

# SIERRAN NEWSLETTER

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Photo credit: Frances Denny, The Luupe (2019)

## Stronger Together - Moving to 100% Clean Energy

*By Gretchen Waddell Barwick, Chapter Director*

The Sierra Club is dedicated to a 100% clean energy future. But what does that mean? John Muir famously said, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe." Martin Luther King, Jr. said "In a real sense all life is inter-related... Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." Working in solidarity and mutuality is key to the future of environmental activism and our transition to clean energy.

In Missouri, in the U.S., and globally, we are experiencing multiple emergencies rooted in social and economic injustice. To address social injustice, we must put our power and privilege to work. To protect our planet we have to protect the people on it--our family, friends and neighbors. This is why the Sierra Club supports the Movement for Black Lives, the Fight for \$15, reproductive justice, healthcare as a human right, and other intersecting movements working to ensure we are all able to thrive.

But what does that look like in our community? An example: Buildings account for 40% of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. If we want to reduce these emissions, key drivers of climate change, we need to invest in energy efficiency and clean energy for existing buildings. Energy efficiency helps the

planet but also has numerous benefits for human health. But many people can't afford energy efficiency upgrades. Assistance programs are limited and tied to outdated financial standards. Building owners with razor-thin profit margins are less likely to update or upgrade their units. Unethical building owners prioritize profits over the well-being of their tenants. And who is most impacted by these high energy burdens? Former redlined areas that experienced racial discrimination, low-income neighborhoods, and Black/Indigenous/people of color (BIPOC).

So what do we do? Support tenants' rights to ensure renters see desperately needed fixes to their units and are treated fairly. Support the movement for family-sustaining wages for all workers. Advocate for changes in our healthcare system to address the disparities in impacts from poor indoor air quality. Demand local authorities hold unethical operators accountable to their tenants and our community. Pass laws that require buildings to become more efficient over time. Pass laws which influence the market so energy efficiency upgrades become more affordable.

This one issue pulls on many threads of our society, from poverty, to racial injustice, environmental injustice, housing, and healthcare. Our fights are all connected. It is time we act accordingly.



## CHAPTER CHAIR'S COLUMN

# Coming Together, Chapter Strong

By Kevin Grooms

In recent months, I've noticed that as much as things feel different, some things haven't changed.

For the better part of a year, I've been dreaming of getting back to all the things I've been missing. I thought the day had finally come—I'm fully vaccinated, and things are reopening, so I can pick right up where I left off, right? Not necessarily. For one thing, we're all competing for the same products and services now in short supply—rental cars, meals in restaurants, anything with a computer chip—things we once took for granted. Turns out I wasn't the only person ready to get "back to normal" (imagine that).

Never mind my small comforts. The systemic problems made worse by the pandemic persist. Folks who struggled with utility bills are now facing shut-offs. Partisanship threatens to weaken badly-needed economic and environmental progress. We are STILL demanding a \$15 an hour minimum wage! It's in challenging times like these when we reflect on our real values, and on what we can change. Thanks to the combined efforts of our staff and volunteers, earlier this year, the Missouri Chapter had an opportunity to do just that, through the Club's Chapter Strong Integrated Planning process. I'm glad to say our chapter is going through 2021 with clearly identified priorities, and as stated in its overview, a plan "to provide people with a sense of their own power to win meaningful, community-driven victories."

One thing that I appreciate about that process is that chapter leaders met as a group to put our heads together



night after night to create our vision, and we did it all via Zoom. The pandemic kept us physically apart, but we accomplished our goals together, with a clarity that none of us could have had alone. Things felt different, and yet they were the same.

Let's continue to lean on one another. Some of us are about to return to in-person gatherings, after 15 months of relative isolation. It was the same before, during, and will continue to be after the pandemic: our greatest accomplishments are possible through our collective efforts. No one is expected to go it alone in their activism.

## THE SIERRAN

A biannual publication of the Missouri Sierra Club

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Ensure your environmental legacy by naming Sierra Club or your favorite Sierra Club Chapter in your will or trust. These gifts cost you nothing now. You can hold on to your assets for as long as you need them and you can change your beneficiaries at any time.

