



# Sauk-Calumet Group

January - June 2017 Issue - Volume 36, Issue 1

## The Election and the Challenge Ahead

*by Lois Lauer, Sierra Club Sauk Calumet Chairperson*

As Sierra Club members and as Americans, we witnessed a stunning election last fall. As the chair of Sauk Calumet group, I feel a responsibility to offer some comments in light of the fact that we've just elected a president who has openly disagreed with so many of our environmental protection positions. Nevertheless, I find reason to be hopeful despite the current situation.

Part of my optimism comes from the successes of the past 46 years since the US Environmental Protection Act was signed into law. We've seen cleaner air, cleaner water, successful endangered species protection, the expansion of renewable energy, and a reduction in the size of the ozone hole, not to mention things now so common that we take them for granted (like recycling). Locally we've established the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, stopped the proposed Illiana Tollroad, and welcomed bald eagles back to our area. We've seen the Keystone pipeline defeat, Obama's bold Clean Power Plan, a stronger EPA, the global Paris Climate agreement, and the Illinois Clean Jobs bill. Sierra Club was involved in supporting all these campaigns, and of course, Sierra Club endorsed Hillary Clinton who pledged to continue progress on environmental protections. But...

Instead, we elected a president who denies climate change, has vowed to repeal the clean power plan, proposes increased fossil fuel development, pledged to pull the US out of the Paris Climate Agreement and nominated fossil fuel and anti-environmental protection candidates for his cabinet. Ugh! What to do now?

In the words of SC executive director Michel Brune days after the election, we need to feel "determined, not defeated." In other words, this is the worst possible time to give up. We are needed now more than ever. We have to protect the progress we've made and continue our efforts to protect this fragile planet. We have to believe we can make a difference...we have made a difference, and we will continue to!

What can we do?

We can become better educated and more active as citizens, raising awareness of environmental issues in our communities and with our elected officials. We can write to them, phone them, and visit them, plus support and vote for pro-environment candidates -- on local, state and national levels. If you don't already receive alerts, you can give national Sierra Club your email address and tell them you want to receive alerts and online opportunities to easily let your elected state and national officials know how you want them to vote. And you can go on our group website today (<http://www.sierraclub.org/illinois/sauk-calumet>) and follow the link in the right hand column to oppose climate change-denier Scott Pruitt's nomination to be the new EPA chief. We have to believe we can make a difference...for indeed we can!

We can also make individual eco-friendly lifestyle choices and encourage our workplaces to make energy-efficient commitments. We can divest from fossil fuel stocks and invest in clean energy companies. By themselves our personal actions may not solve planetary climate change, but we can each make a small difference and influence others as we do. Many major changes at one time seemed impossible (such as women’s suffrage or the abolition of slavery), but little by little small changes cause societal shifts that eventually become new standards. We have to believe we can make a difference...we have and we will!

This planet, our lives, and the lives of all that share our planet are too precious. Each time we have an opportunity to make a difference, which is every single day, we have to act. I believe we can make a difference...acting both individually and together. Moreover, I sincerely believe we will make a difference!

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## Sauk-Cal Group Opposes Kankakee County Vote

*by Patrick Coffey*

The Sauk-Calumet Group supports the establishment and expansion of the Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge & Conservation Area (the Refuge). Located in Kankakee and Iroquois Counties, the Refuge has a long and evolving history in the region. Variously called the Kankakee Sands or the Grand Kankakee Marsh, local activists such as Marianne Hahn and the Friends of the Kankakee (FOK) have, for many years, been buying land and working with government to preserve this naturally rich area.

The FOK, as a requirement for the establishment of the Refuge, have donated a 66-acre parcel to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. This 66-acre parcel alone contains 11 state threatened and endangered species, some of which include regal fritillary butterfly, Carey's heartsease, shore St. John's wort, crowded oval sedge, and primrose violet.

With the Refuge officially established on October 16th, 2016, the US Fish and Wildlife Service will now add to this parcel other lands which will be managed for the unique wildlife they contain. Lands will only be purchased from willing buyers, and some lands will be managed as easements (lands which the Service will not own but will still manage).

In October, the Kankakee County Board, in a symbolic vote, voted to *not* support the creation of the Refuge. Concerns were raised about the Refuge's ability to generate tax funds through local property taxes. The Fish and Wildlife Service does pay local county taxes on lands they acquire at the rate of 3/4 of 1% of the *appraised* value of the land, and many areas will be managed as easements whose private owners will still pay property taxes. The Sauk-Calumet Group responded to the Board's action by writing a letter in support of the Refuge which was published in the Kankakee Daily Journal. [This letter is also posted on the Sauk-Calumet Group's Facebook page in its entirety.](#)

The Kankakee National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area is a biologically diverse and rich habitat that deserves to be protected and managed for current and future generations to enjoy and cherish.

