



Sauk-Calumet Group

August 2022 Newsletter Volume 41, Issue 2

Kankakee River Kayak Trip

by Dorelle Ackermann & Lois Lauer



Photo by Reeds Canoe Rentals

On a sunny, yet cool May Day, with the wind at our backs sixteen hardy Sauk Calumet Sierrans set off in kayaks to explore the Kankakee River. Our trip began with safety and paddling instructions provided by Marlena Bertolozzi from the River Prairie group. We were grateful to Marlena for leading our group of both novice and experienced kayakers. We had a leisurely trip, no hurrying, just going with the flow, paddling along and enjoying each other's company. A fun day for all! Here is what one participant, Jan Musil, had to say about the trip. "Spent the day with a delightful group, several of them strangers to me before we began, but friends by time we reached our exit point. While the weather was a bit overcast and cool, and the water even cooler, I kept saying to myself (or a higher power), "please don't let me tip, please don't let me tip." Ended the day successfully dry. :-) As lovers of nature, we thoroughly enjoyed sharing this experience with numerous birds including Egrets, Great Blue Herons, and songbirds as well as the turtles enjoying the sun along with us. The snake at the end of the trip was an added treat. Let's make this a yearly event.



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Sierra Club Political Endorsements

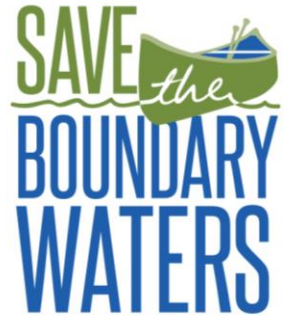
by Lois Lauer

For over 50 years, Sierra Club has been involved in endorsing political candidates. This practice allows us to help elect environmental champions, and then to give us an established connection with our legislators as they make decisions on environmental issues. With the Illinois Primary season over, our attention is turned to the Midterm Election on November 8th. Some candidates have already been endorsed and many more will be in the coming weeks. Look for information in the glossy election booklet you'll receive via U.S. Mail in October or check anytime at <https://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/politics>. And please be sure to vote. Our votes are our power.... let's be sure to use them to protect this precious planet!

Boundary Waters Wilderness Under Threat from Copper Mining

by Lois Lauer

I recently returned from my 22nd wilderness canoe trip in the Boundary Waters Canoe Wilderness along the Minnesota/Canadian border. The Boundary Waters is America's most visited wilderness area, consisting of 1.1 million acres of roadless wilderness with nearly 2000 lakes, connected by overland portage trails on which canoeists carry their canoes and packs. The Boundary Waters is "my place," where I feel most at one with the natural world. Tragically, the Boundary Waters Wilderness is at risk, due to proposals to build Sulfide-Ore Copper Mines just outside the wilderness area. The mines threaten to pollute the nearby waters with sulfuric acid, heavy metals, and sulfates. The waters outside the wilderness of course are connected by streams and rivers to the waters inside the wilderness, allowing the polluted waters to flow into the pristine lakes of the Boundary Waters wilderness. Major fights have been underway in the courts for several years, with varying degrees of success in delaying but not permanently stopping these mines from operating near the wilderness. This spring, Minnesota Congresswoman Betty McCollum introduced legislation (HR 2794, The Boundary Waters Wilderness Protection and Pollution Prevention Act) to permanently protect these waters adjacent to the wilderness area. Kudos to six Illinois Congresspersons who have co-sponsored the bill so far: Jan Schakowski (IL9), Sean Casten (IL06), "Chuy" Garcia (IL04), Marie Newman (IL03), Bobby Rush (IL01), and Cheri Bustos (IL17). More information available at SavetheBoundaryWaters.org



For over a century, the Forest Preserves of Cook County has been protecting our water sources, air quality, and wildlife habitats by restoring and preserving public land. Sierra Club has endorsed the Vote YES initiative which will be on Cook County ballots in the November 8th election. Voting for this proposal will restore and expand forest preserve land for residents to enjoy for generations to come. Please Vote YES!

Old Plank Road Trail Anniversary Celebration

by Lois Lauer

On July 19, 1997, the Old Plank Road Trail officially opened, thanks to the dedication and vision of some folks who saw the potential of this 22-mile biking/walking trail from Joliet to Chicago Heights. Twenty-five years later, on July 19, 2022, some of the original trail promoters gathered along the trail for a celebratory bike ride and picnic. Sauk Calumet Sierrans Steve Baker, Carl Glassford, and Mike Rzepka were among those who worked the hardest and longest to get the trail established and were there to celebrate that accomplishment this month! Thanks to Steve, Carl, and Mike, and for their significant part in this amazing gift!

