



Sauk-Calumet Group

January 2024 Newsletter Volume 43, Issue 1

Now is the Time to Focus on Open Land Acquisition in South Cook County *by Robert Sullivan*

There may never be a more opportune time for adding to our public open spaces in south Cook County. Locally, in 2022 the Forest Preserve District of Cook County was approved via referendum for a tax increase to fund land acquisition, among other things. At the state level, Rebuild Illinois was passed in 2019 and includes \$1 billion for environment and conservation. At the federal level, Congress passed the massive Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in 2021 that funds clean water, brownfields cleanup, advancing environmental justice, resilience to protect communities from climate change, and economic development for distressed communities. Major societal issues have recently been focused on addressing climate change, community health, environmental justice, equitable community resources and restoration of the natural environment. South Cook County has many communities that have been subjected to environmental degradation over many decades and that lack access to many recreational and natural resources common in other areas. Flooding has also been an issue in many of these communities. Such issues correlate with many of the goals of these federal and state funds. Acquisition of land can address many of these issues. For instance, additional forest preserves and open spaces can address access to recreation and natural areas, stormwater management, climate change, water quality, and many other aspects of an overall quality of life. Specifically, one location that should be a multi-jurisdictional effort is Chicago's south lakefront. It shouldn't even be a question that all the land east of Route 41 and south of Rainbow Beach Park should be parkland. It also shouldn't be a question that the Army Corps of Engineer site north of Calumet Beach Park should be restored as previously agreed to a park site, not accepting more toxic sludge. Residents of the South Side need this park space and the Lake Michigan shoreline is arguably the most important recreational feature in the state. It would also be a benefit for the local neighborhood economy. This location checks many of the funding boxes such as environmental cleanup and equitable access to recreation and nature. Also on the South Side are many parcels that should be acquired for the Calumet Open Space Reserve. Visionary leadership is needed from Chicago, Cook County, and Illinois. Thinking outside of the box, these sites may even be pursued as part of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Most other locations would likely be acquired by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. The Deer Creek corridor would seem a likely focus for land acquisition since there is a lot of relatively inexpensive undeveloped land. Land along the Des Plaines River, Calumet River, Calumet Sag Channel and Sanitary & Ship Canal might also be a focus. Much of it is paved vehicle storage and deteriorating or vacant industrial uses. These corridors also check many of the funding boxes including water quality and brownfield cleanup. Other corridors to consider include Stony Creek, Tinley Creek, Butterfield Creek, Spring Creek, Midlothian Creek, and Thorn Creek.

Municipal park departments and park districts should be envisioning projects and applying for grants for land acquisition. These projects would ideally serve multiple purposes, such as recreation, wildlife habitat, flood control, water quality, and equitable access, reflecting the needs of the communities and the goals of available grant programs. The South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, as well as the Southwest Council of Mayors can play a role in this effort with coordination and sharing of resources. Open Lands Project, Friends of the Forest Preserves and the Trust for Open Lands can also be of assistance. Governor Pritzker, President Preckwinkle, Mayor Johnson, the successor of Superintendent Randall, and all the other South Cook County leaders, there may never be a better time!

***IN THIS ISSUE:**

Page 1 Open Land Acquisition in South Cook County

Page 2 Ten Hints to Control Food Waste

Page 3 The Wasted Food Scale

Page 3-4 Sauk Calumet Acknowledges Stewards of the Environment

Page 5 Thinking About Buying a Car?

