



DuPage Sierran

Sierra Club, River Prairie Group of DuPage County

Winter 2012/13

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Letter From The Editor

Both Sides Now

By Lonnie Morris

The two sides of the Sierra Club, outings and activism, are like Peter Gorr's observation in this issue about the purported tensions between the economy and the environment, they're two sides of the same coin. The activist and outings sides cross pollinate, support, inform, inspire and enrich each other. This issue of the DuPage Sierran offers articles from both sides. We're pleased to present three views of exploring and enjoying the outdoors, one from the back of a horse, one from atop skis and one by foot. I'm sure many of us who enjoy the outdoors have mom's words to "go outside and play" echoing in our memories. We went out then and still do now. Thanks, Mom!

If you prefer to curl up with a good book during the winter months, check out what's coming up in Green Readin' this year, three excellent books and lively discussions.

This issue announces good news from the activism side. In the fall, DuPage became the first Illinois county to work with the Sierra Club on setting goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Cool Counties Resolution signed by the County Board has set us on a course to being a leader in local solutions to climate change.

The way forward to a clean, stable and sustainable energy economy is through distributed solar, where residences and businesses every where have solar panels installed on their roofs. It's an idea that's been around for a while and a few early adopters are leading the way in each community. SC member Peter Gorr reports on his experience of installing solar panels on his Palatine home, providing a comprehensive look at the entire process from the environmental and economic reasons, through the technology to the final pay off. Parts 1 and 2 are included here with parts 3 and 4 to follow in the next issue. Who would have thought the solar energy story would be a cliff hanger.

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DuPage Sierran

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For activities, legislative action alerts, & outings information

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“Being There.”

The Schulenberg Prairie at the Morton Arboretum

By Cindy Crosby

I arrive at the Morton Arboretum's Schulenberg Prairie in the morning. It's bone-chilling cold. But the sun illuminates the 100 acres of tallgrass, sandwiched between an oak savanna, a subdivision, and a busy road. Come early, and the gift that waits to be unwrapped here is that of quiet and solitude.

Well, not exactly. The prairie in the early November hours is alive with migrating warblers, each chattering a different song. They are impossible for me to identify; too many slight variations of the color brown flitting from bur oak to bur oak, on a refueling stop while headed south. Above me, sandhill cranes appear in the clear air, trumpeting their unmistakable cries and scrawling their calligraphic configurations across the sky. I listen and watch, wondering what messages the cranes will leave for me.

The tallgrass glitters with frost. I wade in, then pause to crush mountain mint seedheads in my hands. Inhale. Prairie aromatherapy. A compass plant, stunted from the drought, only reaches my waist. Its stem is crusted with crystallized sap that I scrape off with my fingernails and sniff. Mmmmm. The fragrance of pine in a sea of tree-less grass seems ironic.

Dividing the prairie is Willoway Brook, which runs cold and clear, limned with ice that the water sculpts into random curves. I find a place to sit on the hard boards of the wooden bridge over the brook. Then wait, motionless, for whatever might come. My reward: a muskrat swims by, impervious to my presence and the glacial water.

Under that dark current, more life is moving. Terrifying dragonfly nymphs stalk the depths of the brook, biding their time --- sometimes for years --- to morph into colorful creatures of the air that may live for only a few hours. The nymphs are invisible to my eyes, but present, none-the-less.

Also unseen is a vast forest of prairie roots all around me, underground. Some plunge 30 feet into the rich loam. All this concealed energy! But I feel its presence. The dry, desiccated grasses sizzle in the frigid wind like electricity. I lovingly move my lips over their names, like a faithful Catholic fingering the beads of



Morton Arboretum's Schulenberg Prairie, November 2012.
Photo by Cindy Crosby.

a rosary and saying a prayer. Big bluestem. Canada wild rye. Indian grass. Prairie dropseed. Side-oats grama. Sprays of pearly switchgrass seedheads wave in the sun, spangled with melted frost. I take it all in --- tingle to the tips of my fingers --- awe-struck.

In her Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Annie Dillard notes, "...beauty and grace are performed whether or not we will or sense them. The least we can do is try to be there."

I want to be there. The prairie changes from season to season, from day to day, from hour to hour. The slant of the sun. Smells coaxed from the tallgrass. Birdsong. A changing kaleidoscope of colors.

Tracks on the lightly frosted trail clue me in to the presence of others here. A coyote stamps her paw-prints like cloverleaves in a long line, followed by a steaming pile of scat. Mice stitch their tiny foot-prints across the paths. The brush of a hawk's wing is embossed in the sparkling surface nearby. I add my tracks to those of the others, and for a moment, our lives are braided together into this place.

About the Author

Cindy Crosby is the author of *By Willoway Brook: Exploring the Landscape of Prayer* about the Schulenberg Prairie, which *Chicago Wilderness* magazine called one of the region's "great reads." Contact Cindy through www.cindycrosby.com.

Cross Country Skiing in One, Two or Three Outings

By Mike Davis

Does the thought of the upcoming winter leave you feeling less than enthused? Are you dreading the winter months? Instead of hiding indoors, try going cross country skiing, a winter sport appropriate for all ages. If you don't know how to ski or not sure where to go, the River Prairie Group outings program has the answers.

A core group of leaders has been running several ski outings annually, offering participants instruction in skiing basics, with practice time and group skiing opportunities. These outings form an informal skiing program open to skiers of all abilities.