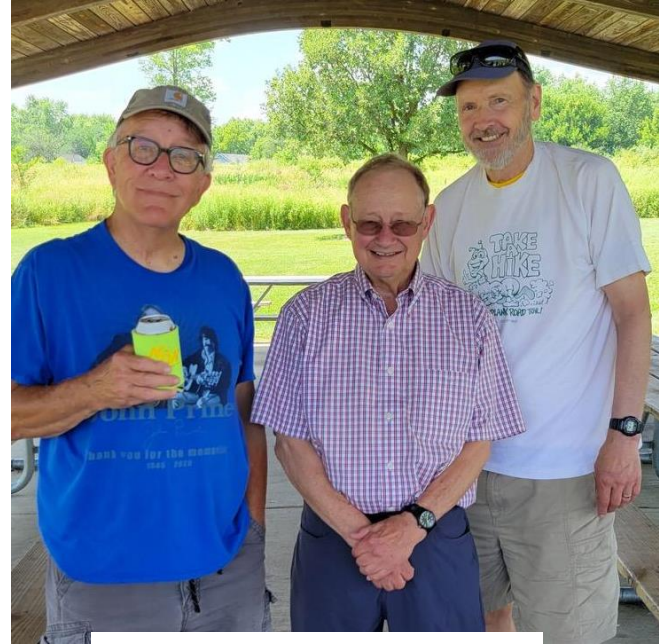


Photo by Sally Wieclaw

Jerry Heinrich Leads Hike at Iron Bridge Trailhead

by Patrick Coffey



Photo by Ed Max

Thirteen of us came together at the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie on the morning of June 12th to try to get a glimpse of the bison. It was a cool, breezy day with some cloud cover - a perfect day to be out on the prairie. Jerry Heinrich, former President of the Midewin Alliance, led the hike and took us through the trails around the Iron Bridge Trailhead. We had hoped to see the bison and their young, but the bison were hiding out as they sometimes do. Fortunately, Jerry could tell us about the prairie plants and those troublesome invasives. He also told us of the ongoing efforts to restore native prairie to Midewin. Jerry also announced his retirement as President of the Midewin Alliance. He shared some of the history of the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie which he has been involved with from the beginning. Other leaders on the hike were, Ed Max, from the River Prairie Group. Ed is a naturalist and certified leader of hikes for Sierra Club. He loves prairies. Also present was Portia Gallegos, from the Sauk-Calumet Group, who works with our group on

activism, primarily in the Joliet area - on issues such as coal ash, affordable water, and warehouse worker rights. She has in previous years worked with the Midewin Alliance.



The November Election is Just Around the Corner!

There are less than three months until the November Election! Did you know that you don't have to wait until election day to cast your vote? Registered voters can now apply for an official vote by mail ballot via the Illinois Board of Elections' [online application](#). The Board of Elections will begin mailing official ballots to voters who request them on September 29. Not sure if you're registered to vote in Illinois? [Check your voter registration status here](#). It's never too early to plan to vote!

A Life Well Lived

by Gregg Ott

Last February, I received an email from Lois Lauer about the passing of a very popular fellow Sauk-Calumet Sierra Club member, Al Sturges. I never met Al, but that was about to change. I also received emails from Ride Illinois and Active Transportation Alliance about the passing of Al Sturges. I soon discovered that someone I had never met has been responsible for the biking and hiking trails that I have enjoyed here in Illinois. Al spent his 87 years working with many organizations that fought to create better and safer trails for everyone to enjoy. After reading so many wonderful tributes for Al, I had mixed emotions. I was happy I got to know about him but sad that I never met him. So, this is my chance to thank him for everything that he has done for all of us. Thank you, Al and enjoy your time biking for eternity. Here are some tribute links: [ATA Tribute](#), [Ride Illinois Tribute](#), [Family Tribute](#)



Photo from Ride Illinois

Why Environmental Volunteering is Good for Your Health and Happiness

by Sandi Schwartz

As environmentalists fighting to improve our planet, we are attuned to the multiple crises we are facing, whether it be climate change, single-use plastics, species extinction, overdevelopment, and more. It can be quite the uphill battle to try to save the planet, and this can sometimes cause us to feel big emotions like stress, anxiety, anger, and even despair.

