



THE LOOKOUT

Huron Valley Group

Vol.29 No.2 Spring 2007



Sweet Saturday with Inner City Outings

Local kids try their hands at maple sugaring



By Barb Powell

On a Saturday in early March, six children ages 5 to 9 years from Green Baxter Community Center in Ann Arbor participated with Sierra Club Inner City Outings (ICO) on a trip to County Farm Park. March can be a challenging month for planning outside activities,

but March also means that sap is moving in the maple trees. Faye Stoner, the county naturalist, had planned a program for us about how sap becomes syrup.

With encouragement to wear an extra layer under our jackets and to pull on hats and hoods, we were ready to begin the outing. The first stop was the picnic area on the west side of the park. As soon as the children were out of the van, they were busy finding animal tracks in the snow. Were they rabbit or squirrel tracks? We learned how rabbits leave a distinctive track with their front feet. The wooded area provided shelter from the March wind and everyone was eager to explore the trails. With brisk walking no one complained of the cold. We circled back to the picnic shelter for snacks. Hot chocolate never tasted better. Among the snacks we had were apples cooked with either maple syrup or brown sugar; we sampled them and tried to distinguish which was which.

Just about the time some were hinting that their ears and toes were getting cold, we headed for the maple syrup program at the county administration building. A small troop of Girl Scout Brownies and their families joined us for the program. It was fun to see all the children sitting around the conference table usually reserved for county business.



Kids love being able to interact directly with nature, as evidenced by the popularity of Washtenaw County's 'Sap to Syrup' program. You can help local children connect with the outdoors by getting involved with ICO. Contact Vera at washtenawico@yahoo.com or 734-665-8118 to learn more. Photo by Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation

continued page 2.

Sweet Saturday continued

Faye had prepared an interesting program about sugar maples. We learned about the short time each winter when sap can be used for syrup, and that Michigan is among the states that produce the most maple syrup. We were surprised to learn that it takes almost 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup! Next we went outside again to see how a maple tree is selected, how it is tapped, and how the sap is collected. Faye had samples of maple sap and

homemade syrup for us to sample. We'll all have good memories of this sweet Saturday.

How do these outings work?

ICO plans activities for school-aged children with Green Baxter and Hikone Community Centers. These centers serve low income housing areas in Ann Arbor. ICO provides a variety of outdoor nature experiences for children who otherwise may not get these opportunities. Agency staff at the centers help advertise the outings, accompany the children on the outings, and provide transportation. ICO volunteers plan and lead the outings, provide snacks, and organize outdoor activities for the children.



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Can you help?

ICO currently has a great need for three or four more trip leaders in order to continue the program. See the ICO web site for details at ico.sierraclub.org/washtenaw. Contact ICO Chair Vera Hernandez for information about the next ICO planning meeting at washtenawico@yahoo.com or 734-665-8118.



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The Huron Valley Group Newsletter is published 4 times a year by Huron Valley Group, Michigan Chapter, Sierra Club, 621 Fifth Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Community Supported Agriculture, Expanded!

Last fall in *The Lookout*, you may have read about the importance of eating locally grown food. Compared with the typical supermarket offerings, local food is fresher and reaches us with less consumption of gasoline. Seeking and eating locally grown food helps us to become more in tune with the earth and with the pattern of the seasons.

Farmers' Markets and farm stands are obvious places to find local food. CSA farms are another. CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture. Members of a CSA farm purchase a share of the year's harvest in advance. Each week from late May to mid-November, members receive their share of that week's harvest directly from the farm. The members share the risk of farming with the farmers—perhaps it will be a bad year for cucumbers and members will get none, or a good year for tomatoes and each member will get 50 lbs! CSA farms allow their members to know just where their food is coming from and just how it has been grown. They also offer members the chance to become friends with the people who grow their food.

There are a number of CSA farms in the Huron Valley area. When I was growing up, we were members of the Community Farm of Ann Arbor. We learned how to hug chickens and collect eggs. We learned how to take goats for a walk. The farmer, Anne Elder, still tells stories of how my younger sister and I would disappear into the fields for hours to play with dolls we made from grass and flowers while my parents helped with the weeding and harvesting. When it came time to collect our share of the harvest, my sister and I would help our dad weigh the kale and choose the eggplant. Each week we would come home with bags bursting with vegetables. My dad (the main cook in our house) learned to plan menus around the produce of the week, frequently including unfamiliar vegetables or unfamiliar quantities. We learned to eat kale, collards, pac choi, and other greens which grow well in Michigan. We developed a taste for rutabagas. What we couldn't eat right away we preserved, canning tomato sauce and freezing zucchini and beans to keep us going through the winter months.

We gave up our membership in the Community Farm when our own vegetable garden got larger and our family got smaller, but I have remained closely involved. I returned to the farm as an apprentice during the summer after my sophomore year in college. I spent sunny days in the fields with the other

apprentices and farmers, weeding, thinning, harvesting, singing, and learning to approach the plants with gentleness and care. In August I could barely tear myself away to go back to school (even for a semester abroad in Scotland). I wanted to see the next season at the farm. It was hard to leave just as the melons were ripening and the tomatoes beginning to

produce more than we could pick. After graduating from college last year, I returned to the farm as an apprentice for the fall. Harvesting the pumpkins and other winter squash was one of my

CSAs are one of the most sustainable and earth-loving ways of obtaining food.



By Mary Wessel Walker



From farm-field to table: Community Supported Agriculture farms such as the Community Farm of Ann Arbor are a great source of fresh, local, and delicious produce.

favorite activities during this quieter, cooler time of the year. We would toss them from hand to hand, from the field to the tractor—it was more of a game than work, provided we did not drop the precious pumpkins.

continued page 5.

