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Columbus North Environmental Club Inspired to Combat Environmental Abuse

Editor's note: The Environmental Club at the Columbus North High School in Bartholomew County has decided to publish a semi-annual newsletter about the environment. They sought the chapter's financial support to get the effort going. The chapter, along with our Winding Waters Group in Columbus and the Energy Matters Community Coalition in Columbus have agreed to donate \$600, which should pay for issues in the spring and fall this year and the spring of next year. We invited the students to submit an article for this newsletter. Their contribution is below.

Dear Sierra Club Members,

With the growth of urbanization and technology, people forget about an important aspect of America: the environment. Our environment is an irreplaceable and beautiful part of our country yet people treat it as just a pile of dirt to sell as lots for neighborhoods, shopping malls, and cities.



Photograph courtesy of the Columbus North Environmental Club Members of the Columbus North Environmental Club who are Inspired by the Hoosier Chapter Sierra Club and other groups include, back row from left: Machi Takeda, Vamshi Balanaga, Joe Robinson, Ihsan Zulkifly, Nurfarah Zulkifly; front row: Dariana Chavez, Anna Kim, Claire Kim, unidentified girl, Luke Swain, Dale Nowlin. truly take action, and that truly make a difference. There is serious, permanent damage done to the environment daily, but with the hard work from organizations like the Sierra Club who appreciate the beauty and sensitivity of the environment, the damage is greatly lessened.

Groups like the Sierra Club advocate for the environment and take action while encouraging others to do the same. Witnessing the amazing work the Sierra Club does is inspirational for smaller groups like the Environmental Club. You remind us that even the seemingly smaller work we do at a high school level is still progress for a better tomorrow.

And today we are writing to tell you: we notice your work, we appreciate your work and we are inspired by your work. We notice

However, people like you, the members of Sierra Club, you don't forget. You are some of the select individuals that truly care, that

the increase in environmental education because of the nature hikes you organize and the student summer programs you host.

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Columbus North Environmental Club

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We notice the cleaner parks Columbus has due to the Sierra Club's clean ups. We notice our town's clean water because of your water testing, and we appreciate it.

We appreciate that every day, we can reap the benefits of cleaner air, cleaner water, and a better ecosystem for America's unique flora and fauna because Sierra Club advocates for it. Not only that but seeing

how the organization's

work improves our lives inspires us to continue the work. Because of the Sierra Club and members like you, we are inspired to advocate for what we believe. We are inspired because the Sierra Club has reminded us that change starts with action, no matter the size. So thank you. Sincerely,

"There is serious, permanent damage done to the environment daily, but with the hard work from organizations like the Sierra Club who appreciate the beauty and sensitivity of the environment, the damage is greatly lessened."

Columbus North High School's Environmental Club

(The Environmental Club strives to promote the well-being of our environment in school and within the commu-

nity through increased recycling efforts and volunteer work. We are currently planning a school wide Earth Day celebration and an environmental newsletter to raise awareness among the student body.)

A Democratic Sierra Club Demands Grassroots Participation

The annual election for the Club's Board of Directors is now underway.

Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election will receive in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery

option) your national Sierra Club ballot in early March. This will include information on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club's web site.

Your participation is critical for a Strong Sierra Club.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well.

Yearly participation in elections at all Club levels is a major membership obligation.

In a typical year less than 10% of eligible members vote in the Board elections. A minimum of 5% is required for the elections to be valid. Our grassroots structure is strengthened when our participation is high. That means your participation is needed in the voting process. How can I learn about the candidates? Members frequently state that they don't know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. Each candidate provides a statement



about themselves and their views on the issues on the official election ballot. You can learn more by asking questions of your group and chapter leadership and other experienced members you know. You can also visit the Club's election web site for additional information about candidates: http://www. sierraclub.org/board/ election

Then make your

choice and cast your vote! Voting online is quick and easy!

Even if you receive your election materials in the mail, we encourage you to use the user-friendly Internet voting site to save time and postage. If sending via ground mail, please note your ballots must be received by no later than Election Day, April 24, 2019.

