



Shawnee Trails



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

Sierra Club – Shawnee Group

June – August 2020 QUARTERLY

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Trump Aims to Block Renewable Energy Expansion in Illinois *Action Alert, by Barb McKasson*

CEJA, the Clean Energy Jobs Act, authorizes the Illinois Power Agency (IPA) to design our own capacity market that will create new savings for customers and prioritize renewables, storage and resources to lower our peak electricity demand. Capacity market reform is a central policy to support our goal of a carbon-free electric sector for Illinois by 2030, and ensure we replace retiring coal, gas and nuclear plants with 100% clean energy. But now, Trump's appointees at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) have issued a decision that would compel Illinois to use peak demand electricity from the fossil fuel powered PJM grid.

This decision by Trump appointees in FERC would raise electricity bills for many Illinois residents by bailing out failing coal companies at the worst possible time during a global health crisis. **These bailouts could cost Illinois consumers hundreds of millions of dollars per year for electricity they don't need and will be sourced from dirty fossil fuel burning plants.**

The good news is the Illinois legislature can pass a bill to opt out of the PJM capacity market and to give the state the power to develop its own plan to ensure we have enough capacity to satisfy peak power demands. The bad news is that the Illinois General Assembly is not meeting right now because of the pandemic. We think that to be fair, the deadline for opting out of the PJM fossil fueled capacity market should be extended beyond the June 1st deadline.

Those of us who are not overwhelmed by financial and health worries caused by the COVID-19 pandemic must not allow this opportunity to switch to renewable electric power be short-circuited by this FERC decision. We must take action and appeal to the Illinois Commerce Commission to delay the arbitrary deadline for the state of Illinois to opt out of the fossil fuel market.

You can help make sure Illinois doesn't allow a corporate bailout at the expense of consumers' wallets and the expense of our air, climate and public health – and ensures that Illinois, not the Federal Government, determines our state's energy future.

What you can do: Submit comments on why you think the Illinois State Legislature should be given more time to pass legislation to develop our own state energy future. Click on the link below (or copy/paste in web browser) to submit your comments – **by May 14th**.
<https://act.sierraclub.org/actions/National?actionId=AR0262651&Id>

Covid-19 Update on Shawnee Group Sierra Club Programs

By Jane Cogie, Shawnee Group Sierra Club Chair

In response to the Sierra Club National's guidance on the need for physical distancing during the Covid-19 outbreak, the Shawnee Group canceled its events scheduled for this spring, March through May. Also, our group has decided to wait to schedule future programs until the trajectory of the virus becomes clearer. For further updates, please watch for emails and Shawnee Group of the Sierra Club Facebook posts. Should meeting in person remain out of reach into the fall, we will very likely set up events to take place online.

Since much of what we share with each other these days must take place virtually, it seems worthwhile to offer to Shawnee members links to events held virtually to celebrate Earth Day's 50th Anniversary. The Shawnee Group helped organize these events in conjunction with a number of other community groups, including the Climate Economy Action Network, Carbondale Park District, the Unitarian Fellowship, All Species Puppet Parade organizers, and Carbondale Spring's Food Autonomy Initiative.

If you missed some or all of the Earth Day programs when they were live streamed, you have the chance, through the recordings, to enjoy these quite varied presentations. They celebrate our planet, raise issues related to unjust climate change impacts, and explore ways we can act locally to help our communities become more collaborative and resilient. Such actions are certainly as important, if not more so, as we see all too familiar injustices play out in the populations most impacted by Covid-19.

Listed below are the titles and presenters of the recorded Earth Day events along with links for accessing them. Also included below is a link to the brief video—"The Story of Stuff"—which we were to watch and discuss during our now cancelled May 2020 program.

Video: "The Story of Stuff": The Cycle of Consumable Stuff & How We Can Build a Healthier Planet": <https://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/the-story-of-stuff/>

This 20-minute animated documentary focuses on the cycle of "Stuff," how we make, consume, and dispose of it. It looks at excessive consumerism and invites us to consider the impact of stuff in our lives and actions can we take to leave a lighter footprint.