Off the Beaten Path: Spring Hiking

By Bob Treemore

The
essence of
spring in
Michigan

I admit it: I am a three-season hiker. I tend to not hike much in summer. When the air is warm and humid and the skeeters are buzzing, I head for the rivers and lakes for respite and relaxation (and swimming!). But that leaves nine solid months of good hiking, and our area has an abundance of wonderful places to explore during those seasons.

I've become a big fan of spring hiking in recent years, especially early in the season. My favorite days are when there's been rain overnight and into the morning—light rain showers, not thunder, not sprinkles, just steady light rain—followed by lingering clouds and cool temperatures, and then clearing. The temperature shoots up, you can feel the humidity rise with it, the sky turns bright blue, there's a mixture of cloud types, a gentle breeze carries the fresh smells of the season; that is the essence of spring in Michigan.

April is particularly magical. Mostly native vegetation is popping out, including the first signs of new life—various woodland wildflowers, skunk cabbage in low areas, and a constant chattering of birds. Come May, the days get warmer, the rain increases in volume and intensity, and the invasives—autumn olive, glossy buckthorn, multiflora rose,

Japanese honeysuckle—start

to leaf out in a big way, faster than the native shrubby vegetation. It's painfully apparent to see how much impact they're making on native natural communities. I highly recommend hiking with a pair of clippers to trim off the new shoots of these nasty buggers before they take over another trail.

On a couple occasions I've arrived at my destination only to have rain start falling just as I was hitting the trailhead. The first time I saw a guy go back to his car and pull out an umbrella. I thought that's ridiculous, hiking with an umbrella, and then realized that I had one in my vehicle and if I didn't use it I'd either get soaked or I'd go home without getting out. So I walked through the woods in a

steady rain shower holding an umbrella—and it was delightful. I adore spring showers and got the rare opportunity to be out in one in the woods.

Three favorite spring excursions:

1. Trails near the Eddy Discovery Center in the Waterloo State Recreation Area. I particularly like the Lowland Woods Trail and the Spring Pond Trail. If there's actually some decent snowfall and some good drenching spring rains, the latter has a series of small pools with connecting seasonal channels. Lowland Woods has a terrific display of skunk cabbage, very lush, very green.

2. Joslin Lake Rd. Esker Trail in the Pinckney State Recreation Area. To get there: head out west on N. Territorial Rd., then NW on Joslin Lake Rd. one mile to the trailhead, west side of the road. I've written about the esker before; on a warm spring evening, the adjacent wetlands are teeming with frogs (spring peeper, chorus frog, wood frog) and the din is (almost) literally deafening. One of the best spots I've found for being immersed in the glory of herpetological mating activity.

3. Leonard Preserve, a Washtenaw County Parks natural area on the edge of Manchester. From Ann Arbor take I-94 west to M-52, go south into the village, turn right (west) on Main St., cross the Raisin River, go through downtown and turn right (north) on Union St. Take that to the end at the river, turn left (west) along the river to the parking area. A trail runs northerly through fields and woods and eventually along the bluff overlooking the river. There are several small streams crossing the property, upland wetlands and floodplains throughout. On the far northwest side is a fabulous meandering small stream and valley and access to the river. The Raisin is an intimate natural river and its spring floods are particularly alluring.

Bob Treemore reminds us that in five billion years, no two days on Earth have been exactly the same.



Along the Discovery Center's trails, lush ferns and grasses reflect in mirror-like spring ponds.



Walking Toward Smart Growth

As we learn more about development patterns, it becomes clear that inefficient land use rather than economic growth is the culprit behind rapid land consumption. Sprawling residential growth often fails to cover the cost of the infrastructure it requires. This leaves many local officials pressured to either accept new commercial development to provide a tax base to support the residential development, or raise property taxes. And so begins the downward pattern: increasing traffic, marginal services, loss of open space and rising taxes.

Sprawl versus smart growth

Sprawl is poorly planned development shaped by, and reliant on, automobile transportation. In addition to making us more dependent on automobiles, sprawl pollutes the air and water, and threatens the preservation and creation of open space and rural areas. One of the core principles of smart growth is alleviating pressure to develop open spaces and farmland, by directing growth inward and reinvesting in existing communities, making them more attractive places to live.

Smart growth communities include mixed uses, compact building design, walkable neighborhoods, passive and active open space, and a variety of transportation options. In these communities, design elements are used to promote walkability; grid street patterns provide direct routes to destinations, while sidewalks, traffic circles, and other devices slow automobile traffic and maintain a safe walking environment.

Mixed land uses and density in urban areas focus on building in and up, using infrastructure more efficiently instead of sprawling out. Infill development reinvests in existing communities and supports a more walkable, viable downtown. This density encourages walkability by connecting residents with pedestrian

accessible shops, grocery stores, restaurants, services, recreation and employment opportunities. Public transit also becomes more efficient to operate and convenient to use as density increases. Studies have shown a density of seven dwelling units per acre is the minimum density for public transit to be feasible. When destinations can be easily reached, people can accomplish daily activities without getting into a car, and local businesses receive the patronage and support they need to keep the downtown area vibrant.

Another benefit of reinvesting in existing communities to create a walkable downtown is the parallel relief of development pressure on rural areas and ability to avoid fragmentation of wildlife habitat often brought about by sprawl. There is a common belief that rural development creates a smaller footprint and less demand on resources. However, as more rural development occurs, sprawl is created. Paving roads for sprawl in turn paves the way for more roads, infrastructure, and development. Each year sprawl is responsible for destroying over two million acres of parks, farmland and open space. Programs to encourage walkable urban areas can be coordinated with regional open space plans to take a holistic approach to creating healthy and sustainable communities.