Sierra Club Legislative Update

By Brian Hasler, Capitol Assets LLC, March 1, 2019

The Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter legislative team and Capitol Assets, the chapter's contract lobbyist, have been following a number of bills during this session of the Indiana General Assembly, testified at hearings, and worked members of the House and Senate to promote alternative energy and protect the environment. We have now reached the midpoint in the session, when bills having passed the House go to the Senate and vice versa. Below is a report on what has happened and what has not happened during the first half.

Homeowner association solar power and a repeal of the phase out of net metering were two areas addressed by bills authored by Rep. Mike Speedy (House Bill 1331) and Sen. J.D. Ford (Senate Bill 430) respectively. HB 1331, which would limit the restrictions that homeowner associations could put



Photograph by Rebecca Dien-Johns Three bills were introduced in the 2019 Legislature dealing with Lake Michigan. SB 553 would protect the indiviuals' right to use the shoreline for recreation. SB 581 addresses concerns of private property owners next to the lake. HB 1266 would eliminate local sediment and erosion regulation at construction sites and is adamantly opposed by the Sierra Club.

on installing solar panels, passed the Senate the last two sessions but failed to get a hearing in the House. This year the bill started in the House and is now headed to the Senate. Sen. Ford's bill would have removed the phase out of net metering, but the bill failed to receive a hearing from the utility committee chairman, Sen. Jim Merritt.

Wind turbine placement has become a flash point in several Indiana communities. While we respect the need for responsible setbacks, the Sierra Club doesn't want to impede the move to wind as an alternative source of energy. Rep. Tom Saunders filed two bills that would potentially have made installation of wind turbines more difficult in the state. HB 2060 was the most troubling as it would have required local referenda before installation. Fortunately, both of Saunders' bills were not heard. In the Senate, Sen. Phil Boots' SB 535 removes extend-

ed boundaries surrounding cities that would have restricted placement of wind turbines. This bill moves on to the House for consideration.

The legislature continues to offer financial favors to the electric utility industry. HB 1470, authored by Rep. Ed Soliday, provides a blank check for utility companies to increase utility rates for transmission construction without review by the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission. Abuse of similar provisions in other

summer study committee.

One of the most serious concerns we have involves SB 471 (Sen. Eric Koch), which comes from the petroleum industry. The bill would impose substantial penalties for "offenses involving critical infrastructure," in other words pipelines and other

> energy-related facilities. The bill would have a chilling effect upon organizations like the Sierra Club regarding First Amendment rights. Efforts are underway to recruit others to our cause and to block the proposal in the House

> Two bills would have impacted mining. The first, HB 1531 (Rep. Jeff Ellington), prohibiting local regulation of mineral extraction, was not heard in committee. A second bill, HB 1045 (Rep. Ron Bacon), would have protected communities by establishing setback provisions. This, too, was not taken up by committee.

Regarding concentrated animal feeding

operations (CAFO's), legislation sought by the environmental community failed to advance this year. HB 1378 (Rep. Sue Errington) would have increased the accountability of CAFO operations in Indiana, and HB 1044 (Rep. Ron Bacon) sought to enact more favorable set-back language. While HB 1378 received a hearing, the bill did not pass out of committee. Two additional bills filed in the Senate, SB 593 (Sen. Mark Stoops), a

Continued on next page

mittee and lobby team will continue to follow these bills, seek to improve those that we can, kill those that we cannot, and work to protect the environment and expand alternative energy in Indiana."

"Your legislative com-

states makes this a top priority for our team to defeat. An attack on the Office of Utility Consumer Counselor, HB 1468 authored

by Rep. Heath VanNatter, didn't receive a hearing. This was an attempt by the Indiana-American Water to hamstring the office by requiring the OUCC to use existing resources in state government first before employing consultants.

SB 442, authored by Sen. Jon Ford, would allow carbon dioxide collection and storage at a former industrial facility in Terre Haute. The project involves reutilization of a closed electric utility for an ammonia fertilizer operation and the storage of CO2 underground. This legislation, being pushed by a start-up company with the backing of the U.S. Department of Energy, raises serious questions about its impact on the environment. Concerns about those impacts and the liability of the state led the author to amend the bill to send the proposal to a

Legislative Update

Continued from previous page

companion bill to Errington's bill in the House, and SB 247 (Sen.

