

## Celebrate the Veto!

by Sharon Rolek, Conservation Liaison

During an "eleventh-hour" announcement, Governor Quinn vetoed two bills (SB3388 and SB1927) that would have allowed two coal-to-gas plants to be built in the state. Gov. Quinn signaled his support for cleaner uses of Illinois coal but said he would not support the technology at the expense of consumers. He said "During these difficult times, it is tempting to pursue short-term solutions. But, as Governor, it is my job to ensure that the decisions we make today benefit Illinoisans for years to come. Higher energy prices for consumers and additional burdens for businesses will not help our State achieve long-term economic success ... Our priorities must be economic growth, consumer protection, environmental quality and a comprehensive approach to energy generation and efficiency."

During the past two months, community and environmental groups opposed to the plant on the southeast side of Chicago flooded the Governor's office with postcards, phone calls and handwritten letters asking him to veto SB3388. And, although the media was contacted, only the Chicago Tribune reported about the rally at the Thompson Center where 100 participants chanted against "sweetheart deals for coal." They expressed concerns that the plant would add more pollution to the neighborhood that extends from South Chicago to Hegewisch. Their air already contains the state's highest levels of toxic heavy metals chromium and cadmium, as well as sulfates that can trigger asthma attacks and increase the risk of heart disease.

As the Lake Calumet area continues to be assaulted by toxic or dangerous "plans" (see gun range article), environmental leaders took time to "Celebrate the Veto" at the Calumet Stewardship Initiative office. Champagne was served and toasts were made to the fine efforts of so many!

Discussion ensued about follow-up of Town Hall meetings to keep the area residents aware and involved. Since State Rep. Marlow Colvin, who sponsored SB3388, promised to revise the bill for later approval, he and Senator Donne Trotter, also a supporter of the bill, will be contacted to discuss alternatives to this method of energy generation. Becki Clayborn, Regional Representative for Sierra Club's Midwest Clean Energy Campaign, stated how we need to Support the Chicago Clean Power Ordinance to strengthen our position.

As a natural extension to highlight the Lake Calumet's industrial history, the first "Toxics to Treasures Tour" this year will take place in April. Call 773-646-0436 for information.

## Ford Calumet Environmental Center in Jeopardy

By Sharon Rolek, Conservation Liaison

During an Update Meeting by the Chicago Department of Environment on March 15, Aaron Durnbaugh, Deputy Commissioner, stated that the city could not afford to build the original design by the Studio Gang for the Ford Calumet Environmental Center. Many delays by the City of Chicago have caused costs to escalate beyond a feasible amount. Proposed dates for "breaking ground" have come and gone for several years. Now there is a shortage of funds. Mr. Durnbaugh indicated that the (award-winning) design would be scaled back.



*Design concept - Ford Calumet Environmental Center*

*Image from Studio Gang website*

The board of the Calumet Ecological Park Association (CEPA) has written a letter to the Mayor's Office and Chicago Department of Environment (DOE) with objections to the proposed change. Other environmental leaders are waiting to see what the DOE proposes to change.

Could this sudden change in plans have anything to do with the proposed Outdoor Gun Range that the city wants to build nearby?

*Editor's note: To learn more about the proposed Gun Range, see Sharon's article entitled "Outdoor Gun Range vs. Important Bird Area" on the next page.*

# Outdoor Gun Range vs. Important Bird Area

by Sharon Rolek, Conservation Liaison

The Chicago Police Department and the City of Chicago propose to build an Outdoor Gun Firing Range, Arsenal and Training Facility next to the proposed Ford Calumet Environmental Center. Also nearby are Whitford Pond and Hegewisch Marsh, excellent habitats for endangered birds and wildlife. The selected 33 acres, located on top of eight feet of landfill at 2000 E. 134<sup>th</sup> Street, is just west of the Calumet River. While Department of Environment representatives could not find statistics about the resident wildlife on-line, conservationists have long known the value of this area (i.e., National Audubon Society Important Bird Area, etc.)

The police state that this "regional" facility can only be situated at this site; whereas, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) admits that the police never asked about any other site. The 33-acre site is owned by the MWRD who will lease the property for 39 years to the City of Chicago for \$10 per year. The acceptance of the lease was on the MWRD agenda for March but was later removed. Speculation abounds regarding the reason for the change.

