



Shawnee Trails



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

Sierra Club – Shawnee Group

September – November 2020 QUARTERLY

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Prevent Toxic Water Contamination of Illinois Lakes and Rivers: Comment on Proposed Coal Ash Pollution Prevention Rules

By Barbara McKasson

Coal ash is the leftover waste from coal burning power plants. The ash contains toxic heavy metals, such as mercury, arsenic, chromium, cadmium, lead, boron, thallium, cobalt and selenium, often at levels dangerous to humans, wildlife and the environment. Power plants have been disposing of this fly ash in landfills and ponds, which usually have no liners and no caps and consequently end up leaching into the ground, contaminating groundwater and threatening aquifers. Most of these sites are also next to lakes or rivers, which can be contaminated by overflows, breaches or underground plumes.

A federal law now requires testing of coal ash sites by the companies that own them. There are seventh-three coal ash ponds at dozens of power plants in Illinois. Twenty-two of twenty-four sites tested had unsafe levels of toxic pollutants. In Southern Illinois, the Vistra owned coal plant campus in Joppa and the Southern Illinois Power Cooperative (SIPC) owned coal facility near Marion have had problems with leaking coal ash landfills and blowing coal ash.

According to the [Cap and Run Report](#), at the SIPC facility on Lake of Egypt, thallium (rat poison) is up to 150X safe levels and cobalt is 70X safe levels. At the Joppa facility on the Ohio River, there are dangerous levels of cobalt and lead. The Vermillion Power Station, which is next to Illinois' only National Wild and Scenic River, the Middle Fork of the Vermillion River, where river otters swim and is home to twenty-four state threatened and endangered species, has three ash pits that are in the floodplain. The Dallman Power Station, next to Lake Springfield, has hundreds of groundwater violations for elevated levels of arsenic, lead, boron, chromium, manganese, iron and other pollutants. For example, arsenic has been found to be twenty-two times the safe standard and manganese found fifty-four times the standard.

The Illinois Coal Ash Pollution Prevention Act, Public Act 101-0171, was signed into law in July, 2019. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) has written the rules under the guidance of the act. The Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) must now hold hearings with input from industry, governments, lawyers, organizations and the general public before deciding on proposed changes and finalization of the rules. The IEPA will also be defending its proposed rules and answering questions.

(Continued on Page 2)

(Coal Ash Pollution Prevention Rules, Continued from Page 1)

The first set of hearings will be **August 11, 12 and 13, 2020**, held both in person and virtually, and open to the public. The second set of hearings will be **September 29, 30 and October 1, 2020**.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: You can help show public concern by attending the hearings (online recommended) and by submitting comments either orally at one of the hearings or written. You can tell the IPCB about the risks of coal ash near you and what protections would be best to make sure you, your community and the environment are safe.

To sign up to attend and/or make comment, go to <https://forms.gle/hGK1Bn2cLVJ1VKme9> and fill out the form. Public commenters are not asked questions.

Written comments will be accepted until **October 30, 2020** by Email to don.brown@illinois.gov
You can also call Don Brown with any question about comment submission at 312-814-3461.

For further information, contact Andrew Rehn at Prairie Rivers Network at arehn@prairierivers.org.
Also, go to prairierivers.org, to search and click on "[The next step in the fight for strong coal ash protections](#)" to find a complete guide to the environmental concerns.

Become a Voter Captain!

This election season, we need you to step up and become a Voter Captain. As a voter captain, you'll be responsible for informing 150 environmentalists about our endorsed candidates and making sure they'll vote this year. Our goals this year are ambitious, and we need you to help us make sure our state has its greenest legislature to date. You'll be working with Shawnee Group Sierra Club volunteers to make sure voters in swing districts are informed when they vote. [Sign up here.](#)



News from the Chair, Summer 2020

The Shawnee Group's new normal, with Covid-19 continuing to shape our lives, isn't yet clear. We see clearly, though, that embracing Zoom is essential—for us to stay in touch, share news and programs for enjoying, exploring and protecting the environment and to forward environmental justice while also staying safe.

With that spirit in mind, we've scheduled five fall 2020 virtual Shawnee Group programs.

We hope you will join us! No driving required! Indeed a new member living hours north of our usual in-person meeting place attended our first Zoom meeting in July, focused on the first solar group buy in our area, Solarize Southern Illinois (solarizesouthernillinois.com). It was great to have her participate. Zoom also makes collaboration with other Illinois groups easier. We will do just that in co-hosting the September 10th event organized by the Kaskaskia Group, on the Illinois Fair Tax.