Currently, most growth occurs outside urban areas and creates distance between residences and destinations, forcing people to rely on cars for every activity. This results in significant impacts to air and water quality. Air pollution from cars contributes to smog, acid rain, climate change, and poor health. As sprawling development necessitates more roads, subsequently converting land to impervious surfaces, the watershed loses its ability to absorb and store rainfall. Impervious roads collect oil, solvents and other contaminants, which are then washed into

Continued page 6.

By Anya Dale

We can regenerate our cities, preserve open spaces and create a healthier community.

Community Supported Agriculture continued from page 3.

One day out at the farm (it was, in fact, the beautifully warm Monday before Hallowe'en and we were picking leeks, but these are side details) we were lamenting the fact that some people can't enjoy Community Supported Agriculture because they don't have time to deal with a refrigerator full of raw vegetables each week. I realized that more people might be able to participate if their share came to them in the form of delicious, healthy, home-cooked meals and prepared, preserved, and ready-to-cook vegetables. The more I thought about this idea, the better it seemed. There are many people who want to eat healthy, local, organic food, but do not have the time to prepare it. Cooking vegetables from scratch is time-consuming and can be daunting for people who have never met certain vegetables before. (I mean, what *are* you supposed to do with seven daikon radishes, anyway?) Thus was born the Community Farm Kitchen. The Community Farm Kitchen will collect members' vegetables at the farm each week and prepare (cook, can, freeze, and/or refrigerate) the vegetables to create dishes that can be easily finished and served at the member's home.

Since that day I have been working hard to turn this seed of a good idea into a plant which can take root and grow, bringing to more people the joy of being involved in Community Supported Agriculture and eating local food. It's an exciting process for a 22-year-old philosophy major who never dreamed she would find herself starting a business. My goal is to make the CSA experience accessible to more people because I believe that CSAs are one of the most sustainable and earth-loving ways of obtaining food.

For more information about the Community Farm of Ann Arbor, please visit www.communityfarmofaa.org, or phone Anne Elder at 734-433-0261.

For more information about the Community Farm Kitchen, please visit www.communityfarmkitchen.com.

Smart Growth continued

streams or other bodies of water. Compact development avoids this by redesigning cities around non-automobile methods of transportation, minimizing overall impervious surfaces, and maximizing groundwater recharge.

Good planning and public health

Public health is one of the most tangible and measurable benefits of a walkable community. It is no surprise that people in walkable communities are more likely to be physically active than those living in the suburbs and reliant on their cars for every activity. What few know is how strong the association is between transportation infrastructure and individuals' level of physical activity and quality of health. Mixing land uses in dense town centers places stores, schools, offices and residences close together, reducing dependency on automobiles, and associated emissions and traffic congestion. Greenways can also be established as a link between parks and open spaces, connecting walking and biking trails to destinations or providing infrastructure for outdoor exercise.

Studies have shown people want to live in communities where they are less reliant on their cars for accomplishing daily tasks such as going to the store. When people are able to walk, bike or take public transit to destinations, they often choose these methods of transportation over driving. People who live in walkable communities are much more likely to meet recommended daily activity levels and experience associated health benefits. In fact, a national study found that those who live in compact communities walk more, weigh less and are less likely to have hypertension than people in sprawling communities.

What's next?

Despite all of the benefits of walkable, mixed use, dense urban centers, current trends indicate that

we are continuing to make walking, biking and transit less practical, convenient, safe and enjoyable. Without well planned density in urban areas where infrastructure exists and community improvements can be easily made, development will continue to move outward, sprawling over the rural landscape, fragmenting natural areas and farms and making people more reliant on their vehicles.

How can development begin to serve the needs of the people, while at the same time providing a balance with nature? The real solution may not be found in new technologies, but in adjusting our mind-set and influencing policy. Without great lifestyle sacrifice, we can regenerate our cities, preserve open spaces and create a healthier community.

The following steps can be taken to make your community more sustainable and walkable.

- Live closer to work and other frequent destinations which allow you to walk or use public transit;
- Actively encourage infill development in urban areas. Each new residence or business in the city that people can walk to is one less sprawl development that requires driving;
- Support downtown businesses, rather than those lying outside of town only accessible by car;
- Encourage the road commission to continue to provide bicycle lanes. Communities should provide sidewalk or trail connections, and install traffic calming techniques;
- Advocate for establishment or expansion of greenways and connecting trails;
- Encourage local governments to adopt development regulations requiring developers to install sidewalks along access roads to all new subdivisions; and
- Advocate the improvement of public transportation systems.

Anya Dale is an Associate Planner for Washtenaw County's Department of Planning & Environment.

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Sierra Club—Huron Valley Group Calendar

Participants in Sierra Club outings will be asked to sign a liability waiver. If you wish to read the waiver before coming to an outing please see <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/> or call 415-977-5630. When carpooling is used to facilitate logistics for an outing, participants assume the risks associated with this travel, as well. Carpooling, ridesharing and the like are strictly a private arrangement among participants. Park fees may apply.

For up to date information, visit our website at <http://www.michigan.sierraclub.org/huron/>

Sunday May 20. Pinckney State Recreation Area “Secret” Hike. Join us for a leisurely paced hike on the Silver Lake trail, and discover the road less traveled with a “secret” Pinckney loop addition. This hike will be 3-4 miles. Meet at Ann Arbor City Hall to carpool at 10 am. Call Kathy Guerreso for more information at 734-677-0823.