Since learning of this plan in October 2010, the environmental community and residents have been requesting a wildlife study of the area to support many concerns. In a letter to the Mayor of Chicago and the Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department, ten leadership organizations respectfully requested ... to allow Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and MWRD consultants to conduct a baseline wildlife survey, not only on the proposed site of the outdoor firing range, but also on the natural areas potentially affected by the activities of the range. The letter stated: "The national significance of bird habitat, the millions of dollars committed to Hegewisch Marsh and the Ford Environmental Center, and a decade of community planning in the area call for a more comprehensive land use analysis before committing to building the outdoor firing range at this location." The letter sent February 9, 2011 has not received any response.

For more details, log onto the SETF blog site: [www.setaskforce.blogspot.com](http://www.setaskforce.blogspot.com). To read Kari Lydersen's article, "Gun Range Near Birds is Opposed", visit [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) and search for the article name.

## End-of-Winter Hike

by Connie Heinrich, Editor

Well, it wasn't quite the end of winter but several intrepid members of the Sauk-Calumet Group and the Midewin Tallgrass Prairie Alliance took to Midewin's trails on the second to the last day in January. We met at the Iron Bridge Trailhead and hiked across that iron bridge to get to the West Side Trail. This trail is the first "real" trail at Midewin; the others are either old roads from the Arsenal days or mowed paths. The West Side Trail was designed to be a trail that would highlight some of the natural features of Midewin's west side. It winds its way for about four miles until it ends (for now) at a wetland area. Eventually it will cross the wetland and connect with the Grass Frog Trail which runs through Midewin's first restored section of prairie.

Our goal was to hike to Prairie Creek which is about three miles down the trail, then hike back in time for lunch at Hayden's Crossing, a local dining establishment in nearby Wilmington. Although the snow on the trail wasn't deep, it did slow down our progress so lunch was a little later than expected. Thankfully, Carol Malnar brought a large bag of freshly baked cookies along on the hike.

We evidently weren't the only creatures who were thinking spring. To our amazement, we spotted a spider scurrying in the snow. Then we saw a tiny fly that didn't

look at all uncomfortable even though the temperature was in the thirties. Seeing the fly answered our question as to what a spider would have to eat on a winter day. We had hoped to see some larger wildlife that day, but there was no sign of the usually abundant deer, turkey and coyote. It was still great to get outside with the anticipation that spring was not far away.



Photo by Jerry Heinrich

Cookie break on the bridge over Prairie Creek

# Sauk- Calumet Legislative Activities

by Mary Lubertozzi, Political Education Chair

We are working on holding meetings this spring with our state legislators to educate them on the Illinois Chapter legislative priorities for this year. The Sauk-Calumet Group encompasses a large geographic area, and ideally we would contact all of the sixteen House members and seven Senate members in districts where we have a significant number of Sierra Club members. So far, we are reaching out to legislators with whom we have had the most contact in the past.

I want to especially thank Lois Lauer, Bernie Kopera, Rich Treptow and Al Sturgis for working with me to hold meetings with these legislators. However, we would be happy to have more members join us. We find it particularly helpful in meeting with legislators if at least some of the meeting participants are constituents of the district in order to demonstrate that the issues have constituent support. Please contact me at 708-747-1359 or at [larmarke@att.net](mailto:larmarke@att.net) if you are interested in being part of our legislative efforts.

The Sierra Club priority bills this year are focusing on energy, clean water, and budget issues. For full details on the bills we are following, please check the Illinois Sierra Club website and review its Legislative Issues page and links.

With strong support from local members, we have had a number of successes in recent years. Continued education of our legislators will hopefully produce continued success in improving the environment in Illinois.

## Earth Month Events

Be sure to celebrate Earth Day by attending one of the many events planned in your local area.

**April 16 – Celebrate Water** at the Four Rivers Environmental Center – McKinley Woods.  
12 – 4:00

**April 29 – Earth Day: Woods Music Concert**  
Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve  
5 p.m.

**April 30 – Celebrate Earth: Can You Dig It?**  
Plum Creek Nature Center  
10:00 – 4:00

See the Forest Preserves of Will County website for more information: [www.reconnectwithnature.org](http://www.reconnectwithnature.org)

# Outings

by Steve Baker, Outings Chair

Spring is here and it's time to get outside.