A few other Summer 2020 Shawnee Group activities —most of them virtual—may be of interest:

- Individual (physically distanced!) work to keep invasives down in high quality natural areas
- Participation in Sierra Club Illinois Clean Power Team meetings, focused on Clean Energy Jobs Act updates
- Involvement in anti-racism workshops, created and facilitated by the Illinois Chapter. Our upcoming August 20th workshop, “Why is the Sierra Club So White?” draws closely on the Chapter's workshop by that name.
- Collaboration of Shawnee Group with Kaskaskia and Piasa Palisades groups to successfully gain Sierra Club endorsement for Ray Lenzi in the 12th District US Congressional race against Mike Bost
- Success in attaining a 2020 Illinois Conservation Committee Grant, for the second year in a row, this time to fund irrigation systems for the Attucks Community Farm on Carbondale's northeast side and the [Men of Power and Women of Strength](#) CAIRGROW Garden in Cairo
- Support for Solarize Southern Illinois Solar Group Buy and an income qualified Solar for All Community Solar opportunity this summer and fall 2020.

If you have future Shawnee Group program ideas or would like to participate in other Shawnee Group activities (such in advancing issues raised in Barb McKasson's CEJA and Coal Ash Hearings articles in this issue), please connect with us via the [Shawnee Group of the Sierra Club Facebook page](#) or email me at jane.cogie@gmail.com. Though the need for now is to physically distance, we can—and indeed must—remain socially and environmentally connected. That will be particularly important as we enter further into the 2020 election season!



FALL 2020: SHAWNEE GROUP SIERRA CLUB VIRTUAL MEMBER PROGRAMS

Information for joining these online Zoom webinar meetings will be shared later by Shawnee Group email, [Shawnee Group of the Sierra Club Facebook Page](#), and at <https://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/shawnee>.

DATE & TIME: Thursday, August 20, 4 to 5:30 pm

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION: “Why is the Sierra Club So White?”

PRESENTERS/FACILITATORS: Sally Burgess, Sierra Club Illinois Downstate Lead Organizer and Jane Cogie and Carla Womack, Shawnee Executive Committee Members

LOCATION: Zoom link—registration access to follow

DATE & TIME Thursday, September 10, 7 pm to 8:15 pm, Hosted by Kaskaskia Group Sierra Club / Co-Hosted by Shawnee Group

TITLE: "Illinois Fair Tax Information Night"

PRESENTER: Kady McFadden, Deputy Director of the Illinois Chapter Sierra Club

LOCATION: Zoom link—registration access to follow

DATE & TIME: Thursday, September 17, 6 to 7:30 pm

TWO-PART PRESENTATION:

--Meet & Greet for Ray Lenzi, Sierra Club’s Endorsed Candidate for Illinois’ 12th District Race for U.S. Congress

--Presentation on Voting by Mail by Dorcy Prosser, Carbondale League of Women Voters

LOCATION: Zoom link—registration access to follow

DATE & TIME: Thursday, October 8th, 5 to 6:30 pm

TITLE: Carbondale Spring’s Food Autonomy Initiative, Summer 2020: Growing Local Collaborations, Healthy Food, and Resilience

PANEL: Representatives of Collaborating North East Side Growing Projects

LOCATION: Zoom link—registration access to follow

DATE & TIME: Thursday, November 12th, 6 to 7:30 pm

TITLE: Climate Change Impacts & Trends in southern Illinois

PRESENTER: Trent Ford, Illinois State Climatologist

LOCATION: Zoom link—registration access to follow

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

League of Women Voters of Jackson County

I am writing on behalf of the [League of Women Voters of Jackson County](#) to share information on voting options for the 2020 election that may be of interest to members of your community. The goal of the League is to educate Jackson County voters about voting options and help avoid confusion in these extraordinary times.

Voting Options for the 2020 General Election

1 - Vote by Mail

This is a two-step process:

- 1) Those who voted in at least one of these elections: 2018, 2019 or 2020 will *receive* an application to vote by mail. Completion and return of the application to the Jackson County Clerk is the first step. **Note that some advocacy groups have also mailed applications to potential voters. Only one completed application is required.** Registered voters who did not receive a vote by mail application can request one from the Jackson County Clerk (687-7366) or by visiting ova.elections.il.gov .
- 2) Beginning September 24th ballots will be mailed to voters who have submitted their vote by mail application. Those who wish to vote by mail should vote the ballot and return in the envelope provided. Completion and return of the ballot is the second step. All ballots postmarked on or before November 3rd, Election Day, will be counted. Be sure to affix the required (70 cents) postage!