Sunday June 3. Independence Lake Park Hike. Join us for a leisurely paced hike. 1.3 miles. Natural trail surface. Whitmore Lake area. Meet at City Hall entrance at 10:30 am to carpool. Call Kathy Guerreso at 734-677-0823 for details.

Saturday June 9. Hewenes Creek Outing. Join us for trail building and trail maintenance. Parking is at the Bemis Road entrance or at Lincoln School (1/4 mile). Meet at 10 am at Bemis Road entrance. Call Norm Roller at 734-426-5737 for details.

Tuesday June 12 Sierra Club Book Club. 7:30 pm, 2nd Tuesday of every month at Nicola’s Books in Westgate Shopping Center, corner of Maple and Jackson, Ann Arbor. Book: **TBD**. Join us for discussion - all are welcome. Check the Ann Arbor Observer or call Nancy Shiffler at 734-971-1157 for details.

Tuesday June 19. HVG Monthly Public Program. 7:30 pm, 3rd Tuesday of every month at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Topic: **Paddling Local Waters: Five Unknown River Trips In and Around Washtenaw County**, with Barry Lonik. Non-members welcome; refreshments provided.

Monday June 25. Conservation Committee meeting. 7:00 pm, 4th Monday of every month. Contact Dorothy Nordness at DorothyK@isr.umich.edu or 734-668-6306 for location.

Thursday July 5. Executive Committee Meeting, typically first Thursday of each month, 7:15 pm. Call Doug Cowherd at 734-662-5205 for location.

Sunday July 8. Inner City Outings. 7:00 pm, 2nd Sunday of every month, Room 302, Halle Library on the EMU campus. Inner City Outings introduces urban children in Washtenaw County to outdoor and environmental experiences that might not otherwise be available to them. Interested chaperones, sponsors, planners, and contributors are always welcome.

Tuesday July 10. Sierra Club Book Club. 7:30 pm, 2nd Tuesday of every month at Nicola’s Books in Westgate Shopping Center, corner of Maple and Jackson, Ann Arbor. Book: **TBD**. Join us for discussion - all are welcome. Check the Ann Arbor Observer or call Nancy Shiffler at 734-971-1157 for details.

Tuesday July 17. HVG Monthly Public Program. 7:30 pm, 3rd Tuesday of every month at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Topic: **TBA**. Non-members welcome; refreshments provided.

Monday July 23. Conservation Committee meeting. 7:00 pm, 4th Monday of every month. Contact Dorothy Nordness at DorothyK@isr.umich.edu or 734-668-6306 for location.

Thursday August 2. Executive Committee Meeting, typically first Thursday of each month 7:15 pm. Call Doug Cowherd at 734-662-5205 for location.

Sierra Club—Huron Valley Group Calendar continued

Sunday August 12. Inner City Outings. 7:00 pm, 2nd Sunday of every month, Room 302 Halle Library on the EMU campus. Inner City Outings introduces urban children in Washtenaw County to outdoor and environmental experiences that might not otherwise be available to them. Interested chaperones, sponsors, planners, and contributors are always welcome.

Tuesday August 14. Sierra Club Book Club. 7:30 pm, 2nd Tuesday of every month at Nicola's Books in Westgate Shopping Center, corner of Maple and Jackson, Ann Arbor. Book: **TBD**. Join us for discussion - all are welcome. Check the Ann Arbor Observer or call Nancy Shiffler 734-971-1157.

Tuesday August 21. HVG Monthly Public Program. 7:30 pm 3rd Tuesday of every month at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Topic: **TBA**. Non-members welcome; refreshments provided.

Monday August 27. Conservation Committee meeting. 7:00 pm, 4th Monday of every month. Contact Dorothy Nordness at DorothyK@isr.umich.edu or 734-668-6306 for location.

Executive Committee Election Schedule

The Executive Committee (ExCom) of the Sierra Club Huron Valley Group is responsible for the administration and operation of the group. The seven members of ExCom serve two-year terms, with an annual election of either three or four members. The election is at the end of the year, but the process leading to the election starts many months earlier. The group bylaws and standing rules describe the schedule of events for each election and require that the schedule be announced to all members.

Any group member can seek nomination to be a candidate in the annual ExCom election. Members willing to serve can be nominated either through the Nominating Committee or by petition signed by at least 15 group members. No member may be nominated or elected against their will.

The Nominating Committee recruits and selects candidates. The committee consists of at least three group members, at least one of whom shall not be an ExCom member, and none may be a candidate in the upcoming election.

The Election Committee is responsible for the production, mailing, receipt, and counting of ballots. It also consists of at least three group members, at least one of whom shall not be an ExCom member, and none may be a candidate in the upcoming election.

Group members who wish to be considered for nomination before the Nominating Committee is appointed may inform the group secretary Joel Dalton. The secretary will also assist members seeking nomination by petition.

Election event

- ExCom appoints Nominating Committee
- Nominees inform Nominating Committee of interest
- Nominating Committee selects nominees and informs ExCom and nominees of selection
- Nominees not selected by Nominating Committee deliver petitions to NomCom for consideration
- Nominating Committee declares final candidate list
- ExCom appoints Election Committee
- Election Committee prepares eligible voter list
- Ballots mailed to all eligible group members
- Election committee accepts ballots
- Election committee counts ballots and informs Secretary of results

Deadline to complete

- August ExCom meeting
- September general meeting
- September general meeting
- two weeks after Sept. gnrl. mtg.
- October ExCom meeting
- October ExCom meeting
- 15 October (or when newsletter list is prepared)
- 15 November (or when newsletter is mailed)
- December general meeting
- 31 December

Ballots are normally counted at the conclusion of the December general meeting, but the Election Committee may choose another time and place. Candidates or their representatives may observe the counting. Ballots and nomination petitions are retained until ordered destroyed by ExCom at their next regular meeting.