Rick Niemeyer), which required annual inspections of CAFO's, both failed to get a hearing. On a brighter note, Sen. Randy Head's SB 270 would require recusal of local government officials for conflicts of interest, which may assist communities in fighting CAFO siting or expansion.

The Chapter joined the efforts of the Indiana Conservation Alliance to promote a dedicated source of funding for conservation in HB 1376 (Rep. Sue Errington). The bill would have directed sales taxes collected by the state from the sale of outdoor recreational equipment into an Indiana outdoor stewardship fund. Similar efforts in other states have produced millions of dollars for much needed repairs in state parks and preservation of natural habitats. The bill didn't receive a hearing but we are committed to a multi-year effort that could produce a big payout for conservation in Indiana.

Sen. John Ruckelshaus introduced SB 610, a state forest management plan proposal. Efforts to reach agreement between the Indiana Forest Alliance and the Indiana Hardwood Lumbermen's Association collapsed and the bill did not

get a hearing. Legislation authored by Rep. Shane Lindauer (HB 1407) that would have allowed hunting and trapping bobcats when county sighting reports reached a certain level wasn't heard following an outcry from the public.

Photograph by Rebecca Dien-Johns The legislature is moving to stifle citizen First Amendment rights and protests, like this one in downtown Indianapolis. The bill is being pushed by the petroleum industry.

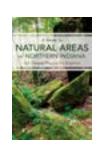
NATURAL AREA

Concerns about lead in drinking water, propelled by lead exposure in Northwest Indiana, and radon in schools prompted a number of bills this session. Bills to address lead in drinking water were introduced by Reps. Ryan Dvorak, Earl Harris, Carolyn Jackson, Sue Errington and Sens. Lonnie Randolph, Greg

> Taylor, and Jean Breaux. Only Sen. Randolph's bill, SB 297, moved to the other chamber, after it was amended to be limited to Gary. Radon in schools and daycare facilities were addressed in Bills by Rep. Carey Hamilton and Sen. Eddie Melton addressed radon in schools and daycare facilities. Only Sen. Melton's bill (SB 522) advanced.

> HB 1406 (Rep. Soliday) provides for a water infrastructure assistance fund and comes from a summer study committee. The bill passed the House and moves to the Senate. Sen. Ed Charbonneau's SB 4 establishes a storm water task force. Two bills were introduced dealing with public access to Lake Michigan. One by Sen. Karen Tallian, SB 553, seeks to protect the right of individuals to use the shoreline for recreation and codifies such use following a positive Supreme Court ruling. The second bill, SB 581 authored by Sen. Blake Doriot, addresses concerns of private property owners next to the lake. Both bills advanced to the House. Finally, HB 1266 eliminates local sediment and erosion regulation of construction sites. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Doug Miller, a home builder, is adamantly opposed by the chapter.

Your legislative committee and lobby team will continue to follow these bills, seek to improve those that we can, kill those that we cannot, and work to protect the environment and expand alternative energy in Indiana.



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244 Unique Places to

Explore

Written and photographed by Steven Higgs

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Monthly contributions can be set up at: www.sierraclub.org/indiana

Get to Know your Local Groups

CONNECTING GREENWAYS FOR WILDLIFE

Dunelands, Northwest Indiana

Covering Lake, Porter, LaPorte, Newton, Jasper, and Starke counties in Northwest Indiana, the Dunelands Group works on a variety of environmental issues, including lead contamination, transitioning to renewable energy, CAFOs, and habitat loss. To help with that last issue, we're excited to introduce a new campaign that will be a focus for our group in 2019. Connecting Greenways For Wildlife emphasizes reconnecting and restoring local habitats that have been fractured or lost.

We're forming partnerships with other organizations, residents, and businesses to link and rehabilitate green spaces to enhance the mobility and health of our wildlife and improve the lives of the people who live here. The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine has shown that adding native plant communities helps fight climate change so these local actions will also have a positive global impact.

The Dunelands executive committee is comprised of people from diverse backgrounds who range in age from their 30s to their 70s. Some are lifelong Sierra Club members and some have joined recently. We look forward to welcoming more people to join this project. Stay tuned to the Dunelands social media pages for opportunities to get involved as Connecting Greenways For Wildlife gets underway!

