



Shawnee Trails



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

Sierra Club – Shawnee Group

June - August 2014 QUARTERLY

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Peabody Arclar Rocky Branch Strip Mine Update

Since the early [spring newsletter](#), a considerable number of events drew the news spotlight concerning the proposed Peabody Arclar Wildcat Hills Cottage Grove Pit strip mine (aka Rocky Branch Mine) along Rocky Branch Road in Cottage Grove, IL east of Harrisburg. Strip mining presently occurs to the north of the proposed Rocky Branch Mine site in Cottage Grove, between Southeastern Illinois College, Equality, and Eldorado, to the northwest between Eldorado and Thompsonville, and south of Garden of the Gods towards Herod. Native Shawnee descendants decry desecration of their homelands by these existing mines, while the little that remains of Cottage Grove includes a cemetery next to a coal waste water impoundment and homes south of Route 13. Endangered Indiana bats live in the forests beside streams and the Saline River that flow to the Ohio, along with other more common wildlife. During the last couple years, Peabody has harassed the remaining residents to sell their farm and forest land. Some sold. Others fight to save their homes, including a Cottage Grove board member, as documented by Greenpeace filmmaker, Mitch Wenkus, in [Judy's Rock](#), or in Derek Deters' and Chris Oliver's filming of [Stripped: A Voice for Rocky Branch](#). Residents voiced their many concerns and protests in a series of public meetings, and hearings. You'll recall the last [newsletter](#) encouraged you to participate in the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency [NPDES](#) and [401](#) water pollution hearings, which had a public comment period until March 19, 2014. Residents made [numerous comments](#) about water and air pollution risk, property damage, wildlife impact, and many other concerns. You will also recall that the U.S. Office of Surface Mining issued an [injunction](#) on logging during mid-January 2014.

However, Peabody sub-contractors began [logging](#) the mine site before the I-EPA public comment period had finished. On March 12th, before a 401 mining permit was file-stamped in Saline County on March 13th, [explosives warning signs](#) were erected along Rocky Branch Road, an activity related to strip-mining. Additional tree feller heavy equipment was hauled in on semi-trucks, weighing well over weight limits of Rocky Branch (County) Road or Cottage Grove (Township) Road. Prior to delivery of the permit on March 13th, residents called out this

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during a peaceful assembly on county property documented by [KPSD Channel 6 news](#), during which an elderly resident was verbally assaulted by Peabody staff.



Explosives warning sign posted on March 12th near the logging entrance, prior to a 401 permit being filed-stamped at the Saline County Courthouse on March 13th.



Over-loaded semis carrying tree fellers for logging Peabody's proposed Rocky Branch Mine site.



Tree feller deforesting slope, forcing birds to flee into the remaining tree line along the neighbor's property line.



Delivery of petitions to the Attorney General's Carbondale office on March 19th, requesting an investigation of the Rocky Branch Mine permit application.

Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan was asked to investigate the numerous violations and inconsistencies in Peabody's permit application process, IDNR, I-EPA and Fish & Wildlife Service. The Illinois agencies and Rocky Branch Mine permit application are currently under investigation.

Residents [appealed](#) to the [Saline County Board](#) to keep Rocky Branch Road [open](#) for residents' use versus Peabody's strip mining. During an April 15th special meeting, the board turned Rocky Branch Road over to Peabody, wherein residents questioned whether proper Open Meetings Act procedures had occurred. Further [peaceful assemblies](#) occurred in the [road to temporarily block logging](#). Direct action protesters from the region joined residents, accepting the role as ["arrestables"](#) to incur a misdemeanor while passively kneeling in the road to block loggers entering at sunrise. Residents chose their actions with their legal standing carefully in mind such as staying off Peabody property and maintaining non-violent
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approaches. Law enforcement was debriefed on the message and non-violent nature of the assemblies, and they have generally been cordial, unlike some Peabody staff or security sub-contractors. On March 31st, the logging was to cease, a day specified in old regulations as the supposed day the Indiana bat arrives, even though new research and observations this year show that the bat is arriving earlier. That evening, residents and Shawnee descendants held a [memorial for the forest](#) at the edge of the road in front of the entrance to the deforestation, leaving a lane open to traffic. The group was harassed again by Peabody's sub-contracted [security guard](#), who came close to running over an elderly man in his wheelchair with her vehicle. The guard's reassignment was facilitated the next morning.