First up in December is an indoor workshop where prospective skiers are introduced to the world of cross-country skiing; what to wear, what to look for when buying or renting ski equipment and skiing techniques. This workshop is worth attending but is not a prerequisite for attending the very successful on-snow, cross-country outing workshop where you actually learn how to ski. This two-day outing takes place either in nearby southwestern Michigan or southern Wisconsin near Milwaukee, depending on the often fickle snow conditions. For the last two years, enough snow fell in Berrien County Michigan to ski at Madeline Bertrand County park, just over the Indiana state line.

A short lecture precedes students donning their skis and shuffling out to the practice area where they are taught striding, turning, and tackling small hills while remaining in control. One instructor specializes in showing students how to get back on their skis after falling. After the practice loop, it is time for the first escorted ski around the park on the groomed and tracked trail system. Hills and more practice make up the afternoon agenda and by the next day skiers are ready for more adventures in another park. This trip is ideal for beginners or for skiers who want to improve their technique.

Sometime in late January the annual 2-day ski trip to Steven's Point in central Wisconsin is often the next step for ski-clinic graduates (and anyone else who knows how to ski). Although this isn't a clinic the instructors are usually present to give advice and encouragement as students and veterans explore more extensive groomed trail systems.



In February the popular 3-day trip the Michigan's Upper Peninsula is certainly a favorite for experienced skiers on down to advanced beginners. The trails are perfectly groomed and snow is always available in copious amounts. (This trip has run annually since at least the mid 90's) Lodging is in north woods cabins where highly rated dinners are served followed by board games or a stroll on a frozen lake which is a unique experience.

No matter what your skill level the River Prairie Group most likely has a cross-country ski trip planned for you.

About the Author

Mike Davis has been a Sierra Club outings leader for 14 years. He leads both a popular cross country ski outing to the upper peninsula of Michigan and a geological Interpretive hike in McHenry County each year.

Green Readin': An Environmental BookDiscussion



No Impact Man

Sun. Jan. 27 at 2:00 pm
Helen Plum Library
Discussion Leader Shannon Burns

Green Readin', the RPG's environmental book discussion group, kicks off its three part winter series in January with No Impact Man, the first hand experience of an uber greenie aiming for the ultimate green life style in New York City. Heading back to the land is a familiar route for getting off the grid; Colin Beavan chose to put his green beliefs into practice in his natural habitat, a setting thrumming with electricity, covered with buildings and concrete.

Less a practical How-to living guide and more aimed at readers with a taste for extreme sports, it quickly becomes clear that being ultra green in NYC requires a lot of work, like walking up and down nine flights of stairs several times a day to walk the dog and go to work. Beavan's personal no impact goal reveals the many unseen, often unacknowledged traces we leave in an ordinary day. You won't rush to follow in his footsteps but you will thank him for illuminating the path to more eco-friendly habits.



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The Golden Spruce

Sun. Feb. 24 at 2:00 pm
Helen Plum Library
Discussion Leader Connie Schmidt

February's selection, The Golden Spruce takes readers to the pacific northwest for a tale of myth, madness and greed. John Vaillant, author of The Tiger, weaves descriptions of Grant Hadwin's mythic outdoor abilities, an exposé of devastating logging practices and historic tales of native people into a real life thriller. Its clear who did it, but why remains a mystery. Witnessing and complicity in the utter destruction of majestic old growth forests for toilet paper may have driven one man to destroy a beloved tree that stood out from all the rest. Join the discussion as we unravel the mystery of the golden spruce.



The Big Thirst

Sun. March 24 at 2:00 pm
Helen Plum Library
Discussion Leader Lonnie Morris

The Big Thirst discussion could be subtitled, the 10 Amazing Things You Didn't Know About Water. There is no substance with which we have a more intimate relationship than water. We drink it, bathe and recreate in it, our bodies are mostly made up of it, and it plays an essential role in our religions. Water has been taken for granted since clean supplies became readily accessible a 100 years ago. Electricity outages are common, water outages are rare. Needing and ignoring water makes for a risky combination and the days of unlimited quantities are numbered. The Big Thirst's introduction to the issues jump starts a thoughtful discussion and proposes a road map to solutions.

Books are available at your local library or for purchase at The BookStore in downtown Glen Ellyn at a 10% discount for Green Readin's participants.

Green Readin' is free and open to the public. Registration is not required. Reading the book is recommended but not required.

The Trail Riders of DuPage:

Another way of enjoying and caring for the environment

By **Connie Schmidt**

Who would think that in the busy ever growing land of strip malls and housing developments, in the collar counties surrounding Chicago there lives an active, thriving, horseback riding organization called the Trail Riders of DuPage. And...they enjoy some of the state's most beautiful trails in their own boundaries! Yes, that's right. There are horses in DuPage County, just 35 miles west of Chicago and a diligent group working to spread the word on how horses can share the trails without harm to other users or the habitats along their route.

In 2012, the Trail Riders of DuPage or T.R.O.D., celebrated its 20th anniversary. It was established by a group of horseback riders who saw that urban sprawl and rapidly increasing use of the Forest Preserve trails could encroach on their use of the trails. The group quickly evolved from kitchen table discussions in 1992 to a strong organization with a board of directors, by-laws and not for profit status geared towards preserving the rights of trail riders while increasing education on proper trail use. They encourage all equestrians to be considerate members of the trail using community in order to preserve the beautiful surroundings where they ride. Founders felt that by joining together as a unified group they would be able to establish open communication with the Forest Preserve District of DuPage, the DuPage County Department of Transportation and other support groups such as the Illinois Prairie Path. The official motto of the group is to "Share the Trails" which is evident in their amiable approach to coordinating trail use with other groups. At one point their numbers reached nearly 500 members, drawing upon interested riders from surrounding counties.