Page 6 Earth Awareness Fair

Page 7 Green Living Tips

Page 8 S-C Club Group Meetings Information

Page 9 S-C Group Contacts / Illinois Sierra Club Outings / S-C Online Links

Ten Hints to Control Food Waste

by Sharon White

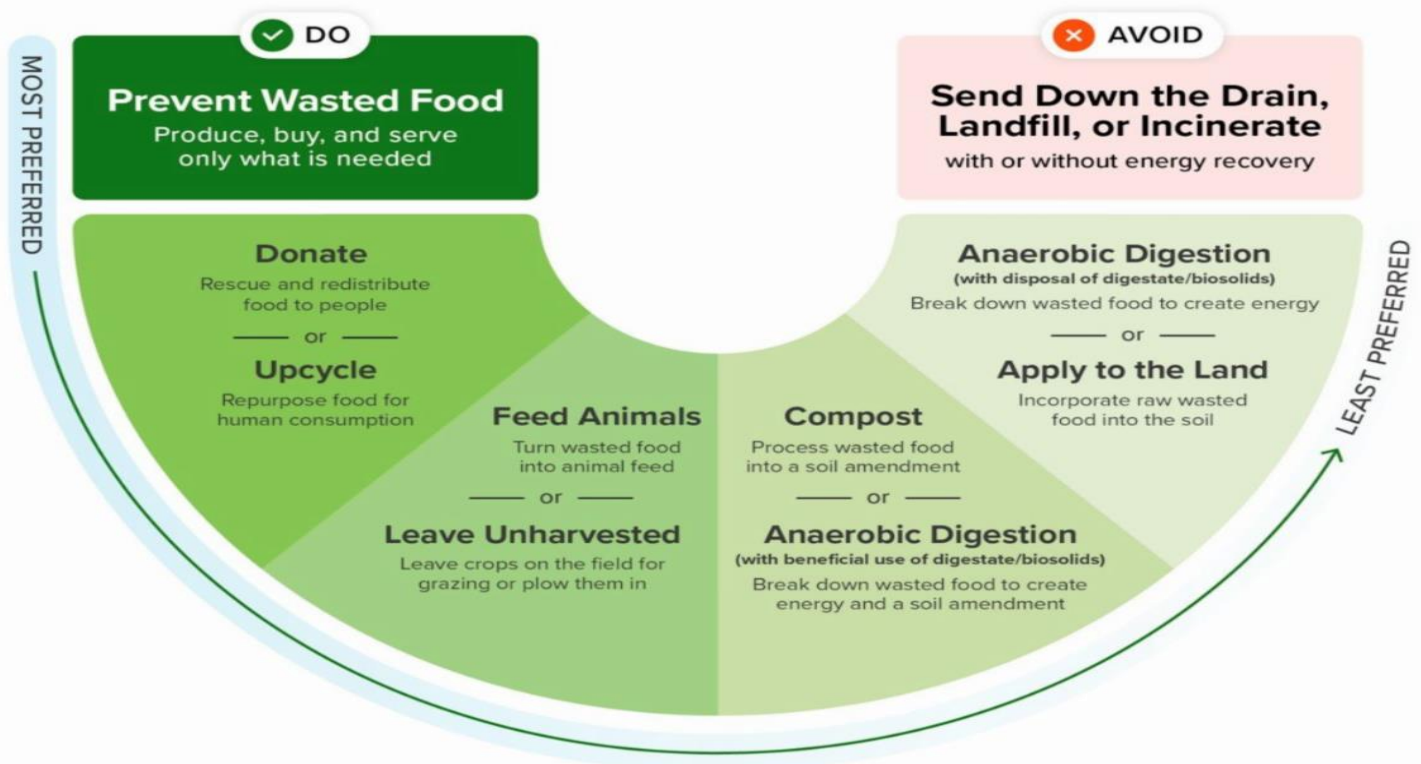
When food waste goes in the landfill it creates Methane Gas which is 85 times worse than carbon dioxide. How can we avoid doing this? First be aware of what and how much you are throwing out. Then, how can you fix it? Here are some hints.

- 1) Don't wash the fruits and vegetables as soon as you buy them-just when eating.
- 2) Freeze leftovers if you are not going to eat them in a couple days. They taste better when you pull them out a week or so later, anyway.
- 3) Buy less- reconsider bulk buying – are you throwing this out? Not a bargain.
- 4) Put signs on food in the refrigerator to remind others in the family what it is and that it needs to be eaten first.
- 5) Bananas and avocados can be kept longer in the refrigerator.
- 6) Make soup out of leftovers- especially vegetables.
- 7) Plan your meals before going shopping.
- 8) Dates on food are just suggestions. The only federally mandated and controlled dates are those on baby formula. For everything else, look, smell, taste if past the date. Usually, it is still good. Make smoothies out of fruit that won't last.
- 9) Take a non-plastic container with you to the restaurant to bring home your leftovers.
- 10) Compost!



