



Sauk-Calumet Group

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New Cal-Sag Trail Opened

by Lois Lauer, ExCom Chair

An exciting opportunity for outdoor enthusiasts opened this summer when the first 13 miles of the new Cal Sag Trail was inaugurated with a ribbon-cutting on June 6. The paved trail connects Alsip with Lemont and will eventually go another 13 miles to Burnham near the Indiana border.



Thousands of folks have pedaled or hiked the new trail this summer, and many look forward to the future extensions and linkages to other trails that will eventually connect the Chicago lakeshore with Joliet. The new Cal-Sag Trail parallels the Cal-Sag Channel, winding through wooded areas and prairies, going under several bridges, and connecting to several areas of special interest such as the Lake Katherine Nature Preserve, Sagawau Environmental Center, and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) aeration station in Worth. I've seen people of all ages riding bikes, running, walking, pushing baby strollers, walking dogs, and rollerblading along the trail. Built mostly on MWRD land and funded with about 80% federal funds and 20% local community and private funds, the trail is a wonderful way for folks to enjoy the outdoors. More information and a trail map are available at <http://www.calsagtrail.org>

Sauk Calumet ExCom Election

Look for our local Sauk Calumet ExCom Ballot that will be included along with the chapter ExCom ballot in the glossy mailing you will receive from the Illinois Chapter office later this month. Our candidates are Pat Coffey, John Field, Christy Mazrimas Ott, and Melinda Elliot.

In this issue:

- page 1 Cal Sag Trail Opened, Sauk Calumet ExCom Election
- page 2 A Summer's Fun
- page 3 Nature Sundays, EPA Village Green Project
- page 4 Nature Sundays, Other Area Events
- page 5 People You Should Know; Program Schedule



A Summer's Fun

by Steve Baker, Outings

Those who have followed, and helped with, the Group's activities over the years may recall the drama and knuckle-biting that accompanied the establishment of the Old Plank Road Trail. The success of that venture has led to a legion of trails that crisscross the Chicago area and branch out across the state. This past summer, a motley gang of cyclists decided to experience the best of what our area has to offer. As summer ends, we've yet to sample them all but here's what we discovered on some of them.

The Old Plank Road Trail remains one of the best. The wet summer spawned lots of growth in the greenery, and much of the trail is a leafy tunnel that stays cool even in warm weather. The link down to the Hickory Creek Junction/Barrens is especially scenic and introduces an unusual landscape feature: hills!

Heading out to the far northwest, we sampled the Great Western Trail starting from Sycamore. A surprisingly pleasant ride through the country was followed by delicious Margaritas in old downtown Sycamore.

The Virgil Gilman Trail runs from Route 47 north of Sugar Grove to Route 30 in Aurora. It's paved, easy riding, and it features an interesting mix of rural and urban settings. At the Fox River crossing, lots of other trail linkages open up, including, for the adventurous, a close connection to the casino in Aurora.

After years of advocacy, the Cal Sag Trail has opened along the canal of the same name. It's new, raw, and not yet blessed with local services, but it flows along the canal amidst some great scenery. A return trip during fall color time is a must. Learn more about the Cal Sag at our October meeting.



The I & M Trail remains a staple of trail riders, although it is suffering both from severe weather damage and lack of maintenance. The Wauponsee Glacial Trail that starts in Joliet and runs south to the Kankakee River is less interesting than some but really pretty as it approaches the Kankakee River. And lastly, the bike trail that runs through Kankakee River State Park is a nice ride although the gravel section going to the Davis Creek area has been closed because of flood damage.

There are still many trails to explore and old friends to revisit. Any suggestions for future rides? Our schedule is consistent in its inconsistency, but all are welcome to join in. Hope to see you on the trails!

Nature Sundays Walks - Summer 2015

By Patrick Coffey, Sauk Calumet ExCom



*Female Spicebush Swallowtail -Cowles Bog
photo by Jeanne Mueller*

There were six Nature Sundays walks this summer (facilitated by Patrick Coffey). We went to some of the key nature sites in the south Chicago region: the Esker Trail in the Palos Forest Preserves, Lockport Prairie, Rock Run Preserve in Joliet, Braidwood Dunes and Savanna, Gensburg Prairie in Markham, and Cowles Bog in the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. There were thirteen individuals who attended the walks, with an average of a little over three guests per walk, not including the facilitator. Everyone was just into nature: we had a herbalist, a dragonfly monitor, some birders, a nature photographer and more. It was such a privilege to be associated with so many wonderful people! Thank you all for joining us! We hope to continue again next year.

EPA's Village Green Project

by Sharon Rolek, Conservation Liaison and Tom Shepherd

The US EPA invited 30 attendees to the *Community Air Monitoring Training* it conducted in Raleigh, NC recently. Tom Shepherd, past president and long-time board member/volunteer of the Southeast Environmental Task Force (SETF) attended.

"One of the aims of the conference was to teach regular activists about the tools for monitoring air quality in our neighborhoods, and to engage citizens in a variety of methods available for change and improvement where problems exist" said Shepherd. "Our heavily-industrialized area {Lake Calumet} is one of those identified as having excessive air pollution and a need for improvement."

