



# Sauk-Calumet Group

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## Chicago Pet Coke Ordinance Disappoints

by Sharon Rolek, Conservation Liaison- Calumet Region

Public input lasted for months. Mayor Emanuel insisted he would close down the piles of pet coke polluting the southeast side communities, waterways and air. Alderman John Pope suddenly switched ordinances during the April 1 City Council meeting. It appears that much of the chest-thumping of the alderman and mayor was show. Instead of an ordinance with some impact, the new ordinance allows an exception for cement manufacturing facilities that have obtained a construction permit and a "new source review" approval from the IEPA. The people wanted a Moratorium on the pet coke.

The Chicago Department of Public Health has regulations, finalized last month, designed to limit emissions from pet coke: operators have to fully enclose storage piles within a two-year period and submit monthly progress reports to the city. The amended ordinance requires facility operators to report the amount of coke and coal material that goes in and out of their factories. Also, the City's Department of Planning and Development is to monitor this data, then issue a report to the city council no later than three years after the passage recommending whether additional material-use limitations are needed to protect the public health and interest. The pet coke mounds piled along the banks of the Calumet River were mostly transported from the BP refinery in Whiting, Indiana - the same facility that malfunctioned and spilled an estimated 39 barrels of oil into Lake Michigan.

Christopher Norborg, Chicago's Law Dept., said the risk of litigation is high and the city's defense costs would be large if a moratorium were to be imposed. Again, kowtowing to big money.

Alderman Bob Fioretti was the only NO vote to the ordinance because he agreed that it did not go far enough to protect the people. He said, "These people are suffering. Their kids are in the hospital...They can't go out. They can't go in their swimming pools. They can't enjoy their quality of life."

## and the Public Reacts

by Sharon Rolek, Conservation Liaison- Calumet Region

Undeterred by the weak ordinance passed by the Chicago City Council, almost 100 residents demonstrated with large signs and chants against the poisonous pet coke on April 26. Led by effective leaders of the cause, many demonstrators wore dust masks to emphasize the pet coke particulates in the air. Marching west on 106th Street, the demonstration stopped at Alderman Pope's office (no response) to the pet coke facility on Burley Avenue.

Knowing the tar sands have three times more heavy metals than other sources of petroleum, the effort to shut down the holding facilities is more pressing. Burning pet coke releases 10% more CO<sup>2</sup> than burning coal.

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# Legislative Update

By Mary Lubertozzi, Political Education Chair

The state legislature's spring session continues until May 30. A high priority for the Illinois Sierra Club chapter is passage of amendments to the Renewable Portfolio Standard. Bills are pending in both the House and Senate to create a no-cost fix to ratepayers for the Renewable Energy Standard (RPS), which will help ensure that renewable energy development continues. This important legislation created more than 20,000 jobs, saved \$177 million in wholesale energy costs and eliminated 5 million tons of air pollution.

The RPS law, which passed in 2007, requires 25% of the state's power to come from clean energy sources by 2025. Because this bill was passed BEFORE community aggregation, the original legislation no longer works as intended. Traditional utilities seek long-term contracts with green energy suppliers, but most communities are now getting energy from alternative suppliers who can usually only offer 1-3 year contracts. Alternative suppliers have been paying into the Renewable Energy Resource Fund, and over \$53 million has been collected but not spent on renewable energy.

The proposed fix will provide more market stability, improve transparency, stimulate more solar development, and prevent energy funds from being "swept" for other uses. The bill is just a technical fix - it DOES NOT raise rates and it keeps all caps and protections in place.

Members are encouraged to contact their senator and representative to ask them to co-sponsor and support Senate Bill 103 or House Bill 2864.



Everyone surely remembers when they first became aware of pelicans, usually via Walt Disney Studios. The cartoon pelicans charmed young viewers with their goofy flight and their irrepressible good mood. It's a bit difficult to gauge a pelican's mood but Disney otherwise left a lasting, yet incorrect, impression.

Pelicans are amazingly graceful birds. If you're fortunate enough to watch them in the wild, you can't fail to be impressed by the close-order flight, the smooth, looping paths through the sky, and the final slide into the water. Luckily for those of us in the Sauk-Calumet area, it's much easier these days to enjoy the experience.

It started only a few short years ago. The "wide waters" above the dam at Starved Rock were covered with large, white birds migrating south for the Winter. Whether in response to other flyway disruption or just a search for better fishing, this area has become a major stopover point for migrating white pelicans.

## Pelicans!

By Steve Baker, Sauk-Calumet Outings

At Starved Rock, they appear just as the eagles are leaving to fish other newly-open water, and they stay around in significant numbers for a couple of weeks. In the Fall, they fly in with the first signs of cold weather and make a nice contrast with changing leaves on the bluffs above them. They are easily visible from the road along the south bank of the river.

Starved Rock Lodge has a Facebook page that tracks the scenic features of the park and is usually an excellent source for information on what is passing through the area.