However, the good news is that by getting involved and volunteering, we can feel happier, healthier, and calmer. And there's science to prove this! When we volunteer in our community, we can experience a physiological change called a "helper's high". This euphoric sensation happens when our brain releases endorphins, making us feel elated and excited. Giving back also stimulates the vagus nerve, which is linked to the production of oxytocin, a hormone that soothes us. As a result, we experience positive health changes including less stress and a boost in happiness.

Volunteering can also help us stay healthy and live longer, improving physical health such as lowering blood pressure. According to research, volunteers are happier and healthier than non-volunteers, and volunteering later in life can have a bigger impact on health than even exercising or eating well. Other benefits of volunteering include experiencing more compassion, feeling more connected to our community, gaining confidence and personal satisfaction, feeling empowered, having a purpose, being more grateful for what we have in life, and viewing the world from a broader perspective—all linked to greater joy and reduced stress.

Additionally, spending time in and around nature is beneficial to our health and well-being. The natural world offers solace and comfort, calming when we are stressed and uplifting our mood when we feel down. In fact, spending time outdoors volunteering enhances positive emotions and increases general health. Much of this is due to nature's many healing attributes, such as vivid colors, invigorating scents, attractive patterns, soothing sounds, fresh air, and awe-inspiring scenes.

Sierra Club provides a positive outlet to make a difference and feel better at the same time. Whether you participate in a cleanup, planting, or trail maintenance locally as a group or create your own [Team Sierra](#) initiative to raise funds to support Sierra Club's work for climate, wildlife, and wild places, there are endless opportunities for environmental volunteering through our organization. You might also have a local [Inspiring Connections Outdoors \(ICO\)](#) program to get involved with, which empowers youth from communities with limited access to connect and reconnect to the outdoors. ICO helps create the next generation of environmental justice and social justice leaders through building community and increasing exposure to outdoor recreation, advocacy, and leadership training.

What other ways can you and your group get involved with environmental volunteering to feel happier and calmer? To discover additional ideas and to learn more about why nature is so healing, check out the book [Finding Ecohappiness](#).

Sauk Calumet Sierra Club Group Meetings Schedule

Meetings are held at 7:15 pm on the second Monday of every month except for June, July and August. All meetings are free and open both to Sierra Club members and to the public. **All meetings will take place via Zoom. An email will be sent the week before each meeting, asking you to RSVP. A second email will be sent to those who plan to attend with the instructions and connection information for our Zoom conference, which you can access from a computer, tablet, or smartphone. We will send details by email about those programs when the programs are confirmed, and they will also be listed on the [Sauk Calumet Sierra Club website](#) and [Sauk Calumet Group Facebook page](#).



September 12 - "Jordan River Farm - What it's All About." Nia White, director of the Jordan River Farm in Pembroke Township, will talk to us about the farm, its purpose, and ecological objectives. Learn more about how Sauk Calumet supports the farm and what it does in Pembroke Township.



October 10 - "CEJA - How it Can Help You Save Money and Go Greener." Learn more about the Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA) and how it can help you, your business, and your community cut carbon emissions and create a greener future. CEJA Ambassadors and the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) will answer your questions and present more information about CEJA.



November 14 - "Supporting Healthy Agriculture." "Natural", "ecological", "better for the planet." How do you know which labels at the grocery store are accurate, and when you're being greenwashed? Sauk-Cal's own Sam Bretz will talk to us about how to support agriculture that's better for the planet, and how to evaluate all those labels so that you truly get the products and food you want.



December 12 - "Climate Changes in Photographs." We'll see photographs that document climate change and find out more about the professionals recording the natural world.



January 9, 2023 - "Members Slide Night." Whether it's your garden or the Galapagos, we want to see your outdoors photos. [Contact Portia](#) and let her know you'll be showing us your slides.

Letters to the Editor:

Letters on content within the Sauk-Calumet newsletter should be sent to the editor at:

sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org

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

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The Sierra Club from the national level down to the local groups does so many positive things to help protect our planet. So, let's get outdoors and enjoy our beautiful world together. Click below for Sierra Club Illinois outings.



Remember to check our Sauk-Calumet Group website for current information and news updates on issues relevant to Illinois.

[Click here for our website.](#)

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