For the past 15 years, T.R.O.D. has conducted an Emergency Rescue course for fire and police professionals who are first responders in emergency situations including traffic accidents, loose horses in neighborhoods or barn accidents. Members volunteer to bring their horses and allow trainees to practice leading, making makeshift halters, and learning how to do a basic horse assessment. Horse owners who have participated in this program often walk away saying they are thankful to have had the opportunity to put their horse through these paces as they will be better able to cope with a stressful situation should the need arise.



Patti Mehling, Shalom Waterous, Savannah Waterous, Beth Fairbanks (front to back). Photo by Ron Mehling.

So how about the fun stuff? The group participates in 5-7 parades annually throughout the DuPage area. Those without a horse are welcome as walkers and provide an important safety net. For the past two years, many riders have enjoyed a "play day" at the county fair ground where horses are exposed to unusual obstacles. Trail Rides and picnics are planned as a great way to meet others from all over the county and surrounding areas.

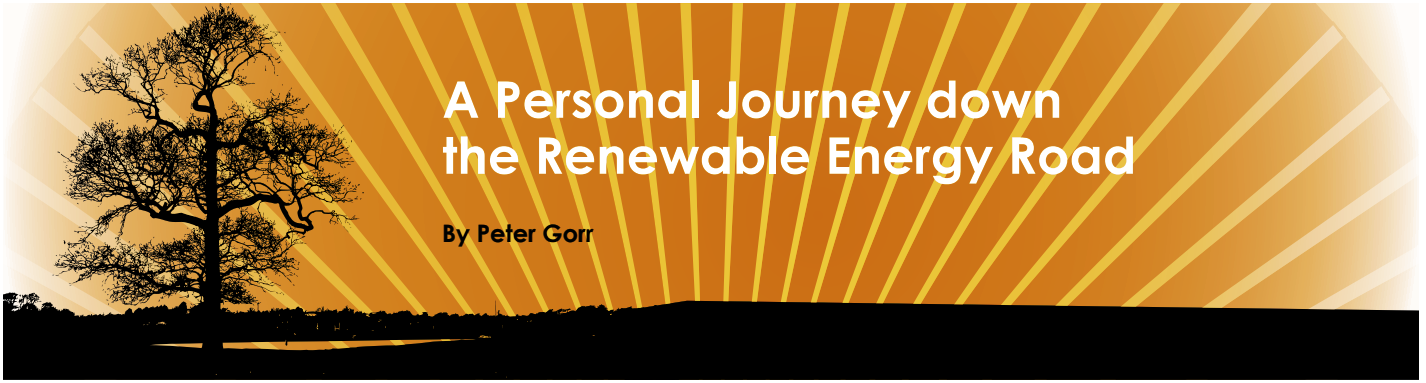
The Trail Riders of DuPage regularly assists in maintaining local trails. They have removed unwanted barbed wire fencing from remnant farm fields and formed work parties to pull non native species from along the trails. They participate in the annual Illinois Prairie Path clean up day. You will also see T.R.O.D. at Forest Preserve events such as the Danada Fall Fest and the St. James Farm Homecoming celebrations helping to spread the word of safe and considerate trail riding in DuPage County.

The Trail Riders of DuPage is a vital, growing organization that is known for taking positive action toward its goal of "Sharing the Trails" with other user groups in DuPage. They are concerned with promoting respect for the natural world by encouraging all horseback riders to stay on designated trails and advocating for safe practices in riding in this suburban setting.

For more information visit the website: TROD.US or phone: Connie Schmidt at 630 393 6276.

About the Author

Connie Schmidt currently serves on the board of directors for T.R.O.D. and the River Prairie Group of the Sierra Club. Her vision is to promote tolerance and respect for both recreational trail users and those working to restore native habitats.



A Personal Journey down the Renewable Energy Road

By Peter Gorr

Part 1: The Economy and the Environment Two Sides of the Same Coin

It is a common misconception that what is good for the environment will be bad for the economy and vice versa. Nothing could be further from the truth. A strong economy and a healthy environment are inseparable.

We are experiencing a struggling economy with what I see as no solid strategy to correct the situation. Our economy has been moving away from manufacturing and towards services for many years. Financial services as a percent of GDP is at an all time high and higher than what is recommended. I, for one, do not feel secure with an economy that is built around managing other people's money in ever more creative ways. Recently every household's wealth has been negatively affected because of this. And what have we learned and how has our behavior changed as a nation?

Taking tax dollars and throwing them at the problem is not a solution. As well intentioned as this is and as appreciative as we are for infrastructure improvements, this is just a tactic to buy time while a real solution hopefully surfaces before the money runs out. Well the money has run out -- ask the unemployed if they feel the solution has been found.

A basic remedy for a downturn in an economy or, for that matter, a business seeking growth is to find or create a significant new demand to supply. Sounds simple but it is not. Certain criteria need to be met or we may experience another dot com-like bubble which offers a brief lift followed by an even more painful fall.

