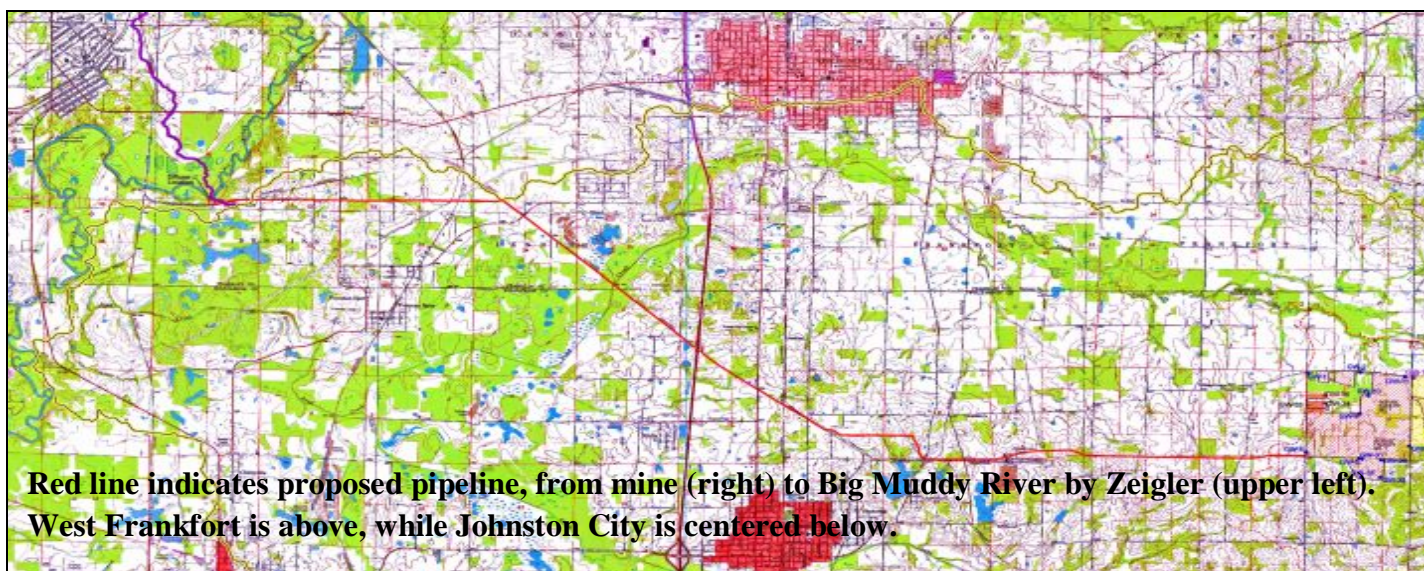
Some of us possibly remember the poor condition of the Big Muddy River a few decades ago before it became somewhat more cleaned up. However, significant sections of the Big Muddy and Pond Creek are still [303\(d\) listed](#) for pollution problems. In 2012, the Big Muddy was still a [Priority 1](#) on the [303\(d\) list](#) for cleanup, whether sulfates, fecal matter, or other water quality problems. Its tributary [Pond Creek had high chloride](#) levels, near Foresight’s mine. Another tributary, the Middle Fork Big Muddy near Foresight’s Sugar Camp mine, also has been [303\(d\) listed](#) for chloride. In 2004, the Big Muddy River had low pH and Dissolved Oxygen, and too much [manganese and sulfate, attributed to local coal mines](#) impact on groundwater. Earlier [reports](#) indicate exposed gob piles in Franklin County coal mining impacted the Big Muddy and its fish with acid runoff. The federal government attempted to change the forest habitat in the lower (Continued on Page 3)



*(Pond Creek Mine Pipeline, Continued from Page 2)*

[Oakwood Bottoms to improve habitat](#) for [endangered and threatened](#) wildlife species, and the area has been a fishing and canoeing or kayaking recreation area. This river and wetland habitat support bald and golden [eagles](#), river otters, bats and other [endangered, threatened](#) and protected wildlife species. High chloride levels are no help to the water resistance of river [otter's fur](#), and the food chain for otters (which are making a [comeback](#)); aquatic wildlife and eagles could diminish from the chloride and sulfite pollution. Foresight's pipeline application does not indicate how they intend to protect such species.