This schedule is defined by the group bylaws adopted April 6, 2000, and standing rules adopted October 5, 2000.

A Chestnut Tree for the Future

When I took a Woody Plants class at University of Michigan many years ago, one of the most memorable moments was holding an American chestnut leaf in my hand. The leaf was toothed and seven or eight inches long. It was from a stump sprout, a shoot sent up by the root system of a blighted chestnut tree. I had thought all American chestnuts were gone, killed by the blight. Not quite.

Ever since those 'many years ago,' I have had my radar out to look for an American chestnut. Twice I thought I'd found one. First, when biking across Michigan I swore I passed a magnificent specimen by the edge of the road and marked the spot the best I could on my bicycling map. Then I lost the map. Second, I thought I'd found a stump sprout in a Glen Helen ravine in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Unfortunately, I couldn't identify it well enough to be sure. Nor could anyone else.

So instead of waiting until I die ('many years ago' is really becoming many years), I decided on another tack. I joined The American Chestnut Foundation, established in 1983 to breed a blight-resistant chestnut. This organization has a research farm in Meadowview, VA, where they plant American chestnuts and back cross to find a resistant native specimen. They are also researching Chinese and American chestnut hybrids for a disease-resistant cross. I purchased 5 native American chestnut seedlings (\$35) and a discounted membership (\$25 instead of \$40) for \$60. The American Chestnut Foundation can be

reached at 469 Main Street, Suite 1, P. O. Box 4044, Bennington, VT 05201, 802-447-0110, www.acf.org.

So my spring planting funds are (more than) spent. I'll have to look for acidic soil in my yard (under the dead white pines?), and watch my little seedlings carefully. They are not resistant to chestnut blight and will probably die in a few years. I might get a nut crop. I might get some small trees. I will get some satisfaction.

By Cynthia Leet

I had thought all American chestnuts were gone, killed by the blight. Not quite.



A majestic American chestnut tree, in a historical photo. Photo courtesy elmpost.org

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

WILDERNESS MEDICINE CLASSES	FILM FESTIVALS
WILDERNESS FIRST AID NOV. 10-12	BANFF FILM FESTIVAL MARCH 25 RACKHAM 6 PM
WILDERNESS FIRST AID MARCH 16-18	BANFF FILM FESTIVAL MARCH 26 RACKHAM 6 PM
WILDERNESS FIRST AID APRIL 20-22	
WILDERNESS FIRST RESPONDER JAN. 9- MARCH 29	EQUIPMENT RENTALS FOR WINTER
WILDERNESS FIRST RESPONDER APRIL 28- MAY 6	SNOW SHOES
	CROSS COUNTRY SKIS

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Water Concerns Continue

By Bernie Poegel

Spring in Michigan is synonymous with melting snow, and fresh water filling lakes and streams; it is an abundant time for growth and renewal of wetlands, green fields, flowers, trees, and crops.

But, this year, for those of us who live near Pleasant Lake in Freedom Township, spring renews our concern over water. The MDEQ is reviewing a permit from Barrett Paving to excavate in their Pit #9, a 58-acre lake, 85-feet deep, in order to sustain its gravel mining operation.

Since there has not previously been such a large mining excavation in a farming/residential area, its impact is unknown. The possible lack of water due to over burdened aquifer(s) unable to replenish may cause irreversible damage not only to Pleasant Lake, which has a maximum depth of 35' and is just ½ mile east of Pit #9; but also to adjoining wetlands and the wells of property owners near Barrett Gravel Pit. If approved, these mining efforts could lower lake levels, shrink adjoining wetlands, cause dry wells and cut through one or more aquifers, some of which may serve both the proposed industrial lake and the surrounding area. Water quality, good to date, may also be affected by these mining operations. And of course, since this pit sits in both the Huron and Raisin River watersheds, potential changes may extend much farther than our township.

As Barrett removes the material via dredging, a

huge hole is dug and begins to fill with water from the aquifers; it won't be possible to go back to the way things were. If the impacts are not as expected, no one can make it right. You could re-fill the hole – but you can't fix an aquifer once damaged. Hydrological testing and data collection only provide a best-guess scenario. Knowledge is our best ally. I have seen what can happen when the means out-perform the knowledge.

For 15 years I was employed at Gelman Sciences (now the Pall Corporation) working on plant water supplies for manufacturing and waste water remediation. I watched my company try to work with the MDEQ regarding the issue of polluted ground water and the long-drawn-out battle that ensued. The court battle and stubbornness of both sides only delayed remediation efforts and incurred huge costs, not to mention the burden to the local waters and residents. All the while, the aquifer-riding plume of 1-4 DIOXANE migrated at 1.5 feet EVERY DAY towards the Huron River.

Did Gelman conduct their operations with MDEQ permitting? Yes they did. But the damage was done nonetheless – irreversible damage, and every day, that plume moves 1.5 feet closer to the Huron River. Who was at fault? Maybe all involved; in any case, the remediation continues.

We need to protect our waters today and into the future.

continued page 11.

NEW! 2006 Honda Accord Hybrid

2006 Honda Civic Hybrid

Honda's IMA

hybrid technology (first pioneered in the Civic Hybrid) is now available in the all-new Accord Hybrid. Integrated Motor Assist boosts power AND delivers excellent fuel economy.

Save gas with style in your Accord Hybrid and enjoy heated front seats, dual-zone automatic climate control, satellite radio, alloy wheels, ABS, traction control, front and side airbags, available satellite navigation system, and much more!