Fortunately we have an opportunity with all the right criteria sitting right on our doorstep. Unfortunately it is our assault on our environment and the imperative that we reverse the track we are on that has created this opportunity. We only lack the will and the

necessary information. The opportunity is to transition our energy source from outdated, dirty, dangerous, largely foreign, and finite resources to state of the art, clean, safe, domestic, and unlimited resources. Jobs are not lost. They are transitioned and added to.

In simple terms the criteria necessary to initiate meaningful economic growth are the following:

1. Access to a large and growing market.

Energy is not only used by everyone, it is increasingly used by everyone and considered not a luxury but a necessity. There can be no stronger market than EVERYONE!

2. The current supply is inadequate or can be improved upon.

Here are a few descriptive terms that can be associated with current fossil fuel based energy sources:

Acid rain, air pollution, black lung, cave-in, cancer causing, clean-up, climate change, diminishing, embargo, explosion, extinction, finite, foreign, greenhouse gas, habitat destruction, hazardous waste, meltdown, mountain top removal, radiation, strip mining, toxic spill, water pollution.

I'm sure many more can be listed. A supply with so many negative and undesirable attributes is ripe for replacement. There is an obvious opportunity to generate energy without most of these problems. It is rare in business to identify such an attractive opportunity for improving matters. But current energy sources have very formidable strengths. They have artificially low pricing (see item 3), a strong distribution network, and huge wealth that can be used to influence public opinion and political action. Who hasn't heard the fictional term "clean coal" and been led to believe that it is real?

Continued on next page...

3. The new alternative needs to be available now.

The good news here is that there exist many alternative energy sources without the negative features listed in item 2. New state of the art wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, and hydropower technology is available. But the bad news is that since there is not a level playing field for these technologies to compete on, they are struggling to gain meaningful market share – which drives innovation and lower prices as well as the associated jobs they create.

Since current energy suppliers do not factor in all environmental impacts into their cost structure (in economic terms this is known as a negative externality) their pricing is lower than it should be which provides them with a huge competitive advantage. These costs do exist but are being transferred to a future time and future payers; our children and grandchildren. The idea of a “carbon tax” or “cap and trade” is an attempt at monetizing some of these negative externalities. A cap and trade mechanism was implemented to reduce sulfur dioxide emissions from power plants, a cause of acid rain. It was highly successful and demonstrated how market forces can achieve cost effective environmental protection.

The EPA has published a series of studies that detail the costs and benefits of the Clean Air Act since 1970. It is estimated that we will spend \$65 Billion in 2020 to address air pollution related effects¹. How less competitive would fossil fuels be if these costs were factored in (and these are not the only ones). Regarding CO₂, another common by-product of fossil fuels, the Stern Report puts the cost of no action on the mitigation of climate change at 5% to 20% of global GDP. This is unimaginable. At a minimum, with proper action, we face a cost of 1% of global GDP due to the damage already done according to this report. Each tonne (metric ton or 2,205 pounds) of CO₂ we emit causes damages worth at least \$85². Keep in mind the US alone emits over 6 Billion tonnes of CO₂ per year. That is half a trillion dollars in damages that we foot the bill on. Each gallon of gas emits some 20 pounds of CO₂. These are some of those external costs which are being ignored by the producers to their gain and to everyone else's loss. These costs are being or will be paid by us but unbundled from the products that are the cause. They may show up in tax bills, health care costs, and insurance premiums or in other ways. This is unfair and deceptive.

Addressing our energy need is clearly a huge environmental protection imperative and a great

economic development opportunity. It's ironic that certain political talking heads and elected officials who preach fiscal responsibility and job growth so actively oppose this. It mystifies me that conservatives reject anything related to protecting the environment as if they are immune to the perils and the costs of such a short-sighted approach. Everyone benefits from a healthy environment. It is not a liberal policy. It is a human policy.

This has been a macro economic view and opinion of the current economic and environmental situation and the basic steps needed to improve it. In the following parts, I will describe a more micro or street level view of these principles in action. Specifically, I invested in converting my home to solar generated electricity. What I am experiencing is a win-win-win-win scenario. I am supporting domestic job creation, my energy dollars are staying in the USA, I have increased my wealth and am protected from wildly fluctuating energy prices, and I am protecting the environment. Please join me on this journey.

Part 2: Selecting a Solar Energy System Walking the Walk

In part 1, I wrote on how the economy and the environment are inseparable and how developing a new clean energy based economy is a huge economic development opportunity. I feel an obligation that if I'm going to “talk the talk”; I need to “walk the walk”. To that end in 2010, I began a project to transition one small slice of the world -- my home -- to new clean energy. I was curious to see if the anticipated benefits will actually be realized.

As an environmentalist, but more importantly, a parent and grandparent, my motivation for transitioning my home to solar generated electricity is that it is the right thing to do. I believed that I would need to spend a lot to do this and perhaps never see a breakeven point. But I couldn't place a price on my children's future. Yes, I was also feeling guilty. As an American I am among the worst CO₂ emitters on the planet. My children already face the prospect of a massive clean up and a difficult adaptation to climate change. This is now a certainty. The only question is how much. In fact, I'm surprised young people are not more vocal and actively in the streets and in the voting booths over this burden they face.

So I solicited bids for a Solar Photovoltaic (PV) system. Basically, solar options consist of solar panels

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“Renewable Energy” By Peter Gorr Continued from Page 7

(PV) that will generate electricity and thermal solar panels for heating water. I just went with a PV system. A great 3 minute video primer on solar can be viewed at <http://www.teachersdomain.org/resource/oer09.sci.ess.watcyc.solarhome/>.