While the public comment period for Foresight's pipeline already passed on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, a public comment period on a related [draft report on Total Maximum Daily Load \(TMDL\) for the Big Muddy River watershed](#) is open until **December 15<sup>th</sup>**. Directions to write a comment to Abel Haile, Manager, Planning (TMDL) Unit Watershed Management Section, Bureau of Water, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency 1021 North Grand Avenue East, P.O. Box 19276, Springfield, IL 62794-9276, [Abel.Haile@illinois.gov](mailto:Abel.Haile@illinois.gov), are [here](#). Copy your comment to the pipeline public comment emails too, [dnr.mmlrd@illinois.gov](mailto:dnr.mmlrd@illinois.gov), and [nick.sandiego@illinois.gov](mailto:nick.sandiego@illinois.gov), with subject line "Permit Application No. 456, Williamson Energy, LLC, Pond Creek Mine, Williamson County." If a site is [303\(d\) listed](#), [no additional loadings are to be permitted until the waterbody is delisted](#); however, shenanigans are happening with the 303(d) listing and TMDL. The draft report indicates that parts of the Big Muddy River (IL\_N-11 - Sulfates) and its tributary Pond Creek (IL\_NG-02 Chloride) by the mine can be delisted, with the aid of a new TMDL calculation method that adjusts for seasonal/periodic water flow variation. Thus, Pond Creek's periodic high concentration of chloride becomes mathematically "diluted" with other seasonal measurements, even though periodic high concentrations during dry seasons may impact aquatic life. [Interaction](#) of varying combinations of water quality variables like sulfate, pH, and temperature is unclear. Pond Creek has been 303(d) listed for chloride in [2016](#), [2014](#) and [2012](#) reports, concurrent with Foresight's nearby mine operation, and the mine has [repeatedly violated chloride discharge levels](#). The explanation of the math focuses the reader on fecal matter examples, deflecting attention from the sulfate, chloride, manganese and pH violations from mining. Yet the strategy to delist sulfite and chloride impairments may now "legitimate" permitting Foresight to pollute the waterways with the very delisted items, when they should be denied the pipeline permit and continue to be monitored for chloride, sulfites, and other TMDL violations (and possibly shut down). The pipeline shunts the TMDL problem down river, to the edge of the TMDL reporting area, pushing the impact off on areas of the Big Muddy River that have been improved. One wonders about industry and government collusion in the concurrent adoption of new TMDL sampling and calculations and the expensive and invasive pipeline project. Foresight just closed their Hillsboro mine after an incident, so they continue financial [asset and debt management](#) with sale of their [more productive mines' coal to foreign buyers](#), helped by the recent lenient federal administration, and possibly the state of Illinois with this pipeline permit.



## **WINTER 2018/2019 SIERRA CLUB PROGRAMS:**

Note: Access Carbondale Township Hall (217 E. Main) via REAR entrance, a green door in the alley, across from Rock Hill Baptist Church (at Monroe and Marion Streets). The front door is locked! FREE and open to the public. Refreshments and socializing before and after meeting.

**Thursday, December 13, 2018**

**6:15 pm: Member & Guest Potluck**

**7:00 pm to 8:15 pm: Reflecting Back on 2018 and Looking Forward to 2019** — Join us for a year-end discussion of our activities this past year and priorities for projects to pursue in the coming year.

**Location for both potluck and meeting:** Carbondale Township, 217 E. Main Street

**Thursday, January 17, 2019, 7 pm**

**Title:** Solar for Southern Illinois Energy Forum: Reaping the Benefits of the Future Energy Jobs Act for Rooftop and Community Solar Projects