Submitted by Farris Kroft, secretary of the Dunelands executive committee. She can be reached at farrisems@gmail.com.

Winding Waters, Columbus, Bartholomew County

1) What five words would you use to describe your group? Environmentalists, nature-lovers, adventurers, passionate & creative

2) What's the main thing you're looking forward to for the rest of 2019? Last year we began our Grassroots Network Pollinator Plant Project. Our community's schools, parks and members have excitedly embraced this project and helped us exceed the goals we had in place. We are enthusiastic to continue this project with our community by expanding our plant sale, offering student-built bat houses, continuing to help with the city's pollinator pocket park and so much more.

3) What's the main environmental challenge in your area? We have eleven CAFOs approved in Bartholomew County. Because of the multiple factory farms in the area, our residents are gravely concerned for the health of the environment. There are many concerns regarding water and air quality. Our chair, Julia Lowe, is a Hoosier Riverwatch water-testing trainer and several of our group members have been trained in water testing as well. We are currently monitoring the water quality for *E.col*i in our area and recording the findings on IDEM's Hoosier Riverwatch database

4) What message would you like to give to readers in your area? Sierra Club is a grassroots organization. The power of such an organization comes from YOU. What we do now affects YOUR future and we believe YOU should have a big say in that. We want to escalate your voices and ideas. We believe that by working together we can all create the change we want to see. The only thing we need is YOU.

Submitted by Michelle Carr, publicity and social media chair, group delegate to the chapter executive committee. She may be reached at michelle.e.carr@gmail.com.



Photograph by Julia Lowe

Member of the Winding Waters Group, Dennis Tibbetts, left, and Aaron Stump, tag monarchs as part of the group's efforts to understand and protect the environment in Bartholomew County.

Heartlands, Indianapolis and Central Indiana

The Heartlands Group encourages everyone to "Get Outside!" through Sierra Club outings and social gatherings-to explore, enjoy, and find inspiration to protect our green and wild spaces. This summer and fall, we have several planned outings (ranging from easy to moderate) in parks, nature preserves, and forests in Indiana. Our goal is to grow in both leadership and membership by appealing to our diverse metropolitan community, as well as to surrounding suburban and rural areas, through our shared values that prize a clean, healthy environment for everyone.

Heartlands combats threats to our natural environment on a number of fronts. The greatest challenge our state faces

is air pollution and its contribution to climate change. We provide a strong voice in both local and national forums to bring attention to the dangers of climate change. We

sponsored buses to the New York Climate Change March and the People's Climate March in Washington, D.C. This year, we will work closely with the Beyond Coal Campaign to push for the retirement of dirty coal plants supplying electricity to central Indiana, promoting their replacement with renewable clean energy sources. We are committed to educating the public on the critical threat posed to our groundwater and waterways by coal ash disposal sites, and we will push for better ways to mitigate

this pollution hazard. Additionally, we will continue to work with our allies in promoting solar energy options and advocating accessibility to renewable energy sources for all Hoosiers. We advocate the widespread adoption of electric vehicles and cleaner public transportation to reduce pollution in the tranportation sector. As an



Photograph Courtesy of HeartInds Group Sierra Club Loria Kirkham, Jesse Kirkham and Lori Adelson are leaders in the Heartland Group, which sees air pollution and its contributions to climate change as the greatest challenge facing the state.

management of our state forests, the proliferation of CAFOs, and the effort to increase the use of solar energy—and on the national

"Heartlands combats threats to our natural environment on a number of fronts. The greatest challenge our state faces is air pollution and its contribution to climate change." front—the Endangered Species Act, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Utah Wilderness Areas, and the protection of the Boundary Waters.

The Heartlands Group provides a channel for Hoosiers to voice their convictions and harness their energies in actions that safeguard our small but iconic natural heritage. We welcome everyone in the central Indiana area. We invite you to enjoy Indiana's wild spaces with us and, with so much at stake, to work with us to preserve and protect these spaces in whatever capacity

suits you.

Submitted by Jesse Kirkham, Heartlands Group chair and delegate to the chapter executive committee. He can be reached at jlkirkham@ earthlink.net.

