



Shawnee Trails



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

Sierra Club – Shawnee Group

March – May 2022 QUARTERLY

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Restoring Oak Hickory Forests in Our Local Environment

By Patty Weyhrich, Shawnee Group of the Sierra Club

The forest you see today in most of the Illinois Ozarks has changed a lot in just the last hundred years or so. For thousands of years prior to the 1800's oak and hickory trees had dominated Illinois forests. Oaks are important because they are a keystone food source for wildlife, but they are in decline.

Did you know that white oak is the number one tree in providing food for wildlife? For example, song birds. . . "During the breeding season, Carolina chickadees and other birds need *a lot* of insects—in the case of chickadees, more than 5,000 per clutch of hatchlings."¹ Acorns, or mast, also feed many animals like deer, squirrels and woodpeckers. As entomologist Doug Tallamy states, "Oaks support more life-forms than any other North American tree genus, providing food, protection or both for birds to bears, as well as countless insects and spiders, among the enormous diversity of species."²

With early settlers came increased logging in the late 1800s to clear land for farming and for commercial timber operations. Sustainable practices for managing forests were not widely practiced at the time resulting in ecological damage, including displacing native plants and animals, and increased erosion that led to nonproductive farmland.³ In response the government purchased many of the depleted farms and developed the beautiful public lands you see today, such as Giant City State Park, the Shawnee National Forest, and the Trail of Tears State Forest, which has been working to restore oak and hickory forests.⁴

Chris Evans, Extension Forester, UIUC NRES, explains that regrowth from the severe logging in the 1880s – 1920s did include the oak and hickory that are mature today. However, the subsequent lack of disturbance (such as the suppression of fire) over the last 80-100 years also allowed for the development of the heavily shaded understories that favored maples, beeches, and others. This further restricted oaks, causing a vicious cycle that perpetuates the shade-tolerant species over the oaks and hickories.

Acorns and young oaks need a lot of sun to reach the forest floor to germinate and grow, and too much shade and understory competition inhibits oak regeneration. While walking through the forest, I could see mature white oaks *but almost no saplings*. A healthy forest needs variety in the age of the oak population for (*Continued on Page 2*)

(Restoring Oak Hickory Forests, Continued from Page 1)

regeneration. Land that had been disturbed is more likely to exhibit regrowth of invasive species and fast-growing pioneer trees such as ash, elm, tulip poplar, cherry, sweetgum, and boxelder.



**Crowded vs. open understory and overstory.
Photos by PA Weyhrich**

native insects, plants, and animals by leaving snags of woody debris for ground dwellers and promote natives such as spring beauty, trillium and ferns.

Selective controlled burns are an intervention that can support oak regrowth by decreasing competition from shallow rooted trees and invasive plants, yet not harm oaks and hickories that have a deeper root system. A critically important component is to preserve undisturbed habitat for wildlife by alternating burned and unburned areas to support regeneration of

Land owners working in concert with public land can help create contiguous habit to support wildlife. Forest management can enhance habitat and biological diversity that mimics features of old-growth forests with retention of downed wood and snags, tree spacing to promote abundant understory vegetation, and thinning to minimize the dense closed-canopy condition that is not optimal for many bird and other species.⁵

In summary, a forest improvement plan may be conceptualized by three types of intervention that includes: the overstory, understory, and follow up. Open the overstory with selective thinning, clear the understory of invasive plants and excessive debris, and follow up and monitor the woods to remove invasives and conduct a controlled burn as needed.

Take action. The US Forest Service estimates that 54% of America's forests are privately owned.⁶ You can help as a landowner or volunteer with groups like the Sierra Club service days at Giant City and Snake Road, or with many local groups such as Friends of Crab Orchard. In doing so you'll be supporting native plants and animals and leave a healthier forest for our future generations.

To learn more on how to manage your woodlands visit the University of IL at:

<https://extension.illinois.edu/forestry/forestry-programs>. The Southern Illinois Beginning Forest Landowner program is a year-long exploration of basic forest and natural resource management and planning that starts in **spring 2022**. Or, if you have at least 5 contiguous wooded acres, work with a forester through IDNR's [Conservation Stewardship Program](#).

1. <https://blog.nwf.org/2015/04/chickadees-show-why-birds-need-native-trees/>
2. Tallamy, Douglas. *The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees*. March 2021.
3. <http://npshistory.com/publications/usfs/region/8/history/chap1.htm>
4. <https://www.letthesunshinein.life/oak-forest-system/>
5. [The State of the Birds 2013 Report on Private Lands](#).
<https://cornell.app.box.com/s/casfmcvyjfdnjxpkapaq7tyh06qh5tyx/file/571839696403>
6. <https://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/infNRS-INF> National Woodland Owner Survey USFS

SPRING 2022: VIRTUAL SHAWNEE GROUP SIERRA CLUB MEMBER PROGRAMS

Information for joining these online Zoom webinar meetings will be shared later by Shawnee Group email, and [Shawnee Group of the Sierra Club Facebook Page](#). **No in-person Shawnee Group member programs will occur this spring, per national Sierra Club directions, because of COVID precautions.** Do also consider other Illinois Sierra groups' virtual presentations, as well as our own, listed on www.sctrips.org.

