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May to August 2011

Proposed Turk Power Plant: The Saga Continues

Special points of interest:

- Turk Power Plant: The Saga Continues
- Special Showing of Film *Manufactured Landscapes*
- Central Arkansas Group Monthly Meetings
- Canoe Trash Pick-up Postponed Until September
- Central Arkansas Group Officer Completes Sierra Club Leader Training
- Goodbye to Uta Meyer, Environmental Educator
- Lake Maumelle Land Use Plan

The saga continues in the fight against Turk, the proposed 600-megawatt coal-fired plant in Hempstead County. The Sierra Club, Audubon, and the Hempstead County Hunting Club are all plaintiffs in a federal wetlands permit lawsuit against the Southwestern Electric Power Company (SWEPCO). We contested the permit because the US Corps of Engineers had not given enough time for public comment.

With regard to the separate issue of the Turk air permit, the Sierra Club had appealed the Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission's decision to grant the air permit in the first place. The Arkansas State Circuit Court in Hempstead County upheld the air permit in December 2010. But the Sierra Club continues to contest Turk's air permit, and on January 13, 2011 we appealed to the Arkansas Court of Appeals. Oral arguments have not yet been scheduled.

Since SWEPCO is losing in the courts, it got the Arkansas Legislature to attempt to help its case. In March 2011, House Bill 1895, drafted by SWEPCO, was passed. SWEPCO and the Public Service Commission had been working on a draft of the bill in secret since January. When the bill was filed, Sierra Club



members and other public interest groups mounted stiff opposition and kept the issue in the public eye to counter the public utility lobby. Even though the bill eventually passed, the vote was much closer than it would have been without our input.

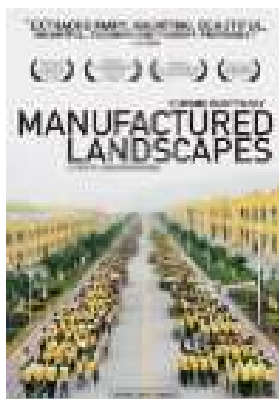
The battle over Turk is far from over, and we have been strengthened through our mobilization efforts. We will keep the momentum going with two more calls to action. Contact me at Lev.guter@sierraclub.org to sign a postcard against mercury pollution and a petition to stop SWEPCO, in anticipation that Turk will go back to the Public Service Commission. Thanks for all your efforts in this important campaign.

— Lev Guter, national Sierra Club Field Organizer, Beyond Coal Campaign. Contact him at Lev.guter@sierraclub.org.

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Acclaimed Film on Pollution, June 29, at Fletcher Library



View the award-winning 2006 film *Manufactured Landscapes* (80 minutes) about the impact of pollution on the environment as seen by Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky. Al Gore called this film "Extraordinary, haunting, beautiful, insightful, touching."

June 29, 6 p.m., Fletcher Library (823 N. Buchanan, LR). We will meet at the Oyster Bar afterwards for discussion.

Update On Fracking Issues

“Fracking” refers to the process by which natural gas is extracted from shale rock formations deep in the earth. All kinds of problems have arisen in Arkansas as a result of fracking, partly because the industry is not sufficiently regulated to provide enough safeguards for water, wildlife, and people.

The *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* for May 24, 2011, reported that the Arkansas Oil & Gas Commission and two companies have agreed to extend the three-month shutdown of two Faulkner County injection wells while scientists study a possible link between the wells and what reporter Paul Quinn calls “a swarm of earthquakes.”

Meanwhile, two lawsuits have been filed in Faulkner County claiming that well operators are liable for damage caused by the earthquakes. The suits say that property values have now gone down and insurance premiums have gone up. The Oil & Gas Commission also voted on March 4 to establish a moratorium on new wells in the area where currently seven injection wells are situated. Injection wells hold the fracking fluid that is not reusable (some of it can be recycled), and there are almost 900 of these sites in the state. Scott Ausbrooks, a geologist with the Arkansas Geological Survey, says that he is “ready to present our data at any time” on the potential correlation between earthquake activity and injection wells.

Recently, BHP Billiton of Australia purchased Chesapeake Energy. Despite current concerns about the hazards of dumping fracking fluid, BHP Billiton plans to double the number of drill rigs that Chesapeake used.