White pelicans also appear at the confluence of the DuPage and DesPlaines Rivers. An excellent viewing location is in the Kerry Sheridan Grove (Forest Preserve of Will County) near the Four Rivers Environmental Education Center.

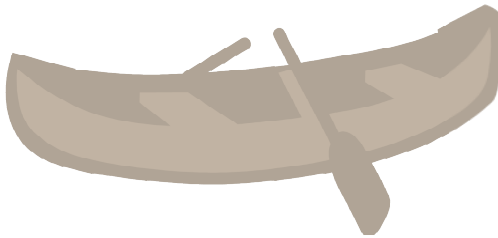
Avid birders will undoubtedly be able to add much greater detail than I have here. As for me, I just like to watch how Disney got it wrong. I confess, though, that I still hear that goofy cartoon laugh every time.

# Spring/Summer Outings

## May 26:

Annual Memorial Day Paddle. We will launch our canoes at Bird Park in Kankakee for a paddle down the Kankakee River. Hopefully, the redbud trees will still be in bloom. The trip will culminate with lunch at Brickstone Restaurant and Brewery.

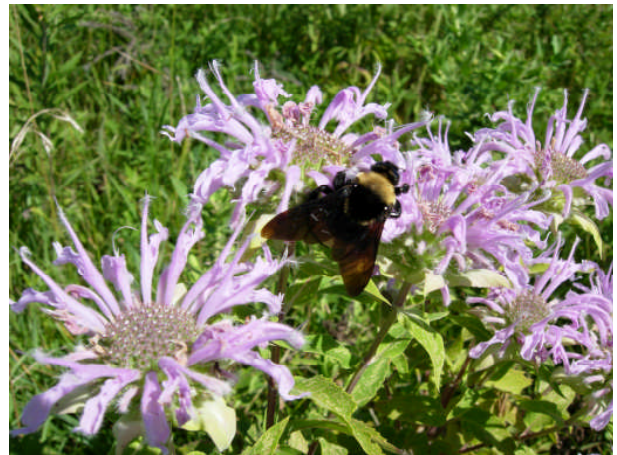
For pre-registration, further information, contact Steve Baker at [trinitysb@msn.com](mailto:trinitysb@msn.com)



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## Nature Sunday Hikes

Bob Schwaan and Pat Coffey are at it again this summer bringing you nature hikes on Sunday, June through August. We will be trying some new twists on the Nature Sundays theme. Some hikes will be early in the morning, others in the afternoon. Some hikes will be short and easy, while others will be longer and more difficult. The longer hikes may focus more on landscape and exercise, while some hikes will be more nature-oriented and focus on identifying species. There should be something for everyone who loves the out-of-doors. The sites and times are not available yet, but members of Sierra Club and those who have participated before will receive invites. All are welcome. We're looking forward to this, and we hope that this year's hikes will be even better than last year's. We'll see you there!



## Midewin Alliance Native Plant Sale

The **Midewin Alliance Native Plant Sale** will be held "rain or shine" under the Midewin Alliance big top tent on Saturday, May 24<sup>th</sup> from 10 am to 3 pm at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie located on Illinois Route 53 approximately 12 miles south of Joliet (take I-80 Exit 132) or 2 miles north of Wilmington. For more detailed directions, visit the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie website at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/midewin>

More than 80 varieties of native wildflowers (forbs), grasses, sedges, shrubs, and trees will be available for purchase. Visit [www.midewinalliance.org](http://www.midewinalliance.org) to view a full list of plants, pricing, plant sizes, and more. If you have questions or need additional information, contact Jerry Heinrich at: 815-476-6171 or [g.heinrich@sbcglobal](mailto:g.heinrich@sbcglobal)

## 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) or  
[www.fotfp.org](http://www.fotfp.org)

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

**Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie**  
[www.fs.usda.gov/midewin](http://www.fs.usda.gov/midewin)

### 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.

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\*Denotes an elected member of the Executive Committee

# Sauk-Calumet Program Schedule

NO MEETINGS IN JUNE, JULY OR AUGUST

MEETINGS WILL RESUME ON SEPT. 8



## Farmers' Markets and More

The reason the Sauk-Calumet Group does not have summer programs is that we love the outdoors. When the weather turns warm, we try to soak up as much sunlight as we can. Sun and warmth also makes our gardens grow; but if we don't have our own garden, we can visit one (or more) of the many local farmers' markets to procure a supply of fresh fruits and vegetables. Farmers' markets aren't just about veggies anymore - you can find everything from apple pie to zucchini bread.

There are also farm stands, U-pick farms and food cooperatives in the area. For those who need to get their hands dirty, there are community gardens. A relatively new concept is community supported agriculture which, in effect, means that you become a "shareholder" in a farm. You share in the cost of producing the crop and then you get to share in the bounty (or the meager output, depending on growing conditions).

To find a farmers' market near you (or one of the other options mentioned above), visit the *Will County Green* website: [www.willcountygreen.com](http://www.willcountygreen.com) and look for "farm fresh options" under the "Green Guide" tab. There's even a chart to let you know what time of year vegetables ripen and go to market.