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Clean Energy Jobs Act: Breathing New Life into Southern Illinois
by Michael Hicks

As a young boy I was a firsthand witness to the "gutting of American Manufacturing" that took place in the '90s and early 2000s. Factories were closed and moved to other countries, communities that were dependent on these jobs became devastated, and people were left feeling hopeless and unsure about the future. My family was impacted by this; my dad lost his job when the factory moved to Mexico, and I saw many people become deeply cynical and apathetic towards politicians and our economic system. Another industry in the area is coal mining, which has also been on a major decline. While I didn't see the impact of coal mining first hand, my parents knew people that died due to black lung disease or had their life severely impacted from the extreme working conditions in the mines.

Fast forward to 2019 and not much has changed for the region I grew up in. On a whole, jobs have continued to decline in the rural parts of Illinois, and many jobs that exist do not pay anywhere near what was provided to folks before I was born. However, what leaves me more confused than anything is the solution some are proposing. Instead of looking towards industries of the future to breathe new life into the region, there's been an attempt to hold on to the coal industry which virtually every statistic shows as being on its last limb. Luckily, there's a bill in Springfield that could turn our situation around. The Clean Energy Jobs Act provides Illinois with a unique opportunity to become a leader in an industry that's already outcompeting fossil fuels around much of the country in terms of price and employment. It plans to put Illinois on a path to 100% renewable energy by 2050, and in the process will create thousands of jobs for the region.

Additionally, it helps retrain and transition fossil fuel workers that are affected. Moving to 100% renewable energy has been a controversial topic lately. Therefore, I'd like to respond to common criticisms I've seen about this bill.

"The Technology Isn't Capable of Powering Everything"

A common criticism is that clean energy technology isn't powerful or reliable enough to meet the electric demand of consumers. In fact, I recently saw a commercial that criticizes wind and solar energy's volatility. In the commercial, wind turbines are shown blowing in the wind, but as soon as the wind stops the turbines cease production; this causes everyone to immediately lose power, and a crisis ensues.

Thankfully, scientists and engineers are trained to test systems they design and study; the suggestion that they're not thinking about days the wind doesn't blow is nothing more than a *(Continued on Page 2)*

scare tactic. In fact, studies that examine clean energy take the unpredictability of weather into account.

In 2018, a [study](#) was published in the journal of Energy & Environmental Science. The study's focus was to see if solar and wind could reliably power all of the United States. Keeping in mind that the wind doesn't always blow and the sun doesn't always shine, they analyzed 36 years of weather data to see if it could meet the United States' electrical demand. They came to the conclusion that a mix of 75% wind and 25% solar could power 75-80% of the country. If we designed the grid to store an excess capacity of energy, 90% of the country could be powered by wind and solar alone. Adding other renewable sources such as hydroelectric could get us to 100%. Considering we're only talking about Illinois, this data shows that wind and solar is capable of powering the state.

"The Technology Costs Too Much"

For years the idea of having 100% renewable energy has been ridiculed due to the price of wind and solar. While this criticism may have been valid a few decades ago, it's not grounded in the current realities of the market. According to [Lazard's widely used assessment of energy costs](#), the cost of unsubsidized wind has declined by 69% in the last 9 years, and unsubsidized solar has declined by 88%. This means that for much of the country, renewable energy is currently cheaper than coal and natural gas. In a press release, [Lazard](#) points out that "we have reached an inflection point where, in some cases, it is more cost-effective to build and operate new alternative energy projects than to maintain existing conventional generation plants." While costs continue to decline, Lazard suggests keeping a mixed power grid to help gradually transition from conventional energy to renewables. The first phase of the Clean Energy Jobs Act does exactly that by having Illinois at 45% renewable energy by 2030.

Additionally, the fossil fuel industry has enjoyed many benefits throughout the years that are arguably the main reason it's been competitive this long. One large benefit is that the market price of fossil fuel is dramatically lower than its real cost; this is due to what economists call "externalities". Negative externalities occur when a buyer and seller negotiate a price that does not take into account the cost to external parties. An obvious example is sulfur dioxide produced from a car manufacturing plant; the pollution creates acid rain, which leads to costs that are forced upon thousands of external parties, not just the people who buy and sell a car. These costs are not calculated into the final prices of coal and natural gas. Once you take externalities into account, it's easy to see that fossil fuel is drastically more expensive than its current market price. In 2010, the [National Research Council tried to estimate the externalities](#) that go unaccounted for in various energy markets; they concluded that the market price for burning coal was off by 70%, and the price for heat produced by natural gas was off by 42%.

