

For more timely notices of the Prairie Group activities sign on to our Alerts Listserv by going to the internet address <http://lists.sierraclub.org/SCRIPTS/WA.EXE?SUBED1=il-prairie-alerts&A=1>.

1 Chair's Corner

This month we celebrate the 44th anniversary of Earth Day. Please join Sierra Club members and other local environmentalists on Tuesday, April 22, for our Earth Day happy hour. We will be gathering from 5:30-7:00 pm in the bar at Escobar's (6 E. Columbia, Champaign). During the evening, we will be hearing updates on Clinton Landfill, Bulldog Mine, a C-U energy initiative, and the state fracking and coal ash rules. We will also be honoring Representative Jakobsson for her strong environmental voting record in Springfield. Please join us, and bring a friend who might not normally celebrate Earth Day! (More details below.)

The last few months Prairie Group has been busy lobbying environmental bills and interviewing political candidates for endorsement.

- For those who want more details and the history of the IEPA actions concerning the Clinton Landfill, here is a link to that part of the IEPA website.

<http://www.epa.state.il.us/community-relations/fact-sheets/clinton-3/index.html> IEPA - Clinton Landfill

2 Upcoming Events

- Sump Pump Water Collection in Savoy on Saturday, June 7th from 2-3

A local resident is very excited to show us the water collection system he designed using water that his sump pump collects. He uses this for all his lawn watering needs. Learn how you can incorporate this water saving technique in your home. Please RSVP Rachel Vellenga with [rvellenga \(at\) yahoo.com](mailto:rvellenga@yahoo.com) by June 5 to get the address and reserve your spot.

- Prairie Group is on Facebook

If you use Facebook please remember to join Sierra Club Prairie Group-Illinois chapter. It is a great way to keep up with local environmental events and issues.

- Earth Day Happy Hour

Join us at Green Politics Happy Hour at Escobar's in downtown Champaign (6 E Columbia in Champaign) on Tuesday, April 22 from 5:30-7. Stop by to mingle

We have also ramped up our efforts to oppose the Clinton Landfill by sponsoring informational events, launching a postcard campaign, and writing several articles for local publications. In the near future we will be publishing some newspaper ads and participating in the USEPA public hearing on the Mahomet Aquifer.

Prairie Group will be sponsoring a few environmental events this spring and summer, some of which are listed in this newsletter. We use our Alerts Listserv to advertise our events, as well as to advertise the environmental events of other local organizations. If you are not on our Alerts Listserv, please consider signing up by clicking on the link above (in red) to the signup website. The listserv traffic is only about 3 emails weekly.

We hope to see you on Earth Day!

Stacy James, Chair

with fellow environmentalists in the lounge of Escobar. We will have several speakers on local environmental issues and initiatives:

Scott Tess (City of Urbana) - Urbana-Champaign Energy Star Challenge

Carrie Otto (Prairie Rivers Network) - Bulldog Mine

Joe Hooker (City of Champaign) - Clinton Landfill/Mahomet Aquifer

Terri Treacy (IL Chapter of the Sierra Club) - fracking rules and coal ash rules

We will also be honoring Representative Naomi Jakobsson for her years of service and strong environmental voting record.

We had a great turnout and great time last year! Hope you can make it to celebrate Earth Day!

Rachel Vellenga

3 Endorsements

Many people think of the Sierra Club as focusing on the outdoors, but one focus of the club is to help elect candidates who support legislation that protects the environment. The Prairie Group is active in the endorsement process. All candidates running in Illinois are mailed a questionnaire. Once the questionnaires are received, teams in each local group schedule in-person meetings with candidates. If a candidate does not return the questionnaire, that usually signals their interests do not lie in getting an endorsement from the Sierra Club.

This year the Prairie Group interviewed the two Democratic Candidates (Carol Ammons and Sam Rosenberg) for the Illinois 103rd Congressional District Primary election, currently held by Rep. Naomi Jakobsson who is not running again. Both candidates proved to be very supporting

of environmental issues, so we chose not to endorse until the general election.