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## New Sauk-Calumet Activism Group

*By Ann Baskerville*

Sauk-Calumet is looking to form an activism group that works to write letters to the editor, engage local elected officials and plan events for our group. This group will meet outside of our regular monthly meeting. An additional meeting will give us time to focus on taking action. Bring your passion and priorities to the group and work with others to achieve goals. Whether you are interested in renewable energy, recycling, monarch butterflies, local food, or reducing the amount of plastic in the oceans, join us! We are still determining when and where we will meet. To get involved, email [ann.baskerville@sierraclub.org](mailto:ann.baskerville@sierraclub.org).

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## Our Victory Passing the Future Energy Jobs Bill in Illinois

*By Melinda Elliott*

After two year's hard work from Sierra Club's grassroots volunteers and the Illinois Clean Jobs Coalition, Illinois passed the Future Energy Jobs Bill on December 7th, 2016. The bill will force cuts in carbon emissions from electricity producers, promote a strong renewable portfolio in Illinois, and create jobs in the clean energy sector. It is a clear victory for proponents of clean energy in Illinois. For the specific details, please read the story by Jack Darin on the Illinois chapter of the Sierra Club website:

<https://sierraclubillinois.wordpress.com/2016/12/07/illinois-acts-on-climate/>

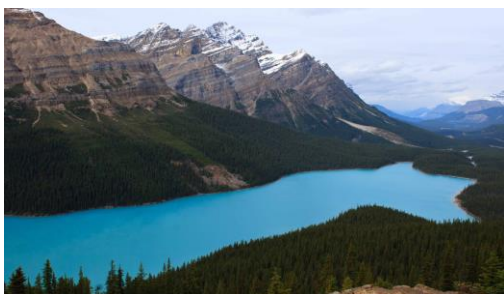
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## Canada Celebrates 150 Years with Free Parks Canada Passes

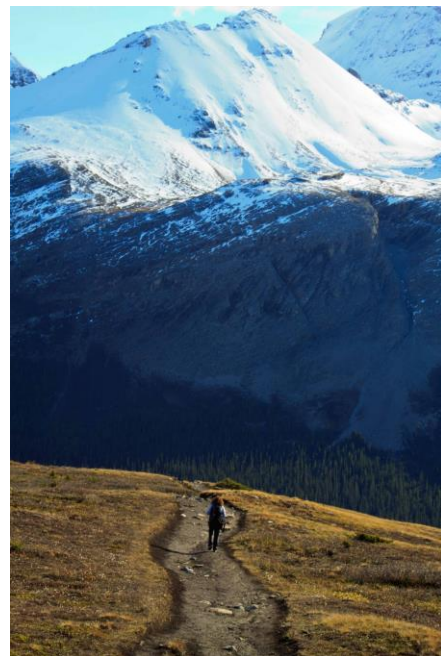
Canada is celebrating its 150th birthday this year and as a gift Parks Canada is offering their 2017 Discovery Pass for free!! This is a perfect opportunity to enjoy some time outdoors in the many beautiful parks in Canada. [Click here to explore the Parks Canada website.](#) [Click here for the free Discovery Pass.](#)



Emerald Lake Yoho National Park



Peyto Lake Banff National Park



Wilcox Pass Jasper National Park

# Polar Bears and Arctic Sea Ice in 2016

*By Christy Mazrimas-Ott*



Polar bears get a late start back out on the ice in Western Hudson Bay this winter. Ice formation did not start until mid-December in 2016. Per Dr. Steven Amstrup, Polar Bears International's chief scientist, the average freeze up day in Western Hudson Bay has been pushed back to 24 November from the 13 November, but not this year. The average Arctic sea ice extent in November 2016 was the lowest on record for the month of November, per the National Snow & Ice Data Center. The loss of sea ice effected all 19 populations of polar bears this year. Polar bears are ice dependent creatures. Their main diet is ring & bearded seals. Without the sea ice it is difficult for polar bears to catch seals out in the open water. Polar bears need that sea ice to catch their specialized diet of seal at breathing holes or open leads in the sea ice. The longer it takes for the ice to freeze up the shorter the polar bears hunting season is and more is taken away from their fat reserves stored up from their last meals when the ice broke up in early July. The lack of ice also causes hungry bears to be more aggressive causing more human bear conflict & even more bear to bear conflict. 2016 also tied with 2007 as having the second lowest Arctic sea ice minimum extent (sea ice coverage in the Arctic) on 10 September, per the National Snow & Sea Ice Data Center. [Here is a link get information on the Arctic Report Card for 2016 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Arctic Program.](#)