Thursday, March 10, 2022, 7 pm

Presentation: Keep Carbondale Beautiful 2022 Projects

Presenter: Anne Krippenstapel, KCB Executive Director

Location: Via Zoom (To receive the Zoom link, contact jane.cogie@gmail.com or go to our website event page, <https://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/shawnee/events>, scroll down to the spreadsheet at the very bottom, click open this event's title and fill out your name, email and info. The spreadsheet is also at www.sctrips.org.)

Thursday, April 14, 2022, 7 pm

Presentation: Adopting Plant-Based Eating to Mitigate Climate Change

Presenter: Leslie Duram, Professor, Geography and Environmental Resources, SIU

Location: Via Zoom (To receive the Zoom link, contact jane.cogie@gmail.com or go to our website event page, <https://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/shawnee/events>, scroll down to the spreadsheet at the very bottom, click open this event's title and fill out your name, email and info. The spreadsheet is also at www.sctrips.org.)

Thursday, May 12, 2022, 7 pm

Presentation: Shawnee National Forest Update

Presenter: Lennie Pitcher, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist, Forest Service

Location: Via Zoom (To receive the Zoom link, contact jane.cogie@gmail.com or go to our website event page, <https://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/shawnee/events>, scroll down to the spreadsheet at the very bottom, click open this event's title, fill out your name, email and info. The spreadsheet is also at www.sctrips.org.)

Annual Sierra Club Native Plant Sale

Saturday, April 30, 2022

9:00 am - 1:00 pm

Carbondale Town Square

Please come help us spread the word about using native plants for landscaping. All pots are \$6.00.

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 November. Please send your Word, PDF or JPG files to sabrina@midwest.net by **Monday, May 2nd**.

SPRING 2022 – SHAWNEE GROUP SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS

Kinkaid Lake Trail Hike, Sunday, March 20, 2022, 10 am

Hike Kinkaid Lake Trail at Crisenberry Dam. This moderate 5-mile hike offers views of the lake, rock ledges, canyon and cave. From Murphysboro, go west on 149 about 6 miles, turn right on Spillway Road, go 1.5 miles to small parking area. Bring water and wear appropriate hiking shoes. Call the leader, Bob Mulcahy, at 618- 942-6342 to go on the hike or obtain more information.

Borks Falls and Bobcat Loop at Ferne Clyffe, Sunday, April 10, 2022

A moderate hike of 1.5 miles. We will see a waterfall and interesting geological features. Meet at the Marion Rural King parking lot before 9:30 am or at the parking area for [Borks Falls](#) before 10 am. Wear appropriate hiking shoes and bring water. You must call Kevin Rohling at 618-694-8150 before attending this hike.



Borks Falls.

Photo by Sabrina Hardenbergh, 2020

Old Grist Mill Trail Hike, Sunday, May 15, 2022

This will be a moderate hike of 3 miles on the Old Grist Mill Trail. The scenery is very beautiful. Meet before 10 am at the main parking lot at [Bell Smith Springs](#). Wear appropriate hiking shoes and bring water. You must call Jon Womack at 815-263-9625 before attending this hike.

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/>

Reduce COVID risk.
The **CDC** and **IDPH** still indicate that in many cases, if you can't socially distance, wear a **mask**, especially indoors.

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 2022 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>

Illinois Chapter Sierra Club 2022 State Legislative Priorities

The Illinois Chapter has [prioritized](#) four issues bills to push for the 2022 state legislative session: PFAS incineration ban bill, Environmental Justice bill, coal plant demolition bill and the EV Charging Act. Below is a summary of each legislative item.

PFAS Incineration Ban–The Sierra Club has been working diligently with the Governor’s Office on acceptable language since last year. HB 3190, the original bill, passed both houses unanimously, but was vetoed by the Governor. The Governor’s veto message stated the reason for his veto: “... Due to an overly broad definition of ‘incineration,’ HB3190 would prohibit companies from using certain pollution control devices, including thermal oxidation, resulting in substantially increased emissions of greenhouse gases, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (“PFAS”), fluorides, hazardous air pollutants, volatile organic materials, and carbon monoxide.”