"It Will Hurt Coal Jobs"

Coal jobs have been on a steady decline for the last three decades, and employment numbers have held steady despite an administration that's been sympathetic to the industry. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that around 2,000 jobs have been added since 2016, which is [not significant enough for economists to make any kind of judgment](#). The number of US coal miners has remained around [50,000 since 2016, which is a record low](#). Furthermore, The Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates that [U.S. coal production fell 2 percent in 2018, and will fall another 6 percent by 2020](#).

Around 75% of coal production is already more expensive than renewables, and according to information from the EIA, the [coal industry will be entirely outcompeted on cost](#) by 2025. There's been a lot of rhetoric lately about the "war on coal"; instead of accepting the reality that the market is moving towards clean energy, some have continued to paint a false picture of the situation. The truth is that the cost of coal is the main reason for its [decline](#). And, as I mentioned earlier, this is comparing the cost of coal to the "unsubsidized" cost of renewable energy.

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(Clean Energy Jobs Act, Continued from Page 2)

Despite the bad news, there's one positive statistic when it comes to employment. In rural Illinois, clean energy already employs twice as many people than the entire fossil fuel industry. Most importantly, these [jobs are growing around 5% each year](#), even as the total number of jobs in the area decline. The data clearly shows that renewable energy is helping drive economic growth, so expanding it through the Clean Energy Jobs Act would only help accelerate this trend. Additionally, the bill includes provisions to help transition and retrain fossil fuel workers through the Clean Jobs Workforce Hubs, a network of organizations that provide support to disadvantaged communities.

Finally, I believe most people, if given the option, would prefer to work at a clean energy job instead of a coal mine due to how dangerous the mines are. [More than 76,000 miners have died from black lung](#) since 1968, and the disease has recently escalated. According to a July 2018 report from The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, [one in ten veteran coal miners currently have black lung; this is the highest level recorded in the last 25 years](#). People shouldn't have to needlessly sacrifice their life just to pay the bills.

Conclusion

If you agree the Clean Energy Jobs Act is exactly what Southern Illinois needs, I encourage you to reach out to your legislators and share your thoughts with them. I believe this bill has potential for bipartisan support if our legislators know how we feel about it. Thank you for reading.



SUMMER 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.

Sunday, June 30, 2019, 1 - 4 pm

Location: [Scratch Brewery](#), 264 Thompson Rd, Ava, IL 62907

Event: Talk by Marika Josephson on “Keeping the ‘Farm’ in ‘Farmhouse’ Beer” and Shawnee Group member/community gathering.

We will share in a meal of Scratch's Pizza, made with Scratch's home-grown ingredients (the pizza will be on us). Both a salad and desert potluck will add to the meal. Bring a salad or desert to share if you are able. For more information on this event, contact J. Cogie (jane.cogie@gmail.com) or look for updates on the [Shawnee Group of the Sierra Club Facebook page](#).

July 2019: No scheduled program -- Summer Vacation.

Thursday, August 8, 2019, 7 pm

Title: Ecological Restoration

Presenter: Debbie Newman, Natural Areas Preservation Specialist for the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

Location: Carbondale Township, 217 E. Main Street

5 pm Dinner: Location TBA

SUMMER 2019 SHAWNEE GROUP SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS

Given ticks, weather, vacations, and other factors, no Shawnee Group Sierra Club outings have been scheduled for summer 2019. However, browse the lower right Index on our old blog page for numerous southern Illinois hiking trail descriptions, and explore some of these during your own time: <http://shawneegroup.blogspot.com/>. Check the Illinois Chapter listings for other outings across the region: <https://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/events-calendar>. Or consider a national outing for your summer vacation: <https://www.sierraclub.org/get-outside>.

Service Outings – Native Plant Rescue Team

Shawnee Group is committed to helping rid high-quality natural areas of non-native invasive plants (NNIS) that are threatening to out-compete the natives, many of which are threatened, endangered or rare. In particular, we have been holding invasive pulls and lopping at the Fern Rocks Nature Preserve (Trillium Trail) and at LaRue – Pine Hills area in Shawnee National Forest.

Because our ability to hold these service outings depend so much on the weather and condition of the ground, we cannot nail down dates very far ahead. Thus, if you are interested in participating, please contact us and we will put you on our Email list to be notified when we do set dates. Please respond to Barb to be on our Native Plant Rescue Team with your name and Email address.

Contact Barb by phone at 618-529-4824 (voice mail) OR by text only to 618-534-7440.

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 or Illinois Chapter websites:

<http://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/shawnee>
<https://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/events-calendar>

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

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

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.

Concerned about fracking?