If you have named Sierra Club as your Chapter in a beneficiary or would like to discuss doing so, please contact us today.

**LORI SULLIVAN**  
Director of Gift Planning  
200 Webster St., Suite 1300  
Oakland, CA 94612

(800) 932-4270  
gift.planning@sierraclub.org  
myplan.sierraclub.org

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# Local Group Updates

## THOMAS HART BENTON GROUP (THB)

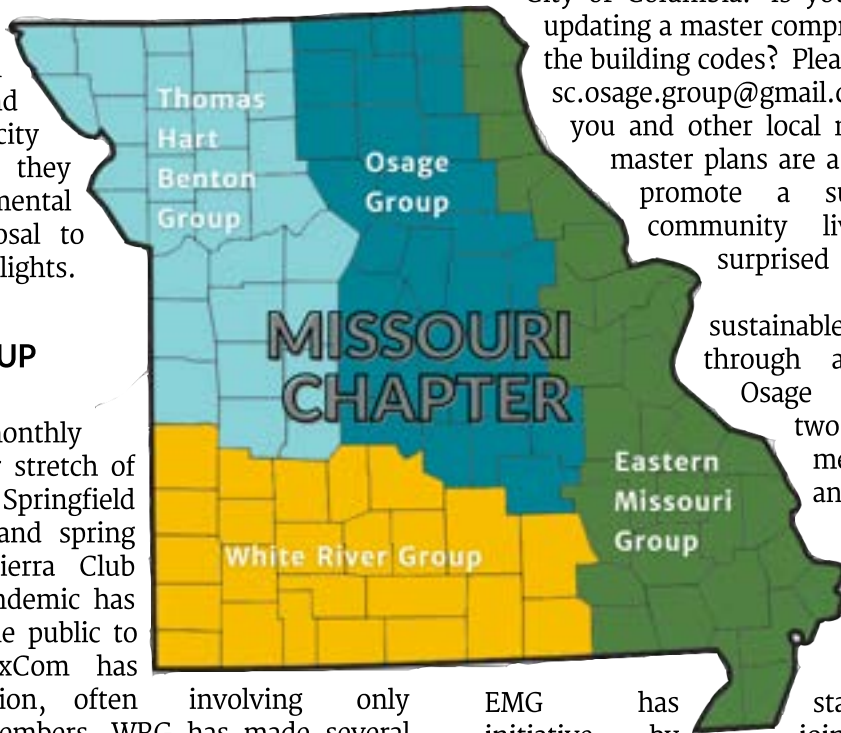
The Thomas Hart Benton Group continues to host monthly programs online, most recently including a speaker from the City of Kansas City to talk about long-range city planning (a recording of which can be seen on our YouTube channel). Outings programs are continuing virtually, as well, to discuss books on nature and host speakers such as national Sierra Club board member Chad Hanson. Our group's legislative committee is closely monitoring Kansas City's climate action planning process, and We contacted city officials to request they consider environmental impacts of its proposal to install new LED street-lights.

## WHITE RIVER GROUP (WRG)

WRG has continued monthly clean-up work on our stretch of South Creek in south Springfield through the winter and spring months. Because Sierra Club policy during the pandemic has prohibited inviting the public to our events, the ExCom has fulfilled the obligation, often involving only one or two board members. WRG has made several significant contributions to various organizations in the past several months. WRG had two Zoom meetings with the administrators of City Utilities. These meetings provide us with the opportunity to ask questions about current and planned policy and to express our concerns about environmental issues related to the utility. WRG continues to watchdog their activities and recently four of us testified at a Department of Natural Resources hearing to oppose a relaxed air quality monitoring permit they've requested. We continue to advocate for adoption of the 2018 or 2021 Energy Efficiency Code in Residential Buildings. A review will be conducted next year with City Council voting on a proposed new code in early 2023.