(Chair's COVID-19 Update, Continued on Page 3)

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 February. Please send your Word, PDF or JPG files to sabrina@midwest.net by **Monday, May 4th**.



CARBONDALE EARTH DAY CELEBRATION

The full virtual 50th Anniversary Earth Day Celebration can be found at the Love4.Earth website link:
<http://love4.earth/2020/04/carbondale-earth-day-2020/>

For your convenience, links to the separate Earth Day events are listed at this site but also below.

- ✚ **Roberto Barrios, SIU Professor of Anthropology: “A Crisis for Whom? Experiences & Anthropogenic Change in North America & the Caribbean”**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNWdpwsHwuw&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR0Daq9bMgOcuOJq0pCZZjZoSnWQZUjL_4G4urbs5xS4AXsLEaa2IvcDshg

- ✚ **Steve Gariepy, with Curt Carter, “The History of Earth Day”**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frOriK8gKp8>

- ✚ **Visit the Virtual All Species Puppet Earth Day Parade**
Cade Bursell, Welcome to the Parade:
https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=all%20species%20puppet%20parade%2C%20earth%20day%20april%2022%2C%20carbondale%2C%20il&epa=SEARCH_BOX

The Virtual Parade: <https://www.allspeciespuppetparade.com/>

- ✚ **Four Presentations at the Virtual Earth Day Rally**
 1. Solarize Southern Illinois Announces Solar Group Buy in southern Illinois, 2020: Beau Henson & Brent Ritzel
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaZWzw57oqA&feature=youtu.be>
 2. Carbondale Corona Response, Curt Wilson:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxampvmybNM&feature=youtu.be>
 3. Climate Economy Action Network, Amy McMorrow Hunter:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UuEko5dNdec&feature=youtu.be>
 4. Nick Smaligo, on Carbondale Food Autonomy projects:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e1dqw0wrkSQ&feature=youtu.be>

- ✚ **Two Carter & Connelly Earth Day Celebration Songs and “Fireside Chat with Aldo Leopold”**
“Everybody Needs a River” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDi70LPBc9c>
“Flambeau River” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgFYz56f210>

On April 14, 2020, the federal EPA [proposed a Rule](#) to keep the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for Particulate Matter the same. This comes after the 2019 [repeal of the Clean Power Plan](#) which attempted to enact better emissions regulation. [Critics](#) of the CPP repeal note the scientific evidence that there is no fine particulate matter threshold under which no damage to health is observed, which was acknowledged during the G.W. Bush administration. American Petroleum Institute ([API welcomes](#) the NAAQS Rule that proposes to stick with existing earlier standards. They enjoyed a win over the coal industry to replace coal-fired power plants with gas, although [oil and gas contribute to high PM 2.5](#), ozone, [methane](#) and other greenhouse gas emissions of concern to public health and global climate change.

Yet in the past few years, further research highlights a variety of public health concerns with PM 2.5 air pollution, some of which were featured in an earlier [Spring 2019 Shawnee Trails article](#). PM 2.5 has a negative association with the incidence of asthma, lung cancer, heart disease, diabetes, premature birth and Alzheimer's. While PM 2.5 rates have slightly improved in southern Illinois in the last year, with the decommissioning of a few regional coal-fired power plants in adjacent states, the rate is still fairly high and now similar to pollution levels elsewhere, where researchers document relationships with poor health, such as [CVD](#). PM 2.5 air quality can be seen on the [EJScreen](#), [AirNow](#), and [TRI](#) online maps. But now there's COVID-19 to consider.

The COVID-19 pandemic, that has rapidly spread across the [U.S. and globe](#) these first months of 2020, has further highlighted our social, economic, political and related health disparities. While many people have recovered, those fatally succumbing to [COVID-19](#) are generally the elderly and people with pre-existing conditions. A [Harvard study](#) of the entire [nation concluded](#) that [long-term exposure to PM 2.5 increased COVID-19 death rates](#), and even small [increases in PM 2.5 increased mortality rates](#). EJ communities were noted as [high risk](#). The COVID-19 mortality and air quality relationship is also noted for [China](#) and [Italy](#). Which brings to [question](#) whether PM 2.5 standards and other environmental regulation [rollbacks](#) and [lack of monitoring](#) shouldn't be scrutinized and readjusted to benefit public health and related environmental and climate change parameters, not kept at the status quo or worse.