For a complete list of all our groups and networks visit sierraclub.org/indiana/local-groups



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example of our work on the local level, Heartlands was one of the first groups to recognize the threat posed by the proposed unnecessary and potentially ruinous Mounds Reservoir Dam project, and we fought hard with our allies to prevent it. We support the development of trails like the Mounds Greenway, as well as the expansion and connection of trail systems throughout central Indiana and beyond.

We are energetic and effective in our work. Over the past two years, we have conducted 22 meetings with Indiana state leadership and local constituents, as well as 24 meetings with Indiana's federal leadership. In those meetings, we have advanced a host of issues both at the state level—the

Hiking the Houston South Logging Project

by Sherry Mitchell-Bruker, Ph.D.

On February 27, Bowden Quinn, Dave Simcox and I took advantage of unseasonably warm temperatures to hike out on the Hickory Ridge portion of the Knobstone Trail. This is part of the proposed Houston South Project which would include logging, clearcutting, herbicide application and burning. It was a lovely hike beginning with lots of young and old oaks and hickories leading down to the stream shown here.

As you may be able to tell from the photo to the right, these are steep slopes leading down to the creek. Eventually this and other un-named streams drain to Starnes Branch, which drains to the South Fork of Salt Creek and Lake Monroe. I wonder what kind of protection this stream would have from sediment runoff when the logging is taking place? State best management practices which are used by Hoosier National Forest only specify riparian management zones for perennial streams and I believe this stream is classified as intermittent. There are already problems with runoff from eroded trails. We saw gullies leading into the streams. Gravel had been laid down in an



Photograph by Dave Simcox The Houston South area is marked by steep slopes that drop to creeks. The Forest Service plans to harvest timber on some 4,000 acres, including clearcuts on up to 417 acres.



Photograph by Dave Simcox

The Buffalo Pike logging project has left bare soil and erosion in the Hoosier National Forest. The U.S. Forest Service plans similar cuts on the nearby 10,000-acre Houston South Project. In addition to logging, the agency plans to use herbicides and burn in Houston South, which is part of the Monroe Lake Watershed. effort to mitigate the damage, but the mitigation is not effective.

The stream bottom is very clear, so I assume that the sediment coming into this stream has been carried downstream by high flows. It is a big job to prevent soil erosion in the National Forest, and I would like to see more attention to trail management and less to oak regeneration.

We also walked on a small gravel road section through this pine plantation that is slated for clearcutting.Many of the trails in this area would be converted to logging roads, which I am guessing would have gravel, which I do not like to hike on.While I would never suggest planting non-native pines in the national forest, these pines are quite pretty and provide unique habitat that natives do not provide.We saw native beeches and other types of trees emerging in the understory.Eventually the natives will overtake the non-native pines.

If the pines are clearcut as proposed, it could look more like the scene to the left from the nearby Buffalo Pike project.

Dr. Sherry Mitchell-Bruker is board president of Friends of Lake Monroe. She has worked as a hydrologist to preserve, protect and manage water resources for over 30 years. Her career in environmental research, consulting and management has taken her from Indiana to the Everglades, the Sierra Nevada and back home to Indiana.



INDIANA SIERRAN

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Indiana Sierran Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter 1100 W. 42nd St., Suite 215 Indianapolis, Indiana 46208 All *Indiana Sierran* newsletter articles should be sent to Chapter Director Bowden Quinn at bowden.quinn@sierraclub.org.

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For upcoming events of interest to members, see: sierraclub.org/indiana



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Houston South Logging Will Close Hickory Ridge, Fork Ridge Trails



Plans by the U.S. Forest Service to log in the Monroe Lake Watershed would close or otherwise impact some 20 miles of the Hickory Ridge Horse Trail and 3.5-mile Fork Ridge Hiking Trail, both in backwoods Jackson County.



The plans have been questioned by the Hoosier

Chapter Sierra Club, Friends of Lake Monroe, Hoosier Environmental Council, Indiana Forest Alliance, Monroe County Commissioners, Monroe County Council, Bloomington City Council, and Bloomington Mayor



John Hamilton.

Hoosier National Photographs by Steven Higgs

Upper left, Hickory Ridge Horse Trail; Upper right, below left and lower right, Fork Ridge Trail.