2006 Civic GX (Natural Gas Vehicle)

- Available now on factory-order basis
- Home refueling equipment available soon
- Rated SULEV with near-zero emissions
- Fuel from North American sources
- Three public filling stations in Ann Arbor
- Average local 2004 fuel cost: 90 cents/gal
- Ask about federal financial incentives

Come in today and test-drive the Civic Hybrid and Accord Hybrid or pick up information on the Civic GX

HOWARD COOPER
2601 S. State
Ann Arbor 734-761-3200

Hours: Mon. & Thurs. 8:30-9:00
Tues., Wed., Fri. 8:30-6:00
Sat. 10:00-4:00



Other Local Events

Key: TNC = The Nature Conservancy. For more information call 615-500-8229 or email IvesRoadFen@gmail.com. Bring your lunch for the workdays.

SN = Stewardship Network. For fee information, to register, and for more information, call 734-996-3190 or visit www.stewardshipnetwork.org.

Saturday June 16 - **Stewardship Workday at Ives Road Fen** (TNC), 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Help cut MF rose in the newest addition to the preserve. Find out what MF stands for. Wildflower walk and refreshments at the end.

Saturday June 23 - **Stewardship Workday at Ives Road Fen** (TNC), 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Cut buckthorn in the fen. We will hunt for great angelica on the way back to the refreshments.

Saturday June 30 - **Lakeshore Ecology by Kayak** (SN), 9:00 am to Noon. Bring your own kayak or canoe and join botanist Ellen Elliott Weatherbee for a morning of gentle paddling along the shores and wetlands of the Pinckney Recreation Area. Details at stewardshipnetworkonline.org.

Saturday June 30 - **Stewardship Workday at Ives Road Fen** (TNC), 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Get a workout while you restore the fen ecology. Have some warm cookies and cold Coke when we finish.

Sunday July 22 - **Invasive *Phragmites* Management** (SN), 1:00 to 3:00 pm. *Phragmites australis* (common reed) increasingly threatens wetlands in our region. This hands-on workshop will help participants prevent *Phragmites* invasion by monitoring susceptible wetlands and plan steps for eradicating already established stands. Details at stewardshipnetworkonline.org.

Saturday August 4 – **Herbicide Wand Workshop** (SN), 9:00 am to Noon. We know that removing invasive shrubs is necessary to protect and promote native ecosystems, but what about all those resprouts? Ever wonder about the herbicide wands used to apply herbicide to those pesky stumps? In this workshop we will show you how to build wands and supply you with the parts for two wands: one for your use and one to donate to the Stewardship Network's tool sharing program. Details at stewardshipnetworkonline.org.

Saturday September 8 – **Unlocking the Secrets of the Prairie** (SN), 10:00 am to Noon. At this workshop, you'll visit a small (but spectacular!) remnant prairie, learn to identify prairie wildflowers and grasses (including indicator species), hear about seasonal changes on a typical prairie, and receive resource materials to take home with you.

For more local events, please visit www.stewardshipnetworkonline.org.

Water Concerns continued

In 2005, to forestall such problems, the Freedom Township Board employed Mr. Robert Hayes, a consulting hydrogeologist. They held a public forum with MDEQ's James Sallee in September 2005. From these events, a citizens group CROW (Citizens Respecting Our Waters) began communicating regularly with interested residents and representatives in state government. CROW also contacted Mike Wiley, Professor of Aquatic Ecology at the University of Michigan, and Wallace E. Fusilier, Ph.D., a water quality investigator, to request that they review available data both from Barrett's engineers, ASTI, and other available sources. Mr. Hayes began reviewing and collecting aquifer data from Barrett and the other gravel pits in the township. As a result of these efforts, Mr. Hayes, Professor Wiley and Dr. Fusilier have recommended that Barrett perform a 'pump test' which will help determine with reasonable scientific accuracy the hydrogeological conductivity, i.e., whether or not Pleasant Lake and Barrett's proposed industrial site share an aquifer. The township planning commission

also requested that Barrett take baseline water quality samples. Such scientifically approved data-gathering is the only defense the township has to protect its residents.

Unfortunately, Freedom Township, like all Michigan governing bodies these days, is feeling the fiscal pinch, and has been reluctant to provide sufficient additional funds for review and response to Barrett's most recent submission to MDEQ regarding Pit #9.

We need to protect our waters today and into the future. If the township, the residents, and CROW can work together, we can provide a factual position to protect these waters. The other local gravel companies in Washtenaw County and around the state are watching this process carefully. This permit request is the first of its size and scope in the state of Michigan – let's not be a test bed for failure. Once the damage is done, it is done, and we all suffer.

If you'd like to learn more about this issue, please contact CROW at crowmichigan@yahoo.com.

The New Ann Arbor Library Branch – Teaching by Example



By Martha Hill

You may have heard Ann Arbor District Library director Josie Parker enthusiastically discussing the new branch library building for the southeast corner of Traverwood Drive and Huron Parkway in Ann Arbor.

What is all the excitement about? In case you have not heard, here is the scoop: the new branch library is designed from start to finish as a community-based learning center aiming to teach by example a more responsible, harmonious, and caring relationship with nature.

In March, an initial and fun step had just been taken — using horses to remove trees at the building site, thus minimizing compaction of the earth and limiting root damage to the remaining trees. Heavy machinery can leave devastating long-term problems for trees, shrubs, and other plants remaining on the site or added after construction. Craig Novotney of Johnson Hardwood Floors of Troy brought his team of Percheron horses to help drag several dying ash trees to a staging area, to be trucked to the sawyers for curing and milling. These, along with another 20 ash trees removed several months ago from the same woods, will eventually return to the site as support beams, flooring, ceiling, and walls for the new library building. Through this process, the trees will once more be a part of the place where they had grown.