Because of COVID-19, the IPCC has [postponed](#) its next 6th Assessment Report on the intricate links between human agency and climate change, both because of challenged logistics to meet, as well as the additional scientific considerations the COVID-19 pandemic brings as [further data to consider](#). The interplay between air quality emissions altered by the pandemic-related human behaviors, and the element of pre-existing conditions associated with air quality which place people at higher risk of complicated COVID-19 morbidity and mortality must be added features in the report. While the EPA recently tried to eliminate consideration of cumulative and complex impacts of industrial pollution from its recent [NEPA revision and Rule](#), COVID-19 has highlighted incredible dysfunction in our political economic system, with ramifications for public health and welfare which cannot be ignored. Therefore, asking for an extension of the public comment period for the present EPA NAAQS Rule, to allow inclusion of pending COVID-19 and air pollution data, would be advisable. Asking for inclusion of earlier PM 2.5 related health and climate data would be advisable, as the current administration frequently dismisses science. Asking for more time because of COVID-19 hindrances warrants consideration.

“Since taking office, and leading up to the publication of the draft Policy Assessment, the current Administration made several drastic changes to the NAAQS review process that have undermined the scientific credibility of the review by shutting out scientific experts from providing input and by reducing the transparency of the process. These changes include EPA’s decisions to (1) consolidate and eliminate several key elements of the review process; (2) disband the PM Review Panel; (3) prohibit scientific experts that receive EPA grant funding from serving on the CASAC; and (4) implement several measures that eliminated transparency from fundamental components of the review process.” -- [Attorneys General of California, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Rhode Island](#)

(EPA PM 2.5 Air Pollution Rule & COVID-19, Continued on Page 5)

(EPA PM 2.5 Air Pollution Rule & COVID-19, Continued from Page 4)

Consider attending a public hearing/teleconference and submit written public comments on the EPA's Proposed Review of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter. Just announced on May 1, 2020, [registration via the EPA website](#) for the particulate matter **public hearing via teleconference** for **listeners** will remain open through **May 18, 2020**. Select your Wednesday, May 20 or Thursday, May 21 morning (8-noon CST) or afternoon (2-6 pm CST) session in which to listen (dial 1-833-646-0610). Alternately, by May 18th, you may also [register to speak](#) to present 5 minutes of oral testimony during the same public hearing schedule. Afterwards, and after reviewing the [existing written public comments](#) and your own research and personal concerns, you can submit a **written public comment** which **must be received** on or before **June 29, 2020**, either online through the [Federal Registrar website](#), or emailed to a-and-r-Docket@epa.gov. Include **Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2015-0072** in the subject line of the email message and in online comments. Because of COVID-19, mail-in methods are canceled.

Help Save the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

Action Alert, by Barb McKasson

Just as state governors had to take charge of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic in each state because Trump has refused to take responsibility, we also must depend on our state governor and legislators to protect our environment, especially since Trump has ordered the U.S. EPA to stop enforcing environmental regulations during the pandemic. The Trump administration has used the pandemic as a smokescreen while rolling back regulations, opening public lands to increased exploitation and working to kill the clean energy economy on behalf of the fossil fuel companies.

Though we are staying at home to help fight the pandemic, we cannot afford to become complacent, because those who are exploiting our lands, waters and air for economic gain are not taking a break. Indeed, we must pivot to doing all we can to strengthen our state environmental protections and protectors. To counteract the Trump administration, we need to support Illinois state efforts to push forward.

The most important thing we the people of Illinois need to do is to support strengthening the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA). Unfortunately, because of state budget cuts the IEPA workforce has been cut from 1,265 in 2003 down to 617 in 2020. In fact, the General Assembly has zeroed out IEPA funding from the state General Fund since 2003, which means IEPA has been funded only by fees, fines and federal grants!