During the summer of 2021, IEPA, the Governor’s Office, Sierra Club, and the United Congregations of the Metro East devised language that was acceptable to all 4 stakeholders. A meeting was held with the chief sponsor Rep. LaToya Greenwood with the goal of passing an amendment during the 2021 veto session. Rep. Greenwood declined and stated that she wanted to designate PFAS incineration as an environmental justice issue. Although Rep. Greenwood filed her own PFAS incineration ban bill, HB 4818, we are still in negotiations with her about using last year’s amended language from the IEPA and the Governor’s Office.

Environmental Justice Bill (HB 4093/SB 2906) – [HB 4093](#), which was introduced by Rep. Sonya Harper, would create an enhanced community engagement process when considering new permits for new and large air pollution sources in environmental justice communities and require the review of cumulative impact of air pollution sources as part of the permitting process. This [bill](#) sought to give power to the residents who live in these industrial corridors regarding what permits, if any, should be authorized.

HB 4093 creates a definition of “Environmental Justice” and requires: public hearings, a local siting process giving local communities more input, and a cumulative impact review of air pollution in the community. It also codifies a process for protected classes to file a grievance for civil rights regarding pollution and gives community members standing to challenge more IEPA permitting decisions.

Coal Demolition – Previous [demolitions](#) have caused excessive dust and air pollution and impacted nearby residents without any warning. The amended version of the bill makes *(Continued on Page 6)*



The [decommissioned Crawford Power Plant](#) (coal) demolition near [Little Village](#) on Saturday, April 11, 2020, further alarmed local residents as to health risks from poor air quality and dust. [EPA reports](#) on heavy metal, asbestos and PCBs during the project were below laboratory method reporting limits or below site action levels. Yet [Chicago Mayor Lightfoot](#) asked Hilco to compensate for damages involving clean-up and health.

(Legislative Priorities, Continued from Page 5)

improvements to increase transparency in the notification process with additional specificity on what must be included in the demolition notification, penalties for notice violations and public meeting requirements, including a published response to issues raised in the meeting.

The draft bill also expands the scope of the provisions to cover all thermal power plants, not just coal plants, and to require: an air quality plan with an air dispersion modeling study, monitoring of upwind/downwind air conditions and quality, fugitive dust mitigation measures and a site cleanup plan to remove dust and debris from the surrounding areas.

This draft language will be attached to a shell bill. Senators Koehler and Crowe will be the lead sponsors, and Rep. Mayfield will be the lead sponsor in the House.

Electric Vehicles Charging Act (HB 3125) – This [bill](#), sponsored by Rep. Robyn Gabel is the same as the Beneficial Electrification Act. It sets forth requirements for parking spaces that are electrical vehicle ready applicable to new or renovated residential or nonresidential buildings. It creates the Electric Vehicle Access for All Program to maximize opportunities for carbon-free transportation across the State, particularly targeting environmental justice and low-income communities and to provide grants to pilot programs with the purpose of bridging public transportation gaps between residences and employment locations. It sets forth provisions concerning administrative review and authorized expenditure of State-controlled funds to accelerate electric vehicle adoption. And the Public Utilities Act is amended.

Shawnee National Forest Committee Update

by Barbara McKasson and Jean Sellar

SNF Committee members met with SNF staff on November 30th to discuss the proposed parking lot enlargement at Winters Pond on Snake Road in the LaRue-Pine Hills Research Natural Area (RNA). As reported in the last Shawnee Trails, we had written objections to this project because the Forest Service would most likely be destroying a wetland area where many frogs, toads and salamanders lay their eggs. It would also have disturbed an area where the rare yellow-bellied water snake and the state-listed Mississippi Green Water Snake hunt. Fortunately, the people at the FS Northern Research Station agreed with us, so the SNF staff was prepared to listen to us.

We came to an agreement that the FS would limit amount of increased parking, and would avoid damaging the wetland area in the middle. In addition, they said they would have FS employees make an area north of the parking lot into an area that would be an additional wetland area for the herps to lay their eggs. We will give you an update after this project is finished.

We also took the opportunity to check on the dam and water control structure that was made to control the draining of Otter Pond, which threatened the plants and animals in the pond. There was some concern about leaks in the structure. The FS assured us they would work with the drainage district, NRCS and people in the town of Wolf Lake to make sure Otter Pond would not be drained again. We will be monitoring this situation. The good news is that our helpful expert engineers – the beavers – are back and working on their own dam. We also have to make sure these beavers are not trapped and killed like the last beaver family was. The FS staff agrees with us on this, especially the wildlife biologist.

New Development: The water control structure has been blown open and Otter Pond has again been drained. This must stop before permanent damage is done!

We will be leading more invasive pulls along Snake Road this year. Please let us know if you want to be part of the team!