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## U.S. Forest Service Honors Jerry Heinrich with Volunteers and Service Restoration Award

*By Ann Baskerville*



Photo credit: U.S. Forest Service/ Allison Cisneros

Sauk-Calumet's own Jerry Heinrich was awarded the U.S. Forest Service Volunteers and Service Restoration Award for his more than 20 years of volunteer work developing and promoting restoration and Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. The award was presented by U.S. Forest Service Eastern Region Deputy Regional Forester Kathryn Lynn and Midewin Prairie Supervisor

Wade Spang during Midewin's annual volunteer recognition event. "Your work on the Midewin National

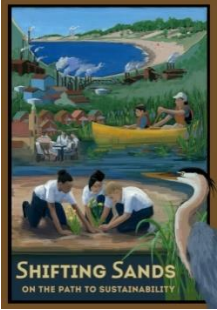
Tallgrass Prairie to support prairie restoration is impressive," United States Forest Service Chief Thomas Tidwell said in a letter congratulating Heinrich. "Whether harvesting or planting seeds or monitoring frogs or helping control invasive plants, you have made a tremendous difference to the complex ecosystem of this prairie." Jerry was one of only seven people nationwide to receive this award. In response to the award, Jerry said: "I get to work with some of the greatest people in the world and we all share an interest in promoting Midewin as probably the last and only opportunity east of the Mississippi to bring prairie back to the Prairie State on a grand scale." Well deserved, Jerry! Thank you for helping create this wonderful prairie restoration in our community.

# 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.

**\* Movie starts at 6 pm on Feb 13...details below.**

## **Feb. 13: Restoration in NW Indiana and the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore**



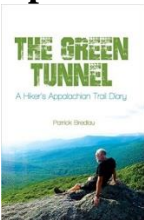
Professor Pete Avis will discuss restoration efforts within and surrounding the National Lakeshore in NW Indiana. \*Come at 6 pm, if you missed our September meeting, to watch “Shifting Sands,” a new documentary in which Dr. Avis and others highlight the successful cooperative efforts between industry and environmentalists working to protect the dunes area.

## **March 13: Sustainable Agriculture and Green Education (S.A.G.E.)**



Amy DiDominicis from the Children’s Farm in Palos Park will show slides and talk about the challenges and success stories of producing healthy organic vegetables and pasture-raised beef, pork, and poultry as part of the farm’s commitment to local, healthy, sustainable food production.

## **April 10: Hiking the Appalachian Trail**



“The Green Tunnel” author/retiree Pat Bredlau will share the joys, challenges, and physical rigors of thru-hiking the entire 2185 miles of the Appalachian Trail, from the cold winter mountains of Georgia to the New England fall colors of Maine.

## **May 8: Malaysian Tiger Conservation**



Brian Czarnik of Brookfield Zoo will speak about his zookeepers’ trip to Malaysia, where he was immersed in one of the world’s oldest rainforests in order to study these amazing jungle cats.

No meetings in June, July, or August

## **Sept 11: Invasive Species in the Great Lakes.**



“**Making Waves, the Battle for the Great Lakes:**” The film’s producers Brendan and Jessica Walsh will be here to answer questions about this new documentary.

### 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.

## Sauk-Calumet Group People You Should Know

**Pat Coffey\*** 708-720-2725  
Political Chair / Publicity

**John Field\*** 630-852-8202  
Treasurer / Web Site

**Jerry Heinrich** 815-476-6171  
Midewin Liaison

**Georganne Higgins\*** 815-936-9040  
Membership

**Lois Lauer\*** 708-923-1550  
Chair / Programs

**Ann Baskerville\*** 815-671-1275  
Chapter Excom Rep

**Christy Mazrimas Ott\*** 708-825-4163  
Conservation Chair

**Sharon Rolek** 773-646-0990  
Conservation Liaison -  
Calumet Region

**Rich Treptow\*** 708-747-0649  
Secretary,  
Climate Change Liaison

**Melinda Elliott\*** 708-792-7240  
Clean Power Liaison

**Gregory Ott** 708-895-1646  
Newsletter

\*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 to for our website.



We are also available on Facebook. You can click <https://www.facebook.com/SierraClubSaukCalumet/> to find us on Facebook.