**Presenters:** Rebecca Judd, Sierra Club Illinois Clean Energy Advocate and Scott Allen, Citizens Utility Board

**Location:** TBD

**5 pm Dinner:** location TBA

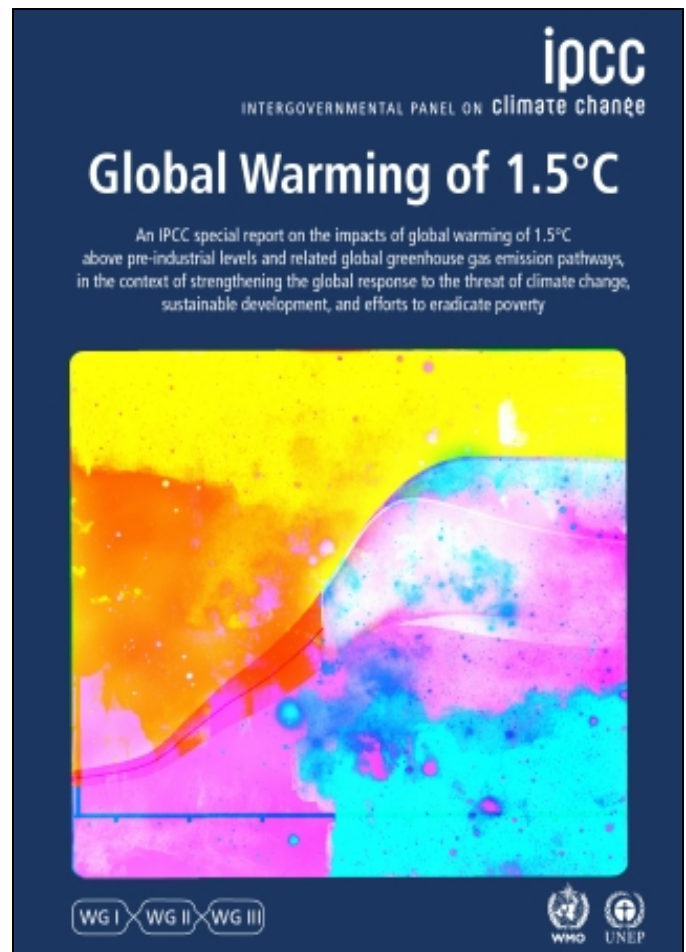
**Thursday, February 21, 2019, 7 pm**

**Title:** Unpacking the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report

**Presenter:** Prof Justin Schoof, SIUC Dept. of Geography & Environmental Resources

**Location:** Carbondale Township, 217 E. Main Street

**5 pm Dinner:** location TBA



### **Volunteers Needed to Help Protect 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](mailto:babitaji@aol.com) if you are interested in helping in any way.

The Illinois Chapter Sierra Club's Frack Fight Team is steered by Terri Treacy ([terri.treacy@sierraclub.org](mailto: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=URI\\_ACTION\\_USER\\_REQUESTS&SURVEY\\_ID=138181](http://action.sierraclub.org/site/Survey?ACTION_REQUIRED=URI_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](https://secure.sierraclub.org/site/SPageNavigator/Chapter/il_newsletter_signup.html?jsessionid=84420F4C49A5A8CD264E1E3C3F131E25.app205a)

**Call for articles and photographs for Shawnee Trails!** The next issue will be published in March. Please send your Word, PDF or JPG files to [sabrina@midwest.net](mailto:sabrina@midwest.net) by **February 4th**.



## WINTER 2018/2019 SHAWNEE GROUP SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS

### **Rim Rock and Garden of the Gods Hike, Sunday, December 2, 2018**

We will meet in the Murdale Shopping Center parking lot in Carbondale near the Murdale sign before 10 am. We will then travel together south of Harrisburg to the Rim Rock National Recreation Trail and the Garden of the Gods Recreation Area. They are both scenic, unique sites with beautiful views. We will do approximately 1-mile hikes at each site. Wear appropriate hiking shoes and bring water and a hiking staff. To sign up for the hike, call Steve Eberhart at 618-967-8690. The hike may be cancelled if no hikers have signed up prior to December 2.

### **Giant City Red Cedar Trail Hike, Sunday, January 6, 2019**

Meet at the Giant City Visitor's Center before 10 am. This will be a moderate hike of 3 miles. We will see bluffs and other beautiful views in Giant City State Park. Resolve to start your new year out right by hiking and experiencing nature. Be sure to wear appropriate clothing and hiking shoes. You must call Bob Mulcahy at 618-942-6342 to go on this hike.

### **Jackson Hollow Hike, Sunday, February 24, 2019**

Meet at Murdale shopping center in Carbondale (by the Murdale sign) before 9:30 or at the Marion Rural King parking lot (near the trailers/farm implements) before 10 am. The Jackson Hollow Natural Area features incredible rock formations and rare plant species. We will hike along the bluff lines on the north and south sides of the hollow. It will be a moderately difficult hike of about 3 miles. We may have to cross over downed trees and water. Wear appropriate hiking shoes and bring water. You must call Kevin Rohling at 618-694-8150 in order to attend this hike.