As with any home improvement project, it is recommended that you take the basic precautions of selecting your contractor carefully and thoroughly educating yourself before signing on the dotted line. Thankfully there are several reputable and experienced firms available these days. So the criteria I used in selecting the supplier were the following:

1. The system should be properly designed to fit my site and to maximize benefits to me.
2. All equipment should be from a reputable manufacturer and must qualify as “Manufactured in USA”.
3. I should be given plenty of hand-holding throughout the project including details of the process required for interconnections, permitting, and renewable energy credit generation and sale.
4. The supplier should have adequate experience and good references.
5. The pricing should be competitive (though it need not be the lowest).

While I feel every contractor I accepted bids from could have done the job and done it well, only one company fit all my criteria. This was a very important indication to me that they listened to and understood all my concerns and that they wanted to supply me with what I wanted rather than with what they wanted. This is Sales 101 but so often such a rare experience.

Here is a description of my system. Before I called in the first contractor, I read up on solar systems and the basic building blocks of such a system. They are not terribly complex but there are some different options to consider. I'm not going to cover this in detail. Simply put, the system consists of collectors (there are different options here both in size and design), inverters (collectors generate DC electricity that needs to be converted to AC, again a couple options to consider), mounting hardware, wiring and conduits. I also added a communications gateway so that I could see the output of my system via an ethernet connection to my PC and to a website for remote

monitoring and analysis. All in all it is pretty basic. The big decision is how many panels and where to locate them on your home or property.

I'm fortunate to have a home that is well suited for solar. The back faces straight south, there is little shading, and there is enough roof space to accommodate my needs (see picture). Occasionally you hear complaints about the aesthetics of a solar system. Judge for yourself. I think it looks good and better than 2 or 3 satellite TV dishes hanging on the house.

My system consists of twenty eight 240 watt panels with micro inverters (one inverter per panel rather than one inverter for the entire array). So, total rated output is 6.72 kilowatts. This is a pretty good size system for a home. But my home is some 4,000 square feet and I have been averaging about 900 kilowatt hours per month. The system should deliver about 80% of my current demand. I under-sized the system for 2 reasons. First, I believe I can continue to reduce my electricity consumption through efficiency measures and second, and this is unfortunate, net metering rules will not compensate me for electricity I produce in excess of what I use. What is net metering? In simplest terms, when I generate electricity and don't use it I will feed it to the grid and my meter will go backwards. When I call for electricity in excess of what I am producing, like at night, my meter will run forward. I pay the net difference, if there is one at the end of the month. If I have delivered more than I have used, these credits roll over to the next month. But here is the kicker, at the end of a 12 month period, the rolling over stops and I start from zero again. So I have no incentive to produce more than I will use in a year since this would just mean providing free energy to a utility which will then sell it at full value. I encourage people to support state legislation when it arrives to remedy this limitation.

Another consideration is obtaining a building permit from the town. Here requirements and costs can vary. In Palatine IL I only require a standard building permit and it cost me \$428. The permit required that I submit engineering calculations verifying that my roof will support the weight of the system. An engineering firm was hired to perform this calculation. Cost here was \$750. Next Commonwealth Edison required an application for interconnection and net metering. Total cost was \$50. My contractor coordinated all of this for me.

So all in all this was not complicated, especially with a contractor who managed the permitting and interconnection details. There was some added cost



but it was not prohibitive. There is an opportunity to simplify things even further and again please support state legislation that addresses these deficiencies. We should feel proud to live in a state that is pretty progressive regarding renewable energy. Currently Illinois has received a grade of B from an independent study of current state policies regarding net metering and interconnections. If minor new legislation is passed, Illinois could move to an A grade in both these categories³. This makes our state a more attractive place in which to live and do business.

Finally I should be eligible to sell RECs (Renewable Energy Credits). This was something I didn't know anything about until well into the process and it was a pleasant surprise. For every megawatt of energy produced I will own one REC. My system should generate 8 RECs per year. This is a little tricky to explain but a REC is a "certificate" tied to the environmental benefits of a renewable energy system. You might call them the "bragging rights" to clean energy. If someone who is trying to meet renewable energy mandates or goals wants to secure this claim without having a renewable energy system they can buy RECs. While I get the energy and savings, if I sell my RECs I cannot claim the environmental benefits, the purchaser now has that right. But I know these ben-

efits are there and I get all the financial benefits so I'm happy to part with these certificates which may net me between \$100 to \$200 each.

In the next part, I will concentrate on the economics of my system. But keep in mind the benefits I am generating in addition to my personal financial gains. First, I created a good size job for a local contractor. Second, I purchased equipment all of which is manufactured in the USA. This is generating domestic job growth. Third, my energy dollars are staying in this country. Fourth, since my "fuel" is free and not controlled by any company or country I do not face inflationary or fluctuating energy costs or the threat of having this source shut off or held hostage. This is beneficial to national and personal security.

About the Author

Peter Gorr lives in Palatine, IL and is a husband, parent, and grandparent. He is a retired business executive and holds a MBA from the University of Chicago in Marketing and Statistics. He is on the Executive Committee of the Northwest Cook County Group of the Sierra Club, an active member of the Illinois Solar Energy Association, a Board Member of Friends of Busse Woods and a founding member of Friends of Deer Grove East conservation groups.

River Prairie Group (RPG) Outings

Note: All local Group outings are offered at cost. Longer and more expensive outings require deposits (ask leader about refund policy). Contact the Leader or Assistant indicated for more information and outing requirements.