The beautiful esthetic and respectful harvesting of the on-site trees as a building source for the new library was made possible by a \$30,000 grant from the Southeast Michigan Resource Conservation and Development Council.

The Ann Arbor District Library and those working with them in the building process (Johnson Hardwood Floors, O’Neal Construction, Inc., Van TinejGuthrie Studio, Grissim Metz Andriese Associates... and, of course, Craig Novotney and the draft horses Andy and Rex) are to be applauded for teaching by example responsible co-existence and co-creation with nature.

The ash trees will be used so that library visitors can see the damage that can be done inadvertently by us humans. The ash trees died when larvae of imported wood-boring beetles, known as emerald ash borers (*Agrilus planipennis* Fairmaire), voraciously ate away the inner bark. Ironically, the larvae’s sinuous trails which kill the tree are nonetheless beautiful and keep the wood structurally sound. In the completed library building, these tracks will remain visible on cured ash beams supporting an expansive glass wall looking out on the woods.

The library is striving to be as environmentally correct as it can be while remaining within its \$10 million budget. The building will hug the corner, taking up 16,500 square feet of the 4.34

acres, with a total of 90 parking spaces on the street and under the building. Rain gardens (watered by rain running down from the roof) and storm-water retention systems will grace the grounds. The building will offer a reading room, public computer terminals, a casual study area with vending and a meeting room, and self-service stations for convenient check-out. It will house a new collection, consisting of traditional materials, such as books, magazines, and DVDs, as well as new formats as they are introduced.

For those concerned about the future of ash trees, the new library will likely facilitate access to information about seed-bank activities, such as the USDA’s National Ash Tree Seed Collection Initiative (<http://www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/pmc.html>) and Seeds of Success (<http://www.nps.gov/plants/sos/>). By doing so, the new library will offer the hope of future generations being able to stand in the beauty of a tall ash canopy, as well as the more immediate pleasure of current generations feeling and seeing ash trees used to grace a public library looking out onto the woods where they once grew.



Beyond Sustainability

Architecture contributing to environmental health

The notion of sustainability has rapidly gained prominence in emerging environmental interests across many industries today...and architecture is no exception. Individual interpretations of sustainability, however, have varied widely. For PMA Consultants, a construction consulting firm headquartered in southeast Michigan, sustainability involves the goal of sufficiently reducing environmental impacts to preserve the current status for future prosperity.

The proposed mixed-use project (formally known as Tierra) in downtown Ann Arbor, Michigan, would be an exciting one for PMA. The building, to include retail, commercial, and residential uses, would be our first not just as project manager, but also as owner and occupant, at our new Ann Arbor office. As consultant, PMA has the opportunity here for valuable experience in green building, demonstrating its benefits and value, thus hoping to inspire our clients and local community.

When considering measures of sustainability, we questioned if our goal was only eliminating our negative effects. Just reducing harmful consequences of our buildings doesn't imply we will positively improve environmental health. We maintain that larger strides are required to properly preserve nature's wealth.

We concluded that a truly sustainable practice would require a fundamental shift in current methodologies. We considered not just achieving the least environmental damage, but a positive symbiotic relationship of the building with natural systems in place (i.e., soil, wind, water, sun, vegetation, wildlife habitat, etc.). In other words, instead of operating independently, both building and land ecology would coexist for mutual benefit.

Thus, green building becomes place-based and recognizes that natural regional environments vary. To properly design a building within its ecosystem, the approach for each location should be unique.

In practical terms, PMA had a keen interest in passive design and renewable energy, but we were uncertain what was viable and optimal for our downtown location and the given climate. A weather station was installed at the site in feasibility studies. Sampled data were extrapolated based on historical trends from neighboring points (Ann Arbor Airport, for one). Interestingly, wind speed, direction, and duration varied widely between the site sample and other available locations. Weather data validated the use of natural ventilation, and the unique wind patterns around the site critically influenced design of inlet and outlet locations to optimize the passive system. The team identified a number of hours each month during the shoulder seasons as optimal conditions for passive heating and cooling. Thus, when

ambient conditions permit, the mixed-mode system will completely shut off mechanical equipment and rely on natural flows to condition interior spaces, projecting 15 percent reduction in overall building energy consumption.

Accumulated weather data again critically influenced our goal of 20 percent renewable energy generated on-site. Solar technology was a high possibility, based on the national number of building-integrated solar systems. However, upon reviewing the site's weather data, wind-energy was a much greater opportunity for renewable energy generation. Because of wind pattern variability, we considered a vertical axis turbine capable of generating energy regardless of wind direction. Seven to ten turbines are projected to meet our renewable energy goal.

From inception of this project, we saw synergistic benefits to local community, environmental, and industry interests alike in creating a progressive green building. With this project, we aim for greater understanding of the benefits of green buildings, while removing some of the barriers impeding their growth in the marketplace. As we look forward to beginning construction in 2007, we are already experiencing a remarkable reception to the green building concept from businesses, politicians, and local citizens.

We have learned that building green aspires for cohabitation, creating a mutually beneficial and sustainable relationship between communities and natural environments. Creating a pathway for our community to achieve this goal is an opportunity for which we are grateful.

Dax Ponce de Leon, LEED AP, is a development manager at PMA Consultants LLC, the project manager for this green building project. He can be reached at dax@pmaconsultants.com or 734-769-0530.

By Dax Ponce de Leon

Green building recognizes that natural environments vary.