Sheffield Nelson has renewed his call for a 7% severance tax on the natural gas industry to compensate for the damage to highways, roads, and bridges.

— Information from Sierra Club member Joyce Hale and the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* for May 24, 2011.

2011 Central Arkansas Group Officers

Your Central Arkansas Group officers are:

David Lyon (Chair)
David.Lyon@Arkansas.SierraClub.org

Gary Cawood (Vice Chair)
Gary.Cawood@Arkansas.SierraClub.org

Kate Althoff (Water Issues/Treasurer)
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Bob Stodola (Communications)
Bob.Stodola@Arkansas.SierraClub.org

Carolyn Shearman (Outings)
tucshea@gmail.com

Stephanie Wolmarans (Outings/
Webmaster)
stephanie.sierraclub@hotmail.com

Zabelle Stodola (ex-officio) Secretary.

NEW BLOOD NEEDED!

Please consider running for office in the upcoming fall elections to choose the 2012 Central Arkansas Group officers and to continue the good work.

Contact current officers for more information.

CAG Meetings May, June, & July At Oyster Bar

The Central Arkansas Group (CAG) meets on the third Tuesday of each month at the Oyster Bar in Little Rock. 6:30 p.m. social time, 7 p.m. program begins.

May 17: Stella Capek, Hendrix College, “An Environmental Soci-

ologist’s Perspective”

June 21: A CleanLine Energy Co. representative will talk on a controversial plan to construct transmission line grids in Arkansas to transport wind energy through the Natural State to other sites.

July 19: Earthquake expert Scott Ausbrooks is Geo-Hazards & Environmental Geology Supervisor for the Arkansas Geological Survey. He will discuss recent earthquake activity in Arkansas.

August: NO MEETING

Environmental Education Initiatives

We say farewell to Uta Meyer, a graduating student at the University of Central Arkansas, and thank her for educating a new generation of kids about environmental issues.

Opposite is a picture of the last activity Uta organized at the Billy Mitchell Boys and Girls Club in Little Rock.

Local businesses donated the plants and the kids got their hands dirty planting flowers and making their environment more attractive.

We wish Uta good luck in her next endeavors.



Stephanie Wolmarans Completes Leader Training

Congratulations to Stephanie Wolmarans, Outings Chair and Webmaster for the Central Arkansas Group, who completed formal training as a Sierra Club outings leader by organizing a 3.3 mile hike on a trail at the base of Pinnacle Mountain. Ten people (and two dogs!) did the hike on a gorgeous Sunday morning in early April.



Stephanie Wolmarans & Nikki Killingsworth (left) and David Lyon & Lev Guter (below) look at an unusual tree formation.



Pinnacle Mtn Canoe Clean-Up Postponed To Fall

The Spring Canoe Clean-up of the Little Maumelle River, scheduled to take place in the spring, had to be postponed twice because of dangerously high water levels and flooding. The Sierra Club and Pinnacle Mountain State Park sponsor this annual event which we are hoping to re-

schedule to a weekend in September. Watch for more information in the next newsletter and on our website at <http://arkansas.sierraclub.org>. Contact person is Carolyn Shearman at tucshea@gmail.com or (501) 603-5305.



Sierra Club, Central Arkansas Group
<http://arkansas.sierraclub.org>

Central Arkansas Group
The Arkansas Chapter of the Sierra Club
1308 West 2nd Street
Little Rock, AR 72201

Lake Maumelle Land Use Plan

Lake Maumelle provides water for almost 400,000 Central Arkansans. The primary threat to its almost pristine water quality is residential development of the forest around the lake. Efforts to protect the lake's water quality now focus on a Land Use Plan by Pulaski County government.

Members of the Central Arkansas Group of the Sierra Club (CAG) are closely monitoring this all important process. We believe it is vital to preserve at least 40% of the land in the area as truly undisturbed. Public comment will be critical to our success.

Contact me if you would like more information and if you are interested in sending Pulaski County your comments.

To keep apprised of updates, please go to the Arkansas Chapter website at <http://arkansas.sierraclub.org> and click on CAG at the top to access CAG's website. More information about the Plan and how to provide input can be found at www.co.pulaski.ar.us.

— Kate Althoff, CAG Treasurer
Kate.Althof@arkansas.sierraclub.org