In early April, [IDNR press releases](#) announced [reform](#) in their [permitting process](#); however, this has not yet shown clear benefit. Rocky Branch residents continue to seek justice by all manner of legal recourse. They have appealed Peabody's IDNR permit application, and they filed various complaints, including with the I-EPA and Illinois Attorney General. The Attorney General is investigating. They lobbied their southern Illinois representatives in Springfield in April. They joined recent coal industry divestment lobbying at Southern Illinois University and Washington University. Joining [Black Mesa Navajo](#), who have fought Peabody for [four decades](#), and St. Louis residents, they attempted to make a [statement](#) in the recent Peabody shareholders meeting in St. Louis on May 8, 2014, while facing a [large show of police force](#). A Cottage Grove township meeting was scheduled for May 12, 2014 to determine whether to turn Cottage Grove Road over to Peabody. The Cottage Grove Road Commissioner announced his [resignation](#) at the meeting, so further decisions were postponed 10 days until a May 22nd meeting at the same time and place, 6 pm in the Cottage Grove Road. Call Barb to carpool to the hearing on May 22, 618-529-4824.

2014 SPRING/SUMMER PROGRAMS NOTE: Start time at 7 PM!

Location: Rear of 217 East Main, across from Rock Hill Baptist Church. Enter in rear, through green door. The front door is locked!

Thursday, June 12, 2014 at 7 pm: Serengeti Seasons

Speaker: John Schwegman

Dinner: Hunan Village

Thursday, July 10, 2014 at 7 pm: Trail of Tears State Forest

Speaker: Tracey Boutelle Fidler

Dinner: TBA



Giraffes.

Photo by Sabrina Hardenbergh, 1973.

Meet Fellow Shawnee Group Members for Dinner before the Monthly Meeting!

The Shawnee Group meets at a local restaurant before each monthly meeting for an hour of sociability and relaxation. New faces are most welcome and we would love to have you join us at any time! Our upcoming dinners will be at:

Thursday, May 8, 2014 at 5 pm Dinner: Garfields, University Mall, Carbondale

Thursday, June 12, 2014 at 5 pm Dinner: Hunan Village

Thursday, July 10, 2014 at 5 pm Dinner: TBA

Wilderness Act 50th Anniversary Hikes in Southern Illinois

In Celebration of the Wilderness Act, several local groups of the Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club collaborated to plan an outing to every wilderness area in the state. Seven of the wilderness areas are located in the only National Forest in the state – the Shawnee National Forest. The eighth is in Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge. Although not a part of the outing itself, Sierrans will camp for the weekend at nearby campgrounds. We face a unique outings challenge in that Wilderness areas are restricted to groups of ten or less. We may need to form multiple groups if the numbers exceed ten. **Contact Carol Klinger, ciklinger@yahoo.com, to reserve your spot for the hikes listed below.**

05/17/14 Wilderness Act Celebration Clear Springs

This year's third adventure takes us to the Clear Springs Wilderness area. Meet at (location tbd). Wear weather appropriate clothing and pack a lunch. Camping is not part of the outing; however, Sierrans camp for the weekend in a reserved campsite in nearby Trail of Tears Campground.

<http://tioga.sierraclub.org/oarsactivity/pages/activity.jsf?activity=50559>

08/09/14 Wilderness Act Celebration Lusk Creek

The fourth adventure takes us to the Lusk Creek Wilderness area. Meet at (location tbd). Wear weather appropriate clothing and pack a lunch. This location was selected for the summer outing due to its availability of summer type activities. Camping is not part of the outing; however, Sierrans camp for the weekend in nearby Lake Glendale where swimming is available.