## OSAGE GROUP

The Osage Group had a successful local election season in April by helping to elect two Columbia city council members, one Kirksville city council member and two Columbia School Board members, all with environmentally-friendly policy positions. Osage Group commented on proposed Boone County wind regulations and building codes, as well as giving input on development concerns and master plan updates in the City of Columbia. Is your community creating or updating a master comprehensive plan or updating the building codes? Please let us know by emailing [sc.osage.group@gmail.com](mailto:sc.osage.group@gmail.com) so we can work with you and other local members to engage. City master plans are a wonderful opportunity to promote a sustainable approach to community living. You might be surprised at how receptive your community is to some sustainable ideas when promoted through a city planning process. Osage Group also welcomes two new executive committee members: Brooke Fletcher and Ken Midkiff.



## EASTERN MISSOURI GROUP (EMG)

EMG has started a new conservation initiative by joining Lights Out Heartland which is part of the International Dark Sky Association (IDA). EMG volunteer, Stephanie Todd, is leading our involvement. St. Louis is at the center of the Mississippi River flyway, but our city lights are harmful to migrating birds. EMG held a group-wide Zoom meeting late in May which drew active participation from both long-time and newer volunteers. EMG ExCom member Tim Elwell participated in a Mississippi River volunteer plastic clean up in May. He is looking into how he and EMG might continue that with work through a regular commitment in a program called Nurdle Patrol, a citizen scientist project through which volunteers identify and facilitate the cleaning up of plastic and other debris associated with rivers and other waterways. The EMG political committee interviewed, endorsed, and offered support for four local candidates running in the April 6 general election.



Follow the Missouri Chapter Sierra Club on Facebook for updates! @mosierraclub

# So you want 100% Clean Energy?

## How Missourians are Reaching the Goal

### ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Energy efficiency is the easiest and most affordable way to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. Buildings alone account for 40% of Missouri's CO2 emissions and fossil fuel consumption.

#### What can we do?

- Strong, modern building codes
- Benchmarking and building performance standards
- Well-funded low income weatherization programs
- Required energy disclosure for home sales



### A JUST TRANSITION

Achieving our goals should not cost workers or our community. Far too often fossil fuel interests have left entire communities decimated in their wake by giving CEOs golden parachutes but not protecting their former employees or the environments they have destroyed.

#### What can we do?

- Proactive economic investment in workers transitioning out of fossil fuel industries
- Training and education for workers
- Equitable access to opportunities for frontline communities



### FOR MORE DETAILS:

[sierraclub.org/MO-mayors](http://sierraclub.org/MO-mayors) and  
[sierraclub.org/ready-for-100-toolkit](http://sierraclub.org/ready-for-100-toolkit)

### SOLAR AND WIND

Renewable energy is cleaner, healthier, and more affordable than dirty fuels like coal and fracked gas—it creates family-sustaining union jobs, lowers bills, and is available right now.

#### What can we do?

- Rooftop and community solar with equitable investment in disenfranchised communities
- Lobby local utilities to invest in wind and solar infrastructure
- Make new buildings solar ready



### ADVOCACY

To ensure the vision of 100% clean, renewable power becomes a reality, we need people power: local activists pushing for a transition to a cleaner, healthier, more affordable, and more just energy system.

#### What can we do?

- Ask your mayor to sign the Clean Energy pledge
- Get involved in your local Sierra Club or talk to others in your community
- Check out the Ready for 100 Toolkit to get started



## CASE STUDIES

# From Cities Across the State



### COLUMBIA

#### *Planning for the long term.*

In June 2019, Columbia passed a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (“CAAP”), becoming one of the first Missouri cities to adopt such a plan. The CAAP sets goals of reducing carbon emissions community-wide and eliminating them from city operations by 2050. Shortly after rolling out its plan, the City became one of the first in Missouri to adopt the 2018 International Energy Conservation Code to ensure all new residential and commercial buildings are built to better protect residents' health and conserve energy. The code update also included a solar-ready amendment to accelerate the transition to renewable energy.



### KANSAS CITY

#### *Just transition centered on community needs.*

In 2020, Kansas City passed a resolution calling for the elimination of greenhouse gas emissions from electricity consumption city-wide by 2030, all to be achieved through a transparent and inclusive public engagement process centered in achieving an equitable transition away from fossil fuels. Weeks later, KC became one of the first U.S. cities to support the strongest model building codes for energy efficiency to date in order to curb emissions from buildings. The city has also adopted a new bike plan and made public transit free for all as it works to make streets safer and make safe transportation more accessible and carbon free.