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### **High Quality Natural Areas Need Your Help: Helping to Preserve Rare Native Plants**

Shawnee Group Sierra Club is working with Illinois DNR to protect some of the highest quality natural areas in Illinois from non-native invasive plants (NNIS). Currently, we are focusing on Fern Rocks Nature Preserve. To save these areas from being overrun by invasive species and to protect the rare and beautiful native plants, we need lots of help. Each outing will include introductions and orientation on the invasive plants and safety measures.

### **Fern Rocks Nature Preserve in Giant City State Park, Saturday, December 8 2018, 1:00 – 4:00 PM**

Meet at Giant City Visitor's Center in Makanda – about six miles south of Carbondale. We will also meet people who need transportation at the SIU arena parking lot at NOON, if you contact us at least by noon two days before the event.

**Bring** a water bottle and work gloves (if you have some). We will provide work gloves to those who need them, plus snacks. Wear appropriate clothing, including closed toe sturdy shoes and long pants and sleeves. IDNR will provide orange vests.

**Contact:** Barbara McKasson, certified Sierra Club Outings Leader at 618-529-4824 or Email at [babitaji@aol.com](mailto:babitaji@aol.com) or Text 618-534-7440.

#### **Piasa Palisades Group Outings Chair:**

Carol Klinger, 618-288-5506, [ciklinger@yahoo.com](mailto: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](mailto:douglas.k.melville@gmail.com)  
<http://sierraclub.org/missouri/eastern-missouri>

#### **Future Outings TBA:**

Updates listed on our or Illinois Chapter websites:

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

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

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

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

## Dear Governor-Elect Pritzker

By Barbara McKasson, Conservation co-chair

Illinois Chapter Sierra Club endorsed JB Pritzker for Governor and worked hard to help elect him. Now is the time to speak up for the trees, wildlife and environment... and for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). You may have read Les Winkeler's excellent open letter to Pritzker that was in *The Southern* on November 9<sup>th</sup> that addressed the need to rebuild IDNR, which has been decimated by years of budget cuts and sweeping of funds meant for the agency. Now it is our turn to add our voices to support increased funding of IDNR and increased concern for the wildlife and natural resources that IDNR has a mandate to protect. So let's start sending Emails and Facebook messages to JB to let him know how much we care about those special places, plants and animals. Offered here are some facts, arguments, perspectives in support of greater funding for IDNR that may help get you thinking of what you would like to include in your letter to the Governor-Elect.

- At what points – besides tax time – do people really feel the state government affects them? How about when they can spend a Sunday afternoon with their whole family taking a walk in a state park or when their child comes home from a school field trip excited about seeing salamanders under a log, a long snake skin or crayfish in a stream. Those great experiences are possible only when there is money to maintain those trails or to pay a site interpreter. Please increase IDNR funding to maintain our state parks and to hire more full-time site interpreters. There are currently only seven full-time site interpreters in the whole state!
- The IDNR has a mandate to protect our natural resources, not encourage exploitation by corporations to mine or drill on our public lands. I urge you to appoint a biologist as Director of IDNR and highly qualified professionals for the departments within IDNR to make sure the agency does not lose sight of its primary mission.
- As Les Winkeler points out in his November 9<sup>th</sup> article in *The Southern*, each wildlife and fisheries biologist is currently covering five or six counties and each conservation police officer covers several counties. This makes it very difficult to protect the wildlife and the natural resources from damage. I urge you to fully staff the Illinois Department of Natural Resources so our parks and wildlife will be adequately protected. In fact, our most popular state park, Starved Rock, is being loved to death, and sorely needs more staff to make sure it does not die a slow death, which is where it is headed.
- Site superintendents are stretched so thin that they must shuttle between two, five or even twelve sites, with maintenance workers and volunteers left to greet the public and make sure public property is not damaged. This is abuse – of our parks and of the superintendents, who do their best to fulfill the demands of an impossible job. I urge you to hire enough site superintendents so that one superintendent does not have to oversee more than one major state park and so that each major state park has its own superintendent.
- Mr. Pritzker, we know you are concerned about childhood education, but how familiar are you with the gaping hole in our children's education and well-being, which is now called "nature deficit disorder." The iGeneration is so glued to their iphones and other screens that most of them hardly ever play outside and are increasingly disconnected from nature. An increasing number of studies have shown that this is resulting in a generation of kids that have trouble navigating their physical environment, have trouble with dexterity, and have increased anxiety and decreased attention span. You can help solve this problem by increasing the budget for parks, open spaces and environmental educators and park site interpreters.