Including updates on those below, new RPG listings, and offerings from other local Groups, current listings are on the internet at: illinois.sierraclub.org/outings.

For our new Activity Calendar which includes meetings and events, and offers map and direction links, go to: illinois.sierraclub.org/rpg/calendar

Jan 5 (Sat) 29th Annual Bald Eagle Watch Clinton, Iowa, 9 AM

Join me for a fun day of programs which will feature lectures, videos, live bird of prey shows, transportation to lock #13 for actual eagle viewing and more. Community College in cooperation with the US Fish and Wildlife service and US Army Corps will be present this eagle watch. There will also be wildlife exhibits, door prizes and food/drinks. So join me for a fun day at the college. Optional dinner after the program at a local restaurant before heading home. Cost is \$3; Limit 15. Jan Bradford 847-455-2947 jbradford60131@sbcglobal.net

Feb 2 (Sat) Frozen Waterfalls and Eagle Watch Starved Rock, Utica, IL, 9 AM

Come join me for eagle watching, hike, and frozen waterfall viewing at Starved Rock. Yak Traks are required as trails could be snowy and/or icy. Cost is \$3 Limit 20 Assistant leader is Anatoly Libgober. Jan Bradford 847-455-2947 jbradford60131@sbcglobal.net

Feb 22-24 (Fri-Sun) Wolf Tracking in Northern Wisconsin

Come out for a winter weekend of wolf tracking activities in Northern Wisconsin. This unique winter outing will be held at Treehaven, an outdoor education center run by the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. Activities will include an orientation on wolf behavior, tracking, outdoor winter survival skills, fort building, and a wolf howl on Saturday night. Snowshoes and cross country skis will be used for exploring this beautiful site. Approximate donation of \$160 covers 2 nights lodging, 3 meals, all necessary

equipment and administrative fees. Limit 14. Leader is Mark Ginger. To sign up, contact Mark @ 224-588-5320. Assistant Leader needed. Chicago Group Outing

Saturday, April 20 (Sat) Spring Hike at Danada/Herrick Preserves, Wheaton, IL, 9:15 AM

Danada/Herrick is close to most of us. And this year I thought we would see it in the early spring time when hopefully the fruit trees will be in bloom and spring flowers will be abundant. Cost \$3 Limit 20 Co-Leader is Mike Way. Jan Bradford 847-455-2947 jbradford60131@sbcglobal.net

May 2-5 (Thu-Sun) 3-Day Backpack in Hoosier National Forest, IN

A moderately-paced spring adventure of backpacking, camping, and day-hiking in the forested hills of south-central Indiana. Covering about 7 miles on each of 3 days (Fri-Sun), we'll backpack into the forest on Friday, camping by a stream. We will spend the middle day in hiking and exploring this vast wilderness area, and backpack out on the third day. Trip fee of \$25 is due April 10th. Leader is Paul Saindon 815-310-0001 paul@pauls.us

Saturday, June 29 (Sat) Early Summer 'Rock Day' Canoe and Rock Farm, 9 AM

Come join us for a fun "Rock Day". We will canoe the Rock River and then go to the Rock Farm just to see what is new. Co-leader is Mike Way limit 20 people. Cost \$31/36. Jan Bradford 847-455-2947 jbradford60131@sbcglobal.net

**June 30 (Sun)
Solar Home, Nachusa and
Wind Mill Farm Tours, 10 AM**

Join me for a fun day of sun, colors, and wind energy. We will learn about construction, solar/geo-thermal, Illinois Prairie colors and electricity from wind mills. Cost is \$5. Co-leader is Mike Way. Assistant leader is Ron Cress. Limit 20. Jan Bradford 847-455-2947 jbradford60131@sbcglobal.net

Calendar of Events

**January 9
Living with Wild Life in DuPage County**

DuPage Environmental Summit
11:30 am – 5:00 pm
Benedictine University, Krasa Center

Registration and exhibits open at 11:30 am
Welcome and presentations begin at 1:00 pm
Presentations on rare and threatened wildlife, coyotes, birds, butterflies and nuisance wildlife.

**January 24
RPG Executive Committee Meeting**

7:30 pm
302 W. Windsor
Lombard

Contact Connie Schmidt for
more information:
630.234.3029

**January 27
Green Readin': No Impact Man**

2:00 pm,
Helen Plum Library
110 W. Maple, Lombard

**February 8
A Fundraiser to Fight Fracking**

7:30 pm
Warren Tavern
3 S. 540 2nd Street
Warrenville IL 60555

\$15 or \$25 couple

Checks made out to the River Prairie Group and mailed to:

Connie Schmidt
3 S. 501 Landon Dr.,
Warrenville, IL 60555

630 393 6276

**February 24
Green Readin': The Golden Spruce**

2:00 p.m.
Helen Plum Library,
110 West Maple Street, Lombard

**February 28
RPG Executive Committee Meeting**

7:30 pm
302 W. Windsor, Lombard
Contact Connie Schmidt
for more information: 630.234.3029

**March 24
Green Readin': The Big Thirst**

2:00 pm
Helen Plum Library
110 W. Maple
Lombard

**For up-to-date information, visit:
Illinois.Sierraclub.org/Outings
And the Activity Calendar at:
Illinois.Serraclub.org/RPG/Calendar**

Dupage County Takes a Major Step in Being Cool

At the urging of the River Prairie Group, DuPage County made an important commitment to sustainability in September when the full board approved the Illinois Cool Counties Resolution. DuPage has shown outstanding leadership in limiting the impact of climate change by being the first Illinois county to work with Sierra Club in setting greenhouse gas reduction targets.