Contact Barb McKasson at babitaji@aol.com if you are interested to help. Bills to support in Springfield, include [HB282](#) (fracking transparency bill) and [HB1562](#) ([People's Property Protection Act](#), concerning subsurface trespass), so do contact your legislators. However, Barb can alert you of many action, outreach and planning opportunities that come up.

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

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

Pollinators: Through the Artist's Eye

CALL FOR ART

In the month June 2019, Pollinator Month, Carbondale Community Arts (CCA) and the Shawnee Sierra Club are hosting an art exhibition featuring pollinators and celebrating the important work they do.

This exhibit will showcase the talent of local artists and provide an opportunity for the public to learn about pollinators. As part of the exhibition, CCA's Artspace 304 will host art workshops and lectures on lifecycles and habitats of pollinators.

CCA welcomes submissions of all media: 2D paintings, prints, drawings, and photographs, 3D works in fiber, metal, wood, and ceramics, and time-based media and performance proposals. All 2D artwork must be hanging ready, no sawtooth hangers, please. All artwork must be original, created by the named artist.

Subjects can include all pollinators such as bees, hummingbirds, wasps, butterflies, bats, moths, and other insects, and the flowers, fruits, and vegetables they pollinate.

HOW TO SUBMIT ARTWORK

Artists may submit up to five works, for display at Artspace 304 and the Corridor Gallery in the Carbondale Civic Center. Artists may sell work on display for a standard commission, split equally between CCA and the Shawnee Sierra Club Pollinator Project. We reserve the right to make all selections to be included in the show.

Work submitted to CCA must include completed entry form and loan agreement. Entry forms can be submitted online or completed in person. Visit www.carbondalearts.org/pollinator for an online form. Drop off submissions to Artspace 304, 304 W Walnut St, Carbondale, IL 62901.

For more information contact CCA at info@carbondalearts.org / 618-457-5100 or Kathy Belletire, project leader: kbelletireart@gmail.com / 618-694-0601
<http://carbondalearts.org/pollinator>

DATES TO REMEMBER

MAY 15-19 12-4:30 pm
drop-off artwork at Artspace 304
(until 7 pm on May 17).

JUNE 7 5-7 pm
Exhibition public opening
reception at Artspace 304.

JUNE 28 Exhibition closes.

JUNE 30, JULY 1-2 12-4:30 pm
Artwork pickup at Artspace 304.



at **ARTSPACE 304**



Pollinator Programs at Carbondale Community Arts on Saturdays in June!

All programs provided free of charge
by a grant from the Illinois Sierra Club.

Location: CCA/Artspace 304, 304 W. Walnut Street, Carbondale, IL 62901

OPENING ART RECEPTION -- FRIDAY, JUNE 7th, 5:00-7:00 pm.

JUNE SATURDAY POLLINATOR PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS:

Saturday, June 1st, 1:00-2:00 pm, “HUMMINGBIRDS” by KAREN FRAILEY from the Shawnee Chapter of the Southern Illinois Audubon Society.

Saturday, June 8th, 1:00-3:00 pm, “WING IT” by KATHY BELLETIRE, Nature Artist. A playful, acrylic painting class on butterflies. Materials and refreshments provided. Adults - Limit 10. **Pre-registration required:** KBelletireArt@gmail.com.

Saturday, June 15th, 1:00-2:00 pm “PHOTOGRAPHING POLLINATORS” by JAMES OSBORN, President of the Friends’ of Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge Photography Club.

Saturday, June 22nd, 1:00-2:00 pm, “EVERYTHING BEES” by DR. SEDONIA SIPES, S.I.U. Associate Professor of Plant Biodiversity and Conservation Biology.



Environmental Bills in Springfield

Illinois Chapter Sierra Club is among the members of the Illinois Environmental Council, who has an 8-page list of current environmental legislation to track. Review the list and let your representatives know your position on each energy, infrastructure, pollution and endangered species related topic:

<https://ilenviro.org/2019-priority-legislation/>.

Illinois Chapter lists four of these bills as their top priority to support: [Clean Energy Jobs Act \(CEJA\)](#), [Investing in Open Space](#), [Clean Water Jobs for All](#), and [Protect Our Families from Toxic BPA Receipts](#).

Clean Energy Jobs Act – Update

SB2132/HB3624 This bill would create more than \$30 billion in new private investment in renewable energy and energy conservation in Illinois, powering over 4 million homes, plus creates new clean energy careers while improving air and water quality. This bill is still being hammered out in negotiations and is anticipated to be ready for a vote in the fall session. For more details see our spring newsletter or go to Illinois.sierraclub.org and click on “legislation.”

ACTION: Call your state senator to co-sponsor SB2132 and your representative to co-sponsor HB3624.