### ST. LOUIS

#### *Committing to 100%.*

St. Louis was the first Missouri city (and one of the largest in the country) to commit to transitioning 100% of its electricity generation to renewable energy from wind and solar, becoming a model for other cities to follow for setting bold targets and achieving them through a community-driven process. In 2019, the city released a comprehensive Pathways Report to guide implementation of its plan for years to come, noting that continued public engagement is key. Since then, St. Louis has added 18 electric buses to its fleet and passed building performance standards to reduce emissions from large older buildings.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

# Environmental Legislation During the Time of COVID-19

By Michael Berg

To say the COVID-19 crisis profoundly affected the 2021 Missouri legislative session is an understatement. Committee chairs and the majority leadership in the state legislature refused to mandate masks for the Capitol during the peak of the pandemic and would not allow virtual testimony for committees - putting the lives of legislators, staff, and visitors on the line. They used this dangerous environment to pass legislation that does not reflect the values of Missouri residents and puts our lives, environment, democracy, and state at risk.

Because of the danger, we could not engage in the legislative session like we normally do. We did not conduct any in-person lobby days nor did we encourage members to testify at the Capitol. We conducted virtual meetings, with nearly 400 Missouri Sierrans meeting with their legislators. We also used calls and emails to influence legislation. Thank you to our Chapter Legislative Committee for staying engaged and keeping up with Jefferson City during two difficult, pandemic-affected sessions.

## Legislative Updates



**WIN for Clean Energy!** Thanks to **House Bill 734**, Missouri utilities will soon be able to more quickly finance the retirement of old, costly, and polluting coal fired power plants. The new law authorizes ratepayer-backed bond securitization – a financing tool already being utilized by utilities throughout the United States to speed up their transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy.



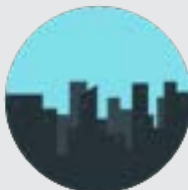
**DEFEATED: Weakened Hazardous Waste Protections.** One bill that did not pass was **Senate Bill 40**. It would have removed the power of Missouri Air Conservation Commission, Clean Water Commission and Hazardous Waste Commission to modify their fee structure – weakening our states entire pollution control structure and potentially defunding the environmental law enforcement section of the Department of Natural Resources.



**PROTECTED Public Lands.** The 2021 legislative session was an excellent year for Missouri's public lands. Our parks system received critical funding. None of the attempts to weaken the Conservation Department advanced far. A bill to sell Eleven Point State Park went nowhere after thousands of Missourians contacted their legislators about the need to protect the park!



**STOPPED: Weakened Air Quality Testing for Metro St. Louis.** **House Bill 661** got an unrelated late-night Senate addition at the very end of session. This bill would have ended vehicle emissions testing for Jefferson, Franklin and St. Charles counties. Metro St. Louis air does not presently meet federal air quality standards. Vehicle emissions testing in these counties is part of a federally mandated program to clean up our air and protect human health and the environment. According to the bill's own fiscal note, Missouri risked losing up to \$52 million in federal highway funds per year for flouting the federal Clean Air Act. Fortunately, Governor Parson vetoed this dangerous bill.



**ELIMINATED: Local Control.** **Senate Bill 230** stated that local governments cannot enact any regulations concerning what kind of energy can and cannot be used within its jurisdiction. This bill was created by the methane gas industry in response to more and more American cities taking action to move towards electrification and phase out dirty climate-change-inducing fracked gas. SB230 was added as an amendment to House Bill 734 and passed.



Osage Group volunteers, Dee Dokken and Gabe Amaran, applying soil amendments to the crop rows.  
Photo by Carolyn Amparan

## GRASSROOTS CLIMATE ACTION

# Osage Group Receives Grant to Build a Soil Carbon Sink

By Carolyn Amparan

The Osage Group applied for and received a national Sierra Club Grassroots Network Grant for 2021. Our project is to create a demonstration of a soil carbon sink. We will use the project to create the carbon sink and educate others to grow our local volunteer network.