"This extraordinary step towards sustainability reflects so well on DuPage County," said Linda Sullivan, River Prairie Group Political Chair. "I believe it would not have happened without the leadership of Chairman Dan Cronin who has understood the cost of reckless use of the earth and worked with Sierra Club towards sustainability since his days in the General Assembly. But the entire apparatus of county government can take credit for this from the DuPage Environmental Commission to the Environmental Committee and finally the extra ordinary vote of the County Board."

The Resolution calls for reducing emissions by 10% below 2007 levels by 2020 and 20% by 2030. Reductions in greenhouse gases, primarily carbon dioxide, will come from increasing energy conservation practices, implementing energy efficiency programs, utilizing renewable energy and improving the fuel efficiency of vehicles.

Becoming a Cool County follows the path to sustainability DuPage has been pursuing for the past several years in its own operations and aligns the county's



Left to Right: Dan Cronin, Chair DuPage County Board; Lonnie Morris, Chair Illinois Cool Cities; Linda Sullivan, Chair Sierra Club Lobby Committee; Jack Darin, Director Illinois Sierra Club; Jeff Redick, Chair, DuPage County Board Environmental Committee. Photo courtesy of DuPage County.

efforts with those currently underway in six Dupage Cool Cities.

A green roof has been installed on the administrative building, producing \$142,000 in annual savings through reduced heating and cooling demands.

The County's commitment to conserving energy, improving energy efficiency and native landscaping on their campus was recognized in 2011 with a Governor's Sustainability Award.

Additional information about Cool Cities is available at illinoiscoolcities.org

Visit Illinois Cool Cities on Facebook.

A Fundraiser to Fight Fracking Friday February 8, 2013

The River Prairie Group is at it again! A night of acoustic music is planned in support of an environmental cause. Our target is the threat of fracking in Illinois near the beautiful Shawnee National Forest. Fracking threatens underground water aquifers with dangerous chemicals and creates the risk of poisoning local drinking water. The Sierra Club supports legislation requiring the reporting of the chemicals used in the process to increase reliability for responsible clean up if water sources are impacted. Donations collected from this event will support this effort.

We welcome you once again to the Warren Tavern (3 S. 540 2nd Street, Warrenville IL 60555) just off I 88

and Winfield Rd. Admission is \$15 per person or two tickets for \$25. With your admission we offer one beverage of your choice (wine, beer, or soft drink) and light snacks. The event will take place on two floors of the historic tavern with the musician upstairs and seating available on the first and second floors.

This time our night of music may involve you. We are offering an OPEN MIC night for interested musicians with 3 song acoustic sets. Several musicians are already in the works so if you are interested, please call soon. To sign up, contact Connie Schmidt at 630 393 6276. We will provide some simple amplification, just bring instruments.

Continued on Next Page...

“Fight Fracking” Continued

Tickets for this event can be purchased and provided on a Will Call basis by sending a check to Connie Schmidt at 3 S. 501 Landon Dr., Warrenville, IL 60555. Please make the checks out to the River Prairie Group of the Sierra Club (RPG). We hope to see many old and new friends at this exciting event and are also planning other surprises including possible art and raffles to be announced as the date approaches. For further information, call 630 393 6276.

Act NOW to Save Starved Rock

Starved Rock is Illinois' premier park, offering visitors outstanding scenic hiking trails, opportunities to view eagles and other wildlife and learning experiences at a site of cultural and historical significance. Visiting Starved Rock provides a chance to escape the challenges of every day life and be immersed in the soul renewing beauty of natural landscapes.

A proposed sand mine at the eastern entrance of the park will change the landscape and pollute the air and water resources that nourish the park. Sand mining will disturb the land, shatter silence and destroy the scenery. The sand will be used for fracking, creating another round of environmental damage. Starved Rock is land preserved for your enjoyment and the state is on course to sacrifice it for mining. There are other places to mine sand, there is no other Starved Rock.

Sierra Club has followed this issue for months and thoroughly researched the mining impacts on the park and surrounding areas. There is still time to act and ask Governor Quinn to protect Starved Rock. You can print this letter and send it to Governor Quinn or write a personal letter asking him to preserve irreplaceable land, water and air. Here are suggested talking points if you opt to write a letter.

Mail letters to:

Gov. Pat Quinn
James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph
Suite 16-100
Chicago, IL 60601



One of the many scenic canyons at Starved Rock. Photo by Joe Dick of Shooting Stars.

Air

The proposed sand mine operations will increase the amounts of both particulate matter and respirable crystalline silica in the air. The blasting and processing of sandstone creates silica dust, which has been classified as a human lung carcinogen, causing silicosis. The dust contains particles that are so small they can't be seen with the naked eye, so light-weight they can stay in the air for a long time and can travel long distances. This means that not only are mine workers exposed, but this dust can be hazardous to nearby homeowners. In addition, many of the millions of visitors seeking fresh, clean air, who hike in the surrounding canyons at Starved Rock will be subjected to a diminished air quality. **IEPA needs to evaluate what adverse impact the mine will have on the health of mine workers, workers at the adjacent state park and on visitors to the park, especially those with chronic respiratory issues such as asthma.** This is unfortunately both a public health and economic issue that must be considered as part of the negative effects of the operation.