Too busy to cook?

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Shop to Stop Sprawl!

Living creatures need space to live. Over the past decade, Shopping for the Earth has helped generate \$110 million to preserve natural areas and farmland.

You can help us do more by buying EarthCash vouchers for the stores where you already shop.



For every \$20 of vouchers, you get \$20 in store credit and earn \$1 for the local Sierra Club.

Complete details are available at
<http://michigan.sierraclub.org/huron/sfte.htm>

Help preserve nature at no cost to you!

Shopping for the Earth Order Form

Indicate the number of EarthCash vouchers you want for each store and available dollar amount below. Enclose your check payable to "Sierra Club-Huron Valley Group." Total order (\$500 maximum): \$ _____.

	\$5	\$10	\$20	\$25	\$50	\$100
Ann Arbor People's Food Co-op ¹						
Arbor Brewing Company						
Arbor Farms						
Borders Books & Music ¹						
Busch's ²						
Farmer Jack ¹ (and affiliated stores)						
Hiller's Markets ²						
Holiday Market (Royal Oak)						
Kroger ² (and affiliated stores)						
Whole Foods ¹ (and affiliated stores)						
Meijer's	A rebate program, no vouchers (neither paper nor cards). Please see http://michigan.sierraclub.org/huron/SFTE_Meijer.pdf or contact us.					

¹ non-reloadable card • Consider buying several cards.

² reloadable card • The Sierra Club receives a contribution when you reload card, so only one needed per person.

all others are paper vouchers

- check here to receive local Sierra Club e-mail updates
 if not a Sierra Club member, check here to receive local Sierra Club newsletter

Your Name: _____
 Your Address: _____

 Your Phone number: _____
 Your email address: _____

Mail to:
 Kristine Denzin (Kodenzin@aol.com)
 5162 Doral Court
 Ann Arbor, MI 48108
 (Your data will not be shared)



Huron Valley Group Directory

www.michigan.sierraclub.org/huron/

Chair	
Doug Cowherd*	662-5205
Vice-chair	
Nancy Shiffler*	971-1157
Treasurer	
Ken Morley	677-7791
Secretary	
Joel Dalton*	
Chapter Representative	
Nancy Shiffler*	971-1157
Conservation Chair	
Dorothy Nordness	668-6306
Inner City Outings Chair	
Vera Hernandez	665-8118
Outings Chair	
Kathy Guerreso	677-0823
Inner City Outings Liaison	
Membership Chair	
Ed Steinman**	665-0248
Political Chair	
Acting Program Chair	
Doug Cowherd*	662-5205
Shopping for the Earth	
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Pauline Mitchell	973-6636
Fund Raising Chair	
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Suzie Heiney	377-8248
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Suzie Heiney, Editor	377-8248
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Gwen Nystuen	665-7632
Effie Hanchett	
Ed Steinman*	665-0248
Executive Committee	
Mike Anglin*	
Rita Mitchell*	665-0248

* = HVG Excom Member

How to Get HVG reminders via email!

At each HVG general meeting, there is an email sign up list. For those who missed it, or haven't joined us at a meeting, here's how you can get our general meeting reminders.

If you would like to receive email notices of each month's Huron Valley Group general meeting and occasional notices about other local Sierra Club activities send an email to Doug Cowherd at dmcowherd3@comcast.net with your name and "HVG email list" in the body of the message.

Are You A New Member?

Welcome to the Huron Valley Group of the Sierra Club. When you join the Sierra Club you are automatically a member of a local group, as well as a state chapter and the national organization. Membership entitles you to this newsletter as well as all editions of the state and national member publications. Check this page for our Directory with contacts on conservation, outings, political action, and the Inner City Outings program. Check the calendar in the middle of this issue for announcements of Monthly Public Program topics and our calendar of activities. We will be glad to see you at our next meeting or answer any questions if you care to call. Please take advantage of your membership as an opportunity to enjoy, preserve and protect our natural environment!

Membership

Yes, I want to help safeguard our nation's precious natural heritage. My check is enclosed.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

email _____

Check enclosed, made payable to Sierra Club

Mastercard Visa Exp Date ____/____

Cardholder Name _____

Card Number _____

Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
SENIOR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
LIMITED INCOME	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

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Spring 2007 Inside:

- Community Supported Agriculture- page 3
- Off the Beaten Path: Spring Hikes - page 4
- Chestnut Tree for the Future - page 9
- Calendar of Events - page 7-8



What's your story?

In celebration of the Sierra Club's mission to explore, enjoy and protect the earth, we'd like to invite you to share your stories, your thoughts, and your ideas.

For each of the next three newsletter issues, we'll focus on one aspect of this mission statement. For summer, the theme will be *Explore*.

**Have you explored a place that particularly moved you?
Or taken a voyage to a far-away locale?
Or discovered a magical world of nature in your own backyard?
Do you keep a list of places that you'd love to explore?
What have you learned from your explorations?**

We invite you to relive your memories – and then share them with others.

How, you ask? Here are the details: Essays, articles, and stories should be 600-900 words. If photos or drawings are your thing, images should be at least 300 dpi and 4"x6". Submissions may be edited (sensitively, we like to think) for style and clarity. Please send submissions via email (strongly preferred) to hvgnews@yahoo.com or by mail to Suzie Heiney, Attn: Sierra Club, 314 Washtenaw Rd., Ypsilanti, MI 48197. The deadline for the summer issue is **July 8, 2007**; contact us before that to tell us about your idea, and so we can hold a space for you.

Got questions? Contact Suzie Heiney at 734-377-8248 or hvgnews@yahoo.com. **Happy exploring!**