Nature Needs Your Vote Now More Than Ever – Make Sure You are Registered to Vote!

It is important for you and me – people who care about wildlife, wild places, environmental justice and a clean environment – to VOTE! We need more environmental champions in office. It's not too early to make sure you are registered to vote. Go to <vote.gov/register/il> to find out whether or not you are registered to vote. If you have moved, changed your name or not voted in the last couple of elections, then you may not be registered to vote (you may have been purged by your county clerk's office). You can fill out the form online or print a form and mail it in. You do not have to declare a party affiliation when you register.

The Illinois primary election has been moved to **June 28, 2022** because of all the wrangling with drawing new district maps. The general state and federal election is **November 8, 2022**.

In Illinois, you can now sign up for permanent mail-in balloting status. If you sign up, the ballot will automatically be mailed to your address for all subsequent elections unless there is a change requiring removal from the list. Early in-person voting begins 40 days before election day up to election day – no excuse needed. A list of early voting hours and locations will be available on the Illinois State Board of Elections website at: www.elections.il.gov.

To register or update your existing registration, you must provide: your IL driver's license or state ID number, the date the license or ID was issued and the last four digits of your social security number, plus your birthdate. If you don't want to register online, you can print out a registration form and mail it into your county clerk's office, but it must be received at least 28 days before election day.

If you just check to see if you are registered, the website will tell you and also give you the address of your polling place, plus what offices you can vote for.

Voter registration deadlines in Illinois are:

- ✓ Online: 16 days before Election Day
- ✓ By Mail: must be received at least 28 days before election
- ✓ In person: up to and including Election Day



Illinois Legislative Contacts: CALL YOUR LEGISLATORS TODAY!

State Dist. 109 – Adam Niemerg: 618-813-6036; 217-782-2087; niemerg@ilhousegop.org

State Dist. 115 – Paul Jacobs: 618-534-9880; 217-782-0387; Jacobs@ilhousegop.org

State Dist. 116 – David Riess: 618-282-7284; 217-782-1018; friess@housegop.org

State Dist. 117 – David Severin: 618-440-5090; 217-782-1051; www.ilhousegop.org/contactseverin

State Dist. 118 – Patrick Windhorst: 618-294-8703; 217-782-5131; www.ilhousegop.org/windhorst_contact

Senate Dist. 55 – Senator Darren Bailey: 618-665-4109; 217-782-6674

Senate Dist. 58 – Senator Terri Bryant: 618-684-1100; 217-782-8137; Sec'y.: cbrown@sgop.ilga.gov

Senate Dist. 59 – Senator Dale Fowler: 618-294-8951; 217-782-5509; senatorfowler59@gmail.com

Governor J.B. Pritzker: 217-782-6830; <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/gov/contactus/Pages/default.aspx>

Speaker of the House Emanuel Chris Welch: 217-782-8120; 708-450-1000; repwelch@emanuelchriswelch.com

Senate President Don Harmon: 217-782-8176; 708-848-2002; <http://www.donharmon.org/contact-senator-harmon>

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 Mary Miller: 618-240-3155; 202-225-5271; <https://marymiller.house.gov>

President Joseph R. Biden, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C.
202-456-1111; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>

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.

Contact Mike Covell at
618-201-4928 or
emike@siu.edu.

White logo on blue T-Shirt \$15
Medium Large or X-Large

Illinois Environmental Council Legislator Scorecard: Southern Illinois Legislators Get a

By Barbara McKasson

D⁺

The Illinois Environment had a good legislative year in 2021. According to the IEC, "From passing the nation's most equitable and comprehensive energy bill – the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) – and historic lead service line replacement legislation, to securing dedicated funding for regenerative agriculture practices in the state budget for the first time, our dedicated team pushed through a backdrop of obstacles to gain significant ground."

Forty-eight legislators scored 100% on the scorecard, which was tabulated on the basis of important environmental votes in the Illinois legislature. Our southern Illinois legislators scored the following: Senator Terri Bryant (Dist. 58) 62.5%; Senator Dale Fowler (Dist. 59) 75%; Senator Bailey (Dist. 55) 55%; Rep. David Friess (Dist. 116) 68.8%; Rep. Paul Jacobs (Dist. 115) 66.7%; Rep. Adam Niemerg (109) 56%; Rep. Dave Severin (Dist. 117) 68.8%; Rep. Patrick Windhorst (Dist. 118) 68.8%.

All of our southern Illinois legislators voted against the "Climate and Equitable Jobs Act", which was the Illinois Chapter Sierra Club's top priority in 2021. To see their entire environmental votes, with explanations, go to the Illinois Environmental Council website: ilenviro.org/?s=2021+Environmental+Scorecard.