Toxic BPA Receipts: SUPPORT

HB2076 People avoid Bisphenol A (BPA) in many products, but are unaware that it’s in the coating on many cash register receipts. BPA has been widely studied and shown to be associated with an increased risk of conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease as well as effects on development of reproductive tissue and the immune system. Recent studies have found BPA may remain in the body longer when it is absorbed through the skin than when it is ingested. This bill would prohibit the use of paper containing BPA for business records and require manufacturers to replace BPA with the least toxic alternative.

ACTION: Passed the House. Call your state senator to vote YES on HB 2076.

MORE LEGISLATIVE ALERTS...CALL OR EMAIL ASAP

SUPPORT Illinois Kyoto Protocol Act Repeal

HB3481 / SB2140 repeals Illinois' Kyoto Protocol Act of 1998, which currently prevents Illinois agencies from regulating greenhouse gas emissions by providing that the Illinois EPA and the Illinois Pollution Control Board "shall not propose or adopt any new rule for the intended purpose of addressing the adverse effects of climate change which in whole or in part reduces emissions of greenhouse gases" 415 ILCS 140/15. The Kyoto Protocol Act was passed at the time due to objections from the coal industry to that treaty. The US never ratified that treaty and it never went into effect internationally. Its proposed milestones have come and gone, and it is now moot. But we still live with these prohibitions on Illinois EPA today. **ACTION:** Passed in House. Call your senator to SUPPORT HB3481 and SB2140 so Illinois can better address the climate crisis.

Protect Endangered Species: OPPOSE HB2425/SB1336

HB2425 / SB1336 jeopardizes endangered species by weakening the expert composition of the Endangered Species Protection Board and eliminates certain requirements for permits, notice, and public hearings. These bills would tie Illinois regulations to Trump Administration federal rollbacks to endangered species laws and prevent Illinois from protecting current state regulations. These bills would allow special interests to hinder science-based decisions for listing species and remove state jurisdiction over "incidental take" of threatened species. Endangered species laws are the most effective tools for protecting not only our native wildlife but also the special natural areas in Illinois that are a much-needed refuge for our native species. These are very dangerous bills.

ACTION: Passed in House and on 3rd reading in Senate. Call your senator to OPPOSE HB2425 and SB1336 in order to keep state control of protection of our most threatened species and make sure that decisions are based on science, not special interests.



Indiana bat

Illinois Legislative Contacts: CALL YOUR LEGISLATORS TODAY!

State Dist. 109 - Rep. Darren Bailey: 618-665-4109 or 217-782-2087; <http://www.ilhousegop.org/contactbailey>
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. Dave Severin: 618-440-5090; 217-782-1051; www.ilhousegop.org/contactseverin
State Rep. 118 - Rep. Patrick Windhorst: 618-294-8703; 217-782-5131; www.ilhousegop.org/windhorst_contact
Senate Dist. 55 - Senator Dale Righter: 217-235-6033; 217-782-6674; dalerighter.com/Contact
Senate Dist. 58 - Senator Paul Schimpf: 618-684-1100; senshimpf58@gmail.com
Senate Dist. 59 - Senator Dale Fowler: 618-294-8951; 217-782-5509; senatorfowler59@gmail.com
Governor JB Pritzker: 217-782-6830; <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/gov/contactus/Pages/default.aspx>
Speaker of the House Mike Madigan: 217-782-5350; 773-581-8000; mmadigan@housedem.state.il.us
Senate President John Cullerton: 217-782-2728; 773-883-0770; 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

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.



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

We #KickCoalAsh!

Both the Illinois Senate and House just passed [Senate Bill 9, The Coal Ash Pollution Prevention Act](#), so the bill goes to Governor Pritzker for signing.

Passing [SB9](#) makes Illinois the 3rd state to take action on coal ash. While southern Illinois legislators Bryant, Windhorst and Fowler voted "No", we can thank the leadership of Senator [Scott Bennett](#), [State Representative Carol Ammons](#), and [State Representative Mike Marron](#) who better understand the environmental and [health hazards of coal ash](#).

What SB 9 does for Illinois:

- Provides Illinois communities protection from toxic coal ash pollution as impoundments are closed.
- Provides a regulatory framework for EPA to approve protective closure plans for coal ash impoundments.
- Requires Financial Assurance so Illinois taxpayers are not stuck with the cleanup bill.
- Ensures meaningful public participation and transparency for affected communities.
- Focuses on environmental justice communities and high-risk impoundments.
- Assesses fees on polluters to provide IEPA the resources they need.

THANK YOU for signing witness slips, making calls, and sending letters to the Senate and the House!