Wasted Food Scale

How to reduce the environmental impacts of wasted food



October 2023

The Sauk Calumet Sierra Club Group would like to acknowledge the work of individuals and groups that are stewards of the environment. Please send stories about any individual or groups that deserve recognition to sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org

On Our Way to Environmental Stewardship: TRHS Science Club

by Dorelle Ackermann

Once again, the Thornridge High School (TRHS) Science Club has proven themselves good stewards of the environment. Over the last year, these students have completed two beach cleanups, removed invasive species at different forest preserves in Cook County and found joy in nature kayaking the Des Plaines River with their sponsors, Jennifer Raich and William Hedden. In preparation for creating their own butterfly garden at Thornridge, 8 students spent last Saturday visiting McDonald Farm in Naperville. They received a private two-hour tour led by Jordan Wilson, the Youth Program Manager for The Conservation Foundation.

Jordan customized her tour knowing that the students were most interested in how to maximize sustainability when planting a garden or caring for a farm. The farm's solar panels and wind turbine provide 75% of the farm's energy needs. The students sampled water purified on site with a hydropanel, which collects water vapor from the air, condenses it into liquid water, and filters it for drinking. They also learned about the importance of pollinator species and the risk to our food supply if we don't create migratory corridors. Monarch butterfly populations have been reduced by 85% in the past two decades, according to the Center for Biological Diversity. Milkweed is one plant that

can encourage monarch butterfly population growth. The TRHS Science Club students are up to the challenge and are planning a butterfly garden watered by a rain barrel and maintained without chemical pesticides. They now know that planting mint or lemongrass is one way nature prevents pests. The Conservation Foundation has offered the students starter seeds, composting soil and even materials to build a raised garden. The students presented their garden plans to District 205's Student School Board of Education and Thornridge Principal Dr. Moore last spring and received approval to begin their garden. They are anxiously waiting for an agreed upon approved location on campus by the District 205 Operations Department Supervisor Mr. Garrett and Dr. Moore. "Dream Big" is a mantra of visionaries and these students envision the day that TRHS will show the community other projects that will create a more sustainable world. One such project they have in mind is rooftop solar. It is a win-win since it will reduce the school's electric bill and reduce our reliance on dirty and expensive fossil fuels. Student initiatives at other school districts have done just that, why not the Falcons? Center for Biological Diversity:

https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/invertebrates/monarch_butterfly/



From left to right: Renard Singleton, Nakai Parker, Jabari Burks, Kaiyah Gillett, Kaliah Oparah, Nyla Martinez, William Hedden (Science Club coach), Laila Bennett, Teonna Davis, Dennis (Landscape/Farmhand), Jordan Wilson (Youth Program Manager), Jennifer Raich (Science Club coach)

Thinking About Buying a Car?

by Dorelle Ackermann

Here are a few good reasons to seriously consider an electric car for your next car purchase.

- We need to reduce emissions 50% by 2030 to reach our climate goal of keeping warming below a 2.7-degree Fahrenheit warming by 2050.
- Transportation is the number one source of greenhouse emissions and passenger cars contribute 60% to those emissions.
- The car you buy today has an average life of 12 - 15 years.
- The federal government will give you \$7500 tax credit on EV's built in the USA and starting in 2024 you can choose to take that money at the time of sale.
- Even considering the emissions generated “cradle to grave” an EV (electric vehicle) will generate 50% less carbon emissions than an ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicle.
- Fuel and maintenance costs will be 50% less.