<http://tioga.sierraclub.org/oars-activity/pages/activity.jsf?activity=50560>

09/27/14 Wilderness Act Crab Orchard and Panther's Den

The fifth adventure takes us to the Crab Orchard and Panther's Den Wilderness areas. Meet at (location tbd). Wear weather appropriate clothing and pack a lunch. Camping is not part of the outing; however, Sierrans camp for the weekend in nearby Ferne Clyffe State park in the tent camp area. <http://tioga.sierraclub.org/oars-activity/pages/activity.jsf?activity=50561>

10/25/14 Wilderness Act Celebration Garden of the Gods

The sixth and conclusion adventure takes us to the Garden of the Gods area. Meet at (location coming). Wear weather appropriate clothing and pack a lunch. This location was selected for the fall outing due to its wonder fall color beauty. Camping is not part of the outing; however, Sierrans camp for the weekend in nearby Pharaoh Campground.

<http://tioga.sierraclub.org/oars-activity/pages/activity.jsf?activity=50562>



Garden of the Gods.

Photo by Sabrina Hardenbergh, 2014

Piasa Palisades Group Outings Chair:

Carol Klinger, 618-288-5506,

ciklinger@yahoo.com

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

Eastern Missouri Group Outings Chair:

Bob Gestel 636-296-8975,

rgestel@sbcglobal.net

<http://missouri.sierraclub.org/emg/outings>

Future Outings TBA: We have two soon-to-be certified outings leaders who plan to hold outings in the fall. Check our "Outings" page for updates:
<http://illinois.sierraclub.org/shawnee>

Stop the Promotion of Coal Mining and Burning in Illinois Schools!

The “Illinois Coal Technology Development and Assistance Act” requires the Illinois Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) to use tax dollars to produce and distribute coal educational materials for our kids. Between 2006 and 2012, the IDCEO spent nearly \$1 million of our taxes and fees on promoting coal to teachers and school children.

In 2013, an independent consultant determined that the coal curriculum was outdated and should be immediately retired. Revising and updating the coal education program will require a significant commitment of new public funds, which could be put to much better uses. House Bill 5660 (Conroy) removes the legal mandate requiring the Illinois DCEO to provide coal education for Illinois children. Tell your State Senator and Representative to Support [HB5660](#).

For more information, go to <illinois.sierraclub.org>, hover over “Act”, and click on “Legislation” for the [fact sheet](#).

Fix the Illinois Renewable Portfolio Standard! Get Renewables Back on Track in Illinois

Illinois was among the top five states for renewable energy growth during the past five years, with \$1.6 billion invested in 2012 alone. Illinois’ [Renewable Portfolio Standard](#) (RPS) has helped create this growth. Since 2007, clean energy investments in Illinois have led to over 20,000 jobs, saved consumers \$177 million in wholesale electrical costs, and eliminated 5 million tons of pollution.

The RPS requires 25% of all electricity in Illinois to come from clean sources by 2025. However, now that we have dozens of energy suppliers in Illinois, and electricity contracts are now short term (one to two years), technical complications have virtually halted clean energy investments in Illinois. Outdated kinks in the law now restrict the Illinois Power Agency from investing millions of dollars it would otherwise be investing in renewable energy projects in Illinois.

Tell your legislators to fix the Renewable Portfolio Standard to create jobs, clean the air and curb global warming and climate change. We could meet the clean energy target of 25% by 2025 if the legislators allocate the funds from the electric suppliers to the Illinois Power Agency to invest in Illinois projects. Ratepayers will not be asked to bear additional costs, and all consumer protections and electricity rate caps will remain in place. Call them today! Fix the RPS, Vote YES! on [SB103](#) and [HB2864](#).

Ban Fracking on Public Lands

Sierra Club supports a [number of recent bills](#) that address gaps in the Illinois Hydraulic Fracturing Regulatory Act, particularly [SB3424](#) and [SB3181](#) pertaining to public lands. The bill ([SB3424](#)) that would [ban fracking on state and federal public lands](#) in Illinois is still in the Senate Energy Committee. We are pushing for a hearing on the bill in the committee. Since fracking may cause upward pollution, [SB3424](#) will ban all drilling underneath state parks, recreation areas, fish and wildlife areas, forests and historic sites, national grasslands, wildlife refuges and forests like the Shawnee. Drilling in a state park is already illegal, but directional drilling underneath state parks is presently allowed. The bill ([SB3181](#)) to use the excise tax on fracking for enforcement of the regulations, cleanup of legacy pollution from fossil fuel extraction, acquire and protect new state parks and conservation areas, and support workforce training in renewable energy is also pending.

