



# Sauk-Calumet Group

February 2018 Newsletter Volume 37, Issue 1

## Hope and Action

By Lois Lauer

Jan 20 was the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Chicago Women's March. Some of us from Sierra Club went down to Chicago and found, as we did last year, a day filled with purpose, commitment, and empowerment. So many causes were represented and so many people (est. 300,000!) and yet once again everyone was courteous and kind and good humored. It felt good to be a part of a movement, feeling that our presence, like everyone else's, was a part of the whole, and that the whole was even greater than the sum of the parts because of how we all inspired each other, and because of the ripples that will extend far beyond the march.

For many of us, this past year has been one of sticking our necks out in lots of new ways (marches, petitions, letters, phone calls, meetings with elected officials, letters to newspapers, participation in activist groups, etc.). Our current President and Congress have been chiseling away at the progress our country has made in environmental issues and so much more. The past year has seemed overwhelming at times. But I've found that taking action brings hope. Just getting on board with any little action seems to make believers of us. If we can do a little bit, maybe others will too. And together we can do so much.



*Photo by Allison Hunter on Postcards for America*

The theme of the Jan 20 march was "March to the Polls!" The March primaries and the November election are opportunities to make our voices heard, by voting for candidates committed to respect for the environment and for people, and by helping to campaign for those candidates either actively or even by just talking to folks we know. We have to speak. Sometimes we turtles have to stick our necks out a little, and

when we do, we might just discover a little brighter world!

Illinois Primary Elections are Tuesday, March 20<sup>th</sup>. It's our opportunity to vote for a cleaner brighter world! Expect an email from Sierra Club or check the Illinois Sierra Club website for endorsements of pro-environment candidates, before you go to the polls!

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**Once Fen Is Gone, It's Gone**

By Patrick Coffey



*Photo taken by Andy Neill, who will be speaking about the fen at the April 9 Sauk Calumet meeting.*

The Sauk-Calumet Group, a group of the Illinois Sierra Club, would like to make its views known on the proposed building of a road through the natural areas owned by Joliet Junior College. Within those natural areas just north of the campus lies a rare geological and biological formation known as a fen. A fen is a rare wetland area which is alkaline and which harbors rare plants and animals. The Illinois Natural Areas Inventory has estimated that there are only about 350 acres of fens surviving in the entire State of Illinois. The Sauk-Calumet Group wants the Joliet Junior College President and Board of Trustees to know that we would greatly mourn the loss of this highly significant site, if it were lost. We ask you, at the very least, to require the developer, Cullinan Properties, to reroute the road so that it does not impact this unique and valuable site.

The Joliet Junior College's fen contains an assortment of rare plants and animals that depend upon it for survival. Among the plants growing there are Blue Flag Iris, Fen Betony, Fen Thistle, Great Angelica, Great Blue Lobelia, Michigan Lily, Swamp Marigold, Turtlehead, and Tussock Sedge. Several of these are what are termed conservative species meaning that they only thrive at high quality sites, sites not greatly impacted by human interference. Among the animals that make the fen home are Bluebirds, Cricket Frogs, Meadow Voles, Queen Snakes,

Short-Tail Shrews, and White Footed Mice. What is to become of such creatures, if we, their caretakers, continue to appropriate their habitat for our own use?

It has been suggested that another area can be created to compensate for the loss of this site, but this disregards the unique qualities of the site, both geologically and biotically. Geologically, the site was formed by glaciers such that the waters coming into the fen now percolate through the limestone rock, making it alkaline. The only way to reproduce such a formation would be to bring back the glacier. And, as we have said, this site harbors several conservative species which are not likely to survive in another (man-made) habitat. To think that a comparable site can be put together with some hydrology, some suitable soil, and some seed is, actually, unrealistic about what nature can and cannot do.

We understand that some of the areas surrounding the fen have some management issues, although the fen itself is in good condition. But this is not necessarily a bad thing. Prairie and savanna restoration science is still in its infancy, and these areas can function as a great living laboratory for faculty and students to work with and learn from. Especially for JJC's biology students, but also for the entire student body that visits the site, Joliet Junior College's natural areas represent a living connection to nature that can continue to teach and inspire for as long as these areas are protected and managed.