## Apr. 16, Sunday:

Canoe/kayak the Mazon River before they change the name! (Really) This is a beautiful little stream that usually floats in the Spring. Fortunately that's when the wildflowers are in bloom along the bank.

## May 30, Monday (Memorial Day):

Our traditional float on the Vermillion River takes us past limestone bluffs on clear water.

## June 25, Saturday

Let's go riding! We'll explore the Wauponsee Trail, stopping along the way for giant burgers at Quigley's Pub.

All outings are suitable for advanced beginner riders and paddlers. You will need to provide your own canoe, kayak or bike. For the float trips, bring a lunch and dry clothes (just in case). Advance registration is required.

Contact Steve Baker at [trinitysb@msn.com](mailto:trinitysb@msn.com) for more information.



## Volunteer Workdays

If you enjoy working outdoors, please consider volunteering in one or more of your local natural areas. Contact information for workday schedules is listed below:

**Cook County Forest Preserves** [www.fpdcc.com](http://www.fpdcc.com)

**Will County Forest Preserves** [www.fpdwc](http://www.fpdwc)

**Midwin Nat'l. Tallgrass Prairie** [www.fs.fed.us/mntp](http://www.fs.fed.us/mntp)

**Bartel Grassland** - Dick Riner 708-720-5683

**Kickapoo Prairie** - Eileen Klees 773-238-4221

**Orland Grassland** - Suzanne Koglin 708-349-4913

**Powderhorn Prairie** - Alice Brandon 312-356-9990

Remember to dress for the weather, wear sturdy shoes or boots, and bring work gloves.

### Letters to the Editor:

Letters on content within the Sauk-Calumet newsletter should be sent to the editor at: [sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org](mailto:sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org)

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

## Sauk-Calumet Group People You Should Know

Steve Baker* Acting Chair / Outings	815-485-5273
John Field* Treasurer / Web Site	630-852-8202
Connie Heinrich* Newsletter	815-476-6171
Jerry Heinrich* Conservation, Co-chair (West), Midewin Liaison	815-476-6171
Georganne Higgins* Membership	815-936-9040
Lois Lauer* Programs / Publicity	708-923-1550
Mary Lubertozzi* Political Education	708-747-1359
Carol Strand* Secretary	708-333-6474
Paul Strand* Conservation Co-chair (East), Programs	708-333-6474
Sharon Rolek Conservation Liaison, Calumet Region	773-646-0990
Mike Rzepka River Watch Program	708-532-1419
Rich Treptow Publications	708-747-0649

\*Denotes an elected member of the Executive Committee

## Sauk-Calumet Program Schedule

Meetings are held at 7:15 p.m. on the second Monday of every month at the Frankfort Library with the exception of June, July and August. All meetings are free and open both to Sierra Club members and to the public.

The Frankfort Library is located at 21119 Pfeiffer Road.

### Apr. 11 Kankakee Sands Ecosystem

Marianne Hahn of the Friends of the Kankakee will speak about the greater Kankakee Sands ecosystem and the efforts that are underway to protect this rich habitat.

### May. 9 Bartel Grassland

Conservation steward Dick Riner will speak about this 585-acre wet mesic prairie restoration project in Matteson and his efforts to preserve its rich birding habitat.

### June, July & August No meeting

### Sept. 12 What's the Story of Your Food?

Rich Treptow and Lois Lauer will show and discuss the inspirational film *Nourish*. In the film you will learn about the current food revolution that is awakening us to learn about the source and quality of our food. You will also learn about the impact of our food system and the benefits of organic farming, fair-trade products and community supported agriculture.

## Native Plant Sale

### A Midewin Tallgrass Prairie Alliance Fundraiser

**Day:** Saturday, May 21, 2011

**Time:** 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**Offering:** Native forbs, grasses and shrubs

**Where:** Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie  
30239 S. State Route 53, Wilmington, IL

**Location:** On Route 53, approx. 12 miles south of Joliet  
or 2 miles north of Wilmington

**Contact :** Jerry Heinrich at [g.heinrich@sbcglobal.net](mailto:g.heinrich@sbcglobal.net)  
or 815-476-6171  or visit Midewin's  
website at [www.fs.fed.us/mntp](http://www.fs.fed.us/mntp)