Illinois Legislative Contacts: Call Your Legislators Today!

State Dist. 115 - Rep. Mike Bost - 618-457-5787; 217-782-0387; rep.bost@hotmail.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. 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;

Senatorforby@yahoo.com

Household Chemical Collection Event – Saturday, May 31, 2014

8 AM – 3 PM at the Southern Illinois Airport

Route 13 West of Carbondale, Airport Rd. North – Follow Signs

Jackson County Residents only: Sponsored by Jackson Co. Board and Health Dept.

Take advantage of this event to properly dispose of items that could cause toxic pollution. Old herbicides, pesticides, solvents, mercury thermometers & thermostats and more! Remember, just one teaspoon of mercury can contaminate a 25 acre lake to a toxic level, and motor oil is a toxic substance. Please do your part. For more information on what is/is not accepted, go to www.RecycleJacksonCounty.org or Call 684-3143, Ext. 128

The Illinois Chapter Sierra Club's Frack Fight Team consists of Terry Treacy (terri.treacy@sierraclub.org) and Jennifer Hensley (jennifer.hensley@sierraclub.org).

To receive periodic updates and communications from local and national Sierra Club, become a member of the Illinois Chapter's Frack Fight Team:

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

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 if you are interested in helping in any way.

Shawnee Group Sierra Club Native Plant Sale

Location: Town Square Pavilion, corner of Main Street and Illinois Ave., Carbondale, IL 62901

Date: 8:00 am - 2:00 pm, Saturday, May 17, 2014

Contact info: Helen Ashraf, 618-713-6401, hlashraf@siu.edu; Barbara McKasson, 618-529-4824, babitaji@aol.com

Large selection of plants native to southern Illinois – hardy, beautiful, pollinator friendly, and low maintenance. Most plants priced at \$6. There will be a limited number of small pots for \$3 and some woody or difficult to grow species for slightly higher prices.

We will have around 1000 plants of many species, including perennial wildflowers, grasses trees, shrubs, and vines for shade and sun. There will also be plants for rain gardens (moist to wet soil).



Call for articles and photographs for Shawnee Trails!

The next issue will be published in September. Please send your Word, PDF or JPG files to sabrina@midwest.net by **August 11th**.

Bobcat and Wildlife Bills

The past winter, Representative Brandon Phelps introduced [HB4226](#), Wildlife - Bobcat Hunting, which removed the prohibition to hunt bobcats, and therein specified the bobcat hunting season. Supporters believed that the bobcat population had grown sufficiently to allow hunting, while other environmentalists spoke out against the bill, favoring protected species status for the elusive cat, similar to that for grey wolves, cougars, and American black bears in [SB3049](#). Shawnee Group Sierra Club past president, Laurel Toussaint, was even nominated for a [Golden Pen Award](#) for her March 26, 2014 [letter to the editor](#) in the local newspaper *The Southern*, which wrote in opposition to HB4226. [Sierra Club](#) opposed the [HB4226](#) bobcat hunting bill, which passed the House in late March, and was then referred to Assignments. Illinois Department of Natural Resources has not yet specified any bobcat hunting and trapping season directives on their hunting and trapping websites. Sierra Club supports [SB3049](#) which protects wolves, cougars and bears. Introduction of SB3049 occurred shortly after a [lone cougar was shot in northern Illinois](#) by a [conservation officer](#), and outraged citizens called for a better IDNR wildlife management plan. Cougars, elusive creatures, are infrequently spotted in Illinois, although there have been sightings in southern Illinois.



Photo courtesy of IDNR.

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: dorcyprosser2001@yahoo.com

At any time you can read current and past newsletters on the Shawnee Group website: <http://illinois.sierraclub.org/Shawnee/> Visit the website also for information on upcoming local programs and outings as well as state and national Sierra Club issues.