My personal experience owning an EV since 2019



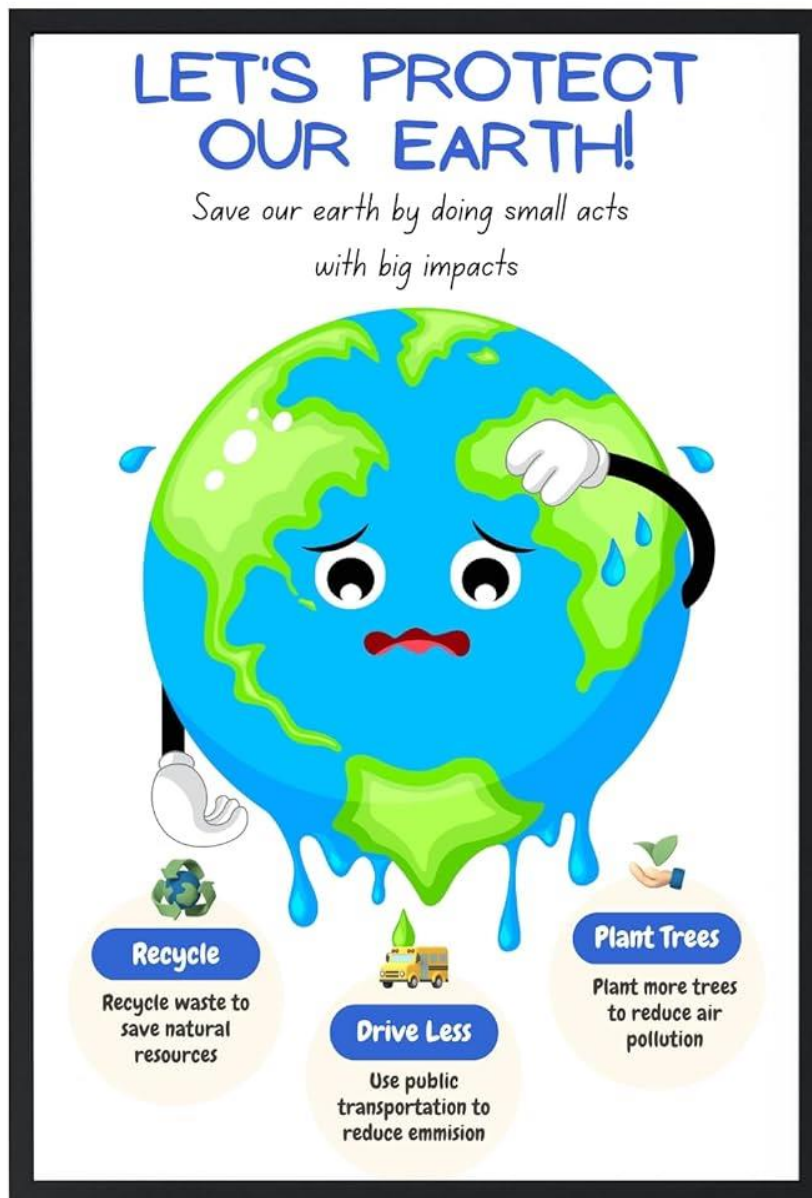
- My 2019 Bolt and 2023 EUV Bolt are “perky” and fun to drive.
- I have NEVER had to use a public charging station. I charge at home at night when ComEd real time pricing costs can be as low as 2-3 cents/kwh. (On Christmas Eve ComEd costs were negative for a few hours meaning they paid me to charge my car.)
 - I personally am not ready to give up my ICE which I use for vacation/long distance travel but 85% of my driving is “in town” so “range anxiety” is not a problem.
 - **Be wary of misinformation** being peddled by organizations threatened by the exponential growth of the electric car market. Do your research.
 - <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/electric-vehicle-myths>
 - <https://www.carbonbrief.org/factcheck-21-misleading-myths-about-electric-vehicles/>
 - <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/electric-vs-gas-cars-it-cheaper-drive-ev>
 - https://advocacy.consumerreports.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/CR_EVSavings_FACTSHEET_6.2023.pdf

Earth Awareness Fair

By Lois Lauer

Mark your calendars: Sunday, March 24, 2-3:30pm:
Earth Awareness Fair!
at the Frankfort Library, 21119 S Pfeiffer Rd

Join us for an opportunity to discover how you can lend your skills and passion to Sierra Club and other local service organizations dedicated to promoting a healthy environment for all of Earth's inhabitants. The Earth Awareness Fair will bring together organizations and individuals to showcase and encourage Earth stewardship, resilience, sustainability, and community. "What should I do?" is the most common question for those who want to contribute in ways that help life thrive. Join us for an informative afternoon of sharing and learning.