A [University of Chicago report](#) has outlined recommendations to reverse [IEPA's decline](#) and to better protect our communities and public health, such as:

- Increase fees on polluters to cover the cost of preventing pollution
- Create new sources of revenue, especially ones to incentivize positive decisions, such as plastic bottle or bag fees, or stormwater fees
- Carry out statewide climate initiatives
- Increase environmental justice work with community outreach
- Modernize IEPA's technology
- Identify agency priorities for hiring, training and mentoring

What you can do: Write to your Illinois state representative and senator to urge them to support Governor Pritzker's budget proposal for the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to hire ninety-one additional staff and to start work on the other recommended priorities. See contact information in this newsletter on page 7.

SUMMER 2020 – NO SHAWNEE GROUP SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS

Because of Governor Pritzker's [Executive Orders](#) and their extension to shelter-in-place during the COVID-19 pandemic, related [Illinois Department of Public Health](#) and [CDC](#) guidelines, and Illinois Chapter and national Sierra Club [response](#), we will not have organized group outings this summer. Shawnee Group Sierra Club also does not typically schedule hikes in the summer because of the summer heat being a potential heat stroke risk for some participants, as well as the more prevalent tick season, where one should be more cautious about contracting Lyme's Disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, ehrlichiosis, and other tick-borne ailments. Still, the governor's orders do recognize the health benefits of allowing individuals to exercise outdoors (e.g., walking, hiking, running, bicycling), so long as one is not sick with COVID-19, avoids crowded places (possible at trailheads), and follows social-distancing guidelines of staying 6 feet apart from other people. Those at higher risk of negative COVID-19 outcomes, including the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions, are advised to stay at home. In southern Illinois, some federal and state park land has been closed because of certain sites' popularity and crowded quality (e.g., Bell Smith Springs and Garden of the Gods are **closed**). However, other federal and state land has hiking trails which are open for socially-distanced use. Park facilities like bathrooms, playgrounds, campgrounds and shelter houses are closed because they attract a crowd, and they have commonly touched surfaces where one could transfer the COVID-19 coronavirus.

Check the Shawnee National Forest and Illinois Department of Natural Resources' state park websites for updates and **rules** about hiking trail and waterway closures and openings during the COVID-19 pandemic. IDNR state parks: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/closures/Pages/ParksOpenDuringCoVID19.aspx>
Shawnee National Forest: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/shawnee>
Crab Orchard NWR: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/crab_orchard/

Visit our older Shawnee Group Sierra Club blog page, lower right side (Index), for a list of weblinks to local hiking trail descriptions, and directions about how to get there: <https://shawneegroup.blogspot.com/>

Service Outings – Help Save High Quality Natural Areas

Shawnee Group is committed to helping rid high-quality natural areas of non-native invasive plants (NNIS) that are threatening to crowd out our native plant communities at La-Rue Pine Hills Research Natural Area (Snake Road) and at Fern Rocks Nature Preserve (Trillium Trail) in Giant City State Park.

COVID-19 pandemic guidelines restrict group activities, but service outings will eventually occur again.

Please consult our web page sierraclub.org/illinois/shawnee or our Facebook Page ([Sierra Club Shawnee Group](#)) for further developments in 2020 or contact Barb at 618-549-9684, babitaji@aol.com or text 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>

COVID-19: SOCIAL DISTANCING IN PUBLIC PARKS AND TRAILS



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; statereterribryant@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: crusso1957@yahoo.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

PLEASE SUPPORT SOUTHERNWOOD GARDENS

a local native plant grower and vender

Due to the COVID-19 coronavirus shutdown orders, Shawnee Group Sierra Club DID NOT HOLD our 7th Annual Native Plant Sale on May 2nd. The alternate plan is for individuals to contact our plant supplier, Southernwood Gardens, directly, to make an appointment to pick out your plant right on their property in Alto Pass. They have raised extra plants for the sale that NEED TO BE SOLD. Please support this local business in this time of need during the pandemic. The appointments will ensure that physical social distancing will be followed, so you MUST call ahead to make an appointment at 618-833-2769. Cash or check only. To view their current plant list, go to:

<https://www.facebook.com/southernwood-gardens-134537089896753>

Click on their photos for lists of what they sell.