Mississippi Sand should be required to do monthly air quality monitoring, preferably fence-line monitoring and monitoring results should be made accessible to the public. Roads on the property should be paved and all sand processing and transportation should take place under cover to reduce air pollution.

Water

Mississippi Sand proposes to mine land that drains to Horseshoe Creek, which flows through Starved Rock

Continued on Page 14...

“Starved Rock” Continued From Page...

State Park before emptying into the Illinois River. Ultimately, the mining operation will completely destroy the tributary stream on site, creating a pit that would remain as a “lake” as part of its reclamation plan. Constructing a lake from the mining quarry will undermine the current hydrology and aquatic functions of the streams and underlying hydrology of the site. During operation of the mine, the pit will create a cone of depression, lowering the water table, and capture flows that now make their way downstream. **A thorough analysis of how the proposed pit will impact flows in Horseshoe Creek is needed as part of the IDNR’s analysis of the short and long term impacts of the proposed mining.**

The discharge from the mine may contain high levels of suspended solids, a different pH, a different dissolved oxygen content, and a higher concentration of total dissolved solids, all of which can greatly impact stream health and aquatic life. Silty water can make it harder for fish and macroinvertebrates to find food, clog their gills and prevent egg and larval development. The sediment fills spaces in stream beds that aquatic organisms could have used for homes. **An individual NPDES permit should be required and a construction permit from the Bureau of Water should work to prevent pollution during the mines initial development.**

The mine will permanently destroy water features on the site, including wetlands and streams. Ernat’s Marsh, a rare salt marsh and INAI site will be destroyed. The loss of these wetland features will remove the functions they currently provide in terms of holding and filtering water before it flows off the mine site and into Horseshoe Creek. Mississippi Sand’s flood engineer stated that “the quality of the storm water leaving the site will likely be better than the quality of the water that leaves the site today.” This is most certainly false. Wetlands, such as those currently present on the site, discharge higher quality water than lakes because they filter nutrients as well sediments. **IEPA and IDNR should not issue permits which allow the mining of Ernat’s Marsh, an irreplaceable rare salt marsh.**

During mining operations, we understand that Mississippi Sand plans to discharge wastewater into Horseshoe Creek which flows into Starved Rock State Park. Park visitors currently enjoy the beauty of the clear waters that flow in the creek. Mine discharge water

will diminish their experience of the natural beauty they have come to expect to see when visiting the park. No chemical additives should be allowed to be discharged into the waters which flow into the park. **IEPA should look carefully at Mississippi Sands discharge plans and ask that Horseshoe Creek be protected.**

Pollution of groundwater resources is another concern. Mississippi Sand will be mining the St. Peter sandstone formation, which holds water and is used as a source for drinking water supplies throughout northern Illinois. The mining operation will create a more open connection between the surface of the land and groundwater resources. The potential for groundwater contamination will be increased from spills of chemicals and fuels used by the mining operation. **We would like to see detailed procedures that Mississippi Sand will use to ensure that groundwater is not contaminated during day to day activities.**

Starved Rock State Park

In issuing its mining permit, IDNR must “consider the short and long term impact of the proposed mining on vegetation, wildlife, fish, land use, land values, local tax base, the economy of the region and the State, employment opportunities, air pollution, water pollution, soil contamination, noise pollution and drainage.” 62 Ill. Adm. Code 300.70(a)

IDNR needs to consider the long term impacts of the proposed mining on the land use of the park, including how the mining could adversely affect tourism at the park and in turn how that will affect the local tax base, the economy of the region and the State and employment opportunities.

The mine will be a 7-day, 24-hour operation. Besides affecting tourism at the park, this will also affect wildlife at the park. **IDNR needs to consider the long term impacts of noise, dust and light pollution on wildlife.**

IDNR did not participate in LaSalle County’s hearings on the proposed mine, despite being an adjacent landowner. The Department did not represent the citizens of the state to protect OUR lands.

IDNR needs to establish a mechanism by which it can both serve its role as the permitting agency for activities such as mining and oil and gas drilling while also standing up as the protector of our state’s lands.

Save Starved Rock! Say 'NO' to Mississippi Sand's mining permit



Dear Governor Quinn,

LaSalle County's natural areas and Starved Rock and all of our state parks are unique assets that not only offer a chance to experience Illinois' natural heritage, but are also provide a strong economic engine for neighboring areas. The frac sand mine proposal jeopardizes the unique natural resources and the attractiveness of this outdoor recreation hub.

Starved Rock State Park and the rare salt marshes at the proposed mine site provide valuable habitat for a wide array of plant and animal life that will be directly and indirectly impacted by mining activity.

Furthermore, over two million people visit Starved Rock State Park each year, providing LaSalle County businesses with customers, and local governments with revenues. This positive economic activity is based entirely on the experience of the visitor as they step out of their car into

the beautiful canyons and listen to the sound of the waterfalls cascade. An active mine brings loud machinery, dust pollution and ceaseless truck traffic.

A mine adjacent to the park won't just scare off wildlife, but will lower park visitation rates and diminish the economic benefits LaSalle County receives thanks to its beautiful natural areas.

Jobs and economic development are needed. However, the location of this proposed mine threatens Starved Rock State Park, one of the state's most treasured places.

In light of these environmental and economic impacts I urge you to protect Starved Rock and say no to the frac sand mine.

Sincerely,

X _____