Green Living Tips: Avoid using single-use plastics!

by Lois Lauer

The glut of plastic waste on our lands and in our rivers and oceans pollutes the earth, destroys natural habitats, and harms animals who either eat the plastic or get tangled in it. Many Illinois legislators are working to ban unnecessary single use plastics and so far, have been successful in getting single use plastic banned from state-operated dining rooms such as at universities. Hopefully we will see more widespread legislation in the near future. In the meantime, we can each make individual choices to limit the use of plastic in our own lifestyles. Here's some good places to start:

1. Wherever you go, always carry your reusable water bottle so you *never* have to use a single use water bottle.
2. Whenever, wherever you shop, always carry your reusable bag so that you *never* have to accept a single use plastic bag.
3. Whenever you drink a beverage, *refuse* to use a plastic straw. Hand it back to the wait staff.

Here are some important information links from Earthday.org.

<https://www.earthday.org/fact-sheet-how-much-disposable-plastic-we-use/>

<https://www.earthday.org/fact-sheet-single-use-plastics/>

<https://www.earthday.org/fact-sheet-plastics-in-the-ocean/>

<https://www.earthday.org/fact-sheet-microplastics-and-drinking-water/>

<https://www.earthday.org/fact-sheet-the-plastic-threat-to-human-health/>

<https://www.earthday.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2022-Plastic-Pollution-Primer-and-Action-Toolkit.pdf>



**BY 2050,
THERE WILL BE
MORE PLASTIC
THAN FISH IN THE
WORLD'S OCEANS.**

ACT NOW

#ZeroPlasticWaste

Sauk Calumet Sierra Club Group Meetings Schedule

Meetings are held at 7:15 pm on the second Monday of every month except for June, July, and August. All meetings are free and open both to Sierra Club members and to the public. **The meetings will take place via Zoom and in person at the Frankfort Library. An email will be sent the week before each meeting, asking you to RSVP. A second email will be sent to those who plan to attend online with the instructions and connection information for our Zoom conference. Please check on the [Sauk Calumet Sierra Club website](#) and [Sauk Calumet Group Facebook page](#) for the latest information on our meetings.



TBD

February 12 -The topic for this month is TBD (to be decided) This month will be Online with Zoom only. Please check on the [Sauk Calumet Sierra Club website](#) and [Sauk Calumet Group Facebook page](#) for the latest information on our meetings.



March 11 - " How to Electrify Your Home at (Partially) The Government's Expense." Join staff from the Sierra Club and Citizen's Utility Board to learn why it's important to electrify your home as part of the fight against climate change. Then find out more about government incentives to help you modernize your home. Finally, we'll learn about important upcoming conservation bills in the spring legislative session and how you can help pass them.



April 8 - "Midewin - The Wilderness Next Door." The nation's first national tallgrass prairie is located just south of Joliet on Route 53. Learn more about this 19,000+ acre prairie restoration. Get tips about the best trails and sights and recommendations for hiking, biking, and more.



May 13 - "Diet for a Healthy Planet." Are you trying to make more vegetarian meals but don't know how to start? Did you know that eating one meatless dinner/week has the same environmental impact as driving a Prius? Volunteers from our local Pachamama environmental group will talk about ways to add tasty vegetarian meals and snacks to your meal rotation. Feel free to bring your favorite vegetarian recipe to share!

Letters to the Editor:

Letters on content within the Sauk-Calumet newsletter should be sent to the editor at:

sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org

Please include your full name and address and reference the article on which you are commenting.

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The Sierra Club from the national level down to the local groups does so many positive things to help protect our planet. So, let's get outdoors and enjoy our beautiful world together. Click below for Sierra Club Illinois outings.



Remember to check our Sauk-Calumet Group website for current information and news updates on issues relevant to Illinois.

[Click here for our website.](#)

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to find us on Facebook