- I urge you, Mr. Pritzker, to make a New Year's Resolution to not sweep any funds from the Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Fund (OSLAD) and the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund (NAAF). OSLAD helps local governments acquire, protect and manage public parks and open space, which is a state-financed grant program. NAAF money is for acquisition, preservation and stewardship of natural areas, including high quality natural communities, habitats for endangered and threatened species and natural heritage sites. Since Illinois is 48<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 states in amount of publicly accessible state and national lands per capita, it is evident that we need to spend OSLAD and NAAF funds for their intended purpose.
- I urge you to suspend bobcat hunting until scientific studies determine that there is a low risk of the species returning to protected list status. The hunting and trapping of bobcats is currently unconscionable since there is not sufficient scientific evidence to support it.
- I urge you to bring stakeholders together to plan a comprehensive strategy to protect Monarch butterflies in Illinois. Having the Illinois Department of Transportation planting and preserving milkweed is not enough, especially since roadways are dangerous areas for butterflies and other pollinators. We need cooperation between government and organizations to map out protected areas for planting and protecting milkweed for the larvae and nectar flowers for the adults.



**Send Governor-elect Pritzker a message voicing your concerns today by going to <http://jbpritzker.com> or messaging him at [Facebook.com/jbpritzker](https://www.facebook.com/jbpritzker).**

**Illinois Legislative Contacts: CALL YOUR LEGISLATORS TODAY!**

State Dist. 109 Rep. David Reis: 618-392-0108 or 217-782-2087; [www.davidreis.org](http://www.davidreis.org)  
 State Dist. 115 - Rep. Terri Bryant: 618-242-8115; 217-782-0387; [statereptribryant@gmail.com](mailto:statereptribryant@gmail.com)  
 State Dist. 116 - Rep. Jerry Costello II - 618-282-7284; 217-782-1018 [Staterepcostello@gmail.com](mailto:Staterepcostello@gmail.com)  
 State Dist. 117 - Rep. Dave Severin - 618-440-5090; 217-782-1051; [www.ilhousegop.org/contactseverin](http://www.ilhousegop.org/contactseverin)  
 State Rep. 118 - Rep. Natalie Phelps Finnie - 618-253-4189; 217-782-5131; [repphelpsfinnie@gmail.com](mailto:repphelpsfinnie@gmail.com)  
 Senate Dist. 55 Senator Dale Righter: 217-235-6033 or 217-782-6674  
 Senate Dist. 58 - Senator Paul Schimpf: 618-684-1100; [senshimpf58@gmail.com](mailto:senshimpf58@gmail.com)  
 Senate Dist. 59 - Senator Dale Fowler: 618-294-8951; 217-782-5509; [senatorfowler59@gmail.com](mailto:senatorfowler59@gmail.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](mailto:jcullerton@senatedem.illinois.gov)

**Congressional Contacts: CALL YOUR CONGRESSMEN TODAY!**

Senator Dick Durbin: 618-351-1122; 202-224-2152; <http://www.durbin.senate.gov/>  
 Senator L. Tammy Duckworth: (202) 224-2854; <https://www.duckworth.senate.gov/>  
 Representative Mike Bost: 618-457-5787; 202-225-5661; <https://bost.house.gov/>  
 Representative John Shimkus: 618-252-8271; 202-225-5271; <https://shimkus.house.gov/>



## Has Your Email Address Changed?

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](mailto:jane.cogie@gmail.com)

Read current and past newsletters on our website: <http://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/shawnee>. The website also lists information on upcoming local programs and outings, plus state and national Sierra Club issues.

### 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.

### **We need Hospitality team members**

Provide refreshments for one monthly meeting each year (2nd 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 Jane Cogie, 618-549-4673 [jane.cogie@gmail.com](mailto:jane.cogie@gmail.com).



## Shawnee Group Sierra Club T-Shirts for Sale!

Show your support for our local group's activities. For sale during our monthly meetings.

Color: White logo on blue T-Shirt

**\$15** Medium Large or X-Large

## 2019 Sierra Club Calendars!

Buy at our monthly meetings this fall. Or contact Barb McKasson ([babitaji@aol.com](mailto:babitaji@aol.com)). We also seek volunteers to sell calendars.