When the demonstration site is ready it will be used to help educate landowners, farmers and gardeners how to apply these techniques to their own property. Our partner in this project is the Columbia Urban Agriculture Center. This is an urban farm that is already dedicated to teaching others how to be urban farmers and good stewards of the

soil. This past year they moved to a new and larger site in Columbia but the soil needs lots of help. The new site is co-located with the Columbia Farmers Market making it a perfect demonstration site. The food that is grown on the urban farm is donated to the local food pantry. Our project benefits the local community experiencing food insecurity by increasing the farm's productivity, and our project will also help sequester carbon and serve as a demonstration site to teach others.

Eventually we hope to have three different plots at the Urban Ag Farm, each focused on a different growing environment. The soil

amendments have already been installed in the first plot and sweet potatoes were planted the first week of June. The long term goal of the project is to motivate landowners across Missouri to use carbon sequestration practices. Once we get our Grassroots Network Page created, anyone will be able to follow our work online in the Sierra Club Grassroots Network. For more information on the project or to volunteer please contact [sc.osage.group@gmail.com](mailto:sc.osage.group@gmail.com). The grant funds will be used for soil amendments and to support education of others.

## CONSERVATION & WILDLIFE UPDATES - ONLINE FEATURES

### Improving Streetlights to Protect Birds and Save Energy

#### THB Group Urges Kansas City to Adopt Sustainable Streetlights

By Dee McCreary

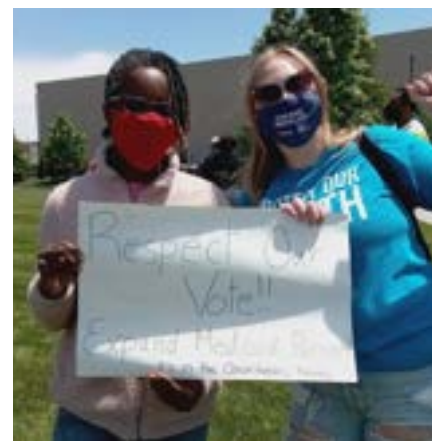
Read about the Thomas Hart Benton Group's efforts to encourage Kansas City leaders to adopt a sustainable streetlight system that improves the lives of all Kansas City residents and mitigates harm to other species, like migratory birds.

Find these articles online at [www.sierraclub.org/MISSOURI](http://www.sierraclub.org/MISSOURI)

#### Sierra Club Participates in International Dark Sky Initiative

By Stephanie Todd

The Sierra Club will be participating in the first annual Missouri Chapter of the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) conference. The conference is October 3 - 4 at Missouri State University in Springfield, MO. There will be no cost to participate in the conference either in-person or via Zoom.



St. Louis Alderman Tina 'Sweet-T' Pihl and Organizer Ashton Kuehnel joined healthcare advocates and allies across the state to rally for Medicaid Expansion. Photo by Sweet-T Pihl.



**SIERRA CLUB**

MISSOURI CHAPTER

2818 SUTTON BLVD. ST. LOUIS, MO 63143

# Clean Energy Newsletter

July 2021

Photo credit: Henrik Kam, 2015

## COMING SOON

### Coming Soon: School for Activists

*Are you new to the Sierra Club and want to learn more about our organization? Or a long-time member looking to sharpen your skills?*

Join friends and neighbors for the Missouri Chapter's first-ever School for Activists in August! Together we will explore the skills and tools needed to be effective advocates in our communities.

We will start with **Sierra Club 101** on Wednesday August 18 at 6:30 PM. Join us for a Zoom conversation about the Sierra Club's values, campaigns, and one of the key proponents of activism: sharing your story.

This multi-session training will go through basics in organizing like making a campaign plan, community mapping, hosting strategic events, and much more! Throughout the training, you will receive toolkits, resources, and one-on-one guidance from Sierra Club staff and volunteers on how to build effective campaigns in your community.

Missouri Sierra Club Presents:

## GRASSROOTS ACTIVIST TRAINING

A SERIES

Join Sierra Club members across the state and in your town for a virtual training series to grow your advocacy skills and grassroots power!

SERIES LAUNCHES WITH SIERRA CLUB 101  
AUGUST 18TH FROM 6:30-8:00

Watch your inbox to sign up or email Kane at [Missouri.Chapter@SierraClub.org](mailto:Missouri.Chapter@SierraClub.org) to learn more.