If a vote by mail ballot is received in the mail it is possible for a voter to change their mind and decide to vote in person; however, it is critical to NOT DESTROY the mailed ballot. The voter should take the ballot with them to the in person voting site.

2 - Early In-Person Voting

Beginning September 24th, voters can cast their vote by mail ballot in person at the Jackson County Clerk's Office at the Jackson County Courthouse in Murphysboro. Both registration and voting are available there through Election Day, November 3.

Early Voting in Jackson County will begin on October 13 at the locations and times below:

Carbondale Civic Center: October 14, 16, 21, 23 (10 am - 3 pm)

SIU Student Center: October 13, 15, 19, 20 (9 am – 3 pm)

October 27, 28, 30 (10 am - 5 pm)

3 - Election Day In-Person Voting at Precinct Polling Place

The third option for voting is at the voter's precinct polling place on November 3rd. Plans are in process to implement cleaning and sanitizing procedures and make polling places as safe as possible.

I hope you will consider providing information about voting options in communications to your membership. For more information, contact Frank Byrd, Jackson County Clerk at 687-7360. Your members who live outside Jackson County can contact the County Clerk in the county where they reside. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Dorcy Prosser

618-457-6535, dorcyprosser2001@yahoo.com

[League of Women Voters of Jackson County](#)

FALL 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 for a while. 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 reopened for socially-distanced use such as hiking. However, some park facilities like bathrooms, playgrounds, campgrounds and shelter houses may still be 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>

General US Forest Service COVID-19 advice: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/covid19-updates>

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>

Illinois Clean Energy Jobs Act Update

by Barbara McKasson

Illinois Chapter Sierra Club has been working hard for over two years to pass the Illinois Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA), along with dozens of other organizations that form the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition. CEJA would put Illinois on a path to 100% renewable energy by 2050, cut carbon from the power sector by 2030, reduce gas and diesel vehicles from the transportation sector, and create jobs and economic opportunity, especially for people in economically disadvantaged communities and displaced energy workers. Sierra Club has been at the negotiating table to work out the details of CEJA and to get more legislators on board for the bills in the Illinois House ([HB3624](#)) and Senate ([SB2132](#)).

The COVID pandemic has slowed down all legislation, including CEJA. The Clean Jobs Coalition has been using this time to strengthen the bill. The global climate crisis is urgent, but the viability of the solar industry in Illinois is also in crisis if we do not pass CEJA soon. There is also a need to push back against pressure from the Trump administration for Illinois to renew participation in a fossil fuel peak capacity market, which would prolong our state's dependence on fossil fuels. Illinois Chapter Sierra Club and our allies will be working to navigate these choppy waters.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

We are hoping the CEJA bills can be voted on in a "Veto Session" before the end of the year, so please be on the alert for an Email and/or text from Sierra Club on these bills.

CEJA Updates!

- Equitable Workforce**
- Energy Access & Solar for All**
- Energy Efficiency**
- Support Fossil Fuel Workers**
- Utility Accountability**
- Electric Transportation**
- Carbon-free Power**
- Renewable Energy**
- Capacity Market Reform**
- Learn more at ILCleanJobs.org**

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 Staterepccostello@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.

Contact Barb McKasson at 618-549-9684 or

ba4ba5lu@aol.com.

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

SUPPORT SHAWNEE GROUP SIERRA CLUB! ORDER SIERRA CLUB 2021 CALENDARS NOW!!

We will be ordering our 2021 calendars soon, but since we will be having online meetings instead of in-person meetings through the end of this year, we will have to sell the calendars on a delivery or pick-up basis only. We will make only one order, so we hope to order enough calendars for all who want them by taking your orders by **September 1st**.

This is our local Shawnee Group's biggest fund raiser, so please help us – 60% of the money goes to our local group. Same low price of \$15 for wall calendars and \$16 for engagement calendars, tax included. **To order**, contact Barb McKasson, at 618-549-9684 or ba4ba5lu@aol.com by **September 1st**.