We at Sierra Club take our responsibility as advocates for the preservation of nature very seriously. We have been to the site and have had explained to us some of the management issues mentioned above. This is indeed a significant site, one whose beauty and rare natural diversity commend itself to us as something well worth preserving in perpetuity. In this time of increasing human development, areas like this are becoming all that much more valuable, not only due to their rarity and the critical habitat they provide for plants and animals, but also for the recreational and spiritual services they provide to us who visit them.

Finally, we would like the President and the Board to know that we understand that this is no easy decision. We realize that the College would benefit from the funds that would be gained with the sale of the land to Cullinan Properties. These funds could be used for programs, or equipment, or facilities that would benefit Joliet Junior College students. We just ask the President and Board to remember that, most likely in just a few years, all the funds from this sale will be expended and all the benefits that can be derived from them will be used up. But at that point the fen will be gone forever. We think that would be a tragedy not only for the living things that inhabit the fen but also for the College, its students, and anyone who chooses to visit the site.

Respectfully, Patrick Coffey, Political Chair, Sauk-Calumet Group of the Illinois Sierra Club

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## A Green Resource for Will County Residents

The Will County Green website provides a treasure trove of "Green" information and services mainly for residents of Will County. Although there is plenty of good information for anyone interested in protecting our natural resources and our planet. Click [Will County Green](#) for the website or [Will County Green FB](#) for their Facebook page.

*Editor's Note: If you know of any websites that support the same issues as our Sierra Club, please send the links to [sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org](mailto:sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org)*

# Community Habitat Symposium

By Georganne Higgins

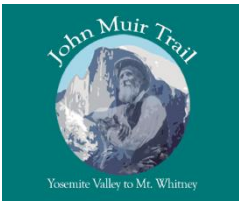


The Kankakee Torrent Chapter will host the Community Habitat Symposium on February 24 & 25, 2018 at the Joliet Junior College in Joliet. Openlands Executive Director Gerald W. Adelmann will be our keynote speaker. Under his guidance, Openlands launched the 21st Century Open Space Plan, which called for expanded parklands, greenways, and trails in northeastern Illinois and the surrounding region. The symposium will have two tracks. At Home with Native Plants will focus on issues relevant to home, suburban, and community habitat. The second track, Acres of Prairie, Savanna and Woods, focuses on similar issues related to land management on a larger scale. Cost: \$30 per person by February 9, \$35 afterwards. There is a limit of 125 people. [Click here for more information and to register.](https://il-ops.org/2018-community-habitat-symposium/)

## Sauk Calumet Sierra Club Group Meeting Schedule

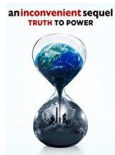
Meetings are held at 7:15 pm on the second Monday of every month at the Frankfort Library (21119 Pfeiffer Rd, Frankfort, IL) with the exception of June, July and August. All meetings are free and open both to Sierra Club members and to the public.

### February 12: Backpacking the John Muir Trail



Mel Tracy and his 17 year old daughter Molly will share slides and tales of their joy filled 250 mile backpack trip this summer hiking north on California's John Muir Trail from 30 miles south of Mt. Whitney to Yosemite Valley. Their three week experience included snow, then floodwaters, and finally fire danger.

### March 12: "An Inconvenient Sequel" Note: 100 min. film will start at 6:45 Come early if you can!



Al Gore's newest documentary about climate change is an informative, inspirational, passionate appeal that shows just how close we are to a real energy revolution. There will be a discussion following the movie.

### April 9: Save the Joliet Fen!



Professor Andy Neill from Joliet Junior College will discuss and show slides of the college's rare fen habitat and the efforts to save it from a developer's proposed road.

### May 14: Will County: Warehouses and Freight



Sierra Club's Will County Conservation Organizer Ann Baskerville will address the impact of the expanding profusion of huge warehouses in Will County and the resulting freight traffic noise and smog pollution and road congestion.

There are no monthly meetings in June, July and August.

### 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

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**Steve Baker** 815 485 5273

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**Maribeth Meaux\*** 708 712 5097

Community Activism

*\*Denotes an elected member of the Executive Committee*

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 out there and enjoy our beautiful world. 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 below for our website.



We are also available on Facebook. You can click

<https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubSaukCalumet/>

to find us on Facebook.