An endorsement for Judge Ann Callis was made in the 13th Congressional District, currently held by Republican Rodney Davis of Taylorville. Davis chose not to submit the questionnaire. The District 13 covers a wide swath of central Illinois from Champaign County SE to the Metro-East area near St. Louis incorporating three Sierra Club Groups. All three groups were involved in the process. We arranged to meet the candidates in Springfield. Ann Callis did win the Primary Election, so we officially endorsed Judge Ann Callis for the 13 Congressional District general election in November.

Electing candidates who are supportive of environmental protections are a very important role for the Sierra Club and the Prairie Group is proud to be a part of this process.

Alice Englebretsen



The Sierra Club has endorsed Judge Ann Callis for the US House of Representatives, 13th Illinois district.
Stacy James, Ann Callis, Alice Englebretsen

4 USEPA to hold public hearings on the Mahomet Aquifer in May

Area Disposal Service's plan to store PCBs in Clinton Landfill has caused local governments to become more concerned about the Mahomet Aquifer. As the only drinking water source for many of central Illinois' communities, the aquifer is an invaluable resource that must be protected from contamination. If the Mahomet Aquifer becomes contaminated, there will be significant economic costs, not to mention health risks.

Realizing the need for more protections, in 2012 an inter-governmental coalition petitioned the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to designate the aquifer as a Sole Source Aquifer. As indicated by the name, aquifers eligible for designation must supply most of an area's drinking water. Such designation would require future, federally-funded projects over the Mahomet Aquifer to undergo a special environmental safety review by USEPA. The review is to ensure projects will not contaminate the aquifer. Unfortunately, the designation does not protect us from privately funded projects such as Clinton Landfill's storage unit for PCBs. But the designation is still an important step in the right direction.

The USEPA recently completed their review of the

application for designation and the agency is recommending that the designation be granted. While this is great news, it is still possible for opponents to influence USEPA enough that the initial decision is reversed. Therefore, Sierra Club will be attending the two upcoming public hearings on the designation. The USEPA will be convening these hearings in May at two locations in central Illinois (see below for details). During these hearings there will be time for public comment, so its important the proponents outnumber the opponents. Please consider attending and making a comment (oral or written) or bringing a sign in support of the designation. If you need any help with talking points, contact Stacy at waterforwishes (at) gmail.com.

Tuesday, May 13, 2014
Hilton Garden Inn
1501 S. Neil, Champaign
6:30-7:15pm informational session
7:30pm-? public hearing

Wednesday, May 14, 2014
Morton Park Districts Freedom Hall
349 Birchwood, Morton
6:30-7:15pm informational session
7:30pm-? public hearing

Stacy James

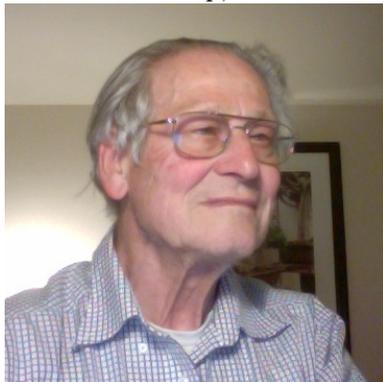
5 Prairie Group Executive Committee needs new member

Oh Brian, we hardly knew ye! Our recently added Excom member, Brian Sproul, has made a step towards becoming an environmental lawyer by taking a job in Springfield to work as an environmental lawyer in office of the Illinois Attorney General. This is great news for Brian and we wish him the best of luck!

But it isn't such good news for us, since it leaves us with only 6 members in the Excom, not the 7 called for by our bylaws. The procedure is now for the remaining members to appoint someone to fill out the term, which will be for almost the whole two years. So now we are making a call for or more of you readers to step forward and test the waters.

Currently the members of the Excom are Stacy James, Chair; Alice Englebretsen, Treasurer; Stuart Levy; Don Davis; Rachel Vellenga; and Katie Mimnaugh. We meet regularly on odd-numbered months. Other action is taken by email and most of us volunteer for other activities, such as setting up a table at the Urbana Farmers' Market and interviewing candidates for office. The minutes of meetings for 2013 and previous years can be seen by following the "minutes" link on the PG home page.

Dick Bishop, Editor



Dick Bishop



Stuart Levy



Rachel Vellenga



Katie Mimnaugh