Speakers at the training conference taught about: learning how to use various equipment; how to organize community members for the monitoring process; collecting and assessing data; and understanding the impacts of advanced monitoring on EPA air programs and planning.

"The most exciting take-away was learning about the EPA's Village Green Project, which the EPA has selected for Chicago's southeast side (one of the first locations in the country) to monitor more microscopic particulate matter, known as PM 2.5."

The location chosen for this revolutionary monitoring station - which resembles a futuristic solar-fitted park bench - is Jane Addams Elementary School.

The southeast side school was chosen due to its close proximity to the notorious petcoke piles, as well as other bulk material facilities that handle such products as manganese, salt, sulfur, crushed stone, sand and scrap.



*monitoring station in Durham, North Carolina
photo from US EPA website - Village Green*

Green Living

tips about living "green"

Gimme Five!

Good news for committed recyclers: a solution for what to do with #5 plastic yoghurt, hummus, and cottage cheese containers! The New York based Preserve Plastics Company now has "Gimme 5" recycle bins in Whole Foods stores for collecting #5 plastic containers. Many community recycle collection programs do not accept #5 plastics, and those that do often have to mix them with other plastics which causes them to be downgraded into low grade plastics that are shipped overseas. The Preserve Plastics Company closes the loop by making useful plastic products such as toothbrushes from the #5 plastics it collects. Look for the blue collection container at Orland or other Chicagoland Whole Foods. Gimme Five!



Clean Energy Event

by Melinda Elliott

The Clean Energy Town Hall event on September 16th at Governors State University was deemed a great success. There were just under one hundred attendees present. Speakers included: Illinois Rep. Anthony DeLuca; Justin Smith, GSU student; Jack Darin, director of the Illinois Sierra Club; Pastor Booker Vance of Faith in Place; Harry Ohde of IBEW Local 164; and Cheryl Johnson of People for Community Recovery. Various aspects of the Illinois Clean Jobs bill were discussed:

- The focus on renewable energy (wind and solar) and improved energy efficiency
- 32,000 new clean energy jobs created per year
- The flow of market mechanism (i.e. carbon tax) dollars back to consumers, including low-income bill assistance
- Environmental justice

The Illinois Sierra Club will continue to work toward getting the Clean Jobs bill passed in Illinois. Melinda Elliott will act as the Clean Jobs bill liaison with the Illinois Sierra Club on behalf of the Sauk Calumet Group.

Midewin Prepares for Arrival of Bison

By Connie Heinrich, Editor

Bison will soon be coming to Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. The US Forest Service has been busy all summer overseeing the installation of miles of fence, a watering station and corral system called a "Berlinic Cube." that was designed specifically for the safe handling of bison and to minimize stress on the animals when they undergo health monitoring and evaluation. Our very own John Field, along with other volunteers, spent the summer building the "data shed" (really a small building) in the corral where the staff monitoring the bison will work.

According to a press release issued by the Forest Service, the bison are being introduced to Midewin "to graze on an experimental basis on approximately 1,200 acres of fenced pasture located within its 19,000 total acres. Bison once roamed the tallgrass prairies of northern Illinois. The experiment will provide information on how bison improve the diversity of native vegetation on restored prairies, compared to similar prairie restoration sites without bison. The forest Service will also monitor how bison grazing on restored prairie provides suitable habitat for a suite of grassland birds."

The Forest Service also stated that "While the bison are scheduled to arrive this fall, the National Forest Foundation, Midewin and local partners are planning a public event in spring 2016 to celebrate the arrival of the bison."

For more information about Midewin's experimental herd of bison, visit the Midewin website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/Midewin/> or Midewin's official facebook page at www.facebook.com/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

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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John Field* Treasurer / Web Site	630-852-8202
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Sharon Rolek Conservation Liaison - Calumet Region	773-646-0990
Rich Treptow* Secretary, Climate Change Liaison	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 (21119 Pfeffer Rd., Frankfort). We do not meet in June, July, or August. All meetings are free and open both to Sierra Club members and the public.

Oct. 12 Cal-Sag Trail: A Treasure in Our Backyard

From Lemont to Alsip, the new Cal-Sag Trail offers adventures to anyone in the south suburbs interested in biking or hiking along the Calumet-Saganashkee Channel. Lois Lauer and Rich Treptow will show slides of the trail, highlighting its beautiful scenery and its future links to other trails.

Nov. 9 "Cowspiracy"

(The film is 91 minutes long. We will begin announcements at 7 p.m. so that we can start the film at 7:15 p.m.)

Join us to watch this groundbreaking, shocking, yet humorous documentary about the absolutely devastating environmental impact of large-scale factory farming, and the path to global sustainability that we need to take.

Dec. 14 Climate Change and the Arctic Ecosystem

Christy Mazrimas-Ott will tell of the environmental effects of climate change on the arctic ecosystem. Christy is a large carnivore zookeeper at Brookfield Zoo and has done extensive research on the loss of polar bear habitat due to climate change.

Jan. 11 Members' Slide Night

Calling all members! Please bring slides (film or digital images) or prints of your latest outdoor experience.

Feb. 8 Paddling in the Wake of Sigurd Olsen

Lois Lauer will talk about the legacy that Minnesotan Sigurd Olsen left for us, both in terms of the lands he helped to preserve and his philosophical reflections about the importance of wilderness.